
Latin American and Soviet Repression

To the Editor:

Messrs. Chomsky and Herman's assertion (letter July 26) that the Coalition for a Democratic Majority has never objected to the killing of thousands of suspected and fleeing guerrillas reveals nothing about C.D.M. but a great deal about Messrs. Chomsky and Herman. C.D.M., of course, objects strenuously to actions by any government which violate the human rights of its subjects. Chomsky and Herman wrote what they did without ever troubling to inquire of C.D.M. about its views on anything.

Equally revealing is their effort to minimize Soviet repression by portraying it as less severe than the practices of certain Latin American governments. They argue that by bothering to place some dissidents on trial the Soviet Government shows that it is "inept" at repression and has "much to learn" from such U.S. "clients" as Argentina and Guatemala.

The number of Soviet citizens who have died — without a trial — at the

hands of their Government, beginning more than half a century before the current Guatemalan or Argentinian regimes even came into being, exceeds the entire population of Guatemala, and perhaps even that of Argentina. If the Soviet Government wished merely to be rid of Mr. Shcharansky and to avoid adverse publicity, it had only to grant his request to emigrate. Its decision, instead, publically to try him for and convict him of treason was a calculated act of intimidation aimed at the rest of its citizens, not an "inept" concession to libertarian standards of justice.

Neither the repression in Latin America nor the still greater repression in the U.S.S.R. justifies the other. And nothing justifies the indifference to truth and to the suffering of Soviet victims displayed by Messrs. Chomsky and Herman.

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for a Democratic Majority
Washington, July 28, 1978