

HYPOCRISY IN THE “PEACE” MOVEMENT: A CASE STUDY

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The CND and the so-called “Peace Movement” bitterly resent any accusations that their motivation is anything less than the desire to prevent a nuclear holocaust. Assertions that their views are really dictated by sympathies with the Soviet Union and Communist ideology are ridiculed. Many of their fiercest critics have now become reluctant to suggest that the bulk of the “peace movement” represents something other than misguided sincerity.

But is this charitable interpretation justified? I believe not. A detailed examination of some of the leading exponents of “peace” will demonstrate that their motivations are somewhat more dubious.

FELIX GREENE

Let us examine the case of Felix Greene. There appeared at the end of 1982, with much fanfare, a new edition of Greene’s book *Let There Be A World* (London, Victor Gollancz, 1982). As well as reading the book you can also wear a badge and decorate your car with the sticker! In his book Mr. Greene warns against “spurious” and “dangerous” rationality. He does so wisely, since the book relies on little other than emotionalism. It is largely a montage of photographs — a crying woman, atomic explosions, wounded people, scenes of devastation, African tribesmen, children running through idyllic countryside.

But amidst this surfeit of emotional sugar, Mr. Greene injects poisonous drops of propaganda. The Soviet Union is, we are told, primarily afraid of invasions, following the traumas of World War II and the loss of 30-35 million citizens (as if the Soviet ruling class hadn’t exterminated more than that number of its own citizens already). In contrast we are told that America is not only afraid of losing her position as “top dog” nation, but of “Communism” (in inverted commas for some reason), and its challenge to her “economic system”. That the “economic system” of the West, one of relative freedom, is worth defending, and that “Communism” is a system of horrific slavery, poverty and degradation are apparently thoughts that have not crossed Mr. Greene’s mind. In his view the only cause of international problems is “irrational fear”. Fear, we are told, is our internal “predicament” which is akin to the armour of the extinct dinosaurs, an armour that ultimately proved fatal for its bearers. There is apparently *nothing* we have good reason to fear. Rather, we “must learn altruism — which means the opposite of selfishness and defensiveness, a devotion to humanity regardless

of all else. (Survival) requires us all to learn how to trust and not be afraid. This is the survival imperative of our time.”

Mr. Greene, indeed, has much to fear from rationality. That every piece of evidence demonstrates that the Soviet Union is, by virtue of its ideology and internal political structure, a blatantly expansionist power, is not apparent to Mr. Greene. That trusting the Communists is as sensible as trusting Adolf Hitler, the Ayatollah Khomeini, or any other of the crazed ideologues and tyrants who have turned human history into a bloodbath, is an exercise in rational thought of which Mr. Greene seems incapable. Fear and mistrust of these monsters is a rational and appropriate response and, contrary to Greene, a requirement for the survival of humanity and freedom.

REJECTION OF FREEDOM

But Felix Greene cares nothing for freedom. “I have come to believe”, he declares, “that our idea of freedom ... the nurturing of our ‘individuality’ on which we place so high a value, is not what it seems. Our present ideas about freedom derive largely from the nineteenth century of bourgeois, capitalist freedom — freedom for the new industrial owners to do what they liked, free from any social control. Many learned books have been written in support of so called freedom. But it can be expressed very simply — it is a ‘me first’ philosophy. ‘Everyone for himself’, ‘grab what you can’, and (so goes the theory) if everyone acted thus society as a whole will benefit ... We are still operating within a jungle. In a competitive society the development of what we call individualism is necessary for survival. To get on I *must* push myself, I *must* make more money, etc., and out of this has grown the sacredness of *me* - my individuality, *my* creativity, *my right* to do and say what I want, and so on. Is this the only kind of freedom — or indeed, is it freedom at all? The concept of individuality which we have developed in the West has very little to do with real freedom. It results in the imprisonment of *me* within myself ... It is this ‘me-ness’ which creates divisions and alienates me from others; and it can suffocate all that is most tender and trusting in us ... any advance up the ladder of success has to be at the expense of someone else and what we call success is often another form of personal disaster. And we call this freedom!” (p. 59)

We must thank Mr. Greene for his candour. Here we are again in the old Orwellian world of slavery = freedom. Free market capitalism, although never wholly implemented, is not a jungle, where “industrial owners” can do what they like, and whose success is at the expense of the people. It is a world where force and fraud are prohibited by the rule of law, where success is dependent upon providing goods and services to our fellows, and where workers receive the fruits of their labour. It is a world where individuals compete not in mutual plunder, through the agency of the State, but in the provision of goods. Insofar as the market has been allowed to operate it has produced unprecedented prosperity and freedom for the masses.

AN APOLOGIST FOR TOTALITARIANISM

But Greene has made a career as an apologist for slavery and totalitarianism. Wherever individuals are indeed not allowed “to do and say what (they) want”, there you will find Mr. Greene telling

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us that such slavery is “real freedom”. In 1966 Mr. Greene produced for Penguin books another largely photographic volume, *Vietnam! Vietnam!*. That book was an example of crude apologetics for the Vietcong in which photographs of injured civilians and devastation were placed alongside pictures of heroic Vietcong guerrillas and contemptible Americans (or rather, photographs chosen to evoke contempt).

The anodyne and largely non-Marxist programme of the NLF is cited as if it were a *real* statement of aims rather than a typical piece of Communist propaganda to hook credulous dupes. Need less to say, Mr. Greene has maintained a discrete silence following the victory of the NLF. What has happened to the “democratic freedoms, the freedom of expression, of the press, of assembly, of association, of trade unions, of movements” promised by the 10 Point Programme of the NLF? For Mr. Greene, the Vietnam War “(stained) the conscience of mankind”. Apparently, mass murder and brutal tyranny in Communist Vietnam (which has claimed at least three quarters of a million victims) doesn’t stain his.

PARADISE, CHINESE STYLE

But the Vietcong are bit-players on the stage of history. Mr. Greene has used his skills in the defence of much bigger butchers than them. Most of his talents have been devoted to the cause of white-washing the People’s Republic of China. While millions were being slaughtered and humiliated, robbed of every vestige of freedom and dignity, and forced to sing of the joys of kissing Mao’s arse Mr. Greene was making a living out of parading fairy stories about the “new freedoms” and “dignity” of China. In both documentary films and such books as *Awakened China, Curtain of Ignorance*, and *The Wall Has Two Sides*, Greene regaled us with a vision of Chinese life so much “richer in content” than our selfish, alienated lives in the West. And what might appear to us in the West rather tyrannical or conformist was only so because the Chinese have a “different psychology” to ours, one obviously more altruistic and noble than our own brutal, selfish individualism (what price racism now?). This was the sort of swill Mr. Greene was feeding to dupes in the West.

But was Greene himself merely a dupe? There are some mistakes, as Ayn Rand said, that are simply too big to be made by accident. Mr. Greene has demonstrated a remarkable lack of even elementary journalistic common sense in his documentary productions. In *Political Pilgrims: Travels of Western Intellectuals to the Soviet Union, China and Cuba 1928-1978* (Oxford University Press, 1981) Professor Paul Hollander relates an interesting anecdote told by Jacques Marcuse, a long term resident of China. Marcuse attempted to explain to Greene a few realities about China:

“I tackled him about the VIP treatment he had been given on his last trip and about his description of the new Peking railway station. I ventured to suggest that that his good faith had been taken advantage of and that what he had written about the station was balderdash: about the station restaurant that stayed open day and night, about the tickets that could be ordered by telephone and were delivered promptly by messenger, about TV rooms, and ‘the two nurseries for infants, where mothers can leave their children under the care of young trained nurses.’ He [i.e. Greene] added, ‘in one of the nurseries I saw rows of little tots fast asleep in their cots.’”

The reality, Marcuse pointed out, was rather different:

“At the Peking railway station ... there was only one nursery. It was there alright, there was no denying it — it had glass doors through which one could look in. Throughout my sojourn in Peking, during which I had gone to that very station at least once or twice a week ... I had never known this nursery to be in use. Its doors were permanently shut and padlocked

“When I mentioned that to Felix Greene he could not believe it. Others who are present and had been in China for some time bore me out. I asked Greene whether he had been to the station again by himself and he said he had not. I reminded him that by his own admission in his book his visit had been prearranged and the deputy stationmaster was there waiting to greet him. I reminded him that the Chinese were masters at

stage management, but that was something he did not particularly wish to hear.

“After that session I saw no more of him, except from a distance when, for instance, he was filming Wang Fu Ching which had been cleared of traffic and down which a sprinkler was operating, a thing never witnessed before in broad daylight.”

HYPOCRISY

Yes, there are a lot of things Mr. Greene does not particularly want to hear about. Greene is more than a misguided advocate of “peace”, he is an advocate of *surrender*, of surrender to the totalitarian system he has spent so much time whitewashing. Furthermore, his work abounds with blatant contradictions. If “selfishness” and “grab what you can” materialism is wicked, why should Greene so welcome the transformations, slum-clearances, education etc., that could be supplied if Western defence budgets were spent on things other than defence? Greene is eager to decry any manifestations of “nationalism” and “patriotism” in the West, but was very enthusiastic about the nationalism of the Vietcong, about its goals of “independent national economy ... national democratic system of education” and “national army to defend the Fatherland”. Why didn’t Greene preach his pacifism and anti-nationalism to the Vietcong? Or indeed to the Soviet Union? Greene is more enthusiastic about enunciating the — to him — “self-evident” truth that it “is not the time to taunt and belittle our enemy, however provocative we consider them to be”. One would undoubtedly wait forever for that time to arrive if Greene had his way.

That Mr. Greene has some very clear politico-economic preferences is something he would rather gloss over in *Let There Be A World*. Although stressing the importance of inner spiritual transformation, he does at one point let slip the remark that “To substitute one social-economic system by another has, in some cases, brought great human benefit.” Indeed. But the question is, which one? At a meeting of the Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding which I attended in 1979, Mr. Greene (surrounded by sycophantic admirers) praised the “liberation of the productive powers of the people” achieved by the Chinese Communist Revolution. He must be mad. Whereas the partial attainment of capitalism in various countries has produced unprecedented productivity and prosperity, Chinese (and Soviet) Communism has produced only stagnation, famine and poverty. The system only survives by its parasitism upon Western capitalism, whose credits and technology it has been absorbing on a huge scale, and by the vigorous functioning of the black marketeers.

IRRATIONALITY

But one looks in vain for truth, logic or rationality in Greene’s work. His whole approach is to drown critical intelligence in a soggy puddle of emotionalism and mystical rhetoric. As if announcing a great discovery, he declares as one of his “self-evident propositions” that “the basic causes of our rivalries must be understood if the present direction is to be reversed.” But what *are* these causes? Greene ignores all rational, logical examination of world affairs, of the declared aims, for example, of the Soviet Union (see Ian Grieg, *They Mean What They Say*, Foreign Affairs Research Institute, London, 1982), or of the respective natures of different political and economic systems.

Western socialism has now largely abandoned its self-characterization as *scientific* socialism, in favour of anti-technological and primitivistic formulations. Greene exemplifies socialism’s degeneration and increasing manifestation of what social psychologist Chris Brand has called the “pietistic” mode. In place of reason Greene preaches and practices a sickly brew of quasi-religious mysticism, blind faith and alleged spiritual rebirths which will, by some never explained mechanism, transform the world and remove the causes of conflict. We are all sinners — but the all somehow excludes the caring, benevolent communists throughout the world.

There are times when it is appropriate to call a spade a bloody shovel. Felix Greene is a despicable apologist for communist totalitarianism to which he wishes the West to surrender. A thorough examination of the peace movement will uncover many of his sort.