

We Are, We Are... a Peaceful Nation

Autor tekstu: **Kaz Dziamka**

(Contrary to a popular belief promoted by the American media, the United States has often been a brutal and violent country. And despite his relative popularity, President Bush is a semi-literate Christian fundamentalist whose disregard for the Constitution has become a national security threat.)

A letter to Mortimer B. Zuckerman, Editor
U.S. News & World Report

Re: Your editorial „Clear and Compelling Proof“

I hardly ever read the *U.S. News & World Report*. I don't, because like *Newsweek* and *Time* magazines, it panders obsequiously to the established political-corporate establishment of the United States. What Bertrand Russell once said about *Time*-that it is „scurrilous and utterly shameless in its willingness to distort“-applies equally to *U.S. News & World Report*, as well.

But facing the boring prospect of an hour-long wait in my dentist's office, I decided that reading the current issue of *U.S. News & World Report* (a copy of which my dentist has placed in the waiting room for his unhappy patients) might still be better than reading nothing at all.

In your concluding paragraph you say that "We are, as the president said, a peaceful people." You are obviously angry, even threatening, that our traditional allies Germany and France beg to differ with our obsession to attack Iraq, even though UN inspectors have not finished their job yet and even though there are other compelling reasons not to attack Iraq. And shouldn't these countries have every political and intellectual right to question the real motivation of the current U.S. foreign policy and to be terrified by its consequences? Particularly now that the U.S. has officially threatened to use nuclear weapons in Iraq, already inhumanly crippled by U.S.-imposed economic sanctions and constant bombing? How can such a dying, brutalized country like Iraq be a threat to the most powerful war machine in the history of the world?

I consider it my civic duty to respond to your editorial by offering a few facts.

Brian Willson, former Captain in the U.S. Air Force and co-chair of the John Steinbeck IV Veterans for Peace," points out the following: „A careful examination of U.S. foreign policy history reveals over 400 military interventions and over 6,000 covert interventions into at least 100 countries, killing millions of innocents." (This horror still before Afghanistan and Kosovo, where the U.S. is responsible for killing another seven or eight thousand innocent citizens.)

Since 1945, we have bombed about 20 countries, one of which-Iraq-we continue to bomb in violation of all international and moral laws known to humankind, with facile admissions of „collateral damage" whenever our crimes and murders of hapless Iraqi civilians happen to be exposed).

No other country since the end of the Second World War can match this appalling record of mayhem and carnage. As David McGowan points out in *Derailing Democracy*, „Since World War II, American military actions, in one form or another, have caused more death and destruction around the world than have the actions of any other country." And you still call the U.S. „a peaceful people"?

Are you stupid, Mr. Zuckerman? Which word don't you understand?

Perhaps, though, you are just „utterly shameless in [your] willingness to distort." In which case, whom are you trying to please? Rush Limbaugh's ditto heads? The military-corporate cabal in the Congress? The Christers in the White House? Given the ease with which one can obtain information about the criminality of U.S. military interventions, why is it that you cannot complete an easy syllogism?

With perhaps one exception since World War II (and it is, by the way, not a very good exception), none of the countries we have devastated in our military interventions has posed a direct or even indirect military threat to the United States. What is it that the Vietnamese, the Cambodians, the Laotians, or, recently, the Iraqis or the Serbs have done to us to justify the cold-blooded mass murder we have inflicted on their citizenry?

(There may be on exception, though: Japan. A good exception, indeed, but not a very good one. This is because Japan did not attack Washington, D.C., but our naval installation at Pearl Harbor on Hawai'i, a once-sovereign nation illegally annexed by U.S. imperialists at the

end of the 19th century.)

Was killing over 2,000,000 Vietnamese civilians „worth it," whatever "it" was supposed to have been worth. Former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright has said it was „worth it" in reference to Iraq, where our government is responsible for killing approximately 1,000,000 Iraqi troops and civilians-mostly children-whether through direct military action or economic sanctions. People are killed in any war, just or unjust, but the U.S. troops burned, buried alive and otherwise obliterated Iraqi troops *after* the Iraqis had tried to surrender and were retreating *en masse* Basra and Baghdad from Kuwait. How many Americans know what happened on the Basra highway, now called „the Highway of Death"? Do you? Here's one account of the horror, which the Pentagon has tried to keep deep secret. In *The Opening Guns of World War III: Washington's Assault on Iraq*, Jack Barnes describes what our „peaceful" nation did":

The most concentrated single bloodletting was organized by the US command in the final forty-eight hours of the invasion[;] as Iraqi soldiers fled Kuwait along the roads to Basra, Washington ordered that tens of thousands of fleeing Iraqi soldiers be targeted [in] wave after wave of bombing, strafing, and shelling. These were people who were putting up no resistance, many with no weapons, leaving in cars, trucks, carts, and on foot. Many civilians from Iraq, Kuwait, and immigrant workers from other countries were killed at the same time as they tried to flee.

„The US armed forces bombed one end of the main highway from Kuwait city to Basra, sealing it off. They bombed the other end of the highway and sealed it off. They positioned mechanized artillery units on the hills overlooking it. And then, from the air and from the land they simply massacred every living thing on the road. Fighter-bombers, helicopter gunships, and armored battalions poured merciless firepower on traffic jams backed up for as much as twenty miles. When the traffic became grid locked, the B-52s were sent in for carpet bombing."

As La Verne University Professor William A. Cook observes, "Our forces did not wait for the fleeing people to surrender, they did not surround them and force them to surrender, they just exterminated them. Americans never heard about the 'Highway of Death,' they just paid for it, a slaughter that, in Barnes' words 'ranks among the great atrocities of modern warfare.'"

Now that we know that our nation is capable of the horror of the Basra-Highway-of-Death caliber, when tens of thousands died horribly and often slowly, should we even bother to recall, for example, the My Lai massacre, in which our troops slaughtered „only" about 500 Vietnamese peasants and their children? (A massacre that, by the way, our current Secretary of State, Colin Powell, tried to prevent from being investigated.) Or the Wounded Knee massacre, in which we exterminated „merely" 300 Sioux Indians?

Over two million human beings killed in Vietnam, over a million in Korea, about a million in Iraq, a half-million in Laos, a half million in Cambodia, 200,000 in Guatemala ..The list goes on and on-like a report from hell. As our Christian brethren say, with God all things are possible.

Then we should never forget the atomic bombs we dropped on Japanese civilians in Hiroshima and Nagasaki-the U.S., a "peaceful nation," being the first, and so far the only country, to have used weapons of such apocalyptic mass destruction in the history of warfare.

And how about hundreds of tons of depleted uranium we fired in Kosovo and Iraq with potentially disastrous ecological consequences, not to mention the ever-growing numbers of both Iraqis *and* Americans sickening and dying from uranium inhalation? And now what? Back to nuclear bombs, much improved, more deadly, more cataclysmic? Will this U.S.-made Apocalypse ever end?

Among the terrorists who destroyed the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, was there a single Iraqi? There were 15 Saudis, though, a fact which you criminally ignore in your article. Another fact you criminally ignore is the business connections between the Bush and the Bin Laden families.

Let me now consider another problem with your editorial commentary: your reference to President Bush in your assessment of our national character. Why do you quote George W. Bush? What does Bush know about U.S. foreign or domestic policy that is worth quoting? It is common knowledge that our President is seriously uninformed not only about the world but our own country. That he is inarticulate, unless he uses formulaic responses prepared by his advisors, and even those pre-fabricated blocks of speech he often repeats mindlessly. That he

is an anti-intellectual and a close-minded Christian fundamentalist for whom a personal superstition is a public mission.

A former top British politician calls him „a child running around with a grenade with the pin pulled out." A Canadian official recently called him a „moron" (as does Bill Harwood in this issue). Eric Alterman of *The Nation* quotes a European journalist, „sympathetic to the United States": „Bush is always showing himself to be utterly stupid."

George Bush is an adult American boy, a boy who will probably never grow up because he has exchanged reason for blind faith. He has surrendered unconditionally, it seems, to a particularly primitive and dangerous kind of religion. Bush thinks-like many other born-again American Christians-that their and America's destiny is to fulfill God's job on earth. As he says, „God has called upon us to protect our country and to lead the world to peace."

He is now prepared to act on such infantile, sick fantasies with potentially horrible consequences for the whole world. In a sane, democratic and secular republic (which the United States is supposed to be), he would be promptly institutionalized for a serious mental disorder and given the best psychiatric treatment available. In a Christianized and corrupted democracy (which is what the United States has now become), the U.S. Supreme Court has offered him the Presidency, while the Congress has violated the U.S. Constitution by empowering him to wage war against Iraq.

In a short time, Bush as U.S. President has all but destroyed the world's inspiring support for the United States in the wake of 9/11. And he still has no idea, no viable economic plan-other than through endless military interventions-to stop a shaky economy and an international crisis spinning out of control. He has, however, tried hard-and partly succeeded-in destroying our cherished civil rights by pushing faith-based social programs and by promoting the U.S. Patriot Acts, prepared by another fundamentalist Christian, John Ashcroft.

He is, in short, incompetent and, as a result, dangerous. He is, in fact, a grave threat to our democracy, our national security, and our international standing.

This is why Former Attorney General Ramsey Clark claims that George W. Bush (and Cheney, Rumsfeld, and Ashcroft) should be impeached. It seems we have reached a stage in U.S. history when we have to protect our country from our own government, (Read Clark's impeachment website: votetoimpeach.org)

To conclude, Mr. Zuckerman: Doesn't your job require that you offer a reasoned reflection, common sense and some understanding of facts-not a distortion or ignorance of facts, a *non sequitur*?

Let me borrow a tune from P.O.D., and let me chant a ditty I have written especially for you:

We are, we are .. a peaceful nation.
We are, we are .. a peaceful nation.
Like hell we are .. a peaceful nation.

Like hell we are .. a peaceful nation.

I hope you like it.

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