

OPINION

Shultz should read U.S. history books

Secretary of State George Shultz told State Department employees Thursday Congress' refusal to aid Nicaraguan rebels demonstrates the same lack of faith Americans displayed during this country's involvement in Vietnam.

"The larger lesson of the past decade is that when America lost faith in herself, world stability suffered and freedom lost ground," Shultz said. "This must not happen again."

But Shultz is conveniently overlooking the reasons for our "lost faith" in the Vietnam fiasco. America was concerned because we were not upholding democratic ideals, we were fighting a war we could not hope to win, in a country which had never in its history experienced anything even closely resembling democracy.

"Our goals in Central America are like those we had in Vietnam: democracy, economic progress and security against aggression," he said. However, Shultz ignored other vital similarities between Nicaragua and Vietnam.

Recent photographs, taken by a 21-year-old American college student and a Contra supporter who spent time with the rebels, depicts a Nicaraguan sympathizer digging his own grave with his hands, lying down in it, and being stabbed in the throat and abdomen by "freedom fighters."

As in Vietnam, we are trying to spread our democratic ideals to a country which shows little understanding of them. Such dig-your-own-grave policies used by the Contras are reminiscent of South Vietnam's President Diem, who, after being put in power by the United States, executed his personal enemies for such reasons as not sharing his Catholic faith. In the Nicaragua situation, it appears "democratic" leadership could be similar to what Shultz calls "the special ruthlessness of communist rule."

Faith in Vietnam was lost as Americans became more and more certain the war was wrong. If Shultz wants to make such comparisons, he should read the history books first.

In his own words: "How many times must we learn the same lesson?"

The Battalion Editorial Board

Reagan should have been in better movies

By ART BUCHWALD

Columnist for The Los Angeles Times Syndicate

President Reagan has had a great deal of difficulty in the past few weeks with the history of World War II. His first gaffe was to believe that German and American soldiers were buried in the same cemeteries in Germany and could presumably be honored at the same time. His second one was to say that very few of today's Germans remember the war and certainly none of the adults now living participated in any way. And finally, he really flunked the course when he said the soldiers buried at Bitburg were just as much victims of the war as people who died in the Holocaust.

What is one to make of the President's blunders?

There may be clues in a book titled "The Films of Ronald Reagan" by Tony Thomas, published by Citadel Press (1980).

Despite being under contract to Warner Brothers, Mr. Reagan did not play in as many World War II movies as one might think. Yet his view of the war and the Nazis could easily have been formed by the ones he did appear in.

In 1941 Ronald Reagan went into action for the first time in a film titled "International Squadron." Mr. Reagan played a daredevil American stunt pilot who ferries a bomber to the RAF in England. Once there he witnesses a child killed in an air raid and joins the RAF to get even with the Nazis. But Reagan doesn't take his flying job seriously and while he's messing around with a French pilot's girlfriend he misses a mission. His American best friend substitutes for him and is killed.

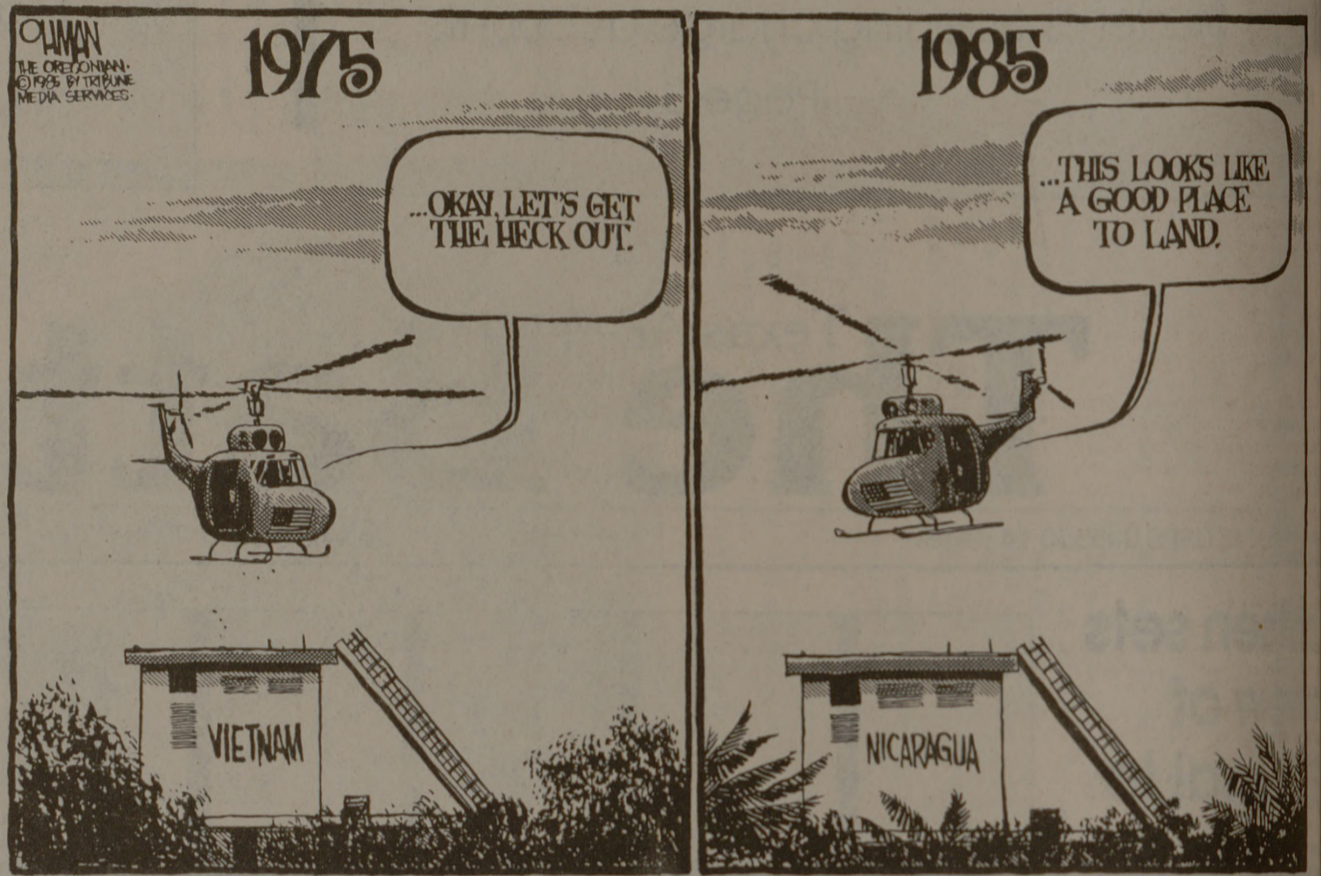
This sobers him up as far as World War II is concerned. He decides to atone for his tacky behavior by knocking out the French pilot and taking his mission. After shooting down several German fighter planes in a smashing dog-fight, Reagan never got to meet one personally in the film.

To my knowledge the only time Ronald Reagan ever came face-to-face with the Nazis was in "Desperate Journey," made in 1942. He co-stars with Errol Flynn as part of the crew of a RAF Flying Fortress. In the film Reagan plays a brash, amusing, irreverent but very brave Yank.

After the RAF plane drops its bombs on Germany it is shot down and the crew are rounded up by a German major (Raymond Massey). The German military in "Desperate Journey" are portrayed not so much as villains as they are bumbling and idiots. (The picture was the "Hogan's Heroes" of its time.) In Reagan's big scene he is being debriefed alone by the major, who thinks the Yank will tell him everything he wants to know about the mission. Instead Ronnie knocks out Massey, and then sits down and eats the major's breakfast.

After this hilarious scene Reagan and the crew find it a breeze to escape and make their way across all of Germany, blowing up half the country with violent acts of sabotage. In a slam-bang finish they manage to steal a German bomber and take off for England with Errol Flynn at the controls. Having wiped out Germany, Flynn turns to Reagan and says, "Now for Australia and a crack at the Japs." That, as far as I know, was Ronald Reagan's only Hollywood action in the European theater during World War II. He did serve honorably in Burma in "The Hasty Heart," and in the Korean theater in an MGM film titled "Prisoner of War," which was so bad that it is said it hastened Mr. Reagan's decision to go into politics. The President's finest hour was "Hellcats of the Navy," in which Reagan was cast as a naval commander on a sub in the Pacific who wreaks havoc on the Japanese fleet. Not only did Mr. Reagan win the war, but he also won the girl, a nurse played by Nancy Davis, who is now our First Lady of the land.

I detail the films that Mr. Reagan played in for only one reason. It appears the President's Hollywood war record, while distinguished, certainly did not prepare him in any way or shape for the 40th anniversary of the end of hostilities with Nazi Germany. It also might explain why Mr. Reagan is so ignorant of World War II history. Even a bit part in "The Battle of the Bulge" would have made him realize that visiting a German military cemetery where SS soldiers are buried is just not the right thing for an American President to do.



How about a PR consultant for SG's image problems?

Help wanted: PR person to assist organization with public image problem. No experience necessary. Contact Texas A&M Student Government. An equal opportunity employer.

John Hallett

Sound like a good job? No way! Bailey and Deardourff, the good Republican political consulting firm that it is, wouldn't touch the job with the proverbial 10-foot pole.

The crux of Student Government's problem lies well below the surface of the image it projects. Image is only the tip of the iceberg.

Student leaders freely admit that a communication problem exists between Student Government and the student body. For its part, Student Government suffers, not unsubstantially, from a trend of student apathy that is gripping many campuses across the nation, including Texas A&M. Students around here just don't get excited about much of anything except the Aggie football team and graduation.

But communication is a two-way street. Unfortunately, students who care must travel a road filled with potholes, roadblocks and detours. Getting through to Student Government would be a formidable task even for a suicide driver from Islamic Jihad.

Not that student leaders are totally inaccessible. Representatives of Student

Government have spoken at Sully's Symposium, and several student senators have been attending Issues and Grievances Committee meetings. But it's not nearly enough. Neither of the two draw large crowds. Even though several student leaders including Sean Royall, student body president, did show up at the last meeting of the year, it was too little, too late. Except for selecting a speaker and speaker program, the Student Senate was finished for the year, too. If students had a legitimate gripe, it would have had to wait. Neither of the two forums give students a large exposure to the Senate.

If students want to be sure their voice is heard then there is only one place to go — the Student Senate. And thanks to the Senate's passage of the student forum bill, students will be able to do just that, next year.

Speaking before the Senate will be as easy as baking an apple pie. Just register with the secretary one week in advance. That's right — one week in advance. Then you're all set to go. Except one thing, don't be verbose, each student is limited to three minutes.

Tastes kind of sour to me.

Eric Thode, former speaker pro tem in the Senate, put it best when he said, "Right now our image is at an all-time low." Thode said Student Government's bad image has led to student apathy toward the organization, which in turn has a negative effect on Student Government's performance.

Student Government should keep Thode's theory in mind when they begin implementing Project Visibility. All the visibility in the world won't heal serious wounds. Legislation like the student forum bill won't make it any better either.

Thode, and Royall acknowledged in a recent Battalion article that Student Government has few formal powers. Thode said that though Student Government has only advisory powers, those powers are important because the University frequently follows Student Government's suggestions.

And why is that? "They want to know what student opinion is," he said. "We (Student Government) are 36,000 people with an idea."

John Hallett is a senior political science major and assistant editorial page editor for The Battalion.

LETTERS:

Smuggled artifacts taint Texas A&M

EDITOR:

When I saw the April 12th edition of The Battalion I was shocked to read about the actions of Dr. Michele Caputo, professor of geophysics, regarding the way in which he acquired a group of seven ancient Greek and Roman artifacts. He admitted that first he illegally bought original artifacts and then had to "hide one of them in some purchased fish" in order to "smuggle" the artifact away from its place of origin. Next, he admitted that he broke Italian and United States laws by first smuggling the artifacts out of Italy and then smuggling them into the United States. Not only has he set a poor example for others, but he also has placed Texas A&M University in jeopardy since it is now displaying stolen property in the Pavilion for others to see.

This disclosure of an antiquities smuggler among our faculty could not have come at a more inopportune time. For fifteen years our Department has looked forward to the day when we could offer our graduate students a doctoral level program of study. The on-site Anthropology Doctoral Review Team was on the Texas A&M campus April 12 and 13. Among the list of prominent anthropologists on that Review Team was Dr. James Wiseman who heads an international committee devoted to the recovery and return of stolen artifacts. In addition, our Department currently holds excavation permits in a number of foreign coun-

tries where authorities are very sensitive about the slightest hint that artifacts are being smuggled out of their country. Even though we enjoy the goodwill and trust of these authorities, they might have second thoughts about our activities if they were to learn that our University proudly displays the booty acquired by faculty antiquity smugglers. We hope that Dr. Caputo's actions do not jeopardize either our ability to excavate sites in foreign countries or our chances to obtain our most sought after doctoral degree.

Since these illegally removed artifacts have been donated as a gift to Texas A&M University, I feel that the University Administration has only one valid option: to set in process a quick return of these artifacts to the governments of the countries from which they were illegally removed.

Vaughn M. Bryant, Jr.
Professor and Head
Department of Anthropology

Thanks for memories

EDITOR:

On Tuesday, April 16, Dr. Denton Cooley came to Texas A&M to speak on the moral and ethical considerations in heart transplantation surgery. These who attended were afforded the opportunity of seeing and hearing one of the greatest heart surgeons of all time. I just want to thank the Pre-Med/Dental Society and Dr. Cooley for a night I'll never forget!

Tracy Fruita

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The Battalion also serves as a laboratory newspaper for students in reporting, editing and photography classes within the Department of Communications.

Letters Policy
Letters to the Editor should not exceed 300 words in length. The editorial staff reserves the right to edit for style and length but will make every effort to maintain the author's intent. Each letter must be signed and must include the address and telephone number of the writer.
The Battalion is published Monday through Friday during Texas A&M regular semesters, except for holidays and examination periods. Mail subscriptions are \$10 per semester, \$33.25 per school year and \$35 per full year. Advertising rates furnished on request.
Our address: The Battalion, 216 Reed McDaniel Building, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843. Editorial staff phone number: (409) 845-2501; advertising: (409) 845-2611.
Second class postage paid at College Station, TX 77843.
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Battalion, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas 77843.

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