

Editor
The Washington Post
Washington DC

Dear Sir,

It is fascinating how truth has a way of surfacing if one can wait long enough. Who would have suspected, say 10 years ago, that the Post would be carrying on its front page (Feb. 12) an unashamed account of the horrors of Mao's Chinese gulags and, in the same issue, a lead editorial which dares to infer, however timidly, that Americans should perhaps not feel ashamed at having tried to help small countries prevent the entirely predictable disasters which have overtaken them since the communist victories in Indochina of 1975 ?

Ten years ago, Shirley MacLaine and Han Suyin were telling us how wonderful Mao's China was, to the point that one was amazed that neither of them went to live there, while at home great newspapers, leading politicians, and Vietnam experts like Fonda and Rubin were telling us how imperialistic and immoral we were as we thwarted the alleged will of the common man in Indochina, etc.

The Post now tells us that, in any case, El Salvador may be different. Of course. But it is also the same in many respects. Already we are seeing again the cult of the young TV hopefuls : "with the rebels in El Salvador," etc., giving us the same politicized, uncritical and unexamined garbage we used to get from Vietnam in the old days, about the Viet Cong, the Tet offensive and the rest. But perhaps there is less gullibility now. A prominent New York Times columnist, famous for the high moral fervor of his erstwhile anti-Vietnam pontifications, now writes me that actually he never opposed our Vietnam involvement on ideological grounds at all ! It was just that he thought we couldn't keep the Communists from invading South Vietnam, so we shouldn't try. And since we lost in the end (with his help), that proves he was right, etc.

Anyway, truths and realities do seem to be surfacing, and the Washington Post is evidently not remaining unaffected. There is light at the end of a lot of journalistic tunnels these days, it begins to seem. Let us hope so, for all our sakes.

O. Williams