How Reagan Might Change Latin Policies

The prospect of a November victory by Republican presidential nominee Ronald Reagan has aroused considerable speculation and, in some sectors, trepidation about a Reagan administration's policies toward Latin America and the Caribbean.

Roger Fontaine, 39, a visiting scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, a respected conservative think tank in Washington, is one of the former California governor's principal advisers on the hemisphere.

Others are Pedro San Juan, the AEI's director of Western Hemisphere affairs, and Jeanne Kirkpatrick, a political scientist at Washington's Georgetown University who also is associated with the AEI.

Fontaine holds both a master's and a doctor's degree in international relations from Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies in Baltimore. Before joining the AEI he was director of the Latin American division of Georgetown University's Center for Strategic and International Studies. He is considered a likely candidate for a top hemisphere affairs position in a Reagan administration.

He spoke recently in Washington with Herald Latin America Editor Don Bohning. Although he emphasized that his views do not constitute formal policy that would be pursued by a Reagan administration, his comments do offer a general idea of what might be expected.

An edited version of the conversation, in question-and-answer form, follows.

By DON BOHNING

Q. What do you think would be the most significant differences between a Carter administration and a Reagan administration regarding policy toward Latin America?

A. I think there is going to be a rather striking difference in approach to Central America and the Caribbean, number one. Number two, a different approach to Mexico and I'd also say a striking difference, in relations with Mexico and, third, dealing with the key countries of South America.

Q. You say some major differences, some major changes in policy toward Central
from page 11

America. Let's pursue that a little bit more.

Well, I think in one of the broadest aspects a Reagan administration is going to act a good deal more aggressively in preserving what's left of, and preserving what opportunities are left for, democracy particularly in Central America. This is a personal feeling because it hasn't been spelled out officially, but I would like to see something shape up in the Reagan administration that would be nothing less than a Truman Doctrine for the region. You remember the Truman Doctrine was designed for Greece back in the late 1940s to help regimes in serious trouble who were friendly to the U.S. but under attack from armed minorities that were aided and abetted by outside, hostile forces, mainly the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.

A somewhat similar situation is occurring in a number of cases in Central America. Armed minorities supported by principally the Cubans are attempting to destabilize regimes to the point where I think the chances for democracy as we know it are going to be closed out, foreclosed. I think you have to do something like a Truman Doctrine. A Truman Doctrine means that you are going to give or extend its support to the junta. I think the two fighting each other will end up destroying or helping to destroy the country and paving the way for a far left takeover. It's very late in the game.

Q. How about Guatemala?

Guatemala is a little further down the road but Guatemala is going to need some help, again both military and principally economic. But mostly what they need, quite aside from military advisers and military training, is some political support, the sense that they are not alone. I think it's probably the most important thing the United States can do, to demonstrate that the United States is still in business, that it is still concerned about the region.

There is a terrible human rights problem there as I am sure you know.

Yes. I am fully aware of it and I am also aware that the United States, by staying out of Guatemala, letting it go its own way, is in fact making things worse, not better. That's why I disagree with that policy.

Q. How would you deal with Nicaragua at this point? You were quoted recently as saying you would not have approved that $75-million loan to Nicaragua.

That's right. That is the Republican Party platform. That is not a position I agreed to six months ago. Six months ago or so, whenever I testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, I said, among five pages of caveats, that I believed that the aid should be approved for Nicaragua because there seemed to be no other option. It was necessary to preserve agrarian reform, for example, although among people whose views I respect it's very controversial. I'm also very much afraid of the nature of what the economy is going to be like in the next six months. If it is going in as many pieces as I suspect it is, that's going to make it even harder, much harder, to preserve any kind of support for the junta. I think another thing the junta has got to do is to extend its support or extend its embrace to the private sector or much of the private sector in El Salvador. I think the two fighting each other will end up destroying or helping to destroy the country and paving the way for a far left takeover. It's very late in the game.

A. I think [Reagan] is on record as saying that now that the [Panama Canal] treaties have been approved by the Senate and ratified that

With some difficulty. Part of the definition is who their friends are and it's very clear from that element of the PNP [Manley's Peoples National Party] that their friends are not in the United States, not in Western Europe, but in Cuba and the Soviet Union.

Q. Do you include Manley in that element of the PNP?

A. Manley is very hard to pin down. But increasingly the answer is yes. It's been a dynamic. Four years ago I think the answer was would have been no. Even two years ago. But I think the direction is obvious and plain.

Q. What about Mexico?

Mexico is very clearly going to be a priority for a Reagan administration. If we are going to prosper, it probably would be Mexico, from what I can tell.

Q. Why?

Because it's next door, 65 million people. Concern about Mexican political stability has got to be paramount to the United States. And there are a number of very serious, inter-related problems that both Mexico and the United States face. We have made very little or no progress on them over the last four years or longer and we all know what they are. Trade, immigration and energy and, to a lesser extent, fishing rights and pollution. I think this is going to be pretty much on the top of the calendar.

Q. How would a Reagan administration differ from a Carter administration in dealing with Mexico?

Well, first of all, I doubt that relations could get any worse. And this is in part due to personality. Carter simply threw away his chances for serious talk, particularly in February 1979 when he visited Mexico. I think it's a question of priority. It means that you are going to have to give credit to the fact that they are serious about negotiations. I would like to see the next U.S. ambassador...
short-term, particularly in the case of El Salvador. It means that they need military advisers. It's a sign of need military training. A combination of the

by staying out of Guatemala, letting it go its own way, all in fact making things worse, not better. That's why I disagree with that policy.

Q. How would you deal with Nicaragua?  
A. You think Nicaragua is a lost?  
Q. You think Nicaragua is a lost?  
A. I think Nicaragua is lost, for the moment. I don't think the money has any real influence in Nicaragua today.

Q. Then how would you deal with Nicaragua?  
A. I don't have a plan. I've asked everyone in town who knows and they don't have a plan, either, although most of theTTY's (by acronym) thought it was a matter of being patient and letting the Nicaraguan people make their own decisions. I am sorry that the [Panama Canal] treaties have been transferred very quickly with a totalitarian Caribbean policy. I have subsequently changed my opinion slightly, added more caveats. I don't think it [the $75-million loan] will do any good now.

Q. You think Nicaragua is a lost?  
A. Yes. And military assistance. Again, a personal opinion, but I think this country is not a very good ally for the United States, which they are, and that the United States will live up to its obligations and that it will assume that the Panamanians will do the same thing.

Q. How would you deal with Nicaragua?  
A. I think Nicaragua is on record as saying that, now that the [Panama Canal] treaties have been approved by the Senate and ratified, that they are a solemn obligation of the United States which they are, and that the United States will live up to its obligations and that it will assume that the Panamanians will do the same thing.

Q. You think it's extraordinary interesting. I can't recall, before a U.S. election, when Fidel was so strong about one presidential candidate. He's said twice now that he was reminded of Hitler. He's obviously concerned about a Reagan victory. He's worried and I think he should be worried.

The other thing, though, is that if you read his [July 26] speech, and Fidel is a very clever fellow, he is trying his best to divide or pare off or shear off the rest of Latin America from the United States, to the benefit of 79ers. They are in common agreement on very few things.

My guess is, in fact, my conviction, is that changing the method, the tone, the tactical approach will do any good now.

Q. You are going to see an ending of aerial surveillance over Cuba which was done for two years or longer. I, for one, would like to reexamine the fishing agreement. That is not saying it should be abrogated, but I'd like to look at it. I'd also like to review the 1962 understanding between Kennedy and Khrushchev after the missile crisis. I'd like to look at that.

Q. Would you review the exchange of interest sections and steps we've taken toward diplomatic relations?  
A. Yeah, I would review the interest section question and I would also review tourist dollars going into Cuba.

Q. You are not saying that you would withdraw the interest section? You are saying you would review?  
A. No, I'd spend a long time, careful time, reviewing the total aspect of U.S.-Cuban relations including all those things.

Q. But doesn't Gov. Reagan, by making a comment like he did after the Afghan invasion suggesting a naval blockade of Cuba, doesn't that play into Castro's hands?  
A. I don't think so. As a matter of fact, I think it's a question of priority, meeting your commitments and indicating you are serious about negotiations. I think Castro's intentions are not particularly changed by what you say.

Q. Well, for example, and again a very personal opinion, don't you think you are going to see an ending of aerial surveillance over Cuba which was done for two years or longer?  
A. Well, I understand that but the fact is that we're going to have to confront the realities of what we're going to have to confront. Are we essential, are required? Yes. And military assistance. Again, a short-term, particularly in the case of Nicaragua.

Q. Mr. Carter. I think in terms of what Reagan will do is to continue to espouse his Party platform. That is not a position that would support or would be supported.

Q. How about Panama? There seems to be a tendency to deal with the situation as it is, not particularly changing the method, the tone, the tactic.  
A. In the early '60s, I think you are going to have to engage in a lot of give and take on trade, immigration and energy. And the other thing that's going to add to the impetus is that [Mexican President Jose] Portillo is now on the downside of his administration. I think we've got about a year in which we can make serious talk and make serious progress and then, we hope, they will continue under the next [Mexican] president.

Q. How would you see a Reagan administration dealing with military dictators in Latin America?  
A. That also raises the question of human rights as well as relating it to political stability and democracy. Let's go to Mexico. I think it's a question of priority, meeting your commitments and indicating you are serious about negotiations. I think in terms of what Reagan will do is to continue under the next [Mexican] president.

Q. Well, first of all, I doubt that relations could get any worse. And this is in part due to personality. Carter simply threw away his chances for serious talk, particularly in February, when he visited Mexico. I think it's a question of priority, meeting your commitments and indicating you are serious about negotiations. I would like to see the next U.S. ambassador to Mexico with a lot of clout and a good personal relationship with Reagan so things can get done and get done a lot faster. I think you have to be willing to take part in serious talks on an inter-related basis because I think you are going to have to engage in a lot of give and take on trade, immigration and energy. And the other thing that's going to add to the impetus is that [Mexican President Jose] Portillo is now on the downside of his administration. I think we've got about a year in which we can make serious talk and make serious progress and then, we hope, they will continue under the next [Mexican] president.

Q. How would you see a Reagan administration dealing with military dictators in Latin America?  
A. That also raises the question of human rights as well as relating it to political stability and democracy. Let's go to Mexico. I think it's a question of priority, meeting your commitments and indicating you are serious about negotiations. I think in terms of what Reagan will do is to continue under the next [Mexican] president.

Q. Well, first of all, I doubt that relations could get any worse. And this is in part due to personality. Carter simply threw away his chances for serious talk, particularly in February, when he visited Mexico. I think it's a question of priority, meeting your commitments and indicating you are serious about negotiations. I would like to see the next U.S. ambassador to Mexico with a lot of clout and a good personal relationship with Reagan so things can get done and get done a lot faster. I think you have to be willing to take part in serious talks on an inter-related basis because I think you are going to have to engage in a lot of give and take on trade, immigration and energy. And the other thing that's going to add to the impetus is that [Mexican President Jose] Portillo is now on the downside of his administration. I think we've got about a year in which we can make serious talk and make serious progress and then, we hope, they will continue under the next [Mexican] president.

Q. How would you see a Reagan administration dealing with military dictators in Latin America?  
A. That also raises the question of human rights as well as relating it to political stability and democracy. Let's go to Mexico. I think it's a question of priority, meeting your commitments and indicating you are serious about negotiations. I think in terms of what Reagan will do is to continue under the next [Mexican] president.

Q. Well, first of all, I doubt that relations could get any worse. And this is in part due to personality. Carter simply threw away his chances for serious talk, particularly in February, when he visited Mexico. I think it's a question of priority, meeting your commitments and indicating you are serious about negotiations. I would like to see the next U.S. ambassador to Mexico with a lot of clout and a good personal relationship with Reagan so things can get done and get done a lot faster. I think you have to be willing to take part in serious talks on an inter-related basis because I think you are going to have to engage in a lot of give and take on trade, immigration and energy. And the other thing that's going to add to the impetus is that [Mexican President Jose] Portillo is now on the downside of his administration. I think we've got about a year in which we can make serious talk and make serious progress and then, we hope, they will continue under the next [Mexican] president.

Q. How would you see a Reagan administration dealing with military dictators in Latin America?  
A. That also raises the question of human rights as well as relating it to political stability and democracy. Let's go to Mexico. I think it's a question of priority, meeting your commitments and indicating you are serious about negotiations. I think in terms of what Reagan will do is to continue under the next [Mexican] president.

Q. Well, first of all, I doubt that relations could get any worse. And this is in part due to personality. Carter simply threw away his chances for serious talk, particularly in February, when he visited Mexico. I think it's a question of priority, meeting your commitments and indicating you are serious about negotiations. I would like to see the next U.S. ambassador to Mexico with a lot of clout and a good personal relationship with Reagan so things can get done and get done a lot faster. I think you have to be willing to take part in serious talks on an inter-related basis because I think you are going to have to engage in a lot of give and take on trade, immigration and energy. And the other thing that's going to add to the impetus is that [Mexican President Jose] Portillo is now on the downside of his administration. I think we've got about a year in which we can make serious talk and make serious progress and then, we hope, they will continue under the next [Mexican] president.

Q. How would you see a Reagan administration dealing with military dictators in Latin America?  
A. That also raises the question of human rights as well as relating it to political stability and democracy. Let's go to Mexico. I think it's a question of priority, meeting your commitments and indicating you are serious about negotiations. I think in terms of what Reagan will do is to continue under the next [Mexican] president.

Q. Well, first of all, I doubt that relations could get any worse. And this is in part due to personality. Carter simply threw away his chances for serious talk, particularly in February, when he visited Mexico. I think it's a question of priority, meeting your commitments and indicating you are serious about negotiations. I would like to see the next U.S. ambassador to Mexico with a lot of clout and a good personal relationship with Reagan so things can get done and get done a lot faster. I think you have to be willing to take part in serious talks on an inter-related basis because I think you are going to have to engage in a lot of give and take on trade, immigration and energy. And the other thing that's going to add to the impetus is that [Mexican President Jose] Portillo is now on the downside of his administration. I think we've got about a year in which we can make serious talk and make serious progress and then, we hope, they will continue under the next [Mexican] president.
I think the governor [Reagan] is on record as saying that now that the treaties have been approved by the Senate there's no way to rescind them. This is a solemn obligation of the United States, which they are, and that the United States will live up to its obligations and that it will never happen that the Panamanians will do the same thing.

Q. Are we talking about a strict interpretation of the treaties, the reservation and the amendment any longer? That's going to be a problem because the Panamanians have not signed all the reservations attached by the Senate.

A. I know. And you also know that the governor pointed out on a number of occasions that the picture of the United States going to have with these treaties is that, in fact, we don't have two treaties, we have two agreements and we have our reservations and we have ours, aside from the reservations. That does raise problems, and it is going to have to be worked out between the United States and Panama.

Q. But as far as the basic treaties themselves, there is no reversing them?

A. I don't see abrogation or reversing or unilateral action. I don't see that, and I think the governor has been very clear on that point.

Q. You think that it is possible that we may sit down and straighten out some points?

A. I think that's inevitable. The problems will grow. I've said, and it's a personal suggestion, that the Cubans aren't very workable; that in a couple of years both Panamanians and Americans are going to have to sit down and sort this thing out. Their view would be a hell of a lot easier if we try and do it together, try to be as mutually beneficial as possible, instead of being antagonistic. And I would guess a Reagan administration would take it in that spirit.

Q. Moving to the Caribbean, how do you deal with Cuba?

A. Ah, Cuba. Big question. This, by the way, is a question that has been debated extensively, between Reagan and a Carter administration. Gov. Reagan has never once thought that the Cubans were anything less than hostile toward the United States and its interests, around the world or in the region. I think there is going to be a change in policy. Now, the next question is: What are you going to do about that, and how do you do it?

Q. What does that mean? Angola? the Caribbean? Central America?

A. That's right. When they stop acting as Soviet allies and surrogates, then I think there is a chance to do some serious talking. I've suggested, and it's only a personal suggestion, that the Cubans ought to have a choice, if they want to continue doing what they are doing or even increasing their activities, there may be a heavy cost. The price goes up for their alliance with the Soviet Union. And I think it should be a heavy cost, a heavy price. However, they decide that price isn't worth it, then they must expect to pay increased costs. The price goes up for their alliance with the Soviet Union. And I think it should be a heavy cost, a heavy price. However, they decide that price isn't worth it, then they must expect to pay increased costs. The price goes up for their alliance with the Soviet Union. And I think it should be a heavy cost, a heavy price. However, they decide that price isn't worth it, then they must expect to pay increased costs. The price goes up for their alliance with the Soviet Union.

Q. How do you make them pay that price?

A. There are ways of doing it, without getting into specifics. The Cubans know it and we know it.

Q. How about the rest of the Caribbean, Jamaica, the small islands? How do you deal with them?

A. Specifically, in the case of Jamaica, its economy is in ruins, largely self-destructed by the [Prime Minister Michael] Manley government. Even my personal opinion, Jamaican elections are to be held in September or October, and I think that from that, what Reagan was saying was that maybe they [the Jamaicans] should be left alone, to have to do it on their own and probably harm more than it's helped. I would like to see us again, behind the scenes, try to help where we can, influence we have, and persistently suggest that maybe they [the Chilenas] should be left alone, to have to do it on their own, and it may harm them, but that's my personal view and I would hope they would take some steps. And the other thing, in the longer time, hope, and expect, too, is that while we want this to happen we are not, as the present administration has done, going to engage in open, high-profile attempts at leverage and pressure, because we don't think that's worked at all. It's political influence we have, and persistently suggest that maybe they [the Chilenas] should be left alone, to have to do it on their own, and it may harm them. This is a very delicate question. But the bottom line is that I'm a little more hopeful about the route that Chile is now going.

Q. Do you think the perception of Gov. Reagan by some Latin Americans, who may be concerned about what some of the military dictators, has been erroneous.

A. Yes. One, it isn't surprising because I think there has been until very recently very legitimate hope to go, to give people in the country. Let's not blame poor, old Latin Americans for not being able to understand who was who, and why, and what the American press why in the world wouldn't they get an idea like that.

Q. Do you think a person who has been subject to his reality, has been undergoing some changes in this country over the last six months or so that they wouldn't understand the region as well. One of the turning points, a turning point, in his foreign does make a major speech on the Human Rights decision by which he will occur sometime in September, he will make a full-blown explanation and exposition of his policies.

Q. Do you call out the Manley government to be Marxist?

A. I consider the Manley government heading in that direction, yeah. I talk to people around him Marxism, yes.

Q. How do you define a Marxist?

A. There are some things I personally disagree with very. I have been of the opinion that countries or countries going through a period of turbulence are going to have to have that sort of thing, at least for a period of time. The idea is they say you are accepting it if that's the way it is and hoping, by the way, you don't make it worse.