

TERRORIST BOMBING DESTROYS YUGOSLAVIA AND THE UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations; used, abused and destroyed.

In the case of Nicaragua vs the United States the International Court of Justice at the Hague, the highest body of the United Nations, ordered the United States to pay 17 billion dollars in restitution to Nicaragua for the destruction of that country in the illegal war that was punctuated by the Iran/Contra scandal. The failure of the United States to comply with international law was a fatal blow to the Court and a message to other nations to ignore its jurisdiction.

President Harry Truman used the United Nations as a cover for his war with Korea in 1950. President Bush literally bribed various member states of the United Nations to carry out the destruction of Iraq which has continued with bombs and a genocidal embargo to this day.

NATO

And now NATO is resurrected to conduct its first action in 50 years by dropping millions of tons of bombs on Yugoslavia for a "humanitarian" objective.

Our warfare state seems to be reaching an apex of malice and stupidity. The reorganization of NATO was simply a contrivance to escape the jurisdiction of the United Nations. The bombing has accelerated the conflict in Yugoslavia beyond all measure. The bombing has united Serbian foes of Slobodan Milosevic with the exception of the Serbian peace movement, members of which are now being assassinated as "traitors."

The League of Nations

After World War I the need for a League of Nations was clear. But our Congress fought against the League until it was defunct. With the absence of the League, World War II evolved leaving over 50 million people dead in its wake. The United Nations was designed as a post World War II effort to build a peace system. Currently our government remains as the mortal enemy of the United Nations.

Had we acted within the United Nations Charter, the conflict in Yugoslavia could have been resolved. But our government has chosen to circumvent the United Nations. The result is a humanitarian and political disaster.

The Media

As the Yugoslavian people are being massacred our media massacres the truth with a legion of Generals and war mongering "pundits" telling us about the glories of their murderous hardware. It is hard to distinguish

between the level of censorship in Yugoslavia as compared with the absolutely managed, filtered, sanitized drivel presented by the networks (the same people who manufacture the death-making trash).

The media refuses to report on protests that have taken place in all parts of the United States and Europe and then has the audacity to say there is no opposition to the war.

We are proud of the response of millions of U.S. citizens who are conscious of how they are being used and lied to as they were used and lied to during the rape of Vietnam. The American Legion, our nation's largest veterans organization has urged President Clinton to immediately withdraw U.S. troops from the Balkans. "We believe the best thing we can do to support our troops, to protect our troops, is to bring them home," said Harold L. "Butch" Miller, national commander of the American Legion. The Legion's national executive committee unanimously adopted a resolution calling for all U.S. soldiers, pilots and support staff to be removed from the region. The American Legion which represents 2.9 million American veterans has delivered this message to the White House and all members of Congress.

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Missing in Action: Peace Activists

We are proud of the consciousness of religious leaders who know that this NATO war is evil, immoral and illegal. We must say, however, together with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words and actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence of the good people." We want to ask just why so many former peace activists are "missing in action."

We are proud of Mary Robinson who heads up the Human Rights Division of the United Nations. She has made it clear that all forces in the conflict could be investigated for war crimes. Yes, this includes NATO and the Commander in Chief of the U.S. Military.

We are also proud of the Los Angeles Peace Center Coalition Against the War in Yugoslavia. Saturday Noon demonstrations at the Westwood Federal Building will

continue until the bombing stops. We demand an end to the bombing, a withdrawal of US/NATO forces from Yugoslavia and that the billions being spent on the war be spent on human needs instead. The Coalition has charged and the Pentagon has now admitted the use of depleted uranium in this conflict. This is a form of nuclear war. As chemical plants are bombed it is also becomes a chemical war.

Only now, when Serbia is in ashes, do our "leaders" want to call in the United Nations to pick up the pieces. If the United Nations had been empowered by the world's only superpower to do what it was designed to do, the devastation would never have taken place!

We believe that the war system belongs with the dinosaurs. We believe that an international peace system can be constructed. The war system is a form of slavery. Slaves fight and die for corporate greed. The slaves are waking up.

* * *

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OFFICE OF THE AMERICAS DELEGATION VISITS LORI BERENSON

All advice was negative. "You will never be allowed into the prison," said most counselors. "Put off your visit until the Organization of American States leaves Peru," said the U.S. Embassy in Peru.

But we decided to go anyway. Our delegation: Reverend Lucius Walker, Director IFCO/Pastors for Peace; Amy Goodman, host of "Democracy Now," Pacifica Radio Network; Annie Bird, Guatemala Director of Guatemala Partners; Kristen Gardner, college room-mate of Lori Berenson; Patricia Todd of CISPES and delegation leader, Blase Bonpane.

At the Prison

We feared our visit would be only symbolic as we passed through military check-points in Arequipa, Peru on our way to Socabaya Prison. Rabbi Guillermo Bronstein in Lima had given us matzoh and prayer books for Lori to celebrate Passover.

At the prison gate when asked for credentials, we only had a letter from a Peruvian Congressman requesting that our visit to Lori be given consideration. By what seemed a miracle we were admitted and sat with Lori for two hours of conversation. This was the first such delegation to visit Lori during her three and a half years of brutal incarceration.

Her parents, however, have been admitted on a regular basis. The six of us came as a human rights delegation and that is what we were.

No one was more surprised at our arrival than Lori. She is a woman of great spiritual strength. She refuses to be intimidated. Her principal concern is the welfare of all prisoners. She is allowed out of her cell for one hour a day. Her eyes have suffered from poor lighting and months of solitary confinement. Her digestive system suffers from a poor diet. Her circulatory system suffers from three years at the notorious Yanamayo Prison located at 12,750 feet above sea-level.

The Ambassador

After our visit we met with U.S. Ambassador Dennis Jett in Lima. He was very disturbed that we were admitted to the prison. He was worried that the prison director might lose her job for admitting us. His main concern was that the visit might upset Mr. Fujimori. The Ambassador was most grateful to Fujimori for allowing the United States to establish a military base on the Peru/Colombia border and for repaying Peru's debts to the World Bank. His concern for Lori seemed non-existent.

Rather than be upset by the visit of six U.S. citizens to an unjustly imprisoned fellow citizen, would it not be proper for a U.S. Ambassador to demand her release, to question why such visits are not accepted, to ask why the press cannot talk to her, to ask why she cannot make a statement to anyone, to ask why her mail, both incoming and outgoing, is censored for any word that might be considered political? We are extremely disturbed by the lack of advocacy for Lori on the part of our government. The State Department and its representatives continue to speak of her in relationship to the activity of the MRTA rebels. She is not a member and has never been a member of this organization. She spoke to members of this organization, however, while preparing articles for two U.S. magazines.

All of us on the delegation are pained by the treatment of Lori Berenson both by the Peruvian authorities and our own government. Please continue to write and to call President Clinton and your Representatives. Remind the President that he is legally obligated by an act of Congress (22 U.S.C., section 1732) to come to the aid of an American citizen wrongfully held in a foreign country. Also remind him that Lori Berenson is suffering physically and needs his help NOW.

Please study the web-site WWW.FREELORI.ORG/

Colombia

We returned from Peru with great sadness as we heard of the assassinations in Colombia of our friend Terance Frietas together with his two companions, Lahe'ena'e Gay and Ingrid Washinawatok. We declare their presence...Presente! Presente! Presente!

The **struggle** for peace is the victory (la lucha misma es la victoria).

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A PILGRIMAGE IN CHIAPAS WITH BISHOP SAMUEL RUIZ GARCIA

In the wake of the Pope's visit to Mexico the press has been full of announcements about the death of liberation theology. Our recent experience in Chiapas indicated that such announcements are premature and marked by misinformation.

Bishop Samuel Ruiz Garcia

We traveled in caravan with Bishop Samuel Ruiz Garcia, Bishop Raul Vera Lopez and Bishop Herbert Hermes through conflictive areas of Ocosingo, Comitán and Tila. The Mexican government contributed bodyguards for the local bishops but this offered little peace of mind. The government itself has been among Bishop Ruiz's greatest adversaries. We kept thinking, "Who is going to guard the guards?" Military and paramilitary aggression continues to make life in Chiapas a nightmare for indigenous citizens.

Liberation Theology

What does this have to do with liberation theology? The phrase was developed as a response to imperial theology which has been dominant for centuries. Contrary to popular media misinformation, the theology of liberation neither promotes violence, nor Marx, nor class struggle. Class struggle is not fomented, it is simply a reality when some earn \$10. per month and others do not earn but rather receive \$1,000,000 per month. Such a theology does not create class struggle, it simply identifies what already exists. Such a theology does not create violence, it identifies the institutional violence of a corrupt system.

History will indicate that Pope John Paul II did not respond positively to liberation theology any more than Pope Urban VIII responded well to Galileo. Actually the current pope has been an active foe of liberation theology and liberation theologians. Members of the clergy like Father Ernesto Cardenal and Bishop Ruiz have valiantly struggled to serve the poor of the earth. Their efforts have received negative attention from the Vatican. In spite of such tensions Pope John Paul II made strong statements against unregulated capitalism (neo-liberalism) greed and multinational domination of the world economy. Our hope is that his deeds will follow his words.

Liberation theology is at once a denunciation of the horrors of imperial theology which gave us the Crusades, the Inquisition, the Conquistadores and God-is-on-our-side nationalism. Liberation theology is not a fad. It is a conviction for the believer that identification with the true God requires liberation from oppression. On the contrary, support for oppression is to worship false gods or idols. It seems to me that what has been called liberation theology in the waning days of the 20th century will simply be called theology in the 21st Century.

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Social Justice

Liberation theology is not focused on human, civil, ecclesiastical mandates like clerical celibacy. Demanding social justice is far more important than demanding clerical celibacy.

Such theological clarity will show reverence and study of the world's many cultural and religious expressions and not waste energy on considering "the other" as adversary. Implementation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is far more important than meaningless efforts to "prove" doctrinal claims.

Let us identify racial, religious and ethnic separatism as what it is; ignorance. Science affirms the claim that there is only one race, the human race. Any other delineation of humanity should be categorized as superstition.

Women will not be excluded from any function in church or state. Small groups will reflect on the needs of society and project their objectives from the base to local and global coordination.

The principle of subsidiarity will be implemented. Each unit of society will have a reasonable autonomy. Starting with the autonomy of the family and continuing to the need for international law and order to deal with threats to peace, justice, environmental degradation and aggression. Distributive justice is an attainable goal.

The objective is to identify one human family attempting to live together harmoniously on a small planet. Such an objective may not be accomplished in the 21st century but with your help we can at least get started.

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renew your membership. See form on page 4.

OFFICE OF THE AMERICAS IN ACTION

Los Angeles Peace Center Coalition

** While she does not like her name to be flaunted about in the OOA newsletter, it is necessary to mention the organizational genius of our Executive Director, Theresa Bonpane. The outbreak of bombing by U.S./NATO led to a volatile mix of demonstrators. There was the outraged Serbian community opposing the bombing as well as Albanian supporters of the KLA and the bombing. There were also U.S. citizens both for and against a variety of issues.

The problem was just how to bring the U.S. Peace Movement into this mix without violence. Theresa invited seasoned organizers, James Lafferty, Don White and Jim Clarke to create a clear position for the U.S. peace-makers. To achieve this a clear message was necessary. As the Saturday demonstrations continued, weekly meetings of the Los Angeles Peace Center Coalition Against the War in Yugoslavia were held and continue to be held every Tuesday night. Our responsibility as U.S. citizens was focused on ending the bombing together with a U.S./NATO withdrawal from Yugoslavia and the demand that the billions being spent on this war be diverted to human needs.

As it stands now, the Albanians know we support the need for humanitarian aid to the refugees. The Serbian community knows that we do not support the position of Slobodan Milosevic and the U.S. government knows we oppose the war. The Coalition now includes organizations focused on peace and justice from throughout Southern California.

Recent Presentations

** OOA and CISPES hosted the visit of Esperanza Rascon Cordoba to Los Angeles. Esperanza participated in the San Andres dialogue for peace in Mexico. She was one of the founders of the Communication and Links Committee of the National Indigenous Conference in Mexico.

** Interviews with Associated Press, Reuters, New York Times, Peruvian press and U.S. radio and T.V. regarding the prison visit to Lori Berenson.

** Presentation at Saddleback College, Mission Viejo, on the War in Yugoslavia.

** Conduct a strategy session for the students of Loyola/Marymount University on their participation in the School of the Americas Watch and the work of Father Roy Bourgeois.

** Speaking and media engagements arranged by Phyllis and Bob Menard at Arizona University, School of Law, School of Journalism, and various TV and radio interviews in Tucson, Arizona.

** Moderate the Spanish Language component of the Los Angeles Times Book Fair at the University of California at Los Angeles. Present three authors from South America.

** Speak on Nicaragua at the Forum at Crossroads School in Santa Monica.

** Discuss the War in Yugoslavia on "Lawson Live" a national TV program.

** Speak at Midnight Special Bookstore on Vietnam, Kent State and the War in Yugoslavia.

** Speak at UCLA on Guatemala.

** Conference Speaker at California State University, Los Angeles.; "Exploring the Common Struggles of the Peoples of the Americas."

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