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Eqbal Ahmad on JIHAD
DRUG WAR'S FINAL SOLUTION
PINOCHET: Autumn of the Autocrat
TECHNOLOGY OF POLITICAL CONTROL

IRAQ: Near War Real Fear
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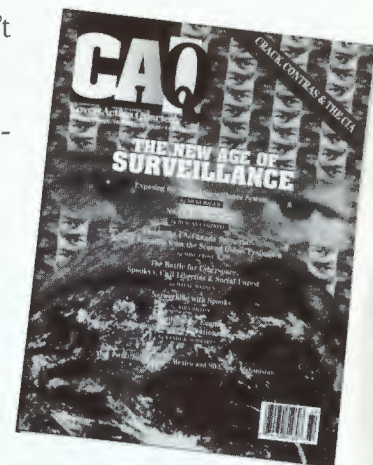
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CAQ

CovertAction Quarterly

Sanctions Against Iraq: New Weapon of Mass Destruction



Photos by Andy Ryan

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More Iraqis have died from US-imposed sanctions than from the two atomic bombs dropped on Japan. The extent of suffering and punishment imposed on the people to go after their leader violates international law and tramples human rights.

Near War, Real Fear

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This year, the US dragged the world to the brink of war with Iraq. Fear that the regime retained its chemical and biological weapons arsenal drove a policy bent on ensuring America's place as the only superpower.

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COVER DESIGN BY JAY JOHNSON
is composed of two separate photographs.

COVER PHOTOS BY NIC DUNLOP

- Zippo lighters for sale as souvenirs in Vietnam.
- Thai Thi Tinh who lost most of her family to the wars in Vietnam.



SANCTIONS AGAINST IRAQ: New Weapon of Mass Destruction

by Roger Normand
photos by Andy Ryan

Leslie Stahl: Half a million Iraqi children have died — more children than died in Hiroshima. Is the price worth it?
Madeleine Albright: Yes, we think the price is worth it.¹

The bottom line is that Madeleine Albright is right. For Washington, half a million Iraqi children is not too high a price for maintaining control over Middle East oil and extending US military penetration of the region — especially since US policy makers have not yet been held accountable for the human costs of sanctions. The US public, swamped with media stories focusing on the threat posed by

Roger Normand has led three fact-finding missions to Iraq as Policy Director of the Center for Economic and Social Rights, a New York-based human rights organization that has reported on the impacts of sanctions.

Andy Ryan is a Boston, MA-based photographer. The photos in the article were taken in 1996. Above: Hisham Rahim suffering from leukemia, septicemia, and malnourishment. Each day without treatment decreases her chances of survival. Al Mansour Pediatric Hospital, Baghdad.

Saddam Hussein, remain largely unaware that sanctions have condemned an entire generation of children to extreme poverty and deprivation. The peace and human rights movements, which would normally be expected to speak out against a disaster of this magnitude, have been similarly demobilized by the specter of Saddam Hussein, and perhaps also by the myth that sanctions are a kinder, gentler way to coerce a nation. Even the UN, which for decades has trumpeted the values of human rights and economic development, has been bullied by the US-dominated Security Council into presiding over the systematic impoverishment of a nation.

1. "Punishing Saddam," *60 Minutes*, May 12, 1996.

Unlike sanctions that have enjoyed popular support in the targeted countries — South Africa or Haiti, for example — sanctions against Iraq have absolutely no internal support. Even Saddam's bitterest enemies — the Kurds in northern Iraq and the opposition groups in exile — oppose sanctions because they understand that after seven years of hunger, disease, and misery for the entire population, Saddam Hussein and his inner circle are even more firmly entrenched than before.

To understand the devastating impact of sanctions, it is important to recognize the extent to which Iraq's highly-developed economy depended on oil income. Oil exports, which generated 75 percent of Iraqi

GDP in 1990 and well over 90 percent of its foreign exchange, were used to build a modern state — financing investments, expenditures, and subsidies in all sectors of the economy.² As a result, Iraq was classified as a high middle income country prior to sanctions.

Despite brutal repression of dissent by the Ba'ath regime, Iraqis enjoyed a good standard of living and free access to the best health care, education, social security, and public welfare programs in the region. More than 70 percent lived in cities and took for granted a modern, interlinked infrastructure of industry, public health, sanitation systems, electric power, telecommunications, and transportation.³ Most of these advanced facilities were built by Western companies, just as most of Iraq's food and medical supplies were imported from the West.

Supporting Saddam

While Iraq enjoyed economic and political links throughout the West, Washington in particular had provided strong military support to Saddam Hussein. Starting in 1980, when Iraq invaded revolutionary Iran, Saddam became one of America's key strategic allies in the region. For protecting the Arab Gulf states from Iran — then the great threat to US interests in the Middle East — Washington rewarded Iraq with huge quantities of weapons, technology, and covert intelligence. A 1994 Senate report documented that these rewards included anthrax and botulism agents for Iraq's unconventional weapons programs — supplied by a US company, licensed by the Commerce Department, and approved by the State Department.⁴ When human rights groups presented evidence in the late 1980s of Iraqi mustard and nerve gas attacks against Iranian soldiers and Kurdish civilians, and also of massive human rights abuses against the Kurds (the "Anfal" campaign), the State Department refused to condemn its close partner, Saddam Hussein.

US support for Iraq was linked to its long-standing policy of controlling Middle East oil, described by the State Department in 1945 as "a stupendous source of strategic power, and one of the greatest material prizes in world history."⁵ For almost

2. "The Iraqi welfare state was among the most comprehensive and generous in the Arab World. ... [and] had the highest caloric consumption per head in the Middle East by the end of the decade [1980s]." *The Economist Intelligence Unit* (London), *EIU Country Profile of Iraq 1995-96*, pp. 6-7.

3. Jean Dreze and Haris Gazdar, *Hunger and Poverty in Iraq*, World Development 20, n. 7 (1992), pp. 921-45.

4. "Approved Licenses to Iraq," March 11, 1991, Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of Finance Administration.

5. *Foreign Relations of the United States 1945* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office), v. 8, p. 45.

50 years, US control of this material prize has meant protecting the family dictatorships of the oil-rich Gulf states from nationalist threats that sought to exploit oil for local purposes — Prime Minister Mossadegh of Iran in the early 1950s, President Nasser of Egypt in the 1960s, President Qaddafi of Libya in the late 1970s, Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran in the 1980s.

So when Iraqi troops marched into Kuwait on August 2, 1990, US strategy changed overnight, but not for the officially stated reasons. Not because Saddam Hussein invaded another country; he had done that before — with US support. Not because he was "developing" unconventional weapons; with US help, he had not only developed but actually used them before. Not because he committed

The peace and human rights movements are demobilized by the specter of Saddam and the myth that sanctions are a kinder, gentler way to coerce a nation.

atrocities in Kuwait; Washington officially ignored far greater atrocities he had committed in the war with Iran and the campaign against the Kurds. But simply because Saddam Hussein, by seizing Kuwait's oil wells, suddenly threatened US control over this most valuable asset.

To counter that threat, the US has deployed every political and military weapon in its arsenal — organizing an international coalition, routing Iraq's army from Kuwait, destroying Iraq's industrial infrastructure, establishing new military bases in the Gulf, and maintaining a comprehensive embargo for over seven years. The day after Iraq's invasion, the US pushed the Security Council to adopt Resolution 661 banning all trade between Iraq and the rest of the world. Subsequent resolutions tightened the noose by imposing naval and air blockades and freezing Iraq's foreign assets. Unprecedented in their scope, severity, and level of enforcement, the blanket sanctions completely severed Iraq's links to the rest of the world. For example, just before the war, the CIA estimated that sanctions were 97 percent successful in stopping Iraqi exports.⁶

6. Alan Towty, "Preventative Diplomacy," *Washington Quarterly*, Summer 1994, p. 197.

Building up to War

Despite this level of effectiveness, the US moved quickly toward war while undercutting any efforts to negotiate a diplomatic solution with Iraq. Secretary of State James Baker, flexing US muscle as the world's only superpower, tricked, bribed, and bullied other states into joining the coalition and backing the use of force against Iraq. Partly on the strength of faked CIA satellite photos "showing" Iraqi troops in offensive formation near its border, Saudi Arabia agreed to base more than half a million US troops.⁷ After Egypt and Turkey supported the war, they were each forgiven billions in bilateral and IMF debt. When Yemen opposed Security Council resolution 678 (the "war resolution"), Baker called it "the most expensive vote they will ever make." The next day, the State Department revoked \$140 million in bilateral aid.⁸

The US was careful to draft Resolution 678 without invoking Article 42 of the UN Charter, which requires that military force be under the direct command of the Security Council rather than individual member states. Firmly in control of the war effort, Pentagon planners made clear that the aim was not simply to drive Iraq out of Kuwait, as called for in various Security Council resolutions, but rather to inflict maximum damage on Iraq's industrial infrastructure. Gen. Buster Glosson, responsible for compiling the target lists, commented that after the war the US and its allies expected to rebuild the damaged infrastructure.⁹ One of the architects of the most concentrated air war in history, Col. John Warden, explained the political motives for such a broad bombing campaign: "Saddam Hussein cannot restore his own electricity. He needs help. If there are political objectives that the UN Coalition has, it can say, 'Saddam, when you agree to do these things, we will allow people to come in and fix your electricity.'"¹⁰

Aftermath of War

As planned, the damage was widespread and could not properly be fixed under

7. Jean Heller, "Public Doesn't Get the Picture with Gulf Satellite Photos," *St. Petersburg Times*, Jan. 6, 1991.

8. Doug Bandow, "Avoiding War," *Washington Post*, June 23, 1991.

9. Transcript of Gen. Glosson's private interview with the *Chicago Tribune*, Feb. 12, 1991 (on file with author).

10. Quoted in Barton Gellman, "Allied Air War Struck Broadly in Iraq; Officials Acknowledge Strategy Went Beyond Purely Military Targets," *Washington Post*, June 23, 1991, p. A1.

sanctions. One month after the war, a team of experts from Harvard visited Iraq and documented the destruction of most of Iraq's civilian infrastructure, including industrial sites, electric power stations, irrigation facilities, food storage facilities, and even some water treatment and sewage plants.¹¹ Many of these sites had been hit repeatedly and razed to the ground. The first UN observer mission to Iraq after the war concluded that "most means of modern life support have been destroyed or rendered tenuous. Iraq has, for some time to come, been relegated to the pre-industrial age, but with all the disabilities of post-industrial dependency on an intensive use of energy and technology."¹²

The war also poisoned Iraq's soil, air, and water with radioactivity from over 300 tons of high density depleted uranium (DU) rounds, used to penetrate tanks and other armored equipment.¹³ While the Pentagon has insisted that the sustained use of DU rounds in the Gulf War poses no danger to human health, researchers and scientists disagree. So do the army's own records. After pressure from local residents and environmentalists in the mid-1980s, the Pentagon hauled topsoil contaminated by DU ammunition from an army reserve firing range in Jericho, Vermont to a low-level radioactive dump in South Carolina.¹⁴ There has been no similar cleanup in Iraq, where DU rounds may be responsible not only for a reported four-fold increase in cancer rates in southern Iraq near the war zone, but also for some of the mysterious symptoms of Gulf War Syndrome that afflict US and British veterans.¹⁵

After the war, the Security Council adopted Resolution 687, which maintained the full sanctions and even added

a new set of conditions, requiring Iraq to recognize the border with Kuwait, account for all Kuwaiti prisoners of war, accept liability for war reparations, and most importantly, dismantle unconventional weapons programs under the supervision of the UN Special Commission (UNSCOM). The Security Council's only concession to the growing humanitarian crisis in Iraq was to exempt food and medicines from the sanctions — an exemption rendered meaningless by the ban on Iraqi oil sales needed to pay for such imports.¹⁶ The Iraqi leadership, more concerned over

lion to restore basic services and control the spiral of hunger and disease,¹⁷ Washington capped the value of oil sales at \$4 billion a year. After deductions for war reparations and UN expenses, the actual revenue came to \$2.2 billion. Since the Security Council controls the bank account, approves every purchase contract, and monitors distribution of supplies inside Iraq, there is no humanitarian rationale for such an arbitrarily low limit. The predictable result, as Secretary-General Kofi Annan reported to the Security Council in December 1997, is that the food-for-oil deal "did not redress the severe health and nutrition conditions of Iraqis because of the embargo imposed on them for seven years now."¹⁸

Human Costs

Nonetheless, US officials have insisted from the start that sanctions are intended to punish the Iraqi regime, not the people. "We do not seek the destruction of Iraq," said President George Bush. "Nor do we seek to punish the Iraqi people for the decisions and policies of their leaders."¹⁹ But most observers agree that sanctions have, in fact, strengthened Saddam Hussein's control by deflecting popular anger to an external enemy and providing a pretext for a series of ruthless internal leadership purges. And by leveling the middle class and destroying the private sector, sanctions have concentrated all economic power in the hands of the regime. With most Iraqis now dependent on the state food rationing system

for their day-to-day survival, organized political dissent is all but unthinkable.²⁰

And while the regime endures, the most vulnerable sectors of the population — the young, the elderly, the sick, and the poor — bear the brunt of the sanctions:

17. Report to the Secretary-General on the Humanitarian Needs in Iraq, U.N. Doc. S/22789 (1991).

18. "Report of the secretary-general pursuant to paragraph 3 of resolution 111 (1997)," Nov. 28, 1997.

19. Transcript of President Bush press conference, quoted in *Washington Post*, Feb. 6, 1991, p. A21.

20. CESR Economics Report.



Ali Mahdi, 12, of Basra awaits treatment for leukemia and malnutrition. "He didn't blink. He didn't move. He sat staring like this the entire time I was in the ward."
— Andy Ryan, photographer

sovereignty issues than the suffering of its people, rejected a food-for-oil deal proposed in 1991 under Resolution 706.

In 1996, as conditions in Iraq continued to deteriorate, Baghdad accepted a food-for-oil deal similar to one it had rejected in 1991. But the deal has done little to ease the population's hardship. Despite a UN assessment that Iraq needed \$6.8 billion on an emergency basis and \$22 bil-

16. Center for Economic and Social Rights, *The Costs of Failure: Economic Impacts of Sanctions on Iraq*, Dec. 1997 (hereinafter CESR Economics Report).

11. Harvard Study Team, *Public Health in Iraq After the Gulf War*, May 1991, (hereinafter Harvard Report). The author went to Iraq as part of this study.

12. Report to the Secretary-General on the Humanitarian Needs in Kuwait and Iraq in the Immediate Post-Crisis Environment, U.N. Doc. S/22366 (March 1991), p. 5.

13. William Arkin, "Still Glowing," *Bulletin of Atomic Scientists*, Sept. 1997, p. 64.

14. Town records, Jericho, Vermont.

15. Robert Fisk, "Allies Blamed for Iraq Cancer Torment," *The Independent* (London), March 4, 1997.



Without the spare parts to repair worn-out medical equipment, hospital staff and family members improvise by constructing incubators using blankets and fluorescent bulbs. Ali Sadoon sleeps while his grandmother looks on.

ECONOMIC CONDITIONS. Sanctions created a macroeconomic shock of massive proportions. The oil embargo dramatically reduced government revenues, causing Iraq's economic structure to collapse. Real earnings fell by around 90 percent in the first year of the sanctions, and then by another 40 percent during 1991-97. With salaries averaging \$5-7 a month, people cannot afford to purchase foods like meat and eggs on the open market. According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, "it is mind-boggling that the price of the most basic food item, wheat flour, has risen by 11,667 times compared with July 1990 ... famine has been prevented largely by an efficient public rationing system."²¹ Despite survival strategies such as working multiple jobs, selling off possessions, and begging, most Iraqis have suffered a severe decline in their living standards. The UN estimates that four million Iraqis — about 20 percent of the population — live in extreme poverty, on a par with the poorest countries in the world.²² As UNICEF noted

in 1995, "It has become increasingly clear that no significant movement toward food security can be achieved so long as the embargo remains in place."²³

CIVILIAN INFRASTRUCTURE. Sanctions have also prevented Iraq from repairing

rine and aluminum sulphate — for Iraq's water and sewage systems. With most sewage treatment shut down, raw waste flows directly into the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, from which two-thirds of the population draws water.²⁶ Ruptured pipes create dangerous cross-connections between water and sewage lines and send raw sewage into city streets. Water treatment plants, which used to serve 93 percent of the urban and 70 percent of the rural populations, now operate at minimum capacity and often distribute contaminated water.²⁷ Under these unsanitary conditions, a sharp increase in disease was inevitable.

Sanctions are "undermining the moral credibility of the UN ... and [violating] the UN Charter."

— Denis J. Halliday UN assistant secretary general and coordinator for Iraq

the estimated \$200 billion damage from war and sanctions to its civilian infrastructure.²⁴ The electric power system, reduced to 4 percent of capacity by the bombing, still operates at less than half capacity because Iraq can't import spare parts.²⁵ Sanctions also prohibit the import of parts and treatment chemicals — especially chlo-

HEALTH CONDITIONS. Iraq's health system, formerly the region's most advanced and efficient, used to provide 90 percent of the population with primary care through a network of 250 modern hospitals.²⁸ Now,

21. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, *Technical Cooperation Programme: Evaluation of Food and Nutrition Situation in Iraq 1997* (hereinafter FAO Report 1997), p. 9.

22. Department of Humanitarian Affairs, *U.N. Consolidated Inter-Agency Humanitarian Cooperation Programme for Iraq: Mid-term Review*, Sept. 21, 1995.

23. UNICEF, *State of the World's Children 1995*.

24. Arab Monetary Fund, *Joint Arab Economic Report* (Abu Dhabi: Arab Monetary Fund, 1993), p. 18.

25. Harvard Report, *op. cit.*; FAO Report 1997, *op. cit.*

26. Center for Economic and Social Rights, *UNsanctioned Suffering: A Human Rights Assessment of UN Sanctions on Iraq* (May 1996), p. 12 (hereinafter CESR Human Rights Report).

27. UNICEF, *Proposal for Water and Environmental Sanitation Project*, Aug. 1994, p. 1.

28. World Health Organization, *The Health Conditions of*



Imagine that suddenly, the city where you live and work is cut off from the rest of the country. Military checkpoints at every point of entry and exit block all trade and travel. Not even food, medicine, and other basic goods can enter the local economy. After several months, hyperinflation sets in and prices rise sharply while your salary stagnates. You and your family must economize just to put food on the table. Then all the regions around you join forces in war, raining bombs down on the city. For 43 days, everything stops. While relatively few of your neighbors are killed directly, the bombing destroys the city's infrastructure. Electricity is out, phones don't work, bridges are down, factories are destroyed, water and sewage plants are hit. Because no spare parts can be imported, damaged facilities can't be repaired. Without electric power, hospitals barely function, food spoils, and idle pumping stations send untreated sewage flowing through the streets.

As the sanctions drag on year after year, prices continue to climb further out of reach. In a city where obesity was a common health problem, malnutrition spreads rapidly, starting with the poor and moving up the economic ladder. Long-vanquished diseases such as tuberculosis and cholera reappear.

Your own situation deteriorates. Even after taking a second job and selling your household valuables, you can't afford meat or eggs. For the first time, you hear your children complain of hunger. As people grow more desperate and demoralized, the social fabric begins to unravel. Thieves and beggars now frequent the streets in poor and rich areas alike.

Then one day your 3-year-old daughter, already weakened by hunger, develops severe diarrhea. Perhaps it was the filthy sewage running by the house; perhaps her water wasn't boiled long enough. You rush her to the hospital, where the wards overflow with sick, malnourished children. The doctor checks her quickly and moves on, explaining that there is no treatment because the hospital has run out of antibiotics and IV fluids. After hearing the same story at every hospital in the city, you turn to the black market, but the prices are exorbitant. You try borrowing money from friends, but they have their own survival to worry about. There is nothing to do but stay at home and watch helplessly as your child struggles for life. ■

equipment such as X-ray machines, incubators, and ambulances have broken down and cannot be repaired or replaced. With Iraq able to afford only 10 percent of its pre-sanctions pharmaceutical imports, basic medicines such as antibiotics and painkillers are in very short supply; as are syringes, IV sets, blood bags, oxygen, anesthesia, and even clean linens.²⁹ Patients who cannot bring their own sheets to the hospital lie on dirty and bloodstained mattresses. Compounding the crisis, demand for health services has skyrocketed. Hospitals throughout Iraq report sharp increases in preventable diseases and infections such as diarrhea and pneumonia, which were treatable prior to sanctions but are now frequently deadly. Malnutrition, once extremely rare, now affects one-fourth of all Iraqi children, according to a joint 1997 study by UNICEF and the World Food Program, which have responded by establishing 20 emergency treatment centers throughout the country.³⁰ The World Health Organization also issued a humanitarian appeal:

The vast majority of the country's population has been on a semi-starvation diet for years. This tragic situation has tremendous implications on the health status of the population and on their quality of life, not only for the present generation, but for the future generation as well. ... [T]he world community should seriously consider the implications of an entire generation of children growing up with such traumatized mental handicaps, if they survive at all.³¹



Buscera Ali, 4, seeks treatment for pneumonia and waits with his mother at Saddam's Children's Hospital, Kerbala, Iraq.

MORTALITY RATES. Despite the difficulty of conducting epidemiological surveys in Iraq, numerous studies have documented a significant rise in mortality, especially among children, primarily from malnutrition, disease, and unsanitary conditions.³² The only population-based survey of the entire country, conducted by an independent team of academics and professionals organized at Harvard, estimated that 47,000 children under the age of five had died in the first eight months of sanctions.³³

the Population in Iraq Since the Gulf Crisis, March 1996, p. 10 (hereinafter WHO Report).

^{29.} CESR Human Rights Report, pp. 9-11.

^{30.} "Nutritional Status Survey at Primary Health Centres," UNICEF/WFP, May 24, 1997.

^{31.} WHO Report, pp. 16-17.

^{32.} Illustrating these difficulties, two similar population-based surveys of child mortality in Baghdad, conducted by the FAO in 1995 and CESR in 1996, produced very different results. See Sarah Zaidi, "Child Mortality in Iraq," *Lancet* (London), Oct. 11, 1997, v. 350, p. 1105.

^{33.} Ascherio, et al., "Special Article: Effects of the Gulf War on Infant and Child Mortality in Iraq," *New England Journal of Medicine*, Sept. 24, 1992, n. 327, pp. 931-36.

A later survey by a US Census Bureau demographer estimated that in 1991 alone, 111,000 Iraqi civilians had died from sanctions-related hunger and disease — excluding deaths directly related to the war and civil uprisings.³⁴ In addition, anecdotal and hospital-based surveys have consistently shown extremely high mortality rates among children. For example, UNICEF estimated in mid-1996 that 4,500 children were dying every month from sanctions-related hunger and disease.³⁵ While a reliable estimate is impossible, it is undeniable that hundreds of thousands of civilians have been sacrificed in what US policy makers like Madeleine Albright consider an acceptable side-effect of their mission to isolate and contain Saddam Hussein.

^{34.} Beth Osborne Daponte, "A Case Study in Estimating Casualties from War and its Aftermath: The 1991 Persian Gulf War," *PSR Quarterly* 3, n. 2, 1993, pp. 57-66.

^{35.} UNICEF press release, June 1996.

No Exit in Iraq

But while Albright and other top policy makers have frequently declared that sanctions will not be lifted until Saddam Hussein is removed from power,³⁶ the US has taken no concrete actions toward this goal. Washington halted the war advance in southern Iraq; failed to support the Kurdish and Shi'a uprisings after the war; allowed Saddam Hussein to use helicopter gunships to suppress the uprisings; refused to support Iraqi opposition groups or Kurdish claims for independence; and most recently, insisted that any future military strikes will avoid targeting Iraq's leader. This contradiction — insisting on Saddam's removal while acting to keep him in power — makes sense only if the actual US objective is to maintain sanctions indefinitely, eliminating Iraq's capacity to

^{36.} "War of Words," *New York Times*, Feb. 19, 1998, p. A9.

There Is a Law Against This

The UN Charter empowers the Security Council to impose economic sanctions, but only "in accordance with the Purposes and Principles of the United Nations" — which include the promotion of human rights.¹ As one World Court justice has explained, "[T]he history of the UN Charter corroborates the view that a clear limitation on the plenitude of the Security Council's powers is that those powers must be exercised in accordance with the well-established principles of international law."²

Yet sanctions against Iraq undeniably violate human rights, most plainly the right to life, considered by the UN Human Rights Committee to be "the supreme right from which no derogation is permitted even in time of public emergency."³ Furthermore, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by almost every country in the world, grants children special protection: States must "ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child" and "take appropriate measures to diminish infant and child mortality." Sanctions against Iraq also violate the full range of economic and social rights, including the rights to health, education, food, and an adequate standard of living, all guaranteed by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and other international treaties.

Security Council sanctions against Iraq even violate the laws of war, which unlike human rights law, allow belligerents to inflict civilian casualties — but only when attacking military targets. Sanctions that cause broad economic collapse violate this principle by using the suffering of civilians to pressure leaders. Even if sanctions can be interpreted as an attack directed against the Iraqi regime, the principle of proportionality requires that they not impose a disproportionate "collateral" impact on civilians.⁴ In the case of Iraq, the massive casualties suffered by civilians under sanctions clearly dwarf the limited harms, if any, inflicted on the regime. Put another way, it is hard to imagine the international community tolerating a war that routed Iraq out of Kuwait but killed a half a million civilians. Why then are sanctions tolerated? ■

1. UN Charter, Article 1(3).

2. *Libya v. United States*, 1992 ICJ 114, 31 ILM 662, 694-96, April 4, 1992.

3. UN Human Rights Committee, *General Comment* 6/16, July 27, 1982.

4. Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Convention, UN Doc. A/32/144, Annex I, II (1977), at Art. 51 (5)(b).

threaten US oil interests in the Gulf while allowing Saddam's iron fist to maintain internal order and prevent the country's disintegration into political chaos. In the end, Washington's sanctions policy comes down to this: As long as Saddam Hussein stays within US-defined limits, he is allowed to rule over a crippled nation.

But US policy has no exit strategy and simply cannot be maintained over the long run. Most members of the coalition, led by Russia, China, France, and the Arab League, have grown frustrated with Washington's inflexible position. They now are supporting Iraq's demand for a clear timetable to wrap up UNSCOM's mission and lift sanctions. The public grumbling has reached the top levels of the UN. Denis J. Halliday, UN assistant secretary general and humanitarian coordinator for Iraq, complained that sanctions were "undermining the moral credibility of the UN" and that their continuation was "in contradiction to the human rights provisions in the UN's own Charter."³⁷ Even Richard Butler, the UNSCOM chairman, recently conceded that "sanctions should be targeted to affect the regime only."³⁸

As these comments highlight, basic principles of international law, not to mention human decency, prohibit inflicting suffering on a civilian population as a substitute for acting directly against the offending regime, especially when the population has little voice in decision-making. Saddam Hussein's behavior does not grant the United States license to violate the human rights of 21 million people through punitive sanctions. Besides being illegal and immoral, collective punishment also defies common sense. By what logic can we hold an entire nation hostage to the "compliance" of a dictator who is indifferent to the fate of his own people?

What Has Been Gained?

Using the rhetoric of security and non-proliferation, the US has pushed the international community to unleash a weapon of mass destruction that has the political virtue of killing quietly, without enough drama to spark public opposition. Most Americans are unaware that sanctions against Iraq have killed more people than the two atomic bombs dropped on Japan, because the media have focused exclusively on the demonized figure of Saddam Hussein and presented Iraq as a country of military targets rather than people. In terms of the sheer number of victims, the sanctions against Iraq rank with the worst

crimes of the post-World War II era — the genocides in East Timor, Cambodia, and Rwanda. Of course, there are major differences. The killers in Iraq are not blinded by ethnic or national chauvinism; their victims do not show up on your television screen in pools of blood. Hunger, disease, and poverty kill without discrimination; their victims die over the course of months and years, silently, out of public view.

And what are the fruits of seven years of sanctions? Saddam Hussein endures, the Gulf dictatorships remain, the Arab-Israeli conflict continues, weapons proliferation in the region escalates, and America's standing in the Arab world falls ever lower. True, Iraq's biological and chemical weapons capability has been weakened in the short term, but the regime's desire to possess these easily developed weapons has only been strengthened. Looking to the future, it is hard to imagine what has been gained by creating deep-seated resentment in Iraq, a country destined to play a leading role in regional affairs because of its economic, cultural, and human resources. The tragedy of US policy is that when sanctions against Iraq are ultimately lifted — as they must someday be — the terrible price paid by innocent civilians will have purchased no additional peace or security. ■

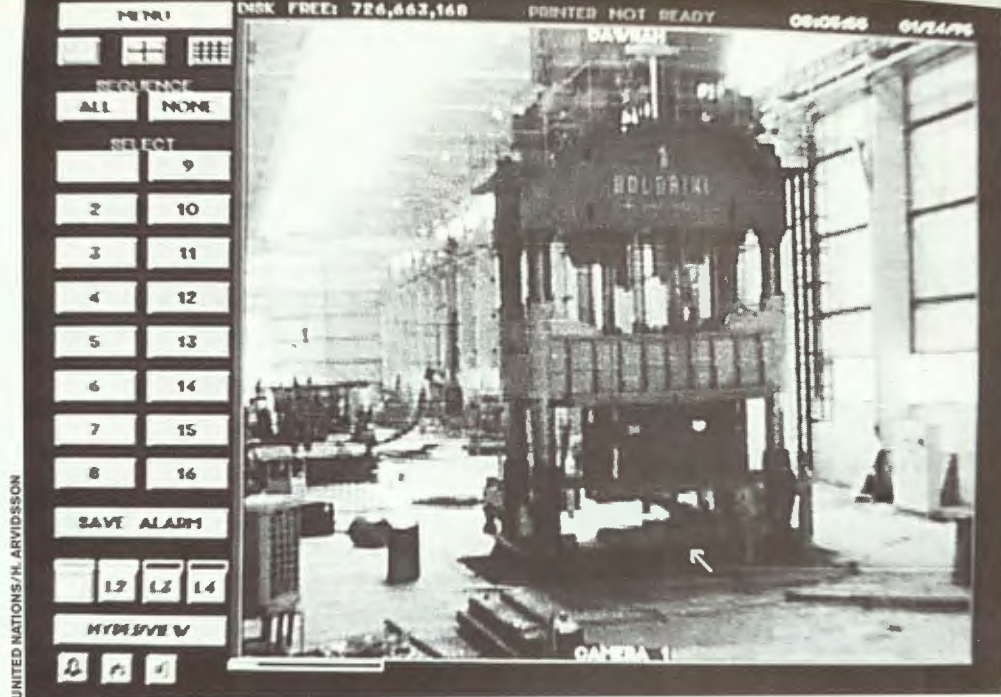
37. Robert Fisk, *The Independent*, "Iraq — Misery and Hardship, the Darker Side of UN Sanctions," Feb. 25, 1998, p. 12.

38. Richard Butler, private talk to NY Bar Committee on Foreign Affairs, March 11, 1998.

CHEMICAL AND BIOLOGICAL WEAPONS IN IRAQ AND BEYOND

Near War, Real Fear

by Paul Rogers



A real-time transmission of a picture from a remote facility in Iraq to UNSCOM's Baghdad Monitoring and Verification Center.

Chemical and biological weapons, the poor nation's weapons of mass destruction, are making the world's only superpower nervous.

Confrontations between nations that both hold weapons of mass destruction (WMD) are extremely rare — there have been only a handful among the 120 plus wars since 1945.¹ When the latest crisis between two such states, the US and Iraq, was defused at the last moment, relief around the world was palpable. Nonetheless, the risk of war in the Middle East continues, and continues to be a matter of huge concern.

The current crisis originated with Iraq's refusal to comply with UN resolutions mandating the dismantling of its weapons of mass destruction, specifically with interference in the work of the UN Special Commission on Iraq (UNSCOM) as it attempted to gain access to the Iraqi biological weapons (BW) program. The showdown escalated rapidly as Washington demanded compliance and moved substantial military forces into the area. Although international and domestic support for US action was weak, it looked probable at the time of Annan's visit to

Baghdad that the US was within a few days of starting a war. Then at the eleventh hour, Annan met with Saddam Hussein in Baghdad and brokered a tense settlement.

Maintaining Weapons of Mass Destruction

But the fundamental differences that brought the countries to the razor's edge

cover and dismantle the Iraqi WMD program. It directed most of its initial efforts against the nuclear facilities and the ballistic missiles. While that mission seems to have been largely successful, the massive effort to find and destroy chemical weapons appears less so. UNSCOM suspects that Iraq may have retained a stockpile of the most modern and potent of the nerve agents — VX.

The Iraqi biological weapons program is even more worrisome, and UNSCOM began to uncover its full extent only in 1995.² Within two years of its start in 1985, the biowar program was producing anthrax spores and gearing up to make botulinum toxin. By 1989, Iraq had field-tested artillery shells and bombs capable of deploying chemical and biological weapons (CBW) agents and was experimenting with ricin toxin, hemorrhagic conjunctivitis, diarrheal rota-

By the end of 1990, US intelligence agencies knew that Iraq was willing to use weapons of mass destruction against invading forces if its very survival was at stake.

virus, aflatoxin, and gas gangrene.³ After invading Kuwait, Baghdad initiated an emergency weaponization program and, by the outbreak of Operation Desert Storm in January 1991, had 25 medium-range missiles with warheads con-

of war remain. If the main aim of Saddam Hussein's regime through the seven years following the Gulf War has been to ensure its own survival, a crucial secondary goal has been to maintain its arsenal of weapons of mass destruction. Throughout this period, UNSCOM, in association with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), has systematically attempted to un-

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1. For details of conflicts since 1945 see Ruth Leger Sivard, *World Military and Social Expenditures 1996* (Washington, DC: World Priorities Inc., 1996). Among the very few wars involving opponents equipped with weapons of mass destruction are the Gulf War in 1991 and the Yom Kippur/Ramadan War of 1973. In the latter conflict, Israel had nuclear weapons and Syria and Egypt probably had a very limited chemical warfare capability.

2. Report by the UN Secretary-General to the Security Council, S/1995/864, Oct. 11, 1995.

3. *Ibid.*



UNITED NATIONS/H. ARVIDSSON

The 350mm "Supergun" at Jabal Hamryn (l.). Rolf Ekeus, UNSCOM executive chair visiting a hydrolysis plant that is set up to destroy chemical warfare agents (below). Iraqi civilian faces the destruction after the 1991 bombing war (r.).



taining botulinum, anthrax or aflatoxin, together with 166 spray bombs with similar payloads.⁴ In perhaps the most significant revelation of all, UNSCOM has reported that during the 1991 war, "authority to launch biological and chemical weapons was pre-delegated in the event that Baghdad was hit by nuclear weapons during the Gulf War." It goes without saying that pre-delegation of launch authority for weapons of mass destruction in time of war is potentially unstable and highly dangerous.

In an extraordinary twist to this story, it is also clear that by the end of 1990, US intelligence agencies knew that Iraq was willing to use WMD against invading forces if its very survival was at stake.⁵ This knowledge may well provide one of the real reasons why the US-led coalition did not push the war north of Basra and avoided any threat to the regime itself.

It is clear from the work of UNSCOM that Iraq made determined efforts to develop a formidable BW capability. Furthermore, it was this part of the Iraqi WMD program that proved most difficult for the UN inspectors to uncover. The Iraqi regime went to great lengths to shield these developments, not least through a comprehensive concealment program involving some 1,000 government officials, most notably the Special Security Organization.⁶

While the UNSCOM process has divested Iraq of most of its weapons of mass destruction, the regime has been determined to retain its one significant remaining capability — biological weapons. Equally, the US administration has been determined to prevent this. Hence the recent crisis.

Iraqi WMD in Context

During the Gulf War, and since 1991, much has been made of the threat of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction. The danger is real, but should be put in context. At the time of the war, the US and the Soviet Union each had some 20,000 nuclear weapons and tens of thousands of tons of chemical weapons. Britain, France, and China each had several hundred nuclear weapons and France and China were reported to have chemical weapons. India, Pakistan, and South Africa were presumed to have small nuclear arsenals or at least nuclear ambitions, and a diverse cluster of countries was thought to possess or be seeking chemical and/or biological weapons. These included North Korea, South Korea, Taiwan, Egypt, Iran, Libya, Syria, Vietnam, and South Africa.⁷

Of particular significance in the Middle East was the status of Israel, thought to have

more than 100 nuclear weapons and a mature chemical and biological warfare program. Iraq thus had a nuclear power to its west and two adjoining countries, Syria and Iran, with WMD programs. If the Iraqi regime was to fulfill its ambition of regional power status, it, too, would have to develop weapons of mass destruction.

Roots of Iraq's Program

Iraq probably began to develop WMD in the mid-1970s, concentrating on nuclear and chemical weapons.⁸ It was spurred on by knowledge that Israel had nuclear capability, that other states including Egypt and Syria had chemical weapons programs, and that Iran under the Shah had nuclear ambitions.

In 1981, Israeli Air Force strike aircraft (US-made F-15 and F-16 jets) bombed the Osiraq plutonium reactor near Baghdad. After this preemptive strike against Iraq's nascent nuclear program, Baghdad seems to have re-thought its WMD program. It explored several different routes to uranium-based nuclear weapons and

4. UN Secretary General's Report, *op. cit.*

5. This information was available briefly on a Department of Defense website and was reported in *The Chemical Weapons Convention Bulletin*, n. 30, Dec. 1995.

6. Paul Rogers, "Implications of the Gulf Crisis," *Disarmament Diplomacy*, London, April 1998.

7. For a survey of the development of weapons of mass destruction at the time of the Gulf War, see Paul Rogers and Malcolm Dando, *The Directory of Nuclear, Biological and Chemical Arms and Disarmament 1990* (London: Tri-Service Press, 1990).

8. *Ibid.*

expanded its program of chemical weapons development.

These programs proceeded throughout the 1980s, with the greatest initial progress in chemical weapons. Between August 1983 and March 1988, Iraq used chemical weapons on at least ten occasions, primarily against Iranian infantry during the long and bitter war with Iran which Iraq had initiated in 1980.⁹ The main chemical agents were mustard gas and Tabun nerve agent, although other agents may also have been used against the Kurdish town of Halabjah in March 1988.

Throughout this period, the most sustained use of chemical warfare since World War I, there was minimal condemnation of Iraq from the West. Instead, Iraq, with much of its munitions industry using Western technology,

9. United States Information Service, *Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction Programs*, US Embassy, London, Feb. 1998.

was seen as a bastion of Western interests against revolutionary Iran. And only one month after the killing of 5,000 civilians at Halabjah, the US Navy fought a series of actions against Iran which destroyed

The Arab world draws a pointed comparison between US reaction to violations of UN resolutions by Iraq and by Israel.

much of the active Iranian Navy. This US intervention, at a time when Baghdad was suffering considerable reversals, helped quickly end the Iran-Iraq war on terms advantageous to Iraq.¹⁰

10. Elizabeth Gamlen and Paul Rogers, "U.S. Reflagging of Kuwaiti Tankers," in Farhang Rajaei, ed., *The Iran-Iraq War*:

By 1991, in the period leading up to the Gulf War, Iraq had a substantial chemical arsenal, had purchased or developed a range of ballistic missiles, and had an active nuclear weapons development program. It also had a large biological weapons program, the full details of which emerged only much later.

Surviving the Storm

Then came the huge Iraqi miscalculation of invading Kuwait in August 1990. The US-led coalition responded with a devastating five-week air assault, followed by a ground war which evicted Iraqi forces from Kuwait. At the time, it was widely believed that the Saddam Hussein regime would collapse in the face of this onslaught. Instead, it not only survived but was able to sup-

The Politics of Aggression (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1993).



press rebellions in the Shi'ite south of Iraq and in the Kurdish north during 1991.

After the war, the UN imposed a series of tough economic sanctions on Iraq intended to force the regime to reveal all of its weapons of mass destruction and their development programs.¹¹ UN Resolution 687 established UNSCOM in 1991 to work with the International Atomic Energy Agency to find and destroy the weapons. It further required Iraq to provide a full, final, and complete declaration (FFCD) of its weapons inventory within 15 days, although dismantling the extensive arsenal was expected to take up to two years.

In practice, though, the regime has survived the sanctions and retained control over most of the country. There are probably two reasons for this resilience, both with implications for the future. First, it is now apparent that the much-vaunted destruction of the Iraqi forces during Desert Storm was nothing like as complete as claimed. Although the Iraqis made a massive strategic miscalculation in invading Kuwait, their tactics afterward were more effective.

Right at the start of the war, the Iraqi army staged a major probe into Saudi Arabia at Al Khafji. Although the US and regional forces effectively repulsed the attack, the Iraqi leadership was probably able to learn something about coalition capabilities. Furthermore, the immediate Iraqi use of Scud missile attacks led coalition forces to expend a huge effort in "Scud hunts," not least in an urgent effort to keep Israel from intervening.

When the main ground war finally started, the great majority of elite Iraqi forces was nowhere near Kuwait — indeed at least half of the Republican Guard divisions remained in or near Baghdad and most of the best regular army units had headed out of the war zone. Poorly equipped conscripts were left to face the coalition forces.

Regime Survival

Since the 1991 war, the regime has survived seven years of sanctions and several bombing and cruise missile raids by the US. The UN "food-for-oil" scheme has given only limited relief to ordinary Iraqi people: 30 percent of the \$2 billion in oil exports allowed every six months pays for war reparations with most of the rest buying food and medicine. Even so, the ma-

jority of the population is impoverished, in poor health and suffering massive hardships.¹²

A substantial elite has survived almost unscathed and Saddam Hussein's regime has been able to invest in major civil and military building programs.¹³ Baghdad has funded these projects through substantial smuggling of oil out of Iraq, especially into Turkey and in small tankers sailing out of Basra and transhipping to larger tankers further down the Gulf. This smuggling has been facilitated by dwindling support in the region for sanctions against Iraq, not least because so much of the Arab world draws a pointed comparison between the US hard-line approach to UN resolutions on Iraq in contrast to its continued support for Israel, which is in clear violation of UN Resolutions 242 and 425 as well as the 4th Geneva Convention and the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Would War Have Worked?

Washington was keenly aware of this lack of regional support as it prepared this winter for another massive air assault on Iraq. Neither growing regional sympathy for Iraq, marked lack of enthusiasm by former Desert Storm allies such as France and Saudi Arabia, growing popular dissent at home, nor questions of international law seemed likely to deflect the US war plan.¹⁴ The success of Kofi Annan's negotiations and Iraq's agreement to comply with UN resolutions was a surprising development.

Saudi Arabia refused to allow USAF planes to strike Iraq from its bases or to be moved to Kuwait or Bahrain.

But in the breathing space that followed the US standdown, there is evidence that the planned attacks were not only unpopular, but militarily unwise. A number of analysts including Gen. Norman Schwartzkopf and British Desert Storm Gen. Sir Peter de le Billiere questioned feasibility of military action — especially if it was designed to

12. Julian Borger, "Saddam's Elite Rides High Despite UN Sanctions," *The Guardian* (London), March 3, 1998.

13. *Ibid.*

14. Julie Dahlitz, "The US Lacks Legal Authority to Attack Iraq," *International Herald Tribune*, Feb. 17, 1998.

harm the regime and force it to make concessions. They have suggested — despite claims by the Pentagon and other sources to the contrary — that the US lacked adequate military forces to target many of the regime's key components of power.

The Pentagon had planned to mount an air campaign that combined cruise missile raids launched from sea and air with aerial bombardment using principally the F-117A Stealth fighter-bomber. It would last up to 30 days¹⁵ and supposedly employ a wide range of new types of weapons. However, a study by the Federation of American Scientists suggested that while the Pentagon would deploy a higher proportion of "smart" weapons, most of its arsenal was the same as in 1991.¹⁶

The new generation of weapons, especially those involving low-cost accurate GPS (global positioning satellite) guidance, will only start to come on line in 1998. Meanwhile, most of the weapons, including laser-guided bombs and many of the cruise missiles, remains as vulnerable, as they were in 1991 to weather and other conditions.

Even more troubling was the friction between Saudi Arabia and the US. For several years, the US Air Force has maintained a major presence in Saudi Arabia and has

trained its forces there for conflict with Iraq. Indeed, these units would form the key components of any major new air strike against Saddam Hussein. During the recent crisis, Saudi Arabia refused to allow these planes to take off from its bases to strike Iraq. Not widely reported was that Saudi Arabia would

not even allow the USAF to move these key strike planes to other bases in Kuwait or Bahrain, a decision which caused consternation in the Pentagon and plunging morale among US Air Force units in Saudi Arabia. As the crisis peaked in mid-February, one reliable source reported that, given the problems with Saudi Arabia, an

15. David A. Fulghum, "Saudi Arabia Blocks USAF Warplane Shift," *Aviation Week*, Feb. 16, 1998.

16. John Pike, "New Study Finds Few New Weapons for War with Iraq," *Federation of American Scientists*, Feb. 20, 1998.



air campaign could not be mounted for up to four weeks.¹⁷

The Risk of Escalation

Washington often stated that its main goal in attacking Iraq was undercutting Saddam Hussein's ability to threaten or wage chemical or biological war. It was clear, however, that since directly targeting these CBW stores would have been hugely dangerous and difficult, the US would try instead to force the Iraqi regime to comply with UN inspections. This strategy meant directly damaging the regime itself, a hazardous endeavor given knowledge of the regime's utter determination in 1991 to ensure its survival.

UNITED NATIONS/H. ARVIDSSON



Leaking 122mm rockets filled with chemical nerve agent sarin in a pit before their destruction by UNSCOM (above). An UNSCOM inspector in protective suit samples chemical weapons precursors at the Muthanna State Establishment (l.). Chemical/biological filled R-400 aerial bombs destroyed by UNSCOM (below).



UNITED NATIONS/H. ARVIDSSON

A remarkable indication of the dangers of a new war with Iraq became apparent in 1995. Each year, the US holds a major war game at the US Naval War College, Newport, RI. Usually beginning in July and frequently lasting three weeks, the war games involve DoD, State Department, National Security Council, and intelligence officials. It is one of the major tools the military uses to explore strategic situations.

Global 95 was based on a future double crisis involving problems with North Korea and with a renaissant Iraq. The crisis in East Asia was contained, but that between the US and Iraq escalated out of control, with the Iraqi regime eventually using biological weapons against US forces in the

region and launching terrorist attacks on Norfolk, VA, and Washington, DC. In this simulation, casualties were massive and the US retaliated with a nuclear attack on Baghdad which ended the "war."¹⁸

The results of Global 95 caused consternation in defense circles and elevated the significance of biological weapons among military planners as they wrestled with possible responses to the real crisis in Iraq. One defense official quoted after Global 95 accepted that virtually the only reaction to such potentially devastating weapons was threatening to use nuclear weapons. Unless the US was willing to destroy whole cities, he was not sure if that deterrent would be sufficient. But, if the US did launch nuclear strikes against cities, he concluded, "no country would use those [biological] weapons for the next 100 years."¹⁹

This doomsday planning has gone beyond the bright summer

18. Theresa Hitchens, "Wargame Finds U.S. Falls Short in Bio War," *Defense News* (Washington, DC), Aug. 28, 1995.

19. *Ibid.*



TEIT HORNEBAK/IMPACT VISUALS

Kurdish refugees near the border between Iran and Iraq (April 1991). In 1988, Saddam Hussein used poison gas on Kurds.

beaches of Newport. At a DoD news briefing on January 27, spokesperson Kenneth Bacon was questioned about US responses to Iraqi WMD use. "The administration's policy on this is very clear," he answered. "We will respond with devastating force." When pressed about a nuclear response, he replied, "I don't think we've ruled anything in or out in this regard. Our position is that we would respond very aggressively."²⁰

Furthermore, a CIA report released in 1992 but not widely circulated, claimed that after the Gulf War, it was found that Iraq's "Nasir State Establishment for Mechanical Industries had stored in its headquarters building bomb shelter approximately 10 drone airplanes which had been designed and produced to deliver biological warfare."²¹

Implications for a New World Order

In the wake of the 1991 Gulf War and at the end of 45 years of Cold War, the world,

with wildly varying degrees of optimism, looked to a "new world order." It would be dominated by the Western liberal democracies pursuing their free market interests and controlling a socioeconomic system that could ultimately be secured, if need be, by military power.

In a war game simulation, the US suffered massive CBW casualties and retaliated with a nuclear attack on Baghdad.

Within five years, the triumph of this world order was by no means secure. Despite the dominance of Washington and its allies, states with relatively little economic and political power could acquire the means to exert considerable military influence, not least by developing biological and chemical arms.

Iraq, though ruled by a brutal elite, provides a model for other states that see their interests circumscribed by Western control of the new world order. In that sense, Iraq is a much more serious "threat" to Western interests than its conventional army or defiant stance would predict. Indeed, control of the regime and its biological weapons has become a test case for whether a Western-dominated new world order will thrive.

For the moment, a dangerous military confrontation has been avoided, or perhaps only postponed. The danger of a confrontation between Western interests and those of other states remains. Shortly after his appointment as director of the Central Intelligence Agency in 1993, James Woolsey commented that Western security interests had "slain the dragon" of the Soviet Union but that the West now lived in a "jungle full of poisonous snakes."²² The recent crisis with Iraq suggests that taming that jungle, and making the world safe for Western interests, may be more difficult than Woolsey ever imagined. ■

20. News Briefing by Kenneth H. Bacon, Assistant Secretary for Defense, Public Affairs, Department of Defense, 1:45 pm, Jan. 27, 1998.

21. Central Intelligence Agency Report CIA 374704, May 1992.

The Technology of Political Control

by Robin Ballantyne

Twenty years ago, when a group of scientists warned about the dangers of a new technology of political control, they were dismissed as alarmist and subversive. The technology the British Society for Social Responsibility of Scientists (BSSRS) saw developing ranged from “means of monitoring internal dissent to devices for controlling demonstrations; from new techniques of interrogation to methods of prisoner control.” Although the 34 riot control weapons described by a 1972 US National Science Foundation report were mostly in a developmental stage, variants of all are now in use. They include chemical and kinetic weapons; electrified water jets; combined stroboscopic light and pulsed sound weapons; infrasound weapons; dart guns that shoot drug-filled flight-stabilized syringes; stench pots which give off an obnoxious odor; the taser, which fires two small electrical contacts, discharging 50,000 volts into the target; and instant banana-peel, which makes roads so slippery they become impassable.”¹

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1. *Non-lethal Weapons for Law Enforcement: Research Needs and Priorities. A Report to the National Science Foundation, Security Planning Corporation, March 1972.*

Added to this arsenal is a sophisticated array of computerized surveillance technology, topped by a global capability for tracking voice and data transmissions. This technology of repression, wrote BSSRS, is “the product of the application of science and technology to the problem of neutralizing the state’s internal enemies. It is mainly directed at civilian populations, and is not intended to kill (and only rarely does). It is aimed as much at hearts and minds as at bodies.”² And it is used both in war abroad and civil strife at home.

BSSRS recognized that the weapons and systems developed and tested by the US in Vietnam and by the UK in its former colonies and Northern Ireland were coming home. The military-industrial complex rapidly modified its military systems for domestic security. Touted as “non-lethal,” the new technology of repression offered a technical fix for social unrest: it

2. C. Ackroyd, K. Margolis, J. Rosenhead, T. Shallice, *The Technology of Political Control* (Middlesex, UK: Penguin Books, 1977).



could crush dissent while masking the level of coercion deployed.

War at Home

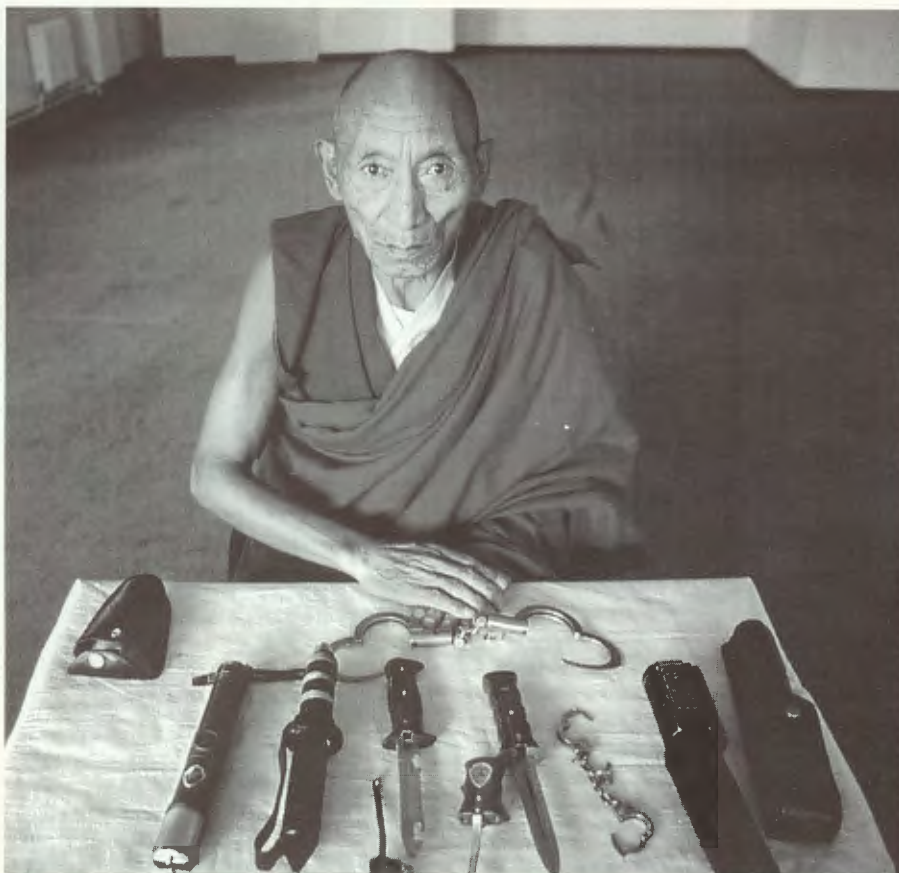
Now in place around the world, this technology, and the concept of non-lethal weaponry, has been normalized. The result is that the functions of armies and police are becoming increasingly blurred: Security forces paramilitarize, police militarize, and armies mobilize for domestic control functions. Corporations have exacerbated this process by aggressively peddling the new arsenal to both civilian and military markets. Today, this “new type of weaponry” has revolutionized the scope, efficiency, and growth of policing power—differing from nation to nation largely by the level of democratic accountability with which it is applied. It has become so deeply rooted in domestic police functions that, two decades after the BSSRS report, the Scientific and Technological Options Assessment (STOA) Committee of the European Parliament (EU) was sufficiently alarmed to commission a study on behalf of the European Union’s Civil Liberties and Internal Affairs Committee.

This 1998 report, “An Appraisal of the Technology of Political Control,” vindicated the scientists’ early concerns, provoked headlines around Europe—but sparked



At a nonviolent protest in Burlington, VT, against the looming war in Iraq this year, fellow demonstrators tend to Steve Christiansen after police sprayed him with pepper gas.

JORDAN SILVERMAN



DAVID HOFFMAN

Released after 24 years in a Chinese prison, Tibetan monk Palden Gyatso walked three days back to the jail and bribed guards to sell him the torture instruments they used on him. They include, "non-lethal" electric batons and thumb cuffs.

little notice in the US. Written by the UK's Omega Foundation, it determined trends and developments, examined the state of the repressive craft, and suggested regulatory strategies for the management and future democratic control of this technology.³

The STOA report paints a chilling picture of innovation in repression — a Pandora's box of new weapons — designed to appear rather than be safe. Included in the continuum of options are the following:

SEMI-INTELLIGENT ZONE-DENIAL SYSTEMS. These automated sentry systems utilize neural networks capable of pattern recognition and "learning" so that they can patrol sensitive zones and deploy either lethal or sub-lethal munitions.

GLOBAL SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS. Voice recognition software can intercept and track individuals and groups while supercomputers automatically sort most phone calls, faxes, and e-mail.⁴ "Data-veillance" systems track asylum seekers and political activists as well as potential terrorists or

other targeted individuals, by using biometric techniques to identify people through DNA, retinal or fingerprint pattern recognition (such as the EU EURODAC Project).

DATA PROFILERS. Police states have been able to use computerized surveillance data to compile "friendship maps" or links by analyzing who phones or e-mails whom. Guatemala has used the Tadiran computer system located in the national palace to create death lists.

"SUB-LETHAL" OR INCAPACITATING WEAPONS. Pepper spray (OC spray), CS gas, and chemical foam can be used for both prison and crowd control as well as in "sub-state conflict operations other than war" (or what used to be called "Low Intensity Conflict"). And while pepper gas, a plant toxin, is banned by the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention for use in war, it is permitted for internal security use. "Sticky foam," an incredibly adhesive chemical, can be used to "glue" demonstrators to various surfaces or to each other. Foams can also be used to form barriers that seal off all escape routes and facilitate mass arrests.

SOFT POINT AMMUNITION. Under the guise of protecting innocent urban bystanders, hollow-point bullets are being touted as

safer than regular metal-jacketed ammunition, which can pass through walls and intended targets to hit civilians beyond the field of view. Although these inhumane expanding "dum-dum" munitions are banned by the Geneva Conventions for on the battlefield, they are increasingly popular with SWAT and special forces teams.

DISCREET ORDER VEHICLES. Designed for prime time television to look like ambulances, they can deploy a formidable array of weaponry and have been used to provide a show of force in countries such as Turkey, or to spray harassing chemicals or dye on protestors, as the security forces have recently done in Indonesia. Although such dye-marking appears relatively benign, it tags protesters for up to a week so that the snatch squads can arrest them later, away from the media's prying lenses. Those arrested can then enjoy the benefits of more traditional techniques of repression: interrogation, torture, and execution.

Crowd Control Weapons

This new repression technology is becoming more sophisticated, more powerful, and more common, particularly with the praetorian guards of torturing states such as China and Guatemala. And because of aggressive marketing by the manufacturers and suppliers who service both civilian and military markets, it is rapidly spreading not only to national armies, but into virtually every state's police, paramilitary, and internal security agency arsenals. Manufacturers such as Alliant Tech Systems (USA), Civil Defence Supply (UK), or Stun Tech (USA) promote the new technology with the claim that it is safer, less lethal, than the traditional alternatives. But instead of replacing lethal weapons, the "non-lethal" alternatives are augmenting the use of deadly force, in both war and in "operations other than war," where the main targets are civilians.

The EU report critically evaluates the safety of these allegedly "harmless" weapons. One of the most common is plastic bullets — deadlier than the rubber bullets that preceded them — and other "kinetic weapons." Using earlier US military and empirical data, the report found that much of the biomedical research legitimizing these weapons is badly flawed. Used widely for riot or crowd control (a common euphemism for dispersing political protest), plastic bullets have frequently caused blindness, other serious injury and death to both dissenters and bystanders.⁵ All the commonly available plastic bullet

5. L. Rocks, "Injuries caused by plastic bullets compared... rubber bullets," *Lancet* (London), April 23, 1983, pp. 919-20.

ammunition used in Europe exceeds the severe damage zone for kinetic energy weapons established in 1975 by US military scientists. Although the UK withdrew more than 100,000 plastic bullets last year, their less forceful replacements were still judged excessively injurious by these same criteria. The price of protest should not be death, yet these weapons are frequently used against bystanders at close range in zone clearance operations. The STOA report advocates a complete ban.

The EU report also calls for a halt to the use of pepper gas (*oleoresin capsicum* or OC) in Europe until its biomedical effects can be independently evaluated. Its use is increasing rapidly despite a US Army study noting possible "mutagenic effects, carcinogenic effects, sensitization, cardiovascular and pulmonary toxicity, neurotoxicity, as well as possible human fatalities."⁶ In the US, pepper gas became a routine police tool after a 1987 FBI endorsement. In 1996, Special Agent Thomas Ward, the FBI's chief proselytizer for OC, was con-

RIOT CONTROL VEHICLES

- B.A.T. is the leading manufacturer of riot control vehicles which are based on the B.A.T. unique "computerized jet pulse water cannon" system.
- B.A.T. presents a complete line of riot control vehicles, with over 15 different models, on a wide variety of basic chassis.
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B.A.T. RIOT CONTROL VEHICLE FEATURES:

- Three different firing modes: Short Pulse Long Pulse and Continuous Stream.
- Tear Gas (C.S.) Injection into the water pulse.
- Dye Injection into the water pulse.
- Under Chassis foam protection (against fire bombs)
- Gas Nozzles for vehicle's protection.
- Front Bulldozer
- Close Circuit T.V.+Video system
- Ballistic Armouring against any threat level

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Advertisement for riot control vehicle (r.); (below) a water cannon is turned on demonstrators in Chile.

BAT

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do US products and yet they are touted as being comparable. Most police forces in the UK adopted the spray before findings on its alleged safety were published. At this strength, CS can cause permanent damage. A former London Metropolitan Police instructor, Peter Hodgkinson, undergoing training at the Northamptonshire Constabulary, lost 40-50 percent of his corneas after he volunteered to be sprayed during initial testing. No one from the police or Home Office has visited the partially blinded inspector.⁹

Non-Lethal War

The other main application of the new technology of repression is in war. Armies around the globe are eager to embrace the new oxymoronic doctrine of non-lethal warfare. The concept emerged in the US in the 1990s, much to the disbelief of serious researchers. Its advocates were predominantly futurist writers such as Alvin and Heidi Toffler¹⁰ and science fiction writers such as Janet and Chris Morris,¹¹ who

9. *Guardian* (London), Jan. 29, 1998.

10. A. Toffler & H. Toffler, *War and Anti-war: Survival at the Dawn of the 21st Century* (London: Little Brown & Co., 1994).

11. See e.g., Janet Morris and Chris Morris, *Non-lethality: A Global Strategy* (West Hyannisport, MA: Morris & Morris, 1994).

victed of taking a \$57,000 kickback from a pepper spray manufacturer. Moreover, a report by the International Association of Chiefs of Police documented at least 113 pepper gas-linked fatalities in the US — predominantly from positional asphyxia.⁷

In addition to the dangers from approved usage, pepper spray has been widely misused. In California, police deputies pulled back the heads of protestors, opened their lids and swabbed

the burning liquid directly on their eyeballs. Amnesty International called this use against peaceful environmental activists, "tantamount to torture."⁸

In some cases, technologies, used under regulated circumstances in one country or tested at a particular strength, are changed when exported. For example, the CS sprays authorized for use by UK police since 1996 are five times more concentrated than similar MACE products in the US and have dispersion rates five times greater. These sprays effectively dump 25 times as much irritant on a target's face as

8. Amnesty International Press Release, "AI-USA: Police Use of Pepper Spray Is Tantamount to Torture," Nov. 7, 1997.

6. H. Salem, N. J. Olajos, L. M. Miller, and S. A. Thomson, *Capsaicin Toxicology Review*, US Army Edgewood Research, Development and Engineering Center, Life Sciences Department (1993).

7. Terry Allen, "Critics Question Use of Pepper Spray," *Rutland Herald and Barre Times-Argus* (VT), Feb. 22, 1998, p. 1.

New Surveillance Technology

In frightening detail, the STOA report describes a global telecommunications surveillance system that can sift through all telephone, e-mail, and fax transmissions of private citizens, politicians, trade unionists, activists, suspected terrorists, and corporations alike.

PREEMPTIVE POLICING. Increasingly, instead of reacting to crime, law enforcement agencies are "tracking certain social classes and races of people living in red-lined areas before crime is committed. This preemptive policing, called data-veillance, is based on military models of gathering huge quantities of low grade intelligence." Another telecommunications surveillance system that is jointly maintained by the EU and FBI provides information to law enforcement agencies (police, customs, immigration, and internal security services) of other European countries and the international community.¹

The report explains how police and intelligence agencies can use built-in monitoring and geographical tracking facilities to surveil mobile phones. For instance, the digital System X exchanges used for most telephone calls in the UK has the built-in "ability to take phones 'off hook' and listen into conversations occurring near the phone, without the user being aware that it is happening. This capability effectively means that national telephone systems are designed from the start to have eavesdropping capacity. (System X has been exported to Russia and China)."² The STOA report also notes that "the digital technology required to pinpoint mobile phone users for incoming calls, allows cell phones to become mini-tracking devices that can locate their owners at any time on a geographic information display map down to a few hundred meters, providing the



The sophistication of current surveillance technology dwarfs anything envisioned in Orwell's novel *1984*, pictured here in the 1955 film.

phone is switched on. The information can be stored in the company's computer for up to two years. Coupled with System X technology, this is a custom built mobile track, tail and tap system par excellence."³

THE ECHELON SYSTEM. A key intelligence element in this global surveillance net-

work is the ECHELON system run by the US National Security Agency (NSA) in conjunction with the UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Unlike many Cold War era electronic spy systems, the e-mail, telephone and fax communications interception capabilities of ECHELON were designed for primarily non-military targets. Investigative journalists in the UK first uncovered this network in the 1970s using open sources to research the telephone tapping functions of the NSA base at Menwith Hill. They and their Norwegian colleagues⁴ found themselves at the receiving end of Kafkaesque official secrecy and national security trials. James Bamford enlarged public knowledge of NSA's activities in his seminal volume *The Puzzle Palace*,⁵ and most recently Nicky Hager in his book *Secret Power* and in his writing for CAQ has revealed the vast extent and power of the network. The EU report drew on Hager's work to describe the ECHELON dictionary of keywords, phrases, and people's names and to detail how it is used by NSA's international network of bases in affiliate countries to trawl the airwaves, track, and download communications containing the tagged words.⁶

The UK-USA link via Menwith Hill has rapidly expanded to become the biggest spy station in Europe. It feeds extremely sensitive intelligence on EU parliamentary, diplomatic, and commercial matters to only one EU member: the UK.

ECONOMIC INTELLIGENCE. Interestingly, it is the use of these surveillance networks for commercial and diplomatic advantage, even against allies, that has raised

The US has likely shared economic intelligence with US firms to tilt the playing field.

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MOVIE STILL ARCHIVES

the most interest from journalists and the loudest outcry from politicians. "The report hints strongly," noted European Parliamentarian for Greater Manchester, Glyn Ford, "that on occasion the US has not been beyond sharing collateral economic intelligence picked up in passing, with US companies to tilt the playing field of international industrial competition in their favor. In British and European boardrooms this will cause more anguish and anger in some quarters than the civil liberties dimension." Ford was a driving force behind the commissioning of the STOA report.

Indeed since the report came out, journalists have alleged that ECHELON has benefited US companies involved in arms deals, and strengthened Washington's position in crucial World Trade Organization talks with Europe during a 1995

dispute with Japan over car part exports. According to the *Financial Mail On Sunday*, "key words identified by US experts include the names of intergovernmental trade organizations and business consortia bidding against US companies. The word 'block' is on the [ECHELON dictionary's] list to identify communications about offshore oil in areas where the seabed has yet to be divided up into exploration blocks. ... It has also been suggested that in 1990, the US broke into secret negotiations and persuaded Indonesia that US giant AT&T be included in a multi-billion dollar telecom deal that at one point was going entirely to Japan's NEC."⁷

Surveilling Civil Liberties

But unlike politicians and business leaders concerned primarily about national competitive advantage, critics like Glyn Ford are alarmed about the broader implications of the technology of political repression. "There are times in history when technology helps to democratize, and times when it helps centralize," he said. "This is a time of centralization ... without a corresponding strengthening of civil liberties."

"If the STOA report does one thing, it is to alert politicians of the need to reclaim democratic accountability over ever-more capable surveillance technologies. It is vital to have in place institutional and political control structures that can direct and control the use of such systems. ... Some democratically elected body should surely have a right to know at some level. At the moment that's nowhere."⁸

The STOA report recommends that the "European Parliament should reject US proposals for making internet messages accessible to US intelligence agencies. Nor should the Parliament agree to new expensive encryption controls, without a wide ranging debate within the EU on the implications for the civil and human rights of European citizens and the commercial rights of companies to operate without unwarranted surveillance by intelligence agencies operating in conjunction with multinational competitors." With classic finesse, Washington-based Privacy International plans to file a complaint with Brussels, accusing Britain of breaking the spirit of the Maastricht Treaty by taking unfair commercial advantage over EU partners.

Ford is sanguine about the unlikely alliance that is forming between civil rights and commercial interests. "Of course, it won't be easy for government to take on and win the battle with the intelligence community and bring a little light into the dark secrets they have been schooled to keep inviolate from those tainted by electoral politics." ■

1. This system was first described by the UK journal, *Statewatch*. See v. 7, n. 1, Jan. - Feb. 1997 and n. 4 & 5, July to Oct. 1997, available from Statewatch, PO Box 1516, London N16 0EW, UK (e-mail: statewatch-off@geo2.poptel.org.uk).

2. Scientists for Global Responsibility *Newsletter*; n. 4, 1999.

3. *Sunday Telegraph*, Feb. 2, 1997. Cited in the STOA Report.

4. For a full account see Duncan Campbell, "Phonetappers & the Security State," *New Statesman Report*, n. 2, 1981.

A description of the Norwegian security trials of Owen Wilkes and Nils Petter Gleditsch is provided in "The Oslo Rabbit Trial, Solidarity Campaign for Gleditsch & Wilkes," Dec. 1981, and *Round Two* — *The Norwegian Supreme Court vs. Gleditsch and Wilkes*, PRIO publication P-12/82, Oslo, Feb. 1982.

5. James Bamford, *The Puzzle Palace: America's National Security Agency and Its Special Relationship with Britain's GCHQ*, (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1982).

6. See Nicky Hager, "Exposing the Global Surveillance System," *CAQ*, n. 59, Winter 1996-97.

7. M. Fletcher, "Cook Faces Quiz on Big Brother Spy Net," *Financial Mail on Sunday*, March 1, 1998.

8. Simon Davies, "They are eavesdropping on our every word," *Daily Telegraph* (London) Dec. 16, 1997.

found a willing ear in the nuclear weapons laboratories of Los Alamos, Oak Ridge and Lawrence Livermore. Cynics were quick to point out that the initiative was useful for protecting jobs in the beleaguered weapons laboratories facing the challenge of life after the Cold War.

This disingenuous doctrine found a champion in Col. John Alexander, who made his name in the rather more lethal Phoenix assassination programs of the Vietnam War (and later became a proponent of psychic warfare). The Pentagon and Justice Department rallied around the doctrine, hoping to find a magic bullet that would neutralize the "CNN factor," and somehow allow the powers of good to prevail without public bloodshed. Police were reeling after the Rodney King beating in Los Angeles; the ATF and FBI were feeling the heat after disasters at Waco and Ruby Ridge; and the military was stinging from the humiliation it had suffered in Somalia at the hands of unruly crowds and uncooperative "war lords." They all looked to a good old fashioned American "technical fix."

The US now has an integrated product team: the Marines, Air Force, Special Operations Command, Army, Navy, Joint Staff of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Departments of Transportation, Justice, Energy. One of its roles is to liaise with friendly foreign governments. To this end, last November, the team sponsored a special conference in London on the "Future of Non-lethal Weapons." Hildi Libby, systems manager of the US Army's Non-lethal Material Program, offered a flavor of what was provided. She zealously described the M203 anti-personnel blunt trauma crowd dispersal grenade, which hurtles a large number of small "stinging" rubber balls at rioters. The US team also touted:

- acoustic weapons that use "mechanical pressure wave generation" to "provide the war fighter with a weapon capable of delivering incapacitating effects, from lethal to non-lethal";
- the non-lethal Claymore mine which disperses blunt impact ordnance — a crowd control version of the more lethal M18A1;
- ground vehicle stoppers;
- the M139 Volcano mine dispenser which projects a football field-sized net laced with either razor blades or other "immobilization enhancers" — adhesive or stinging; sticky foam guns and barriers to immobilize individuals;
- vortex ring guns — a high-tech device to apply vortex ring gas impulses with flash, concussion and the option of quickly changing between lethal and non-lethal operations;

Push-Button Torture: New Prison Control Systems

Prisons are providing a controlled environment away from the view of media in which to "field test" many of these new weapons of political control.

Eager to cut costs as the use of prisons for human warehousing grows, both privatized and public prisons¹ are substituting this technology for staff. The STOA report highlights the use of less-lethal weapons on prisoners and calls for an immediate ban on electroshock and remote control devices such as the react belt. This weapon, which is locked around an inmate's waist, delivers 50,000 volts to the kidney area of the back. Amnesty International has warned of the rapid proliferation and aggressive marketing of such instruments which facilitate "push-button torture and is calling for a complete ban."²

Such protest, however, has not prevented the manufacturers from promoting the belt "for total psychological supremacy ... of potentially troublesome prisoners." Noting that stunned prisoners often lose control of their bladders and bowels, the Stun Tech company literature boasts: "After all, if you were wearing the contraption around your waist that by the mere push of a button in someone's hand, could make you defecate or urinate yourself, what would you do from the psychological standpoint?"³

With more than a million inmates and severe overcrowding, US prisons face rising tensions. The federal Bureau of Prisons has become a formal part of the new research program on less-lethal weapons. Disturbance control squads, specialized units used in US jails to quell riots, are writing up their shopping lists which include: aqueous foams; containment nets; anti-traction devices; anesthetic darts/pellets; chemical area dispensers; noise weapons such as acoustic generators; infra-ultrasound; low energy lasers; and optical munitions in addition to the kinetic energy, chemical and electrical weapons they now deploy.⁴

In addition to testing mechanical restraints, notes the STOA report, prisons "form the new laboratories for developing the next generation of drugs for social reprogramming, whilst the pharmacology laboratories of both the universities and the military provide scores of new psychoactive drugs each year."

Increasingly, prison authorities use drugs to immobilize inmates — a tactic that would be a crime if used during war. These chemical restraints "vary from psychotropic drugs such as anti-depressants, sedatives and tranquilizers, to powerful hypnotics. Drugs like Largactil or Serenace offer the chemical equivalent of a straitjacket and their usage is becoming increasingly controversial as prison populations rise and larger numbers of inmates are 'treated.' In the US, the trend for punishment to become therapy reaches its apotheosis with 'behavior modification' which uses Pavlovian reward and punishment routines to recondition behavior. Drugs like Anectine (a curare derivative), which produce either fear or pain, are used in aversion therapy. In prisons, the possibilities of testing new social control drugs are extensive, while actual controls are few."

The STOA report calls for licensing all prisons — public and private. No license would be granted to any contractor in whose facilities human rights violations have been documented. It recommends an outright ban on automated systems of indiscriminate punishment such as built-in baton round firing and OC gas systems; and it calls for a ban on all kill fencing and lethal area denial systems in any prison within the European Union. ■

1. See Phil Smith, "Private Prisons: Profits of Crime," *CAC*, n. 46, Fall 1993.

2. Amnesty International, *Arming the Torturers — Electro-shock Torture and the Spread of Stun Technology*, March 1997. Also ACLU newsfeed, "Chain Gang Stun Belts Shock Rights Groups," Aug. 12, 1996.

3. Quoted in Amnesty International, "USA: Use of electro-shock belts," June 1996.

4. Presentation to the Non-lethal Defense II conference, held by the American Defense Preparedness Association, Tyson's Corner, VA, March 1996.

• and, the underbarrel tactical payload delivery system — essentially an M16 that shoots either bullets, disabling chemicals, kinetic munitions, or marker dye.

A Switch Away from Street Level Executions

"Paradoxically, while these weapons were meant to provide [states with] a new series of flexible responses," the STOA report noted, "their ultimate effect was to program their targets into traditional anti-state activities and procedures. In other words, their most invidious characteristic may be to undermine non-violence as a means of public protest."¹² When used to inflict instant, gratuitous punishment, official violence may in fact tempt demonstrators to fight back. Regimes can also use non-lethal weapons to deliberately provoke a riot and

The new generation of acoustic weapons, which can be merely annoying, can also be turned up to rupture organs, create cavities in human tissue, or to kill.

thereby create a pretext for arresting "violent" demonstrators. And because some of these weapons can be changed instantly from producing a force that immobilizes people to one that kills them, the lethal/less-lethal flexibility puts police a flick of a switch away from administering street level executions.

The Nobel Peace Prize winning organization Pugwash concluded that the term "non-lethal" should be abandoned, not only because it covers a variety of very different weapons, but also because it can be dangerously misleading. "In combat situations, 'sub-lethal' weapons are likely to be used in co-ordination with other weapons and could increase overall lethality. Weapons purportedly developed for conventional military or peacekeeping use are also likely to be used in civil wars or for oppression by brutal governments. Weapons designed to replace lethal force are used to augment it. Weapons developed for police use may encourage the militarization of police forces or be used for torture. If a generic term is needed, 'less-lethal' or pre-lethal weapons might be preferable."¹³

Such misgivings are certainly borne out by recent developments. US expert William

13. *Pugwash Newsletter* (London), Nov. 1997, p. 276.

12. Steve Wright, "Undermining Nonviolence: The Coming Role of New Police Technologies," *Gandhi Mary*, v. 14, n.1, April-June 1992, pp. 157-65.

Arkin has warned that the new generation of acoustic weapons, which can be merely annoying, can be turned up to produce shockwaves of 170 decibels and rupture organs, create cavities in human tissue, and cause potentially lethal blastwave trauma.¹⁴

Pugwash considered that "each of the emerging 'less-lethal' weapons technologies required urgent examination and that their development or adoption should be subject to public review."¹⁵ This view is endorsed by the EU report which recommends that the European Parliament should:

- Establish criteria, independent from commercial or governmental research, for assessing the biomedical effects of so-called non-lethal weapons;
- Report on existing US-EU liaison arrangements for the second generation of non-lethal weaponry;
- Prohibit deployment by the police, military or paramilitary special forces of all US-made or -licensed kinetic, acoustic, laser, chemical irritant, electromagnetic frequency, capture, entanglement, injector, or electrical disabling or paralyzing weapons, until and unless such independent research is completed;
- Publish research on the alleged safety of existing

control weapons and of all proposed future innovations, prior to any decision leading to deployment.

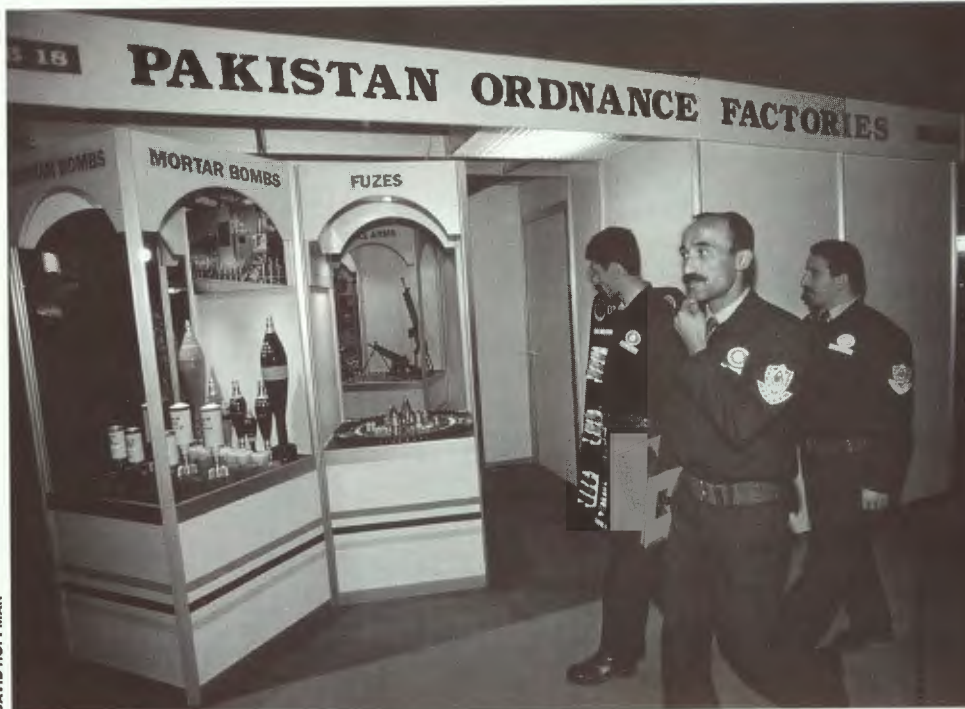
Regulating Proliferation

The key issue here is the political control of this technology, which is not only becoming more powerful (vertical proliferation), but is also diffusing rapidly into many countries' state security forces (horizontal pro-

14. William Arkin writing in *Journal of Medicine*, "Conflict and Survival," quoted in the *Guardian*, Dec. 9, 1997.

15. Pugwash, *op. cit.*

DAVID HOFFMAN



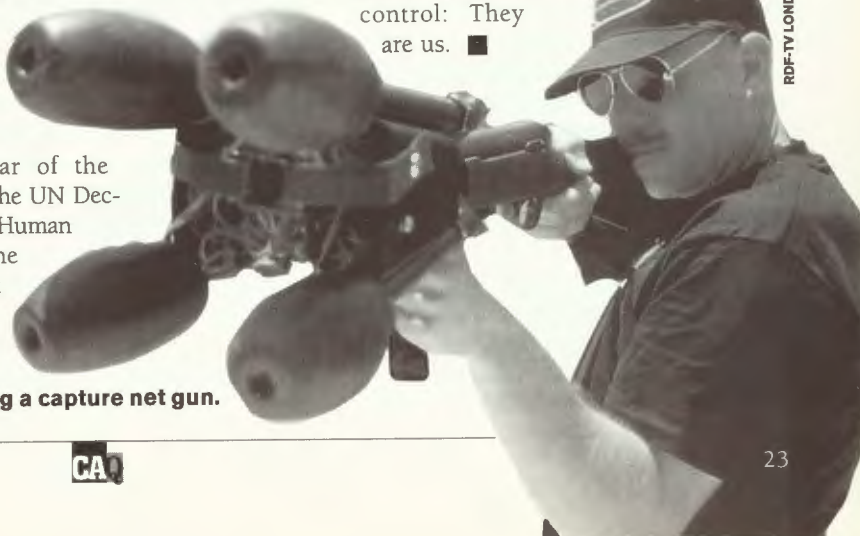
Shopping for death and destruction at the annual arms bazaar in Turkey.

liferation). While most STOA reports gather dust in official libraries, this one sparked parliamentary debates in the Netherlands, Norway and Italy. Newspaper and TV companies and consultants throughout Europe and beyond urgently sought copies, and intelligence chiefs in Washington and GCHQ in London joined the line.

The Omega Foundation has advised the EU that while the genie of political control technology may not go back into its bottle, there is still time for nations to develop consistent and appropriate structures of accountability. The process should be transparent, adaptable, and open to appropriate public scrutiny. Any class of technology shown to be excessively injurious, cruel, inhumane, or indiscriminate should be prohibited or subject to stringent and democratic controls.

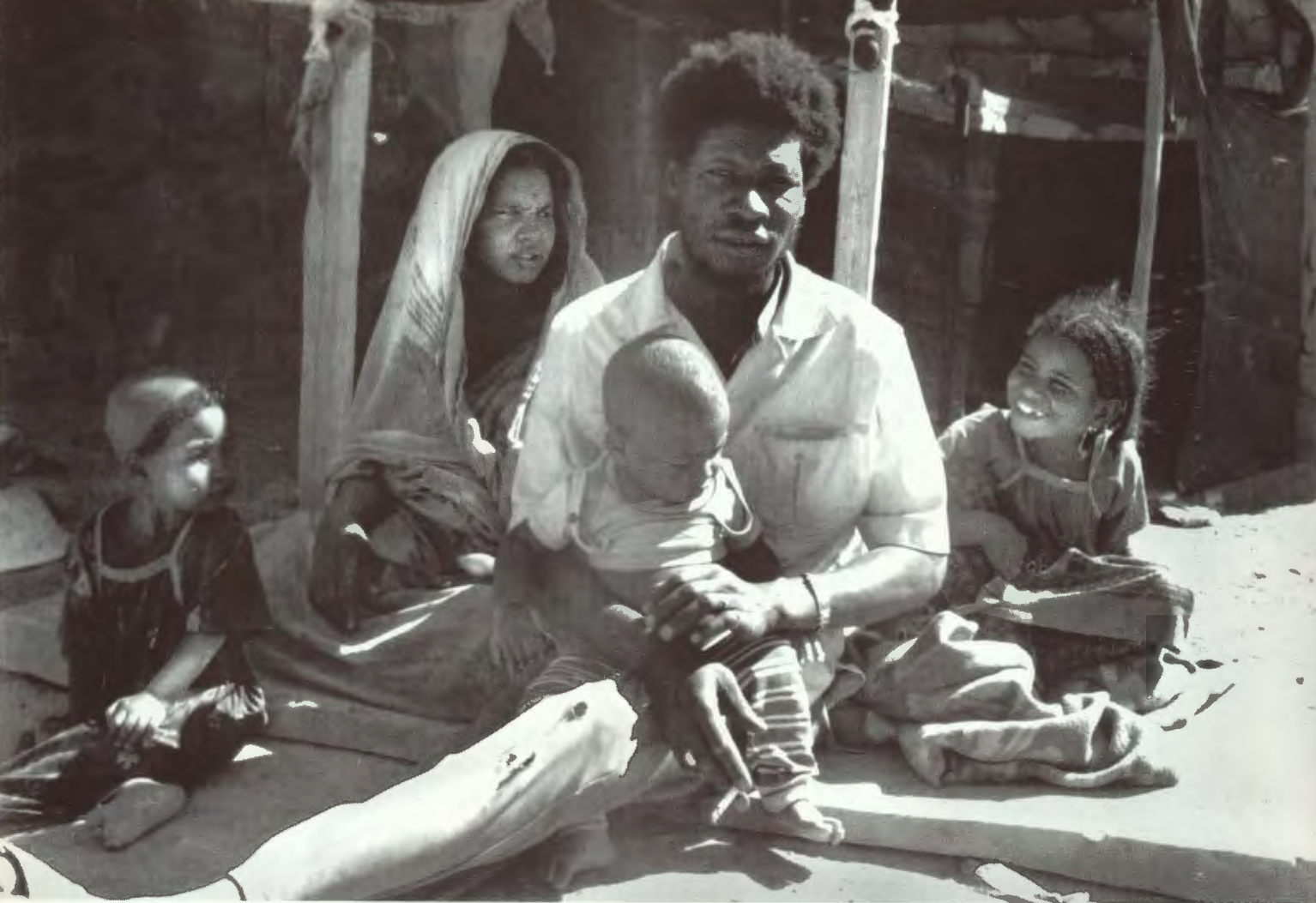
In this 50th anniversary year of the signing of the UN Declaration on Human Rights, the threat that this technology

poses to international human rights legislation is particularly poignant. This potential is not lost on providers to the repression trade: the manufacturers that service tyrannical regimes and court new markets. If regulators wish to prevent these technologies from being used to violate human rights, they will have to adopt codes of conduct and mechanisms for enforcement. Many NGO's in the UK, such as Oxfam, British-American Security Information Council (BASIS), Amnesty International, and Saferworld, advocate that protections be written into law. Perhaps one day we may see a corporate equivalent to the "three strikes and you're out" legislation with prison terms for the peddlers of repression technologies. In the meantime, there should be no illusions about the future targets of these technologies of political control: They are us. ■



Firing a capture net gun.

RDF-TV LONDON



SEAN SPRAGUE/PANOS PICTURES

Death and Silence in “Useless Algeria”

by Farhan Haq

The massacre in Sidi Rais, Algeria went on for hours. By dawn on August 18, 1997, up to 300 people, men, women, children, and babies, were dead — many of them hacked to death. For some Algerians, the attack in the suburb south of the capital, Algiers, was more proof that Islamists were waging a horrific, uncompromising battle to overthrow the secular state. For others, it was just the latest sign that things are not what they seem. They accused the government of complicity in the slaughter of civilians. “The army,” one massacre survivor told Amnesty International, “waited for the terrorists to fin-

ish their dirty task, and then they let them leave. What does that mean to you? ... I had been threatened by the fundamentalists, but I almost got killed by the army. Even my friends in the army don’t understand anything anymore these days.”¹

The conventional wisdom regarding the recent conflict in Algeria revolves around a central narrative: that an increasingly brutal, fundamentalist Muslim insurgency threatens a secular, military-backed government. The violence has hit particularly hard in the impoverished suburbs of what is often described as “*Algerie Futile*” (Useless Algeria). Comprising the 90 percent of the country which is remote

from the main cities and oil- and gas-producing regions, “Useless Algeria” has been the site of more than 80 percent of the massacres since 1994.²

Gen. Liamine Zeroual’s regime represents the “Useful Algeria” (*Algerie Utile*), a largely francophone community that lives in, and profits from, the country’s urban and petroleum producing regions. These are the same elite interests, including the oil-producing business elite and the military, that disrupted Algeria’s first multiparty elections in 1992, after the since-banned Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) led an initial round of polling in December 1991 and seemed on the verge of winning the run-

Farhan Haq is a United Nations correspondent for Inter Press Service (IPS), a Third World news agency.
Photo: A family in Ain Guezzam, part of “Useless” Algeria.

1. *Algeria: Civilian Population Caught in a Spiral of Violence* (London: Amnesty International [AI], 1997), p. 8.

2. Bizham Torabi, “The Useless Algeria Suffers as the Useful Algeria Prospers,” *Deutsche Presse-Agentur*, Jan. 14, 1998.

off. A wide spectrum of political parties has since accused President Zeroual's government of establishing an authoritarian regime. The government in turn maintains that it is only trying to contain the FIS and its Islamist allies, whom Algiers blames for the bulk of the estimated 75,000 deaths since 1992. Underlying the confusion of the massacres is the *de facto* civil war between the government and the Islamists — a war so unmentionable that the Zeroual regime even refuses to call it a "conflict."

In this climate of fear, few in Algeria speak out about either terrorism or the state's own record. "Writing certain things is impossible, so you don't write; saying certain things is dangerous, even if you don't write it, so you don't say it; but what is worse is that it has become more dangerous to *know* things, even if you don't say that you know it and you don't write about it," one journalist told Amnesty.³ Against that backdrop, worldwide revulsion at the recent massacres has sparked pressure for an outside investigation and perhaps intervention. A few international institutions, most notably the UN and its Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, are questioning Algiers' justification for repression: its "war against Islamist terrorism."

Intervention?

UN High Commissioner, Mary Robinson, is advocating outside intervention to stop the continuing violence. She has, for example, persuasively countered Algerian rejection of intervention by arguing, "Teachers are being hacked in front of students; children are being traumatized in an appalling way. ... It is not a matter in our complex, interrelated world that can be the sovereignty of only one country."⁴ Algerian politicians, meanwhile, have questioned why a UN investigation can be dismissed as foreign interference, while the economic adjustments and debt rescheduling commitments demanded by world financial institutions cannot.⁵

In the past few months, calls for independent investigations have become

3. Amnesty International, *op. cit.*, p. 27 (emphasis in original).
4. Mary Robinson, interview, New York, Oct. 9, 1997.

5. According to World Bank and Amnesty International statistics, the reforms imposed by the World Bank, IMF, Paris Club and London Club have contributed to a more than 80 percent devaluation of the Algerian *dinar* since 1992 and more than 800 percent price increases for bread, semolina, milk and olive oil since then.

stronger and the myth of an Islamic menace has taken a strange turn. As the killings attributed to the radical Armed Islamic Group (GIA) have grown more savage — including the mass slaughter of entire villages and suburban neighborhoods — a growing number of organizations have begun to doubt the official line. Human rights groups, media reports, and even statements by Western governments and the UN have questioned the idea that the fundamentalists bear responsibility for all the violence.



While Arab tradition and Western values coexist within many families, Algeria is painfully divided.

While the Zeroual government insists that the GIA, FIS, and other Islamic groups are slaughtering their opponents and each other in a series of reprisal attacks, it cannot explain why many of the recent massacre victims come from the very neighborhoods comprising the traditional support base of the Islamists. For instance, more than 1,100 Algerians living in such communities were slaughtered in the first weeks of Ramadan, the Muslim month of fasting held this year during January. Moreover, the government has been unable to explain why Algeria's military security forces, many with their barracks located near the massacres, have not intervened in any of the recent attacks.⁶

6. Amnesty International, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

The World Watches

Ever since the 1992 election annulment sparked the continuing violence, the government has blamed a fanatical and evil Islamist insurgency for the bulk of the estimated 75,000 killings. Although the US criticized the annulment of the elections, it has since accepted the argument that the Islamists are responsible for most of the violence; at a session of the House Subcommittee on Africa in February, officials from the State Department and Congress alike, weighed in on the need to support Algiers' fight against terrorism.

Bill Richardson, US Ambassador to the UN, recently summed up Washington's approach. On one hand, he echoed the standard US line on the Islamists by contending that they are committing "monstrous crimes" and that "so-called Islamic terrorists are murdering thousands of innocent people. Women and children are not being spared from this unspeakable horror, with young women often being taken hostage and held in cruel and inhumane captivity." On the other hand, he acknowledged the "paramount need for a credible, independent verification of the facts," and urged an investigation, perhaps by the UN special rapporteur on summary, extrajudicial and arbitrary executions. He also asked the government to broaden the access of journalists and outside experts and "to include in a credible political process all those who renounce violence and embrace democratic norms."⁷

Europe, following the lead of Algeria's former colonial power, France, has until recently shied from any direct criticism of the Zeroual regime. Indeed, French media and security officials alleged that Algerian extremists were behind the 1995 Paris subway bombings that inflamed French public opinion against the fundamentalists and were also responsible for the assassinations of journalists. The Committee to Protect Journalists and other press-freedom groups allege that the GIA has killed more than 70 journalists.

Evidence of Complicity

Gradually, all those assertions seem less secure. In 1997, one former military agent, who identifies himself only as Joseph, named two generals in the Algerian secret

7. Comments to the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, March 25, 1998.

police as the actual planners of the Paris bombings. Even France's then-Interior Minister, Jean-Louis Debre, said after the blasts: "The Algerian *securité militaire* would like us to go up the wrong trail, so that we can eliminate people who annoy them."⁸ Two other Algerians who fled to England, "Andrew" and "Robert," say they participated in many killings as part of a state-sponsored paramilitary group. These so-called "Ninjas" would don fundamentalist garb and slaughter communities without any interference from the police or army. "If you cut someone's throat in front of me now, I would say that is normal, normal," Andrew said in a recent interview. "I have seen torture, and I have done it."⁹ Among their other crimes, the two men detailed massacres by death squads, torture, and "the murder of difficult journalists and popular entertainers to blacken the name of the Islamists in carefully organized psychological warfare."¹⁰

If proven, those charges would constitute a damning indictment of a government that contrasted its orderly, if authoritarian, image to the seeming savagery of the GIA. The shadowy GIA, which rose up after the 1992 annulment, has repeatedly claimed responsibility for many of the worst atrocities, including assassinations of intellectuals and feminists. Government supporters have often tried to link the group to the FIS, citing a 1994 interview in which FIS spokesman Anouar Haddam called the GIA "the principal armed branch of the FIS."¹¹

Other groups have attested to the armed group's brutality. The Committee to Protect Journalists, for example, placed shadowy GIA leader Antar Zouabri — whom the government claimed to have killed on several different occasions last summer — at the top of its list of "Enemies of the Press" because the extremist group claims to have assassinated dozens of journalists under its slogan: "Those who live by the pen, die by the sword."

Last October, the GIA was included on a US State Department list of foreign terrorist organizations. And yet, while not disputing that GIA has been responsible for serious human rights violations, even some Algerian opposition deputies have

wondered if it is being scapegoated while other forces escape censure. As one deputy of the Socialist Forces Front put it recently, "Who are the terrorists? If we say they are GIA, who are GIA? Who is behind them? Who is among them? Why do they kill citizens who sympathized with the dissolved party [i.e., the FIS]? ... All these questions need an independent inquiry."¹² Some officials already suspect a degree of collusion between the state and the GIA designed to discredit the more moderate Islamists of the banned FIS. One such Algerian diplomat, who defected to Britain, claimed that an Al-

"Ninjas" who don fundamentalist garb slaughter communities without interference from police or army.

gerian secret service member told him, "Don't worry. It is, in fact, we who control a large part of the GIA."¹³

How "Useless Algeria" Dies

Although most analysts still doubt that any such conspiracy between state forces and Islamists exists, they agree on one thing: The government has responded inappropriately to the growing spate of killings since the June 1997 legislative elections were marred by allegations of fraud.

While the citizens of "Useful Algeria" have been relatively safe from attack, residents in the villages of the Algiers, Blida and Medea regions and northwestern Algeria's Relizans area have been subjected to ever increasing violence since 1996.¹⁴ The majority of the people in these "useless" regions share several common characteristics. Their roughly 13,000 villages house some eight million unemployed Algerians out of an overall population of more than 28 million. These areas also voted heavily for the FIS in 1992 and they are "the most heavily militarized part of the country."¹⁵ Amnesty International notes: "That the army barracks and security forces outposts are located

next to the sites of several massacres is an indisputable fact. That the security forces have not intervened during the massacres is also a fact not disputed by Algerian authorities."¹⁶

What happened after the attacks occurred is where the confusion arises. Robert, one of the men claiming to have worked as a Ninja, described one village-clearing operation: "Our orders were clear. We should guard the surrounding area but not act unless we were given specific orders. The *securité militaire* went in and came out after a time, maybe two hours, maybe less. After they had gone, we went in to clear the place up. There were about 16 bodies, two families. I saw with my own eyes dead men, women, and children, even a baby, all with their throats slit."¹⁷ That story, in turn, fits with survivors' accounts of the curious behavior of the army, police, and ambulances during massacres, including the inability of the paramilitary "patriot" groups, formed by the state for civil defense, to intervene. According to one such witness who survived last September's massacre of more than 200 civilians in the town of Bentalha: "Some patriots [local militias] came from Baraki to help us when they heard the massacre was happening, but the army did not let them into Bentalha. The terrorists had lists of people to kill, but they also killed at random ... The massacre went on for several hours and then the terrorists left and no-one stopped them; then, the ambulances came and cleared the bodies."¹⁸

Such a strange convergence of official inattention and "terrorist" attack has resulted in particularly brazen raids: massacres during broad daylight or lasting many hours, in areas where neither armed forces nor civil defense units ever even attempt to travel. The security vacuum in that area, in turn, is filled by some 80,000 villagers who have formed more than 5,000 "legitimate defense" or "patriotic groups" since 1995 — almost half the number of total security forces deployed in Algeria.¹⁹ It is small wonder that human rights groups argue that some patriot civil defense units are them-

8. John Sweeney, "We Accuse. 8,000 Times," *The Observer* (London), Nov. 16, 1997, p. 33.

9. John Sweeney, "Atrocities in Algeria: We Were the Murderers Who Killed for the State," *The Observer*, Jan. 11, 1998, p. 14.

10. *Ibid.*

11. Anouar Haddam interview, *The Guardian* (London), Apr. 13, 1994. Haddam is awaiting civil trial in the US for involvement in FIS-linked killings. US authorities have denied his request for political asylum and have held him in federal custody pending appeal of deportation. See Bob Herbert, "Terrorism by the Book," *New York Times*, Nov. 30, 1997, p. 9.

12. Abdeslam Ali Rachdi, Algerian television, Feb. 6, 1998.

13. Michael Willis, "Atrocities in Algeria: Why Murder Your Own People?" *The Observer*, Jan. 11, 1998, p. 14.

14. Torabi, *op. cit.*; and Mary-Jane Deeb, "Testimony on the Situation in Algeria," to the US House Subcommittee on Africa, Feb. 5, 1998; Pierre Sané, director of Amnesty International, press conference, New York, Nov. 18, 1997.

15. Amnesty International, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

17. Sweeney, "Atrocities in Algeria," *op. cit.*, p. 14.

18. Amnesty International, *op. cit.*, p. 9. Amnesty's account of the Sept. 22, 1997 massacre notes: "Bentalha is near five different army and security forces outposts, including the army barracks of Baraki, about three kilometers away, the army barracks of Sidi Moussa, about five kilometers away, the Gaid Kacem security forces post, less than one kilometer away, the communal guard barracks about one kilometer away, and the security forces posts at the entrance of Bentalha."

19. Torabi, *op. cit.*; and Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia on Algerian television, Feb. 6, 1998; broadcast in English on BBC Summary of World Broadcasts, Feb. 11, 1998.

selves carrying out the attacks, or at least that “the links of patriot groups to the violence in the rural areas, as well as the extent of training and oversight they receive from the authorities, merit concern and close scrutiny.”²⁰

Other Explanations

Many theories have been advanced to shed light on the authorities’ seeming neglect of the attacked suburbs, and quite a few of these explanations do not involve government complicity with the killers. Some analysts believe that the security forces — suspicious of being drawn into a trap by responding to massacre calls in outlying areas — stay away from the attacked zones until they are certain they will not, in turn, be targeted.²¹ Others believe that the government’s concern about causing rifts in the army, which contains its own conservative Muslim elements, prevents it from ordering troops into combat in areas with a high civilian concentration. Such encounters could pit Muslim soldiers against Muslim communities.

Whatever the reason, the result is that the areas containing the most disenchanted segments of the population are now dramatically less safe, while the major cities of Algiers, Constantine, Oran, and Annaba are relatively safe. This condition allows defenders of the government’s anti-terrorism efforts to claim that “the army and the security forces have in fact provided extensive protection to most of the country, and especially to major urban centers.”²²

UN Stay Out

Adding further to suspicion that the government has something to hide, is its response to proposed international investigations. The Zeroual government has lashed out at any outsiders, including a recent delegation of European Union (EU) ministers and Mary Robinson, the UN high commissioner for human rights. When Robinson suggested an independent investigation into the massacres, Algiers responded tersely. “An investigation or any other interference is completely rejected,” Prime Minister Ahmed Ouyahia said this February during a televised debate on terrorism.²³

20. Eric Goldstein, Human Rights Watch, testimony to the US House Subcommittee on Africa, Feb. 5, 1998.

21. Sané, *op. cit.*

22. Deeb, *op. cit.*

23. Ouyahia, *op. cit.*



The General Council of Algiers, 1860, when Algeria was ten percent French and totally ruled by the Europeans. This division planted some of the seeds for future conflict.

Other attempts to “internationalize” the Algerian conflict have been similarly, and quickly, stifled. Last year, Algeria’s UN mission tried to revoke the “consultative status” to the UN Economic and Social Council of two non-governmental organizations critical of the regime’s human rights record: Amnesty International and the International Federation of Human Rights. When Robinson suggested a visit to Algeria by two

Similarly, Algiers accused UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan of interference last fall when he responded to the massacres in Sidi Rais and other towns by stating that the world could no longer be silent about Algeria’s violence. Annan’s offer of mediation was soundly rejected. FIS leader Abbasi Madani, however, wrote to Annan that his party would honor a unilateral cease-fire and would encourage UN involvement. The gov-

ernment responded by placing the recently-released Madani under house arrest once again. Annan, noting Zeroual’s insistence that “Algeria has the means, the strong capabilities and the institutions to handle the situation itself,” backed off

“That the security forces have not intervened during the massacres is also a fact.” — Amnesty International

UN human rights rapporteurs who deal with extrajudicial executions and torture, Foreign Minister Ahmed Attaf rebuffed the offer, saying it could only be discussed “in proper channels,” and likely not before spring 1998, by which time Algiers could process the request officially. At the same time, the Zeroual government struck back at Robinson’s office by “block[ing] minor budgetary matters for the High Commissioner for Human Rights in pique at what it considered to be outside meddling.”²⁴

24. David Warner, “The Deadly Waiting Game,” *Financial Times* (London), Jan. 27, 1998, p. 20.

from his offer, noting grimly that “it takes two to tango.”²⁵

The strong stand in Algiers against an investigation has left many groups confused and suspicious. “The human rights crisis has been taking place off camera, in the midst of increased censorship and the indifference of the international community,” says Abderrahim Sabir, chair of Amnesty International-USA’s North Africa Coordinating Group. Given the lack of investigation, he contends, Algeria should sup-

25. Kofi Annan, press conference, New York, Sep. 11, 1997.

port any effort to “find out who’s killing whom” and if indeed the fundamentalists are to blame.²⁶ Its refusal to do so feeds accusations that the regime has participated in at least some of the killings, or even that it operates or encourages some groups of “fundamentalist” killers. The FIS, for its part, claims that the *secr  t   militaire* or other state agents carry out many of the massacres; they doff their military garb at night to don the robes and beards of Islamists. Others take a more nuanced view. “It cannot be said that elements from the regime are solely responsible for the violence,” writes Michael Willis, an analyst of Islamic

gram” — will continue to attract a large portion of the population. Moreover, the 1997 elections were so badly flawed that a small UN observer team was unable to certify the validity of the June vote. A UN spokesperson acknowledged last summer that the world body, in any case, never had enough observers stationed in the country to verify the election results.

Apart from a few cautious statements, the Western powers have generally refrained from asking hard questions about Algeria. An EU delegation led by French deputy Andr   Soulier returned disappointed from a January visit to Algiers. The Zeroual gov-

which have backed the Sant’Egidio initiative, a peace proposal from Algerian opposition parties in January 1995. It calls for a transitional government to run the country until new elections are held. One Algerian editor who won the European Parliament’s Sakharov Award for Democracy called the plan “the first lucid political proposition that has looked toward the future.”²⁹

Algerian feminists also worry about the government’s authoritarianism, but fear even more that a deal with the Islamists could shatter the already fragile state of women’s rights in Algeria without guaranteeing an end to the massacres. Several Algerian women have charged that, despite their stated intentions for a cease-fire, groups like the FIS have particularly targeted women, abducting some, raping them and using them as sexual slaves.³⁰

Other developing countries are loath to support calls for outside, especially Western intervention or investigation. Since the liberation war against France, Algeria has been one of the most popular Third World supporters of freedom from Western intrusion, and it remains a mainstay of the (largely dormant) Non-Aligned Movement. The reputation it enjoys as a supporter of liberation struggles has discouraged most African or Arab nations from criticizing the Zeroual government.³¹ Indeed, in February, South African Defense Minister Joe Modise visited Algiers to affirm security ties, and perhaps to open new arms deals between the two governments. Ironically, the South African government, led by a liberation movement as esteemed as Algeria’s former ruling National Liberation Front, is linking itself with a regime that may be as undemocratic and terrorist as the former French colonial or apartheid regimes.

Writing at the height of the Algerian liberation struggle, Frantz Fanon argued that “no one thought that France would defend foot by foot this shameless colonialism for five years, a colonialism which is matched, on the continent, by its homologue in South Africa.”³² It would be a sad epilogue to the era of freedom struggles if the new South Africa and other progressive states end up defending and arming a post-revolutionary Algeria whose defense, “foot by foot,” of its grip on power could rival what Fanon described as “a dying colonialism.” ■

29. Salima Ghezali, “Algeria Burning,” *The Nation*, Feb. 16, 1998, p. 22.

30. Author’s interviews with Algerian feminists who requested anonymity, March 1998.

31. The major exception in the Middle East is Iran, which broke off relations with Algeria in 1993 and is in turn accused of supporting the Algerian Islamists.

32. Frantz Fanon, *A Dying Colonialism* (New York: Grove Press, 1965), p. 26.



Algerian women demonstrate for civil and human rights, 1992.

groups in Algeria. “But to maintain that the conflict simply pits a pro-Western secular regime against a monolithic and pathologically violent Islamist movement is even further from the truth.”²⁷

Breaking the Silence

Among Zeroual’s arguments against foreign involvement is the claim that the government is bringing the situation under control. The relative safety of “Algerie utile” has allowed the regime to present itself as winning the war on terrorism and isolating the Islamists while building a stable democracy through last year’s legislative and provincial elections. Those claims are questionable at best. The death toll is rising and Algeria’s continuing economic woes virtually ensure that the Islamists — whose populism and social welfare programs hold great appeal for those who feel left out under the current IMF-dictated “adjustment pro-

ernment turned down the delegation’s request for an outside investigation, barred it from massacre sites, and denied it permission to meet with banned FIS leaders.

US officials, including several diplomats and representatives attending a February meeting of the House Subcommittee on Africa, have hewed to the standard line that Islamic extremists are responsible for most of the violence. At the same time, Washington, which accepts the legitimacy of the Zeroual regime despite the flawed elections, contends that the best approach to establishing order is to work with democratic institutions, such as the Algerian lower house of parliament, to build up peaceful avenues for change.²⁸ But Washington currently seems more concerned with avoiding “another Iran” in Algeria either to oppose the government or to take any steps that could antagonize the Islamists.

The initiative has thus been taken instead by several European governments, 28. See also Roula Khalaf, “Euro MPs To Pursue Peace in Algeria,” *Financial Times*, Jan. 21, 1998, p. 4.

26. Abderrahim Sabir, phone interview, Nov. 4, 1997.

27. Willis, *op. cit.*, p. 14.

Jihad International, Inc.



by Eqbal Ahmad

The violence of Islamism has roused anxious concern throughout the world, especially the Muslim world. In the United States, the media and policy makers wage a campaign to demonize Muslims and Islam as a threat to Western interests and civilization itself. This politically motivated propaganda has been aided by the Islamic resistance to Israel's occupation of Lebanon, the West Bank, Gaza, and Golan, along with such incidents as the plot to blow up New York's World Trade Center. The anti-Islam bias of media and policy makers is revealed in their double standard:

They condone Israel's US-aided violence — conducted on an enormous scale — while denouncing Arab resistance to it. They condemn "Islamic fundamentalism" but ignore the historic role the West played in spawning the violence of the groups and individuals they now label and denounce as terrorist. And after the West promoted the violent ideological enterprise that served its short-term interests, it largely withdrew, leaving the native peoples to pay the heaviest price.

The propaganda in the West suggests that violence and holy war are inherent in Islam. The reality is that as a worldwide movement *Jihad International, Inc.* is a recent phenomenon. It is a modern, multinational conglomerate founded not

so much by fanatic mullahs in Teheran as it is sponsored by governments including the US and its allies Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. It was the 1979-91 US-sponsored anticommunist crusade in Afghanistan that revitalized the notion of *jihad* as the armed struggle of believers. Israel's invasions and occupation of Lebanon, the West Bank, Gaza, and Golan continue to invest it with moral meaning and give it added impetus.

Never before in this century had *jihad* as violence assumed so pronounced an "Islamic" and international character.

Nearly all the Muslim struggles of the 20th century were secular. The Ottomans fought their last wars on essentially secular terms — in defense of a tottering empire and, at least in the Middle East, against predominantly Muslim foes. The Egyptian national movement — from the rise of Saad Zaghlul to the demise of Gamal Abdel Nasser — re-

mained secular and explicitly Arab and Egyptian. This non-theological character was equally true of the Iraqi, Syrian, Palestinian, and Lebanese national struggles. The Turks attained their liberation under the banner of intemperate secularism. Iranian nationalists fought and forged a Belgium-like constitution in 1906. In India, Muslim nationalism — opposed by an overwhelming majority of Indian *Ulema* (Muslim theologians) — defined the demand for and achievement of Pakistan. All these movements resonated among other Muslim peoples who were

Battles for souls often degenerate into a hankering after body counts.

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Photo: Mujahideen with AK-47 reads a *Koran* passage on Jihad at the siege of Jalalabad.

similarly engaged in anti-colonial struggles, but none had an explicit pan-Islamic context.

Jihad — a noun meaning struggle, from the Arabic root verb *jhd* “to strive” — was a favored term among Muslims in their struggle of liberation from colonial rule. Its meaning was expansive and often secular. When my brother was expelled from school after raising the nationalist flag, for example, he was welcomed in our village as a *mujahid* — one who struggles, one who engages in *jihad*. In the Maghrib, Algerian nationalist cadres who warred against France for seven grueling years were called Mujahideen. Their newspaper *El-Moudjahid* was edited for a time by Frantz Fanon, a non-Muslim, and their struggle was led by a secular organization — *Front du Liberation National* (FLN). In Tunisia, the national struggle was headed by Habib Bourguiba, a diehard Cartesian secularist who nevertheless enjoyed the title of Mujahidul-Akbar. And although the

word *jihad* did occasionally appear as a mobilizing cry of the 1979 Iranian revolution, it was the cry of *Enghelab* — revolution — that sounded the uprising against the Shah. After seizing power, Iran’s revolutionary government adopted *Jihad-I-Sazandegi* — jihad for construction — as its mobilizing call. Without significant exception during the 20th century, *jihad* was used in a national, secular, and political context until, that is, the advent of the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan.

Reagan’s Holy War

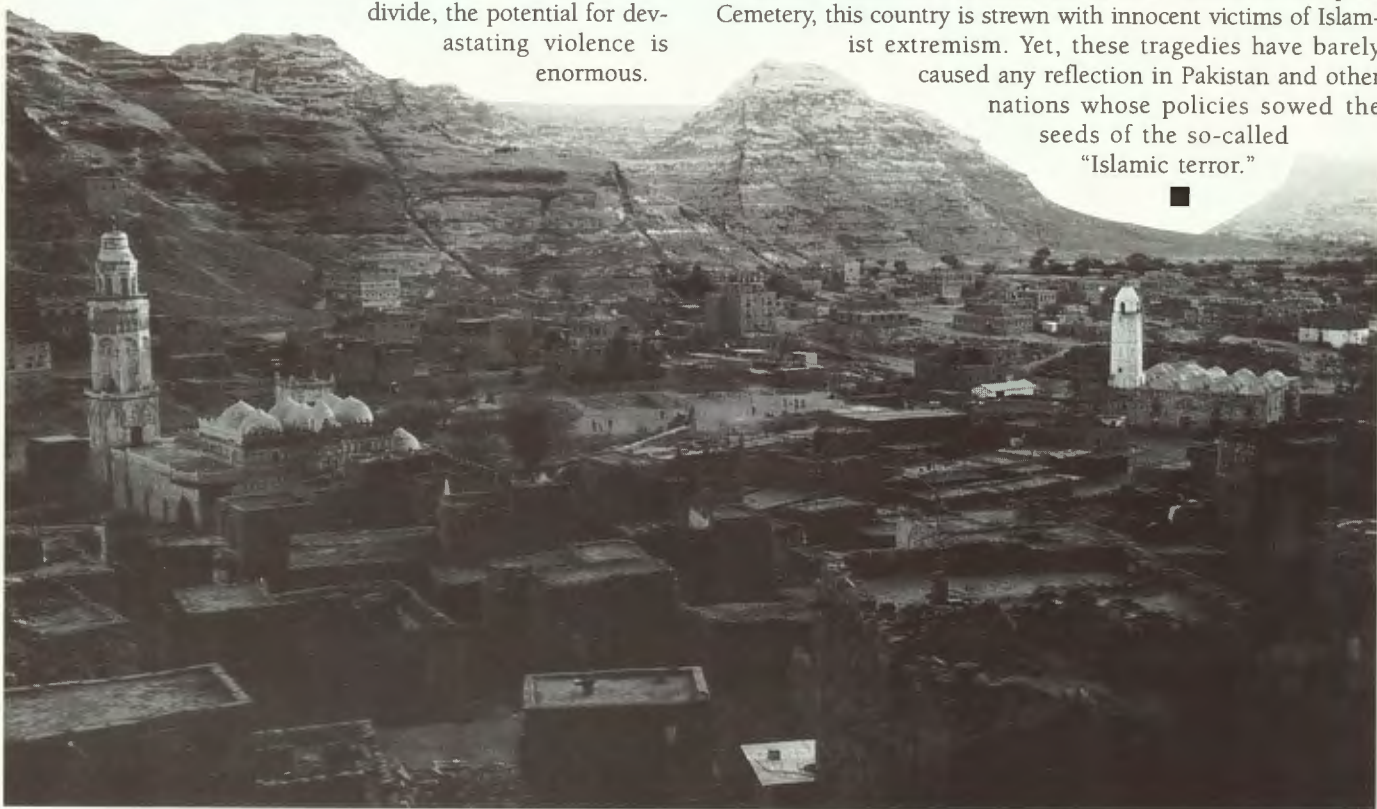
Then, for the first time in this century, the standard bearers of a Muslim people’s struggle for liberation were Islamic parties committed to the violent overthrow of “godless communism” and dedicated to the establishment of an “Islamic state” in Afghanistan. Theirs was a *jihad* in the classical, strictly theological sense of the word. Ironically, they had the kind of support no

Pakistan: Islamism’s Front-line State

In Pakistan, as in Algeria and Egypt, a virtual civil war is raging between the differing hues of Islamists and the secular authoritarian government. Among these countries, Pakistan is distinguished in several ways: It was the original staging ground of *jihad* as an international movement. Unlike Algeria and Egypt, votes for Islamic parties in the last four Pakistani elections since 1988 have declined. Also unlike Algeria and Egypt, where *Sunni* majorities predominate, Pakistan is a multi-denominational country where about a quarter of the population is non-*Sunni*. Furthermore, even Pakistan’s *Sunni* are divided by theological disputes (notably between the *Barelvis* and *Deobandis*) that have tended to turn violent. With *Sunni* against Shi’a, *Sunni* against Christians and *Ahmedis*, and killings across the *Barelvi-Deobandi* divide, the potential for devastating violence is enormous.

Pakistan’s position is also unique in that it is Islamism’s “front-line state.” The war in Afghanistan continues and, in numerous ways, impacts on Pakistan’s internal developments. Finally, Pakistan’s is an ideologically ambiguous polity; here, political paeans to Islam have served as the compensatory mechanism for the ruling elite’s corruption, consumerism and kowtowing to the West. As a consequence, the fervent Islamist minority keeps an ideological grip on the morally insecure and ill-formed power elite. It is this phenomenon that explains the continued political clout of the extremist religious minority even as it has been all but repudiated by the electorate.

Pakistan is a prime example of the mayhem and official failure to address it. From the 1995 bombing of the Egyptian embassy in Islamabad to the recent massacre in Lahore’s Mominpura Cemetery, this country is strewn with innocent victims of Islamist extremism. Yet, these tragedies have barely caused any reflection in Pakistan and other nations whose policies sowed the seeds of the so-called “Islamic terror.”



JON SWANSON

other liberation movement had ever enjoyed: that of the Western powers. Washington and its allies supplied the Mujahideen with an estimated \$10 billion in arms and aid. They also invested in this *jihād* the legitimacy of their enormous power, and the luster of their media-made glory. President Ronald Reagan treated them as glorious freedom fighters. Similarly, the US and European media played up the war in Afghanistan as the greatest story of the 1980s. Foreign correspondents combed the Hindu Kush for stories of “Mooj” heroism. Competition for *jihād* narrative was so great that in one instance a major network, CBS, bought film of a staged battle between Islamism and Communism. As testament to the great importance and authority that Western media carry in the Third World, its Afghanistan war coverage made an enormous impact, especially on Muslim youth.

Within a year of the Soviet intervention, Afghanistan's struggle was on its way to becoming a pan-Islamic *jihād*. Hundreds, eventually thousands, of young Muslims, from as far apart as Algeria and the Philippines, Sudan and Sinkiang, traveled to Peshawar and Torkham, for military training. Under the strict guidance of various Islamic parties, they tasted the *jihād-in-the-path-of-God* and grew ideologically ripe.

Washington and its vaunted intelligence agency saw in this process a Cold War opportunity to pit militant Islam against communism. Had the Soviet Union not collapsed unexpectedly, it is likely that the US would still be benefiting from this historic mobilization of *jihād*.

As the Afghan war raged, many knew of the violent pan-Islamic character it was assuming — with US sponsorship. But no country — not Algeria, not Egypt — protested the participation of its nationals; all watched casually, then looked the other way. Pakistan, which served as a CIA conduit of US-supplied arms, was hospitable to a fault. In 1986, for example, Egyptian intelligence had an effective presence in the Pakistani border town of Peshawar and excellent information on the demography of *jihād*. But it could not interfere with the agenda set by Washington, which was, after all, an ally and benefactor. It was only after the US had cashed in its investments in Afghanistan and all hell broke loose in Algeria and Egypt, that demands for extradition started to reach Pakistan from Algiers and Cairo. But whom can Pakistanis request to rid its country of the thousands of armed zealots their own government has nurtured, and continues to nurture?

Transnationalization of Jihād

Not since the crusades in the Middle Ages has *jihād* crossed cultural, ethnic, and territorial boundaries with such vigor. Except for a brief emergence in the 19th century, Pan-Islamism survived only as the abstract agenda of a microscopic minority of Muslim intellectuals and as an influence on the works of some modern writers and poets including Mohammed Iqbal.



A well-stocked gun shop – the Cold War's gift to Afghanistan.

Not since the crusades has *jihād* crossed cultural, ethnic, and territorial boundaries with such vigor.

The generalized sentiment of Muslim affinity on which pan-Islamism relied was real nevertheless and from time to time manifested itself in people's expressions of solidarity with co-religionists in Palestine, Bosnia, etc. Still, the national struggles of Muslim peoples remained national, and pan-Islamism endured only as an inchoate sentiment of solidarity.

Until Afghanistan. With that war, pan-Islamism grew on a significant scale as a financial, cultural, political, and military phenomenon with a world-wide network of exchange and collaboration. Myriad institutions — *madaaris*, Islamic universities, training camps, and conference centers — arose in Pakistan and other places. Sensing its enormous opportunity, traders in guns and drugs became linked to the phenomenon, creating an informal but extraordinary cartel of vested interests in guns, gold, and god.

Transnational involvement in the *jihād* not only reinforced links among Islamic groupings, but also militarized the conventional religious parties: Pakistan's *Jamaat-I-Islami* is an example. Until its involvement in Afghanistan, it was a conventional party, cadre-based, intellectually oriented, and prone to debate and agitation rather than armed militancy. It now com-



J.C. TORDAI/PANOS PICTURES

Afghanistan, a Cold War battleground, spawned international Islamic militancy.

mands perhaps the largest number of armed and battle-hardened veterans outside of Pakistan's army and rangers. In 1948-49, its chief ideologue, Maulana Abul Ala Maududi had rejected, on theological grounds, the notion of *jihād* in Kashmir. Today, his party openly boasts of its militant involvement there. In recent years, other conventional Islamic parties — the *Jamiat-e-Ulama-I-Islam* (JUI) and *Jamiat-e-Ulama-e-Pakistan* — have also been militarizing, thanks to their linkages with the Taliban; thanks also to their involvement in Kashmir. In addition, other armed sectarian groupings — the *Sipahe Sahaba*, *Lashkare Jhangvi*, *Harakatul Ansar*, *Sipahe Mohammed*, *Lashkare Tayba*, *Anjumane Sarfaroshane Islam* — have emerged to menace society no less than the state. They are all sectarian formations, apparently a far cry from Islamism as expounded by the older religious parties such as the *Jamaat-I-Islami* and JUI. Yet the fact remains that their antecedents lie with these parties, and they draw sustenance from the neighboring wars which are cast in Islamic terms. In effect, while Washington and the media blamed Iran as the source of organized Muslim rage, armed Islamic radicalism was actually nurtured in Zia ul-Haq's Pakistan with US funding and CIA help.

Divisions in the Ranks

The birth of *Jihad* International coincided with another development that has had a particularly unwholesome effect on Pakistan. Following the prolonged hostage crisis during which Iranian radicals held US diplomats captive in Teheran, a contest began between two versions of political Islam: The radical approach was supported by Iran; the conservative by Saudi

Americans, Saudis, and Iraqis may have promoted their brand of conservative Islam only to counter Iran's growing appeal, their anti-Iran campaign was easily translated into anti-Shi'a

sentiments and actions. The *Sipahe Sahaba*, a die-hard anti-Iran, anti-shi'a terrorist group in Pakistan, is one such result. It was funded first by the Saudis and then by Iraq. The terror and counter-terror that followed have involved murders of Iranian diplomats and trainees, US technicians, ordinary people in mosques, and most recently, in a cemetery. Battles for souls often degenerate into a hankering after body counts. As the chickens of *jihād* once nurtured by imperialism and the state

come home to roost, Afghanistan threatens to become a metaphor for the future. ■

While Washington and the media blamed Iran, armed Islamic radicalism was nurtured with US funding and CIA help.



J.C. TORDAI/PANOS PICTURES

Islamic Jihad rally at Shati Camp, Gaza.

Autumn of the Autocrat

by Saul Landau and Sarah Anderson

Chilean General Augusto Pinochet Ugarte went to great lengths to ensure a comfortable retirement after his 17-year rule as president and commander-in-chief of the armed forces. Before agreeing to democratic elections in 1990, he granted himself a list of perks, including: an eight-year stint as head of the army, with access to the military budget (collected from copper revenues and independent of civilian government control); the fancy post-retirement title of "senator for life." He also secured amnesty for military officers who committed the thousands of murders, disappearances and tortures during his reign.

With this golden parachute in place, Pinochet had no reason to doubt that his retirement last March at age 82 would mean anything other than a chance to exchange his military boots for fur-lined slippers. He expected to enjoy his last days in peace and deferential honor.

Then, in July 1996, Pinochet's retirement plan hit its first serious snag. The Madrid-based Association of Progressive Spanish Prosecutors accused Pinochet and other Chilean junta leaders of international terrorism, genocide, and crimes against humanity.¹ The families of the victims of his excesses also filed a civil suit against him. Spanish judge Manuel García

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1. Genocide is not restricted to the elimination of an entire group of persons on the basis of their ethnic or racial origin. The legal definition of genocide found in Article 2 of the Genocide Convention includes the "partial" destruction of a national, ethnic, racial or religious group of persons. The lawsuit by Juan Garcés against Pinochet charges him with genocide for willfully exterminating the opposition's national leadership of Chile—the latter being the particular social group in question. It is also a well settled principle of international law that the elimination of a group on the basis of its political opinions is a crime against humanity.

Castellón, a member of the Conservative Judges Association, ruled that his court had jurisdiction in the case, since the accusations against the Chilean general dealt with crimes covered under international law.²

The Spanish case alleges that agents of Pinochet's regime killed or attempted to kill individuals in the United States, Argentina, Italy, and other countries. In addition, they add, the Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation has documented more than 3,000 murders and "disappearances" of Chileans and other nationals carried out on Chilean soil during the dictatorship.³ Patricio Aylwin, who was elected Chile's first post-military president in 1990, formed the commission to investigate and report on murders and tortures committed under the dictatorship. While it was hardly a secret that Pinochet's regime murdered its opponents at home, uncovering

2. For a detailed legal account of the case, see: Juan Garcés, "Pinochet ante la Audiencia Nacional y el Derecho Penal Internacional," *Jueces para la Democracia*, Madrid, March 1997.
3. *Report of the Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1993). According to the 1997 Chilean Government Association of Reparation and Reconciliation report, 3,197 people were killed during Pinochet's rule and, of those, 1,102 "disappeared" after being taken into custody by security agents. *Miami Herald*, March 11, 1998, p. 1.



JULIO ETCHEART/PANOS PICTURES

Finally, Chile's Gen. Augusto Pinochet may face justice.

the acts done abroad by the DINA, Chile's intelligence and secret police agency, has made the aging dictator most vulnerable to prosecution.

How did the formerly Teflon-clad dictator begin to lose his protective coating? According to lawyers who filed the Spanish charges, Pinochet's mistake lay in his thinking that self-imposed amnesty would shield him from international human rights law, which forbids amnesty for perpetrators of crimes against humanity. Moreover, Pinochet's extraterritorial terrorism made him vulnerable to prosecution outside his own nation.

The General in His Labyrinth

If the plaintiff's novel application of international human rights law to this panoply of crimes is successful, it will have far reaching implications for amnesty laws in other countries emerging from totalitarian rule (see *Punishing Pinochet*, p. 39). Courts in Argentina and Italy are also investigating Pinochet's connections to Chilean government-inspired assassinations in Buenos Aires and Rome (see *Pinochet's Hit Man*, p. 34).

Pinochet's Hit Man

As the Spanish judge decides whether to indict Pinochet for ordering foreign assassinations, there is one man he would especially like to question: a US citizen now living under a false name granted by the federal witness protection program. A hit man for Pinochet's intelligence agency (DINA), Michael Vernon Townley saw himself as Chile's "jackal." Murders, such as the ones he carried out for Pinochet's foreign assassination program are proving to be the dictator's Achilles' heel.

In 1957, at age 14, Townley had moved to Chile, where Ford Motors had assigned his father. In 1970, he joined *Patria y Libertad*, a violent anti-Allende proto-fascist group. That same year, he fled to the US after he was accused of murdering a watchman when *Patria y Libertad* tried to seize a radio station.

After the 1973 coup, the 30-year-old Townley returned to Chile and joined DINA as an electronics expert, bugging technician, and all around Mr. Fix-it. Within a year, he had developed a reputation as an overseas hit man.

Bombing in Washington

In mid-September 1976, following orders, he traveled to Washington via New York on a false US passport. There, he recruited members of the Cuban Nationalist Movement (CNM), a violent ultra-right anti-Castro fringe group, to help him build and detonate a bomb. That same month, he murdered Orlando Letelier and Ronni Moffitt.

In 1978, under US pressure, Pinochet delivered up Townley to Washington as a kind of sacrifice, hoping that handing over one assassin would satisfy US interests and end the FBI's pursuit of the additional Chilean conspirators in the Letelier case.

While the distraught Townley sat in jail, FBI special agent Robert Scherrer cleverly assumed the role of father confessor. During a series of conversations during 1978-82, he told Scherrer eerie details about DINA's covert operations around the world: how he had used the anti-Castro Cubans to acquire C4 plastic explosive and other gadgets to make the bomb; how he had bought electrical tape and a metal baking pan at Sears to use to secure the bomb to the I-beam of Letelier's car.

Townley told Scherrer about his participation in manufacturing sarin in the

basement of his Chilean home. (This variety of poison gas was later used by Japanese terrorists used in 1995 in the Tokyo subway system.) He boasted that he had smuggled the toxin in a Chanel No. 5 perfume vial in his pocket aboard the LAN Chile flight to the US. He hoped to break into Letelier's house and spray his target's pillow. In the end, the "tradercraft" conscious Townley opted for the method he knew best: the remote-controlled car bomb.¹

Trail of Blood

That was not the only crime to which Townley confessed. During one conversation, he led agent Scherrer to conclude that he had assassinated other DINA targets. Scherrer ascertained that Townley had traveled to Argentina to kill exiled former Chilean Chief of Staff Gen. Carlos Prats. In Buenos Aires, he recruited members of an extreme right wing group tied to the Argentine secret police, who then placed a bomb under Gen. Prats' car. He and his wife were blown nine stories high as they drove home one late September evening in 1974. By the time the Argentine thugs detonated the bomb, Townley was already on his way back to Chile — a routine that DINA followed in all its overseas hits.

In the fall of 1975, Townley toured Europe with assignments to "hit" Carlos Altamirano and Clodomiro Almeida, exiled leaders of Chile's Socialist Party.² Accompanied by his wife and Virgilio Paz, a *pistolero* from the CNM, Townley went to Europe to meet with fascist groups in several countries to coordinate future missions. One of his contacts, Stefano delle Chiaie, a leader of the Italian Fascist Youth organization, agreed to assassinate Bernardo Leighton, a Chilean Christian Democratic leader exiled in Italy.

On October 6, 1975, Leighton and his wife strolled leisurely on a Rome street, their customary route home. A gunman stepped behind them and fired a 9mm bullet into each of their heads. Neither died, nor did they fully recover. The CNM claimed credit, telling a Miami newspaper details of the hit that only the assassins could have known. The hit bolstered CNM's reputation and Paz' credentials as a thug.

A month after the assassination attempt on Leighton, Pinochet attended Francisco Franco's funeral. Judge García

Castellón now has evidence that while in Spain, the dictator met with delle Chiaie, the man who had shot Leighton.

House of the Killers

While the assassination program carried out abroad against Letelier, Moffitt, Prats, Leighton, and others may be Pinochet's undoing, most of his crimes took place at home in Chile. Townley, in his cell in the US, also told Scherrer about DINA's domestic killings including the 1976 murder of Carmelo Soria, a Spanish economist and UN official in Chile.

DINA agents belonging to the elite Mulchén Brigade had dragged Soria into Townley's large home in the outskirts of Santiago. In addition to his electronics lab and poison gas factory, Townley had a veritable torture chamber in his basement. There, the DINA elite began to beat Soria, preparatory to questioning him about his activities with Chile's underground Communist Party.³ One overly enthusiastic torturer broke Soria's neck. A gardener saw the DINA agents drag the corpse to his car. They then poured liquor on the body and left the empty *Pisco* bottle on the car seat. After forging a ridiculous suicide note about Soria's despondency over his wife's supposed affair, they pushed his car into a canal, trying to make it look like he killed himself. Soria's body was found in the canal about a kilometer from his car.⁴

The series of confessions bought Townley a plea bargain for a reduced sentence in the Letelier case. Appearing as the key witness in a series of trials in Washington in 1980 and 1981, he fingered five right-wing Cuban accomplices.⁵ Townley's testimony also sent shock waves through Chile when he testified that his orders to assassinate Letelier came from Chilean secret police chief Col. Manuel Contreras and his subordinate Lt. Col. Pedro Espinoza. Until 1995 Pinochet had protected Contreras and Espinoza, but under civilian government, the shield eroded and a Chilean judge sent both men to prison for their role in the Letelier assassination. In telling his tale from prison, Townley inadvertently illuminated a trail of evidence that may, nearly two decades later, lead Spanish prosecutors to the feet of Gen. Pinochet. ■

— SL & SA

1. Scherrer suspected that Townley had made the bomb that killed Rolando Masferrer in Miami on Oct. 31, 1975. Like the Prats and Letelier bombs, the device that killed Masferrer was stowed under the driver's seat and detonated by remote control. Scherrer's hypothesis was that Townley did this "favor" for the CNM, expecting that they would then "owe" him one in return — which he collected when he received the Letelier assignment. The CNM had wanted the

The Spanish judicial probe covers the period from September 11, 1973, when Pinochet led a military coup against the elected government of Socialist Salvador Allende, through 1990, when international pressure forced him to acquiesce to civilian control. According to Spanish sources close to the case, Judge García Castellón will soon have to issue an indictment or drop the investigation. If he indicts, he will demand that Pinochet appear in Spain to testify in his defense. Under a bilateral treaty, the Chilean government can refuse a Spanish extradition order only if it agrees to try the defendant on the same charges in his home country.

If indicted, Pinochet's best hope may be to become "the Karadzic of the Andes," according to Juan Garcés, a Madrid lawyer representing families of the victims.⁴ Since the International War Crimes Tribunal in the Hague indicted the Bosnian Serb leader, Radovan Karadzic has remained free, albeit confined

4. Garcés served as Allende's political adviser at the time of the 1973 coup. He has written about Chilean politics under the Allende government and about the coup itself.

gangster Masferrer eliminated since he stood in their way, both in the rackets and for taking action against Castro. Some FBI agents suspected that Jorge Mas Canosa had hired the CNM to do the Masferrer job.

2. In early 1976, Townley physically bumped into Altamirano at the Madrid airport, but never got the opportunity for a "clean" kill. The CIA got wind of this plot to murder exiled Chileans in western Europe and notified the Spanish and French governments. In addition, Townley had orders to bomb the meeting room in Mexico where Chilean exile leaders were meeting in 1974. CNM member Virgilio Paz accompanied Townley on the Mexico mission, along with Townley's wife Mariana Inez Callejas, who also worked for DINA.

3. E. Martín De Pozuelo, "El caso de los desaparecidos llega a EE.UU.," *La Vanguardia* (Barcelona), Jan. 11, 1998.

4. *Report of the Chilean National Commission on Truth and Reconciliation*, p. 595.

5. Guillermo Novo, Alvin Ross, José Dionisio Suarez and Virgilio Paz were all charged with conspiracy to assassinate a foreign diplomat, plus a host of other charges. In the 1980 trial, a Washington jury convicted Guillermo Novo and Alvin Ross of conspiracy to murder Letelier. They received life sentences and Ignacio Novo got ten years for aiding and abetting. An appeals court reversed the decision, citing prosecutorial error, and in a subsequent trial a jury acquitted Ross. Guillermo Novo was also acquitted of conspiracy but found guilty of perjury before a grand jury. The judge freed him on the grounds that he had already served more than a year in prison. Virgilio Paz and Dionisio Suarez became fugitives and were subsequently captured in 1991 and 1990 respectively. Each pled guilty to conspiracy to assassinate and received 12 year sentences.



BARBARA JAMISON/IMPACT VISUALS

Although Pinochet's rule was touted as a triumph of market capitalism, it has left the country with a far greater disparity of wealth than before. Here, a family looks for food in an affluent section of Santiago.

to his region of power, where NATO forces are reluctant to arrest him.

But even if he stays at home, Pinochet may not escape unscathed. The Spanish judicial proceedings have caused a series of additional irritations for Pinochet. In September, the European Parliament passed a unanimous resolution in support of the investigation.⁵ In November, Chilean student leaders, including members of the ruling Christian Democratic Party, attempted to present Pinochet with the birthday gift of a one-way ticket to Spain. Their arrest by Chilean police did little to lessen the dictator's humiliation.

Then, in early January, Chile's lower house passed a non-binding resolution rejecting Pinochet's plan to assume the title of "senator for life." The 56-26 vote sent a clear message about how the majority of Chile's elected deputies viewed their army commander.⁶

Booyed by this development, Chile's Communist Party filed a complaint with the Santiago Court of Appeals charging Pinochet with the same crimes outlined in the Spanish case. Although chances for winning this case are slim — since Pinochet granted himself and his fellow officers amnesty — the court's acceptance

of jurisdiction accentuates the decline in the general's authority.

Another group of left and left-center legislators has announced that it intends to accuse Pinochet of making "political comments," which active military officers cannot do under the Constitution.⁷ All these initiatives followed the opening of the Spanish judicial process.

Chronicle of a Death Retold

The United States entered the case in 1997 after the Spanish judge sent "Letters Rogatory," asking the Justice Department for access to information regarding one of Pinochet's most famous foreign assassinations. As a result of a prolonged investigation of the 1976 murder of Orlando Letelier and Ronni Moffitt in Washington, DC, the US has reams of information about Chile's extraterritorial violence. Under a mutual legal assistance treaty, both nations are obliged to aid each other in judicial investigations. In January 1998, the Spanish judge spent a week in Washington, meeting with security officials and gathering testimony from witnesses living in the US.

The focus of the judge's US inquiry centers on Gen. Pinochet's complicity in a series of assassinations carried out in foreign

5. European Parliament, "Joint Motion for a Resolution," Sept. 17, 1997.

6. "Chilean Lawmakers Oppose Post for Pinochet," *Washington Post*, Jan. 9, 1998.

7. AP, "Chilean Leftists Sue Pinochet," *New York Times*, Jan. 13, 1998.



Soldiers guard the doors to the bombed-out presidential palace "La Moneda" after the 1973 CIA-backed coup overthrew the elected government of Salvador Allende.

ALEJANDRO STUART/IMPACT VISUALS

countries. Judge García Castellón will attempt to uncover what information US intelligence agencies collected on Pinochet's internal killings as well.

The FBI determined that the Chilean DINA had ordered the killing of Letelier, a former ambassador to the US and defense minister under Allende, who had become a high-profile critic of the Pinochet regime. The remote-controlled bomb planted in his car also killed one of his colleagues at the Institute for Policy Studies, 25-year-old Ronni Moffitt.

Until now, Pinochet has eluded US and Chilean justice, even though FBI special agents Robert Scherrer and Carter Cornick

concluded that "it would have been inconceivable that the Letelier assassination was ordered without the express authorization of the commander-in-chief." E. Lawrence Barcella, one of the prosecutors in the Letelier-Moffitt case, drew the same conclusion in testimony before the Spanish magistrate last summer.⁸

In a December 1997 appeal to the Chilean Supreme Court for a reduced sentence, former DINA chief Col. Manuel Contreras, while denying his and DINA's role in the Letelier-Moffitt case, stated that "As Maxi-

8. Berna G. Harbour, "La Policía Secreta de Pinochet Planeo Eliminar en Madrid a un Líder Chileno," *El País* (Madrid), July 12, 1997.

mum Authority of the DINA, only [Pinochet] could dispose of and order the missions to be carried out."⁹ Then two months later, Chilean Evangelical Lutheran Bishop Helmut Frenz testified in the Spanish court that when Catholic Bishop Fernando Ariztía and he met with Pinochet in 1974, the president justified the torture of Marxists and communists. "Through other means," said Pinochet, "they wouldn't confess." As to the accusation that a priest was tortured, Pinochet replied: "He's no priest. He's a Marxist."¹⁰

Hate in the Time of Kissinger

In spring 1976, Treasury Secretary William Simon and Secretary of State Kissinger made formal visits to Chile, symbolically blessing Pinochet's regime. By ordering a hit in Washington, DINA ended the cozy relationship that had begun with the 1973 coup. Less than two weeks after the September 4, 1970 election of President Salvador Allende, President Richard Nixon ordered the CIA to prevent the Socialist from being inaugurated. National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger reported that on September 15, Nixon ordered CIA Director Richard Helms to initiate: "a major effort to see what could be done to prevent Allende's accession to power. If there were one chance in ten of getting rid of Allende we should try it; if Helms needed \$10 million he would approve it. ... Aid programs should be cut; [Chile's] economy should be squeezed until it screamed."¹¹

9. Ramon Lobo, "El responsable del asesinato de Letelier dice que sólo cumplió órdenes de Pinochet," *El País* (Madrid), Feb. 24, 1998.

10. "Obispo declaró ayer ante la justicia española y habló con La Nación," *La Nación* (Santiago), Feb. 10, 1998.

11. Dinges, John and Saul Landau, *Assassination on Embassy Row* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), pp. 188-96, 230-53. The CIA did throw obstacles in the FBI's investigative past and tried to cover up certain aspects of the murder trail. In late June 1976, the CIA director of Clandestine Operations for Latin America received word from the US ambassador in Paraguay of what looked like a plan to attempt an assassination in Washington, DC. The CIA notified neither the FBI, nor the probable target of the hit, Letelier. In addition, the CIA sent the FBI on numerous false trails, providing the Bureau with thousands of "suspects" in the case, all of whom were leftists, on the theory that "the left killed Letelier to create a martyr."

Helms' own notes corroborated Kissinger's story. "If I ever carried the Marshall's baton out of the Oval Office," Helms later boasted to a Senate committee looking into the CIA's covert war against Chile, "it was that day."¹²

Under these guidelines, CIA operatives in Chile undertook a series of covert actions designed to stop Allende's Novem-

An indictment of Pinochet could be a prelude to Latin America's first "Nuremberg" trial.

ber inauguration. CIA officers attempted to bribe Chilean legislators to vote against Allende's confirmation and provided \$50,000 to Gen. Camelio Valenzuela to dole out to other generals to foment a military coup. Valenzuela failed because of the principled resistance of army chief Gen. Rene Schneider, without whose approval the ultra hierarchical Chilean officers would not move. The CIA station chief went to Valenzuela's house and pistol-whipped him until he returned most of the money. The irate CIA official then gave \$50,000 to *Patria y Libertad*, a right-wing terrorist group, to assassinate Schneider. In broad daylight the group attacked his car and killed him, making it appear to be a failed kidnapping attempt.¹³

The US did make Chile's economy "scream" by conspiring with other nations to cut off Allende's credit and make Chile pay through the nose for loans. Meanwhile, the CIA instigated strikes and sabotage in strategic sectors of the economy. Finally, in the late summer of 1973, the conspirators succeeded in forcing Gen. Carlos Prats to resign as commander of the Chilean military. Pinochet ascended to the role, setting the stage for a military coup on September 11, 1973.

12. *Covert Action in Chile, 1963-1973*, based on hearings before the Senate Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations with Respect to Intelligence Activities, held in 1975 under the chairmanship of Sen. Frank Church.

13. Seymour Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House* (New York: Summit Books, 1983), pp. 277-96. Additional information from Saul Landau's background interview with a former CIA official.

The US lost no time in recognizing Pinochet's military junta and rewarding its cooperation with restored credit and loans. But by 1979, when the extent of Pinochet's abuses embarrassed even the US, President Jimmy Carter began to distance himself from the dictator.

A pariah around the world, Pinochet hung onto presidential power for 17 years. Now, he scrambles to wield his remaining influence and salvage his retirement plan. In an interview last October, he indignantly described the Spanish case as "absolutely unlawful." "[T]he only thing I have done in my life was serve my country.

... Why don't they investigate

Fidel Castro?" he snapped.¹⁴

Last fall, he dispatched his adjutant, Gen. Fernando Torres Silva, to Spain to try to "persuade" the judge to drop the case. Previously, the Chilean justice minister had

A Hundred Years in Solitary

The current move by Spain to bring Pinochet to justice has dramatized divisions among Chileans. On March 10, 1998, thousands cheered the aging dictator during a lavish ceremony marking his resignation as army commander. Pinochet wept for the cameras as fellow generals paid homage to his greatness. The next day, angry demonstrators protested as Pinochet took his seat in Chile's upper house as a "Senator for Life." Several Christian Democrat and Socialist senators expressed outrage at Pinochet's presence by carrying photos of the disappeared, and signs asking: "Where are they?"

Aside from Pinochet's core of right-wing admirers, a sizeable sector of the ruling center-left coalition of Christian Democrats and Socialists (including the foreign minister) fear that the Spanish proceedings could raise the wrath of the military and thus destabilize Chile's



STEVEN RUBIN/IMPACT VISUALS

The National Police arrest a woman who was peacefully protesting in support of political prisoners on a hunger strike (Santiago, 1987).

taken the unusual step of flying to Spain, holding an airport press conference stating Chile's opposition to the proceedings, and then flying home. Presumably, the aged army chief also had a hand in Chile's threat in 1997 to cancel a \$25 million contract to purchase Spanish transport aircraft.¹⁵

14. Maria Eugenia Oyarzun, "Entrevista a Pinochet," *Diario La Tercera*, Santiago, Oct. 30, 1997.

15. *Financial Times* (London), Nov. 19, 1997.

booming economy. Or, it might open the door to the unpleasant past, unleashing not only a legal storm, but vendettas as well. On the legal plane, cabinet ministers argue that Spain is interfering with Chile's peaceful, albeit not necessarily smooth, transition to democracy. The justice minister contended that this investigation lacked proper jurisdiction and, moreover, centers on the past. To



Above, mothers of the disappeared; below, Pinochet supporters.



Punishing Pinochet

by Peter Weiss

The two judicial proceedings currently pending in the Spanish courts — one against Augusto Pinochet and some of his fellow butchers, the other against Leopoldo Galtieri and other members of the equally brutal Argentine junta — would have gladdened the heart of Raphael Lemkin, the father of the Genocide Convention.

As a child in Poland, Lemkin became interested in what we now call genocide and crimes against humanity when he heard about the massacre of the Armenians by the Turks in the second decade of this century. As a young lawyer in the thirties, he began to lobby for an international law regime that would prevent such atrocities and punish their perpetrators. After he lost 47 members of his family in the Holocaust and came to the United States, he coined the word “genocide” and devoted the rest of his life — he died in 1958 — to getting the idea of genocide as an international crime accepted by the world community.

Although he called January 12, 1951, the day the Convention came into force, “the greatest day of my life,” he had two regrets: While he wanted genocide to be a universal crime (i.e., one for which a perpetrator could be tried anywhere), Article VI of the Convention limits jurisdiction to the courts of the country in which the crime is committed, or to an international tribunal. (The Soviet Union, incidentally, advocated universality, but lost out to the United States, which insisted on territoriality). Lemkin also would have liked to see the definition of genocide include the entire or partial destruction of political groups but, in the event, it was limited to “national, ethnic, racial or religious groups.”

How then, did the Spanish judges decide that they had jurisdiction to open proceedings for genocidal crimes committed outside of Spain? (In addition to genocide, the prosecutions charged terrorism, torture and illegal detention followed by disappearance.) They were able to do so under Spanish laws which define genocide, terrorism and torture as universal crimes and authorize Spanish courts to prosecute persons committing them anywhere in the world, if no other court has done so. But, it may be asked, how could the Spanish legislators go beyond the jurisdictional terms of the Convention? The answer lies in the fact that Article I of the Convention

does not *create* the crime of genocide, but *confirms* it. In other words, the crime pre-exists the Convention, and does so as a universal crime. This was also the view of the Israeli courts in the Adolf Eichmann case and of the International Court of Justice which, in its Advisory Opinion of May 28, 1951, stated: “The Genocide Convention was ... intended by the General Assembly and by the contracting parties to be definitely universal in scope.”

As for the definition of the target group, the Spanish judges latched on to the word “national,” thus in effect reading “political” back into the scope of the Convention, since the victims of the Chilean and Argentine dictators owed their fate to their political beliefs rather than their national origin, but were undeniably persecuted as groups rather than as individuals. In this interpretation, which goes far beyond the narrow meaning of “national origin” that some have tried to read into the term “national,” the judges were reinforced by the opinion of Benjamin Whitaker, the UN Rapporteur on genocide who, in his 1985 report, concluded that the intentional destruction of a “significant sector of a national group” for ideological or political reasons — such as in Cambodia — constituted genocide.

There is, in any case, a direct connection between Spain and the two proceedings in that they were originally based on the victimization of Spanish citizens who were tortured and disappeared under Pinochet’s and Galtieri’s reigns of terror and whose relatives were the original plaintiffs. It is questionable whether the cases could or would have been brought had there not been this connection. However, subsequently other plaintiffs, including the entire Chilean Association of the Killed and Disappeared, were allowed to join as plaintiffs, as is possible under the law of Spain and other continental law countries.¹

It is interesting to note that, while, unlike the Spanish law, there is no provision in US law for the trial of genocidal acts committed abroad against US citizens, there is such a provision for terrorist acts, and there is a provision for trying US citizens committing genocidal acts anywhere in the world. This is found in the Genocide Convention Implementation Act of 1987, also known as the Symington Act (18 U.S.C. 1091), which was finally enacted 36

(count ‘em!) years after the Convention, which the US was the first country to sign, came into force.

What will be the outcome of the two landmark Spanish cases, the first ever brought by national courts for crimes of genocide committed outside their territory? The two judges, who at the moment are acting as investigating magistrates, somewhat in the manner of a grand jury, have stood their ground courageously against severe attacks from conservative legal and political circles in Spain, including the country’s Attorney General. International arrest warrants — which the Argentine government has refused to honor — have already been issued against Galtieri and his fellow defendants in the Argentine case. Similar warrants are expected to be issued against Pinochet and his fellow defendants once the judge in that case finishes taking testimony from the many witnesses who have come forward to build the most complete record to date of the 17 darkest years in Chile’s history.

Under Spanish law, defendants may not be tried *in absentia*, thus Pinochet and Galtieri are not likely ever to be seen sitting in the dock of a Spanish courtroom. But these unique proceedings have already had an enormous moral and historical impact, not to mention the political firestorms which they have caused in the three countries affected. If nothing else, they will serve as forerunners for the work of the International Criminal Court which is likely to be established at a UN-sponsored conference this June, precisely because, for jurisdictional and political reasons, it has proved so difficult to punish the bumper crop of head-of-state terrorists which this century has produced.

And, if nothing else, the international arrest warrants issued by the Spanish judges may put a severe crimp in the travel plans of Pinochet, Galtieri and company for the rest of their damned lives. ■

Peter Weiss is vice president of the Center for Constitutional Rights, which represented the family of Charles Horman, who was murdered in Chile shortly after the Pinochet coup, in their suit against Henry Kissinger and other high officials of the US government, and which pioneered the line of cases in which foreign torturers have been sued in US courts. He gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Juan E. Garcés, the lawyer representing most of the plaintiffs in the Spanish case against Pinochet, in the preparation of this note.

1. Under the US criminal system, no such intervention is possible, given the legal fiction that crimes are committed against “The People,” rather than individuals. However, our courts are beginning to allow victims and their survivors to participate in sentencing hearings and to attend executions — a questionable advance if ever there was one. On the other hand, our courts, unlike those of any other country so far, are open to *civil* suits by alien victims, or the survivors of victims, of torture and other gross human rights violations committed abroad, provided their perpetrators can be served with complaints in this country.



STEVEN RUBIN/IMPACT VISUALS

A college student, 19, shows torture marks made by the secret police. The brand, inflicted with a hot metal object, stands for *Unidad Popular*, a coalition of leftist and left-of-center, political parties (Santiago, 1987).

maintain the "miracle" boom of the economy, government officials said, Chileans must focus on the future.

Those who brought the suit, in and outside Chile, hope that the case might allow some measure of belated justice and ease the pain they continue to suffer as a result of Pinochet's atrocities. Along with Spanish and Chilean plaintiffs, the family

of Charles Horman has also joined the civil suit. Horman was a US filmmaker and writer whose arrest and execution in Chile in 1973 became the basis of the film *Missing* starring Jack Lemmon.¹⁶ Unlike the well-documented assassination of Orlando Letelier, thousands of less-famous murdered Chileans have been denied

¹⁶ *Report of the Chilean National Commission...*, op. cit., p. 180.

justice because of the blanket amnesty Pinochet granted to members of his repressive apparatus.

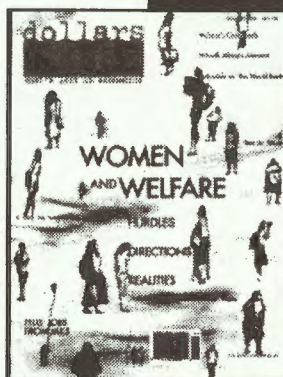
Thousand of miles and many years away, a Spanish judge hears testimony from victims and culprits. He will decide if sufficient compelling evidence exists to indict the unrepentant general. It is the first time that a court of law is scrutinizing Pinochet's role in 17 years of bloody deeds.

Ironically, Washington holds evidence that might nail shut Pinochet's legal coffin. Washington's "war on terrorism" policy should have dictated avid cooperation in this case. As of mid-April, the US had not yet delivered relevant classified documents to Judge García Castellón, nor had the Justice Department "found" a key witness living in the US who participated in the Letelier killing, Lt. Armando Fernandez Larios. Perhaps the White House feared that an indictment of Pinochet might cause some military stirring, just as President Clinton landed in Chile for the April 18-19 economic Summit.

The Spanish judge's indictment could be a prelude to Latin America's first "Nuremberg" trial, an assurance that future tyrants must think before committing atrocities. For the victims' families, it would provide a small measure of justice to watch the infamous dictator head not to retirement, but to prison. ■

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THE DRUG WAR'S FUNGAL SOLUTION?



JON MITCHELL/PANOS PICTURES

Biological Roulette

by Jim Hogshire

This past August, a piece of good news came from the maze of nameless buildings at the USDA's Agricultural Research Service (ARS) in Beltsville, Maryland. Dr. Deborah R. Fravel, a plant pathologist at the laboratory-for Biocontrol of Plant Diseases (BCPD) had turned the tables on a nasty, tomato-eating fungus called *Fusarium oxysporum*. She had developed a "benign"

Jim Hogshire is a freelance journalist and author of the books *Opium for the Masses* (1994), *Sell Yourself to Science* (1992), and *Grossed-Out Surgeon Vomits Inside Patient* (1997).

Photo: Soldier in poppy field: US-funded "Operation Radiance."

strain of the fungus that "inoculates" the tomatoes, much as a vaccine protects a child against certain diseases.¹

And the fungus is nasty. A virulent mutation of *fusarium*, called "Race 3," has been a bane to Florida and Georgia farmers who have trouble controlling it with even the strongest fungicides.² Around the world, *fusarium* also destroys watermelons, chickpeas, basil, bananas, and

hundreds of other crops. The blight, in all its myriad permutations, can lie dormant in the soil for years without a host plant and then springs to life, causing devastating "wilt disease." Fear of introducing the disease is one reason Japan is loath to accept US produce.³ While some strains of this fungus are relatively harmless to most plants, other types of *fusarium* can produce mycotoxins poisonous to humans.

1. "Lab Notes" *The Columbian* (Vancouver, WA), Sept. 10, 1997.
2. Press Release, Jan Suszkiw, ARS Information Staff, Aug. 7, 1997.

3. USDA Reports, Sept. 3, 1997.

The Fungus Among Us

But the USDA press release was warm and fuzzy, describing "good" fungi "helping plants to help themselves."

There was no mention of Fravel's part in dozens of projects aimed at producing a lethal — but "natural" — herbicide from the same fungus for a very different purpose. Fravel's efforts are part of a cabal of scientists working hand in hand with the DEA, the State Department, and foreign governments to produce an herbicide designed to effect the drug war's Final Solution: total elimination of the world's illicit coca crops and opium poppies — the same goal recently announced by the United Nations.⁴

Fravel's boss at the BCPD, Dr. Robert D. Lumsden, is a prominent figure in the eradication research program. Lumsden's work with mutant strains of *Fusarium oxysporum* over the past few years has taken him to sites around the world and across the country. At the University of Montana in Bozeman, he and another ARS plant pathologist, Dr. Bryan A. Bailey, are in the midst of a five-year study of the toxic effects of *F. oxysporum* and other fungi on opium poppies and marijuana.⁵ According to one of Lumsden's reports, unlike chemical herbicides, "these naturally-occurring fungi are safe for humans and the environment."⁶

Lumsden worked with Bailey to develop a granular formulation of *fusarium* mycotoxin, for testing at

sites "foreign and domestic."⁷ A government coca field in Hawaii was eventually used to test the mycotoxin, along with traditional chemical herbicides.⁸ A 1995 study of *fusarium* herbicide showed "significant kill" of coca bushes while other studies indicate a 60 to 90 percent kill-rate for opium poppies.⁹ When scientists noticed that ants sometimes carried away the poison pellets, Fravel and Bailey looked for

ways to make them more attractive to the insects — so they would take the herbicide deeper into the soil. The ants (which preferred their pellets flavored with olive oil) were found to carry the fungus both "outside and inside their bodies."¹⁰

Changing Genes

Later research by Bailey and others identified the gene responsible for one strain's deadly effects on coca. They then developed a way "to allow alteration of the gene expression."¹¹ They began to play with the fungus' genetic code.

The ARS's long-standing interest in manipulating the *fusarium* fungus is revealed in a series of studies it commissioned. One experiment set out "to construct a genetic map of *Fusarium moniliforme*" and "to identify mutants that affect the synthesis of" its mycotoxins.¹² Another study proposed "the development of strains with enhanced pathogenicity" that could wipe out coca plants "using molecular genetic manipulations involving fungal proteins."¹³ The ARS branch in Ft. Detrick, Maryland, carried out the "successful transformation of *Fusarium oxysporum*" by "DNA sequence encoding."¹⁴ Claim-



JULIO ETCHART/PANOS PICTURES

Small holding farmers have few alternatives to growing coca if they hope to make a living in the rural Andes region.

4. Raymond Bonner, "Top UN Drug Aide Hopes to Rid Globe of Poppy and Coca Crops," *New York Times*, Nov. 14, 1997, p. 6.
5. "The Development and Field Testing of *Papaver*-specific and *Cannabis*-specific Mycoherbicides," #0148941 (1996). Some citations in this article (preceded by a # sign) are listed by their "Accession Number" and are retrievable from the USDA's CRIS database. Reports that begin with "ARS Report #" come from the Agricultural Research Service's (ARS) "Tektran" database. The summaries for these reports can be accessed USDA CRIS website <<http://crisel.nal.usda.gov:8080/>> or the USDA tektran website <<http://www.nal.usda.gov/ttic/>>.
6. "Preparation of Stable, Granular Formulations Containing *Fusarium oxysporum* Pathogenic to Narcotic Plants," ARS Report #0000084462 (1997).

7. *Ibid.* See also "Development and Field Testing of *Papaver*-specific and *Cannabis*-specific Mycoherbicides," #0148941 (1996).
8. "Environmental Fate of Herbicides in Hawaii, Peru, and Panama," ARS Report #0000073921 (1996); and, "Epidemiology, Ecology and Molecular Systematics of *Fusarium* Pathogenic on Tropical Crops in Peru," #0149339 (1996). This report concluded, "This information will be used by scientists developing *Fusarium* *a. erythroxyli* as a mycoherbicide against *E. coca*."
9. "Discovery, Development and Mechanism of Action of Biocontrol Agents for Perennial and Annual Weeds," #0147936 (1995); "Genetic Improvement of Biological Control Agents for Weed Control," #0168979 (1996); and, "Discovery Development and Mechanism of Action of Biocontrol Agents for Perennial and Annual Weeds," #0148941 (1996).

10. "Dispersal of Formulations of the Mycoherbicide Strain of *Fusarium oxysporum* *F. Sp. erythroxyli* by Ants," ARS Report #0000080246 (1997).
11. Summary of work written by Bailey on the ARS website <www.barc.usda.gov/psi/bpdl/staff.htm>. He notes, "A *Fusarium* wilt epidemic is being monitored to determine factors which influence the spread of disease. ... We have isolated a gene for the 24 kDa protein from *Fusarium oxysporum* and have developed a transformation system in *Fusarium oxysporum* to allow alteration of the gene expression."
12. "Genetics and Physiology of *Fusarium* spp.," #0095292 (1996). This study began in 1993. See also "Genetic Characterization by RAPD Analysis of an Emerging Epidemic in Peru of *Fusarium oxysporum* *f. sp. erythroxyli*," ARS Report #0000079357 (1997). This report discussed "an epidemic of *Fusarium oxysporum* ... presently occurring in the coca-growing region of the Hualaga Valley in Peru," which, through "DNA fingerprinting," revealed "two subpopulations" of *fusarium* at work.
13. "The Sensitivity of *Erythroxylium coca* var. *coca* Leaves to Stress: Their Response to Ethylene and Fungal Protein Preparations," ARS Report #0000064222 (1995).
14. "Characterization and Development of Exotic Pathogens for Biocontrol of Introduced Weeds," #0147908, (1996).

ing that it would have "limited environmental impact," another ARS study acknowledged that a "biocontrol strategy for coca" using *Fusarium oxysporum* had been "developed and successfully field tested in small scale trials."¹⁵

Researchers hint that they took their cue for the mycotoxin from a naturally occurring outbreak of *fusarium* wilt destroying crops in Peru's Upper Hualлага Valley. An ongoing ARS project, begun in 1993, noted:

"Studies of a naturally-occurring epidemic of *fusarium* wilt in Peru have been concluded which verify that the epidemic is progressing and causing significant disease in the coca producing regions of Peru. Already, the natural epidemic of *fusarium* wilt in the coca producing areas of Peru is causing farmers to abandon their fields. A protein produced by *Fusarium oxysporum* which is toxic to *E. coca* has been purified and its gene cloned. The data indicate that a bioherbicide using *F. oxysporum* which is effective against coca can be produced and proof of concept field tests are being initiated."¹⁶

As early as 1991, Peruvian *campesinos* testified that they witnessed helicopters carrying DEA agents and Peruvian police dropping pellets containing the fungus onto coca fields; however, there is no other solid evidence to support the allegation that the pellets actually contained *fusarium*.¹⁷ Other press accounts allege a direct link between the DEA and the use of *fusarium*:

"The US Drug Enforcement Administration resumed full cooperation with the Peruvian police in 1994, when [the] strategy shifted to destroying illegal coca plantations using a mushroom known scientifically as *fusarium* and colloquially among the peasants as 'the coca-eater.'"¹⁸ Because there are so many strains or races of *fusarium*, it may not be possible to determine if this outbreak affecting coca and other crops is a result of natural causes or human intervention.

Eat Stuff and Die

The problem with creating any "bug" that will eat just one thing and then obediently cease to exist is obvious. All life-forms mutate and adapt, especially a

15. "Strategies of Biological Control of Narcotic Plants," ARS Report #0000087089 (1997).

16. "Discovery Development and Mechanism of Action of Biocontrol Agents for Perennial and Annual Weeds," #0147936 (1996), emphasis added.

17. Ricardo Soberon, "The War on Cocaine in Peru: from Cartagena to Peru," Issue Brief #6, Washington Office on Latin America, Aug. 7, 1992.

18. Abraham Luma, "Chemists Playing Bigger Part in Drug War," Inter Press Service, Apr. 16, 1996.

simple organism like a fungus; sooner or later it will learn to eat something else. A similar situation occurred in 1971, when Richard Nixon misinterpreted a theory about "an insect which could consume poppy crops" and then die. Nixon, preoccupied by this imaginary weevil, by then dubbed the "screw worm" (because it was supposed to die after intercourse), asked Congress for funding. When Nixon's advisors could not be assured that this "screw worm" would be host specific — i.e., it might eat the world's supply of poppy crops and then adapt to another host, such as rice or wheat — they lost interest in the project. Eventually even these knuckleheads dropped the idea.¹⁹

But research into doper bugs continued. In 1996, Bailey, Lumsden, and Fravel — working on a project at North Carolina State University in Raleigh — wrote that their finely tuned pathogen "kills only coca and does not harm other plants."²⁰ A recently launched study, however, suggests that the *fusarium* formulas are still not specific enough. One ARS investigator is studying the "ubiquitous species-complex of *Fusarium oxysporum* [that] is currently being investigated as a biological control agent. However, this fungus encompasses broad genetic variability that has not yet been delineated." There is, the researcher continues, "still a need to characterize genetically the strains that attach *Erythroxylon* [coca] and/or *Papaver* [poppies] as well as those that occur in soils and on crop plants growing in close proximity."²¹ Translation: the innumerable strains of the fungus could possibly attack adjacent crops and do God-knows-what to everything else.

Perversely, the government touts the fungus project as environmentally friendly because it avoids the use of chemicals. For

years, the US has browbeaten Andean producer countries into using US-produced herbicides such as Roundup (glyphosate), and to kill off the "source" of the US drug problem. The Andean nations have balked, arguing that US consumer demand drives production, not the other way around. With the threat of withholding millions in aid dollars to bolster its side, Washington has demanded eradication. Local growers are then left not only without a cash crop, but sick from the toxic effects of the herbicides.

The fungus could attack adjacent crops and do God-knows-what to everything else around it.

Protests over the health effects of herbicides prompted Bolivia and Peru to stand up to Washington and prohibit Roundup-like herbicides for coca and poppy eradication.²² In early March 1996, Colombia abruptly halted herbicide fumigation in retaliation for being "decertified" for not complying with US drug war demands.

Humans exposed to Monsanto Corporation's Roundup — the current chemical of choice — can suffer damage to the stomach, heart, kidneys, lungs and skin.²³ Glyphosate, according to a 1993 study by the University of California Berkeley School of Public Health, was the third most commonly-reported cause of pesticide illness among agricultural workers. Another study from the Berkeley school found that it was the most frequently reported cause of pesticide illness among landscape maintenance workers.²⁴ As a drug eradication chemical, glyphosate has another problem: It can be washed off for 8 hours after it is sprayed on, making it vulnerable

to rain — and farmers who rush into the freshly poisoned fields to wash the toxins off their crops.²⁵

Armed with the more potent herbicide Spike (tebuthiuron), the US is now pushing to use that defoliant in the drug war. Manufactured by Dow AgroSciences (formerly DowElanco and then Eli Lilly before that merger), the use of tebuthiuron has been hawked in Congress by Rep. Dan Burton (R-IN) — a longtime recipient of money from both Indianapolis based-Eli Lilly and Dow.

While killer fungi and many poisonous herbicides are not approved for use in the US, people in developing countries often have no say in what toxins are released in their communities. If some US officials have their way, unilateral decision-making could become the norm.

At a hearing he chaired on "certification" of nations in the drug war, Dan Burton told the State Department's narcotics point man, Robert Gelbard, how to handle countries that refused to be defoliated: "Tell the president [sic] of Peru and Bolivia at about 5:00 in the morning, 'We've got a bunch of aircraft carriers out here, and we're coming down through those valleys, and we're gonna drop this stuff, this tebuthiuron ...' I think we should consider, if this really is a war on drugs, doing it unilaterally and violating the territorial boundaries of those countries and dropping that stuff. Now, I know that doesn't sit well with the State Department, but either we deal with it or our kids continue to suffer and our society continues to let this cancer grow."²⁶

Whether "our" kids should be "protected" by poisoning "their" kids, however, is a policy issue that seems to escape US drug warriors. In their zeal to sound ever tougher on drug issues, Washington policy makers — together with fearless scientists eager to test their theories on other people's communities — may soon have a new biological doomsday weapon to unleash on their southern neighbors. At best, *fusarium* could become the latest bit of humiliation unilaterally rammed down the throat of Andean nations. At worst, the fungus could run amok unleashing the modern day equivalent of the Great Potato Famine. ■

25. "Effects of Surfactants on the Uptake of 14c-Glyphosate in *Erythroxylum Sp.*," ARS Report #0000085585, (1997).

26. "Hearings on Certification for Drug-producing Countries in Latin America," chaired by Rep. Dan Burton (R-IN), House Western Hemisphere Affairs Subcommittee of the House International Relations Committee, March 7, 1996.

19. Edward J. Epstein, *Agency of Fear*, revised edition (New York: Verso, 1990), pp. 147-51, 290-91. Nixon's imaginary "Screw Worm" is based on a weevil and is completely unrelated to the Screwworm fly which strikes livestock.

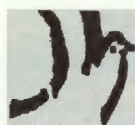
20. "Epidemiology, Ecology and Molecular Systematics of *Fusarium* Pathogenic on Tropical Crops in Peru," #0149339 (1996).

21. "Developing Molecular Markers For Candidate Biological Control Fungi for Narcotic Plants," #0401025 (1997).

22. Testimony of Robert Gelbard at the "Hearings on Certification for Drug-producing Countries in Latin America," chaired by Rep. Dan Burton (R-IN), House Western Hemisphere Affairs Subcommittee of the House International Relations Committee, March 7, 1996.

23. Caroline Cox, "Glyphosate, Part 1: Toxicology," *Journal of Pesticide Reform*, v. 15, n. 3, Fall 1995. See also "Glyphosate, Part 2: Human Exposure and Ecological Effects," in n. 4, Winter 1995.

24. *Ibid.*



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The Burma-Singapore Axis:

Globalizing the Heroin Trade

by Leslie Kean and Dennis Bernstein



PIERS CAVENDISH



BETTE LEE/IMPACT VISUALS

Two countries with repressive regimes abet the illegal drug trade. Above, Burmese hill tribe members smoke opium; right, Singapore promotes its values.

"Singapore's economic linkage with Burma is one of the most vital factors for the survival of Burma's military regime," says Professor Mya Maung, a Burmese economist based in Boston. This link, he continues, is also central to "the expansion of the heroin trade."¹ Singapore has achieved the distinction of being the Burmese junta's number one business partner — both largest trading partner and largest foreign investor. More than half these investments, totaling upwards of \$1.3 billion, are in partnership with Burma's in-

famous heroin kingpin Lo Hsing Han, who now controls a substantial portion of the world's opium trade.² The close political, economic, and military relationship between the two countries facilitates the weaving of millions of narco-dollars into the legitimate world economy.

Singapore has also become a major player in Asian commerce. According to Steven Green, US Ambassador to Singapore, that city-state's free market policies have "allowed this small country to develop one of the world's most successful trading and investment economies."³ Singapore also has a strong role in the powerful 132-member country World

Trade Organization. Indeed, the tiny China Sea island of three and a half million people is known far and wide as the blue chip of the region — a financial trading base and a route for the vast sums of money that flow in and out of Asia.⁴

If the brutal Burmese dictatorship's international pariah status is of any concern to its more powerful partner, Singapore shows no sign of it. Following the March 24 visit of Singapore's Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong to Rangoon, a Singapore spokesperson proclaimed, "Singapore and Myanmar⁵ should continue to explore areas where they can complement each other."⁶ As both countries continue to celebrate their "complementary" relationship, the international community must take note of the powerful support this relationship provides both to Burma's illegitimate regime and to its booming billion dollar drug trade.

Drugs 'R' Us

The Burmese military dictatorship — known by the acronym SLORC for State Law and Order Restoration Council until it

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Dennis Bernstein, associate editor at Pacific News Service, is producer of KPFA radio's "Flashpoints."

1. Interview, Sept. 8, 1997. Professor Mya Maung is the author of *The Burma Road to Poverty* (Praeger, 1991); *Totalitarianism in Burma: Prospects for Economic Development* (Paragon House, 1992); *The Burma Road to Capitalism: Growth versus Democracy* (Praeger, 1998).

2. *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, 1997*, Bureau for International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs, US Department of State, Washington, DC, March 1998 [hereinafter *INCSR*].

3. Steven J. Green, Confirmation Statement, US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Oct. 21, 1997.

4. Interview with Doug Henwood (ed.), *Left Business Observer*, Feb. 2, 1998.

5. The military junta changed Burma's name to "Myanmar" without consulting the citizens of the country. The leaders of Burma's elected democratic party — who were not allowed to take office despite an overwhelming victory in 1990 — do not recognize the name change.

6. "S'Pore, Myanmar ease VIP travel," *The Straits Times*, March 25, 1998.

changed its name to the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) last November — depends on the resources of Burma's drug barons for its financial survival. Since it seized power in 1988, opium production has doubled,⁷ equaling all legal exports and making the country the world's biggest heroin supplier. Burma now supplies the US with 60 percent of its heroin imports and has recently become a major regional producer of methamphetamines. With 50 percent of the economy unaccounted for, drug traffickers, businessmen and government officials are able to integrate spectacular profits throughout Burma's permanent economy.⁸

Both the Burmese generals and drug lords have been able to take advantage of Singapore's liberal banking laws and money laundering opportunities. In 1991, for example, the SLORC laundered \$400 million through a Singapore bank which it used as a down payment for Chinese arms. Despite the large sum, Burma's foreign exchange reserves registered no change either before or after the sale.⁹ With no laws to prevent money laundering, Singapore is widely reported to be a financial haven for Burma's elite, including its two most notorious traffickers, Lo Hsing Han and Khun Sa (also known by his Chinese name Chang Qifu).

SLORC cut a deal with Khun Sa for his "surrender" in early 1996, allowing him protection and business opportunities in exchange for retirement from the drug trade. Khun Sa now bills himself as "a commercial real estate agent who also has a foot in the Burmese construction industry."¹⁰ Already in control of a bus route into the northern poppy growing region where the military is actively involved in the drug business,¹¹ he is now investing \$250 million in a new highway between Rangoon and Mandalay, an SPDC cabinet member confirmed.¹² "The

Burmese government says one thing but does another," according to Banphot Piamdi, director of Thailand's Northern Region's Narcotics Suppression Center. "It claims to have subdued Khun Sa's group. ... However the fact is that the group under the supervision of...Khun Sa's son has received permission from Rangoon to produce narcotics in the areas along the Thai-Burmese border."¹³

Khun Sa's son is not the only trafficker reaping benefits in the Shan State area which borders Thailand and China and serves as Burma's primary poppy growing area. Field intelligence and ethnic militia sources consistently report a pattern of

"Singapore's investments in Burma are opening doors for the drug traffickers, giving them access to banks and financial systems."

Burmese military involvement with drug production in these remote areas. Government troops offer protection to the heroin and amphetamine refineries in the area in exchange for payoffs and gifts, such as Toyota sedans, pistols and army uniforms. The only access to the refineries is through permits issued by Burmese military intelligence — without this, the heavily guarded areas surrounding the refineries are too dangerous to approach. The military is also involved in protecting the transport of narcotics throughout the region, which the authorities have sealed off from the outside world.

"There are persistent and reliable reports that officials, particularly army personnel posted in outlying areas, are involved in the drug business," confirms the March 1998 US government narcotics report. "Army personnel wield considerable political clout locally, and their involvement in trafficking is a significant problem."¹⁴ Intelligence sources, working for ethnic leaders combating both the drug trade and the military dictatorship, report that the pattern of government involvement extends all the way to the top. The central government in Rangoon demands

funds on a regular basis from regional commanders who, in turn, expect payoffs from the rank and file. The soldiers get the money any way they can — through smuggling, gambling or selling jade — with drugs being the most accessible source of revenue in Shan State. The officers in the field also "tax" refineries, drug transporters, and opium farmers.

At great risk, the intelligence sources — who go undercover to infiltrate troops in the field — collect painstakingly detailed data including names, dates and places, such as these delivered in March 1998 from Shan State: "On 10th Jan. 98, SPDC army no. 65 stationed at Mong Ton sent 40 troops to Nam Hkek village, Pon Pa Khem village tract, collected 0.16 kilo of opium per household or [collected payment of] Baht 600. Then the troops sold the collected opium to the drug business men at the rate of Baht 6000 for 1.6 kilos." Another report states: "Troops from SPDC Battalion nos. 277 & 65 stationed at Mong Ton are still protecting heroin refineries situated at Hkai lon, Pay lon & Ho ya areas, Mong Ton town-

ship. Those who can pay B.200,00 per month are allowed to run the heroin refineries." And: "On 3rd of Jan. 98, Burma Army no. 99 collected opium tax in Lashio township. They charged 0.32 kilo per household. They arrested and beat seriously those who failed to give."¹⁵

These sources also report that Ko Tat, Private 90900 from SPDC battalion no. 525 stationed in Lin Kay, recently defected from the Burmese army and said that his company had been giving protection to the opium fields around Ho Mong. While the lower ranked officers struggle to meet their quotas in the field, the highest levels of the government in the capital city strike deals with Burma's two top traffickers, one of whom is the prosperous partner of Singapore.

Lo Hsing Han: At Home in Singapore

With massive financial ties to Singapore, Lo Hsing Han is now one of Burma's top investors. He, along with Khun Sa, the former "king of opium," is a major player in the Burmese economy.

In the early 1990s, Lo Hsing Han controlled the most heavily armed drug-

7. *INCSR, op. cit.*

8. "Country Commercial Guide: Burma," American Embassy, Rangoon, July 1996; and Dennis Bernstein and Leslie Kean, "People of the Opiate: Burma's Dictatorship of Drugs," *The Nation*, Dec. 16, 1996 (US weekly, not to be confused with the Bangkok daily).

9. Andrew Selth, "Burma's Defence Expenditure and Arms Industries," Working Paper No. 309, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, August 1997, p. 8. The source of the \$400 million has not been documented, but it is widely speculated that this was drug money since the SLORC did not have access to such large sums from other sources.

10. Raoul Kirschbichler, "Interview with Khun Sa," *Austrian Daily*, July 30, 1997.

11. "Khun Sa given bus concession," *Bangkok Post*, May 21, 1996. Although Khun Sa has been indicted in the US, the generals refused a US offer of \$2 million to extradite him for trial. Khun Sa has threatened to reveal information about the involvement of high-ranking officials in the drug trade if they hand him over (Bertil Lintner, "High Time in the Golden Triangle," *Tokyo Journal*, April 17, 1996).

12. *INCSR, op. cit.*

13. "Thailand flays Burma for not cooperating in drug fight," *Bangkok Siam Rath*, Jan. 6, 1998 (translated from Thai).

14. *INCSR, op. cit.*

15. This article is partly based on a series of interviews with sources both permanently and temporarily in the United States who must remain anonymous. Interviews were conducted by phone and in person during 1997 and 1998.

trafficking organization in Southeast Asia.¹⁶ He was arrested in 1973 and sentenced to death, but was freed under a general amnesty in 1980. Now, like Khun Sa, he wears the public persona of a successful businessman in Rangoon — where no one does business without close government cooperation. Although he still oversees rural drug operations with the status of a godfather, according to US narcotics officials, the notorious Lo currently serves as an adviser on ethnic affairs to Lt. Gen. Khin Nyunt, the military intelligence chief and the junta's powerful "Secretary 1."¹⁷

ZUNETTA LIDDELL



Burmese students on a hunger strike for human rights and democracy in 1988, when the regime massacred hundreds of peaceful demonstrators. Singapore was the first to come to the junta's rescue.

Lo Hsing Han is the chair of Burma's biggest conglomerate, Asia World, founded in 1992. His son, Steven Law, is managing director and also runs three companies in Singapore which are "overseas branches" of Asia World. Although Singapore is proud of its mandatory death penalty for small-time narcotics smugglers and heroin addicts, both father and son travel freely in and out of the friendly island-nation. "The family money is offshore," said a high-level US narcotics official. "The old man is a convicted drug trafficker, so his kid is handling the financial activities."

In 1996, when Law married his Singaporean business partner in a lavish, well-publicized Rangoon wedding, guests from Singapore were flown in on two chartered

planes. According to a high-level US government official familiar with the situation, Law's wife Cecilia Ng operates an underground banking system, and "is a contact for people in Burma to get their drug

Singapore has a mandatory death penalty on small-time traffickers, but embraces Burma's drug lords.

money into Singapore, because she has a connection to the government." According to the official, Ng spends half her time in Rangoon, half in Singapore; when in Rangoon, she is headquartered at Asia

Lite, a subsidiary of Asia World.¹⁸ The husband-wife team are also the sole officers and shareholders of Asia World subsidiary, Kokang Singapore Pte Ltd. Founded in Singapore in 1993 with \$4.6 million, the company "engages in general trading activities in goods/products of all kinds/descriptions."¹⁹

Singapore's ventures with Asia World include both government and private investments. Kuok Singapore Ltd., a partner with Asia World in many ventures, was Burma's largest single real estate investor as of late 1996, with over \$650 million invested.²⁰ Other Singaporean companies are mentioned in Asia World's company reports. Sinmardev, another major Singaporean project linked to Lo's company, is a \$207 million industrial park and port on the outskirts of Rangoon, which broke ground in 1997. Singaporean entrepreneur Albert Hong, head of Sinmardev,

18. Meeting with the authors in Washington, DC, in Dec. 1997. The government official wished to remain anonymous.

19. Registry of Companies and Businesses, Singapore, for Kokang Singapore Pte. Ltd., Nov. 9, 1996. The family's operations have begun to penetrate US borders. Kokang Import and Export, a subsidiary of Asia World, was registered in Scottsdale, AZ, in 1993 and in Diamond Bar, CA, in 1994. The President of the Scottsdale branch of Kokang was Daisy Lo, daughter of Lo Hsing Han. It is not known where the company now operates in the US, if at all.

20. "Kuok group invests another 128 million dollars in Burma," AFP, Sept. 11, 1996.

16. Bertil Lintner, "The Volatile Yunnan Frontier," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, v. 6, n. 2, Feb. 1, 1994, p. 84.

17. Anthony Davis and Bruce Hawke, "Business Is Blooming," *Asiaweek*, Jan. 23, 1998.



described the project as the largest foreign investment in Burma outside the energy field. The Singaporean consortium leads the joint venture along with the Burmese junta, Lo's Asia World, and a slew of international shareholders.²¹

Kuok Singapore Ltd., Lo Hsing Han's Asia World, and the Burmese junta are also partners in the luxury Traders Hotel. The hotel's November 1996 opening ceremony was attended by the Singapore ambassador, the president of Kuok Singapore, and briefly by Lo Hsing Han himself. The presiding Burmese minister publicly thanked Steven Law and the government of Singapore "without whose support and encouragement there would be very few Singaporean businessmen in our country."²²

While government and business connections in Burma and Singapore have boosted Asia World's prospects, other factors have contributed to the company's extraordinary growth. In the last six years, Asia World has expanded from a modest trading company to become Burma's largest and fastest-growing private sector enterprise with interests in trading, manufacturing, property, industrial investment, development, construction, transportation, import and distribution, and infrastructure. "How is it that a company that has a

humble beginning trading beans and pulses is suddenly involved in \$200 million projects?" said a US government official, requesting anonymity. "Where did all that start-up capital come from?"

The US government ventured a guess in 1996: It denied Asia World's CEO Steven Law a visa to the US "on suspicion of drug trafficking."²³ Asia World's operations now include a deepwater port in Rangoon, the

Burmese generals and drug lords enjoy Singapore's liberal banking laws and money laundering opportunities.

Leo Express bus line into Northern Burma, and a \$33 million toll highway from the heart of Burma's poppy-growing region to the China border.²⁴ On December 20, the conglomerate opened a wharf with freight handling, storage, and a customs yard for ships carrying up to 15,000 tons.²⁵ "If you're in the dope business, these are the types of things that you've got

to have to be able to move your product," said a high-level US narcotics official. "They have set up institutions to facilitate the movement of drugs. And in all probability, they are using laundered drug proceeds, or funds generated from investments of drug trafficking proceeds, to build this infrastructure," he added.

The activities of Lo's company Asia World have triggered an international narcotics investigation led by Washington. US investigators allege that Asia World's relationship to Singapore paves the way for the narcotics trade to be woven into all legitimate investments between the two countries. "Singapore's investments in Burma are opening doors for the drug traffickers, giving them access to banks and financial systems," said one government official familiar with the situation.

One Stop Shopping: Intelligence to Repression

The Burmese junta's control of its impoverished population through crude methods such as torture, forced labor, and mass killings leaves it open to international condemnation. In contrast, Singapore takes a more sophisticated approach to repression, both at home and abroad. While the island-nation's citizens have material ben-

21. "S'pore-led consortium in \$282m Myanmar deal," *The Straits Times*, June 29, 1996.

22. "Traders Hotel holds soft opening to start operation with 90 rooms," *The New Light of Myanmar*, Nov. 15, 1996.

23. "Visa Bar," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Sept. 5, 1996; interview by the authors with a State Department official who wished not to be named, Sept. 1996.

24. Asia World Company Limited, Company Profile, 1996.

25. SPDC Information Sheet No. A.0255(1), Dec. 21, 1997.

efits and the appearance of rule of law, they live in fear of an Orwellian government that closely monitors every aspect of their lives.²⁶ The ruling party often sues those who dare to oppose it on trumped up defamation charges, forcing many into bankruptcy or exile.²⁷

The FBI is investigating complaints by US citizens of harassment by Singapore's Internal Security Department (ISD). One California academic, a widely respected specialist on Southeast Asian affairs who asked not to be identified, said ISD agents broke into his home because he was working to bring leading Singaporean opposition figure Tang Liang Hong to an American university. The operatives tore out his door handle to get in, then searched his computer and desk. A week later, an Asian man, waiting in a tree, photographed and videotaped the academic while he walked in the park. After temporarily blinding the academic with his bright flash, the man jumped from the tree and made a getaway in his car. Tang — who is facing a \$4.5 million defamation lawsuit by Singaporean senior ministers — was not surprised by the burglary. "I've been followed everywhere, whether I was in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Australia or in London," he said in a phone interview from Australia.²⁸

Singapore has been more than willing to share its expertise in intelligence with its Burmese counterparts. The Singapore-Myanmar Ministerial-Level Work Committee was set up in 1993 in Rangoon to "forge mutual benefits in investment, trade and economic sectors." The committee includes intelligence chief Lt. Gen. Khin Nyunt,

26. The Singapore government's oversight of its citizens reaches down to the most basic levels of daily life. In October, the government launched a "toilet alert," during which Singaporeans were asked to call the "clean public toilets hotline" to identify Singapore's model toilets and vote for their top five favorites. (*South China Morning Post*, Oct. 22, 1997).

27. "Singapore / J B Jeyaretnam — the use of defamation suits for political purposes," Amnesty International, Oct. 15, 1997. The report states that Singapore's leaders are systematically "resorting to defamation suits as a politically-motivated tactic to silence critical views and curb opposition activity."

28. Phone interview on Nov. 2, 1997, from Melbourne, Australia, where Tang is in exile.



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A pack train on the Golden Triangle route used by smugglers of black market goods and opium (above). Escaped porter (l.), tortured and forced into slave labor by the Burmese military.



ALAN CLEMENTS

other top Burmese ministers, and high-level Singaporean officials. At the December 23 meeting, Khin Nyunt urged his ministers to give priority to projects arranged by the

Singaporean government. "Pilot projects are being implemented to transfer know-how to Myanmar," said Khin Nyunt in his address.²⁹

One such project is a state-of-the-art cyber-war center in Rangoon. Burma's military leaders can now intercept a range of incoming communications — including telephone calls, faxes, e-mails and computer data transmissions — from 20 other countries.³⁰

The high-tech cyber-war center was built by Singapore Technologies, the city-state's largest industrial and technology

conglomerate, comprising more than 100 companies.³¹ This government-owned company also provides on-site training at Burma's Defense Ministry complex, and reportedly passes on its "sophisticated capability" to hundreds of Burmese "secret police" at an institution inside Singapore.³²

Burma has no external enemies, but the ruling junta goes to extremes to terrorize the population through its elaborate intelligence network. Intelligence officials have already used their newly-acquired talents from the cyber-war center to arrest pro-democracy activists,³³ and it is well known that Burma's feared military intelligence, often tortures its victims during lengthy interrogations.³⁴

31. The CEO and president of the Board of Directors is Ho Chim, wife of Deputy Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong (son of retired Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew).

32. William Ashton, "Burma receives advances from its silent suitors in Singapore," *Jane's Intelligence Review*, v. 10, n. 3, March 1, 1998.

33. Karniol, *op. cit.*

34. Andrew Selth, "Burma's Intelligence Apparatus," Working Paper No. 308, Strategic and Defense Studies Centre, Australian National University, p. 26; Amnesty International, *Myanmar: In the National Interest*, 1990.

29. "Myanmar-Singapore Ministerial-Level Work Committee helps develop Myanmar's economic and technical sectors," *The New Light of Myanmar*, Dec. 24, 1997.

30. Robert Karniol, "Myanmar spy centre can listen to sat-phones," *Jane's Defence Weekly*, Sept. 17, 1997.

Shielding Burma

While Singapore and China are Burma's closest allies, other countries and multinational corporations provide a big shield for Burma's narcotics trade. In 1997 alone, the military regime approved 60 new projects worth \$1.27 billion, bringing total foreign investment since the regime came to power to 299 projects worth \$6.87 billion. Following Singapore in the foreign investment lineup are Britain, Thailand and Malaysia, in that order.¹ The US and France follow close behind.²

Unocal — which no longer considers itself a US company but calls itself a "global energy company"³ — and the French oil giant Total have joined forces with the Burmese regime and its state oil company Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprises (MOGE) in building the \$1.2 billion Yadhana gas pipeline through Burma into Thailand. Fourteen Burmese plaintiffs filed an unprecedented federal lawsuit in Los Angeles, holding Unocal and Total accountable for the torture, rape, murder, forced labor and forced relocations of people living on the pipeline route.

Unocal also faces allegations of fueling the heroin trade through its relationship to the government-owned MOGE which is "the main channel for laundering the revenues of heroin produced and exported under the control of the Burmese army," according to a sworn affidavit for the federal suit.⁴ Randy Renick, an attorney for the lawsuit, says this affidavit "provides irrefutable evidence that Unocal is in partnership with criminal drug dealers who are making profits off the backs of the indigenous people of Myanmar."⁵

In January, one Israeli and two British companies signed a contract with MOGE for oil exploration and production, the largest investment in Burma so far this year. The US oil company Atlantic Richfield (ARCO) and oil firms from Indonesia and Malaysia have also entered into agreements with MOGE.⁶

Back in Washington, the firm of Jefferson Waterman International is busy campaigning against US sanctions on Burma and giving a face lift to the Burmese government for \$400,000 a year plus expenses.⁷ Ironically, Ann B.

Wroblewski, president of the firm, was the architect of Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No" campaign. As the Assistant Secretary of State for the Bureau for International Narcotics Matters during 1986-89, she advocated the denial of US anti-narcotics aid to the junta in 1989 until a government supported by the people was in power.⁸

In a 1989 statement to the House of Representatives Task Force on Narcotics Control, Wroblewski said that "prospects are for expanded cultivation of what is already the world's largest supply of illicit opium" in Burma.⁹ Her State Department report the same year predicted accurately that Burma's opium

An ex-Reagan-Bush anti-drug crusader now is a flack for drug-dealing Rangoon.

production would continue to increase and that "the military regime is unlikely to resume any significant anti-narcotics activity for the near future."¹⁰

Yet Wroblewski's crusade against drugs seems to have made an about-face since she moved to Jefferson Waterman International. Her newsletter "Myanmar Monitor," praises the military regime for making great progress in combating drugs — information which runs contrary to the current Narcotics Strategy Control Report from her old department and the statements of Madeleine Albright and President Clinton. "Western countries are turning a blind eye to Myanmar's narcotics control efforts" proclaims a January issue,¹¹ while other headlines read "SPDC makes headway in Narcotics control" and "Myanmar: serious about conquering drug trade."¹²

Services provided by Jefferson Waterman also include "strategic counsel" and "up-to-the-minute intelligence on how Washington views the foreign cli-

ent," according to company information. Both the CEO of Jefferson Waterman International, Charles E. Waterman, and the Senior Vice President, Samuel H. Wyman, were formerly officers for the CIA — Wyman for 31 years.¹³

A second firm, Bain and Associates, is receiving \$21,500 per month plus expenses from the Burmese construction company Zay Kabar — which has strong links to the highest levels of Burma's government — to improve the image of the regime in the media.¹⁴ With "exclusive permission from the Myanmar government," Bain sponsored an invitation-only media tour to Burma from February 24-27. Bain representative Laura Livingston suggested to participants that they write about the fact that "through mass-drug burnings, strong anti-drug policies and innovative crop-substitution programs, the government is committed to wiping out the scourge of opium and drugs in present-day Myanmar."¹⁵ Livingston said the response from journalists to her invitation was so enthusiastic that Bain doubled the number of participants and had to turn others away. As a result, more tours are being planned.¹⁶ ■

1. "Myanmar Approves \$1.27 Billion Investment in 1997," Reuters, Jan. 8, 1998. "Myanmar Approves \$6.87 Billion Investment since 1988," Reuters, March 17, 1998.

2. Ted Bardacke, "US Companies Rush to Beat Sanctions against Burma," *Financial Times*, April 25, 1997.

3. "Unocal Becomes a Company without a Nation," *Business Ethics*, vol. 12, no. 1, Jan./Feb. 1998.

4. Declaration of Francois Casanier, associate researcher with the *Geopolitical Drugwatch*, Paris, filed as an affidavit with the US District Court in Los Angeles on April 7, 1997, in support of the suit against Unocal.

5. Interview, April 1997.

6. "British, Israeli Companies to Explore Oil in Myanmar," Xinhua News Agency, Jan. 31, 1998; Free Burma — No Petro-dollars for SLORC, a project of International Rivers Network, Berkeley, CA; and "Rangoon signs oil gas deals," BurmaNews Network (BNN), Oct. 16, 1996.

7. Jefferson Waterman International Retainer Agreement, between Myanmar Resources Development Ltd. and JWI, filed under the Foreign Agents Registration Act, US Department of Justice, Feb. 13, 1997.

8. R. Jeffrey Smith, "Burma's Image Problem Is a Money-maker for US Lobbyists," *Washington Post*, Feb. 24, 1998.

9. Statement by Assistant Secretary for International Narcotics Matters Ann B. Wroblewski before the House of Representatives Task Force on Narcotics Control, March 15, 1989.

10. *International Narcotics Control Strategy Report, Burma*, 1989, pp. 89, 182.

11. "A View Towards 1998," *Myanmar Monitor*, distributed by Jefferson Waterman International, v. 26, Jan. 5, 1998.

12. *Myanmar Monitor*, op. cit.; "Myanmar serious about conquering drug trade," *Myanmar Monitor*, v. 16, Oct. 1997.

13. Jefferson Waterman International information packet.

14. Registration Statement, filed under the Foreign Agents Registration Act, US Department of Justice, Sept. 3, 1997.

15. Letter from Laura Livingston, Bain and Associates, Inc. to Gary Thatcher, *Chicago Tribune*, Jan. 13, 1998.

16. Conversation with Laura Livingston, Bain and Associates.

Singaporean companies have also helped suppress dissent in Burma by supplying the military with arms to use against its own people. The first shipment of guns and ammunition was delivered on October 6, 1988.³⁵ Throughout that month, hundreds of boxes of mortars, ammunition, and other supplies marked "Allied Ordnance, Singapore" were unloaded from vessels in Rangoon. Allied Ordnance is a subsidiary of Chartered Industries of Singapore, the arms branch of Singapore Technologies — the same government-owned company which built the cyber-war center. The shipments also included rockets made by Chartered Industries of Singapore under license from a Swedish company and sold in violation of an agreement with Sweden requiring authorization for re-exports.³⁶

These shipments from Singapore arrived only weeks after the September 1988 military takeover in Rangoon, in which the new leaders of the SLORC massacred hundreds of peaceful, pro-democracy demonstrators in the streets. These killings followed another wave of government massacres earlier that summer, when longtime dictator Ne Win struggled to keep power in the face of nationwide strikes and demonstrations for democracy. He eventually stepped down but, operating behind the scenes, installed the puppet SLORC. As the killings continued, thousands of civilians fled the country fearing for their lives. When numerous countries responded by suspending aid and Burma's traditional suppliers cut shipments, the SLORC became desperate. Singapore was the first country to come to its rescue.

Singapore companies have continued to supply Burma's military, sometimes acting as middlemen for arms from other countries. In 1989, Israel and Belgium delivered grenade launchers and anti-tank guns via Singapore.³⁷ In 1992, Singapore violated the European Commission arms embargo against the Burmese regime by acting as a broker and arranging for a \$1.5 million shipment of mortars from Portugal.³⁸

"It is highly unlikely that any of these shipments to Burma could have been made without the knowledge and support of the



PIERS CAVENISH

Burmese children slit the poppy pods and collect the lucrative raw opium.

Singapore Government," wrote William Ashton in *Jane's Intelligence Review*. "By assisting with weapons sales, defense technology transfers, military training and intelligence cooperation, Singapore has been able to win a sympathetic hearing at the very heart of Burma's official councils."³⁹

Singapore's Stakes

Last November, Singapore deployed its diplomatic arsenal to defend Rangoon at the UN. Singaporean UN representatives made an effort to water down the General Assembly resolution which castigated the Burmese government for its harsh treatment of pro-democracy activists, widespread human rights violations, and nullification of free and fair elections that had voted it out of power. In an "urgent" letter to the Swedish mission, which was drafting the resolution, Singapore representative Bilahari Kausikan cited "progress" in Burma and said that "the majority of your co-sponsors have little or no substantive interests in Myanmar. ... Our position is different. We have concrete and immediate stakes."⁴⁰

Objecting to parts of the resolution and attempting to soften the language, Singapore's representative circulated the letter to key members of the UN's Third Committee on Human Rights. "The driving force was definitely business connections," according to Dr. Thauung Htun, Representative for UN Affairs of Burma's government-in-exile. "Singapore is defending its investments at the diplomatic level, using

its efforts at the UN level to promote its business interests."⁴¹

The protection of Singapore's "concrete and immediate stakes" is essential to the ruling party's success in maintaining power and the basis of its support for Burma, said Case Western Reserve University economist Christopher Lingle. "Singapore depends heavily upon its symbiotic relationship with crony capitalists and upon accommodating a high enough rate of return to keep the citizenry in line. Therefore its very survival is tied up with business and government investments."⁴²

William Ashton, writing in *Jane's Intelligence Review*, suggested an additional incentive for Singapore's alliance with Burma. As Rangoon's major regional backer and strategic ally, China has provided much of the weaponry, training, and financial assistance for the junta. China's expanding commercial and strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific region, coupled with its alliance with neighboring Burma, is a source of great concern in Singapore. The desire to keep Burma from becoming Beijing's stalking horse in the region may provide another motivation for Singapore's wooing of Rangoon.⁴³

Turning a Blind Eye

The Singapore government has consistently disregarded the gross human rights

35. Bertil Lintner, "Myanmar's Chinese connection," *Jane's International Defense Review*, v. 27, n. 11, Nov. 1, 1994, p. 23.

36. Ashton, *op. cit.*

37. *Ibid.*

38. Lintner, "Myanmar's Chinese Connection," *op. cit.*

39. Ashton, *op. cit.*

40. Letter from Bilahari Kausikan, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Singapore to the United Nations, to H.E. Mr. Hans Dahlgren, Permanent Rep. of Sweden to the UN, Nov. 21, 1997, marked "Urgent."

41. Interview with Thauung Htun, National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) Representative for UN Affairs, on Dec. 8, 1997.

42. E-mail interview on Dec. 13, 1997. Lingle, who used to teach at the National University of Singapore, is the author of *The Rise and Decline of the Asian Century and Singapore's Authoritarian Capitalism*.

43. Ashton, *op. cit.*

violations perpetrated by its allies in Burma. The UN Special Rapporteur, appointed to report to the United Nations on the situation in Burma, has been barred entry into Burma since 1995.⁴⁴ The new US State Department Country Report on Burma for 1997 states that its "long-standing severe repression of human rights continued during the year. Citizens continued to live subject at any time and without appeal to the arbitrary and sometimes brutal dictates of the military dictatorship."⁴⁵ Amnesty International reports that there are well over 1,200 political prisoners languishing in Burmese dungeons, where torture is commonplace.⁴⁶

Singapore has issued no urgent letters about a recent report by Danish Doctors for Human Rights which noted that "sixty-six percent of [the over 120,000] refugees from Burma now living in Thailand have been tortured" and subjected to "forced labor, deportation, pillaging, destruction of villages, and various forms of torture and rape." The doctors reported that refugees witnessed the junta's military forces murder members of their families.⁴⁷

Singaporean leaders also seem unconcerned about the fact that the Burmese government shut down almost all of Burma's colleges and universities following student protests in December 1996 and imprisoned hundreds of students.⁴⁸ At a February ceremony of the Singapore Association in Myanmar, the Ambassador to Singapore presented a large check to Gen. Khin Nyunt — who is also Chairman of the government Education Committee — for the "Myanmar education development fund." While depriving young Burmese of higher education, the junta's "Secretary 1" Khin Nyunt responded that "Uplifting the educational standards of our people is one of the social objectives of our Government." He then went on at length to extol the "firm foundation of growing economic and trade ties" between Singapore and Burma.⁴⁹

44. Statement made by Judge Rajsoomer Lallah, Special Rapporteur of the Commission on Human Rights to the Fifty-Third Session of the Commission on Human Rights, UN, April 9, 1997.

45. "Burma Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 1997," US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, Jan. 30, 1998.

46. "Myanmar: A challenge for the international community," Amnesty International report, Oct. 20, 1997; Win Naing Oo, *Cries From Insein: A report on conditions for political prisoners in Burma's infamous Insein prison* (Bangkok: ABSDF, July 1996).

47. "Danish group says refugees were tortured," AFP, *Bangkok Post*, Jan. 24, 1998.

48. "Students do exams to enter closed Myanmar colleges," Reuters, March 4, 1998; Statement from the All Burma Federation of Students' Union, Rangoon, Feb. 26, 1998.

49. "Singapore association in Myanmar donates K one million to Myanmar education development fund," *The New Light of Myanmar*, Feb. 23, 1998.

The Burmese government has also kept computers and communication technology away from students and others in opposition to the regime. All computers, software, e-mail services and other telecommunication devices — which hardly anyone can afford anyway — must be licensed, but licences are almost impossible to obtain.⁵⁰ Yet Singapore has made the best computer technology available to the ruling elite and their business partners. Singapore Telecom, the largest company in Asia outside of Japan, was the first to provide Burmese businesses and government offices with the ability to set up inter- and intra-corporate communications in more than 90 countries.⁵¹

Complementary Relations

Singapore's concerns are dramatically different from those of countries sharing a border with Burma. Thailand has to deal with the deadly narcotics trade and an overwhelming number of refugees arriving on a daily basis. Banphot Piamdi, the Thai counter-narcotics official, believes Thailand made a big mistake when it voted for Burma's entry into the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), given Burma's lack of cooperation in fighting drugs.⁵² Not surprisingly, the Singapore government lobbied hard for Burma's 1997 acceptance into the powerful regional trade alliance.

Ironically, Burma's inclusion in ASEAN may force member nations, including Singapore, to address the havoc that their newest ally is imposing on the region — especially since Burma provides approximately 90 percent of the total production of Southeast Asian opium.⁵³ China and India, Burma's other neighbors, now face severe AIDS epidemics related to increased heroin use in their bordering provinces. Most of the heroin exported from Burma to the West passes through China's Yunnan province, which now has more than half a million addicts.⁵⁴ And even Singapore — whose heroin supply comes mostly from Burma — had a 41 percent rise in HIV cases in 1997.⁵⁵

As we head into the "Asian century," Singapore has become Washington's forward partner in the unfolding era of East-

West trade. Ambassador Green called the country "a major entry port and a natural gateway to Asia for American firms." US companies exported \$16 billion worth of goods to Singapore in 1996 and more than 1,300 US firms now operate in the country.⁵⁶ Singapore's strategic and economic importance to the US cannot be overstated. The two nations just reached an agreement allowing the US Navy to use a Singapore base even though the deal violates ASEAN's 1997 nuclear-weapons-free zone agreement.⁵⁷

The US has condemned the Burmese junta's record of human rights abuses and support for the drug trade, but has turned a blind eye when it comes to Singapore's dealings with the regime. Although President Clinton imposed economic sanctions on Burma partly for its role in providing pure and cheap heroin to America's youth, he has not commented on Singapore's willingness to play ball with the world's biggest heroin traffickers. Ambassador Green told Congress last year that the US "has an important role in working with the Singapore government to deal with illegal drug and weapons proliferation issues,"⁵⁸ but most US officials have remained silent about Singapore's investments with Lo Hsing Han and Burma's narco-dictatorship. It's unlikely Clinton made any mention of this issue last fall while golfing with Singaporean Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong during the APEC summit in Vancouver.

Unless the financial crisis in Asia limits its profits, Singapore will probably continue to expand its investments in Burma. "Our two economies are complementary and although we can derive satisfaction from the progress made, I believe that there still remains a great potential that is yet to be exploited," said the junta's Gen. Khin Nyunt last February.⁵⁹ Aided by Singapore's support, Burma's thriving heroin trade has plagued the majority of countries around the globe. While these countries blithely pour money into drug-connected companies based in Burma and thereby help them to expand into foreign markets, an abundance of the world's finest heroin continues to plague their citizens. At the same time, the line between legitimate and illegitimate investments grows dimmer in the global economy. ■

56. Green, *op. cit.*

57. Brendan Pereira, "KL paper raps S'pore move to allow US use of new Changi base," *Straits Times*, Feb. 1, 1998.

58. Green, *op. cit.*

59. "Singapore association in Myanmar ...," *op. cit.*

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Vietnam: The Final Battle



Nguyen Thi Hao, survivor of 1972 Christmas bombing that destroyed her street.

This article is reprinted from John Pilger's new book *Hidden Agendas*. See page 65.

John Pilger is an Australian-born journalist and film maker based in London. He has reported on Indo-China since 1966; his writing and documentaries have won numerous awards in Europe and the US. Special thanks to Bangkok-based photographer **Nic Dunlop**.

"It should never be forgotten that the people must have priority."

—Ho Chi Minh

by John Pilger

I returned to Vietnam in the winter of 1995. Hanoi presented a strange hybrid. The Odeon arcades, the avenues and villas and the replica of the Paris Opera, in which the French *colons* amused themselves with Berlioz and Bizet were only slightly more decrepit. In the crowded Old Quarter, little had changed; there was still a sense of what Victorian England might have looked like: beneath the slate-grey skies diminutive houses huddled over open drains in crooked streets and the air was thick with sweet-smelling smoke from wood-burning braziers.

Tiny parlors were filled with people swathed in scarves, sipping green tea drawn from large floral-painted flasks while sepia figures in mandarin dress looked down from oval frames. Almost everywhere there was a cluster of military medals and a photograph of a lost loved one.

Normality graced with laughter has a certain excitement here. Laughter drew me to one house where a wedding party was in progress, and I was invited in by Thuan, age 28, and his bride, Hong, 24. He is a dog-meat salesman, she a "flower girl": that is, she ekes out a living by selling single stems on the streets. They and their family and friends looked deceptively prosperous gathered in the small courtyard beneath a canopy made from an American

NIC DUNLOP

parachute. There were pots of steaming noodles, sweets and betel nuts; and the bridesmaids wore shocking pink. The groom giggled, the bride cried, and we were all invited to inspect the marital bed.

Nearby, Nguyen The Khan, a venerable artist who speaks Chinese, French and English, sat like an old bird in his impossibly crowded loft, cigarette drooping, working on a series of lacquer panels. They show Hanoi in the mid-19th century before the French built their scaled-down copies of Paris and destroyed the ancient landmarks: the Princess Huyen Tran Temple, the Jade Mountain Pagoda, the Subdued Waves Pavilion.

"What work would you like to do before you die?" I asked him.

"Something that announced true peace," he said, "A tranquil life ... that's all. We are still not at peace; we are in a dilemma now."

Rising above us were the symbols of this dilemma: some of the most spectacularly ugly buildings on earth, made from black glass and slab concrete, shaped like clothes pegs, the inspiration, clearly, of the same Thai school of "architecture" whose monstrosities join up the power lines in the deserts that have replaced Thailand's teak forests.

Nguyen The Khan and other residents of the old quarter had marched on the City Hall to complain about them and the corruption that often smoothed the way for planning permission. In these buildings reside the high commands of corporate Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, the United States, Australia and the City of London, who are changing almost everything in Vietnam. As one American banker put it, "The circus is back in town."

To those who knew Vietnam during the war, the familiarity of the circus is almost other-worldly. In a bar on the corner of "Duong Chien Thang B-52" (Avenue of the Victory over the B-52) was Joe, a former US helicopter pilot, who runs a fleet of corporate jets flying in American businessmen, many of them from companies that profited hugely from the war. Nearby are the new offices of a pillar of the war, the Bank of America. When the bank's burglar alarm went off one evening, people gathered, wondering what it was. No one seemed to know, because no one robs banks in Hanoi. Not yet.

The teahouse opposite has been renamed the "No Noodles Sandwich Bar." The

Marlboro Man covers its walls, and the old woman darting through the beaded curtain wore a red Marlboro baseball cap and a T-shirt with a picture of the Marlboro Man. At a stroke, she had sur-

Joe, a former US helicopter pilot now runs a fleet of corporate jets flying in companies that profited hugely from the war.

rendered her dignity: a metaphoric warning for her country.

Marlboro and Dunhill have claimed Vietnam, where the majority seem to smoke. Foreign tobacco companies were among the first to return, and now turn out cigarettes with a high tar content.



At the Cu Chi tunnels, once a symbol of national sacrifice and courage, tour guides in "Viet Cong" costume sell T-shirts.

Marlboro's advertising concentrates on its "macho image," long discredited in the West. The cowboy with a cigarette in his mouth, the one who died from lung cancer, has been replaced by images of young, muscle-bound lads winning the girls, while real lads, with stick-thin arms and rotten teeth, are given red caps too big for them and lent a Honda and paid in cigarettes for selling Marlboros to teashops. Such is the reality of what is called "Renovation."

Revenge, Renovation and Recolonization

"Renovation," or *Doi Moi*, was conceived in collective desperation. The catastrophe wreaked in Vietnam by the US invasion was to be multiplied in the years that followed a cease-fire signed in Paris in 1973 and which, said Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, would bring "peace with honor."

A cornerstone of the cease-fire agreement was a secret promise by President Nixon of \$3.25 billion in reparations, contained in a letter to Pham Van Dong, prime minister of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam ("North Vietnam"). Dated February 1, 1973, the letter remained secret for more than two years, until after the war was finally over, when the Vietnamese showed it to a group of visiting US Congressmembers.

The State Department confirmed its authenticity. Eight, single-spaced pages specified the forms that the US "reconstruction grant" would take. Most of it would be spent

in the United States; American firms would tender for contracts to build industrial plants and to restore bombed bridges, railway lines, dams, and harbor facilities. "We knew," a Vietnamese government minister confided later, "that without that minimum capital, we could never rebuild the country and remain independent."¹

Not a cent was paid. On April 30, 1975, the last day of the war, the US Treasury

1. Interview, 1995.



NIC DUNLOP

Thieu Thi Tao holds pictures of herself before and after she was tortured by the South Vietnamese regime during the war.

Department froze Vietnamese assets of \$70 million. Two weeks later, the Commerce Department classified Vietnam a "Category Z" country, requiring all exports to be approved by the State Department. This applied to foreign subsidiaries of US companies. The World Bank was frightened away, suspending a grant for an irrigation scheme that would have increased food capacity.

From 1981, under the Trading with the Enemy Act, a legacy of the First World War, US voluntary agencies were denied export licences for humanitarian aid to all of Indo-China: Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos. The first aid to be banned included modest amounts of seed-processing and storage equipment, which Oxfam America had promised to an agricultural co-operative in Vietnam, together with help in setting up a small bee-keeping co-operative designed to supply honey as a food supplement to pre-school children.

Revenge was the policy. Washington's allies joined in. In 1979, the new British prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, persuaded the European Community to halt its regular shipments of milk to Vietnamese children. As a consequence, the price of a

kilo of milk powder in Vietnam rose to ten times the price of a kilo of meat. During visits in 1975 and 1978, I saw many children with distended bellies and fragile limbs in the towns as well as the countryside. According to World Health Organization measurements, one third of all infants under 5 so deteriorated following the milk ban that the majority of them were stunted or likely to be, and a disproportionate number of the very youngest were reportedly going blind because of a lack of Vitamin A.²

In Hongai, a coal-mining community on the Gulf of Tonkin, which claims the distinction of the most bombed town in Vietnam — during 1966, US carrier-based planes bombed it from seven in the morning until five in the evening — Dr. Luu Van Hoat told me that 10 percent of the children were deaf. "Although they lost their hearing during the raids," he said, "they lived. It was a sign of hope. Now we are losing the next generation to malnutrition. The situation is straightforward; children need milk to live, and we don't have it."

Among Washington's demons, not even Cuba was subjected to such a complete

embargo. "We have smashed the country to bits," wrote Telford Taylor, chief US prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials, "and [we] will not even take the trouble to clean up the blood and rubble. Somehow we have failed to learn the lessons we undertook to teach at Nuremberg."³

There seemed hope in 1978. The Vietnamese Government made contact with the Carter administration, seeking "normalization." No conditions were sought; no mention was made of the \$3.25 billion pledged by Nixon. The foreign minister at the time, Nguyen Co Thach, a humane and conciliatory man, flew to New York and waited a week in a room at the Holiday Inn on 42nd Street for a promised call from Richard Holbrooke, the assistant secretary of State.

"He assured me our countries would have an 'historic reconciliation,'" Thach told me. "Those were the words he used. But it never happened. I never got the phone call. Other developments were overtaking us. That summer China had become the big interest in Washington. Deng Xiaoping had been to the US and worn a cowboy hat. No one seemed to be bothered

2. Estimate provided by Dr. Duong Quynh Hoa at Saigon's Pediatric Hospital No. 2.

3. Telford Taylor, *Nuremberg and Vietnam*, cited by Alex Carey, *Sun-Herald* (Sydney), June 30, 1985.

that China was then backing Pol Pot in Cambodia, whose forces had been attacking us for over a year. On the contrary, when we counter-attacked [Christmas Day 1978] and drove the Khmer Rouge into Thailand, the new allies, China and America, made us the pariahs."

No Good Deed Goes Unpunished

In January 1979, the Chinese attacked Vietnam from the north. It was a massive assault by 600,000 troops, more than the Americans had deployed. China, said Peking Radio, was "teaching Vietnam a lesson." Before they were thrown back, the invaders destroyed dykes and canals that had withstood the US bombing, and most of the country's reserve stocks of rice.

A siege mentality now consumed the Communist Party leadership in Hanoi as the country descended deeper into isolation. Having cast Vietnam as an aggressor, the US under Ronald Reagan sought to justify and redeem its "noble cause" in Indo-China. A United Nations blockade, engineered by the US, its Western allies and China, was mounted against Vietnamese-liberated Cambodia. At the United Nations and other world bodies, such as the World Health Organization, Pol Pot's representatives continued to speak for their victims. Two US relief workers on the Thai border, Linda Mason and Roger Brown, wrote, "The US Government insisted that the Khmer Rouge be fed ... the US preferred that the Khmer Rouge operation benefit from the credibility of an internationally known relief operation."⁴ Under US pressure, the World Food Program handed over \$12 million worth of food to the Thai army to pass on to the Khmer Rouge. "20,000 to 40,000 Pol Pot guerrillas benefitted," according to Assistant Secretary of State Holbrooke.⁵

As the threat of Pol Pot's return effectively trapped the Vietnamese army in Cambodia, the strain on Vietnam's war-ruined economy proved intolerable. For many Vietnamese, this meant austerity, hunger, and repression: a time of bitter-

4. Linda Mason and Roger Brown, *Rice, Rivalry and Politics: Managing Cambodian Relief* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), pp. 135, 159.

5. William Shawcross, *The Quality of Mercy: Cambodia, Holocaust and Modern Conscience* (London: André Deutsch, 1984), pp. 289, 345, 395.

ness. Although hundreds of thousands of war refugees were successfully returned to their land, and their villages rebuilt, many former soldiers and servants of the Saigon regime were imprisoned in extremely harsh "re-education camps," together with those who had owed no allegiance to either side. These were Vietnam's gulags.

Liberty came to be measured by your standing in the Communist Party. Thou-

"We have smashed [Vietnam] to bits, and [we] will not even take the trouble to clean up the blood and rubble."

— Telford Taylor, chief US prosecutor, Nuremberg trials

sands of the newly impoverished took to the sea in boats, many of them Chinese-Vietnamese fearful of recrimination in the wake of China's invasion. They were followed by destitute farmers from the north. The Hanoi Government had agreed to an "orderly departure program" in 1979, but without the cooperation of the US this was all but impossible.

In 1986, faced with criticism from within the party and public discontent over shortages and rising prices, the old guard in the Politburo, who had led the

country for 40 years, resigned *en masse*. They were succeeded by a relatively youthful leadership, notably Nguyen Van Linh, "Vietnam's Gorbachev," who had led the National Liberation Front ("Vietcong"). Linh saw himself as a "pragmatist"; he had been dropped from the Politburo because of his opposition to the rapid "socialization" of the south in the late 1970s.

In December 1986, at the Sixth Congress of the Communist Party, the new leadership announced a far-reaching program of economic and social change. This was *Doi Moi*, "renovation." The "free market" was embraced as the means of breaking down the Western-led embargo. Since then, the Party line has been that "all people in society and all Party members should strive to amass wealth for

themselves and for the nation as a whole," thereby "promoting economic growth." Nervously, however, the leadership has warned that "it will be difficult to avoid gaps between rich and poor," which if not controlled "will lead to danger and social turmoil."⁶

Within two years the World Bank had opened an office in Hanoi, along with the

6. *Nhan Dan* (Hanoi), the Communist Party's official daily newspaper, Mar. 1, 1996; also *Tup Chi Gong San* (Hanoi), the party's theoretical monthly, Mar. 15, 1996, cited by Gabriel Kolko, *Vietnam: Anatomy of a Peace* (London & New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 102.



Thieu Thi Tao at the war crimes museum enters a replica of the US-designed "tiger cage" in which she was imprisoned by the South Vietnam regime.

International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank. They were joined by investors from Europe, Japan, Korea, Singapore, and the other southeast Asian states. The "prize," as Richard Nixon used to describe the countries of South-east Asia, was an abundance of natural resources: coal, oil, gas, and timber. US companies, still legally prevented from trading, brought pressure on the White House. In 1994, President Clinton lifted the American embargo, and the first post-war ambassador arrived in Hanoi three years later. "United States policy," said the ambassador, "is to help Vietnam [become] fully integrated into this dynamic region."⁷

No Dogs or Vietnamese Allowed

Alfonso L. DeMatteis, from Brooklyn, New York, is the founder of the American Chamber of Commerce in Hanoi. When we met, he was sitting in front of a furled US flag and puzzling over why no one in Vietnam seemed to bear him a grudge. He reminded me of the old Hollywood comic Jerry Lewis, though his *bonhomie* was limited. I noticed on his desk a copy of a letter he had written to a ministry complaining about a proposed museum that would commemorate the US bombing of Hanoi.

Having made a fortune in the construction business, much of it in Saudi Arabia, DeMatteis is making another in Vietnam. After greeting me warmly, he wanted to talk about Mother Teresa. "Mother was recently in this very town," he said. "Mother was in this very office. She stood with me and was photographed next to the [American] flag." He handed me a press release about "Mother's movements" and how his company was "accommodating Mother's local Sisters."

7. *Viet Nam News* (Hanoi), May 5, 1997.

By this time, DeMatteis was constructing a 15-story building at Hanoi's West Lake, the Ho Tay, also known as the Lake of Mist. A place of beauty and the source of legends, like the rising of the Dragon King and the casting and ringing of a huge bell that can be heard all the way to China, it was once overlooked by grand pavilions and pagodas. A few pagodas rise out of the mist, still sur-



Truong Thai Le, My Lai survivor, holds a photo of relatives murdered by GIs.

rounded by the funerary monuments of 12th century monks.

People come here in the evenings and on weekends on their bicycles, pedaling all the way from the rickety streets that cling to the Red River dykes. On Sundays they hire ancient clinker-built rowing boats, and picnic in the public space soon to be occupied by the DeMatteis tower, and others like it.

"It will come complete with health club and running track," said DeMatteis. "We're fortunate; we got in early. All the prime sites have gone already."

"Will the Vietnamese have use of it?"

"You've got to appreciate the rents are not cheap. In a word, John — unlikely."

"Isn't it ironic," I said, "that the foreigners Vietnam has been repelling all this century, the French, Japanese, Americans, might by other means end up gaining what they've been unable to achieve by war?"

"I don't quite get you."

"Well, you're all back. ..."

"We sure are!"

"And you may end up owning the place."

"You know, I never thought of it like that. Thank you, John."

Peter Purcell is an Australian version of DeMatteis. When we met, he was building the Hanoi Club, whose annual membership fees range from \$6,500 to \$15,000 and which, he says, "will only work if it's exclusive." "I hate communism," he said, "but the socialism here is just right."

As an illustration, he described how, with initial capital of \$10.5 million, he had already made \$37 million, and he still had a vacant lot. He told me a story about a senior Vietnamese government official who had asked him, on the quiet, to teach him about stocks and shares. "They're on the verge of being ripped off," he said, "as part of their necessary education program converting them

to the wonderful world of capitalism."

There Is a Specter Haunting Vietnam ...

A World Bank economist, David Dollar has predicted that Vietnam will end up as "another Asian tiger." "They have made an excellent start with the necessary reforms," he wrote.⁸ These "necessary reforms" were spelled out at a 1993 meeting of the Paris Club of donors, the richest Western states and Japan, which dispense "aid" to countries with prospects of exploitation.

The Vietnamese were told that a total of \$2.8 billion in "grants" and loans would be

8. *IndoChina Digest* (Washington, DC), Feb. 17, 1995.

forthcoming if they "opened up" to the "free market." The state economy would have to be "downsized, public enterprises scrapped or converted to "joint ventures" with foreign firms, and tens of thousands of public employees sacked.

There would no longer be a place for public services, including health and education systems that were the envy of the Third World. These would be replaced by "safety nets" dependent on "macro-economic growth." Foreign investors would be offered "tax holidays" of five years or more, along with "competitively priced" (cheap) labor. And before all this got under way, Hanoi would have to honor the bad debts of the defunct Saigon regime: in effect, pay back loans incurred by its enemy which had helped bankroll the US war.

It was as if the Vietnamese were finally being granted membership in the "international community" as long as they first created a society based on divisions of wealth and poverty and exploited labor: a society in which social achievements were no longer valued; the kind of foreign-imposed system they had sacrificed so much to escape. It seemed, wrote Gabriel Kolko in *Anatomy of a War*, that the Vietnam War would finally end in "the defeat of all who fought in it — and one of the greatest tragedies of modern history."⁹

Few apart from Kolko have raised the alarm. In his subsequent book, *Vietnam: Anatomy of a Peace*, he pointed out that the new policies, in less than a decade, had destroyed the high degree of equity that Vietnam had achieved by the end of the war, and created a class society with divisions of wealth greater than those of India, the US, and Britain under Thatcherism.¹⁰

The Canadian economist Michel Chossudovsky, a specialist in Third World issues, wrote in 1994, "The

9. Gabriel Kolko, *Vietnam: Anatomy of a War* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997, p. 602.

10. Gabriel Kolko, *Vietnam, Anatomy of a Peace* (New York: New Press, 1994) p. 102.

achievements of past struggles and the aspirations of an entire nation are [being] undone and erased. ... No Agent Orange or steel pellet bombs, no napalm, no toxic chemicals: a new phase of economic and social (rather than physical) destruction has unfolded. The seemingly neutral and scientific tools of macro-economic policy constitute a non-violent instrument of recolonization and impoverishment."¹¹

The report was candid, almost ecstatic about the cheapness of people. "Labor rates," it said, "are as low as \$35 a month."

The World Bank, together with the International Monetary Fund and the Asian Development Bank, are overseeing the implementation of these "reforms." The World Bank began by rewriting the land laws, affecting two-thirds of the population. Subsistence farming, which had kept famine at bay, is being replaced by cash-cropping for export, as Vietnam is "fully integrated into the dynamic region."

11. Michel Chossudovsky, *Third World Resurgence* (Penang), n. 47, Jan. 1994.

Restructuring or Rollback?

District cooperatives, which supported the elementary school system, antenatal clinics and emergency food stores, are being phased out. These have no place in the new order. In order to be "competitive," rice, the staple of more than 70 million people, is now linked to the depredations of the world market and sold below the world price. While the World Bank lauds

Vietnam's "rice surplus," buried in the jargon is the implicit acceptance that famine has returned.

Where farmers in difficulty could once depend on rural credit from the state ("interest" was unknown), they now must go to private lenders, the usurers who once plagued the peasantry.

This was the system under the French; peonage was the result. In its report, *Viet Nam: Transition to the Market*, the World Bank welcomed this change, explaining that it would cause the desired "greater land concentration and landlessness."¹² Other reforms followed, such as the abolition of pensions and social welfare measures that had supported the sick and disabled, widows, orphans, and ex-soldiers.

12. World Bank, East Asia and Pacific Region, Washington, DC, Sept. 1993.



NIC DUNLOP

My Lai, scene of the only well-publicized massacre of civilians by US troops.

After seven years of this "restructuring," according to the World Bank's own estimates, poverty has increased, with up to 70 percent of the population now in "absolute poverty," half the adult population consuming considerably fewer than 2,100 calories a day and half the children severely malnourished.¹³ At least a million people have been made unemployed, most of them in the health services. They, together with people thrown off their land, should be offered, says the World Bank, "unskilled work at low wages." (In the draft of this report I saw in the Bank's offices in Hanoi, someone had pencilled in the margins that the "figure proposed by UNDP consultants is so low as to be virtually slave labor.")¹⁴

Since these "reforms" got under way, the bank admits there is

a higher proportion of underweight and stunted children than in any other country in south and Southeast Asia with the exception of Bangladesh. ... The magnitude of stunting and wasting among children appears to have increased significantly. ... [T]he problem of food availability in the food deficit areas will not disappear overnight, since consumers in these areas do not have the purchasing power to bid up the price paid for food grains from the surplus regions. In fact, it is financially more rewarding to export rice outside Vietnam than to transfer it to the deficit regions within the country. Indeed, as private sector grain trade expands, the availability of food in the deficit regions may initially decline before it improves.

In other words, "consumers without purchasing power" will have to go hungry.¹⁵

When I put these matters to Bradley Babson, a US economist who represents the World Bank in Hanoi, he was generous in his praise of the Vietnamese "independence of mind" in "defending their real achievements in the social arena." He was also extraordinarily frank. "I think it's fair to say," he said, "that Vietnam in the past has had more equality than many other countries, and that the reforms necessary for economic growth will bring greater inequality."

Limping with Tigers

According to Michel Chossudovsky, "the hidden agenda of the reforms is the destabilization of Vietnam's industrial base: heavy industry, oil and gas, natural re-

sources and mining, cement, and steel production are to be reorganized and taken over by foreign capital with the Japanese conglomerates playing a decisive and dominant role. ... [T]he movement is towards the reintegration of Vietnam into the Japanese sphere of influence, a situation reminiscent of World War II when Vietnam was part of Japan's 'Great East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.'"¹⁶

Japanese capital controls 80 percent of the loans for investment projects and infrastructure, while the dollar has taken over from the Vietnamese *dong*, giving the US Federal Reserve Bank effective control

Vietnam's "integration" into the region is likely to be as an economic colony for the tigers, Japan, and the West.

of the flow of currency. Singapore dominates the property market, and Taiwan and Korea the "tax holiday" sweatshops. The French and the Australians are doing nicely, too, with the British not far behind.

In 1995, the then British chancellor of the exchequer, Kenneth Clarke, visited Hanoi with a group of British businesspeople, who had been given a briefing document by the Department of Trade and Industry. It was candid, almost ecstatic about the cheapness of people. "Labor rates," it said, "are as low as \$35 a month." Moreover, the Vietnamese "can provide a new industrial home for ailing British products." "Take the long view," advised the British government, "use Vietnam's weaknesses selfishly. Vietnam's open door invites you to take advantage of its low standard of living and low wages."¹⁷

I showed this document to Dr. Nguyen Xuan Oanh, the economic adviser to Prime Minister Vo Van Kiet. "We have inexpensive labor," he said. "I don't call it cheap labor. It allows us to be competitive on the international market." Thereupon he extolled growth rates, "tax holidays," diminished public services and the rest of the IMF deity.

What was interesting about this man was that not only was he an architect of Vietnam's "market socialism," as he called

it, but that he used to be deputy prime minister in the old Saigon regime. Detained at the end of the war, he convinced the communists they would need him one day and, like a bending reed, he survived. Today, from his smart Saigon offices, with their black leather chairs and remote-controlled air conditioning, he offers foreign entrepreneurs silky "personalized consulting" as they enter "a paradise for your investment."

"The regime you helped to run in the old days," I said, "was pretty corrupt, wasn't it?"

"We had a bad administration," he said.

"It was supported by a black market, drugs, prostitution and war profiteering."

"It was not good."

"You were number two."

"I tried very hard to help, but not successfully."

"Aren't you beginning to re-create that same kind of government?"

"No, we are harmoniously blending socialism with capitalism. That is not to deny that when you open the door for new winds to come in, the dust comes in, too."

"That's an old Vietnamese saying?"

Laughter.

"I'm told Mrs. Thatcher has been an inspiration."

"We learned some things from her, but what we are doing is distinctively Vietnamese."

"The Vietnamese kicked out the French, who forced the population to work for next to nothing in foreign-owned factories. Isn't that now happening again?"

"I told you our people are merely inexpensive..."

Although those like Nguyen Xuan Oanh, David Dollar, and Bradley Babson speak publicly about Vietnam as "the next tiger economy," the truth is that, as the current crop of Asian tigers — Korea, Hong Kong, Singapore, Malaysia — run out of steam, with their share markets collapsing and currencies devaluing, the last thing they want is a competitor the size of Vietnam. For this reason, Vietnam's "integration" into the region is likely to be as an economic colony for the tigers, Japan, and the West.

This is dramatically evident in the Export Processing Zones, known as EPZs. Run by a Taiwanese company on cleared land on the banks of the Saigon River, one of them announces itself as "Saigon South ... a Brave New World." Inside, I was struck by the likeness to photographs of the cotton mills of Lancashire. Ancient

13. *IndoChina Digest*, op. cit.

14. World Bank, East Asia and Pacific Region, *Viet Nam: Poverty Assessment and Strategy*, Washington, DC, Jan. 1995; and *Report on Poverty 1995*.

15. Cited by Chossudovsky, op. cit.

16. *Ibid*.

17. Overseas Trade Services, Department of Trade and Industry, *Vietnam, General Information*, London, Jan. 1995.

looms imported from China, making towel-
eling for export, were attended by mostly
young women, who get a basic rate of \$19
a month for a 12-hour day. If they fall be-
hind the target set by the manager, who
secretly tags thread in their machine, they
are fired. One worker controls four ma-
chines. "In Taiwan," said the Taiwanese
manager, "we'd have one worker on six,
even eight machines. But the Vietnamese
don't accept this: They object."

The air was foul and filled with cotton
dust, the noise unrelenting and the only
protective clothing appeared to be hair
curlers. One woman was struck in the eye
while I was there. "We've got a medical
center for that sort of thing," said the man-
ager, who told me he had a business di-
ploma from a California college. Under
Vietnamese law, there ought to be a union
at the factory. "We haven't got one of those
yet," he said. With 100,000 workers, many
of them living in dormitories, "Saigon
South" is a city state, with its own stock
exchange, police, and customs. "We calcu-
late," said the manager, "that this EPZ is
what all Vietnamese cities will look like in
the next century."

Commodifying Rights

Dr. Le Thi Quy runs the Center for Scien-
tific Studies of Women and the Family in
Saigon. Her work lately has concentrated
on the conditions of workers in the EPZs,
which she inspects unannounced. In a re-
port commissioned by the government she
describes as "commonplace" women
forced to work from 7 am to 9 pm every
other day. "They must never stop," she
wrote. "They are given a 'hygiene card'
which allows them to do their personal
hygiene only three times a day, each time
taking no more than five minutes. The
stress is something people have not known
before, not even in war-time. It is system-
atic."

She concluded, "I have to report that
something very serious is happening to
our society. Traps are being laid at the gates
of profits. As public service employment
is drastically reduced, our families are be-
ing commercialize ..., prostitution has
emerged into the open and is growing." She
added eloquently, "The market
economy is about mechanism. I wish to
speak for humanitarian values. If we affirm
that development can only be achieved by
sacrificing these values, which have been
long pursued by mankind and give us
hope for freedom, democracy, and equal-
ity, it means that we reject the most basic
factors that link people together as a com-

munity. It is an insult to our humanity to
maintain that people only have economic
demands, and therefore economic devel-
opment must be made at all costs. To live
is not enough. People must seek many
things to make their lives significant."¹⁸

If development was measured not by
gross national product, but a society's suc-
cess in meeting the basic needs of its
people, Vietnam would have been a model.
That was its real "threat." From the defeat
of the French at Dien Bien Phu in 1954 to
1972, primary and secondary school en-
rolment in the North increased seven-
fold, from 700,000 to almost five million.
In 1980, UNESCO estimated a literacy rate
of 90 percent and school enrolment
among the highest in Asia and through-
out the Third World.¹⁹

Now that education has been trans-
formed into a commodity, "consumers of
[educational] services," says a constipated
UN Development Program report, "[are re-
quired] to pay increased amounts, encour-
aging institutions to become self-financing,
and by using incentives to privatize deliv-
ery of education and training where ap-
propriate."²⁰ Teachers who have not been
"redeployed" on road gangs and other

"The market economy is about mechanism. I wish to speak for humanitarian values."

"public projects" have had their salaries
cut to as little as \$8 a month. Most schools
have been privatized, with the obligation
to pay tuition fees now written into the
constitution. By 1992, an estimated three-
quarters of a million children had been
pushed out of the education system, de-
spite an increase in the population of chil-
dren of school age.²¹

At a village in the Mekong Delta a
woman and her 12-year-old daughter sit
in the shade making straw beach mats for
export. A middle-man pays them a total
of a dollar a day. They work from five in

the morning until five in the evening. Ten
years ago, the village had a cooperative that
funded a primary school. Now that coopera-
tives have been abolished, the girl must work
such grinding hours to pay for sporadic les-
sons at a nearby fee-charging school.

The Vietnamese health service was
once famous. Primary care where people
lived and worked raised life expectancy to
among the highest in the developing
world. Vaccination programs reduced the
spread of infectious diseases; in contrast
to most of the Third World, preventable
diseases were prevented. More babies sur-
vived birth and their first precarious years
than in most countries in Southeast Asia.²²
Now, under the tutelage of the foreign "do-
nor community," the government has
abandoned direct support for all health
services. Drugs are available only to those
who can afford to buy them on the "free
market." Diseases like malaria, dengue,
and cholera have returned.

In its inimitable way, the World Bank
acknowledges this "downside" of its "re-
forms." "Despite its impressive perfor-
mance in the past," says the *Transition to
the Market* report, "the Vietnamese health
sector is currently languishing ... there is
a severe shortage of drugs and
medical equipment. ... The
shortage of funds is so acute
that it is unclear where the
grass roots facilities are going
to find the inputs to continue
functioning in the future."²³

During the US carpet
bombing of Hanoi at Christ-
mas 1972, the Bach Mai hos-
pital in the center of the city became some-
thing of a symbol of resistance. A bomb
destroyed a wing, including wards and
laboratories; patients, doctors, and nurses
died. One of the survivors was Professor
Nguyen Van Xang, a stooped man who
could be Ho Chi Minh's brother and whose
office is dominated by a picture of the
rubble it was. "I heard the bombs whistling
towards us," he said. "I took the nearest
patients and sheltered them over there,
under the stairs. Everything seemed to col-
lapse around us."

As we talked, there was a power cut;
the hospital's weary generator failed yet
again, turning the wispy-bearded figure
seated in front of me into a silhouette in a
Gothic setting, bathed in the thin, yellow
light of early evening. The scene poignantly
expressed the exhaustion of Vietnam.

18. Le Thi Quy, *Some Remarks on the Situation of Women Workers in Foreign-invested Enterprises in Ho Chi Minh City*, 1994; also *Gender: The Relations Between Research and Policymaking in Vietnam*, Asian and Pacific Development Centre (APDC), summer institute, Kuala Lumpur, May-June 1994.

19. Chossudovsky, *op. cit.*

20. Cited in *National Project Education Sector Review and Human Resources Sector Analysis*, v. 1, Hanoi, 1992, p. 39.

21. Chossudovsky, *op. cit.*

22. United Nations Development Program, *Report on the Economy of Vietnam*, New York, p. 183.

23. World Bank, *Viet Nam*, *op. cit.*, p. 145.

Xang explained that, under the new, privatized system, a patient had to put down a deposit of 7,000 *dong* (\$6.30) and a bed cost the equivalent of \$4 per day. This was a great deal of money for the majority, who were excluded, causing Xang to put his socialist beliefs into practice by handing out free drugs to poor people at a pagoda every Sunday. "The situation here," said the professor, "is that we can no longer afford a filter for our one kidney machine. It costs \$22. So we use the same filter several times, which is wrong and dangerous. ... If a patient has renal failure and cannot afford to pay a quarter of the cost of the treatment, we have no choice but to treat them by traditional means; and they die."

Uncle Sam's Gift Horse

In Saigon, I made an appointment to visit the Tu Du obstetrics and gynecological hospital. Built by the French in the 1950s and extended by the Americans, it is one of the most modern in the country — in the circumstances, a handicap, for almost all the equipment is American, for which parts stopped coming in 1975. The last children's respirator had disintegrated a year earlier.

A former operating room is known as the "collection room" and, unofficially, the "room of horrors." It has shelves of large bottles containing grotesquely deformed fetuses. In the late 1960s, the US sprayed much of South Vietnam, which it said it had come to "save," with defoliant herbicides. Intended to "deny cover" to the National Liberation Front, this program was code-named "Operation Hades," later changed to the friendlier "Operation Ranch Hand." The defoliants included Agent Orange, containing dioxin, which is a poison of such power that it causes fetal death, miscarriage, chromosomal damage, congenital defects, and cancer.

In 1970, the US government banned the use of Agent Orange on US farmlands, but continued to spray it in Vietnam, where a pattern of deformities began to emerge: babies born without eyes, with deformed hearts and small brains, and stumps instead of legs. Occasionally I saw these children in contaminated villages in the Mekong Delta; and whenever I asked about them, people pointed to the sky; one man scratched in the dust a good likeness of a bulbous C-130 aircraft, spraying.

In August that year, in a report to the US Senate, Sen. Gaylord Nelson (D-WI) wrote that "the US has dumped [on South Vietnam] a quantity of toxic chemical amounting to six pounds per head of

population, including women and children."²⁴ When the new US ambassador, Douglas Peterson, said that the "exact consequences of Agent Orange" were not "clarified," he was challenged by the director of the War Crimes Investigation Department, Vu Trong Huong, who said, "We have over 50,000 children that have been born with horrific deformities; the link is clear."²⁵

At the Tu Du hospital Dr. Pham Viet Thanh showed me a group of recently born babies in incubators. They all had thalidomide-type deformities. "These Agent Orange births are routine for us," he said. "Every now and then we have what we call a fetal catastrophe — when the number of miscarriages and deformed babies, I am afraid to say, overwhelms us." In one ward there were two women suffering from

Every day, very poor people and disabled ex-soldiers are swept from the center of Saigon and taken to detention centers; anti-government Buddhists are again prisoners of conscience.

chorion carcinoma — cancer of pregnancy, which is extremely rare in the West. "We don't have the training to deal with this phenomenon," said Thanh. "We have asked for scholarships in Japan, Germany, the US, and the UK, but they say no, or they don't reply."

From Uncle Ho to Adam Smith

The question begs: Why is this being allowed to happen? Why are foreigners once again being permitted to dictate the future of Vietnam? One answer is that the Vietnamese Communist Party was never as ideological as it appeared. The original impetus was nationalist; initially, the communists were the only political group that opposed French imperialism. Once they gained power in the north in 1954, many people joined the Party for reasons of personal ambition. There was a similar influx in the south after 1975; party membership offered power and privilege. Another explanation is that, like other Communist parties, with their hierarchy and disci-

plines and lack of internal democracy, they were best equipped to fight a protracted war, but not to govern and protect a society at peace.

Yet the party was immensely popular. The great majority of Vietnamese "provided its strength and often forced it to move in ways that broadened its popular appeal and, in turn, accepted and made monumental sacrifices," wrote Gabriel Kolko. "However elitist its top leadership, the party's success as a social movement was based largely on its response to peasant desires." And that, says Kolko, is at the root of its betrayal today, making "the war a monumental tragedy and a vain sacrifice ... for the majority of Vietnam's peasants, veterans, and genuine idealists."²⁶

I understand his disillusion, but I think the privations that the Vietnamese have endured during 30 years of war and 20 years of isolation made some things inevitable, such as the erosion of principle and ideology and the growth of corruption in a war-ruined economy, especially in a bureaucracy which, since the war, has operated substantially for the benefit of party cadres. Many of them had little interest or education in socialism and became, like

those in Boris Yeltsin's Russia, the most visible and voracious members of the new urban consumer class.

As for the ones who refused to go this way, and who could legitimately claim to be the legatees of Ho Chi Minh, they, too, were both desperate and vulnerable — desperate to internationalize their country and fulfill a historic need for counterweights to the power of China, the ancient foe, and to lessen the dependency on a Soviet Union in its death throes. The most generous explanation for their embrace of *laissez-faire* capitalism is that they have been seduced, and as one destructive "reform" follows another, the seduction is beginning to look like rape. In another sense, Vietnam is simply typical of poor countries denied an independent path for their economies and whose governments become more concerned, almost mesmerized, with satisfying their foreign creditors than with serving their people. The resolution of this is perhaps Vietnam's final battle and the most difficult one of all.

24. Sen. Gaylord Nelson, speech to Congress, Aug. 25, 1970.

25. *Vietnam Investment Review*, June 16-22, 1997.

26. Kolko, *Anatomy of A War*, op. cit., p. 590.



LEAH MELNICK/IMPACT VISUALS

Stilt houses on polluted canals in Ho Chi Minh City house Vietnamese who have not profited from foreign investment.

Shredding Culture

Certainly, the “dangerous time” that the artist Nguyen The Khan and many others allude to has arrived. That is to say, the point is passing where the Communist Party leadership loses control and becomes a captive of the foreign impositions it has endorsed. When that happens, the pact between the party and the peasants, which was probably unique to Vietnam, will be finally broken, and there will be a vacuum and trouble or, as Kolkko calls it, “a divorce.”

The signs are there. Every day, very poor people and disabled ex-soldiers are swept from the center of Saigon and taken to detention centers; and anti-government Buddhists — reminiscent of those who helped to topple the US-backed regimes in the 1960s — are again prisoners of conscience. The Vietnamese army, having expended the nation's blood, sweat and tears, and built the cooperative system in the countryside, regards itself as the keeper of historical memories and legacies. That is why it has allowed its own journals to criticize their political masters and has made a subversive hero of the late Gen. Tran Van

Tra, the brilliant, nonconformist commander of the victorious army in South Vietnam in 1975, who later formed a dissident group, the Society of Resistance Fighters. Another war hero, Col. Bui Tin, said from exile in France, “I long for a humanist, modern, and pluralist socialism in my country.”²⁷

Unlike China, obedience requires consensus in Vietnam. In his biography of Defense Minister Gen. Vo Nguyen Giap, Peter MacDonald wrote that “whereas in many nations there are thousands of family names, evolved over the centuries and added to by migrants, in the whole of Vietnam there are less than a hundred, based on tribal groupings such as the Ngo and the Nguyen: people are part of a big family.”²⁸ Tearing apart the fabric of this family will not be compensated for by Honda motorbikes, Pepsi-Cola, and mobile phones.

In advocating an “agricultural wage labor market” as a way of brutally disconnecting farm workers from their villages and making them “flexible,” meaning itinerant,

²⁷ Interviewed on BBC Television, cited on *BBC Summary of World Broadcasts*, Feb. 8, 1991.

²⁸ Peter MacDonald, *Giap, The Victor in Vietnam* (London: Warner Books, 1993), p. 42.

Vietnam's new foreign managers and creditors ignore the resilience of rural life, with its community of labor, its village councils, mutual aid societies, craftsmen's guilds, and emergency relief organizations. Much of this has lasted for 2,500 years: a model of natural socialism, you might say. Instead of trying to destroy it, genuine reform would build on its foundations and, with resources that eradicated poverty, create a modern, vibrant, agriculture-based economy that matched the needs of the majority.

Fighting Back

The final battle has begun. Saigon's biggest strikes since the war have swept over the Korean-owned EPZs. The issues are slave wages, excessive hours, and cruel managers. Although not reported in the media, labor rights are widely supported in Saigon. Seldom a week now passes without a major “wildcat” strike, which can be of such intensity that the civil authorities often choose to stand back: a clear sign that they are worried.

In 1997, Nike, the giant US running-shoe maker, which employs 35,000 mostly



Thai Thi Tinh (pictured on the cover) holds photos of her husband, center, who was killed by the French at Dien Bien Phu, and her sons, killed in the US war.

female workers in Vietnam, was hit by a series of rolling strikes. Illegal demonstrations were held outside the gates of the company's sub-contractors, and the police stood by. A study by the US-based Vietnam Labor Watch found that the workers' average wage was \$1.60 for eight hours, while the shoes they made sold for up to \$149 in the US.

"Supervisors humiliate women," reported the Vietnamese investigator. "They force them to kneel, to stand in the hot sun, treating them like recruits in a boot camp. In one plant, workers were allowed to go to the lavatory only once during a shift and were limited to two drinks of water. The Taiwanese sub-contractor forced 56 women to run around the plant in the sun as punishment for wearing 'non-regulation' shoes. Twelve fainted and were taken to hospital. The next day, the factory was attacked by local people."²⁹

In the countryside, the privatization of land has brought administrative chaos and anger. This has been reported in the official press as "hot spots" that are "smoldering," "tense," and "very fierce."³⁰ In Thai Binh province, south of Hanoi, government offices have been sacked and officials forced to flee for their lives. "The military and police failed to halt the problem," said one reporter.³¹

29. Associated Press, *Sydney Morning Herald*, Mar. 29, 1997.
30. *Tap Chi Cong San*, cited by Kolko, *Anatomy of a Peace*, op. cit., p. 93.

31. Reuters, July 26, 1997.

The biggest single foreign investor in Vietnam, the Korean multinational Daewoo, plans to build a \$147 million EPZ near Hanoi, including an 18-hole golf course for its executives and customers. The golf course will destroy the rice fields and the way of life of the village of Tho Da. The government has offered the villagers compensation of \$197 per family. Reject-

"The real danger is that we shall lose our soul, and not realize it before it's too late."

ing this, they erected barricades and a sign, "Dangerous Area. Do not enter," over a skull and crossbones. Police attacked twice and were thrown back; one woman was killed. Daewoo's chairman flew in from Seoul with reassurances that the golf course was "not just for golfers." At the time of writing, there is a huge row involving the prime minister, the Hanoi People's Committee and the Korean government. Meanwhile, the barricades remain, a symbol of a new popular resistance finding its natural leaders and confidence with every confrontation. Not only has the government admitted that this "danger and social turmoil" is "becoming more and more

complex and serious," but the instigator of "Renovation," Nguyen Van Linh, has warned that the "gap between the classes needs to be solved promptly."³²

Cranes vs. Vultures

In Saigon, I stayed in the same room at the Caravelle Hotel that was my intermittent home 30 years ago. From the same balcony overlooking Lam Som Square, next to the French playhouse, I used to watch people show immense courage in demonstrating against the vicious foreign-backed regimes that came and went. Here, too, I watched the dawn lit up by tracer bullets on the last day of April 1975, the last day of the longest war this century.

The hotel's cashier in those days, always a morbid man, had threatened to shoot himself that evening; but he chose not to, and he survived and retired on a cashier's pension. The door-opener, a laconic character from Bombay, was there until recently. "I have ushered in victors and ushered out vanquished," he would say. "The good thing about this job is that, in hurrying in and hurrying out, they don't notice me."

Coming back, I met Dr. Nguyen Thi Oanh in the foyer. A gracious and wry person, she had trained as a sociologist in the US in the 1950s. "I was never a communist," she said, "but I was close to them because they expressed the nationalism I felt, and they were brave. The problem with the course we are taking now is that it flies in the face of the best of our history,

which makes us proud and able to bear many privations. The real danger is that we shall lose our soul, and not realize it before it's too late."

I told her that the Ministry of Culture had wanted to censor the documentary film my colleagues and I had shot at My Lai, because they were afraid it would offend the Americans and be bad for business. She shook her head. "They know the Americans can never forget," she said.

"Why," I asked, "are the Vietnamese able to forget?"

32. Kolko, *Anatomy of a War*, op. cit., p. 94; *Saigon Giai Phong* (daily newspaper of the Ho Chi Minh City Communist Party), July 17, 1997.

"Because we didn't lose, we won. We lost materially speaking, but spiritually we won. We are losing a bit now, but we will win again."

Apart from such pride, there are, for me, two outstanding attractions about Vietnam. The first is that the maxims of Ho Chi Minh, which inspired a great popular resistance, are still admired for their common wisdom and acted upon. When the bombing began in the mid-1960s, Ho traveled down Route One, which was then known as "the Street of No Joy" by the US pilots who blitzed it and the Vietnamese convoys who depended on it. He made a speech along the way, in which he said that when the war was over, "we shall make our country a thousand times more beautiful."

I met a man who is the embodiment of this, Professor Vo Quy, a restless 70-year-old whose office at Hanoi University is guarded by the ancient skeleton of an elephant. He has led one of the most dramatic environmental rescues in history. In 1974, while the war was still going on, he traveled south and found the environmental damage so great that he returned with the warning that, unless something was done, Vietnam in 20 years would look like the moon. "The ecosystem was in a terrible way," he said. "The mangroves were largely ruined by bombing and herbicides. The wildlife was gone. The tigers, which had

followed the sound of gunfire, were extinct. I found no water birds."

The task of reforestation was enormous. In areas drenched in Agent Orange, not a single tree remained; the earth was thought to have solidified and "died." Quy initiated a re-greening campaign, that involved almost everybody. Over the next five years, millions of acres of poisoned land were reclaimed. Every village planted a forest, every child a tree.

Today, in many parts of the country, the sound of birds and the rustle of wildlife are heard for the first time in two generations. "We thought the stork and the ibis and certain types of crane were extinct," said Quy. "But as each new tree encouraged the tropical organisms, and the mangroves began to grow back, we had exciting discoveries: we found great birds we thought we'd lost: 25 cranes and the rare milky stork. I myself saw an ibis on the Laos side of the border. *What a sight it was!* I immediately ordered a sanctuary to be marked out!" A pheasant which reappeared was named a "Vo Quy."

For me, the other compelling attraction of Vietnam is the spectacle of human reconciliation. Under a program sponsored by the European Union, Vietnamese boat people scattered in refugee camps throughout Asia were asked if they wanted to go home. Tens of thousands said they did, but many were frightened. They were

first reassured by videotaped interviews with their relatives and friends at home. A small nation has since returned. On arrival, they are lent enough money to start again; and their community is subsidized so that there is no talk of favoritism.

I was introduced to a fisherman, Mac Thi Nhan, who fled with his family to Hong Kong, and was now back in his village on Ha Long Bay, and with a new boat. "I was afraid at first, but everyone has been thoughtful to us," he said. His wife nodded agreement.

Michael Culligan, who runs the EU program in Haiphong, said, "I have traveled all over the country and met thousands of returnees, and I have not come across a single case of victimization. The Vietnamese are a very kindly people. They were very sympathetic towards the boat people who came home, and they went out of their way to ensure they didn't lose face. That is a civilized society." ■

John Pilger's book *Hidden Agendas* can be ordered from Vintage Books, Random House UK, 20 Vauxhall Bridge Rd., London SW1V 2SA. International sales office: phone 44-171-840-8400 or fax 44-171-840-8408 or 840-8409. A US edition will be published by New Press, New York in 1999.

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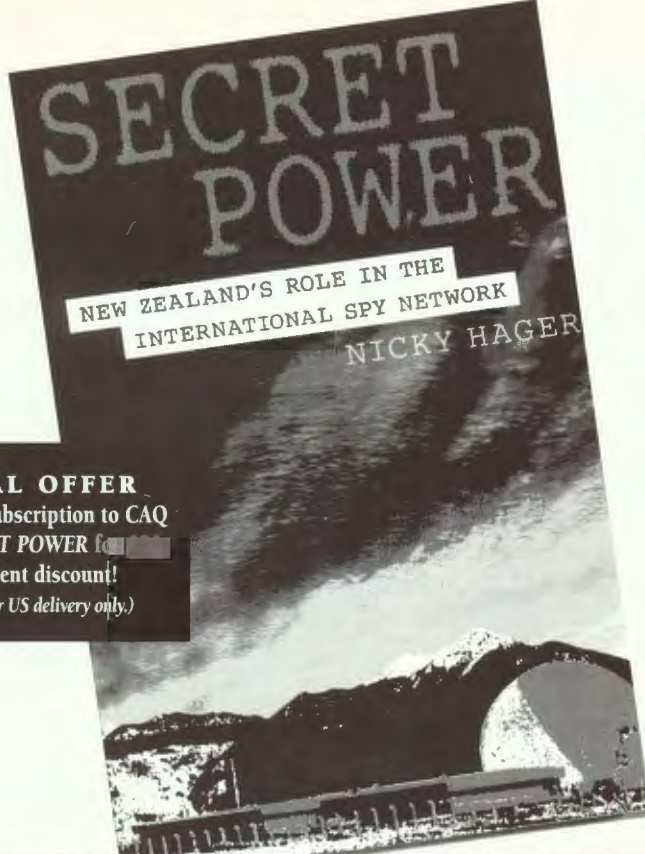
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* AVAILABLE IN PHOTOCOPY ONLY

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