

03-29-1999 These Are Our Values?

"America is intervening 100 percent on the side of the Albanians in Kosovo. It is supporting separatism and terrorism and trying to take away our state. Who gives them the right to bomb anybody they want?" -- A Serb man, Mile, quoted in the NY Times 3/26/99

"The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom is outraged over the aerial bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia by NATO forces. We call for an immediate halt to this aggression against a sovereign UN Member State and for the withdrawal of NATO forces from the region." WILPF statement, 3/25/99

These are indeed complicated times. According to a column by the right-wing mouthpiece, William Safire, the good people at WILPF will have found themselves aligned with the isolationist right-wing of the Republican Party against the Democrats in their support of terrorizing Serbia. Safire didn't actually mention WILPF in his column but those are the facts. Ironically, these same isolationist Republicans have UN General Secretary Kofi Anan on their side as well. His position seems to be that NATO is acting outside its authority as a rogue element ignoring the primary role of the UN in these matters.

At least this time we aren't bombing brown people. Some have said that we are very racist in our use of missiles and bombs, but here we are bombing white people. We are now an equal opportunity terrorist nation, no doubt about that now. And for the moment we even have all of NATO helping spread the expense of this terrorizing.

The depth of the hypocrisy in these US led NATO actions is truly astounding. This should not come as a surprise to anyone who has followed US foreign policy in the last century though. Our government always seems to find ways to punish ordinary people for any display of independence -- in this case the ineffectual nationalism of the Serbian government.

There is at least one positive aspect to this current war mongering and that is that most people see through the propaganda and don't support it. According to a CNN/USA Today poll (3/26/99) support for the bombing came in at 46% -- an interesting number considering the overwhelmingly pro-bombing reporting in the major commercial media. That support is significantly lower in the rest of the world, including among NATO member nations, and in the UN.

It is not easy to sort through the tangle that is Balkan history, but even with that confusion the American people seem unconvinced that bombing people will achieve much in the way of peace or stability. The situation involves rivalries and feuds that date back centuries and it involves violence on all sides. How did NATO decide that they should bomb Serbs when the other side of this conflict is a guerrilla army acting outside of any recognized moral or democratic authority?

And just why is it, as Anan has pointed out, that any peacekeeping mission should be undertaken outside of the authority of the United Nations? Could this have something to do with the fact that the world community, like the American people, does not support taking sides in what many regard as an artificially constructed civil war? All this in the context of the U.S. facing the loss of its vote in the UN General Assembly over unpaid dues -- which are now \$250 million in arrears. Democracy is a difficult thing, and when it gets in the way, evidently, the warmongers in the US government feel free to disregard it.

The confusion and propaganda in this country is overwhelming. But through it all much of the scenario just seems too convenient for those who want to divide Serbia and undermine its autonomous stance. Where, for example, did the Kosovo Liberation Army come from? Who organizes it? Who finances the KLA? And why, at least according to Hearst News Services, does it seem to have connections with US and British intelligence organizations, Islamic fundamentalist governments, and organized crime families in Europe?

Isn't that convenient? The imperialist powers have a disagreement with the nationalist Serbian government, and so a shadowy guerrilla army financed by a motley assortment of criminals -- in and out of various governments -- shows up with a lot of AK-47's. After the rattling of sabers, the coddling of a group of criminals and terrorists, and one-sided pretend negotiations, our government has begun bombing an innocent population. Our president claims this violence is necessary, "to advance peace." Curiously this list of players is the same as those who destroyed Afghanistan: drug dealers, spooks, and religious fanatics.

The world thus continues to become more and more unstable, just in time for the Republicans' "budget for the new millennium." The military-industrial complex can claim that the Republicans' obscene budget is justified. We will continue to spend more and more on guns and bombs, and less and less on human welfare. The rich will grow richer and the poor poorer. But these are our government's values, and these are the interests of the people who buy that government.

What the president actually said is that, "By acting now, we are upholding our values, protecting our interests and advancing the cause of peace."