

Apartheid weakens, freedom still denied

Life imprisonment. Such a severe sentence in this country would occur only after an unthinkable crime such as murder.

In South Africa, however, citizens who vocally protest the actions of their government can be sentenced to life imprisonment. Heck, if we employed such punishment for protesters, half of the University would be stamping license plates by now.

Last week in Soweto, eight of the country's most prominent political prisoners were released after spending up to 26 years in jail. All but one of the freed men are members of the outlawed African National Congress. Their liberation, made possible by President F.W. de Klerk, is rumored to be influenced by talk of increased sanctions against the country if the government continues its senseless discrimination against the black majority.

One of the most well-known political prisoners, Nelson Mandela, was not released. His freedom seems to be imminent, but de Klerk is obviously testing the waters for the threat of an uprising before he allows for the release of Mandela.

All the men freed last week are at least 60 years old. They include Walter Sisulu, a former secretary general of the ANC and a close friend of Mandela. Although the released prisoners are elderly and would likely seem tired of fighting, they vowed to continue their fight until Mandela and other prisoners are released, the ANC is legalized and the government lifts the state of emergency in the country.

Besides the release of the political prisoners, another promising signal was the fact that the ANC was allowed to hold a news conference in celebration of the prisoners' freedom. This conference was the first such ANC gathering allowed in the country since the organization was banned in 1960.

The fact that some of the most vocal protesters of the government were released, coupled with the allowance of an ANC news conference in the country, are both encouraging signs that the South African government is rethinking its policies concerning the black majority. However, these steps are not large enough to be satisfying. Nelson Mandela remains behind bars, and blacks are still denied such basic freedoms as the right to vote or to have full citizenship in the country of their birth.

The men who were released last week seemed quite adamant that, despite their ages and the length of their struggle, they wouldn't stop fighting until their demands for equality are recognized. If goes without saying that their freedoms are long past overdue.

These political activists are all past the age of retirement. They should be allowed to rest.



Honecker's fall another step in process

If you heard a dull thud last Wednesday, it was another section of the Iron Curtain falling down.

Erich Honecker, the man who brought you the Berlin Wall, outdated socialist doctrine and the rebirth of Stalinism, was removed from his post as the East German Communist party head.

Honecker, 77, was deposed because of "health reasons." He is rumored to be suffering from such maladies as gall bladder failure and cancer, but the real reason for his removal was his stubborn refusal to move toward democracy like the other Eastern European countries.

While Poland, Hungary and the Soviet Union have remolded their governments, East Germany has stubbornly remained firmly entrenched in Marxism. Honecker's removal is just another step in the loosening of socialist ties.

Honecker was replaced with a 52-year-old protege, Egon Krenz. Krenz, who was in charge of state security, is also the youngest member of the ruling Politburo. While still considered a Communist hard-liner, he took a softer stance toward protesters than Honecker would have liked.

Does this scenario sound familiar? An old, entrenched leader stripped of power

and replaced by a younger, more idealistic man. Shades of Gorbachev all over again.

Before you think the Communist bloc is crumbling, wait a moment. Krenz is still considered a true socialist, and it is too early to tell whether he will be the kind of leader Gorbachev is.

Encouraging signs, yes. Definite signs, no.

The straw that finally broke Honecker's back was the huge amounts of workers who fled to the West in the last several weeks. As many as 123,000 people have emigrated, sharply undercutting the East German working population. Honecker's refusal to even listen to the protesters, let alone open up his country's borders, led to his fall.

East Germany is, economically, the most successful Eastern European country. But with many highly skilled workers fleeing the country, Communist Party leaders what effect it would have. And with Honecker still in office, the exodus was expected to continue. So the other party leaders cut bait in an effort to placate the protesters.

Krenz's accession to power will not likely result in any immediate democratic moves. The Berlin Wall will probably not be dismantled overnight, and a combined East-West Germany is not in the future.

But you've got to start somewhere.

Letters

Imagination

President Brand's comments on the protest at the opening of the new science complex (ODE, Oct. 18) come as no surprise. Imagine the consequences if a president of a university were to applaud rebellious activity.

Imagine is about all we can do.

David Edgar
Student

Horrible

In regard to the Oct. 15 science complex dedication protest article, I was pleased to read that the *Emerald* editors exposed the "military research on animals."

This entire issue is horrible. Why just last week while on my regular nightly stroll, I heard a rustling behind some shrubbery. To my disgust, I

witnessed rabbits and squirrels dressed in full combat gear practicing nightly military maneuvers. I am confident these animals were not acting on their own volition.

I have lived in or near a forest for more than 20 years; I have never seen a pistol-packing bunny. I was born in an America where bunnies run free on Easter and squirrels collect nuts.

To live in a day, an age where forest creatures are compelled to bear arms for a country whose policies they may or may not believe in is abhorrent! Stop military research on animals now!

Enrique Arias
Eugene

Graffiti

Why is it that some element of scum insists on defacing the University campus with graffiti?

ti? I call you/them scum because this is vandalism pure and simple.

Vandalism, especially on an institution of learning, is appalling and nauseating.

These actions have now become the burden of the University in the form of clean-up. The cost of this clean-up will have to be absorbed by University funds, and as a paying-member of this University, I am irate.

So you have an opinion, eh? Too bad you've screwed yourself by using a form of communication that no one respects, and therefore will not respect whatever has been graffitied. In fact, it makes observers like me look down upon your opinion, even though I may agree with it.

So, in a nutshell, your vandalism is detrimental to your cause. Have you ever heard the phrase, "you're beating your head against a wall?"

Since I'm an intelligent, re-

sponsible citizen (not scum), might I suggest expressing your opinions in another manner, such as in a classroom, a speech, a letter, or at a public-interest meeting. Do I need to explain what these are?

Hopefully in the future, myself and the rest of the University population will have a choice of whether or not I want to read your self-absorbed opinions.

Vanessa Mongeon
Architecture

New Zoo

It is my belief that a publication such as the *Emerald* has a

responsibility to inform and support the best interests of its readers. This being the case, I was disheartened to learn that you chose not to report the non-profit New Zoo in even a single issue of your daily paper.

Not only is the New Zoo a wonderful education experience, it addresses timely and critical issues that are left consistently unresolved. Ignoring the dedicated and innovative work of the New Zoo as it grapples with the complexities of an environmental conservation is a serious injustice to your community of readers.

Beth Hopkins
Eugene

Letters Policy

The *Emerald* will attempt to print all letters containing comments on topics of interest to the University community. Comments must be factually accurate and refrain from personal attacks on the character of others.