

# Defeat of the left was Latin America's loss

Jim Christie, in valuing Mexico's expanding political spectrum in proportion to the free-market orientation of the ruling party's challengers, has obviously swallowed whole every morsel of propaganda on Latin America served up by the State Department since President Nixon's CIA destabilized the Chilean economy and set the stage for the overthrow (and murder) of Salvador Allende ("Loreto sign of change in Mexico," Viewpoint, Aug. 7). Christie's most egregious error is his statement that Nicaragua's leftist Sandinistas were voted out of office because they were corrupt.

In 1990, after suffering 10 years of unremitting torment at the hands of the Reagan-inspired Contra insurgency, including six years of punishment for having elected the Sandinistas to office in 1984, the Nicaraguan people finally cried "uncle" and voted for Washington's preferred candidate, Violetta Chamorro. They "were not electing a president, they were electing a way out," said former Contra director Edgar Chamorro, who was fired by the CIA for protesting Contra war crimes. Col. Phil Roettinger, USMC, ret., who directed the CIA-inspired coup against the popularly elected Guatemalan government in 1954, agreed (Even so, 41 percent of the voters supported the Sandinistas).

Certainly there was some corruption in the Sandinista government (show me a squeaky clean government anywhere). Nevertheless, the British-based aid agency Oxfam, which helps Third World nations with their development projects, said that the Sandinistas had fulfilled their promises better than any revolutionary government in its experience.

Had the Sandinistas been allowed to continue their "preferential option for the poor," they would have been re-elected by a landslide, and Nicaragua would be a happy and healthy nation today, and a solid friend of the U.S.

Nor does Christie's apparent regard for Salvadoran capitalism do him credit. In fact, when responding to the slightest real or imagined threat to their privileged status, the Salvadoran oligarchy, military, and death squads are still peerless in viciousness and disregard for human life. It is hard to imagine a worse example of the "triumph of capitalism" to crow about.

The constant breast-beating by conservatives over the "defeat of socialism" is tiresome, not least because it usually rests on a badly distorted historical and moral perspective.

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