

U.S. should help Baltic republics

As Yugoslavia and its secessionist republics Slovenia and Croatia maintain a shaky peace, the United States continues to do nothing to help these two groups avoid a bloody conflict.

It seems ironic that the United States would not support a small republic trying to break free from a forced union with a country where ethnic or national ties are no longer shared. Didn't this nation do the same thing 215 years ago?

The lack of U.S. interest seems to contradict President Bush's vision of the United States leading all nations to a peaceful "new world order." Ironically, the United States acted swiftly to restore the Kuwaiti government — a royal family that offers no voting privileges to its citizens.

Yet, Bush and congressional leaders ignore two struggling republics' quest for democracy and freedom. Slovenia chose independence under a new democratic government by a nine-to-one margin in a general election, but Croatia and Slovenia remain under the United States' indifferent shadow.

At least the European Community managed to withhold \$1 billion of financial support if violence erupts, but no meaningful effort has been put forth by the United States to end this civil unrest. Although Slovenia and Croatia have agreed to suspend its declarations of independence for three months, negotiations could break down quickly. Slovenia said it was withdrawing its deputies from the Yugoslav national legislature, and Croatia told the national legislature to "work so the disassociation process may unfold in a peaceful and democratic way." Obviously, independence won't be compromised, which makes war a stronger possibility.

Further, as Slovenia's parliament agreed to a European Community plan to avoid war in favor of more negotiations (a plan Croatia already approved), the secessionist republics and Yugoslavian government still traded threats of violence. Indeed, war still is lurking.

If the United States insists on supporting current borders over a struggling people's quest for freedom, then at least give the dispute the attention it deserves. It is wrong for the United States to passively observe a nation

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stand precariously on the edge of violent conflict.

In fairness, the answer to solving the ethnic and political conflicts in Yugoslavia seems elusive, even to experts. European Community representatives have been hesitant and sometimes doubtful of a peaceful settlement being reached. The problem surrounds the origin of these current disputes. Yugoslavia is a country made up of several different ethnic groups, many of which have been ancient rivals. They were strangers to one another with no interest in unity for hundreds of years, and it was post WWI negotiations that forced these groups together. To expect these factions to stay together is not logical; to insist on it is silly.

To his credit, Bush has softened his pro-Yugoslav stance by saying he may support the independence of Croatia and Slovenia under peaceful bilateral processes. But breaking up parts of a country is a tricky and often violent business. Bush's "new order" vision for this country could be permanently tarnished if violence breaks out and the United States has done nothing to help avoid it.

Certainly, indifference is not a part of any equation for developing a peaceful international community. I'm not suggesting military intervention similar to Desert Storm would work, or that the United States must serve as a worldwide police force. However, the United States could assist the European Community in arbitration.

Unfortunately, President Bush and congressional leaders seem content to sit on their hands, keep their distance and hope that Yugoslavia and its independence-minded republics can avoid conflict. So much for the United States being a "new world" leader for international peace.

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WE SHALL OVERTUR-U-RN, WE SHALL OVERTURN SOMEDAY-A-A-A-Y!



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MAIL CALL

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Editor's Note: Due to lack of space for reader correspondence in summer issues of The Battalion, letters might not be printed if the subject matter does not present new information or a new outlook to an issue previously discussed on the Opinion page.

Research supports vegetarians

EDITOR:

It's easy to make fun of Michael Worsham's column on nutrition (Battalion 6/25/91). After all, he refers to "whole wheat grain" as one of the new four food groups (wheat is only one of the grains, Mike, you mean whole grain cereals or simply whole grains); he asks supposedly rhetorical questions like "Ever seen a fat vegetarian?" (of course we have — take a nutritionally adequate vegan diet, add a six pack of beer and a pound of potato chips per day, and you will get a fat vegan); and he cites, as his only empirical source, John Robbins' weakly documented and sensationalist book, "Diet for a New America."

Although Worsham sometimes seems to thrive on looking outrageous, good empirical research by sober nutritionists has verified some of the claims that graduate students writing in response to Worsham's column have denigrated.

First, while it is true that "Animal products are the main source of vitamin B12" (Rober Hagevoort and Jon Moritz, Battalion 6/28/91), numerous studies of people on vegan diets (which exclude both flesh and animal by-products like eggs and dairy products) have found that vegetarians only develop deficiencies when they develop absorption problems which are unrelated to their diets. This suggests, contrary to the received wisdom, that vegetarians get enough B12 by microorganisms in the human ileum. See the comprehensive review of available literature by Alan Immerman, "Vitamin B12 Status on a Vegetarian Diet," World Review of Nutrition and Dietetics 37 (1981), pp. 38-54, at pp. 45-47; and the case report, Anonymous, "Vegetarian Diet and Vitamin B12 Deficiency," Nutrition Reviews 36 (1978), pp. 243-44.

Second, it is an oversimplification to say that "Osteoporosis is diminished, not caused by, milk products mainly while young, but also through life" (Hagevoort and Moritz again). Although studies have shown that calcium consumption during childhood and adolescence affects bone density decades later during menopause, frequency of osteoporosis is positively correlated with calcium consumption, at least at the national level. Countries

that, like the United States, consume the most calcium per capita also have the highest incidence of hip fractures per 100,000 people. Individuals raised on low-calcium diets utilize available calcium more efficiently, whereas long-term adaptation to high-calcium diets decreases efficiency of utilization and eventually increases the risk of osteoporosis. See D.M. Hested, "Calcium and Osteoporosis," Journal of Nutrition 116 (1986), pp.2316-19.

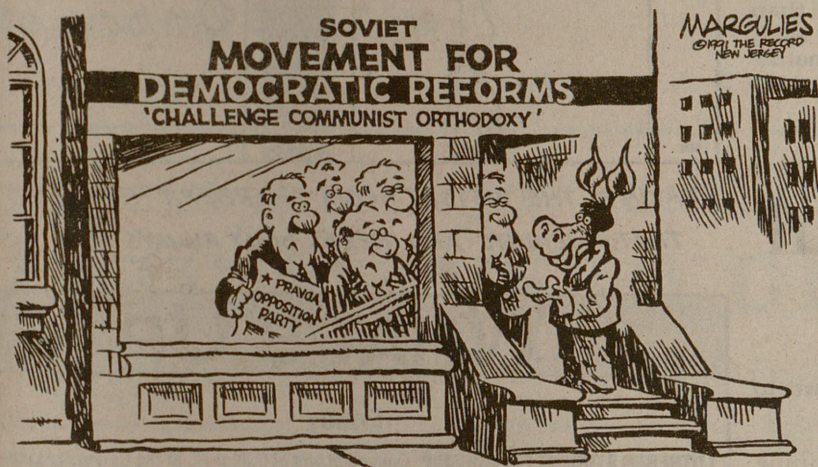
Finally, Worsham is hardly guilty of "misinforming the public" (Max Alleger, Battalion 7/3/91) about the general healthiness of a vegetarian diet. A major study of the nutrition and dietary habits of 6,500 rural Chinese, who eat very little or no meat or dairy products, confirms that men and women can live healthier lives on a vegetarian diet. The study concludes that consumption of meat is not necessary to prevent anemia, that adequate calcium can be obtained from plant sources, that U.S. Recommended Daily Allowances (RDAs) of some B vitamins are set much too high and that people on vegetarian diets run significantly lower risks of heart disease and cancer. See J. Chen, et al., "A Preliminary Study of the Dietary, Lifestyle and Mortality Characteristics of 65 Rural Populations in the People's Republic of China" (forthcoming from Oxford University Press).

So contrary to what we've been told for years, vegetarians probably don't even need to use vitamin B12 and iron supplements, and even if a contemporary, middle-aged American woman needs 800 mg of calcium a day (the current U.S. R.D.A.), this is only because she has become "hooked" on calcium. In light of all this it's understandable to suspect, as Worsham does, that the Department of Agriculture was being captured by the beef and dairy industries when it developed the original four food groups publicity campaign in the 1950s.

Myself, I'm not one to suspect conspiracies where there are simple explanations, and in this case there is one. The research cited above was all done in the 1970s and 1980s, so the Department of Agriculture could hardly have been expected to have known what we know today when it began publicizing the now traditional four food groups. In doing so, it was just reflecting the received wisdom of the time.

But now we know better.

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"I'd like your advice on setting up an opposition party..."

NAACP must face difficult discrimination issues

This week the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) held its annual convention in Houston. Despite gradual improvements in civil rights in the United States, such as the recent designation of Martin Luther King's birthday as an official state holiday in Texas, the NAACP had a full agenda.

Typical of the problems the NAACP faces, such as the racist police brutality which sickened the nation in the Rodney King incident, is the following shocking story reported by Alice Bailey of The Evergreen Free Press.

A prominent black South Carolina legislator named Luther L. Taylor was convicted of "selling his vote" to a confessed cocaine trafficker working for an FBI sting operation code named "Operation Lost Trust."

Ron Cobb, the trafficker, is a former legislator, and was given total immunity in exchange for attempting to bribe legislators. Cobb says that Taylor accepted a campaign contribution in exchange for favorable treatment of parimutuel betting legislation.

The FBI claim of impropriety is preposterous, since Taylor sponsored

such legislation five years before the supposed bribe occurred, and has a long record of support for parimutuel wagering.

After Taylor's arrest, he was threatened with total personal destruction unless he lied against other black legislators. He refused to plead guilty or to lie against the others, and demanded a jury trial. Denied bail, pending appeal, Taylor was clapped in manacles immediately after sentencing on Dec. 3, 1990.

Taylor is being held in a local prison, while the secret police still hope he will give perjured testimony in the upcoming trials of three other black legislators. Taylor says that after he turned down the government's initial "deal" to turn state's evidence against his colleagues, he was warned by an FBI cooperative, that he has not seen anything yet. Taylor says he was told that "... they were going to slam me major style if I did not go along with their program ..."

The FBI operation comes as a redistricting act is prepared which should result in increased black representation in the state legislature. With Taylor and other targeted black leaders gone, the redistricting results will be less threatening to the Eastern

Michael Worsham
Columnist

establishment, Bailey says.

Here are some excerpts from a Nov. 12, 1990, statement by Luther L. Taylor:

"For almost four months, I have remained silent ... With an unalterable belief in the fairness of the judicial system of our nation, I bided my time while the judicial processes were at work. Even after conviction ... I am faced with the continuation of a pattern of harassment by the government that began prior to my indictment ... The dehumanizing efforts by the government led me to surmise that I am merely a human soccer ball to be viciously kicked, from every possible direction time after time, after time.

I sincerely believe that the FBI and the U.S. attorney are trying to punish me for refusing to lie against my colleagues ... While I suffer under the burden of a guilty verdict on six counts and the threat of others to

come, two known cocaine traffickers are cloaked in immunity from prosecution for their crimes ... The government's carefully planned destruction is cutting a wide path across this nation. Who will hear the cry before the darkness is upon us?"

If you are like me, the first time I read this, you are shaking your head in disbelief. However, if you find can't believe this could happen in the United States, in 1991, remember which country just killed an estimated 150,000 people in Iraq for oil and then held scores of military parades congratulating and glorifying itself for having done so.

That massacre, by the way, was made possible partly through the unfortunate participation of many black Americans, victims of the United States' economic draft, euphemistically called the "volunteer" armed services. When you can't get into college or away from drugs and crime, you are not really a volunteer.

So as you can see, the NAACP really does have its hands full. Another high priority item the NAACP will consider is the nomination of Clarence Thomas to the U.S. Supreme Court.

Nominated as much for his conservative philosophy as for his race, Thomas is met with skepticism. His

record on civil rights is mixed, and must improve to match the stellar civil rights legacy of Thurgood Marshall, whom he is replacing. Perhaps if David Souter and Clarence Thomas had both been black and at least moderate in outlook, then maybe the NAACP might have had something to get excited about.

Having graduated from very racially mixed schools, I have difficulty understanding any racism, especially the vicious racism which riddles the U.S. criminal justice system. I believe it may take another period of intense activism like the 1960s to install the kind of racial equality synonymous with true democracy.

It was the opposition to black segregation in the South, not opposition to the Vietnam War, which sparked the 1960s revolution. The spark next time may come instead from the environmental movement, but wherever it comes from, something must provoke change. If South Africa continues to dismantle apartheid, and racist police brutality and the apparent framing of Luther Taylor continue, maybe one day South Africa will place sanctions on the United States.

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