

GI SPECIAL 4D18:



www.ivaw.net

Listen To This One And Carve It On Your Heart Forever:

“Sarah Montague Talks To Garrett Reppenhagen Of Iraq Veterans Against The War”

7 April 2006 BBC

The latest opinion polls in the United States show that most Americans are now against the military campaign in Iraq.

Garrett Reppenhagen's experience in Iraq, where he served for a year, has changed his mind on the occupation and has led him to leave the US Army.

He now campaigns for a group of former soldiers, Iraq Veterans Against the War.

They have fought there, become disillusioned and say it is time for America to pull out.

To meet Garrett Reppenhagen:

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/hardtalk/4888294.stm>

IRAQ WAR REPORTS

Kentucky Soldier Dies Of Wounds



Master Sgt. Clinton Cubert of Lawrenceburg, Ky., when he was a Sgt. 1st Class, who died April 16, 2006, at the Lexington Veterans Affairs Hospital of injuries he sustained Sept. 11, 2005, when a roadside bomb detonated near his vehicle in Iraq. He was assigned to the Kentucky Army National Guards 2113th Transportation Company based in Paducah. (AP Photo/Kentucky National Guard)

Missouri Soldier Dies

Apr. 11, 2006 Associated Press, SPRINGFIELD, Mo.

A 36-year-old soldier from Springfield was one of two soldiers killed in Iraq when a roadside bomb exploded near their Humvee, the Defense Department said Tuesday.

Army Sgt. 1st Class Randall Lamberson died Monday in Balad, one day after he was injured during combat operations in the Al Anbar Province

Another soldier in the Humvee died Sunday. He was identified as Army Spc. David S. Collins, 24, of Jasper, Ga.

Both were assigned to the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell, Ky. They served with the 1st Battalion, 506th Infantry Regiment, 4th Brigade Combat Team.

Lamberson joined the Army in 1989 and arrived at Fort Campbell in 2001. He is survived by his wife, Dana, daughter Kelsi and son Evan, of Fort Campbell; and his father, Lloyd, of Lampe, Mo.

"Randall believed in what he was doing," Dana Lamberson said in a statement released by the post Tuesday night.

Collins is survived by his wife, Mara, and children, Elizabeth and James, of Fort Campbell; father, Jack Collins of Talking Rock, Ga.; and mother, Marsha Dean of Jasper, Ga. He joined the Army in January 2002.

The deaths of Lamberson, Collins and another soldier killed Monday bring to 141 the number of members of the 101st Airborne who have died in Iraq since the war began more than three years ago.

Marine, 20, Laid To Rest

April 11, 2006 Internet Broadcasting Systems, Inc.

BOSTON: A community came together Tuesday to honor Marine Cpl. Scott Procopio, who was killed in Iraq.

NewsCenter 5's Jack Harper reported that Procopio's Marine brothers carried him through a final salute. The town of Saugus kept its promise, making it a special day for his parents and wife, Kristal, the high school sweetheart he married six months ago.

"It's tragic. It's a terrible thing that has happened," Kristal Procopio's grandfather, Carl Stout, said.

"He gave his life for his country. She loved him dearly. They knew the danger," Kristal Procopio's grandmother, Pamela Stout, said.

They were married in September during a break between his tours in Iraq.

"They were going to get married later, but they decided at the last minute to get married before he went for his second (deployment) so they could spend more time together," Carl Stout said.

The support of the town has given the family strength.

"The reality will be setting in. I'm sure it will be difficult. Her older sister is getting married in another week, so maybe that will bring a little joy to her," Pamela Stout said.

"He was wonderful young man. He had velvet brown eyes. We loved him from the beginning. She has never been so happy in her whole life. I just wish they could have gone on to have a family."

Procopio, a 2003 Saugus High School graduate, was killed Sunday during combat operations in Al Anbar Province, Iraq. He was 20 years old.

Two Marines From PA Killed

Apr 5, 2006 CBS Broadcasting

ALLENTOWN, Pa. Two Marines from Pennsylvania were killed in separate incidents in Iraq, military authorities said Wednesday.

Lance Cpl. Jacob W. Beisel, 21, of Lackawaxen, died Friday from wounds sustained in combat in Iraq's Al Anbar Province, the Department of Defense said. Staff Sgt. Eric A. McIntosh, 29, of Trafford, and two other Marines died Sunday, authorities said.

Both were assigned to the 3rd Battalion, 8th Marine Regiment, 2nd Marine Division, II Marine Expeditionary Force, based at Camp Lejeune, N.C.

Beisel joined the Marines in September of 2003, a few months after graduating from high school. He had just started his second tour in Iraq when he was killed, according to a public affairs officer at Camp Lejeune.

"He was just a really fun, fun-loving kid," said Amy Newcomer, 21, Beisel's friend since kindergarten and president of their high school class. "A goofball who got along with everybody. It didn't matter what clique you were in."

"I think he's the kind of student that everyone wants to have," said Joann Hudak, Beisel's principal throughout middle school and high school. "Quiet, went about his business, respectful, a really solid young man from a good family."

Hudak, principal of Wallenpaupack Area High School, said Beisel planned to attend college after leaving the military.

The high school observed a moment of silence Monday after Hudak announced Beisel's death. Hudak said she is working with the Class of 2003 on some sort of memorial, perhaps a scholarship.

Beisel is survived by his mother, father and a younger sister.

Funeral plans were private.

McIntosh was a 1996 graduate of Penn Trafford High School in suburban Pittsburgh.

McIntosh was an infantry unit leader and had joined the Marines in September 1996, according to Marine spokesman First Lt. Barry Edwards. Beisel was a mortarman who joined in September 2003.

Coordinated Resistance Attack On U.S. Positions In Ramadi: Casualties Not Announced

April 17, 2006 (AP) RAMADI, Iraq

A car apparently driven by a suicide bomber exploded Tuesday in front of a U.S. observation post in central Iraq, sending up a huge fireball and damaging buildings and cars on a main road. There were no reports of U.S. casualties.

The front end and two wheels were all that remained of the car, which appeared to have been driven by a suicide bomber, officials said.

The bombing was part of a coordinated attack by insurgents, who fired mortars and rocket-propelled grenades at several sites occupied by Marines in the center of the city, which is 70 miles west of Baghdad.

The Marines fired back, and a U.S. Army tank blew off chunks of a mosque minaret, where gunmen were believed to be holed up. Fighting lasted about 90 minutes

**REALLY BAD IDEA:
NO MISSION;
HOPELESS WAR:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW**



U.S. soldiers view a car destroyed during a gun battle in Falluja, April 15, 2006.
REUTERS/Mohammed Faisal

Insurgents Mount Bold Seven Hour Attack In Baghdad

Apr 17 By Michael Georgy, Reuters Limited

About 50 insurgents mounted a brazen attack on Iraqi forces in Baghdad on Monday, prompting U.S. troops to provide support in a battle that lasted seven hours, a U.S. military spokesman said.

The guerrillas attacked Iraqi forces in the district of Adhamiya in northern Baghdad overnight. Five rebels were killed and one member of the Iraqi forces was wounded. There were no U.S. casualties, said the spokesman.

"It was quite a battle. It lasted seven hours," he said.

While insurgents mount such attacks in their strongholds in western Anbar province, they are rare in the Iraqi capital.

The bold attack raises fresh questions about security in the capital as Iraqi leaders struggle to form a unity government they hope can avert a sectarian civil war.

There are bodies on Omar bin Abdul Aziz street, but police forces can't get to the area," said the police official.

AFGHANISTAN WAR REPORTS

A Battle In Sangisar

15 April 2006 Aljazeera

Forty-one Taliban and six police officers were killed in a battle in southern Afghanistan in an area where the Taliban's leader once lived, a governor said on Saturday.

Nine police and several Taliban were wounded in Friday's fighting in Sangisar, a town 40km (25 miles) southwest of Kandahar, said Asadullah Khalid, the provincial governor.

However, a Taliban spokesman, in a telephone call to Al Jazeera's correspondent in Islamabad, rejected Khalid's account.

Mohamed Hanif said 15 Afghan police and one Taliban fighter were killed in Friday's battle.

Khalid said that although major fighting near Kandahar had ended and the area was under control, a search was under way to capture Taliban fighters who had fled to a nearby village.

"We saw the 41 bodies of Taliban at the end of the fighting, but we collected only 11," he said, declining to elaborate on why the other bodies were not retrieved.

The dead in Friday's clash included a district police chief and a district governor was among the wounded, Khalid told Agence France-Presse.

Fighting between the Taliban and Afghan forces broke out in Helmand province on Saturday, and seven members of the security forces were killed, Hanif told Al Jazeera.

Police said that Taliban insurgents killed a district governor in an ambush on Saturday in Helmand.

Abdul Majeed, the governor for the province's Baghran district, was killed in his car, district police chief Bahaudin Khan told AFP. "Our district governor was martyred today," he said.

Another Taliban spokesman, Yousuf Ahmadi, told AFP by telephone that the movement was responsible for the attack. He said seven police were killed, but this was rejected by Khan.

TROOP NEWS

**THIS IS HOW BUSH BRINGS THE TROOPS HOME:
BRING THEM ALL HOME NOW, ALIVE**



The casket of Lance Corporal Brain Montgomery at Mentor United Methodist Church in Mentor, Ohio, August 10, 2005. Montgomery was killed in Iraq August 1. REUTERS/Ron Schwane

The Generals Vs. Rumsfeld:

“Folks Are Seeing The End Of This Administration”

April 14, 2006 by David S. Cloud and Eric Schmitt, New York Times [Excerpt]

WASHINGTON: The widening circle of retired generals who have stepped forward to call for Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld's resignation is shaping up as an unusual outcry that could pose a significant challenge to Mr. Rumsfeld's leadership, current and former generals said on Thursday.

"Are the floodgates opening?" asked one retired Army general, who drew a connection between the complaints and the fact that President Bush's second term ends in less than three years.

"The tide is changing, and folks are seeing the end of this administration."

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.

Report From Camp Casey, Crawford, Texas: “Either We Did It, Or Bush Is Afraid Of The Easter Bunny!”

From: Ward Reilly, Veterans For Peace
To: GI Special
Sent: April 16, 2006

Brothers and sisters...

Either we did it, or Bush is afraid of the Easter Bunny!

After 5 straight years of holding an Easter Egg hunt at his (VERY) White House-West, Bush changed his plans of coming to Crawford, and left the Easter children hangin'....he went and hid in Kennebunkport...wherever the fu*k that is...no bunnies showed up there either!

(It's in Maine, I know, I know)

This 5-day Easter action at Camp Casey KICKED ASS, particularly because civil-rights ICON, the Rev Joseph Lowery, AND the immigrant workers leaders, were present at Camp Casey in solidarity, pledging the mutual support of their respective followers in our fight against the common enemy, and our common issue, that being class warfare by our government against us all.

You were all with us, and Lowery predicted that we are unstoppable.

How's this for a switch?

The attorney for the Camp Casey arrestees, from the ACLU, went to court to demand that charges be brought against all of those arrested, as the judge in charge will not charge our "Prairie Dogs" with the "crime" they were arrested for, that being standing in a ditch that we own on public property, next to unCurious Georges ranch.

IVAW member Geoff Millard was released without having to pay bail, because the judge thought he should be released on PR!!

IVAW, VFP, GSFP, and MFSSO were all represented in the arrests, including 5 new resisters! They "Prairie Dog 19", including Daniel Ellsberg, DeDe, Tammara, Geoff and and and...

Charlie, Geoff, and I stood toe-to toe against 100 "bikers for Bush."

Before they left, half were flashing the peace sign, and the other half scowled and left as we stood silently (sort-of) and pointed at our unit patches: this story is REALLY funny, and will be detailed soon...

5 flash films are posted at Truthout on this weekends Camp Casey adventures...

Much more to come.... onward to NYC, 4-29.

Cindy Sheehan has called for 1,000,000 to march in DC for July 4th....start saving your plane fares...

Peace from Ward

Courageous Women Bring Down Groping Colonel

Letters To The Editor
Army Times
4.17.06

Confronting harassment

Regarding Col. Nikki McCarty's conviction for "groping" women ("Reserve officer gets 3 years for harassment," March 27), this verdict were long overdue and entirely appropriate. We cannot and should not tolerate for one minute harassment, assault and abuse of any soldiers or civilian employees by any member of the military.

Having known and served with some of the victims for many years, I know what it took for them to stay the course to the end. I applaud their courage and willingness to do the right thing.

I hope one day that harassment and abuse are things of the past and that no one has to go through what these women did.

Maj. Beth Strickland
Nashville, Tenn.

IRAQ RESISTANCE ROUNDUP

Assorted Resistance Action

Apr 17 AP & By QASSIM ABDUL-ZAHRA, AP & Reuters & April 16, 2006, Leila Fadel, Knight Ridder Newspapers & By Qassim Abdul-Zahra, The Associated Press

A roadside bomb targeted an army patrol in central Baghdad, wounding some soldiers.

Assailants attacked a police patrol in western Baghdad in a drive-by shooting, wounding two policemen, police said.

Gunwomen in the southern city of Basra kidnapped three employees of a state-run electrical company on their way to work. The body of a Basra policeman captured three days earlier was found near the Iranian border, Basra police Capt. Mushtaq Khazim said.

Guerrillas killed a soldier while he was heading to his work in Hawija, 70 km (43 miles) southwest of Kirkuk.

The body of a contractor working with U.S. forces has been found in Riyadh, a town some 60 km (37 miles) southwest of Baghdad, police said.

In northeast Baghdad, insurgents riddled a police patrol with bullets, killing one policeman and injuring four; in the slums of Sadr City two police stations were attacked killing another officer and injuring three.

Guerrillas killed seven people in the northern city of Mosul as they drove from a police station where they had been working on renovations.

**IF YOU DON'T LIKE THE RESISTANCE
END THE OCCUPATION**

FORWARD OBSERVATIONS

Building The Central America Movement: The Vietnam Antiwar Movement Experience: “Radical Civilians Played An Especially Crucial Role In Helping To Sustain The GI Movement”



Vietnam: They Stopped An Imperial War

[Although written 24 years ago, about a different problem, there are arguments that ring true today, especially about the necessity of civilians helping troops build their own movement against the war inside the Armed Forces. This is part

of our forgotten history of movements from below. Thanks to Michael Letwin, for making available. T]

“The plague of disaffection and defiance within the ranks, most dramatically evidenced in fragging, crippled the infantry and left the once proud American Army helpless, more a liability than an asset to U.S. purposes.”

November 8, 1982 Laura Daigen (Black and Third World Outreach Committee), Eric Jacobson (Brooklyn Commit-tee), John King (Press Committee), and Michael Letwin (Black and Third World Outreach Committee)

Introduction

Over the last two-and-a-half years, CISPES has played a vital role in making El Salvador a nationally visible issue as part of a growing antiwar atmosphere and movement. After the interventionist fever which swept the U.S. only a couple of years ago, especially during the Iranian Hostage Crisis, this is no small contribution.

Today, however, we face an impasse. Our activity has so far helped prevent large scale U.S. intervention in Central America, but it clearly will not be enough to prevent the current escalation of the war by the U.S. or to force the U.S. out. This fact has forced to the surface the basic question: To whom and with what politics and strategy must CISPES direct its work?

Since the March 27 [1982] demonstration in Washington, members of CISPES have generally considered two opposing answers.

One position is that CISPES needs to more narrowly limit its focus to the issue of El Salvador in order to reach the “middle sectors”—the religious groups, labor leaders, liberal politicians and middle class people generally.

The other position, which we argue for in this paper, is that both the experience of the Vietnam and the situation in this country today calls for building a Central America movement first and foremost among rank and file working class and specially oppressed people () in this country on the basis of an independent, multi issue approach.**

These two positions have surfaced in evaluating and planning CISPES activities over the last year, with the more narrow approach usually dominant.

For example the New York Women's Committee proposal to endorse the abortion rights demonstration at Cherry Hill on July 17 [1982] was opposed and defeated (***) on the grounds that to do so would threaten our relationship with the Catholic Church.

More recently the demands and CISPES literature for the World Front demonstration (the Front itself is discussed in the related papers) didn't address related issues such as racism, sexism, cutbacks union busting or unemployment. The coalition for the event was limited to far fewer and less diverse groups than was previously the case, with a particularly prominent role for the Peace Council/Communist Party and the leaders of the Labor Committees in Support of Democracy and Human Rights in El Salvador.

We believe that this approach has limited the actual and potential Central American movement, and that to move ahead, CISPES must broaden itself to relate to the people it needs to reach most.

1. The Vietnam Antiwar Movement Experience

The Vietnam War showed that the activity of rank and file working class people was in-dispensable, both indirectly and directly, in ending the war.

The “official” antiwar and white student movements were themselves born out of and took inspiration from the Civil Rights and Black Power activity of working class Black people. This official antiwar movement was able to stir up, and eventually legitimize opposition to the war. But it didn’t have the power to end it alone.

The liberal Democratic politicians supported by the moderate antiwar forces didn’t end the war, and some actually ran it, as in the case of LBJ. More militant activities, such as shutting down a university, holding a huge demonstration, and middle class draft resistance, were dramatic and important, but they could not bring society to a halt and so the war continued despite them.

The war was ended, under a Republican administration, only when the resistance of the Vietnamese and antiwar sentiment in the U.S. found a direct response, especially in the military, among masses of ordinary North American working class people.

Black Opposition

Like the official Antiwar Movement, this working class response was first influenced by the radical wing of the Black Movement, which rejected the idea that the war was separate from the oppression of Blacks in this country. From 1964 on, Malcolm X, the Student Non Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), the Congress on Racial Equality (CORE), the Black Panther Party—the Black revolutionaries—and eventually Martin Luther King, Jr., all played the key role of being among the first to declare widespread and militant opposition to the war.

The growing Black opposition contributed to varying degrees of Black (and white) political awareness about Vietnam. As early as 1966, Newsweek found that 35% of the Blacks polled opposed the war “because they had less freedom in the U.S.” than whites. By 1969, 56% of the Blacks polled opposed the war and one out of seven did not even “consider the U.S. worth fighting for in a world war.” (1)

This attitude had its greatest and most direct impact among Black GIs in Vietnam, who saw each other, poor white and Latino GIs and the Vietnamese killed and maimed, all despite the fact that, as the popular slogan went, “No Vietnamese Ever Called Me Nigger.”

Black awareness was further fueled by the fact that Black soldiers were more likely than anyone else to be sent to the front lines and killed: only 11% of the general population between nineteen and twenty one years old was Black in 1961-66, but Blacks made up 25% of the casualties in Vietnam (2). The irrepressible Vietnamese national liberation movement, especially when compared to the corrupt Saigon regime, made clear that the U.S. could never win the war, and that the claim of the government to be defending “democracy” was a sham.

Working Class Antiwar Movement

Especially after the Tet Offensive, the first major National Liberation Front offensive against the U.S. in Vietnam in early 1968, and the assassination of King in April, Black GIs, joined by Latinos and whites, created their own antiwar movement, the basic aim of which was to survive.

By the early '70s, heavy drug use, antiwar and Black countercultures, AWOLs, desertions, fraggings (shooting and blowing up officers), avoidance of combat and outright and some-times large scale mutiny, and an extensive GI movement around the world had made the American ground forces, soon followed by the Navy and Air Force, militarily unreliable.

As David Cortright concluded in his book *Soldiers in Revolt*:

“The plague of disaffection and defiance within the ranks, most dramatically evidenced in fragging, crippled the infantry and left the once proud American Army helpless, more a liability than an asset to U.S. purposes.” (3)

One of the most important effects of the GI movement was to make it more difficult to use the Army for purposes of repression at home. For example, in the summer of 1968, 43 Black GIs stationed at Fort Hood, Texas, were court martialed for refusing riot duty at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, where student and antiwar radicals were protesting.

Working class vets, Black, Latino and white, brought the experience of the war home with them, and joined in organizing against the war. Vietnam veterans were able to reach people in their communities about Vietnam better than any Moratorium on television, and the impact of their accounts and the obvious toll that the war took on them continues to be an important factor in sustaining the “Vietnam Syndrome” which has so far kept U.S. troops out of El Salvador.

In addition to participating in official antiwar activity, organized groups such as Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) put on events like the dramatic Dewey Canyon III encampment in Washington in 1971. Vets and others organized their own antiwar activity in actions such as the Chicano Moratorium in Los Angeles in 1970.

Working class and Third World vets also linked up with non vets in related movements.

Many were involved in the ghetto revolts that shook the country from 1964-68.

Some Blacks, Puerto Ricans and Chicanos joined organizations like the Black Panthers, the Young Lords and Brown Berets, which at their height in the late '60s were among the most militant political organizations in their communities.

Perhaps most importantly in terms of where their power lay, young Nam vets fed into growing worker unrest. Groups like the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, and the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement in Detroit and other rank and file union groups organized against racism and bureaucracy in the unions and around other issues in the plants and community.

And despite the image of pro war demonstrations by white hardhats, polls from the mid and late '60s showed that white workers were actually more antiwar as a group than were more educated and wealthier sections of society.

Two Movements

The relationship between these movements of working class and nonwhite people around the war, racism, the unions and the community on the one hand, and the official antiwar and white radical movement on the other was varied.

Generally, the major official organizations of the antiwar movement directed themselves toward white middle class students and professionals, stressed a single issue approach, and periodically folded themselves into the presidential campaigns of McCarthy in '68 and McGovern in '72. Their contact with workers and the oppressed was usually limited to relations with liberal union bureaucrats who refused to seriously mobilize their members. [Now who does that remind you of today? T]

Others in the white movement, especially some from the radical antiwar and student movements, tried to seriously relate to and support the activities of workers and the specially oppressed. Alliances were forged with Black revolutionary organizations.

Radical civilians played an especially crucial role in helping to sustain the GI movement.

Some groups made ongoing attempts to connect the war with the emerging worker revolt.

At the same time, the work of many white radicals was limited by taking on a patronizing, one way, missionary approach, and by attempts to prove their revolutionary credentials by idolizing Black and other nonwhite struggles in this country and Third World nationalism abroad.

Furthermore, many middle class groups, both moderate and radical, tended to focus exclusively on the immorality of the war, without attempting to address its impact on or relationship to working class and oppressed people in this country, as articulated, for example, by the Black movement.

Sometimes this took the form of hostility and impatience toward working class people, especially whites, for fighting in the war, or working in a “defense” plant, as if they had the same options of college deferments, psychiatric exemptions, or graduate school as middle class kids.

These politics had their price.

Often, distrust of Third World people for white activists and multiracial unity, learned over decades of betrayal, was confirmed and deepened.

Working class people of all colors, many of whom participated in the war, were hostile toward a movement which seemed to be made up of privileged and often arrogant college kids who ignored, preached to, and sometimes even blamed them for the war.

The Women’s Liberation Movement, which emerged from the Black and Antiwar movements, remained suspicious of the male dominated moderate, radical and Third World organizations which often refused to acknowledge or support the Women’s Movement. Gays and lesbians felt even more alienated from the established movements.

The Effects

The result was that unity between the movements was difficult to achieve or maintain and therefore antiwar activity never went as far or as soon as it might have.

One of the most important limits was that working class people never used their power at the workplace where they could have ended the war in a matter of weeks by shutting down all or even parts of the economy. This didn’t happen spontaneously because after McCarthyism and relative prosperity, the organized working class of the ‘60s lacked a tradition of using its economic muscle for much of anything, let alone to end the war. However, this weakness was reinforced by their distance from the official antiwar movement.

Moreover, the inability to build a united movement around a variety of issues led to the collapse of the official antiwar organizations after U.S. troops were withdrawn in the early ‘70s.

When new imperialist adventure arose, such as the U.S. intervention in Angola in 1975 76, and the Iranian Hostage Crisis in 1979 80, there were no mass mobilizations.

Today, the struggles against draft registration and intervention in Central America have to be built from scratch, within the context of a racially and class segregated set of movements.

And none of the movements gave rise to a general movement against the system of capitalism responsible for the war.

The last antiwar movement, therefore, leaves us two legacies to choose from.

The least effective was a single issue approach focused on middle class people alone.

The most effective was that which attempted to relate to the movements of working class and specially oppressed people with as few illusions as possible, and which succeeded in linking to and mobilizing them around the war through a multi issue approach.

2. The Antiwar Movement Today

In some ways, despite the intense turmoil of the period, the 1960s wasn't the easiest time for mobilizing a large, active antiwar movement among working class and specially oppressed people. Much of the working class came out of the 1950s without an independent political tradition or strong union, let alone socialist, organizations.

The postwar period was one of unprecedented prosperity, especially, but not only for white workers. Except among Blacks, working class people, by and large, still believed in the system. Racial divisions were strong. Yet, large numbers of working class people were reached and mobilized against the war and around related issues to the point where the war had to be ended.

Today, there are in many ways much greater possibilities for building an antiwar movement among workers and the specially oppressed. Vietnam, racism, sexism, Watergate, and the decline of the economy, due in part to job export to Third World countries, has created wide-spread disillusionment and cynicism with the system among nearly everyone.

There is a diverse, sudden, and uneven political reawakening directly linked to Reaganism and the economic crisis. There is a small though steady increase of activity among Blacks and women and a growing if largely disorganized rank and file worker opposition to "concessions" as seen in the recent auto industry contract rejection at Chrysler. The Disarmament Movement has found widespread support.

There is also a climate of opposition to U.S. intervention abroad, especially in Central America. This is reflected not only in the polls, but in the fact that hundreds of thousands of young people have refused to register for the draft.

Small numbers of organized working class people have also taken some direct steps against U.S. intervention in Central America. The West Coast longshoremen have refused to load weapons bound for El Salvador. Numerous union locals have passed resolutions demanding U.S. withdrawal. Black, Latino and Women's organizations have addressed the issue. These movements in general, and the activity of working class and specially oppressed people in particular, show great promise for opposition to U.S. intervention in Central America, particularly if the U.S. sends troops into Central America.

This promise is especially great among Third World people in the Armed Forces. As the recent Brookings Institution study put it:

“That black soldiers would prove unreliable should they be called upon to take up arms against their “brothers” in either a domestic civil disorder or a foreign action . . . has long been the subject of speculation.” [4]

One important and positive difference between the wars in Vietnam and Central America is that this time around, there is a large Latino population in the U.S.; Chicano, Mexican, Puerto Rican, Central and South American; with a direct sympathy for the Central American revolution.

At the same time, we face serious barriers.

The widespread alienation that exists among working class and specially oppressed people is still largely confused and hasn't reached the level of class consciousness or action.

There is little unity between the various emerging movements. The anti militarist movements and organizations, including that around Central America, remain confined almost totally to white, middle class people who, as during Vietnam lack the power to end the war.

It is clear that despite the possibilities, a unified, active, mass opposition to U.S. intervention in Central America will not grow automatically. Whether, and at what pace it develops, its ultimate depth, and its internal unity, will depend on three interrelated things:

1. The way in which events in Central America unfold;
2. The development of a general, political radicalization of middle and especially working class people and the oppressed around a wide variety of related and immediate issues in this country; and
3. The willingness and ability of the existing Central American movement to build the greatest possible ties with an antiwar resistance among working class and oppressed people.

To play the most effective possible role, CISPES must develop a politics and strategy which makes central the attempt to build a Central America movement based among rank and file working class and specially oppressed people. To do so would include the following:

1. In all our work, our main orientation should be toward the rank and file.

In working with unionists, for example, we want to relate most to people fighting around immediate issues such as condition in the workplace and the unions. The same applies to all communities, since, although support from officials of major organizations can be useful, it is the activity of ordinary working class people, many of them in constant conflict with their leaders, who will have the greatest interest and potential to act effectively against the war.

2. Maintain Independence from the Democrats and Republicans.

Liberal politicians and congressional opposition to the war is important. But the Central American and anti war movements should remain completely independent from the politicians and their parties, for their overall goals are fundamentally different from ours.

Where we stand for complete self determination for Central America, the liberal capitalist politicians oppose the Reagan policy in favor of a more indirect form of U.S. control, through agencies such as the International Monetary Fund, in which direct U.S. military means plays a less important and obvious role.

But even this level of opposition is uncertain, since if they be-come convinced that military intervention is the only way to hold onto U.S. control of the region or prevent the spread of revolution, say, to Mexico, or that their opposition should be toned down to strike a deal with their colleagues on some other issue, their role will change.

Remember that it was under the "human rights" era of Carter that U.S. military aid to El Salvador was dramatically increased in the beginning of 1981.

Therefore, the greatest pressure on the major parties and their candidates is a movement from the' left which, because of its militance and independence, threatens them as well.

Once they can count on our endorsements and votes on the grounds of lesser-evilism, whatever leverage we have is gone and the more likely it is that the liberals will become more like the conservatives, as they did during Vietnam.

Likewise, even conservative politicians will oppose U.S. intervention if they feel that independent mass opposition is a strong enough threat. Richard Nixon presided over the U.S. defeat in Vietnam.

3. A political analysis and line of argument which shows why it is necessary for working class and specially oppressed people in this country to care about and act against the war in Central America.

Vietnam showed that moralism, appeals based only on the injustice of the war as it affects its Central American victims, cannot by itself motivate large numbers of people from any class into active opposition to U.S. intervention.

Most middle class people acted against Vietnam only when the draft began to threaten them directly.

Working class people began to act against it, usually in uniform, when they saw their buddies, sons, brothers and fathers die or get maimed in a war they began to associate with racism and the rich, and as it became clear that the war was directly harmful to the economy and the poverty programs.

The only way that the still passive antiwar sentiment that exists today can be mobilized is when people see that the immediate problems they feel, mammoth unemployment

and permanent de industrialization, rampant inflation, crime, massive social service cuts, union busting, racism, sexism, and homophobia; in a word their overall position in society; is directly related to a war like the one in Central America.

This isn't because people don't have morals or principles. They do. But most everyone feels powerless and overwhelmed with their day to day problems. They will act only when they feel they have to.

Therefore, our most important argument is that it is in the immediate and long term self interest of working class and oppressed people in North America to oppose the war for the following reasons:

A. It is working class people, especially Blacks and Latinos, who face not only the draft but also economic and racial conscription, who will have to fight, kill and die in the next Vietnam in Central America, putting down nonwhite people like themselves who desire only to be free. Blacks, for example, are now 33% of the Army and 22% of the Marines enlisted forces, and are likely to suffer between one third and one half of the initial combat fatalities in the next war. As the Brookings Institution concluded, "If that happened, the 20 percent casualty rate of Blacks that provoked charges of racial genocide in the mid 1960s could appear small." (5).

B. The elimination of jobs and decline in wages, union busting and "concessions" in this country are all due, in part, to the fact that especially in the current depression, U.S. backed repression in Third World countries makes it much more profitable for companies to set up shop in places like Central America where unions and political activity are stamped out. Therefore, by supporting the organization, power and freedom of workers and peasants in Central America, workers in the U.S. are also defending their own jobs and working conditions by undercutting a haven for runaway shops.

C. At home, working class and oppressed people also pay for war spending with the destruction of social services and the deterioration of the economy as a whole.

D. It is possible that this or another war in the Third World will provide the spark for nuclear confrontation.

E. Success for the U.S. government and the racist, sexist, anti working class system it represents in Central America strengthens the bonds of the oppression and exploitation of working class and oppressed people in this country.

Every U.S. victory abroad gives those who hold power additional confidence to press ahead with the attack on us in this country, particularly by making us pay for their economic crisis.

Moreover, the ideas used to whip up support for U.S. intervention in Central America are a weapon against us at home.

Workers face the destruction of their unions in the name of the same "patriotism" rolled out for the war in El Salvador.

Black and Latino people are the victims of a racist system and offensive which depends on calling and treating nonwhite people as less than human, just as they

do in Central America. Women, lesbian and gay people are the special targets of the ultra patriotic New Right.

On the other hand, every successful blow against the U.S. by the Central American revolution weakens our common enemy.

So working class and oppressed people in North America have no common cause with North American capitalism and imperialism. Rather it is the workers, poor and oppressed of Central America who are our allies.

4. Support for all legitimate struggles of working class and specially oppressed people and others in the U.S., and a multi issue oriented Central America movement.

Just as the Black movements of the '60s gave rise to the antiwar movement among both middle and working class people as they gained self confidence and were radicalized, so today will those organized around related issues move into action more quickly around the seemingly more remote issue of Central America. This opposition, and a healthy relationship between it and existing Central America groups such as CISPES, will be greatest if we can connect with and support those immediate and related struggles.

So, while maintaining a clear primary focus on Central America, we must conceive of ourselves as part of a broader alliance of all legitimate struggles and movements: those among unionists, Blacks, Latinos and other Third World people, women, gays, lesbians, youth, and with middle class dominated movements such as Disarmament, that against the Draft, and those in solidarity with other international struggles.

First of all, this means giving our concrete and consistent support to such struggles and movements by mobilizing our members and base, whether for abortion rights, a union battle, or around racism, as we did during the demonstration which followed the murder of Black transit worker Willie Turks in Brooklyn last July. Secondly, our propaganda and activities around Central America must connect with related issues through the inclusion of sub demands, speakers, and coalitions which reflect and address those movements.

The argument is often made that this approach would make the Central America movement too narrow by requiring that opponents of U.S. intervention also agree on a wide range of other political issues. This is an understandable fear. Some people will object if we address and support related issues, even if they are not put forward in the largely rhetorical and disconnected way that they were, for example, on March 27 [1982].

But CISPES can't afford to accept the logic of this argument.

First, because it is precisely our ability to relate to and support the immediate and related struggles of working class and oppressed people that will make our movement "broad" among them, and in doing so mobilize the most important forces against the war.

Undoubtedly, some people will act on Central America because they already see its immediate relevance. The vast majority, however, from whatever class or community, do not. The isolation of CISPES and the issue of Central America from the day to day consciousness and activity of most working class and oppressed people, and the legacy

of disunity and distrust among the movements, can in general only be overcome by bending over backwards to link our activity and arguments to the related struggles and concerns of the day.

The other reason it is necessary to address these issues and movements at home and abroad is that they have a direct effect on the situation in Central America. As an FDR representative recently pointed out, introduction of U.S. Marines in Lebanon set a precedent for the U.S. to send "peace keeping" troops into Central America.

Conversely, the success of the Palestinian struggle will have a tangible impact on the spirits of both the U.S. government and the Central American revolution.

The same holds true for the balance of forces at home. A victory of the Right against abortion rights, unions or Third World people only emboldens it in its intervention abroad.

Because of these concerns, it is dangerous to support some struggles while refusing to openly support abortion rights, for example, because some members of the Catholic Church might object. We should try to work with the Catholic Church and anyone else around Central America. But it is doubtful that its opposition to U.S. intervention in Central America is so weak that it would be compromised by a position that we take on abortion. Moreover, the defense of the Women's Movement against our common enemies is necessary both to build unity with the Women's Movement, which can't be done by selling it out when it seems convenient, and to oppose the growth of the pro interventionist Right.

A multi issue approach does not mean a wholesale sacrifice of people currently active around Central America. The best middle class and student activists will see its logic, as has already been shown.

The demonstration on May 3, 1981, drew over 100,000 people largely around El Salvador precisely because it addressed a wide range of people in its demands and tone. The March 27 [1982] El Salvador demonstration was successful in its size partly because of the same thing.

Since then, however, more narrow El Salvador actions have been less broad, and although much of the blame lies with the lack of media coverage of El Salvador, we have not taken the opportunity to make connections that may have made the activities more successful.

Nor does a multi issue approach mean that we should only work with organizations around Central America if they agree with all CISPES politics. CISPES can't be the entire movement against U.S. intervention in Central America. However, we should be part of the left wing of the movement and fight consistently for a genuinely broad linking up with related issues and movements.

The bottom line is that when a choice has to be made between appealing to politicians, labor and church leaders by narrowing the movement, and to ordinary Third World, Women or rank and file workers by broadening it, our priorities are clear.

5. Change the Composition of CISPES

CISPES is today overwhelmingly white and middle class. Some members of CISPES have argued that this is acceptable, and that is wrong for a predominantly white middle class organization to make the attempt to integrate itself by class, and particularly by race.

While acutely aware of the history of class prejudice and racism within white middle class organizations and movements, we believe that CISPES cannot remain segregated by class and race if it wants to contribute its resources to reaching and mobilizing workers and the specially oppressed against the war in Central America.

We cannot again afford to build an antiwar movement seen as alien by those with the greatest interest in and ability to support the Central American movement, and it is only by building an organization that includes workers and Third World people that we can effectively organize in working class and Third World communities.

In light of this, opposition to the building a multiracial movement and organization, even if in the name of recognizing the leadership of Third World organizations, only avoids the difficulties of resisting white racism and class bias and reaching out to both whites and nonwhite around Central America where it can be done best: In building a multiracial Central America movement and organization.

But by insisting that CISPES must remain white and middle class, Black and Latino people who want to organize against U.S. intervention in Central America as full members of the main Central America organization are effectively excluded, if not officially then by a refusal to orient toward their communities or by a membership which isn't seriously challenging the difficulties of becoming multiracial. New York CISPES has already lost Black members and potential members because it hasn't addressed this issue.

A multiracial Central America organization is not in conflict with recognizing the need for and importance of independent organizations of Third World people, with whom we need to build and strengthen coalition work. In fact, an integrated CISPES will probably give rise to caucuses of Third World people inside the organization, which we should welcome. But the existence of independent Third World organizations cannot serve as a convenient substitute for creating a racially diverse membership in CISPES itself, for to do so deprives us of the invaluable and day to day input of Third World people at all levels of the movement. There is a place for both independent Third World organizations and a place where activists of all colors can learn to work together in the process of actual work.

Footnotes

1. Robert Mullen, Blacks in America's Wars, NY: 1973, p. 64.
2. Martin Binkin and Mark J. Eitelberg, Blacks in the Military, Washington: 1982, p. 32.
3. David Cortright, Soldiers in Revolt, Garden City: 1973, p. 47.
4. Binkin, op. cit., p. 108.
5. Binkin, op. cit., p. 78.

[*] This paper was written by members of New York City CISPES. It is one of a three part discussion which also addresses, in separate sections, 1) CISPES and Central America and 2) CISPES Internal Functioning.

[**] “Specially oppressed” in this context includes Blacks, Latinos, Asians and Native Americans, women, gays, lesbians, and others, all of whom have in common the fact that they are not only exploited economically and oppressed generally as workers, but that in addition, they face special oppression because of their race, sex, and/or sexual preference.

[***] in fact, 68% of the members voting on the issue in New York City CISPES supported the endorsement, but the previous vote had required that all controversial endorsements be agreed to by 75% of the vote.

“Corporations Are Driving U.S. Financial Policy, And They’re Driving U.S. Foreign Policy”

BASICALLY, THE U.S. was offered Osama bin Laden and his inner cabal. The Taliban offered them up, and the Bush administration refused. We interviewed the intermediary for the Taliban.

April 14, 2006 Socialist Worker [Excerpts]

JEFFREY ST. CLAIR, coeditor of the muckraking Web site and newsletter CounterPunch, is the author of a new book, Grand Theft Pentagon: Tales of Corruption and Profiteering in the War on Terror. He talked to Socialist Worker about what’s responsible for the crooked system in Washington.

It used to be that the worst thing you could be called in American politics was a war profiteer--that was the death knell.

Even the robber barons, when they were caught peddling shoddy bullets or uniforms that dissolved in the rain during the Civil War, went in the doghouse for a decade or two, and could only wrench their way back through their philanthropic tithing.

Now, I think we’ve seen a sea change of sorts, where the attitude is: If you’re making a profit, it must be good. If you look at the annual reports and prospectuses of corporations that have their snouts in the troughs, they brag about how much money they’re making off of Bush’s “war on terror.”

But it would be a mistake to only focus on the Bush administration. Perhaps we should thank them for bringing this all out into the open, because a lot of the truly grandiose rip-offs got their start during the Clinton-Gore administration.

Gore is largely responsible for this, through his Reinventing Government scheme--where the Reagan dream of privatizing the federal government reached its apotheosis. Gore's scheme thought of ways to privatize a lot of Pentagon operations via contract. It got its test run during the Somalia operation, and the Bosnian war and the war on Serbia.

This is where you see Halliburton, Bechtel, Parsons--the big companies that Michael Moore in his film Fahrenheit 9/11 was trying to associate as being in a kind of symbiotic relationship with Bush--really getting their tentacles on these Pentagon contracts. What you saw was no-bid, no-oversight, endless-war, permanent contracts.

AND NOT only are these companies making billions off Pentagon contracts, but they're using their influence to drive foreign policy--for example, in pressing for an occupation of Iraq intended to get their hands on Iraq's oil.

THAT SHOULDN'T be a surprise to anyone. It's a corporate government. The two parties have consolidated into one corporate body, with two heads--one of which happens to be bigger than the other at this point.

Corporations are driving U.S. financial policy, and they're driving U.S. foreign policy. They own our political system, from top to bottom.

I think most Americans realize this. It's why they've soured on politics, and I don't blame them. They realize that there's no entrance into our political system, unless your calling card comes with a Fortune 500 company on it. Or maybe you're an Indian tribe, and you hire yourself someone like Jack Abramoff to press your interests. And Abramoff, of course, takes your money and screws you over because you're Indians.

Oil companies, the big defense contractors--they've always been directing foreign policy. But now I think what you've got is a situation where the boundaries between the corporate world and the political world and the military have dissolved.

They used to speak of an iron triangle. It's not a triangle anymore. It's like sub-atomic particles, where you're a general in the Pentagon one moment, and at the very same time, you're a lobbyist for Boeing. At the same time you're handing out contracts for weapons systems, you're also working for the companies that are getting the contracts. You're in two places at once--you're a sub-atomic particle. That's what our political system has become.

So the system is, I think, irretrievably corrupt. The cancer has gone to phase five and metastasized through the body politic. And no one has clean hands.

EVEN AMONG people who genuinely oppose the U.S. war on Iraq, there's a perception that the preceding war on Afghanistan to topple the former Taliban government was a good thing. But your book tells a different story.

BASICALLY, THE U.S. was offered Osama bin Laden and his inner cabal. The Taliban offered them up, and the Bush administration refused. We interviewed the intermediary for the Taliban.

They wanted to get rid of bin Laden. He was a huge liability to the Taliban. It began in Clinton times and really picked up steam after September 11. And both the Bush and Clinton administrations' response was: "Fuck that. He's useful to us." There's no question they wanted war.

Afghanistan was a kind of a replay of the wars from Clinton times. It was an air war and a cruise missile war. The U.S. had a proxy army in the Northern Alliance that they could work with, along with a few special forces divisions and the CIA and the interrogators/torturers.

They weren't suffering under any illusions about rebuilding Afghanistan as a model of democracy. Basically, what they wanted was to set up a government there quickly, and then get the hell out, because their grand ambition was in Iraq. There were flirtations with pipelines and military bases, but I think they needed a kind of fire show in Afghanistan, which they got.

But it still turned into a quagmire.

I think the death and injury rate for U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan is inching up now, so that it's getting close to what it is in Iraq. **[Wrong. It's higher than Iraq.]**

And that's totally uncovered in the media. Ninety percent of the people in this country don't know that we're even in Afghanistan any more. But it's sucking them down slowly and silently.

IN IRAQ, all the pretexts for the invasion--weapons of mass destruction, promoting democracy--have crumbled. So who was it that really benefited?

I think the left gets fixated on the neo-cons, instead of what I think is the one rational motivation that you can pick out--economic control of the Middle East.

The administration wants to laugh about the war not being about oil. I don't think it is all about oil, but look at the profits of ExxonMobil. Croesus would have been envious. Wal-Mart is road kill in their wake.

But it goes way beyond oil. Right now, you have the last vestige of Keynesian economics at work in the billions of federal dollars being spent in these Pentagon contracts. It's an astounding transfer of wealth--the likes of which I don't know that we've ever seen.

The war has been very good for the oil companies, and it's been very, very good for the defense companies. One thing that we have to realize now is that we've gone way beyond the traditional defense companies, like Boeing and Lockheed. Now, the dot-coms are defense companies.

The contracts have been saturated across the economic spectrum. If you're a corporate CEO, and you haven't found out a way to become part of this orgy of spending, from the Department of Homeland Security to the Pentagon, you should be fired by your board of directors. Because it's all there for the taking.

To a certain extent, I think this has created a fissure within the Pentagon, because there's a price that's going to be paid. The original idea was that we could cut taxes and have these wars, because we'd take over Iraq, and the war would pay for itself. Iraq was a kind of sitting duck. The U.S. knew they didn't have any weapons of mass destruction. That's why it went to war against them. We don't go to war against countries that have weapons of mass destruction. Iraq was a kind of prisoner country, battered by sanctions and 13 years of war before Shock and Awe.

And it has one of the largest untapped oil reserves in the world, which had been off the market. So the war would pay for itself, because we would have our hands on all of that oil. We could get production up and going, thanks to handing out big contracts to Parsons and Halliburton and Bechtel, and we would sell that oil on the market, and use those revenues to pay for the war.

Well, they were in for a surprise--that didn't happen. Now, the cost of this war is reaching into the trillions of dollars. So what's happened is that there's a kind of civil war in the Pentagon.

You have the traditional defense companies, like Boeing and Lockheed and Raytheon, who are building the baroque weapons systems that are relics of the Cold War, but we haven't stopped building them yet. Like the F-22 fighter--there's no enemy for this, unless we're invaded by aliens. Or Star Wars, or the joint strike fighter and all these big stealth systems--from when everybody was into stealth, and all you had to do was attach the name "stealth" to any project or weapons system, and you immediately got billions in contracts.

Those days may be gone. For a lot of these generals, particularly in the procurement office in the Pentagon, their mission in life was to steer those big contracts to the defense companies. They would get their two or three stars, they would retire, and they would go to work for Boeing and Lockheed, and become millionaires and powerbrokers.

Now, those big projects are being put at risk, because of the fact that the Afghanistan and Iraq Wars can't pay for themselves.

And you have this new retinue of contractors, like the Halliburtons, which are getting the reconstruction and logistics contracts.

They've now become almost as powerful as the old-line defense contractors. So there's a kind of civil war going on inside that microcosm.

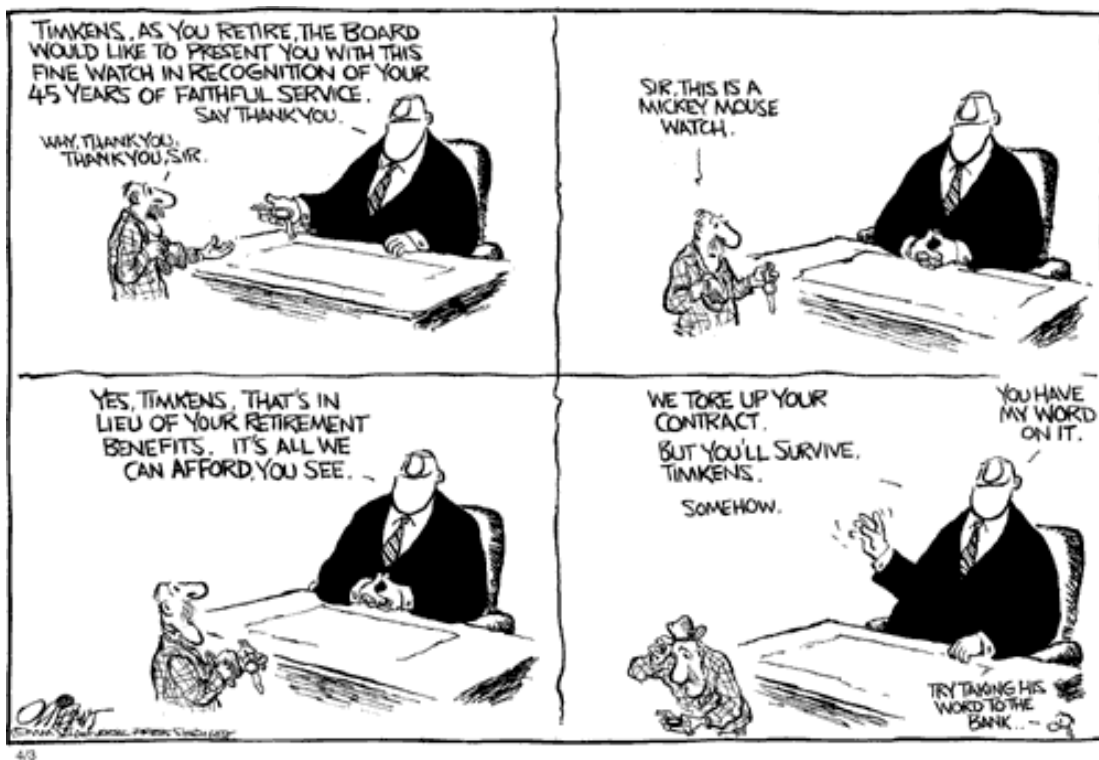
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