

Verdict won't deter sanctuary efforts

Despite last week's guilty verdict against eight church workers charged with conspiring to smuggle illegal aliens into the United States, the sanctuary movement will not be broken. While the government claimed victory, the case only proved the inherent injustice of current U.S. refugee policy.

Sanctuary began in 1980-81 as the rising tide of Central American aliens found themselves unable to meet U.S. requirements for alien status. Religious workers began aiding refugees in open defiance of immigration laws. Since then the movement has been endorsed by more than 300 local churches, 11 universities, 19 cities, the state of New Mexico and several major religious denominations.

At issue is the distinction between economic and political refugees. In the Cold War mentality of the Reagan administration, all refugees are not alike. Those fleeing "communist" nations are classified as "political" refugees and given preferential treatment.

Guatemalan and Salvadoran citizens, however, are labeled "economic" refugees and denied asylum with few exceptions. Less than 3 percent of Guatemalans and Salvadorans applying are granted political asylum in the United States.

This distinction belies evidence the Central American refugees face persecution, often death, from their government. In 1984, Amnesty International found 30 percent of all refugees deported to El Salvador were murdered.

From the outset, the government limited the scope of the trial to proving if the defendants had violated U.S. immigration laws by smuggling and harboring illegal aliens. Thus numerous issues relevant to the defendant's motivation were barred from the courtroom.

These included evidence or testimony concerning the defendants' religious beliefs, the Refugee Act of 1980, human rights and refugee statutes signed by the United States, and political conditions in Guatemala and El Salvador.

The number of political murders and disappearances in El Salvador has averaged 30 a month since January 1985, according to Americas Watch. The majority of the killings and disappearances of students, peasants and opposition labor and political leaders are attributed to the armed forces. But the government has not been immune to the threat of violence either.

Last October, members of Salvadoran president Jose Napoleon Duarte's family fled to this country in a U.S. military plane. Ten members of his family who have fled El Salvador now legally reside in the United States. Their reason? They fear for their personal safety, the same argument unsuccessfully used by most Salvadorans.

Such selective application of asylum regulations makes a mockery of the law, and can only invite further violations of immigration statutes. Repression is repression, no matter the political persuasion of a particular nation, a point lost on the administration.

If the government wishes to stem the flow of aliens, it should end its support of repressive forces in the region. As long as death squads roam the countryside, Central American citizens will seek refuge in the United States. And they will continue to receive the aid of the sanctuary movement.

The sanctuary workers admit their actions are illegal, but they are challenging the morality of immigration laws. Their actions also serve to challenge the basis of the inherently violent U.S. involvement in Central America.



Letters

Real heroes

While agreeing in the main with your editorial on the American bombing of Libya, I disagree with your blanket condemnation of Israel and linkage with South African policies and "Latin American death squads."

The term, "Israeli intransigence," is cliché, inaccurate and incomplete, and works against the policy you would favor, namely flexibility and reconciliation.

There are four major positions held within Israel: messianic; nationalistic (both of these might appear somewhat inflexible); pragmatic, the most dominant view which sees occupation as the worst of possible choices; and spiritual, in which the moral and spiritual character of Israeli society is given precedence over borders and land.

Since all of our major media is preoccupied with the violence and sensationalism of the Middle East, it is difficult to know about the numerous and significant acts of peace and cooperation currently taking place in Israel between Muslims, Christians and Jews. The real heroes are those coming together from the respective

camp to meet and talk, despite their criticism of the opposing system and loyalty to their own.

This is the only approach which can create options for peace. Let's hear more about Neve Shalom where young Muslims, Jews and Christians live and study together; Interns for Peace, a peace program bringing American college youth to work and live in Arab and Jewish villages; or the dialogue going on, in and out of Israel between PLO supporters and members of Israel's Knesset.

Rabbi Hanan Sills
Eugene

How extreme?

Society has always had its favorite group to hate. In the South it used to be the Negro. In Nazi Germany it was the Jew. Now the favorite group in America to hate is the "born-again" Christian.

Graffiti on the walls bears evidence: "Death to the Christians," "Christ-busters," and "Christians to the lions." They are dubbed as stupid, narrow-minded and subversive by professors and students alike. They are forbidden from having "too many meetings" in the dorms, are dubbed "money-hungry" when they ask for donations.

Yet no one complains when PBS solicits for funds or when OSPIRG asks for and gets \$45,000 a year from student pockets. If Negroes or Jews were victimized in graffiti or through discrimination, they would have recourse.

But the "born-again" Christian, a minority in America, has nowhere to go. Why do people "hate" Jerry Falwell and pelt Brother Jed? Do they hate the man or Christ in the man?

Christ said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest..." He was killed for preaching a message of God's love toward man. He also said, however, "All men will hate you because

of me..." Will this country become so extreme that they will start killing a group, this time Christians, for the amusement of the masses?

I don't understand — it looks like it may happen. Yet why does a message of love receive hatred, blood and death in return? Does anyone know?

Brandon Shepard
Graduate

Editor's note

A letter in Thursday's "Letters" column entitled "Social deviants" was not written by Jon Niedermeyer, of the Beta Theta Pi fraternity. Niedermeyer brought identification to the Emerald Thursday, which was different than that shown Monday, the day the letter was delivered to the Emerald.

The original identification shown belonged to Eric Niedermeyer. Jon's brother who attended the University but no longer lives in Oregon. The person who delivered the letter used that identification, saying "Jon" was his nickname, according to our receptionist. In addition, the signature on the letter and Jon's signature on all of his identification were markedly different.

The Emerald reaffirms its policy of requiring current identification for all letters. Unfortunately, the identity of the author of the letter is unknown. We encourage the writer to assume responsibility for his or her letter.

We have already received a significant response to the letter, and anticipate further comment. The Emerald will attempt to print all of these remarks. However, in fairness to Niedermeyer all reference to his name will be removed in any response.

Friday, May 9, 1986

Oregon Daily Emerald

The Oregon Daily Emerald is published Monday through Friday except during exam week and vacations by the Oregon Daily Emerald Publishing Co., at the University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon, 97403.

The Emerald operates independently of the University with offices on the third floor of the Erb Memorial Union and is a member of the Associated Press.

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News and Editorial: 686-5511
Display Advertising and Business: 686-3712
Classified Advertising: 686-4343
Production: 686-4381
Circulation: 686-5511