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Steven Lukes
Dear Steven,

Many thanks for sending me your THES article and the material from Milton Osborne.

I am extremely unhappy with your article and want to tell you why in detail.

You ask: 'What, then, is Chomsky doing contributing to deceit and distortion surrounding Pol Pot regimes in Cambodia?'. This is a very grave and damaging accusation, which demands careful and specific evidence of 'deceit and distortion'. There is no such evidence in your article.

You say that Pol Pot's regime is subjected by Chomsky and Herman to 'an extraordinary and perverse scrutiny'. Not so. At no point do they claim that their book constitutes a 'scrutiny', extraordinary, perverse or otherwise of the Pol Pot regime. In fact, your own quotation from them to the effect that 'when the facts are in, it may turn out that the more extreme condemnations were in fact correct', this clearly indicates that they do not claim to have conducted the 'scrutiny' you suggest. It could also be taken to suggest an honest admission that the facts are not in. Instead, you treat it as an attempt by Chomsky to 'protect himself from refutation by the facts'. This is unwarranted and unworthy. One might as well say that Lukes is trying to protect himself from accusations of this and that by saying (as you do) 'of course, propaganda has been made out of the Cambodian tragedy'. Imputations of this sort are best avoided.

You attack Chomsky's 'focus of concern and method' on grounds which strike me as odd. You say that he follows 'an apparently rigorous but actually ludicrous method', which turns out to be a demand for 'verifiable evidence', 'documentary sources', material that can be checked. What the hell is wrong with that? You say that Chomsky 'exultantly' attacks Ponchaud (why 'exultantly'?!) for 'carelessness with regard to quotes, numbers and sources', which you don't dispute and indeed half admit by saying that 'such carelessness is always deplorable', but then go on to attack Chomsky for 'a pedantry that is grotesque', 'given the circumstances, the meagre results he attains' and so on. This is simply bluster. I am afraid (note the use of language, pedantry, grotesque, meagre results) rather than what is here appropriate, namely the fact that Chomsky and Herman's analysis of Ponchaud and other reporting does cast doubt on a great deal that appears in the material analysed.

You yourself speak of 'inflated figures, faked photographs, invented atrocities'; of the fact that 'of course apologists have obscured or completed eliminated' the U.S. role; and so on. You don't seem to me to make nearly enough of this. That is a large part of Chomsky and Herman's case; and it does not involve 'deceit and distortion', but the combating of deceit and distortion under extremely difficult conditions.

As I see it, the real difference between you and Chomsky is that you see the regime itself as having been mainly responsible for deliberate mass terror and mass killing, and he does not. You speak of 'the Cambodian experiment' as a 'ghastly exercise in mass terror and forced collectivisation', and suggest a kind of extreme extension of Stalinist collectivisation in Russia. My own feeling is that much of what happened in Cambodia between 1975 and 1978 was not the result of the 'experiment' you refer to simply because there was nothing like the apparatus of terror and the administration of 'collectivisation' that such 'experiments' require. The figure of 3,000,000 people killed by the regime can, on this score, absurd, and an exercise in simple invention. The Russians had the apparatus, and so
had the Nazis. The Cambodians did not. There was very little unorganised killing in either Russia or German-occupied territories, or at least no great deal, and a massive amount of organised killing. The reverse seems to me to have been true in Cambodia. This does not make the matter any better, but it is a different picture from the one now prevalent as peddled by media with suspect motives. On the whole, Chomsky seems to me closer to the truth than you are, with the large caveat that the facts are not in. But for you to treat what he says and what you quote him as saying as 'deceit and distortion' is absolutely wrong. I would myself want to be more categorical than is Chomsky in denouncing the Pol Pot regime, but that has nothing to do with the kind of denunciation of Chomsky and Herman in which you engage, in language so inflated and with so little argument. You seem to me to have been so influence by the quite horrifying reports about what happened in Cambodia that you are hitting out at people who do not deny that a lot of terrible things did happen, but who want to apply nonetheless common standards of evidence which are not in the least 'grotesque'. I don't think this is apologetic and I am truly sorry that you should have thought it necessary to have written as if it was. Chomsky is no sacred cow, and I think his politics are some way from mine. But he is a man of great courage and integrity, and it would take a lot more than you provide here to convince me that your strictures on him are merited.

Yours ever,

Ralph Miliband

P.S. I will be back in London in mid-December and I would like the proofs of my article sent there, please. I don't, after this extreme delay, want the thing to go adrift.
Darling?
Yes my sweet love.
Kiss me again.
Ahah.
Ooooh.
Do you know something my little potted shrimp? This is the loveliest Boxing Day I've ever had.
And me. And me.
I've forgotten all about that silly thesis.
Silly thesis.
And you're not thinking about your old lecture notes are you?
A million miles away, my princess.
Do you think anyone else in the department is having such a good time as us?
Impossible.
Isn't it wonderful when you feel so close to someone that you're almost one being?
A single body.
A single ego.
But still of course with our independence intact.
Absolutely. In living our own lives outside each other.
And yet this time last Christmas we were just two people who passed each other in the departmental corridor.
Two names in the prospectus.
Just two members of the General Academic Board.
Not any more.
Never again.
Ahah.
Ooooh.
And you're sure you liked my present?
Loved it. Just what I wanted. Can't wait to see them when I wear it on the first day of term. The best briefcase in the faculty.
It's real leather, you know.
I know my sweet.
And with an extra wide gusset for your big fat books.
Is that what they really said? Oh you funny funny shrimp face. And did you like yours?
You know I did. Such lovely books, so clever. That beautiful Gay Weldon and that naughty Anni Nin.
We'll read some more tonight. Perhaps the one about the evil baron. Before the late night film.
Oh yes please. But after the cold champagne.
And some liqueur chocolates. Yummy scrumptious.
Now boy. And if you are good I shall have the Tio Maria. Such a heavy baby.
That's really just a little boy.
I hope you are. Come to Mummy or another kiss.

56.12.80

UGC control and the un

Sir,—Anthony Abclarber took Dr Parkes, UGC chairman, to task for omitting in his speech to the CVCP whether qualified school-leavers who are as readily able to gain admission to higher education and in their subjects of choice (THES, December 12). Cleverly Dr Parkes's error was to blame these matters to be axiomatic.

From the viewpoint of higher education as a whole, the difficulty is likely to be a different and could centre on whether enough qualified school-leavers seek higher education. The Participation Rate (APR) of those minimally qualified for entry to higher education is at best static and has been so since 1973. The APR of the university share has continued to rise, albeit slowly, during this period despite Government declared support in the universities for a constant home student population in spite of the bulge in 15-year-olds which peaked in 1972-73. For the next three years or so, it will be more difficult for school-leavers to gain university status, but their steady overflow into the empty places in other institutions of higher education—they are not lost to the system.

The realistic alternative is "rationalization"—which will be traumatic for some. Rationalization is like a road accident—everyone hopes it will happen to someone else. If the universities do not rationalize themselves, it will surely be imposed and the UGC would be failing in their duty if they did not catalyze the process with urgency as to pre-empt the wielding of blunt instruments and in some less sensitivity than was demonstrated by the Atkinson report.

There is another way. If the Government funds the university issue of Indochina, then is it not reasonable—especially when Indochina was already exposed the devastating fact in a previous volume—to seize upon the pattern here—especially in the distant reality of real horrors committed in Indochina?

No major American journal has reviewed the first volume. The selective criticism of Steven Lukes is that not only does damage to Lukes's own perspective, else why does he not pose himself to the disturbing conclusion. Chairman.-Chomsky and the Western media and the United States have exploited and distorted the situation in Indochina in order to serve ideological interests. It is not insignificant as the actual and undisguised fact of the atrocities committed by the communists.

But is Chomsky's purpose merely to relativize the facts of the mass exterminations, or is it to point out in this area of the evidence of the systematic manipulations of the media and the consequent loss of verifiable truths? Is the Chomsky's supposed to the calculations of the State Department, the corporate elite, and the mass media to be destroyed the evolution of societies who would seek some alternative to the regimes currently propped up by the United States?

By ignoring the first volume of the Chomsky/Herman book, Lukes has attempted to judge the thesis of Chomsky on the particular data to use in this chapter with Indochina. He does not even mention this first volume: The Washington Connection and World Fascism, and makes it seem that Chomsky had no business quarrelling with the facts presented by the greater and the mass media in regard to Indochina.

If in investigations it is discovered that gross lying has taken place, and that lying seems part of an overall scheme which has as its basic some mechanism of deceit that goes well beyond the present situation, the role of the State Department, the corporate elite, and the mass media to be destroyed the evolution of societies who would seek some alternative to the regimes currently propped up by the United States?

Mr Abclarber will probably be familiar with the Conference on University Admissions in the U.S.A. Final Report on Forecasting and University Expansion (1973) which explored the relationships between APR and demographic change. In a nutshell, between now and 1992 if university entry conditions are unchanged, the student population could decline from the present 300,000 to 250,000. So we lose one student in six—is this to be translated into one school in six, or one university in six? It would be ostrich-like to assume that until 1992 the universities need not be taking 10% per cent higher than they need be.

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There is another way. If the Government funds the university...
Postwar Indochina

Sir—The correspondence prompted by Steven Luke’s comments (THES, November 7) about a major section of After the Catechism: Postwar Indochina and the Reconstruction of Imperial Ideology is distinguished by its common quality of heated rhetoric. Professors Chomsky and Herman claim to have set out not to establish the facts with regard to postwar Indochina, but rather to investigate their refraction through the prism of Western ideology. Despite this stance, they do attempt to provide an explanation for the “fearful toll” exacted in Cambodia after April 1975. A constant reiteration of the theme of peasant revenge and undisciplined troops leaves the reader in no doubt whatsoever of the alternative establishment of the facts which they seek to expand. It is this unsubstantiated argument which merits Steven Luke’s criticism that Chomsky has lost all sense of perspective.

I would point out that in the course of their analysis, Chomsky and Herman rely greatly on the writings of Ben Kiernan and Steven Heder, especially to refute refugee accounts of organized terror. Yet, in the Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars in 1979, Kiernan maintains: “It is quite clear that I was wrong about an important aspect of Kampuchean communism: the brutal authoritarian trend within the revolutionary movement after 1975 was not simply a grassroots reaction, but also avengeful reaction and expression of popular outrage at the killing and destruction of the countryside by United States bombs, although that helped it along decisively. There can be no doubt that the evidence also points clearly to the systematic use of violence against the population by that chauvinist section of the revolutionary movement that was led by Pol Pot.” Moreover, in a paper presented in June 1990, Heder wrote of “The relentless use of terror by the party apparatus as a whole against the population as a whole and by the Pol Pot–Hun Sen coalition at the Party Center.”

Yours faithfully,

MICHAEL LEIFER
London School of Economics and Political Science
Houghton Street
London WC2

Letters for publication should arrive on Thursday morning at the latest. They should be as short as possible and should be written on one side of the paper only. The editor reserves the right to cut or amend them if necessary.
The Truth about Indochina
Noam Chomsky (right) replies to charges by Steven Lukes (left)

In THES (November 7), Steven Lukes charged that our book, The Political Economy of War, which he reviewed in the current issue of this magazine, is "blatantly false and misleading." Lukes bases his charge on the assumption that we refuse to acknowledge that there was a systematic bias, not only with regard to Cambodia. This yields the ways in which the "facts" and the "evidence" is used. We made this point explicitly, and we stated explicitly that there could be no confusion. It was even cited in the book when the facts are in print, it may turn out that the accounting of demarcations were in fact correct. But even then it is not the case, it will not in any way change the conclusions that Lukes offered. But he also states that Lukes "projects himself against the facts." We are doing what we explicitly deny: direct and understandable response to the violence of the direct responsibility.

Lukes then wrote to me, requesting us to verify sources. We offered to the general population. writes that peasants who suffered profound Pol Pot's regime. led to peddle than the futb: that they correspond to the reports of refugees. We warned against the very falsification of the truth that behind the Khmer smile is not to consider the most significant factors. While de Lacroix's "fraction" was. is not to consider the most significant factors. While de Lacroix's "fraction" was.

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SUSPENDING CHOMSKY'S DBIES

By Paul Flather

Angry lecturers from the Polytechnic of the South Bank have protested strongly to the Inner London Education Authority about an abrupt plan to move polymer science courses to the Polytechnic of North London (PNL). The decision is of great significance because the South Bank campus was developed on land owned by the Inner London Education Authority, and it was planned to be a model of the future polytechnic sector higher education but retain government control. Under the CLEA proposal, a new body would have a majority of non-academic members, of which only 30 per cent would be either academic or lay representatives. The South Bank lecturers believe that this is unacceptable, and they have called for a public inquiry into the government's proposals.

The decision of the South Bank lecturers to suspend polymer science courses at the South Bank campus was a response to the government's proposals. They believe that the government has no right to take such a decision without consulting the lecturers and students. They also believe that the government's proposals are not in the best interests of the students and the institution.

The government's proposals were made as part of a wider policy of reducing the number of polytechnics and creating a new University of London. The government's proposals were based on the assumption that the South Bank campus was not viable and that the students and staff would be better off if it was merged with the Polytechnic of North London. However, the South Bank lecturers believe that the campus is viable and that the students and staff would be better off if it was kept as an independent institution.

The South Bank lecturers also argue that the government's proposals are not in the best interests of the students. They believe that the students would be better off if they were able to continue their studies at the South Bank campus. They also believe that the students would be better off if they were able to continue to work with the staff and lecturers who have been at the South Bank campus for many years.

The South Bank lecturers also argue that the government's proposals are not in the best interests of the institution. They believe that the South Bank campus is an important institution, and that it should be kept as an independent institution. They also believe that the South Bank campus is an important part of the university sector, and that it should be kept as an independent institution.

The South Bank lecturers believe that the government's proposals are not in the best interests of the students and the institution, and they are calling for a public inquiry into the government's proposals.
7th May, 1981.

Dr. Steven Lukes,
Balliol College,
Oxford, OX1 3BJ.

Dear Steven,

Thank you for sending the file of your controversy with Noam Chomsky and its peripheral results. I really do strongly agree with Noam Chomsky, and I think that your original attack was grossly unfair while your later justification was quite unworthy of you. You consistently ignore the stated intentions of the authors of THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF HUMAN RIGHTS, and your polemic actually endorses Leifer's astonishing complaint that Chomsky and Herman did not observe the contents of books that were published after theirs had already gone to press.

In short, you do not come out of any of this very well, and it is remarkably honest (or perhaps a bit ingenuous) of you to have felt that the exchange was worth circulating.

It all makes me very sad ...

Yours,

Ken Coates
Sir,—In our study of US foreign policy and ideology (Political Economy of Human Rights, 1979), E.S. Herman and I cited two cases of bloodbath: “benign or constructive bloodbath”, which are satisfactory to US interests, and “nefarious bloodbaths”, committed by official enemies. In a series of cases, the former are typically treated with silence, denial, or apologists, while the latter are seized upon for propaganda purposes, often with reliance on evidence that is dubious or simply fabricated. Atrocities that we could mitigate or terminate are ignored or denied (eg, the US-supported massacres in Timor), while those beyond our reach elicit great outpourings of humanitarian sentiment and outrage (eg, Pol Pot massacres). While there are exceptions, this tendency is striking and plays a significant role in creating an ideological climate supportive of continuing atrocities.

As one example in our book, we dealt with Khmer Rouge atrocities (volume I, Cambodia), while the reaction fits the general pattern quite well. Since these atrocities could be attributed to an official enemy and there was little that could be done about them, the reaction was consistent, fabricated evidence of violence and obliteration of past history (including the US role), refusal to evaluate the credibility of those who had been fighting the Khmer Rouge, and selection of the most extreme condemnations from the reports. We also described the ludicrous pretense that a great debate was raging over Khmer Rouge atrocities, with the courageous deniers of such atrocities offering apologetics for Pol Pot. Since real examples were not available, they were fabricated.

Lukes begins by noting that “there is no difficulty in documenting major atrocities and oppression, primarily from the reports of refugees” and that “the record of atrocities in Cambodia is substantial and often gruesome,” and noting finally that “When the facts are in, it may turn out that the more extreme condemnations were in fact correct.” He then concludes that “Pol Pot’s regime was simply forcing the urban population to the countryside,” and that “if the deaths in Cambodia were not the result of systematic slaughter and starvation” and “we did not give our views concerning the Pol Pot regime”, then “we should have been more careful in our interpretation of the evidence.”

Sir,—I refer to the dispute between Steven Lukes, Noam Chomsky et al over the nature of Chomsky’s writings on Kampuchea. Chomsky’s position has been disastrous ever since the Khmer Rouge victory in 1975. By continually concentrating on mistakes which journalists and writers made and on the way in which western governments exploited the stories of Kampuchea, he has failed to take note of the most important issue: whether or not gross abuses of human rights were being committed.

Tassure, given his intellect, that had Chomsky actually gone to talk to Kambuchean refugees in Thailand, he would have realized that a terrible crime was indeed being committed. His political influence is such that he could have played an important part in mobilizing public opinion against the Khmer Rouge. Had world opinion, left as well as right, been so mobilized (as happened, for example, in the case of Chile after 1973) then much greater pressure could have been brought to bear—on the basis of the Khmer Rouge’s principal sponsor in Peking.

Instead Chomsky’s well-known views helped to persuade many people throughout the world into the delusion that the horror stories about the Khmer Rouge were either planted by the CIA, fabricated by journalists or both. That is a sorry role, Steven Lukes is absolutely right to criticize him. Yours faithfully, WiliAM SHAWCROSS 17 Parkhill Road, London N.W.3.