

EDITORIALS

Bosnia goal is worthy, but not worth U.S. lives

How sad that as Christians prepare to celebrate the birth of a Savior, 60,000 troops are poised to keep the peace among people who have been fighting one another along largely religious lines. Whatever national boundaries are eventually drawn in the former Yugoslavia, knowledgeable observers believe it is religion, not nationality, that divides the inhabitants of that unfortunate part of the world. If that is the case, a lasting end to the fighting is unlikely to emerge from this military action.

The absence of a certain outcome has been raised by opponents of American involvement, while somewhat starry-eyed principles have been cited to support our role. As is so often the case, the true factors influencing President Clinton's decision to join the NATO action lie someplace between those two extremes.

There is no doubt that United States involvement was necessary if this action was to have any chance of success. Anyone who says this is strictly a European problem is deluding themselves; we have had an interest in maintaining a reasonably peaceful world since the conclusion of World War II, and no place more than Europe. We are the only true superpower on earth, and for all our faults still carry the strongest moral weight in international circles. That is probably true because our motives have seldom been to take land by force, at least not since the Mexican-American conflicts of more than a century ago.

We also have by far the largest military budget, equal at last glance to all the rest of the world combined. So, if action was needed to stop the carnage, the U.S. had to be part of it.

None of that answers the question of whether intervention is necessary, or even wise. It is not inconsistent for the same people who say the poor should fend for themselves to take a hands-off approach to foreign affairs, and their argument that America has no direct interest in Bosnia has some merit. Supporters of the action point out that aside from the human cost of the fighting, there is always the potential it will spread, eventually threatening our allies. That seems a bit far-fetched in this corner.

Many people we respect support the intervention, and American participation in it. They see the substantial risks as worth the potential reward. Despite that, we wonder why ground forces are suddenly necessary when the use of forceful air power brought the heaviest fighting to such a quick end. It's now obvious that earlier use of air power could have slowed the killing, and perhaps ended it long ago.

Bringing peace to the Balkans is certainly a worthy goal, but it is difficult to imagine how peace can be forced on people who seem determined to hate their neighbors. We must support our soldiers who are now in the line of fire, but we should not hesitate to demand they be removed if the parties with the most at stake don't take serious strides toward ending the conflict once and for all.

Publisher's notebook

Ron Bartizek



Modern technology has made publishing a newspaper — particularly a small one — far easier than it was even 15 years ago. Off-the-shelf computers now boast more power than decade-old mainframes, and software has more capability than most of us will ever use, or master. We've added a couple of the latest generation Apple Power Macintosh computers, and we can't wait to get them up and running. There's one snag; our old word processing software won't run on the new machines. No problem, you may say, just buy a new program. It's not quite that easy; since we will continue to use early Macs for text entry and other simple tasks, so the new program must run on both the old and new systems. There are a couple that do, so I ordered the most stripped-down one. That was a month ago, and we're still waiting for it to arrive. My guess is the company made far more sales than it anticipated from the mailing I responded to, and can't meet the demand. So, our fancy hardware is staring blankly at us until we can get our hands on the right software. Very frustrating.

There may be one silver lining in the cloud of rapidly-escalating paper prices; perhaps higher costs will reduce the volume of useless material we receive in the mail each day. We depend on people to send us much of the news that fills the inside pages of The Post, and some of it gets us started on larger features. But most of the mail is meaningless to the Back Mountain, or even to anyone in northeastern Pennsylvania, for that matter. Things like a pile of press releases from the PA Dental Ass'n touting dental products as "great holiday gifts," or the release from Bon Secours Health System, Inc. reorganization of its office... in Baltimore! Then there are the weekly notices from the U.S. Commerce Department, announcing that the Census Bureau will visit "selected area households" to conduct an income survey. The release ends with a sentence saying potential survey households will be contacted individually, so why bother sending the notice to the newspapers? This is just the tip of the iceberg. If you add in all the glossy press kits about commercial real estate in Philly and vacations in the Bahamas, it adds up to a tremendous amount of wasted postage, printing costs and trees. I don't enjoy paying higher printing costs for the newspaper, but I'll cheer any effort to cut down the useless stuff we toss each day.

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Huntsville United Methodist Church. Photo by Charlotte Bartizek.

LETTERS

Kiwanis thanks community for its generosity

Editor:
On behalf of the Back Mountain Kiwanis and the Charles Young family of Dallas, we would like to thank the good, open-hearted people of the Back Mountain, Luzerne County and the surrounding area for their more than generous donations in their time of crisis.

As you know, the Young family lost everything but the clothes on their backs and their car due to a fire at their home on Lower Demunds Road in Dallas. The Back Mountain Kiwanis called on the

commendable people of this area to lend a helping hand to this young couple and their children in their special time of need by giving clothing, appliances, furniture, monetary and moral support.

We also wish to give Chili Willie's Ice Cream Parlor in Dallas great big kudos for giving the drive a distribution center when we really needed it — and with such expedience, especially with the short notice given them. The Franklin First Savings on the Tunkhannock Highway in Dallas has been

simply wonderful for letting us use their insittution for money donations.

Once again the people of Luzerne County and the surrounding areas have proved that we still have plenty of heart left here, especially in a young family's time of need. Again, thank you to all who contributed and for everything that was donated. May your holidays be special this year and may the New Year be prosperous for all.

Susan Stephens, president
Back Mountain Kiwanis

Reporter's notebook



Grace R. Dove

The Christmas season is the most magical time of the year to me.

Right after Thanksgiving (we'll ignore the display of trees and decorations amid the Halloween costumes at my favorite discount store), people begin to deck their homes with colorful lights and displays.

Because a good chunk of my work involves attending evening municipal meetings, I get a free month-long light show every December. It's fun to note which of my neighbors has their display up first and how elaborate it is. One family in my neighborhood does something new every year, so I'm treated to the latest in outdoor decor, from chase lights to a lighted Santa's sled which somehow manages to look like a UFO hanging from the flagpole. Sometimes I'll take the back roads to cover municipal meetings instead of the main drag, or cut through an exceptionally well-decorated neighborhood just for the heck of it.

A snowfall adds a nice touch to the colored lights, muting and diffusing them to create an unusual look.

My other favorite Christmas pastime is making gifts for my family and watching their reactions as they open them. My oldest sister, Phyllis, promptly tries

Christmas stories

on anything I make her within five minutes of opening it.

One year we all ganged up on Dad and his tales of his epic gun battles with the armadillos which dig up his yard looking for grubs. Phyllis found him a stuffed armadillo in a flea market, while I picked up an armadillo pin at a craft show and produced an armadillo cookbook.

This year he's in for it again. He had asked me for a gun-cleaning kit. I shudder to think of how grubby the inside of the barrel of his .22 rifle and .357 magnum pistol, which haven't been cleaned in a coon's (or armadillo's) age, must look.

"Oh, I don't have to worry about cleaning them," he said blithely. "I use self-cleaning ammo."

Please do not go out to your friendly neighborhood gun shop and ask the nice people for self-cleaning ammo. It doesn't exist, although I have devised a passable substitute. Q-tips glued into empty .22 casings won't shoot, but will still look rather convincing.

Outwitting the four-legged members of my family is another popular holiday sport with an honored history in my home. For more than two decades I tied full-size trees to nails driven into the wall so they wouldn't topple when kitties climb them. I decorated the lower third with cheap plastic stuff, reserving the handmade and glass decorations for the upper reaches where dogs can't reach.

Our only casualty was the garland, which one of our beagles, Ralph, loved to grab and take off with, accompanied by "Ralph, you little @#%^\$!"

I down-sized to a table-size tree

several years ago after acquiring my beagle, Buddy, first boy dog, and I didn't want to confuse him by setting up a tree indoors, then scolding him for leaving his mark on it.

I've even devised a foolproof way to keep my cat, Fancy, from overturning our small holiday tree. Last year Fancy, then only slightly more than two months old, was too tiny to claw her way up onto the desk in the living room where the tree sat on top of the stereo.

This year the little whiskerface goes wherever she wants, so I've used duct tape to anchor the tree to the stereo's plastic top.

I give it about five minutes.

My Dad says I'm wrong to treat my pets like people. He says a dog or cat should know its place, etc., etc. They do — on my bed at night.

At least mine don't pull a stunt like Jester, the venerable golden retriever which my oldest sister, Phyllis, once owned.

We returned from Christmas Eve services to find that the mischevious little furface had dragged one of my special gifts for Phyllis, a large bag of her favorite flavored coffee, from under the tree into the kitchen and was giving it a thorough sniffing through the wrapping paper. He tried to tell us he was just getting ready to make up a pot of it for us after church, but nobody believed him.

This holiday season I wish my readers, both two- and four-legged, a healthy dose of Christmas magic, the kind which makes the fur people able to speak at midnight, paints smiles on the spirits of cynics and brings beautiful lights to the year's longest, darkest nights.

ONLY YESTERDAY



60 Years Ago - Dec. 27, 1935 FR. O'LEARY TO LEAVE ST. THERESE'S PARISH

One of the most beloved priests in Northeastern Pennsylvania, Rev. J.J. O'Leary, pastor of St. Therese's R.C. Church, Shavertown, will resign January 1 because of poor health. His successor will be named within a few days by Bishop Thomas C.O. Reilly of the Scranton Diocese.

As an outgrowth of complaints that politics is influencing the administration of government relief projects, needy persons from this section who claim they were "denied directly" as work relief will have an opportunity to register after the first day of the year so their complaints can be considered by a committee investigating the charges.

50 Years Ago - Dec. 28, 1945 NATIVE LACE TO BUILD NEW PLANT HERE

Plans for the new Dallas plant of Native Lace Co. of Hightstown, N.J. have been released by Lacy, Atherton, Wilson & Davis, and have been placed for competitive bids, which will be received by the company at its office in Hightstown on Jan. 11.

Hearing tests under the supervision of the Pa. Department of Health are being conducted in local schools. The department has distributed Western Electric Audiometers to test those students whose hearing is defective in order that they might be placed in classroom positions near the teacher. Formerly in many instances students were seated haphazard fashion, causing those with defective hearing to miss valuable information.

40 Years Ago - Dec. 22, 1955 NEIGHBORS HELP ZOSH FAMILY REBUILD BARN

Drawings are complete for a \$100,000 8-lane, air conditioned bowling alley, to be built this winter opposite Delaney's Gas Service on a lot fronting 300 feet along Memorial Highway. Robert Hanson owner has announced that the enterprise will be known as Crown Imperial Bowling.

For the eighth consecutive season, Harveys Lake Woman's Service Club is sending out Christmas Cheer to the aged, infirm and needy in the form of gaily wrapped and filled Christmas baskets and packages. This year 135 Cheer Baskets, 19 food baskets and toys and clothing for 50 children are being distributed.

Zosh cattle will be in their new barn before Christmas, a triumphant tribute to a neighborhood that turned out en masse to cope with disaster when lightning wiped out in minutes the work of years early in the morning of Nov. 14.

30 Years Ago - Dec. 23, 1965 MERRILL MAY NOT BE AUDITOR AND COP

If created a borough, Harveys Lake would be the first new municipality incorporated in the Back Mountain since 1879, the birth of Dallas Borough. Harveys Lake Borough would also enjoy distinction of being one of the rare instances where consolidation-minded PA Economic League advocated creating a new municipality.

Mr. and Mrs. George Belles, Dallas, will celebrate their 58th wedding anniversary on Christmas Day. The couple are the parents of four children, have 12 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

20 Years Ago - Dec. 24, 1975 TELEPHONE WORKERS STRIKE CONTINUES

A mediation meeting called by Charles McHugh of the Federal Mediation & Conciliation Association between representatives of five striking locals of Communication Workers of America and Commonwealth Telephone Co. ended with "no progress" having been made after only two hours according to McHugh. Commonwealth still stands on the final offer made prior to the strike, December 9 mediation session between the two groups. The offer consists of 9.4 across the board wage increase with increases in fringe benefits "stands firm". CWA workers are seeking increases in vacation and sick leave and a 12.5 percent across the board wage increases.