

INSIGHTS

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"Think for yourselves; ask yourselves whether this wide-spread fact of poverty is not a crime, and a crime for which every one of us, man and woman, who does not do what he or she can do to call attention to it and do away with it, is responsible." from Henry George, *The Crime of Poverty*, an address delivered to the Knights of Labor, April 1, 1885.

DOES THE USA HAVE A "SUBSTANTIAL INTEREST" IN YUGOSLAVIA

We dimly recall the homily of John Donne, British statesman, churchman, and poet wherein he refers to the ancient custom of ringing church bells to signify a death. Donne wrote: "No man is an island, entire of itself, each man is a part of the continent, a piece of the main." He further noted that "Every man's death diminishes me, because I am part of mankind. Therefore, do not send to know for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for thee."

Opponents of this philosophy claim that we have no responsibility for whatever mass murder, robbery, and rape may take place in Yugoslavia, in the Sudan, in South-West Africa or any other country. They contend that we cannot win the war against Milosevic and his supporters by aerial bombing, that sending ground troops would be unconscionable and disastrous, and that, under no circumstances should we inflict casualties upon innocent civilians.

By the time this *Insights* gets to you, one or more of the above may have taken place. If not, we suggest that if ground troops are necessary, so be it. Contrary to the arguments of the isolationists, most soldiers, upon enlisting, know there is a possibility that, eventually, someone may be shooting at them. And no greater worth is placed on the body of an infantryman than that of an airforce pilot. As to as the bombing of cities and the killing of civilians, every war involves support from civilians—in the supply of armaments, necessities of life, and enthusiastic recruits. When everything is going well, the armies of the tyrants walk proudly through the streets while the populace shower flowers upon them and sings enthusiastic praise. In modern warfare, there are no bystanders.

When Tokyo and other Japanese cities were so badly damaged and the citizens were so demoralized by conventional bombing during World War II, some military experts contend that it was unnecessary and redundant to drop atomic bombs. Did "substantial interest" dictate this escalation?

Let us take a look through history to see what our record has been in determining what constitutes "substantial interest" on entering into warfare.

"SUBSTANTIAL INTEREST" LIBERALLY INTERPRETED IN THE 18TH AND 19TH CENTURIES

The Revolutionary war was not supported by the wealthier and better educated residents of the United States. And after the British withdrawal, many of the large estates of the loyalists were taken over by the rebels. Otherwise, there was little economic change. The stamp act, Townshend act, tea tax, and other consumer taxes, which so stirred the ire of the colonists, had mainly been removed when the war broke out, and the average American was taxed more lightly than the average Englishman. It might well be argued that we had slight interest in cutting all ties to good King George the Third.

There were many who claimed that the Northerners had no "substantial interest" in complaining about the way the slaves were treated in the South, since this did not directly concern them. This group, called the Copperheads, with a substantial membership in Congress, supported General McClellan in his unsuccessful effort to defeat Lincoln for President in 1864. These old time isolationists, with aid from Southern agents, stirred up the mobs so successfully that almost a thousand men were killed in the Draft Act riots in the summer of 1863. Hundreds of blacks were murdered and a Negro orphan assylum was burned down by New York slum dwellers who blamed Blacks for the war.

During the 19th century, we had a series of minor sized wars brought to displace local land owners with Americans. This includes the war with Mexico, the Hawaiian takeover and the Spanish American war. On each occasion, we saw to it that big ranch holdings ended up in the hands of men with a substantial interest in the resulting change of ownership.

In 1836, we adopted a new strategy in military conquests where our substantial interests lay in making a land grab. Americans settling in Texas declared their independence and desire to become part of the USA. The main difference in status was that instead of dishonest Mexican land grants controlling the economic system, huge Texas owned ranches controlled the economy.

A similar revolt of American landgrabbers took place in 1848, leading to the peace treaty of that year under which Texas, California, and most of New Mexico, and Arizona were deeded by Mexico to the US for \$18, 250,000.

Many years later, in 1893, a similar American landholder's revolt threw out the Hawaiian ruling queen and made that country a province of the USA.

In each of the above instances, the "substantial interest" was financial and not humanitarian.

The civil war was one of our few military ventures which involved humanitarian principles. Yet there were many who claimed that Northerners had no "substantial interest" in complaining about the use of somebody else's "property." The Democratic Party, in it's August 1864 convention, declared the war to be a failure. It nominated General McClellan as its candidate for President.. It was only reversals in the field of battle that brought Lincoln his narrow victory. Lincoln squeaked by, obtaining 2,216,000 votes vs. 1,800,000 for McClellan, who was as incompetent a politician as he was a general.

BACKGROUND OF THE KOSOVO CRISIS

A historical study of the Kosovo area exposes the repeated change of sovereignty and demand for independence and cultural identity. Milosevic's claims are shaky that, historically, it is part of Serbia. In antiquity, the territory comprising Kosovo was part of the Roman province of Illyricum and was overrun by Goths after the collapse of the Roman empire. About the sixth century, it was occupied by Slavs and after a brief period of Croatian rule, it became part of Hungary. In 1376, one Stephen Tvrtko extended the Hungarian boundaries and proclaimed himself King of Serbia and Bosnia. In 1398 the Turks started a long series of attacks on the kingdom. By 1463, the Turks had conquered all of Bosnia and Hertzegovenia fell to them in 1483. The two nations remained Turkish provinces for the next 400 years until the Turkish war of 1877-1878.

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Unsuccessful risings against the Turks occurred frequently in Bosnia and Herzegovina during the 19th century. Under the terms of the Treaty of Berlin, the peace agreement which ended the war, the victorious Russians authorized Austria-Hungary, as a reward for its neutrality during the war, to occupy and administer Bosnia and Herzegovina. The two provinces were annexed by Hungary in 1908. Under Austrian rule, both provinces were centers of nationalist agitation for political independence and cultural autonomy. On December 1, 1918, following the overthrow of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, Bosnia and Herzegovina were merged and became part of an independent kingdom of Yugoslavia. On November 29, 1945, they became one of the federal republics of the new state of Yugoslavia.

BACKGROUND OF WORLD WAR I AND THE FAILURE OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

In 1908, a global crisis took place arising from the annexation by Austria-Hungary of Bosnia-Herzegovina. A greater Serbia movement existed, which had as one of its objectives the acquisition of the southern part of Bosnia. The Serbs threatened war against Austria. War was avoided only because Serbia would not fight without Russian support and Russia was then unprepared for war. The Balkan wars of 1912-1913 resulted in an increased desire of Serbia to acquire lands occupied by Slavic people.

The assassination of the Grand Duke of Austria-Hungary brought to a head the bad relations between Austria-Hungary and Serbia. Austria-Hungary claimed that the assassination was the work of the greater Serbian movement, which, if not suppressed by an Austrian military expedition, would cause the Austrian-Hungarian empire to collapse. On July 23, 1914, Austria-Hungary sent an ultimatum to Serbia submitting ten specific demands involving suppression of anti-Austrian propaganda in Serbia. Serbia accepted all but two of the demands, but Austria declared this reply to be unsatisfactory. On July 28, 1914, Austria declared war against Serbia, possibly thinking that Russia would not actually fight for Serbia. Germany warned Russia that continued mobilization would entail war with Germany. Germany had Austria agree to discuss with Russia possible alteration of the ultimatum with Serbia, but Germany insisted that Russia immediately demobilize. Russia declined to do so and on August 1, 1914, Germany declared war on Russia. Then the whole world exploded.

It is now evident that the positions of the Serbians and the Austrians were not that far apart, and that an international body with strong powers to enforce peace could very well have avoided the terrible carnage that followed.

THE RISE AND FALL OF THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS

Woodrow Wilson was elected on a platform of the US staying out of World War. But, after we were drawn into that "war to end all wars," and it ended with the Treaty of Versailles, President Wilson helped formulate a plan that would insure eternal peace. Unfortunately, he was not able to persuade Congress to support his plan.

Congress was unwilling to have the U.S. become a member of the League of Nations and abide by the requirement that each party honor the territorial boundaries of each other party.

In 1933, Japan invaded Manchuria and subsequently the rest of China. The League of Nations objected vociferously and demanded that Japan release its hold on China, but did nothing to enforce its demand. According to President Hoover the U.S. had "no substantial interest" in the Japanese situation.

It became obvious that the U.S. and the League of Nations were paper tigers. Encouraged by this timidity, Mussolini had Italy invade the primitively armed nation of Ethiopia.

Again, the toothless League protested vigorously, but did nothing and when Francisco Franco commenced the revolution against the duly elected government in Spain, with air and tank support from Nazi Germany and from Italy, the U.S. responded by placing an embargo on the export of arms and ammunition to both sides, thus leading to the triumph of this dictator.

Now, knowing that nothing would be done to oppose him, Germany's Hitler invaded Austria, Danzig, Alsace-Lorraine, Western Czechoslovakia and adjacent territories. Other than crying, "naughty, naughty," nothing was done. Finally British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlaine, on giving away Western Czechoslovakia, declared, "Now, we will have peace in our time." Churchill warned that Chamberlain had the choice between war or dishonor. "He chose dishonor. He will get war."

Even after the U.S. and the League failed to find any "substantial interest" in Hitler's rush for world domination, we ignored the proclamations in *Mein Kampf* that there would only be peace when Germany was master of the world, and similar bellicose declarations by Mussolini and the Japanese high command.

In the USA, the deified Charles Lindberg, Joseph Kennedy and their America First organization, and other Nazi sympathizers won great support, praising the Nazis, blaming the world conflagration on the Jews, and proclaiming that Germany would inevitably win this war.

Even after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, we did not declare war on Germany and Italy. They declared war on us.

After the termination of WWII, the United Nations was formed to enforce the peace that the League of Nations and the U.S. had failed to achieve. Unfortunately, Russia and China were made permanent members of the Security Council and were given the right to veto any affirmative action of any importance.

NATO was subsequently formed to solve this weakness of the United Nations. But, again, it has been a paper tiger when it comes to action replacing words.

A possible exception occurred when the U.S. and miscellaneous other nations defeated Saddam Hussein's murderous army. But this confrontation was not carried through to completion. The Nervous Nellies in the White House pulled out without toppling Hussein. We then called upon the ill armed opponents of Hussein to finish the job and throw him out. This was comparable to calling off World War II when our troops reached the Rhine, and then instructing the unarmed German population to destroy Hitler and his army.

Here again, we had an unfortunately named "America First" organization, headed by Pat Buchanan, formed to weaken our resolution in the Near East.

We hear the same voices again proclaiming that "We have no 'substantial interest' in Yugoslavia." "We can't win." Serbia's territorial ambitions are of little consequence to us financially. Ethnic cleansing is occurring over there, not here.

It is long past time to return to basic concerns about humanitarianism, justice, equity, equal and undeniable rights to the land. *Insights* staff suggests that every reader contact his/her congressional representative to remind her/him that we do have a substantial interest in Yugoslavia and anywhere else in the world that tyranny reigns. We must take every possible step, including troops on the ground, to crush this tyranny and prevent the resurrection of future tyrannies. We cannot ignore or tolerate yet another holocaust; we will not permit criminal, power corrupted, dictators and their supporters to destroy civilized society. We do have a "substantial interest" in the welfare of all society and the death and suffering of every human being.

We do not need to ask for whom the bell tolls. It tolls for us. ●●●●●●●●●●