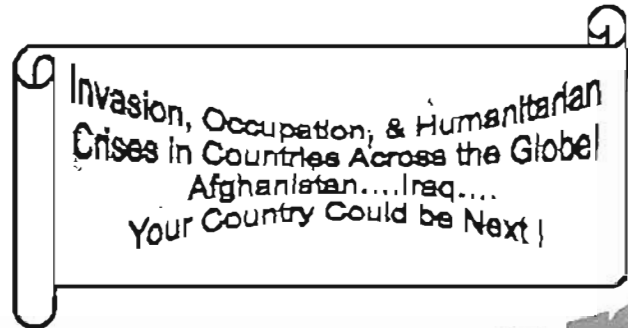


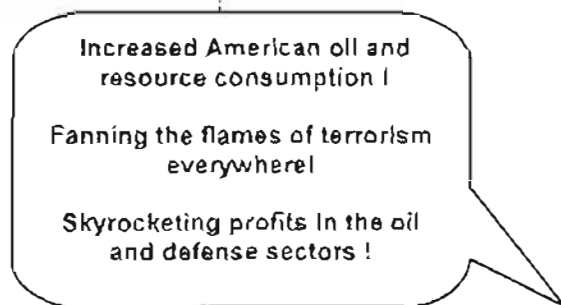
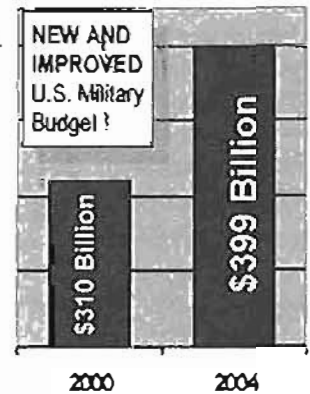
THE Round Table

Summer
2003

"...a path from where we are, to where we should be." --Peter Maurin



The New American EMPIRE



Why This Issue?

This issue has been long in coming, and has been framed by personal and political tragedy. The political tragedy is the United States' war on Iraq. We began to plan the issue before the war started, continued and adjusted our planning during the war, and *recontinued* (is that a word?) and *readjusted* after the major hostilities were over. The war itself, of course, is far from over.

The personal tragedy was the death by suicide of our dear friend Mark Scheu on May 3 of this year. Mark was a community member at Karen House from about 1984 to 1994 or so. During that time and beyond he was a member of the *Round Table* editorial board. Indeed, many an issue in the 1980's was conceived and largely planned in Mark and Pat Coy's shared apartment, no doubt over a few high quality brews, and maybe sandwiched in between a cribbage game played on the back porch. We relied on Mark's careful and insightful analyses of political events, as well as his wit, in our discussions and in his frequent contributions to the *Round Table*. Even after resigning from the board he continued to update and print out our mailing list up to the day of his death. Although every one of us who knew and loved Mark is still reeling from shock and grief, we believe that his personal war is finally over.

We offer you our reflections, both political and personal, on these events. It is crucial, we believe, for everyone, but especially those of us in the peace movement, to recognize and name that we are in the age of the new American empire. Teka Childress and Jenny Truax reveal the policy of the right wing think tank, the Project for a New American Century, which is now U.S. foreign policy. The war against Afghanistan, and against Iraq, the threatened wars against (fill in the blank - North Korea? Syria? Iran?) are but pieces of a larger puzzle in the blanket war on terrorism which provides the cover for the unbridled pursuit of U.S. dominance in the world. As Carolyn Griffith points out in her article, in which she deconstructs the lies behind the weapons of mass destruction, the two world powers now seem to be the United States and those (few) countries supporting its agenda, and the global peace movement which opposed the U.S. war in large numbers.

Jack Renard invites us Christians to look at the log of scandalous behavior in our own eyes before we pick out the speck in the eyes of our Muslim brothers and sisters in faith. I offer an analysis of the causes of terrorism in an effort to understand the motivations of those who pit themselves so wholeheartedly against the U.S. Angie O'Gorman, Anne Treeger, and Andrew Wimmer offer more personal reflections on the experience of the new American empire. Following the belief that the personal is political, Andrew enjoins us to cultivate our gardens, since world peace is in part an expression of personal peace.

We conclude with our regular features. Annjie Schiefelbein wraps up our issue with her thoughts on the experience of community through our above-mentioned tragedies and also our celebrations, that of the wedding of Teka Childress and Mike Baldwin on May 17. As she so aptly points out, "Both Mark's death and Teka's wedding require of us to come closer and let go of anything but love."



— Ellen Rehg

Front cover and centerfold by Jenny Truax

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American Empire Exposed

by Teka Childress and Jenny Truax

The Bush Administration has moved forward with its agenda for a "New American Century" with amazing rapidity. Since the tragedies of September 11, the U.S. has engaged in two wars, with Administration officials making threats of more. Is this really the new century that the American people want? Understanding the roots of the Administration's foreign policy agenda, and unmasking its real intentions, is imperative. If the peace movement wants to effectively counter propaganda used to justify each individual war (such as weapons of mass destruction in Iraq), it must address the Administration's global agenda and offer a viable alternative. Otherwise, the peace movement is left to react to the latest supposed threat, real or manufactured.

The doctrine under-girding the United States' current foreign policy agenda was first articulated in 1992 at the end of the first Bush Administration. It was developed further, mostly outside of official government policy during the Clinton Administration, and has now become realized during George W. Bush's Administration. The core ideas of this doctrine involve preventing the rise of potential opponents to the United States, "shaping" world events, and expanding the United States' influence militarily. We should take note of Pentagon official Richard Perle's words in April 2003, concerning the Middle East: "There is tremendous potential to transform the region. If a tyrant like Saddam can be brought down, others are going to begin to think... and act to bring down the tyrants that are afflicting them."

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney gathered his staff to begin developing a foreign policy doctrine that would reflect and address the new global division

of power. Paul Wolfowitz, then Under Secretary of Defense, drafted the Defense Policy Guidance (DPG) which laid out a framework for the expansion of U.S. power globally. The document was skeptical of the United Nations, advocating for unilateral action when "collective action cannot be orchestrated." The report emphasized the need for "detering potential competitors from even aspiring to a larger regional or global role," and stressed the importance of "preemptive military intervention."

The ideas behind this report continued to develop during the Clinton Administration, especially in political groups such as the Jewish Institute for National Security (JINSA) and the American Enterprise Institute (AEI.) Members of these two groups include current officials such as Richard Perle (Pentagon Under-Secretary of Defense), Paul Wolfowitz (Deputy Defense Secretary), Dick Cheney (Vice President), James Woolsey (former CIA Director), and Jay Garner (former "Sheriff of Baghdad.")

The Project for a New American Century (PNAC), another right-wing think tank, was founded in 1997 during the Clinton Administration to counter its "adrift" foreign and defense policies. The PNAC founding statement, signed by each of the above officials along with Donald Rumsfeld, Jeb Bush, Dan Quayle, and Zalmay Khalizad (Bush's special envoy to Afghanistan & Iraq), states: "We seem to have forgotten the essential elements of the Reagan Administration's success: a military that is strong and ready to meet both present and future challenges; a foreign policy that boldly and purposefully promotes

Teka Childress is enjoying being a newlywed; Jenny Truax is Karen House resident expert on *The Matrix Reloaded* and Dar Williams.

American principles abroad; and national leadership that accepts the United States' global responsibilities."

In February of 1998, the PNAC sent a letter to President Clinton calling for an urgent removal of Saddam Hussein and his regime, stating "that now needs to become the aim of American foreign policy." In December, "Desert Fox," a four-day U.S. bombing campaign, was initiated by President Clinton. The next major report issued by the PNAC, "Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategies, Forces and Resources for a New Century," lays out a grand and detailed roadmap of American dominance with the goal of "Pax Americana"—peace and security for American interests domestically and abroad. Six out of twenty-seven of its authors currently hold key defense and policy positions in the Administration. A conspicuous number of the report's recommendations (which are noticeably products of the 1992 DPG ideology), have systematically become official Bush Administration policy. A few examples include:

The PNAC report written a year before 11 September 2001 also predicted that an attack on the United States might expedite the adoption of its recommendations: "The process of transformation... is likely to be a long one, absent some catastrophic event—like a new Pearl Harbor."

The PNAC report recommends that the Pentagon should be "prepared to fight and decisively win multiple, simultaneous, major theatre wars." The Bush Administration has shifted from its campaign promise in 2000 to work towards a more "humble" America, to a very different policy, one of preemptive and all-but-unilateral military strikes.

We should take heed of this last PNAC recommendation as the conflict with North Korea escalates, and pressure on Syria and possibly Iran mount in the coming months. We should be suspicious of rhetoric that targets these "new potential threats" to the U.S. while ignoring human rights abusers in governments that are economically and politically acquiescent to the United States. We should be wary of terms such as "expanding the zone of democracy," "taking responsibility for global leadership," and "defending our interests." After all, what is the interest of the United States? Is it to support Saddam Hussein with weapons of mass destruction (while at war against Iran), only to use this as a later justification for twelve years of the most devastating sanctions in modern history, and then invasion? Or, is it really more in the interest of the United States to become part of an international body of nations seeking ways to promote human rights, justice and peace for all people? This is the alternative vision that the peace movement must profess.

Various think tanks and policy study groups have published commentaries on "what the peace movement should do now." We would like to join that discussion to share a few ideas for a unified peace agenda. These ideas could begin as a pledge that citizens sign, and evolve into policy and legislative recommendations:

1. We call for a moratorium on preemptive military strikes by the United States. We oppose the policy of using preemptive strikes because it is often questionable how real the stated threats are, and whether the threats are to U.S. security or a challenge to economic interests. We also oppose this policy because it is highly questionable whether the threat posed against the U.S. is less than the harm done to civilian populations who suffer under U.S. attack. Further, these attacks threaten our constitution, as they are often unconstitutional and internationally illegal.
2. We call on the United Nations to initiate an international conference to discuss terrorism, its causes and cures, and we call on the United States to participate in this conference. We make this call because the United States has launched a campaign against terrorism, which is a global problem and needs to be solved by the global community.
3. We call on the United States to re-sign, ratify, and fully support the International Criminal Court as a way of resolving its conflicts whenever appropriate.
4. We call on the United States to provide reparations in the form of financial aid and humanitarian assistance to both Afghanistan and Iraq.
5. We call on the United States to continue supporting the Israeli-Palestine peace process as it seeks to achieve two independent states, and to terminate all military aid to Israel.
6. We call on the United States to participate in efforts of global disarmament as a way to truly eliminate weapons of mass destruction, by reducing the military budget, ceasing research into missile defense and 'mini-nukes,' and participating in international arms treaties including the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

This pledge could be adopted by national peace and justice groups, and promoted in local groups in a variety of ways, including house meeting campaigns. We look forward to the future, and refuse to let the current Administration's destructive policies set the agenda for it. Join us.



Hope has two beautiful daughters. Their names are anger and courage: anger at the way things are, and courage to see that they do not remain the way they are.

--Saint Augustine

Rage Awaits Us in the Debris

by Angie O'Gorman

The bombing of Baghdad wakes me in the morning even though I lie in my safe bed. Shock waves jerk me from sleep, unrelenting explosions jolt open my eyes. My head shakes like a rattle towards the coming disorientation. Baghdad is convulsed by American bunker-busting bombs with their nuclear tips and mushroom clouds.

Missiles immobilize radar and command and control centers, yes, but hospitals, too, and the phone system, heat and air in the shelters, plumbing and sewage disposal. 3000 U.S. bombs and missiles, set to hit Baghdad in the first two days of the air war - a little over one a minute for 48 hours - begin to find their targets, or miss.

I lay here remembering Donald Rumsfeld on the Lehrer NewsHour saying "catastrophic success" was his preferred outcome. Preferable to what?

Something insane in this word combination stuns me. I want to find the thought world in which "catastrophic success" becomes a rational way of talking about peace through war.

It is not hard to locate. Numerous articles bragged about our "Shock and Awe" strategy, part of the bigger plan for "Rapid Dominance." It is terror through bombing, calibrated to result in psychological paralysis of the population. Its goal is to traumatize -- both civil society and the military - into inaction. It is modern carpet bombing, today's blitzkrieg.

"The sheer size of this has never been . . . contemplated before," boasts a Pentagon spokesman interviewed by CBS News. "There will not be a safe place in Baghdad." Elsewhere the Pentagon mentions that the initial attack could approximate the devastation of a nuclear explosion.

Baghdad, I recall, is a city of five million people.
This is terrorism.

I thought we were fighting to end terrorism and find we have merely become terrorists ourselves.

"You have this simultaneous effect, rather like the nuclear weapons at Hiroshima . . ." says the strategy's main author, "defense intellectual" Harlan Ullman. But this war is supposedly about ridding Iraq of weapons of mass destruction, not introducing our own. Our talk is about saving. Our actions, about annihilation.

The war debate focused on Iraqi actions to which ours were merely a response. And I wonder if that forgives us responsibility for what we do? We were set to terrorize the enemy population into passivity. That was my government's war strategy. It is too Hussein-esque for me. If we have no alternative to his methods, we have no reason for war.



Angie O'Gorman writes from St. Louis where she works with immigrants and refugees.

I imagine myself a woman all these years in the prison of Hussein's Iraq.

I am the Iraqi women in Baghdad for whom there is no escaping the prison of America's war plans and weaponry. Our new occupiers. Our next Saddam. The Americans closed the borders before the bombs began - afraid, I guess, of witnesses.

We Iraqi mothers can no longer tell the enemy from the savior. Threat is present everywhere. There is no safe place. Not the bomb shelters. America bombed Amariyah, our largest air raid shelter in Baghdad the last time around, turning it into a museum of dead women and children, metal mattress springs melting into their skin. I will not go into a bomb shelter again.

Knowing what was to come I collected extra liters of kerosene and water. Food has been rationed too long to have saved any.

I look at my children, the earth shakes under us. Powerlessness has detonated my being, my soul shatters into shards. I cannot protect them. Some of us, most of us I hope, will die. We are not good without each other: I want us to die together. That is all I hope for: That no one is left behind.

What does your President desire? What exactly does your President desire? No one answers this question when I ask.

Our liberation? Embedded in your weaponry are a thousand Saddams. You righteously condemn him and Saddamize the rest of us. Regime change? It does not require this war. You know this, you have done it many times before. When I wonder about America's goal for this war, I look at your weapons. Your weapons reveal everything about you. Your hopes, your dreams, your motivations, enfolded in piercing metals and gas. You are personified for us in your weaponry. We know who you are by your weaponry.

This war is not about us. It is about you. "He made us do it," you cry like some infantile child. You wonder how I can live with Saddam? I wonder how you can live with yourself. Who rules my country is a

thing over which I have no choice, but I still know the difference between right and wrong. You live by your own choices and are unable to see the evil in them. You are more like Saddam than you know, imposing your will through whatever means possible. I can hate Saddam and your weapons as well.

I will be debris. This is the freedom you offer me. I will be debris. What will you be when this war is done with you?

I remember my 15 year-old son. Saddam took him before the bombing began. Perhaps American weapons will take my daughter. What is the difference? This war is my children's second before their adulthood. And there is nothing for me but to sit and wait, comforting them with lies.

Do you tell your children the truth about what is coming and why, or lie to them as I do to mine? I only have to face the terror in their eyes while you, you have to face your children's disgust. We women should have known better. We have become unwitting apologists for our governments, similar as they are, telling our children lies rather than unbearable truths. We join the campaigns of disinformation hoping the children will be as easily duped as we were. They weren't. They aren't.

My empty eyes saw terror staring back at me when I looked at my children and rage broke through my paralysis like wind whipping at the desert sand. It blinds me. Great waves of cutting sand, rage rising up to choke off the hopes of your weaponry; the paralysis your government depends on, refusing your ownership of my soul. Our bomb-broken bodies may die, our trauma continue down the generations. But the paralysis your war planners hoped for will give way to rage, and rage weaponized is something you do not want. My children will not blame me for your actions. I have loved them too well.

Look at your own experience. The debris will rise up and have her day.

+



Fritz Eichenberg

Weapon of Mass Distraction

by Carolyn Griffeth

In the last year citizens from all over the world have rallied in protest of the United States planned invasion of Iraq, resulting in the largest antiwar protests in world history before the war had even began. This massive outcry for peace has led some to conclude that in the current world order there are again two great powers, one the United States and those nations supporting its agenda, and the second the global peace movement. Very little analysis is needed to conclude which is the larger camp: With the exception of Israel and England, none of the other one hundred and eighty four nations in the United Nations supported the U. S. plan for invasion. Furthermore, Tony Blair's own party did not endorse his support of George W. Bush's plan, and polls revealed that even more British than French citizens were against the war. Therefore, only Israel, the number one recipient of United States' military aid, looked favorably upon the war. A better question is which camp has the greater power? If one believes that truth itself is the greatest power of all, then the answer is obvious: No Weapons of Mass Destruction have been found in Iraq, nor do Americans, much less the world's citizens, live in greater security. Considering that neither truth nor world opinion supported the US invasion of Iraq and that such an attack to overthrow a nation's government was a flagrant violation of the U.N. Charter, the Nuremberg Charter, and international law, why did any Americans support this war?

For starters, many Americans were victims of a weapon of mass distraction: Americans have been bombarded by the

media's uncritical reporting on the U.S. Administration's claim regarding Iraq's weapons of mass destruction (WMD), which Saddam Hussein's government was supposedly hiding from UN weapons inspectors. Americans were also told that Hussein was building or amassing these weapons because of his hate for the United States and our precious "way of life." Furthermore, it was often implied that he was not only a sponsor of terrorism and a threat to the United States, but also, like Hitler, to the rest of the world. The constant mention of Iraq's WMD, coupled with rhetoric like the "axis of evil" fanned the flames of fear Americans understandably felt after the September 11th attacks, and fear is no tonic for logic and reason.

Americans whose lives are already marked by the distractions of long work hours, commutes, consumer culture, self-absorption, and sound-bite news, have become distracted all the more from reason and reflection by an overwhelming sense of insecurity. US citizens, while rallying behind the cry for greater national security, are mostly too distracted from asking: What would real security look like? If such a question were posed, many would agree that national security would begin with befriending, rather than bombing, other nations of the world, and would be reflected at home by the availability of health care, good jobs, decent education, and housing for all. Yet, distracted by fear, and indoctrinated to find security in weapons, many Americans cling to the very things (weapons made at enormous tax payer expense) that not only are responsible for the lack of real security at home but also for the hostility toward the United States on the part of many nations.

Carolyn Griffeth hosts delicious and festive potluck community dinners at her home on Friday evenings.

In effort to overcome the weapon of mass distraction it is useful to study the history of United States' involvement with Iraq, and some basics about the US economy to uncover some critical facts one could not hear on the nightly news.

- ◊ In 1979 Saddam Hussein came to power in Iraq by killing his opponents, but also by the strength of his massive social uplift program. Hussein virtually eliminated female illiteracy, provided free universal health care, clean water, and free education to all, even through graduate school.
- ◊ In 1979 Iran's Muslim fundamentalists ousted the Shah (previously installed by the United States and backed the U.S. secret police) through non-violent demonstrations. The United States changed its laws so that United States companies could sell resources for WMD to Iraq. The United States support continued through Hussein's gassing of the Kurds in Halabja. Notably, the United States sent a delegation to support Hussein (including Donald Rumsfeld) when Hussein's human rights violations became controversial.
- ◊ In 1990, Iraq invaded Kuwait, after being given the "go-ahead" from the United States. This was a sort of reparation for the fact that the United States was actually supporting both Iran and Iraq in the previous war.
- ◊ Soon thereafter, the United States launched Operation Desert Storm against Iraq, supposedly because of their attack on Kuwait. The effect of the war was devastating.
 1. The United States dropped over 60,000 tons of bombs on Iraq, mostly on the civilian infrastructure, specifically targeting the electrical grid and power stations.
 2. Hospitals were disconnected, sewage systems broke down, and water became contaminated leading to epidemics of cholera, typhoid fever, malaria, dysentery, diphtheria and gastroenteritis, which would be furthered by the sanctions. (Who is guilty of using biological warfare?)
 3. A Pentagon source admitted that the attacks on the infrastructure of Iraq were specifically to accelerate the effect of the sanctions.
 4. The United States and Britain left 660,000 pounds of Depleted Uranium in Iraq with a half-life of 4.5 billion years. Depleted Uranium leads to chromosomal damage, evidenced by the staggering child leukemia rate and birth defects, as well as the Gulf War Syndrome.
 5. Notably, Iraq used no WMD on United States troops during the Gulf War and the United States claimed to having destroyed 90% of Iraq's WMD during that war

On the forty-fifth anniversary of the United States' bombing of Hiroshima, the United Nations Security Council approved the United States-crafted sanctions on Iraq. Effectively the Gulf War never ended. It was extended for twelve years in the most comprehensive sanctions ever imposed in history.

- ◊ The United States blocked oil sales (previously 95% of Iraq's foreign exchange) in Iraq for six years before allowing the Oil-For-Food program that allowed Iraq to sell limited amounts of oil in exchange for food and medicine.
- ◊ Everything that came into Iraq through the Oil-For-Food had to be approved by the permanent members of the committee; the United States routinely vetoed parts to repair water and sewage systems, parts for oil production, chlorine for water purification, and even baby milk powder that contains phosphates.
- ◊ All present and past UN heads of the Oil-For-Food program report that the food was not hoarded but rather gave Iraq an "A" for distribution.
- ◊ Denis Halliday and Hans von Sponeck resigned their 30 plus year positions as Assistant Secretary Generals in the UN to protest the sanctions.
- ◊ In 1999 UNICEF did a study concluding that five hundred thousand children under the age of five have died due to the sanctions.
- ◊ The sanctions caused easily the death of 1.5 million Iraqi people.
- ◊ In 2000, UNICEF estimated that 1/3 of Iraqi children were chronically malnourished, and 1/8 died before their first birthday.
- ◊ Scott Ritter, the seven-year former UN chief weapons-inspector and United States marine, resigned, saying that the Iraqis were being "set up" to fail the inspection requirements. Touring the country, Ritter asserted that the United States used the information he uncovered during his investigations to bomb civilian targets in an attempt to assassinate Saddam Hussein. This substantiates Hussein's claim that weapons inspectors were spying on Iraq.
- ◊ Furthermore, Scott Ritter has testified that Iraq had been effectively disarmed of WMD in 1996.
- ◊ The International Atomic Energy Agency of the United Nations refuted Bush and Blair's statement that Iraq was six months from making a nuclear weapon. There is no evidence of nuclear capability.
- ◊ For the last twelve years the United States and the Britain bombed Iraq regularly over the "no fly zones" which was not authorized by the United Nations and were illegal violations of Iraqi sovereignty. Iraq was unable to shoot down even one of these warplanes.

These facts (and many others now being discussed ex post facto by the mainstream media) have begun to call many Americans to skeptically consider the whole WMD distraction that once led to their support of the war. A recent edition of *TIME* magazine (July 21, 2003) entitled "Untruth & Consequences: How flawed was the case for going to war against Saddam?" is just one example. Although it explores some of the deceptions around the whole WMD argument, it fails to ask: "What is the real interest of the United States in going to war with Iraq?" In order to bring such interests to the fore one should consider the following facts (that can not be found in



Imagine a world without weapons

TIME) which point not only to the roots of this war but also to many of the past, and, God forbid, the future

The United States' largest cash crop is not soy and corn, but weapons. The United States has more nuclear weapons than all other nations combined. Military spending by the United States is more than the twelve next largest budgets combined. The United States has renounced treaties control-

ling nuclear weapons and their proliferation, voted against enforcing the Biological Weapons Conventions, voted against treaties banning land mines, and against the International Criminal Court. Why? Because the US profits from war.

Iraq has the second largest oil reserves in the world. Thus, one hint of the United States' interests in controlling what happens in Iraq can be found in the current Administration's oil interests. Both President Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney are entrenched in the oil industry; Bush's energy policy is a blue print for oil dependency.

Even Congress has expressed its interests in Iraq's oil. Senator Richard Lugar, the ranking representative of the Republican Party on the Foreign Relations Committee, submitted a strategy for urging other countries to join the United States in invading Iraq. The United States should tell other countries: "We are going to run the oil business. We are going to run it well, we are going to make money, and it's going to help pay for the rehabilitation of Iraq because there is money there... Because once we get there, we're going to control the oil business."

Only time will tell the far-reaching consequences of invading Iraq. Already the Muslim world feels legitimately discriminated against, if not demonized, by the United States. Already North Korea has said preemptive attacks are not just the right of the United States. Not only is the United States exporting weapons and war, it is also exporting a new culture based on fear and the illusion that weapons, threats, and even unprovoked attacks can increase national security. The

United States must begin to look at the threat that lies not in the Middle East, but in its own weapon based, oil-dependent economy. It must also look inside and ask why it has become so insecure. Is it possible that the us-versus-them culture that drives the United States to war is an outgrowth of the dog-eat-dog, winner-versus-loser culture at home?

Most the facts here are taken from Simon Harak S.J., *Why Invade Iraq?* which is published by Blueprint for Social Justice and from Ramsey Clark's (former Attorney General) letter to the UN, which can be found at the International Action Center at www.iacenter.org.

America, Islam, and the New Bigotry

by Jack Renard

A new and virulent strain of an ancient disease has begun to infect our society. Like all forms of bigotry, this disease feeds on ignorance and fear, and on the desperate need for control that is so pronounced in times of uncertainty. As bigotry begins to assume epidemic proportions, more and more people begin swallowing demagogic condemnations of the latest and most convenient scapegoats – in this instance, Islam and Muslims.

As always, the logic of bigotry involves the use of double standards. Those who know they are right invariably apply criteria to the “others” that they would never apply to themselves. Rev. Jerry Vines called Muhammad a demon-possessed pedophile because he was a polygamist and that one of his wives was a child. A man many Christians revere as Saint Augustine was betrothed to a child by his mother, now revered as Saint Monica; and the patriarch Abraham lied saying that his wife (who had suggested he have a child by his concubine Hagar) was really his sister, was of course a child-abuser because he was prepared to slaughter his child. Solomon, a world-class philanderer with multiple wives and scores of concubines, remains a paragon of wisdom for Christians and Jews.

Jerry Falwell dismisses Muhammad as a “terrorist and a violent man,” but would surely bristle at the suggestion that King David was an overwhelmingly violent man who was dominated by his passions and deserves to be condemned outright. Pat Robertson assures his viewers that the problem is that “we haven’t read the Qur’an,” for if we had we would see clearly Islam’s sanctioning of violence. Mr. Robertson has evidently

not read the Bible either, or he would have seen that Moses was a murderer and that Jesus said, “I have come not to bring peace, but the sword.” Verse for verse, the Bible is far more violent than the Qur’an.

A few months ago, Vice President Cheney keynoted the Conservative Political Action Conference in Washington, DC. At that national convention, new bumper stickers targeting Muslims were on sale at several booths: No Muslims = no terrorists; Islam spelled with a swastika for an s. After the Vice President’s office received complaints, it asked that the stickers be removed from the display tables, but there was not a whisper of denunciation, and reporters discovered that vendors continued to sell them under the table. How about a new bumper stick that says, “No white people, no corporate scandal”?

Another use of double standards: Americans often criticize Islam as inherently flawed because it allegedly refuses to distinguish between religious and civil spheres. We ignore the fact that historically there have been far more Islamically-related regimes with separate administrative structures to deal with religious affairs than those that made no policy distinction between religious and civil spheres. That critique might have some credibility except that those who voice it most loudly are the very Americans who are more and more insisting that their own religious convictions are a legitimate standard of political action. A fine sphere of the American melding of religious and civil spheres is the State of the Union, in which President Bush made it clear that because of divine guidance, American is virtually infallible. But there are, and always have been, other far

Jack Renard, author of several books on Islam, teaches at Saint Louis University.

more spectacular examples of political ideology cloaked in the garb of religion.

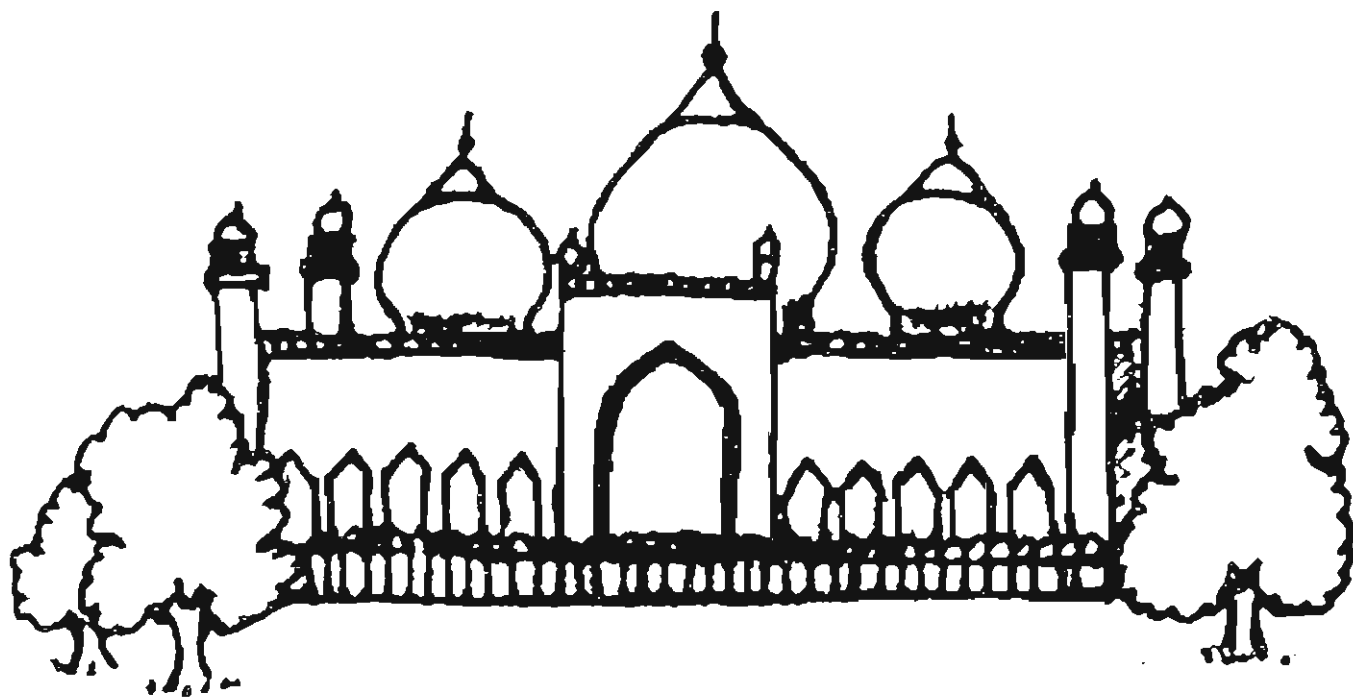
It has become increasingly common to claim that Islam is the only religion that has been spread through violence or other means of social and economic coercion — no one who has studied the history of the spread of Christianity could maintain that Latin America is now more or less uniformly Catholic purely as a result of the benevolence of the armies that invaded in the name of Catholic monarchs. Many insist that Islamic regimes have been uniquely intolerant of religious pluralism and that only Muslims have ever engaged in religious persecution of minority communities in their midst — no one who has studied the ways Christian majorities throughout history have dominated and persecuted Jewish communities among them would dream of making such a claim.

The first side of that claim is the notion that Muslims have never experienced a religious discrimination at the hands of non-Muslim majorities and have thus never had a justifiable claim to self-defense. One needs only to look at current events in India to see shocking evidence to the contrary. For over a decade, the ultra-nationalist Hindu BJP and its sectarian supporters has given whole-hearted support to anti-Muslim mob violence, leaving scores of thousands of Muslims dead and hundreds of thousands homeless. India faces a grim future of communal violence instigated not by its 120 million Muslims but by Hindus wrapped in the Indian flag — a sobering reminder that it was a Hindu who murdered Gandhi, a Jew who shot Yitzhak Rabin.

Is it any wonder that hundreds of millions of non-violent, high-minded Muslims all over the world have begun to feel besieged? Citizens of other lands are watching us, and what they see terrifies them. They see increasing cause for concern in our inconsistent foreign policy. They fear the growing intolerance of genuine diversity that they associate with a Christianity again drafted into service as the stealth ideology of a global power. They see a people that for centuries justified slavery on biblical grounds. They see a society again falling under the spell of its founding doctrine of divine election and incontrovertible destiny. They see a nation determined to work its will and to thwart that of other nations regardless of the suffering that may ensue.

Until we as a people see ourselves as others see us, we will not appreciate our place as members of the human race. Until we acknowledge that our shared humanity binds us to others more surely than our diversity divides us, we will continue to be the medium in which bigotry — the most fearsome of all weapons of mass destruction — breeds uncontrollably. Finally, some good news: we can begin to inoculate ourselves against religious bigotry by applying two variations on the Golden Rule. Golden Rule of Ethical Pluralism: If your own tradition absolutely condemns a certain course of action, never assume that another tradition condones it. Golden Rule of Scriptural Interpretation: If you don't want members of other faiths to interpret your scriptures as only the extremists among you would, do not interpret their scriptures as only the extremists among them would.

+



VOICES

Things are going as they always go in this life. But one thing makes it go in another direction, the US threats of war that may be launched against my country, my people and me. What do you think about a person who is threatened- and his beloved ones too- to be killed at any time. I am not thinking now of how to secure or protect myself but how to do this for the others. How can a powerless being bring assistance to others?

Email from Mohammed Ibraheem Abbas in Baghdad to Chrissy Kirchoffer in St. Louis, 15 January 2003



ABOVE: Anchorage, Alaska



ABOVE: Rome, Italy

Before I volunteered to serve in the Gulf, I used to run marathons for charity. Now, even on a good day, I need a walking stick to go short distances. Any further and I have to use a wheelchair. My urine sample showed, in layman's terms, that I had been exposed to 100 times the safe level of Depleted Uranium. The civilian population was also suffering from DU poisoning. I remember looking around one hospital ward in tears. It was full of dozens of tiny babies with awful deformities and older children suffering from cancer. Because of the sanctions there was barely any modern medical equipment.

Ray Bristow, Army officer based in Saudi Arabia in 1991

BELOW: Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



I am against a war, just as I am against the economic sanctions. Like many many Iraqi people, I am against Saddam Hussein and at the same time against America's intervention in Iraq. Saddam Hussein came to power with American backing, and now they want to get rid of him and impose another leadership on us. It has nothing to do with democracy, or the good of the Iraqi people - this is about the supremacy of the United States over the world.

Nadia Mahmoud, Middle East Centre for Women's Studies

World-wide photos all taken on the international day 2003. The St. Louis photos from The World Wars. Thanks to allimg.org for St. Louis photos.

ON IRAQ

...enormous potential if we prosecute this war in the right way with the right result ... to transform the region. ... United States acts decisively, it strengthens the influence of the United States. Multilateralism is fine in principle. ... what is not fine is unilateralism. American interests, particularly where security is concerned, in some cases require action that, if the only option is unilateral, we should be paralyzed.

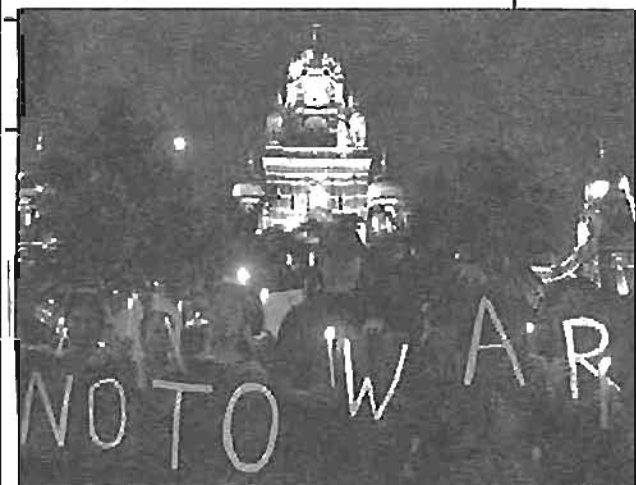
Defense Policy Board, Frontline, interview Jan. 25, 2003

...[I]t is not surprising that the world's most powerful military force couldn't spare so much as a single tank or two soldiers to guard the National Museum of Iraq during the "war" for Baghdad. ... It should be noted that the oil wells of Iraq have been consistently, well and massively guarded by British and American forces.

Paul Street, April 14, 2003 ZNET



St. Louis, Missouri



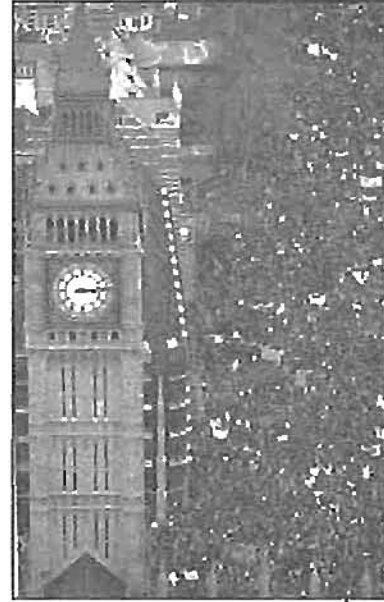
ABOVE: Bombay, India

protest against the war on Iraq on February 15, 'Peace' Rally in Forest Park on March 30, 2002. punchdown.org for international pics.

Before the war, American intelligence officials said that they had a list of 14,000 sites where, they suspected, chemical or biological agents had been harboured, as well as the delivery systems to deploy them.

Anxious to find a "smoking gun", a team of US disarmament experts has been set up... The move has alarmed the weapons inspectors at the UN, where Kofi Annan, the UN secretary general, pointedly said last week: "I think they are the ones with the mandate to disarm Iraq, and when the situation permits they should go back to resume their work"

BELOW: London, England



13 April 2003 The Independent



They have to terrify the population to feel there's some enormous threat to their existence and carry out a miraculous, decisive and rapid victory over this enormous foe and march on to the next one.

Noam Chomsky MIT professor, author, and activist February 4 2003

Understanding Terrorism

by Ellen Rehg

Since September 11, I have wondered about the young men who were willing to kill themselves and countless others in their attack on the U.S. Who were they? How could anyone so carefully and cold heartedly plot their own destruction in order to destroy others? Was it an act of hatred, as so many people have been characterizing it, or of desperation? I have been reading a little on the subject and while I am by no means anywhere near an expert or even that knowledgeable, I thought I would share a few insights with you. I write this with some concern that my intent may be misunderstood. I am neither trying to jump on to the patriotic bandwagon and demonize the "evil-doers" in the words of our president, nor am I trying to paint a picture of "freedom fighters," perhaps in the words of Al-Qaeda. Rather, I am writing this because I am opposed to killing, no matter who is doing it, following in the spirit of Dorothy Day, who opposed both World War II and the Spanish Civil War. This is not to say that both 'sides' are equally at fault in any given war, but that it is war, or violence, that we ought to seek to vanquish, not other human beings.

In the ethics class that I teach at St. Louis University, I have my students read a book about "moral exemplars" – people who risk their lives and give their lives wholeheartedly to a moral ideal. Dorothy Day, for example, could be one, or any number of Catholic Workers. The book asks the same questions about this kind of person as I am asking about the Al-Qaeda, namely, who are they and what motivates them? One point that is made in this book is that moral exemplars are people who are not different in kind from anyone else. It doesn't take a certain kind of personality to be a Gandhi or an Auog San Suu

Kyi; rather, the difference between the morally exceptional individual and the "average" one is more a matter of degree than kind. We are all capable of great goodness.

The same applies, I now think, to the other end, that of great evil. The Al-Qaeda members are not so different from anyone of us – again, it is a matter of degree, rather than kind. I think this is important to realize because of the dangers of turning them into moral monsters, so foreign to us that we can't begin to fathom them. Of course, their actions are morally repugnant, but unfortunately, not so different in kind from what we already know.

One thing that helped me put Al-Qaeda in perspective, if I am not drawing a totally false analogy, is to recall our own home grown terrorists, the Weather People. The Weather People, whose terrorist activity consisted mainly in bombing government buildings like the Capitol and the Pentagon, were a movement which first surfaced in 1969 as an offshoot of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). The SDS itself had been organized by college students in 1962 to promote a "democracy of individual participation." It had been inspired by the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), a group of young black students challenging the racist systems in the South. The SDS began in order to help in the fight for civil rights in the South, but as the U.S. involvement in Southeast Asia grew, it became a significant voice of opposition to the Vietnam War. The Weathermen (as they were initially called) rejected the SDS's commitment to nonviolence, in part because they admired the Black Panther party and its stance of using armed self-defense in the face of police and government repression. The Weather People were white, middle class, well-edu-

Ellen Rehg is spending the summer teaching at St. Louis University and playing with her three kids.

cated college students, and they felt guilty that they would not be subject to the same harsh treatment by the authorities as the Black Panthers were, even though they believed in the same cause. They wanted their opposition to the system to put them in as much danger as the oppressed were in.

But the primary reason for their turn to the use of terrorist tactics had to do with the increasing escalation of the Vietnam War. As the war grew more violent and expanded to Cambodia and Laos, and as the police and National Guard at home began to shoot and kill demonstrators, the U.S. government increasingly lost legitimacy in the eyes of the students and others. The U.S. government, founded upon the principles of democracy and equality, (at least, at that point, for white men) which are themselves grounded in a respect for human dignity, had shown itself to be the brutal tool of corporate capitalism, willing to go to any length to keep the world safe for American markets. The SDS and Black Power movements began calling for a revolution, the Weather People saw themselves as the urban guerillas engaging in it. According to Ehud Sprinzak, a political scientist and a scholar of terrorism, whose analysis I have been drawing from, "Ideological terrorism does not emerge from a vacuum or from an inexplicable urge on the part of a few unstable radicals to go berserk. Rather, it is the psychopolitical product of a profound process of delegitimation that a large number of people undergo in relation to the established social and political order."

Can this help us to understand Al-Qaeda? Could there be a similar process of delegitimation underlying Islamist terrorism? It seems that there might be. This time the system which has lost legitimacy is global in nature, the Western corporate capitalist system which is spreading across the globe as never before. Of course, Islamism itself, a religious-political movement aimed at establishing shari'a (Islamic law) in Muslim nations, predates the fall of the Soviet Union and the unchecked spread of capitalism. But the international network of Islamist terrorism does not. (Note: it might be helpful here to distinguish between Islamist and Islamic. The former refers to the movement mentioned above, and is at times, but not always, associated with the use of violent means to achieve its goals. The latter is simply the adjectival form for the word Islam. It carries no automatic connotations associated with the establishment of theocratic states nor of the use of violence).

According to Timur Kuran, an economist and scholar of Islam, earlier generations of Islamists believed that the two major world economic systems, Communism and capitalism, would inevitably fail due to the injustices at their core. The first system has fallen, and the second, capitalism, will also fall when it becomes known for its true nature. "Capitalism has failed humanity because it breeds emptiness, mistrust, dissatisfaction and despair even among the materially successful," Kuran says, articulating the Islamist belief.

In the meantime, it is a corrupting influence in Islamic countries, not so much as an economic system ideally characterized by free markets, but more as a cultural system of the West. Again, Kuran relates that according to Islamists, "the principle source of corruption is Westernization, which masquerades as globalization and whose chief instruments are the military, cultural and economic powers of the United States. Americans

THE CHOICE TODAY
IS NO LONGER
BETWEEN VIOLENCE
AND NON-VIOLENCE.
IT IS EITHER
NON-VIOLENCE OR
NON-EXISTENCE.
Martin Luther King, Jr.

have been corrupting people everywhere, including Muslims, through seductive advertising and the dominance of their Godless media. They have also been propping up client regimes that are committed, despite appearances to the contrary, to frustrating Islamists goals." Obviously, the Islamists believe that the rules and regulations of Islam ought to guide a good Muslim's life in place of the West's system and norms of corporate capitalism.

To a certain extent, much of the resentment against Westernization is fed by the desperation of citizens in Arab nations who have been more the victims than the beneficiaries of globalization. Some people argue that one way to combat Islamist terrorism is to address the poverty and lack of opportunity in Arab countries. While this certainly would help, it must be remembered that, first of all, most Muslims have not responded to the injustices of globalization by becoming terrorists, and secondly, like the Weather People, the members of Al-Qaeda who hijacked the airplanes on September 11 were minimally middle-class and highly educated. As has been frequently noted, Bin Laden himself is extremely wealthy. The family business is the Saudi Binladen Group (SBG) which had an estimated worth of \$5 billion in the mid 1990s. Among other enterprises the company is the distributor of Snapple drinks and Porsche and Volkswagen in the Middle East, and, ironically, even produces a variety of Arabic books based on Disney's animated films. I hate to engage in armchair psychologizing, but one has to wonder if, as with the Weather People, there isn't some guilt stoking the fires of Bin Laden's opposition.

Perhaps it is because Bin Laden and his cohorts are well

off and well educated that they experience this delegitimation crisis. Their fervent commitment to Islamist principles gets funneled through an intellectual analysis of the problems of their region. As Bin Laden said in an interview in 1997, "The collapse of the Soviet Union made the U.S. more haughty and arrogant and it has started to look at itself as a master of this world and established what it calls the New World Order... The U.S. today has set a double standard, calling whoever goes against its injustices a terrorist. It wants to occupy our countries, steal our resources, impose on us agents to rule us... and wants us to agree to all these. If we refuse to do so, it will say, 'You are terrorists.' With a simple look at the U.S. behaviors, we find that it judges the behavior of the poor Palestinian children whose country was occupied: if they throw stones against the Israeli occupation, it says they are terrorists, whereas when the Israeli pilots bombed the United Nations building in Qana, Lebanon, while it was full of children and women, the U.S. stopped any plan to condemn Israel."

In his words, he points to the hypocrisy of the U.S. calling those who use violence to further their ends "terrorist," all the while also using violence to further American ends. While I would have to agree with him here, I would also have to point out that if it is wrong for the U.S. to do this, which I think it is, then it is also wrong for any group to pursue their goals by killing other people. His analysis of U.S. injustice does not provide a justification for terrorism; rather, it shows that any use of violence against people is unjustified.

Peter Bergen, a reporter for CNN who wrote a book about Bin Laden entitled, *Holy War, Inc.*, said that the men who lead many of the Islamist movements are well educated, and look to Bin Laden for inspiration. The military ruler of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf, explained Bin Laden's appeal: "The Western demonization of OBL, as he is known in Pakistan, made him a cult figure among Muslims who resent everything from the decline in moral values as conveyed by Hollywood movies and TV serials to America's lack of support for Palestinians being killed by Israeli occupation forces, to what Russia is doing to Muslims in Chechnya, [to] what the West did to Muslims in Bosnia and Kosovo, [to] India's oppression of Muslims in Kashmir... It is a very long list of complaints..." Although they are opposed to the global encroachment of Western corporate capitalism, their movements also make use of the latest technologies. One man explained, "This technology is a good thing, but we reject the civilization of the West."

If we follow the model of the SDS and the Weather People, we would have to assume that a large number of Muslims in the Middle East are opposed to Western globalization (and wish to follow an Islamic approach instead) but only a relative few have taken the next step into actually waging war against "the infidel." Again, the next step is just a matter of degree. However, there usually are events that encourage or help people to take that next step.

For some Islamists, the event which nudged them into the next step was the Soviet war in Afghanistan. Other Islamists

had already been engaging in terrorism in their home countries. When Bin Laden traveled there to fight in a jihad, or holy war, against the Soviets, he was only 22 and had not yet committed an act of terrorism, although he was already a committed Islamist. The experience proved to be transforming for him and thousands of other "Afghan Arabs" who left their native lands to fight on the side of the Afghans. Their willingness to fight the enemy of another country has been compared to the Spanish Civil War in the 30's that attracted radicals and sympathizers from many other countries as well. In Afghanistan, Bin Laden met members of other Islamist terrorist groups, such as Egypt's Al Jihad, which would later merge with Al-Qaeda. Al-Qaeda itself was formed initially as a way to create a secure inner circle that had not been penetrated by the security forces of other countries trying to keep track of terrorists. Before the Afghan war, Islamist terrorist groups had primarily targeted their own governments, such as when Al Jihad assassinated Anwar Sadat in 1981. After the Afghan war terrorist activity became international; not based in any one country and composed of people from many countries, and directed primarily against U.S. targets.

And of course, the other major event that precipitated greater violence directed at the U.S. was the first Gulf War and the U.S.'s establishment of military bases in Saudi Arabia. This was a move opposed by many Muslims. A Saudi dissident articulated the majority view when he said, "I don't think there is a sensible person who believes that the Americans should stay in Saudi Arabia... if you are a devoted Muslim, there is a religious obligation not to accept non-Muslims in military form staying in the country, especially the holy land." It appears that, just as with the terrorism of the Weather People, war breeds more war.

There is obviously a lot more that could be said on this topic. I've narrowed my focus to one aspect of understanding terrorism, that of seeing one of its causes as a kind of crisis of legitimacy. I have left out a huge part of understanding Al-Qaeda, and that is the grounding or justification for their killing in a particular interpretation of their religion. It goes without saying that this interpretation is rejected by most Muslims, but to fully understand Islamist terrorism, it would be necessary to examine that phenomenon as well. But I hope that my brief analysis is somewhat enlightening.

One last thing I'd like to add is that one other process underlies the step into terrorist activity, or indeed, any kind of violence against other human beings. This is the process of dehumanization. Killing other people becomes psychologically easier when you have dehumanized them, and identify them solely with a corrupt system. When members of the police and national guard become "pigs," when the enemies of your country become "dogs" or "gooks," when all Iraqi civilians are seen as potential killers, when Americans become "the infidel," when terrorists become "monsters," this is when the killing starts. What we need is a process of rehumanization, and maybe the killing can stop.



Teaching Our Children

by Anne Treeger

There's so much I don't understand.

As a pacifist, I don't understand how a country so rich in education and resources can continue to resort to intimidation and force to solve problems, repeating actions that have proven time and again to have a devastating impact on people, the environment and its denizens, the hope of peace. Don't we teach our children to learn from their mistakes?

As a woman, I don't understand how our government could ignore the plight of Afghani women suffering for years under the Taliban, only taking retaliatory action when the U.S. became a target. Don't we teach our children to help those in need less fortunate than ourselves?

As a citizen, I don't understand how so many voices united in peace can have so little impact, can be disregarded and even condemned by a government built on the principles of democracy and free speech. Don't we teach our children the First Amendment, that their voices have a right to be heard, are important, that each one can have a positive impact and make a difference in the world?

As a patriot, I don't understand how our government can speak of supporting the troops while at the same time drastically cutting health care for veterans physically and mentally traumatized by war. Don't we teach our children to support those in need, to love in times of sickness and health, to care for body, mind and spirit?

As a Jew and a spiritual being, I don't understand how religion, the practice of honoring the sanctity of god and the spirit, and race, the wonderful variety of colors and creeds that make up the world, have been triggers for so much fear and hate. Don't we teach our children tolerance, the value of cel-

ebrating differences?

As an artist, I don't understand the kind of expression that harms others. Don't we teach our children to unleash their feelings in positive, productive ways: in words, in paintings, in music, in dance, in invention, in sports?

As a lover of the earth, I don't understand the blatant disregard of aggressive human actions on the animals, the trees, the air, the planet, our future. Don't we teach our children to protect and cherish the land that they will inherit?

As an art historian, I don't understand how so much of the pivotal art and artifacts of the genesis of our world could be treated with such callous neglect and carelessness. Don't we teach our children to respect and protect history and culture?

As an advocate of children, I don't understand the willingness to put so many young people all over the world at risk of injury, malnutrition, illness, homelessness, orphan-hood, isolation, death. Don't we teach our children that they are our future and that safety comes first?

As an educator, I don't understand how the powers of the world can continue in good conscience to solve problems with weapons and spite instigated by fear and ignorance. With all of our intelligence, how can we not find another way? Don't we teach our children that violence is never the answer, that the way to achieve, to settle differences is through education, compassion, empathy and understanding.

As an optimist, I know that day will come when the world will learn to live up to the words we teach our children: to live with integrity through respect, faith, gratitude, kindness, inner strength, love and peace. ✦

Anne Treeger is an Associate Educator at the Saint Louis Art Museum.

Cultivating Our Gardens

by Andrew Wimmer



I've been struggling with a heavy sense of despair these past several months. Adjusting—once again—to living in the time after the fall. The invasion and occupation of Iraq are now realities that we believed, with an increasingly urgent hope, we might be able to prevent. The millions in the streets was an excellent thing, and we can celebrate the myriad victories of the winter—new insights gained, friendships forged, and commitments made. But much of the time I find that it's too early (or too hard?) to practice detachment. Not to feel overwhelmed, done in, by the deadly power of the empire. Moving on presents a challenge to go deeper, shed the things that bind, to wise up.

And then Mark Scheu's death came right smack in the middle of our mourning. The devastation, the senseless loss, the numbing of mind and spirit—all brought home most cruelly and effectively. If we thought it was just Iraq, or just Bush, or just political stupidity, we found ourselves reminded—as if we needed to be—of the mysteries, even absurdities, of the human psyche. The lurking noon-day demon that continues to prey upon us, catching us unawares. We're in the net before we know it.

In conversations with friends, I realize that we all expended so much energy throughout the dark days of this past winter

Andrew Wimmer is a member of the Core Community of the Center for Theology and Social Analysis.

that our reserves are low, defenses down. Personally, I find that many of my old tormentors have seized the opportunity to take up residence within my skull and resume their war chant. Questioning everything, sowing those familiar seeds of self-doubt, challenging value, commitment, worth.

So it was that Wendell Berry came to my rescue a few days ago. Though his topic was hardly sunny—the 6,000 square mile “hypoxic dead zone” in the Gulf of Mexico, caused over a relatively brief span of years by the excessive nutrient runoff from farms and animal factories in the Mississippi watershed—I found his words salvific, a balm for the soul.

“The health of the oceans depends on the health of rivers; the health of rivers depends on the health of small streams; the health of small streams depends on the health of their watersheds. The health of water is exactly the same as the health of the land, the health of small places is exactly the same as the health of large places. As we know, disease is hard to confine. We cannot immunize the continents and the oceans against our contempt for small places and small streams. Small destructions add up, and finally they are understood as part of large destructions.”

Berry’s profound understanding of the concrete and quite specific interconnectedness of life liberates in its simplicity: we ignore or destroy the small places to our common peril; when we tend them, humankind and the planet we inhabit flourish.

“Some day,” Berry writes, “we may finally understand the

connections.”

Perhaps that day is dawning. There seem to be plenty of signs that people are beginning to understand the connections. In January, February, and March we witnessed a magnificent phenomenon as millions took to the streets—in cities and towns, large and small, north and south—to say “no” to United States militarism and its latest adventure in Iraq. While the mainstream media appeared to be at a loss to explain, or even accurately describe, what was happening, writers like Arundhati Roy, John Pilger, and Noam Chomsky were exulting in the realization that those who were able to make the connections, who “got it,” were finding their voice and emerging as a global force. The press often depicted a motley, mismatched crowd of naïve war protestors, anti-globalists, and eco-extremists. Conversations with those who took to the streets, however, revealed the common thread: an understanding that the path that we are on—militarily, economically, and ecologically—is simply not sustainable.

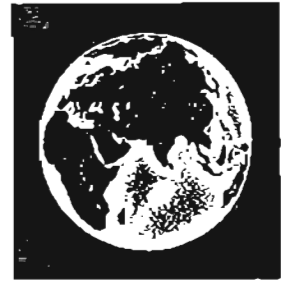
Once you get a glimmer of an understanding of the connections, you begin to see the contours of empire more clearly and can’t help but decry the “dead zones” that it is leaving in its wake. Arundhati Roy calls us to confront empire by mocking it at every opportunity—in noisy protest, subversive verse, quiet non-compliance. Berry would have us tend to the little streams, care for our groundwater, help stave off the little destructions. As Voltaire had Candide observe a couple of centuries ago, let us cultivate our collective garden.



Mark Schenck (1986)

From Abroad

by Elizabeth Madden



Puerto Asis is a municipality of about 28 thousand inhabitants in the Putumayo department of Colombia. This July, a delegation of five U.S. citizens visited Puerto Asis to discuss the impacts of fumigation with the indigenous communities of that area. Putumayo, with 16 different indigenous communities living in seven different pueblos, has been one of the most heavily fumigated areas in the U.S./Colombian "War on Drugs."

Through Plan Colombia, the United States has given over \$1.3 billion in military aid to the Colombian government in the last three years. Initially allocated for counter-narcotics use, the aid given to Colombia can now be used to counter "terror."

The fumigation campaign being waged against coca growers has been one that targets the poorest link on the long chain that is cocaine production and trafficking. Coca growers in Colombia often opt to grow the illicit crop as an alternative to hunger, as legal crops cannot compete on the open market alongside foods that have been subsidized in their production and transport by countries in the European Union and the United States.

Of all the people heavily impacted by the fumigation campaign, the indigenous communities of Colombia are perhaps hit the hardest. As the head of ONIC (National Organization of Indigenous Communities) Armando Valbuena explained to our delegation, "The things being faced by the indigenous today are more serious than they have been in the last five centuries," when the Spanish colonized the Americas, committing mass genocide against the native people.

In a country of 40 million people, the indigenous comprise 1 million of the population, with 84 tribes, and 65 different languages among them. 27% of Colombia is indigenous territory, but the people inhabiting it face massive displacement, as multinational corporations and foreign governments seek to exploit the energy resources of oil, gas, and coal that are found on their land.

The indigenous communities of Puerto Asis have been fumigated twice, the first fumigation occurring January through March of 2002, and the second taking place August through December of 2002. Both of these fumigations took place after indigenous communities had signed an agreement with the Colombian government to manually eradicate their coca cultivations within two years, in return for government assistance in alternative development projects, and an agreement not to

fumigate their land. The Colombian government has yet to comply with this agreement, and obligated the indigenous to manually eradicate their coca within 3 months, not the agreed upon two years. The indigenous communities of Puerto Asis complied with this alteration, and manually eradicated all coca cultivation in their communities within the three months. Their land, with licit crops planted in it, was fumigated twice after the agreement was signed and manual eradication complied with on the part of the indigenous.

The chemical herbicide glyphosate (manufactured by the Monsanto corporation in St. Louis) is at the heart of the destruction caused by the fumigation. Glyphosate has had numerous impacts on the health and environment of the sprayed and surrounding communities. Skin rashes have appeared immediately after the spraying, bodies of water have been contaminated; cattle have died within 6 months after eating and drinking from contaminated sources; animals in gestation have lost their offspring, born pre-maturely and malformed; and children and women especially have developed symptoms of diarrhea, vomiting, headaches, and dizziness after the spraying.

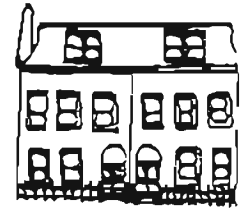
Over twenty-five indigenous leaders from tribes all around Puerto Asis traveled up to four difficult hours to come and meet with our delegation, and to tell us the hopes they hold for their communities. They are terribly fearful for their future; of the displacement that is being forced upon them, and the cultural death of their communities that they see coming ever closer. Even the action of coming to meet with our delegation from the United States posed a threat to their security, and subjected them to questioning, and the fear of reprisals, from armed actors who insist on being informed of their organizing activities.

These indigenous leaders explained to us that with so much to offer the world, through their stewardship of the earth and their ancient medicinal knowledge, that there is a great historical debt owed by the Colombian government and other countries whose policies and actions have been damaging to indigenous communities. It is our obligation in the United States to ensure that this debt is paid; that the U.S.-sponsored fumigation end; that indigenous people are granted titles to their land and not forcibly displaced from it; that their intellectual property is protected; and that the indigenous are free and autonomous to preserve their culture.



Elizabeth Madden is a poet and the staff person for the Inter-Faith Committee on Latin America.

From Little House



by Mary Ann McGivern, SL



photo by Mary Ann McGivern

This has been a hard year at the Little House. Two tenants left abruptly, and left wreckage in their wake. They're both young moms who carry heavy burdens; and perhaps they are of an age to understand the enormity of these burdens (sick children, no high school diploma, no partner, no job, no welfare benefits) and to resent the hardships in their lives.

I didn't ask them to leave. They both went toward what they saw as better options, what I fear is mirage. Whatever. It cost a lot of labor and more money than we'd budgeted to clean up after them, not to mention the cost of our own emotions: anger, frustration, sorrow, distress, worry. We miss them, these children and their mothers whom we've known since they were teenagers.

Tom finished repairing the windows and he and Elijah put in two full bathrooms with showers and sinks to replace the old tubs and toilets. Rehab always carries more than you expect and this time we replaced ceilings and floors as well as

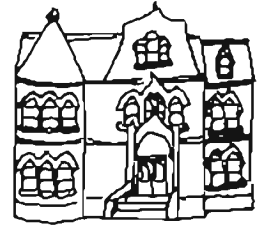
bathrooms. And while the end results are terrific, the upheaval was wearing.

I think we're settled now, surrounded by blooming flowers and bearing fruit trees. Spring came slow and easy, with no late frost, so every blossom seems to be bearing apricots or nectarines or pears or peaches. The kids ride their bikes and shoot baskets on our little dead-end street; grown-ups sit on the front stoops at night, talking quietly underneath the children's shouts and fire cracker bangs. Our "No War in Iraq" sign is still standing at one end of the roses and my school board failed campaign sign stands at the other end; I plan to leave it out until it falls apart.

To my surprise, I enjoyed the school board campaign. I didn't think I'd mind losing so much, but it gets harder and harder to watch the new board play its hand. They raised half a million dollars; I came in fifth, right behind them, having raised \$7,500, really quite a lot of money, enough to rehab all four bathrooms! ✦

Mary Ann McGivern has been in and out of town so much this summer she's now trying to catch up with her garden.

From Karen House



by Nicholas Long

This might not be a great read! I wanted to take my first "From Karen House" and dance with it. I wanted to be creative and witty, to share an insightful and entertaining story, but I changed my mind. Or my heart changed my mind.

My heart has something to share. I'm sad. Life is filled with joy and goodness, but my soul is suffocating. I miss my friends that have died. Linda, we lived together and I think we barely got to know one another... I'm sorry. Mark, I think we lived the same vision but I never asked you how you saw it... I'm sorry. Victims of violence, why do we continue the cycle? I'm so sorry. Guests and community, why do petty differences carry so much more weight than our beautiful similarities? I'm sorry. Family and friends, why do we not take the time for one another? I'm sorry. Children, I'm sorry for the violence. I'm sorry for the degenerate condition of our earth, skies, and waters. I'm sorry for our misguided priorities.

We want to change it, I think. Unless that means giving up my cynicism, or resentment. I can't let go of jealousy or mediocrity. Everyone else better behave correctly, but my temper is justified. We should live with the poor, as long as I'm not really poor. We should stand against the oppressors, unless I'll have to suffer. I will not support violence, unless it's really entertaining. I'll live simply, right after I buy a new pair of running shoes. Treat everyone as a person who deserves our love and respect, unless their political views are different. I feed the hungry or clothe the naked if it's convenient, care for the sick unless they have an annoying mental illness, visit the imprisoned if I know them and are proud of what they have done.

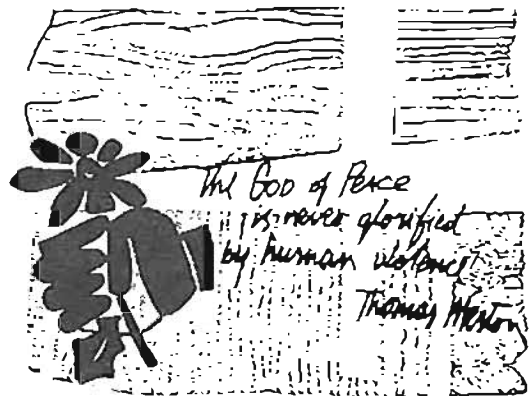
We want to change ourselves, I hope. But we have to allow the change to happen. We have to allow ourselves to love and be vulnerable when the opportunity is ringing the doorbell again, and again, and again. I have to resist judgment

and anger, and instead remind myself of my own struggles.

This is my life...

Beautiful people, laughing children, guffawing adults, cleansing rain, energy filled sunlight, shared meals, shared conversations, prejudice and laziness, selfishness and shortsightedness, hard work, gross work, fun work, mothers wanting their children, mothers not wanting their children, funerals and weddings, new faces, really new and chubby faces, old friends, hugs, violence, mental illness, addiction, destructive habits, wastefulness, hope, learning.

"What's happening at Karen House?" you ask. Like "Uncle" Pete and Joe, neighbors who come to the door to see how we are and what's for lunch, like to say, "We're alive." Well, so are we... REALLY alive. Living our lives, as best we can. I like the path I'm walking and with whom I'm walking. I am encouraged to live what I have learned... seize every opportunity to love.



Nicholas Taggart Long expends some of his formidable energies on Paramedic School and Ultimate Frisbee

by Annjie Schiefelbein

A friend and I were talking about community the other day (I am a Catholic Worker and he is a Jesuit), and he paraphrased the creator of the L'Arche community, Jean Vanier, by saying that a community can be defined by how it celebrates together and by how it forgives. The past month has given us ample opportunity to do both—a fact for which we are equally grateful and despairing.

On May 3rd we lost our dear friend and former community member Mark Scheu. Losing Mark was unexpected and devastating. In the days following Mark's death, the extended community of Mark's friends found solace in each other, telling stories, crying, singing, hiking, and hurting together. We at Karen House came together fiercely. We helped each other in our various ways of grieving, but the most amazing thing was how focused we became on each other. At any given moment there was someone with whom to cry, reminisce, or question. Anything that had been a struggle went away for a time. What hurt or resentment we had among ourselves, as communities do in the process of ordinary living, disappeared as we reached out and found each other. As we mourned and learned Mark better through each other, we were transformed. And if Mark's death didn't make any sense, community did. If our own hearts and minds were difficult places to be, community was comfort and warmth. And even in the shambles of our sadness, we forgave each other our humanity and loved as well as I've seen. We didn't create something new, we just remembered better who we are when the superfluous things go away.

We were still living in that focused way on May 17th when our dear community member Teka married our beloved neighbor Mike. If our continuous retelling of the wedding day is any indication, it was a day the Worker won't be forgetting. It will become one of our best loved stories or hallowed tales like Mitch and the light bulb or my Swiss chard and strawberry pie, or more relevantly Ann Manganero and the vomit on the stairs or Teka and the Barbie dolls. It was a fabulous ceremony, as inclusive as the bride had prayed for. It was a glorious party, as fun as we all had hoped for! The earnest and true love of Mike and Teka extends to all of us, and it was easy to celebrate that

love. And again, it showed our community at its best. Weeks before the wedding, community members could be seen making plans for the flowers, practicing the music, and helping Teka in various parts of her busy life. Days before and after the wedding showed us all getting ready—preparing the reception area with flowers and balloons and getting the church ready, and cleaning up after the celebrating had officially ended. But the work didn't reveal the entire picture, that of people so immensely happy for the couple, praying and rejoicing with them along with calming the occasional fear. Just out of the worst of our suffering over Mark we were again passionately focused, this time in joy.

As I think of it now, though, the two don't seem so different, especially when I consider the wedding along with the beautiful liturgy for Mark we had at St. Cronan's. At the end of the joy and sorrow, we came to the same points: a more focused love, gratitude for our community, forgiveness of each other, and a celebration of our life together. Both Mark's death and Teka's wedding require of us to come closer and let go of anything but love. I know Teka is elated to have been a conduit for these things, and I imagine that Mark continues to bless us from the freedom of heaven.

I pray that Mark's spirit has found peace. I pray that Teka and Mike continue to find love and grace. I pray for our community that we may keep this lesson of focus and love when the forgiveness and celebrating have finally faded from our present moment. +

Annjie Schiefelbein's second favorite Trinity consists of Rumi, Yoda, and The Boss.

Karen House Needs The Following:

100% Juice
Chicken
Twin beds

Karen House invites you to help out by

Taking house shifts
Cooking dinners

For more information, call Melissa at 621-4052.



Wedding of Teka Childress and Mike Baldwin
May 17th, 2003

The Round Table is the quarterly journal of Catholic Worker life and thought in St. Louis. Subscriptions are free. Please write to *The Round Table*, 1840 Hogan, St. Louis, MO. 63106. Donations are gladly accepted to help us continue our work with the poor. People working on this issue include: Joe Angert, Teka Childress, Mark Chmiel, Carol Giles, Carolyn Griffith, Elizabeth Madden, Bill Miller, Ellen Rehg, and Jenny Truax. Letters to the editor are encouraged; we'll print as many as space permits.

The Round Table

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