

The Passy Press

Letters to the Editor

From: Jamie Blaine jblaine@undisclosed.com
Date: October 8, 2015 at 6:50:59 PM
To: Gardiner Nick enpg@thepassypress.com
Subject: Re: October Passy Press Essay from Daniel M Simpson

Dear Nick,

Ambassador Simpson, a diplomat with impressive credentials from the area about which he writes, does not mince his words. The result is a refreshing read and a challenging analysis. I am writing on the day that President Obama has apologized for the American bombing of the Doctors Without Borders hospital in Afghanistan, which seems clearly a war crime, and lends great weight to Mr. Simpson's focus on American bombing, his call for it to cease, and his underlying premise that U.S. policies and actions in the Middle East have a long and often woeful history to account for. I agree with his contention that we must do more to assist the refugees in their own regions, in Europe, and particularly in the United States, although even 100,000 (a tenfold increase) seems a modest number.

But the idea that the United States is the primary, at times seemingly the only, responsible party for the carnage undervalues the complexity of the situation – a complexity, ironically, that our government is rightfully accused of misunderstanding, either consciously or out of ignorance or both, in its own actions in the Middle East and elsewhere. We have exacerbated and lethalized the violence, but we have not done so alone and clearly can't control what we and others have unleashed.

In my recent trip to Eastern Europe, whose small scope and duration make me hesitant to make generalizations, I saw no anti-Americanism among the refugees with whom I talked. Often, quite the opposite: America remains the impossible dream for many. A conversation with a Syrian veterinarian and his family, who had been traveling by bus, boat and foot for 50 days, encapsulates both the complexity of the war and the political spin for a western audience. When we got to Europe, he said, we were told to say that we were fleeing from ISIS, but, in fact, it was Assad who had bombed our town and killed my brother.

Sincerely,

James G. Blaine is a writer, teacher and consultant whose wanderings have taken him from teaching, to writing and running a group of community newspapers. He ran for Congress and designed courses and programs for educational institutions. He currently writes "Perspectives," a regular blog, consults on environmental justice programs with the New Jersey Council for the Humanities.