How many “acts of genocide” does it take before systematic ethnic murder is called genocide? That’s the absurd, immoral question the hand-washers and wafflers of the Clinton foreign policy team were posing in reaction to the slaughter in Rwanda. By referring to the mass killings as “acts of genocide”—not “genocide”—the President’s aids were ducking their obligation under an international treaty to “prevent and punish” genocide.

This word game was the most cynical part of the paltry U.S. response to the Rwanda holocaust. In May the White House agreed to provide armored personnel carriers to troops from several African nations set to enter Rwanda as peacekeepers. (The few peacekeepers there have been able to protect people in their areas.) But the A.P.C. order languished in the Pentagon bureaucracy for weeks as the bean-counters fretted over who would pay for damage to the vehicles. As frustrated human rights activists beseeched the White House, Clinton did nothing to speed the process. In the meantime, thousands more were hacked or shot to death.

On June 16 the President came around. Two months after Rwanda turned into hell, the White House decided to use the g-word and rush the A.P.C.s to Africa. Its abdication on Rwanda had become too damn embarrassing. Now, having accepted the genocide label, the United States should meet its treaty obligations by pushing to punish the genocidists (whose identities are known), supply all support needed by the peacekeepers and work with other nations to jam the radio waves used by the killers.
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EDITORIALS.

Euromood

A lthough the powers of the European Parliament have been somewhat increased, it is still a toothless institution and perceived as such by the public. From Milan to Manchester and from Madrid to Munich, voters do not much care which of the 567 deputies represents them in Strasbourg, so when they do bother to go to the polls, they can express their preference without worrying about wasting their vote. Actually they may not waste it: in all countries except Britain, the Euro-deputies are elected through proportional representation, which tends to favor smaller parties. The European elections, held every five years, thus serve as a glorified opinion poll, providing a good snapshot of the political mood of the moment, though not necessarily a guide to future national elections.

The variegated results of the vote held June 12 show that Europe remains divided. In Britain, the Tories under John Major won a smaller percentage of the vote than in any national election in this century, and the Labor Party, with 44 percent of the total, could start dreaming that its days in the wilderness are over. In Italy, on the other hand, the right, taking half the votes cast, consolidated its recent victory, and Silvio Berlusconi strengthened his position within the ruling coalition.

Even the fates of long-serving incumbents differed. Thus,
in Spain the Socialist Party of Felipe Gonzalez, admittedly hurt by mass unemployment and political scandals, saw its share of the vote drop from nearly 40 percent to less than 31 percent (the Left Unity, led by the Communists, climbed from 6 percent to more than 13 percent, however). In Germany Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Christian Democrats increased their share slightly to nearly 40 percent, while the Social Democrats dropped to 33 percent. Those results will not necessarily be repeated in the general election in October, since the Greens, allied with the Social Democrats, did well, while the Liberals, linked to the Christian Democrats, fared badly. Altogether, the campaigns were waged on national lines without any serious debates on, say, European measures on unemployment or Bosnia.

These elections presage a changing of the guard on the European left. In Britain the late John Smith, who was head of the Labor Party, is likely to be succeeded by Tony Blair, a man so smooth and moderate he is known as Tony Blur. In Italy the Democratic Party of the Left must find a successor to Achille Occhetto, who resigned—paying the price for his party's unsuccessful transition and its losses to the right. In France Michel Rocard is no longer the Socialist candidate for the presidency of the Republic, and as Mr. Less-Than-15-Percent he doesn't have much of a future. But the European left needs more than new faces—it needs new policies. It must show that it has other solutions to the current capitalist crisis than its opponents' programs for squeezing wages and dismantling the welfare state. Absent such alternatives, even a victory in forthcoming national polls that matter would be at best Pyrrhic and at worst a road to disaster.

After Stonewall

As revolutions go, the street fighting that took place around Sheridan Square in Greenwich Village on the night of June 27, 1969, lacked the splendor of the Bastille or the sweep of the Finland Station. State power did not crumble, great leaders did not appear, no clear objective was advanced. A bunch of drag queens and their friends pulled from the Stonewall bar in a police raid refused to go docilely into the paddy wagons and all hell broke loose along Christopher Street and in adjoining parks and alleys. Fighting between the queens and the cops resumed the next night, but that was the extent of the violence. And yet the Stonewall Riot must count as a transformative moment of liberation, not only for homosexuals, who were the street fighters, but for the entire sexual culture, which broke out of confinement that night as surely as gay people emerged from the closet.

Stonewall became a metaphor for emergence, visibility and pride, and its historic power has been its affirmation of gay identity rather than its establishment of a particular homosexual agenda. Unlike the national days of other communities, countries and ethnic groups, the nationwide celebration of the anniversary of the riots memorializes an act of legitimization, not an act of Parliament, a treaty or a war. Gay Pride Week, the name for the observance, could hardly be more appropriate. Although Stonewall came at the very end of a decade of convulsive change, and was profoundly informed by the struggles of black Americans, women, radical students and insurgent movements throughout the Third World, it was in many ways the purest cultural revolution of them all, and the precursor of the postmodern politics of identity that proliferated in the decades to follow. Lesbians and gays are surely today's children of Stonewall, but many more are stepchildren or close cousins. That June night a quarter of a century ago now belongs to everyone.

Lenin said somewhere that "revolutions are festivals of the oppressed," and although Stonewall wasn't remotely Leninist, it was certainly festive and it definitely was a low-down crowd that poured out of that bar. The prominence of drag queens in the vanguard of the insurgency always made theoretical sense: As one of the most marginal, disdained and isolated sectors of the homosexual world (it could not yet be called a "gay community"), the drag queens had the least to lose from acting out, or acting up—and perhaps the most to gain. But as much as "straight appearing" gay men (a description that still appears in the personals) kept their distance from drag queens, or treated them only as camp objects of amusement, the boys in "chinos and penny-loafers," as Stonewall historian Martin Duberman calls them, could see that those qualities in the drag males despised by the straight world were present in all homosexuals in one form or another. The most unmodulated, outrageous and flamboyant behavior—and the most oppressed—was thus the most liberating expression of all. In the gay liberation movement that exploded after Stonewall, young lesbians and gay men were urged to "get into their oppression," to comb the crannies of gay consciousness and sensibility, and to feel solidarity with those who suffered the most.

Today's gay necons—as Tony Kushner points out on page 9—deny the radical history of Stonewall as well as its relevance to the present. It's true that Stonewall was the beginning of something, but it was also the culmination of a long siege, during which protest had become a normal way of making politics, and all sorts and sizes of groups had bid for power. Many of the campaigns crossed communal lines, but there was a great deal of fear, a sense of threat and sometimes an ardent "nationalism" that kept the groups apart. Stonewall is often described as a narrowly constructed, exclusively gay male "happening" (in the 1960s sense), but lots of lines were crossed. The drag contingent, at least, was remarkably racially integrated. Although the bar was not known as a lesbian hangout, lesbians were always in attendance, and one story suggests that a butch lesbian cross-dresser might have instigated the riot. Some original street fighters complained that political leftists didn't participate, that the left didn't "get it." But in less than a year gay liberation was on the agenda at every radical event, organizations took revolutionary names and styles (e.g., the Gay Liberation Front, after the Vietnamese guerrillas) and the roots of the gay movement were apparent in the uprisings of the decade.

Craig Rodwell, a witness to the war in the streets; said in an interview for the documentary Before Stonewall that what was most magical about the Stonewall Riot was that "every-
Korean War II?

President Clinton has put himself in a fine mess with North Korea. He has failed to pursue a consistent diplomacy to defuse the crisis over Pyongyang’s nuclear program, and his Administration tends to think that the world—whether China, Bosnia, Haiti or North Korea—should live up to American standards of good behavior. It’s a bad idea, and it only gets worse if you can’t make it work and can’t pay the cost. We can’t pay the cost in Korea.

There is no solution to the problem outside the diplomatic track. Sanctions will not work. Japan is afraid to antagonize the 250,000 Koreans in Japan who are loyal to the North, not because they might “resort to terrorism” as the pundits say but because it would draw attention to the apartheid-like discrimination still suffered by second- and third-generation Koreans in Japan. China will not implement any serious sanctions either; because it still shares common interests with North Korea: for example, a failure to understand why the United States continues to spy on it and tell it what to do regarding such areas as arms sales to the Middle East and human rights. As for North Korea, sanctions are nothing new: We have had a trade embargo on Pyongyang for forty years, and the heighten ten tensions of recent weeks merely return its leaders to the familiar cold war script of threat and counterthreat that they have lived with since the Korean War.

The only other choice is to use force, which is much more frequently discussed in Washington than the public realizes. Of course, the problems with this are legion. The experience of the Korean War, when the United States controlled the skies and rained a terrible destruction on the country, forced North Korea to dig deep and move underground; the command and control centers of North Korea’s army are so well hidden that U.S. military planners don’t know where to find them. An Israeli-style raid on the Yongbyon nuclear reactor would also be futile because reprocessed plutonium may be buried somewhere else in the country.

When the North Koreans seized the U.S. spy ship Pueblo in 1968, and again when they shot down a U.S. spy plane in 1969, both Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon toyed with the idea of punitive raids, only to learn from the Pentagon that such an action would cause a second Korean War. Today no one can predict with any certainty whether the North Koreans would take a pre-emptive strike lying down or if they would send hundreds of thousands of troops toward Seoul, some thirty-five miles across the border. If it’s the latter, millions of Koreans could die and American body bags would come back by the thousands—and that would be the end of the Clinton Administration.

Why? Because amid the recriminations someone will reveal that diplomacy was not given the “long, patient, careful” try that Administration supporters claim. No one can fairly study the current negotiations and say the North is wholly in the wrong (as the U.S. media routinely do).

Before giving out any carrots, Washington demands that Pyongyang establish its good behavior; meanwhile Washington threatens to bring economic and military sticks to bear if the North does not. Pyongyang’s leaders are convinced that Washington’s real goal is to pressure the regime into collapse. If that is not the goal (and I don’t think it is), every day someone in Washington says it ought to be.

All along, Pyongyang couldn’t have been clearer about what it wants: diplomatic recognition and economic aid in return for giving up the truth about its nuclear program. The United States failed to recognize Kim Il Sung’s regime in 1946—and still has not found a way to do it in nearly fifty years. Both Beijing and Moscow have recognized Seoul. Last November in high-level talks with Washington, North Korean negotiators proposed a step-by-step package deal leading to diplomatic relations. That proposal has never been published.

Until Pyongyang gets something tangible out of Washington, it cannot turn over its ace in the hole—an answer to the question of whether it can make nuclear weapons—because it would lose its leverage. So it has consistently refused demands by U.N. inspectors to probe its reprocessing activities going back to 1989, the only other time its reactor was shut down (according to the C.I.A.; the North Koreans deny it).

Instead Pyongyang has clearly offered to stop reprocessing pending an agreement, and after the agreement, to open up the history of its reactor to U.N. inspectors. For many months the Administration seemed willing to accept a cap on more reprocessing, but it never gave anything to the North Koreans to reward them for that concession. Meanwhile the U.N. inspectors, pursuing a different agenda from Washington, kept pushing North Korea to disclose its past reprocessing activities. When they declared June 3 that the evidence on what happened in 1989 was probably lost, that triggered the move to U.N. sanctions.

There’s still a chance to cap the current crisis with a dramatic diplomatic move by the United States. Jimmy Carter’s private visit showed that the North Koreans are eager to keep talking. Why not appoint an ambassador to Pyongyang, and see if they give him a visa?

Bruce Cumings teaches international relations at Northwestern University. He is author of The Origins of the Korean War (Princeton University).
Can one appointment make a difference? When William Gray 3d, President Clinton’s special adviser on Haiti, recently appeared before Congress to unveil harsher sanctions against the military junta in Port-au-Prince, he stomped on the "corrupt and brutal" leaders of the coup and uttered a clear statement of blame: “They alone have created the problem.” He noted that Haiti has become a drug transshipment stop and endorsed a recent human rights report that documented “the gravity and horror of abuses.”

Gray’s straightforward talk is a swerve in the right direction for an Administration that had previously been hiding the victim (deposed President Jean-Bertrand Aristide) and dismissing reports of human rights travesties. Only a few months ago National Security Council staff members were meeting with Aristide supporters and pooh-poohing allegations of the Haitian military’s guilt. Now Gray lists drug-smuggling among the reasons Clinton is “committed to the prompt return” of Aristide. The White House can no longer ignore the matter, thanks to evidence collected by the Justice Department.

According to an April 8 memo by Deputy Assistant Attorney General Mark Richard, the U.S. Attorney’s office in Miami “has established that the Haitian military have been closely involved in the facilitation of drug trafficking since at least the early 1980s.” The memo notes that a three-year investigation had recently targeted “certain Colombian traffickers and Haitian government officials responsible for transshipment of cocaine through Haiti.” The preliminary finding: “The military are paid to protect the off-loading of planes as well as the loading of ships.... in addition, the military sometimes seize cocaine, then sell it to Haitian traffickers who ship it to the United States.”

The memo, which was dispatched to the C.I.A., the National Security Agency, the White House, the Defense Department, the F.B.I. and the Drug Enforcement Administration, fingers fourteen military officers, including Col. Michel François, one of the coup leaders. The inquiry does face a potential problem. “We believe,” Richard writes, “that one or more of these persons may assert a defense. . . . by claiming their criminal acts were done with the knowledge of and at the behest of American authorities. At the very least, intelligence equities that are known to these individuals will be at risk in the event of an indictment, and any joint operations that were undertaken between the U.S. and Haiti will be cast in the worst possible light.”

Richard was delivering a heads-up to the national security bureaucracy: Guys you worked with might be indicted and then spill their secrets. To prevent a “graymail” defense—one in which a defendant would threaten to talk if prosecuted—the Justice Department requested that the other agencies search their files and inform Justice what relationship they had with those facing charges. (The memo does not say how Justice will respond if an agency discloses it collaborated with a suspect.)

Justice also asked that memo recipients report what they know of the purported drug dealing of the Haitian National Intelligence Service, which was established with C.I.A. assistance. The replies have not yet leaked.

Indictments would add to the new round of pressure—but only if they go after top dogs like François, not the underlings. Gray and other officials are also considering allowing Aristide access to radio broadcasts into Haiti. Yet there has been a tussle between the Aristide camp and the White House over control of the content of the broadcasts.

Clinton’s selection of Gray has locked the White House into a confrontational course for the time being. Before taking the post, Gray held a series of discussions with the President and White House aides in which he kept asking, Are you serious about cracking down on the coupmakers? They said yes, he moved in, and the White House finally got around to adopting measures that should have been embraced at least by last fall, when the Haitian military refused to let Aristide return. (The White House, though, still insists on the send-them-back refugee policy opposed by the human rights community.) This endgame comes late—and after the military and its civilian supporters have established a new system of terror throughout Haiti. With invasion rumors rampant in Washington, Gray, a one-time minister, is compelling Clinton to turn the screws—and waiting to see how far he might have to push Clinton and the thugs of Haiti.

Leave it to Henry Kissinger to remind us of how much worse U.S. policy could be. At a recent reception for his new book, Kissinger was asked about Haiti. The McDaddy of Diplomacy huffed, “I don’t spend sleepless nights on that problem. I don’t know anyone who knows Aristide who doesn’t, to put it mildly, think he’s odd.” He bleated that some sort of multilateral intervention might be required—one that leaves Aristide out of the picture. But wasn’t Aristide “duly elected”? an attendee inquired. The smartest man in the universe waved his hands dismissively and countered, “But I don’t know what ‘duly elected’ means in Haiti.”

David Corn

An Attempt To Summarize the Latest 400,000 Words Written About Bill and Hillary Clinton

He’s a cad,
Which is bad.
She’s an adder,
Which is badder.

Calvin Trillin
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