

Pacifists deeply misguided

April 19, 1999

Some are opposed to war period, and specifically today to NATO's acts of aggression in the former Yugoslavia. They're pacifists, they argue it's wrong for the rest of us to intervene in the affairs of a sovereign country, and they couldn't be more wrong!

If English Canada were to bomb, burn, murder or otherwise cleanse this country of its French speaking population we would understandably be condemned in the court of world opinion. Would it then be right for that world to just sit idly by and watch it happen? Of course not! We would expect intervention and the protection of innocents. Anything less would amount to acquiescence and be the moral equivalent of collaboration. That it took the world community so long to respond to the situation in the Balkans is frankly reprehensible.

"But people will be killed," the pacifists argue. People are being killed with or without military intervention, and those who argue against it frankly argue against history. The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki caused inestimable damage and suffering, for instance, but so did the war which those bombs brought to an end, and it's undeniable that many American lives were saved by that government's use of superior fire power.

Pacifists believe that one can negotiate with devils. Again they argue with history, Hitler having entered into pacts of nonaggression with just about every country he shortly thereafter invaded.

And why did he invade them? Because he knew he could beat the tar out of them after the relative success of that era's peaceniks in disarming the western democracies. Do you not see then that the peaceniks themselves are in part responsible for the carnage of the Second World War?

Pacifists are almost invariably from the left of the political spectrum. Those on the right seem more acutely aware of the condition of the human heart and the depths to which it can plumb. In light of this, they're aware too that war is sometimes simply unavoidable. I humbly suggest that those who believe otherwise clearly do not well understand human nature.

UPDATE: While on the subject of peaceniks, Margaret Atwood, Naomi Klein, self-described "former Marxist" Judy Rebick and then MP Svend Robinson issued a letter in 2002 declaring that war with Iraq would be immoral because it was "unprovoked."

Unprovoked. Saddam Hussein bombed several neighbouring countries, gassed tens of thousand of his own countrymen and was before his ouster both a financier and provocateur of terrorism. According to a physicist formerly in his employ, he was also actively pursuing an agenda of nuclear and biological weaponry development. That's what was known in 2002.

Foreign policy is not an exact science. It's based on other countries' leaders' histories and capabilities, neither of Hussein's having done anything to endear him to anyone. He was a terrorist and a thug, and there was the very real possibility that he had some hardware with which to deliver his spite.

What we now know, according to one General Georges Sada, Vice Marshall of the Iraqi Air Force and onetime Hussein advisor, is that it took fifty-six sorties of jumbo

jet flights to hide the country's stockpile of chemical, biological and nuclear materials in Syria in advance of the first Gulf War. Then sanctioned by Oil for Food which was none too effective, he thereafter continued to invest multiplied millions in advancing his nuclear ambitions. In light of all this it would have been irresponsible for junior to have *not* invaded the country!

While on the subject of foreign policy, what does Canada's experience in Afghanistan, America's in Iraq and Israel's ongoing conflict with its neighbours all have in common? Only that we were/are, I believe, fighting deeply misguided zealots with no regard for human life and Hitleresque ambitions of world dominion.

Civilians have, of course, been killed in each of these theatres. It is a fact that no army has yet devised a method of warfare that completely avoids civilian casualties, though minimizing the scale of such is the objective of at least the remotely civilized ones. This objective becomes increasingly difficult when one side in a conflict specifically targets civilian populations while using yet others as human shields, both in direct violation of the Geneva Convention. I'm referring now, of course, to both Hezbollah and Hamas, and no less a reliable source than their own Al-Jazeera newscast has confirmed their tactics.

In 2006 Hezbollah killed eight and kidnapped two Israeli soldiers in direct contravention of the above convention. By 2009, Hamas had fired no less than 7,000 rockets over a three year period on the Jewish homeland. In 2012, over a six day period, they launched a thousand more, killing five. In each of these cases Israel has provided a very measured response, (as evidenced by the fact that Gaza and Lebanon weren't reduced to smoldering ruins) but anyone who questions what precipitated these actions is guilty of willful blindness.

In Gaza, Lebanon, and on the high seas Israel's actions have been entirely defensible – as they will be again when they get around to addressing the threat posed by the murderous Iranian regime's nuclear program (assuming they haven't done so before this goes to print.)

Defensible, and entirely justified – just like America when it went into Afghanistan to root out the perpetrators of 9/11, and as were we in our efforts to keep it from falling back into the hands of the terrorists. Girls are going to school today and their mothers are providing for their own through businesses started up with micro-loans. The Taliban, alternatively, would murder the girls for trying to get an education and sell their mothers into slavery to pay their debts. The left, marching in the streets with their tiresome “Troops Out Now” nonsense, as usual, knew not what they called for.

Nor, though, did anyone (save the military industria-complex) want this to become another twenty-five year engagement like Cypress. At some point the country had to be turned over to the locals. We'll know whether 2011 was the right time to do so if those locals, with our guidance, can manage to keep it from reverting to a terrorist state.

The U.S. went into Iraq to end Hussein's nightmarish ambitions, and in this, at least, they have succeeded. Whether or not they should have stayed in theatre after he was dispatched will likely be debated for years, as will the timing of their eventual departure, but there's one group the decision makers should never listen to.

In June a Gallup poll revealed that 25% of Americans wanted their troops brought home from theatre. That was five months before Germany unconditionally surrendered to the Allies! The year was 1945. I'm referring to peaceniks, of course, and all one can say is thank God for the politicians who ignore them, both past and present.