

GI SPECIAL 2#C56



"Killed in Action"
(Drawing by Kathe Kollwitz, 1919)

The drawing above is from Kollwitz's *Krieg*-series. Click [here](#) to see *Widows and Orphans*, another anti-war drawing by this German artist. **Kathe Kollwitz lost her only son in the war (and later, in the Second World War, her only grandson).** (Exhibit By Rob Ruggenberg.)

Most Americans Say Iraq War Not Worth Fighting:

Over Half Think Rumsfeld Should Be Replaced

December 20, 2004 By Christopher Muste, Washington Post Staff Writer & WASHINGTON (AFP) & By The Associated Press

Most Americans now believe the war with Iraq was not worth fighting and more than half want to fire embattled Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, the chief architect of that conflict, according to a Washington Post-ABC News poll.

The survey found that 56 percent of the country now believes that the cost of the conflict in Iraq outweighs the benefits, while 42 percent disagreed. It marked the first time since the war began that a clear majority of Americans have judged the war to have been a mistake.

People were evenly divided on whether more troops should be sent to Iraq to help with upcoming elections.

On Iraq, 47 percent of Americans say the situation in the war-racked country has worsened during the past year, while 20 percent say it has improved.

Barely a third of the country approves of the job that Rumsfeld is doing as defense secretary, and 52 percent said President Bush should sack Rumsfeld, a view shared by a big majority of Democrats and political independents. Only 36 percent say the embattled defense secretary should remain at the post he has held since 2001.

The political fallout over the continuing bloody chaos in Iraq clearly is taking its toll on President Bush, who today strongly defended Rumsfeld in a press conference. Bush's overall job approval stood at 48 percent while 49 percent disapproved of his performance as president. **Nearly six in 10 -- 57 percent -- say they disapprove of the way the president has handled the situation in Iraq.**

Six in 10 Americans also say they believe that next month's presidential elections in Iraq should be held as scheduled but expressed broad pessimism about the outcome.

A 54 percent majority said they doubted that the elections will be honest and the votes counted accurately. And an identical proportion said they were not confident that the voting will produce a stable government that will rule Iraq effectively.

"Bush is the first incumbent president to have an approval rating below 50 percent one month after winning re-election," CNN said.

Do you have a friend or relative in the service? Forward this E-MAIL along, or send us the address if you wish and we'll send it regularly. Whether in Iraq or stuck on a base in the USA, this is extra important for your service friend, too often cut off from access to encouraging news of growing

resistance to the war, at home and inside the armed services. Send requests to address up top.

IRAQ WAR REPORTS:

Baghdad (Not Falluja) The Killing Ground For U.S. Troops

12.19.04 Patrick Cockburn, The Independent

US military briefings give the impression that Fallujah has been the heart of the uprising since the invasion.

In reality the deadliest location for a US soldier in Iraq is Baghdad, where 240 US troops have been killed since March last year, more than twice as many as in Fallujah.

NEED SOME TRUTH? CHECK OUT TRAVELING SOLDIER

Telling the truth - about the occupation, the cuts to veterans' benefits, or the dangers of depleted uranium - is the first reason Traveling Soldier is necessary. But we want to do more than tell the truth; we want to report on the resistance - whether it's in the streets of Baghdad, New York, or inside the armed forces. Our goal is for Traveling Soldier to become the thread that ties working-class people inside the armed services together. We want this newsletter to be a weapon to help you organize resistance within the armed forces. If you like what you've read, we hope that you'll join with us in building a network of active duty organizers. <http://www.traveling-soldier.org/> And join with Iraq War vets in the call to end the occupation and bring our troops home now! (www.ivaw.net)

Mosul IED Wounds Three U.S.

Dec. 20, 2004 By ABDUL HUSSEIN AL-OBEIDI, The Associated Press

Insurgents detonated two roadside bombs and a car bomb targeting U.S. forces in the volatile city of Mosul 225 miles northwest of Baghdad, in three separate attacks during a two-hour period. **Three soldiers were wounded in one roadside bomb blast**, while there were no casualties from the others, according to military spokesman Lt. Col. Paul Hastings.

Baghdad IED Gets Humvee, 1 Soldier Wounded

Dec 20, 2004 The Associated Press

Monday, a roadside bomb planted near Baghdad's airport destroyed a U.S. Army Humvee, the military said. One of the soldiers was wounded.

U.S. Patrol Attacked In Ramadi



During an afternoon of sporadic battling with insurgents, U.S. Marines waiting to advance shelter inside the gateway to a home in Ramadi Dec. 20. Marines came under mortar and rocket-propelled grenade fire from insurgents. (AP Photo/Brennan Linsley)

Dec 20, 2004 The Associated Press

In the town of Ramadi, west of Baghdad, insurgents attacked a U.S. patrol with rocket-propelled grenades and machine guns in the center of the city, witnesses said. It was unclear whether there were any casualties in the clash.

Three Foreigners Killed By Samara Car Bomb

Dec. 20, 2004 Focus 1 News, Samara & Middle East Online

Four men driving in a sports utility vehicle, which are often used by foreign contractors, were hit by a roadside bomb and then gunfire in Ashaki, south of Samarra, said Lieutenant Colonel Hamid Mohamed.

Four people are dead including three with foreign citizenship. Their identities are still not clear. The fourth killed is an Iraqi citizen.

War In Falluja Goes On: Displaced Civilians Unsure When They Can Go Home

Under the Geneva Conventions, however, such people are considered to be civilians if they are in civilian dress and don't carry weapons, al-Karbuli said. At the same time, US forces are saying such "military-aged males" could be insurgents, he said.

BAGHDAD, 20 Dec 2004 (IRIN)

Children play and sing songs around the tents they temporarily call home, as fathers queue to receive blankets from a local NGO.

More than two weeks after major fighting ended in Fallujah, about 60 km west of Baghdad, close to 200 families, amounting to more than 1,000 residents of the devastated city, are camped around a local mosque near Baghdad University.

A resident sheikh asks for the exact location not be named for security reasons. An additional estimated 2,000 are living in tent cities or with relatives or other families near mosques around Baghdad, according to figures from the Iraqi Red Crescent Society (IRCS).

"You should not believe it when they say the fighting has stopped," Nasser Mehssen, 48, told IRIN. "We are people from Fallujah, but we should also not be accused of being terrorists."

US officials have announced plans to give ID cards to residents that include fingerprints and retina scans, but so far only a few people have received the cards - mostly aid workers and interim government officials going in and out of the city.

"The situation is still unstable. Security is still fluctuating all the time," Jamal al-Karbuli, secretary general of the IRCS, told IRIN. "It can be calm one minute but 15 minutes later you have to run and hide because of gunfire and worse."

If heads of households go home, they'll just be arrested anyway, the sheikh told IRIN, declining to be named. "This is dreaming, if they think we can go back," the sheikh said. "They detained all of the men from 15 to 50 - how can people like me go back?"

Virtually all of Fallujah's estimated 200,000 people displaced by the fighting are also still living in temporary conditions in places such as Saklawiya, Habbaniya and Germa near Fallujah. **Most of those areas are considered too dangerous for foreigners to go without being embedded with the US Marines in the area.**

"We take them food, water, blankets - our most important focus is on the areas around Fallujah," said Abdul Hamid Salim, an information officer at the IRCS.

One of the biggest potential problems will be the time it takes to make the identification cards, al-Karbuli said. Based on the amount of time it took him to get processed for a card, it would take a year for every resident to receive one, he claimed.

"It took me 20 minutes to go through the procedure to get one," al-Karbuli said. "How will they do this for all of the people who live there?"

Young men who are in the city to guard their houses are not fighters, al-Karbuli said. He said he is unclear if such guards need aid or not.

Under the Geneva Conventions, however, such people are considered to be civilians if they are in civilian dress and don't carry weapons, al-Karbuli said. At the same time, US forces are saying such "military-aged males" could be insurgents, he said.

OCCUPATION ISN'T LIBERATION BRING ALL THE TROOPS HOME NOW!

[THANKS TO D WHO E-MAILED THIS IN: B WRITES: I don't know why the US Army is handing this photo out. Doesn't really look inspiring.]



Sergeant First Class Eugene Hicks, with the U.S. Army's Stryker Brigade, in Mosul December 10, 2004. (REUTERS/HO/US Army/Sgt. Jeremiah Johnson)

TROOP NEWS

Last Hungarian Soldiers Leave Iraq

Dec 20, AP

BUDAPEST, Hungary - The last of Hungary's 300 soldiers serving in a transportation unit south of Baghdad left Iraq on Monday and will be home in a few days, a Defense Ministry spokesman said.

"The soldiers are in now Kuwait and all will return home by Christmas," ministry spokesman Istvan Bocskai said.

Hungary's parliament last year authorized the soldiers' mission, but restricted their activities to non-combat duties and set an end date of Dec. 31, 2004.

The government's plan to extend the mission by three months — until March 31, 2005 — was voted down in parliament last month by the center-right opposition.

Soldiers: "Why Are We Here"?

(Miami Herald, November 30, 2004, Pg. 1)

The bone-weary soldiers of Alpha Company push forward in Fallujah through pounding firefights, close calls and bloodshed. **Some wonder why they are there.**

Soldier Killed In Kuwait Didn't Want To Go Back For Third Tour

"He had to be there because of his country but if he had a choice he preferred not to go. He had already been," Cindi Meza said. Her nephew, she said, was not given a timetable on how long he would have to serve in Iraq on his third tour.

Dec. 20, 2004 By RUTH RENDON, Houston Chronicle

LEAGUE CITY -- The Meza family gathered the week before Thanksgiving to celebrate because U.S. Army Sgt. Barry Meza was leaving for a third tour of duty in Iraq.

Today, the family gathered to mourn his death. The 23-year-old soldier died after being struck by a car as he changed a flat tire Sunday morning in Kuwait.

Meza's family in League City had last spoken to Meza on Saturday.

"It was wonderful," his aunt, Cindi Meza, said. "He loved everybody. He couldn't wait to get back home. **He was happy he was in Kuwait and not on the fighting line.**"

An Army representative notified the family of his death on Sunday evening.

"We just couldn't believe it," Cindi Meza said.

After returning from Iraq earlier this year, Barry Meza was stationed at Fort Hood, which allowed him to visit his family, including 5- and 6-year-old sons in League City, on weekends.

When he was notified of his third tour of duty, Barry Meza had some resistance but went because "he wanted to honor his country," his aunt said.

"He had to be there because of his country but if he had a choice he preferred not to go. He had already been," Cindi Meza said. Her nephew, she said, was not given a timetable on how long he would have to serve in Iraq on his third tour.

Before he left, about 25 family members got together and had a Thanksgiving dinner.

"He was outgoing. The most fun-loving. Always enjoyed life. He was best friends with everybody," Cindi Meza said in describing her nephew. "He knew everybody in town. He had the greatest outlook on life. He always lived every day to the fullest."

Aside from his sons, Barry Meza is survived by a wife, mother, sister and numerous other relatives.

Funeral arrangements are pending.

Lost In Medical Hell: "It Makes Me Wonder What Exactly It Was I Fought For"

"Those who served are being kicked to the curb with little or nothing, and many of them will never fully regain their health," said Lemke. "I still find it totally incomprehensible that people wearing the same uniform I had on while fighting a war are the ones treating medical patients this way."

December 05, 2004 By Marsha Austin and Eileen Kelley, Denver Post Staff Writers

Army Pvt. Jessica Rich was medically evacuated from Iraq in January. Eleven months and two misdiagnoses later, she is still waiting to see a specialist who can treat the autoimmune disease hardening her muscles and attacking her joints.

Sgt. Michael Lemke spent two months after returning from combat dealing with flashbacks of a mass grave at Abu Ghraib prison and dodging phantom sniper fire. Finally, an Army nurse asked him if he might like to see a psychologist.

Sgt. Irene Cornett spent a year in treatment for a wrist injury that occurred when a tent rope snapped. **After a bad infection, doctors fused the bone, leaving her with 10 percent movement and eligible for disability pay, according to her hand surgeon. But the officer who summarized Cornett's medical records to determine her eligibility for disability payments reported she had twice as much movement, ultimately disqualifying her from a lifetime pension.**

All three, along with more than 13,000 others nationwide, have spent time in a "medical holdover" unit, a system now under congressional scrutiny and the source of seemingly endless frustration to members of the Army Reserve and National Guard.

Critics inside and outside the Army say "med hold" units are choked with reservists who should have been home much sooner with family or friends. Instead, they find themselves in a system that some Army officials acknowledge was unprepared to handle the thousands of soldiers wounded in combat overseas or injured while training or serving on U.S. military bases.

Shortly after the March 2003 Iraq invasion, when casualties started returning to the U.S., "the system was immediately overloaded," said Col. Lynn Denooyer, an Army Reserve nurse stationed at Fort Carson between March 2003 and August 2004.

Guard and Reserve soldiers can spend months in med-hold units, unable to return to their civilian lives, while the military decides whether they are fit to serve or must be discharged - and if so, how much pay they should receive.

Since November 2003, 13,542 men and women who volunteered to serve as Army National Guard and Reserve soldiers have been injured on military bases or returned wounded from combat in Iraq and been assigned to med-hold units. **Currently, 4,326 soldiers are in the system, according to the Army surgeon general's office.**

Past and present members of Fort Carson Army Base's medical-hold company, including Rich, Lemke and Cornett, say they've waited weeks, even months, for medical appointments, surgery or other treatments. Soldiers say military doctors routinely deny them consultations with specialists while prescribing dangerously large quantities of sleep aids and painkillers that only mask underlying medical issues.

Some argue that the delay and substandard care are a symptom of an Army that cares more for "active" or "regular" soldiers than for the Guard or Reserve.

"I'm National Guard - that's what happened," said now-discharged and unemployed Sgt. Virgil Travecek, 45, who waited about a year on medical hold for treatment of an injured back at Fort Carson before he was finally given a lump-sum check and sent home to South Dakota.

"They screw you around," he said. "If you were National Guard, Reserve, you were not really a soldier. If you were regular Army, you were the best."

Beyond the frustration of being cooped up in a barracks, with untreated mental and physical ailments, reservists and guardsmen say the system frustrates their efforts to be medically retired, a discharge that requires an Army judgment of 30 percent disability and comes with a lifetime monthly pension and access to military perks such as commissary stores.

Lemke described the whole process as a "pressure cooker" designed to frustrate soldiers to the point where they stop fighting for medical care and retirement the Army can't afford.

He and others feel a deep sense of betrayal. These volunteer soldiers - waitresses, Wal-Mart managers, cooks and corrections officers - never expected to go to war.

Once they did, they expected to be taken care of when they came home to face broken marriages, unsalvageable careers, wasted minds and crippled bodies.

"Those who served are being kicked to the curb with little or nothing, and many of them will never fully regain their health," said Lemke. "I still find it totally incomprehensible that people wearing the same uniform I had on while fighting a war are the ones treating medical patients this way.

"It makes me wonder, past all the flag-waving, what exactly it was I fought for."

Upon arrival at Fort Carson, they are initially screened. If they are not declared fit for duty within 60 days, they have the option of mustering out of active duty and going home to receive medical care through short-term reserve benefits.

Those who choose to seek more extensive care or disability pay enter medical hold. They are given treatment on the base, while boards of soldiers and doctors at Fort Carson and Fort Lewis, Wash., determine how severe their disabilities are, and whether they are eligible for lifelong payments.

Soldiers at Fort Carson say they don't see doctors as often as they need to. Additionally, they complain that reservists and members of the National Guard get less medical care and are less likely to receive a full medical retirement than their counterparts in the "active Army."

Reserve Sgt. Shelly Hays, 31, injured her back at Fort Carson last year while moving a 700-pound pump.

She said the doctor who saw her made it clear she would receive what she described as "part-time care for part-time soldiers."

"He said, 'I'm sick and tired of all you reservists coming in here and taking up all the (appointments) for the regular soldiers,'" she said.

Army statistics show that reservists and members of the National Guard are less likely than active Army soldiers to receive full medical retirements.

From Oct. 1, 2003, through Sept. 30, 26 percent of injured active Army soldiers received a disability rating that resulted in a temporary or permanent retirement with all benefits. Only 16 percent of Reserve or National Guard soldiers received a similar rating.

Dr. Gene Bolles, a Longmont neurosurgeon, spent two years as chief of neurosurgery for Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany. He said he felt the Army's motivation in treating all soldiers was monetary, not medical.

He has seen herniated discs go untreated, causing severe neurological problems - loss of bladder control, loss of sexual function, atrophied extremities.

In his view, the Army needs to invest more in the care of soldiers, or Americans will face long-term costs for Veterans Affairs hospitalizations.

"This is one of the so-called 'hidden costs' of the war," Bolles said. "We are going to end up with a lot of young people with chronic pain."

ABUSED FOREVER? MAYBE NOT: THE SOLDIER OF LA CIOTAT

[Thanks to CZ who sent this in.]

By Bertolt Brecht

After the First World War, during a fete to celebrate the launching of a ship in the small port town of La Ciotat in the South of France, we saw in a public square the bronze statue of a French soldier with a crowd pressing round it.

We went closer and found that it was a living man standing there in a dun-colored greatcoat, a tin hat on his head, his bayonet fixed, motionless on a plinth in the hot June sun. His face and hands were coated with bronze paint. He did not move a muscle, not even his eyelashes flickered.

At his feet a piece of cardboard was propped against the plinth with the following legend:

**HUMAN STATUE
(L'Homme Statue)**

I, Charles Louis Franchard, a private in the ... the regiment, have acquired as a result of being buried alive at Verdun, the unusual faculty of remaining as motionless as a statue for any desired length of time. This skill of mine has been

tested by many professors and described as an inexplicable disease. Please contribute a small donation to the unemployed father of a family.

We threw a coin into the plate which stood by the placard and walked away, shaking our heads.

So here he stands, we thought, armed to the teeth, the indestructible soldier of the long millennia, he with whom history was made, he who enabled Alexander, Caesar and Napoleon to perform those great deeds we read about in school text-books. This is he. He does not flicker an eyelash.

This is Cyrus's archer, Cambyses's scythe-wheeled charioteer whom the sands of the desert could not bury for all eternity, Caesar's legionary, Jenghis Khan's mounted lancer, Louis XIV's Swiss Guard, Napoleon I's grenadier. His is the faculty -- not, after all, so unusual -- of not betraying his feelings when every conceivable instrument of destruction is tried out on him.

He remains (he says) like a stone, without feeling, when he is sent to his death.

Pierced by spears of every possible age -- stone, bronze, iron -- mown down by the chariots of war, those of Artaxerxes and those of General Ludendorff, trampled underfoot by Hannibal's elephants and Atilla's horsemen, smashed to pieces by flying metal from the ever-improved guns of many centuries, though also by flying stones from catapults, riddled by rifle bullets as big as pigeons' eggs, as small as bees, he stands indestructible, ever commanded anew in diverse tongues, but never knowing why or wherefore.

It was not he who took possession of the lands he conquered, just as the mason does not live in the house he has built. Nor indeed did the territory he defended belong to him. Not even his weapon or his equipment belongs to him. But he stands under the rain of death from aircraft and burning pitch from city walls, mine and pitfall beneath his feet, pestilence and mustard gas around him, there he stands, flesh-and-blood quiver for javelin and arrow, target, tank pulp, gas inhaler, with the enemy in front of him and the General behind.

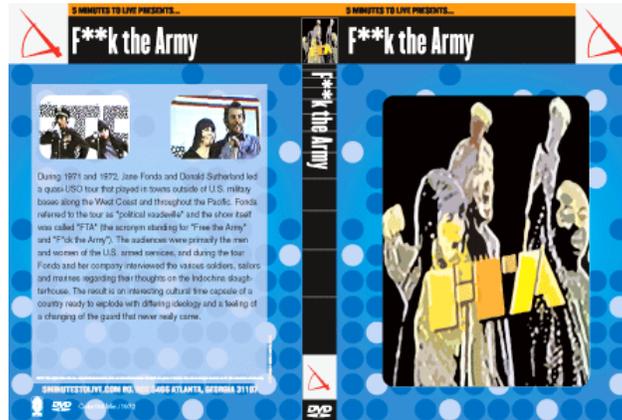
The untold hands that wove the jacket, forged the armour, cut the boots for him! The untold pockets that were filled by him! The immeasurable clamour in every language in the world that urged him on! No god who did not bless him. He who is afflicted by the hideous leprosy of patience, sapped by the incurable disease of imperviousness.

What sort of burying alive is this, we thought, to which he owes this disease, this frightful, monstrous, supremely infectious disease?

Might it not, we asked ourselves, be curable after all?

FTA Rocks Scotland;

Soldiers Mother Condemns War



About FTA:

Jane Fonda's answer to Bob Hope's military comedy show was pulled from theatrical release after just one week in American theatres! In fact, it's amazing this movie even got released, let alone got made during those turbulent times.

During 1971 and 1972, Jane Fonda and Donald Sutherland led a quasi-USO tour that played in towns outside of U.S. military bases along the West Coast and throughout the Pacific. Fonda referred to the tour as "political vaudeville" and the show itself was called "FTA" (the acronym standing for Fuck the Army). The audiences were primarily the men and women of the U.S. armed services, and during the tour Fonda and her company interviewed the various soldiers, sailors and marines regarding their thoughts on the Indochina slaughterhouse. Naturally, they hated the war and the government.

The most stunning scenes show active duty troops cheering Fonda and Sutherland as they heap scorn on the Vietnam War, the government and the brass, turning the themes of combat refusal, mutiny, and fragging officers into a musical and comedy review, to the complete delight of their audience, who encourage them with clenched fist salutes.

Report From Scotland: Camcorder Guerillas' Premiere Of FTA On December 6th.

First off, the showing of FTA at Mono by the Camcorder Guerillas went down a storm. A 'Guerilla' informed that the event was attended by 80-100 people and that the reaction of the audience was one of 'total astonishment'. He went on to say, 'People couldn't believe how much of a movement there had been and just how involved Jane Fonda was'. He said people left feeling 'really encouraged and motivated'. It was a hit.

Last night The Camcorder Guerillas premiered a 15 minute film titled 'Dear Mrs Blair'. The film is a message from Rose Gentle to the wife of the man who sent her son to his death in a war for capitalism. Rose is backed up by her community and family, and addresses Cherie Blair, mother to another, asking her for a response to her grief, pain and rage. At one point in the film Rose says, 'Would you want your son coming home in a coffin covered in the Union Jack, I don't think so'.

The film shows Gordon as a child, in a school play, Gordon in training, Gordon in his stepping out parade, photographs, Gordon's friends, lads like him, alive and kicking a ball around the estate streets of Pollock, and **the film also shows Rose recalling her last words to him, she remembers him calling her and telling her, 'This place is crazy, we nearly got shot the other night, bullets were passing past our heads'.**

And she recalls watching the news and hearing that a patrol had been attacked and a soldier killed, seeing a burned out military vehicle and a dead soldier lying on the ground beside it. And then four hours later, army reps came to her door and informed her that Gordon had been killed. And she realised the boy shed seen on television, lying dead on the ground, had been her son.

The film honours Gordon, pays testament to his character. He was a star athlete, did voluntary work when he couldn't get a job, had a 'heart of gold'. Rose explains that her campaign is exactly what Gordon would have wanted her to do and that if the same had happened to any of his friends, he would have done the same.

Tens of friends and relatives of the Gentle family came to the screening and crying could be heard in the audience when the film was screened.

Afterwards, Rose took the mike and made it clear that Blair and Co. might think that the campaign was ending with this video, but in fact, it was only just beginning and that she hoped other families would be joining her too because, 'I won't shut up, I'll never shut up, I'm gonna keep going until I get justice for my son and all those boys out there'.

She also called for Blair to be removed, saying he had to come out and we had to get him out. She received a standing ovation. She has a new firmness and confidence, the film has helped consolidate the campaign and honour Gordon, send his memory throughout the whole country and further. **Rose Gentle, her campaign, her family, her community, are unstoppable.**

One of the speakers who followed, writer AL Kennedy re-affirmed the relentless pursuit of those who must have justice for their dead loved ones. She said, for every person who is killed in this war, every person, they are never forgotten. Their friends, their families, can never forget and they carry that memory and the pain of that loss and that this propels them to take action.

A.L. Kennedy also calculated just how much blood for oil had been shed, according to the volume of blood a human body carries and how much of it must be shed before someone dies. She calculated the bloodshed at 'a minimum Total Blood Spilled of 92,811 pints - or a touch over 11,600 gallons of human blood on Blair's hands, the hands of the man who still runs our country'. Full article here:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,3604,1038831,00.html> Enough to fill the Glasgow Film Theatre we were sitting in over and over and over.

Scholar and Scientist Mahmood Al-Savagh also spoke searingly, about the ongoing torture and abuse of inmates in prison camps all over Iraq, noting that Abu Ghraib was just the tip of the iceberg. He also highlighted the fact of the Occupation still controlling the profits of Iraq's oil sales, exporting the oil to re-fuel the occupation and to pay for mercenaries and the continued killing of his people.

The Reverend John Mann also spoke. He has been serving Pollock's Christian community since January and gave a profound eulogy at Gordon's funeral. Featured in the film, he says he had just three words for Bush and Blair, which he prayed would be etched into their hearts for evermore: 'Shame On You'.

Rev Mann re-iterated his own sense of shame for the actions of his government, and also condemned Hollywood plans to make a blockbuster of the Battle of Fallujah. He said: 'Gordon didn't get up and dust himself off after he was blown up', stressing, the war isn't a movie and its carnage and terror cannot be belittled or glossed over.

Ewa Jasiewicz, a human rights activist and journalist who had spend over eight months in Occupied Iraq told the story of a Major she had met in Basra who had lost his humanity.

Major Clements was the face of the British Occupation's civil division. He was the face so to speak of the Occupation, the man you would go and visit if you had a problem, if one of your loved ones was killed or injured by an occupation soldier.

When asked if there would be compensation for the families of those shot dead in a riot a few days ago, he said that 'If you're in a riot, your committing a criminal act, so there wont be any compensation,' basically condoning and approving of extra judicial killing. He also outlined an incident outside the Occupation HQ when a demonstrator had clambered onto the bonnet of a car and had been poised to smash a brick through the windshield. He said, 'One of our lads shot him in the legs, personally I would have shot him dead'.

He declared this openly, remorselessly.

Ewa said that Campaigns like Rose's were essential in encouraging soldiers to disaffect and refuse their orders as they appealed to and promoted the humanity of soldiers having doubts about the war.

In order for refusals to start taking place in earnest, there had to be a visible and vocal movement that would show disaffecting soldiers that they would be returning to congratulation and consolation and not condemnation. Ewa also said that the next time there's a demo in Pollock (Gordon's hometown) then there shouldn't be 500 protestors, there should be 5000, 50,000, people should come up from London to Pollock and see the poverty there. Everybody should be coming out to Pollock more often.

Free copies of FTA were available and were snapped up within minutes. Rose said she thought the film was great, nodding and smiling with approval when it was

announced. Free copies of anti-war Country album 'Touch a Name on the Wall' by Annie and the Vets also went rapidly <http://www.cdbaby.com/cd/annieandthevets>

The audience were all encouraged to send ready-to-go postcards to Cherie Blair asking her to 'listen to Mrs Rose Gentle's plea, mother to mother, and to help her bring British soldiers back home from Iraq'. People were also asked to lobby Members of Scottish Parliament, the Defence Secretary and given info on how to join and support CND (Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, Coalition Against the War, and Glasgow Campaign to Welcome Refugees. Every attendee also received a copy of Maxine Gentle's (Gordon's sister) letter to Tony Blair
<http://www.stopwar.org.uk/article.asp?id=190804>

Local and national TV also covered the film's release.

All in all, it was an incredibly successful event and fuelled the fire of Rose's Campaign and the ever-increasing anti-war anti-military resistance in Scotland, where the Blackwatch are recruited, from some of the poorest communities in the UK, and where army recruitment officers are allowed to prey on young people in schools (something Rose agreed she'd be fighting against).

Also, Rose said she'd be taking the campaign into the realms of the anti G8 resistance which is building up for the yearly world-carve-up shindig to be held this June in Gleneagles, Perthshire <http://www.dissent.org.uk/>

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

U.S. Military Translator Killed Near Salman Pak

2004-12-20 Middle East Online

An Iraqi translator for the US military was also shot dead by unknown gunmen near Salman Pak, said Major Hamed Abdullah of the Salman Pak police.

U.S. Convoy Truck Driver Killed

20 December 2004 Focus 1 News & Middle East Online

An Iraqi truck driver leaving a US military base near the town of Yethrub, north of Baghdad, was shot dead, said Lieutenant Colonel Ali Abdullah. The truck of the killed has been part of US convoy travelling to Tikrit.

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

The Dipshit Lieutenant

From: CZ

To: GI Special

Sent: Monday, December 20, 2004 5:22 PM

"We had this lieutenant, honest to Christ he was about the biggest dipshit fool of all time, all time. We called him Lieutenant Gladly 'cause he was always going like, 'Men... Men, I won't never ask you to do nothing I wouldn't do myself gladly,' what an asshole.

We was on 1338 and he goes to me, "Take a little run up to the ridge and report to me,' and I goes like, 'Never happen, Sir.'

So he does, he goes up there himself and damned if the fucker didn't get zapped. He said we was gonna have a real serious talk when he come back, too. Sorry 'bout that."

Dispatches by Michael Herr, p. 26

GUNS BEFORE BUTTER

[Also from: CZ]

BY Bertolt Brecht

1

The famous remark of General Goering
That guns should come before butter
Is correct, inasmuch as the government needs
The more guns the less butter it has
For the less butter it has
The more enemies.

2

Furthermore it should be said that
Guns on an empty stomach
Are not to every people's taste.
Merely swallowing gas
They say, does not quench thirst
And without woollen pants
A soldier, it could be, is brave only in summer.

3

When the artillery runs out of ammunition
Officers up front tend
To get holes in their backs.

Declare Victory And Leave

12/03/04 Helen Thomas

Back in the days of the Vietnam quagmire, the administrations of Presidents Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard M. Nixon insisted that they couldn't remove our troops from Southeast Asia because there would be chaos, anarchy and a blood bath.

The result: Johnson and Nixon -- who did not want to go down in history as having lost a war -- stayed the course and kept us in the killing fields.

In the end, more than 58,000 Americans gave their lives, as did hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese. It was a painful, cruel lesson.

The same rationale is being invoked by a U.S. officialdom that insists we have to stay in Iraq to fight the resistance there. Even those opposed to the war now say we can't leave because a catastrophe would ensue if we were to depart.

Well, the slaughter in Iraq continues apace anyway. Our occupation only compounds the horror of it all.

We ferociously destroyed ancient Fallujah to clear it of the Iraqi resistance, as if there were a geographic center for the insurgency that knows no map coordinates.

Casualty figures continue to rise, but the administration that committed the United States to this senseless folly is content to let others pay the price. More than 1,200 Americans have died, thousands more have been wounded. Thousands of Iraqis -- fighters and civilians -- have been killed.

It's beyond the courage of the American leadership to admit it was wrong to invade a country under false pretenses and to stay there by force. But at some point, the U.S. leadership may have to 'fess up. This may come when, as veteran war correspondent Chris Hedges put it, "The reality of war is so revolting and horrifying that if we did see war it would be hard for us to wage it."

At a recent White House briefing, I asked press secretary Scott McClellan, "Why are we killing people in Iraq? What is the reason we are there, killing people?"

His answer: "The reason we are there is the same reason the international community is, is united in helping Iraq -- the international community is helping Iraq move forward on a free and peaceful and democratic future."

"There are terrorists and other Saddam loyalists who continue to seek to derail that transition to democracy, but they will not prevail," he added. "And we are there to partner with the Iraqi people as they work to realize a better future, one that stands in stark contrast to the past of Saddam Hussein and his brutal regime."

McClellan did the best he could to create a facade of international support, which doesn't exist in the real world, for the U.S. occupation.

The United States did not invade Iraq out of some great humanitarian compassion to protect the Iraqi people, nor did the administration defend the invasion on those grounds early on. (Remember how Iraq was an imminent threat with weapons of mass destruction targeted to destroy us?) Nor did the Iraqis ask for us to save them from Saddam.

To those who warn that it would be inhumane and wrong to leave Iraq soon, I ask: What's so humane about sticking around and killing again and again?

The Upside To Losing Iraq? An Empire Falls

So, as a U.S. citizen, I welcome the U.S. defeat, for a simple reason: It isn't the defeat of the United States - its people or their ideals - but of that empire. And it's essential the American empire be defeated and dismantled.

12/03/04 By Robert Jensen, The Austin (Texas) American Statesman

The United States has lost the war in Iraq, and that's a good thing.

I don't mean that the loss of American and Iraqi lives is to be celebrated. The death and destruction are numbingly tragic, and the suffering in Iraq is hard for most of us in the United States to comprehend. The tragedy is compounded because these deaths haven't protected Americans or brought freedom to Iraqis - they have come in the quest to extend the American empire in this so-called "new American century."

So, as a U.S. citizen, I welcome the U.S. defeat, for a simple reason: It isn't the defeat of the United States - its people or their ideals - but of that empire. And it's essential the American empire be defeated and dismantled.

The fact the Bush administration says we are fighting for freedom and democracy (having long ago abandoned fictions about weapons of mass destruction and terrorist ties) does not make it so. We must look at the reality, no matter how painful. The people of Iraq are better off without Saddam Hussein's despised regime, but that does not prove our benevolent intentions nor guarantee the United States will work to bring meaningful democracy to Iraq.

Throughout history, our support for democracies has depended on their support for U.S. policy. When democratic governments follow an independent course, they typically end up as targets of U.S. power, military or economic. Ask Venezuela's Hugo Chavez or Haiti's Jean-Bertrand Aristide.

In Iraq, the Bush administration invaded not to liberate but to extend and deepen U.S. domination. When Bush says, "We have no territorial ambitions; we don't seek an empire," he tells a half-truth. The United States doesn't want to absorb Iraq nor take direct possession of its oil. That's not the way of empire today - it's about control over the flow of oil and oil profits, not ownership.

In a world that runs on oil, the nation that controls the flow of oil has great strategic power. U.S. policymakers want leverage over the economies of its competitors - Western Europe, Japan and China - which are more dependent on Middle Eastern oil. **Hence the longstanding U.S. policy of support for reactionary regimes (Saudi Arabia), dictatorships (Iran under the Shah) and regional military surrogates (Israel), aimed at maintaining control.**

The Bush administration has invested money and lives in making Iraq a platform from which the United States can project power - from permanent U.S. bases, officials hope.

<p>That requires not the liberation of Iraq, but its subordination. But most Iraqis don't want to be subordinated, which is why the United States in some sense lost the war the day it invaded. One lesson of contemporary history is that occupying armies generate resistance that, inevitably, prevails over imperial power.</p>

Most Iraqis are glad Saddam is gone, and most want the United States gone. When we admit defeat and pull out - not if, but when - the fate of Iraqis depends in part on whether the United States (1) makes good on legal and moral obligations to pay reparations, and (2) allows international institutions to aid in creating a truly sovereign Iraq.

We shouldn't expect politicians to do either without pressure. An anti-empire movement - the joining of antiwar forces with the movement to reject corporate globalization - must create that pressure. Failure will add to the suffering in Iraq and more clearly mark the United States as a rogue state and an impediment to a just and peaceful world.

So, I'm glad for the U.S. military defeat in Iraq, but with no joy in my heart. We should all carry a profound sense of sadness at where decisions made by U.S. policy-makers - not just the gang in power today, but a string of Republican and Democratic administrations - have left us and the Iraqis. But that sadness should not keep us from pursuing the most courageous act of citizenship in the United States today: Pledging to dismantle the American empire.

This planet's resources do not belong to the United States. The century is not America's. We own neither the world nor time. And if we don't give up the quest - if we don't find our place in the world instead of on top of the world - there is little hope for a safe, sane and sustainable future.

What do you think? Comments from service men and women, and veterans, are especially welcome. Send to contact@militaryproject.org. Name, I.D., withheld on request. Replies confidential.

OCCUPATION REPORT

Baghdad Fucked: Power Cut To 4 Hours A Day

20 Dec 2004 BAGHDAD, 20 December (IRIN)

Ministry of Power officials say that problems with the main generators for the city will take longer than expected to be repaired and that a shortage of petrol is also delaying work.

Residents and shopkeepers say they have lost most of the food kept in refrigerators and complain that there is increasing insecurity due to blackouts, **with power only available for two hours in the morning and sometimes only two hours at night.**

"I have to go to buy food for my family every day and cannot store anything," Abbas di'Lemi, a resident of the Sadr city suburb of Baghdad, told IRIN.

"I don't have money to afford a generator and my family is going through a very difficult situation. **The minister tells us that improvements are everywhere, but I cannot see them,**" di'Lemi added.

Pharmacists in the capital said that they too have suffered with the loss of many vital and expensive medicines that should be kept cool.

Some medical centres which depend on generators also claim huge losses in vaccines. "It's really terrible. We are in need of vaccines and now the ones that we have should be thrown away," Dr Linda Muhammad, a paediatrician from the Yarmouk health centre, told IRIN.

Baghdad used to have approximately 18 hours a day of constant electricity until August of this year. Shalal explained that recent events and the curfew also delayed repairs as workers had to go home earlier. **In the 10 months before the conflict that overthrew Saddam Hussein, the power supply was regular and almost 24 hours per day in the capital in both winter and summer.**

Ra'ad Shalal, a senior official of the Ministry of Power, told IRIN that they were doing all they could with the present capacity to repair power stations. "The situation should be

improved at any time. We expected it to be done earlier, **but the security circumstances delayed our work,"** he said.

This situation is contrary to US and Iraqi interim government statements saying that power output in Iraq has increased since the fall of Saddam Hussein.

People in the capital are beginning to show their frustrations, with a recent demonstration demanding improvement in power supplies.

"For Iraqis, power is the most important start for a democracy. We don't want elections if there is no power supply in our homes. It will get worse and worse," Fatah Abdu Kareem, a spokesman for the demonstration in Baghdad, told IRIN.

US Convoys Sow Death On Iraqi Highways

BAGHDAD, December 20 By Mazen Ghazi, Amer Saleh (IslamOnline.net)

Driving on or living by Iraq's highways became a risky must-do experience in the war-battered country.

It is almost a daily routine for Iraqi fighters to target US military convoys traveling down highways.

The typical reaction by US forces in such incidents, according to eye-witnesses, is indiscriminate and massive firepower.

With bullets flying in all directions, surrounding buildings, traveling cars and bystanders could easily be hit.

Such a repeated scenario forced many residents to put their houses, overlooking or next to highways, for sale and move inward, opting for more security.

Others just desert rooms overlooking highways and confine their lives to other rooms, somehow remote from the indiscriminate firing every now and then.

"A US military convoy came under attack on the highway the other day. The Americans opened fire randomly towards my house and the neighbors'," Raed El-Shawi, a government employee living on Anbar-Baghdad highway, told IslamOnline.net.

Pointing at traces and holes on the walls of the house's façade, he added that the flying bullets smashed the windows and ignited a fire in the guest room.

"After that incident, we quit using rooms overlooking the highway and moved our furniture to back rooms, fearing for our lives."

Many Iraqis said they had to evacuate their highway homes, to avoid being hit by flying US bullets or buried under the ruins of their houses.

Sameh El-A'ni said he had to quit a house he had rented almost a year ago after getting married.

“I rented the house, dreaming, along with my bride, of a stable life. But military convoys kept passing by and attacks targeting them kept happening day in and day out. It was scary, but we had to put up with it.

“One day, our house was directly hit by bullets and glass windows broke down with a boom. My wife, then in her seventh month, panicked and we almost lost the baby.

“We had to decide to leave the house and now live with my parents away from the highway.”

Salman Al-Kaabi, a real-estate broker in Al-A'mel neighborhood in Baghdad, told IOL the prices of houses overlooking the highways have nose-dived.

“These houses have become like stagnant goods that attract no one.”

The unabated anti-US attacks on highways have also put these roads into a miserable state, filled with bumps and holes.

In addition, the mere driving alongside a US military convoy could prove as fatal as being in a war zone uninvited.

“These US military convoys are really unbearable. In addition to the great noise and disturbance they make, they could get us killed as well,” Mahmud Ahmed, an Iraqi driver, told IOL.

“They shoot at people for any reason they see enough to take a life. We must keep a minimum of 300-meter distance from the last vehicle in their convoys on highways.

“A barrage of bullets fired by a soldier at a car closing in or just speeding could result in a number of civilian killings in a second.”

The driver, with a furious tone, recalled the killing of a friend by US soldiers in a similar situation.

“He was hired by an Iraqi family to drive them from Baghdad. His guilt was that he tried to bypass a US military convoy driving too slow. He was killed instantly, along with the Iraqi family.”

DANGER: POLITICIANS AT WORK

SATAN



Satan was named Time magazine's Person of the Year, after a reelection victory that he said was about the 'use of American influence.' (AFP/File/Brendan Smialowski)

CLASS WAR NEWS

Investment Banker Politely Warns That The Empire Is Bankrupt And The Bush Regime Is Looney

18 November 2004 By Gerry van Wyngen, Business Review Weekly. Gerry van Wyngen is an investment banker and chairman of CPI Group.

It is potentially worse than Vietnam because this time America is weaker economically and poorer in world status.

George Bush, President of the United States for another four years, may change the world more than he might hope, or his critics fear. Contrarily, the outcomes will differ from what is intended. Bush was re-elected on a platform of keeping

America strong, but an obsession with imposing a global Pax Americana will drain the administration's ability to achieve its foremost aim.

The cost of war in Iraq alone is running at about \$US100 billion a year.

Like Vietnam, Iraq will bleed America, yet there is a big difference between then and now. In 1973, the US was an economically powerful creditor nation and it could afford the war. Today, it is a weak debtor nation and its negative position on net overseas assets (investments and loans made by US entities to foreigners less investments and loans received by US entities from foreigners) is 30% of gross domestic product (GDP) and worsening.

The US has a current account deficit of almost 6% of GDP, which also is rising, and it is dependent on large purchases of US bonds by the Japanese and Chinese central banks to help offset the deficit.

Politically, Bush's mandate to continue the war against Muslim terrorists helps President Vladimir Putin legitimise Russia's subjugation of Chechnya as a fight against Muslim terrorists. **Putin's support for Bush, however, does not extend to the US dollar, and he has intimated that he would like to see a lowering of dollar holdings in Russia's foreign exchange reserves.**

For Europe, which is increasingly seeing the world through different eyes and against a background of economic and financial interests that differ to those of the US, Bush's uncompromising and confrontational style may result in the evolution of more cohesive and functional government in the European Union. **That may have implications for its economy and will almost certainly improve the euro as a reserve currency, eventually ranking with the US dollar.**

On the home front, the Bush administration will be pushed along by an economic agenda that is as far removed from reality as is the military agenda.

This year, federal tax revenue was \$US100 billion lower and spending was \$400 billion higher than when Bush took office in 2001.

Although Bush is paying lip service to halving the budget deficit, he is determined to make permanent the temporary tax cuts, lessen further taxation of investment income and make other reforms of the tax system, all of which will worsen the budget deficit.

And, in case you are wondering, no, the future cost of the war in Iraq is not in Bush's forward projections. He assumes that his tax changes will promote higher economic growth and thus increase tax revenue. **To put it politely, it is an interesting hypothesis, completely at odds with the results of tax reforms in the past four years.**

The combined effect of the chronic budget deficit and the deteriorating current account deficit will be of increasing concern to the international community next year.

Downward pressure on the US dollar may become extreme, placing central banks in the difficult position of having to decide whether to support it to keep their own

currencies competitive, notwithstanding the deteriorating creditworthiness of the US.

The Bush administration and, more recently, the US Federal Reserve appear to be receptive to a depreciation of the US dollar. There is doubt this would provide much relief to the current account deficit. Depreciation would certainly make some European exports uncompetitive but the effect on Asia would be minor. To come to the core of the problem, even a 20% depreciation of the dollar against the Chinese yuan might have negligible effect on US import volumes, and in fact make the same volume of imports 20% more expensive.

The crux of the matter is that the US has a chronic national savings problem. Personal savings, as a percentage of net income, are slightly above zero. Although this is marginally better than in Australia, at present the world's worst savings offender, the US Government is a massive deficit spender, which is in marked contrast to Australia's performance.

Fixing these core problems is not on the Bush agenda, yet they may eventually undermine his ability to achieve a safe America with prosperity and full employment. Indeed, the longer the US remains bogged down in Iraq and defers putting its domestic house in order, the greater the possibility of a crisis erupting before Bush's second term is complete.

Received:

Keep Hammering

From: RS

To: GI Special

Sent: Sunday, December 19, 2004 8:46 PM

Compared to the VN war, incipient GI resistance re Iraq is running well ahead of sked. Keep hammering.

[RS should know. His brother, a Vietnam soldier, played a key role in bringing on the rebellion of the U.S. army inside Vietnam that finally made continuing that Imperial war impossible. T.]

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