

Inaction in Bosnia leaves sad legacy

The world community's inaction on the civil war in Bosnia is a tragedy on a scale rarely seen in the last decade. The United Nations, NATO, the European community and the United States must now accept responsibility for this multinational failure.

While there certainly is enough blame to go around, no one nation is responsible. Entering a civil war, even on a peacekeeping basis, is a risky and harsh step few nations are willing to take. Britain, France and Canada, however, contributed ground troops to the U.N. effort. Now they are paying the price in the coin of hostages for NATO air strikes that destroyed empty battle tanks and uninhabited airstrips. At least those countries had the fortitude to commit a peacekeeping presence to the splintered republic.

The United States, on the other hand, made available warplanes in Greece, Italy and Germany capable of striking anywhere in Serbia or Bosnia. Despite campaign pledges by President Clinton "to do whatever it takes to stop the slaughter of civilians," he has now denied ever making such a promise. Clinton encountered heavy opposition from Western allies in his initial attempts to use force to stop Serbian aggression. Instead of taking the opportunity to lead the world to stop the systematic extermination of ethnic Bosnians, he caved in to this pressure.

Most importantly, the civil war has shown NATO to be a toothless monstrosity with no business in the peacekeeping game. Despite multiple NATO threats dangled over the Serbian war machine, the aggression continues because the threats have never been carried out with a substantial enough force to deter further advancement.

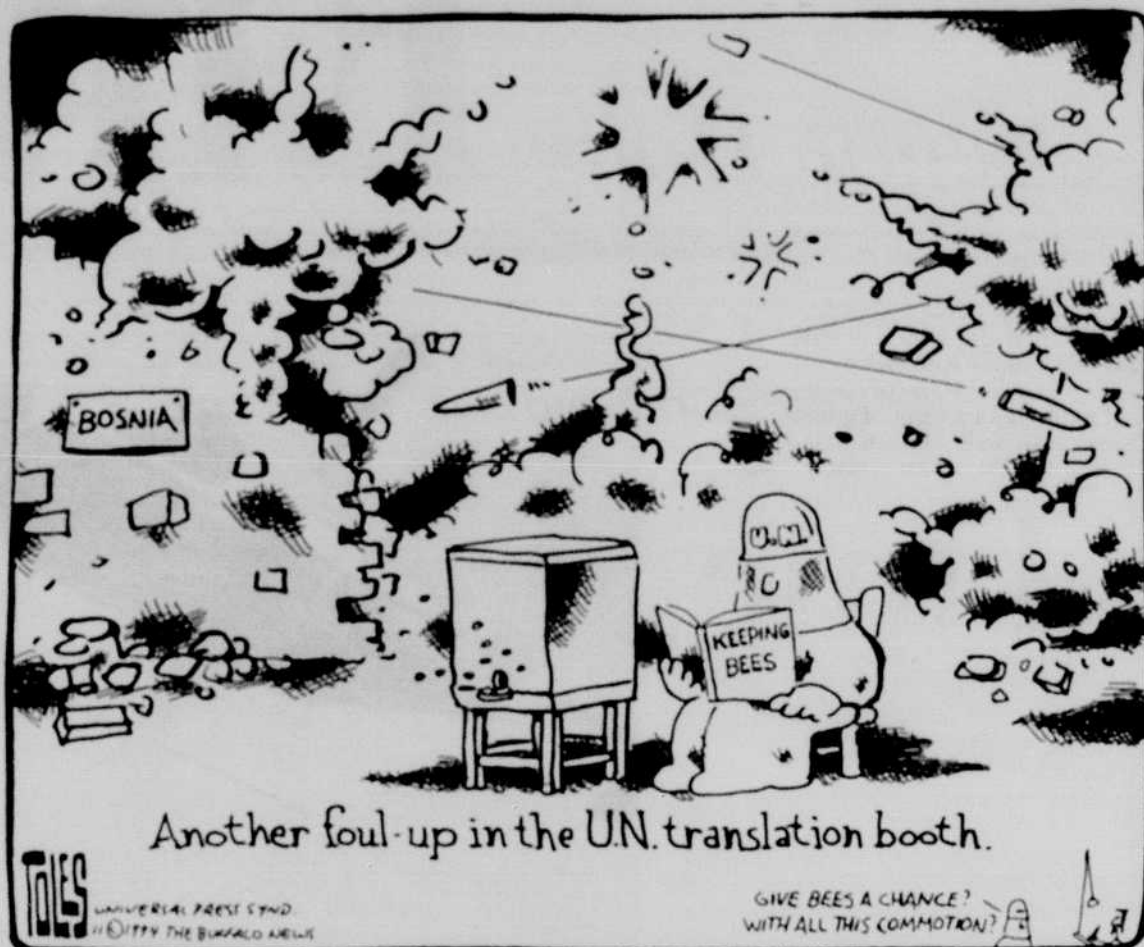
One could speculate that the world community has failed because we decided the conflict to be a localized aberration, not worthy of risking large amounts of U.S., French, British and Canadian lives.

But a disturbing question is then raised. If Christians instead of Muslims had been the target of the Bosnian Serb's ethnic cleansing campaign, would the world community have stepped in sooner and with more force?

The answer is probably yes. Because those being slaughtered are predominantly Muslim, the world has turned a blind eye. Stereotypes of the radical Islamic terrorist of Middle Eastern origin feed an ignorance of the world's largest religion. Whereas the overwhelming majority of Muslims are peaceful, law-abiding people, a few rotten characters have soiled the image. And now the Bosnians of Muslim faith are paying the price.

Public opinion dictated Clinton's response to this international crisis. Likewise, public opinion fueled our Western allies' resistance to a more aggressive enforcement of NATO ultimatums.

The world has allowed this tragedy to continue. Now we must live with a sad history that could have been averted.



■ OPINION

Need a laugh? Watch the GOP



Gayle Forman

During the weeks leading up to November's election, I found myself plunged into a pit of depression and disgust as I watched members of the Republican Party successfully campaign as the agents of change. Who could they be fooling. I wondered.

A lot of people, it would seem. The whole country was dissatisfied with all those corrupt politicians up there on Capitol Hill. As the fated day drew nearer, the air was thick with GOP blood lust. The Democrats were going down. Conservative segments of the Republican Party were out to re-moralize this nation.

Sure enough, Americans, looking for salvation, voted for Republicans majorities in the Senate and the House. The results made me hyperventilate and tug on my hair. I thought about moving to Sweden or another such socially un-regressive country. I couldn't read the newspaper: Newt, Jesse and Bob crowing, Clinton scratching his head, wondering what went wrong. I used my mute button a lot, whenever some ancient, craggy politicians started yammering about how the county voted for change. Oy, what a mess.

But in the last week, I have noticed the pit in my stomach giving way to tickles of laughter, my feelings of despair elevating to glimmers of hope. I realized that the arch-conservative GOP blowhards should be a source of entertainment, not consternation. Before Congress heads back to Washington the GOP is already muddling itself up. Here, see for yourself.

Jesse Helms is getting the old

idiot ball rolling. First he announces that Clinton is not fit to be commander in chief of the armed forces, and then he threatens the president's safety by warns him not to travel to North Carolina, Helms' home state, without a bodyguard. Jesse, soon-to-be head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, is proving to the world that he is not fit to fill that role or any other. He rejects U.S. aid to foreign countries; he calls it throwing money into rat holes. His fellow party members will be spending the next few years scrambling to cover up Helms' verbal diarrhea. See what fun this could be?

Congressman Newt Gingrich, a man who once upset me greatly, now provides me with hours of fun as I imagine his demise. The Newtster believes prayer in school will solve all our social woes. Other politicians have agreed with him and condoned the idea of a silent moment of "reflection" in school. Scary and unconstitutional as that option is, it wasn't enough for Newt. He wanted prayer, good old "Our Father who art in Heaven" Christian-style prayer. Now he's not so sure. If he ever pushes his plans through to force all the young people of this country to make daily prayers to Jesus Christ, won't it be a lark to watch as he encounters the vengeful wrath of all those who pray to Allah, Buddha, the goddess or to no one?

And what a belly laugh it will give me to watch as the GOP wages a cultural war on the counterculture of America. Counterculture? What decade are these people in? Just who comprises this so-called counterculture? Maybe old hippies like Sonny Bono, but he's a Republican congressman now, so he can't count. Those GOPsters can keep on blaming the world's ills on the 1960s, castigating the 1990s counterculture and all the while alienating thousands of their supporters.

But the grand finale in the GOP comedy hour will no doubt be watching the GOP enforce its

Contract with America, a contract that promises to return the country to Reagan-style economic policies. The first order of business is to get a balanced-budget amendment passed. That's all well and good, everyone agrees. But how will they ever balance the budget when the rest of the Contract promises a return to Reaganomics, economic policies that, ahem, sky-rocketed the national deficit into the trillions and plummeted the country into a severe economic slump?

But the GOP promised a balanced budget and, by golly, they're gonna deliver, they say. By cutting back on things like, say, welfare, because everybody knows that the welfare mothers are at the root of this country's economic and social problems. The greedy mothers only have the kids to rake in the cash. So, that nutty Newt Gingrich has suggested putting welfare babies in orphanages, cutting benefits and eliminating the enticement of motherhood to those nasty women who have the audacity to have children when they're poor.

According to the GOP plan, there won't be any more welfare moms because there will be no loose women left having premarital sex after that minute of prayer takes effect and the country's morals are restored. Moving right along in the cutbacks, the GOP's Contract with America promises to increase military spending. Hello? Anybody home? Where's the enemy?

Obviously these policies make no sense. That's the funny part; it's also the sad part. The ball is in the GOP's court now to prove its ability to make change and progress. It has the burden of proving its worth, ability and connection with the American people. But Republicans are heading in a very wrong direction. If they don't turn themselves around and get updated soon, 1996 will find many Americans dumping the incumbent again.

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