

Why the Reagan cabinet is still such an enigma

by Nancy Spannaus, Contributing Editor

Despite the appointment of 20 members of the incoming Reagan cabinet, the character of the cabinet still remains an enigma. For unlike the Nixon and Ford administrations, the Reagan administration has given every indication that it will function with a strong executive hand over individual cabinet areas of specialization.

The structure for implementing such centralized policy direction has already been put into place. In particular, the appointment, the appointment of Edwin Meese III as counselor to the President, and reconstitution of Reagan's long-term personal staff within the White House has signaled loud and clear that key decisions will be made in the Oval Office. The press has extensively commented on the downgrading of the National Security Adviser; but similarly the initial statements of the cabinet officers have indicated that they expect to be implementing Reagan's policies rather than making them themselves.

What makes the cabinet still an enigma is that the *content* of the policies which this strong executive will carry out has not yet been determined.

The central policy issue is of course the nearly out-of-control financial and economic crisis being fed by the high interest-rate policies of Federal Reserve Board Chairman Paul Adolph Volcker. If the core Reagan group does not decide to stop Volcker and his policies in their tracks, the Federal Reserve will have succeeded in setting the agenda for the new cabinet regardless of their intentions. Every key area of domestic and foreign policy is now being determined by the deliberate ratcheting of the United States into a depression.

The cabinet nominees Reagan has announced are by no means the optimal choices for implementing an anti-Volcker policy, and launching a 180-degree shift of policy toward reindustrialization. While Reagan avoided the option of returning certain "superstars" from the Nixon administration to power—including such bald allies of Volcker such as William Simon and Walter Wriston—it was to be expected that Reagan would pay off his political debts to the Eastern Establishment group that supported his election effort. Overall, the initial cabinet nominees fall within the range of "big shots"

from prominent American institutions that are dominated by the Council on Foreign Relations crowd. This is especially obvious with such nominees as Council on Foreign Relations member William Casey for head of the Central Intelligence Agency, Trilateral Commission member Caspar W. Weinberger for Secretary of Defense, and former NATO commander Alexander Haig for Secretary of State.

But we must issue a strong caveat against the temptation to judge even these cabinet members according to their past track records.

The case of Alexander Haig

Take the case of Alexander Haig, for example. Haig, like Henry Kissinger, is a longtime protégé of Pentagon official Fritz Kraemer, who until his recent retirement operated as an unobtrusive representative of the British Special Operations Executive and European black oligarchy within the U.S. government hierarchy. Haig's unprecedentedly meteoric rise to four-star general without ever holding a major field command was the direct result of his sponsorship by Kraemer, Cyrus Vance, and Kraemer's superiors in the Jesuit order and British intelligence. But unlike Henry Kissinger, Haig is not limited in where he can be deployed by a colossal bag of neurosis and ego. In true Jesuit tradition, he is an "organization" man. It is likely that, no matter what his personal views or previous activities on certain subjects, he will do what he is told.

This judgment has been supported by rumors, relayed through the press, on the policy which the Reagan White House is taking toward the undersecretary, and even staff, positions in the various cabinet departments. As the *Washington Post* reported on Dec. 18, "according to several top transition officials, each cabinet nominee will be given lists of from three to eight names recommended for appointment to each subcabinet post. If the cabinet secretaries prefer someone who is not on the list, they will be required to go back to White House officials—presumably counselor Edwin Meese III and James A. Baker III [the chief of staff]—for approval."

Some sources have even been reporting that the Reagan executive is planning to purge a full 200 staffers from the State Department, and then make sure that Haig is surrounded by traditional Reagan appointees all the way down the line. Even Haig himself seems to have qualms about this, as reflected in a Dec. 18 op-ed in the *Baltimore Sun* lauding the "independence of spirit and judgment" that the President receives from a cabinet official who has "enough free rein to run his or her department effectively."

In fact, the functioning of any cabinet department is totally dependent upon the relationship between the secretary and his key undersecretaries, at least. It is known, for example, that Nixon's Attorney General John Mitchell never consolidated control over the Justice Department, which was still controlled by Kennedy loyalists. Other historical examples abound.

To conclude a judgment on the Reagan cabinet, therefore, it is indispensable to assess who the key undersecretaries are going to be in all areas.

One of Reagan's appointees breaks ranks totally with the recent trend toward establishing a government bureaucracy totally "independent" of responsibility to national constituency groupings: Richard Schweiker, the former Republican senator from Pennsylvania who ran for the Republican vice-presidential nomination with Reagan in 1976 and has been nominated for the Department of Health and Human Services. The fact that he is a politician makes him more likely to respond to the clamor of constituency pressure particularly on the economic issues.

In the final analysis, how *political* the Reagan administration dares to be will determine its stand on the Volcker issue, and thus its ability to govern. Vigorous efforts are already under way from the *Washington Post* and other liberal Democratic outposts to tie up all the cabinet nominations in a Nixonesque process of charges of special interests, corruption, and so forth. Such a process would paralyze the incoming administration, and deny it the ability to take aggressive action on the nation's crucial problems. That is its undisguised intent.

The effective solution to this problem, as well as to determining what this cabinet will do, lies squarely with Reagan's willingness to directly mobilize the nation against the Volcker measures of depression. The political constituencies who deserted Carter and the Democratic Party in record numbers because of the disastrous policies of Volcker on Nov. 4, want to see the government once more responsible to their needs on the economic issue above all.

Until the Volcker issue is resolved in the Reagan White House, the cabinet will remain an interesting but secondary enigma. In the next 30 days it is the Volcker fight that will set the agenda.



'Good news from Israel'

by Warren Hamerman

Mr. Hamerman, chairman of the National Democratic Policy Committee, released the following statement on Dec. 19.

I enthusiastically welcome yesterday's development in Israel, where Labour Party Chairman Shimon Peres overwhelmingly won the right to oppose Prime Minister Menachem Begin in next year's elections. My colleague Lyndon H. LaRouche, Jr. and I have worked for the last half-decade to support a proper "Israeli nationalist" policy. On Dec. 18, Peres's postelection statement to make Israel "great again" through "focus on developing a highly sophisticated, science-based industry to pull Israel out of its economic difficulties" embodies the germ of appropriate Israeli policy.

Potentially, Israel can now become the key to achieving an overall Middle East peace package. This potential has been brought to the fore by the recent stunning rejection of the Carter-Brzezinski policy of creating an "Arc of Crisis" from the Middle East through Asia. In fact, a not insignificant factor in electing Ronald Reagan President was the strong backing he received from normally Democratic Jewish-Americans.

The problem with Israeli policy over the past years has not been caused by Menachem Begin. It was caused from Washington, through the outrageous policies of Carter and Brzezinski. The United States backed the worst possible combination in the Arab world: wild man Qaddafi (remember Billygate?), the lunatic Khomeini, and bully Assad of Syria. This policy was packaged with special touches for Carter and Brzezinski by the British old hands who have been fighting against French and German influence in the area for over a century. In addition, Milton Friedman, the economist of dictator Pinochet in Chile, came into Israel and wrecked her economy, provoking triple-digit inflation and worse calamities.

The Carter policy of destabilizing the area, combined

Above: Warren Hamerman