

## Media condones exploitation authors claim

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"Abandon hope, all ye who enter here." - Dante

Melodramatic yes, but in many ways this inscription is as warranted on the cover of Noam Chomsky's and Edward Herman's **The Washington Connection and Third World Fascism** as it was above the gates of hell. In the case of this book however, the first in their two-volume opus **The Political Economy of Human Rights**, what must be abandoned is our naive hope of ever achieving a semblance of social justice and respect for human rights as long as the American sponsored capitalist mode of development is in place.

The authors present a shocking, scholarly attack on both the evil perpetrated by the present economic system in the Third World and, more importantly, the role of Western media in blatantly suppressing or disguising both its effects and the West's role in perpetuating them. To read this book is to destroy once and for all any belief that we have a free, objective press and that the U.S. is the guardian of human rights and progress throughout the world.

Chomsky and Herman have collaborated to expose what should be (and is, after you've read the book) obvious to us all. Not only is the U.S. guilty of

actually undermining social reform and progress in the Third World (with consequences in terms of starvation, violence and political repression far in excess of anything "Communist aggression" achieves), but it successfully obscures this fact with an astonishing veil of propaganda. Most startling of all is the willing and eager cooperation it receives from our alleged free press. In fact, as the authors meticulously point out, our press is as rigidly censored in its own manner as that of any totalitarian state. 99% of what we read about foreign affairs is as far, and often farther, removed from the truth of the global

situation, as anything found in Pravda.

Such an hypothesis may seem incredible, and one's first assumption is that the authors are mere polemicists, or worse, sympathizers and apologists of Communism. That is absolutely not the case. Both are high respected non-Marxist scholars. Chomsky is a prolific linguist at M.I.T., whose other works include **At War With Asia** and **For Reasons of State**. They were among the earliest outspoken principled opponents of U.S. involvement in Vietnam. Their research is backed up by equally respected and creditable sources (83 pages of footnotes!) as well as a faultless logic. They have few kind words for Communist brands of totalitarianism, although they maintain that, in the long run, these are inept and relatively benign compared to the effects of U.S. policy. If anything, their reasoned approach and conclusions about the existence, maintenance and cover-up of a brutal American empire seem too mild. The sheer weight of the facts they present would seem to justify even the most hysterical response.

To begin with, they assert that

the U.S. is relatively democratic. Admirable domestic politics however have rarely prevented a country from pursuing aggressive foreign policies. Democracy is, in fact, perfectly compatible with the nurturing of fascist, terroristic regimes abroad. Indeed, it may actually abet such an inhuman foreign policy for it encourages the people of the U.S. (and the West people of the U.S. (and the west as a whole) to don a mantle of self-righteousness that thoroughly obscures an objective perception of the facts. We believe we are the vanguard of decency and civilization. Any evidence to the contrary can therefore only be regarded as the lies of those insidious commies.

Such evidence however is overwhelming. The authors draw on a broad range of sources, including the UN, Amnesty International, refugees, politicians and correspondents, to describe in detail how the U.S. reigns over an empire of fascist regimes characterized by their greed and brutality. It is a military empire that guarantees by brute force the most favourable climate for the capitalist mode of development.

Third World fascism is supported for it has been found by experience to be the most amenable in offering Western corporations lucrative business opportunities. It not only crushes unions, represses the dissenting population into passivity, provides scandalous tax shelters and corporate freedom for pollution, health and other environmental or social responsibility, but it also buys up vast quantities of Western arms and thus becomes a bulwark against the Great Bogeyman, communism. In short, the U.S., through the corrupt, elite of its Third World allies, sells out its professed concern for human rights in favour of its lust for property rights.

Throughout this "subfascist empire" the U.S. condones 'benign' and 'constructive' terror.

Our much lauded media is apparently to blame. On foreign policy issues it is virtually monolithic, that is, totally conformist to government propaganda. By various tricks, including reporters' rigorous self-censorship, avoidance of searching through allies' propaganda for ideologically unacceptable truth, skillful editing and even deliberate mistranslation, the press feeds us precisely the material conducive to corporate and government aims.

Chomsky and Herman examine the tactics of our press under a fine microscope, including comparisons between what reporters wrote and what appeared after editing in the media, between proper and self-serving translations and between reported fact and unwarranted or even absurd interpretations. It seems we are all capable of the failure to perceive even the most fantastic leaps of logic. We are so trusting in the media that we simply waive any critical analysis of our 'news'. But then that would be nearly impossible to achieve in any case, as facts and opinions that don't conform to ideology either don't get media exposure at all or they appear as a five-line filler at the bottom of page 43.

A less close examination of government and business strategies is needed, since the facts here are all clearly documented. What Chomsky and Herman do manage to do is connect the discrepancies between professed, self-righteous ideology and actual behaviour to a systematic campaign to disguise those facts, in effect preventing the well-documented from becoming the well-known.

For those of you who support Reagan and believe Haig, or worse, still believe in the "innocence" of America, this book will probably be too much of a shock. For others who have wondered why, after so many years and dollars, the Third World keeps sinking farther into debt and depravity, it will confirm all your worst fears. It is, in short, profoundly disturbing and ultimately depressing, without doubt imperative reading for anyone who wishes to understand the brutally bared political reality of the world today.

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