

## FOREIGN POLICY &amp; DEFENSE

## *The Politics of Human Rights*

"Conditioning U.S. Security Assistance on Human Rights Practices" by Stephen B. Cohen, in *American Journal of International Law* (Apr. 1982), 2223 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20008.

Despite President Carter's personal commitment to human rights, his administration was surprisingly cautious in denying arms transfers to regimes considered to be repressive. Cohen, a Georgetown University law professor, contends that executive branch "bureaucratic warfare" during the Carter years kept military aid flowing to foreign governments guilty of flagrant human-rights transgressions.

In 1974, Congress enacted legislation (inserting Section 502B into the 1961 Foreign Assistance Act) recommending that the President deny, except in "extraordinary circumstances," American arms sales and military aid to regimes that showed a "consistent pattern" of "gross" abuse of human rights, including torture and "prolonged detention without charges." Until 1978, the statute remained merely advisory. During the Ford administration, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger simply ignored it. When Carter took office in 1977, the view at the top changed; Congress made Section 502B mandatory. But career foreign service officers, bent on maintaining cordial relations with foreign governments, failed to cooperate. They frequently played down human rights abuses in their assigned countries, and exaggerated improvements, says Cohen. (Countries that "squeaked through" under such conditions include Morocco, Taiwan, and Thailand, Cohen suggests.)



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Moreover, though the Carter administration banned new weapons sales to eight nations on the basis of Section 502B—Argentina, Bolivia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Nicaragua, Paraguay, and Uruguay—it did so quietly, to keep its options open. The State Department even refused congressional requests for lists of countries guilty of “gross abuse.” Spare weapons parts and military support equipment (e.g., trucks, radar) usually were not included in the bans. In 1978, for example, the United States sold Argentina nearly \$120 million in spare parts and support. “Extraordinary circumstances” continued to necessitate frequent aid to five other regimes judged repressive (Indonesia, Iran, the Philippines, South Korea, Zaire).

“Human rights,” President Carter said in December 1978, “is the soul of our foreign policy.” That may have been the President’s policy, says Cohen, but to career State Department officials, loyalty to “client” countries and U.S. allies came first.

### *Moscow’s Friends Backed the Bomb*

“Hiroshima and the American Left: August 1945” by Paul F. Boller, Jr., in *International Social Science Review* (Winter 1982), 1717 Ames St., Winfield, Kans. 67156.

Did America drop atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 mainly to defeat Japan or to daunt its future rival, the Soviet Union?

Since the publication of Gar Alperovitz’s revisionist *Atomic Diplomacy: Hiroshima and Potsdam*, in 1965, the conventional wisdom among American radical intellectuals has been that the bombings were unnecessary and immoral, staged chiefly to intimidate the Soviets. But Boller, a Texas Christian University historian, writes that this argument ignores one important fact: In 1945, those U.S. intellectuals who were most sympathetic to Moscow were also among the most enthusiastic supporters of the decision to use the bombs.

On August 8, 1945, two days after the devastation of Hiroshima, for example, a columnist for the American communist *Daily Worker* wrote, “So let us not greet our atomic device with a shudder, but with the elation and admiration which the genius of man deserves.” Among intellectual journals then generally sympathetic to the Soviet Union—*The Nation*, *The New Republic*, and *PM*—the reaction was equally triumphant. The editor of *The Nation* wrote that “\$2,000,000,000 . . . was never better spent.”

But anticommunist liberals, writing in such periodicals as *Common Sense*, *The Progressive*, and *Christianity and Crisis* were disturbed. Theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, for instance, criticized left-wing supporters of the bombings for harboring “the foolish hope that if we can completely destroy we will also be able to build a more ideal social structure out of these complete ruins.” American socialists, led by Norman Thomas, echoed these liberals’ anticommunism and their qualms about the bombings. The American Trotskyists of the Socialist