

# Other Opinions

## Parallels exist between Vietnam, Central America

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**Staff Writer**  
 During the past week at Elon, considerable attention was given a three-day program focusing Central America. Through the considerable efforts of professors, administrators and organizers, a dozen programs were staged for the edification of the community.

We watched actors Peter Gould and Stephen Stearns portray a personal view of the El Salvadorian peasant; State Department spokesman William Hofield explain the Reagan administration's policies toward the region; and economist Robert G. Williams discuss the historical uses of land in Central America—to mention a few. The outcome of this "Teach-In" was twofold. First, organizers attempted to bring to a deeper understanding of Central America—a view that some of us do not get from our President, Congress, and the news media. Secondly, by drawing on this knowledge, it is hoped that we better understand what causes human misery and ultimately produces the revolt against those who conspire against the masses of people.

The Teach-In focused on the decision-making process of our government and asked whether Central America is going down the same path it did when we became entangled in Vietnam. In other words, is our support of El Salvadorian President Duarte and Nicaraguan "contras" comparable to our aid of South Vietnam in the 1960s?

The question is being debated in many places in our society: the White House, Congress, college campuses, institutes and "think-tanks."

Generally speaking, those Americans who support President Reagan's policies have long sought the question to be repugnant. The "hawks," as they are known, want little to do with an image of Central America as possibly the next Vietnam. On the other hand, those who have criticized President Reagan fear that perhaps we are being drawn into another foreign strife.

The next question deserves the attention. First, we examine who our enemy was and is. In the Vietnam campaign, we lost 58,000 American lives and billions of dollars attempting to stop the communist North Vietnamese forces of Ho Chi Minh. That enemy was supplied and

supported by the Chinese and Soviets.

Today in Central America we support, among others, El Salvadoran and Nicaraguan Con-

tras. Both forces fight either directly or indirectly against another Soviet satellite—Nicaragua. Therefore, in both cases, we supported or support

anti-Soviet allies.

The country erred in assisting the anti-communist forces in South Vietnam, why should the President and Congress vote to do

it on another continent today? A comparison between the two Soviet states—Vietnam and

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