

Taking on the World's Repressive Regimes: The Ford Foundation's International Human Rights Policies and Practices, William Korey (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 336 pp., \$75 cloth.

With *Taking on the World's Repressive Regimes*, William Korey has done a great service for both those who champion and follow the realization of human rights internationally and those who wish to understand the potential and limitations of foundation strategies to bring about real change. And “real change” is certainly what characterizes the narrative of this slim volume, which covers the significant realization of human rights from about 1967 to the present day.

Despite the UN's adoption in 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights—which should have given some saliency to human rights as an urgent issue for governments, intergovernmental agencies, and nonprofits—that ideal was not instantly achieved. Even twenty years later, in the 1960s, “international human rights” as a subject of general concern and conversation remained all but invisible in U.S. public and political discourse. Over the course of the subsequent forty years, however, its topicality, and indeed urgency, steadily increased,

as demonstrated by a succession of great efforts to overcome repression in virtually all parts of the globe. Today, human rights violations are the grist of daily news, triggered by China's actions in Tibet, the continuing calamity in Darfur, and the reluctance of the Myanmar dictators to accept international assistance in the wake of the May 2008 cyclone, to name but a few of the most egregious examples.

Most people know about—and thrill to—the recent triumphs of freedom over authoritarianism; and more and more individuals join in expressions of outrage at the many instances of continued repression. Nonetheless, few know much if anything about how those triumphs of the past few decades came about. There were, of course, many individuals, NGOs, public officials, and civic and business leaders who contributed to the spreading march of liberty, some of whose names are well known, but little attention has been paid to the role that foundations have played in this process.

While this volume focuses on the Ford Foundation, it makes clear that Ford played a steadily increasing role in empowering other organizations, both U.S. nonprofits and international NGOs. Credit certainly belongs to those persons who put their lives on the line by protesting injustices, but the facts provided by Korey are persuasive in crediting Ford with speeding up human rights advances by providing significant financial and/or human resources to empower those on whom the brunt of repression fell.

Korey's book is a rich trove of hitherto unpublished documentation, drawn from interviews as well as from Ford's archives. It presents a detailed account of how the organization initially turned its attention to international human rights and eventually made that subject a major program in 1975. As is often the case, the great strengths of this book have their downsides as well. The book is so dense, scholarly, carefully researched, and dutifully footnoted that it may be tough going for the general public. Moreover, Korey is perhaps a bit too willing to ascribe causation to Ford's role in particular events, when proof is impossible to ascertain. In any event, readers will have all that they need to judge for themselves the degree of credit that should be ascribed to Ford for making a significant difference in each development.

The book includes descriptions of such Ford involvements as its extensive support of many Chilean scholars engaged in economic and social reforms during the Frei and Allende administrations, as well as the full-time role of its Santiago office in establishing independent policy research centers during the Pinochet regime; and its support for civil society organizations attempting to throw off the Communist

yoke in the late 1980s in Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, and East Germany. Korey also documents the history of Ford's early and sustained support for U.S. Helsinki Watch, starting in 1978, and Ford's midwifing of its transformation into Human Rights Watch in 1990. Readers will find it fascinating to learn about then Ford president McGeorge Bundy's role in bringing about such support in 1978 over the opposition of Ford staff members responsible for human rights.

Korey underscores Ford's long-term role in nurturing change in South Africa, which started as early as 1952 with support for the South Africa Institute of Race Relations. Other South African initiatives and organizations supported by Ford include the Federal Missionary Council, which coordinated the race relations activities of domestic religious organizations; the Natal University Institute of Social Research; a major conference in 1956 on "Problems Arising from the Structure and Functioning of a Multi-Racial Society"; and the ongoing U.S.–South Africa Leadership Exchange Program. Bundy again played a determinative role in Ford's support of the Washington-based Southern Africa Project and the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights program to defend South Africans charged under the 1967 Terrorism Act.

When Franklin Thomas succeeded Bundy as president he continued to provide leadership on South Africa, chairing the Rockefeller Commission, which published *South Africa: Time Running Out* in 1981. And when Susan Berresford succeeded Thomas in 1996 she, too, provided personal leadership in the area of international human rights. It was Berresford who orchestrated the creation of the International Center for Transitional Justice,

not only with large grants from Ford but in personally recruiting other foundations to join as well.

What comes across loud and clear from this book is that for a foundation to undertake and sustain important major program changes, the personal commitment of its CEO is a must. How those foundation leaders effected such change within the

Ford bureaucracy is fascinating, informative reading indeed.

—JOEL L. FLEISHMAN

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