Policy on El Salvador: death and destruction

In the Editor:

This letter is addressed to all conscientious readers who knowingly would not want to be a party to destruction and death. Events in El Salvador and more recent US policy has created it necessary to look at this episode with renewed interest. One does not have to closely monitor the situation to get to the bare facts. The facts are these: the military, in the form of El Salvadoran military forces, is brutally killing its population with direct assistance from the United States in the form of military aid and military advisors.

Last year alone more than 13,000 people were killed in this small nation of 5 million people, according to U.S. Human Rights Commission. An even larger number of people have been subjected to systematic political repression and torture. The bulk of this number were victims of government security forces—a view supported by Mr. White, former U.S. ambassador to El Salvador. Proportionally in the United States this death toll would be equivalent to about 500,000 people— the population of New Orleans. And this is in one year only. The current administration has made El Salvador a focal point in its foreign policy, with intent to gain support for its stepped up military aid, from 10 million dollars to 35 million dollars. State Department documents allegedly proving Soviet involvement has been received with skepticism by U.S. allies in Europe despite the efforts of a high-level interagency task force for that purpose. None of the allies have expressed support for Washington’s role in this conflict.

This is not intended to be a political letter supporting the opposition forces. I ask all who are compassion maneuver enough to try to stop this needless bloodshed. Whether one likes it or not all citizens of this country are in some way responsible for the brutality being carried out by the U.S. Army. It is not speaking out against U.S. support for U.S. killing. We are all passive partners of this crime. The U.S. government represents all Americans, its actions purport to carry out the will of the American people. I ask you to write to your Congressperson or Senator urging them to stop providing aid to the military junta. Even conservative institutions like the Catholic Church conference have condemned U.S. aid to El Salvador and have even risen to the point ofury expression of your opposition to using taxpayers’ money for buying weapons to kill innocent Salvadorans.

For months of your time spent in writing the note could be helpless in saving a human life.

All Minutiae ’81

View on militarization is thick with fallacy

To the editor:

I was very distressed by Mr. Christopher Fry’s letter titled “Education and Militarization” in your Feb. 24 issue, though I confess I was not surprised to see a piece like this come out at this time. Sadly, the whole letter is so thick with fallacy it’s hard to know where to begin a reasonable critique.

First, to be fair, Mr. Fry has half a grip on a point. Military spending is indeed, as he asserts, substantially (though not entirely) the source of this scene. It is diverting private funds and public funds from other more productive investments. I have even vaguely familiar with the history of American military spending and planning over the last thirty years or so knows that the policies of DOD and the services have often been flawed and self-serving, even though they have been on the whole, sound.

However, Mr. Fry’s central contention is that all of the military establishments in the world, and that of the U.S. in particular, are simply parasites that feed off of public and private wealth and exploit nations’ conflicts to keep themselves in business. This contention is utterly nonsense; to believe it forces you into ignoring reality, especially all of the facts, the whole history and ambitions of the world’s nations that provide plenty of potential grounds for war. Realistic and level-headed Americans have ample reason to be concerned for their country’s security. Policies concerning military strategy and arms expenditures in this country ought to be, and generally are, determined with the end in mind of keeping some nasty and potentially very dangerous totalitarian forces at bay. If Mr. Fry or any other like-minded people would prefer to live in a world where the preeminent military power is a nation whose government denies its citizens the most basic political freedoms of speech and thought, ruthlessly exporting dispossession, extorts, exiles its leading thinkers for uttering the mildest criticism of official policy, has a centuries-long tradition of authoritarian rule and rapacious imperial conquest, and which garrisons and governs the rest of the world under the pretense it is in their interests to keep them in line, then I invite them to live up their propia of fantasy and do so; however, don’t expect the rest of us to come along for the ride.

Once and for all a pernicious set of myths, myths which are disturbingly popular on this campus: “Please turn to page 7”

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