

# Ottawa's tilt to the left

Here in Canada, we seem to be blithely floating along on a cloud of moral hot air. Recent threats by Joe Clark to "get tough" with South Africa have produced what can be best described as a massive sexual frenzy among our media and politicians as they jostle one another to denounce wicked racism 10,000 miles away.

Meanwhile, less than 3,000 miles to our south, Soviet and East-bloc freighters are delivering growing quantities of all types of arms to Nicaragua. In recent weeks, such deliveries have included medium tanks, rocket batteries, heavy and medium artillery, ammunition, small arms, anti-aircraft guns and, reportedly, more MI-24 Hind helicopter gunships.

Canada is ignoring this massive inflow of communist arms into our hemisphere. Protesting against such action would mean Clark having to put on his deepest voice and actually tell the Russians to stop. But this, of course, is dangerous since Moscow might get testy and cut back on importing Canadian wheat. How would Clark explain that to all those irate farmers?

No, it's so much easier to "get tough" with those horrid South Africans. Can we imagine Joe Clark telling Moscow to free its political prisoners and let Russian Jews emigrate? Ha. Ha. Ha. Or even to ask what all those Cuban and Russian officers are doing in Nicaragua.

Canada may be unconcerned about Central America, but the region's nations are fast growing alarmed at the level of Soviet and Cuban influence in Nicaragua. A senior official of Panama's foreign ministry told me recently that his government,

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while officially supporting the much ballyhooed Contadora peace process, was deeply worried that Nicaragua was about to become another Cuba.

In fact, Panama has offered its troops to neighboring Costa Rica, whose borders are being regularly violated by Nicaraguan troops. Both of these Central American nations are urging negotiations while preparing for more fighting. Speaking to other Latin American officials leads me to believe that this sense of growing alarm is widely shared.

Soviet-built MI-24 helicopter gunships, the same as used in Afghanistan, are now flying against the contra rebels in Nicaragua. Last week, Nicaragua attacked Honduran troops, causing the Hondurans to stage air strikes inside Nicaragua. Nicaragua is rapidly expanding its armed forces and may soon begin receiving Soviet-bloc combat aircraft.

It amazes me that Ottawa can simply ignore this dangerous situation. Why do we remain silent while East German secret police teach torture and surveillance techniques to the Nicaraguans — while Ottawa moans about South Africa and Chile.

When, for example, did Brian Mulroney have anything to say about the presence of a full Soviet mechanized combat brigade of 3,000 men and 120 tanks in Havana, Cuba? Are many Canadians even aware that Russian troops are now based 90 miles off the coast of Florida? Do they know that Cuba is now a major base for Soviet nuclear submarines, some of whose missiles point at Canada?

Instead, Canada is preparing to cut off its nose to spite its face by stopping exports to South Africa. At the same time, Ottawa is increasing trade with Nicaragua and Cuba. Why, our government even pays companies to promote business with these two communist states. We are, in effect, helping subsidize their economies by granting them low-cost loans, technical assistance and political support.

One of these days, the Americans, who have been very, very patient so far, are going to get most angry at Ottawa's blatant tilt to the left. Not only is Ottawa ignoring the growing danger in Central America, it is profiting from communist penetration. Such a policy, while highly popular with the domestic left, is clearly dangerous at a time when the U.S. is reviewing its trade relations.

Unless I am very mistaken, Washington may soon bring some very heavy pressure to bear on Ottawa, telling Clark and his team of Red Tories to begin acting like responsible North Americans instead of giddy, university parlor pinks.

It makes you wonder. Is all the fuss about South Africa being promoted as a convenient, wonderfully timed smokescreen to cover the massive intervention of the Soviet bloc into Central America? And is Ottawa being just a little too eager to go along? These are questions we should ask our politicians.

## Punch



"As soon as I saw you, I said to myself, I said, 'There's a person scared stiff at the prospect of flying.' Let me put another Coke in there for you."