

Voices for Creative Nonviolence

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APRIL, 2006
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Dear Friends,

In Bread and Wine, Ignacio Silone's novel about resistance to fascism in pre-World War II Italy, Don Paolo tries to tell young Bianchina why the government would make a lot of fuss about a few inscriptions written anonymously on a wall. "The Land of Propaganda is built on unanimity," he says.

He then explains that any person who thinks independently "...imperils public order. Tons of printed paper repeat the government slogans; thousands of loud-speakers, hundreds of thousands of manifestoes and leaflets, legions of orators in the squares and at the crossroads, thousands of priests from the pulpit repeat these slogans ad nauseam, to the point of collective stupefaction."

But Silone insists it is enough for one person to say "No!" in a neighbor's ear and public order supporting the propaganda state is endangered.

People in Iraq desperately need voices here to refute the Bush administration's "happy talk" regarding conditions in Iraq. Traumatized by violence beyond our imagination, ordinary Iraqis must also face spiraling prices for food staples that no longer appear in the ration basket. The price of cooking oil and petrol has risen threefold and will go higher. Fuel

prices will rise ten fold by the end of this year.

These are predictable outcomes of the imposition of austerity measures by the International Monetary Fund (I.M.F.) against Iraq as part of the Faustian bargain to reduce—rather than cancel outright—the odious debt incurred by Hussein's regime in the 1980's. We must insist on an end to both economic and military warfare against Iraqis.

We must also press the U.S. to pay war reparations to Iraq, with no strings attached, for the damage our country inflicted upon Iraq over these past 15 years of warfare against Iraq.

This newsletter includes a report on the Winter of Our Discontent campaign in our nation's capital. Here in Chicago, eight activists fasted from electricity for 34 days, seeking to better identify with people in Iraq who endure constant electrical outages with little relief in sight. Lone voices? Certainly we must all work to swell our numbers in our local communities, and yet polls tell us that we are the anti-war majority. At a recent weeklong encampment in front of Rahm Emanuel's office (D-IL), we held huge signs that said "Honk for Peace." The cacophony of honks continued

morning, noon and night, every day. But the hard work of turning honks into calls, letters, visits and movement growth lies ahead. Karl Meyer's chart detailing comparisons between the Vietnam War and this war spurs us to work steadily on behalf of ending the war, saving lives, stopping the agonizing spiral of violence.

Tom Fox, the beloved Christian Peacemaker Team member who was killed in Iraq, wrote in his diary that he had long admired Margaret Hassan, also killed in Iraq while working to ease the agonies inflicted by economic and military warmaking. "She lived extravagantly," he wrote, "on behalf of others." And she refused to live behind gates.

With you, we hope to walk in the light of Tom Fox.

In Solidarity,
Kathy Kelly, Laurie Hasbrook, Farah Mokhtareizadeh, Scott Blackburn, Joel Gullede, Dan Pearson, Jeff Leys, Bob Ablanalp, Sean Reynolds

Walk for Justice and Peace: From the Midwest to the Mideast

JUNE 2006

Voices for Creative Nonviolence invites you to join us this summer for a walk from Springfield to North Chicago, Illinois. We will challenge the Military-Prison-Industrial Complex along the way, drawing the connections between the wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Israel-Palestine and our home communities.

We will begin at the headquarters of the Illinois National Guard in Springfield, Illinois. Currently over 900 members of the Illinois National Guard are serving in Iraq. Another 170 were called to active duty on March 8 and are scheduled to deploy to Iraq in June. National Guard units make up nearly 23 percent of the U.S. forces deployed in Iraq.

From Springfield, we will travel to the federal prisons located in Pekin, Illinois—to stand in solidarity with those currently imprisoned for active nonviolent resistance to the School of the Americas and, more importantly, to stand in solidarity with those imprisoned at Pekin and Marion because of the unjust criminal injustice system in our country. Our criminal injustice system is increasingly punitive, fostering and based upon racism and class politics. Prisons tear families apart and further destroy our inner cities through harsh, punitive sentences.

We then walk to Peoria to confront Caterpillar, makers of the bulldozers used by Israel's occupation authorities to destroy Palestinian homes and lives. We will remember the witness of Rachel Corrie who lost her life while acting in solidarity with Palestinians whose homes were being destroyed by Israel's occupation of Palestine.

In Batavia, we will visit the offices of Dennis Hastert, Speaker of the House of Representatives. We will call upon Speaker Hastert to find the political courage to break with his party's President and to oppose the war against Iraq—to show the same courage demonstrated by former Congressman Pete McCloskey when he became the first Republican to call for the impeachment of President Nixon in 1973.

We will visit Veterans Administration hospitals to demand quality health care for veterans and for all people living in the United States.

Our walk will conclude in North Chicago, at the Military Entrance Processing Command (MEPCOM) and include nonviolent civil disobedience / civil resistance. MEPCOM is the headquarters for the system of Military Entrance Processing Stations at which the final oath of enlistment takes place

Please be in touch with us to join this walk, for part or all of the way.

The walk route is still in formation as this newsletter goes to press. The conclusion date for the walk and civil disobedience at MEPCOM is also to be determined, though we anticipate it will be about 30 days in length.

Final information will soon be available via the Voices website. Contact us by email at info@vcnv.org or by calling 773-878-3815.

www.vcnv.org/walk06



Cynthia Banas and Mike Ferner on their way to the Pentagon, March 20th, 2006

Winter of Our Discontent: An Experiment in Truth and Resistance

Why fast? Why vigil? Why resist? And why, oh why, during the winter?

For 40 days, Voices maintained vigil at the U.S. Capitol—seeking an end to the 15 years of economic and military warfare which our country has waged against the Iraqi people.

Friends from the Iowa, Minnesota and Missouri lobbied their Representatives and Senators. They organized non-violent civil resistance at Blight House (a.k.a. the White House) at which seven Catholic Workers and Voices members were arrested.

Voices members Ed Kinane and Mike Ferner entered the hearing of the House Appropriations Committee at which an additional \$67.5 billion was approved for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. They read the names of Iraqi citizens and U.S. service members who have died in the war. Arrested on the charge of disrupting Congress, Ed and Mike were sentenced to “time served”.

Witness Against Torture (www.witnesstorture.org), those who walked to Guantanamo in December,



Diane Haugesag Climbs over a barricade at the entrance to the Pentagon, March 20th, 2006



organized civil resistance at the White House on Ash Wednesday. 15 members of Witness Against Torture were arrested at the White House while resisting our country’s participation in torture and violation of international human rights. Several who walked to Guantanamo have received threatening letters from the U.S. government for their December act of civil resistance against torture.

On March 20th, six members of Voices were arrested at the Pentagon, amongst the 51 total arrested resisting the war.

The Carmelite Sisters organized an international rotating fast in such countries as Brazil, Venezuela, Spain, Italy and India. 44 Sisters at the Motherhouse of the Sisters of St. Joseph in Nazareth, Michigan also organized a rotating fast throughout the Winter of Our Discontent. Several people, while not being able to travel to D.C., joined us in the fast at a distance—some for the entire period.

Fasting draws in people who might not otherwise be drawn to action because, while fasting has a political edge for some, fasting also is a very significant, powerful, prayerful experience for many others. Might fasts be a way to strengthen political and spiritual resistance to this war at one and the same time?

Winter of Our Discontent

...continued from p.3

Might it be possible to nurture the seeds sown during the Winter of Our Discontent to bloom into a longer, sustained campaign of nonviolent resistance to the war in Iraq? Might such a campaign include, not only a sustained core presence in D.C., but also relay fasts, rolling fasts and civil disobedience in countless communities around the U.S. and internationally? Might people commit to traveling to D.C. to participate in acts of nonviolent resistance at the U.S. Capitol, the White House and the Pentagon (coordinating with action in their local commu-

nity)—perhaps a different resistance community or affinity group assuming responsibility for one week during a 60 day period of time to organize nonviolent resistance?

Let the conclusion of the Winter of Our Discontent be the start of our discussion for building the strongest possible campaign of nonviolent resistance to finally bring the war against Iraq to a close. Please be in touch with us if you would like to help in building a future Winter of Our Discontent II.

RESOURCES WWW.VCNV.ORG

Iraq Health

Frequent updates of articles and resources regarding Iraqi Health Care and the Infrastructure of Iraq, such as water, electricity, and disease.

Visit: www.vcnv.org/health

Other Lands Have Dreams

Companion resources from Kathy Kelly's book Other Lands Have Dreams - including nonviolent training materials.

Visit: www.vcnv.org/olhd

Information for lobbying efforts to end the war against Iraq and to promote real reconstruction of Iraq

can be found on the website of both the Friends Committee on National Legislation and NETWORK. They have direct experience from travel to and work within Iraq both prior to and after the U.S. invasion in March 2003.

FCNL: www.fcnl.org

NETWORK: www.networklobby.org

Support the St. Patrick's Day Four

On St. Patrick's Day in 2003, four members of the Ithaca, New York Catholic Worker community poured blood inside a military recruiting station as an act of nonviolent civil resistance to the imminent invasion of Iraq. Acquitted in state court, the federal prosecutor filed charges against the four. They were found guilty in federal court and sentenced in January to sentences ranging from 4 to 8 months. Visit their support

website for more information: www.stpatricksfour.org. Following are their addresses:

Teresa Grady

PO Box 2047
Binghamton, NY 13902

Peter DeMott 10891-083

MDC Brooklyn
Metropolitan Detention Center
P.O. Box 329002
Brooklyn, NY 11232

Clare Grady 01264-052

Federal Detention Center
P.O. Box 562
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Daniel Burns 13182-052

MDC Brooklyn
Metropolitan Detention Center
P.O. Box 11232
Brooklyn, NY 11232

Lanugage Study In Damascus

By Farah Marie Mokhtareizadeh

Steeling myself from the allure of easy answers in the growing chorus of opinions on the war and occupation of Iraq, I made the decision to expand my perspective and travel to Damascus to study Arabic. I traveled with my Voices colleague and friend Dan Pearson from the St. Francis Catholic Worker

in Chicago. After spending a few nights in a lovely little hostel just outside the old city, Dan and I met a family who offered us two rooms in their home on St. Ananias Street just blocks from our friends Gabe and Theresa. The street had been named after the early Christian disciple, Ananias, who, according to the Ninth chapter of the Book of Acts, was commissioned by God to cure the blindness of Saul, later Paul, when God struck Saul sightless on the road to Damascus.

Dan and I arrived in early January just as the quarterly Muslim religious holiday of Eid ul-Adha was underway. Eid ul-Adha is celebrated as a commemoration of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son Ishmael (many Muslim's believe it was Ishmael who was bound, not Isaac), and God's intended mercy and abolition of child sacrifice by replacing Ishmael with a sheep. The holiday is celebrated over four days commencing with the slaughter of thousands of sheep where feasts and meals are shared with neighbors, friends and the poor.

We began our studies at Damascus University (DU) a week after arriving in Syria. We chose the language institute at DU because it seemed to be the least expensive, most intensive option among the abundance Arabic study programs in Damascus. All classes at the institute were strictly conducted in Modern Standard Arabic called "Fousa", although we soon learned that Arabic has two forms; the written form, "Fousa" and the colloquial or spoken form called "Amia". The Fousa form is used in all types of media including the local television news as well as in academic settings, however it is hardly ever spoken. The colloquial form of Arabic changes slightly depending on nationality and sometimes ethnicity whether one is a Kurd, Bedouin, or African etc. Each session at the language institute is four weeks. Dan and I finished our first session in early February yet were feeling slightly frustrated by our inability to communicate in the language of everyday Syrians. The next week we both found private language tutors and continued our study of Arabic for the following eight weeks with these tutors.

Damascus' isolation from western investment helps to preserve its authentic charm, and made the city a very appealing option for study of Arab language and culture. After emerging from a day of study, there was always an opportunity to visit friends at an Old City café where traditional Syrian food, dancing and hookah were enjoyed along with backgammon and tea. The time spent with friends at the café was the perfect opportunity to practice our Arabic, as well as hear the analyses of other young people

about politics in the region.

Hopping aboard one of the old Ottoman train-lines I headed west to spend a holiday on the Northern coast of Syria visiting the lush green city of Lattakia on the Mediterranean Sea as well as Syria's second largest city, Aleppo, just two hours North East of Lattakia near the Turkish border. The train was a magnificent way to get a glimpse of the varied landscapes of Syria, and to experience its striking farmland, which is the heart of the country's economy. Various early Christian monasteries, massive Frankish-style castles and ruins from thousands of years of civilization mystify the imagination. In these cities, and the tiny villages outside, I met monks planting seeds in their organic gardens, villagers speaking to one another in Aramaic, and merchants selling "magic" sea salts on the boardwalk of the Mediterranean. Although my goals for traveling to Syria included avoiding touristy destinations, the opportunity to see more of Syria only improved my desire to learn the language. It also assisted in placing Syria in the larger context of history and civilization making the U.S.'s brandish illustration of Syria as a renegade country massively iniquitous.

Dan and I stayed nearly three months in Syria before returning to Chicago on the 24th of March. We hope to continue our study of Arabic and the region, and encourage others who are thinking of traveling abroad to study Arabic to consider Damascus. I do not feel my time in Damascus gave me different answers as to how to stop the slaughter and pillaging of this region for its natural resources; it is clear that only through passionate and cooperative efforts to change our lifestyles will we see an end to perpetual instability in the region. What the experience did provide me was a confidence that speaking one another's language is imperative (though often underappreciated) in our efforts to find sustainable ways to live together in peace.

Masalaam, Farah Marie Mokhtareizadeh

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Three Years After: The Iraq War Drags On, And Gets Deadlier

Those who will not learn from history are doomed to repeat it.

Vietnam 1963-1975	Iraq 2003-2006
Fabricated "Gulf Of Tonkin Attack" fools Congress	"Weapons of Mass Destruction" claims fool Congress
Upwards of 2 Million Vietnamese civilians die. (Lots of images on TV screen)	128,000 Iraqis die and counting. (TV images suppressed)
55,000 American soldiers die.	Over 2,326 American soldiers dead, so far.
Tens of thousands of U.S. service members wounded, physically and mentally; treatment inadequate.	Nearly 17,000 thousand U.S. service members wounded, so far; veterans' benefits cut.
Agent Orange health effects denied.	Depleted uranium health effects denied.
Flag draped coffins come home. Johnson, McNamara, Nixon attended funerals.	Flag draped coffins concealed from view. Bush, Rumsfeld ignore funerals, media follow suit.
Arrogant Defense Secretary McNamara sees "light at the end of the tunnel."	Arrogant Defense Secretary Rumsfeld sees "long hard slog" to victory.
Demonstration elections held in Vietnam, "Free Elections" celebrated by press.	Press credits Bush with securing "Free Elections" in Iraq. Voter insistence on US withdrawal ignored.
Resistance and casualties keep growing.	Resistance and casualties keep growing.
President Johnson's domestic "War On Poverty" lost to military spending.	Bush throws up hands: can't fund health care and other urgent social needs.
U.S. allies angry and alienated.	U.S. allies angry and alienated.
"Vietnamization" plan to train South Vietnam Army, and gradually withdraw U.S. troops.	Attempts to train Iraqi Army to take brunt for fighting (permanently backed up by U.S. Military bases) countered vigorously by Iraqi resistance.
U.S. troops finally withdrawn after 11 years.	U.S. builds permanent military bases in Iraq and, in the Green Zone, the largest embassy in the world.
Two years later, total collapse of the client army and government.	Iraqi government facing more and more entrenched and sophisticated resistance movement the longer U.S. stays, leading to prospect of permanent civil war even after inevitable U.S. withdrawal.
No war reparations paid; Carter calls damage from war "mutual."	Iraqis may be forced to pay 125 billion of Saddam Hussein's odious war debt despite past U.S. support for Saddam Hussein.

The above comparisons were developed by Karl Meyer who can be reached at: karmeyeng@hotmail.com
 Statistics of US casualties and wounded can be found at <http://icasualties.org/oif/>
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War versus Reconstruction: The Harsh Reality in Iraq

U.S. War Funding

- ❖ U.S. military spending in Fiscal Year 2007 (FY 2007), will be 48% greater than in FY 2001
- ❖ FY 2007 military budget is 7% greater than FY 2006
- ❖ In 2005, U.S. military spending was 43% of global military spending and 7 times greater than China, the next highest spender.
- ❖ U.S. military spending on the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan rose 48% from FY 2004 to FY 2005 and will be 75% greater in FY 2006 than in FY 2004 (assuming anticipated passage of the pending supplemental spending bill).
- ❖ The supplemental spending bill provides \$17.7 billion for procurement of weapons and equipment. The Pentagon states that it takes 1 to 3 years for weapons and equipment to reach the field after money has been appropriated. How long does the U.S. intend to fight the war in Iraq?
- ❖ President Bush seeks \$50 billion more funding for the war for FY 2007 (which begins October 1)
- ❖ President Bush has already said he intends to seek additional war funding in early 2007

Diverting Reconstruction Money To Fund The War

In October 2003, the U.S. Congress allocated \$18.4 billion for reconstruction in Iraq. Since then, funding has been shifted from rebuilding to war making.

- ❖ Water Resources and Sanitation project funding was cut by \$2.185 billion—a 50.4% cut.
- ❖ Electric project funding was cut by \$1.25 billion—a 22.5% cut.
- ❖ Security and Law Enforcement Sector Funding increased by \$1.774 billion—an increase of 54.5%. This is on top of the \$10 billion of U.S. funding of Iraq's military and law enforcement sectors.

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Health Care In Iraq

- ❖ In January 2006, Iraq's Minister of Health estimated it would cost \$8 billion over a 4 year period to rebuild Iraq's health care system
- ❖ In October 2003, the U.S. Congress allocated only \$786 million for rebuilding health care in Iraq.
- ❖ In 2004 Parsons was awarded a contract to build 142 primary health care centers. Only 20 are expected to be completed. The remainder will, on average, be only two-thirds completed when Parsons leaves Iraq.
- ❖ Nearly 50 percent of the Parsons contract was used for "overhead"—not building clinics.
- ❖ In Baghdad, doctors use one incubator for every two newborn infants requiring medical care.
- ❖ In April 2005, the U.N. Development Programme reported: "Among the current major problems are lack of health personnel, lack of medicines, non-functioning medical equipment and destroyed hospitals and health centers. The health services are also heavily affected by infrastructure problems, including degraded or disrupted electricity supply, sanitation and communications."

Food & Oil Subsidies

The International Monetary Fund is forcing Iraq to cut back on and eliminate food and oil subsidies. The impact:

- ❖ In April 2005, the U.N. Development Programme reported that nearly 300,000 children under the age of 5 suffer acute malnutrition.
- ❖ The food rations basket has been reduced from 12 staple items to only 4 items.
- ❖ Food prices soared by 26% from December 2005 to January 2006.
- ❖ The I.M.F. expects inflation to reach 15% this year.
- ❖ Fuel subsidies were cut in December, with prices nearly tripling.
- ❖ By the end of 2006, fuel prices are expected to be 10 times greater than now.
- ❖ The I.M.F. is requiring Iraq to implement new laws and regulations which will significantly open up Iraq's oil wealth to being drained off by foreign corporations.

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THIS SUMMER...

MILAN RAI - U.S. TOUR

Milan Rai, founder of the British branch of Voices in the Wilderness and the London-based direct action and anti-war information group, Justice Not Vengeance, will be on a book and speaking tour this June. Rai is the author of two acclaimed books; *War Plan Iraq: 10 Reasons Against War with Iraq* and *Regime Unchanged: Why the War on Iraq Changed Nothing*. His latest book is *7/7: The London Bombings, Islam and the Iraq War*.

"As former CIA bin Laden expert Michael Scheuer has pointed out, far too little attention has been paid to what Osama bin Laden and the al-Qaeda leadership actually say. Examining their words and their deeds, Milan Rai argues that we can dry up the wellsprings of support for al-Qaeda, but only by halting aggressive and unjust Western policies."

For more info: www.vcnv.org/rai06

RESOURCES AVAILABLE FROM VOICES FOR CREATIVE NONVIOLENCE

The following are available from Voices for Creative Nonviolence. All prices include postage. You may make checks out to VCNV and mail to VCNV; 1249 W. Argyle St #2; Chicago, IL 60640. Please note in the memo of the check which item you are purchasing and quantity.

"In a Time of Siege: Defying War and Sanctions in Iraq", a **Peace Productions** documentary on the Voices in the Wilderness campaign to end U.S. economic sanctions. It includes footage of Voices members meeting U.S. Marines as they entered Baghdad following the Shock and Awe bombing. **\$20**

Other Lands Have Dreams: From Baghdad to Peking Prison by Kathy Kelly. **\$15**

Taking a Stand: A Guide To Peace Teams And Accompaniment Projects, by Elizabeth Boardman. **\$10**

September 11th Families for a Peaceful Tomorrow, edited by David Potorti. **\$15**