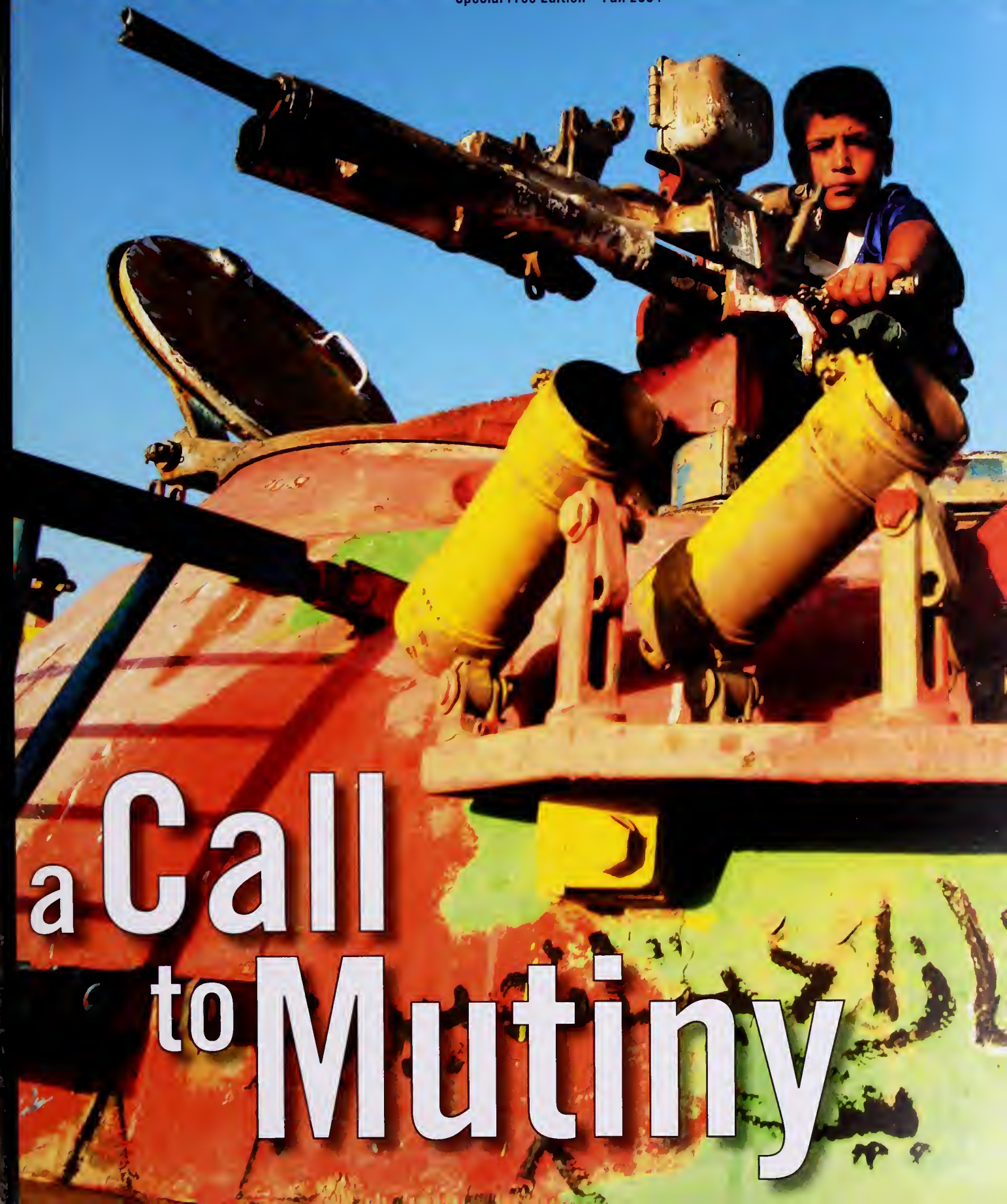


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The Revolution of Everyday Life

Special Free Edition • Fall 2004



a Call to Mutiny

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The Revolution of Everyday Life

September/October 2004 • Issue 20

Stop Me Before I Kill Again

Join the award-winning **Clamor Magazine** for our September/October issue as we present the myriad reasons George W. Bush needs to find a new career. Over the past four years, Clamor has been your main source for the revolution of everyday life, looking at culture, politics, media, sex and gender, and economics from the perspectives of **REAL PEOPLE** like you. This fall, we know there's one thing that's on your mind...

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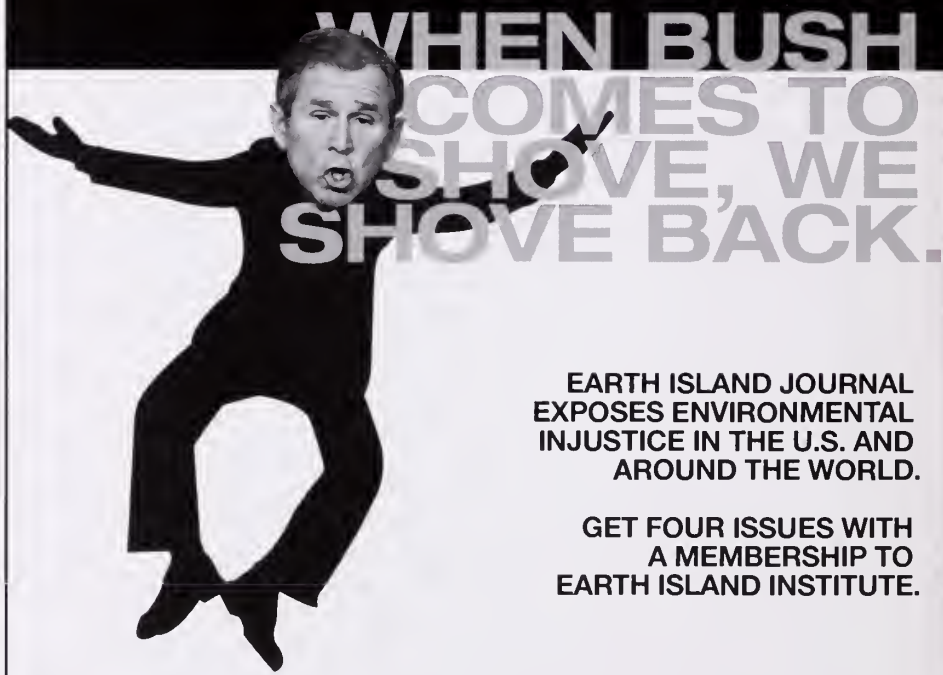
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from your editors

"Will Iraq be a democracy? The real question is will the US be a democracy?" – Howard Zinn

Call To Mutiny brings the call of resistance from Iraq to the shores of the US, telling of recent history's most successful challenge to US empire, and – we hope – inspiring folks to step out of our comfort zones and take audacious, creative, and intelligent action.

We see the protests in New York as being symbolic, and not just of our disgust at one administration's destructive policies. Our actions will show the world that resistance exists in the belly of the war-mongering beast. We hope to light a fire in the minds of empire's children; to show why mutiny is crucial at this critical time; to challenge our readers to rebel – to take actions which are fierce and joyous, playful and militant, defiant and effective. We hope to get people thinking beyond New York, beyond November 2, even beyond ending the occupations of Iraq and Palestine. Being in the streets during the RNC isn't enough; we must aim for making history, and to do that requires hope – hope that we find in the depth and breadth of the Iraqi resistance.

If you're following the corporate news about Iraq, you might think that the resistance comes from the fundamentalists, the fascists who wish to turn a largely secular Iraq into a right wing Islamicist state like Iran or Saudi Arabia. While that element certainly exists, it is but one facet of the resistance. Not everyone in the armed struggle see the infamous Muqtada al-Sad'r as a spiritual or political leader; some see him as a tool around which to organize, others despise him. The vast majority of the uprising is comprised of civilians engaging in everyday acts of defiance: using precious hours of electricity to upload stories about everyday life in Baghdad; risking their lives transporting the wounded through US military checkpoints; sending food to a city under seige; refusing to work for the occupying armies; researching and publishing the only credible count of civilian casualties; organizing local people to do reconstruction projects at a fraction of what the transnationals charge – these are the faces of Iraqi resistance, these are the faces of hope.

But hope is not a passive thing. It's a way of living – existing to resist, resisting in order to exist. To quote Rebecca Solnit's magnificent book *Hope in the Dark*: "Hope is an ax you break down doors with in an emergency; because hope should shove you out the door... because it will take everything you have to steer the future away from endless war.... Hope calls for action; action is impossible without hope."

And action ignites hope – hope because we have the power to reclaim memory from those who would impose oblivion, hope because we are more powerful than they can possibly imagine, hope because history is ours when we make it with our own hands.

See you in the streets,

xoxo

Jennifer Whitney and Andrew Stern

Jennifer Whitney is a writer, organizer, and musician. She works with the Black Cross Health Collective in Portland, Oregon, and co-founded and worked for four years with the Infernal Noise Brigade. Andrew Stern is a photographer and media activist whose work focuses on social and political issues around the world. His pictures can be seen on various Indymedia sites and in the many publications with which he works. Jennifer and Andrew collaborated on the publication Que Se Vayan Todos, about the financial crisis and concomitant uprising in Argentina, which was distributed widely in over 30 countries. They also are part of the Notes From Nowhere collective, which created the book, We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anticapitalism, published by Verso in September, 2003.

www.WeAreEverywhere.org | www.AndrewStern.net | www.blackcrosscollective.org
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Clamor would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the individuals whose generous donations made this special edition possible. Thank you all very much!

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Summer/Fall 2004

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on the cover: A young boy sits on a destroyed Iraqi tank near the border between Iraq and Kurdistan. Kurdish children beautifully painted the tank many different colors and pushed it to the border as a symbolic offering of peace to Arab children. Outside of Sulamaniyah, Iraq. June 21, 2003.
©Andrew Stern / AndrewStern.net

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Join the Global

It wasn't supposed to go down like this. When Karl Rove decided to hold the Republican National Convention in New York City, the plan was to use 9-11 as a dramatic backdrop from which to declare victory in Iraq. But there is no victory to declare in New York this month; instead, the mission is on the verge of collapse. And collapse it must because what is unfolding in Iraq is neoliberalism at its most brutish and obscene.

Our job – all of us who opposed this war, who oppose neoliberalism as a never-ending war, who are in New York City to confront the RNC – is to do our best to help that collapse along.

Five days after Bush landed on that infamous aircraft carrier and declared “mission accomplished,” he unveiled the real mission behind the war: there would be a free trade zone covering the entire Middle East in the next ten years, NAFTA for the Arab world. This is the true Bush doctrine: bomb first, buy later. Shock therapy through shock and awe military force. That is, and always has been, the true mission in Iraq, and it must never be accomplished.

As the voices in these pages attest, those of us who have spent time in Iraq in recent months know that this mission is failing. And it isn't just failing because of the staggering incompetence and crushing hypocrisy of the US occupation. It's also failing because the occupation has encountered wave, after wave, of tenacious, courageous resistance. Not only by armed Iraqi fighters, but other kinds of resistance as well.

Months of inflammatory US aggression in Iraq has inspired what can only be described as a mutiny: thousands of soldiers, workers, and politicians under the command of the US occupation authority are suddenly refusing to follow orders and abandoning their posts. First Spain announced it would withdraw its troops, then Honduras, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and Kazakhstan. South Korean and Bulgarian troops were pulled back to their bases, while New Zealand may withdraw its engineers. El Salvador, Norway, The Netherlands, and Thailand will likely be next.

Then there is the mutiny within the Iraqi army – a security force created and controlled by the US military. Since April, Iraqi soldiers have been in open revolt, donating their weapons to resistance fighters in the South and refusing to fight in Fallujah, saying that they didn't join the army to kill other Iraqis. Maj. Gen. Martin Dempsey, commander of the 1st Armored Division,

ABOVE The community coming together to rebuild the destroyed Al-Sadr offices in Sadr City. US troops shot the offices with guided missiles, machine gun and tank cannon fire, and then proceeded to move in on foot and rip up and shoot copies of the Koran and pictures of Shia religious leaders. Baghdad, Iraq, April 8, 2004. ©Andrew Stern / AndrewStern.net

admits that “about 40 percent [of Iraqi security officers] walked off the job because of intimidation. And about 10 percent actually worked against us.”

And it's not just Iraq's soldiers who have been deserting the occupation. Four ministers of the Iraqi Governing Council have resigned their posts in protest. Remember, these are the people who got their jobs because they were thought to be willing puppets of the US occupation – but now even the puppets are refusing to perform. In addition, more than half the Iraqis with jobs in the secured “green zone” – as translators, drivers, cleaners – are not showing up for work. And Al-Sabah, the psy-ops newspaper created by the US military, lost its entire staff in May after they walked off the job in protest against editorial interference. You know your occupation is in trouble when even the propagandists turn on you.

Minor mutinous signs are emerging even within the ranks of the US military: Privates Jeremy Hinzman and Brandon Hughey have applied for refugee status in Canada as conscientious objectors and Staff Sgt. Camilo Mejia is facing court martial after he refused to return to Iraq on the grounds that he no longer knew what the war was about [at press time, he was dishonorably discharged, sentenced to a year in prison, and demoted to Private – ed]. Higher ranking officers have echoed the sentiment. Army Colonel Paul Hugues, who helped formulate policy for the war, told the Washington Post in May that, “we don't understand the war we're in.” And let's not forget that it was a US soldier who first blew the whistle on torture at the Abu Ghraib prison, an unsung act of courage with world-changing consequences.

As thousands of us gather in New York City this month, the anti-occupation mutiny – which has already spread from Iraq to Spain to

Sadr City, and Najaf. In only a few short weeks this spring, the US managed to turn a resistance movement that began with small numbers of Saddam loyalists operating in the shadows into something akin to an Iraqi Intifada. The war against the occupation is now being fought out in the open by regular people defending their homes and neighborhoods. In addition to swelling the ranks of the resistance, the US has also managed to unite its enemies. When simultaneous assaults were launched on Fallujah and Najaf in April, Sunnis and Shias both were forced to bury their children and witness the desecration of their holy sites. Many responded to this shared tragedy by burying ancient rivalries and joining forces. Instead of the civil war between Sunnis and Shias that Washington has been predicting,



On the day before the anniversary of the invasion, thousands of Shia and Sunni Iraqis protested for an end to the US led occupation in a strong show of unity between the two religious groups. Baghdad, Iraq, March 19, 2004. ©Andrew Stern / AndrewStern.net

Mutiny

by Naomi Klein

Honduras to the backrooms of the US military— is about to arrive on George Bush's doorstep.

Rebelling against the US authority in Iraq is neither treachery, nor is it giving “false comfort to terrorists,” as Bush claimed when he scolded Spain's new Prime Minister. It is an entirely rational and principled response to policies that have put everyone living and working under US command in grave and unacceptable danger. When the commander has lost it, mutiny is the only sane response. This is a view shared by fifty-two former British diplomats, who in April sent a letter to Prime Minister Tony Blair stating, “there is no case for supporting policies which are doomed to failure.”

And the US occupation of Iraq does appear doomed on all fronts — military, political, and economic:

The Military Front

We see the gruesome evidence of military failure every day: a dramatically rising death toll, both among Iraqis and occupation forces; war crimes committed not just in the prisons but in the streets of Fallujah,

the US inadvertently created a united front — united against the occupation.

The Political Front

The idea that the United States intends to bring real democracy to Iraq is now irredeemably discredited, even in the eyes of Iraqis who dared to hope that the freedom they longed for under dictatorship could flow from this war. They may be overjoyed to be rid of Saddam Hussein, but nobody is waiting for US tanks to deliver democracy anymore. Too many relatives of Iraqi Governing Council members have landed plum jobs and rigged contracts, too many groups demanding direct elections have been fired upon, too many newspapers have been closed down, too many mosques have been destroyed and too many Arab journalists have been murdered while trying to do their jobs.

The Economic Front

White House plans to turn Iraq into a model “free” market economy are in equally rough shape, plagued by corruption scandals and the

“It's going to take a while for [Iraqis] to understand what freedom is all about.” — George W. Bush

“The Iraqi people now equate democracy with bloodshed.” — Hachim Hassani [a representative of the Iraqi Islamic Party]

rage of Iraqis who have seen few benefits – either in services or jobs – from the reconstruction. Corporate trade shows have been canceled across the country, investors are relocating to Amman, and Iraq’s Housing Minister estimates that more than 1,500 foreign contractors have fled the country to avoid the violence and kidnappings. Bechtel, meanwhile, admits that it can no longer operate “in the hot spots” (and there are precious few cold ones); truck drivers are afraid to travel the

people of Iraq, who have suffered so long under dictatorship, war, sanctions, and now occupation, to do everything we can to help them achieve their goal of real sovereignty and self-determination.

But how do we do that? Easy: we listen to the voices on the streets of Baghdad, Basra, Najaf, and Fallujah. Even in the midst of enormous daily suffering and unimaginable insecurities, Iraqis have made their desires for genuine sovereignty abundantly clear. Hundreds of thousands have taken to the streets chanting “Yes, Yes Election! No, No Selections!” There is also widespread rejection of the interim constitution, written by US occupation chief Paul Bremer and his appointees on the Iraqi Governing Council. The document is seen as a thinly veiled attempt by the US to continue to control Iraq’s future long after Iraqi “sovereignty” has been declared. It contains a clause which states: “The laws, regulations, orders, and directives issued by the Coalition Provisional Authority... shall remain in force” under Iraq’s “sovereign” government. (These laws include Bremer’s Order 39, which drastically changed Iraq’s previous constitution to allow foreign companies to own 100 percent of Iraqi assets, and to take 100 percent of their profits out of the country). In other words, the constitution makes it illegal for Iraqis to change the laws written by their occupiers.

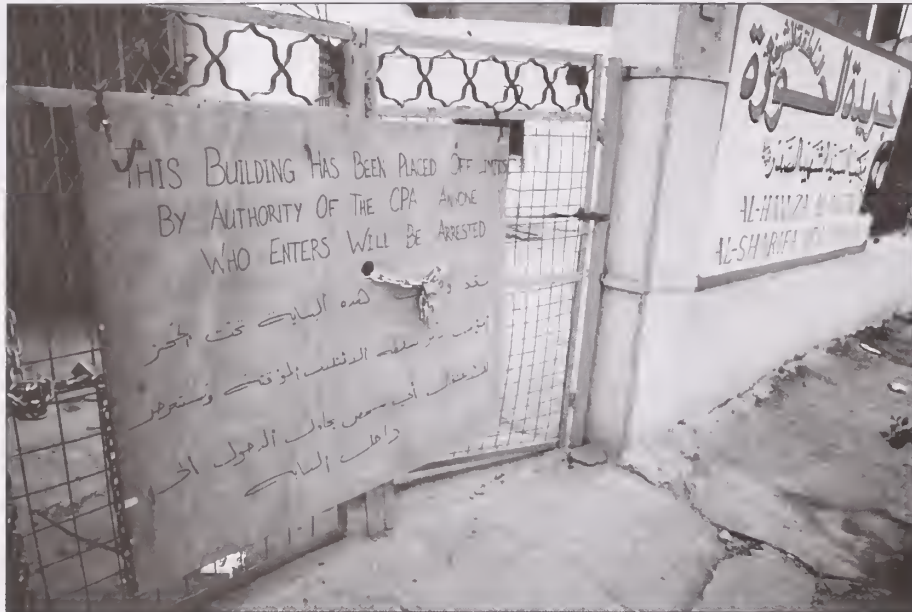
Yet Iraqis have made it clear that they oppose the privatization of the oil industry and of state companies because they fear more layoffs in a country where unemployment is already around 60 percent. They also oppose US plans to continue to control billions of dollars in reconstruction funds, which they rightly see as their money – not Bechtel’s or Halliburton’s. Again and again, Iraqis have told politicians, journalists, pollsters, and religious leaders that they want to rebuild their ravaged country themselves, using their knowledge, experience, and their own people.

But by far the clearest demand is for the occupation of Iraq to end.

So far, the Bush regime has proven deaf to these demands coming from the Iraqi people. The hated constitution stands, elections have been postponed, and US engineers have begun construction on 14 “enduring bases” in Iraq, capable of housing the 110,000 soldiers posted for at least two more years. Which is why it’s our job to bring these demands from the occupied streets of Baghdad to the militarized streets of New York City. And the demands are clear:

Troops Out Now

Many argue that if the US were to withdraw, the country would descend into chaos. John Kerry believes *more* troops are needed, to provide security for the transition process. But US troops provide security to no one – not to the Iraqis, not to their fellow soldiers, not to the UN. American soldiers have become a direct provocation to *more* violence, not only because of the brutality of the occupation in Iraq but also be-



The offices of Al-Hawza newspaper, run by supporters of the radical Shia cleric Muqtada Al-Sad'r. The newspaper office was forcibly shut down by CPA authorities who claim the newspaper was printing information inciting people to violence. March 30, 2004. ©Andrew Stern /AndrewStern.net

roads with valuable goods; and General Electric has suspended work on key power stations. The only private companies doing any serious work in Iraq are the security firms, renting out tens of thousands of highly paid mercenary soldiers and prison guards. Reconstruction may be stalled, but the destruction business is still booming.

Taken together, the crisis facing the US in Iraq is nearly complete: its “liberating” soldiers are despised as occupiers, its politicians are viewed as thieves, and its businesses can neither buy nor rebuild. But a US failure is not the same as a victory for the people of Iraq – anything could fill the vacuum that is being created, from oppressive religious fundamentalism, to US-installed dictatorship, to decades of civil warfare. Besides, the ideologues who waged this war have not given up; if anything, they have become more desperate to win, more bloodily determined to extract the spoils of their war, whatever the cost.

So this isn’t a moment for the anti-war movement to be satisfied with self-congratulation and I-told-you-sos – that’s not good enough. Rather, we have to use this window of weakness to make our demands for meaningful change in Iraq – and we have to make them with even more clarity and forcefulness than that with which we opposed the war. Because we opposed the invasion of Iraq not out of any love for Saddam, but because, behind the rhetoric of “liberation,” many of us detected the most savage and ambitious expression of imperialism in recent history. Now that this project is collapsing, we owe it to the

“Economic oppression and military repression are flip sides of the same globalization coin. The economic rape of the poor that accompanies globalization could not stand without the repressive military apparatus that brutalizes people who rise up to resist. Those who oppose the globalization of greed and those who work to end US training of repressive foreign armies are joined in one effort.”

– Hendrik Voss, SOA Watch

cause of US support for Israel's deadly occupation of Palestinian territory. In the minds of many Iraqis, the two occupations have blended into a single anti-Arab outrage, with Israeli and US soldiers viewed as interchangeable and Iraqis openly identifying with Palestinians.

Without US troops, the major incitement to violence would be removed, allowing the country to be stabilized with far fewer soldiers. Iraq would still face security challenges – there would still be extremists willing to die to impose Islamic law, as well as attempts by Saddam loyalists to regain power. On the other hand, with Sunnis and Shiites now united against the occupation, it's the best possible moment for an honest broker to negotiate an equitable power-sharing agreement.

With that in mind, combat troops who participated in the invasion and occupation could be replaced with genuine peacekeepers, made up of Iraqis from every part of the country, and from neighboring Arab states. But what cannot be allowed to happen is a rebranded occupation under the UN flag. To prevent this, any stabilizing force in Iraq must have two jobs and two jobs only. First, it must secure the country for immediate elections so that Iraqis can directly choose their own government. Second, it must ensure that by the time Iraqis get to the polls, there is still something left to vote for. That means fiercely fending off all attempts to shackle the future government of Iraq to the US military and economic agenda.

So...

Ditch the Interim Constitution

The document is a blue print for outsourcing the occupation. It is illegal, illegitimate, and must be discarded. Some argue that it is needed to prevent open elections from delivering the country to religious extremists. Yet according to a February 2004 poll by Oxford Research International, Iraqis have no desire to see their country turned into another Iran. Asked to rate their favored political system and actors, 48.5 percent of Iraqis ranked a "democracy" as most important, while an "Islamic state" received 20.5 percent support. If Iraqis are given the chance to vote their will, there is every reason to expect that the results will reflect a balance between their faith and their secular aspirations.

Put the Money in Trust

A crucial plank of any transition to real sovereignty is safeguarding Iraq's national assets: its oil revenue, the remaining oil for food program money (currently administered by the United States with no oversight), as well as what's left of the \$18.4 billion in reconstruction funds still being controlled by the US. All of it must be put in trust, to be spent by an elected Iraqi government. And it's not enough for the troops to go home; Halliburton, Bechtel, Shell, and Dyncorp have to go home too.

No Privatization Without Representation

The laws Paul Bremer passed to allow Iraq to be sold off to foreign investors were illegal to start with and no future government of Iraq should be bound by them. But there are other, less visible ways that Washington is trying to force Iraq's next government to follow the neoliberal rule book. It has already begun the process of getting membership for Iraq in the World Trade Organization, and it has started negotiating the terms for an extensive loan package from the International Monetary Fund. Both these processes violate the most basic principles of national sovereignty and must be halted, leaving all decisions about Iraq's economic future to an elected government.

Full Reparations Now

Instead of the status quo of disguising robbery as reconstruction, Iraq must receive massive war reparations, to be administered by the people of Iraq as they choose. The sum must cover not only the rebuilding of bombed out infrastructure, but also the humanitarian crisis created by war, sanctions, and occupation. This level of financial compensation will give Iraqis something more important than money – it will give them the freedom not to sell off their national assets if they choose, as well as the freedom not to give up their sovereignty in exchange for an IMF or World Bank loan.

Demonstration against a future war on Iraq. San Francisco, US. October 26, 2002. ©Peter Maiden / SF Bay Indymedia



No matter how many times George Bush declares victory, a simple fact remains: this war isn't over yet. I won't say that we can win, because to speak of winning is to succumb to its barbaric logic. But there is something we can do: we can keep *them* from winning. We can make them lose – lose their power over Iraq, lose their military bases, lose their corrupt reconstruction contracts, lose their free trade zone, lose their dream of a privatized Iraq. And that would be a victory. Because the damage of this war cannot be undone. But at least the men who waged it can be taught that it doesn't pay to set our world on fire and try to turn a profit off the ashes.

Naomi Klein is the author of No Logo (Picador) and a columnist with The Nation magazine.

“National Day”?

For Whose Victory? For Whose Nation?

by Riverbend

Occupation Day – April 9, 2003

The last few days, I’ve been sorely trying to avoid a trip down memory lane. I flip the channel every time they show shots of Baghdad up in flames, I turn off the radio as they begin to talk about the first few days of occupation, and I quietly leave the room as family members begin, “Remember how....” No, I don’t *want* to remember some of the worst days of my life. I wish there was some way one could selectively delete certain memories as one does files on a computer.

But today, I’m letting my mind wander back to last April quite freely. April 9, 2003 in particular – the day our darling puppet [Iraqi General] Council has chosen as our “National Day” – the day the occupation became not a possibility, but a definite reality.

The day began with heavy bombing. I remember waking up at five am to a huge explosion. The hair almost stood on my head. We were all sleeping in the living room because the drapes are heavy and offered some small security against shattering glass. E. in-

The entrance point of the tank shell that killed Murtada Muhammad, age 4, in his family home on Block 37 of Sad'r City's Chuadir District, Baghdad, Iraq, April 7, 2004. ©Andrew Stern / AndrewStern.net



stantly jumped up and ran to make sure the Kalashnikov was loaded properly and I tried to cover my cousin's children better with the heavy blankets. The weather was already warm, but the blankets would protect the kids against glass. Their older daughter was, luckily, still sound asleep - lost in a dream or nightmare. The younger one lay in the semi-dark, with eyes wide open. I sensed her trying to read my face for some small reassurance. I smiled tightly, "Go back to sleep."

After a few more colossal explosions we all knew sleep would be useless. It was still too early for breakfast and no one was in the mood anyway. My mother and I got up to check our bags, packed and waiting by the door. We had packed them during the first few days of war; they contained sturdy clothes, bottles of water, important documents (like birth certificates and ID papers), and some spare money. They were to remain by the door in case the ceiling came crashing down or the American tanks came plowing through the neighborhood. In either case, we were given specific instructions to run for the door and take out the bags: "Don't wait for anyone - just run and take the bags with you," were our orders.

Our neighborhood was one of the more volatile areas. We had helicopters hovering above, fighter planes, and explosions. An area just across the main street had been invaded by tanks and we could hear the gun shots and tanks all night. My mother stood, unsure, at the window, trying to see the street. Were we supposed to evacuate? Were we supposed to stay in the house and wait? What was going to happen? E. and my cousin volunteered to ask the neighbors their plans.

They came back five minutes later. E. was pale and my cousin looked grim. Everyone on our street was in the same quandary - what was to be done? E. said that while there were a few men in the streets in our immediate area, the rest of Baghdad seemed almost empty. We discussed leaving the house and heading for my uncle's home on the other side of Baghdad, but my cousin said that that would be impossible - the roads were all blocked, the bridges were cut off by American tanks, and even if we were lucky enough to get anywhere near my uncle's area, we risked being shot by a tank or helicopter. No, we would wait it out at home.

My cousin's wife was wide awake by then. She sat between her two children and held them close on either side. She hadn't spoken to her parents in almost a week now; there were no telephones and there was no

way to get to their area. She was beyond terrified at this crucial point, and she was certain that they were all dead or dying. The only thing that seemed to be keeping her functioning was the presence of her two young daughters.

At that point, my mind was numb. All I could do was react to the explosions - flinch when one was particularly powerful, and automatically say a brief prayer of thanks when another was further away. Every once in a while, my brain would clear enough to do some mindless chore, like fill the water pots or fold the blankets, but otherwise I felt numb.

It was almost noon when the explosions calmed somewhat and I risked going outside for a few moments. The planes were freely coming and going, and along with the sound of distant gunshots, only they pierced the eerie silence. My mother joined me outside a few minutes later and stood next to me under a small olive tree.

"In case we have to leave, there are some things I want to be sure you know," she said. I nodded vaguely, studying a particularly annoying plane we were calling *buggeh* or bug, as it made the sound of a mosquito while it flew. We later learned it was a surveyor plane that scanned certain areas for resistance or Iraqi troops.

"The documents in the bag contain the papers for the house, the car." I was alert. I turned to her and asked, "But why are you telling me this - you know I know. We packed the stuff together, and *you* know everything anyway." She nodded assent, but added, "Well, I just want to be sure in case something happens, if we..."

"You mean if we get separated for some reason?" I finished quickly. "Yes, if we get - separated - fine. You have to know where everything is and what it is." I was fighting hard against tears. I swallowed with difficulty and concentrated harder on the planes above. I wondered how many parents and kids were having this very same conversation today. She continued talking for a few moments after introducing a new and terrible possibility that I hadn't dared to think about all this time - life after death. Not eternal life after death - that was nothing new - but the possibility of *our* life - mine and E.'s - after *their* death.

During the war, the possibility of death was a constant. There were moments when I was sure we'd all be dead in a matter of seconds - especially during the horrific "shock and awe" period. But I always took it for granted that we'd all die together - as a fam-

ily. We'd either survive together or die together, it was always that simple. This new possibility was one I refused to think about.

As we sat there - she talking, and I retreating further and further into the nightmare of words - there was a colossal explosion that made the windows rattle and even seemed to shake the sturdy trees in the little garden. I jumped, relieved for the very first time in my life to hear that sound. It was the end of that morbid conversation, and all I could think was, "saved by the bomb."

We spent the rest of the day listening to the battery-powered radio and trying to figure out what was happening around us. We heard stories from the neighbors about a massacre in A'adhamiya - the Americans were shooting left and right; there were deaths and looting in the south. The streets were unsafe and the only people risking them were those seeking refuge in other areas, or the looters who began to descend on homes, schools, universities, museums, government buildings, and institutions like a group of vultures on the carcass of a freshly dead lion.

Day faded into night - the longest day of my life. The day we first sensed that the struggle in Baghdad was over and the fear of war was nothing compared to the new fear we were currently facing. It was the day I saw my first American tank roll grotesquely down the streets of Baghdad, through a residential neighborhood.

And that was April 9 for me and millions of others. There are thousands who weren't so lucky, who lost loved ones on April 9 to guns, tanks, and Apache helicopters. Now the current Governing Council want us to remember April 9 fondly and hail it our "National Day," a day of victory. But whose victory? And whose nation?

One Year Later - April 9, 2004

Today, the day the Iraqi Puppets hail "National Day," will mark the day of the Fallujah massacre. Bremer has called for a truce and ceasefire in Fallujah very recently and claimed that the bombing will stop, but the bombing continues as I write this. Over 300 are dead in Fallujah [*this number will more than double in subsequent days - ed.*] and they have taken to burying the dead in the town soccer field because they aren't allowed near the cemetery. The bodies are decomposing in the heat and the people are struggling to bury them as quickly as they arrive. The soccer field that once supported running, youthful feet and cheering fans has turned into a mass grave holding men, women, and children.

The people in Fallujah have been trying to get the women and children out of the town for the last 48 hours but all the roads out of the city are closed by the Americans, and refugees are being shot at and bombed on a regular basis. We're watching the television and crying. The hospital is overflowing with victims who have lost arms and legs, who have lost loved ones. There isn't enough medicine or bandages.

What are the Americans doing?! This is collective punishment. Is this their "solution" to the chaos in which we're living? Is this the "hearts and minds" part of the campaign?

A convoy carrying food, medication, blood, and doctors left for Fallujah yesterday, hoping to get in and help the people in there. Some people from our neighborhood were gathering bags of flour and rice to take into the town. E. and I rummaged the house from top to bottom and came up with a big sack of flour, a couple of smaller bags of rice, a few kilos of assorted dry lentils, chickpeas, etc. But today I spoke with an Iraqi doctor who told me that the whole convoy was denied entry. Now they are trying to get the women and children out – at least the very sick and wounded.



Shia Muslims in 'Sad'r City chant and express their anger as they prepare to donate blood for Sunni Muslims injured in Fallujah when US forces bombed a mosque. As the occupation army increases repression of communities throughout Iraq, these instances of unity between Shia and Sunni become more common. Baghdad, Iraq April 8, 2004 ©Andrew Stern / AndrewStern.net

The south isn't much better; the casualties are rising and there's looting and chaos. There's an almost palpable anger in Baghdad. The faces are grim and sad all at once and there's a feeling of helplessness that can't be described in words. It's like being held under water and struggling for the unattainable surface, seeing all this destruction and devastation.

Firdos Square, where the statue was brought down, is off-limits because the Americans fear angry mobs and demonstrations, but it



A man killed the night before during clashes with US troops in Sad'r City, Baghdad, Iraq, April 7, 2004. ©Andrew Stern / AndrewStern.net

doesn't matter because people are sticking to their homes. The kids haven't been to school for several days now and even the universities are empty. The situation in Baghdad feels very unstable, and the men in the neighborhood are talking of a neighborhood watch again – just like the early days of occupation.

Where are the useless Iraqi Governing Council? Why aren't they condemning the killings in the south and in Fallujah?! Why aren't they sitting that fool Bremer down and telling him that this is wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong? If one of them were half a man or even half a human, they would threaten to resign their posts if there isn't an immediate cease-fire. The people are enraged. This latest situation proves that they aren't Iraqi anymore – they aren't here for the welfare of the Iraqi people.

The American and European news stations don't show the dying Iraqis – they don't show the women and children bandaged and bleeding, the mother looking for some sign of her son in the middle of a puddle of blood and dismembered arms and legs. They don't show you the hospitals overflowing with the dead and dying because they

"Why should we hear about body bags and deaths? Oh, I mean, it's not relevant. So why should I waste my beautiful mind on something like that?"

– Barbara Bush, March 18, 2003, ABC's "Good Morning America."

don't want to hurt American feelings. But American people should see it. You should see the price of your war and occupation. It's unfair that the Americans are fighting a war thousands of miles from home. They get their dead in neat, tidy caskets draped with a flag, and we have to gather and scrape our dead off of the floors and hope the American shrapnel and bullets left enough to make a definite identification

One year later, and Bush has achieved what he wanted. This day – our "National Day" – will go down in history and in the memory of all Iraqis as one of the bloodiest yet.

Riverbend is a young Iraqi woman living in Baghdad whose prolific web log is one of the best resources for learning about everyday life in Occupied Iraq. <http://riverbendblog.blogspot.com/>



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Hold Your Head High. You Are In Fallujah!

by Amer Jubran

The Chinese military philosopher Sun Tzu once said: "To win a war, you must know yourself, then your enemy." Apparently, the US does not know either itself or its enemy. Blinded with the arrogance of racism and military superiority, Uncle Sam is being subjected to a severe beating by the Iraqi resistance. It is absolutely sensational to watch the outnumbered and poorly equipped Iraqi volunteers, without a central command or logistics supply lines, fight back with their thin bodies (after 14 years of sanctions) against the most powerful empire in the history of humankind.

The military adventure of Uncle Sam in Iraq – "Operation Iraqi Freedom" – has given the world a lesson in geography as towns such as Baquba, Ramadi, and Abu Ghraib are making headlines more than Washington or London.

When superior militaries attack those who have only bravery and determination with which to defend themselves, they only add to that special list of legendary battles which includes the Paris Commune, Stalingrad, Beirut, Jenin, and Gaza. On April 9, 2004, one year after the supposed fall of Baghdad, Fallujah was added to the list.

After 14 years of searching for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, the US finally managed to discover huge caches in Fallujah. This discovery was of an unconventional weapon called "popular resistance," whose destructive capacity caught Uncle Sam completely by surprise. The well-armed, and well-trained – "the Few, the Proud, the Marines" – who were dispatched to Fallujah reacted with fear, confusion, and panic. These mercenaries

were told that they were signing up for a turkey shoot, a cakewalk, and would get in return a job, a scholarship, a home loan, adventure, world travel, and a safe return to the US. The crash course on Iraq offered by the US military to new cadets failed to mention that Iraqis are human beings who have

integrity, sovereignty, and freedom. There should have been a prerequisite course on Vietnam offered to these killers-in-training. Like the Vietnamese, Uncle Sam failed to gauge the determination of the Iraqi people to fight back.

The weapons used by the Iraqi resistance today are not made in high-tech factories, imported from abroad, or bought in defense contractor trade shows. What makes up this resistance is very hard for Uncle Sam to analyze, poisoned as he is with power. The cold-faced invaders from cowboyland must learn a lesson about Iraq's weapons. These are weapons of daring, gallantry, valor, and heroism – none of which are possessed by the invader.

One year after its armed invasion, the US has failed to win the hearts of the Iraqis by failing to restore order or provide security and economic prosperity. Also, it failed in benefiting from the black gold it

seized from Iraq. Its only success was in playing to perfection the part of the occupying imperialist army.

The US's biggest failure, however, was its inability to intimidate and terrorize the Iraqi resistance. This resistance chose its own time to declare itself after Bush announced in May of 2003, on the deck of a US Navy aircraft carrier, the end of all military operations in Iraq. Between then and now, the resistance rolled like a snowball to cover all of the country. It progressed in its lethality and the quality of its operations to make the air and land of all Iraq unsafe for Uncle Sam.

Fallujah was the beginning of this resistance, and is its center and backbone now.

The barbaric US assault on Fallujah is aimed at the heart of resistance against the US occupation of Iraq. The choice of the resistance to switch from hit-and-run guerrilla warfare to direct confrontation is one to be examined closely. This decision inspired the whole Iraqi population to take up arms. Groups of fighters in hundreds are forming and confronting the US army and its allies everywhere they find it. A huge front

opened up from east to west, and from north to south of Iraq. It is Uncle Sam's worst nightmare – a total armed uprising.

Thankfully, this revolt saved the whole planet from a disgusting propaganda display scheduled for the anniversary of the proclaimed April 9 victory over Iraq a year ago. The whole world was spared from hearing Bush, Blair, Rumsfeld, and Powell brag about how the Iraqis are free. The resistance spoiled the ceremony.

The debate during the Vietnam War was built around the question, "Can we win in Vietnam?" rather than, "Why are we attacking a defenseless nation?" This time in Iraq, if the debate admits the obvious moral question: "How are we freeing Iraqis by bombing them with cluster bombs?" then less excuses will be available to people like bin Laden to justify another September 11. If this doesn't happen, then the American public need no longer ask "Why do they hate us?" They will know why.

The whole world owes Fallujah a tribute. Through the sacrifice of Iraqi fighters, the entire world has been shown the bloodsucking nature of US empire. The resistance in Fallujah is a lesson to all who choose to resist a life of oppression.

During a TV interview, one of the resistance members of Fallujah said: "We will fight until our last bullet, our last drop of blood. We hold our heads high in the sky, because we are in al-Fallujah."

Amer Jubran is a Palestinian human rights activist who lived and organized on the East Coast for nearly half his life. Founding member of Boston's New England Committee to Defend Palestine, he was arrested at his home on trumped up immigration charges two days after NECDP's first public demonstration. After a lengthy court battle, he was eventually deported to Jordan.



A resistance fighter in the Mahdi Army outside the Muqtada Al-Sadr's offices in Sadr City, Baghdad, Iraq, April 6, 2004.
©Andrew Stern / AndrewStern.net

"War is God's way of teaching Americans geography"

– Ambrose Bierce

the Kill Zone

Moving Wounded in Fallujah

The first thing you notice is the silence. An unnerving, horrible quiet without the sound of voices, car engines, children playing, or televisions. Even the birds are wise enough to have gone elsewhere. And yet we are in a small city in the middle of the day.

by David Martínez

We passed the last *mujaheddin* patrol two blocks ago, and they waved us through when our escort told them what we were there for. To evacuate wounded, and to collect the dead.

We drop out of the truck and start walking, our passports held high in our otherwise empty hands. We leave our Iraqi driver and guide and enter the crushing quiet of the Kill Zone – the no man’s land between the rebels and the American forces – somewhere inside the town of Fallujah.

The team is made up of myself, a British woman, and an Iraqi woman. On the way in, I grab the Brit’s hand and squeeze it. “For luck,” I say, and I think I will remember the wink she gives me for the rest of my life.

No one, and I mean no one, is on the empty streets. We advance cautiously for about 50 yards, and then someone opens the door of a house, gesturing frantically around a corner with wild eyes. We can see what he is pointing at: a man lies in the street, covered in blood, a Kalashnikov still slung around his body. To retrieve him, however, will mean walking into American sniper fire.

If we carefully look through cracks in the brick wall that leads to the street, we can see them. Three soldiers in shooting positions, aiming straight down the way toward the victim. The situation is further complicated by a car that stands abandoned behind the prone man, all four doors hanging open as if the occupants have suddenly fled. Around it are scattered several rocket propelled grenades (RPGs) and rockets. So if we attempt to do anything, the Americans will assume we are enemy fighters.

The Brit tries first. “HELLO!” she yells.

“Can you hear me?” No response. I give it a try. “We are a medical emergency team! We want to retrieve this man in the street!” Maybe it’s the American accent. “Go ahead!” yells someone. “Okay! We’re coming out! Don’t shoot!” I reply.

We leave the safety of the wall and enter the street. The three Americans look at us like we’re insane. We go to the victim and immediately see he is gone: rigor mortis has even set in. We pick him up and start to carry him through the dead streets back toward the waiting truck. After we have gone about a block, one of the Americans yells from behind us, “Hey!” We stop. “Drop your weapons!” I want to laugh. But it’s not funny. Or maybe it is. “We don’t have any weapons!” He nods. “Oh. Okay!” We resume hauling the corpse to the truck.

Entering Fallujah was difficult, but not impossible. We came in along the back roads, following the scintillating Furat river (called the Euphrates by the colonizers), past beautiful date groves, villages of clay houses, and herds of goats. The air is marvelously dry, clean, and bright – the polar opposite of Baghdad’s choking, fume-ridden skies. It is a fantastic and timeless landscape.

We are a group of six internationals bringing medical supplies to the town in a chartered bus. Along the way, we pass a stream of vehicles headed the opposite direction, evacuating women and children. On our own path we are joined by minivans and pickups, also carrying medical and other supplies into the besieged city. People stand by the roadside, offering water and food to anyone helping their city. At one point, a group of young boys literally throws bread

and rolls into our bus, hitting us in the heads. The murderous operation against Fallujah has indeed united Iraqis in solidarity.

As we get closer, every crossroads is guarded by groups of masked *mujaheddin* wielding rifles. They wave us on and shout "Bravo!" in Arabic. The people's spirit is strong here, and they intend to fight to the death against the Americans.

This venture has been arranged by a friend of ours, an Iraqi activist and professional bodyguard who has the necessary contacts to ensure our safety. He is tall, with a moustache, tiny glasses, and a paunch, and is given to relentless chain smoking. He is also, incidentally, barking mad. But in some situations, it's only the craziest people that you can trust.

When we first arrive in Fallujah, we go immediately to a hospital, which is really a converted clinic, and deliver the medical supplies. We haven't been there ten minutes when casualties start arriving. A car screeches around the corner and slams to a stop in front of the hospital. Volunteers scramble for stretchers while young *mujaheddin*, faces

covered by *keffiyahs*, scan the horizon. A family – a mother and two children – are removed from the vehicle. They have all been shot, and are screaming in pain. We help bring them inside the already crowded building.

We are shown an ambulance that the Iraqis say was shot up by the Americans. It has bullet holes in the front windows, sides, and top. They say the Americans do not respect international law, and openly attack ambulances.

Our Iraqi host soon wades through the crowd to find us. "I need volunteers!" he shouts, his preferred method of communication. "Now!" "To do what, exactly?" someone enquires. "Retrieve wounded persons!" My hand goes up, and the next thing I know,

"International solidarity is not an act of charity: It is an act of unity between allies fighting on different terrains toward the same objective. The foremost of these objectives is to aid the development of humanity to the highest level possible."

– Samora Machel, leader of the Front for Liberation of Mozambique

myself, the Brit, and the Iraqi woman are standing in the back of a truck, with a grimly smiling Fallujah man next to us who waves a Red Crescent flag and sings "*Allah akhbar*, God is great," as we roll towards the Kill Zone. A fighter holding an RPG-7 waves at us as we pass him.

We return successfully to the hospital with the dead body, to find that our Iraqi activist friend

has driven an ambulance through American sniper positions to move wounded people. He returns shortly, his mission accomplished, and the shooting victims are carried into the building.

By now night has fallen. Nevertheless, on the next ambulance run, our team of three volunteers offers to help. As we mount the

Raad Daier, who was hit by a bullet when a US humvee opened fire on him while driving his ambulance carrying six people injured by US forces in Sad'r City, Baghdad, Iraq, April 7, 2004. ©Andrew Stern / AndrewStern.net



van, I squeeze the Brit's hand and she winks at me. Then away we go. Our Iraqi guide drives murderously fast, and as we wheel around one corner, he yells, "Snipers!" and we all hit the floor of the van.

But there are no shots fired, and we arrive at another clinic in a different part of town to move wounded patients to the main hospital. We run with rolling gurneys through the dark, there being no electricity in Fallujah at the moment, and load the patients to the ambulance for another harrowing ride back.

As soon as we arrive at the hospital, staff tell us there is a pregnant woman in premature labor that needs to come to the hospital. So we are off again to another part of town. This time there is no warning from the driver – only a rifle crack as American snipers open fire on our ambulance.

Riding in the back, I can see the flash of the gun as bullets pierce the walls of the vehicle above our heads. Thank God I am on the floor. Another shooter blows out our headlights, and I hear the Brit, who is in the front seat, scream as pieces of engine spray into the cabin. Then they take out our front tires. It is madness – we are in a clearly marked ambulance, with a flashing, noisy siren, and they are shooting at us. Another bullet rips into the engine as the driver throws the vehicle into reverse. We hit a curb doing about ninety miles an hour, which takes out the rear tires. We screech back to the hospital on rims alone.

That's the last trip for that night, as the ambulance is, for the moment, beyond repair. We watch more casualties arrive in private cars, including a severely burned man who was hit by cluster bombs, who breathlessly prays as he is carried inside.

It is now late, and since there is not much we can do at the clinic, we retire to our quarters for the night. We are led along dark streets, keeping close to the walls, while red and orange military flares shoot overhead and rocket fire is heard in the distance. We are put up in a family's house, where we sit down to a much needed dinner in Fallujah.

The next morning we begin to load our bus – the same one we arrived in – with wounded people to take to Baghdad hospitals. While this is transpiring, the Iraqi woman with whom we went out the day before runs up to me. "The same mission as before, the same place they want us to go," she says. "Do you want to do it?"

We jump on board a truck flying a white Red Crescent flag. Our favorite *mujaheddin*, a boy of 11 years who is already a seasoned fighter, shouts that nothing will happen to us, that they will protect us and that Allah is on our side. We roll back towards the Kill Zone. I squeeze the Brit's hand. She winks at me.

We find a middle-aged unarmed man nearby lying in the street, shot in the neck and dead. As we begin to remove his body, his family pours out of a nearby house, all of them hysterical with grief and fear. They want to know why someone didn't come earlier, why he had to die, and if they themselves can safely leave. It is a very difficult situation, and the Iraqi woman with us does an excellent job of keeping everyone calm. The Brit and I return to the Marines to negotiate the evacuation of the family, who are half a block away from the soldiers.

The Marines also ask us a favor: they have a family in a house that they are occupying, and they cannot give them food or water. Can we evacuate them as well? We agree, and our Iraqi comrade goes inside with

the soldiers to talk to the second family.

The Brit and I wait for her on the curb, the only two people on the otherwise empty streets. The day is hot and dry, and it seems bizarre to be just sitting there in the dust in the middle of a war. But we feel we are doing the right thing at the moment.

As the family in the house emerges, gunfire starts up very nearby, and the Marines tell us we are going to have to get this thing done fast. We group the two families together, then load them all onto our truck and a new, functioning ambulance that has just arrived. We also put the slain father and the bodies of two dead fighters in the back of the ambulance, where, due to lack of space, we are forced to ride. The stench of death is almost overpowering and a cloud of flies accompanies us back to the hospital.

By then it is time to go. The bus is loaded with injured persons, including the burn victim, and we say our good-byes to the hospital staff. Word is sent out to the *mujaheddin* guarding the roads to let us through safely, and we begin the journey back to Baghdad.

Our first stop in Baghdad is the Italian hospital, to drop off the most severely injured. An Italian friend meets us there and she greets me in her usual fashion. "Fuck you bastard. I am worrying about you all the night."

Yeah, well, I was worrying about me all the night too.

David Martinez is a video and print journalist based in San Francisco. He is currently finishing a film about Iraq under US occupation. He may be reached at moleverde @graffitiproductions.com

US Army vs. the Posters of Muqtada al-Sad'r



The mid-day call to prayer sounds in Baghdad's poor, Shia neighborhood, Showle. A group of residents crowd around a neighborhood cigarette stand to explain to the reporter what happened when the American Army came to their neighborhood with tanks and humvees last week.

Seventeen year old Ali Hakim explains the Americans came for his poster of Muqtada al-Sad'r, "They used their machine guns to lift the picture," he says.

Ali says the American soldiers carried out the raid without a translator. "They didn't talk to me. There were fifteen of them. They closed the road first. What can we do for them? What can we do when they take the pictures?"

Speaking to the Army News Service, the American Captain in charge of the raid on Sad'r's posters said it was "important because al-Sad'r stands for all things that are anti-coalition." He said, "It's important to show the people that we can deal with the propaganda in a non-threatening way, rather than coming in hard and forcefully." But the raid was not well received by the people.

"I came here with five of my friends and we threw stones at the soldiers," explains 17 year old Narah Habi. "We just picked up any rocks we could. Then the Americans left."

Hold Your Sword Still

by Raed Jarrar

It's been over a year, and no one can name a single success for the American administration in Iraq:

Public services? The *only* thing that has happened is "rehabilitating" some schools by Bechtel. Bechtel charged around \$75,000 per school, and gave the contracts to Iraqi sub-contractors. The Iraqi sub-contractors gave it to other Iraqi sub-sub-contractors, and the sub-sub-contractors painted the schools, fixed the bathrooms, changed the broken windows, and replaced some light bulbs. It could not have cost more than \$7,500.

Infrastructure? Destroyed buildings and bridges are as they were one year ago. Some were brought down at Najaf and Basra (which is better than leaving them standing and adding more depression to the urban skyline), but the buildings in Baghdad were not even touched. They look sad and painful – downtown Baghdad looks like a battlefield. Can you imagine if all the buildings that you love, that you spent your life seeing and using, were partially destroyed? Can you imagine the feeling you would have if you went by the White House or the Capitol while it was burning and destroyed? Can you imagine what it would feel like to have the twin towers of the WTC standing for months, burned and partially destroyed? The skyline of Baghdad reminds me of war and death, reminds me of explosions and destruction.

Other smaller landmarks which were destroyed after the war under the de-Ba'athification campaign (statues, pictures, small monuments and other things) left Baghdad and other cities full of small depressing icons. I don't care about the statue of [former Iraqi president] al-Bakr, I don't see his statue as a sign of evil and Ba'ath. It was simply the landmark in front of my house, and we either must put in another one or

continued next page



A telecommunications center destroyed by US bombs during the war. Baghdad, Iraq. June 14, 2003. ©Andrew Stern / AndrewStern.net

by Aaron Glantz

An older man interjects; "They're an army of cowards," he says. "They're from a country of cowards. They cannot stop [Muqtada al-Sad'r] so they take the picture of the man."

This confrontation in Showle is just one of many between the US military and the posters of Muqtada al-Sadr. In April, an Iraqi civilian was beaten to death by US soldiers in the primarily Shi'ite city of Kut. The Iraqi reportedly refused to take down a photo of Muqtada al-Sadr from the window of his car.

Earlier, the occupation Coalition Provisional Authority shut down the newspaper of Sad'r's newspaper, al-Hawza. The charge, according to a letter from US administrator Paul Bremer, was what he called "fake articles" that incite violence against occupying troops and Iraqi citizens that support them. Among the articles mentioned by the American administrator: one that bore the headline "Bremer Follows in the Steps of Saddam Hussein."

More recently, the US military raided Baghdad's Mustansuriye University, breaking every window that held a picture of the fiery cleric. Then the army sent tanks into the middle class neighborhood that houses the university, blasting a message from the tank's loudspeakers.

"First the soldiers said you are a very good neighborhood and you have to stand with us, not against us," remembers Mustansuriye resident Salahadul Karim. He says the message

was delivered by an Iraqi working as a US military translator who sat on top of the tank, his head covered with a hood to disguise his identity from his neighbors. "The translator told us 'We will crush (al-Sad'r's) Mehdi Army and if this neighborhood stands with them, we will crush you too.'"

Like many middle class Sunnis, Salahadul Karim doesn't much like Muqtada al-Sad'r, whose primarily poor, young followers, he says, are a source of crime and vigilante justice on the streets. But he's been thrown in prison twice by the US Army in the last month and he's not happy about the way they're keeping the peace.

"Really I hate Muqtada," he says. "But now with the Americans going after him so strongly and Muqtada speaking out I begin to respect him somehow."

"We will welcome any foreign person from America or Britain or France," he adds. "But if the Army comes and puts itself in your face we will oppose it every time."

Aaron Glantz is a radio and print journalist who works for Free Speech Radio News. His programs can be heard at www.pacifica.org.

Ripped up pictures of the Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani, Muqtada Al-Sad'r, and prophet Mohammed in the destroyed Al-Sad'r offices in Sad'r City. US troops shot the offices with guided missiles, machine gun and tank cannon fire and then proceeded to move in on foot and rip up and shoot copies of the Koran and pictures of Shia religious leaders. Baghdad, Iraq. April 8, 2004. ©Andrew Stern / AndrewStern.net

remove this one completely! Leaving things partially destroyed is the worst thing to do.

Social changes? The entire society is more protective and defensive. We had a real democratic couple of weeks after the war and everyone could do whatever he wanted – loot, sing in the street, start political parties, build some palaces on moving sand – but “democracy” became a cheap word that is used in jokes now. We now have something like a dozen small Saddams trying to prove how powerful can they are. De-Ba’athification (led by the corrupt figure, Chalabi) destroyed the hopes of rebuilding the community, added more reasons for conflicts, and gave Ba’athists a dark corner in which to hide and rebuild themselves slowly. Which means that rebuilding post-war Iraq is deprived of their vast experience. When a smart, educated, man such as my supervisor – the Director of the Architecture Department of Baghdad’s University – is simply judged as a Ba’athist that must go and die slowly in his house, we are not doing the right thing.

Gender-related problems have also increased; women can’t go outside without covering their hair, they can’t easily go to public markets. Read Riverbend for more details of what she faces in her life as a woman in Baghdad. Iraqis in general are disappointed, and are losing / have lost faith. Most people don’t leave their homes. I know everyone has heard so much of this criticism. But still it is not enough. The unjustified war on Iraq will be criticized for decades.

And the uprising is still expanding. Bush and Bremer are totally out of touch. All we hear from the coalition governments’ spokesmen, and from the international media are some fake news and explanations. Let me respond to them:

Muqtada al-Sad’r is NOT reflecting a minority of Iraqis, this is a stupid big lie. Whether we like him or not, he is the political and religious leader for millions of Iraqis. Al-Sad’r is NOT a mere twenty-something year old guy who is playing games. He is a phenomenon. When people in the south of Iraq look at him, they see the history of his father [the prominent Shiite cleric and opposition leader Mohammed al-Sad’r, assassinated under Saddam’s regime, for whom Sad’r City is named], and the deep roots of his religious supporter, Grand Ayatollah Kadhem al-Husseini al-Haeri, [challenger to current official religious leader of Iraqi shiites, Grand Allatollah Ali al-Sistani]. Al-Sad’r is NOT a small follower of the Iranian Government; he has very bad relations with the official government of Iran. Al-Sad’r is the government in most of the cities of the south: Amara, Kut, Nasiriya, Diwaniya, and parts of Simawa and Najaf.

From my secular point of view it is a disaster to have all of these extremist religious right-winged militias. But this is the direct result of the lost policy of the Bush administration, the problem of imported “democracy.” I used to call this cul-de-sac that we are stuck in: The Algerian Dead End. Algeria went through this exact scenario some years ago: do you want elections and democracy? Then the powerful fundamentalists are going to win. You don’t want democracy and elections? Don’t get me started....

It is the lack of vision that gives space and time for extremists to grow and build armies. Didn’t anyone think what the anti-American army of al-Mahdi is going to do? Arrange the election rooms? Or play

American football with the army of the USA?

I am totally against the super imposed democratic experience of the west on Iraq, and as a secular left-wing Muslim, I had my theories for reforming our communities even before the war. It is such a complicated task... to reform the values of our patriarchal culture, and to change the social hierarchy which is now based on power and strength. But this is a real long procedure, and a very sophisticated one.

Most of the people that I know (including myself) who were against this war, still are. Why? Because we are Ba’athists and Saddamists? Because we are masochists who enjoyed living a horrible life under the former Iraqi government? No. It was because we understood that the reform must come from inside, even if it takes decades or centuries.

I know that I can’t come to Texas and tell people what to do. Or to London, or to Madrid. Not because I don’t have enough ideas, but because my ideas will be out of context. This is the exact situation of the ideas of the Bush administration in Iraq – they are not all bad, they are completely out of context. And when they try to act like Iraqis, everything starts looking more paradoxical. Iraq is not yet a part of the “Global Village,” and it won’t ever become a peaceful part if it is added by using tanks and bombs.

In Iraq, people feel that their personality, history, and culture are being attacked. Everyone is defensive now: “They destroyed our museums, they want to delete our history,” “They are increasing prostitution and trafficking, this is against our religion,” “We don’t want Jewish people to come to our country,” “They are killing the Iraqi scientists,” etc. You can hear dozens of these statements, most of which are mere illusions, but the point is that a defensive community cannot be a friendly one. Attacking Iraq made people more conservative and self-protective.

All of these military steps that Bremer is taking now remind Iraqis of the Palestinian crisis. Everything related to mass collective punishment will not give good results. Fallujah under siege is the wrong thing to happen, bombing Shia residential areas is the wrong signal to give, and telling lies in public is killing the hope that the Coalition Provisional Authority will ever be credible.

The thing happening in Iraq right now, which is killing hundreds of Iraqis and dozens of coalition soldiers, is *not* just another mob. It is an uprising.

I know that I am criticizing without giving answers; this is because the time of giving suggestions has not come yet. As Guoying, my Chinese ex-girlfriend, used to say: “Hold your sword still, until the right moment.”

Raed Jarrar is a 20-something Palestinian-Iraqi architect who is best known to the world as one half of the famous Baghdad Blogger team with his best friend, Salam Pax. Theirs was the first uncensored reporting coming out of Baghdad. Jarrar also started a small NGO that has completed more than 100 small reconstruction projects. Following his personal mantra, “democracy cannot come from outside,” he provided stark contrasts to the waste of US corporate contracts, building bridges for \$60 for which Bechtel would charge millions. For more of Raed’s views, see his blog at www.raedinthemiddle.blogspot.com. For the results of his exhaustive research into civilian war casualties, see www.civilians.info/iraq/



Women waiting in line for treatment at a clinic run by Doctors Without Borders in Sad’r City, Baghdad, Iraq. June 28, 2003. ©Andrew Stern / AndrewStern.net

POW

by Jo Wilding

Sergeant Tratner of the First Armored Division is irritated. "Git back or you'll git killed," are his opening words. Lee says we're press and he looks with disdain at the car. "In this piece of shit?" Makes us less of a target for kidnappers, Lee tells him. Suddenly he decides he recognizes Lee from TV. "Cool. Hey, can I have your autograph?" Lee makes a scribble, unsure who he's meant to be but happy to have a ticket through the checkpoint. Sergeant Tratner carries on. "You guys be careful in Fallujah. We're killing loads of those folks." Detecting a lack of admiration on our part, he adds, "Well, they're killing us too. I like Fallujah. I killed a bunch of them mother fuckers." I wish Sergeant Tratner were a caricature, a stereotype, but these are all direct quotations.

A convoy of aid vehicles flying Red Crescent flags approaches the checkpoint, hesitates. One ambulance comes through with us, the rest turn back. There are loads of supplies when we get to Fallujah's clinic and mosque – food, water, medicine – which have come in on the back roads. The relief effort for the people there has been enormous, but the hospital is in the US-held part of town, cut off from the clinic by sniper fire. They can't get any of the relief supplies to the hospital nor the injured people out.

The aerial bombardment starts with the night and we stand outside watching the explosions and the flames. No one can quite recall whether it's a theoretical cease-fire or not. Someone brings the remains of a rocket – unraveled into metal and wires, a fuel canister inside it – and it sits like a space alien on display on a piece of cloth on the sidewalk near the clinic while everyone gives it stares and a wide berth.

In the morning the cease-fire negotiations begin again, centered, like everything else, in one of the local mosques. While we

wait we chat with the sheikh in the mosque. He says the hospitals have recorded 1,200 casualties, between 500-600 people dead in the first 5 days of fighting and 86 children killed in the first 3 days of fighting. "Fallujah people like peace but after we were attacked by the US they lost all their friends here. Not all of the men are fighting: some left with their families, some work in the clinics or move supplies or go in the negotiating teams. We are willing to fight until the last minute, even if it takes a hundred years."

The cease-fire takes effect from nine am. The opening up of the way to the hospital is one of the terms of the deal, so we're not really needed anymore and we decide to leave.

At the corner of town is a fork – one branch a paved road curving in front of the last of the houses, controlled by as yet invisible *mujaheddin*; the other, a track leading into the desert, controlled by the Marines, who fire a warning shot when our driver gets out to negotiate a way through. Gunfire suddenly surrounds the car. David, head down, shifts into the driver's seat and backs us out of there but the only place to go is into the line of *mujaheddin*. One of the fighters jumps into the passenger seat and directs us to drive.

"We're hostages, aren't we?" Billie says. No, it's fine, I say, sure that they're just directing us out of harm's way. The man in the passenger seat asks which country we're all from. Donna says she's Australian. Billie says she's British. "*Allahu akbar! Ahlan wa sahlam,*" says the fighter, God is great, welcome. "I think he just said he's got the two most valuable hostages in the world," Billie paraphrases.

A jeep meets us and as I climb in I notice that the driver has a grenade between his legs. I'm sure it's intended for the Americans, but nonetheless it's clear there's no room for dissent. Still, it's not until we turn off the road

and stop at a house, not until David and the other men are being searched, not really until a couple of the fighters take off their *keffiyahs* to tie the men's hands behind their backs, that I accept that I'm definitely a captive.

You look for ways out. You wonder whether they're going to kill you, make demands for your release, if they'll hurt you. You wait for the knives and the guns and the video camera. You tell yourself you're going to be okay. You think about your family, your mum finding out you're kidnapped. You decide you're going to be strong, because there's nothing else you can do. You fight the understanding that your life isn't fully in your hands any more, that you can't control what's happening. You turn to your best friend next to you and tell her you love her with all your heart.

Donna, Billie, David, Ahrar, and I are delivered to another house, where a tall, dignified man in a brown *keffiyah* sits and begins interviewing Donna – her name, where she's from, what she does there, what she's doing in Iraq, why she came to Fallujah.

Billie's not well, hot and sick. She lies down on the cushions, head on her arm. The fighter brings a pillow and gently lifts her head onto it. Another one brings a cotton sheet and covers her, then places the blanket around her: tucked in by the *mujaheddin*.

It's my turn next for questioning. I feel okay. All I can tell him is the truth, so I tell him about the circus, about the ambulance trips, about the snipers shooting at us. Then he asks what British people think about the war. I'm not sure what the right answer is. I try to compute what's least likely to make him think it's worth keeping me.

If people oppose the occupation, he says, how is it that the government could carry on and do it? He's genuinely interested but also sarcastic: surely the great "liberators" must

be truly democratic, truly governing by the will of the people? Eventually he thanks me and we're done. David's next. Donna, Billie, and I talk quietly about the interviews and the boy guarding us doesn't object. Someone asks if we want chai. Warm giggles come from the kitchen – maybe the two young men imagining if their mates could see them now, masked, Kalashnikov-wielding, and brewing tea for a load of women.

They bring our bags in and I make a hanky disappear. The guard, a different one now, is unimpressed. It's black magic. It's *haram*. It's an affront to Allah. Oops. I show him the secret of the trick in the hope he'll let me off, and make a balloon giraffe for his kids.

"My brother was killed and my brother's son and my sister's son. My other brother is in the prison at Abu Ghraib. I am the last one left. Can you imagine? And this morning my best friend was killed. He was wounded in the leg and lying in the street and the Americans came and cut his throat."

We saw him brought into the hospital this morning. Oh shit. Why wouldn't they kill us?

But the day goes by and we carry on breathing, dozing, talking. They bring food, apologize for not bringing more, promise

again that they're not going to hurt us. One of the men knocks on the door and, looking at the ground, tells us they've checked everything and, *insh'Allah*, we'll be taken back to Baghdad in the morning. They can't let us go now because we'll be kidnapped again.

The night is filled with the racket of what sounds like a huge dodgy plumbing system: a rhythmic series of explosions in quick succession like an immense grinding noise. Apparently it's the sound of cluster bombs. Billie and I hold each other's hands all night because we can. In the morning there's still a knot of doubt in my belly. They said they'd take us home after the morning prayers, more or less at first light, and it's been light for ages.

But they do let us go; they take us to one of the local *inams* who drives us home. At the edge of Fallujah is a queue of vehicles, some already turned back from the US checkpoint. The passengers say the soldiers fired as they approached. We get out, *hijabs* off, and negotiate ourselves and several other vehicles trying to leave through the checkpoint and finally, we escape.

The road is quiet but for our small convoy, but it's only when we walk through the door of our apartment that we're sure we're

coming home, all of us yelling and talking at once, telling the story, laughing over the surreal moments, hugging each other, retrieving hidden passports from underwear. "We're laughing about it now," Billie says, "but there were moments...."

Harb comes round to tell me off, but I'm unrepentant. I still think it was the right thing to do. They took us because we were foreigners acting strangely in the middle of their war. They found out what we were doing and let us go. On the way out we were able to open up the checkpoint so people could get out of Fallujah to safety. If that was all we did, it would have been worth it. But still, in a quiet moment later on, I whisper a thank you to the cheeky angels who look after clowns and ambulance volunteers.

Jo Wilding is an activist, writer, and clown from Bristol, UK who is about to start law school. She first visited Iraq in 2001, returned in February 2003 and was expelled by the Iraqi government 12 days into the bombing. She returned in November 2003 and spent seven months there working with the Boomchukka circus. Her web log is online at www.wildfirejo.org.uk and you can learn more about the circus at www.circus2iraq.org

What Has Failed in Palestine Will Fail in Iraq



Just as many senior Israeli military officials are openly criticizing their government's tactics in the occupied Palestinian territories, the United States is repeating in Iraq many of Israel's worst mistakes. This will doom efforts to stabilize Iraq and restore its independence.

"In a tactic reminiscent of Israeli crackdowns in the West Bank and Gaza," reported the Detroit Free Press in November, "the US military has begun destroying the homes of suspected guerrilla fighters in Iraq's Sunni Triangle, evacuating women and children, then leveling their houses with heavy weaponry.... Family members at one of the houses, in the village of al-



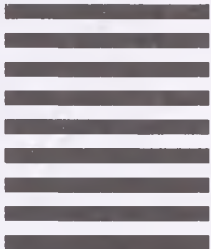
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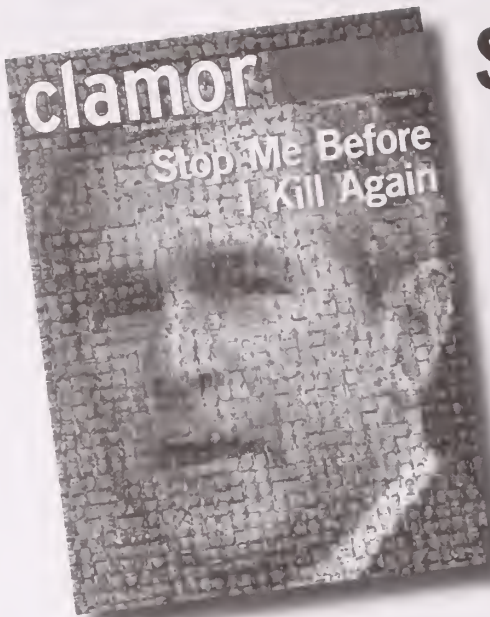
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Our Borders are Blast Walls

by Andréa Schmidt



Blast walls are everywhere in Baghdad, and provide protection against explosions. They are usually found surrounding military installations, hotels and NGO offices. Baghdad, Iraq. March 21, 2004. ©Andrew Stern / AndrewStern.net

As the US pursues its War on Terror in Iraq, the kidnappings of foreigners by the *muqawama* (resistance fighters) has grabbed the media spotlight. In response to the kidnappings, many international NGOs and humanitarian aid organizations have moved their foreign staff to Amman. Foreign journalists who haven't already left the country are nearly paralyzed, reporting from their seats in front of TV sets in hotel compounds "secured" by blast walls, armed guards, and the right connections. This isn't a huge change for the staffs of some news channels – for security reasons, CNN hasn't let its foreign journalists out on the streets of Baghdad after four pm for the past year of occupation. But for many reporters, both independent and mainstream, the current immobility is insanely frustrating.

Those of us who came here as anti-war or anti-occupation activists intent on bearing witness to the injustices perpetrated by occupation authorities aren't managing a whole lot better. I haven't even really been out walking on the streets of Baghdad for a week now, and have submitted, in spite of my better

by Ali Abunimah

Haweda, said they were given five minutes to evacuate before soldiers opened fire."

This is precisely the tactic for which human rights organizations and even the US government have repeatedly condemned Israel.

Near the Iraqi town of Dhulaiya, US forces re-enacted another scene familiar to Palestinians. "The bulldozers worked for 10 days, methodically clearing the date palms and citrus groves as 200 soldiers sealed off the area," according to *Newsday*. "Townsppeople looked on helplessly while jazz music blared from speakers mounted atop the soldiers' trucks," the report said, adding, "Iraqis are quick to make a comparison with Israel's actions in the Palestinian territories, where Israeli forces regularly clear fields as a security measure – and as a form of communal punishment."

In *The Independent*, Phil Reeves reported that the town of Awja, near Tikrit, "is the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but transported to Iraq." Reeves, a long-time Palestine/Israel correspondent, described a town "imprisoned by razor wire. The entrance is guarded by soldiers, protected by sand bags, concrete barricades, and a machine gun nest. Only those people with an identification card issued by the occupation authorities are allowed in or, more importantly, out." (November 18, 2003).

Other aspects of life in Palestine are creeping into Iraqis' daily experience. *The Los Angeles Times* reported that due to the insecurity

felt by the US occupation forces, "body searches have become a constant of daily life." *Times* reporter Alissa Rubin observed that, "ordinary residents now may have their bodies patted down, pockets turned inside-out, and the contents of purses, briefcases, and grocery bags scrutinized several times a day. A trip to the hospital, attendance at a university class, entrance to a government office, or a stop to pray at a major mosque involve highly physical encounters with total strangers." (November 25, 2003).

The growing similarities between Iraq and Palestine are due in part to the inexorable logic of military occupation, which – in order to maintain control (or avoid losing it totally) – must draw ever greater numbers of innocent people into the net of oppression. But worryingly, some of the US tactics in Iraq are deliberately copied from Israel.

The Los Angeles Times reported in November: "Facing a bloody insurgency by guerrillas who label it an 'occupier,' the military has quietly turned to an ally experienced with occupation and uprisings: Israel." In the last six months, the report adds, "US Army commanders, Pentagon officials, and military trainers have sought advice from Israeli intelligence and security officials on everything from how to set up roadblocks to the best way to bomb suspected guerrilla hide-outs in an urban area."

Americans should be alarmed that their government is seeking advice on how to run the occupation of Iraq from an Israel whose

"Resistance is not terrorism," graffiti viewed through a bullet hole as Israeli soldiers stand by. Deheshieh Refugee Camp, outside of Bethlehem, Palestine. July 10, 2002. ©Tim Russo.

continued next page

sense of moral judgment, to being driven between “safe” houses where sympathetic Iraqi and international friends have extended their hospitality.

The concrete blast walls that surround NGOs, humanitarian aid organizations, ministry buildings, political party headquarters, the CPA, and hotels frequented by foreigners in Iraq have always struck me as obscene. They are obscene because of the way in which they demarcate the lives that are considered

worthy of “protection” from those which are not. They are obscene in the context of this occupation, in which one of the most common complaints heard from ordinary Iraqis is the almost total lack of security that for themselves and their families.

The blast walls are also obscene because of the hypocrisy of NGOs and humanitarian organizations that they make manifest in

“Individuals have international duties which transcend the national obligations of obedience. Therefore [individual citizens] have the duty to violate domestic laws to prevent crimes against peace and humanity from occurring.”

– Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal of 1950

concrete. They are barriers that prevent Iraq’s “multitudes” – the poorest people, the unemployed families whose women and children panhandle in the streets, people without the mandatory identification or the right contacts – from entering the very organizations and institutions that purport to be present to “help” them. The blast walls send a message: “We will help you, but only at a distance, and only at a level of risk that we choose and can control.”

At the same time as the fear of being kidnapped has paralyzed foreigners in Iraq, US Occupation Forces have massacred hundreds of people in the town of Fallujah, a hundred people in Sad’r City, bombed practically every one of Muqtada al-Sad’r’s offices in Baghdad, and have announced that they will capture him dead or alive – essentially threatening to martyr him as Saddam martyred Muqtada’s father before him. Explosions resound across Baghdad at

intervals throughout the day and night. The helicopters fly so low that the windows rattle.

This crossroads of terror has made me think constantly about the blast walls. I remember an observation made several weeks ago by a perceptive friend. For those of us who are “first-class” citizens of North American or European countries in a global system best characterized as one of apartheid, our borders are blast walls. They shield us from the conflict and the poverty that our governments and our corporations create and profit from in the rest of the world.

Iraqis didn’t choose their country to be the battleground for George W Bush’s War on Terror. And I don’t think that most of them would even have chosen it as the battleground for a righteous stand against US imperialism. That doesn’t mean that various sections of Iraqi society aren’t fighting and won’t continue to fight to resist the occupiers. They are and they will – and if the US forces that surround holy town of Najaf at this moment actually invade the town, Shi’ite resistance will begin in earnest and it won’t ever stop. At least that is the prediction of an acquaintance of mine, a Shi’ite man and an ex-officer in the Iraqi army who participated in the 1991 uprising against Saddam. But he also added, referring to the current Intifada, “We are not fighting for an

bloody methods have not only failed for 36 years to bring “security” and end resistance to the occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip, but have been often condemned by human rights organizations such as Amnesty International as “war crimes.”

Rather than taking catastrophically bad advice from

Israel, the US ought to listen to those top Israelis who increasingly acknowledge that these kinds of repressive measures have only stiffened all Palestinians’ resolve, while Israeli civilians are less secure than ever before from suicide bombings by Palestinian extremists.

Israel’s hard-line military chief of staff, Major General Moshe Ya’alon sparked uproar last month [in October 23, 2003] when he told journalists that Israel’s repressive tactics against the Palestinian population were generating explosive levels of “hatred and terrorism.”

Four former chiefs of Israel’s internal security service, Shin Bet, echoed Ya’alon’s views. One ex-Shin Bet chief, Avraham Shalom, told Israel’s *Yediot Aharonot* newspaper, “We must once and for all admit

“It would be quite astounding if Israel, the US’s most loyal ally, which we now know has at least one secret prison, wasn’t offering its services to the US. Israel has decades of expertise in torturing and interrogating Arab prisoners – exactly the skills the Americans now need since the invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan.”

– Dalia Kerstein, director of Israeli human rights group *Hamoked*

there is another side, that it has feelings, that it is suffering, and that we are behaving disgracefully.... This entire behavior is the result of the occupation.”

Brig. Gen. Yiftah Spector, one of Israel’s most decorated fighter pilots, said of his country’s occupation of the Palestinians, “We’re in a more serious situation than the US was in Vietnam.”

While the Bush administration says its actions are for the welfare and freedom of the Iraqi people, the administration’s desire to highlight “progress,” and the media’s focus on US casualties, is making the suffering the occupation is causing for Iraqis all but invisible. Civilians are regularly killed and maimed by jittery US soldiers. Although it’s hard to get numbers, since the US hasn’t tried to count Iraqi casualties, *Boston Globe* reporter Charles Sennott told NPR’s *Fresh Air* program that he recently visited Baghdad hospital wards full of civilians shot by American soldiers.

A leaked CIA report in early November, 2003 predicted that harsher military tactics would drive more Iraqis to the insurgents’ side.

anti-war or an anti-imperialist movement. We are fighting for the people of Iraq.”

If our borders are blast walls, then they are what many of us – as anti-war and anti-imperialist activists living in the global North – rely on to keep a safe distance between ourselves and the danger-filled reality that Iraqis, peoples of other occupied and colonized nations, and people displaced by war, poverty, and occupation have no choice but to survive on a day-to-day basis. Maybe solidarity and justice demand that we stop playing it so safe. Maybe it is time to put our own bodies at risk in the sort of direct actions that confront the empire within its own fortress. Maybe it is time to move the battleground within our own borders, and to become the resistance inside the blast walls – the sort of resistance which would effectively take them down.

Andréa Schmidt lives, works, and organizes in Montréal. She lived in Baghdad from mid-February to mid-May 2004 as a delegate of the Iraq Solidarity Project.

*Her reports are available online: <http://www.en-camino.org/iraqreports/>
For more information about the Iraq Solidarity Project, write: psi@riseup.net*

Civilian weapons inspectors” invade Fairford Air Force base, the biggest bomber base in Europe. They employ a humorous approach to the serious business of weapons inspection, in an attempt to highlight the fact that the US and the UK are the largest stockpilers of weapons of mass destruction. Fairford, UK. January 26, 2003. ©Andrew Stern / AndrewStern.net



While the bleak situation prompted the Bush administration to hastily seek a quicker handover of power to Iraqis, it also launched a broad new military campaign, “Operation Iron Hammer,” that may nullify all the political efforts to win the confidence of Iraqis. In effect, the administration has two contradictory policies.

Americans should also be aware that in the wider Arab and Muslim worlds, the strikingly similar images of both occupations feed the mounting anger and fear about United States’ foreign policy, and in the worst case, fuel the extremism the US says it wants to fight.

This policy confusion is not surprising, since Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld still seems to be in denial about the reality in Iraq. In an interview with Japan’s NHK network on November 15, Rumsfeld said the security situation in Iraq could be roughly compared with the crime levels in Tokyo or Chicago, and asserted that all in all, the occupation is “doing very well.” Rumsfeld, unable or unwilling to admit the devastating impact of the policies in occupied Iraq on world public opinion, has also resorted to blaming the messenger – once again lashing out at the Arabic-language al-Jazeera and al-Arabiya satellite networks who bring the images into millions

of Arab homes. Rumsfeld even approved of a recent decision by Iraq’s US-created “Governing Council” to shut down al-Arabiya’s offices in Iraq. So much for a free media.

With such attitudes prevailing, it is no wonder Marco Calamai, the senior Italian member of the US-led Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) resigned a week after the November 12 bombing in the Iraqi city of Nasiriya that killed 31 people, including 19 Italians. Calamai told Italy’s *Unita* newspaper that the CPA’s woe-filled failure to understand Iraqi society had created “delusion, social discontent, and anger,” and had allowed terrorism to “easily take root.” He added that the only way to save the situation is for the US to hand over power to a UN-led interim authority.

This, not military escalation, remains the best of a bad set of options. But on current performance, it seems the Bush administration has neither the inclination nor the international credibility to seize it while it is still available.

“I see no difference between us and the Palestinians,” an Iraqi named Taek muttered, as he waited to pass through the checkpoint outside Abu Hishma, now encircled by five miles of razor wire. “We didn’t expect anything like this after Saddam fell.”

—New York Times, December 7, 2003.

Ali Abunimah is a co-founder of Electronic Iraq and the Electronic Intifada websites – www.electroniciraq.net and www.electronicintifada.net, respectively.

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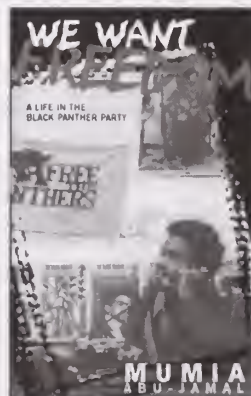
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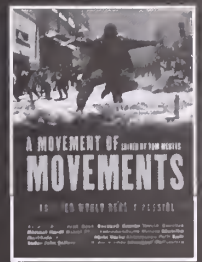
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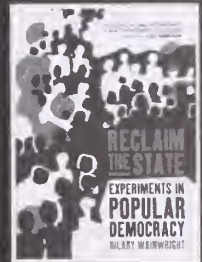


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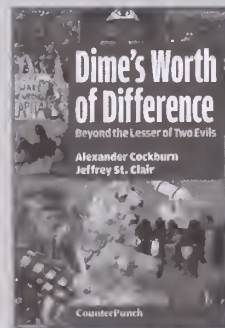
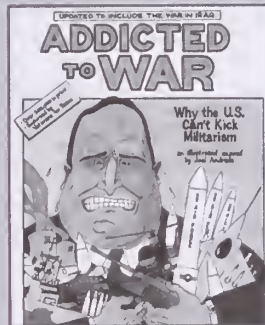
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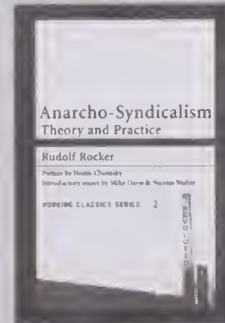
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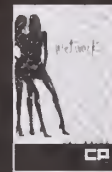
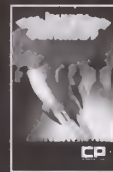
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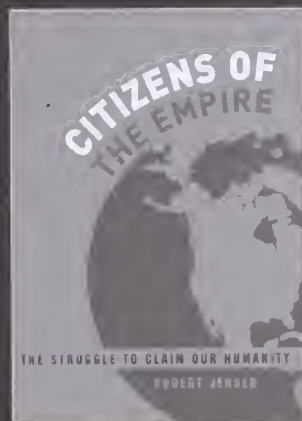
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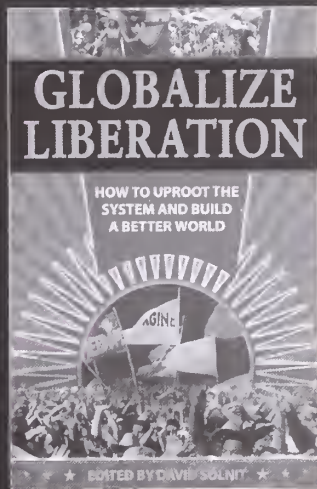


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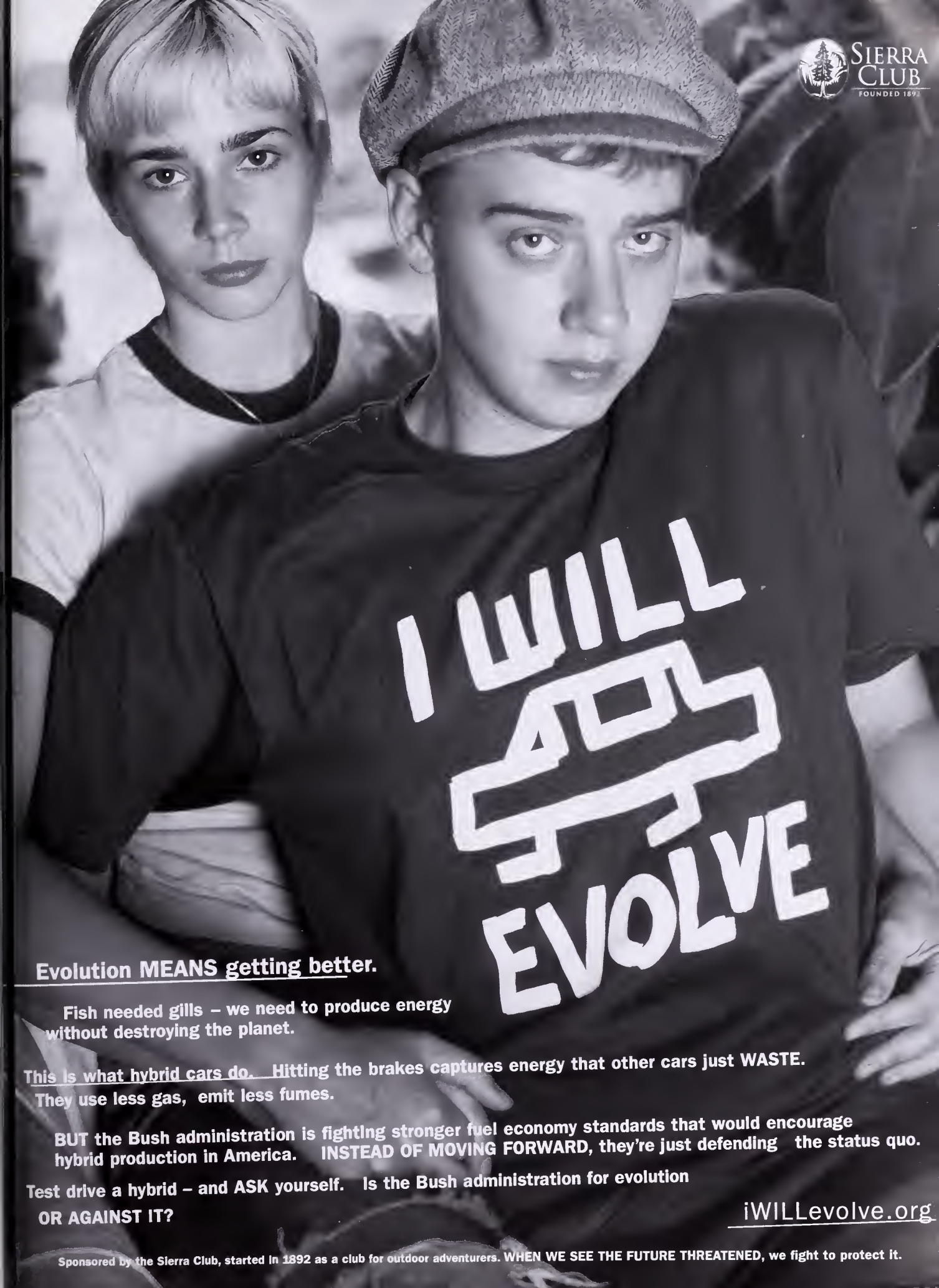
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