

The dawn of the Middle Ages

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War is barbaric. We must face it, and remembering is a good thing, because it is never entertainment. That is what we see at the cinema, on television. But when weapons are used, the death and destruction are real.

This might sound trivial, but it is true.

And it is no different for Libya. Once more, the situation we face is one in which it is the people who must pay, and heavily, whatever happens.

But this time, the contradictions are plain to everyone. What has reared its ugly head is the worst type of cynicism. Until yesterday, agreements and business deals were made on a handshake, great friendships were paraded at splendid ceremonies of state. Now, the bombs are falling.

Maybe there was, and still is, no other solution, but this is not, and never will be, the lesser of evils, nor a response to Libya's need of democracy.

It is the response of the weakness of man; as Erich Fromm said fifty years ago, "while we are living technically in the Atomic Age, the majority of men ... still live emotionally in the Stone Age".

Of course, acknowledging this will not stop the fighter planes and missiles, or the barbarity of a wicked dictator, but it can help us to understand that what is happening concerns us all, it affects everybody, without exclusion. Until we look inside ourselves, we will not be able to do anything but use weapons and force. But it is there that we will find our contradiction and fragility. Awareness does not resolve a human drama, but at least it allows us to understand what we are talking about. This is what we expect from our leaders. Maybe we expect too much, in Italy, certainly, but not only.

Is this the dawn of the Odyssey, as this military operation has been called? Not at all. That is the tale of Ulysses' journey of love, back to Ithaca, to his Penelope. It is a metaphor for the journey of every man and every civilization. Today, one thousand years later, we seem to be at the dawn of the Middle Ages. And this is nothing to be complacent about.

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