

Can America Afford Enemies?



Arthur Hoppe

ONE OF THE busiest agencies in Washington these days is the Bureau of Bombing Applications located high up in the State Department.

Each morning, the vestibule is jammed with foreign dignitaries filling in applications and waiting to be interviewed by that harried public servant, the Hon. Homer T. Pettibone, who presides from behind a wicket at one end of the room.

"All right, Number 43?" called out Mr. Pettibone in a typical scene the other day.

A large, bearded man in a herringbone burnoose stood up and nervously shoved his papers through the wicket. Mr. Pettibone studied them carefully.

"You are, I see," said Mr. Pettibone, "the Rhatt of Phynkia?"

"Correct," said the Rhatt. "I am the hereditary leader of my beloved people."

Mr. Pettibone shuffled the papers. "Let's see, application to be bombed, four 3-by-5 photographs of each vital military target and six copies of your unconditional surrender agreement. Everything seems in order."

"Good," said the Rhatt. "When will you begin?"

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"NOT SO FAST," said Mr. Pettibone with annoyance. "It wasn't so bad when we rebuilt Germany and Japan into two of the wealthiest nations on the globe after World War II. But now that we're talking about pouring billions into North Vietnam, all you two-bit countries want to hop on the gravy train. What makes you think you deserved to be bombed?"

"Because if you don't," said the Rhatt, "I will loose human wave attacks on neighboring Mbonga, which is a bastion of democracy and the key to South-by-Southwest Antarctica. Today Phynkia, tomorrow the world!"

"Your slogan's adequate," admitted Mr. Pettibone. "But I see here that your total population is only 473."

"True," said the Rhatt. "But each of my fanatic subjects is a wily, cunning, bloodthirsty guerrilla dedicated to violating treaties, young women and parking meters."

"All right," said Mr. Pettibone. "Now what are the vital military targets you want bombed?"

"First," said the Rhatt, "there's the vital rope bridge across the Great Phynkia River, which sometimes has puddles in it. The rope's getting frayed. A giant steel cantilever span would be nicer. Then there's our vital north-south military footpath which is full of potholes. We'd prefer an eight-lane super freeway. Then there's an abandoned slum . . ."

"No urban renewal projects," said Mr. Pettibone firmly. "Bombing and rebuilding your bridges and highways is going to cost us billions alone. And what do we get out of it?"

"Peace with honor!" said the Rhatt triumphantly. "This is one you can't lose. We guarantee it. And just think, it's been 27 years since you won a war."

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"DON'T rub it in," said Mr. Pettibone. "All right, application approved."

"Thank you," said the Rhatt happily. "I think it's the least you can do for us Phynkians, who've been your loyal friends and allies for a hundred years."

"Friends?" said Mr. Pettibone, frowning. "Allies? Application rejected!"

"But . . ." said the crestfallen Rhatt.

"You obviously don't understand U.S. foreign policy," said Mr. Pettibone sternly. "We only do these things for our enemies. Next?"