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OPINION

Is The Cold War Back In Style?

In the 2005 comic-book noir movie "Sin City," a mountainous brute named Marv declares during a vengeance-filled murder spree, "These are the old days, man! The bad days, the all-or-nothing days. They're back! ... And I'm ready for war."
This melodramatic dialogue slips to mind occasionally, if needlessly, as we watch what's happening in the Ukraine and wonder if Russia's Vladimir Putin is intent on reigniting the Cold War.

It is an appropriately chilling thought, especially for those of us who lived through it — or more precisely, learned to live with it — for almost a half-century following World War II. We all thought the Cold War had died with the collapse of the old Soviet Union in 1991 and the breakup of that communist empire.

Is Putin, an old KGB man and cold warrior, attempting to revive history with Moscow's recent action in the Crimean province of the Ukraine?

The fact that we even consider the idea suggests how clear the ghosts of those old and bad days really are.

But these are different times with different realities. While what is going on in the Ukraine certainly demands the attention and the appropriate action from the West, it is hard to see it as a revival of the Cold War — at least the one that we knew seemingly so long ago.

Putin seems to have learned little from history, either from the Cold War days or from recent years.

His efforts to tear away Crimea (which was once a part of Russia until 60 years ago) are part of a larger campaign to keep the Ukraine out of the European sphere of influence toward which it appeared to be gravitating. The ouster of the Ukraine's pro-Russia leadership recently was a clear warning sign that Moscow was further losing its grasp on Kiev. Thus, Putin's actions are not part of a coldly calculated chess game but, to an extent, a matter of desperation. One problem (among many) with it is, it virtually cements the anti-Moscow sentiment in much of the Ukraine.

The action also brings in the economic screws that the European Union and the United States can tighten on Moscow. Surgical sanctions are already being enacted. While Russia is also capable of some economic moves that can hinder Europe, Moscow would seem to have far more to lose and far more pain to feel.

As far as reviving the old Cold War, Russia is not the military powerhouse with global designs that it was during those days, although it is still a nuclear power. It does not have a vast empire of subjugated lands (such as, at one time, the Ukraine) to hold up as a buffer against the West. The fact that NATO could conceivably respond to this crisis by pursuing a missile defense system in eastern Europe would enrage Moscow because it would put the Russians in an even more vulnerable position.

Putin's own heavyhandedness defies modern wisdom. He seems to be reconstituting some of the repressive traits of the old Soviet empire — including the use of force, cracking down on dissent and state control of the media — while forgetting what that old repression wrought: the collapse of the Soviet Union itself. And such tyrannical posturing flies in the face of recent events in other countries in which similarly repressive regimes were brought down by the people who sought a new meaning of freedom.

Make no mistake, Putin is a dangerous player and an aggressive Russia is a destabilizing threat. And this issue is still a matter that must be addressed sternly by the West. But this is not the old Cold War rising from the grave. This is a different kind of headache for another age.

kmh

THE VIEWS PAGE

■ The **PRESS & DAKOTAN** Views page provides a forum for open discussion of issues and interests affecting our readers. Initialed editorials represent the opinion of the writer, but not necessarily that of the **PRESS & DAKOTAN**. Bylined columns represent the view of the author. We welcome letters to the editor on current topics. Questions regarding the Views page should be directed to Kelly Hertz at views@yankton.net.

ON THIS DATE

By The Associated Press

Today is Tuesday, March 25, the 84th day of 2014. There are 281 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On March 25, 1634, English colonists sent by Lord Baltimore arrived in present-day Maryland.

On this date: In 1306, Robert the Bruce was crowned the King of Scots. In 1776, Gen. George Washington, commander of the Continental Army, was awarded the first Congressional Gold Medal by the Continental Congress.

In 1865, during the Civil War, Confederate forces attacked Fort Stedman in Virginia but were forced to withdraw because of counterattacking Union troops.

In 1894, Jacob S. Coxey began leading an "army" of unemployed from Massillon, Ohio, to Washington D.C., to demand help from the federal government.

In 1911, 146 people, mostly young female immigrants, were killed when fire broke out at the Triangle Shirtwaist Co. in New York.

In 1924, the Second Hellenic Republic was proclaimed in Greece.

In 1947, a coal mine explosion in Centralia, Ill., claimed 111 lives.

In 1954, RCA announced it had begun producing color television sets at its plant in Bloomington, Ind. (The sets, with 12 1/2-inch picture tubes, cost \$1,000 each — roughly \$8,700 in today's dollars.)

In 1964, an acre of Runnymede in Surrey, England, was set aside by the British government as the site of a memorial to honor the late U.S. President John F. Kennedy.

In 1975, King Faisal of Saudi Arabia was shot to death by a nephew with a history of mental illness. (The nephew was beheaded in June 1975.)

In 1988, in New York City's so-called "Preppie Killer" case, Robert Chambers Jr. pleaded guilty to first-degree manslaughter in the death of 18-year-old Jennifer Levin. (Chambers received a sentence of 5 to 15 years in prison; he was released in 2003.)

In 1990, 87 people, most of them Honduran and Dominican immigrants, were killed when fire raced through an illegal social club in New York City.

Ten years ago: The Senate joined the House in passing the Unborn Victims of Violence Act, making it a separate offense to harm a fetus during a violent federal crime. The United States vetoed a U.N. Security Council resolution condemning Israel's assassination of Hamas leader Ahmed

Yassin. Russian Evgeni Plushenko won his third world figure skating title, defeating French rival Brian Joubert in Dortmund, Germany.

Five years ago: Pirates seized the Panama-registered, Greek-owned Nipayia with 18 Filipino crew members and a Russian captain off the Somali coastline. (The ship and crew were released in May 2009.) John Hope Franklin, a towering scholar of African-American studies, died in Durham, N.C. at age 94. Dan Seals, half of the pop duo England Dan and John Ford Coley, later a top country singer ("You Still Move Me"), died in Nashville at age 61.

One year ago: U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Afghan President Hamid Karzai made a show of unusual unity between their two nations as the U.S. military ceded control of its last detention facility in Afghanistan, ending a long-standing irritant in relations. Anthony Lewis, 85, a prize-winning columnist for The New York Times who'd championed liberal causes for three decades, died in Cambridge, Mass.

Today's Birthdays: Modeling agency founder Eileen Ford is 92. Movie reviewer Gene Shalit is 88. Former astronaut James Lovell is 86. Feminist activist and author Gloria Steinem is 80. Singer Anita Bryant is 74. Singer Aretha Franklin is 72. Actor Paul Michael Glaser is 71. Singer Elton John is 67. Actress Bonnie Bedelia is 66. Actress-comedian Mary Gross is 61. Actor James McDaniel is 56. Former Sen. John Ensign, R-Nev., is 56. Rock musician Steve Norman (Spandau Ballet) is 54. Actress Brenda Strong is 54. Actor Fred Goss is 53. Actor-writer-director John Stockwell is 53. Actress Marcia Cross is 52. Author Kate DiCamillo is 50. Actress Lisa Gay Hamilton is 50. Actress Sarah Jessica Parker is 49. Former MLB All-Star pitcher Tom Glavine is 48. Olympic bronze medal figure skater Debi Thomas, M.D., is 47. Singer Melanie Blatt (All Saints) is 39. Actor Lee Pace is 35. Actor Sean Faris is 32. Auto racer Danica Patrick is 32. Actress-singer Katharine McPhee is 30. Singer Jason Castro ("American Idol") is 27. Rap DJ/producer Ryan Lewis is 26. Actress-singer Aly Michalka is 25. Actor Kiowa Gordon is 24. Actress Seychelle Gabriel is 23.

Thought for Today: "It is better to be hated for what you are than to be loved for something you are not." — Andre Gide (zheed), French author and critic (1869-1951).

FROM THE BIBLE

These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world. John 16:33, NASB. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis



Leonard Pitts Jr.

Fred Phelps' Wasted Life

BY LEONARD PITTS JR.
Tribune Content Agency

And what shall we say now that the monster has died?

His estranged sons Mark and Nate told the world just a few days ago that their 84-year old father, Fred Phelps, was in the care of a hospice and "on the edge of death." Thursday morning, he went over the edge.

The senior Phelps, of course, was the founder of Westboro Baptist "Church" in Topeka, Kan. He was the "God hates" guy. As in "God Hates China" (its divorce rates are too high), "God Hates Islam" (for being a false religion), "God Hates Qatar" (for being rich) "God Hates The Media" (for saying mean things about Westboro), "God Hates Tuvalu" (for having too many holidays), "God Hates America" (for tolerating homosexuality) and, of course, most notoriously, "God Hates Fags" — Phelps' odious word for gay men and lesbians.

He was also the man who applauded the deaths of American soldiers and picketed their funerals, under the dubious formulation that their dying represented God's judgment upon this country.

Westboro is a tiny "church" — hate group, actually — said to draw its membership almost exclusively from Phelps' extended family. His sons say Phelps was excommunicated from it last year for some reason, which the "church" refused to confirm or deny, saying its "membership issues are private." For what it's worth, last week Phelps was conspicuous by his near absence from Westboro's website, which once displayed his words and image prominently.

Now the monster is gone. What shall we say?

The people hurt and maligned by Phelps didn't wait for his actual expiration to begin answering that question. They started days ago when his sons announced that his end was near. One woman tweeted about Death needing rubber gloves to touch the body. Another woman set up a "Fred Phelps Death Watch" on Facebook, the tone of which can be inferred from one posting depicting feces in a toilet as a photo of Phelps in hospice care.

After his death, one person tweeted the hope that "his final hours were filled with immense physical pain and horrifying hallucinations."

You can hardly blame people for not being prostrate with grief. This man cheered the lynching of a young gay man in Wyoming. He turned the funerals of American military personnel into circuses. It is hard to imagine anyone more loathsome, despicable and justifiably reviled than he.

And yet it is also hard not to feel saddened by this reaction, diminished by it.

If one is a Christian as Phelps claimed to be, one may hear the voice of Jesus arising from conscience: "A new command I give you: Love one another." And you may demand an exemption from that command, because being asked to love the spectacularly unlovable Phelps is just too much. But, if you love only the lovable, what's the point? What does that say or prove? Indeed, loving the unlovable pretty much constitutes God's job description.

Even beyond the obligations imposed by faith, though, there is something troubling in the idea that some of us willingly become what we profess to abhor, adopt extremist hatred in protest of extremist hatred. As Martin Luther King famously put it, "Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

It is hard to imagine that anyone beyond, perhaps, his immediate family, is sorry Fred Phelps is dead. And that is probably the truest barometer of his life and its value. But as most of us are not sorry, some of us are not glad, either. What we feel is probably best described as a certain dull pity.

Phelps was given the gift, the incandescent miracle, of being alive in this world for over 80 years — and he wasted it, utterly.

If God hates anything, surely God hates that.

Leonard Pitts is a columnist for The Miami Herald, 1 Herald Plaza, Miami, Fla., 33132. Readers may contact him via e-mail at lpitts@miamiherald.com.

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The Rez of the Story | Vince Two Eagles

Putting The Squeeze On Humor

BY VINCE TWO EAGLES

Hau Mitakuepi (Greetings My Relatives),

One of the more persistent stereotypical characterizations of Native people by the dominant society (especially Hollywood) is the notion that all Indian people are stoic — stoic in the sense of being indifferent, resigned or apathetic (unfeeling). Obviously those who cling to such nonsense have never spent any substantial time with or among Native people, case in point:

This was a story carried across Indian Country from reservation to reservation, from pow-wow to pow-wow (wachipi to wachipi). This story was told time and time again (up until it got stale of course) by traveling wachipi announcer extraordinaire, Severt Young Bear. I thought it would be an excellent opportunity help expel the myth that Indian people are stoic in nature. If you get the chance to spend any amount of time among Native people you would immediately notice the instant and easy-to-come-by laughing at things we find funny.

It seems that Severt and his young cousin were invited to go on a speaking tour so that America and the rest of the world could find out just what makes Indian people tick. Of course, most curiosity seekers want to hear about "Indian Spirituality." Their tour was to include Chicago, New York and somewhere in Germany. Also, it is important to note that among Traditionalists of our people who call cultural protocol, "The Indian Way," it is apparently not open for discussion the option to refuse a request when being asked by a close relative so:

Severt tells, (and here I am paraphrasing, of course) "My cousin and I were on our way around the world to speak about our Lakota culture and the 'Indian' experience. After we were settled in to our plane ride for the first leg of our journey, Chicago (where we going to speak to a small group at the Indian Center there), my cousin turned to me and asked that I when I introduce him if I could introduce him as a Spiritual Leader of the Lakota people. Him being my cousin, I could not refuse him. So when we got the Indian Center for our

speaking engagement I introduce my cousin (after I gave my talk) as a Spiritual Leader.

"A good number of the people there came up to my cousin at to the end of his talk wanting prayers and to see if he could come to their neck of the woods to speak. My cousin liked the attention and the feeling of importance he got from people who thought he was a Spiritual Leader of the Lakota people.

"Then, on the plane ride, to New York City, for the second leg of our tour, my cousin turned to me and asked that I introduce him as a Lakota medicine man. He was my cousin. In the Indian way, I could not refuse what he was asking me to do.

"When we arrived in New York City, we were driven to this great big gymnasium, plum full of people, somewhere in that great big city. Chicago was big but this New York seemed even bigger. Anyway, after I gave my talk I introduced my cousin like he wanted — as a Lakota Medicine Man. Boy, the people cheered and the sound of them was deafening. My cousin liked that all over.

"After he got through talking many of the people, who filled up that gymnasium, gathered around my cousin anxious to give their prayer request and offers of tobacco (when you ask a Medicine man, or any elder for that matter, it is our cultural protocol to offer them tobacco as a sign of respect and as a gift to cover your request). My cousin was all charged up after that.

"On our way to the final leg of our trip, my cousin asked me to introduce him as a Shaman when we got to Germany. We were taken to this huge stadium plum full of people. I introduce him as a Shaman after I talked. Boy, you should have seen all the people who rushed the stage we were speaking from in order to be healed by touching a real Indian Shaman. They were crushing in to touch my cousin when I had to hold up my hand and yell stop to all those people! Please don't squeeze the Shaman!"

And now you know the rez of the story. Doksha (later) ...

YOUR LETTERS

Agendas

Fred Bender, Yankton

On Saint Patrick's Day I had a brief conversation with a man who identified himself as Chairperson of our local Republican Party. I mentioned that it is a time of redemption, a reference to Lent. He replied that his father had told him "you can't kill all the (a word referring to a human's point of elimination)" which I clearly understood to be referring to citizens that are not Republicans. He probably intended the comment to be humorous. But we ARE in a "redemptive" season. And, assuming this is published, we have no or an extremely anemic war on religion or Christianity in our country.

The Bible makes it pretty clear that Christian faith demands we care for each other and particularly those in need. Yet, I am not aware of any current Republican positions — either national, state or local — that reflect that. I found it ironic the conversation occurred on a day remembering and celebrating a Christian Saint and in a redemptive season.

Online Opinion

The results of the most recent internet poll on the Press & Dakotan's Web site are as follows:

LATEST RESULTS:

How closely have you been following the media coverage of the missing Malaysian jetliner?
Sometimes44%
Only a little27%
Very closely25%
Not at all/never heard of it4%
TOTAL VOTES CAST309

The Press & Dakotan Internet poll is not a scientific survey and reflects the opinions only of those who choose to participate. The results should not be construed as an accurate representation or scientific measurement of public opinion.

CURRENT QUESTION:

Do you think television and movies promote gun violence?
To vote in the Press & Dakotan's Internet poll, log on to our website at www.yankton.net.