First World not the epitome of logic, reason we think it is

n Zimbabwe, where I recently visit- You would think that the administra- same time keep taxes where Reagan too) who dammed a stream to grow continue doing what it has been doing mermaids. He also restricted the flow of water to nearby farms. The govern- the U.S. version of growing mermaids. ment dispatched an official who reported that the local people didn't think much of the mermaid scheme, but they did of the medicine man. If he were overruled, they thought they would starve to death. At last report, the stream was still dammed.

Chuckle, chuckle, we say. This is the way things sometimes are in the Third World where logic and rationality can be scarce commodities and where the crackpot idea of a medicine man can result in the ruination of several farms. But as someone returning from abroad, I find myself thinking the same thoughts about the United States. Logic seems to have taken a powder here.

Take, for instance, the current mild panic over the trade deficit. When I left ter, a \$200 billion annual mistake, conthe country nearly three weeks ago, tributes to the overvalued dollar which this was only a potential issue. When I returned, it had achieved such impor- competitive abroad. tance that it not only had made the cover of the news magazines, but the lobotomized Congress does nothing president himself was paying atten- about the budget deficit. Congress tion. As with South Africa, he was try- tried in the last session, trimming the ing to figure out a way to stop Congress budget by about \$50 billion, only to from taking some meaningful action.

sive trade deficits, everyone is sud- for funds. It cannot keep the defense

ed, there is a certain witch doctor/- tion would by now have a plan to deal medicine man (maybe internist, with it and in a sense it does, It will and hope the deficit goes away: This is



Richard Cohen

In fact, you do not have to stretch the analogy very far to conclude that President Reagan is our national medicine man. With the exception of some scattered supply-siders who, like theoretical communists, are waiting for their theory to be applied in its purest form, there is almost no one who does not think that the trade deficit is tied to the federal budget deficit. The latin turn makes American goods non-

And yet, the administration and a learn after recess that it made almost You may ask why, after years of mas- no difference. The government is starved denly so concerned about the problem. industry rolling in dough and at the

put them with his 1981 tax cut. The obvious answer is to raise taxes, but a popular president won't permit it. Like the Zimbabwian medicine man, there is no way around him.

In this and other matters, people sort of stand around and wait for the medicine-man-in-chief to change his mind. Former Senate Majority Leader Howard Baker has now joined much of the civilized world in saying that maybe a tax increase is in order. But nobody much, certainly not the president, paid attention. Instead, the president is pushing for a tax-reform bill that would be revenue neutral - in other words. besides the point - and that oxymoron known as the congressional leadership is wondering whether it can be done. Meanwhile, the deficit ticks like Edgar Allen Poe's "Tell-Tale Heart."

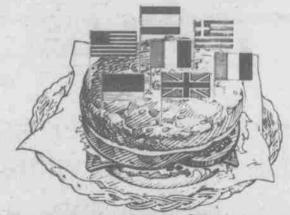
The bane of the Third World is irrationality. But the First World is hardly the epitome of logic and reason that we think it is. In the same way that the Zimbabwe medicine man is waiting for his mermaids to grow, the administration is waiting for the budget and trade deficit to go away.

Keep your eye on Zimbabwe. When they succeed in growing mermaids, we may close the deficit.

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Heinous murder wasn't 'especially heinous'

ROYKO from Page 4

he detected a pulse. So he put her head under water in the tub and went home.

Now, it is possible she was already dead, but her body was still twitching. If so, I'm wrong. He didn't drown her.

So, there are my glaring errors. He didn't stalk her. He just watched and waited. He didn't actually rape her. He used her unconscious body in another

In any case, the murder wasn't Nebraska.

'especially heinous, atrocious, cruel, or manifested exceptional depravity by ordinary standards of morality and intelligence." At least, that's what the soon will, whether Justice Krivosha judge and three of his associates say.

I'm glad the judge straightened me out. And I'm so impressed by his eye for detail - the significant difference between stalking and waiting and watching, and the clear difference

sexual way. And maybe he didn't drown between "heinous" and "especially her. Maybe all he did was strangle her. heinous" - that I now wish I lived in

Yes, I'd love to be a resident of Nebraska. Especially when the voters there get a chance to decide, as they should remain in his job.

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