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## Hell, Yes, We Will Go!

A growing number of people on the American Left are looking at military intervention in a new light, Michael Walzer, a professor in the School of Social Science at the Institute for Advanced Study, in Princeton, New Jersey, and author of *Just and Unjust Wars* (1977), notes in *Dissent* (Winter 1995).

*Should we put soldiers at risk in faraway places when our own country is not under attack or threatened with attack (not Maine or Georgia or Oregon) and when national interests, narrowly understood, are not at stake? I am strongly inclined, sometimes, to give a positive answer to this question.... The reason is simple enough: all states have an interest in global stability and even in global humanity, and in the case of wealthy and powerful states like ours, this interest is seconded by obligation. No doubt, the "civilized" world is capable of living with grossly uncivilized behavior in places like East Timor, say—offstage and out of sight. But behavior of that kind, unchallenged, tends to spread, to be imitated or reiterated. Pay the moral price of silence and callousness, and you will soon have to pay the political price of turmoil and lawlessness nearer home. . . .*

*[Interest] and obligation together have often provided an ideology for imperial expansion or Cold War advance. So it's the political Right that has defended both, while the Left has ac-*

*quired the habit of criticism and rejection. But in this post-imperial and post-Cold War age, these positions are likely to be reversed or, at least, confused. Many people on the Right see no point in intervention today when there is no material or, for that matter, ideological advantage to be gained. "What's Bosnia to them or they to Bosnia/ that they should weep for her?" And a small but growing number of people on the Left now favor intervening, here or there, driven by an internationalist ethic. They are right to feel driven. Internationalism has always been understood to require support for, and even participation in, popular struggles anywhere in the world. But that meant: we have to wait for the popular struggles. Liberation should always be a local initiative. In the face of human disaster, however, internationalism has a more urgent meaning. It's not possible to wait; anyone who can take the initiative should do so. Active opposition to massacre and massive deportation is morally necessary; its risks must be accepted.*

democratic organizations, train market entrepreneurs, and increase farm productivity. The Hutu genocidal assault on the Tutsis there, however, had little to do with living conditions. It "was chosen, planned, and directed by individuals who did not want to cede power," writes Stedman.

"Absent well-defined interests, clear goals, and prudent judgment about acceptable costs and risks," he concludes, "policies of preventive diplomacy and conflict prevention simply mean that one founders early in a crisis instead of later."

## The Hiroshima Debate

"The Biggest Decision: Why We Had to Drop the Atomic Bomb" by Robert James Maddox, in *American Heritage* (May-June 1995), Forbes Building, 60 Fifth Ave., New York, N.Y. 10011; "Hiroshima: Historians Reassess" by Gar Alperovitz, in *Foreign Policy* (Summer 1995), Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2400 N St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20037-1153.

As the recent rows over the Smithsonian Institution's planned *Enola Gay* exhibit and the U.S. Postal Service's mushroom-cloud postage stamp demonstrate, President Harry S

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Truman's decision to drop an atomic bomb on Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, and a second one on Nagasaki three days later, can still stir controversy.

Revisionist critics such as Alperovitz, author of *Atomic Diplomacy* (1965), contend that U.S. leaders failed to explore other alternatives and may even have used the bombs mainly with an eye to making the postwar Soviet Union "more manageable," not to defeat a Japan already on the verge of surrender. Maddox, a historian at Pennsylvania State University, believes that the revisionists are all wet. The militarists in control of Japan's government intended to fight to the bitter end, he argues, and Truman "acted for the reason he said he did: to end a bloody war that would have become far bloodier had invasion [of Japan's home islands] proved necessary."

Much of the recent debate has focused on estimates of American casualties in an invasion. Truman in his memoirs claimed that 500,000 American lives would have been lost. Critics have assailed that and similar statements by other officials as gross exaggerations. Alperovitz, who updates his familiar critique in *Foreign Policy*, asserts that U.S. military planning documents—as shown in recent studies such as John Ray Skates's *Invasion of Japan* (1994)—indicate that a November 1945 invasion of the southernmost Japanese home island of Kyushu would have cost between 20,000 and 26,000 American lives. "In the unlikely event that a subsequent full-scale invasion had been mounted in 1946," Alperovitz writes, "the maximum estimate found in such documents was 46,000."

In their effort to minimize the number of U.S. casualties an invasion would have entailed, Maddox notes, revisionist critics have often cited a spring 1945 report prepared for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. It concluded that an invasion of

Kyushu, followed by that of the main island of Honshu (as the chiefs proposed), would cost 40,000 dead, 150,000 wounded, and 3,500 missing in action. "The notion that 193,500 anticipated casualties were too insignificant to have caused Truman to resort to atomic bombs might seem bizarre to anyone other than an academic," Maddox observes. In any case, he says, subsequent Japanese troop buildups on Kyushu made those spring estimates irrelevant.

By August 6, he says, intercepts of Japanese military communications indicated that there were 560,000 troops in southern Kyushu, some 210,000 more than had been assumed in the spring (and 340,000 short of the roughly 900,000 troops actually there). A July 31 assessment of medical needs—unmentioned by Alperovitz—estimated that total U.S. battle and nonbattle casualties might run as high as 394,859 for the Kyushu operation alone. That figure, moreover, did not include those killed outright (who would not require medical attention).

Some historians concede that the first bomb might have been necessary but condemn the dropping of the second as needless. "The record shows otherwise," Maddox says. As American officials predicted, Japanese hardliners minimized the significance of



*Preface to Hiroshima: Taking Iwo Jima (above) in March 1945 cost 6,000 U.S. dead and 20,000 wounded; on Okinawa, U.S. casualties neared 50,000.*

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Hiroshima. The Japanese minister of war, for example, at first refused even to admit that the weapon used at Hiroshima was an atomic bomb. "Even after both bombs had fallen and Russia entered the war, Japanese militants

insisted on such lenient peace terms that moderates knew there was no sense even transmitting them to the United States," Maddox writes. Only after the intercession of Emperor Hirohito did Japan finally surrender.

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## ECONOMICS, LABOR & BUSINESS

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### *The Retail Revolution*

"Change at the Check-out" by Michael Reid, in *The Economist* (Mar. 4, 1995), 25 St. James St., London, England SW1A 1HG.

The retail business once seemed fairly simple: the humble merchant chose from the goods available from manufacturers and wholesalers, then offered the array to his customers, at prices largely determined by the manufacturers. Not any more, reports the *Economist's* Reid. "In the past 15 years, retailing has undergone a many-sided revolution from which it has emerged as a leader in business innovation and the management of complexity. Top retail firms are now run by polished professionals" and exercise enormous sway over both manufacturers and consumers.

Retail firms have grown, first at home, more and more abroad, into some of the largest companies on earth. The Wal-Mart discount chain, launched in 1962 when founder Sam Walton opened a store in Rogers, Arkansas, is now the world's biggest retailer, ahead of Metro, a diversified German chain. Wal-Mart, with more than 2,500 stores, had receipts of more than \$67 billion in 1993, making it, in terms of sales, the fourth largest American company. (If it sustains its rapid growth, by 2000 the firm may be the largest company in the world.) Today, Wal-Mart's sales revenues outstrip those of its main suppliers. Similarly, each of Europe's top half-dozen food retailers has greater sales than any of the Continent's food manufacturers except Nestlé and Unilever.

"The traditional supply chain, powered by

manufacturer 'push,' is becoming a demand chain driven by consumer 'pull,'" Reid writes. "Retailers have won control over distribution not just because they decide the price at which goods are sold, but also because both individual shops and retail companies have become much bigger and more efficient. They are able to buy in bulk and to reap economies of scale, mainly thanks to advances in transport and, more recently, in information technology."

Using sophisticated computer systems, retailers can now find out right away "what they are selling in each of hundreds of stores, how much money they are making on each sale and, increasingly, who their customers are," Reid notes. No longer must a retail firm keep stock that may not sell or run out of items customers want. Exploiting their closeness to the customers, retailers have passed the devilish risk of maintaining inventories to manufacturers.

Growth has been accompanied by concentration. The gap between the front-running retailers and the rest has widened. America's top 70 nonfood retailers accounted for well over half of total sales of general merchandise, clothing, and furniture in 1993, a 10 percent increase over their share a decade earlier. Bankruptcies in U.S. retailing have gone up sharply during the 1990s.

"As most of the easy pickings have gone, large American retailers now find they can gain market share only at each other's expense," Reid observes. And increased competition is not retailers' only worry: "What if new technology allows their customers to dispense with stores altogether? What if consumers find they can do their shopping from