

## What would Hitler think of the press?

Forty-eight hours after the ground offensive began in the Persian Gulf, tidbits of actual news finally started to make their way to the United States.

There are several developments in the press coverage of the war that should worry citizens. The press's complacency toward Pentagon restrictions is one example. In the face of a popular war, where most citizens approve of press restrictions, it would not be economically sound to strongly oppose the military's policies by circumventing restrictions. The loss of readers and viewers plays heavily into the decision-making of media corporations.

But the most frightening aspect of the war coverage is the public's approval of the lack of real reporting. Reporting means finding a story yourself and avoiding dependence on official sources.

No one wants the safety of allied forces to be breached. But it is also dangerous to have the press under the direct control of the government or the military. In the case of press pools, reporters go where the military wants them to go, speak to whom the military wants them to speak. If they do find an "out of the way" source, the interview is overseen by a military "minder" (watchdog). Soldiers are not going to say anything to a reporter that might get them in trouble while there is a minder present.

In Vietnam, reporters were allowed to go where they wanted on an independent basis. They had a list of ground rules to follow, and reporters or publications who breached these ground rules had their credentials taken away. The press censored itself, without interference from the military.

One example occurred early in the Vietnam conflict before U.S. troops were involved in a major way. In January 1965, a *Time* reporter found out the Marines were going to land in Da Nang and were going to engage in the war. The Marines were not landing on an enemy-held beach. They were simply arriving in the country and would be deployed elsewhere. The report was proof that President Johnson was going to step up the United States' role in Vietnam.

Editors for *Time* checked with official sources in Washington and killed the story because the "highest sources in the land" denied it. A few months later two battalions of Marines landed in Da Nang.

The military lied, not to protect the safety of American troops, but to hide the fact that the United States was enlarging the scope of its involvement. It lied, or if you prefer euphemisms, withheld the truth, for political, not security reasons.

Relying on one source of information, in this case the military, leaves the press open to manipulation. Even people who have no respect for the press should understand the value of having other sources confirm or deny the military's claims.

A perfect example is taking place right now. Iraq has claimed its troops have been ordered to withdraw. Official U.S. military reports say there have been only slight indications this is true. But the military does not want Hussein merely to withdraw. It will be satisfied with nothing but a complete and humiliating Iraqi surrender. It would not further the military's goal to report that Iraqis were massively withdrawing and U.S. troops were firing on them anyway. So can the official reports be believed? Because any Iraqi retreats could easily be hidden from press pools it is necessary for reporters independent of the military to confirm or deny official reports.

The government and the Defense Department have lied in the past, and will do so in the future. To dismiss the military's past performance as something that could not happen again is extremely naive.

As far as we have been told things are going remarkably well for the allies. During the good times press restrictions do not seem to be a problem. But if there were problems, would the military tell us? Most likely they would not. That is the danger of relying on a source that has an interest in what information gets out. Americans have dangerously fallen into a trap of trusting the military and the government too much.

If Adolf Hitler surfaced today in American politics, he would find that the American public is perfect fodder for his propaganda techniques.



## LETTERS

### Crossed the line

We, as individuals and organizations, would like to express our concern in regards to the current issue of the *Oregon Commentator*.

Specifically, we would like to address the back cover of the February issue where there is a picture of a hippie (presumably African-American) holding a molotov cocktail. The person is on a highway crossing sign.

We would passionately defend the rights and freedoms granted to all individuals and organizations regarding speech and the use of the media. We would never argue that ideologies contrary to ours should be repressed in any way.

We simply feel the *Oregon Commentator* crossed a line when they objectified a minority group of people. We are afraid that these messages do nothing but legitimize and promote violence against a group of people.

We realize a goal of the *Oregon Commentator* is to outrage a specific group of people on this campus. Well, they've won.

We're outraged. However, we would question if anyone really wins when a group of people is attacked.

Jon Organ, EMU Board  
Caitilin Twain, OSPIRG  
Cynthia Brown, OU/UES Sister University Project  
Priscilla Wilbourn, Student Insurgent  
Phil Nebergall, Survival Center  
Mary Ager, Student Campaign for Disarmament

### Good guy

I am writing concerning your lead article (*ODE*, Feb. 15) on science research at the University.

While being interviewed by your reporter for this article I emphasized my concern for accuracy and offered to check a draft of the proposed article for possible errors of fact. Your reporter failed to take advantage of this offer.

I was, therefore, interested to

note that Vice President John Moseley was quoted in the article as saying that, "You get a sense of community by being smaller people working together across department lines." I, myself, was quoted as stating that "People who practice science recognize individuals who do good in science ..."

A reader, combining the remarks attributed to Moseley and to me, would reasonably conclude that the high ranking of the University in the recent "Science Watch" survey was due to the fact that "small people do good."

Brian W. Matthews  
Professor  
Physics and Molecular Biology

### Dwight's ditty

Back in 1953 Dwight D. Eisenhower had this to say about war: "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies a theft from those who are cold and not clothed."

"The world in arms is not spending money alone. It is spending the sweat of its laborers, the genius of its scientists, the hopes of its children. This is not a way of life at all in any true sense."

"Under the clouds of war, it is humanity hanging on a cross of iron."

Gena Gerard  
Sociology/Political Science

### Same paper

I'd like to compliment the creator of the "blow-up doll/punching bag" and Patriot vibrator poster on their wry socio-political humor.

I thought they were "right on target" in "taking aim at" the sexism and violence in our society. It's ironic that these fliers were mentioned in an article on hate crimes.

And it's ironic that the same paper that carried this article on the front page had an ad for Jiggles' "amateur nite" on the back.

Marcia Dibble  
Eugene

### Terrible tees

I was strolling through the dubiously decorated Gateway Mall the other day when I was halted by a T-shirt display.

These, of course, were not just ordinary T-shirts. They were examples of the new commercialized fashion slime that has so recently come into vogue: The patriotic T-shirt.

You know the kind: There's one with a flag on it that says, "U Can't Touch This," and there's one advertised on TV that reads, "This is Your Wakeup Call, Mr. Hussein!" Whenever I see these garments, I can't decide whether to laugh or cry.

But the T-shirt I saw at the mall takes the cake. It said, "Operation Desert Storm: Feel the Thunder!" It was so appalling I couldn't think about feeling angry.

Hard as it was to believe, the words on the T-shirt looked just like a movie slogan. Apparently the war is no longer being marketed as a sporting event, but as an action/adventure film as well.

I don't support this war and T-shirts like these contradict themselves in that they don't support it either. They just cheapen the values that the American troops are supposedly fighting for in the Gulf.

Jenny Smith  
Liberal Arts

### Volume level

Regarding the peace march through the EMU Sunday night (Feb. 24):

At 8:15 p.m. it seemed much like my pencil about that time: pointless.

And the EMU-speak at the table I was at still seemed something like, "Yeah, yeah, war bad, peace good, can I borrow your pencil and 15 cents for coffee?"

While I admire the effort to raise the consciousness level in the EMU I have a feeling that the only thing that got raised was the volume level on many, many Walkmans.

Damien Lee Williams  
Journalism