

Reagan ignores Vietnam lesson

Last week the Reagan administration blasted those opposed to contra funding, virtually labeling half of Congress "communist." This week Reagan is praising those who support his military aid proposal. He hailed the "end of the post-Vietnam syndrome" and said he sees a "reconstruction of an anti-communist coalition" in Congress.

Congratulations, Mr. President. You seem to think that you have successfully recreated the '50 s, complete with anti-communist hysteria. You *have* managed to completely bury any sensible debate with Ramboesque rhetoric, and at least in your own head have managed to transform an unpopular band of murderers and rapists into a glorious army fighting for the freedom of the world from that terrible communist menace lapping bloodily at the shores of our angelic and God-fearing land. Even most of Congress won't buy that, and you've sold them some large parcels of similar swampland before.

In one case I must agree with our president, however. He is right, this country seems to be contracting a bad case of *pre-Vietnam syndrome*. Symptoms include the aforementioned red-baiting, widespread glorification of the military in films and the ubiquitous Army ads, draft registration, saber-rattling on the Honduran side of the Nicaragua border, Reagan's three-hour victorious liberator tour of Grenada, FBI infiltration of sanctuary churches and Central America solidarity groups. But most of all, the tendency is to forget or ignore the lessons taught us by our blundering intervention in Vietnam: The United States has no right, obligation or practical interest in practicing military domination in someone else's country.

Hypocrisy of the week: Video tapes made by the Marcos family while they were in power in the Philippines show Marcos' son and others at an extravagant party hamming it up while singing "We are the World." More appropriate lyrics might be: "We are the dictators, we cause the hunger, we party while the millions starve." By the way, lest anyone forget, *Marcos was supported by the United States*, and supplied many millions of dollars in military aid to carry out his repressive poli-

against the tide

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cies. U.S. companies made out well in the Philippines under Marcos, because U.S. business interests lie with repressive economic systems in the Third World. Let's not forget the U.S. historic role there as we watch President Corazon Aquino try to pull the country together under the nose of a very strong military and in the grips of a ravaged economy and plundered treasury.

Encouraging sign of the month: I attended the March for Women's Lives in Washington, D.C., this past weekend, along with 80,000 other citizens concerned with abortion rights and reproductive choice. The Reagan administration has been systematically chipping away at these rights, ultimately threatening to make abortion illegal again. What was most encouraging about the march was the widespread awareness, in the speeches, in the signs, in the songs and chants, that women's right to reproductive choice is merely a part of the struggle. Concerns about nuclear arms, civil rights, hunger, economic justice, self-determination in Latin America and the environment were heard. There seemed to be an important synthesis taking place in the minds of those attending, a realization that the oppression of women, the oppression of workers, the poor, other cultures, Lesbians and gay men, blacks and the people of what is unfortunately known as the Third World has led to a domination of not only white Christian males, but white Christian male ideas and white Christian male solutions to the exclusion of all others. We will not let this economic, physical and intellectual domination go unchallenged, the marchers seemed to say. Let this be one step on the road to a saner world.

Jenny Brown is a UF sophomore majoring in philosophy who is irate at a misprint in her last column. 80 percent of Americans supported the nuclear freeze in 1982, not 8 percent!

Military response is a U.S. obligation

You can't imagine how frightened and angry I become when hearing opinions like those expressed by Jenny Brown in her column on March 13. I assume her intentions are good, but it would be misleading to characterize her views as naive, for they are simply ignorant and dangerous.

She speaks negatively of "widespread glorification of the military in films." What is Miss Brown suggesting, that we vilify the military? Should we be *ashamed* of the armed forces and of the members of the ROTC on campus? I have the distinct impression that, if Miss Brown had attended college during the '60s, her column would have referred to the police as "pigs."

Miss Brown also voices her disapproval over contra funding and referred satirically to "that terrible communist menace lapping bloodily at the shores of our angelic and God-fearing land." Is she implying that communism is *not* a menace?

I assume so, for she later champions "self-determination in Latin America." Is that what she considers the brutal government currently in charge of Nicaragua, self-determined? What is Miss Brown afraid the United States might do? Force (gasp!) free elections upon the people of Latin America? Doesn't she understand that democracy *is* self-determination?

But, of course, we have a problem with definition. She does not mean self-determination in the sense of "letting the people decide." She means it in the sense of "non-interference by the U.S." The sad result of such "self-determination" is that the U.S.S.R. is given free rein to do as it pleases.

Miss Brown probably considers this attitude to be paranoid, but history speaks for itself. I wonder, Miss Brown, have you always been for self-determination? Do you applaud the self-determination that occurred in Poland in 1952, in East Germany in 1953, in Hungary in 1956, in Czechoslovakia in 1968, in Poland (again) in 1981? Heard much from Solidarity lately? No, nor will you, Miss Brown.

She later comments on how the marchers in the March for Women's Lives in Washington were beginning to realize that such issues as abortion, arms control and the environment are all part of "the struggle," that all of them are interconnected. Quite true. Now what about making the logical leap to the fact that the fate of the United States is interconnected to the fate of Latin America? How meaningful will our precious freedom be if the rest of the world is engulfed in communism?

When will Miss Brown allow the United States to fight the machinations of the U.S.S.R.? When the communists have taken over El Salvador? Mexico? Texas? We certainly shouldn't have stood up to the communists in Vietnam, right? (Please pause a moment and cleanse your mind of all the negative connotations attached to "Vietnam." It is a term that has ceased to refer to that beleaguered country, becoming merely a buzzword for any misguided or evil military action.)

right reason

MICHAEL GILTZ

While few would disagree with the fact that the Vietnam War was horribly bungled, its basic intention (to stop the flow of communism into Asia) was correct. Golly, says Miss Brown, *everybody* knows that the Vietnam War was wrong. Really? Have you ever considered the result of our allowing Vietnam and Cambodia to be self-determined; that is, abandoned to the communists?

Well, Amnesty International has reported that literally millions of people have been slaughtered by the ruthless regime that took control. (I assume Miss Brown will not object to my use of conservative rhetoric like "ruthless regime" when speaking about a government that has murdered so many people.)

The sin of omission is a useful concept to employ here. It is a religious term that indicates someone has sinned if their inaction has resulted in some evil. For example, if your roommate kills a liberal and you don't report it to the police, you have committed the sin of omission. It is the most frequent mistake that occurs in our foreign policy.

Miss Brown claims that "The U.S. has no right, obligation or practical interest in practicing military domination in someone else's country." It is self-evident that the United States could have a practical interest in practicing military domination, whether our doing so would be morally correct or not. The Soviet Union had a practical interest in invading Afghanistan, despite the fact that some of us objected to its doing so.

As for ever having an *obligations* to become militarily involved (I abandon her liberal rhetoric), I believe that when our inaction would result in the death of millions (as in Cambodia), or the spread of fascism (as in World War II), or even simply the quashing of basic human rights (as in Poland) that we *do* have an obligation, indeed a duty, to become involved. To stay uninvolved would be a sin of omission.

Miss Brown is right in one respect: it would be much easier to close our eyes and let the rest of the world fend for itself. Then, we would never have to make tough, moral decisions about when to get involved and to what degree.

However, such a policy is unconscientious and unrealistic. Inevitably, it would be too late for us to make *any* decisions, just as the people in Nicaragua and Poland do not have to make any decisions. We must choose while we still can.

Michael Giltz is a UF sophomore who, not surprisingly, recently purchased the latest novel by William F. Buckley, Jr.