

LETTERS

FROM

EXILE



by Political Prisoner

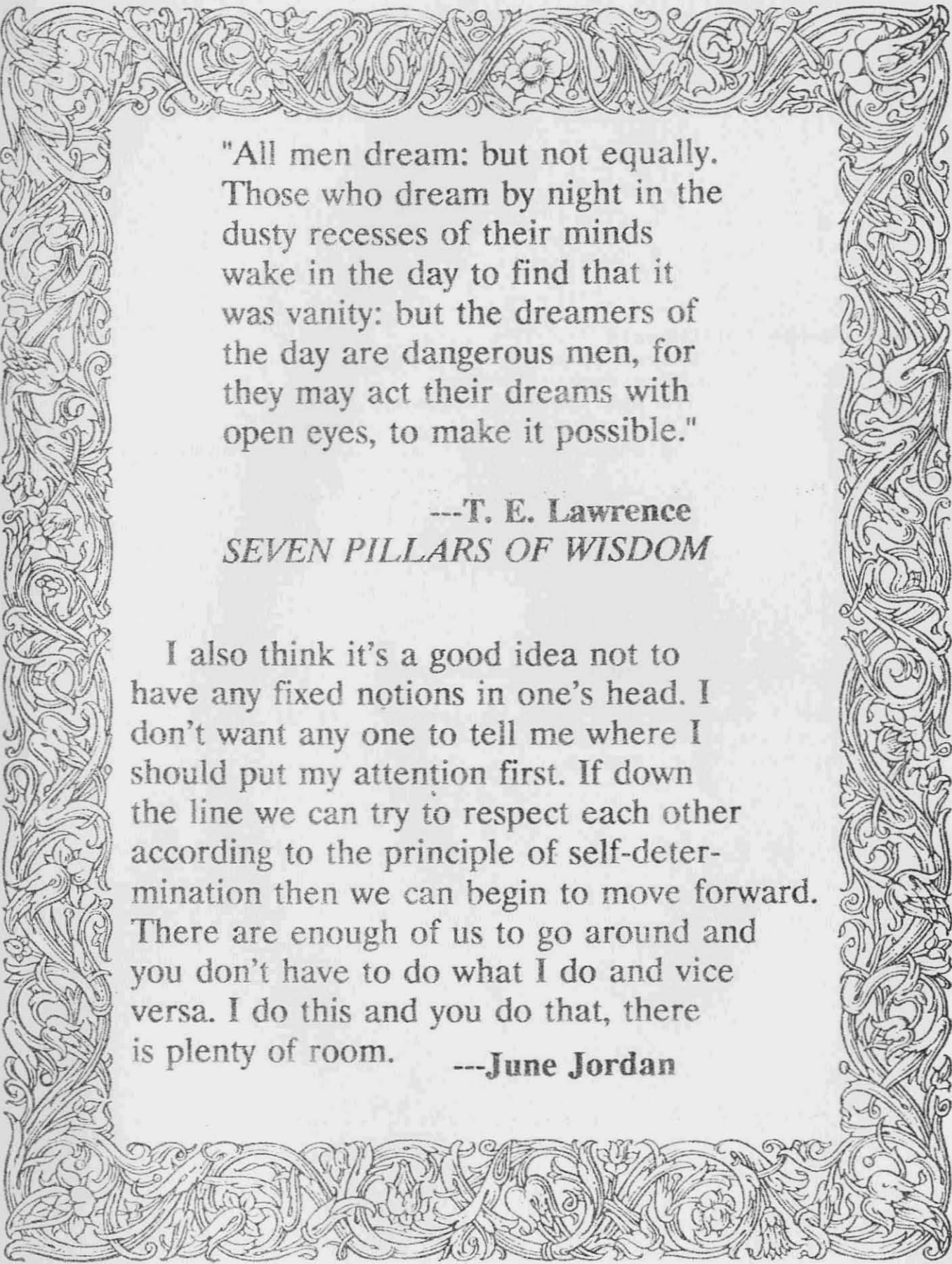
RAYMOND LUC LEVASSEUR

Marion Prison

Many thanks to: Generik
Eileen Findlay, computer wiz,
Uncle Punky Graffix,
all you stubborn friends of
political prisoners everywhere;
and Mom, who bought me this swell mimeo.
--Velvet, for F.O.P.P.

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"All men dream: but not equally.
Those who dream by night in the
dusty recesses of their minds
wake in the day to find that it
was vanity: but the dreamers of
the day are dangerous men, for
they may act their dreams with
open eyes, to make it possible."

---T. E. Lawrence
SEVEN PILLARS OF WISDOM

I also think it's a good idea not to
have any fixed notions in one's head. I
don't want any one to tell me where I
should put my attention first. If down
the line we can try to respect each other
according to the principle of self-deter-
mination then we can begin to move forward.
There are enough of us to go around and
you don't have to do what I do and vice
versa. I do this and you do that, there
is plenty of room.

---June Jordan

My Blood Is Quebecois

Salut mes soeuro et freres:

MY NAME IS RAYMOND LUC LEVASSEUR. Luc is my peperes name, which I carry with Franco pride. I come from a long line of mill workers, and grew up in the overbearing shadow of textile mills and shoe factories of Southwestern Maine. My father was born in the Quebec nation. We called ourselves French Canadian, or simply French, and that's what others called us. Our detractors held a different perspective and referred to us as "frogs" or "maudive (godamn) canucks." Those were fighting words then, and they are now.

IT'S ALWAYS FELT natural for me to refer to myself as French Canadian. To think of myself this way. What it means to me is that my blood is Quebecois. We didn't use the term Franco- American when I was coming up. Between the time I left Maine in 1964 and my return in later years, "Franco-American" became widely used. I've always associated Franco-American with France or canned spaghetti. I don't say this disparagingly, but simply as a comment of how I was taught to see things. I realize that the hyphenated American signifies assimilation into the American landscape, if not the American dream. While I do not deny the reality of assimilation, neither will I deny the moral bankruptcy and nightmare that America is for many of us. Personally and politically I draw the line at complete assimilation into the worst aspects of 100 percent Americanism. Apparently the government concurs, as it holds me in an isolation cell in the infamous control unit prison at Marion, Illinois.

MY GRANDPARENTS WENT to work in the textile mills at 13 and 14 years. My mother and father went into those mills at 16. My turn came at 17, when I misrepresented my age to a mill boss in order to work on a machine making shoe heels. From the earliest years I'd watched my family and predominantly French Canadian neighbors enter and leave the mills. Now I followed them into an exceedingly unpleasant experience. Perhaps you've had such an experience and don't have to rely on the imagination to conjure up the sweat of oppression. At the time my immediate co-workers were mostly French-Canadian. While I had gone farther in school than the others, none on the shop floor had a good education.

... My grandparents went to work in the textile mills at 13 and 14 years...

We worked in the shell of the old Goodall mills - a miserable runaway shop that fled South, destroying unions in its wake. We had no union protection and it showed. The pay was low, the work demanding, and the conditions hazardous. Speed up was used to maximize exploitation. To resist the debilitating effects of this speed up my French Canadian brethren introduced me to the proverbial shoe- le sabot - with which we jammed the machines. It was my first act of sabotage, but a long way from my last. Our immediate objective was to draw the line at how many shoe heels we'd have to produce per hour, beyond which the task became increasingly exhaustive and dangerous. We had our dignity, and in this small way, sought to dispel the power that the mills held over us- mills that we commonly believed were owned by wealthy Anglos from out of state.

A FUTURE IN the mills became all the more frightening when a Franco school friend, working in a mill across from mine, got his arm caught in a machine that choked him to death. He'd quit school to earn a living and was rewarded with an early death.

A MACHINE CAN kill in the blink of an eye, but mill work can take decades to ravage a body and soul. My pepere worked in textile mills as long as I could remember. He was a man who took pride in carrying a

lunch pail and bringing home a pay check. This was a man who used to bounce me on his knee, and for whom I had the greatest respect. When the mill where he worked closed and moved south, he was discarded like an old pair of shoes. A worker to the depth of his soul, he was without a job. It wasn't long before his health began to noticeably deteriorate. He had difficulty with his balance, his hands became unsteady and his breathing labored. One day he fell in the chicken coop and I went to help him. He no longer had the strength and steadiness to get himself up. I picked him up from where he'd fallen in dirt and excrement. In my arms he felt as light as a child. My memere and I cleaned him up and rolled him a Bull Durham. "Things will get better" we said, as I disguised my hatred for those mills that demanded so much from our lives.

... but how was I to strike back at the mills and factories that exploited us...

THERE WAS NO improvement. My pepere was a World War I veteran, so we took him to Togus. After the VA warehoused him in a corner, he begged to come home, so we brought him back to die. Within a year my memere was living with my mother because she could no longer afford to live alone.

BEING OF FRENCH CANADIAN blood and working class has impacted on my view of the American political/economic system and society. I was told to strike back at those who made ethnic slurs about us, and I did. Still, I heard the insulting remarks about us as being stupid, lazy and papist dominated. But how was I to strike back at the mills and factories that exploited us - besides breaking the windows of their abandoned buildings as we did as kids?

TO ME, THE French and class identity were inseparable. At 17 years of age I felt those who didn't fall into this category were the lucky ones- the exceptions. I wasn't one of the exceptions. I had to work to eat and the only work was in a dead end job in a non- union mill. At age 17, with limited options, I left Maine and followed Route 95 to Boston where I found work on the waterfront loading docks.

... I later joined Vietnam Veterans Against the War...

AT VARIOUS TIMES I've tried to change or conceal my French identity. When I was younger I Anglicized my middle and last names. I sidestepped the French language as if it were a trap. I left the Catholic church. I sought Protestant girlfriends. I toyed with the illusion of someday crossing over to that fabulously free, white and 21 middle-class, devoid of ethnic identity and lowly wages. The assimilationist's dream.

I'VE WORKED AS a wage laborer throughout my life - factories, farm work, logger, construction, tannery worker and other stints of endurance. The remnants of the French language I retain from my youth includes "travail" as one of the most often used words. Work was central to the material and spiritual well being of my extended family, and nowhere have I seen as strong a work ethic as amongst French Canadians. An old worker once told me that it takes as much courage to carry a lunch pail to a sweat shop every day to feed your kids, as it does to shoulder a weapon. There's a strong current of truth in this little parable. I know - I've done both. When I wasn't working for some big bossman, I was working for the people. By this, I mean I did community work with various political organizations, and I spent 10 years underground banging away at the worst manifestations of U.S. imperialism.

... and I spent 10 years underground banging away at the worst manifestations of U.S. imperialism...

THE ROOTS OF my political vision and militancy extend deep into life as a French Canadian worker. However, it was a tour of duty in Vietnam which led me from the provincial to the radical. In Vietnam, 1967, I saw intense racism directed towards the Vietnamese people, which recalled my own experience with anti-Franco bigots and the white supremacy I'd encountered in Boston and throughout the military. As I saw the culture and poverty of the Vietnamese ridiculed, I recalled the

intolerant WASP's of my youth. I saw the exploitation of their labor and the desecration of their lives. And charged with carrying out a frightening level of violence, were the poor and working class soldiers - disproportionately Black, Latino, and some of French Canadian backgrounds.

I LATER JOINED Vietnam Veterans Against the War. When I returned stateside I took my new consciousness and became politically active in Tennessee. I quickly became involved in opposition to the war, civil rights and a strike by black and white packinghouse workers. My political activism was a prelude to prison, which is where I found myself a year after honorable discharge from the army.

MY CONSCIOUSNESS NOR commitment remained at a standstill. In 1970 I met Sacco and Vanzetti. They appeared to me through the pages of a book I was reading on the labor movement in the sweltering heat of a southern prison cell. I vividly remember reading Vanzetti's last statement to the court before he was sentenced to execution for the crime of being an immigrant radical:

"If it had not been for these thing I might have lived out my life talking at corners to scorning men.

I might have die, unmarked, unknown, a failure.

Now we are not a failure. This is our career and our triumph. Never in our full life could we hope to do such work for tolerance, for justice, for man's understanding of man as now we do by accident.

Our words, our lives, our pains -- nothing!

The taking of our lives -- lives of a good shoemaker and poor fish peddler -- all!

That last moment belongs to us--
that agony is our triumph."

... Human rights found a warm reception in my cell...

HERE WAS THE faltering English I'd heard spoken in and around the mills now presented in an impassioned and principled defense

of immigrant workers. The lives of a "good shoemaker and poor fish peddler": I saw increased clarity the laboring class of which I am a part. I had worked in a mill making shoe heels. I had been a farm worker and worked on the Boston Fish Pier. I'd felt the ethnic prejudice against our people - the French Canadians. Then there was my imprisonment, so soon after Vietnam, and related to my political activism. I found a kindred spirit in those who sacrificed before us and with us.

IT WAS IN prison that I studied the great political theorists and revolutions. Human rights found a warm reception in my cell as did ideologies based on revolutionary nationalism and socialism. The life and thought of Malcolm X was shared with me by his descendents who occupied the same cell block. I was encouraged by the activities of the Black Panther Party and ecstatic with the resurgence of the Front de Liberation du Quebec. When I defied the prison's Jim Crow segregation, I did so with the conviction that as the only French Canadian prisoner there, I would not side with white supremacy against our black brothers.

WHEN I RETURNED to Maine in 1971, it was to various jobs making concrete blocks, hammering 2x4's, bolting steel, and sweeping floors. I also attended the University of Maine, was drug crisis coordinator at Augusta's Rap & Rescue, and worked with organizations such as Vietnam Veterans Against the War and Scar. Again I was among the dispossessed and least respected.

**... never should we resort to racism to
persevere...**

WHEN I REFER to being underground, I refer to a period of activity from late 1974 to late 1984 when I took my political work away from the eyes and ears of the government. During those years I joined efforts with others in attempting to build a revolutionary resistance movement. We sought to bring to the attention of the American people the horrendous crimes being committed by their own government and transnational corporations. We targeted the worst criminals because they are the ones who hurt the most people. After my capture I was convicted of bombing U.S. military facilities, offices of the South African government,

and corporations doing business with apartheid. Now I am one of over one hundred political prisoners held in the U.S. gulag.

I WHOLEHEARTEDLY SUPPORT the effort of those who nourish and preserve the French Canadian culture and heritage, including our language. There are obstacles to be sure. In my current situation, the authorities have prohibited me from receiving French language publications such as Le FAROG Forum and Rebelles.

NEVER SHOULD WE resort to racism to persevere. It is with anger and sadness I note Quebec's use of the Surete du Quebec to attack the indigenous Mohawk people who are defending their land against encroachment by non-native land developers.

... assimilation must not translate to complicity and collaboration...

A SERIOUS CHALLENGE faced by Franco-Americans is the level of assimilation we pursue. Too many are seduced by America's materialism along with its racist and class arrogance. It is rotten fruit. It's clear from the recent uprisings in Los Angeles and other cities that all is not well in Babylon. America has constituted itself into a criminal enterprise. The magnitude of the crimes is staggering. The U.S. was built on the theft of Indian lands and decimation of Indian people. Mexican land was stolen. African sweat and blood constructed a substantial portion of this country. America's invasion of Vietnam was an attempt to suppress that nation's right to independence. And what horrible atrocities the U.S. has committed against the peoples of El Salvador, Nicaragua, Chile, Southern Africa, the Philippines and so many others. It's a bloody legacy that cannot be denied by an arrogant 500 years commemoration of Columbus and colonization. Franco-Americans should actively involve themselves in the opposition movement to this celebration. Assimilation carries with it a responsibility of bringing America to task for its worst abuses. Assimilation must not translate to complicity and collaboration.

I WAS ASKED to provide testimony as to what being Franco-American means to me, and why from this perspective I became a

militant. It began with simple French songs sung by my mother and memere, and burnished by the anti-French slurs of bigots. I'm proud of my blood and pained with an anger that has not subsided. My accumulated life experiences have left me hungry for something better. I yearn for my freedom and a future where every child can live to their full potential without the scourges of poverty, racism and war. I have chosen to fight for that future.

Pour liberte-

Raymond Luc Levasseur

Marion Prison, May, 1992

PARDON

MY ANALYSIS

ON DECEMBER 24th, 1992, George Bush bestowed presidential pardons on six former henchmen: Caspar Weinburger, ex-War Secretary; Duane Claridge, former head of covert CIA wars in Latin America; Alan Fiers, closely linked to Central American death squads; Eliot Abrams, whose Goebbels-like spin on U.S. Latin American policy provided cover for the above, and former National Security Advisor (and Iranscam figure) Robert McFarlane.

ALL OF THESE MEN faced criminal charges in the Iran-Contra scandal. The charges consisted largely of perjury and withholding information from Congress about illegal arms sales to Iran and a multi-million dollar arms pipeline to the Contras.

GEORGE BUSH SAYS THAT these men he pardoned are good and honorable men. True patriots. The reality and moral dilemma is that these men are killers. They were links in a chain of command that turned parts of Central America into graveyards. Somehow they find honor in claiming innocence and being unwilling to see their victims as anything other than ideological pawns, without flesh, without blood.

WE ARE TOLD BY the pundits that few Americans can understand the complexities of the Iran-Contra scandal. Yet, the media's focus on the scandal has omitted the most serious crimes committed by the Reagan-Bush criminal enterprise: War crimes, and crimes against humanity. The "complexities of the Iran-Contra scandal" are no more complex than firing an M-16. And fire it they did . . . Americans are capable of understanding that a person who supplies a weapon to a murderer is an accessory to a murder. Supply a multi-million dollar diversion of weapons, ammunition, training, and

other lethal aid to CIA-backed Contras and you bear direct responsibility for what follows.

IT'S NOT COMPLICATED. The U.S. weapons pipeline enabled the Contras--offspring of the Somoza dictatorship--to rape, torture, mutilate, and murder their way into Nicaragua from sanctuaries in Honduras. The CIA/Contras mined Nicaraguan harbors, bombed oil refineries, and attempted to overthrow a sovereign government through a pattern of terror. The terror claimed predominantly civilian victims. Weinburger, et al, should have faced more than probation from their classmates on the federal bench. They should have faced an international court of law, holding them responsible for 30,000 deaths in Nicaragua and bottomless suffering endured by a people who sought no more from their Revolution than true independence and a better life.

REMEMBER, THE IRAN-CONTRA cover-up pertains only to that time period in which the Boland Amendment prohibited direct or indirect aid to the contras. Congress proved more than willing to fund extraordinary amounts of lethal aid to the contras, as long as they approved it.

NO SUCH COVER-UP WAS NECESSARY regarding U.S. military aid to the murderous regimes of Guatemala and El Salvador. U.S. weapons, equipment, training, and advisors flowed through an open pipeline, and with predictable results--70,000 killed in El Salvador, 100,000 in Guatemala. Part of the pardoned Eliot Abrams' job was to make crimes against humanity digestible to the American public. Lying to the public is not a prosecutable offense.



ABRAMS AND HIS PREDECESSORS, in one example, denied the Salvadoran Army's massacre of almost 1,000 civilians at El Mazote, Morazón Province, in December of 1981--a massacre that was documented at the time by human rights organizations. The documentation established that the Fort Bragg-trained and U.S.-supplied Atlactl Battalion butchered the people of El Mazote, littering their corpses with M-16 casings. Shortly before Bush issued his pardons, a group of forensic anthropologists from Argentina was still digging up skeletons from one of El Mazote's mass graves--37 in this most recent find, mostly children. There was no need to lie about the U.S. role in El Salvador; the Administration boasted of its involvement and complicity. The duplicity of its propaganda is merely used to camouflage its worst abuses.

BUSH STATED THAT those pardoned were not motivated by greed or

personal gain. This is little consolation to the people of Central America who suffered for these men's blood-lust and quest for power. The narrow focus on a single dimension of Iran-Contra doesn't account for the parallel devastation that the Reagan-Bush clique brought to bear on Southern Africa, Lebanon, Palestine, Libya, Panama, and Grenada. Commander-in-Chief Bush led his own assaults on Iraq and Panama. And when the finger of U.S. imperialism isn't directly on the trigger, it is pulled by one of its client states.

BUSH REFERRED TO Weinburger, et al, as true American patriots. Sunshine patriots is more like it. Suited in seats of power, they designed policies that others implemented through covert operations and wars. The result was death, while the quintessential Ugly Americans slumbered in their suburban Washington homes. Once they were threatened with investigations that threatened them with more than a tarnished image or probation, they began to whine like spoiled children. Fiers whined all the way into the U.S. Attorney's office and then provided tearful testimony against Clair George--his former boss at the CIA. Undoubtedly, Bush had a further rat in the pack in mind when he pardoned the lot for "their conduct relating to the Iran-Contra affair". Weinburger was scheduled for trial in January.

BUSH AND THOSE HE PARDONED had established themselves as predators that feed off the misery of others. They flaunted both domestic and international law while using their powerful positions to fill graveyards.

THE PUBLIC IS FOREVER fed the fiction that there is equal justice under the law for all. It's in the Pledge of Allegiance. What isn't in the Pledge is that the U.S. has the largest and most racist prison system on Earth, and approximately 150 political prisoners dispersed throughout the Gulag. Just us poor folks in prison, and more Blacks imprisoned per capita than another U.S. client state--South Africa.

PRISONERS OF CONSCIENCE, radicals and revolutionaries, are not pardoned. They are imprisoned for years on end that often turn into decades. Nor are we in country club facilities reserved for the few imprisoned miscreants of the ruling class, and the plague of government snitches. We are chained in the bowels of hell.

CASE IN POINT: Those of us convicted of armed actions against U.S. military facilities and war profiteers. The intent and purpose of our actions was to draw the American people's attention to horrendous crimes being committed by their government, in their name, against the people of Central America. It was one of the numerous courses of action necessary to bring the repression and killing to an end.

WE BROUGHT the El Mazote Massacre to the attention of people years before the current revelations. The actions pointed out that revolutionary Nicaragua didn't slaughter its own people as U.S. clients in Central America do, so the U.S. intervened with its own brand of barbarism. Pointed out also was the Sandinistas'

survival and improvement programs for the poor, again distinguishing it from U.S. client states in the region--programs which the U.S. spared no effort to subvert. To the American people, clandestine organizations sent the message: What good is conscience and moral judgment if we lack the will to take strong action to stop war crimes and crimes against humanity. To know and do nothing is complicity.

BUSH'S STATED REASON FOR THE PARDONS:

1) His criminal associates were "motivated by patriotism". Yet, any political prisoner or defendant who has stolen a pair of shoes can tell you that courts do not permit motivation as defense. The denial of a politically-based defense to those who resist government and corporate crimes are one aspect of criminalizing resistance. In any event, the *intent* of channelling weapons to Nicaragua was to increase the body count and implement U.S. policy through hired killers.

2) Weinburger, et al, "did not profit from their conduct." But they did. They retained government positions throughout the Reagan-Bush years. They secured Third World lands, resources, and exploitable labor for U.S. banks and multi-nationals--the capitalist family business. Which directly relates to the third reason:

3) "Each has a record of long and distinguished service to this country." Indeed--as racketeers in service to an ongoing criminal enterprise called imperialism. Lucrative careers preceded their entry into the Reagan-Bush administration, and the corporate world awaits their return. As Iran-Contra windbag Oliver North has shown, \$50,000 speaker fees await those with the blood of Nicaraguans on their hands.

To know and do nothing is complicity . .

4) "They have already paid a price--in depleted savings, lost careers, and anguished families." Such crap is often used by convicted felons of the ruling class to avoid prison sentences, or sentences to the worst prisons. They assert their constitutions are too delicate to be placed next to convicts who have stolen goods, sold drugs, or wielded guns. They plead to be spared even the shortest prison sentence because they shelled out a half a million for the best lawyer that can be bought. They've lost their government jobs, though private corporations will find ways to parlay their corrupt ways into profit. The family is embarrassed, not for what they did, but because they got caught. Not surprisingly, this type of appeal often succeeds because the judges are classmates. Bourgeois scum. In this case, the boss of bosses provided insurance.

BUT IF YOU ARE one of those jailed during the L.A. uprising, in Rikers Island for jumping subway turnstiles, or stealing cars in Newark, you got nothing coming but heartache. In fact, you should consider yourself lucky you aren't being summarily executed. To be poor, Black, Latino, jobless, homeless, underpaid or underfed are not acceptable reasons to stay out of prison. It's your ticket in.

THE POLITICAL PRISONERS who've stood out from the profiteers and careerists through their commitment to fight oppression and their personal sacrifices have no savings to deplete or careers to be lost. It is our lives that are at stake. Some, like Angel Rodríguez Cristobal, Ahmed Evans, George Jackson, and Kuwasi Balagoon have been murdered or killed by medical neglect. Pedro Albizu Campos and Andrés Figueroa Cordero suffered years of abuse in Federal prison, only to die of their illnesses shortly after release. Alan Berkman and Sylvia Baraldini fought courageous battles against cancer under the most debilitating conditions. Numerous former members of the Black Panther Party have been imprisoned for 18, 20, 22 years. Mumia Abu Jamal faces execution by the state of Pennsylvania.

WE MUST NOT LOSE SIGHT of the real death-dealing crimes of Reagan-Bush-Weinberger et al. And neither should the lives and freedom of political prisoners be denied.

THE PUNDITS SAY there's nothing that can be done about the pardons--they're enshrined in the Constitution and irreversible. That's what was said about slavery. There is no statute of limitations on war crimes and crimes against humanity.

WHILE HISTORY'S INDICTMENT continues to build against our common enemy, a fire needs to be lit to free political prisoners. If the ruling class can protect its own, we should be able to save lives and gain the freedom of 150 of our own. Whether a blanket amnesty (for which there is ample precedent) or an uncompromising movement to stop the State's execution of Mumia Abu Jamal, the time is now.

Marion Prison, January, 1992

“Thank God for [people who] have some life in them and some conscience, some anguish over others...Gandhi used to say that those who do nothing are far more guilty than those who do violence against tyranny.”

-Phillip Berrigan, referring to the OHIO 7.

THE UPRISING

THE LOS ANGELES uprising isn't about a free lunch or integrated lunch counters. It's about those whose lives have been diss'd: disinherited, displaced, discriminated against, and disenfranchised. It's about 500 years of European-exported genocide. The entire state of California sits on stolen Indian and Mexican land. There is nothing legitimate about this kind of theft, nor the institutional racism and violent repression which accompanies it.

THE MOST INTENSE flames of this uprising have burned in predominantly Black South Central L.A. This community is one of many emanating from the African Diaspora and its historically developed land base in the Black Belt South. Today's resistance draws its lifeblood from the earliest slave rebellions and is embodied in the descendants of Malcolm X. There is no "middle of the road" after the Middle Passage.

THERE ARE COMMON threads between the L.A. uprising and the

Palestinian Intifada. Both defy overwhelming superior police and military forces. Both constitute dispossessed nations fighting for basic human rights. And at the heart of their struggles is the right to national identity and land. The L.A. uprising has broken through one of oppression's fundamental realities: its disarming effectiveness at turning its victims against each other instead of their oppressors. The rising has redirected the rage of its participants against the moral bankruptcy of capitalism and white supremacy.

AS OF THIS writing, the battleground has claimed 50 lives in four days, most by police gunfire. In the usual course of events, L.A.'s killing grounds would take two weeks to claim as many lives. The significant difference is that instead of passively waiting for death to stalk them, the people went on the offensive. Or what might be considered a vigorous self-defense, since they were going to die anyway through police violence, internecine warfare, alcohol and drug poisoning, and social neglect.

THE UPRISING RESULTED in extensive property damage. While there was some needless destruction, the people's firebombs were strikingly accurate at rooting out capitalism's ghetto infrastructure. For the most part, people avoided damaging schools, mosques, churches, and housing. Most damaged property was corporate and absentee-owned. More than one Bank of Amerikka branch was torched into oblivion. These are the businesses that bleed the community with overpriced staples of life, then take the money and run. These are the purveyors of unlimited supplies of alcohol. It was like pouring salt on leeches as the profiteers squirmed in their suburban enclaves.



WHEN FACED WITH uprising and mass resistance, the government has historically responded with military intervention. From one decade and century to another--Watts, East St. Louis, Chicago, New York--the police and military have combined to exact a fearful death toll. It was during the 1965 Watts rebellion that Daryl Gates, the Bull Conner of L.A., drew his first blood as a police commander. From Watts, Black rage swept through Cleveland in '66, and Newark, Detroit, and other cities in 1967. After returning from Viet Nam, I travelled to Detroit and saw the immense destruction. In Viet Nam I'd seen extensive bomb damage from the door of a helicopter; in Detroit, I saw it from the asphalt. Both areas burned in wars for self-determination. The deployment of federal troops is predictable, but uprisings that trigger deployment demand attention and demonstrate the potential power of the people.

THIS IS NOT a time for apology and accommodation. If I began writing

all the names of those murdered and beaten senseless by the police, I'd be writing until forever. I could never catch up with the reality. With each death is a killer cop who walks free. I know I've written this before, but it's something I can't forget. It shouldn't be forgotten. I will write but two: Philip Pannel, a Black teenager from Teaneck, New Jersey, who died from a police officer's bullet as his hands were raised over his head. And Ralph Canady, a personal friend, who was murdered in cold blood by police in Baltimore, Maryland. No civil rights inquiries were initiated into these murders. There rarely are. It took 50 deaths in L.A. and the U.S. government's embarrassment in the court of world opinion to legitimize a federal inquiry into the Rodney King case.

THOUSANDS HAVE BEEN arrested in L.A., and the federal and state governments have formed a special task force to prosecute them. Steal a pair of shoes and go to jail; rip off the livelihood of a people and you're rewarded with profits and high office. These prosecutions will be punitive and vindictive. Years after the Watts rebellion, some of its participants are still in California prisons. Black Nationalist Ahmed Evans was sentenced to death following the Cleveland uprising. I first met Ralph Canady after he'd been railroaded to prison in the wake of the 1968 rebellion in Nashville's Black community. Colonial rebellions strike fear in the bowels of American capitalism, and it'll spare no effort to imprison the most rebellious. Still in prison, some for decades, are those women and men that represent their people's aspirations to be free: Leonard Peltier, Geronimo Pratt, Mumia Abu-Jamal, Gary Tyler, Alejandrina Torres, Abdul Haqq, and many others. As Mandela put it--there's no easy way to walk to freedom.

... more prisons in a country already choking with them ...

THE FEDERAL DEPLOYMENT in L.A. includes elements of the U.S. Marshall's Service, who made their notorious mark in history tracking fugitive slaves, the racist dogs of the Border Patrol, and the Bureau of Prisons. The presence of the latter is a further indication of what lies in store for the rebellious poor: more prisons in a country that's already choking with them. The U.S. has more steel cages than any country on earth, and imprisons more Blacks per capita than South Africa. I live in this compressed nightmare of a gulag. Each year of my imprisonment I've endured the exile with those from amerikkka's barrios and ghettos, including South Central and East L.A. There's no denying this apartheid reality or the necessity to break its chains.

NAT TURNER SAID that the struggle for freedom was not a war for robbery or to satisfy passions. Opportunists exist everywhere, but most of that unleashed power of mass resistance did not act with criminal intent. They are pursuing their very survival. Their intent is to demand respect and gain some measure of control over their

lives and community. What criminal intent exists is primarily represented by police violence and a system which fosters and protects the real criminals: that rotten element that lives in bourgeois splendor derived from exploiting and defrauding societies' most vulnerable. Their rapacity is exceeded only by their ruthlessness and disregard for the value of human life. The rule of class and white supremacy ensures that they operate with impunity.

NO DOUBT THE system will attempt some band-aid application to problems reflected in the uprising. This has been attempted before, but hasn't worked. That's one of the messages from the streets-- government money, with all its bureaucratic strings, may alleviate some conditions in the short term, but it cannot deal with the basic causes that underlie a people's subjugation. There's only one serious context in which to discuss money, and that is reparations. Billions of dollars in reparations. Millions of acres of land in reparations. However, a government and a general population that applauds the agonizing death of Iraqi children caused by U.S. bombing raids will not seriously consider reparations simply to quell the impact of 50 deaths and property destruction in L.A.

THE SITUATION IS desperate but not hopeless. To rise from ashes and bondage requires a well-organized and militant resistance that's willing and prepared to take it to the limit. For amerikka's most oppressed, there is no viable alternative to revolutionary nationalism and socialism.

THERE WAS WIDESPREAD participation by Mexicans in the L.A. uprising, though the media has manipulated coverage to keep them voiceless. Their involvement is understandable given the conditions of survival and the fact the amerikka occupies their land. Los Angeles was forcibly taken from the Mexicans in 1846.

THERE WAS MARGINAL participation by young whites in L.A., as well as in actions in other cities. This is encouraging, but it is not enough. Historically, white people have laid claim to privilege based on race. There are exceptions, but they're not the rule.

White power rules in amerikka, as is clearly evident in the presidency, congress, supreme court, and corporate boardrooms. You can see it in the faces of the swine wearing the badge of the LAPD. You see it in celebrations of Columbus. There are those that embrace the racist ideology that permeates this country, others are simply complacent when confronted with its effects. Both are part of the problem.



FOR THE PREDOMINANTLY white Left and broader grouping of "progressives", there exists a heightened call to action. Where are the millions who created a vibrant anti-apartheid movement? Where are all those that provided political support and material aid to Nicaragua and El Salvador? Where are the near million strong that attended the recent pro-choice demonstration in Washington? And where in hell is organized labor? It's time for this conspiracy of silence to end.

FOR POOR AND working-class whites, the choice is clear: collaboration with a system based on white supremacy, or combatting it. When John Brown was asked why he fought to end slavery, he replied "I act from principle. My objective is to restore human rights." When Malcolm X was asked what whites who care about Black peoples' struggles could do to support them, he replied "Do as John Brown did." It's time to get down to dismantling the apartheid legacy of slavery. It's time to organize a 20th century abolition movement, and to provide aid and assistance to freedom fighters. It's way beyond the time of no return.

Marion Prison, May, 1992



DISS'D

FROM 1976 through 1984, the Sam Melville-Johnson Jackson Unit and the United Freedom Front called for the release of political prisoners and POW's from U.S. prisons. This call, accentuated through the use of explosives, was integrated with other issues such as independence for Puerto Rico, an end to apartheid, and support for liberation movements in Central America.

In 1985, the first of many trials began for seven long time activists and

revolutionaries. Collectively known as the Ohio 7, the first group trial stemmed from resistance actions attributed to the UFF, including the bombings of U.S. military facilities. This trial resulted in numerous convictions. Subsequently, 8 people were indicted on Sedition and RICO (Racketeer Influenced Corrupt Organization) charges coming out of SMJJ/UFF actions. This case resulted in the longest sedition trial in U.S. history and acquittals for those who remained in the case. I was a defendant in both cases as was Richard Williams and Thomas Manning.

BETWEEN the earlier UFF trial and the Sedition case, there was a New Jersey state trial in which Tom and Richard were tried for the 1981 shooting death of a state trooper. In very compelling and unequivocal testimony, Tom described how he had shot the trooper in self-defense after the trooper tried to kill him with his .357 Magnum. During the court proceedings it was determined that the trooper had fired a minimum of 6 shots; carried an unregistered, unlicensed "drop gun" concealed on his person, and was previously involved in shooting incidents.

TOM testified that Richard Williams was not present at the shooting.

AT trial's conclusion, Tom Manning was convicted of felony murder. The jury failed to reach a verdict on Richard, with the majority for acquittal. This led to a second trial, a retrial, which began 5 years later on September 30th, 1991, and ended with Richard's conviction in December.



A year earlier, December 7-10, 1990, a Special Tribunal on the violation of the human rights of political prisoners/POW's in U.S. prisons and jails was held in New York City. This event was convened by 88 sponsoring and endorsing organizations, including Freedom Now!, a coalition of organizations and individuals pledged to support political prisoners. Hundreds of activists attended the event. The Tribunal provided an opportunity and forum to examine the political claims and conditions of over one hundred political prisoners. Examination was also given to government claims that these prisoners are simply terrorists and criminals.

THE Tribunal drew numerous conclusions based on the evidence. Among these findings: U.S. prisons hold substantial numbers of political prisoner/POW's, including "white north american opponents of U.S. government policies." The Tribunal then issued the following call to actions--"It is of critical importance that the international human rights community as well as all freedom loving people to bring

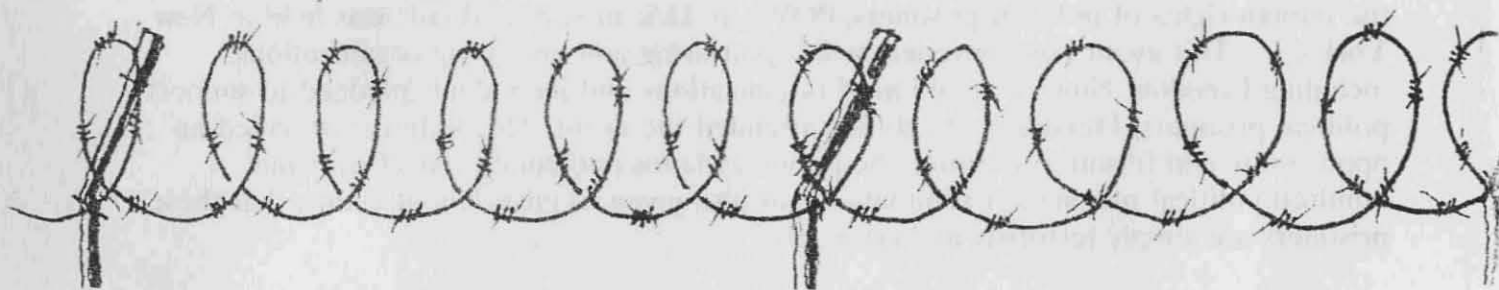
worldwide attention to the plight of U.S. political prisoners."

HOW is it that one year after the Tribunal's findings, the New Jersey trial of Richard Williams elicited no moral or political support from those who organized, sponsored, endorsed and attended this event? Or from the organizations and individuals affiliated with Freedom Now!? How did circumstances and attitudes evolve to the point of adding insult to injury by abandoning Richard Williams to a relentless attack by the State?

IT has been my position, shared by some of my comrades, that we do not distance ourselves politically from actions claimed by the SMJJ/UFF. For example, we do not deny bombing the offices of the South African government in 1982, or the destruction of military facilities. We think they were necessary and righteous actions designed to draw the attention of the American people to crimes being committed by their own government.

THIS has had repercussions in our ability to build support among the organized Left and others. Many activists consider the SMJJ/UFF actions "dirty" because they involved the use or threat of violence, including confrontations with the police. These activists won't even consider extending support to those who do not establish their "innocence" or repudiate armed resistance. Trying to gain their favor resembles an appearance before a parole board.

AT his recent trial, Richard Williams maintained his innocence throughout the circumstantial case against him, yet political and moral support did not materialize. With the exception of a few individuals who braved the elements and police intimidation, the Left virtually boycotted the trial. The alternative press, with the exception of the Canadian Left, did not devote so much as a single column inch to the trial. Events were not organized or shared which would draw attention to our comrade's plight. One of the few bright spots in the midst of this wayward stampede was defense attorney Lynne Stewart, who put forward a valiant effort.



WHY the white out? Despite the rhetoric of our detractors, the issue is not one of "guilt" or "innocence". If it were, the courtroom would have been filled with supporters from that nearby hotbed of radicalism, New York City. As it was, the courtroom was filled with state cops making their own political statement. The real deal with those that renounce us and retreat from trials and prison battlegrounds is that we

are seen as anti-imperialists with guns. Guns were used to defend ourselves; guns to confront the enemy, guns that speak for our own liberation and provide support to others. With no apologies.

SELF DEFENSE was clearly established in the New Jersey case. However, our critics' convoluted logic turns the issue around to a condemnation: What were we doing with guns to begin with! The soft part of the Left filed a superseding indictment behind that of the State, implicating us as terrorists and criminals. The guns, our lack of adherence to a particular party line, our radical ideas (e.g. the liberation of oppressed nations within the borders of the U.S. Empire) are used by others to label the Ohio 7 as renegade workers unworthy of support.

THERE are those who've just begun to grasp the necessary understanding and courage to denounce the inherent injustice of 20 year old cases involving our Black Panther Party and Black Liberation Army comrades, and others. Yet they don't lift a finger to help someone on trial now. Anyone who has been chewed up in this so-called "criminal justice" system will tell you support is most effective in the trial stage. Convictions are extremely difficult to get reversed, and early support lays the foundation for protracted support if necessary. A New York judge put it succinctly when he stated the government has an interest in the finality of judgments. Final--as in bury them alive--or, in the case of Mumia Abu Jamal, execute as soon as convenient.



MUCH of the North American Left suffers from myopia on this issue of political prisoners. It affects their value judgments. They place our value at nil. They see no relationship or kindred spirit between

those who function clandestinely or outside the bounds of the Empire's law, and the combatants, bombmakers, expropriators, armorers, courtiers, and propagandists of other anti-imperialist struggles. Struggles represented by the FMLN, the FSLN, Umkhonto we Sizwe, the PLA of the Philippines, etc. *They* merit admiration and respect. We get ostracized and disrespect.



WHEN Mandela toured the U.S. after his release from prison, I watched with pride as millions turned out to welcome him. Nelson Mandela symbolizes anti-apartheid resistance and the defiant spirit of political prisoners. Most Left organizations expressed enthusiastic support for Mandela--and appreciation for his sacrifice on behalf of others. It was a very special moment when Mandela spoke in Harlem. Adding to its significance was Mandela sharing the stage and place of honor with Black Panther Party leader Dhoruba Bin Wahad, and former Puerto Rican Nationalist Prisoners of War. Liberal and conservative politicians opposed their presence on stage. It is then with some

irony that so many Left organizations, year after year, refused to acknowledge the political persecution of these comrades. Curious, that many didn't recognize the connection between the fight against white supremacy in Amerikka. Disturbing, that at no time prior, during, or after did anyone acknowledge the reality of U.S. political prisoners in prison for years, and still in prison today, for anti-apartheid actions.

THE consistency with which the Left ignores political prisoners can be seen through the experiences of soldiers that refused to serve in the Gulf War. These working class women and men took the risks, bad discharges, and imprisonment. For their commitment and sacrifice, they received scant support from the various antiwar groups and coalitions, with the major exceptions of Citizen Soldier, the War Resisters' League, and the anti-imperialist segment of Viet Nam Veterans Against the War.

EXCEPTIONAL also is the Puerto Rican Independence Movement, and the singular example of Leonard Peltier (also, the particular effort formed around IRA prisoner Joe Doherty). They have made progress with integrating the lives of the prisoners with other community and political issues.

HOWEVER, few prisoners, including anti-imperialist prisoners, receive organizational support. The demise of Freedom Now! from competing agendas, personal squabbling, and myriad other self-induced problems undermined the good intentions and hard work of a few. It dashed the hopes of scores of political prisoners, long ago forgotten. This is a continuation of a decades-old legacy which relegates political prisoners to the status of irritant and minor humanitarian consideration.

THE prisoners want and need outside support. We need it to remain visible and as a vehicle for activism; as a measure of physical protection and to secure our freedom. Our lifeline is perilously weak.



THE State put a lot of muscle and resources into prosecuting Richard Williams. Every day, state police ringed the courthouse, patrolled the building and occupied the courtroom. This was more than a symbolic demonstration—it was a strategy designed to use the power of the State to take a man's life. The dichotomy was striking: a frenzied police power bent on exacting their pound of flesh, and the wilted response of the Left. There was the depth, character, and attitude of each in the context of a political trial.

NEITHER my comrades nor I have asked for awards, promotions, or pensions. If that's what I wanted, I would have re-enlisted with the U.S. Army rather than join with the unconventional forces. Some will say I have an axe to grind.

"My purpose is to stir the conscience and inflame the passions"

No doubt. I began to sharpen my axe under the war skies of Viet Nam. 25 years ago. I've continued to hone its edge as my own life was rubbed raw with oppression. With me, the political IS personal.

THIS is not a criticism of the entire Left. Most of the Left doesn't even know we exist. For those who have made a difference in our lives--you know who you are. Neither is it meant to be a comprehensive analysis. My purpose is to stir the conscience and inflame the passions; to draw attention to the inherent weakness of political organizations and movements that cut and run at the first sign of a courtroom confrontation. ALL progressive and revolutionary movements have their activists and seditious conspirators. Some of us are imprisoned for our commitment. Do you see us as part of your community, or as casualties of a war you'd just as soon forget? Do you see us at all? For after all is said and done, the women and men locked down for their political beliefs, intent, and actions are the United States' political prisoners.

January, 1992

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DEAR BETTY

GREETINGS TO YOU on International Women's Day! I was pleased to receive your letter and appreciate the kind words. It was very nice of you to write. It was also encouraging to hear the Berkshire Forum continues on. Every progressive voice is important.

I'M SURE THE RESPECTED PANELISTS at the Forum will address a range of human rights issues. Through my own life experiences, I have come to place supreme value on human rights and have committed a good deal of my life to the struggle for social justice. My work has most often taken the form organizer or combatant. I don't consider myself much of a writer.

I WOULD, however, like to take this opportunity to share with you some observations about the control unit prison at Marion, Illinois. I have monitored conditions here for many years and they have monopolized my life since they arrived, shortly after the conclusion of the Sedition trial. There's a story here that needs to be told.

MARION IS A CONTROL UNIT PRISON. Its regimen is enforced through physical brutality, deprivation, and psychological torture. I do not overstate the situation and there are thousands of pages of documented evidence which attests to the suffering and rights violations in Marion.

CONTROL UNIT POLICIES are based on isolation, separation, and controlled movement. Since the 1983 guard riot in which hundreds of prisoners were brutalized, Marion has been "locked down". We are confined to solitary cells, 22 1/2 a day. If I stand at the bars of my cell, I can see approximately 50 feet down-range--to another wall.

THERE EXISTS a total separation of cell blocks. Prisoners in one cell block have no contact with prisoners in the other area. Puerto Rican patriot Oscar López Rivera is 200 feet from me but I never see him.

EACH HALF of a cell block has two tiers of cells. But prisoners on one tier are never let out of their cells with prisoners from the other tier. Our primary "recreation" is to be let out onto the corridor in front of our cells for 1 1/2 hours with nothing to avail ourselves of. There is no exercise equipment, no work for the laborer, nothing to engage the intellect. The maximum number of prisoners allowed out of their cells at one time is 9, but usually does not exceed 7-8. Weather permitting, we are allowed outside into a yard, once a week, for 2 hours. The perimeter of Marion makes the Berlin Wall look like a minor obstacle.

SOCIALIZING among prisoners has been effectively barred.

INTEGRAL TO MARION'S regimen is the use of "restraints." Guards never get near a prisoner unless separated by a barrier or the prisoner is in restraints, either handcuffed behind the back or in handcuffs and leg irons. A prisoner does not move anywhere in this prison unless he is in restraints, even if the move is 100 feet to the guards' office or a mere 30 feet to another cell. Here's how it works: Guards will approach your cell door. You must turn away from them and back up to the door, extending your arms behind you and through an opening in the door. Handcuffs are placed on your wrists. The door is then opened and a guard immediately grabs you by the chain links of the handcuffs. (Through the entire course of the movement, and until you are on the other side of a barrier, he will not let go.) You back out of the cell. Your back must always be towards the guard. You are pat searched. From that moment on, you move and stop on command. The procedure is reversed and repeated at each destination and upon return to your cell. When you are returned to your cell, you are frequently pat searched.



ALL GUARDS CARRY 3-foot clubs with steel balls on each end. The steel allows them to separate your ribs and cause internal injuries without breaking bone. The club-wielding guards are an omnipresent reminder that you will be beaten senseless unless you go along with the program.

WHEN CLUBS FAIL to do the job, prisoners have been chained to concrete slabs (for days on end!) to contemplate their rebelliousness. Prisoners have also been forcibly injected with drugs. Recently, the U.S. Supreme Court approved the forcible use of psychotropic drugs on prisoners without their consent or due process protection. This merely put a high-level stamp of approval on what has been an ongoing practice in prisons. While in the segregation unit at MCC/New York I personally witnessed several prisoners forcibly strapped into their bunks and injected with tranquilizers.

ADDING TO THE VIOLENCE and humiliation directed towards the Marion prisoners is the selective use of "anal probes". This has been likened by prisoners to anal rape. Guards will attack a prisoner in restraints, remove his clothes, and one of them will shove their fingers in the prisoner's anus.

HEALTH CARE is a major grievance of the prisoners, and topping this category is the toxic water supply from which we are forced to drink. Marion draws its water from Crab Orchard lake, an area which has one of the most serious PCB toxic waste problems in the country. The lake itself has been designated to receive EPA Superfund cleanup money. In addition to PCB toxins, it has been determined that the area also contains other hazardous wastes, such as lead and cadmium. At one time, this lake was the backup source of drinking water for the town of Marion until disclosure of the contamination led the town to seek an alternative source. Although a class action suit has been filed on behalf of the prisoners, the bureau of prisons has refused to allow a lawyer for the prisoners a sample for testing. The men here have reported a variety of health problems, including rashes and subcutaneous lumps, but are denied health consultations and treatment. This is one of the many human rights violations which take place at Marion every day.



NONE OF THE MARION BROTHERS believes the courts imposed a death sentence on us.

IN THE SPRING OF 1989, there was an outbreak of intestinal parasites, which can be contracted by ingestion of fecally-contaminated water. The bureau of prisons has said it cannot determine the source of the outbreak.

IN THE FALL OF 1989, over 100 prisoners became violently ill with what they suspected was food poisoning. Prison medical workers made no attempt to diagnose or treat the problem.

HEALTH CARE AT MARION is in the same realm as due process for alleged disciplinary infractions. It exists only for whatever purposes the administration wants it to serve.

EVERY DAY the Marion Brothers must deal with intense isolation and the ongoing psychological assaults against us. There is no human touch in marion and the prison makes no concession to the human spirit. Marion exists to break the will of prisoners who refuse to grovel at the feet of our self-anointed masters.

MARION IS the only federal prison in the country which does not allow contact visits. Visitors are separated from prisoners by a plexiglass barrier and must speak through monitored phone receivers. As long as I am here, I will never be allowed to touch my children. Just how long you remain in Marion is entirely up to the discretion of the bureau of prisons. Some men have been here 12 years.

WE MUST EAT and defecate in our cells. Unlike other prisons, the cells here have been stripped of their furnishings. In their place is a concrete block on which has been placed a plastic mattress. It has four iron rings embedded in it to allow the guards to chain, naked and spreadeagled, those who arouse their ire. Three small concrete slabs protruding from the wall round out the decor. In a tribute to 20th century penology, Marion is the only federal prison which installs a small television in each cell. Its purpose is to pacify and keep the demons of insanity at bay. The bureau of prisons doesn't necessarily want to drive the prisoners insane. It wants them to submit.

how much of our living, breathing
humanity will be ground into dust . . .

IN KEEPING with the racist nature of the prison system, two-thirds of Marion prisoners are Third World--Black, Latino, Native American. The overwhelming majority of the guards are white.

THERE ARE no religious services and the chapel stands idle.

I SAID there was no work in Marion and for the large majority of us that is true. However, there is one exception. Before a prisoner can be transferred to another prison, he must prove he is worthy by some ambiguous standard set down by administrators. This includes a year's stay in the "pre-transfer" cell block (B unit), in which you are assigned a production job. What you produce is materiel (wire and cable) for the United States military.

MARION IS THE MOST maximum security prison in the United States. It is the government's disciplinary prison and holds both federal and state prisoners. Since its inception as a control unit prison, many inside organizers and political prisoners have been transferred here. I have never been in a federal prison before, yet I was sent to Marion directly from court following my acquittal of seditious conspiracy. I was sent here because of my political beliefs, and what the government calls my political associations. Yet the Department of Justice continues to propagate the lie that only the most serious of disciplinary violations gets a prisoner transferred to Marion. The bureau of prisons can at any time and without justifiable cause change a prisoner's security classification to cover their transfer to Marion.

MARION HAS AN EVIL REPUTATION. It is used to intimidate tens of thousands of other prisoners, any of whom could be transferred here at a moment's notice. The bureau of prisons has deliberately created a place of real suffering, which suffocates both mind and body. It is designed to create prisoners who are the walking wounded, to strike fear in any or all who would contemplate resistance to the system.

ONE OF THE MANY WARDENS who have served a tour of duty at Marion publically stated, "the purpose of Marion is to control revolutionary attitudes in the prison system and society at large." Recalcitrant prisoners, organizers, rights advocates, and political prisoners make good test subjects according to Marion policy. It is our belief systems that come under attack from Marion's brainwashing schemes ("to force a person to reject old beliefs and accept new ones by subjecting them to great mental pressure").

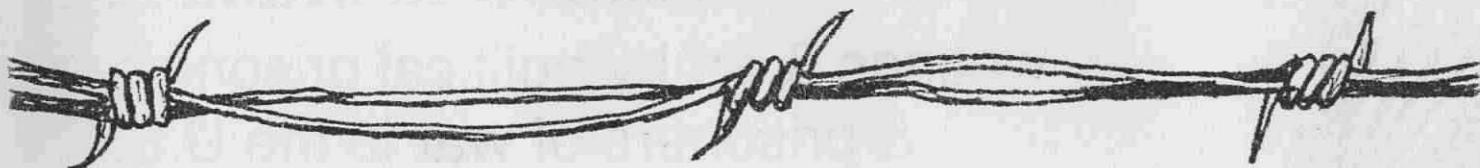
AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, IN A DEPARTURE from its usual lack of interest in the U.S. prison system, has condemned Marion for violating many of the United Nations' Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners. The Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals has described conditions at Marion as "sordid, horrible, and ghastly." A Congressional subcommittee has released reports on human rights violations at Marion. But after all is said, nothing is done to change life at Marion. every day, the

assault on our humanity continues.

OUR OPPRESSORS try to justify their policies by categorizing the Marion Brothers as "the worst of the worst", as if we were just so much human garbage. This propaganda ploy has been used for as long as any of us can remember. I saw it used during the Viet Nam War. It was a thinly-veiled cover to justify the government's own criminal actions, that they may continue unfettered with their exploitation and atrocities.

UNLIKE THE CAMPAIGN to close the Lexington Control Unit for Women, the struggle of the Marion Brothers has received only marginal support among progressive people. Though the U.S. prison population has more than doubled since the early '70's, with the number of Third World prisoners reaching alarming proportions, most of the Left ignores the issue. They fail to see prisons and the police as the States' first line of defense in the class war.

THE ISSUE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS has long since ceased to be an important issue in this country. Somehow, those of us imprisoned and mistreated because of our political commitment, do not merit enough respect from progressives to gain their support and protection. We are attacked by the government and ignored by those who should be our natural allies. If such a view continues to propagate--along with control units themselves--human rights abuses in U.S. prisons and in other aspects of our society will remain unchallenged on the altar of U.S. exceptionalism.



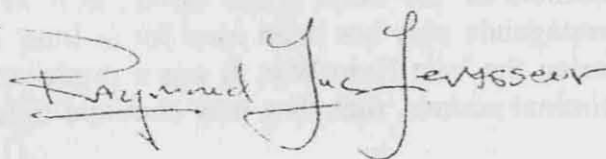
BETTY, I recently read a book by STARHAWK, a witch and healer. She says: "No matter how strong we become, how many inner demons we conquer, how many insights we gain, we are ultimately confirming our own isolation unless our journey is grounded in a relationship with living, breathing human beings."

CONDITIONS AT MARION are calculated to sever the relationships we have with our loved ones, people from our communities, and political movements. Amnesty International's report on Marion stated that policies here are designed to break the defiant spirit and alter the behavior of prisoners. It goes on to say that we are continually subjected to sensory and psychological deprivation, and stripped of our individual identities in a process called "mortification and depersonalization."

STARHAWK's view is an affirmation of life and belief in human potential. Marion is a negation of this. Conditions here force us into an intense fight for survival,

but how much of our living, breathing humanity will be ground into dust within isolation cells and by the very struggle it takes to survive these conditions? Time will tell, but at the moment, the prognosis doesn't look good.

In Solidarity,



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United States Penitentiary
Marion, Illinois 62959

March 8, 1990

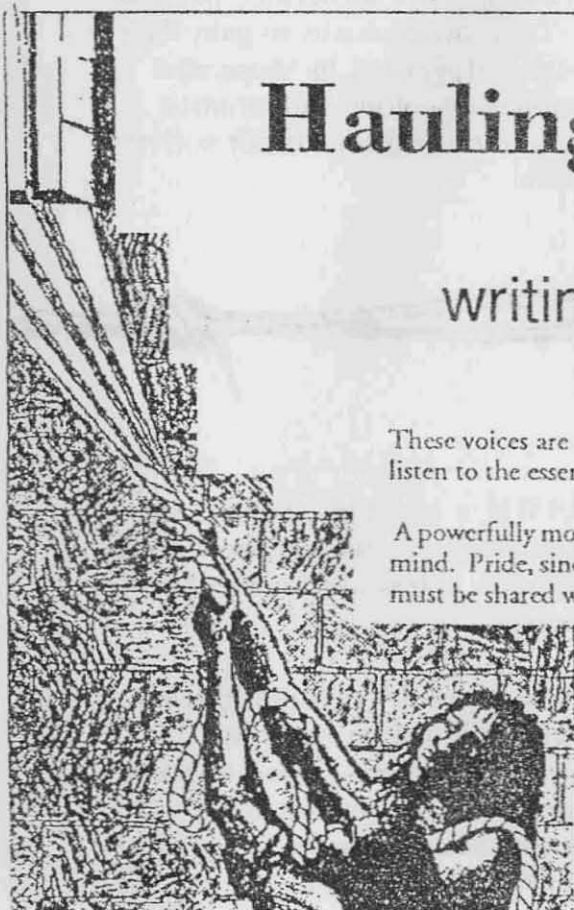
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COMRADE

GEORGE

IN AUGUST 1971, I was working a menial job, my hands rough and hewn from lugging thousands of concrete blocks. I was on parole at the time, ending a 5 to 7 year sentence for selling an undercover cop a few joints. First offence. But since my return from Viet Nam, I'd been organizing against the war--effectively. That was a far greater crime than the joints.

ON AUGUST 21st, I heard the news that the brother I knew as Comrade George had been murdered in the prison yard of San Quentin. The first shot from a guard's rifle had hit George in the leg, and dropped him to his knees. The second shot was put through his skull and killed him. The man I admired most in the world was dead.

I WAS STILL CONSUMED with grief and rage when, three weeks later, New York State Police stormed Attica Prison and systematically murdered 29 prisoners in what became known as the Attica Rebellion and Massacre. Like everywhere else, most of the prisoners were Black or Latino.

GEORGE JACKSON was a new breed of political prisoner. At the time of his death, he had already spent half of his life in prison for a \$70 robbery. Imprisoned on a criminal charge, George proceeded to change his life, and the lives of others. He became politically conscious, a skilled organizer and member of the Black Panther Party. He received international acclaim with the publication of his first book *Soledad Brother: The Prison Writings of George Jackson*, which contained an introduction by French author Jean Genet.

SOLEDAD BROTHER became a fundamental writing of Black militancy. George's writing projected the spirit of Black people who have experienced centuries of racism, economic exploitation, and violent repression.

THIS BOOK was followed by a second, *Blood in my Eye*, with its focus on armed resistance to the systemic violence of the State. He made it clear that if there are to be funerals, they will be on both sides.

THE EXECUTION WARRANT for George came down the moment his influence as a leader in the Black Liberation struggle was felt beyond the confines of his prison cell. Wherever and whenever Black women and men begin to assert effective leadership, they become targets of assassination or imprisonment. From the fallen leaders of slave revolts to the murders of Medgar Evers, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr., Fred Hampton, and dozens of Black Panthers, this country has repeatedly demonstrated it will not tolerate a movement that fights for the human rights and aspirations of Black people.

Wherever and whenever Black women and men begin to assert effective leadership, they become targets of assassination or imprisonment. . . .

LISTEN TO THE WORDS of Comrade George: "Born to a premature death, a menial, subsistence-wage worker, odd-job man, the cleaner, the caught, the man under hatches, without bail--that's me, the colonial victim. Anyone who passed the civil service examination yesterday can kill me today, with complete immunity. I've lived with repression every moment of my life, a repression so formidable that any movement on my part can only bring relief, the respite of a small victory or the release of death. In every sense of the term, in every sense that's real, I'm a slave to and of property."

THE WORDS AND PERSPECTIVE are George Jackson's but clearly we have seen a similar vein in Malcolm X and Nelson Mandela. Mandela has often pointed to the role of prisons in South Africa and the existence of political prisoners. In 1971, George recognized that certain colonial conditions existed within the borders of the United States.

LISTEN TO THE WORDS of George Jackson: "The hypocrisy of Amerikan fascism forces it to conceal its attacks on political offenders by the legal fiction of conspiracy laws and highly sophisticated frameups. [People] . . . must understand the true function of prisons. Why do they exist in such large numbers? What is the real underlying economic motive of crime and the official definitions of types of offenders and victims?"

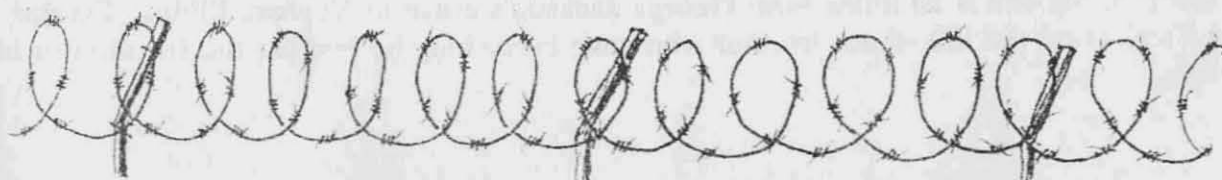
IN 1990, the United States has more Blacks imprisoned, per capita, than South Africa. There are also well over 100 political prisoners.

MANDELA POINTS TO THE LEADING ROLE of Black people in South Africa. George Jackson wrote: "The principal reservoir of revolutionary potential in Amerika lies in wait inside the Black colony."

GEORGE RECOGNIZED that Black people in the U.S. are subjected to a form of apartheid. Since 1971, the prison system has more than doubled--satellite camps to the ghettos and projects that exist in most urban areas. One fourth of Black men in their 20's are in prison, on parole, or probation. People in Harlem have a shorter life expectancy than the people of impoverished Bangladesh. In New York, AIDS is the primary cause of death among Black women under 40; the infant mortality rate among Black babies is nothing short of criminal; the cold-blooded murders of Black people by killer cops has replaced the lynch rope.

I HAVE WATCHED with much interest the warm and exuberant reception extended to Mandela during his recent tour of the country. People say we need a hero in these difficult times. Mandela is certainly an inspiration--a person of great courage and principle. He told the American people we need to deal with our own internal affairs and reiterated the ANC's position that they are opposed to white supremacy wherever it raises its ugly head. He reminded us of the sacrifices and commitment of our own Nat Turner, John Brown, Rosa Parks, Malcolm X, and so many others. . . .

AND I AM REMINDED of Comrade George who made the supreme sacrifice.



AS IF FORECASTING HIS MURDER at the hands of the State, George wrote, with rage, "This monster--the monster they engendered in me will return to torment its maker, from the grave, the pit, the profoundest pit. Hurl me into the next existence; the descent into Hell won't turn me . . . I'm going to charge them reparations in blood. I'm going to charge them like a maddened, wounded, rogue male elephant, ears flared, trunk raised, trumpet blaring . . . War, without terms."

PUBLISHERS LONG AGO ceased to print the books of George Jackson, though many a tattered copy remains in circulation.¹ There is no profit to be made in the hopes and aspirations of Black people--only in their oppression. George propelled those hopes and aspirations to the top of the agenda. He stood as a symbol incarnate of Black pride and courage.

THE SPIRIT OF GEORGE LIVES on in the fertile legacy of common people's history. His blood continues to flow through the veins of young Black people lashing out at the chains of colonial subjugation. His life is not lost on those who organize against lynch mobs from Los Angeles to Bensonhurst. His legacy continues to torment the oppressor, for as long as conditions of life deteriorate for so many, the ruling class and its functionaries will harbor the fear of resistance. Reparations WILL be paid.

His legacy continues to torment the oppressor

I WRITE THIS from a prison cell in the locked-down, chained-up, and poisoned prison in Marion, Illinois. Concrete blocks are still close at hand. Throughout its history, as well as today, Marion holds the largest concentration of political prisoners in the U.S. My cell is 20 miles from George Jackson's grave in Vernon, Illinois. On this day I reflect on the life of our brother who gave everything he had for the freedom of his people.

(Script for August 16, 1990 "Inside Kites", WORT/FM's weekly program by and about U.S. Political Prisoners and Prisoners of War.)

¹ Since this article was written, *Blood in My Eye* and *Soledad Brother* have been reprinted.

FROM BEHIND THE WIRE:

A View Of The Gulf War

(excerpts from a personal letter)

THE AMERIKAN GULAG is now the largest in the world. The motherfucker of all prison systems. The United States imprisons more of its citizens than any country on earth, and more Black people than are taken down by apartheid. When the U.S. isn't busy supporting apartheid, it's busy practicing it. A type of re-enslavement. The price of freedom, says our government, includes over one million children, women and men imprisoned behind the bars of the amerikan flag. A cost of living increase which includes the unemployed, homeless, hungry, and sick. We have entered the killing zone that constitutes crimes against humanity, which is to say, a particularly heinous offense committed during war. The government says, and we damn well know, that war wages within the borders of Amerika. The poor of Amerika are more endangered of life and limb than the Amerikan soldier parked in the Persian Gulf. Death bears out this fact.

PRISONERS OF CLASS and conflict; prisoners of oppressed nations and nationalities; political prisoners and prisoners of war against colonialism. The Prisoners Rights Union (California) recently completed a study which concluded that extreme forms of "discipline", ranging from beatings and assaults of prisoners to sensory deprivation for prolonged periods are the norm in maximum security prisons across the U.S. The norm in Amerika is to subject prisoners to neglect, abuse, and the longest sentences in the world (Amerika has a penchant for records). Flagship Marion is

symptomatic in that it has been continually locked down since 1983 and cited by Amnesty International for violating every one of the United Nations Standard Minimal Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners.

THINK ABOUT IT -- over one million prisoners waiting to return to the army of under and unemployed. That's equivalent to the total number of soldiers on both sides of the Gulf War. The prisoners are coming home to pay their respects after years of being abused, assaulted, humiliated, sensory deprived, and worked for criminal wages. Out of a revolving door through which another million will eventually pass; tormented with symptoms of PTSD, ready to implode or explode upon impact with the Amerikan landscape. It should be some homecoming.

IF RECIDIVIST STATISTICS mean anything, we know that the large majority will commit further crimes -- to survive, to signify, to strike back. We will have the lumpen and bottomed-out working class at their worst unless we can wake up the consciousness, triumph human dignity, and develop a base from which we can organize and seriously kick in survival programs on multiple levels. Survival implies at least an apprenticeship with the martial arts.

THE LEFT AND I. The movements and us. The left had a brief fling with prisoners in this country but it has long since passed. Ironical, given the numbers and composition of the prison population. The extended families. It took the Attica uprising and George Jackson to force their attention span beyond what it was accustomed to. Today there is little meaningful recognition of political prisoners. The perception seems to be that there is no political capital to be had in defending those who have been captured. Not enough of us to bother with you say? A soccer stadium filled to bursting is more in line with your world view? By then you'll be looking at your broken finger bones wondering who'll remember you? Workers? Don't start me to talkin', I'll tell everything I know. An academic issue with too many groups whose leadership and perspective is middle class. The poor? "The People" if you like them; lumpen if you have reservations. My kind of people. But it's a hard row to hoe when you don't have a pot to piss in. But we do get lots of ink in the literature. Soldiers? Ah yes - the proletariat armed. Serious weaponry. Lots of recent emphasis on organizing GI's - a necessary component of anti-war and anti-imperialist organizing. But where was the effort before the deployment to the Gulf? It's been playing catch-up with a blitzkrieg. There have been some laudable efforts but much of it came from a defensive posture or opportunistic design, with some anti-war formations wrapped in their own version of yellow ribbons.

THERE WAS an organizational rep who asked my opinion on the Gulf War, from the perspective of a Viet Nam veteran, though not from the perspective of a soldier still at war. Understandable request, but a real piece of irony none the less. I spent twelve months in the Viet Nam combat zone. I spent 120 months fighting from clandestinity right here in the heart of the beast. Yet my Viet Nam service draws more interest, as it often did in past media interviews. Why is that? The government indicted me for sedition covering the years 1974-1984 stating "...it was further part of the conspiracy that the defendants did state in a communiqué that as a matter of revolutionary principal and strategy, 'we must expose and attack military contractors like Honeywell [among other misdeeds, a producer and peddler of cluster bombs]...we must continue to attack U.S. imperialism, its military, and its war producers.' That defendants requested, encouraged, incited, and asked other persons, known and unknown to them, to commit acts of sabotage and armed actions."

ASK ME about war profiteers and white collar mercenaries out there pimping for the government, and why I advocate sweeping away all pests!!

I CONFESS THAT my first act of sabotage was in 1964, at the volatile age of seventeen. This was several years before I became politically conscious and active. I learned how to sabotage machinery from French-Canadians in the mill where we worked. The owners were burning us out with speed-ups and other hazards so we threw the proverbial shoe, le sabot, into the machines. Temporary relief in a non-union shop.

WHY, THEN, when people think of me soldiering do they think of me as a young dude in 'Nam, 1966-67, rather than a seasoned veteran from a ten year hitch underground (where in some respects I saw more action than in Viet Nam). Do they see in my reflection the blood in my eye, the unabashed militancy, the faded pay stubs, tarnished dreams, physical deprivation, the prison within the prison within the prison? (During the sedition trial, I showed folks photos of me from the 'Nam - steel pot, flak jacket, M-14, machine gun on standby. That isn't you, they'd respond. Can't be. Is it?). I'm asked what it was like to fight for the government, rather than my more significant and meaningful fight *against* the government. Certainly, every soldier bears witness. In Viet Nam I got a birds-eye view of bomb craters from the shotgun seat next to the door gunner. I saw a couple of gunships go down, killing 14-15 men, but I didn't see broken bodies. I saw a few dead and wounded when our convoy hit a mine. I was pulled deep into the eyes of the Vietnamese people.

BUT TODAY, you want to see aerial bombardment, you turn on the sharp color images of the television. Then listen carefully, very carefully, to the survivors. What I can do is give you basic instruction on how to attack war criminals and their collaborators.

THERE'S BEEN There's been much timely analysis of the Gulf War and folks can contemplate it. This war used up more analysis than small arms ammunition.

On the plus side there is Noam Chomsky who knows how to engage the enemy with his pen. Intellectual dynamite. The man's writing smokes. The point is, its been said, underlined, underscored, wrung out, and said again. So, asks Philip Berrigan, (I like this dude, bro) why the surprise and shock when a declining empire sinks its teeth into the Third World; when it bleeds humanity to salvage its own existence? We have a thousand books, social upheavals, wars, and revolutions that map out the imperial strategy. Not to mention what's been happening in our own suffering and dying communities. The Gulf War was preceded by the U.S. invasion of Panama. The continuing carnage in El Salvador didn't stop because of transgressions in the Gulf. The priorities of imperialism still weave its web in Southern Africa.

BERRIGAN GOES ON TO ASK -- Who is responsible for this war? His answer -- All of us. I tend to agree. Let's not begin by looking at the higher echelons of the military-industrial complex. Everyone who is criticizing begins with the obvious. Or Iraq's occupation of Kuwait. Again, highly culpable. Lets begin with the troops since "support the troops" without supporting the war is one of the biggest scams to come out of this conflict. As bogus as the yellow rain over Laos that the State Department tried to pass off as Soviet chemicals when in fact it was the feces of bees. The "support the troops" scam began to develop a life of its own in the wake of a policy vote by those spineless spectacles in the U.S. congress.

JUST TO BE CLEAR: I am sympathetic with GI's, as I am with vets, prisoners, workers, and all us poor folk who bear a considerable burden. After all, I share the experience. Working with these people has been the focus of my political activism. Having served in the U.S. Army (honorably discharged, thank you) and Viet Nam, I'm well aware of how economic conditions and enticing drumbeats can lead one to put on a uniform. I fully support efforts to organize GIs and to implement efforts such as your own community sanctuary. [Refers to a broad based effort to make Madison, WI a sanctuary for GI resisters to the Gulf War.] I thought it took a good deal of courage for Jeff Patterson to refuse to cross the line on the tarmac in Hawaii and then go on after jail and discharge to organize against the war. Note, however, the usual agenda is to ignore GIs *outside* of a major military conflict.

After all, I share the experience . . .

WHEN I LOOK at the Gulf War I see a complete waste of human life, civilian and soldier. Once again it's the working class being used to kill their own. Again, Third World people are treated as expendable. During the First World War, Big Bill Haywood said there was not a piece of capitalist property that was worth a laborer's life to defend. A far cry from being "all you can be" in Army green. My sympathy with

the soldier wanes when he picks up a rifle or other implement of destruction and proceeds to kill, maim, and destroy for god and country.

UNQUALIFIED SUPPORT for soldiers is a bandwagon you won't see me on. They got me once but not again. In a recent Guardian piece, Earl Ofari Hutchinson makes an interesting observation: "Black troops in the Gulf should not be blamed for being there. They are victims, too. They are involuntary volunteers, poverty draftees who now have little choice but to follow orders." In other articles I've seen more or less the same analysis applied to poor, working class, Latino, and women soldiers. Obviously, Hutchinson, et al were not at the My Lai Massacre. A massacre that can be said to be the legacy of the enslavement of Africans and decimation of Native Americans. The Amerikan predator. Calley and the others of the Americal Division (the cover-up went quite high) said they were just following orders. The sort of trench warfare where you shoot

Shoot civilians and let them drop in a ditch . .

civilians and let them drop in a ditch. They, too, said they had little choice but to follow orders. There's ALWAYS a choice other than following orders. The Nuremberg principals prohibit a defense based on "following orders" when charged with criminal acts committed during war. In fascist El Salvador, Guatemala, Chile, South Africa, Indonesia, Israel and elsewhere, soldiers of death purport to be following orders. And from where are these soldiers recruited? Dig it -- in the mother of all bombings, the pilots and bombardiers were just carrying out orders - in this instance, the nuclear destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

CONSIDER THIS: the average age of the GI's in the Gulf was 26. In Viet Nam it was 20. Almost all have high school diplomas. They are volunteers, well trained, and part of the highest paid military in the world. If they step out to fight for god, guts, glory, and the improved GI bill, then they are responsible for their actions. They certainly will bask in the limelight as long as they have it which, if history continues to repeat itself, they may not have for long. Whatever part of the war machine you're oiling and operating, you bear some responsibility. Recognition of this is a prerequisite towards disruption and disengagement/resistance, from within and outside the military apparatus.

I REMEMBER the Pentagon demonstrations from years back and the flowers placed in the muzzles of soldiers' rifles. That's cool, there's room for varied approaches to reach hearts and minds. I also remember the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and Black Panther Party posters during the Viet Nam War -- Uncle Sam pointing -- "I want YOU, nigger", "Receive valuable training in the skills of killing off other oppressed people", "Die Nigger Die - You can't die fast enough in the ghettos." Those who say that soldiers can't help what they got themselves into have never had to look down the business end of an M16 or suffered the effects of bombardment and shelling. Remember the brothers' testimony at Viet Nam Veterans Against the War "Winter Soldier" investigation? That was about exposing abuses and stopping a war, *not making excuses for participating in it.*



IRONIC, IS IT NOT, that political prisoners in Amerika are abandoned by much of the left that hold us dearly responsible for political/military activities they don't approve of. Yet now they support the divisions which drive the armada into the middle east ("support the troops, not the war!").

WHEN HAVE AMERICAN SOLDIERS protected the rights of workers or oppressed nations? On the contrary. From Detroit and Newark, to Managua (many times) and Grenada, as occupation forces and strikebreakers, soldiers have acted as thugs for Wall Street, to paraphrase marine Major General Smedley Butler. Offer them friendship and refuge, organize them if you can, encourage resistance, but in the final analysis you have to be prepared to bring some of them down.

THIS IS NOT AN ACCUSATION of war crimes against individual soldiers and armies. A search for war criminals begins with the higher ranking officers, well-placed politicians, money makers, on down to the murderer hiding in uniform. However, with all the winning attributes being ascribed to the troops, I figure its also 'fess up time for GI Joe and Josephine.

I'VE EXPERIENCED the law of gravity enough to know that shit rolls down hill. When you pull on the thread, as you peel back layers of insulation and follow the paper trail, you will come across greater degrees of responsibility and culpability, until all covered with shit is the war criminal and collaborators.

WHEN BOMBS AND MISSILES rained down on Iraq, killing and wounding thousands of civilians, this hardware bore the fingerprints of military

personnel. It also bore the prints of the workers and technicians of the highest paid work force in the world. When I say fingerprints are on the smoking gun, I mean literally and figuratively.

THE IMPERIALISTS then tell the Iraqis, after slaughtering their families, that they are to blame the president of their country for the deaths. How convenient. Bush must be eating too many Twinkies, like the murderer of Harvey Milk, to proffer such a sorry-assed defense of his criminal conduct. Problem is, people eat it up. Injustice is especially cruel when it wraps itself in the robes of patriotism.

IT TOOK THE AMERICANS and the Brits a month or so to drop more bombs and explosives than any equivalent time period in WWII. The bombing of a civilian air raid shelter in Baghdad drew the most attention, and distortion. Children were incinerated along with their mothers and elders. They were hit by one or two GBU-27's, 2,000 lb. bombs manufactured by Texas Instruments (when they aren't making calculators). These bombs were adapted for use by the "stealth" F117. Prior to the bombing, Defense (sic) Secretary Dick Cheney and Joint Chiefs chairman General Colin Powell stopped by a Stealth squadron in Saudi to autograph a pair of 2,000 lb. bombs. In criminal law parlance this is a "signature" bomb which identifies the perpetrator. Aiding and abetting. This single act of callous disrespect for human life qualifies them for war crimes trials under Nuremberg.

IN REAL DEAL TERMS, massive air power always blows away any pretense to rules of war. Strategic bombing of cities, saturation bombing, cluster bombs, napalm, chemicals, -- Hiroshima, Dresden, Hanoi, Hamburg, Coventry, Rouen, Rotterdam, Tokyo, Haiphong, with greater and greater death tolls among civilians, along with many dead conscripts clutching their useless rifles.

There's more than one way to kill a kid from a warplane.

THE BOMBARDMENT OF IRAQ has targetted the lifelines of cities and towns: neighborhoods, factories, schools, transportation, and communication systems, fuel, and water systems. As I write this, the bombing has ceased but children continue to suffer and die from the devastation, particularly the destruction of water supplies and sewage systems. There's more than one way to kill a kid from a warplane.

I FOUND IT INTERESTING when a USAF general played a video of the bombing of the Iraqi Ministry of "Defense" which he referred to as "my counterpart". The Pentagon, to be sure. This made me curious as to what the general's reaction would be if the Pentagon were bombed. Would he begin raging about a cowardly criminal terrorist act? Most certainly he would.

HERE I SIT IN A PRISON CELL, pulling down a life sentence of 45 years for bombing U.S. military facilities where not a person received so much as a scratch. Facilities of those who are knee deep in the blood of the people of Central America. Indeed, aggression must stop here! Look at the heavy prison sentences laid on the Resistance Conspiracy comrades for bombing that millionaires' club in the Capitol building -- a righteous response to the invasion of Grenada. Tim Blunk and Susan Rosenberg tortured with a 58 year sentence for the mere possession of explosives.

U.S. WARPLANES have been obliterating courthouses, post offices, and other government buildings including that of the Ba'ath Party. Lethal and symbolic bombings. Can you imagine the reaction to a bombing of a dominant party headquarters in Washington, D.C. any time these parties foment some act of territorial aggression! ~~They'd~~ have to operate out of bunkers if they took their international law seriously (but of course they never did until Kuwait).

FOR NO DISCERNIBLE REASON other than the sheer terror value of it, U.S. planes strafed Jordanian and Sudanese refugees fleeing the destruction of the cities. In the most gruesome attack 60 were killed on a couple of buses, including children who were burned to death. What is the punishment for burning children to death in an act of war? I recall a case back in Maine that made national headlines when a man put his infant son in a microwave and hit the switch. He was so despised in prison they had to place him in protective custody. But for Air Amerika, its business as usual and quite deliberate, as college-educated pilots press button after button, dropping bomb after bomb, for which they are decorated for service to their country.

RECALL in the early 70's when Viet Nam Veterans Against the War had to switch gears and focus on the massive air war and the "electronic battlefield". I remember having to work harder at holding people's attention on a war where the body bags weren't coming back at such a brisk rate. Frustration, trying to convince people their government was violating the sanctity of human life by systematically killing so many Vietnamese. The electronic gadgetry and distant air strikes provided a buffer from which they could relieve themselves of the bloody stain of amerika's war crimes. I have no more sympathy for bomber pilots than do their victims, which is to say, none.

WITH EACH WAR the U.S. has engaged in this century, the numbers of civilian casualties, compared to military, has increased. More and more civilians killed for each soldier that dies. In the U.S war against Indochina, civilians were 85% of the victims. This war may equal or surpass that. The number of Iraqi military deaths may never be known, most of them conscripts, blown to pieces by unchallenged aircraft.

IT IS A THOUSAND WORD PICTURE to watch technicians, ground crews, pilots and bombardiers fondle their explosives and write slogans of bravado on the bombs. Marx must be rolling over in his grave with this sort of working class disunity. With background research, we just might find the diversified holdings of a war contractor have been cranking out these vile yellow ribbons and plastic flags. They are like that, you know, cranking out light fixtures in one city and machine guns in the next. How many people pass through Burlington, Vermont or Biddeford, Maine realizing plants in both communities produce enormous amounts of machine guns? These are not "defense contractors," they are merchants of death peddling their product line, technology, and skills rather than some rudimentary combat training. I'm reminded of Jack London's description of The Scab, which can be adopted by the war profiteer: a two-legged animal with a cork-screw soul, a water-logged brain, a combination backbone of jelly and glue. Where others have hearts, he carries a tumor of rotten principles.

SOME OF THESE PROFITEERS need to end up before war crimes tribunals. As Hitler's finance minister said at the Nuremberg war crimes trials, "If you want to prosecute the industrialists who made possible the rearmament of Germany, then you will end up prosecuting your own industrialists." He was referring to U.S. corporations that supplied a generous flow of aid and loans to the fascists. Included was General Motors which had a direct pipeline to Germany's war machine. GM is today a major military contractor. Playing both sides of a conflict to make a financial killing is nothing new, though the Gulf War has served to more clearly illustrate the interlocking parts.

These are not "defense contractors,"
they are merchants of death

DURING THE 1980's, the United Freedom Front and others began to target war profiteers. With good reason, as their communiques indicate. After bombing the General Electric offices of the aerospace strategic planning and aircraft design division, the UFF action and communiqué focussed on GE's production role on the A 37 "counterinsurgency" warplane and 7.62mm minigun. They were and are being used as you read this against the Salvadoran resistance and in the terror campaign against the civilian population. The UFF also attempted to prod the conscience of the industries' workers, to act to stop the bleeding of other workers and peasants. To do something for the benefit of humanity.

THE LEVEL OF COLLABORATION remains high, particularly during recessionary times and phases of patriotic fervor. The war profiteers pay good money because war and the constant preparation and prodding for it remains good business. Unfortunately, much of the privileged middle class like to tout the idea they are a kindly and just people; the mythology of the white proletariat. A hard nut to crack, yet something needs to be done if there is to be resistance on a wider front.

DURING THE COURSE OF THIS WAR I noticed the focus on Raytheon Corporation. Raytheon's infrastructure is prominent on the high-tech highway which circles Boston. During the sedition trial the government alleged beaucoup surveillance notes of Raytheon were seized from one of the houses. "Possession is nine-tenths of the crime," in this case seditious conspiracy. Fortunately the jury felt 9/10 was not enough to topple the government. It's a cakewalk to get to many of these facilities, while others involve a much more concerted effort.

UNTIL THE PATRIOT MISSILE was launched most people were unaware that Raytheon is the nation's second largest supplier of military electronics. Notwithstanding the focus on the defensive mode of the Patriot, their weaponry and technology is lethal and offensive in the extreme. Significantly, Raytheon is the largest non-governmental employer in Massachusetts. People plead to get jobs at Raytheon. A recent letter in Z Magazine from an anti-war employee stated that he had sought to organize the workers against the war. A little something on the path of least resistance, but even his modest efforts proved futile. When Bush showed up at the plant to address the troops, the workers responded with red, white and blue flags provided by Raytheon. The money's not just good, it's sweet.

IN UPSTATE NEW YORK, the U.S. arsenal at Watervliet had been laying off until the violent advent of this thing called New World Order. Layoffs were cancelled and production resumed on the 120 mm guns for the M-1A1 tank. Local citizens say that as long as there's war they'll have work. They point out that the war has improved morale considerably which had been at a low ebb with layoffs. The entire community is awash in something resembling yellow baby shit. The \$12.00 salary can't be beat in an area where manufacturing is dying out and the largest employer (N.Y. state) is laying off.

ACROSS COUNTRY in Minneapolis, workers at Alliant Techsystems (manufacturers of 25 mm shells for APC's) went on strike. Community sentiment turned against the strike when the war began in earnest. The strike was said to be against the interests of U.S. troops; i.e., U.S. policy, and the strikers settled without a concession being made by management. They returned to an average wage of \$12.40.

I READ an interesting piece in Newsweek entitled, "Should We Kill Saddam?" "We" has been one of those terribly exploited words. The author of this article teaches the "law of war" to marine officers at Quantico. His conclusion is that Saddam is suitable for assassination or death by other violent methods because: 1) he's a member of the military within a chain of command, 2) wears a uniform with rank insignia, and 3) carries arms openly. I see the same rationale as being applicable to the Commander in Chief of U.S. Armed Forces, George Bush, as well as Quayle (the thinking person's National Guardsman), Cheney, Powell, and others. The CIA don't often wear camos but do build incredible killing machines. Bush is the lead man in every sense of the military term, within a military framework. As for uniform with insignia, the more recent Protocols to the Geneva Convention (adapting rules of war to anti-colonial and national liberation struggles) moot this point. Guerrillas seldom wear epaulets. Besides, a windbreaker with executive logo or a three-piece suit is as much uniform as you need these days to carry out acts of barbarism. As for carrying arms openly, well, openly or concealed, or whether you have a group of thugs carry them around you, it all comes down to the power and capacity to kill (the FMLN should hang on to that photo of VP Quayle wielding a shoulder fired missile launcher with Salvadoran soldiers looking on. Exhibit -- war crimes trial -- from which the dead of Central America will speak).

a three-piece suit is as much uniform
as you need these days to carry out
acts of barbarism . . .

THE NEWSWEEK ARTICLE didn't propose a trial or tribunal for Saddam, just a quick kill. Turning the analogy around is the sort of political thinking that ends up as evidence at sedition trials.

I THINK MOST OF US realize that Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was wrong from jump street, as were any abuses committed under occupation. However, it's unfortunate that the general public's introduction to international law comes about through these events. It has become easy for the media to manipulate the forest into a tree.

THE PUBLIC is functionally illiterate when it comes to international law, its applicability, and the role of the United States in thwarting it. One need only examine the abysmal voting record of the U.S. in the United Nations to see that the U.S. has frustrated the implementation of international law at every turn (particularly in the Security Council where it has veto power). The U.S. has vetoed or voted against UN resolutions that condemn the invasion of Panama; Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the occupation of Palestine; the condemnation of the U.S. support of contras and other acts of aggression and economic warfare against Nicaragua (which was also declared unlawful by the World court); and a whole range of UN initiatives which sought to preserve and protect human rights, implement nuclear disarmament, put an end to apartheid and U.S. colonialism in Puerto Rico. And that's just a small sampling.

NOT ONLY does the U.S. block the implementation of international law, *it is one of the most frequent violators of it.* Now it demands immediate compliance under punishment of death.

THE U.S. ROLE IN THE GULF is one of unilateral military action with the most powerful force in the world. It was intended to present the ultimate obstacle to peaceful negotiation and resolution of the conflict. The UN resolutions became U.S. resolutions as politicians travelled the globe stuffing U.S. dollars and other bribes into the pockets of desperate governments. Thus, it somehow becomes legitimate to wage high intensity war over Kuwaiti self-determination while the Palestinians are stripped of their homeland and U.S. storm troopers run roughshod in Panama. That level of hypocrisy and deceit will bring the chickens home to roost.

THERE WILL BE NO post-war crimes tribunal. The rhetoric around war crimes (e.g. the video performance of U.S. POWS) is intended to appease an acquiescent public with a quick fix. Nuremberg involves acts which constitute crimes against humanity (such as apartheid, which the U.S. has supported in all its manifestations for decades); war crimes (such as the U.S. committed in Viet Nam, Panama, and by proxy in El Salvador); and crimes against peace (for which the World Court found the U.S. culpable in its attack against Nicaragua). The U.S. would never tolerate an internationally supervised war crimes trial that examined the conduct of the victor as well as the vanquished. An honest application of Nuremberg principles would lead to the indictment of political, corporate, and military leaders from the highest levels of the U.S. ruling class. There is no statute of limitations on war crimes and crimes against humanity.

NOTE BUSH'S INTEREST in Amnesty International's report on human rights abuses by Iraq. "Must reading" says George, clutching the report to his heart. Bush should keep on reading right through Amnesty's reports of horrendous human rights abuses in El Salvador, Guatemala, Chile, South Africa, Israel, Indonesia, Turkey, etc. etc. - all of whom are U.S. client states and allies in counter-insurgency. Turkey receives enormous U.S. aid while updating the book on torture and repression including persecution of the Kurds. While Bush clutched Amnesty's report on Iraq, the first aerial bombardment began. While the public's eye was diverted, full U.S. military aid was restored to the fascist regime in El Salvador - January 16th. On January 21st, government soldiers went into the Salvadoran village of El Zapote and carried out another bloodbath, shooting and hacking to death 15 innocents. El Salvador's non-governmental Human Rights Commission cites the Salvadoran army for the assassination of over a thousand civilians in 1991 (another 185 deaths were ascribed to that special category - government death squads). On January 29th the United States provided the Salvadoran government with more war planes and helicopter gunships.

COINCIDENTALLY, I received an Amnesty International report on Police Torture in Chicago, Illinois dated December 1990. That's Chicago, United States of America.

YOU GOT TO FIGURE there's some evil doings going down when the favorite pinup of GIs is a cop. Yes, indeed, Ms. Jacqueline Phillips Guibord, a Provo, Utah police officer resplendent in Wrangler jeans, badge, and shotgun (no mere prop, it looks like a Remington Riot 12 gauge). The police - first line of defense in the sand of class conflict and war. The pigs (you wonder why we call you pigs?) - violent, abusive, and racist. Seen recently through video eyes in Los Angeles stomping another body. Any Mexican, Black and poor white folk from L.A. will tell you that police brutality has been a fact of life for them as long as they can remember.



THE NEW WORLD ORDER is little more than a violent announcement that the Old World Order will continue with added gusto. Expect the police to emphasize this point on the home front.

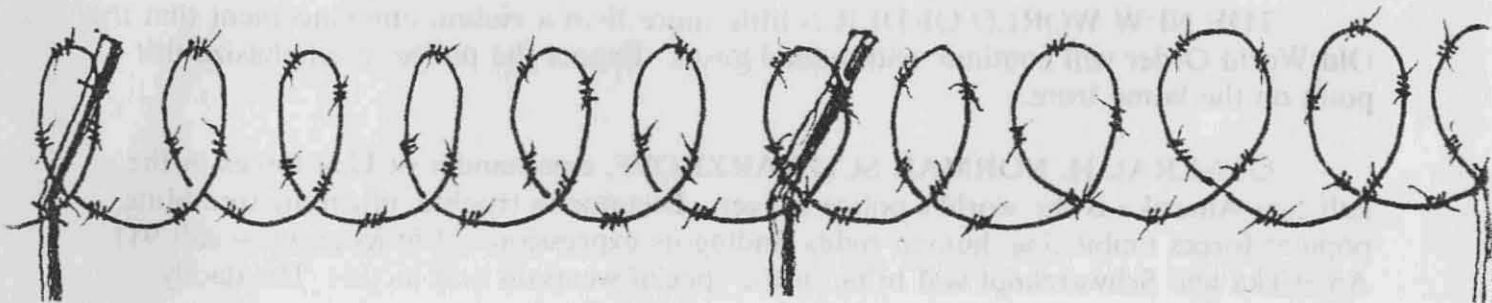
GENERAL H. NORMAN SCHWARZKOPF, commander of U.S. forces in the gulf says Amerika is the world's police officer. Dictator in trouble, oligarchy trembling, popular forces mobilizing, human rights finding its expression, oil in jeopardy -- call 911 Amerikka and Schwarzkopf will bring in the special weapons and tactics. His daddy

responded likewise when he went to the aid of the Shah of Iran, pumping iron into the notorious Savak, secret police. Indeed, Schwarzkopf's daddy was at one time commander of the New Jersey State Police. NJSP, who cut down Zayd Shakur and Assata and which today holds our comrades in captivity. NJSP, those exhibitors of nazi fashion and paraphernalia, who continue to torment Third World people who make the mistake of getting into a car in New Jersey. Far afield you say? Perhaps I don't like the po-lease -- but the element of fascism is in their behavior.

THE U.S. is the world's leading supplier of police and prison hardware. Supplied are some of the world's most repressive regimes. The police, prisons, death squads, paramilitary units, torturers, operating outside the law, or using it, shoving it up the ass of anyone who gets in the way. The Foreign Assistance Act of 1974 prohibits U.S. military and police aid or assistance to countries engaged in human rights violations. The law is virtually ignored while soldiers and police work that side of the street.

NAZI PROPAGANDIST Herman Goering once said, "Naturally the common people don't want war...but after all it's the leaders of the country who determine the policy...the people can always be brought to the bidding of their leaders...all you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists (etc.) for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in every country." And so it does. It sucked me into the Viet Nam war 25 years ago. Saddam worked the crowds with it. Bush has proved to be a master of deceit stroking the 3-card Monte crowd that was waiting to be taken to the cleaners.

FOR THEIR PART, american citizens have not had direct contact with the human element of war, such as their counterparts in war-swept cities and countryside. They don't receive the full impact of the suffering and blood which war brings to bear on a people. They have not had their schools, hospitals, and factories bombed or children turned to ashes before their eyes (an exception -- the incineration of MOVE families in Philadelphia). To americans, other workers and peasants are turned into the enemy, a subhuman mass molded into copy by Pentagon representatives and a compliant news media. What does it say for the national character of amerika which condones the carnage employed against the poor, wherever on this earth imperialism corners them? When the Ugly American becomes more upset over the price of gasoline and a pound of coffee than with the rising cost of injustice?



THERE IS NOT a single, valid reason for any poor and working class person to sacrifice their life for this New World Order. No moral authority, nor moral higher ground from which to claim a soldier dies for humanity and human rights to prosper. No justification for the death and maiming of so many civilians.

THE POLLS point to overwhelming support for Bush and his war. I don't doubt the results of these polls, it's obvious a sort of mass psychosis is throbbing, but I've never been questioned by any of these pollsters, through all the wars and conflicts. Never known anyone who has. Must be we don't live in the right neighborhoods. The wake of war victory and other jingoistic proclivities will make it difficult to organize on the home front. We have yet to feel the full brunt of reaction. For some of us there may be hell to pay.

AND HOME COMES THE SOLDIER. Let me step further back to my own return from Viet Nam, December 24, 1967. What's all this gruff about Nam vets being spit on and abused by the people? (Need I comment on what I'd do with someone misguided enough to spit on me, past or present!). I know of no such incident myself and view this sort of thing as the exception. More common, especially in the earlier years, was for GPs and assorted macho types to *vamp on long hairs and other anti-war individuals*. I'm talking everything from petty harassment to serious vamping. Some folks were frightened or put off by GIs. There are still folks back in my hometown who explain away my political life by saying I got violent and alienated in Viet Nam. When VVAW became a significant part of the anti-war movement, the lines began to blur. Active duty GIs joined the resistance. Hell man, we rejuvenated the whole movement. If anyone was abusing us it was the pigs and our own government.

WHEN I GOT USED as a doormat after returning from Nam, it was by the power of the state. During a period of political activity and anti-war work, I got bashed in the teeth with their cannabis laws. The intolerance and lack of understanding were frightening. Then it started to further unfold, the blacklisting (man, I couldn't get a fucking job!); the vets in prison; the scourge of V.A. hospitals; Agent Orange; Black veterans without justice; homeless vets (to the point where today the government itself admits that a third of homeless men are veterans); PTSD and the spiraling problems with alcohol and drug abuse. And political repression, some of which targeted Vietnam Veterans Against the War.

AT UFW WATERING HOLES the most patriotic of all veterans looked with disdain at the young Vietnam vets. Which is as close as I came to getting spit on. My own father, a world war II veteran, has not spoken to me since 1969 because he felt it was traitorous of me to oppose the war and support the Black liberation struggle. As you say bro, contracts are written in blood. Who are Bush and the multinationals scheming with today that they'll want to throw young soldiers against tomorrow?

THIS WAS a relatively short war, about six weeks, but with an assemblage of immense killing power. The ground war, nothing short of a rout, lasted a matter of hours. Approximately 100 KiA's among U.S. forces. The marines lost more than double that in the '83 attack in Beirut, which should speak volumes about the advantages of unconventional tactics against a superior force. For the Gulf War effort all U.S. soldiers are to receive the National Defense Medal, as we did in Nam. Cheap thrill. Looking over the casualty figures, I don't see a single KiA among the 82nd Airborne, an entire division. Yet the world's civilian populations hang on the brink, knowing full well that the nuclear threat and chemical/biological bombs were being held by the masters of war.

IN THE MIDDLE EAST, a single spark can start a roaring fire. Bush wailed about a scorched earth policy, watching those petro-dollars going up in smoke, but not an iota of support for Palestine which the zionists are trying to burn beyond recognition. Recall what Began said during the invasion of Lebanon -- he will kill ten Lebanese civilians and five Palestinians if this leads to the elimination of a simple fedayeen. Shabra, Shatila, Al Akoa, the Intifada, there will be no peace without justice. This was a war in which U.S. soldiers were safer and more comfortable than Iraqi civilians who bore the madness of daily bombing raids and had to struggle for food, water, and medicine. There were casualties in Kuwait, though unclear as to how many.

GIs HAD A BETTER rate of survival than had they been home working production lines and construction jobs. Bush has stated as much in his regurgitated "war on crime" legislation, though he chose to emphasize how unsafe the streets are for returning soldiers. I've seen an earlier House version of this legislation. Be prepared for a fascist implant with Thornberg riding a wave of repression. The commentators and pundits are saying the sort of shock therapy utilized in the Gulf is what's needed on the home front. Consider the following; according to figures of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (a government agency given to downgrading negative figures) 200,000 workers have been killed on the job since 1970, about 20,000 a year. That's 60 dead women, children and men a day. One and a half million permanently disabled. Since 1970, more than 2 million workers dead from the conditions where they labored. It's estimated that approximately 250,000 will die in the next 10 years from asbestos related illnesses, contracted on the job. The response of the asbestos industry has been to crawl behind the federal judiciary to avoid paying damages.

ACCORDING TO the World Summit for Children (United Nations) 40,000 children under age 5 die in developing countries every day; this horror repeats itself. It is the colonial and imperial legacy, as is Kuwait.

AND WITH ALL THE CONCERN about chemical warfare I see the unforgivable crime of the Butcher of Bhopal (India) - the Union Carbide Corporation - saturating Indian people with their poison causing over 2,000 deaths and untold suffering. The UFF claimed responsibility for rearranging Union Carbide laboratories during an

after hours visit to their facilities.

AN ANTI-IMPERIALIST VIEW? I think so, although it's not always a simple matter to follow all the economic sleight of hand. One outstanding fact, gluttonous Amerika, with 6% of the world's population consumes more than 60% of the world's oil. Although Germany and Japan consume most of the Kuwaiti oil, imperial control lies in the force that Amerikan power brings to bear on the peoples and natural resources of other nations. You can follow the bloody trail for the bombing of Baghdad, to Palestine, Southeast Asia, Africa, and before you know it you're at wounded knee, Sand Creek, and Labor's Untold Story - Bloody Ludlow. The entire capitalist/imperialist enterprise is built on theft and violence.

THEY CAN TELEVIZE and orchestrate their high tech weaponry, but I still feel the adage that the revolution will not be televised. Not as long as there exists a flicker of hope and a will to fight among the oppressed and the salient factor that a five dollar weapon can take out the most highly trained pilots and a homespun IED (incendiary explosive device) can render their killing machines useless.

IRAQ'S LOSSES were immense. Specific numbers have not been released but the human toll - killed in action - could be as high as 50,000 (obliterated by falling bombs and artillery which resembled some sort of bloodthirsty sport). Many more wounded. A lot of conscripts died. Someone besides the triggerman bears responsibility for these soldiers. To place them in a static defense, then watch the supply lines cut and the relentless bombings was sheer arrogance and stupidity. Makes me think of Armstrong Custer, with as much disgust. By the time the Iraqis were in full retreat, Schwarzkopf could allow 2 or 3 of their infantry divisions to pass deeper into Iraq. He then made the observation these divisions were insignificant and they posed no threat of offensive capability. Two or three infantry divisions being considered insignificant! It's a telling commentary on conventional military challenges to the techno-beast. Which is why I go with the War of the Flea and take what can be had from the foco and other strategies and tactics of People's war. Formidable weapons when activated through the heart, initiative, and imagination of the guerilla.

AS THE SMOKE CLEARS from the battlefield, the old wounds will remain. The U.S. will undoubtedly maintain a military presence beyond what it was before the war. The wretched of the earth are still dispossessed in the Middle East and elsewhere. The imperialists still dictate the terms of survival through the International Monetary Fund and World Bank. When that policy falters, they send in the CIA and military advisors - low intensity. If that stick doesn't work, then in come the army, air force, navy, and marines - high intensity.

ON THE DOMESTIC BATTLEFIELD there's no new order that doesn't utilize

more repression, racism, and poverty. Bush is proposing to increase the prison budget by 63%. More prisons. Just as U.S. soldiers are not figured into the unemployment figures, neither are the nation's prisoners. Hell of a way to deal with joblessness and the housing shortage. At the present rate of growth more than half of all americans would be in prison by the year 2053. Recalculating George Orwell. Advanced capitalism being what it is, the other half of the citizenry are likely to be working in corrections or other aspects of the "security" apparatus.

I WATCH these tendencies because I'm in prison and on line to be sent to the government's new master plan, control unit joint in Colorado. The contract to build phase one has been awarded to an "employee owned" firm. Worker against worker, again. When will we ever learn. This latest development in 20th century penology will be a prison where "windows will be non-existent" and prisoners will "never leave their cells." Presumably so we can acclimate ourselves to a living death.

but we must continue to raise
our voices against this madness . . .

I TELL YOU, MY BROTHER, it's a heartache and a half. I make love with freedom every night, hold to the principles, sing bluesey songs in my head, and reach for the warmth of my children. I've not lost the vision of why I took up the fight 23 years ago. Life is hard and the pain can be excruciating, but we must continue to raise our voices against this madness that destroys the innocence of children. Bureaucratic socialism was a bust, but socialist ideas can be brought to life. We can build an alternative to imperial plunder and devastation on the streets of Amerika. I believe with all my heart that the human spirit will prevail and that our struggle is a necessary and worthy sacrifice.

Keep Hauling Up the Morning.
International Women's Day, 1991

MALCOLM

MANY YEARS AGO, I was introduced to the life and thought of Malcolm X. It happened in the seemingly endless days of Tennessee's death row in Nashville. My first teacher was a Black prisoner from Memphis--Jesse X. "White" was his slave name. Someone had branded generations of his family with the name "White." To this brother, the slave name signified ownership--and he wasn't about being owned any more. Or brainwashed either--not since he'd come upon Malcom X.

MALCOLM X was first and foremost a liberator. A revolutionary. A man who had the will and vision to break de chains. His contribution to the liberation of Black people is immense yet immeasurable. I say immeasurable because he planted and nourished the idea that the Black nation is never lost as long as it lives in the heart: the desire and demand of a people to be free.

MALCOLM OFTEN SPOKE of human rights. The right to an independent Black nation. The human rights accrued through birth, sweat, and blood. Rights that belong to the people. Rights that no overseer, class, or race must be allowed to destroy.

JUST AS IMPORTANTLY, he spoke of duties. To stand firm and stand together. To be prepared, if necessary, to defend and take with force that which is denied by force. Malcolm X was no sunshine soldier. He didn't shrink from his duty to Black people when the struggle got difficult and eventually lost him his life.

IT IS WORTH NOTING another of Malcolm's observations: that oppression often works by turning its victims against each other instead of against the common enemy. This kind of extended victimization--whether it be self-hatred or bleeding neighbors and community--is diametrically opposed to what Malcom stood for.

TODAY'S TRIBUTE to the life and legacy of Malcom X necessitates a renewed commitment. A commitment to respecting and defending the lives of the oppressed as the spear of the nation is sharpened.

May 19, 1993

FEELING THE CRUNCH

(excerpts from a personal letter)

REMEMBER EUGENE DEBS? One of the first socialists I ever read. I used to quote him in letters from the Tennessee joint² -- "while there is a lower class, I am in it; while there is a criminal element, I am of it; and while there is a soul in prison, I am not free". I don't know if he wrote this before or after his bit in Atlanta, but it always impressed me. Enough so I named a cat after him.

I DON'T THINK PRISONERS or their struggle needs or should be romanticized, but what phase have we entered when the liberals/left, including that highly suspect group "progressives", make no mention of prisons? They write enough about police and police repression--check that--not enough, but more than about prisons, and then let it die on the vine as if humanity ceases to exist after booking. I don't think the lack of consciousness problem is so much that predominantly white, middle class leftist liberals have never experienced prison; it's more a case of they're not being personally or politically threatened by it. They go on and on about Big Brother, civil rights violations, suppression of dissent, etc.--but they all go past "Go" and collect their \$200. They can play monopoly like the rich folks, but without a "Get Out Of Jail Free" card. That wasn't the case in the past.

AT THE TURN OF the century through the 20's, radicals, Wobblies, immigrants, union organizers and pacifists felt the crunch. Communists and unionists in the 30's. Reds in the 50's. Enough radicals and militants in the 60's and 70's to make

² After Ray returned from Viet Nam, his antiwar activism got him set up for a pot sale. He spent 3 years in a Tennessee prison.

people think. Blacks--radical and otherwise--have long been held in the revolving door. And Latinos/as, in the last few decades.

NOWHERE DO YOU COME up against the power of the law and naked force as it's wielded in prison. A virtual slavocracy as embodied in the 13th amendment to the Constitution. We have barely any rights the State is bound to respect. If the Left did have any consciousness about the issue--and some do--they're not likely to act on it because they lack the strength and resources to wage a vigorous struggle.

IN THEIR PUBLICATIONS, leftists often refer to the risk of imprisonment or bodily harm because of their activities, but I wonder how many would remain active if they seriously thought their actions carried the risk of imprisonment or bodily harm. Prisoners often mirror image what is happening in the street. With the exception of "criminal justice" issues, the general level of political consciousness among prisoner is low. They are ripe for new ideas and alternatives but don't see them. Which is understandable, given that there are no organized movements presenting any offerings. This is a period of near total abandonment for prisoners. Combine that with the conditions of survival and it tends to breed an unhealthy cynicism.

MANY MARION PRISONERS have been involved in individual and group acts of resistance over the years. For their efforts they've been subjected to beatings, torture, solitary, more time--the whole 9 yards. They see nothing positive coming out of any of it except maintaining their integrity while staring down the worst abuses. They get no support outside, and solidarity is lacking inside. Their hopes hinge on one more crack at the streets. One more payday or payback, and

. a period of total abandonment .

Hell has no fury like that of an enraged ex-convict. For 5 years now, prisoners have been sentenced under the new guidelines of mandatory terms with no parole. Young dudes are coming in with big time. You can't do time on the installment plan anymore--the sentences are too steep, with no parole release. You do more than a couple bits and your entire life is gone. So the prevailing attitude is that next time why show consideration for witnesses or the cops since you're coming back for 20 to 30 after doing 10 or 15?

THE PREVAILING INFORMATIONAL exchange is based on methods of criminal operation. So while a totally scammed and unsuspecting soul takes refuge in the fact that 1.2 million women and men are locked away, the next generation is slipping up

to their back door, and ex-cons come out of their own frightful situation without a pot to piss in and no prospects. The reason there was such a level of political consciousness and activity among prisoners of an earlier era is because they reflected what was happening in the streets of this country at the time. Prison conditions are such that confrontations and rebellions will continue regardless of the existence of external movements. A few even think that prisoners will begin to demonstrate more political will and direction than we see on the street. It's possible--but the odds are against such a phenomenon.



THE LOWEST COMMON DENOMINATOR with us, without any significant outside support, is how much suffering and bleeding will we endure before we are willing and able to sacrifice even more for a chance to turn the situation around. Or has the present situation become a permanent and expanding part of a larger nightmare we are *all* getting sucked into?

Marion Prison, 7/18/92



TALES FROM DOWN UNDER

(excerpt from a personal letter)

I FIRST SAW the film Titicut Follies at a clandestine viewing decades ago. Now I get to see it again on PBS from inside a cage. Bridgewater was/is a dumping ground for the "criminally insane" in Massachusetts, which also served/serves as a place to send sane prisoners for "observation". Many a Walpole prisoner has passed through Bridgewater. Everyone hates it except the parasites that make a living off the misery there. And as the film depicts, Bridgewater's staff is loonier than its inmates. And more cruel.

PBS WAS ABLE to show Titicut Follies because a court reversed a 25 year ban on public showing of the film. In 1967 a state judge in Massachusetts ruled that public showings would violate the privacy rights of the prisoners in the film.

LIKE HE GAVE A SHIT about prisoners' privacy rights. We have none. Any guard that looks up your ass, forces a finger wave, or smashes you across the neck with a club can tell you that. No--the judge was protecting the state from the light of truth. He disappeared the prisoners and restrained them with nightmares and endless abuses. 1967--When they were lying about Viet Nam, hiding what we were not to see, while sending us there to die, Bridgewater and sores like it functioned as America's tiger cages.

THE DAY BEFORE Titicut Follies aired, Marion's guards held an informational picket. Ostensibly they were protesting the recent firing of a guard who had opened the grille and walked on the tier when one of the cells was still open (unlike

in other joints, a Marion prisoner is never out of his cell unless there's a barrier between him and guards or he's in chains). The guards want it this way but were trying to get their own reinstated because the administration could not produce a *written* policy mandating this procedure.

A TECHNICALITY, because the lock-down policy as it's enforced is NO contact. What the guards have now done is to turn this incident around and demand the hiring of more guards and even tighter security policies. Overworked and understaffed, they say, although Marion is the only federal prison that has more guards than prisoners. And the fucking joint is locked-down.

THEY WANT MORE GUARDS to escort us (e.g. to the yard) even though we're all in restraints with one guard on each individual prisoner, holding on the cuffs which are behind our backs, armed with clubs, with an additional 2 guards in charge of the movement escort, all under video surveillance from the control booth. While picketing, they engaged in a little emotional blackmail with signs reading "NO OHIOS" (referring to the Lucasville rebellion).

THE DAY FOLLOWING Titicut Follies, a prisoner's body was found in H-Block. A "suspected" suicide. Everyone in these cages has reason enough to kill themselves but none of us accept the official version either. It's too easy for them to kill you.

NO FURTHER INFORMATION is coming out of Lucasville prison. There was precious little throughout the rebellion. It took over 20 years to get the Attica Brothers civil rights case to trial--not exactly a deterrent to guards bent by hatred of prisoners, racism and the cloak of immunity. That's why they were attacked to begin with. Listening to a description of the Lucasville area and population, it sounds like close to a carbon copy of Marion/Southern Illinois. Predominantly white, predominantly racist, and predominantly unemployed if they weren't sucking off the world's largest prison system.

WHEN LUCASVILLE JUMPED OFF, there were also confrontations at the Michigan State Prison at Jackson, and Bernard State Prison in Illinois. A few weeks prior to Lucasville, the New Bedford Home of Corrections (Mass.) was burned to the ground by prisoners. It's ironic that guards set the spark by searching and seizing prisoners' reading material, stating that too much paper was a fire hazard.

SEVERAL COUNTIES in Southern Illinois are in competition with each other for dibs on a proposed control unit prison that the governor and state legislature have yet to approve. They're like hungry pups trying to push out the weaker ones for a better grip on the appropriations tit. I hope they feed themselves into a coronary. Recently, the state opened the Big Muddy medium security prison in this area--more jobs now that most mining is dead and manufacturing has moved on to even poorer areas.

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Part of the power elite and various overseers showed up for the ceremonies. The state's Attorney General--Black. The state's Commissioner of Corrections--Black. And the prison's new warden--a Black woman. This is called collusion within the framework of internal colonialism.

AND LEST WE FORGET: 47 hangings in Mississippi jails and prisons in the past 5 years, and the widespread use of 4-point restraint torture at Onondaga County jail in New York. Others too numerous to mention or which have not found their way into the media.

DATELINE: WACO. A lone man stands in front of a tank near Tienanmen Square and it's depicted in the U.S. media as the embodiment of a budding democracy. Send a gas-spewing tank crashing through the wall of a home in which 25 children are huddled, and it's referred to us as defending democratic values. Next time we want to incrementally increase the pressure on Washington to respond to human needs, we should send a tank up to the White House lawn. See then if they can bring themselves to refer to such action as an assault.

WHEN JANET RENO accepted the position of U.S. Attorney General she said she would place special emphasis on children's welfare and civil rights. Then she throws a barbeque where children are the main course. There's a history of it: tanks and torches used against the Bonus Army encampment in DC; the attack and fiery death of those at Ludlow; the MOVE bombing--and others.

Then she throws a barbeque where children are the main course.

A NOTE on the "Hostage Rescue Team." Another misnomer. They are a paramilitary assault group trained by the U.S. military. When the FBI thought they'd located me in Ohio in Nov. '84, the H.R.T. was brought in from Washington for what they deemed would be "a difficult and extremely dangerous operation". Referring to my arrest or death.

ON A MOMENT'S NOTICE, they brought with them specially armored vehicles (they were flown in). Most were armed with MP-5 automatics (manufactured by H & K). They then joined forces with the Bos Luc FBI task force. There were approximately 50 at the point of arrest. Things hadn't gone as they'd planned so the confrontation took place with us in the van.

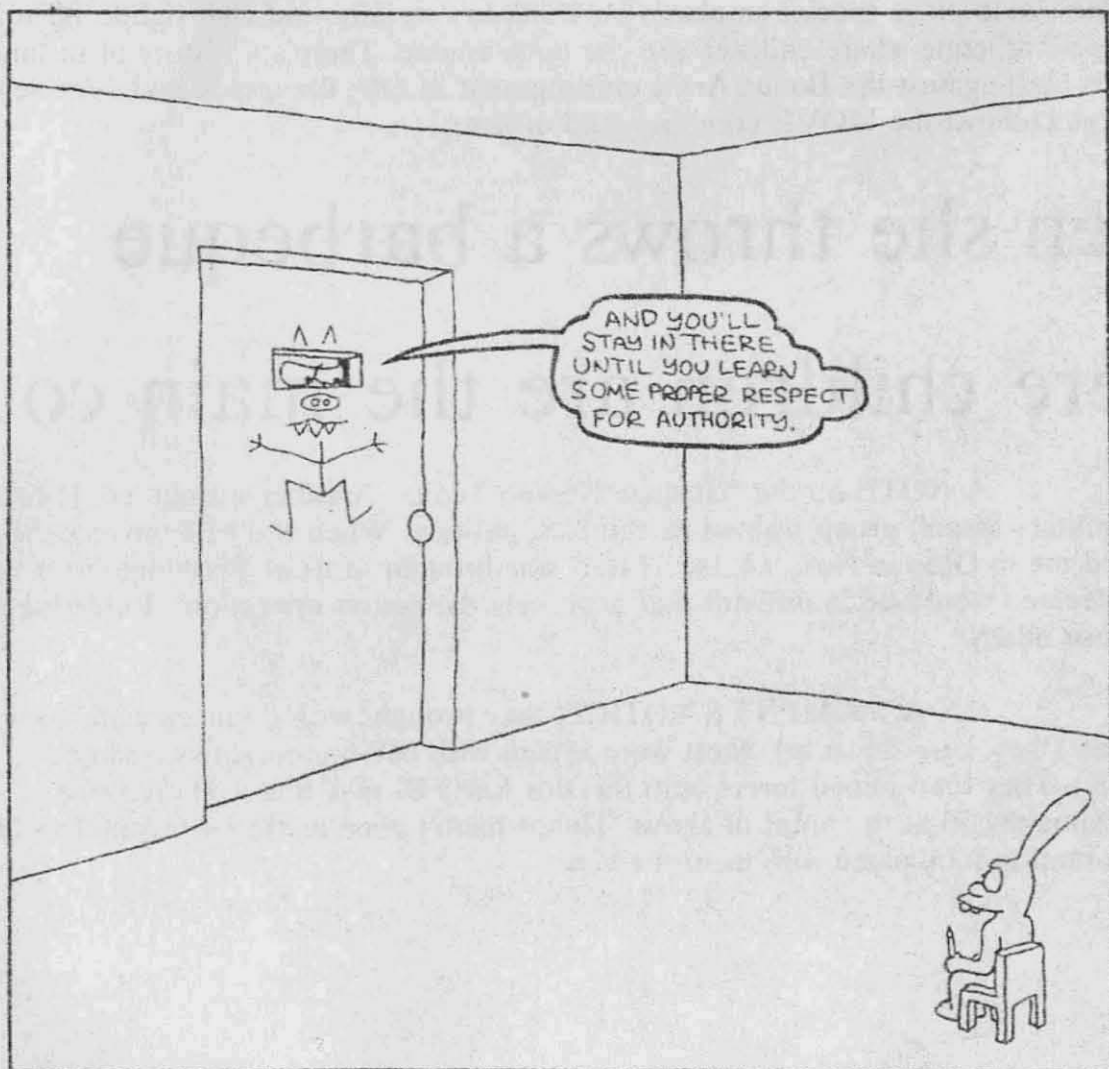
AS I'VE TOLD YOU BEFORE, my kids were with me at the time as we faced down an enclosing circle of MP-5's, AR-15's, and shotguns. I had a gun and a bead on the first agent exiting a vehicle to the front but when they aimed to shoot and yelled they would, my only thought was 3 small coffins. There was no way the kids could have escaped the kind of high-powered fire those agents were prepared to pump into me and the van. So I gave it up. If I hadn't it would have been a disaster.

LESS THREATENING: Take Our Daughters to Work Week sponsored by the Ms. Foundation. The idea is to take your daughter to work so she can boost her self-esteem. It's been on the tube and in the papers--got a lot of attention. America was turned overnight into a country of middle class office workers and professionals. The rest of us disappeared as if we didn't have kids or little ones needing self-esteem. I supposed that's 'cause of the reaction you're likely to get from a kid when you take them into the bowels of a food packing plant, plastics factory, assembly line or textile mill. self-esteem at \$6.00 an hour and no union? Lines waiting to snare your job? Non-existent or inefficient medical coverage? Might end up fielding a whole division of Red Stockings.

Mayday '93

LIFE IN HELL

BY MATT GROENING



THE FIRE INSIDE

OCTOBER, 1993, marks the tenth year of collective punishment at the United States penitentiary, Marion. It marks a decade of lockdown, control unit regimes and government lies. No doubt the federal Bureau of Prisons will commemorate the event by rolling out its propaganda wagon, and indulging the public with some contrived fantasy about the lockdown's purpose and effectiveness. Silently, they'll rejoice at the well-orchestrated scam they've pulled off.

IN A SOCIETY that criminalizes poverty and makes racism a redeeming social value, the Bureau of Prisons simply plugs its propaganda arm into a mass media whose corporate ownership serves its own interests. There is significant political capital to be had by scapegoating the disenfranchised and deflecting the public's attention away from the real issues which affect their quality of life.

MARION is the most written-about prison in the world. One of the battle lines drawn in October, 1983, was for public opinion. The government is winning this battle hands down. The Bureau of Prisons utilizes a highly effective public relations strategy which revolves around the agiprop slogan "the worst of the worse" to describe Marion prisoners. It is a soundbite which condenses "nigger, spic, white trash, jobless, homeless, useless underclass" into one dehumanizing phrase. Dehumanizing a population with language is a prelude to dehumanizing them with force.

THE BUREAU OF PRISON'S STATEMENT IS FALSE, unless the "the worst" refers to rebels, dissenters, revolutionaries, jailhouse lawyers, group members and others whose beliefs and integrity the Bureau of Prisons wants to crush. It is false when one examines who is sent to Marion, and why they're here. Certainly there are exceptions, but those exceptions don't warrant the use of collective punishment. Additionally, I've not met a convicted felon whose misdeeds were in any way comparable to the massive killing of civilians perpetrated by the likes of Nixon, Reagan, Bush, et al. No one here has been convicted of crimes against humanity in the court of world opinion.

THE "WORST OF THE WORSE" has no meaning outside the realm of propaganda because any prisoner can be sent to Marion at any time, for any reason, without due process of law. In Bureau of Prisons parlance, dissent and rebellion are "management problems" to be suppressed. What it feeds the public is designed to secure support for such schemes.

EFFECTIVE PROPAGANDA diverts people from thinking and acting not only on prison issues, but also on the problems that led to the construction of the American gulag: poverty, racism and injustice stemming from an unbridled capitalism that diminishes the humanity of its victims. Marion is but one more satellite in the ever-expanding concentric circles of oppression and violence that are consuming society. This is good news for prison and related bureaucracies. Instead of being hung out to dry, these parasitic purveyors of misery are relishing their careers, fattening their wallets and passing themselves off as guardians of the sliced white bread culture.

. . . language . . . a prelude to dehumanizing with force . . .

IN A RECENT London Sunday Times article on Marion, a denizen of the local community was quoted as saying that Marion prisoners should be taken out and shot as part of the deficit reduction plan. This citizen comes from the same pool from which the Bureau of Prisons recruits its guards. Bleak economic realities feed such fascist sentiments. Marion's guards are the descendants of once-proud coal miners and factory workers--many unionized. But when the mines and plants closed they were left floundering on their own. Their response is to board the nation and state's biggest growth industry--human chattel.

ILLINOIS RECENTLY APPROVED construction of another state control unit prison. Before the ink was dry on the legislation, the economically depressed counties of southern Illinois were unabashedly begging for the prison to be located on their turf. One state legislature stated there was so much unemployment in his county, "it would be a crime" not to locate the prison there. A crime *not* to build a control unit prison in an area already saturated with them. "Worst of the worse" means nothing to these people. All they want are warm bodies to feed on. They don't much care where they come from.

ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT REVERBERATIONS of the Marion lockdown is the subsequent proliferation of control unit prisons throughout the country. Thirty eight, according to a recent Human Rights Watch report, which also

documents the inherent abuses. This proliferation is part and parcel of the rapid expansion of the entire prison system. Marion was the flagship, but no longer the exception.

EVEN A RELATIVELY SMALL STATE like Maine has opened a control unit for 100 prisoners at an initial cost of \$16 million. Already the state is seeking to double the size of the prison. Maine's situation somewhat reflects what's happening nationwide. The state spent money it could not afford to build a control unit prison it does not need. Concurrently, the state cut rehab programs at the Youth Reformatory and slashed programs to Aid to Families with Dependent Children (\$418 a month for a parent with 2 children). By gouging the needs of children, the state insured a steady supply of youthful offenders to fill its control unit and other cells well into the next generation. New York and Florida have come up with their own creative fraud by diverting funds initially allocated for the homeless and social welfare programs, to fund prison construction and operations.

PROPAGANDA THAT PROMOTES CONTROL UNITS as effective against crime--in and out of prison--perpetrates a cruel hoax on an unsuspecting and too often gullible public. Like most government bureaucracies, the Bureau of Prisons hides the cost overruns from a public who will foot the bill. In real terms, "more bang for the buck is quickly eroding their false sense of security.

WHEN MEN AND WOMEN ARE LOCKED in small cells 22-23 hours a day, with little human contact, in a violent environment devoid of respect for the human spirit, there is a steep cost not limited to prisoners or dollars. Certainly the prisoners suffer. And much of it not played out in violent prison incidents is internalized in an organic time capsule. Eventually, they carry the years of abuse and neglect right on through their release dates, which is when it's all brought home. A prisoner doesn't separate him/herself from the prison experience anymore than soldiers separate themselves from the wars **they live through**. Neither does the media, which puts its own spin on the term "ex-convict" to mean depraved and violent.

IF PRISONERS NEVER RETURNED to their neighborhoods and communities--or anyone else's--the public might take some perverted comfort in never seeing them again. But this doesn't happen. Even the most extensive prison system in the world can't keep millions of people locked up forever. While some former prisoners salvage their lives and spare others--entirely through their own efforts--the majority proceed to engage in both self-destructive behavior and crime aimed at the lives and property of others. Life's agenda is reduced primarily to one more paycheck or paycheck.

THOSE WHO BECOME VICTIMIZED by the alumni of America's prisons need ask themselves the following: will the billions spent on prison hardware and subsidizing the welfare payments of prisoncrats buy back the lost lives of those they

thought they were protecting with their tax dollars? It won't. The funds that could have been invested in human services and community development were pissed away down bottomless sinkhole of violence, heartache and the illusion that repression will provide security.

THE MISNAMED CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM churns out an appalling casualty rate. There are now almost one million children under the age of 18 who have one or both parents in prison. One in four young black men is in prison or under police "supervision". More Latinos than ever before are locked up. More women and children. More of everyone whose lives are plagued by poverty and racism. The proliferation of control unit prisons represents one response of wealth and power to the agony of the oppressed.

All they want are warm bodies to feed on.

They don't much care where they come from. . .

EARLY IN THE LOCKDOWN, Marion prisoners put up a stiff resistance. Whether in this prison or elsewhere, the majority have been subjected to police assaults, beatings, gas, clubs, prolonged restraints, drugs, anal probes, stun guns, humiliations, degradations, harassment, psychological rape and mistreatment of all sorts.

THE U.S. CALLS THIS TORTURE when referring to other governments. It's not like we haven't been there. Little positive has come of it other than maintaining our personal integrity. Earlier in the lockdown we had important outside support. Now that most of this support has worn out, a cloud of pessimism, if not cynicism, descends over the entombed.

DURING THE 10 YEAR REIGN of the Marion lockdown, prisoners have attempted to redress their grievances through the federal courts. They got nothing but a judge's spiteful decision that sordid and horrid conditions do not violate constitutional rights. The many prisoners who testified about beatings and other rights violations were dismissed as liars (court tend to credit prisoners' testimony only when they testify for the government). Congressional subcommittee hearings did little besides enter Marion's devastation into the public record.

THIS ISN'T TO SAY that judicial and legislative efforts should be abandoned. There is pending litigation by control unit prisoners in other districts that

may produce different results. And various state legislatures may respond differently to their constituents' concerns. Yet given the prevailing political climate and the entrenchment of the Marion model, little is likely to come from this approach other than a belated civics lesson.

THE BUREAU OF PRISONS cannot continuously apply heat to Marion without allowing some steam to escape, unless they want the place to blow up. The Bureau of Prisons' efforts to contain organized resistance and picking off individual efforts is rooted primarily in the control unit regimen: isolation, separation, controlled movement in restraints, limited communication and the selective use of violence.

an . . . environment devoid of respect for the human spirit . . .

BUT THERE IS MORE. The answer also lies in the Bureau of Prisons' arbitrary use of control mechanisms that begin with who is sent to Marion, and why they're singled out. The process continues--more arbitrarily--in determining who leaves Marion, and when. Clear conduct (no disciplinary infractions) alone will not get a prisoner out of Marion. Some will leave in the minimum 2 1/2 years; some in 5 or 10; some appear branded not to leave at all. Some turnover is necessary because the 375 capacity must have room to warehouse new arrivals, including recidivists.

NO ONE CAN FAULT A PRISONER for wanting to be on that bus out of Marion. However, the emphasis on catching that bus in the 2 1/2 year minimum has evolved into the most viable method for the majority of prisoners to escape Marion's clutches. In turn, this has led to individual "programming" rather than a more collective effort to end the lockdown. The lack of outside support reinforces the view that each of us is on his own.

AS THE POLITICAL RESOURCES for prisoners have waned, the federal government has continued to beef up its repressive capacity. A new control unit prison is being built in Florence CO, which will replace Marion in 1994. The addition of 200 cells over Marion's capacity underscores the failure of Marion's lockdown to reduce violence and rebellion in the federal prison system and states which tap into it. Florence's 550 permanently locked down cells await those who will continue to refuse and resist, as well as those caught up in the spiral of crime that prisons produce. Conditions at Florence

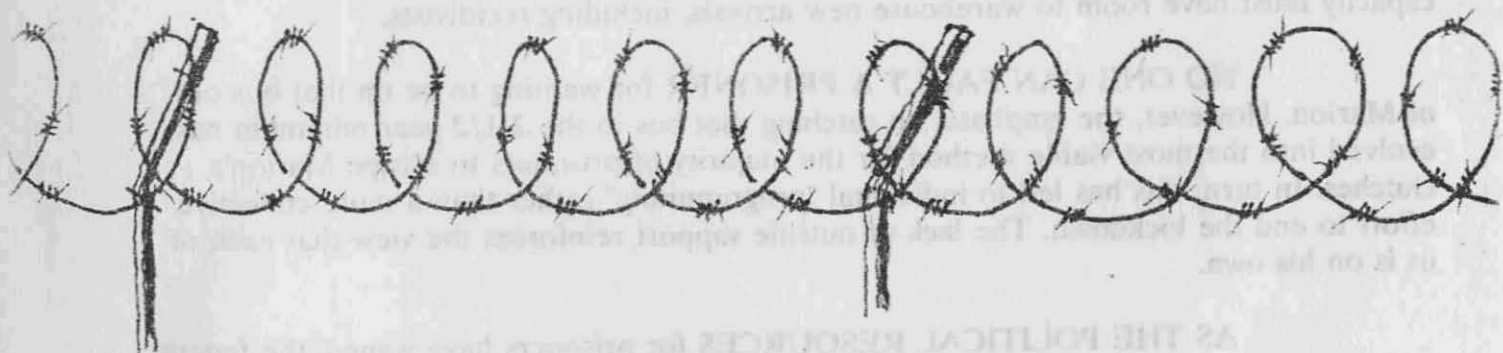
promise to be considerably worse with more emphasis placed on deeper isolation.

IT'S NOT EASY TO CHART a future course from inside. Doing time in these joints is like walking a mine field. The Florence prison will present new challenges and other control units are cutting their teeth. We know from Attica, Lucasville, and a hundred other rebellions, both organized and spontaneous, that stiff resistance will continue. Some of it will be violent. We also know that as captive slaves we are extremely vulnerable to offensive violence and retribution by the guards. For this reason, some matters are best left to clandestine maneuvers.

What's clear to me now and has been since I first did time in '69-71 is that no matter how much litigation and legislation is filed and defiled, the road to building a prisoners' movement is paved with solidarity. Irrespective of individual differences and group affiliations, we all have a common bond on which to stand together. Solidarity is our greatest weapon, bar none. Additionally, outside support is critical. A necessary lifeline involves family, friends, professionals, and political activists. We urgently need a stronger voice. And everyone--inside and out of prison walls--can help build it.

ULTIMATELY, control units like Marion must be shut down. But in the meantime, attitudes with a political consciousness; adoption and application of the United Nations' Standard Minimum Rules for the treatment of Prisoners; outside observers--taken together, can open a new front in the struggle for justice.

September, 1993



""Protest" is when I say: I no longer accept this or that thing. "Resistance" is when I see to it that that which I no longer accept no longer occurs."----- Ulrike Mienhoff, murdered by West German prison guards.

ARMED & DANGEROUS

WHEN I WAS TRANSFERRED to the U.S. penitentiary in Marion, Illinois in December, 1989, Panama was being invaded by U.S. forces. Amidst the wholesale destruction, mass graves, and lies by U.S. politicians and military leaders was an awesome display of American firepower designed to impose its will on yet another Central American nation. Weapons systems from land, sea, and air were utilized, along with the basic M16 to kill whoever stood in the line of fire. Whether technologically advanced or as simple as a grenade, this war matériel is made in the U.S.A.--some of it by federal prisoners.

THE FEDERAL PRISON INDUSTRIES, INC. (UNICOR) is one of the manufacturers that supplies military equipment to the bloated U.S. war machine. UNICOR has served this function since 1934 under contract to the War Department, now known euphemistically as the Department of Defense. The Federal Bureau of Prisons (BoP) boasts that the slave labor of prisoners, under hazardous conditions, and at an entry level wage of 23 cents an hour has made and continues to make significant contributions towards supplying the military's needs. It also boasts of using UNICOR to control prisoners within its vastly overcrowded system.

UNICOR'S MILITARY PRODUCTION ranges from TOW and other missile cables, munitions components, communications equipment, bomb parts, engine overhauls, uniform sewing, etc. In its brochures, the BoP proudly displays photographs of prisoners working hard producing this matériel. As a Viet Nam veteran, I was particularly struck by a photo of Federal prisoners producing equipment destined for Viet Nam. Unlike most prisoners, I got to see with my own eyes the lethal effect of the end product.

IT IS THE PRIORITY OF UNICOR to provide for the military's needs, whether it was during the Korean War when 80% of UNICOR sales went to the military, or the Gulf War when prisoners were pressed into overtime. In fact, the military has its own representative on UNICOR's Board of Directors to advise on how to better harness

prison labor for military purposes.

BEING CONTRACTED to the War Department means supplying more than just U.S. forces. It means that this military equipment is rerouted by the U.S. to its client states--from Israel to Indonesia--and into the hands of the world's most degenerate and bloodthirsty regimes. In cases like El Salvador, the supplies were used to kill their own people.

USP-MARION IS A CONTROL UNIT prison where abuse of prisoners is well documented by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Congressional Committee hearings, and other sources. In the never-ending lockdown there is little to engage the intellect, an abysmal lack of stimulation and recreation, and no work with which to labor. With one exception. The prison administration has designed a scheme whereby prisoners deemed suitable must enter a period of involuntary servitude in the "pre-transfer" unit before approval is granted for transfer to a less brutal prison. It is a scheme the administration exploits to the hilt because they understand that Marion prisoners are desperate to leave its punishment cells, isolation, and tomb-like conditions.

WHILE ALL FEDERAL PRISONERS are required to work, they are not required to work UNICOR, though 26% do so. Most prisoners opt to work in other areas such as food service or maintenance, or pursue the very limited educational or vocational programs available. USP-Marion is the single exception in the Federal prison system because it mandates that prisoners work UNICOR as a condition of transfer. They only work at Marion's UNICOR is military production.

MARION'S OPERATION is an extension of a larger operation at the federal prison in Lexington, Kentucky, so its production and profit figures are not individually computed. In a typical year, Lexington fills 800-1200 orders for the military, totalling \$12 million.

THE BUREAU OF PRISONS has parried Freedom of Information Act requests to disclose detailed information about war production at Marion. However, this much is known: UNICOR Marion produces electronics communication cables which it sells to the War Department. These cables are used in various ground vehicles, such as tanks and Armored Personnel Carriers, and production line supervisors have bragged that the cables are used in helicopters. During the Gulf War, the prisoners working UNICOR Marion were compelled to do overtime production. Whatever its finite specifics, the military application of the electronics cables is essential to many weapons systems and platforms.

IN MODERN WARFARE, the term "military hardware" encompasses advanced weapons systems in which electronics often provide a more destructive function than the soldiers' rifles. During the U.S. war on Iraq, for example, bombardment by electronically-enhanced munitions on water treatment plants spreads a bacteriological

assault on all those people whose lives depend on that water. According to the New England Journal of Medicine, 46,900 Iraqi children died in the first seven months of 1991 as a result of U.S. attacks on the country's infrastructure. Besides pilots and gunners who never see their victims, what's used to coordinate and propel mass destruction are the essential components of war, right down to the vital electronics and communication cables. War where the primary victims are civilian.

MILITARY EQUIPMENT is not produced in a vacuum. Those prisoners who produced matériel during the Viet Nam war certainly knew there was a war raging. U.S. military conquests, past and present, are well-documented. Perhaps less well known, though equally significant and well-documented, is the Government's diversion of weapons and military equipment to serial killers disguised as heads of state. UNICOR's military production is part of an extensive pipeline that feeds the world's largest weapon exporter.

... sustenance obtained from the spirit of resistance ...

THE U.S. HAS MADE MUCH of China's use of prison labor for textile and other exports to the U.S. market. This is said to be a human rights abuse (i.e., that it cuts into the profits of U.S. corporations). The latest controversy revolved around Christmas tree ornaments manufactured by Chinese prisoners and exported to the U.S. To my knowledge, no one has ever been killed by an attack from a Christmas tree ornament, yet tons of military equipment for which U.S. prisoners have provided essential components are exported to bomb, blast, and terrorize their ultimate recipients.

FOR ME, being a revolutionary is the best way to live. Capture and imprisonment involve adjustments, but have not made me repentant for a lifetime of anti-imperialism and struggle for justice. I was sent to Marion because of my political beliefs and associations and will likely remain here unless I repudiate them, which I will not do. For me to engage in the production of military equipment as a condition for transfer would be a repudiation of my political beliefs and principles. *I will not do it.*

REFUSING TO BE AN ACCOMPLICE to U.S. militarism is an act rooted deep in conscience and solidarity with those fighting U.S. imperialism and trying to survive its onslaught. It is largely a symbolic act, yet necessary in confronting the

collaborative nature of the system. During the recent attack against Lebanon by U.S.-supplied Israeli forces, every newspaper, magazine, and newsreel image of the subsequent atrocities--hundreds killed and wounded; hundreds of thousands made refugees--shows a steady movement of U.S.-manufactured weapons and equipment.



FOR THE POLITICAL PRISONER, putting principles into practice may be largely symbolic, but demonstrating who we are and what we stand for is better than accommodating the government's agenda. It's important to remember that however small the resistance, someone always steps forward. The magnitude of crimes perpetuated by the U.S. must be opposed, and this cannot be done without risk and sacrifice. The lack of an organized and wider resistance, though lamented, does not negate individual and small group action. History is replete with their examples and their corpses: from the White Rose activists who opposed fascism to the first and few guerrillas of the Sandinista Front for National Liberation; from John Brown to the Industrial Workers of the World who were sent to prison in droves; to Malcolm X and the indomitable George Jackson. For each of them there are the countless unnamed. The only reward short of victory is the sustenance obtained from the spirit of resistance.

IT IS NOT a decision made without consequences. The Government's and the BoP's iron fist gives no quarter to revolutionaries, rebels, and dissenters. It's part of Marion's mission to destroy an individual's identity and community ties. One warden stated that "the purpose of Marion is to control revolutionary attitudes in the prison system and society at large." Rather overstated from a bureaucratic windbag, but the fact remains that Marion is repression personified in a social experiment. Any outward indication that a prisoner does not conform to Marion's dictates and he is condemned to incessant isolation. For the transgressor there will be no relief--no step closer to personal freedom, no embrace of family and loved ones, no access to expanded work, education, or recreational opportunities, no shot at parole. Added to the burden is the public's indifference and the response of the liberal left, who view prisoners with contempt and political prisoners with hostility.

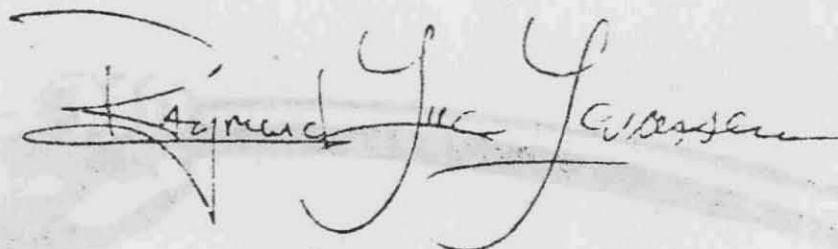
YET, THROUGH ALL THE YEARS and for all its evil ways, Marion has not destroyed me. All that *can* destroy me are guards, medical neglect, or a prisoner who doesn't have his head screwed on right. There's an axiom here which declares that all who enter these walls will eat much shit before leaving. It's inherent in Marion's mission. But eating shit is qualitatively different than producing war matériel that's used to put someone else in their grave. Someone else who also experiences a steady diet of

oppression. Someone who does me no harm.

IT'S BEEN 26 YEARS since I moved as soldier among the Vietnamese people, with rifle in hand, desecrating their land and seeing the ill, the infirm, the wounded and dying of those I was assigned to enlighten--or light up--about the virtues of U.S. imperialism. After my discharge, I joined Viet Nam Veterans Against the War, a group of conscience-ridden and war-weary vets who rejuvenated a lethargic anti-war movement when the U.S. bombing of Viet Nam was at its extreme. Overlapping with Viet Nam was the war in America's streets, fought in places like Newark, Detroit, Pine Ridge, Attica, Humboldt Park, East L.A. Within *this* war were internecine battles provoked by police spies and provocateurs and the rapid proliferation of snitches in a drug-saturated, me-first society. And beyond South East Asia, U.S. wars of intervention left its bloody footprints in Chile, Argentina, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Angola, South Africa, Cuba and Puerto Rico, to name but a few. As in Viet Nam, the victims are mostly civilians.

ALWAYS AT WAR, as the world's policeman, this omnipotent and ubiquitous United States military is charged with enforcing capitalism's code of conduct. Troops were mobilized during the rebellion in Los Angeles. Troops are deployed in Somalia where they now stand accused of human rights violations by the humanitarian relief agencies and the Somali people themselves.

VIET NAM CHANGED my view of liberation to mean a constant and protracted struggle against those forces that impose their will on others for power and profit. Freedom is the ultimate expression and condition of a people who control their own destiny. Once before, the government put me in uniform and used me for military purposes. Being young and naive was no excuse for my complicity. They'll not do it again.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Raymond J. Jensen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping initial "R" and "J".

August 1993

For more information on Marion and other Control Unit prisons:

"Dungeon Marion: An Instrument of Oppression", Bill Dunne,
Journal of Prisoners on Prisons, (Vol4, No2,1993) PO Box 60779
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada T6G 2S9

Committee To End The Marion Lockdown, PO Box 578172,
Chicago, Ill, 60657-8172

Prison Conditions In The US: A Human Rights Watch Report
Human Rights Watch, 485 5th Ave, New York, NY, 10017

Through The Wire, a video about women political prisoners in
the Lexington High Security Unit. Nina Rosenblum, producer.
Narrated by Susan Sarandon. Daedalus Productions, 1990.
Available in some video stores.

"The Crime Of Punishment At Pelican Bay Maximum Security Prison",
Wienstien and Cummins, Covert Action #45, Summer, 1993. CA Quarterly,
1500 Massachusetts Ave, NW, #732, Washington DC 20005

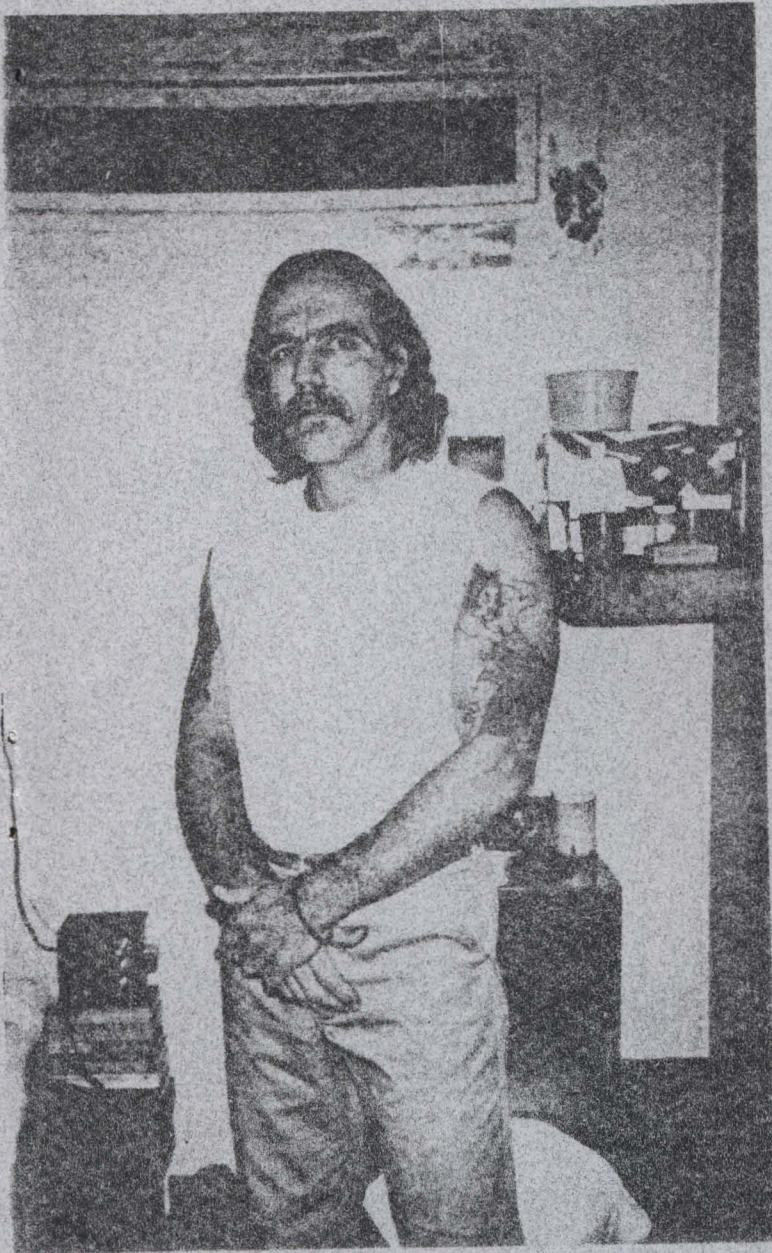
Pelican Bay Information Report 2489 Mission St, San Fransisco, CA, 94110

"The Marionization Of American Prisons" Immarigeon, Vol 7, #4, Fall '92
and "Infamous Punishment: The Psychological Consequences of Isolation",
Haney, The National Prison Project Journal Vol 8, #2, Spring '93
1875 Connecticut Ave NW, #410, Washington, DC, 20009

The Drumbeat: News From Inside, CFF Publications, PO Box 14075,
Chicago, Ill., 60614-0075

Prison News Service, PO Box 5052, Station A, Toronto, Ontario,
Canada M5W 1W4





Ray, December, 1992, Marion

RAYMOND LUC LEVASSEUR
10376/016, box 1000
Marion, Ill., 62959

PUBLISHERS NOTE

Ray is but one of over 150 U.S. held political prisoners and prisoners of war. Some, like framed Black Panther Geronimo Pratt, have spent as long in prison as Nelson Mandela. A tiny few, like Leonard Peltier, are internationally known and have garnered support among "progressives". Far, far too many do their outrageously long sentences in the Empires worst prisons forgotten by the movements they were/are part of. For those who don't have Rays inspired way with words, they have let thier deeds do their talking.

Today, despite all the good work and effort of "acceptable" peace organizations, Nicaragua is in agony, Cuba embargoed, the military still rules El Salvador with terror, Guatemala is armed by the latest of a long line of White House thugs, and death squads stalk Mexico.

Our cities are drowned in drugs, our prisons filled to bursting minority youth, and Federal cops can burn to death 80 plus souls and get away with it. The Branch Davidians are just this decades MO

This no doubt sounds like heresy but we believe wrecking war research facilities is as valid as a "non-violent" CD. We believe fighting for your people is as valid as praying for them. How has it come to pass that we are expected (by our own "leaders"!) to treat the property and lives of mass murderers as sacred? We need poets and polemicists, dancers and dynamiters.

Velvet, F.O.P.P.

AS OF the time of assembling this book, F.O.P.P. has been remiss in not having a up to date and complete list of PP/POWs. We deeply regret this error. BREAKTHROUGH, the quarterly of the Prairiefire Organizing Committee, publishes such a list. Ours went south, and the only one we could dig up at this point is too old to rely on its accuracy.

