

Yugoslav immigrant condemns US bombing

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Erik Siljak, a Yugoslav immigrant to the US, is the host of Global Kitchen, a weekly program on KVMR, Nevada City (89.5 FM) and Sacramento (99.3 FM), California, which may be heard in Real Audio at <http://www.resonance.org/kitchen>. He has written the following letter to the World Socialist Web Site:

Last year on August 20, President Clinton personally ordered cruise missiles to be launched against Sudan and Afghanistan (some ended up also in Pakistan). Then in December last year the Iraqi people suffered the latest episode of repeated US attacks on their country (while our government explained once again how it was a war against Saddam Hussein and "not the Iraqi people"). Now the American people have learned that their president has started yet another attack on a faraway foreign country (which according to a CBS poll the majority of Americans could not even find on a map). This is the fourth US foreign intervention in the past seven months.

This time the people of Yugoslavia have been exposed to a US-led NATO bombardment. Our president explained once again to the American people and to the rest of the world that he's actually waging war against Slobodan Milosevic and "not the Serbian people." The stubborn Serbs, not unlike the Iraqis before them, have failed to understand that US bombs are for their own good. And no matter how much they might have hated Milosevic before, as soon as the bombs started to fall over their country they rallied around their leader. Just like the Iraqis did.

Was that a big surprise for our foreign policy planners, that the US government has strengthened Milosevic while claiming to be fighting him? Or is Milosevic one of our government's precious "bad guys"? One of those indispensable "enemies" our military industry needs in order to justify the continuous spending of billions of dollars of US taxpayers' money. In order to keep the war machine well oiled, a reliable supply of "enemies" is needed. If

there are no enemies then Washington's "crisis factory" produces them.

While the Yugoslavs have been exposed to the US/NATO bombardment, the rest of us have been exposed to mental bombardment. Maybe that's why CBS, CNN and other "reliable" polls are showing that the percentage of Americans who support Clinton's attack against that country is higher than the percentage of people who can find it on a map.

The technology of "Information Processing" has been dramatically improved since the days of primitive Communist Party propaganda. So much so that today the old Party propaganda machine looks completely obvious and silly, almost naive. Even back then, most people in Eastern European countries could see through it. Not so with the media in this country. No more blunt lies. Oh, well, a little bit of staged-for-CNN "atrocities" here and there, "Wag the dog" style. But in most cases, just careful selection from the endless pool of information will produce the desired effect: public outrage at suffering of "innocent civilians" and the demand that "something must be done".

Of course this "something" quite predictably turns out to be the testing of the new generation of high-tech weapons over some country not able to defend itself. Our government's "humanitarian" concerns are carefully selected, and so is CNN's coverage of "atrocities". Nobody has suggested bombing China over ethnic cleansing of Tibet. Nobody ever suggested sending the US army to protect "innocent civilians" in Sierra Leone (of whom, according to UN cautious estimates, at least 6,350 were killed just in January 1999). That means that five times more people in Sierra Leone were killed in ONE MONTH than in Kosovo in ONE YEAR (since the beginning of the armed conflict in February 1998).

Of course, our political and media elites could not care less about the Albanians or the Iraqis or the Serbs or the Tibetans. The Clinton administration could not

be accused of conducting a foreign policy based on humanitarian concerns. But still, this is the one explanation we keep hearing for our foreign interventions. It makes one feel a certain admiration for the integrity of the Roman Empire or the British Empire. They waged wars in pursuit of their own interests and didn't use the fig leaf of "humanitarian concerns". And they called wars wars. And not "peacekeeping". And they even declared wars!

Today's only superpower does not bother with any of those formalities. The new post-Cold War American right is that our government can bomb countries whenever it wants, and still insist that it is not about any national or other interest. Purely humanitarian. Out of compassion for innocent civilians. Killing to stop killing. It's all about freedom and democracy. And they keep straight faces!



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