

Policy hypocritical

I continue to be amazed by the inconsistencies displayed by certain of the local intelligentsia (I use the term liberally) when it comes to protesting human rights violations. The latest major crisis appears to be a boat full of Chilean logs. Now I am quite the opposite of a Pinochet fan, not to mention Somoza, Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, Marcos, Ian Smith, et al. But isn't it curious that our righteous efforts are directed towards those oppressive regimes which are either too weak to strike back or our allies?

I realize that self-flagellation is the latest Western craze, but is it not ludicrous to rant and rave (rightly so) about the racist policies of South Africa and yet ignore the greatest racist regime on the face of the earth? Is anyone aware that the Soviet Union's ethnic Russian population (about 50 percent of the total) holds sway over scores of minorities which suffer varying degrees of economic, religious and political oppression? When was the last free election in the Soviet Union? Or in the so-called People's Republic of China?

We are afraid to confront the really large human rights problems, so we make straw Hitler's out of dime-store dictators. These countries then become for us convenient moral resort areas where we can assuage our guilt complexes by punching bad guys who can't hit back, and so draw attention away from our own flagrantly lazy and self-centered lifestyles.

Yes, it is admirable to weep for the 41 whales who beached themselves this year. What about the tens of thousands who have died trying to escape the despots in Vietnam — who are carrying on in the best tradition of Thieu and the colonialists before him? What about the holocaust in Cambodia? By all means protect a boat full of logs from Chile. But also throw off your intellectual narrowness and dishonesty, and protest the 25 million metric tons of wheat which we are going to provide to the Soviet Union so that the government can continue its unworkable and patently oppressive economic policies.

Protest the laziness and greed which is

destroying our own society. It is wrong to protest only the evils with which you feel comfortable in doing so. You must, if you are to be taken seriously, fight all injustice. But first we must overcome the fear and hypocrisy within ourselves.

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Honesty has impact

I write this letter to Kathy Gunson and anyone else who still has an urge to understand rather than forget Viet Nam. Kathy's letter in last Tuesday's Emerald about elusive peace of mind was one of the most beautiful sharing experiences I've ever read. The editorial impact of her honesty takes in much more than our little world here at the University and what she reveals about herself should touch us all. Any of us could be Kathy Gunson, but very few will come close to understanding what she feels. Few of us realize how difficult it can be just to survive.

I was in the Navy during the early seventies and volunteered to go to Viet Nam. I spent only four months operating out of Da Nang. I never witnessed any of the carnage that Kathy saw, and only came close to becoming a casualty myself on one occasion. Six hours after the end of the 1972 Christmas cease-fire, I awoke to the sound of two almost simultaneous explosions. My roommate and I instantly rolled out from under our mosquito nets onto the floor, covering our heads with our arms as the dirt from the explosions rained down on our barracks. I felt strange, thinking that I was about to die, and after a few moments I realized how much I did not want to die as part of what was going on in Vietnam. I had not felt any fear going there; I never thought I might be making the biggest mistake of my life. I was still much the same person that I was prior to entering the service; innocent and ignorant.

I witnessed a different but still ugly side of the Viet Nam war from the one Kathy described. An unusual aspect of the Viet Nam war was that the majority of the Americans there were not involved in combat. Most were cooped up in military bases with enormous amounts of free time, no chance of having anything ap-

proaching a meaningful friendship with any Vietnamese and no preparation for the culture-shock that faced them everywhere. Being unable to absorb anything worthwhile from the new culture, the people I knew tried to find their own personal method for keeping sanity through the stagnant confusion of base life in Vietnam. For most it was some form of escape.

Most turned to booze, drugs and/or prostitution to divert or dull the mind to unfamiliar surroundings. I personally knew a young man who got hooked on heroin while stationed in Saigon, and put off going home because he knew he could not get cheap heroin back in the good old USA. When the Army finally made him board a plane back to the US, he disappeared. He was never seen again by any of his co-workers in Saigon.

I knew another guy who spent three months in Viet Nam, and during the next two years when I saw him almost every day, he was never completely sober. Not once in two years. These men were a kind of casualty too. They were not stupid degenerates either. They were typical young American men, just like the kind that I sit next to in class every day. They only wanted to escape.

Another form of escape that got little attention but was widespread and well used was prostitution. Thailand, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taipei, as well as Viet Nam, all expanded their facilities to cater to the American Servicemen. The incidence of venereal disease in the US reached its still epidemic proportions in a large part because of the thousands of GIs who went whoring and did not bother to get cleaned up before coming home. This seemingly incredible apathy toward one's self and others says much about the inability of so many of our GIs to cope with what happened to them in South East Asia. Yes, we lost our innocence.

I share Kathy's frustration at trying to make my family understand what was happening there. Descriptive words do not do the job. Only first-hand experience can reveal some facets of human nature, and I would not wish some of my experiences on anyone.

America had noble goals when she became involved in Southeast Asia: stop the spread of communism; set an exam-

ple for the rest of the free world; bring peace to a people who had only known war for over thirty years. We failed on every count. Failures are not greeted with red carpets and marching bands. We did not deserve any accolades.

For my part in this affair, I regret my lost innocence but have a hope for the memories that so bitterly cover the idealistic ignorance of my youth. Those who survived this terrible mistake must remember, and remind the young and forgetful, whenever necessary. Ignorance of what we are getting into caused a horror story. If such a situation ever begins developing again the survivors must speak out. This responsibility continues for all of us. Clarence Darrow once said the bad thing about history is that it repeats itself. We shared in a tragic blunder once. Let's hope the sober voice of experience can prevent a repetition.

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RCYB oppressed

"Universities came under the control of aristocratic interests for whom these institutions functioned...as centers of legal training and bureaucratic advancement. Such dominance...undermined the ability of universities to pursue true scholarship." (1500), Jan de Vries.

Having recently moved to Eugene from an area of the country beset by political apathy and stagnation, we looked forward with eager anticipation to our arrival here. Eugene and the University's reputation, in particular, for political awareness and activity — as well as a reputation for supporting many diverse interests and opinions — reached us even in our small town in upstate New York.

To our displeasure and extreme dissatisfaction, this open forum for free exchange of ideas and political opinions is apparently lacking in a fundamental sense.

We deplore the inexcusable treatment of radically affiliated citizens, such as the members of the RCYB, by the University students and staff. The recent article printed in the Emerald (10/18) points out the narrow minded and jaded epidemic that characterizes the mentality of those who knowingly and unknowingly maintain the status quo.

Apparently, Mr. Spencer does not have the confidence in his own political views to allow those differing opinions to be freely expressed. This mentality is the same as that which has indicted 17 members and supporters of the RCP (known collectively as the Mao Tse Tung Defendants) on felony charges and sentenced them to 241 years each in prison.

The crux of the matter is not whether the RCYB or the RCP may have broken the law but that the oppressive response of those entrenched in the status quo only mirrors fear, paranoia and the general instability of the system. In addition, this appalling reaction occurred at the University, a supposed forum for the liberal interplay and free exchange of ideas. The handling of this issue by Emerald reporter David Steinman provided inadequate coverage of the news in that the substance of the conflict was not addressed.

We are not members of the RCP or the RCYB and in fact disagree with many of their tactics and political solutions, yet we do support not only their right to express their views but also the rights of individuals to express those views which pose a potential threat to the status quo. Without this necessary conflict, we dangerously spread the narrow-minded and jaded epidemic that already sustains the totalitarian and monolithic status quo within which we live today. Political oppression must therefore cease.

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theirs

