

Grenada changes the nature of conflict

Not since the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962 have the "Superpowers" — the United States and the Soviet Union — been so eyeball-to-eyeball as they are now over the invasion in Grenada. Neither have blinked.

The number of "buffer" third world countries appear to be diminishing and it may herald a new, more ominous, era of U.S. and Soviet relations.

A "buffer" country is one where U.S. and Soviet influences are removed by enough distance as to not come in direct conflict.

An example is U.S. influence in El Salvador and Honduras. These countries are fighting with Nicaragua under the auspices of the United States. Nicaragua is resisting with the blessing and aid of the Soviets through their minion Cuba.

In Central America U.S. advisers don't exchange gunfire with Cuban or Soviet advisers. Not that it hasn't occurred — or may occur in the future. But, at present, the "Superpowers" have small countries do their sniping.

As these "buffer" countries grow more scarce the incidence of direct U.S. and Soviet conflict increases. This is not diplomatic conflict — the veritable war of words — which has waxed and waned over discernible instances, but still has maintained a modicum of consistency. This is armed conflict, the last resort when words fail.

The U.S. invasion of Grenada, the presence of Soviet technicians and subsequent armed resistance by more than 600 Cubans on the island, is an inkling of the direct conflicts of the future. The U.S. Army Rangers and U.S. Marines invading the tiny Caribbean island came under fire from the Grenadians and the Cubans.

The Cuban resistance was understandably belligerent. Cuban Premier Fidal Castro, by telling the Cubans to never surrender, all but asked them to fight to the death.

By Thursday, what has come to be called the battle of Grenada (which must place it in the annals of warfare underneath the Falklands war) was nearing an end. In Washington U.S. military sources were saying only small pockets of resistance remained.

Those pockets of resistance were gaining more in the propaganda war than in the ground war. "At the end, a group of six comrades, embracing our flag... sacrificed themselves for the motherland," a Cuban news agency said.

Rhetoric such as this is frightening, and reminiscent of German chauvanism of the late 1930s.

The Soviets have been icy and almost silent. Predictably they called the U.S. invasion an act of aggression and demanded an immediate withdrawal of U.S. troops.

The Soviet statement echoes almost word for word the statement issued by the Carter administration when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan.

But Grenada is different — the tiny island might just ignite that spark to explode that metaphoric powder keg on which our world is said to balance.

Grenada is not the only fuse dangling above the match. If we may reiterate a note from an earlier editorial: "The situation in Grenada must be placed alongside the situation in Central America. There are U.S. military personnel in Honduras and El Salvador." Add to this the U.S. Marines in Lebanon and you'll get the distinct impression the Reagan administration is fighting wars on three (and possibly more) fronts.

Are the Soviets any different? Probably not.

The circumstances of the past few weeks have shocked, angered, grieved and bewildered most of us. Only a few people would accept their prejudiced stances and knee-jerk responses. The events have nearly overwhelmed us.

A blanket condemnation from a pacifist standpoint is all too pat and simple. We could fall right or left and editorialize yea or nay — but what understanding of the events would that achieve?

Deep down we feel the military events have been running away from any sort of logical reason. And like many people we have become less certain of where we as a nation are heading. What is certain is the interests of the "Superpowers" are getting closer and closer, eyeball-to-eyeball. Let's hope someone blinks and starts talking again.

Strangers on a strange campus

When the late singer/songwriter Jim Morrison purred out the words to his song "People are Strange," Eugene couldn't have been too far from his mind. In my four years here, I've become convinced of that.

Some of the most bizarre characters I've ever seen, I've seen here in Eugene. Most of them on this campus.

without malice harry esteve

Walking to a history class in Gilbert Hall two years ago, my attention was drawn to a small but burly fellow, sporting a mass of wild, furry hair and a ragged beard. His thick head of hair and his brisk gait gave him a young look, but closer inspection revealed deepening age lines, suggesting late forties, possibly fifties.

What caught my glance was his somewhat bizarre behavior. With each quick step, he stiffly swung one arm out until it was exactly perpendicular to his body, and then turned his wrist over. As he abruptly lowered that arm, the other shot out and the wrist turned over in the same manner. In each fist he gripped a miniature barbell, probably weighing about five pounds.

I watched for a moment, deciding the chap was simply practicing his morning martial arts ritual. Except later that day I saw the guy again, walking past what used to be Burton's restaurant on 13th Avenue. He was still doing his thing with the barbells, walking at the same swift pace.

The next day I saw him again — still at it, only this time sporting a Chesire-like grin. In fact I would catch glimpses of him here and there for the rest of the week. Every time he had his barbells and was in the middle of his Kung-Fu march.

He grinned a lot, but I never heard him say anything, which is in stark contrast to a surly character who visited us three years ago.

It was late fall. I was crunching through the red fallen oak leaves along Greek row on Alder Street, when around a corner slouched a man with a battered stocking cap pulled flat against his forehead.

He was talking, and as I was the only one around, I assumed he was talking to me.

He wasn't. His monologue went something like this "(Mild oath.) Get a job, pigs!" Then a string of sentences muttered unintelligibly. Then: "(Crude

obscenity!) Try looking at reality, you (really scuzzy obscenity)!"

He brushed past me indignantly, mouthing something sordid. His eyes were wild and his forehead had broken into a sweat on this relatively chilly morning.

We were both headed to campus, so I was able to observe unobtrusively for several minutes. Without letup, and in his loudest baritone, the ill-tempered man cursed the hordes of students passing between classes.

His hands shot skyward, invoking the very gods to look down with contempt on this mass of unthinking, unfeeling humanity — college students. "Do you ever question why you're here? Do you ever realize how worthless you really are?"

He never looked at anyone in particular, never stopped at the EMU to preach his misanthropic philosophy. He was content to wade among us in his stocking cap, and his wild eyes, effusing his loathing for our kind. He hung around for a week or two, and I got the feeling he was beginning to like us in spite of himself.

Speaking of stocking caps, I'm reminded of a tall thin stranger who drifted about campus most of last year. His distinguishing features were a thick wool stocking cap that he wore over his eyes, and a hefty overcoat that he wore indoors or out, regardless of the ambient temperature. Whenever I saw him he was looking at the ground, presumably because that was all he could see.

What is it about this campus that attracts these folks? Maybe it's the guaranteed audience. Maybe it's the cheap snacks in the Fishbowl and the comfortable couches in the EMU lounges.

My guess is that it's the hope we all feel at some time during our time here — the hope that somewhere among the faceless throng, one face will come forward and reflect our own.

All this comes as a result of a gentleman I spied Monday, this time as I was leaving an existentialist literature class in Gilbert Hall. Striding down 13th Avenue, past the stately columns of Johnson Hall, under the turning oak trees outside Chapman, was a balding man in a grey, three-piece wool suit.

As he walked, he pushed a toy duck along, using a thin plastic rod. The duck was one of those that flapped along on rubber webfeet, and squawked with each revolution. What piqued me was the look on the man's face — concerned, perhaps even distraught because he was in a hurry and his duck wasn't waddling fast enough.

So I decided to write this column.

letters

Satire

I am writing in reference to a recent letter of mine that was published on Oct. 26. Since the letter was published, I have been involved in some rather disheartening confrontations from other individuals over the content of the letter. I would like at this opportunity to clarify my intent in writing it.

Simply, my letter on the U.S. intervention in Lebanon was a satire of our military involvement there. In the original letter I submitted that I had intentionally misspelled the word "Lebanon" to read "Lebanam." The changing of the last three letters, I had hoped, would have certain implications (those being to resurrect memories of Vietnam, or Nam, as it was often called).

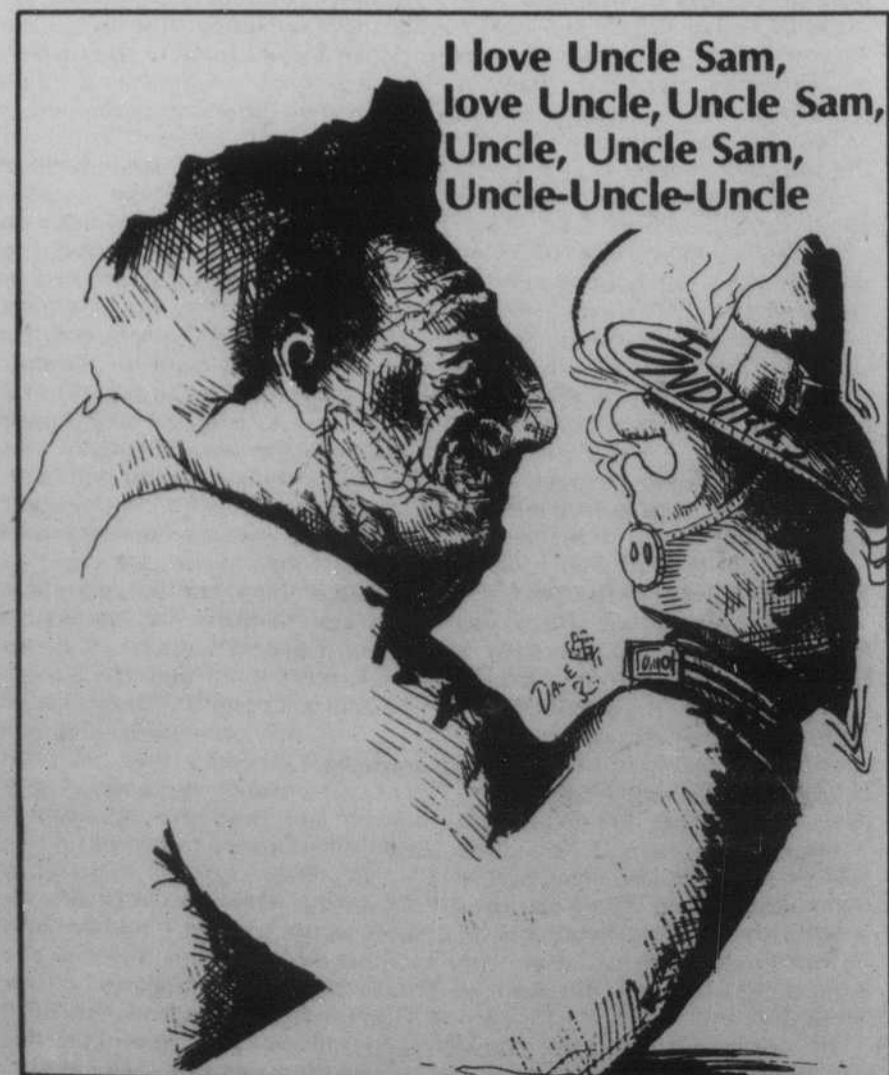
The Emerald editorial staff, in accordance with their editing policy, rewrote the word to read as "Lebanon," "Lebanam" not being

an actual word. My purpose of pointing this out is not to chastise or denounce the Emerald. They were within their bounds in editing my letter. They felt my satire was a little too subtle and that many people would merely interpret the misspelling as a typing error.

I write this letter to make my

political standpoint clear to all those uncertain of it. The letter was a satire and not meant to be interpreted for its literal content. Personally, I see Lebanon as a horrible repeat performance of the carnage seen 20 years ago in Vietnam.

Kirk Carter
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