



Thursday, Oct. 16, 1969

Page 23

'We say we want to give the Vietnamese democracy, but every indication I've seen is that they don't want the American brand.'

## Logic Is This Radical's Game

By CAROL TOWARNICKY  
Daily News Staff Writer

ATHENS — Andy Alexander never marched in an anti-war demonstration. But he has marched through a few rice paddies, which could explain why the ex-Eagle scout sometimes talks about the United States in four-letter obscenities.

And why the short-haired radical sometimes disparages the New Left.

Because Andy Alexander has a jump on most college students. He's been there. He's seen Vietnam. And it appalled him.

THE OHIO UNIVERSITY senior from Urbana looked somewhat out of place among colleagues who favored a somewhat more hip mode of campus dress, attired as he was in fatigues and combat boots.

There is no question, however, that Alexander is the recognized editor-leader of Ohio U's radical-leaning campus daily, the Post.

He was sweeping the floor.

At times, he interrupted his chore to run through the

"And even though I must sound like Barry Goldwater, if you believe in the thing you might as well fight it . . . But there's the hitch."

The "hitch" is what Alexander considers the chauvinistic attitude of America transferred into action and death. He's observed it, he says, over most of the Eastern world.

"AMERICANS THINK they're the only people who count," he said, his voice gaining only a slight touch of emotion from its usual clinical tone.

"This is America: We're standing outside a bunker that had been bombed and they're carrying out Vietnamese after Vietnamese—eight of them, and no one bats an eye.

"But then they pull an American out of the wreckage and the entire place falls apart. 'Oh, they got one of our guys,' everyone is moaning, and guys start to cry.

"How many Vietnamese are worth one American?"

He leaned forward. "Every time I see one of these damn American flag decals, I want to hit something. Americans have never learned that they're not the only people on earth.

"The attitude toward the war is changing in this country, but for the wrong reasons. Not because they're

By CAROL TOWARNICKY  
Daily News Staff Writer

ATHENS — Andy Alexander never marched in an anti-war demonstration. But he has marched through a few rice paddies, which could explain why the ex-Eagle scout sometimes talks about the United States in four-letter obscenities.

And why the short-haired radical sometimes disparages the New Left.

Because Andy Alexander has a jump on most college students. He's been there. He's seen Vietnam. And it appalled him.

**THE OHIO UNIVERSITY** senior from Urbana looked somewhat out of place among colleagues who favored a somewhat more hip mode of campus dress, attired as he was in fatigue greens and combat boots.

There is no question, however, that Alexander is the recognized editor-leader of Ohio U's radical-leaning campus daily, the Post.

He was sweeping the floor.

At times, he interrupted his chore to run through the ~~op-art white and blank of the student newspaper office and~~ check progress on the headline machine for the paper's first issue of the academic year.

And to talk about Vietnam. He returned from there last month, convinced of a mistake by the United States.

"**WE SAY WE** want to give the Vietnamese democracy, but every indication I've seen is that they don't want the American brand," Alexander said. "We continue to try to force them to eat it, to swallow it, and they continue to tell us in so many ways, 'We don't like it, we don't want your food.'"

Alexander financed a trip to Vietnam the past summer out of his own pocket. He lined up a string of newspapers to buy his stories. A peace symbol on his flak helmet, he tramped around places like Nhe Trang and Da Nang and Saigon, observing, questioning and writing.

"I went to make a name for myself," he explained matter-of-factly. "I doubt I found any newsman who was there out of dedication . . . Everyone wanted to make it big, fast. Some of them died trying.

"**AND THEN I** figure once you're out of college you have to settle down. I wanted to be hell on wheels for four years, to get ahead of everyone else."

Alexander spent two summers reporting for the Melbourne, Australia, Herald. A year ago, he found himself in Prague, reporting the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia.

The guy who gave a friend a dead mouse for Christmas, who could make macabre jokes about death and disease didn't undergo any great changes in Vietnam.

He didn't come back with many atrocity stories, although he can tell a few. The perspective that changed was one of cold logic.

"**I DON'T AGREE** with the way the New Left opposes the war," he said, sitting now in his closet-office, running a pencil along the ridges of the ancient, revered and hand-me-down "editor's chair."

"The radicals base their opposition on morality. I can't agree. Sure, the Green Berets boast of knocking Viet Cong out of helicopters, but that would happen in any war. If you accept the premise of the thing, you have to accept that also.

"And even though I must sound like Barry Goldwater, if you believe in the thing you might as well fight it . . . But there's the hitch."

The "hitch" is what Alexander considers the chauvinistic attitude of America transferred into action and death. He's observed it, he says, over most of the Eastern world.

"**AMERICANS THINK** they're the only people who count," he said, his voice gaining only a slight touch of emotion from its usual clinical tone.

"This is America: We're standing outside a bunker that had been bombed and they're carrying out Vietnamese after Vietnamese—eight of them, and no one bats an eye.

"But then they pull an American out of the wreckage and the entire place falls apart. 'Oh, they got one of our guys,' everyone is moaning, and guys start to cry.

"How many Vietnamese are worth one American?"

He leaned forward. "Every time I see one of these damn American flag decals, I want to hit something. Americans have never learned that they're not the only people on earth.

"The attitude toward the war is changing in this country, but for the wrong reasons. Not because they've learned that you can't force a way of life, but because — for the first time in history — America is losing a war. They can't believe it — those little guys in pajamas are beating them."

**TO ALEXANDER**, the Vietnamese are a pitiful people who want only to be left alone. In a survey he ran, he said, almost every one of 400 South Vietnamese peasants he interviewed knew who Ho Chi Minh was. Only a quarter of them knew Thieu, their president.

"There are areas there called 'free fire zones,' he began. "Anyone who runs from the Marines in one of those zones is considered a VC and can be shot. Think of what it must be to stand there, knowing that if you run, the Americans will kill you, yet knowing that the VC are watching, too."

American troops betray what Alexander, from the height of his 21 years, termed the "tragedy of youth."

"They're sheep, just like the sheep the radical movement has created. They've never questioned what they've been told.

"**I NEVER MET** a guy in the front lines who was for the war. But no one knew why he was against it. I met plenty of guys back in the supply lines who were for involvement. But they weren't being shot at."

"Marines are trained killers. They've been taught well. It's as if the victims aren't people — they're termed 'male' and 'female' not 'Men' and 'women'. Game, like duck or rabbit . . ."

Alexander's present job is not as exciting as the Fourth-of-July-type fireworks of the first phantom strike he witnessed. But it's one he considers just as important: Providing, he says, the best-documented, logical comment possible on the war and America for his 15,000 student-faculty-townspeople audience at Ohio university.

**AFTER THIS YEAR**, he doesn't know. There still is the draft.

The war has less to do with philosophy, more with logic, he says. However, the efficiency of killing framed in the paradox of rigor-mortis complacency raised one philosophical question:

"Is man basically militant or basically peaceful? I keep asking. But damned if I know."