

by R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

# Peace Now



In April Our Wartime President bombed Yugoslavia, Iraq, and Bulgaria. Earlier he had dropped bombs on Afghanistan and the Sudan. The bombing of

Bulgaria was an accident. Our forces were aiming at Belgrade and hit Sofia. As progressives in Congress are wont to say, "So what!" Also in April, Our Wartime President became the first American president to lose the "football," the attaché case containing the country's nuclear launch codes. After his last meeting at the NATO summit the Boy President sped off to the White House for an as-yet unexplained assignation. His bewildered military aide was left to hoof it back to the White House past crowds of Washington's colorful street people, the most potent attaché case in the world under his arm and a prayer in his heart. Finally, in early May, Our Wartime President bombed China's embassy in Belgrade, despite that country's generous support for his 1996 presidential campaign. Charlie Chaplin at the height of his comic powers could not have imagined such rich material.

Those of us who have been saying "I told you so" since our big lovable lug of a president first began selling off the White House silver know that these preposterousities are but the ones that got reported. Doubtless history will record more. So let us pause to put Bill Clinton's Balkan War into historic perspective. The United States has never fought a more stupid war. It has never bungled its way into a war more artlessly. It has

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Adapted from RET's weekly Washington Times column syndicated by Creators Syndicate.

never relied on a more dubious strategy. And it has never failed in its goals so rapidly. The homeless Kosovars will soon be hating us as intensely as they hate their erstwhile Serb neighbors. Though many of us Clinton critics predicted that foreign affairs would reveal the forty-second president for the humbug that he is, I doubt that any of us could have envisaged the full calamity that the Boy President has visited on the Balkans.

Once again, however, Clinton's unsurpassed vulgarity and gauchness leave the press speechless. With the exception of a handful of columnists led by A.M. Rosenthal, the press has yet to fasten upon the amazing incompetence of this war, along with its foolhardiness and fundamental immorality. American air power is pitilessly bombing the defenseless in the name of those whom this administration has rendered undefendable. Rosenthal called for a cease-fire weeks ago, and he is no dove. He recognized the full dimension of Clinton's blundering. Believing that once our flag was committed we had to achieve victory, I at first stood with John McCain. Our cause, though poorly thought out, was just. But the justice of the endeavor has diminished as the displacement of the Kosovars from their homes has increased and the suffering of Serb civilians spreads. The Boy President's giddy flop into hostility with Yugoslavia and possible cold war with China was beyond my calculations.

As the full stupidity of his entry into the war and of our execution of it becomes manifest, it seems to me that it is time to call for a cease-fire. Hand the mess over to the diplomats. Bill Clinton is America's first war resister to play at being Franklin Delano Roosevelt rendezvousing with destiny. The embarrassing consequences should have been anticipated. This president belongs outside the White House leading peace vigils. For him to be engaged in the disciplined and exacting business of war is as

unthinkable as an animal-rights activist leading a fox hunt or boning a deer.

Face the facts. No entertainer lives by the maxim that the show must go on when in center stage he finds his pants won't stay up and he's coming down with food poisoning. Clinton's condition is worse. He increasingly sounds like he's losing his grip. The other day when talking about the Littleton massacre he lunged into an explication of our Balkan War. That digressed into a complaint about the plight of women in Afghanistan. Then he blubbered "we have worked hard in Africa to work with other African forces to build an African Crisis Response Initiative...." Thence to the inner self, where "inside each of us there are vulnerabilities to dehumanizing other people...." And on to "we grew up in the segregated South...." And finally "that's what this whole issue with gays is today in America." Call an ambulance!

The Boy President sounds like this several times a week. Meanwhile in Moscow, the head of the other superpower—when your strategic arsenal is nuclear you remain a superpower in my book—is equally prone to bizarre outbursts. Said President Boris

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.....  
Congress, spurred on by the always seductive cry of "reform," is about to put government in the business of financing federal election campaigns. The John Chancellors and Walter Cronkites have set the mood, speaking in sonorous tones of how Watergate indicates the "corrosive influence of private money on public elections." Only Edward Kennedy attaches more significance to the crusade.

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JULY 1974

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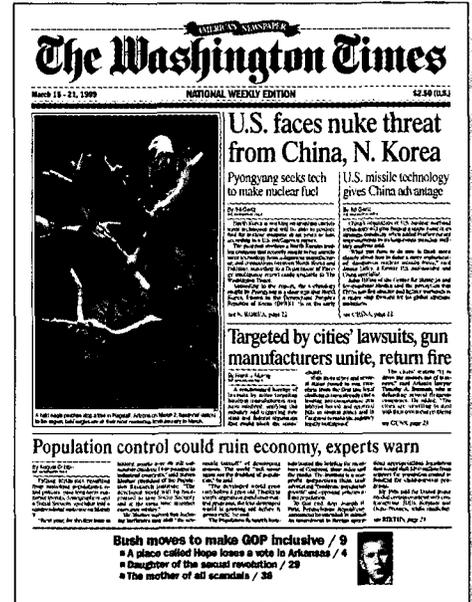
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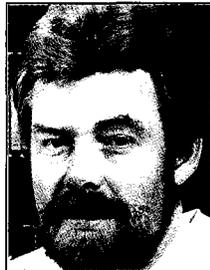
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Yeltsin on May 7 during a simple award ceremony, "No one—just let Clinton, a little bit, accidentally, send a missile. We'll answer immediately." The dozing Russian big *shishkis* looked suddenly alert. And Yeltsin blustered on: "We don't want.... Such impudence! To unleash a war on a sovereign state. Without Security Council. Without United Nations. It could only be possible in a time of barbarism."

Those are the kinds of utterances emitting from the leaders of the most powerful

nations on Earth. Three months after the American political system passed on an opportunity to dispose constitutionally of the most inept and corrupt president in American history, the nation is engaged in a war that is provoking the Chinese to hostile actions and the emotionally unstable President Yeltsin to rave. I say it is about time we quit this war and divert Our President's attention to matters less dangerous to our national security, for instance, his intern program. ❁

and behind all those masks you are all liberal Democrats playing masked politics.

As one reads down the list of those associated with the New America Foundation, one gets the impression masked politics is being played there too. The group's chairman is James Fallows, once a Democratic speechwriter, long a liberal moralist. "Senior fellows" include Margaret Talbot, a liberal from a famously left-wing California family whose writings are mildly left-wing but certainly not "unconventional." Then there is Michael Lind, a writer from the right most famous for criticizing conservatives and for holding Luddite views. Another senior fellow mentioned is Debra Dickerson. She writes for the left-wing *Village Voice*, does commentary for National Public Radio, and is national correspondent at the cyberspace magazine *Salon* that President Bill Clinton proclaims as his favorite. That soft-porn magazine is also edited by, if memory serves, Margaret Talbot's brother, who is also coy about his politics.

Interestingly, Mr. Halstead's foundation is gathering its funding from Silicon Valley executives, one of whom, Eric E. Schmidt of Norvell, expresses his impatience with "the left-right debate." He is paraphrased as saying that Silicon Valley's values have much to do with meritocracy, innovation, and "as little government interference as is feasible." That is all to the good and helps to explain why the technical innovations of his industry probably mark as historic a moment in commercial history as has ever been known. He goes on to say that he does not demand that the thinkers at the New America Foundation conform to the thinking in Silicon Valley. That too is admirable, for the above-mentioned writers are for the most part uneasy about economic change, technological innovation, global markets, untrammelled immigration, and "as little government interference as is feasible."

They are all markedly liberal with the presence of one somewhat offbeat conservative. It is not so surprising that they labor to hide their politics. What is somewhat surprising is that intelligent Americans think it is possible for politically engaged writers to be innocent of liberal or conservative politics. In such a conformist intellectual climate as ours there is no alternative. ❁

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## What's New?

**C**an any good come of something called the New America Foundation? Recently this new Washington think tank comfortably ensconced itself near Dupont Circle, where its triumphally young adepts are even now burning incense to each other's prodigiousness. Not surprisingly they abandon themselves to the illusion that they compose something that really is new in the land, and *special*.

In the annals of American history how many listings will we find under the chipped and peeling rubric "New America"? Going back a century or more intellectuals and intellectualoids with a glint in their eye have been booming "New America." There has been the *New American* magazine, the New America movement, the New American Revolution, New America this, and New America that. Were any of these New Americas really new? By the 1970's with the rise of hypochondria among the sophisticates, there was a New American cuisine, perhaps even a New American deodorant. The New America Foundation, according to the *New York Times*, enhaloes itself as the think tank that "will introduce younger voices, break out of the traditional liberal and conservative categories and produce unconventional ideas."

Accordingly its "younger voices" are writers in their thirties and twenties. But is this really young? Why not some teenagers? How about a few six-year-olds? Surely the New America Foundation could rustle up a stenographer to jot down the enlightened

cooings of a babe in its mother's arms. America has been introducing "younger voices" for years. If the New America Foundation is all that new it will summon voices from the nursery, diapers and all. And spare me this bilge about "unconventional ideas." The world is filled with lunatics who have unconventional ideas. What Washington and the nation are in critical need of is sound ideas.

Of course the fishiest of the New America Foundation's boasts is its claim to "break out of the traditional liberal and conservative categories." To be sure, after decades of ideological posturing strict ideological conformity is stultifying, in fact sterile. Yet practically any time I have encountered a stentorian voice claiming to have gone "beyond liberalism and conservatism" I have discovered an intellectual on the make or a liberal who has lost faith in his convictions.

The New America Foundation's president, a Mr. Ted Halstead (age 30, politics indescribable), tells the *Times* "people his age have removed themselves from politics and policy...largely out of distrust of political leaders and political institutions as well as impatience with the constricting right and left labels." Following that self-congratulatory note, let me add that people of all ages are also impatient with politicians and intellectuals who juggle political terminology and hide their ideology behind masks: "I, my friend, am a mere environmentalist." "And I am a sorely-pressed consumerist." "How very nice to meet you, I am a feminist." Yes,

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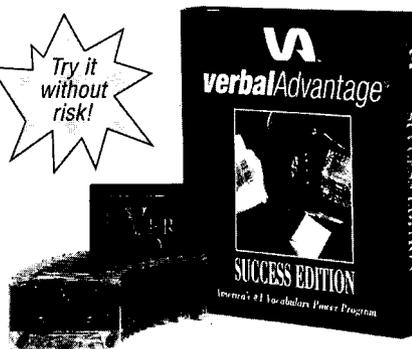
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# Liberals Go to War

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**T**he quintessential liberal Eleanor Clift complained the other day about “all this whining about civilians being hurt.” You thought there was something about this war you didn’t like? Think of it this way. The B-2 is in combat at last—and Eleanor Clift and Hillary Clinton are in the cockpit. Nina Totenberg: “We’re going to have to use... a lot more violence, and that means B-52s and ground troops.” Jack Germond: “This defiance, of nationalism, the only way you can break it down is to be awfully harsh. Shut off the electricity. You’ve got to wreck Belgrade, basically.”

One of the first to defend the U.S. war on Serbia was the television commentator Andy Rooney. “We have the weapons, we have the money, we have the moral authority,” he said on “60 Minutes” on March 28. “We even have some help from other countries this time. There’s nothing in it for us. No big oil companies going to make money, no bankers. All we’ll get out of it is the good feeling of knowing we’re helping a lot of poor bastards who don’t have the power to help themselves.... I trust President Clinton in this matter. I trust my country. I’m proud.”

That is an almost perfect statement of the liberal rationale for war. There’s nothing in it for us—except that it makes us feel good. We deliver unto those who deserve it a purely disinterested bombing, a moral bombing from on high. Rooney only failed to add that the groundwork—the real groundwork, having nothing to

do with ground troops—had already been laid. Milosevic had been demonized by the media worldwide. So we had our Hitler, and now good was bombing evil. Not for America’s national interest, mind. Not for oil. But for the pure moral improvement of mankind. Notice that Rooney’s cynicism about earlier wars (“warbucks” were their unstated cause) was exceeded only by his self-righteousness about our starting a new one.

By the end of May, our claim to moral superiority remained a key justification for bombing. “It is the alliance that obviously has the high moral values, has the democracy and the open, questioning system,” a senior administration official told a *Washington Post* reporter. Why does this fail to reassure? Madeleine Albright, our deracinated secretary of state, said NATO will be in the business of imposing “values.” Among them she included “democracy, stability and basic human decency.” Bombing for democracy? Absurd. And forget about stability. We already had that, and may have now lost it. As for basic human decency, Steven Mosher of the Population Research Institute reported that by May, “morning-after” birth-control pills were being distributed to Kosovar women in Albanian refugee camps as “a routine form of family planning.” Not just as an emergency response to allegations of rape.

That was admittedly the U.N. Population Fund’s doing, but it wouldn’t have happened without our tacit approval. Our basic message to the world seems to have been propounded by the Rockefeller Foundation, and now delegated to the U.S. Air Force: “Too many people out there!” What does Western civilization

now have to offer the world? Polling booths, condoms, and, oh yes, something else—diversity. Clinton wrote in his *New York Times* article that the “cleansing of people from their land” was a threat to diversity. “Had they experienced nothing but that, their nations would be homogeneous today, not endlessly diverse.” “Homogeneous” nations are self-evidently wicked, apparently. Have we really come to that?

One “value” that Albright & Co. do take seriously is “Might makes right.” It is disquieting to contemplate the enemies that the United States is making around the world as we bomb for democracy and diversity. We will not be able to sustain our predominant might for long. Sometimes I think that our desperate attempts to confine high-tech information within U.S. borders is not so much a concern about “theft” or “spying” as it is the well-founded fear that once we lose our monopoly of might, others might adopt our philosophy of right against us. Since, in bombing Belgrade, we ignored the U.N. Charter provision that requires Security Council approval for attacks on sovereign nations, we may now expect others to follow our example. “The trouble with flying in the face of the Charter,” Jonathan Power wrote, “is that when the West bends it out of shape, it does not simply spring back to where it was, ready for use the next time. It is damaged, perhaps unusable. Why should China not use force to win back Taiwan?”

Many said that the bombing was an error, but most agreed that there was no going back. That would undermine our “credibility.” War has no reverse gear, apparently. Buy a bad stock, and you must invest your whole portfolio in it. The “prevailing argument,” Arianna Huffington said, is that “the best way to get out of a strategic error is to compound it.” Of course, nothing

TOM BETHELL is TAS’s *Washington correspondent*. His latest book, *The Noblest Triumph*, was recently published by St. Martin’s Press.