

When a Bully meets a Bully....

".....coming through the rye"... I was thinking of reprising the old Robert Burns song complete with rhymes and meter, in a new song about the two current contenders for macho maniac of the year award. But that seemed too trivial when I realized that the two juvenile boys who are involved in this are actually serious; as serious as only juvenile boys can be.

Do you remember way back when the USSR put long range missiles in Cuba? It was 1962. The two boys I'm talking about came very close to going too far, risking a lot more than bragging rights to a hemisphere. Well, here we are almost fifty years later and one of the boys is talking about putting missiles in Poland. That would be US. In an amazing reverse of that near-doomsday scenario the U.S. has agreed to a missile deal with Poland.

Every bully has his own version of the Monroe Doctrine. The Doctrine goes something like this. "Any action you might undertake inside our "sphere" will be construed as an act against us, personally". Russia thinks Poland is in their "sphere" just as we thought Cuba was in our "sphere". Go figure. As we all know, it doesn't matter if the smaller nation wants to be in your sphere, they are in your sphere, period. Bullies are funny that way. They like to make decisions for other people. They like to say things like, "Hey, Iraq. You know what? I think you need a Democracy. Here, take one. I said take one!"

Over the past three hundred years Russia is one of the nations which easily tops our "nations bullied" count, especially if you include re-takes. The Russian bully has recently made a decision about the Republic of Georgia. When they were silly enough to provoke the bully, Georgia was quickly invaded, slapped around and sent back to their yard looking for allies (NATO). If it sounds a lot like Panama and Granada and Iraq that's because it IS a lot like Panama and Granada and Iraq. All bullies like small targets. They look for the kid they can whip and then they go whip him.

You can add a lot of modifiers to the concept of bully like sadistic bully (Sadam), self-righteous bully (the U.S.), long running bully (Russia), or big, fat, stupid bully (Butch Mahan) who lived on 59<sup>th</sup> Street. But you've still got the same root, the same persona if you will. Basically you're talking about an antisocial, emotionally volatile, immature soul with an inferiority complex who probably came from a home that beat him up, regularly.

You can also make distinctions in the motivations for national bullying. You've got "making a point" as in Granada and Chile. The point was that countries in our hemisphere (including other democracies) shouldn't go fooling with socialism. You've got "it's just business" which is the root of imperialistic bullying. This has played out in English history, Dutch history, Spanish history, Portuguese history and the history of any Empire (including ours) that you might fancy. You've got paranoid bullying as practiced by the USSR and imperial Japan. They didn't feel quite secure without a buffer zone of thousands of miles and dozens of countries.

It's kind of a toss up when you're trying to pick a favorite bully nation, so folks usually go with the country where they live. Most citizens of bully nations think that their own rationale for bullying is justified. They simply choose to use words like preemptive strike or defending the fatherland or spreading freedom. Heck, I'm told that nations have even invoked the Deity to justify brutality. It makes the citizens who pay the taxes, which fund the blitzkriegs and assassinations, feel better. It's so much easier to be supportive of striking a blow for freedom than it is to cheer for punching a weakling in the mouth. But for the victim, a punch in the mouth is still just a punch in the mouth.

It's tough enough when you're talking about schoolyard dynamics or your loudmouthed uncle Fred. But when it comes to Bully Nations the stakes are really high. Inevitably there are thousands of innocent casualties, even in very brief outbursts like the one in Ossetia by the Russians. By all accounts there have been several thousand civilians killed or injured, just so Moscow could make its point. There have been over a million killed, injured and displaced in Iraq, so that Washington could make its point. I don't know about you but I sure expect more from the collective wisdom of a nation's leaders than the same old stupid behavior as the brute who lives down the block.

So stay tuned folks. Let's pay attention to how the current spitting contest between us and them plays out. That's all it is, you know, nothing more and nothing less. It's just a stupid shoving match between dumb and dumber. Except that there are simply too many lives on the line, if and when this Bully meets that Bully.