

“Letter to the Editor”
by Milton Friedman
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Any Reaction to Friedman’s travels?

In 1975, I spent five days in Chile, on my way to Australia, as a guest of a private organization.

I gave a series of talks and met with many proponents and opponents of the Pinochet regime.

In addition, I had one meeting with General Pinochet and his fellow junta members. A month or so after I returned to the United States, I became the object of organized protests whenever and wherever I spoke, on campus and off campus, including the Nobel ceremonies in Stockholm in December 1976. The protestors accused me of unspeakable crimes for having been willing to give advice to so evil a government.

I have just returned from a 12-day stay in Communist China, where I was mostly the guest of governmental entities.

I gave a series of talks and met with many proponents and a very few opponents of the Communist regime. One talk in Beijing was to a group of 200 civil servants, some stationed in Beijing, others brought in for the occasion from other cities.

In addition, I had a two-hour private meeting with Zhao Zi Yang, the General Secretary of the Chinese Communist party.

Incidentally, I gave precisely the same advice to both Chile and China—stop inflation by controlling the quantity of money, free individual prices from control, privatize governmental activities, eliminate exchange control.

I doubt that anyone will deny that, in every relevant sense, the Chinese Communist regime has been and still is more repressive than the Chilean military junta, or that there is less chance that real democracy will emerge in China than in Chile.

Under the circumstances, should I prepare myself for an avalanche of protests for having been willing to give advice to so evil a government? If not, why not?

Milton Friedman

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