

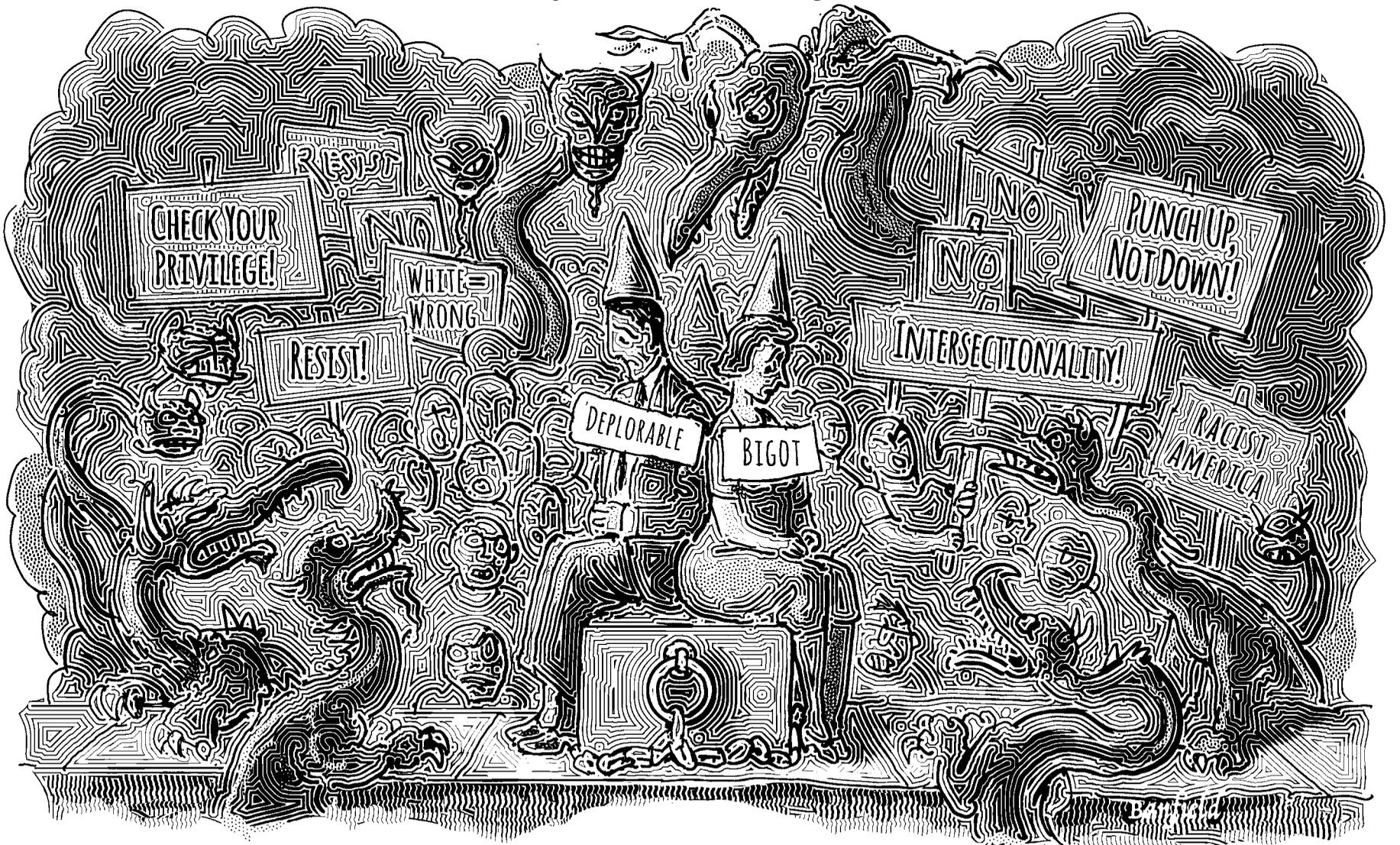
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SOURCES OF THE REAGAN DOCTRINE

Paving the Way for Reagan: The Influence of Conservative Media on U.S. Foreign Policy, by Laurence R. Jurdem.
University Press of Kentucky, 278 pages, \$45

EVER SINCE HERBERT CROLY AND WALTER Lippmann founded the *New Republic* in 1914 to guide the ascendant Progressive administration of Woodrow Wilson, journals of political opinion have come to be associated with presidents of similar ideological bent. During Bill Clinton's two terms the *New Republic* became known as "the in-flight magazine of Air Force One." President George W. Bush had the *Weekly Standard*. President Obama sat for long, discursive interviews with the *Atlantic*. The Trump White House is thought to be influenced by the journal you're reading now. Publications such as these supply historical and intellectual context, public policy suggestions, and even personnel to elected officials who must navigate a bewildering, hostile rush of events.

Historian Laurence Jurdem has written a fair-minded analysis of the political influence of three such journals: *Human Events*, *National Review*, and *Commentary*. "Between 1964 and 1980," Jurdem argues, "by providing an ideological perspective on important national issues, the publications of conservative opinion played a fundamental role in reviving the political fortunes of the American Right, culminating in the election of Ronald Reagan."

Through close readings of these magazines, and by examining their positions on such issues as arms control, multilateralism, the opening to China, the Panama Canal treaties, the Middle Eastern oil embargo, and the Iran hostage crisis, Jurdem describes a consistency of thought and prescription that, in his view, shaped Republican foreign policy. "[T]he ideological consistency with which these publications presented their arguments," he concludes, "played a critical role in the development of the 1980 GOP agenda."

Maybe. What Jurdem proves without a doubt is the critical role *Human Events*, *National Review*, and *Commentary* played on the worldview of Ronald Reagan. What is more difficult to discern is their influence on GOP foreign policy in general—or even on Reagan's foreign policy itself. Although small-circulation journals of ideas may help define the climate of opinion in a given era, intellectuals are often shocked by how difficult it is for even their friends to implement policies they would like.

INFLUENCE, AFTER ALL, IS A RATHER SLIPPERY concept. Are editors and writers whispering in politicians' ears? Or do their articles reflect the politicians' agendas? When Henry Kissinger served in the Nixon White House, for example, his close friend William F. Buckley, Jr.,

saw Kissinger about twenty times and spoke with him on the phone frequently. But the conservative commentator's visits had little to do with Kissinger's need for foreign policy advice. Kissinger wanted Buckley to use his influence with others on the Right to show that he was in favor of the administration's initiatives. However, as M. Stanton Evans and David Keene both recalled, many of their colleagues were suspicious of Kissinger and thought he was taking advantage of *National Review's* editor in chief.

Those suspicions may have been well founded. When *National Review* senior editor James Burnham filed a column critical of Nixon's foreign policy with the headline "The Kissinger Doctrine," Buckley changed it to "The Sonnenfeldt Doctrine," after Kissinger's deputy.

Reagan was different. He liked to crib from *Human Events* during his years as an after-dinner speaker, and continued to do so when he entered politics in 1966 as a candidate for governor of California. Staffers worried that the conservative publication made Reagan vulnerable to attacks that he was out of the mainstream—a fear that persisted after he was elected president in 1980. Senator Paul Laxalt once mentioned a recent article from *Human Events* in conversation with the president. "Reagan said he had not seen it," recalled Laxalt. "Well, the sons of bitches were hiding it from him." The president ordered that multiple copies of *Human Events* be delivered to the White House every weekend.

As Reagan put it in a letter to Buckley in 1962, "I'd be lost without *National Review*." His 1982 address to the British parliament, and his speech to the National Association of Evangelicals the following year, drew heavily from Burnham's prescriptions for full-scale ideological and political assault on the legitimacy of the Soviet Union. His defense build-

up, and especially the Reagan Doctrine of support for anti-Communist guerrillas, reflected Burnham's policy of rolling back Soviet gains rather than simply containing them. Reagan awarded the presidential Medal of Freedom to Burnham and (posthumously) to *NR* senior editor, and author of *Witness*, Whittaker Chambers. He spoke at the opening of *National Review's* Washington bureau during his first term, and attended the magazine's 30th anniversary gala during his second. "The man standing before you was a Democrat when he picked up his first issue in a plain brown wrapper," Reagan told the celebratory crowd in 1985. "And even now, as an occupant of public housing, he awaits as anxiously as ever his biweekly edition—without the wrapper."

CONTRIBUTORS TO *NATIONAL REVIEW* populated the Reagan Administration. The president made Buckley protégé Anthony Dolan head of speechwriting. He worked alongside other *National Review* alumni, including Aram Bakshian, Jr., and Mona Charen. Jeane Kirkpatrick's 1979 *Commentary* essay "Dictatorships and Double Standards" led to her becoming one of Reagan's foreign policy advisors and eventually ambassador to the United Nations. She was joined in the administration by *Commentary* contributors Elliott Abrams, Michael Novak, Richard Pipes, and Carl Gershman.

Not every aspect of Reagan's foreign policy sprang from the pages of *National Review* and *Commentary*. The editors of both publications criticized his diplomacy with Mikhail Gorbachev. But there was never any doubt that Reagan was a man of the Right, a principled statesman. And, unlike many politicians, he was not afraid to credit and to honor the thinkers and publications that had shaped him—and thereby the world—the most. In 1994, in one of his last public appearances, Reagan addressed the 50th birthday party of *Human Events* by video. "With your help," he said, "we won the war with the evil empire and the Berlin Wall came tumbling down." As he had put it a few years before: "All in all, not bad, not bad at all."

Matthew Continetti is editor in chief of the Washington Free Beacon.

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