

Torture — Alive & Well

by Michael Greenfield

80,000 people dead since the signing of the Paris Peace Treaty, 200,000 political prisoners rotting in South Vietnamese jails, and an American administration pressing for more military aid. After decades of war the situation in Vietnam could not be much worse. If anything it was this sad fact that came across in the discussion with the 3 ex-political prisoners who brought their fight for peace to the Law Hour at Dal last week.

Nguyen Long, a South Vietnamese lawyer who was a political prisoner for 6 years, Vo Nhu Lanh, a student and representative of the South Vietnamese student union, and Ton That Lap, a teacher and composer, along with Mr. Ho acting as interpreter, gave over an hour long lecture and discussion at the Law Building. The main thrust of their demand for peace revolves around the implementation of the Paris Peace Treaty. A demand labeled "communist" and "traitorous" by the Thieu regime. Before returning to France they plan to travel across Canada and in the U.S. to drum up support for the National Council of Reconciliation, the organization they represent.

Nguyen Long, the 65 year old elder statesman of the group, gave what can only be termed a "plea" for peace. Mr. Long, who had both his legs broken while in prison, spoke of the illegality of the Thieu government and called for self determination of the Vietnamese peoples.

However, much of the time spent by the other speakers revolved around their lives in prison and the numerous tortures inflicted upon them. Vo Nhu Lanh pointed out that the torture was both mental and physical. During Mr. Lanh's time in prison he had been beaten in the following manners; beaten with a club on the same spot for weeks; had his hands tied behind his back, then suspended in the air and punched; tied to a bench with a rag stuffed in his mouth and water poured down his throat while being beaten on the bottom half of his body. When bloated with water they would kick him, so that all the water and food in him would come out.

Ton That Lap, an artist, was arrested for composing and singing antiwar songs. For advocating peace he was placed in a tiny cubicle, where the tap was turned on for only ten minutes every three days. He was continuously beaten for 3 months. Among other things, they beat him on the arm so that he would never again be able to write songs.

Mr. Lap spoke of the complete stifling of creative work under the Thieu regime. He said that heavy taxes on paper, the closing down of printers and publishers, confiscation of

work, and imprisonment were all ways in which artistic energy has been suppressed. At the end of his statement he sang one of his banned songs to the audience.

Asked why they constantly voiced attacks against the American government, Vo Nhu Lanh replied that he has seen American agents in the prisons directly taking part in the tortures and teaching the police their "skills". He said it is a common fact in Vietnam that much of American military aid is being used to build Thieu's prisons. Mr. Lanh further went on to say that the American government does not have enough conscience to realize what it is doing. This statement elicited a response of table thumping and clapping from some of the audience.

Although seemingly far removed from the conflict Dal students are asked to

write letters to the Prime Minister and their M.P.s urging support for the demands of peace and justice. These three Vietnamese are not communists nor controlled by any "brand name" political ideology. Like so many heroes their ideology is Peace, a Peace they are willing to be tortured for, maimed for, die for; but not a Peace they must destroy for, a "Peace with Honor". They are not bomb throwing terrorists, they educe terror from those who desire power at the expense of the people. The eventual goal for Nguyen Dong, Vo Nhy Lanh, Tom That Lap, and thousands of other Vietnamese is the reunification of Vietnam. Unfortunately, they are caught in a quicksand of many conflicts, established by all sides. A quicksand which is drowning Vietnam and threatening to take all of South East Asia.

It Looks Like Up?

by Brenda Van Zoost

Depression is something which is experienced by all of us at various times in our lives and to various degrees. Without "down" days, in fact, the "up" ones would not seem so good. Being "depressed" after blowing an exam, or breaking up with a three year steady is natural, and perhaps functional. The negative consequence may motivate you to handle your life differently the next time a similar situation occurs. You may determine, for example, that part of the reason why the relationship did not work was because of your lack of tolerance of the other person's viewpoints, values, goals, etc. Remediating this will make you less uptight about such variations, and hence happier with yourself. Correspondingly, it will affect your relationships with other people.

However, not all depressions are so functional. And sometimes they last too long. For a university student, the second year seems to be when he/she is most vulnerable to depression. The novelty and excitement of university life has diminished from first year, and the rewards of graduation are far away. Statistics tell us that the months of November and February are when the greatest number of people get depressed.

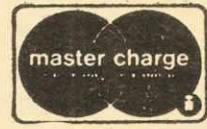
What are some of the characteristics of depression? Most of them are probably pretty familiar to you - lack of motivation or inspiration to do much of anything, lack of energy, desire to sleep more, lack of appetite. Nothing seems to have much purpose or meaning any more. It seems futile to learn those chemistry formulas or even

to be at university at all. These depressed feelings and behaviors are sometimes caused by some physiological factor, such as genetic, enzymatic, metabolic, endocrine or other biochemical disturbances. More frequently they may be caused by situational factors, either of an evident nature such as three F's on midterms, loss of a part-time job, or loss or money - or factors of a very subtle nature which are not always identifiable. For example, anticipating doing poorly academically may elicit depression.

These subtle factors are probably related to our cognitive activities. By this, I mean there are certain kinds of thoughts or self-statements which people tend to generate when they are depressed. A prominent one is the tendency to evaluate one's own performance overly-critically and unrealistically. One's errors, blunders, or poor performance are readily recognized and pondered, while the good characteristics, the accomplishments and successes are left unrecognized and unacknowledged. In psychological terms this might be called a lack of self-reinforcement.

While speaking about reinforcement, there's another point to be made here. Not only is self-reinforcement typically low during depression but also is social reinforcement - or positive activities or feedback resulting from the interaction of others. One of the major possible reasons for the latter is because the depressed person is so "wrapped up in himself," or occupied in handling his own problems, that he does not put himself

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