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Hit 'Em Where it Hurts

Craig Rosebraugh

Summer 2003

Below is an article by the former Earth Liberation Front Press officer. As I write this we have just gone to war (officially at least) with Iraq. Although the article is aimed primarily at and refers to the US anti war and peace movement(s), I feel that many of the criticisms and ideas in the article could just as easily be directed towards the movement(s) here in the UK.

As the Commander in Chief of the United States gears up at 8:00 pm (EST) to tell the nation and the world that war is inevitable; that the window of opportunity for Saddam to disarm and destroy his “weapons of mass destruction” has expired, serious questions need to be posed to the privileged anti-war movement in the United States. With massive U.S. led bombing of Iraq perhaps just hours away, the question remains, how far is the anti-war movement in the United States willing to go to stop the U.S. government and its unceasing atrocities?

So far the peace or anti-war movement in this country has mirrored the same strategies and tactics of past historical anti-war causes. By far the most important example to reference is that of the Vietnam anti-war movement in the United States during the 1960s and 1970s. Well over a million people participated in this effort, engaging in a variety of tactics and strate-

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gies in an attempt to stop the war, or even to prevent its further escalation.

From public education to picketing, boycotts to lobbying, marches to massive civil disobedience, to even outright suicide in the numerous cases of individuals lighting themselves on fire in protest, the Movement was extremely diverse. There was even a decent contingency of property destruction that occurred, no doubt condemned by the mainstream corporate peace organizations.

With all this activity, with the incredible amount of participation, one would assume this would have been more than enough to stop the war, to pressure the federal government to pull out of Southeast Asia. Furthermore, when soldiers such as Ron Kovic, returned from the war angry and disillusioned and formed organizations such as the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, even more intense pressure was placed on the U.S. government. But it was not enough. None of the strategies and tactics applied during the Vietnam anti-war movement in the United States were enough, either individually or combined, to stop the U.S. government's military horrors. At the height of the Movement, Nixon's response was not to stop the war but to initiate his policy of Vietnamization. This ingenious plan allowed the U.S. government to weaken the anti-war movement while continuing on with the war for another five years. When the peace accords were finally signed in Paris in 1973, they were more a result of the incredible success of the Viet Cong than any realistic effectiveness of the anti-war cause.

Each of the anti-war movements that have surfaced in the United States since then have attempted to mirror, to an absolutist extent, the strategies and tactics that failed during the Vietnam anti-war struggle. In fact these same strategies and tactics have been used in nearly all U.S. anti-war movements throughout history and the fact remains, never in U.S. history has any anti-war or peace movement actually prevented or ceased a U.S. military operation or war. And yet continuously,

anti-war movements in the United States fall into the same mold of ineffective activism that stands absolutely no chance of threatening or challenging the power structure of the U.S. government.

In the current day, protests in select locations such as Washington, DC, New York, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Portland, and more are considered successful due only to the numbers of people in attendance. The common argument is stated in defense of these activities that the message is getting out into the media and thus people in this country and around the world are learning that not everyone supports Bush's war. Yet, from a strategic standpoint there is absolutely no realistic foundation to the belief that this form of public education can and will have any effect on the government's decision to use military force in Iraq. Again, glancing back to the Vietnam period when the protests were even larger, when more people gathered and the tactics were even broader than those utilized today, Nixon refused to listen to the public and continued on with the war.

During the past few weeks cries have emerged from the "progressive" sectors of U.S. society concerning Bush's statement that the anti-war movement is a mere focus group and would not effect his ultimate decision. This should provide at least some indication that the large parties — which some might call protests or rallies — are not capable of generating the needed pressure which could actually force the government to stop. If it hasn't ever occurred throughout U.S. history and, arguably, the U.S. government is more powerful now than ever, there is no precedent on which to base this faulty behavior and activity. Yet, the large mainstream peace groups continue to give caring U.S. people false hope, that if they get involved in the movement there is actually a chance they can help stop the war.

If we are going to become serious about stopping this war, and even the U.S. led atrocities of tomorrow, we must be realistic about our strategies and tactics and actually begin to uti-

lize those methodologies that can and will challenge the power structure of the country.

Yes, I am speaking of direct action, but not the generalized version spouted freely today and used to describe primarily conscience serving endeavors. An action is direct if it actually gets in the way, prevents, or stops an injustice from occurring. Unfortunately, the government sanctioned peace parades do not fit into this description. Even though public education is an inherent necessity of any movement, the time for public education by relying upon corporate media's interpretation of your events has long since passed — if it was ever valuable.

The only possibility of stopping this current military action is to engage in strategies and tactics which severely disrupt the war machine, the U.S. economy, and the overall functioning of U.S. society; particularly how it relates to consumerism and the economy. Marches, picketing, rallies, parties, benefits, civil disobedience and even property destruction are pointless, and perhaps even counterproductive, unless they serve to severely disrupt the functioning of the political system and its economy. An atmosphere of severe unrest, if manufactured properly, will force the U.S. government to place military resources in the streets of the United States, will threaten the economy (the chief motive behind this military excursion) of the United States, and ultimately create a political atmosphere unfavorable for Bush to continue on with the war.

So how is an atmosphere of severe unrest and disruption generated? First and foremost, it must begin with our ability to look beyond the business as usual strategies and tactics that have failed miserably in the past. It must begin with our allegiance to come to terms with the realization that any and all tactics and strategies must be considered at least available for use. Next we must be willing to decipher exactly how the power of the political structure can be effectively challenged. Once this matter has been examined there is only one question remaining, will each of us become involved and use whatever tactics

same manner as Saddam? Why is it leaders of the United States have not targeted the U.S. government for its weapons of mass destruction and incredible history of terrorist and murderous atrocities? Similar to Bush Senior's Gulf War, this is another war for U.S. corporations and for the protection and, more importantly, expansion of the U.S. economy. With the incredible oil reserves in the region and the potential for U.S. corporations to have a hand in building and ruling a future Iraq nation, the motives are quite obvious. Of course, it wouldn't be just if the U.S. did not claim that it was taking action against a horrible dictator for humanitarian purposes.

As the U.S. led military campaign gets fully under way in the very near future, the question remains... how far is the anti-war movement in the United States willing to go to stop the U.S. government and its unceasing atrocities? How far are you willing to go, what are you willing to do to stop the massive bloodshed once again caused by the U.S. government.

and strategies are necessary, or will we refuse and continue to engage solely in conduct which serves little other purpose than making people feel better about themselves.

Here are some suggestions for the necessary creation of an atmosphere of unrest and disruption in the United States.

1. Attack the financial centers of the country. Using covert or black bloc techniques, depending on the situation, physically shut down financial centers which regulate and assist the functioning of U.S. economy. This can be done in a variety of ways from massive property destruction, to online sabotage, to physical occupation of buildings. However the latter I would shy away from, especially the open civil disobedience type of activities which purposely involve arrests. This movement needs all the assistance it can get and absolutely **no** good will come from going to jail. Allowing yourself to be purposely arrested demonstrates that an individual has at least some faith in the U.S. legal system. This is completely foolish. One primary objective is to engage in serious unrest and disruption and **not** to get caught. Not getting caught means you are able to continue the struggle the next day.
2. Large scale urban rioting. With massive unrest and even state of emergencies declared in major cities across the country, the U.S. government will be forced to send U.S. troops into the domestic arena thereby taking resources and political focus away from the war. Unstable conditions in much of the country also serve as a political embarrassment for the Administration and could assist in forcing them to stop the war to deal with domestic concerns. Rioting should be focused on governmental agencies and corporations — especially those that are profiting from the war or destruction of life.

3. Attack the media centers of the country. It is the corporate media who has and continues to influence and control the minds of the mass body of people in the United States. These new media outlets cannot be utilized by the movement as they are owned by the very corporations one should be opposing. Using any means necessary, shut down the national networks of NBC, ABC, CBS, CNN, etc. Not just occupations but actually engage in strategies and tactics which knock the networks off the air.
4. Spread the battle to the individuals responsible for the war and destruction of life — the very heads of government and U.S. corporations. No longer should these people be able to hide behind their occupations, living their lives in peace while they simultaneously slaughter countless people. Hit them in their personal lives, visit their homes, and make them feel personally responsible for committing massive atrocities.
5. Make it known publicly that this movement *does not* support U.S. troops as long as they are serving an unjust and horrifying political regime. Create an atmosphere lacking of support to assist U.S. troops at home and abroad in losing their morale and will to fight. If you are supporting the troops you are supporting this war and the very U.S. government that is the primary terrorist regime in the international arena.
6. Actively target U.S. military establishments within the United States. Again, following the above stated goal of **not** getting caught, use any means necessary to slow down the functioning of the murdering body.
7. When engaging in the above six activities, strike hard and fast and retreat in anonymity. Select another loca-

tion, strike again hard and fast and quickly retreat in anonymity. Engage only in actions where you will be victorious.

Do not be concerned with alienating the mainstream sectors of the movement — that mainstream has **never** stopped a U.S. military activity or war. Do not get caught. **do not get caught.** Do not get sent to jail. Stay alert, keep active, and keep fighting. Remember, an action is only good (especially at this juncture in U.S. society) if it will serve to severely disrupt the political system of the country, its economy, and the corporate interests that drive this society.

These suggestions are not radical. They are merely recommendations for those that desire to actually have a chance at stopping this current military siege. As the peace or anti-war corporate organizations vocally oppose this message and its enclosed suggestions, continue to ask what realistic chance do their strategies and tactics have to actually stop this war? What historical precedent do their business as usual politics and policies have? As no peace or anti-war movement has ever stopped U.S. governmental military policies or activities using the state sanctioned and societal approved methods, what right do they have to give the caring public false hope?

Well over 500,000 Iraqi children have died since the Gulf War as a result of U.S. bombing and sanctions — not to mention thousands of innocent men and women. With the planned massive bombing campaign planned by the U.S. military, the death toll of the innocent will severely increase. And for what? The U.S. rhetorical line of “liberating the Iraqi people from dictator Saddam” is as much bullshit as our historical line of helping to spread freedom and democracy around the world. Surely Saddam is guilty of massive atrocities, but so are many other world leaders. Sure Saddam may have had weapons of mass destruction, but so do many evil leaders of nations around the world. Just why is it we have not targeted Israel and Sharon in the