

# EDITORIAL

Daniel Ortega



Chun Doo Hwan

## East is East and West is West

When is a principle not a principle? When it is mouthed by the Reagan administration. How do we know this? Because the "principles" it proclaims apply only when they are convenient and are applied only selectively for their public-relations effect.

The most recent example of this occurred last week in reaction to South Korean dictator Chun Doo Hwan's announcement that there would be no constitutional reforms that might provide his opponents a chance to win the elections scheduled for 1988. Did this denial of democracy outrage the administration? No.

The methods by which South Korea chooses its leaders, the administration explained, is an "internal matter." That being so, "We have no position on Korean constitutional reform," the assistant secretary of state for East Asian affairs said. "That is a decision for the Korean people to make."

How benign. And how this statement of principle must have warmed the heart of Daniel Ortega and his fellow Sandinistas. They were under the misapprehension that this administration was unfamiliar with the idea of self-determination. Could they have been wrong? Is it only their imagination that Reagan has not only been trying to force them to adopt his method of choosing their leaders, but even telling them whom to include in the leadership of their nation? Or was this latest statement of "principle" by the administration just another example of the low regard it has for the intelligence of the American people?

## Only Reagan's face will be lost

The Democrats in the House of Representatives have now passed their own budget. Republicans refused to participate in the process, and none voted for it (19 Democrats also voted against the budget resolutions, but it passed 230-192). Not even the Republicans voted for President Reagan's budget proposal, which was defeated by a 27-394 vote.

The House budget as passed differs from the president's in its priorities, though only marginally. Military spending authorization for 1988 in the House resolution, for example, is \$288.7 billion—\$8.75 billion less than the current budget (adjusted for inflation) and \$23 billion below Reagan's request. Similar cuts, proportionately, were made in foreign aid, especially military aid, and science and space research. Social spending, on the other hand, is greater in the House resolution than the president wanted. Welfare authorization is \$7.5 billion more, education and social services \$7.35 billion greater and spending for agriculture, housing, transportation, community development and health are all significantly higher than in Reagan's budget.

In total outlays for 1988, as in budget authority (the amount that

may be obligated but not necessarily spent in 1988), the Democrats' budget is close to Reagan's, but the president's budget would produce a deficit of \$134 billion to the House budget's \$108 billion. That's because the House budget would increase tax revenues by \$25.5 billion, while Reagan, almost alone, continues to oppose any tax increase.

The differences between Reagan and the Democrats are, of course, not fundamental. They are differences between the traditional corporate liberals, who understand the necessity for a degree of social democracy in order to assure social peace, and the more ideological and greedy right-wingers who want to get as much as they can for the wealthy without regard for the long-range stability of our corporate system.

But the House Democrats are a mixed bag. Among them are many members whose loyalty to the needs of their constituents is greater than to their corporate funders. And this year, as in years past, they had a budget resolution for which to vote that more clearly distinguished them from their colleagues. It was the budget of the Congressional Black Caucus, which was defeated by a vote of 56-352—not an impressive show of support, but better than twice that given to Reagan.

The Black Caucus budget differed from the one passed in much the same way that the adopted budget differed from Reagan's. Yet in context it more clearly reflected a different set of social priorities. Thus military outlays in the Black Caucus budget were \$20 billion less than in the Democrats' budget (and \$43 billion less than Reagan's request), while spending for Medicare was \$27 billion more than the House resolution. The Black Caucus budget also called for substantially higher outlays for housing, education, welfare, mass transit and community development, while cutting military foreign aid. All but two members of the Black Caucus voted for the Caucus budget: Mike Espy of Mississippi and Budget Committee Chairman William H. Gray of Pennsylvania voted present. The Caucus was joined by 37 white members. In short, the Black Caucus budget reflected the needs not only of blacks, but of working people in general, as well as those concerned about American intervention abroad and the militarization of our economy at home. It was in content, if not in intent, strikingly similar to the proposals of Rev. Jesse Jackson.

The next step in the budget process is up to the Senate, which is less Democratic and more in line with the administration, especially on the issues of military and social spending. Senators will likely be pressured to work out a compromise between conservatives and liberals under which a Republican-supported tax increase will be traded for more money for the Pentagon and its suppliers. Given the composition of the Senate and the timidity of many House members, the chances of a final budget looking like the House version are not bright. To preserve the cuts in military spending and retain even the paltry gains in social spending will require massive popular pressure on Congress. We'd like to see it, but we're not optimistic.

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# LETTERS

## No tirades here

GETTING A BOOK REVIEWED IS FREQUENTLY LIKE watching the movie *Rashomon*. The same incident is described four different ways by four different characters. Did Daniel Lazare (*In These Times*, March 25) read the book I wrote?

He called it "a tirade." Against whom? He gave no examples. In the jacket blurb I warned that *Jews in America Today* would antagonize not just Zionists but all the Jewishly engaged. Lazare liked my earlier book, *Zionism in the Age of Dictators*, which accused Zionists of collaboration with Hitler. Absent any explanation of his present objections, I must presume he demurs from my further denunciations of liberalism for its collusion with Zionism. But let's ask him if this is a tirade?:

*A few plain truths are in order here. As the Jewish scriptures would put it, the Democratic Party goes toward murder "as sparks to heaven fly." These hacks oppose the PLO for only two reasons: The Palestinians are the oppressed and they are conscious imperialists; the PLO terrorizes Jews and Jews are their moneybags.*

Lazare says I "seem uncertain why [I] should focus on American Jews as opposed to, say, American tennis players." Tennis players are not the richest ethnic and/or religious group in the U.S. Jews are crucial to the Democrats' finances. Therefore, I asked of the Jews' vaunted liberalism, just *Who is a liberal? Someone who opposed Johnson and Humphrey and Carter and Mondale and their murders in Vietnam—and voted for them, felon after felon.... As the discussion is of Jews, an Old Testament proverb—26:11—is appropriate. Truly, the far-seeing prophet had them fully in mind when he set quill to scroll, for indeed, "As a dog returneth to his vomit, so a fool returneth to his folly."*

Instead of this, Lazare would have had me devote the book to the "central issue" which is?—anti-Semitism! In fact, I did write 30 pages on "Anti-Semitism from Nazis to nutsies." But I did the miraculous. I agreed with the Anti-Defamation League. They do constant polls. Anti-Semitism is dropping like a shot. The Nazis are splintered into isolated collections of nutsies. But this does not please our Marxist. The economy is going to collapse and guess who is going to lead the SS to power? "A strong man of the Pat Buchanan type."

*Jews and Pat Buchanan Tomorrow* would be a hard book to sell to a publisher, but Lazare is welcome to write it. In the book I did write, I explained that many Jews have always been convinced Nazism is coming again. In the left version of this wacko script, the Depression hits, and the bosses call Central Casting for a Shickelgruber. But the Jews play the prodigal and return to the left. Then they and their black cleaning ladies build barricades on West End Avenue and the storm troops are beaten off.

A lot of Jewish lefties either grew up with or later accepted the notion that persecution made the bulk of Jews into progressives. Today they are neither. But not to worry, they will be.

Lazare accepts the bizarre notion that history repeats itself, exactly. But no one is expecting another Hitler in Germany. Why should we here? Hitler fed on deep

anti-Semitic traditions. Millions of peasants already saw the Jews as Christ-killers. Today 28 percent of American youths don't even know that Easter commemorates the death of Jesus, much less do they know or care who killed him.

Fascism works with existing prejudices. I showed that when Mussolini started adding anti-Semitism to his early message, his followers made him give it up as the Jews were not unpopular in Italy. Now Lazare tells us that Howard Beach and Forsyth County, Ga., show that the Jews are in danger. Bullshit. I know Howard Beach. Blacks were attacked. If three Jews wearing yarmulkas walked into the same place, nothing would have happened. Are there any Jews in Forsyth County? I don't know. However, if any moved in, the KKK might burn a cross, but there would be no mass support for a demonstration against Jews even in one of the most anti-black areas in America.

It has been said that more nonsense has been written about Jews, by Jews and non-Jews alike, than on any topic in human history. And truthfully, Lazare's piece is a case in point. It was not about real anti-Semitism, and still less was it about my book. In fact, it was a perfect example of why I had to write *Jews in America Today*.

Lenni Brenner  
Berkeley, Calif.

**Dan Lazare replies:** Yes, I read Lenni Brenner's *Jews in America*—twice—although judging from his bizarre reply I doubt Brenner read my review. His letter is devoted to rebutting arguments I never made. I did not say that history necessarily repeats itself, that Nazism will rise again or that a resurgence of anti-Semitism will send Jews rushing back to the left. I did say that four decades after the Holocaust it is impossible to write off the danger of renewed anti-Semitism. I also argued that today's comparatively liberal racial climate cannot last forever, and that if old-fashioned political racism makes a reappearance all minorities would suffer.

Since Brenner brings him up—and completely misinterprets his significance—Mussolini is a good example of how this would work. True, anti-Semitism was not central to Italian fascism. But Italian fascist ideology was fundamentally racist, and once Hitler seized power in 1933 an alliance between the two main wings of European fascism was inevitable. And, indeed, in 1938 Mussolini instituted his own anti-Semitic laws modeled on Germany's.

As for the rest, is Brenner really so vulgar as to believe that the Democratic Party's

support for the state of Israel can be reduced to a question of Jewish political contributions? Israel is central to post-war American ideology. The U.S. believes it defeated Nazism singlehandedly and points to Israel as evidence that it rescued the Jews. But it didn't. The U.S. didn't save them but merely thrust them into a new war zone. After the war, most displaced Jews greatly preferred to come to the U.S. But they were denied admission and Palestine became one of few options open to them.

## Beverly Hills smokers

MARK NICHOLS' LETTER (APRIL 1) ABOUT THE Beverly Hills ordinance prohibiting smoking in restaurants contains a series of fallacious arguments. Most of them (such as his comparison of cigarettes to candy bars, and the statement that smoking is an "indulgence" that people eventually outgrow) do not merit debate because the counterarguments are obvious.

One point, however, calls for a response. Nichols' reference to the ordinance as a "righteous prohibition" echoes the self-serving obfuscation propagated by the tobacco industry. The real purpose of this ordinance is not to "prohibit" smoking per se, but to regulate air quality. As far as I know, it does not prohibit smoking in homes, private automobiles, in the open air or in a multitude of other places (and that is as it should be). It simply prevents people from creating a general health hazard in specified public places, and as such is no different from hundreds of other laws currently in force.

The fallacy of Nichols' argument is the implication that this smoking ordinance is a civil rights issue, a question of "individual freedom." It is not. It is a public health issue, and the sooner that realization becomes widespread the longer we all will live.

Joseph Demboski  
Seattle

## Honduras and the contras

WILLIAM I. ROBINSON'S ARTICLE ON GROWING opposition to the contras in Honduras (*ITT*, March 18) tells an important story, deserving much more attention than it has gotten in the mainstream press. In general, Robinson's report was accurate, but I was disturbed at certain details that seemed hyped for rhetorical effect.

The offending paragraph was the following: "On March 5 at least 20,000 people marched through the streets of Tegucigal-

pa, demanding the expulsion of the contras from Honduras. The demonstration was unprecedented in its size and militancy."

I witnessed the March 5 demonstration with several journalists, including Marjorie Miller of the *Los Angeles Times* and Carlos Ramos, who writes for the progressive Mexican newspaper *La Jornada*. These journalists made a rough count of the demonstration, coming up with 1,500 and settling on 2,000 as a safe, relatively generous estimate. This looked right to me; I have been to enough demonstrations to know this one was nowhere near 20,000 people. (In Robinson's dispatches for Agencia Nueva Nicaragua, as printed in the Nicaraguan papers the following week, the march swelled to "tens of thousands" of Honduran citizens.)

The journalists I was with were also told by march organizers that, while the demonstration was on the large side, it was not the largest of many anti-contra demonstrations they have held. As for the "most militant"—that is basically rhetoric. The tone of many of the marchers seemed civil to me, perhaps reflecting the fact that opposition to the contras is shared by so many Hondurans.

All of this may seem like nit-picking, since I don't disagree with the thrust of Robinson's story. But it seems to me that "hyped" otherwise accurate stories—if that is indeed what is going on here—is a bad habit for left journalists to fall into.

Daniel C. Hallin

Author of *The Uncensored War: The Media and Vietnam*  
San Diego

**William Robinson replies:** Honduran police put the number of demonstrators at 10,000. March organizers from the Coordinating Committee of Popular Organizations placed the crowd size at over 30,000. Such estimates were widely cited by international wire services.

## Bizarre

"LISTEN," SAID ALLEN SIMPSON, WYOMING, THE Republican number two man in the United States Senate, "I'm 55 years old and can still change. That man over there is 76. He is not going to change."

There are a number of us who are older than both Simpson and Our Leader in every state of the Union, who knew a decade ago he was selected because he could be elected, not because he could distinguish bizarre from magnetic or geographical north poles.

D. Hare Hansen  
Green Bay, Wisc.

## SYLVIA



SUSAN IS ARRANGING ALL HER SPICES IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER WHEN HER HUSBAND COMMENTS THAT IT'D BE NICE IF SHE COULD EARN A LIVING. SUSAN'S HURT FEELINGS BRING OUT HER LATENT VOLUNTEERISM, AND SHE PHONES A HOSPITAL TO OFFER HER HUSBAND AS A TRANSPLANT DONOR.



by Nicole Hollander