

The beam in our eye

I completely agree with Patrick Buchanan's condemnation of the Soviet Union's considerable crimes against humanity (Daily News, Dec. 30). Nevertheless, I suspect that Buchanan "protesteth too much," in the manner of one seeking to divert attention away from the beam in his own eye by pointing to the beam in the other fellow's eye (to modify slightly a Christian homily).

One example stands out — Buchanan's appalling assertion that Anastasio Somoza's crimes against the Nicaraguan people "do not remotely approach the scale or scope of those committed by the decadent Sandinistas."

Amnesty International has documented the Somoza regime's extensive atrocities against the Nicaraguan people. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights described life for at least half of Nicaragua's population under Somoza as "beneath the rational definition of human decency."

By contrast, Amnesty International's 1984 report on governmental use of torture around the world does not even mention Nicaragua under the Sandinistas. "Human Rights in Nicaragua (1985-86)," by Americas Watch, criticizes the Sandinistas for "about a dozen disappearances and killings out of combat" in 1985 (this after four years of well-documented terrorism against Nicaraguans by the U.S.-sponsored Contras, whom Buchanan supports enthusiastically). Americas Watch also notes that Sandinista human rights violators have been jailed.

There is no rational basis for Buchanan's lopsided comparison of Somoza with the Sandinistas. The beam in America's eye, of course, is exactly our establishment of, and unwavering support for, some of the most vicious dictatorships on earth. This is the major reason for the intense anti-American sentiment around the world.

— Bill Becker
Woodland Hills