

By Paul Rogat Loeb

IN "STRUGGLING FOR HEARTS AND MINDS of Americans" (ITT, March 20), Stephen Slade rightly suggests that we have a responsibility to challenge the notion of a noble and costless victory in the Gulf war. He raises tactical questions about the peace movement's slow response to the initial deployments, its excessive focus on potential U.S. casualties and overdependence on media explanations for the war. But he doesn't explain how we can make our voices heard by an American public flush with the pride of victory.

When the fighting began, many of us hoped to draw attention to our views through marches and rallies. Some were truly massive. Hundreds of thousands marched in Washington, D.C., San Francisco and Los Angeles on January 26. Yet even those mobilizations were barely covered by the media or were dismissed with condescending stereotypes. Most Americans saw us as indulgent, obstructive and marginal.

How, in this situation, to have our views heard?

We might follow the lead of democrats in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. They built the intellectual foundations of their movement around the need to reinvent what they called "civil society," that web of associations and communities that exists outside the control of the state and the media. Here in America, we have always had these institutions aplenty, from churches and unions to the PTA, the YMCA and the Lions Clubs. But these groups rarely chal-

Desperately seeking enlistment for peace

lenge government policy, and the war was too brief and we were too busy trying to mobilize in the streets to engage them. We can call on them now, however, to discuss the war's roots and implications.

Even those who endorsed the decision to fight may be more willing than we think to examine the war's roots and costs. My next-door neighbor, a Presbyterian minister, told me recently that President Bush may have had no choice but to fight. Yet he agreed it would be a tragedy if the quick and easy victory tempted the U.S. into future military interventions. His church needed to address alternatives to global violence, he said.

For a local peace community to organize a 1,000-person demonstration against the kinds of future interventions Slade describes might be useful. But it would be far more effective to use the same energy to arrange 25 discussions in churches, schools, community centers and neighborhoods. People need to examine their doubts about U.S. actions past and present. They are much more likely to do so in such discussions than by watching anonymous sign-carriers on TV.

A broad base: In the early '80s, at the height of the Reagan era, the nuclear-freeze campaigns grew dramatically through a

similar organizing strategy. In Florence, S.C., a small town's peace efforts began when a single Baptist preacher called a biologist who'd written a letter to the local paper opposing the MX missile. The two met, enlisted several others, then chipped in to buy the Physicians for Social Responsibility film *The Last Epidemic*.

Calling friends, neighbors and colleagues, they explained, "There's going to be a nuclear film shown at the Baptist church. Sure, think you all would enjoy seeing it." They took *The Last Epidemic* to schools and churches, garden clubs, community centers, the PTA, the Rotary Club, the Young Nurses Association and any other community institutions they could find. The subsequent discussions and marches created an educated base where none had existed before.

The freeze campaigns, which tapped into immediate fears for survival, had the strengths and weaknesses of ducking major questions of power. But efforts against intervention in Central America raised more profound questions about our country's relationship to others. We did this largely through the parade of mainstream Americans who went down to see for themselves the truth or falsehood of our government's claims and then returned to describe to friends and neighbors what they had learned. Because they spoke from within existing institutions and communities, their conclusions could not casually be dismissed.

These movements led thousands to anti-war activity and helped create a far broader potential base to challenge America's role as global policeman. Even after the Gulf war began, major churches and unions took stands unprecedented until the very last years of the Vietnam War.

We need to reach out to those who marched with us when they believed a choice of peace was still possible. And to enlist them in a vision that holds the Bush administration accountable for its own rhetoric of self-determination, opposition to dictators and respect for United Nations mandates.

Polls suggest that popular sentiment may be more receptive to our appeals than appearances would indicate. In a *Times Mirror* survey shortly before the ground war began, 77 percent of respondents backed Bush's policies. But an almost equal number feared that many Iraqi civilians might be killed, anticipating the massive death tolls only now beginning to trickle in. They worried as well that U.S. troops would be bogged down in the Middle East for years to come, which now seems increasingly likely. They feared our economy was far less solid than our armaments—and that whatever our military successes, we still might not prosper in peace.

Sympathetic friends: It's tempting for us to huddle together with others of like mind, bemoaning how America's longstanding imperial tendencies will now only intensify, or simply to march in defiance, as radical shock troops willing to bear any sacrifice.

But we can't afford this isolation. For outreach to work, we must take seriously both

our existing links to American civic life and the value of new ties we can build in the process.

Are sympathetic friends involved in local block associations, churches, environmental groups, Democratic clubs or even Chambers of Commerce? Can municipal authorities sponsor public debate on future national directions? Can school districts follow the lead of Seattle and San Francisco and grant peace advocates the same access to students as they give to military recruiters? Can churches translate denominational peace statements into sustained discussion, reflection and witness? Can college students reach out beyond their elite core and take seriously the challenge of working with dorms, fraternity houses and campus clubs? Can unions and human-service organizations debate the war economy's immense domestic costs?

Just as non-violent resistance training has helped participants anticipate dangers and conflicts, examine their reasons for acting and explore what they hope to achieve, our organizations can conduct specific training for institutional outreach. We need to examine the barriers that prevent us and our peers from asking a group of neighbors or co-workers over to talk, or from approaching the local League of Women Voters or Kiwanis Club. We need to focus on this work without feeling that we are letting down the cause by not opting for the most visible militance.

If our outreach is successful, many we involve will challenge our perspectives. But they may still be willing to talk about the interconnected roots of our national choices. If we respect their right to define how far they can go in agreement and don't simply try to recruit them for a retroactive judgment that America's choices were wrong, we may be able to work together to question our nation's propensity for military adventure, energy policies that feed our hair-trigger belligerence and the absence of popular participation in making critical war and peace choices.

Our meetings need to offer specific opportunities to act. We can circulate reprints and lists of relevant books for people to read and share with friends. And encourage participants to meet again, form structured peer-support systems as critical as those of Alcoholics Anonymous and reflect on who they might involve in further conversations. The 25,000-member SANE/Freeze organization of Washington state, for example, has started to devote major resources to supporting members and community leaders in precisely these person-to-person approaches. They encourage people to:

- organize further house and community meetings and to write letters to newspapers, TV and radio stations, as well as local politicians;
- participate in study groups,
- develop anti-war artistic statements; and
- train for non-violent action.

In all these efforts, organizers don't tell participants to go home and try to change the world on their own. Rather, they invite them to become part of an active community. And remind them that they speak most powerfully not as countercultural outsiders but as citizens.

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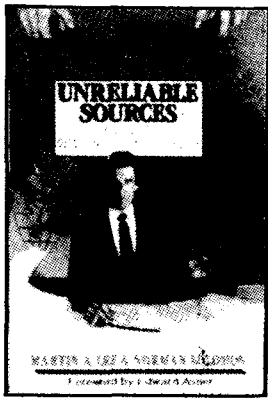
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From Belfast to Los Angeles

Talking to blacks and other minorities in Los Angeles about the cops reminds me vividly of similar conversations with Catholics in Northern Ireland 25 years ago about the "B Specials." The Specials were a section of the Ulster security forces charged with the duty of keeping the Taigs—the Papists—in their place. They ruled by exemplary terror.

Catholics driving down a road in Ulster knew somewhere in the back of their minds that the headlights suddenly showing up behind them might belong to a car full of Specials, and that these Specials might stop them, beat them, frame them, maybe kill them.

The B Specials were part of the apparatus created by the Ulster elite to keep the Catholics down. The discrimination expressed itself in terms of religion, class and race (Protestant bigots firmly believed in the racial inferiority of their Catholic nationalist neighbors). The good jobs were reserved for Protestants; labor was kept subservient. Exemplary terror helped keep a whole system of economic and social exploitation on track.

At a far more grisly level, exemplary terror is how the elites maintain themselves in Guatemala or El Salvador or Brazil. The mutilated body by the side of the road on your way to work tells you that this is a system that can strike you down without justice and with impunity.

When William Parker became chief of the Los Angeles Police Department in 1950, the force was corrupt, fat off shakedowns of Central Avenue vice operations. In its stead, Parker forged a less-corrupt but brutal paramilitary force. His men, mostly white Southwesterners, behaved toward black neighborhoods like an occupying army.

Parker was fanatically opposed to race mixing. If at one level this meant busting mixed clubs on Central Avenue, it also meant the violent enforcement of race and class divisions in the city. Above all, it meant telling the thousands of blacks pouring into Los Angeles from the South in the '50s that this was no land of opportunity.

For the overt purpose of cleaning up the police department, it was made immune to political influence, thus creating a force beyond political control and a police chief with more political power than the mayor. This has been the case with Mayor Tom Bradley and Police Chief Darryl Gates.

Right at the start of Gates' term, Bradley did have a chance. Gates' men put twelve bullets in Eula Love, the Rodney King of her time, cut down for waving a two-inch paring knife. But the mayor wanted to be governor, so when Assemblywoman Maxine Waters and every black minister in town called for Gates' dismissal, Bradley sat on his hands, afraid to alienate white voters.

In the end, people won't put up with exemplary terror, even in the name of a "drug war." The Irish Catholics in Ulster rose in 1969. Four years earlier, the people of Watts—whom Parker called "monkeys in a zoo"—rebelled. A year earlier, the state attorney general was getting reports that Watts was going to blow. Then, as now, there was a rising curve of exemplary terror. In the six months before the rebellion began, there were 168 shootings by the LAPD. Between 1963 and 1965, white em-

ployment in the city was rising, while for minorities the trend was heading the other way.

A police force institutionally dedicated to the practice of exemplary terror is not reformed by the ouster of a police chief any more than racism in a police department is cured by hiring black or Hispanic officers. A black policeman who has absorbed his institution's culture from the police academy can be as much a part of the problem as his white colleague.

Gates should undoubtedly go, but the problem is far greater and beyond the powers of any single reformer installed in Gates' stead. All eyes are now directed at the LAPD, but the rot in County Sheriff Sherman Block's bailiwick is just as bad, even though Block can use sociological lingo far removed from Gates' oafish bluster.

It was Block's men who, in June 1989, were confronted by Betty Jean Aborn, a homeless black woman in Lancaster waving a carving knife. They fired 28 rounds at her, 18 of which found their mark. It was not Gates' men but the Hawthorne force that developed the radio language about "no human involved," meaning blacks, Latinos and poor whites.

Years of frustration and fury are now finding their expression in tumultuous meetings and hearings, as Gates is pressed toward the exit. It reminds me of the same angry, excited tumult in Ulster in 1969. In that instance, the Specials were disbanded. But the underlying system of economic exploitation and injustice was never threatened, and instead of the Specials

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came other security forces. The unaccountability and the violence grew again.

True reform here, as anywhere, will come only when there is true accountability, and that means review boards with teeth, community control and, beyond that, a program for economic justice. Without social programs, there will, in the end, be the same old violence program to keep the poor in their place.

Dustbins of history

We live in the age of throwaway history. Nobody remembers what anyone said the day before yesterday. And if someone does have an inconvenient memory, they say it doesn't matter anymore.

Take April Glaspie, who testified before a Senate committee last week about what she might or might not have said to Saddam Hussein in their famous meeting in Baghdad on July 25, 1990.

You'll recall that Glaspie was the U.S. ambassador in Iraq. In mid-September, the Iraqis released a transcript of her conversation with Hussein. The State Department never disputed its accuracy, and it seemed to show that Glaspie, on behalf of her government, was telling the Iraqi president that his quarrels with Kuwait were of no great concern to the United States.

ASHES & DIAMONDS

By Alexander Cockburn

After months of silence, Ambassador Glaspie told the senators March 20 that the Iraqi transcript was defective by reason of omission. It had left out her most serious warnings to Hussein that if he moved with military force against Kuwait, the U.S. would take this as an unacceptable threat to its security interests.

It's an important issue. The charge made against the Bush administration last year was that Hussein felt emboldened to march into Kuwait only because two Republican presidents had presided over years of appeasement of the Iraqi tyrant. Glaspie now says that in the all-important late July days the U.S. stood firm and Hussein had fair warning.

Let's go back to the transcript, whose accuracy regarding what she did say the State Department did not dispute.

After agreeing that the low price of oil—engineered by Kuwaiti overproduction—has been disastrous for Iraq, Glaspie said, "We have no opinion on the Arab-Arab conflicts, like your border disagreement with Kuwait."

A few days later, only 48 hours before the invasion, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs John Kelly testified to a House foreign-relations subcommittee in exactly the same fashion. This was no Iraqi transcript, and this was the message that Hussein heard, courtesy of the BBC World Service.

In other words, the U.S. gave Hussein every reason to suppose that there would not be too much trouble if he took the resolute action which, as the transcript shows, he made clear to Glaspie he had in mind.

Call it an inconvenient memory.

Here's another one. When the debate over the propriety of going to war was still raging in the pre-January 16 days, before bombing stilled all qualms, many doubters said that war might create more problems than it solved.

Only last week, James Schlesinger, former secretary of defense under Richard Nixon, said that Iran was now master of the Persian Gulf. Iran, you may remember, was the Great Satan of American policymakers throughout the '80s. The real nightmare was of crusading fundamentalism sweeping down through to menace the Trucial States and Saudi Arabia.

Exactly as predicted, war has now weakened to the point of prostration Iraq, the traditional buffer against Iran. Almost the only thing that could be said for Iraqi Baathism was that it was resolutely secular, with only opportunistic deference to Islam. The mullahs are resurgent. American policymakers now face a dilemma of their own making. Israel would like a Lebanized Iraq. Turkey would like the northern Kurdish portion. Iran would like the southern Shia chunk. Saudi Arabia would like Iraq in its present shape, run by a Sunni Muslim military dictator.

Chances are that the U.S. will prefer either a weakened Saddam or the Saudi option—which leaves things much as they were before, with the Bush government underwriting a tyranny possibly even more brutal than Saddam's but twice as compliant.

It is perhaps even more inconvenient to recall all the high-minded talk about a just

war and the rule of law.

President Bush said he had no quarrel with the Iraqi people. His military commanders said that targeting was against military targets only.

Red Cross and U.N. relief workers inspecting Iraq now say the destruction is of "near apocalyptic" proportions. Iraq was indeed bombed back into the 19th century. There will be devastating epidemics, a decline in life expectancy and a rise in infant mortality.

Speaking privately on Capitol Hill, Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf says that up to 100,000 Iraqi soldiers probably died. These deaths would mostly have come after Iraq had announced its acceptance of U.N. resolutions and a cease-fire.

Before the war began, other experts told Bush that the Iraqis would blow up Kuwait's oil wells, causing environmental devastation. Bush pressed on, and the devastation is duly occurring.

One more inconvenient memory. Many who supported economic sanctions against Iraq questioned whether blood should be shed to prop up the Sabahs of Kuwait, a dynasty whose latest emir had suspended the constitution, whose prisons nourished torturers, whose workers—many of whom had been born in Kuwait—were denied elementary rights.

Today American GIs on the Kuwaiti border stand aghast as tortured Palestinians, Sudanese and other minorities are flung out in the sand by Kuwaiti soldiers. Summary executions continue inside Kuwait, whose government announces that it proposes to hang 600 "collaborators." Human-rights workers have denounced wholesale breaches of international laws governing treatment of prisoners and refugees.

Meanwhile, the city is at a standstill while the Palestinians who made Kuwait work cower in their homes, fearing the knock of a rabble who spent the war abroad, some of them dancing in Egyptian discos. The only fully functioning establishment in Kuwait is the \$2 million pro tem palace for the emir, replete with gold-plated taps.

Was the vast disturbance and terrible death toll of the Gulf war all for this?

One final and inconvenient memory. There were opportunities for negotiation. Sanctions could have been pressed. The war need not have happened, and we would have been spared many things, including the most expensive re-election campaign in history.

Distributed by Alexander Cockburn



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