

Michael Deaver tells only half of the Nancy Reagan story

by Scott Thompson

Behind the Scenes

by Michael K. Deaver

William Morrow and Co., New York, N.Y., 1987
272 pages, hardbound, \$17.95

Since his "Evil Empire" speech and trip to Bitburg, President Ronald Reagan has made an about-face to the left to adopt a "New Yalta" policy of appeasing the Soviet Union, highlighted by the "Neville Chamberlain" INF treaty signed with Mikhail Gorbachov on Dec. 8, 1987. But, the transformation of President Reagan began earlier. This transformation has been shocking to those who are unfamiliar with his earlier political background until approximately 1947, when in his own words, "I was a near hopeless, hemophiliac liberal." The available record shows that Reagan has flipped and flopped for at least four decades, according to which way the political winds were blowing at the time—and the winds of career opportunity.

According to well-informed Washington sources, one of the leading influences upon Reagan's return to his liberal political roots has been his wife, Nancy Davis Reagan. Now this story is confirmed by Michael Deaver in his recent book, *Behind the Scenes*, whose publication led the *New York Times* in its Feb. 3, 1988 "Washington Talk" column to question, "Is Nancy Reagan a closet liberal?" *Behind the Scenes* is an otherwise shallow book, written by the leading pragmatist of the "Palace Guard" during the first Reagan administration. It is a significant addition to the history of the administration only because it confirms Nancy Reagan's role as the "Red Queen" of that "Palace Guard."

Deaver is a well-qualified source to report on Nancy's role. He had been assigned as special liaison to Mrs. Reagan (a post known as "the Mommy Watch"), since he joined Reagan's staff during Reagan's first term as California governor. Deaver says of Nancy Reagan's real influence, "For as long as I have known them, she has used her persuasion with care, knowing when and how hard to apply pressure. If he resists, she will back off and return to that issue at another moment.

"She has not gotten involved at all, it should be noted, unless there is a controversy around him, or he needs to be convinced that an action is unavoidable. . . . She will wage a quiet campaign, planting a thought, recruiting others of us to push it along, making a case: Foreign policy will be hurt . . . our allies will be let down.

"She lobbied the President to soften his line on the Soviet Union; to reduce military spending and not to push Star Wars at the expense of the poor and dispossessed. She favored a diplomatic solution in Nicaragua and opposed his trip to Bitburg. Nancy wins most of the time. When she does, it is not by wearing him down but by usually being on the right side of an issue."

Of the President's May 1985 visit with Chancellor Helmut Kohl to the cemetery at Bitburg, West Germany, to honor American war dead buried there, Deaver says that Mrs. Reagan "was convinced that I had ruined her husband's presidency, and perhaps the rest of his life. . . . Almost to the last minute, she insisted that the trip should be canceled. She said so to me. She said so to her husband. . . . She may push to a point where he slams a table with his hand, or throws down a fountain pen. . . . In this case, it ended when the President said: 'Nancy, I simply don't believe you're right and I'm not going to change my mind.' She pressed him no further. On the early part of the trip, she was almost physically ill."

If Nancy Reagan lost on the question of Bitburg, she has since won on the question of softening the President's line on the Soviet Union and on backpedaling on the Strategic Defense Initiative.

"When some of his staff wanted him to get tough with the Soviets, she argued that he should soften his language. What she saw was a man she knew wanted peace, who had been painted as strident and unyielding to the point of being a warmonger. . . .

"For all the speculation about her White House role, Nancy took care to pick her spots. But once into an issue, she was like a dog with a bone. She just didn't give up. It was Nancy who pushed everybody on the Geneva summit. She felt strongly that it was not only in the interest of world peace but a correct move politically. She would buttonhole George Shultz, Bud McFarlane, and others, to be sure that they were

moving toward that goal.

"[William] Clark's obsession was the Soviet Union. He saw no hope in any policy that relied on trusting the Russians, argued against any attempt to improve that relationship, and did what he could to slow it down.

"He felt betrayed—by Mike Deaver—when Nancy and I were able to persuade the President to tone down the 'Evil Empire' language Clark had favored. When Bill went to Nancy, and was told point-blank that I stood with her, he decided it was time to go home."

Davis and the Communists

There is a myth, perpetuated by the *New York Times* during the 1980 presidential campaign, that Nancy Reagan had influenced the President's change from an FDR liberal to the right wing on issues, because of the influence of her stepfather, Dr. Loyal Davis, a well-known Chicago neurosurgeon.

While Michael Deaver's book dispels this myth, he does not cover the true story about Nancy Davis Reagan. During the Cold War period in Hollywood, Nancy Davis was receiving Communist Party literature. At the time, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) had begun its 1947 hearings into the "Hollywood Ten" and "Communist Influence in the Motion Picture Industry."

Numerous investigators of the "Hollywood Ten" period have told *EIR* that they believe the President's wife had had a fling with the "progressives" in Hollywood at that time. The jury is still out, and the question may never be answered as to whether Nancy Davis Reagan had ties to the Communist Party in Hollywood. All that is clear is that another actress, also named Nancy Davis, was scapegoated by Ronald Reagan to save the career of his future wife.

In her autobiography, *Nancy*, Mrs. Reagan tells how she reacted to receiving Communist Party literature. "I told Mervyn" LeRoy, her producer at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, "how upset I was. . . . Mervyn made my problem his. He is that kind of man. He told me he knew the man who could fix this thing, the president of the Screen Actors Guild, and would speak to him about my problem. . . . Mervyn assured me that Ronnie was a nice young man and I was a nice young woman, and it might be nice if we met."

Mervyn LeRoy, in his autobiography, *Take One*, recalls the incident as follows:

"I didn't know what to tell her to do about it, but suggested she talk to Ronald Reagan, who was then president of the Screen Actors Guild.

"I called Ronnie and explained the problem. I said he ought to talk to the girl, because the whole thing had her so upset.

" 'Besides,' I said, 'You're single and she's kind of cute and you should meet her.' "

"So Ronnie said, okay, send her down. Nancy went to the SAG office and met Ronnie."

'Informant T-10'

At the time of this meeting between Nancy Davis and Ronald Reagan, the president of the Screen Actors Guild was undergoing a transformation from "hemophiliac liberal" to anti-Communist Cold Warrior. HUAC had turned Hollywood, whose actors and work crews had been a hotbed of Popular Front organizing, led by such people as Christopher Isherwood, upside down. Every one of the "Hollywood Ten" members subpoenaed to the 1947 HUAC hearings was a member of the Communist Party.

Ronald Reagan had himself been a member of several Popular Front institutions, but, unlike the "Hollywood Ten," he went along with the swing to the right in Hollywood, at a time when any actor who refused to "name names" before HUAC was blacklisted by Hollywood producers fearing box office backlash.

By late 1947, Reagan, whose first encounter with the FBI was in 1943 when he informed on an "anti-Semite," emerged as "Confidential Informant T-10" on questions of "Communist Infiltration of the Motion Picture Industry." He testified before HUAC during the 1947 hearings as a "friendly witness," along with Louis B. Mayer and others.

During the period when he was discharged in 1945 from the Hal Roach Studios in Culver City, California, where he had served as a captain in the Army Air Corps producing training films, until his 1947 Cold War transformation, Ronald Reagan was a member of: The United World Federalists, Americans for Democratic Action, American Veterans Committee, Hollywood Independent Citizens Committee of Arts, Sciences and Professions, and the Institute for Pacific Relations' Committee for a Democratic Far Eastern Policy front. Truly, he was a "near hopeless, hemophiliac liberal." Some of these activities got him reported to the FBI, despite his own brief role as an informant to the bureau during World War II. In fact, the Los Angeles FBI had Ronald Reagan down as a suspected "Communist," because of his affiliations, according to *Reagan's America*, by Gary Wills.

A report dated April 11, 1946 from the Los Angeles office of the FBI, mentions Ronald Reagan's activities with the Committee for a Democratic Far Eastern Policy (CDFEP), as well it might: Reagan was listed on its letterhead as a "sponsor." At the time, the committee was carrying out a propaganda campaign on behalf of Mme. Sun Yat-Sen, Agnes Smedley, Gunther Stein, and others in the Institute for Pacific Relations network. Smedley, the most infamous of the group, was shown to be a member of the "Sorge network," which originated in the Frankfurt School in West Germany, before Sorge joined the Comintern espionage apparatus and then the GRU. Gunther Stein was another member of the Sorge network, while Mme. Sun Yat-Sen has been named by KGB defector Anatoli Golitsyn in his book *New Lies for Old* as having served as a high-level Soviet mole inside China.

Asked in 1947 by Robert Stripling, the chief investigator for HUAC, whether he had "ever been solicited to join any

of those organizations or any organization which you considered to be a Communist front organization," Reagan responded, "Well, Sir, I have received literature from an organization called the Committee for a Far Eastern Democratic Policy [sic]. I don't know whether it is Communist or not. I only know that I didn't like their views and as a result I didn't want to have anything to do with them."

A similar report was made to the Los Angeles FBI office concerning Reagan's participation as a national fundraiser for the American Veterans Committee, which the Communist Party had been busy infiltrating. But, the most influential of Reagan's associations was with the Hollywood Independent Citizens Committee of the Arts, Sciences and Professions (HICCASP), where there was a major faction fight in 1946 between the Roosevelt liberals and the Communists of the Popular Front. Hollywood Independent Citizens emerged in 1945 through the merger of the Hollywood Democratic Committee, which supported President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, with the HICCASP. In 1946, the year that Ronald Reagan was an emerging leader on the board of HICCASP, it elected James Roosevelt, son of the late President, to be national director of political organization. HICCASP was seen as a stepping stone for a bid by James Roosevelt to unseat Harry S. Truman.

A 1947 *Time* cover story on HICCASP said it had a "leftist tinge" and was controlled by Communists. James Roosevelt responded, "I feel strongly that to adopt a principle barring from membership so-called Communists is a very dangerous and un-Democratic procedure." Yet, four months later, James Roosevelt resigned, along with Ronald Reagan and Olivia De Havilland, after a resolution condemning both Communism and Fascism equally failed to pass. HICCASP then went through several transformations to emerge as a full-blown Popular Front institution backing Henry Wallace for President, in a campaign run by Michael Straight from the offices of the *New Republic*, with Communist Party support.

Ronald Reagan's older brother, Neil, was an informant for the FBI, and he warned Ronald that, because of his membership in HICCASP, he was under FBI surveillance. Concerned about his future in movies, Reagan decided to talk to the FBI, when they approached him for information about HICCASP and other organizations. On April 18, 1947, Reagan and his wife of that time, Jane Wyman, told the FBI that HICCASP was strongly influenced by Communists. In the same year Ronald Reagan reported several more times, "naming the names" of those he suspected were the Communists in the Screen Actors Guild, which he had recently become president of. Reagan's transformation was dutifully reported to the FBI by an actress, "Informant T-9," who was cited in a Dec. 19, 1947 report. Shortly thereafter, the FBI listed Ronald Reagan as informant "T-10."

An FBI report on Dec. 19 notes, "T-10 advised Special Agent [deleted] that he has been made a member of a com-

mittee headed by L. B. Mayer, the purpose of which allegedly is to 'purge' the Motion Picture Industry of Communist Party members, which committee was an outgrowth of the Thomas Committee [HUAC] hearings in Washington and the subsequent meeting of motion picture producers in New York City." Still, Reagan informed the FBI that, with respect to the HUAC hearings, he "regretted the whole affair," and he thought it would be next to impossible to clean out the Communists, unless there were clear guidelines provided by Congress, which would include outlawing the Communist Party as "a foreign-inspired conspiracy."

A March 3, 1949 interoffice memo from D.M. Ladd to J. Edgar Hoover on the subject of "Communist Infiltration of the Motion Picture Industry," notes that "The Hollywood Reporter, in its issue of Nov. 11, 1948, reported on the formation of the Labor League of Hollywood Voters for the purpose of blocking Communist penetration of motion pictures. Ronald Reagan was the chairman and Roy Brewer was vice chairman of the group."

Books Received

The Secret War in Central America: Sandinista Assault on World Order, by John Norton Moore. University Publications of America, Inc., Frederick, Md., 1987. \$17.95, 195 pages.

The Shadow War: German Espionage and United States Counterespionage in Latin America during World War II, by Leslie B. Rout, Jr. and John F. Bratzel. University Publications of America, Inc., Frederick Md., 1986. \$29.50.

History of the Military Intelligence Division, Department of the Army General Staff: 1775-1941, by Bruce W. Bidwell, Col. U.S. Army (ret.). University Publications of America, Inc., Frederick, Md., 1986. \$29.50.

Empire: William S. Paley and the Making of CBS, by Lewis J. Paper. St. Martins Press, New York, N.Y., 1987. \$19.95, hardbound, 384 pages.

Good Families of Barcelona: A Social History of Power in the Industrial Era, by Gary Wray McDonogh. Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1986. \$30.00, hardbound, 262 pages.

Partners in Conflict: The United States and Latin America, by Abraham F. Lowenthal. John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Md., 1987. \$19.95, hardbound, 240 pages.