

Do you support President Clinton's deployment of U.S. troops in Bosnia?



"No. We should not intrude on another country because we may make more problems."

Melissa Napoli, 18, New City



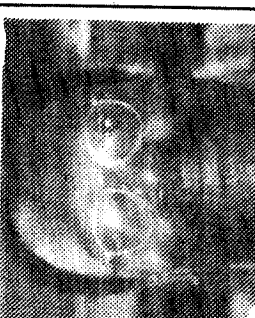
"Yes, I think we should. We have an obligation to meet. It's a difficult decision sometimes but we need to prevent the bloodshed and genocide that is going on there. We have to do whatever we can."

John Maloney, 71, Nanuet



"No we shouldn't get involved. We should actually take the money we would spend on the war and help to feed the homeless people in our own country."

Lorraine Megdanis, 41, Orangeburg



Stop the slaughter

With President Clinton's decision to send American troops to Bosnia to enforce a peace plan between the warring factions, the Rockland Review presents various points of view.

Doug Hostetter, international secretary for the Upper Nyack-based Fellowship of Reconciliation, an 80-year-old interfaith justice and peace organization, returned from Bosnia in October having spent two weeks visiting teachers and students in the war zone. For the last two years, Hostetter has brought more than 100 Bosnian students to the U.S. to continue their education. Hostetter and two of these students who witnessed the destruction of human life and property tell their stories here:

The United States and the world have a vested interest in trying to end the slaughter in Bosnia and stopping the spread of ethnic nationalism in the Balkans.

It is not only that to stand by in the face of genocide is morally outrageous; it is also that if we turn down this request for assistance to end this war, ethnic nationalist policies will spread to de stabilize the Balkans, destroy friendly relations between our allies and perhaps lead to World War III.

War in the former Yugoslavia broke out because politicians from a number of political parties and ethnic groups started to use ethnic nationalism as a way of building their own political base, and as a foundation for separate ethnic states. Serbia declared itself to be a nation of Serbs (Eastern Orthodox Christians) and Croatia declared itself to be a nation of

Croats (Eastern Orthodox Christians) while Bosnia declared itself a secular pluralistic democracy with a collective government of Muslims, Croats (Catholics) and Serbs (Orthodox) with full rights for citizens of any racial and ethnic



Doug Hostetter

background. When a state that defines citizenship by ethnic/religious or racial criteria, there is always the dilemma of what to do with the people who have lived in that area for generations but do not fit the ethnic/religious or racial criteria of the state. The solution often is genocide.

In 1992, when more than two-thirds of the Bosnian population voted to set up a secular democratic pluralistic state, Serbia invaded Bosnia where it killed or drove out (the Serbian euphemism is "ethnic cleansing") the Muslims, Croats and Jews from the areas that they controlled militarily. At several stages of the war, Croatia has also used their army to "ethnically cleanse" the Muslims, Serbs and Jews from the area of Bosnia that they were able to control (as they

have done with the Serbs who lived in Croatia). Currently, the Bosnia Croats and the Bosnian Muslims are cooperating in governance of areas of Bosnia still controlled by the Bosnian government.

Many people will say, "Racial and ethnic politics are dirty, immoral and often lead to genocide. All the more reason why young men and women from the U.S. should never get involved." Many Americans felt the same way 50 years ago during the rise of fascism: "The slaughter of Jews, Communists, gypsies and homosexuals, while disgusting, is none of our business."

We now have an opportunity to stop the spread of ethnic nationalism in the Balkans. This is important to the U.S. because, as we learned 60 years ago, racist ideologies do not fade away if everyone simply looks the other way. If the Serbs were able to defeat Bosnia, they would then move on to bring genocide to Kosovo.

Kosovo was an autonomous region of the former Yugoslavia which is peopled by 95 percent Albanian Muslims. When the Serbian nationalists took over in Belgrade a few years ago, they forcibly absorbed Kosovo into Serbia. Now all civil rights for the Muslims of Kosovo have been eliminated - Muslim teachers, policemen and politicians have been fired and Serbia has stated moving Serbian refugees from other parts of Yugoslavia into the area. If Serbia resorted to the expulsion and killing of the Muslims from Kosovo as they did in Bosnia - Albania and Turkey (predominantly Muslim) would likely intervene on behalf of the citizens of Kosovo while Greece (predomi-

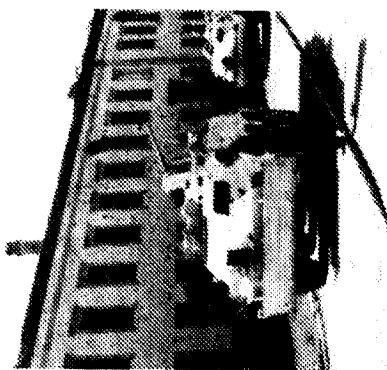


Photo by Dough Hostetter
United Nations tank on patrol in Mostar, Bosnia.

nantly Eastern Orthodox Christian) would likely come to Serbia's aid. Two U.S. allies would be involved on different sides of an ethnic/religious war in Europe which would not stop in Kosovo. The U.S. and the world cannot afford to allow this scenario to develop.

The people of Bosnia have a history of tolerance and pluralism that goes back centuries. One has only to remember back to the 1984 Winter Olympics where the Muslims, Croats, Serbs and Jews of Sarajevo worked together to offer hospitality to the athletes and guests of all races and religions. Bosnians, when not dominated by their neighbors, have been an example to the world.

The United States has a fundamental stake in supporting tolerance and pluralism against the forces of ethnic nationalism and genocide. We have been asked by the Bosnians to help them to end this war - we should do no less.

Doug Hostetter lives in Upper Nyack with his wife, Bobbie, and their two sons, Seth and Jake.