

Opinion

WANT TO COMMENT? Contact Editor in Chief Tom Bodus at tbodus@ivpressonline.com or (760) 337-3427.

MY VIEW

Wars and rumors of wars

History's tyrants have at least one thing in common – their willingness to destroy and slaughter anything and anyone who stands in the way of conquest. This is not new. From Genghis Khan to Adolph Hitler to Vladimir Putin, civilization's greatest monsters have always been able to justify unspeakable atrocities in the name of imperial expansion.

Putin's rationale for invading Ukraine was especially chilling, given its Hitleresque overtones – denying Ukraine's right to exist while providing the same sort of fractured justification the world heard from Hitler before he annexed the Sudetenland of Czechoslovakia in 1938.

Among the differences between then and now is the world is much smaller. Weaponry is far more advanced and information (true or false) can spread internationally within seconds.

Explaining all of this to young people, in my case college students, most of whom were born after 9/11, can be a challenge. Mostly, they ask, "Why? Why is Putin doing this? Why is he killing Ukrainians?" Telling 19-year-olds about Ivan the Terrible or Julius Caesar only satisfies to a point.

There is another answer.

Evil is present in the world and we underestimate its existence at our peril. After all, the devil's greatest trick is convincing us he doesn't exist. Thus, the manifestations of evil shouldn't surprise us.

In the New Testament, in Matthew's gospel, in chapter 6, Jesus says, "You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. 7 Nation will rise



RICH MANIERI
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against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places."

As Christians, we accept this and find comfort because we know the ultimate outcome; in the end, God wins. Death and evil are already in checkmate. In the meantime, we're not called to a spirit of fear or fatalism so what should be our response?

A good place to start is to turn our gaze away from the tyrant and toward his victims. There is a massive humanitarian crisis unfolding as hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians flee the country for parts unknown. Many who remain are, at this moment, huddled in bomb shelters, without food, water or medical care. Ukrainian soldiers and civilians are fighting and dying. And much of this unfolding human drama is being witnessed live throughout the world.

We need to remind ourselves that what we see is real, more real and potentially combustible than any such conflict in our lifetimes. We don't know what's going to happen but we should all be well aware of what can happen.

But there's work to do. First, we can pray. Pray for the people of Ukraine and for their courageous president. Second, we can look for ways to get involved in a material way via volunteer and financial support. For example, Samaritan's Purse, a non-profit, international Christian relief organization,

has deployed disaster response teams to Poland, Romania and Moldova to receive and help thousands of fleeing Ukrainians who left their homes with nothing more than they could carry. Samaritan's Purse typically provides food, clothing, shelter and medical care to victims of disasters, from hurricanes to wars. There are other churches and organizations in Ukraine right now doing what they can to meet the needs of suffering people.

Christians are called to empathy and turning empathy and compassion into affirmative action is both a Christian and patriotic response. As author and Iraq war veteran David French writes, "a healthy patriotism extends our sphere of concern" while an unhealthy nationalism "narrows our focus, leaving us often indifferent to the suffering of others."

The Bible is replete with passages about empathy. But nowhere will you find empathy described as a virtue we can manufacture or acquire simply by trying a bit harder. The Spirit of God gives us an empathetic heart. That's not to say a non-Christian can't show genuine empathy. But Christian empathy comes from Christ and it can turn a self-centered rascal into someone willing to die for someone else.

What can we do for the people of Ukraine? We can pay attention. We can donate to charity and yes, we can pray for them. And we can pray that we will never become indifferent to their or anyone else's suffering.

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MY VIEW

Is America strong enough to endure domestic sacrifice?



DICK POLMAN
VIEWPOINT

During World War II, Americans put up with rationed gas and car tires, rationed coal and fuel oil, rationed silk and nylon, rationed meat and daily products, rationed jams and jellies, even rationed coffee.

Would today's Americans – some of whom freaked out, during the worst of the pandemic, when they couldn't get their hair done – be willing to endure even a minuscule fraction of the sacrifices that our forebears weathered 80 years ago? I'll answer my own question with a question: Can you imagine what would happen if coffee were rationed, and people could no longer order their favorite cafe lattes?

I pondered all that while watching President Biden deliver his State of the Union speech. He vowed on our behalf, and for the pre-eminent cause of democracy, to stick it to the murderous Russian thug for as long as it takes. Ukraine is fighting for its life on the front line of freedom, and, as our commander in chief said, we need to show our "resolve."

He stressed that word many times.

We meet tonight as Americans, "with an unwavering resolve that freedom will always triumph over tyranny." And "American resolve matters." And "(Putin) will never weaken the resolve of the free world." And this: "Now is the hour. Our moment of responsibility. Our test of resolve and conscience, of history itself."

We'll see if his fellow citizens are willing to pass that test, because it would appear that most are not willing to follow his lead. Only 37 percent say he's doing a good job (which seems insanely low, given the 65 percent fully-vaccinated rate and the 4 percent unemployment rate and the 6 million new jobs and the signing of his historic infrastructure repair law – but hey, what do I know).

People are "tired, frustrated, and exhausted" (Biden's words) after two years of lockdowns and masks, inflation has spiked, and now they're being asked to hunker down a bit for more sacrifice, on behalf of a country that millions couldn't locate on a map unless their hands were duct-taped to the correct coordinates.

This is especially true among younger Americans – who, by the luck of birth, did not experience the Cold War and barely know what it was. According to a new ABC News-Washington Post poll, only 35 percent of those aged 18 to 39 would still support sanctioning Russia if it resulted in higher energy prices at home. Indeed, only half of all Americans would still be on board. It just so happens that in our interconnected world, Russia is the third biggest producer of crude oil. And, politically speaking, woe to any president who makes it more costly to fill the sainted internal combustion engine.

Biden is releasing 30 million barrels from our Strategic Petroleum Reserve to "help blunt gas prices here at home," as permitted under federal law (a 30-million barrel release can be ordered in the event of "a domestic or international energy supply shortage of significant scope or duration.") And yeah, that could help – maybe for awhile. But mostly he tried to mollify Americans by doing his best impression of a kindly doctor who still makes house calls, dropping his voice to a reassuring semi-whisper while telling Americans, "We are going to be OK."

It was some consolation that Biden's Ukraine remarks drew actual bipartisan applause. There is indeed a market for high principle, as former Republican pollster Matthew Dowd wrote: "In our country and in the world, the forces of autocracy are rising in the most significant way since World War II, and democracies are in danger of suffering tragic harms, if history is any predictor. This is why the fight in Ukraine is important to us all."

True that. For many Americans, particularly those born after the Cold War, the fight for freedom was an abstraction. Putin has made it very real.

So here's a handy tip for any American who gets whiny about pain at the gas pump: Just be thankful you're not huddled with your family in some basement while killers detonate thermobaric vacuum bombs that suck oxygen out of the air. That's real pain.

Dick Polman, a veteran national political columnist based in Philadelphia and a Writer in Residence at the University of Pennsylvania, writes at DickPolman.net. Email him at dickpolman7@gmail.com

VOICE OF THE PEOPLE

Bumpy road

I would like to draw your attention to the bumpy road surface condition on the Highway 111 by Ashley Furniture store in Calexico.

Recently, the interface of the cement and the asphalt had been worked on both northbound and southbound lanes, since then the interface became bumpy. The point is that the bumpy road condition is getting worse, not better.

–Tony Tam, Calexico

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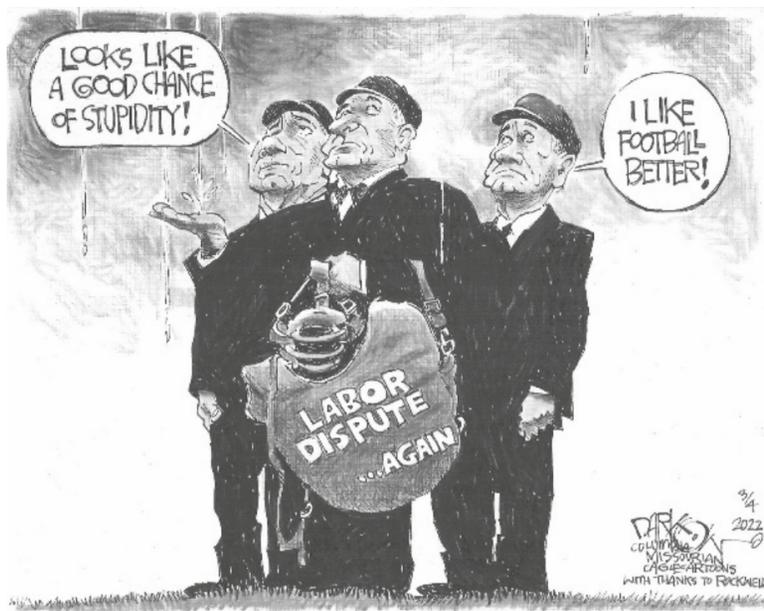
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ANOTHER VIEW



MY VIEW

Wrong solutions to temporary problems

The case of the County's Auditor-Controller Josué Mercado who was found guilty of misappropriating public funds, should be a call to everyone's conscience, but especially for us gentlemen.

Last week, the virtually deposed official was found guilty by a jury after having deleted from the County's accounting system – which he was in charge of – a court order for the payment of spousal and child support.

Mercado is a young man who was on the rise in his political and professional career. Before running for election in 2018, the certified public accountant worked at one of the largest business services firms in Imperial County. His candidacy undoubtedly led many to follow him in his political adventure, without leaving aside the fact that there were many others who promoted his campaign. Thus, the young accountant displaced as auditor-controller another talented and veteran official, Douglas Newland.

However, after his political victory his personal life apparently began to decline. A messy divorce led the elected official to anger, resentment and poor judgment despite the fact that he had everything ahead.

I am not the one to judge the personal life of the people, but I raise this issue so readers understand why this matter should call our attention on an individual level.

As County Auditor-Controller, Mercado had an annual salary of



ARTURO BOJORQUEZ
THE MEX FACTOR

\$130,000, which far exceeds the median income of Imperial Valley families.

I do not know in detail what percentage the judge ordered the official to deduct to pay spousal and child support. However, if I am not mistaken, the young official would have been left with a good income to continue his life and career in peace within the county.

As I said above, anger and resentment took over the mind of the auditor, who apparently in a fit of fury sought revenge that eventually turned against him.

Now, due to the crime committed, instead of being a shining star in the political and social firmament of Imperial County, Mercado may find himself with a new address in state prison, depending on his sentence.

This unfortunate case should teach those of us who lead our families and who are going through a situation of separation or divorce a lesson so that we take things calmly and accept that can't necessarily control everything that happens in our relationships, but we can control how we react. In social media one can find multiple messages in which we are

told that a Superior Being is the one who is marking the path of our lives and that things happen simply because they have to happen.

Being filled with hate and resentment prevents the mind from having a sound judgment and, in turn, clouds our vision of everything beautiful that exists in life despite bad times.

There are several anger management support groups here in our Valley for those who need it most.

If more person availed themselves of such classes, incidents such as the Christmas murder-suicide in Brawley, where a man deprived his children of both of their parents for the rest of their lives, may not have occurred. This is another example that as a society we must consider when our families struggle with a relationship storm.

Even despite these tragedies, the Higher Self allows those who have gone through these experiences an opportunity to return to the path of emotional and spiritual health as long as those involved have the will to do so.

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