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BRING THEM HOME NOW!

The Making of a Campaign

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- The end of the Sweeney era? Jeff Crosby on the crisis in the AFL-CIO
- JoMa Sison on class forces in the Philippines and the charge of 'terrorism'
- *Ku Li* returns: The suffering of workers in today's China

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Striking Back against the Empire

The war drive of the Bush regime has ground to a halt. Iraq was supposed to be the "low-hanging fruit," an easy victory to demonstrate the invincibility of the US war machine, but Iraq alone may be more than they can manage. Starting a new campaign against Iran, Cuba or North Korea doesn't even look to be in the cards at this point as the ground in Iraq turns more treacherous. (The article "Iraqi Heat" by Stan Goff on page 10 of this issue vividly illustrates the deepening crisis in that country.)

In the last issue we noted both the probable ease of the initial war and the likelihood of "imperial overreach." Both predictions seem to have come true. Now the Bush administration is reduced to begging other countries (such as France) to contribute significant numbers of troops to the occupation — without much success, needless to say.

Marxism-Leninism holds that imperialism is what the system has always been about. Most of the time, though, it is more successfully disguised. Imperialist actions are dressed in clothes of pursuing "democracy" and "humanitarianism." Most people can't see through it because the power of the propaganda is so great and the corporate media are so servile. This is what is called *hegemony* — maintaining rule through ideological dominance rather than sheer force.

With the war on Iraq these clothes have been pretty well torn off. Most of the world and even a decent slice of the US population (as many as 10–20 percent) can see through it all. They can see that it's all about petroleum and world domination. An even bigger percentage in the US are at the point of seriously doubting the Bush regime's motives.

At most points over the last few decades, at least since the end of the Vietnam War, many left groups that ranted most intensely against "imperialism" might as well have been speaking Esperanto to the masses. The left rhetoric couldn't pierce the veil of hegemony. Most people couldn't even digest what the term "imperialism" really means.

Now, however, we have a historic opening. The term "imperialism," despite its Leninist precision, doesn't trip easily off the American tongue, but the people of this country know what *empire* is. Most believe that empires are bad, and many are starting to see the colors red, white and blue when they hear the word. We have the most shameless ideologists for the Bush regime publicly defending the need to maintain and expand a global US empire. And we also have criticisms and denunciations of *empire* increasingly being seen in the corporate media — an unfamiliar development for those of us revolutionaries who are younger.

Another basic Marxist-Leninist principle is that imperialism is not just about a specific policy, not just about war. But for many people the understanding that the war is about empire-building is going to be the starting point. As much as some "left" dogmatists would like to believe that a thorough Leninist understanding of imperialism will fall from the sky right into the brains of the masses, the reality is that people's understanding develops in stages. At this point we must help as many people in the US as possible realize that the Bush war drive was about empire. As we succeed in doing that, we will be in an increasingly favorable position to take people the next step — that empire is what the US has been building for more than a century using all kinds of tactics and that war is merely the most extreme of these tactics.

Building an Anti-empire Movement

The task at hand is to build the counter-attack — a movement against empire. And this moment, with Bush's regime on the defensive and his support plummeting, is an ideal time to begin. So what do we do to build such a movement?

The task at hand is to build the counterattack — a movement against empire.

- At the top of the list is supporting the developing campaign to bring the troops home. This campaign must be centered on organizing the troops themselves and their families, but other anti-war activists will have important supporting roles to play. As the Back in the Day column by Dennis O'Neil on page 8 describes, we can learn a lot from a similar movement half a century ago at the end of World War II.
- Just like in the immediate period after the 9/11 attacks, this is a "teachable moment." But we should remember that people whose minds have been opened up a little bit by the current situation will respond much better to political arguments about US empire that speak to them based on where they're at than to dogmatic diatribes written in "leftese" denouncing capitalist imperialism in a way that's only understandable to already trained leftists. And most fundamentally, the Marxist theory of knowledge points out that people learn about imperialism mainly through being engaged in a struggle that brings them into conflict with it.
- The global justice movement, having been derailed by the 9/11 attacks and the resulting US war drives, is getting back on track. Major actions took place against the World Trade Organization in Cancún in September and the Free Trade Area of the Americas agreement in Miami in November. In addition to those "standard" targets, one major task for global justice–minded activists is to focus attention on the selling off of Iraq's oil assets to the Western multinationals. This is a perfect example of a point where global justice can converge with anti-war into a broader movement against empire.
- We must raise the attention of the movement around future targets of the US war machine. While in the Middle East it has become bogged down, the Philippines, Korea and Colombia in particular are still in the gunsights. (See, for example, the interview of Philippine revolutionary leader Jose Maria Sison on page 26 of this issue.) Important work has been done by solidarity movements around all of these countries; it is vital that the movement against empire draw more people into these vital struggles.

While the above points are not a comprehensive list, they are hopefully some good starting points in building an anti-empire movement. Even taking into account that triumphalism — the mistaken belief that victory is inevitable — is a "left" error to always watch out for, the balance of forces between us and our imperialist enemy is looking the most favorable that it has since 9/11. Bush has tried to keep this country in fear for two years; maybe now it's time for him to do some shaking.

BRING THEM HOME NOW!

Eight Days in the Making of a Campaign

By Dennis O'Neil

October 26, 2002

Jeff McKenzie attends a huge demonstration in Washington against Bush's threatened invasion of Iraq. He sees a couple, Charley Richardson and Nancy Lessin, who each carry a big posterboard sign with a picture of their son, Joe Richardson. The signs read, "My Son Is a Marine. Don't Send Him To War For Oil." Jeff tells them he is deeply concerned that his own son, Army Captain Jeremy McKenzie, will also be sent into battle in an unjust war.

From this chance meeting is born Military Families Speak Out. MFSO holds press conferences and sets up a website. They march in demonstrations locally and speak from the stage at national demonstrations. 15 MFSO members join in a lawsuit against George W. Bush and Donald Rumsfeld, seeking to prevent an invasion of Iraq absent a Congressional declaration of war. MFSO members appear on *Phil Donahue*, the *Today Show*, in print media and on radio programs across the country and around the world. By the time the war starts, the group has grown from 2 families to 200, all with loved ones who are active duty servicepeople, reservists or National Guard deployed or facing deployment in the Middle East.

March 23, 2003

Operation Dire Distress. Hundreds of veterans from across the country lay siege to Washington, DC, marching in ragged formation. Led by Veterans For Peace president Dave Cline — described by one vet as "a combination of Old Testament prophet and rapper" — they chant marching cadences like:

> Bush and Cheney talk war talk,
> But we know that they're chickenhawks!
> They wave the flag when you attack,
> When you get home, they turn their back!

Operation Dire Distress is planned by VFP, Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and a wide array of other veterans' groups. The action links two critical issues — opposition to the US invasion of Iraq and denunciation of the steady wave of cuts in veterans' programs and benefits being pushed by the Bush administration. The night before, a teach-in featuring a dozen veterans from different organizations and from different wars and periods of service is broadcast live on C-Span. The White House refuses to accept the petition against the war they bring.

Dire Distress, with a number of US flags displayed upside down, marks the reappearance on the scene of progressive veterans as a powerful and vocal organized force. In the months to come, their strength will grow as new VFP chapters form around the country. It also cements a crucial alliance. Leading members of Military Families Speak Out take part, finding a common language and common purpose with the veterans.

May 1, 2003

President George W. Bush is landed on the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln, sitting just off San Diego, all dressed up in a jet pilot's uniform. Standing beneath a banner proclaiming "Mission Accomplished," he announces, "Major combat operations in Iraq have ended." One week later, military spokespeople report the first combat death since Bush's proclamation: Marlin T. Rockhold, a 23-year-old private in the 3rd Infantry Division, from Hamilton, Ohio, shot by a sniper while directing traffic in Baghdad.

Iraqi resistance to occupation grows. Troops fall in firefights, ambushes, sniper attacks, mine explosions. Dozens more die from accidents, self-inflicted wounds or mysterious diseases. Hundreds and hundreds are wounded, shipped to Germany or back to the overcrowded Walter Reade Hospital in Washington, DC, for treatment.

Meanwhile conditions for the common people of Iraq deteriorate, Iraqi resistance to occupying forces grows, and ill-prepared US grunts shoot men, women and children. Repeated acts of sabotage keep the US from pumping and exporting oil to pay the soaring costs of occupation.

May 30, 2003

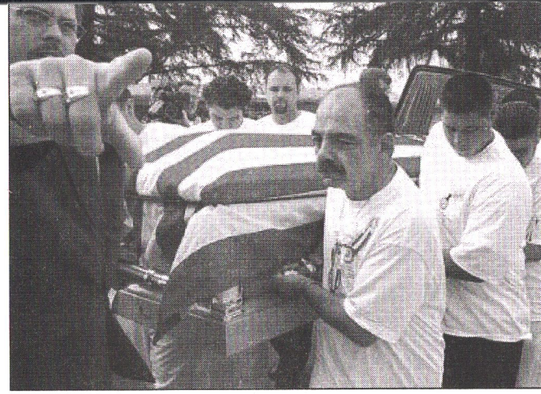
It's Memorial Day and it comes and goes without any good news for the troops of the 3rd Infantry Division. Bone tired, hurt by the combat they've seen and the losses they had taken, unprepared to act as cops in a country whose language they don't speak, surrounded by worn and broken equipment, the 3rd has been promised a quick trip home since they rolled into Baghdad just under two months earlier.

Instead they learn that Lt. Gen. David McKiernan told news reporters just the day before, "If we need to apply some of the combat power of the 3rd Infantry Division elsewhere in Iraq, we will certainly not hesitate to do that." He went on to mention Fallujah, 30 miles west of Baghdad, a center of armed resistance.

"He is going to get U.S. soldiers needlessly killed if he expects us to go into battle," a senior noncom says of McKiernan, withholding his name for fear of retribution. His prediction turns out to be 100 percent accurate.

The 3rd is about to become the flashpoint for discontent in the US/British "Coalition" occupation force. Elements of the 2nd Brigade write an open letter demanding to be brought back to the US. Press interviews feature angry troops like the sergeant who says, "I've got my own 'Most Wanted' list. The aces in my deck are Paul Bremer, Donald Rumsfeld, George Bush and Paul Wolfowitz."

A rapid crackdown silences most of the critics, but only speeds up the deterioration of morale and discipline. By the end of summer, troops from the 82nd Airborne are being rushed to Iraq from Fort Bragg to replace the 3rd ID because, they are told by their officers, "the Third has melted down." From the Pentagon's point of view, that may be the story, but there's another way of looking at it — the 3rd has won. After all, they get the trip Stateside they have been demanding.



Fernando Suarez de Solar, center, whose son Jesus was killed early in the war, became an outspoken critic of Bush's war.

Military Families Speak Out finds a second wave of members coming in. The group's original base opposed the war before it began. Many of these new members had at first supported the war. Now they are finding out that they have been lied to, and lied to repeatedly: about the reasons for the war, about the attitude of the Iraqi people toward being occupied by a foreign power, about the length of deployment. Letters, calls and emails they get from their loved ones "in country" tell a very different story from the administration's smiley-face version.

July 2, 2003

President Bush postures on the evening news, taunting the growing armed resistance in Iraq and sneering "Bring 'em on!" In Raleigh, NC, Stan Goff watches his TV and sees red. He sits down at his computer and rips out a 739-word column. In it, he puts himself in the combat boots of a young soldier — a kid like he himself had been in Vietnam in 1971 at the start of his twenty-plus years in the military — hearing his Commander-in-Chief daring the Iraqis to come try and kill him.

He sends the article to the Counterpunch website, which posts it immediately, without changing a word. Within hours, thousands of copies of Goff's powerful tirade circulate on the Internet. By two days later, over 175 websites have posted the article. For weeks it is one of the most posted and read and discussed articles on the whole Web. Stan Goff is deluged with grateful emails, many from families whose loved ones are exactly the young soldier he had described.

A crew of old friends and newer acquaintances see this as proof positive that it is time, indeed past time, to pull together a campaign that unites veterans and military families in demanding an immediate end to the occupation and the repatriation of the troops.

A chain of hasty phone calls checking in and collecting thoughts and hooking people up morphs into a series of conference calls. Tasks are identified and tackled: Hammer out a mission statement. Start a website. Stabilize a coordinating committee. Plan a publicity barrage to get the media focused on the growing opposition to the occupation among vets and military families. Nancy Lessin from Military Families Speak Out drives the process forward, saying there's no time to waste.

The conception is simple — a campaign of military families, veterans, active duty and reserve troops focused around the single demand: Bring Them Home Now! It will be a campaign and not an organization — sponsoring groups like Military Families Speak Out and Veterans For Peace are already membership organizations. Likewise the campaign can refer families and military personnel who need immediate help to existing counseling services like Citizen Soldier and the GI Rights Hotline, and members of those projects agree to sit on the Bring Them Home Now! (BTHN!) steering committee.

Furthermore, the campaign is not to be a direct project of the anti-war/anti-occupation movement. Though many participants will sympathize with that movement and particular groups within it, uniting with or even liking the anti-occupation movement should not be a

requirement for people who want to support the central demand of the campaign. Nor do BTHN! activists want to spend more time than necessary in the internal debates of the broader movement.

August 13, 2003

The Bring Them Home Now! campaign is formally launched at a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington, DC. Nineteen television cameras and scores of print and radio reporters crowd the room as veterans and members of military families tell their stories — expose the "ground truth," as their loved ones say — and demand that the government end the occupation of Iraq immediately.

C-Span broadcasts the whole press conference live and the Bring Them Home Now! website is deluged with thousands of emails from around the country and the world. Many are from passionately grateful military families, who have up 'til now been intimidated to speak their minds about the unjust and unjustifiable occupation. Some emails, maybe 20 percent, are overtly hostile, but the steering committee sums up that this means that the campaign has gone mainstream and broken out of the "peace ghetto," where word had been spread mainly on progressive websites like Truthout and Counterpunch and via anti-war email lists.

The next day a second press conference in Fayetteville, NC, home of Fort Bragg, emphasizes that this new campaign will be taking its message out into the military towns and bases where troops and their families live

Coverage is broad and friendly. Perhaps the most significant single story appears in the pages of Stars & Stripes, the semi-official daily newspaper of the US military overseas since 1942. Stars and Stripes flaunts its "independence," but generally confines its dissent to particular problems facing troops and their families. The paper's very sympathetic coverage of the Bring Them Home Now! campaign suggests a very deep discontent in the US military with Bush and Rumsfeld's occupation and how it is being conducted.

Over the next few days, military families are the media flavor of the week. Calls come in from dozens of radio and television stations asking for someone from Bring Them Home Now! to appear on a talk show or news feature or panel discussion. On some shows, BTHN! panelists find themselves aligned with much more conservative experts on military affairs who also see Iraq as an unnecessary and unjustifiable fiasco.

A press conference in Fayetteville, NC, home of Fort Bragg, emphasizes that the campaign will take its message out where troops and their families live.

It becomes clear that the campaign has contributed to an important shift in the national dialog over the occupation of Iraq. Short weeks before, no one was talking about immediate withdrawal of US troops from Iraq. Now the demand "Bring Them Home Now!" is a legitimate position, and those who oppose it must at least make an argument rather than just dismiss the campaign as too impractical to spend time on.

September 9, 2003

Representative Maxine Waters organizes a Congressional Briefing on the war in Iraq, featuring MFSO member families, in the Rayburn House Office Building in Washington. One after another, members of Military Families Speak Out tell their stories. Each speaker's remarks end with the ringing call, "Bring Them Home Now!"

The Congressional Briefing is important because it is the first time that the voices of military families are formally heard in the halls of Congress. MFSO members and other supporters of the campaign have been bombarding their Senators and Representatives with letters, phone calls and visits. Repeated broadcasts on CNN over the next few days and other press coverage keep the story alive in the media and bring new members to MFSO.

The Bush administration helps too. Caught in a quagmire in Iraq, the morning of the Congressional briefing, the Pentagon announces extensions of the tours of duty for National Guards and reservists to a year in Iraq, on top of mobilization and demobilization time elsewhere. Families who have been promised and are expecting the quick return of their loved ones find themselves plunged deeper into uncertainty and fear, and in many cases, bitter anger. MFSO member and wife of a reservist Candance Robison has a warning to give: "Our December reunion has now turned into an April one. My husband's employer can't be expected to hold his position for a year and a half. Then what? Get the spare room ready, Donald Rumsfeld, because the kids and I are coming to stay."

The Briefing is also important because it happens opposite the start of a Senate Armed Forces Committee hearing on the Bush administration's demand for $87 billion more to pursue the war. Democratic Senators tend to declare their support for the $66 billion that is "for the troops" (in other words, for the indefinite continuation of the war), and then declare that they will "ask hard questions" about the $21 million budgeted for the reconstruction of Iraq (in other words, for Halliburton).

But at the Congressional Briefing, 13-year-old Robin Ponton of Pittsburgh, PA, whose father Staff Sgt. Charles Pollard is serving in Iraq, says, "President Bush is now asking for $87 billion more for this war. It would work better if we gave the Iraqi people the money and let them rebuild their country the way they want to."

Summing up, Charley Richardson of MFSO lays down the challenge: "The ball is now in Congress's court. Last October, Congress failed the American people, the people sitting in front of you and their loved ones and the people of the world. The President has asked to you reaffirm that failure, to give him the green light and the funding he needs to keep our loved ones at risk in a war that should never have been fought, that is rapidly turning into a quagmire, that is immeasurably harming the Iraqi people, that is ruining the reputation of the US in the world and that is setting a disastrous course for this country going into the future."

Comgresswoman Waters and Congressman John Conyers declare on the spot that they will oppose the whole appropriation and organize others in Congress to do so. When the vote does come up in October, 125 Representatives vote "Nay" to the $87 billion. Congress again fails the American people, but the firm stand of these military families has helped provide cover for some elected officials to do the right thing despite fears of being baited as "letting our troops down."

October 25, 2003

When the big anti-occupation march on the East Coast heads out from the rally site at the Washington Monument, a contingent with upwards of 50 military families and hundreds of veterans, the largest vets' turnout in the current period, is in the vanguard. The call and response of cadences echoes off the White House as the march rolls past:

> George Bush says, "Bring 'em on'"
> But he ain't standin' near the bombs.
> With soldiers' lives he sure acts brave
> But he ain't standin' near their grave.

The Washington DC demonstration, its sister rally in San Francisco, and smaller ones around the country mark two more important steps for the Bring Them Home Now! campaign. The first is a very practical one: for many of the military families present, this is first chance to meet face to face. Many have been on the Military Families Speak Out e-mail list for a long time and even spoken on the phone. Other family members come to the demonstration alone and break down in tears of relief when they find others there who feel as they do, organized and fighting back. All draw renewed strength and determination form each other and from the veterans who embrace them, offering understanding, aid and advice.

The other step is the accomplishment of the goal the BTHN! steering committee had set for itself almost two months before. Rather than devoting its main efforts to directly publicizing and building the October 25 actions, BTHN! decided instead to try and maximize the voice of veterans and military families within the activities, and in doing so make it harder for the media and occupation supporters to portray the demonstrators as marginal or unpatriotic.

This happens. Story after story highlights the role of vets and families. The Associated Press, in the main news story picked up by papers around the country, quotes the passionate speech of one member of the Bring Them Home Now! steering committee in the early paragraphs of its report:

BTHN! made it harder for the media to portray demonstrators as marginal or unpatriotic.

> The protest drew a diverse crowd — young, old, veterans, relatives with loved ones in the armed forces and American Muslims.
>
> Michael McPhearson, a veteran from the 1991 Persian Gulf War, issued a scathing critique of President Bush, who was spending the weekend at the Camp David presidential retreat in Maryland.
>
> "Your administration has misled our nation," said McPhearson. "You have butchered the truth, George Bush."

Dave Cline of Veterans for Peace leads cadences in a contingent of vets and military families in Washington on October 25.

HOME BY CHRISTMAS!

GIs Thwart War Plans in 1945

By Dennis O'Neil

When the Second World War ended in mid-1945, the world was almost thrust straight into World War III. There was a section of the US ruling class and the military high command who weren't happy that the Soviet Union had played such a key role in defeating fascism and rolling up the Wehrmacht in Europe, that communists had led the underground resistance to German and Japanese occupation in country after country in Europe and Asia, and that around the world national liberation movements were vocally demanding independence and an end to colonial bondage. The ruling class and its military chiefs wanted to run the world, and were ready to crush the pesky reds and foreigners who stood in the way.

The rich and the brass were stopped in their tracks.

It wasn't the Red Army of the Soviet Union that did it, or the fighters of the French *maquis*, or Mao Zedong's Eighth Route Army in China. It was US soldiers and sailors and other troops, who launched a mighty movement to be sent home. They had signed on to do a job, to stop the drive to fascist world domination by Hitler's Germany and Italy and Japan, and they had helped do it.

The way they saw it, the job was done. But the brass were trying to keep the troops in Europe and Asia as an occupying army and a combat-ready invasion force. Unfortunately for this plan, many of the GIs were workers who had been involved in the giant wave of strikes that shook the US in the midst of the Great Depression in the late '30s. These disciplined collective struggles organized the mass production industries like auto, steel and rubber before the outbreak of war. The soldiers knew that back in the States, the winding down of the war had triggered a huge strike wave beginning in '44 and picking up steam in '45 to make up the ground lost during labor's no-strike pledge during the war.

The first to stand up were troops from the European Theater who had made it back to the US only to find that orders had been cut to send them to the West Coast where they were to take ship to Asia for occupation duty. On August 21, less than two weeks after VJ Day, 580 soldiers from the Army's 95th Division signed a protest telegram to the White House. The 97th Division hung banners from the trains taking them to California, proclaiming, "We're Being Sold down the River While Congress Vacations!" On September 15, General Twaddle of the 95th Division assembled his soldiers for orders on occupation duty. The Washington Post the next day reported "the boos from the soldiers were so prolonged and frequent that it took [General Twaddle] 40 minutes to deliver a 15 minute speech."

Families added their voices to the chorus. Congress was inundated with letters and telegrams, thousands every day, insisting that the troops come home and stay home. As fall turned to winter, some families sent baby booties to their Congressmen, with a note that read, "Be a good Santa Claus and release the fathers."

On September 15, General Twaddle of the 95th Division assembled his soldiers for orders on occupation duty. The Washington Post the next day reported "the boos from the soldiers were so prolonged and frequent that it took [General Twaddle] 40 minutes to deliver a 15 minute speech."

And the outcry rapidly spread to the troops overseas. Nelson Peery, a veteran revolutionary who was then in a segregated Black unit in the Philippines in 1945, recalls (in his autobiographical *Black Fire*):

> Perhaps it will never be known who coined the slogan "Home by Christmas!" It was a perfect piece of agitation. This simple, understandable slogan was in the immediate interest of the troops and at the same time hit at the core of the generals' hopes of attacking the Soviet Union…
>
> It was painted on the latrines. It was scratched on the directional posts at the crossroads. It appeared as if by magic in the recreation rooms and the mess halls. Sometimes it was even painted on the screened-in officers' quarters.

When Christmas Day came, graffiti was no longer enough — 4,000 soldiers marched in formation to the 21st Replacement Depot in Manila behind banners saying "We Want Ships!" Their panicked commander said, "You men forget you're not working for General Motors. You're in the army." On Guam, mass meetings called a hunger strike.

Halfway round the world, thousands of soldiers marched down the Champs Elysee in Paris on January 8 to rally in front of the US Embassy and shout "Get us home!" The next day in Frankfurt am Main in occupied Germany, speakers at a soldiers' demonstration telegraphed a message to Congress that said only, "Are the brass-hats to be permitted to build empires?"

With Christmas past, things in the Philippines got hotter. A 156-man Soldier's Committee was elected in Manila to speak for 139,000 soldiers there, "all interested in going home." It issued leaflets that declared, "The State Department wants the army to back up its imperialism." The Soldier's Committee elected an eight-man central committee which included Emil Mazey, a UAW local president who had played a leading role in the battle to unionize auto in the late '30s.

Declaring that "The continued stay of these millions of GIs in the armed forces can only serve the predatory interests of Wall Street," the soldiers' leadership asked the powerful United Auto Workers to present their demands of Congress. The UAW did, further fueling the "Bring Us Home" movement stateside.

With rebellion in the ranks turning political, discipline eroding and no sympathy on the home front, the ruling class and the military blinked. Orders to the Pacific were revoked and more vessels, even ocean liners, were pressed into service to get the restive veterans home and demobilized. It was all the generals could do to keep enough troops to maintain the occupation of the conquered Axis powers.

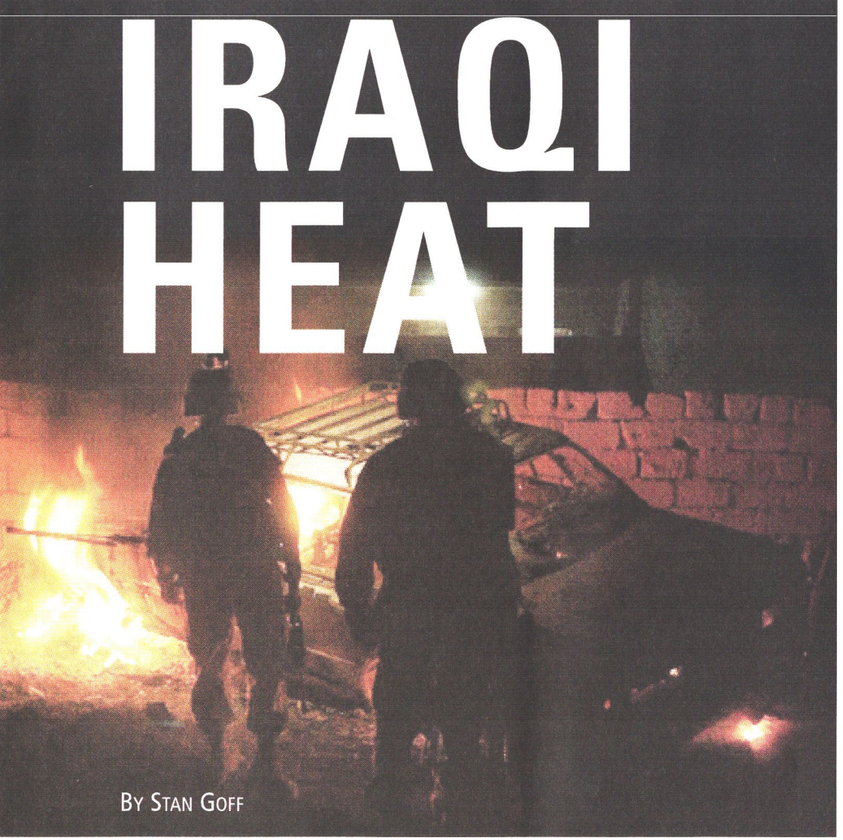
With rebellion in the ranks turning political, discipline eroding and no sympathy on the home front, the ruling class and the military blinked.

The invasion of Iraq may not last long enough to produce a wave of rebellion in the military like the Vietnam War did, but even if it doesn't, there's a lot we can learn from the soldiers who organized the post-WWII Troops Home movement, back in the day.

With major combat in World War II at an end, massive pressure grew among the troops and their families back home that they be brought back to the States without delay.

Historian Bruce Franklin has pointed out that the roots of the GI resistance to US aggression in Vietnam go way back before the '60s. In fact US troops could be said to have started the US anti-Vietnam War movement in the fall of 1945. US troopships that were supposed to bring American troops home from Europe were shifted to transporting US-armed French soldiers to re-colonize Vietnam. The Merchant Marines on those ships immediately began organized protests. On arriving in Vietnam, the entire crews of the first four troopships met in Saigon and passed a resolution condemning the US government for using American ships to transport an invasion army "to subjugate the native population."

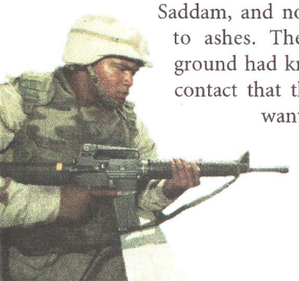
IRAQI HEAT



By Stan Goff

By July, daily ambushes picked off US soldiers in Iraq, and with them percentage points from George W. Bush's popularity. The Mesopotamian heat also melted US military morale. The occupation of Iraq may be remembered by historians as the first momentous blunder by a United States government in the 21st Century, right after the Supreme Court appointment of George W. Bush to the presidency.

Reports of the deaths of Uday and Qusay — welcomed for a day as a breath of fresh news by the Bush junta — caught in their throats as the resistance continued and the fiction that the resistance was the work of Saddam, and not Iraq, crumbled to ashes. The troops on the ground had known from direct contact that the Iraqis did not want them there, and that the Iraqis were determined to expel them one at a time, in bags if necessary.



By June of 2003, British correspondent Robert Fisk reported conversations with occupation soldiers, noting that the now battle-hardened and edgy troops — undergoing a Somalia-like habituation to daily RPG and rifle attacks — sneered at any notion of "liberation."

Soldiers were trapped between two imperatives; the command from the air-conditioned DC offices of Bush and Rumsfeld and their ilk to consolidate the occupation through aggressive action, and the force protection measures of junior officers who oversee actual tactical operations, young career officers who will be made to answer for any preventable casualties.

This trap is a physical one for the soldiers. The Washington mandate for more aggression puts the troops out into the streets for hours on end. The force protection directive covers their heads with hot Kevlar pots, wraps their torsos in Kevlar and ceramic body armor, and burdens their shoulders with ammunition and water-laden load-carrying harnesses. Add bloused boots, buttoned long sleeve shirts, and a weapon, and each of these troops is now 75 pounds over body weight. The mid-day heat was 120 degrees Fahrenheit.

Staff Sergeant Pollard is a reserve military policeman. He signed up years ago for the "one weekend a month" that the television ads said. He'd been away from Philadelphia, where his family lives, since April, and in Iraq since May. When Anthony Shadid of the Washington Post Foreign Service asked him on June 30 what the US needed to do, Sergeant Pollard, a 43-year-old African American, said, "US officials need to get our asses out of here. I say that seriously. We have no business being here." Sergeant Pollard said he felt like a "sitting duck."

Lieutenant Harry Heinz, a 25-year-old white man from Georgia, runs a Bradley platoon deployed to Fallujah. Fallujah is where the American troops were ordered into town to seize control in late April, were met with demonstrations when they commandeered a school for their headquarters, and proceeded to kill 20 civilians and wound scores more. Fallujah, not surprisingly, became a hub of armed resistance to the Americans before June. Once the Americans began to take casualties, young Lieutenant Heinz snapped out in front of reporters.

Punctuating his speech by pounding a table, he spat at them, "If they kill one of our guys, it's going to be tenfold. If you shoot one round, I'll shoot 1,000. You have to make an example…We're like a pit bull on a chain. You cut the chain and you're going to have problems."

Rumsfeld vs. Reality

When the expected urban defense of Baghdad evaporated in April, it only took a couple of days for Rumsfeld to congratulate himself. The "operational pause" that resulted from the failure of his new high-tech battlefield coordination scheme had been overcome by plain '80s-variety air-land battle doctrine, with heavy emphasis on close air support from A-10s injecting tons of depleted uranium into the battlefield environment.

There were still thousands of Iraqi tanks and armored personnel carriers, however, unaccounted for in Iraq, and they didn't drive themselves away. Hundreds of thousands of small arms. Up to 3,000 wire-guided anti-armor missiles. Over 1,500 artillery pieces, possibly a half dozen SCUD launchers, 1,000+ MOWAG light anti-aircraft weapons as well as a decent supply of unfired surface-to-air Missiles, a dozen Hind attack helicopters, several dozen smaller choppers, and up to two dozen PC-7 and PC-9 fixed-wing aircraft.

The imperial crowing about this lopsided attack was tempered behind the scenes. Commanders knew that — contrary to all the bullshit about destruction of Iraqi units — the boldest sacrifices by Iraqi fighters were made not in conventional confrontations but in delaying tactics. Those tactics worked. The Iraqis took good advantage of the US aversion to high "friendly" casualties and their obsession with "force protection." The fact is the lion's share of Iraqi forces had managed an orderly retreat… somewhere.

These numbers haunted US military commanders. They didn't faze Rumsfeld, however, who was delirious over his great victory. The reality was that this was a fight between Lennox and Lewis and a ten-year-old child, and Lewis was crowing because he had knocked the child out in the second round.

Guerrilla Resistance Grows

By June 8th, guerrilla methods had been honed. Horn honks, camouflaged among traffic, were used to pass signals. Some honks were used to relay the size and direction of approaching forces. Non-combatant foot messengers relayed information to fighting positions about the location and disposition of American troops.

Perhaps we need to revisit some good advice from Vietnam. When asked how we could get out of Vietnam, one simple answer was tragically ignored: With ships and airplanes.

Ambushes were multi-directional, integrating rocket propelled grenades with assault rifles, which trapped US soldiers in streets that had become fields of fire. Were it not for the heavy body armor and Kevlar helmets, US fatalities would be far higher.

But this weight reduces physical agility, just as the mission of the occupier itself reduces tactical agility. The guerrilla can always seize the initiative, which is the ability to pick the time and place of combat. The multiple pinprick attacks had two objectives: one, to stretch the occupier's capacity thin trying to protect itself, and two, to drive a permanent wedge between the occupier and the population.

Almost like a big bass wallowing to the surface of the water for a meal, Central Command responded to the ambushes with a series of heavy-handed pillage missions with goofy names: Operation Peninsula Strike, Operation Desert Scorpion, Operation Sidewinder, where they trashed people's homes, violated their modesty and dignity, flex-cuffed children, and shot more civilians.

Reporters talked to young, bone-skinny, prepubescent boys who told them they were practicing throwing rocks so they could one day hurl grenades at the Americans. These were not Saddam Fedayeen.

US Troops Feel the Effects

It's hard to be an occupier. Different people react differently, but it is hard for all of them nonetheless. The fatigue of operating like this is indescribable — physical, mental, and emotional. Add the gnawing fear of ambush, some wounded machismo, a little racism, a lot of homesickness, a daily diet of official stupidity, chronic confusion, and the contempt for each other that only a long occupation can breed among soldiers, and you have a "morale problem."

American soldiers have some impressive weapons and gadgets. But they are not invincible. Their bodies are ordinary bodies with a little physical conditioning, the resilience of youth, and plenty of calories to sustain them. They were doing everything now in an oven. Their connections to their past lives were dissolving, as were the bonds of some of their fragile marriages, as was their belief in official stories. Those whose nation they occupied only served as a constant reminder of how far they were from all they value and took for granted before they came on this masculine little quest, and they were

learning to despise them. Them. The Ragheads. The Hajjis.

Long occupations translate into occasional outbursts against the local populations — like shooting up crowds, which the military then has to justify or cover up. Each outburst becomes a recruitment drive for the resistance. More independent-minded soldiers — and there are many of them — were already experiencing a terrible role conflict. The refusal by some to dehumanize the Iraqis and the Afghans does not immediately convert soldiers into conscientious objectors, or — like me — leftists, but it will begin an irreversible process that separates them first from many of their fellows, then from their old selves. This war and occupation will send home people who are the uncounted casualties, and some of them — reunited with themselves and humanity — will become witnesses.

With each flag-draped coffin that arrives in the United States, there is a diminishing willingness of a duped American population to accept the official version of the war. People become very angry when they discover they have been conned. The commander of Ft. Stewart, whose 3rd Division has taken the heaviest casualties, and that has been in theater longer than any combat unit, called a cheerleading meeting of 800 post wives in early July. He was not greeted with cheers but a hard-eyed crowd, exhausted by running families alone, by changing official stories of redeployment, by mounting casualties, and by women grown fiercely sullen as official pre-war justifications disintegrated before the meekest of press inquires.

Imperial Overreach Is Back

With the French putting their mark back on Africa, all of Latin America shifting to the left, China and India attempting a rapprochement, and Afghanistan reverting to a feudal patchwork of opium dealers and gun-runners, the Bush administration got getting its first glimmer of how far they've overreached this time. By the end of June, they had the audacity to suggest that the rest of the world should now pitch in and assist in the occupation — the same rest of the world they thumbed their noses at when they didn't get their fig leaf of legitimacy from the UN.

Meanwhile, the Iraqis figured out what Bush and Rumsfeld could not see as they played their little game of neocon Risk with the world. Iraq's oil wealth, control over which was the central reason for this occupation, cannot be effectively hauled out on flatbed trucks. And a million soldiers would be required to protect the hundreds and hundreds of miles of pipeline that gets the crude to market. Borrowing a time-honored tactic from the Colombian ELN, Iraqi guerrillas have begun to place explosives on the pipelines. Halliburton can secure all the contracts it wants, but this is *not* a favorable investment climate.

The word "Vietnam" began to form on the lips of even the mainstream press.

In Vietnam, troop morale plummeted as the lies about the reasons for war became ever more apparent. The morale of the troops in Iraq began to fall as soon as the reality that they weren't liberating anything sank in. Most troops were prepared to face danger and hardship. They just don't like facing hardship and danger for lies.

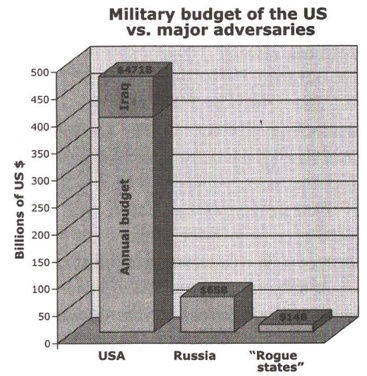
Since the political decision in August to cut US casualties, the US has minimized operations and largely drawn the troops back inside the concertina wire. They were tangled up with pinprick strikes, and the slow, steady stream of US casualties was harming Bush politically. It still isn't working. Fixed installations need logistical support, and that means convoys, so the Iraqi resistance is schooling itself on the art of ambush.

From an operational tempo that was lethally strenuous, American troops are now subjected to mind-numbing boredom, where they can concentrate on how slowly the calendar pages turn, how hot it is, how bad the sand fleas are, how much they miss home-cooked meals and making love and air-conditioning. The temperature is falling, but the clock goes very slowly now. The occasional mortar attack gives them something to talk about. The US is stuck right now, having lost the battlefield initiative, and is losing the war. This is another parallel to Vietnam.

The fact is, if this guerrilla resistance can sustain itself and slowly grow over the next few months, we will look back to today and say, as we could have said about Vietnam by 1968 — the United States is about to lose an unjustifiable war. Rumsfeld's Defense Policy Board will have outdone McNamara's whiz kids, however. Rumsfeld has succeeded in crossing the point of no return into hopelessness in six months, where it took McNamara six years.

If McNamara was Johnson's bad counsel, Rumsfeld appears to be Bush's Rasputin. Another flim-flam artist, with his silly robo-war doctrine. Even the generals despise this arrogant pretender. The generals still remember Vietnam, about which Bush's cabinet has experienced a deep amnesia, but even the generals — especially the generals, with few exceptions — will protect their careers and remain silent as they are led into the swamp.

Perhaps we need to revisit some good advice from Vietnam. When asked how we could get out of Vietnam, one simple answer was tragically ignored: With ships and airplanes. The Iraqis — a talented people with 5,000 years of experience in civilization — are more qualified to determine their own future, however painful that process may be, than Bush's cabinet, or the UN for that matter. End the occupation. Bring the troops home now.



WAR ON THE ECONOMY

MILITARIZATION'S COSTS AT HOME

By Meizhu Lui

The militarization of the US and its economy is here to stay. Regardless of where precisely the guns are pointed next, we are promised an endless war on terror, a state of constant alert. This will require lots more security personnel, spies, and technology, more weapons of mass destruction as well as weapons of very targeted destruction, and many more troops stationed abroad to police the post-destruction phase of the wars.

But no one, especially Bush, wants to mention that these adventures cost money. Who will foot the bill? Will everyone share the financial sacrifices that war entails? Will a war economy narrow the economic divide or jumpstart the economy? What will be the longer-term impact on our economy and our lives?

It wasn't until the first bombs dropped in Iraq that he handed the nation a partial bill of $75 billion. That was in addition to the $396 billion already in the military budget. Playing on the fear of terrorism and the pressure to rally around the flag during war, the government tries to make post-9/11 increases in the defense budget seem reasonable. But the public is not told that the US is already the top military spender in the world. The second biggest, Russia, spent only $65 billion. If you add up the military spending of all the "rogue states" (Iraq, Iran, North Korea, Syria, Libya, Cuba, and Sudan), *together* they spent just $14 billion — 3% of what the US spends!

War and Taxes

In the past during wartimes taxes have been raised to pay for the extra costs. Those who could most afford to pay were asked to dig deep. For example, in 1942, only months after Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt asked Congress to cap individual wealthy incomes at $25,000 (which would be about $300,000 in current dollars.) By 1944, 94% of all income over $200,000 was taxed away.

How different this is from the Bush tax plan! Even as he moved the country into a state of war, he was asking for more tax cuts — $726 billion worth over ten years. Even some of his fellow wealthy Republicans couldn't stomach that one! Instead, the latest round of tax cuts passed by Congress total $350 billion, still not chump change. Both the capital gains tax and the dividend tax have been cut — which will mean that more money will go into the pockets of the already wealthy. The wealthiest 400 taxpayers with average incomes of $174 million in 2000 had already seen their tax rate drop by 8% over five years — and now it has dropped even more.

These tax policies also widen the racial economic gap because the wealthy are overwhelmingly white. According to a recent Survey of Consumer Finances done by the Federal Reserve, the median net worth of families of color *fell* 4.5% in the last three years to $17,000, while white families' net worth *rose* 17% to $120,900. Clearly, there are hidden breaks for white people — affirmative action for whites — in the supposedly race-neutral tax policies. Thus, young people of color will increasingly be forced to turn to the military for employment and education, while young white inheritors can live well off the fruit of someone else's labor.

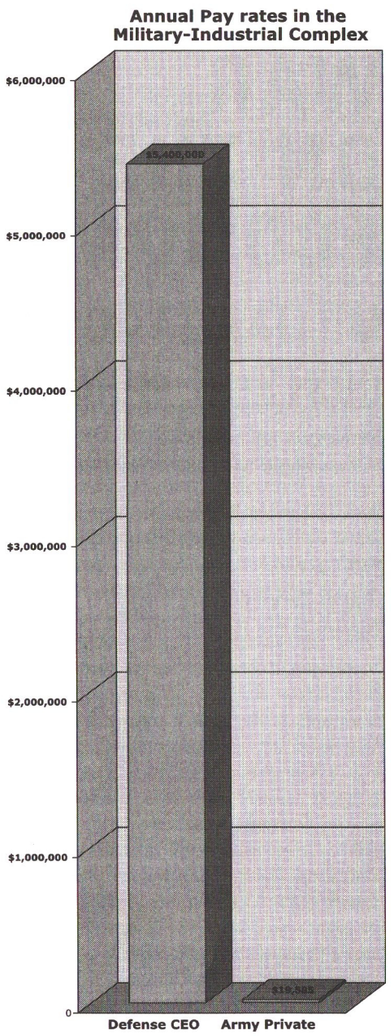
The increase in the military budget also benefits the defense contractors. Median CEO pay at the 37 largest defense contractors rose 79% from 2001 to 2002. The typical defense industry CEO made $5.4 million dollars in 2002. Compare this with an army private's pay of $19,585.

Social Services
Drown in the Bathtub

Increasing military spending and cutting taxes at the same time is not good economic policy if you want to maintain social services in a time of war. But it is good political policy if your real purpose is, as Bush's political advisor Grover Norquist so delicately put it, "to reduce [government] to the size where I can drag it into the bathroom and drown it in the bathtub." The purpose of government would be shrunk to one core function: the protection of private property, at home and abroad.

After convincing the public that we need to spend more and more on the military, and fooling them into thinking tax cuts to the wealthy will help benefit all of us, the till looks pretty empty. "There is no money" is a good excuse to get people resigned to cuts in the kinds of services we have every right to expect from government. In 2003, with $399 billion to go to the military, there is only $29 billion for housing assistance, and only $52 billion for education.

That $75 billion for a 30-day war is an interesting figure, because that is roughly the amount missing from the states' combined budgets in 2004. Just as individuals can use credit cards and go into debt when they need to spend



money, the federal government can use deficit spending to do the same. By law, though, most states can't do this. Their budgets must be balanced; that is, income must equal expenditures. All over the country, states will therefore have to cut between 14.5% and 18% of what they needed to spend to maintain the level of services provided in the previous year — services people depend on like health care, child care, public education, affordable housing. Let's look at the tradeoffs: One cluster bomb costs $14,000, enough to enroll two children in Head Start for a year. One year of military aid to Colombia costs $494 million, enough to provide 7000 units of affordable housing. One Stealth bomber costs $2.1 billion, the annual salary/benefits for 38,000 teachers — and that's how many teachers have been lost this year.

Past presidents have been well aware that spending more dollars to protect people militarily lessens the ability of government to protect its people from poverty. Even President Eisenhower — a Republican *and* a general — said, "Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed… We pay for a single destroyer with new homes that could have housed more than 8,000 people."

These tax policies also widen the racial economic gap because the wealthy are overwhelmingly white.

What we have today is worse than business as usual. The far-Right's agenda — to reduce government to the function of protecting private property — also becomes clear when you see the massive increase in public spending for prisons. Manning Marable notes that, during the last 20 years, 38 new prisons were built in New York State compared to only 31 prisons during the previous 200 years. Right now our nation is number one militarily *within* US borders as well as without, with over two million people incarcerated. Outrageously, prison and the military have become the two main ways for poor people to get government subsidized housing, food, and healthcare.

Getting Away with Robbery and Murder

As always in US history, the face put on "the enemy" both abroad and at home is a face of color. This administration has used racism and national chauvinism to fuel the fears of the domestic population in order to gain their support for increasing the military budget while cutting basic human services. Creating the myth of the African American "welfare queen" undercut public support for all low-income women and children, just as blaming "illegal aliens" for the loss of good jobs led to cuts in healthcare and food stamp benefits for all immigrants. People are not informed that we spend far less on programs to provide opportunities to low-income people than on tax breaks to corporations and the already wealthy. Abroad we have the myth of the "axis of evil" in the global South, and the specter of "weapons of mass destruction" in the hands of people of color is used to drum up support for military expenditures.

Is it surprising then that while 75% of whites supported the Iraq war, 75% of African Americans did not? And yet, the majority of people who have lost government-funded benefits or public sector jobs have been white. Clearly, the racism that benefits white elites hurts working and middle-class whites as well as people of color.

You don't have to be a socialist to see that the "social" part of government is indeed drowning in the bathtub: the part that aims to ensure the interests of society as a whole, to move toward greater equality, to provide and to build and support relationships among the people. We are supposed to be so shocked and awed that we don't even feel their hands in our pockets and their heels on our necks.

the AFL-CIO
CRISIS AND OPPORTUNITY

By Jeff Crosby

Eight years into the revitalized leadership of the John Sweeney–Richard Trumka–Linda Chavez-Thompson team, the AFL-CIO continues to face a serious, ongoing crisis. The percentage of the US workforce organized into unions continues to shrink — even though reversing this trend was identified as the number–one goal of the new AFL-CIO leaders when they were elected in 1995. A viciously anti-union Republican party holds the Presidency and a majority of both houses of Congress — despite the re-energized and sophisticated trade union political operation. But this has not brought about a narrowing of the "window of opportunity" of progressive change in the federation, as some leftists believe.

It is true that the first blush of the early Sweeney programs is over. Some programs seem to have disappeared: the "change to organize" challenge to the international unions, the "paycheck economics" internal union education program, the talk about organizing the South, etc. Other initiatives are still around but receive less emphasis or are simply facing new challenges and efforts at renewal: the community-based unionism of Union Cities and the appeal to youth to join the Union Summer program, for example.

This is to be expected in any change process which was in some ways very superficial, and instigated by a thin layer of Federation activists who have little authority over the affiliates and even less access to rank-and-file members. The current situation is one of an organization in continuing crisis from external pressures, with internal differences driving the crisis forward. Some opportunities for progressive activists have passed within this process, some remain, and some will open in the future.

Perhaps the most telling part of the crisis is that so many efforts by the AFL-CIO leadership and the affiliated international unions that seemed well-conceived and -resourced have not been sufficient. More radical changes are needed.

The current phase of the crisis first arrived in the wake of the 2000 elections, when, despite stupendous efforts by the labor movement, the Democrats did not win the Senate or the Presidency. For many, probably most, of the national labor leaders, this is really what the Federation's job is — to win national elections. And the continuing failure of the labor movement as a whole to turn the organizing numbers around (union density in the private sector is now under 9%) contributes to the crisis as well.

Some opportunities for progressive activists have passed, some remain, and some will open in the future.

Still, opportunities remain and good work continues. The Central Labor Councils in some areas remain a space where progressive leaders and staff can directly affect developments on the ground. The Central Labor Council Advisory Committee has been restructured to focus more on the larger councils. The people leading this work believe in organizing workers to confront capital, using political work to support organizing, building genuine coalitions with non-union folks, developing leadership in the unions (not just by smart staff folks), and building a labor movement instead of a coalition of feuding warlords. This work continues to receive support from the AFL-CIO officers.

As a result of the continuing evolution of the Federation's immigration policy, it held a massive demonstration on October 4 in NYC and DC, preceded by bus caravans inspired by the Freedom Riders from the 1960s. The goal is legalization of people without papers. In fact, this campaign is more politically progressive than most native rank-and-file members' feelings about "illegal" immigrants. It will take a strong education effort to make this campaign have any impact at the base among the native sector of our membership.

The AFL-CIO successfully organized labor participation in the anti-FTAA demonstrations in Miami in November, 2004. A strong showing by the Steelworkers led the way, with good participation from Florida unions as well. While support from other interna-

Glossary

AFSCME: American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees

AFT: American Federation of Teachers

Building Trades: Unions that are involved in Construction

Carpenters: United Brotherhood of Carpenters, including some related workers

Central Labor Councils (CLCs): Organization of AFL-CIO unions in a particular geographic area of a state

CWA: Communication Workers of America

HERE: Hotel and Restaurant workers union

International Union: United States based unions that sometimes include workers in Canada and Puerto Rico

Laborers: Laborers International Union of North America, a construction union that has members in other industries

Machinists (IAM): International Association of Machinists, a union historically based in manufacturing which today has members in the airlines and other industries

SEIU: Service Employees International Union, originally a "building services" or custodians union, today with large numbers of members in health care and state employees

Teamsters: International Brotherhood of Teamsters, which has expanded beyond the truckng and warehouse industry to many other areas

UAW: United Auto Workers

USWA: United Steelworkers of America

tionals was more spotty, that was not the fault of the federation. The AFL-CIO also managed to bridge the gap between the direct action folks and the unions with few missteps, after a rocky beginning and a timid pose of the unions against the police in the run-up to the mobilization. Relations with the lower-sector, non-union working class organizations of color in South Florida like the Miami Workers Center, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers and Power remained more strained. This sector entered the anti-globalization movement under their own organizational umbrella, a coalition called "Root Cause," for the first time. It is an important development. But despite huge efforts by the Miami press and police to split the "responsible" trade unionists from the alleged crazy anarchists who the press said were coming to burn Miami, the labor-youth-environmentalist alliance was re-established for the first time since Bush's War on Terror began after 9/11.

The federation has also pumped up its organizing focus, with a successful mobilization of 10,000 to support campus workers at Yale University and national mobilizations around the Dec. 10 Human Rights Day, posing the right to organize unions as a human right and a "public good." The AFL-CIO continues to support campaigns of individual affiliates as well, as in UNITE's campaign against the powerful CINTAS laundry.

But there are two 800-pound gorillas looming in the room whenever the future of the Federation is discussed...

Looking Out for #1 — Is There a Labor Movement?

The first is that the forces pulling the AFL-CIO apart are an offshoot of the ongoing crisis mentioned above. When things are going badly, people start looking out for themselves.

In the case of the Carpenters, President McCarren took the union completely out of the AFL-CIO, and has gambled on an independent road.

The decision of the Carpenters to rejoin the Building Trades but not the AFL-CIO is a temporary fix that is not likely to hold in the long run. It eliminates the most dangerous of the jurisdictional confrontations — the real threat that the Carpenters would start organizing "wall to wall" at construction sites, taking work away from other crafts — which satisfies the Building Trades Division leadership. But while constitutionally the Carpenters cannot participate in a division of the AFL-CIO without being part of the overall federation, President Sweeney is powerless to enforce this rule.

Politically, the Carpenters have their noses stuck up Bush's ass, perhaps hoping both for government help in securing contracts and that McCarren will get a break on federal investigations he figures in.

In fact, there is a whole group of international unions that have a pretty distant relationship with the AFL-CIO leadership. The restructuring of the AFL-CIO state by state (called the "New Alliance" program) has proceeded in a half-dozen or more states (New York, Maryland and North Carolina, among others). But it was dropped in Ohio because two of the largest unions (Teamsters and UAW) are very under-affiliated (they don't pay per capita to CLCs and/or the state AFL-CIO) and didn't want anything to do with it. Other states are being held up due to prickly relationships between one or another international union and state AFL-CIO leaderships, and the whole project has slowed considerably.

The Machinists (IAM) have dropped out of Coordinating Bargaining with other GE unions for the first time since 1969, and don't coordinate bargaining with other unions in the airlines or other industries either. This had a lot to do with Tom Buffembarger's being elected president, and the Machinists' changing from a social-democratic orientation to a more conservative one. When I mentioned this to an AFL-CIO officer, the officer replied, "The Machinists are out of everything."

SEIU Goes Its Own Way

Perhaps most important, there is a discussion going on within the SEIU which might ultimately even lead them to raid other unions, although this last seems unlikely. SEIU is a key — perhaps *the* key — union in the AFL-CIO, due to its size and its innovative and aggressive approach to organizing and mergers. SEIU decided several years ago that the unions that were going to change had changed, so it and perhaps a few others had to go ahead on their own. The Federation couldn't be of that much help to SEIU and couldn't change the other unions that didn't want or know how to organize.

Now they are trying to close other unions out of what they consider their "core jurisdictions" (building services, health care, and to some degree state employees). Since building density in industries is the only way to build power for workers, and the AFL-CIO can't be expected to enforce jurisdictional discipline, SEIU should do so on its own, with whatever other unions they can bring along. Specifically this means doing more and more co-ordinated work with HERE and possibly other unions. (SEIU and HERE have even swapped some local unions — a hotel for a hospital, for example, to make their memberships more consistent with their core constituencies.)

The "core jurisdictions" concept is meeting serious opposition from other unions that have been organizing in, for example, health care (UAW, Machinists, AFT, CWA, AFSCME, USWA — in fact practically everybody). The institutional pressure unions are under to find new members in the easiest possible place cannot be underestimated.

The current discussion in SEIU reflects a hard-nosed approach to building power through density (percentage of workers who are union members) in an industry — a bedrock union principle ignored by many unions. But they also sometimes display a disregard for workers as masters of their own fate. Steven Lerner, the head of the Building Services Department of SEIU, has argued bluntly that you can't have democracy without density, thereby dismissing internal democracy in unions by equating it with national union density in an industry.

This kind of thinking leads to situations like the Boston Justice for Janitors strike, where a heroic and bitter battle against a vicious employer was led by a trusteed local without any elected leadership, relying mostly on outside support with a large majority of the membership staying on the job throughout the strike. The post-strike developments revealed a demoralized, split membership. And the internal restructuring process within SEIU to bring locals in line with industrial concentrations is sometimes done over the heads of the "restructured" workers.

The SEIU's "core jurisdictions" concept is meeting serious opposition from other unions. The institutional pressure unions are under to find new members in the easiest possible place cannot be underestimated.

The CWA has posited an alternative view, arguing for a movement-wide effort to build support for organizing as a "public good," and emphasizing bottom up, long-term organizing efforts which "build power" for workers. That union's long-term commitment to organizing cannot be questioned — at targeted employers (like IBM) they build union committees in non-union workplaces where there is no short-term prospect of getting a collective bargaining agreement, and they keep at it, year after year.

But they argue that density must be built at employers (complemented by the political strength of strong amalgamated local unions), not in industries, since many of the large employers in the US — using GE as a prime example — have diversified to products from lighting to plastics, and stretch across industries from defense to health care to financial services. Whether these giant corporations are typical of the economy, however, is not so clear. And even in a diversified company there are pressures to bargain according to industry standards, and organized power across an industry is still important.

The long-term, bottom-up approach makes sense at IBM or GE, and is a huge improvement over the "hot shop" losses that leave unorganized workers bitter when the union closes the motel room the day after a defeat, never to be seen again. But it is hardly applicable in a laundry or a nursing home or among university clericals where the turnover may be 50% in a single year. Different tactics and strategies are often influenced by conditions in a particular industry as much as the principles of the organizing union. Different methods tend to become false matters of "principle" in the same way they do among the left or among academics. The debate over organizing strategy could be extremely healthy for the Federation, in the unlikely event that it is carried out

Despite a heroic effort on the part of Southern California supermarket workers, their months-long strike ended in defeat in February, making them a symbol of labor's troubles.

in a principled way that allows each of these unions to learn from each other.

The point here is that even SEIU — previously viewed by most other unions as running the AFL-CIO — is spinning away from the Federation in response to the crisis and failures of the movement so far.

Discussions have started with at least five International Unions (SEIU, UNITE, Laborers, Carpenters, HERE) as the "New Unity Project." The strengths and weaknesses of their approach are similar to SEIU's. A first draft of their proposals, for example, included appointing Central Labor Council presidents as an subordinate part of State AFL-CIO Federations, along the lines of the "cadrification" of SEIU, where loyal, disciplined and like-thinking staff people are appointed leaders of trusteed or reorganized locals. The unspoken and perhaps unrecognized assumption here, of course, is that ultimate wisdom always resides with educated smart people in Washington D.C.

A nasty dispute over political fundraising has added fuel to the fire. Two different "527" funds have been set up to raise money for the 2004 elections, one led by AFSCME President Jerry McIntee and the other by SEIU's Andy Stern.

The stakes are very high. New Unity Project union leaders portray themselves as stranding between the current crisis and the destruction of the labor movement. They have openly threatened to disaffiliate from the AFL-CIO and even create a rival federation if reforms are not instituted. The Sweeney leadership team in response has announced their intention to run for reelection for a third term as AFL-CIO officers, reversing an earlier pledge by Sweeney, who will be 70 at the end of his term in 2005. If neither side blinks, this will tear the federation apart with unpredictable consequences.

The debate over organizing strategy could be extremely healthy for the Federation, in the unlikely event that it is carried out in a principled way.

War: "Not Our Issue"?

The second 800-pound gorilla in the ongoing AFL-CIO crisis is the War on Terrorism. The general line on the War on Terrorism in the labor movement is usually "It's not our issue" or "We support the President," or both of those.

"It's not our issue" reflects both the real pressures on union leaders to keep the membership united in the face of corporate assaults, and a politically narrow concept of what defines "labor issues." Unlike student groups or community organizations, unions are organizations made up of people who hold very different political views, united only by where they happen to work or the trade they happen to practice. It's hard to get people together on what they need in the next contract, let alone what to do in Afghanistan. Local unions have been torn apart, at least temporarily, over issues like that. So "our issues" come to be seen as the bread and butter ones that everyone can agree on.

Even SEIU — previously viewed by most other unions as running the AFL-CIO — is spinning away from the Federation in response to the crisis.

The unions' effort to separate President Bush's domestic and foreign policy has gone to extremes. In the entire 2002 election cycle, the AFL-CIO's multi-million-dollar effort was based on studiously ignoring the largest issue facing the country — the looming invasion of Iraq. Keeping some kind of unity in the unraveling federation on an issue like Iraq is of course difficult. The Federation is institutionally cautious. After 9/11, statements from members of the AFL-CIO Executive Council ranged from a warning not to let this inflame us against foreigners (Leo Girard from USWA — notably a Canadian) to outright blood-thirsty calls for revenge (Buffembargar from the IAM).

Union leaders have called Bush a liar on every other issue but, without missing a step, have concluded, "We support the President on the War on Terrorism." The problem for the "It's not our issue" folks is that this position can't hold in this protracted period of "armed globalization."

The question of war can radically transform mass consciousness as nothing else can. We are already seeing this regarding Iraq, as the US bodycount mounts in the "post-war" period. When the War on Terrorism is properly understood as armed globalization, a direct outgrowth of the intensified integration of the world capitalist system under US domination, then the radicalizing conclusion that moved hundreds of thousands during the Vietnam War will be drawn by similar numbers today: imperialism means war.

President Sweeney, in the wake of some moderate Democratic Party opposition to the invasion of Iraq, issued a tentative statement calling Saddam Hussein a menace but also urging Congress not to embark on a unilateral attack on Iraq. Then the Executive Council in February '03 passed a resolution stating that President Bush had not made the case for war. These were critical in legitimizing discussion of the war in the pre-invasion period.

Even before the post-invasion debacle, there was a huge difference among rank-and-file union members on invading Iraq as opposed to invading Afghanistan. Nobody who was trained by a terrorist organization based in Iraq blew up any buildings in the US, for starters. And union activists, who have been schooled in little niceties like contracts, negotiated agreements, and legalities, are a bit less likely than some to buy into the novel concept of "preventative war." Prior to the US invasion, from the service sector to defense plants, labor activists reported that their members were "50–50" on Iraq. Labor Councils and even a few state federations passed resolutions against the war, and not just the usual suspects. The San Francisco Labor Council (which seems to have its own State Department) was joined by the unlikely Philadelphia Labor Council in condemning Bush on the war. This was as big a shock to movement activists as the Chicago City Council condemning the war by a vote of 46–1.

Bush, the Great Unifier

The single stongest factor holding the labor movement together, and contributing to the opposition to the war in labor's base, has been the extraordinary anti-labor animus of President Bush and his Congressional legion of zealots. Despite the obvious efforts of the Teamsters and some of the building trades unions to get next to Bush, the President has made that nearly impossible. He has created such a siege mentality in the Federation that it has been nearly impossible for any union to break ranks.

Secretary of Labor Elaine Chao openly insulted the top leaders of the federation at an Executive Council meeting, and Bush has announced plans for a new set of impossible financial procedures for the unions that will cost millions of dollars. He has tried to invalidate the Project Labor Agreements that are the bread and butter of the building trades unions. He would eliminate unions for hundreds of thousands of public and related private employees. In one notorious letter, Republican House Leader Dick Armey attacked the patriotism of the "union bosses" after 9/11. This brought angry return fire from union leaders who lost members in 9/11 and who, unlike the macho chickenhawks in the Defense Department who never saw a war close up, were often veterans themselves. These guys are not used to being baited like some left-wing professor.

Bush does not fail to split the union ranks out of tactical ineptness any more than he failed to unite the United Nations due to inept diplomacy. He is a moron captured by zealots, who sees things in black and white, who knows little and cares even less about tactics and consequences. He uses the word "free markets" interchangeably with democracy and sees unions as just one more obstacle to those free markets. The national leaders of the Federation and international unions are quite convinced that another four years of Bush will strangle the unions, setting us back to the 1920s. They are genuinely afraid of what the President will do if he gets a chance. And even the most conservative among them can find no open seats on the Bush bus.

This much can be said for Bush — he has shown the labor leadership a mirror in which they can see a future of naked powerlessness, forcing them to face the harsh reality of which Sweeney had the courage to speak when he ran for AFL-CIO President in 1995 — the labor movement is becoming irrelevant.

Conclusion

The AFL-CIO is in continuing crisis. The crisis is conditioned by the hostility of US employers and the ideological dominance of free-market thinking and individualism, and defies simplistic criticism by the left. The tendency of the Federation to split apart, de facto or actually through disaffiliation, is growing, but has been held in check by the overwhelming hostility of the Bush administration.

As the body count grows in Iraq, the War on Terrorism will again be the subject of debate within the labor movement. As the US economy continues to slow, debate will also surface again over such central labor concerns such as health care. Differences will sharpen over whether to try again to cobble together a Clinton-style market based "solution" or to take the crisis head-on and offer a "single-payer" answer.

The determined effort by capital to destroy the public sector is beginning to hit as hard in the United States as it has in other parts of the world. If the battle is joined as part of the fight against corporate globalization, and the ideological domination of the "efficiency of the free market" is taken head on, this confrontation can be turned into an opportunity to strengthen the political consciousness of the movement, and to build alliances of the trade union movement with other sectors of the working people.

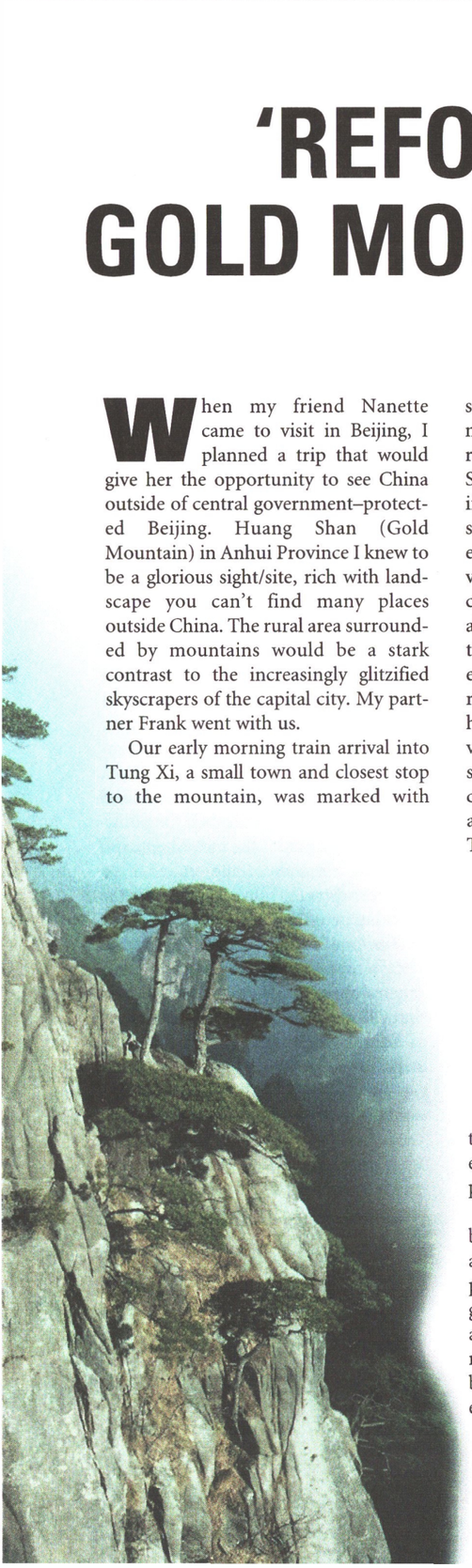
The one business principle that has always made sense to me is that crisis creates opportunity. If that is the case, we will not lack in opportunity in the labor movement in the next year and a half.

Jeff Crosby is President of the North Shore Labor Council in Lynn, Ma. This article is excerpted from a longer article — particularly regarding the public sector — which is on the Freedom Road website at *www.freedomroad.org.*

'REFORM' ON GOLD MOUNTAIN

COMING FACE TO FACE WITH CHINA'S EXPLOITED AND THE ONES WHO RIDE ON THEIR BACKS

By Dina



When my friend Nanette came to visit in Beijing, I planned a trip that would give her the opportunity to see China outside of central government–protected Beijing. Huang Shan (Gold Mountain) in Anhui Province I knew to be a glorious sight/site, rich with landscape you can't find many places outside China. The rural area surrounded by mountains would be a stark contrast to the increasingly glitzified skyscrapers of the capital city. My partner Frank went with us.

Our early morning train arrival into Tung Xi, a small town and closest stop to the mountain, was marked with swarms of persistent entrepreneurs. The minute we got off the train, our ears rang with "Are you going to Huang Shan? Take our car, it's only X yuan and if you take that car it will be so expensive." Each bus crowding the station entrance was a different group of private business people vying for customers, spreading vicious rumors about the others in cutthroat competition. None of them would leave until every single seat was occupied; so the result was a parking lot of minibuses all half-full with hapless suckers, convinced that their bus would leave "very soon, immediately." Every time a train came in, they'd all start up their engines as if they were just about to pull out. Then when passengers came on board, they killed the motor and sat and waited for the next train. There was no public bus.

I never dreamed I would see that kind of thing in China, where, after all, a revolution had liberated the bulk of the Chinese people from brutal exploitation.

We walked around followed around by swarms of minibus representatives and finally found a driver who promised to leave after the next train got in. We were surprised when it actually happened. The ride to the mountain was gorgeous, mainly because of the crops of *you cai* (oil vegetables) that were in bloom. The beauty of the flowers, yellow dots that glittered on the tiniest areas of land painstakingly leveled and terraced, suggested the hardship of peasants in that area. Flatlanders in the north had less beauty and lots more arable land to till.

At the foothills of the Huang Shan range we caught a ride to the park entrance with a taxi whose driver took the road's hairpin turns at madman speeds. He recommended a hotel on the western side of the summit that had lower rates than the bigger ones in the "front." But the most expensive thing on the mountain, apparently, was food. "It's not an ordinary kind of expensive," he warned. We had a backpack full of power bars and ramen noodles; as long as we could get an affordable bed for the night, we weren't worried.

Past the entrance to the cable cars — whose short line confirmed that it was the off season — and just inside the gate, we were faced with the beginning of the endless stone steps that would lead us to the summit. I was about to start to feel sorry for us when two thin men shouldering big A-frames of construction lumber strained in heavy steps past us in the shadow of cable cars above them. Frank asked how much their loads weighed: about 170 pounds.

And so our journey up was crammed full of spectacular scenery, endless steps marking our painful progress up, and the infuriating and heartbreaking sight of peasants selling their sweat in the tradition of "old China" coolies. The term *coolie* actually comes from the Chinese words *ku li*, or bitter strength, which is what Chinese laborers used to sell for poverty wages in pre-Liberation China. Twenty years of the country's "Reform" has wiped clean thirty years of socialism's sense of justice and guaranteed human right to a decent living — in one clever and brutal stroke. The granite cliffs of Huang Shan weren't the only things taking my breath away.

We stopped to talk to many of the coolies, because they could only take ten or fifteen steps before having to stop and rest. One guy was hauling up 200 pounds of roof tiles that he had to pay for if they were chipped on the way up. When we asked how much they made, they each turned around to look behind first to see if anyone was listening, before answering 20 Chinese cents a pound (2.4¢US). (Frank guessed that they were pitted against each other and didn't want the others to find out their rates.) At the most they made 40 yuan (less than $5US) a day, which is why they didn't ship the goods up by cable car. Tourists paid over 60 yuan for the ride up. So why didn't they run it at night? Their answer was that it closed down at night so there was no one at the summit to receive the goods. But because labor is so cheap in the Chinese countryside, park officials probably didn't even bother to think about alternative solutions. With a crowd of human mules vying to make the 6 to 7 hour climb to the top, why tax the cable cars?

When we passed an older man struggling under his load of 200 pounds of cement, Nanette stopped in horror and asked if she could give him some money. I didn't know, but I thought not. People who were going to these lengths to earn money through work might regard handouts as insulting. But later, when Frank spoke to a couple guys taking a break, they told him, "If you really care about us, you'll give us five bucks so we can buy lunch when we get to the top." And later, we found others asking directly for food. They gorged themselves in the morning to avoid carrying food in addition to their loads. But the result was sometimes they could barely make it up having burned through their breakfasts early on.

The term *coolie* actually comes from the Chinese words *ku li*, or bitter strength, which is what Chinese laborers used to sell for poverty wages in pre-Liberation China.

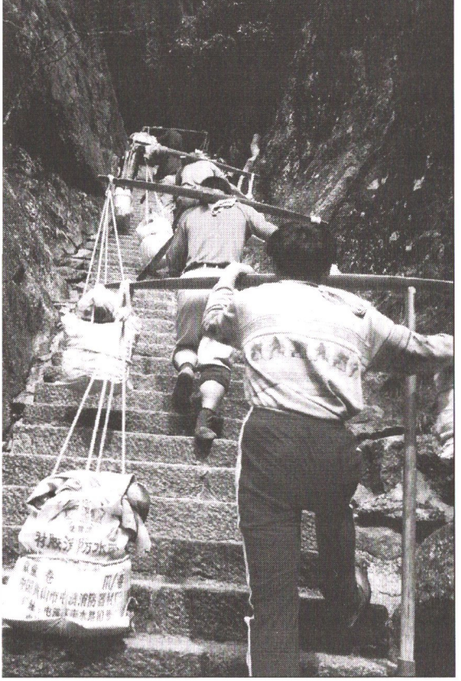
Working people had turned to begging. And half empty cable cars continued to glide effortlessly overhead.

Reaching the summit was physical relief and mental torture. The top of the mountain was completely paved over with stone, and vendors and small tourist shops crowded the paths. The sound of tour group bullhorns urging their members to stay close clashed with sellers of ramen noodles shouting "5 yuan a bowl!"

Following the cab driver's advice, we headed west over the top for shelter. Confused by the tourist map, we stopped in one of the fancier hotels to see if they could point us in the direction of some cheap digs. Inside, we found the culprit of the whole mess of the mountainous megalopolis. A giant photo of Deng Xiao Ping, hand outstretched trying his best to look majestic, adorned the wall of the lobby with the quote: "Huang Shan is a great place to make money." The executive suite in the place went for over 8000 yuan (almost $1000US) a night.

The hotel staff suggested we cross the nearby basketball court and inquire at the row of barrack-style houses built into the side of a slope. The room we got was damp but livable, cabin style for 50 a night. By dinner time ramen noodles looked remarkably unappetizing, so we went to find out just how expensive the "not ordinary kind of expensive" was. Turned out to be about a 700 percent markup for a simple bowl of noodles, which, when if you thought about how the flour and vegetables undoubtedly got to the restaurant, seemed almost reasonable.

Sunrise was scheduled for 6:00 the next morning and when our alarms went off, we were greeted by the sounds of a milling crowd and a blaring bullhorn rousing sleepy tour groups. In spite of the yelling crowds, the obnoxious vendors and it being the wrong



season for anything but fog, we weren't disappointed. The sunrise, as Frank heard someone describe, was the "pouring of melted gold" into the cup of a mountain's saddle. Accompanied by the roar of the crowd below, the horizon bled its traditional sunrise pink, then purple and blue. We were allowed a few breaths of quiet before the sound of the hordes trampling down to breakfast signaled the official end of the sunrise viewing.

The reason why most folks climb up the eastern trail and down the western, is because the way west is grueling. The eastern route was almost a straight shot up, but the west had a lot more ups and downs and narrow passage through steep terrain. So I assumed that we wouldn't be meeting up with the lines of coolies on the way down and was sadly mistaken. If anything, there seemed to be more, supplying the hotels to the west with food and drink and hauling up construction supplies too.

Worse than coolies hauling supplies, though, was the sight that greeted us at the beginning of the steepest descent: sedan chairs. So again, amidst all the spectacular landscape, horrific scenes intermingled. Young, able bodied tourists, too lazy to expend their own sweat and too far removed from any sense of right and wrong or even humanity to just ride the cable cars, threw down ten yuan a piece to get carried up by two grunting coolies. Each turn witnessed these new rich haggling with coolies over one or two yuan's price difference. I never dreamed I would see that kind of thing in China, where, after all, a revolution had liberated the bulk of the Chinese people from brutal exploitation. In 1949, they stood up. Now, in 2001, the rich were sitting down literally on the backs of newly harnessed coolies.

When I turned down one offer to be carried down for 10 yuan, and the guy offered a lower price, I explained that it wasn't a question of price and bit back tears.

It took us six hours to make it down that mountain. At the tail end of our trip, we met rain and coolies running like deer down the steps, happy and light, having shed their day's work at the top. There were also a few others, still struggling in their climb; they were either very new at the work or very old, and couldn't keep pace with the others. What they wanted was food — fuel. We handed out power bars along the way and felt like shit. When one guy jokingly asked for some US dollars as a souvenir, I muttered that what they really needed was a union. They all shook their heads. With hundreds and hundreds of people vying for their jobs, how could anyone organize a union? With planting season long over, and harvest yet to begin, local peasants were desperate to make some cash. 40 yuan a day was a small fortune in the countryside if you could work every day of the month — which most did. That body-breaking 1200 yuan monthly wage, however, didn't make it all the way home; they had to spend several hundred on permits for the "privilege" to work on the mountain.

At trail's end we found a familiar scene of taxis, which we ploughed through to find the driver who had taken us up the day before. On the road back, we talked to him about the terrible loads that the peasants were hauling up the mountain and were surprised by his complete lack of sympathy. The fact that those men had employment was a source of bitterness among locals who did not; it meant that they had special connections, or what the Chinese call "back door" relationships, with officials to get the work. If you had to know the right people just to get the chance to sell your bitter strength in those conditions, I guess organizing the "privileged" few *would* qualify as an enormously difficult task.

Twenty years of the country's "Reform" has wiped clean thirty years of socialism's sense of justice and guaranteed human right to a decent living.

We were up before dawn for the third morning in a row to catch our train. None of us could remember a time when we'd been more sore. But at the station, my muscles mustered up some motivation to take me by the hustlers pacing the entrance. I felt relieved to be able to brush past the minibus drivers by saying the magic words: "We're not going to Huang Shan." The drivers, the first link in a shiny chain holding up a part of China's new economy, barely paused before darting around us, eager to mark new customers on their way to Gold Mountain.

CRITICAL RESISTANCE SOUTH

Freedom Road *Interviews Three Organizers*

By Michelle Foy

In April 2003 a historic conference in New Orleans brought together folks from throughout the South to discuss strategies for fighting increased repression, imprisonment, and surveillance in communities. The Critical Resistance South conference was planned through two years of discussions among community members and organizers throughout the region.

Critical Resistance began in 1998 as a national grassroots organization fighting to end the Prison-Industrial Complex (PIC). The conference in the South was the third, following a national founding conference held in Berkeley in 1998 and a subsequent Northeast regional conference.

The South has great importance to both the powers that be and those who are resisting exploitation and repression. Conditions in the South are particularly repressive, and the PIC is tied into many other issues. For example, with the majority of Southern states being "Right to Work" states — an anti-union policy that results in low numbers of unionized workers — organizing is criminalized in a particular way. The Charleston Five, a group of workers in the International Longshoremen's Association who faced riot and conspiracy to riot charges, are a clear example of one form which repression takes in the South (see "Freeing the Charleston Five" in *Freedom Road* #2).

Likewise, the disenfranchisement of thousands of Black voters, many of them former prisoners, in Florida in the 2000 Presidential election is another example of the forms that white supremacy takes today in the South. According to the Sentencing Project and Human Rights Watch, 16 percent of African American adults and 31 percent of African American men in Florida are disenfranchised — permanently barred from voting — because they are in prison, on parole, or have had a felony conviction in their lifetime.

At Critical Resistance South, a national meeting of All of Us or None, a newly formed organization of former prisoners and felons, convened. The group discussed regional and national strategies former prisoners can use to challenge ongoing disenfranchisement (in all its forms, not simply around voting) and to find ways to put leadership of former prisoners and family members of prisoners at the front of the movement to stop the Prison-Industrial Complex.

Following the conference Michelle Foy interviewed three Southern organizers: Melissa Burch, coordinator of the conference; Dan Horowitz de Garcia, with Project South; and Tamika Middleton, student and intern with Critical Resistance, about the importance of the conference, why the focus on the South is needed, and what the next steps are in their day-to-day work.

Where are you from and what kind of work do you do in your area?

Dan Horowitz de Garcia: I am a program director at Project South: Institute for the Elimination of Poverty & Genocide, based in Atlanta. We do leadership development for movement building by partnering with grassroots organizations.

Tamika Middleton: I am from St. Helena Island, South Carolina. I didn't do much activism at home, just started getting involved here in New Orleans. St. Helena is one of the Sea Islands off the coast of South Carolina and Georgia. It has a very rich culture and a large African American population. Coming from there, it really got me interested in prison issues and people of color issues in general.

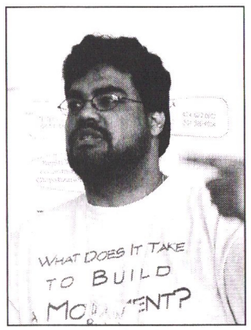
Melissa Burch: I live in New Orleans. Before we had contact with Critical Resistance here in New Orleans, a small group of folks and I were trying to find effective ways to address prison issues here locally. The work took different incarnations, including working with women who had children in prison, other kinds of family support and resources for them.

Dan: Most of our partnerships at Project South are with labor organizations or poor people's organizations. We don't explicitly do prison work, we do anti-poverty work. Because of our work and our strategy for achieving social and economic justice, we decided it was important to expand the definition of the PIC beyond prisons and police brutality. There are so many

pieces of the PIC, for example the "Zero Tolerance" policy (severe punishment for the tiniest infractions) in schools, which are not directly about prisons or police, but are so clearly about the PIC and about social control. We work with a lot of parents who are very concerned about it.

How did you get involved with the conference and with prison issues in the South?

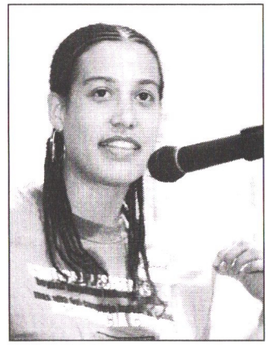
Dan: We went to the Critical Resistance East conference, which was just following major anti-globalization protests, expecting to see connections made between anti-globalization issues and the PIC. We didn't see a lot of connections being drawn, and thought that was a problem. So a question we ask is: How is the PIC a domestic impact of globalization? We needed to incorporate that into our materials and figure out ways to talk about it with the folks that we work with on a day-to-day basis. We were in the process of creating a curriculum for Up & Out of Poverty NOW!, an anti-poverty coalition in Georgia that organizes Poor People's Day at the Capitol every year. At CR East we learned about plans for CR South, and at that point decided to become involved in the organizing for the conference.



Dan Horowitz de Garcia

Melissa: We recognized that there were people already doing much of the work, death penalty, juvenile justice, family members of prisoners, students working in the campaign against private prisons and Sodexho Marriot and the National Coalition to Free the Angola Three. So we began to pull together a coalition, and it started going really well. Around the time that the coalition began we were asked to participate in a Critical Resistance South roundtable. It was at the initial meeting that it was decided to have the conference in New Orleans. So we took it on. Around that time my brother was also locked up.

Tamika: I go to Xavier University, which is really close to the Critical Resistance office. Xavier is very conservative, it's the only Black Catholic school in the nation, and it's not the best atmosphere for fostering political activity. A few of us have tried to start an anti-war group at Xavier, and they shut us down. We were told that the school is not anti-war, but it is for "peace and prayer." We tried to organize a rally, and the administration said that we couldn't. Then we tried to put flyers for an off-campus rally up on campus, and they wouldn't let us do that either. So that's why I came off campus to get involved. I was eager to get involved in something in New Orleans.


Melissa Burch

Why is addressing the Prison-Industrial Complex important?

Melissa: The New Orleans activist community is very small and somewhat isolated. We don't often feel like we are a part of something bigger. Here you can't afford to affiliate with people only doing prison work. This work brings so many people and issues together. The people doing welfare reform work, education reform, fighting for housing — they are all interested in these issues around the PIC. That feeling of isolation seems to be prevalent throughout the South. For a lot of people from across the region, the conference was really a rare opportunity to come together with so many people of like mind in one place. People reported having made important connections, not only with people from different states, but with people from their own states who they weren't connected with before.

Dan: We define the Prison-Industrial Complex, in summary, as the violent systems of social control. It's totally connected to the state, the global economy and the philosophy behind globalization. The state's job is to be the main social controller of society, with corporations linked as well. The media are an example of the corporate link to the state. Both the state and media use white supremacy and people's experience with violence to justify the violence of the state.

If we just talk about prisons, it's just one slice of a larger pie, and ultimately, we're not going to win if we focus on just that. All these different reforms, unless they're in a larger context of questioning the power structure of society, will come back to bite us. Prisons are the result of reform work done outside that context.

What is the role of social control? In the 17th and 18th centuries in the US, chattel slavery was the main form that social control took. Following the end of slavery, social control did not end. The form of social control changed, but the nature of it has not changed. Convict leasing is a great example. The Black Codes were developed as a way to criminalize African Americans after the legal end of slavery. The codes and convict leasing resulted from the state and business interests pairing up to ensure a cheap labor pool.

How is the work shaped by where you live and work?

Tamika: In the South we have a lot of prisons built on former plantations. It's really something to know that where there is a prison is where your great-grandfather was a slave. And there are a lot of rural communities in the South. The prisons are put in the poor areas, those that are populated by people of color, with the promise of jobs.

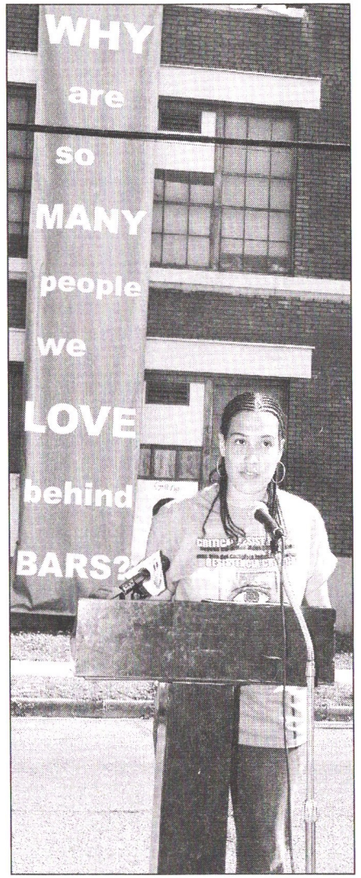
What, in your view, were some of the main questions and themes at the conference? How do you think this conference was unique and different from past Critical Resistance conferences?

Dan: I wish that the framing of the issues at the conference had been broader. It was very much along the black/white paradigm, and it was very prison-focused.

Melissa: In terms of how the conference differed from past CR conferences, the setting for the conference was unique — it was in a neighborhood affected by the issues, rather than at a university. We had concerns about descending upon the neighborhood, but instead, the community really took it up. It was supported by the Treme Community Center and three churches in the neighborhood. I think many people attended, who would not have attended if it had been held at a university — and this was our goal when we chose the location.

Tamika: The thing that made the most difference for the conference was that it was in the community. The kids from Craig Elementary in the Treme Community, their banners really personalized it, rather than something official at a college campus. The students from Craig all drew pictures of someone they knew in prison: fathers, mothers, neighbors. Basically we all got a sense that all these kids know someone in prison. A lot of them are raised by grandparents, because their parents are in prison. It was a way to make people realize how big the problem is. It's not just the people in prison affected, but these kids are affected too.

Melissa: I want to hope that, culturally it was really a *Southern* regional conference. We had a high school choir perform and closed the conference with a secondline. The secondline is a New Orleans tradition that originated in the jazz community. When someone would pass away in the community, following the funeral, which mourned the person's death, would be a "secondline," a joyful procession of brass band music and "stepping," a distinct dance style, in celebration of that person's life. Today secondlines are a regular occurrence, sometimes, but not always, following a funeral, and are organized by local social clubs. People join in along the route as they hear the music and see the crowd. The food at the conference was great too — red beans and rice and jambalaya — I think people really felt at home.



What do you see as next steps, following the conference? How can people throughout the South work together to pose a real challenge to repression, prisons, police, etc.?

Tamika: People are interested in starting chapters. As far as New Orleans, I'm looking forward to a chapter starting here. Louisiana has so many issues, the highest incarceration rate. I really see the South getting involved in prison activism. There hasn't been a lot of activism, especially in South Carolina. I look forward to a southern regional effort around prisons.

Melissa: My hope is that the conference will have served as a lasting networking tool. We are already hearing from people in Alabama who are reaching out to people in Louisiana where Alabama prisoners are being transferred. Hopefully we can work together more as a region and information and resource sharing will continue.

How do you see your work and the work against the Prison-Industrial Complex related to what is going on internationally, with the war and the anti-war movement? How do we make the connections, and link the fight against the war at home & abroad?

Tamika: I think that first off the two things are related, it's the same people being affected. People of color are both being affected by the war and the PIC. The same things that we are striving to maintain to keep people from getting involved in the Criminal Justice system, is the same that keeps us from going to war.

I know when I was in high school, there were two choices, go into the military or go to college. And for some families and kids, they couldn't afford college, so they ended up in the military.

The poor fight in it, the poor die in it, but the rich profit, that's how it works with the Criminal Justice system and that's how it works with war.

Melissa: When we use the term Prison-Industrial Complex, which has its roots in an analysis of the Military-Industrial Complex, we are making a connection.

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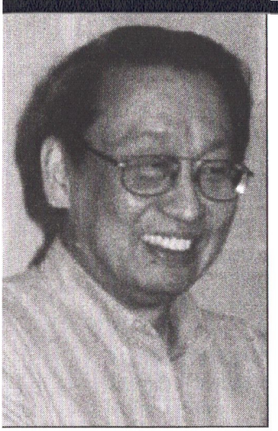


The Term 'Terrorism' Has Been Used So Often against Me Before

An Interview with Jose Maria Sison

The following piece is an excerpt from a longer interview Freedom Road conducted recently with Jose Maria Sison, the Chief Political Consultant for the National Democratic Front of the Philippines. A leader of the Philippine revolutionary movement for more than 35 years, he is now a political refugee in the Netherlands.

We have been talking about the broad international context of the current period, and you've emphasized the absolute necessity of a national, and indeed international, united front opposing imperialism, fascism and war. I'd like to ask about the specific situation facing the national democratic movement in the Philippines. How do you understand the struggle there in this broader context?

JMS: Southeast Asia is predominantly Muslim—Indonesia and Malaysia in particular. The Philippines is supposed to be Christian. The US colonized the Philippines, and the US is comfortable with it as a base to control Muslim countries with more oil. The Philippines is a base the US imperialists know very well—historically, economically, socially, culturally. In particular, the US wants its military bases back, as a vantage point for East Asia, to encircle China, to control trade routes, and to serve as a transit point from the West Coast of the US to the Middle East.

The US also wants to get over the Vietnam syndrome and to demonstrate its military power. In the Philippines, they have used the initial pretext of Abu Sayyaf in order to shift their target to the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and the New People's Army. The US has deliberately sabotaged peace negotiations between the National Democratic Front and the government of the Republic of the Philippines.

The Pentagon thinks new technology—bulletproof vests and helmets, night-vision goggles, GPS and satellites—can win in places with Vietnam-like terrain, such as in the Philippines. All these tools can easily fall into the hands of the guerrilla forces. In its wish to overcome the Vietnam Syndrome, the US could beat itself again.

The US bases were driven out by a mass movement that also had sympathy among sections of the Filipino ruling class. Does the basis still exist for that kind of a united front to prevent an effort to re-grant the bases?

JMS: Yes, of course. We have a broad range of patriots. They include the bourgeois nationalists in the upper layers of Philippines society. That fact accounts for various provisions in the constitution of the reactionary government which are patriotic, one of which is a provision against foreign military bases and foreign troops in the Philippines.

Some rascals now in the Philippines are trying to push a constituent assembly to be formed by joining the upper and lower houses of congress to make amendments to the Philippine constitution. The avowed purpose of the rascals is to shift the form of government from presidential to parliamentary. But in fact the reason is to take out provisions in the bill of rights upholding the Miranda doctrine, which is taken from US jurisprudence. The Miranda doctrine is a product of the antifascist struggle against the Marcos regime. And there are also provisions that limit the ability of the president to declare martial law.

Now these libertarian principles and basic democratic rights are going to be done away with. In the malevolent spirit of the US PATRIOT Act, to this day the reactionaries are still trying to push an antiterrorism law. This has always been blocked from year to year since the downfall of Marcos. There are other elements of constitutional provisions that the most rabid pro-US reactionaries want removed such as the the national restrictions on businesses around exploitation of natural resources and the principles of economic sovereignty and the protection of the national patrimony.

All these things will be under attack if the rascals succeed in getting a constituent assembly. So this must make the 2004 elections extremely important.

JMS: So even before the constituent assembly arises, a broad united front has to be made, and in making a spectrum, you have the progressives led by the working-class party. Then we can turn to the middle, the bourgeois nationalists, the most consistent ones among them. On the right you have some big compradors, strong in the media, and they don't like foreign corporations to come in and take over. There are also those in public utilities—while they themselves are rascals, they can be in a united front against the bigger rascals. (laughter)

Inside the country we have used the broad united front to bring down presidents or ruling cliques. Against Marcos, you had the forces led by the Communist Party, then you have the forces of the petit bourgeoisie and middle bourgeoisie, then you have a split among the reactionaries. Aquino and Marcos belonged to the same rightist side. There's a split between those in power and those out of power, so you can have an alliance with those opposed to Marcos because they have their own ambitions. Then among the forces of the right would be the Catholic Church, the high clergy siding with the movement for the overthrow of Marcos.

We brought the same broad united front tactics against Estrada. The main line was to be opposed to corruption, it wasn't impressive, but the main thing about the Estrada was that he was corrupt. In the case of Marcos, he was repressive.

We are seeing the Bush administration putting basically outrageous demands and public pressure on various Third-World governments without any respect for their independence or, even with compradors, to give them a little face to deal with it. Is there any backlash against the US government from within the Macapagal administration?

JMS: Yes, there is some. The vice president, Teofisto Guingona, did not agree with Ms. Macapagal Arroyo about the US's strengthening its so-called "military access rights." He has not agreed with what they call the Mutual Logistics Support Agreement, which would allow the US further to get all the facilities it wants for its interventionist troops.

The title suggests an equality I can't really see. The Philippines is not going to be able to say, "We are going to station our troops in Fort Benning, Georgia to prevent an attack."

That's the way the US has always fooled the Filipinos. For instance, when the US wanted to retain control over the natural resources of the Philippines and wanted to introduce an amendment in the Philippine constitution, it called for "parity rights." The amendment was called the Parity Amendment. In other words, the US acquires extraterritorial rights over the Filipino people and calls it equality, parity. They would actually say something as silly as, "Well if the Filipinos would also like to invest in the US, they can do so." The US is good at linguistic engineering. They said after more than 300 years of Spanish Christianizing in the Philippines, the US came to "Christianize" the Philippines. They called the conquest "benevolent assimilation."

In its wish to overcome the Vietnam Syndrome, the US could beat itself again.

I want to turn to your personal case. You've been characterized first by the US, and then by the European Union and the Dutch government under extreme pressure from the US, as a "terrorist." Are you a terrorist?

JMS: No.

That was easy. (laughter) Okay, they're calling you a terrorist. Sticks and stones can break my bones, but in this case, what is the damage done by legally calling you this, and what risk are you at?

JMS: Actually, the US, and the other governments following the baton of the US, are being illegal when they accuse me of terrorism and immediately impose punitive measures on me. So I get the punishment without any kind of trial, all in violation of my right to due process. So they're doing something illegal.

Anyway, "terrorism" is a term that applies more to the US and the puppet governments and the nongovernmental trainees of the US in terrorism like Abu Sayyaf and probably al Qaeda. I don't know much about al Qaeda but I know much about Abu Sayyaf, which is a CIA creation.

So I'm put on a list. Some people might think it's just like being put on a list of suspects, but in fact after you get listed by the US State Department and by the US Treasury Department, just as I have been listed, you get the punishment. So in official documents I'm as good as convicted. I'm defamed, I'm demonized. The public is incited to hatred against the demon. My bank account is frozen, even social service payments are withdrawn.

My lawyers and I are standing up to fight against this criminality of the governments, the Dutch and the European Council, following the dictates of the US. With basic necessities of life taken away from me and due process ignored, I assert that my rights under the European Convention are violated.

The charge of terrorism against you is basically that the New People's Army assassinated a CIA operative who was running agents inside the NPA, a legitimate combat force—agents who were responsible for killing any number of Filipino revolutionaries, patriots and so on. How do you respond to the

specifics of your charge of terrorism?

JMS: As a political term, "terrorism" has been used so often against me before. But as a legal term, the charge of terrorism is not going through any legal process except the listing. In these arbitrary times of the so-called war on terrorism, that's how you get the punishment.

But "terrorism" has been loosely used the way the British used it in the fight against the Malayan Communist Party. They called them "communist terrorists." The military of the Philippines also use that term. But that's a term for psychological warfare and for the newspapers. What is paradoxical is it took us a long time to remove "communism" as a witch-hunt term. Now it has been replaced by "terrorism." In the case of the use of the term "communism," there was at least a lawcalled the anti-subversion law.

When I applied for political asylum here in the Netherlands, the term "terrorism" was already being used, although it was not yet a term defined in Philippine law. In recent times, when I was put on the terrorist list of the US and then the other governments in connection with UN Security Council Resolution 1373, related to Osama bin Laden and al Qaeda, there was not a single criminal case of any kind against me in the Philippines, in the US, in Europe, or anywhere else in the world.

In 1992, a subversion charge against me was automatically dismissed. In 1994, the false charge of being responsible for masterminding the Plaza Miranda bombing was declared as based on pure speculation by the prosecutors of the city of Manila. By 1998 the department of Justice of the Philippine government made a certification that there was no pending criminal charge against me.

Only in this year is there a belated attempt to charge me with a criminal offense in the Philippines for the killing of Colonel Rodolfo Aguinaldo, the notorious human rights violator since the time of Marcos. He became a governor and then a Congressman, but he was frequently active in combat operations against the New People's Army. Now this charge is still being investigated at the level of the prosecutors. So up until now there is no case filed against me before any court.

The US by propaganda keeps on accusing me of inciting the violence of the New People's Army against US civilians and military personnel, and they added a new phrase lately, "including diplomatic personnel," because they would like to make Colonel "Nick" Rowe as a diplomat because he was killed in the Philippines in 1989, and he was then head of the Joint US Military Advisory Group. It's no good for the US to invent anything about Colonel Rowe because that case was already fully claimed under Philippine jurisdiction, fully investigated, and disposed of. It's only for propaganda that the US keeps on in the press.

An international mass movement in support of you is developing. Do you have any advice or suggestions to the people around the world who are trying to defend you and keep your right to stay in protected exile in Europe, as opposed to being harassed and deported?

JMS: Yes, certainly the mass movement must grow even stronger. If there is a slackening in the mass movement to support me, then the US and other governments will find themselves more at liberty to take actions against me. The worst danger legally would be a request for extradition under the US-Dutch extradition treaty. Of course, outside of legal processes the worst would be a "wet operation" by the CIA, especially after all the leeway Bush has given to the covert operatives of the CIA to take action against those considered as enemies of US national security.

In the mass movement, the level of information must continually be raised. That means updating and pointing to the ever-changing tactics of the US and other governments to put the squeeze on me. There are many ways for people to show their support and solidarity. They can write letters, articles. They can hold rallies, or pickets at the least. They can collect signatures—we have already reached 35,000; the next target is 50,000 signatures.

They can also raise money for the legal defense fund. If I neglect the legal cases, then I'm wide open for political attack. So there is an interactive relationship between the legal cases and the mass movement.

Our Beloved Engineer

Amilcar Cabral, the PAIGC and Class Suicide

BY DOUG WORDELL

Amilcar Cabral, (affectionately know as "the Engineer" among his people) was the leader of the independence struggle in Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde, and the General Secretary of the Partido Africano da Independencia da Guiné e Cabo Verde (PAIGC). One of the most significant political thinkers of the 20th century, he contributed to a trend of revolutionary theory (later dubbed Third World Marxism) that stemmed from the wave of national liberation movements following World War II. This piece will briefly introduce Cabral, and one of his many contributions to revolutionary thought—his theory of *class suicide*.

Who was Cabral and where is Guinea-Bissau?

Guinea-Bissau, a small country on the western coast of Africa (between Guinea and Senegal), and Cape Verde, a series of islands just off the coast, share a sense of national identity. Like Angola, Mozambique and Cabinda, they were colonized by the Portuguese. The conditions of Portuguese colonialism in Guinea-Bissau created intense suffering. More than ninety-nine percent of the indigenous people were illiterate. There were only 11 doctors in the entire country (one for every 45,000 people) and over sixty percent of children died before reaching their first birthday.

Amilcar Cabral was born in Guinea-Bissau in 1924 and assassinated in 1973 by reactionary elements in the PAIGC who were assisted by Portuguese agents and the CIA. Educated in Lisbon as an agricultural engineer, Cabral used his professional work to develop a phenomenal understanding of the conditions in G-B - the tribal differences, the terrain, what was grown where and which sectors of the people were most ready to resist Portuguese colonial rule. Between 1952 and 1954, Cabral visited every corner of the country conducting an agricultural census. This careful assessment of the material conditions laid the groundwork for the Party's patient, clandestine work of setting up the infrastructure for the anti-colonial struggle as well as the parallel struggle to construct a from-the-ground-up socialist Guinea-Bissau.

The PAIGC Model for Party Building and Socialist Struggle

In 1956 Cabral and five trusted comrades founded the PAIGC. By the time of Cabral's death in 1973, the party had secured three quarters of the territory of Guinea-Bissau and was around the corner from a total victory against Portuguese rule. There are a number of valuable lessons the PAIGC has to share with us.

In the spirit of self-determination, Cabral and the PAIGC consciously chose to non-align with either China or the USSR, keeping the Party clear of the some of the uglier aspects of the Sino-Soviet split. Cabral wrote, "Non-alignment for us means not aligning ourselves with blocs, not aligning ourselves with the decisions of others. We reserve the right to make with our own decisions, and if by chance our choices and decisions coincide with those of those of others, that is not our fault."

Cabral saw the movement in G-B as dialectically linked with the movement for democracy against the fascist Salazar regime in Portugal. He believed that successful struggles by oppressed nations against imperialism were a condition for the advancement of working class politics within the imperialist countries themselves.

One conclusion Cabral had reached from his assessment of conditions in Guinea-Bissau is that the country lacked an established indigenous bourgeoisie. This radically changed what striving for national liberation would mean. The party had only limited lessons to draw from the Communist and Marxist-Leninist parties of Europe or even from most other parties in the Third World. There were no ready-made formulas to apply. The only forces that could initiate a struggle to abolish colonial rule in Guinea-Bissau were the petty-bourgeoisie and some relatively privileged wage earners in the cities. The PAIGC would have to start the struggle with them. But in order to win, it would need to undertake the slow patient work of constructing socialism from the rural areas.

The PAIGC systematically created the forces to make breakthroughs in organizing the rural people by establishing a cadre training school in neighboring Conakry, Guinea. Those cadre then went on to set up party schools, clinics, and basic serve the people programs in rural Guinea-Bissau.

Cabral's conception of the PAIGC was one based on cadre; every member of the party had to get their hands dirty in struggle. Collective leadership was practiced both within the party as well as with the masses. The party practiced criticism - self-criticism to develop itself as "an instrument for the construction of freedom, peace, progress and happiness for our people." For Cabral the re-construction of Guinea-Bissau from the ground up was the essential factor in gauging the success of their movement.

For Cabral the re-construction of Guinea-Bissau from the ground up was the essential factor in gauging the success of their movement.

The PAIGC not only built up the means for an effective struggle in G-B but also built up a critique of the neo-colonial dynamics that were beginning to typify the de-colonization movement in Africa. For Cabral the struggle against opportunistic leadership was essential if the PAIGC was not going to fall into the same failures as other national liberation movements. Vital to this commitment was his theory of Class Suicide.

Class Suicide

In Guinea-Bissau, the Portuguese had no material interest in investing in the education of the masses. Instead they developed a very slim layer of the population to help administer the expropriation of resources. The mal-developed social structure of Guinea-Bissau ultimately meant that the petty bourgeoisie was endowed with a unique position. They could have a huge influence on the direction of history because they were not one of many classes like in the advanced West. Rather they were the only class with the means to initiate and lead the struggle for national liberation and establish a theoretical basis for socialism.

This raised a danger that this class might construct itself as the new ruling class after overthrowing direct colonial rule. Cabral wanted the party to be able to hinder such tendencies, rather than unconsciously lay the groundwork for future positions of privilege in the party or the post-revolutionary state. People from the petty bourgeois layers had a choice: either they could ally themselves with imperialism in a new form and continue as a privileged but morally bankrupt class; or they could ally themselves with the workers and peasants to make a profound, thorough and socialist revolution.

Therefore Cabral put forth a principle within the party that the cadre from petty bourgeois backgrounds should work to commit "class suicide." In other words, they should work to give up their privileges, to share their specialized knowledge, and to transfer their leadership to the peasants and workers coming forward from the mass struggle. For Cabral, it was essential that the cadre from petty bourgeois origins dedicate themselves to this goal even before the ousting of the colonial power. They would need to be closely observed during the struggle and they must live their lives in front of the people. A commitment to "tell no lies, claim no easy victories" was an essential part of this practice and ethos. At the same time and as part of the same process, the Party had to develop the capacity of the huge masses of peasants and workers to govern themselves, create institutions and takeover leadership.

What this means for today

Although Cabral was always hesitant to portray his ideas having great significance for other liberation movements, he developed several concepts and probematics that are relevant to us in the drastically different conditions of the US.

Cabral makes us look at what truly revolutionary thought is: the ability to accurately assess the conditions and then make a plan to move forward.

His second contribution relates the role that the middle-strata can play in the development of social struggle. It is essential that progressive and revolutionary forces fight for the middle strata to commit themselves to the struggles of the working class and oppressed nationalities. From the activist scholar W.E.B. DuBois to many members of SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee) in the Black Liberation movement to SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) in the student movement of the 1960s—these people overwhelmingly came from the middle strata of society. The resources, skills and contributions the middle strata can bring are essential for a successful movement.

The third contribution is his emphasis on the necessity to engage in patient base-building among the people before engaging in all-out struggle.

Cabral also impels us to recognize the centrality of struggles in the Third World not—just in relation to their own peoples but also in advancing working class politics internationally.

From six comrades in 1956, PAIGC grew into a force that dealt crippling blows to Portuguese colonialism.

Anti-War Music Wants To Be Free

By Scott MX Turner

All over the world, for all time, music's been used to get the word out. Until electricity, it was troubadours, ramblers and rovers with lutes, drums, voices and the snottiness to bring people the news of the day against the authorities' wishes.

As technology's lumbered forward, so have the ways we get our news, politics and inspiration from songs. From Edison wax cylinders to the digital revolution, the modes have changed, but the song remains the same.

At least the song called "Rally The Masses With A Three-Minute Broadside!"

The really good songs help us deal and give us strength. That is, if we get a chance to actually hear them. Distribution is the key here: the best rally-the-troops songs are nothing if the troops don't get the message.

In the past, protest music relied on a complex web of live performances, rallies, record company releases, fanzine promotion, the press and songs passed from singer to singer, campaign to campaign, city to city. The size of the audience depended on record company proclivities, the media's whims, cultural activists' get-up-and-go, and political activists' willingness to make use of the songs given them.

And now, behold, The Internet. It's cutting out the middlepeople and passing the protest on to *you*!

...somewhat.

The current Not-Specifically-Concluded Second Iraq War has seen a torrent of anti-war songs e-released. Everyone from major-label acts doing end-runs around their record companies to unknown singers without distribution deals made their songs freely available to the world. To everyone with a computer, mp3-capturing software, a brisk internet connection, and a hard-drive roomy enough to store audio files, anyway.

Hence, an insanely great opportunity for the movement (which we imaginatively call "The Movement") to make spectacular use of cultural activisim.

The far right grasped the benefits of the internet well before the left — maybe it was all those survivalists who cut their teeth in the same military that developed the internet itself decades ago.

But now the left has caught up. And one of the new weapons is instantly available protest songs. And there were *zillions* of them tailored for the Not-Specifically-Concluded Second Iraq War.

The Internet is cutting out the middlepeople and passing the protest on to *you*!

...somewhat.

Protest Music in the Digital Era

The digital revolution, as it's called, enabled acts to spring their anti-war warbles in no time flat. In fact, digital technology has jumped ahead of the studio-to-stores process. Easily mixed recordings can be burned on personal computers, sold at that night's show and posted on the internet... just like that.

But what if you're a big-name band on a corporate label? Tell off the bean counters and release your anti-war screed on the web. Use your own site or one set up specifically to host political and anti-war songs, like Thurston Moore's terrific Protest Music.com (www.protest-music.com). Moore's site also offers groovy stencil artwork to download and spraypaint on the sidewalk in front of your friendly neighborhood US government offices.

Protest-Music.com invites anyone with, well, protest music to post songs on the site. You don't have to be a known entity like Sonic Youth, Eugene Chadbourne or the Beastie Boys (whose "In A World Gone Mad" can be downloaded from Protest-Music.com or their own site, www.beastieboys.com). The best thing about Protest-Music.com is that passionate cultural activists from the hinterlands have their place alongside the big shots.

Sure, it's a good start. But lots of cultural activists are urging not just digital distribution through the internet, but also physical distribution via CDs that can be sold, given away, used as fundraisers, foisted on radio stations (at least those not trapped in Clear Channel's mega-tentacles), and played at rallies and rad socials.

In the autumn of '02, Billy Bragg tossed home-burned CDs to crowds at his shows. They contained a single mp3 of his just recorded anti-war song, "The Price Of Oil." It would be released in a few months, Bragg told his fans, on the *Peace Not War* album. But he couldn't wait, he said. The song had to get out NOW!

"If you grab one of these," he implored as he flipped the jewel-cased CDs into the crowd, "don't just keep it. *Burn it* and get it up on the web. Make sure as many people can download it and get it around. If you don't have the ability, pass it over to someone here tonight who does." Sure enough, days after his New York appearance, "The Price Of Oil" was available from fan

sites, radical bulletin boards, and on discussion lists dealing with a wide range of topics.

Increasing the Audience

The last element of this burgeoning blueprint is to expand the audience for these songs. Distribution and P.R. are as important on the internet as in the Old Way of stores filled with albums delivered on trucks and bought by people actually flipping through the bins.

The mp3.com site (stations.mp3s.com/stations/372/antiwar_2003.html) contains 120 anti-war songs, all from artists we've never heard of. The platform is there, but the energy, knowhow and desire to access these songs and make them part of the movement need to be kicked up several notches.

The current Not-Specifically-Concluded Second Iraq War has seen a torrent of anti-war songs e-released.

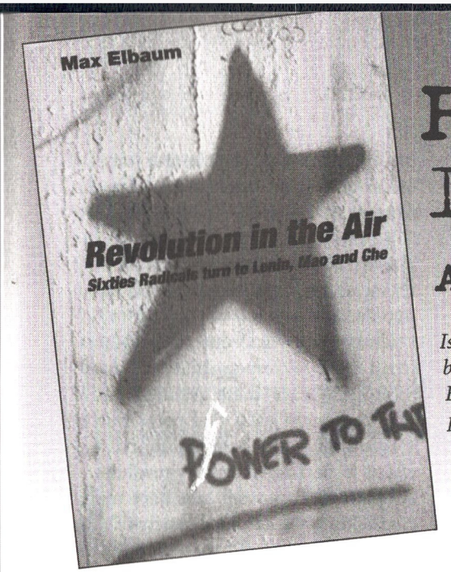
Eventually computers will be almost as ubiquitous as TVs are today. Maybe the next time there's an explosion of progressive songs whose sole mission is to fight the power, enough households will have the means to download them so as to reach a critical mass and give the power structure something more to fear.

We know instantly available protest music is there to inspire the converted as well as convert the inspired. We just have to figure out how to get it to folks who're overwhelmed by the boundless choices of the endless info superhighway... and those who pay the digital revolution no mind at all.

Some particularly good sites and songs to check out

- Various, including Sonic Youth, Eugene Chadbourne, Mike Watt, DJ Spooky, Ed Sanders, Allen Ginsberg(!) http://www.protest-records.com/mp3/index.html
- Various, mp3.com http://stations.mp3s.com/stations/372/antiwar_2003.html
- Various, lacarte.org, with acts known and unknown from across the board http://www.lacarte.org/songs/anti-war/updates.html
- R.E.M., "The Final Straw" http://www.remhq.com/finalStraw/finalstraw.html
- Paris, "What Would You Do?" http://www.guerrillafunk.com/paris/sonic_jihad/
- George Michael, "The Grave" http://www.georgemichael.com
- Michael Franti, "U Can't Bomb The World To Peace" http://www.daveyd.com/antiwarfrantibombtheworld.mp3
- Yusuf Islam (formerly known as Cat Stevens), "Peace Train" http://www.yusufislam.org.uk/audio/peacetrain.shtml
- Chris Brown and Kate Fenner, "Resist War" http://resistwar.com/
- Chuck D. & Fine Arts Militia, "Twisted Sense Of God" http://www.daveyd.com/antiwarPEFAMgodpt1.mp3
- Billy Bragg, "The Price of Oil" http://www.billybragg.co.uk/releases/
- Beastie Boys "In A World Gone Mad" http://www.beastieboys.com
- Chumbawamba, "Jacob's Ladder" http://www.chumba.com/
- Zach de la Rocha with DJ Shadow, "March of Death" http://www.marchofdeath.com/
- John Mellencamp, "To Washington" http://www.mellencamp.com/news.htm
- DJ Hype, featuring Akrobatik & Zion, "We're At War" http://www.djhype.de/1973/war.mp3

...and, the best place to find downloadable anti-war mp3s: *your favorite search engine!* Now git goin'...



REVOLUTION IN THE AIR

AN EXCHANGE WITH MAX ELBAUM

Issue #3 of Freedom Road *contained a special section devoted to the groundbreaking recent book* Revolution in the Air: Sixties Radicals Turn to Lenin, Mao and Che *by Max Elbaum. This book is the first major examination of the New Communist Movement, the political tradition from which the Freedom Road Socialist Organization descends. The following exchange with Max Elbaum is in response to the articles in that special section.*

People interested in finding out more can visit the website revolutionintheair.com.

What Maoism Actually Stood For

BY MAX ELBAUM

I appreciate Freedom Road's serious treatment of *Revolution in the Air*. Due to space limitations, I will focus my comments on my differences with Khalil Hassan on the role of Maoism.

I must first point out that Hassan misrepresents central points in my book. He writes that *Revolution in the Air* considers Maoism "the principal problem of the revolutionary left" and he says that the book "avoids some deeper questions about problems within the Marxist-Leninist paradigm." Wrong on both counts.

My book argues that the principal problem with the New Communist Movement was a combination of ultra-leftism, voluntarism and a dogmatic "quest for orthodoxy" which, in different forms, afflicted all sectors of the revolutionary left. And on the level of doctrine I wrote: "There was an even more fundamental problem. Advocates of all these perspectives accepted the notion that there was one and only one revolutionary tradition — and that there existed a single, genuine Marxism-Leninism which embodied its accumulated wisdom." The book goes on to criticize many concrete aspects of the classical Leninist paradigm — in particular the single-party vanguard model — and in a related vein offers a stinging indictment of Stalinism.

It is especially unfortunate that Hassan gets this point incorrect since he and I have drawn remarkably similar conclusions about what should and should not be carried forward from the classic Third International Leninist tradition.

Where we do differ is that my book argues that Maoism did tremendous damage in reinforcing and exacerbating the New Communist Movement's negative side, while Hassan believes Maoism, while limited, pushed the movement in positive directions.

The problem with Hassan's argument is that it is based on a set of academic notions about what he would like Maoism to have stood for instead of what that trend actually did and said between the 1960s and the 1980s. Hassan says Maoism is to be credited with confronting an underlying "crisis of socialism" and for being at bottom a left-wing critique of Stalinism. Those would have been good things, but they have nothing whatsoever to do with Maoism's actual role.

After Khrushchev made his criticism of Stalin and at least half-heartedly opened the door for a re-examination of the Stalin era, it was the Chinese Communist Party and Maoism that stepped forward to become the biggest *defenders* of Stalin in the world communist movement. Maoism was the main proponent of the proposition that any alleged "crisis of socialism" began with Khrushchev's "betrayal" and had nothing whatsoever to do with the basic structures of the one-party state or "command" economy that Stalin had put in place.

Hassan is likewise off base when he discusses the Maoist thesis that the Soviet Union had been socialist under Stalin and after his death restored capitalism mainly as if this was the basis for a probing theoretical debate. He distances himself from this thesis, saying it is must be taken as only "descriptive," while completely evading the fact that this thesis was the central justification for both Chinese foreign policy of aligning with the anyone — including U.S. imperialism — who opposed the USSR, and for the disastrous ideological crusades of the Cultural Revolution which alienated three generations in China from ideas of class struggle.

Further, it was the CCP and its followers who argued that embrace of the "capitalist restoration thesis" was an essential line of demarcation between genuine revolutionaries and opportunists. Hassan today ridicules the

notion that the Soviet Union could ever have been socialist, since Western-style capitalism has been put in place there "without a civil war." What does he have to say about the fact that every single Maoist group argued that precisely this had taken place in the USSR after Stalin's death? Even PUL, arguably the most flexible U.S. Maoist group and a major predecessor of Freedom Road, insisted in its signature book *2, 3, Many Parties of a New Type?* that:

> The third position, shared by the CPC, the PLA [Albania], and a number of other Marxist-Leninist Parties, believes that the rise to power of revisionism means the rise to power of the bourgeoisie…. The restoration of capitalism in a country as powerful and centralized politically and economically as the Soviet Union means the emergence of imperialism or social-imperialism… the question of the USSR stands at the center of the world stage…Communist unification will require basic agreement around this analysis. (p. 218)

Given this framework, it's not the Chinese party's support for Pinochet or denunciation of Cuba which "almost defies explanation" as Hassan argues. Rather, it's why Hassan thinks there is anything whatsoever mysterious about either these stances or Maoism's alliance with apartheid South Africa against the MPLA in Angola or its backing for the genocidal Pol Pot regime in Kampuchea.

Maoism's stance undermined national liberation struggles that had been waged for decades across the global south, and was of tremendous value to U.S. administrations from Nixon to Reagan. That's why the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (among other liberation movements on the frontlines) concluded in 1981 that the "Chinese leadership's position in the international class conflict is one of retrogression and cooperation with imperialism."

Those who come out of the Maoist trend have a responsibility to more forthrightly face these realities. There may be certain ideas that come out of Maoism which can be useful for current efforts to find a 21st century revolutionary path. But they will not have much credibility with the vast majority of radicals who experienced the 1960s–1980s, or with those from a new generation who have studied those years, if those who advance them are unwilling to engage with the actual role Maoism played in the international class struggle.

Khalil Hassan responds

Max Elbaum: It's the Maoism, stupid.

Khalil Hassan and the Editors: Oh, puhleeze...

I appreciate the comradely spirit of Max's response. The following are a few quick thoughts.

Let's start that Max is correct that the stand that people like me took during the '70s and early '80s that the so-called "capitalist restoration thesis" had to be a bottom line for unity, was incorrect. While I believe that a new class society — probably state capitalism — emerged in the USSR, the manner in which this debate was used to divide the Left was overwhelmingly unproductive, if not outright destructive. Max is right to point this out.

Having said that, I believe that Max and I, while agreeing on so much, simply have a significant difference of opinion on a few things. Max points out that Maoism was a strident defender of Stalin. He raises this in opposition to my position that Maoism was an attempt to address the crisis of socialism, and represented a critique of Stalinian Marxism from the Left (and within a Marxist-Leninist paradigm). The problem is that Max is not looking at the whole picture.

The Chinese Party did uphold Stalin in opposition to Khrushchev but when one looks deeper at Maoism — leaving aside the various tendencies within it — one sees a critique of the Soviet experience under Stalin. This included the question of the Comintern, industrialization (and the peasant question), the theory of dialectics, the notion of class struggle under socialism. In fact, the Party of Labor of Albania, when it broke with the Chinese in the 1970s, attacked the Chinese for being insufficiently Stalinist and alleged that the party had never really upheld Stalin. I think that Max is overstating the case and missing some key ingredients in Maoism.

In order to avoid going into a lengthy exchange, let me suggest that Max uses slanders against China (e.g., an alleged alliance with apartheid South Africa — not even the US suggests this) in order to bolster his position that the Chinese undermined national liberation movements. The problem, and I tried raising this in my original piece, is that comrade Max is interestingly silent on the role of the Soviet Union in numerous national liberation struggles, e.g., Algeria where the USSR was, at best, *very* late to the table.

He also ignores a very important question: was the USSR an actual threat to China? Based on various revelations — as mentioned in my original text — that there were at least two Soviet initiated discussions about a nuclear bombardment of China, this might help one understand some of the peculiarities in Chinese foreign policy.

The main point, however, is that one can learn from both the Soviet and Chinese experience that foreign policy, regardless of the rhetoric, is driven by various factors. For those of us on the Left in the USA to be advancing our strategies and programs based mainly or solely on the political line of a party in power in another country is, at best, risky. No successful Left movement has ever built its line around the foreign policy of another country. Unfortunately, many of us — and certainly including those of us who came through the Maoist experience — recognized this a bit too late.

In Struggle,
Khalil Hassan

The Editors respond to Max

In critiquing Maoism, Max, as does the political tradition that he comes out of, places his main emphasis on one aspect of China's foreign policy in the Mao era — its relations with unsavory governments. With this one-sided approach Max repeats the same error that Khalil previously identified — attempting to explain away Maoism by narrowly equating it with these external governmental relations. While we agree with Max that there were real problems with many aspects of China's foreign policy (and Khalil points to at least some of the causative factors involved there), we believe that this approach is reductionistic.

The Maoist political tradition — which the majority of people in Freedom Road, as well as the majority of the New Communist Movement that Max wrote about in his book, identify with — has a fundamentally different approach toward analyzing the character of "socialist" countries. Our critique of the Soviet Union is a fundamentally *internal* one. We believe it is necessary to examine the *class relationships* within a country: Are the people from the working class and other formerly oppressed groups in their millions actually learning to exercise political power within a country, leading the struggle to eliminate the vestiges of the old society, and fighting to prevent the development of a new exploitative order? Or is a layer of self-reproducing elites merely ruling *in the name of* the working class and oppressed masses, who are mobilized merely for economic production? In the view of Maoism, the latter was the basic character of the Soviet Union, and we think the ease of the transformation of the "Communist" rulers into the new capitalist rulers after 1991 proves it.

Given this emphasis on China's foreign policy, it is ironic that Max skips right over that of the USSR. Whereas China may have had ties with regressive regimes, it had a fundamentally defensive military policy. Its army was organized mainly around defending the national territory, and it had no blue-water navy. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, economically and militarily dominated the countries in its bloc and insisted on total political subservience. We mustn't forget examples like the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 to crush the Prague Spring uprising, or when the Soviets gave the Polish government a choice: declare martial law or face an invasion to crush Solidarity. The USSR also treated parties under its political leadership in countries outside the Soviet Bloc as mere tools of its foreign policy. One such country, which has been in the news the last couple years in part because of the legacy of this social-imperialist policy, is Afghanistan. China had no such mechanisms to create and maintain an international bloc under its domination.

We hail the milestone importance of Max's book and share with him at a deep level the desire for a *Newer* Communist Movement based much more on a spirit of unity. At the same time, we value constructive struggle over how to sum up the history of the Twentieth Century's socialist experiments. We continue to believe that a dialectical materialist class analysis has to be applied to these countries if we are to learn the lessons we need to do things better the next time.

We're Not Going Back Continued

I think the challenge is that Prison-Industrial Complex is an elite term and we have to figure out how to make that term — and also the connections between militarism abroad and increased policing, prisons and surveillance at home — real to people. The anti-war movement is very middle class and white here in New Orleans and I'm sure plenty of other places too, even though both war and the domestic PIC primarily affect people of color.

What riles me up — and Michael Moore's film *Bowling for Columbine* pointed it out — is that it is the same group of people who stand to gain from locking people up who benefit from going to war. The weapons manufacturers, politicians, police, companies that get contracts to build prisons, build walls at our borders and rebuild Iraq — they are all part of the same complex of interests. The manufacturers of the culture of violence, retribution and punishment both abroad and at home are the ones that benefit from their so-called "solutions" to violence and crime — more prisons, more police, more borders, more surveillance, more war.

Dan: We can fight to stop a prison here, fight to stop one there, but that's not going to stop the PIC. Same with the anti-war work, if we fight one invasion, then another, that doesn't stop imperialism. It needs to be strategic, and needs to make connections. Any kind of anti-war work needs to be rooted in fighting for economic and social justice for it to succeed.

Max Elbaum's *Revolution In the Air*: An Exchange