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The Left's Selective Moral Outrage

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President Reagan's objective of trying to prevent communist takeovers in Central America is being most vigorously opposed—in the universities, the media, the churches and Congress—by people who were part of, or inspired by, the anti-war movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The current opponents adopt the same moralistic postures as the "peace marchers" of the past, and again contrast themselves with the purportedly cruel and duplicitous administrations they oppose.

The anti-war movement of America's Vietnam era was never monolithic. But by 1970, a coalition of New Leftists and radicalized liberals had established its organizational and ideological dominance within the movement. Currently, it is most of these same people who lead the militant opposition to U.S. policy in Central America. The list of sponsors of United States Out of Central America (USOCA)—a San Francisco-based organization engaged in agitation and propaganda on behalf of all Central American revolutionaries—provides some of the best examples of this political recycle.

The universities are once again the base for the most intense assaults upon the policy of containing communism. USOCA's Nobel Prize-winning scientists George Wald and Linus Pauling sponsor shiploads of supplies for the Sandinista regime in order to demonstrate their "solidarity," as they did more than a decade ago with North Vietnam. Mr. Wald, who endorses the claims of the Guatemalan communists about repression in their country, has nevertheless failed to protest against the massive repression in communist Vietnam, and was silent about Khmer Rouge atrocities in Cambodia while Pol Pot was in power.

Mr. Chomsky's Views

But USOCA's most influential academic sponsor is the celebrated Massachusetts Institute of Technology linguist Noam Chomsky. As was the case during the era of American involvement in Indochina, Prof. Chomsky draws capacity crowds of dotting students to his lectures on campuses across the nation. There, once again, he denounces the real and imagined crimes of the U.S. and its clients, while portraying their communist adversaries as morally untarnished victims. Mr. Chomsky apparently still believes, as he wrote in 1979, that "Washington has become the torture and political murder capital of the world." Before undemurring audiences, he identifies the views of intellectuals who support a resolutely anticommunist policy in Cen-

tral America—such as Norman Podhoretz, the Jewish neoconservative editor of Commentary, and the Jewish editors of the liberal New Republic—with the views of the Nazis.

It is thus interesting to look back on Mr. Chomsky's attitude to the "peacetime" record of the last communist revolutions he supported—in Indochina. In various articles, books and speeches, Mr. Chomsky challenged firsthand accounts of a Vietnamese gulag of prisons, "reeducation camps" and New Economic Zones.

At a time when perhaps more than a million Cambodians had died at the hands of ruling communist revolutionaries, he also attempted to discredit reports of a Cambodian holocaust, based on refugee testimony, as "distortions at fourth hand." Mr. Chomsky suspected Thai or Central Intelligence Agency connivance in fabricating many of these stories. He was more impressed with the accounts of veteran pro-Hanoi researchers, such as Ben Kiernan, Michael Vickery and Institute for Policy Studies associate D. Gareth Porter who, using largely communist sources, testified before a congressional subcommittee in May 1977:

"... the notion that the leadership of Democratic Kampuchea adopted a policy of physically eliminating whole classes of people, of purging anyone who was connected with the Lon Nol government, or punishing the entire urban population by putting them to work in the countryside after the 'death march' from the cities, is a myth. . . ."

Mr. Chomsky continued to vilify critics of the Khmer Rouge for several more years. But the campaign of holocaust denial by other anti-war academics, including IPS associates, suddenly wound down in 1978. In that year the Vietnamese and Cambodian communists openly announced their disagreement with one another, the result being an escalating border war. Most Western anti-war activists suddenly began to develop new perspectives on the Khmer Rouge. A mini-replay of the Sino-Soviet dispute had forced "progressives" to choose sides. Most chose Hanoi.

Along with the radical academics, the "progressive" Protestant church groups—those influenced by "liberation" theology—today play an important role in supporting the communists in Central America. They funnel money to pro-Sandinista organizations inside Nicaragua, and provide important propaganda work in the U.S. on behalf of the Sandinista regime, and the Salvadoran and Guatemalan insurgents.

These same progressive church circles, especially the American Friends' Service Committee, the Mennonite Central Com-

mittee, the Methodist office for the United Nations and the Church World Service, were active in the last anti-war movement. They have remained unwavering advocates of Vietnamese communist foreign policy. When the pacifist Joan Baez protested against massive human-rights violations in Vietnam, the AFSC disseminated a document, originating in Havana, that dishonestly smeared one of her many Vietnamese sources (Doan Van Toai) as a stooge of Nguyen Van Thieu and the CIA.

The "progressive" church activists have also given money to Hanoi for the building of New Economic Zones—the Vietnamese equivalent of Siberian exile—to which Hanoi deports people it considers politically or socially undesirable.

During the period 1975-77, when the Khmer Rouge was publicly on good terms with Hanoi, the "progressive" Protestants were silent about the regime. But as with the academic and political communities, after the split between the Indochinese communists, these same people suddenly became fervent critics of the "Pol Pot genocidal regime." In October 1980, after the U.N. had already condemned the Vietnamese invasion of Cambodia, representatives of the major "progressive" Protestant groups held a welcoming reception for the Vietnamese foreign minister, Nguyen Co Thach, at the U.N. and expressed their "solidarity."

The influence of anti-war movement ideology has also made itself felt within secular "relief" agencies. The most significant of these is Oxfam-America, an organization that describes its purpose as "international development and disaster relief." Most Americans, including Sen. Edward Kennedy (who has spoken on its platform), imagine Oxfam-America to be non-partisan. In fact Oxfam-America engages in political advocacy. Its publications demonstrate not merely hostility to the Guatemalan government but sympathy with the cause of Guatemalan communist guerrillas. Oxfam-America provides aid to organizations controlled by the communist regime in Nicaragua.

Oxfam-America's conception of "international development and disaster relief" is even more starkly brought out by its

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