

Prime Minister
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THE REAGAN PRESIDENCY: THE FIRST YEAR.

1. THE WHITE HOUSE HAS, WITH A GREAT FLOURISH, PUBLISHED A 128 PAGE REVIEW OF REAGAN'S FIRST YEAR IN OFFICE. IT IS AN UNUSUAL DOCUMENT.

2. AFTER WHAT THE WASHINGTON POST CALLS A DICKENSIAN OPENING (''IT WAS A TIME OF CRISIS AND RENEWAL. NOT SINCE THE OPENING DAYS OF ROOSEVELT'S NEW DEAL HAD AN INCOMING PRESIDENT BEEN FACED WITH SUCH A BROAD ARRAY OF CHALLENGES''), THE DOCUMENT QUICKLY LAPSES INTO ADVENTURE-BOOK STYLE (''BELIEVING THE AMERICAN PEOPLE HAD SENT HIM TO WASHINGTON TO END THE DECADES OF GOVERNMENT MIS-MANAGEMENT, PRESIDENT REAGAN IMMEDIATELY BEGAN TO WORK CHANGES THAT WOULD RETURN THE COUNTRY TO THE POLICIES THAT HAD ONCE MADE IT GREAT''). THE WHOLE WORK IS PANGLOSSIAN IN ITS OPTIMISM AND PRAVDA-LIKE IN ITS SYCOPHANCY. TIME AND AGAIN, THE PRESIDENT SNATCHES VICTORY FROM THE JAWS OF DEFEAT. SUCH MINOR REVERSALS AS THE LOOMING BUDGET DEFICIT (POTENTIALLY THE LARGEST IN U.S. HISTORY) ARE NOWHERE MENTIONED. SWINGING CUTS IN HEALTH CARE PROGRAMMES ARE DISMISSED AS CHANGES WHICH WILL HELP BRING ABOUT MORE COST-EFFECTIVE HEALTH CARE FOR THE ELDERLY.

3. THE PASSAGES ON FOREIGN POLICY ARE NO LESS EGREGIOUS. REAGAN HAS DRIVEN BACK THE SOVIET MENACE, AVERTED THE THREAT OF WAR IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND REASSERTED U.S. LEADERSHIP OF THE WESTERN ALLIANCE. UNAIDED, HE HAS BROUGHT NEW LIFE TO THE NAMIBIAN TALKS, WHICH HAD ALL BUT COLLAPSED. MORE IRKSOME IS THE CONTENTION THAT, BY ENSUREING EUROPEAN INVOLVEMENT IN THE MULTI-NATIONAL FORCE IN SINAI, AMERICA HAS BROUGHT THE EUROPEANS INTO THE CAMP DAVID FRAMEWORK.

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4. A PASSAGE ON THE UNITED NATIONS, WHICH BEARS ALL THE SIGNS OF HAVING BEEN DRAFTED BY MRS KIRKPATRICK, IS A LAUNDRY-LIST OF UN DIRTY WASHING. IT MODESTLY ACKNOWLEDGES THAT IN 1981 IT WAS NOT POSSIBLE TO REVERSE MOST OF THE ADVERSE TRENDS. ONE OF THE NEW NEGATIVE DEVELOPMENTS AT THE UN NOTED IS THE "PROGRESSIVE ISOLATION OF THE U.S. FROM HER EUROPEAN ALLIES, WHO NOW REACH VIRTUALLY ALL DECISIONS AS MEMBERS OF THE EC WITHOUT CONSULTATION WITH THE U.S."

5. THE PRESS ARE CALLING THIS DOCUMENT REAGAN'S FIRST REPORT CARD. IT IS SO BIZARRE, AND SO MUCH A REFLECTION OF THE BYZANTINE NATURE OF AMERICAN GOVERNMENT THAT IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE FOR US TO TAKE IT TOO MUCH TO HEART AS A SERIOUS DOCUMENT. I RECOMMEND THAT WE TREAT IT, AS THE AMERICAN PRESS ARE DOING, AS A PIECE OF PURE POLITICAL BRAGGADOCIO. ONE JOURNALIST TO WHOM WE HAVE SPOKEN HAS COMPARED IT TO THE WORKS OF KIM I I SUNG.

HENDERSON

FCO/WHITEHALL

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