

De-Briefing Academics: Unpaid Intelligence Informants

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Introduction

Over the past half-century, I have been engaged in research, lectured and worked with social movements and leftist governments in Latin America. I interviewed US officials and think tanks in Washington and New York. I have written scores of books, hundreds of professional articles and presented numerous papers at professional meetings.

In the course, of my activity I have discovered that many academics are frequently engage in what government officials dub ‘de-briefing’! Academics meet and discuss their field-work, data collection, research finding, observations and personal contacts over lunch at the Embassy with US government officials or in Washington with State Department officials.

US government officials look forward to these ‘debriefings’; the academic provided useful access to information which they otherwise could not obtain from paid, intelligence agents or local collaborators.

Not all academic informants are very well placed or competent investigators. However, many provide useful insights and information especially on leftist movements, parties and leaders who are real or potential anti-imperialist adversaries.

US empire builders whether engaged in political or military activities depend on information especially regarding who to back and who to subvert; who should receive diplomatic support and who to receive financial and to military resources.

De-briefed academics identify ‘moderate’ and ‘radical’ adversaries, as well as personal and political vulnerabilities. Officials frequently exploit health problems or family needs to ‘turn’ leftists into imperial stool pigeons.

US officials are especially interested in academic gate-keepers who *exclude* ‘anti-imperialist’ critics, activists, politicians and government officials.

At times, US State Department officials claim to be sympathetic ‘progressives’ who oppose ‘Neanderthals’ in their institution, in order to elicit inside information from leftist academic informants.

Debriefing is a widespread practice and involves numerous academics from major universities and research centers, as well as non-governmental ‘activists’ and editors of academic journals and publications.

Academic participants in debriefing frequently do not publicize their reporting to the government. Most likely they share their reports with other academic informers. All claim they are merely sharing research and diffusing information for ‘science’ and to further ‘humane values’.

Academic informers always justify their collaboration as providing a clear and more balanced picture to 'our' policymakers, ignoring the predictable destructive outcomes likely to ensue.

Academics in the Service of Empire

Academic informants never study, collect research and publicize reports on US covert, overt and clandestine policies in defense of multi-nationals and Latin American elite which collaborate with empire builders.

US officials have no interest in 'debriefing' academics conducting anti-imperialist research.

US officials are keen to know any and all reports on 'movements from below': who they are, how much influence they have, their susceptibility to bribes, blackmail and invitations to the State Department, Disneyland, or the Wilson Center in D.C.

US officials fund academic research on militant trade unions, agrarian social movements, feminist and ethnic minorities engaged in class struggle, and anti-imperialist activists and leaders, as they all serve as targets for imperial repression.

The officials are also keen on academic reports on so-called 'moderate' collaborators who can be funded, advised and recruited to defend the empire, undermine the class struggle and split movements.

Academic informants are especially useful in providing personal and political information on Latin American leftwing intellectuals, academics, journalists, writers and

critics which allows US officials to isolate, slander and boycott anti-imperialists, as well as those intellectuals who can be recruited and seduced with foundation grants and invitations to the Kennedy Center at Harvard.

When US officials have a difficult time understanding the intricacies and consequences of ideological debates and factional divisions within leftist parties or regimes, ex-leftist academic informers, who collect documents and interviews, provide detailed explanations and provide officials with a political roadmap to exploit and exacerbate divisions and to guide repressive policies, which undermine adversaries engaged in anti-imperialist and class struggle.

The State Department works hand and glove with research centers and foundations in promoting journals which eschew all mention of imperialism and ruling class exploitation; they promote 'special issues' on 'class-less' identity politics, post-modern theorizing and ethnic-racial conflicts and conciliation.

In a study of the two leading political science and sociological journals over a period of fifty years they published less than .01% on class struggle and US imperialism

Academic informants have never reported on US government links to narco-political rulers.

Academic informants do not research widespread long term Israeli collaboration with death squads in Colombia, Guatemala, Argentina and El Salvador, in cases because

of their loyalties to Tel Aviv and in most cases because the State Department is not interested in debriefings which expose their allies and their joint complicity.

Academic Informants: What do they want and what do they get?

Academic informers engage in debriefing for various reasons. A few do so simply because they share the politics and ideology of the empire builders and feel it is their 'duty' to serve.

The great majority are established academics with ties to research centers who inform because it fattens their CV-- which helps secure grants, prestigious appointments and awards.

Progressive academics who collaborates have a Janus face approach; they speak at Leftist public conferences , especially to students and in private they report to the State Department.

Many academics believe they can influence and change government policy. They seek to impress self-identified 'progressive' officials with their inside knowledge on how to 'turn' Latin critics into moderate collaborators. They invent innocuous academic categories and concepts to attract graduate students to further collaboration with imperial colleagues.

The Consequence of Academic Debriefing

Former leftist academic informers are frequently cited by the mass media as a reliable and knowledgeable ‘expert’ in order to slander anti-imperialist governments, academics and critics.

Ex-leftist academics pressure rising scholars with a critical perspective to adopt ‘moderate’ reasonable critiques, to denounce and avoid anti-imperialist ‘extremists’ and to disparage them as ‘polemical ideologues’!

Academic informants in Chile helped the US Embassy identify neighborhood militants who were handed over to the secret police (DINA) during the Pinochet dictatorship.

US academic informants in Peru and Brazil provided the Embassy with research projects which identified nationalist military officials and leftist students who were subsequently purged, arrested and tortured.

In Colombia, US academic informers were active in providing reports on rural insurgent movements which led to massive repression. Academic collaborators provided detailed reports to the embassy in Venezuela on the grass roots movements and political divisions among Chavista government and military officials with command of troops.

The State Department financed academics working with NGO who identified and recruited middle class youth as street fighters, drug gangsters and the destitute to engage in violent struggles to overthrow the elected government by paralyzing the economy.

Academic reports on regime 'violence' and 'authoritarianism' served as propaganda fodder for the State Department to impose economic sanctions , impoverishing people, to foment a coup.US academic collaborators enlisted their latin colleagues to sign petitions urging rightwing regimes in the region to boycott Venezuela.

When academic informers are confronted with the destructive consequences of imperial advances they argue that it was not their 'intention'; that it was not their State Department contacts who carried out the regressive policies.The more cynical claim that the government was going to do their dirty work regardless of the debriefing.

Conclusion

What is clear in virtually all know experiences is that academic informers' 'debriefings' strengthened the empire-builders and complemented the deadly work of the paid professional operatives of the CIA, DEA and the National Security Agency.