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Worldwide change spurs Congress to re-examine aid

By Jake Thompson
Washington correspondent

Washington—Suddenly, after decades of stolid, gray communism and dictator-dominated republics, the world is throwing off its shackles and lunging for democracy. And for crumbs from the United States foreign aid pie.

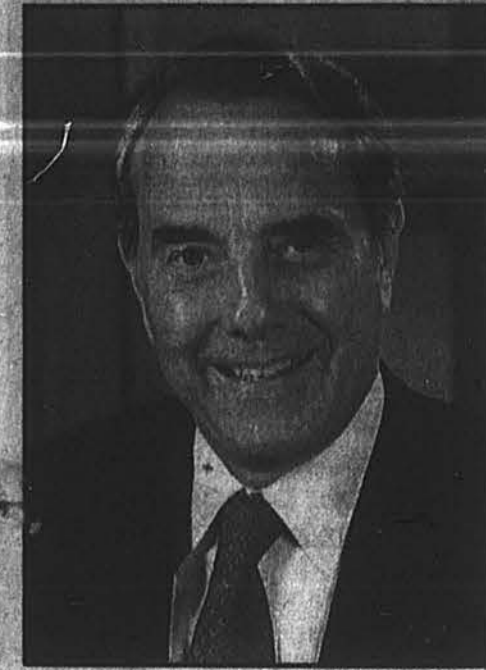
The world has poor timing. The United States, hobbled by a \$3 trillion debt, is desperately short of cash to share with those exulting in its traditions of democracy.

But the dizzying events are expected to trigger a debate in Congress about whether to increase foreign aid to help fledgling democracies or to spend the same amount of money differently.

Some congressional leaders suggest it's time to abandon the traditional foreign aid approach favoring big projects such as tanks and highways and move to a more people-oriented plan that would include insuring new businesses, offering computer training, opening freer trade. It's time, they say, to trade military diplomacy for economic diplomacy.

And Senate Minority Leader Bob Dole of Kansas has complicated the question further by proposing cuts in foreign aid for the nations already getting a piece of the pie.

The debate is expected to begin in



Bob Dole

about two weeks with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee focusing on a new Democratic-sponsored aid package to add \$511 million in aid for Romania, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Bulgaria. The money

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would supplement a congressional aid package passed late last year that will give \$738 million to Poland and Hungary.

But those Eastern European countries say they do not need millions of dollars to leapfrog to free market economies. They need billions. In Poland alone, Solidarity leader Lech Walesa asked for \$10 billion to modernize the country.

Dole last month lobbed a bombshell into the process by proposing that the United States not increase total foreign aid, which he says Americans loathe, but spread the \$14.6 billion around by sending less money to current recipients and more to Latin America and Eastern Europe.

The Senate minority leader suggested cutting by 5 percent the expenditures for the "Big Five" nations, Israel, Egypt, the Philippines, Pakistan and Turkey. He then expanded his proposal to a 5 percent cut across the board. Dole's proposal is not expected to dominate debate, but it will be part of the discussions about what U.S. foreign aid should accomplish.

Several congressional scholars and congressmen credited Dole with using his leadership position to suggest a radical idea, buffering the Bush administration from attacks. The move also was seen as a signal for Israel to move

forward in the Middle East peace process and as a warning to others not to take their U.S. aid for granted.

"What it does is get ideas injected into the bloodstream without any expectation they're going to be embraced... within the next weeks or months," said Norman Ornstein, a congressional scholar at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington. "They're available on the shelf to be pulled down later. The Republican Party is in danger of being pre-empted by the Democrats on Eastern Europe, and this is a prominent Republican saying, 'We've got to do more.'"

It was the second time during the Bush administration that Dole offered an against-the-grain idea with little immediate prospect of acceptance. Last year, Dole suggested that one way to help rebuild America's crumbling roads, bridges and sewer systems was by raising the tax on gasoline. The plan faded quickly, but it put a top Republican on record in potential support for tinkering with the tax system.

Then last month Dole offered his aid proposal in an op-ed article published in *The New York Times*. Dole suggested that a 5 percent cut would free about \$400 million. The five countries receive about two-thirds of the \$14.6 billion the United States spends on foreign aid. Because much of the money is earmarked for specific countries, the administration had to reduce or eliminate

funding this year in 31 other countries, Dole said in an interview last week.

He said he did not discuss the idea with the Bush administration before writing his article, although the administration reacted favorably. Dole's staff said they have received 454 telephone calls in support of his proposal and 40 against.

Dole said the plan grew from his travels last summer to Poland and earthquake-ravaged Armenia and just before Christmas to South America. He also was spurred on by learning that Jamaica needed just \$5 million to battle illegal drugs.

Dole knew, too, that foreign aid is not popular at home. A nationwide poll conducted in December by Opinion Dynamics Corp. of Cambridge, Mass., showed financial aid to reform-minded countries in Eastern Europe ranked 14th in a list of items people favored spending more for, far behind drug abuse, cleaning the nation's air, helping the homeless and providing health care for the needy.

"It doesn't take a lot of money in some of these smaller countries to have an impact," Dole said last week. "But some of these big, big sums have gotten to be like an entitlement program. Every year it's the same amount or more: We got X billion last year; we need X billion this year."

"We're trying to give the president a little more flexibility because so much of this aid is reserved for each country," Dole said. "Eighty-two percent of the economic cash aid is already given by the Congress, and 92 percent of the military aid is earmarked. So if some emergency comes up the president doesn't have much flexibility to respond."

But it didn't. Israel this year is to receive \$3.6 billion in U.S. aid. That is \$10 million a day.

A spokesman for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee said 73 senators recently signed a letter upholding the current U.S. commitments to Israel and Egypt. Republicans Jack Danforth and Kit Bond of Missouri signed the letter. Kassebaum and Dole did not.

Allan Abrams, president of the American Jewish Committee in Leawood, Kan., said Israel needs more help than in the past. The United States has successfully prodded the Soviet Union to allow more Soviet Jews to emigrate, but has refused to allow them to come to America. Israel, as the destination for thousands of those leaving the Soviet Union, needs financial help to accommodate the influx, Abrams said.

"This really is a moment in history for the United States to increase its foreign aid as an instrument of diplomacy," said David Harris, a spokesman for the American Jewish Committee in Washington.

Sen. Joseph Biden, a Delaware Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations committee, has said he opposes Dole's plan. Biden offered a view that is gaining momentum among congressional Democrats. Rather than ransacking foreign aid for America's friends, Biden favors boosting spending by raiding the \$300 billion "defense sandbox."

Lawmakers want stiffer labor laws

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two House members called today for mandatory jail terms and fines of up to \$100,000 for employers who repeatedly violate child labor laws.

Rep. Charles Schumer, D-N.Y., said child labor laws need to be overhauled to make effective the Labor Department's efforts to crack down on businesses that violate them.

Schumer, speaking before a House Government Operations subcommittee on employment and housing, called for increasing the civil penalties for child labor violations from \$1,000 to \$10,000.

Schumer said that between 1987 and 1989 there were 128,000 minors who were injured and an estimated 59 killed in the workplace. Yet 37 employers who were cited for violations relating to these cases were fined a total of only \$27,000, he said.

"The average penalty was a paltry \$740 — \$740 for a child's life in the United States," Schumer said.

The hearing came a day after Labor Secretary Elizabeth Dole announced that a three-day sting operation had uncovered 7,000 minors employed in dangerous jobs or working long hours in violation of child labor laws. The companies are expected to face civil fines totaling \$1.8 million, she said.

Rep. Don Pease, D-Ohio, said, "A three-day undercover sting followed by a highly publicized media blitz is no substitute for practical laws and sustained enforcement over time," Pease said.

Schumer and Pease plan to introduce legislation next month to expand the definition of child labor violations.

Rep. Tom Lantos, D-Calif., the committee chairman, said the panel would explore why child labor violations have increased and whether it is due to labor shortages or increased economic pressures on families.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Labor Secretary Elizabeth Dole talks to reporters about a three-day national investigation of child labor laws during a news conference in Washington Thursday.

"The sad fact is that it may continue to make economic sense to employers to violate the law" if penalties remain at present levels, Schumer said.

Lantos said more enforcement personnel are needed, "not for three days, but every single day of the year so the most valuable resource of this nation — children — will not be frittered away in terms of their time, energy and physical well-being."

At a news conference Thursday, Dole said proposed revisions to the nation's child labor laws were under review.

She said the government should first make the most of current resources.

Most of the violations uncovered

this week involved firms in which 14- and 15-year-olds worked more hours or later at night during the school week than allowed under federal law, said William Brooks, an assistant labor secretary.

But there also were more than 900 youngsters, mostly 16- and 17-year-olds, who were performing dangerous tasks or using hazardous equipment such as power-driven meat-slicing machinery, dough mixers and paper-balers.

Federal law forbids 14- and 15-year-olds from working more than three hours on a school day or 18 hours during a week when school is in session. Eight hours is permitted on weekend days and 40-hour weeks are permitted in summer and during vacations.

Kansas Briefs

From staff and wire reports



Meeting Mubarak

Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole, R-Kan., greets Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak Tuesday in Cairo. Dole and five Senate colleagues are touring the Middle East, and will meet with Iraq's president, Saddam Hussein, Thursday.

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"I LIKE IKE" buttons were the order of the day when Sen. Bob Dole recently addressed a joint session of Congress honoring the centennial of President Dwight D. Eisenhower's birth. "Opportunity is Ike's legacy," Dole said, remembering the nation's 34th president and victorious World War II general. "A century after his birth, we remember the man from Abi-

lene as a symbol of democratic opportunity in a world where tired oppression is crumbling like the wall that once artificially divided East from West." The extraordinary joint meeting of Congress kicked off a wide array of centennial events around the world which will culminate in a celebration in Eisenhower's hometown of Abilene next Oct. 14.