

DELAWARE COUNTY PLEDGE OF RESISTANCE



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Fall 2006

Pledge to Screen Vietnam War Film *Sir! No Sir!*

by Ron Coburn

Pledge is holding a screening of *Sir! No Sir!* on Saturday, October 14, 7 pm, at Media-Providence Friends School, 125 W. Third Street, Media, Pa. This is the time to see this powerful and disquieting film. It is highly unlikely that this film will EVER be shown by our standard media outlets.

"In the 1960s, an antiwar movement emerged that altered the course of history. This movement didn't take place on college campuses, but in barracks and on aircraft carriers. It flourished in army stockades, navy brigs, and in the dingy towns that surround military bases. It penetrated elite military colleges like West Point. And it spread through the battlefields of Vietnam. It was a movement no one expected, least of all those in it. Hundreds went to prison and thousands into exile. And by 1971, it had, in the words of one colonel, infested the entire armed services. It was estimated that more than 500,000 soldiers took part. Yet today few people know about the GI movement against the war in Vietnam.

"*Sir! No Sir!*" is the story of this antiwar movement. This film never mentions the words Iraq or Afghanistan but

disturbing parallels to the current wars are inescapable. Reasons for our military invasion of Vietnam were entirely different from those given for the invasion and occupation of Iraq. However, one is struck by the similar rhetoric produced by MacNamara and Johnson and that produced by Rumsfeld, Cheney, and Bush." (All quotes from the *Sir! No Sir!* website).

After viewing *Sir! No Sir!* recently, I listened to a discussion that followed, which was for me a unique and sad experience. I heard the anguish and fear in the voices of a number of Vietnam war veterans, emotions which precipitated their antiwar activities, including the killing of their officers. I felt their patriotism, their grief for lost buddies, and their disillusionment. I will never forget the story of how one U.S. soldier in Iraq was overheard discussing with fellow soldiers questions about the necessity of this war. He was subsequently transferred to the U.S. combat force that attacked and destroyed Fallujah. One veteran communicated his deep sorrow, still palpable today, for his killing role in Vietnam. The combination of *Sir! No Sir!*, the voices of veterans, and the



opportunity to meet and thank them was powerful. I recommend it to everyone.

The screening of this film will be followed by a panel discussion organized by Bill Perry, who served in Vietnam, now with Veterans for Peace. A combat sniper and a medic just back from Iraq will also be present. Admission is free.

Who Got the Button?



Our crack panel of judges has emptied the last mailbag, pored over each entry, and determined a winner in the Pledge "Design a Button" contest!

The favorite phrase, submitted by A.N. Other, is . . . "RESISTANCE: Every Little Bit Helps." Colorful union-made buttons sporting this slogan will soon be available at Pledge events everywhere. Be sure to grab yours. And thanks for all your creative contributions!

Partnership of the Americas— Blurring the Lines

by Marge Van Cleef

Partnership of the Americas is a military program operating out of U.S. Southern Command and implemented by U.S. Naval Forces Carrier Strike Group 10, embarked aboard the USS *George Washington*. It is continuing efforts to “improve training and readiness of U.S. naval forces in the region, and enhance interoperability and relationships with other countries’ civil and military forces.” Assigned units focus on regional “challenges such as illegal drug smuggling, illegal migration, and improving training to ensure a secure maritime domain in the region,” Naval Commander Stevenson said. “Whether the sailors make repairs to a school or hospital in a community relations project or conduct military-to-military training with regional maritime forces, each effort directly supports security cooperation.”¹

Such efforts have taken place in Honduras, St. Kitt’s, and the Dominican Republic. In May 2006, members of the Colombian navy visited the *George Washington* to conduct bilateral training with U.S. sailors who provided the guests with an orientation for operations at sea on both an aircraft carrier and surface combatants.

We might thus conclude that Partnership of the Americas is a well-planned attempt to blur the lines between military and civilian goals in the region of the Americas, as described by the Latin America Working Group’s paper “Erasing the Lines” on foreign military and police forces (www.wola.org). They have stated that “to further the militarization goals, the Bush administration’s counterterrorism program legitimizes the Defense Department’s role in foreign military training.” On May 11, 2006, the House of Representatives approved its version of H.R. 5122, the 2007 National Defense Authorization Act. Section 1024 of this

bill would change the program’s name to “Regional Defense Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program,” allowing funds to be used to send students to civilian educational institutions in the United States. What is the underlying goal of this program?

But another reality still stands. Certain nations in South America and the Caribbean, in particular Cuba and Haiti, have been targeted for years as strategic to U.S. interests. They have been attacked militarily and economically with invasions and sanctions. Presently, outspoken leaders in Bolivia and

Venezuela, bolstered with their large supplies of oil and natural gas, have already been threatened by the U.S. State Department. Cuba has recently announced a tentative agreement with China for technical assistance in drilling for oil in Cuba’s half of the Florida Straits, which are shared with the U.S.

We need to pay close attention to U.S. military operations in Latin America and the Caribbean area.

¹ Quotes from U.S. Naval Forces Southern Command Public Affairs at www.southcom.mil.

Travel to Haiti on Pledge Scholarship

by Karen Wisniewski

The Delaware County Pledge of Resistance is very pleased to announce an opportunity for a young activist to travel to Haiti on scholarship. We are looking for people in their 20s and 30s who have an interest in Latin America and the Caribbean, and who would like the opportunity to explore the human rights situation in Haiti. We would be able to help design the trip to meet the specific interests of the person traveling.

Upon return from Haiti, we would ask the recipient to be available for making presentations about the experience and to write an article for our newsletter.

If you or someone you know might be interested, please submit your request to be considered in writing. In-



Haitian women show off their voter registration cards.

clude in the request your experience as an activist, why you are interested in Latin America and the Caribbean, and specifically what you would like to include in your itinerary in Haiti.

With this scholarship program, the Delaware County Pledge of Resistance hopes to support and encourage young activists. We would like to sponsor the first trip in the spring of 2007.

For more information, contact the Pledge at 610-543-8427 or 215-545-4122.

Don't Spy On Me!

When our government undermines democracy in Haiti, or greases the skids for working people in the name of “free trade,” or baldly lies to justify its wars, we will criticize our government. That’s our responsibility as citizens. When our officials respond by spying, that’s un-American and represents a threat we must challenge.—Pledge statement in support of “Don’t Spy On Me!” campaign

by Brad Bradlee

It is no secret that our government has long targeted dissident citizens with unfashionable views. Police surveillance of 1980s Central America affinity groups, COINTELPRO’s anti-movement intrigues, state harassment of WWI pacifists—our government’s intolerance of dissent reaches throughout our history. Today, we read fresh stories of robust domestic spying operations—NSA eavesdropping on domestic calls, Pentagon surveillance of “suspicious” antiwar meetings, FBI investigations of Pittsburgh’s pacifist Thomas Merton Center. It has always been up to ordinary people to stand up to this kind of official intimidation and speak out for their own rights, so when the Pledge heard about the ACLU “Don’t Spy On



Members of Delco Pledge, Brandywine Peace Community, Catholic Peace Fellowship, Darfur Alert Coalition, and Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom participated in the “Don’t Spy On Me!” action.

Me!” campaign, we knew it was important to jump on board.

“Don’t Spy On Me!” is a national effort to expose illegal, secret government investigations of dissident groups and individuals. The Philadelphia campaign is directed by the Pennsylvania ACLU and has brought together 23 local peace and justice groups, including the Delco Pledge. Our organizations want to know if government snoops have us in their sights, so we thought we would use a straightforward tactic to find out: we’d ask them. On June 14, “Don’t Spy On Me!” filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request to demand that government intelligence agencies disclose information they have collected on our groups and our legal, peaceful activities.¹ Exercising our

rights to free speech and assembly, we gathered outside the National Constitution Center at noon for a rally launching the campaign. After a short parade to the Federal Building and delicate negotiations with security, a delegation delivered our FOIA request to the offices of the FBI and Sen. Arlen Specter. We await the government’s response.

We filed for an “expedited processing” of our request because the public has an urgent need to be informed about our undercover government. And because it is clear the government is expeditiously ramping up its Big Brother aspirations. The “Don’t Spy On Me!” launch statement makes it plain:

The admitted practice of domestic spying, government secrecy, illegal detention and even torture, threatens us all. Our constitution must protect all or eventually none will be protected from the suppression of human rights and civil liberties, and the government assault on freedom.



The Philadelphia “Don’t Spy On Me!” campaign is directed by the Pennsylvania ACLU and has brought together 23 local peace and justice groups.

¹ “Don’t Spy On Me!” member groups filing an FOIA request included Brandywine Peace Community, Catholic Peace Fellowship, Darfur Alert Coalition, Defenestrator, Delco Wage Peace and Justice, Delco Pledge of Resistance, House of Grace Catholic Worker, Campus Activism, IWW-Phila. Branch, Military Families Speak Out, Northwest Greens, Peace Center of Delaware County, Phila. Regional Anti-War Network, Kensington Welfare Rights Union, Poor People’s Economic Human Rights Campaign, Student Environmental Action Coalition, School of the Americas Watch Northeast, Shalom Center, Veterans for Peace-Chapter 31, Vietnam Veterans against the War, Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, WILPF-Phila. Branch, WILPF-Delco Branch.

Witness for Peace Delegation to Venezuela

by Julia Graff

The Mid-Atlantic Region of Witness for Peace is hosting a delegation to Venezuela from January 11-21, 2007. The theme of the delegation is "Venezuela's Allocation of Natural Resources and U.S. Foreign Policy: Is 'Another Way' Possible?" This delegation offers opportunities to understand the impact of U.S. policies toward Venezuela; meet Venezuelan workers, community activists, political dissidents, labor organizers, scholars, and business people to discuss the economic, social, and political issues confronting Venezuela; learn about grassroots resistance to unjust global economic trends; witness the innovative social programs of the Chavez administration, including

land reform, health, and education; and discuss alternatives to current U.S. policies and ways to advocate for more just policies.

The price of this ten-day delegation is \$1,350, which includes meals, lodging, interpreters, transportation within Venezuela, and extensive reading materials and activist tools before and after the delegation. The fee does not cover airfare to and from Venezuela. Some fundraising assistance is available. Students may be able to arrange to receive academic credit. An application with



President Chavez giving land titles and farm machinery to farmers in the southern state of Apure.

non-refundable deposit of \$150 is due as soon as possible to reserve your place.

For more information and an application, please contact the delegation leaders, Julia Graff, 202-494-0560, jmgraft@gmail.com, and Nancy Gwin, 315-422-4689, ngwin@tcwny.rr.com.

Learn How U.S. Intervention in Venezuela Works

by John Mateyko

Over 24 years, Witness for Peace has sponsored more than 750 delegations to Latin America. A special WFP delegation, "A Delegation to Venezuela and the Washington Institutions of Domination," will take place January 31-February 13, 2007. Its goal is to examine how power is deployed against Venezuela by U.S. policy. The delegation begins in Washington, D.C. with meetings at the International Monetary Fund (IMF), U.S. State Department, USAID, and the National Endowment for Democracy (a subsidiary of the CIA). Next follows an evening of debriefing with former CIA top analyst Ray McGovern.

Then, in Venezuela, we will have extensive meetings with political parties, unions, think-tanks, human rights groups, and community organizations

to examine how U.S. intervention works. We will witness firsthand some of the most innovative social programs in the world and learn about grassroots resis-

tance to globalized economic violence.

Cost: \$1,399 + airfare covers all lodgings and most meals, transportation, and program set-up. The delegation is limited to 23 people. Apply ASAP as space is limited. Delegation leaders are: John Mateyko, WFP Mid-Atlantic coordinator, 302-645-2657 or charitocw@aol.com.



Hunger on the Border

To explore conditions for Mexican border workers, David Bacon interviewed Julia Quiñones, coordinator of the Border Committee of Women Workers, the Comité Fronterizo de Obreras (CFO), an organization of rank and file women, led by women and men who work in the maquiladoras with offices in Piedras Negras, Mexico. January 25, 2006

David: What are the effects of free trade and NAFTA, as you see them in your section of the border?

Julia: With the advent of NAFTA 11 years ago, the working conditions in the maquiladoras got much worse. Even those plants, which over the years had achieved better benefits and wages, began to move south into the interior of Mexico, where the salaries were much lower and the conditions worse.

David: Have salaries gone up in the years that NAFTA has been in effect?

Julia: Salaries have not gotten better; in fact, they're completely insufficient for anybody to live on. Workers continue to live in extreme poverty, and at the same time, many people still arrive in the border region looking for work. The cities are overloaded and don't provide basic services or infrastructure.

David: What is an average maquiladora factory wage?

Julia: The average salary for a maquiladora worker is US \$45 a week. This allows workers to buy just the basic things to eat. They can't buy cereals. No meat. They buy milk on rare occasions, if there are children. In Piedras Negras, a gallon of milk costs 45 pesos or about US \$4.50—twice as expensive [as in the U.S.]. If there's just one head of the family working, other members have to supplement their income by selling things like beauty products. Often people cross the border to sell their blood.

David: That means that somebody has

to work almost half a day just to buy a gallon of milk. What are the conditions in which people live?

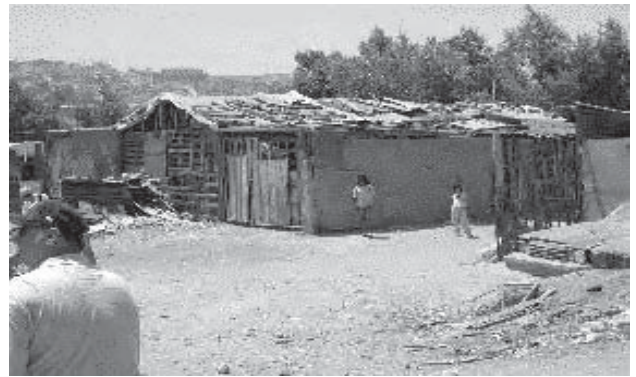
Julia: The lucky ones can acquire a house through the Mexican housing program, INFONAVIT. But if they do so they're really in debt to the Mexican government for the rest of their lives. Those houses are in slightly better condition. Otherwise, workers are forced to build their own houses out of whatever materials they can find—cardboard, or materials taken from the factories—in places that are completely inappropriate, along the sides of cliffs or in areas prone to flooding, like stream beds.

In the houses built by INFONAVIT, the government does provide electricity. The problem there is that the bills are very high. A monthly electricity bill might get up to 450 pesos, or US \$45, and a water bill 150 pesos per month, or US \$15. And the water is not drinkable. In other neighborhoods, where people squat and build their houses the best they can, the government doesn't provide services. People are reduced often to robbing power from electrical lines. Many times when you go into people's houses, you can see the wires run along the ground where kids are walking and playing around them.

David: Is there any form of labor protection that can be incorporated into agreements like NAFTA, that would guarantee workers rights?

Julia: NAFTA could be renegotiated to include effective and obligatory measures to enforce workers' rights. Holding transnational corporations accountable for complying with the law would be helpful to workers.

David: What about support from unions on the other side of the border?



Many maquiladora workers live in conditions similar to these eight years after NAFTA.—from the International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers website.

Julia: Right now, what's most important to us is developing a greater level of commitment to Mexican workers among U.S. unions.

David: What can an ordinary worker in the US do to be part of this?

Julia: The first thing workers can do is organize themselves and fight for their own jobs where they are. This is the first step towards building international solidarity. For the companies, there are simply no borders anymore or barriers to the movement of capital. We need to take a lesson from their mentality and build the same borderless solidarity and support for one another. If workers in the U.S. understand that Mexican workers face huge economic difficulties when they try to organize themselves, they can contribute economic support.

Supporting Mexican workers in the United States is important, too. The effort of Mexican and other immigrant workers to legalize their status is connected to our rights as workers in Mexico. If workers in the U.S. can't exercise fully their rights, it brings everybody down. Ultimately, the economic level of everybody has to come up. Corporations are very good at looking around the world to see where conditions are the worst, and move to that place. If we can help each other come up, they won't be able to do that.

For more information, see www.cfomaquiladoras.org.

Address correction requested

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Peace Activists Parade on Fourth of July in Swarthmore

This year for the first time since the Delco Pledge has been marching in the Swarthmore Fourth of July parade, the Pledge and other activists finally got their picture in the Swarthmorean. Pictured right are (l-r) Bob Small, Judy Goodrobb, Paula Bronstein, and Ron Coburn. Also marching this year was Pledge photographer Brad Bradlee, not pictured.



Joining the parade this year as in years past were members of the Brandywine Peace Community at left. The crowd along the parade route this year was small but supportive, applauding and cheering as the activists marched past.

