

Death Squad

By Christopher Nagle

During the 1970s and directly as a result of the Vietnam conflict, there was an intensification of the struggle between the left and right in Central and South America. It was called the 'The Dirty War'. The measures taken by elements within the military, in co-operation with right wing political parties and backed by the US, were an echo of Japanese Imperial Army occupation policy in China during World War 2: Unlimited Terror.

The campaign succeeded in virtually destroying the left for a generation.

In my poem, 'Bosnia', I explored the humanist perspective in an equally bitter and brutal conflict that took place as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Empire.

This piece explores the voice of repression and counter-revolution.

Our culture repels this voice because it so clearly contradicts the very dominant humanist tradition that has been extant since 1945. But then this tradition has existed within very stable and long established democratic societies that have been able to contain and disarm threats to themselves, without having to resort to violence.

The emergence of terrorism and the prospect of the mass murder of civil population as a result of the use of weapons of mass destruction, may alter this perspective in the coming years.

The voice here has a terrible and potentially compelling logic. It is part of a short introductory lecture given to new security paramilitary officer recruits, by the camp Commandant:

Death Squad

"Good morning and welcome to Camp..... I need to remind you why you are here, what we expect of you and how that relates to the kind of training you will receive over the next.....

"The Communist Party and its front organizations are not debating clubs. They are a coordinated ideological fighting machine. It is far more dangerous than an ordinary competitor in the political jostle of party politics. Its aim is not to merely to displace opponents, but to wipe out enemies; i.e., to kill, exile, imprison, enslave and expropriate them, harass their families and discriminate against their children and grandchildren.

"Ideological fighting machines like The Communist Party never enter into bona fides dialogue with

anyone, for their words are but war by other means. Communists make wild promises of freedom to the simple minded to bend them to their will and then deliver them such repression that they are not even allowed to merely passively accept their lot. They must enthusiastically embrace it or risk their loyalty being questioned. Fighting machines have no mercy with waverers or neutrals.

“The Communists promise justice and power to the people, but deliver party functionaries who entrench themselves and their children with privileges, oracular authority and almost godlike powers to do whatever they like, as long as they toe The Party Line.

“The Communists promise to build a better life for the poor, but they deliver longer and harder hours of work, monstrous inefficiency and endless propaganda, disrupt family life, take away whatever small individual property they ever had and force everyone into collectives over which they have absolutely no control and which are used to tax them to the hilt. In the end the old poor become new poor, but the 'new rich' insist that everyone cheer and smile for the wonderful 'New Order'.

“Over my dead body gentlemen. Over my dead body! We have to be a fighting machine too. We cannot leave a single chink in our armour, nor fail to strike a blow at our enemy whenever, wherever and however we can. If we cannot match their aggression with ours and then more, we are lost and so are the people under our stewardship.

“To protect what we hold dear we must do what must be done. Take off your humanity and scruples and lock them out of reach until victory is ours. Drape yourselves in darkness so that those who might cross you will fear you more than your enemy. Only listen to the voices of dissent long enough to detect and destroy them. If you cannot hear the truth from those you interrogate, hear their screams instead. Remember that there is no such thing as an innocent bystander. Know that your ferocity must cut off all possibility of escape or revenge. Insufficient force is worse than none at all, for it angers more than it overawes. When you strike, you take out your target roots and all!

“Thus your wrath is not just death to those against whom it is directed, but their families, their homes and their livelihood. You do not take anything from your enemies. You destroy everything, even to the salting of their fields and smashing their tools. You do not just burn a house. You throw it down so that that not one stone or brick sits upon another.

“And if an entire community or region turns against you, liquidate a sufficiently large group in that community or region for those surrounding it to know they will surely be next unless they co-operate with us. As Mao Tse Tung said, it is better to cut off one finger than to merely burn four.

“Your reputation for cold, brutal and ruthless efficiency will precede you at all times such that even

the most loyal citizen will shiver as you go past. This is how it must be.

“When it is over, then and only then can you return to yourselves and come back into the light of a grateful and joyous day; a day when you will know that the dreadful sacrifice you have made and the death and suffering you have had to inflict, have been worth it.

“Unfortunately, there will be those who will want to call us criminals and abusers of human rights. Of course they will be able to say that from their comfortable armchairs and airy debating halls. Because of the blood and tears that have had to be spilled on their behalf, they can have the security and well-being to pontificate and moralize. My God! The Communists would know how to deal with such loquacious ingrates!

“Your silence in the face of fools will be the contempt they deserve. Leave the rest to us, for the army will be your friend and protect you always.

“Come therefore with me, and together we shall inter the communist menace into the graveyard of history!”

© 2011 Christopher Nagle