History S-1967, summer 2010

ARTICLES TO READ FOR LAST 2 CLASSES—SET A, ON WAR, PEACE & SOCIAL ISSUES SINCE ABOUT 2005

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*from this organization's website, especially the "Tradeoffs" page, you can get other information about the costs of wars, federal tax cuts etc.—including costs at the level of ***states, cities or towns***.

**Nancy Shippen, a trainer for Alternatives to Violence Project, will be a guest speaker at John MacDougall's section meeting on 7/29. All are welcome; also you can e-mail Nancy at nancyshippen@comcast.net for more information about AVP

Article No. 1

The Boston Globe

MICHAEL OREN

UN report a victory for terror

By Michael Oren | September 24, 2009

CONSIDER THIS scenario. In response to the atrocities of 9/11, the United States invades Afghanistan and battles non-uniformed Taliban terrorists who fight within densely populated areas. Though American forces do their utmost to avoid inflicting civilian casualties, many innocents are killed - not the least because the Taliban uses them as human shields. Nevertheless, the United States carefully investigates each civilian death and, in the case of misconduct, punishes those soldiers responsible.

But then an international organization notorious for its one-sided condemnations of America launches an investigation into US "war crimes." The inquiry is held under Taliban auspices, and Taliban commanders - disguised as civilians - are interviewed. Inexorably, the organization finds America guilty of mounting a pre-meditated campaign to inflict the maximum amount of civilian deaths and of failing to try those responsible. The final report calls for punitive action against the United States for its "crimes against humanity."

If true, this scenario would mark an unparalleled victory for terror and deal a crippling blow to any democracy trying to defend itself. Yet, this is precisely the catastrophe created by a UN report on Israeli military actions against Hamas in Gaza last January.

The UN Human Rights Commission, which has condemned Israel more frequently than Libya, Saudi Arabia, and North Korea combined, undertook to investigate "all violations of international human rights law" in the Israeli operation - essentially presuming Israel's guilt. The judges, one of whom had already denounced Israel in print, conducted their hearings in Hamas-controlled Gaza and interviewed witnesses, including several Hamas operatives posing as civilians, selected by the regime. They ignored Israel's deeply-probing investigation into its own force's conduct and found only the evidence that confirmed their preordained conclusion. Israel was found guilty of attacking "the people of Gaza as a whole," of violating their "fundamental rights and freedoms," and arbitrarily killing them.

Just as the United States entered Afghanistan in response to an unprovoked attack on American civilians in 2001, so, too, did Israel's

intervention, which followed more than 7,000 Hamas rocket and mortar strikes on Israeli towns and villages since the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in 2005. Given the UN Human Rights Commission's silence in the face of this aggression, and Hamas's rejection of Israeli offers to renew a cease-fire, Israel exercised its unassailable right to defend its citizens.

Despite Hamas's cynical use of civilians as human shields, the Israel Defense Forces repeatedly called off operations deemed too dangerous to civilian populations and endangered its own troops by warning Palestinian neighborhoods of impending attacks. Yet even the most moral army can make mistakes, especially in dense urban warfare; for every Serbian soldier killed by NATO in 1999, for example, four civilians died. By comparison, more than half of the Palestinian casualties in Gaza were military. Still, Israel launched investigations into some 100 cases of alleged misconduct by its soldiers, 23 of which continue. If found guilty, as one soldier already has been, the perpetrators will be brought to justice under Israel's internationally respected legal system.

But the UN report is not about justice. Rather, it is the latest initiative designed to delegitimize Israel and deny its right to self-defense.

The UN report not only endangers Israel. It bestows virtual immunity on terrorists and ties the hands of any nation to protect itself.

Ironically, the greatest victim of the UN report is not Israel's ability to wage a moral war but its willingness to make an historic peace. If asked to take immense risks for peace, Israelis must be convinced of their internationally recognized right to self-defense should that peace be broken. Deprived of that right, even after being subjected to years of murderous rocket attacks, an Israeli electorate will understandably recoil from such risks.

The UN report must therefore be rejected by all those who understand that democratic states must have the legitimate means to defend themselves from complex 21st-century threats. No less critically, the report must be rebuffed by all those who care about peace.

Michael Oren is Israel's ambassador to the United States. ■

NO.2

The Transformation of Hamas

Palestine's Islamic movement has subtly changed its uncompromising posture on Israel.

by FAWAZ A. GERGES

Something is stirring within the Hamas body politic, a moderating trend that, if nourished and engaged, could transform Palestinian politics and the Arab-Israeli peace process. There are unmistakable signs that the religiously based radical movement has subtly changed its uncompromising posture on Israel. Although low-key and restrained, those shifts indicate that the movement is searching for a formula that addresses the concerns of Western powers yet avoids alienating its social base.

PETER O. ZIERLEIN

Far from impulsive and unexpected, Hamas's shift reflects a gradual evolution occurring over the past five years. The big strategic turn occurred in 2005, when Hamas decided to participate in the January 2006 legislative elections and thus tacitly accepted the governing rules of the Palestinian Authority (PA), one of which includes recognition of Israel. Ever since, top Hamas leaders have repeatedly declared they will accept a resolution of the conflict along the 1967 borders. The Damascus-based Khaled Meshal, head of Hamas's political bureau and considered a hardliner, acknowledged as much in 2008. "We are realists," he said, who recognize that there is "an entity called Israel." Pressed by an Australian journalist on policy changes Hamas might make, Meshal asserted that the organization has shifted on several key points: "Hamas has already changed—we accepted the national accords for a Palestinian state based on the 1967 borders, and we took part in the 2006 Palestinian elections."

Another senior Hamas leader, Ghazi Hamad, was more specific than Meshal, telling journalists in January 2009 that Hamas would be satisfied with ending Israeli control over the Palestinian areas occupied in the 1967 war—the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem. In other words, Hamas would not hold out for liberation of the land that currently includes Israel.

Previously Hamas moderates had called at times for a *tahdia* (a minor truce, or "calm") or *hudna* (a longer-term truce, lasting as long as fifty years), which implies some measure of recognition, if only tacit. The moderates justified their policy shift by using Islamic terms (in Islamic history *hudnas* sometimes develop into permanent truces). Now leaders appear to be going further; they have made a concerted effort to re-educate the rank and file about the necessity of living side by side with their Jewish neighbors, and in so doing mentally prepare them for a permanent settlement. In Gaza's mosques pro-Hamas clerics have begun to cite the example of the famed twelfth-century Muslim military commander and statesman Saladin, who after liberating Jerusalem from the Crusaders allowed them to retain a coastal state in the Levant. The point is that if Saladin could tolerate the warring, bloodthirsty Crusaders, then today's Palestinians should be willing to live peacefully with a Jewish state in their midst.

The Saladin story is important because it provides Hamas

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with religious legitimacy and allows it to justify the change of direction to followers. Hamas's raison d'être rests on religious legitimation; its leaders understand that they neglect this at their peril. Western leaders and students of international politics should acknowledge that Hamas can no more abandon its commitment to Islamism than the United States can abandon its commitment to liberal democracy. That does not mean Hamas is incapable of change or compromise but simply that its political identity is strongly constituted by its religious legitimation.

It should be emphasized as well that Hamas is not monolithic on the issue of peace. There are multiple, clashing viewpoints and constituencies within the movement. Over the years I have interviewed more than a dozen leaders inside and outside the occupied territories. Although on the whole Hamas's public rhetoric calls for the liberation of all of historic Palestine, not only the territories occupied in 1967, a healthy debate has grown both within and without.

Several factors have played a role in the transformation. They include the burden of governing a war-torn Gaza and the devastation from Israel's 2008–09 attack, which has caused incalculable human suffering and increasing public dissatisfaction in Gaza with Hamas rule.

Before the 2006 parliamentary elections, Hamas was known for its suicide bombers, not its bureaucrats, even though between 2002 and 2006 the organization moved from rejectionism toward participation in a political framework that is a direct product of the Oslo peace process of the 1990s. After the elections, the shift continued. "It is much more difficult to run a government than to oppose and resist Israeli occupation," a senior Hamas leader told me while on official business in Egypt in 2007. "If we do not provide the goods to our people, they'll disown us." Hamas is not just a political party. It's a social movement, and as such it has a long record of concern about and close attention to public opinion. Given the gravity of deteriorating conditions in Gaza and Hamas's weak performance during last year's fighting, it should be no surprise that the organization has undergone a period of fairly intense soul-searching and reassessment of strategic options.

Ironically, despite the West's refusal to regard the Hamas government as legitimate and despite the continuing brutal siege of Gaza, demands for democratic governance within Gaza are driving change. Yet Hamas leaders are fully aware of the danger of alienating more-hardline factions if they show weakness or water down their position and move toward de facto recognition of Israel without getting something substantive in return. Hamas's strategic predicament lies in striking a balance between, on the one hand, a new moderating and maturing sensibility and, on the other, insistence on the right and imperative of armed resistance. This difficult balance often explains the tensions and contradictions in Hamas's public and private pronouncements.

What is striking about Hamas's shift toward the peace process is that it has come at a time of critical challenges from Al Qaeda–like jihadist groups; a low-intensity civil war with rival Fatah, the ruling party of the PA; and a deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza.

Last summer a militant group called Jund Ansar Allah, or the Warriors of God, one of a handful of Al Qaeda–inspired factions, declared the establishment of an Islamic emirate in Gaza—a flagrant rejection of Hamas's authority. Hamas security forces struck instantly and mercilessly at the Warriors, killing more than twenty members, including the group's leader, Abdel-Latif Moussa. In one stroke, the Hamas leadership sent a message to foes and friends alike that it will not tolerate global jihadist groups like Al Qaeda, which want to turn Gaza into a theater of transnational jihad.

Despite the crushing of Moussa's outfit, the extremist challenge persists. The Israeli siege, in place since 2006, along with the suffering and despair it has caused among Gaza's 1.4 million inhabitants, has driven hundreds of young Palestinians into the arms of small Salafist extremist factions that accuse Hamas of forfeiting the armed struggle and failing to implement Shariah law. Hamas leaders appear to be worried about the proliferation of these factions and have instructed clerics to warn worshipers against joining such bands.

Compared with these puritanical and nihilistic groups, Hamas is well within the mainstream of Islamist politics. Operationally and ideologically, there are huge differences between Hamas and jihadi extremists such as Al Qaeda—and there's a lot of bad blood. Hamas is a broad-based religious/nationalist resistance whose focus and violence is limited to Palestine/Israel, while Al Qaeda is a small, transnational terrorist network that has carried out attacks worldwide. Al Qaeda leaders Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri have vehemently criticized Hamas for its willingness to play politics and negotiate with Israel. Hamas leaders have responded that they know what is good for their people, and they have made it crystal clear they have no interest in transnational militancy. Their overriding goal is political and nationalist rather than ideological and global: to empower Palestinians and liberate the occupied Palestinian territories.

Unlike Al Qaeda and other fringe factions, Hamas is a viable social movement with an extensive social network and a large popular base that has been estimated at several hundred thousand. Given its tradition of sensitivity and responsiveness to Palestinian public opinion, a convincing argument could be made that the recent changes in the organization's conduct can be attributed to the high levels of poverty, unemployment and isolation of Palestinians in Gaza, who fear an even greater deterioration of conditions there.

A further example of Hamas's political and social priorities is its decision to agree in principle to an Egyptian-brokered deal that sketches out a path to peace with Fatah. After two years of bitter and violent division, the warring parties came very close to agreement in October. The deal collapsed at the last moment, but talks continue. There are two points to make about the Egyptian role: first, Hamas leaders say they feel somewhat betrayed by the Egyptians because after pressure from the Americans, Cairo unilaterally revised the final agreed-upon text without consulting the Hamas negotiating team. Second, many Palestinian and Arab observers think Egypt is in no hurry to conclude the Fatah-Hamas talks. They contend that faced with regional challenges and rivals (Iran,

Turkey, Syria and Saudi Arabia), the Mubarak regime views its brokering process in the Palestinian-Israeli theater as an important regional asset and a way to solidify its relationship with Washington.

Despite its frequently reactionary rhetoric, Hamas is a rational actor, a conclusion reached by former Mossad chief Ephraim Halevy, who also served as Ariel Sharon's national security adviser and who is certainly not a peacenik. The Hamas leadership has undergone a transformation "right under our very noses" by recognizing that "its ideological goal is not attainable and will not be in the foreseeable future," Halevy wrote in the Israeli daily *Yediot Ahronot* just before the 2008 attack on Gaza. He believes Hamas is ready and willing to accept the establishment of a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders. The US Army Strategic Studies Institute published a similar analysis just before the Israeli offensive, concluding that Hamas was considering a shift of its position and that "Israel's stance toward [Hamas]...has been a major obstacle to substantive peacemaking."

Indeed, it could be argued that Hamas has moved closer to a vision of peace consistent with international law and consensus (two separate states in historic Palestine, divided more or less along the '67 borders with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, and recognition of all states in the region) than the current Israeli governing coalition. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vehemently opposes the establishment of a genuinely viable Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, and is opposed to giving up any part of Jerusalem—and Netanyahu's governing coalition is more right wing and pro-settlement than he is.

Hamas's political evolution and deepening moderation stand in stark contrast to the rejectionism of the Netanyahu government and call into question which parties are "hardline" and which are "extremist." And at the regional level, a sea change has occurred in the official Arab position toward the Jewish state (the Arab League's 2002 Beirut Declaration, subsequently reiterated, offers full recognition and diplomatic relations if Israel accepts the international consensus regarding a two-state solution), while the attitudes of the Israeli ruling elite have hardened. This marks a transformation of regional politics and a reversal of roles.

Observers might ask, If Hamas is so eager to accept a two-state solution, why doesn't it simply accept the three conditions for engagement required by the so-called diplomatic Quartet (the United States, Russia, the European Union and the United Nations): recognition of Israel, renunciation of violence and acceptance of all previous agreements (primarily, the Oslo Accords)? In my interviews with Hamas officials, they stress that while they have made significant concessions to the Quartet, it has not lifted the punishing sanctions against Hamas, nor has it pressed Israel to end its siege, which has caused a dire humanitarian crisis. In addition, Hamas leaders believe that recognition of Israel is the last card in their hand and are reluctant to play it before talks even begin. Their diplomatic starting point will be to demand that Israel recognize the national rights of the Palestinians and withdraw from the occupied territories—but it will not be their final position.

There can be no viable, lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians if Hamas is not consulted and if Palestinians remain divided, with two warring authorities in the West Bank and Gaza. Hamas has the means and public support to undermine any agreement that does not address the legitimate rights and claims of the Palestinian people. Its Fatah/PA rival lacks a popular mandate and the legitimacy needed to implement a resolution of the conflict. PA President Mahmoud Abbas has been weakened by a series of blunders of his own making, and with his most authority compromised in the eyes of a sizable Palestinian constituency, Abbas is yesterday's man—no matter how long he remains in power as a lame duck, and whether or not he competes in the upcoming presidential elections.

If the United States and Europe engaged Hamas, encouraging it to continue moderating its views instead of ignoring it or worse yet, seeking its overthrow, the West could test the extent of Hamas's evolution. So far the strategy of isolation and military confrontation—pursued in tandem by Israel and the United States—has not appeared to weaken Hamas significantly. If anything, it has radicalized hundreds of young Palestinians, who have joined extremist factions and reinforced the culture of martyrdom and nihilism. All the while, the siege of Gaza has left a trail of untold pain and suffering.

If the Western powers don't engage Hamas, they will never know if it can evolve into an open, tolerant and peaceful social movement. The jury is still out on whether the Islamist movement can make that painful and ideologically costly transition. But the claim that engaging Hamas legitimizes it does not carry much weight; the organization derives its legitimacy from the Palestinian people, a mandate resoundingly confirmed in the free and fair elections of 2006.

To break the impasse and prevent gains by more extremist factions, the Obama administration and Congress should support a unified Palestinian government that could negotiate peace with Israel. Whatever they think of its ideology, US officials should acknowledge that Hamas is a legitimately elected representative of the Palestinian people, and that any treaty signed by a rump Fatah/PA will not withstand the test of time. And instead of twisting Cairo's arms in a rejectionist direction, Washington should encourage its Egyptian ally to broker a truce between Hamas and Fatah and thus repair the badly frayed Palestinian governing institutions. If the Obama administration continues to shun engagement with Hamas, Europe ought to take the lead in establishing an official connection. European governments have already dealt with Lebanon's Hezbollah, a group similar to Hamas in some respects, and they possess the skills, experience and political weight to help broker a viable peace settlement.

Like it or not, Hamas is the most powerful organization in the occupied territories. It is deeply entrenched in Palestinian society. Neither Israel nor the Western powers can wish it away. The good news, if my reading is correct, is that Hamas has changed, is willing to meet some of the Quartet's conditions and is making domestic political preparations for further change. But if Hamas is not engaged, and if the siege of Gaza and Palestinian suffering continue without hope of ending the political impasse, there is a real danger of a regional war.

No. 3

US, Russia reach pact to cut nuclear arms--Most extensive deal since 1991 Arsenals to be cut by a third

By Mark S. Smith and Robert Burns, Associated Press | March 27, 2010 (Boston Globe)

WASHINGTON — Climaxing months of hard negotiations, President Obama and President Dmitry Medvedev of Russia agreed yesterday to sharp cuts in the nuclear arsenals of both nations in the most comprehensive arms control treaty in two decades.

"We have turned words into action," Obama declared.

Obama said the pact, to be signed April 8 in Prague, was part of his effort to "reset" relations with Russia and a step toward "the peace and security of a world without nuclear weapons."

The agreement would require both sides to reduce their arsenals of long-range nuclear weapons by about a third, from 2,200 to 1,550 each. The pact, replacing and expanding the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty of 1991, which expired in December, was a significant gesture toward improved US-Russian relations that have been badly frayed.

The reductions would still leave both sides with immense arsenals — and the ability to easily annihilate each other.

"In many ways, nuclear weapons represent both the darkest days of the Cold War and the most troubling threats of our time," Obama said at the White House. "Today, we have taken another step forward in leaving behind the legacy of the 20th century while building a more secure future for our children."

In Russia, Medvedev's spokeswoman Natalya Timakova told the Interfax news agency: "This treaty reflects the balance of interests of both nations."

A Kremlin statement said, "The new treaty stipulates that strategic arms will be based exclusively on the territories of each of the nations."

Both sides would have seven years after the treaty's ratification to carry out the approximately 30 percent reduction in long-range nuclear warheads. The agreement also calls for cutting by about half the missiles and bombers that carry the weapons to their targets.

"We have turned words into action. We have made progress that is clear and concrete. And we have demonstrated the importance of American leadership — and American partnership — on behalf of our own security, and the world's," Obama said.

Though the agreement must still be ratified by the Senate and both houses of the Russian Parliament before it takes effect, Obama and Medvedev plan to sign it next month in Prague, the city where last April, Obama delivered his signature speech on arms control.

For his administration, a major value of the treaty is in setting the stage for potential further successes.

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, standing with Defense Secretary Robert Gates alongside Obama, noted that next month's international meeting of leaders on nuclear proliferation being hosted by the president in Washington, would focus on preventing the spread of nuclear weapons to terrorists and rogue states.

"We come with more credibility, Russia comes with more credibility, having negotiated this treaty," she said.

Ratification in the Senate will require 67 votes, two-thirds of the Senate, meaning Obama will need support from Republicans. Some GOP senators had previously expressed concerns about concessions being made by US negotiators.

Clinton, asked whether approval could be achieved given the recent fierce partisan battles and close votes over health care, said it could.

"National security has always produced large bipartisan majorities, and I see no reason why this should be any different," she said. "I believe that a vast majority of the Senate, at the end of the day, will see that this is in America's interest. And it goes way beyond politics."

In Russia, the treaty goes first to the State Duma, the lower house, and then to the Federation Council.

Speaking in the White House briefing room, Obama said the treaty by the globe's two largest nuclear powers would "send a clear signal that we intend to lead" the rest of the world in reducing the nuclear threat.

Clinton noted that the United States and Russia still possess more than 90 percent of the world's nuclear weapons. "We do not need such large arsenals to protect our nation," she said.

She emphasized the verification mechanism in the treaty, a key demand of the United States that was resisted by Russia and was one of the sticking points that delayed completion of the deal. It will "reduce the chance for misunderstandings and miscalculations," she told reporters. ■

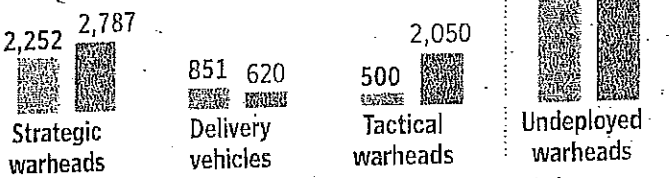
SLASHING THE STOCKPILE

The Boston Globe

President Obama and Russian President Dmitry Medvedev agreed to cut nuclear arsenals of long-range nuclear weapons by about a third, from 2,220 to 1,550 each.

Deployed nuclear weapons stockpiles, June 2009

	Ballistic missiles		
	Intercontinental	Submarine-launched	Bomber
US	550	1,152	550
Russia	1,355	576	856



NOTE: Strategic weapons are designed for mass destruction, while tactical weapons contain a high explosive warhead.

SOURCE: Center for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation

AP

How we helped create the Afghan crisis

3/20/09 Boston Globe

By Stephen Kinzer

WITH THE United States facing a terrifying set of challenges in Pakistan and Afghanistan, this is an opportune moment to look back at how the United States itself helped create the crisis. It is an all-too-familiar tale of the behemoth lashing out in ways that seem emotionally satisfying and even successful at first, but that in the end decisively weaken its own security.

The tale begins in 1979, when Americans were caught in a sense of defeat and malaise. They were still recovering from the shock of losing the Vietnam War, only to absorb another one with the stunning overthrow of the Shah of Iran and the seizure of American diplomats in Tehran.

On Christmas Eve, however, something happened that seemed to open a new horizon for the United States. Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan and installed a pro-Moscow regime. Here, suddenly, was a chance for the United States to fight a war against the Red Army.

In order to forge an Afghan force that would wage this war, the United States needed camps in Pakistan. Pakistan was ruled by General Zia al-Huq, who had proclaimed two transcendent goals: imposing a "true Islamic order" in his country and building a nuclear bomb. He had also just hanged the elected leader he deposed, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. This was the man the United States would have to embrace if it wanted Pakistan to support the anti-Soviet rebellion it hoped to foment in Afghanistan. It eagerly did so.

The United States also accepted Zia's demand that all aid sent to Afghan warlords be channeled through his intelligence agency, the ISI, and that the ISI be given the exclusive right to decide which warlords to support. It chose seven, all of them in varying degrees fundamentalist and anti-Western.

The ISI also came up with the idea of recruiting Islamic militants from other countries to come to Pakistan and join the anti-Soviet force. Its director, Hamid Gul, later said his agency recruited 50,000 of these militants from 28 countries. One was Osama bin Laden. Most of the others — brought to the region as part of a US-sponsored project, then armed and trained with US funds — shared bin Laden's radical anti-Americanism and fundamentalist religious beliefs.

During the 1980s, the CIA waged its most expensive and largest-scale campaign ever, pouring a staggering $6 billion into its anti-Soviet guerrilla force. Saudi Arabia, at Washington's request, contributed another $4 billion. Finally, in 1989, the insurgency succeeded and the Red Army withdrew from Afghanistan in defeat. One million Afghans died in the decade-long war. Five million fled to refugee camps in neighboring countries. Many found food and shelter at religious schools sponsored by Saudi Arabia, where they were taught the radical Wahhabi brand of Islam. Those schools were the cradle of the Taliban.

After the last Soviet unit withdrew from Afghanistan, the overseer of the CIA project there, Milt Bearden, sent a two-word message to his superiors at Langley: "WE WON." For a while, that seemed true. In 1998, Zbigniew Brzezinski, who had helped conceive the project, dismissed those who worried about its long-term effects.

"That secret operation was an excellent idea," he said. "What is most important to the history of the world? The Taliban or the collapse of the Soviet empire? Some stirred-up Muslims or the liberation of Central Europe and the end of the Cold War?"

Those "stirred-up Muslims" are now the enemy that the US faces in Pakistan and Afghanistan. They threaten America's national security far more profoundly than the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan ever did.

Jimmy Carter approved the idea of sponsoring anti-Soviet jihad in Afghanistan. Ronald Reagan poured billions of dollars into it. George H. W. Bush turned his back on Afghanistan, allowing it to degenerate into the chaos from which the Taliban emerged. Bill Clinton refused to confront the looming threat with anything more than an ineffective cruise missile raid on one of bin Laden's camps. George W. Bush invaded Afghanistan, succeeded in toppling the Taliban regime, and then, rather than staying engaged, immediately turned his attention to Iraq. Their policies showed the short-sightedness that has for more than a century been a hallmark of American foreign policy.

These American policies, more than any other factor, created the daunting crisis President Barack Obama now faces.

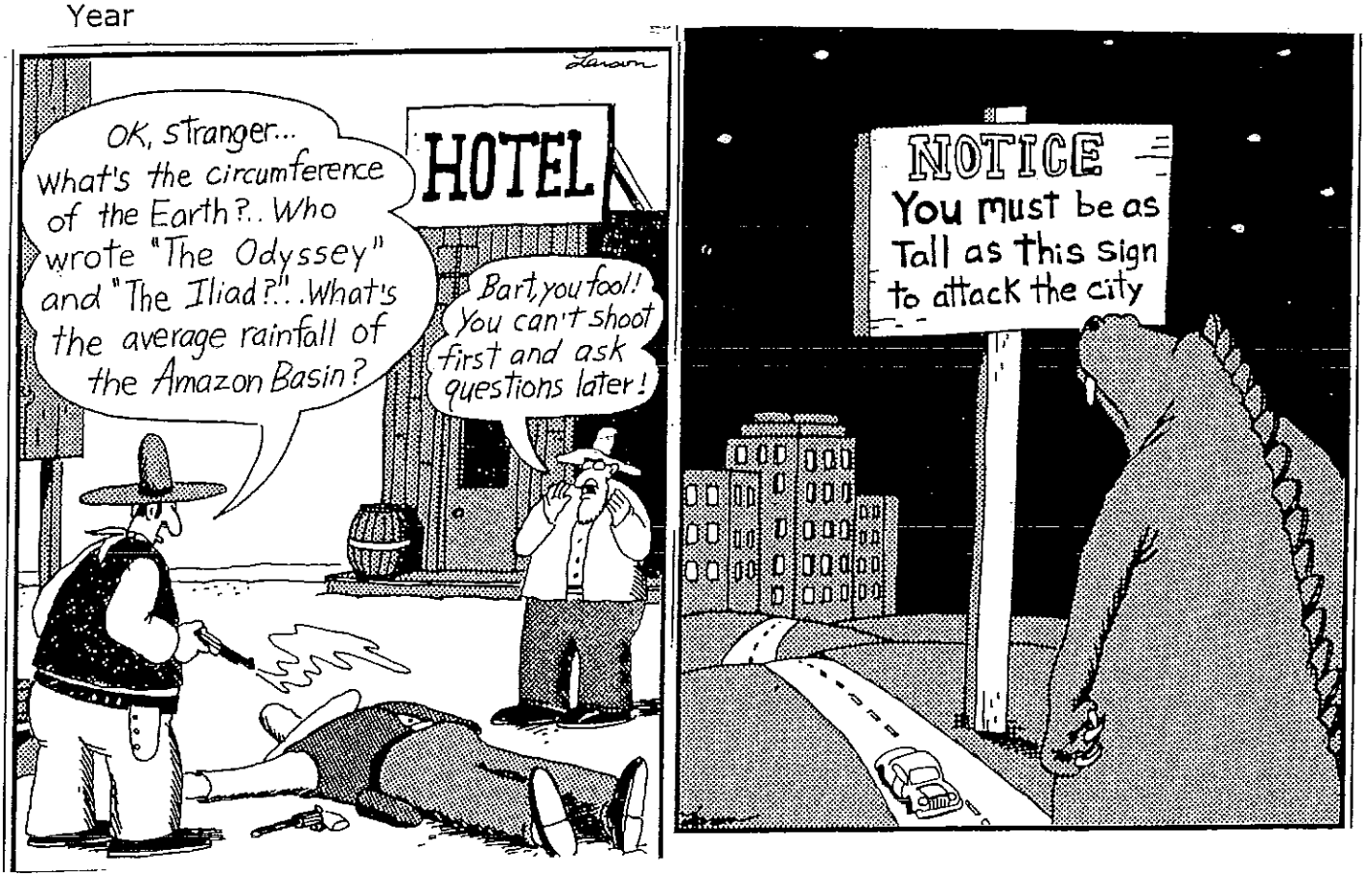
Stephen Kinzer is a longtime foreign correspondent and author of "Overthrow: America's Century of Regime Change From Hawaii to Iraq."

No.5

COSTS OF THE WARS IN AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ (by National Priorities Project, www.nationalpriorities.org)

Taxpayers in the United States will pay $1.05 trillion for total Iraq and Afghanistan war spending since 2001. For the same amount of money, the following could have been provided:

- 161,677,766 People Receiving Low-Income Healthcare for One Year **OR**
- 15,851,218 Police or Sheriff's Patrol Officers for One Year **OR**
- 18,317,348 Firefighters for One Year **OR**
- 132,716,897 Scholarships for University Students for One Year **OR**
- 188,536,667 Students receiving Pell Grants of $5550 **OR**
- 395,755,864 Children Receiving Low-Income Healthcare for One Year **OR**
- 137,673,774 Head Start Slots for Children for One Year **OR**
- 236,951,654 Households with Renewable Electricity - Solar Photovoltaic for One Year **OR**
- 16,024,173 Elementary School Teachers for One Year **OR**
- 631,871,077 Households with Renewable Electricity-Wind Power for One Year



NO.6

NG HAN GUAN/AP PHOTO

Migrant construction workers in Beijing protest withheld salary, January 2007.

Peasants and workers are demanding their rights—and the government is responding.

by CHRISTIAN PARENTI

The countryside around Da Ba village in southwestern China's Chongqing province is steep and verdant but swathed in the bitter smog of many small, coal-fired factories and power plants. These mountains are rich with veins of lignite, and because the area is only a few hours from Chongqing—the eponymous provincial capital and megacity you've likely never heard of (12 million and counting)—it is dotted with small power plants, mines, quarries and cement factories that feed the metropolis.

Da Ba is in many ways a typical Chinese village. Its center has a few blocks of tightly packed two- and three-story projects of socialist-style housing nestled along a dirty creek and a cramped valley crossroads. On the edge of town, the walls of farmhouse compounds are painted with bold red characters exhorting obedience to the one-child policy.

And as in many other places in China, the farmers of Da Ba are fighting to save their land from those who want to seize it in the name of progress and profit.

Here in Da Ba, the trouble began in October 2005, when the village party secretary, Lu Cheng Cun, told more than 600 farmers they would have to sell their land to the privately owned Tian Hong Mine Ltd. so it could be excavated for coal.

The farmers refused to sell. "We could not survive on the price they offered. We could not buy other land with it," says a woman named Chun. The protest leaders have asked that I use only their first names, and our meeting is held secretly after elaborate efforts to confuse and avoid the police.

"They said this is an important energy project and that we were getting in the way," explains Chun. The farmers still refused. Then several leaders were jailed and beaten. The first was Yong Sam Lan, a 50-year-old woman, jailed and beaten twice. Police raided family homes, locking up and battering those they thought were ringleaders.

"They beat my mother so badly she was in hospital for two months with a brain injury," says one of the protesting villagers, a woman in her mid-40s named Lin. In all, they say, eight of the farmers have been hospitalized from beatings by local goons, and many others have been roughed up.

Perhaps just as bad, the villagers were also prevented from working their land and thus stripped of their livelihoods. Eventually about 200 people signed away their property, but most held out and filed a lawsuit against the local authorities. For three years, through arbitration and two trials, they have fought, all the while living under intimidation from local thugs and the police.

This situation is not unique. Across China there is rising rural and urban protest—or, if you will, burgeoning class struggle. As the economy moves from Maoist socialism to a strange type of quasi-Maoist capitalism, farmers are fighting off land grabs, which, as in the case of Da Ba, are often linked to industry's voracious appetite for space and resources. Typically, the land grabs involve local government officials working

with large, mostly state-owned but partly private businesses.

The land struggles are just one part of a rural crisis that is also, by extension, an urban crisis. An estimated 200 million workers have left the countryside for cities in the past thirty years. Once in the cities, these displaced farmers cum urban workers often find themselves forced to battle against employers and local governments for basic rights and even unpaid wages.

According to the Ministry of Public Security, the wave of protests—rural and urban—peaked in 2005 with roughly 87,000 "public order disturbances," a 7 percent rise over the previous year. After that, the government stopped reporting such numbers. Usually the protests are small, spontaneous and peaceful—like those staged by grieving parents after the Sichuan earthquake.

But at times the conflicts involve thousands of people clashing with armed police, leaving casualties on both sides. Perhaps most interesting, many of the urban labor strikes are not spontaneous but are planned by an incipient underground trade union movement.

When the Western press has covered these protests, it has generally cast the story as one of China being on the edge of chaos. But China's new class struggle may actually lead to broader prosperity and thus deeper stability. China still has a command economy, a form of Asian capitalism that retains a very large public sector and uses extensive state planning. If the central government responds to the protests fairly—using its might to rein in the corrupt local authorities, who are often in cahoots with business interests to repress workers' aspirations—the current wave of protest could usher in needed reforms, a more equitable distribution of wealth and greener forms of growth.

So far the signals are not all bad. Two years ago the protest-spooked central government abolished the agricultural land tax and gave farmers greater legal protections. And it has just passed a new and, at least on paper, progressive labor law. Among other things, the law requires employers to give workers formal contracts that last for a set period; it also requires severance pay and mandates that workers can be fired only with cause. After two short-term contracts, employers must offer open-ended, tenure-style employment. Companies that don't comply face stiff penalties. (Business-friendly critics say the law introduces "European-style inflexibility.") The central government has also announced its desire to have the official state union federation—the All-China Federation of Trade Unions—organize 80 percent of private companies by the end of this year.

These directives face resistance from local governments, which operate with a lot of legal and illegal autonomy. But even as the central government's reach is limited, it's significant that it has demonstrated a willingness to move in response to pressure from below. In the face of unrest, Wen Jiabao—China's down-to-earth prime minister and second-most-powerful politician, who famously spoke at Tiananmen Square in 1989 and survived with his health and career intact—has called for progressive reforms and issued stark, if cryptic, warnings like, "The speed of the fleet is not determined by the fastest vessel; rather, it is determined by the slowest one."

If there is a traditional epicenter to rural protest and local corruption, it is Anhui province, about 300 miles inland from Shanghai on the Yangtze River. In 1978 the now-storied farmers of Anhui were the first to demand the right to cultivate individual plots rather than farm communally. By 1983 this "household responsibility system" became the national norm. Two years ago several rebellious Anhui villages stopped paying land taxes. It was in response to that protest that the central government abolished the levy.

The local Anhui leadership epitomizes the problem of provincial and district-level corruption. In the northern Anhui city of Fuyang, a Chinese NGO has said it will show me around. But at the last minute it backs out because the staff is under "too much pressure." It's not Big Brother in Beijing they fear but Little Brother Gangster—the local government.

Recently several judges were jailed for bribery and the former vice governor was executed. One local district blew a third of its public funds to build a replica of the US Capitol building, which they call the White House. This spring an anticorruption whistleblower named Li Guofu was arrested and then found dead in his Fuyang jail cell.

If there is a traditional epicenter to rural protest and local corruption, it is Anhui province, where rebellious villages stopped paying land taxes.

Officials in Fuyang seem compelled to steal and lie even when they confess and apologize for their crimes. In 2007 Zhang Shaocang, a party chief and executive of a state-owned power company, went on trial for embezzlement. In court he read a four-page "letter of apology." Alas, the letter was plagiarized. He had lifted it from a similar trial in another province.

Meanwhile, in the countryside the farmers suffer. The land around Fuyang is flat and the straight dirt roads are lined with poplars, whose round leaves make a soothing rustle in the breeze. Agriculture here is supplemented with garbage-sorting. The air smells of burning plastic. "They are recycling electronics," explains a local. "You can't eat the fish here anymore—the streams are all polluted."

My local driver's wife has leukemia. He asks, "Is medicine for that very expensive in America?" A woman from the city jokes that "Fuyang is famous. We're known for pollution, corruption, disease, babies with enlarged heads and for being very flat and getting flooded by the Yangtze."

On the edge of the city farmers have faced land seizures, as in Chongqing, but no one will talk about the protests. They are simply too frightened. They *will* talk about the poverty that is driving so many farmers to the cities in search of work. "Young people are abandoning the villages for the cities because farming pays so little," explains a constable. Most farmers here earn only $2,000–$3,000 a year—a tractor costs about $50,000. "We have villages of babies and grandparents only," says the constable. Remittances from the city appear on the landscape

Christian Parenti is a Nation *contributing editor. Research support was provided by the Puffin Foundation Investigative Fund at The Nation Institute.*

as a smattering of new construction and small stores.

Almost all those who stay behind supplement farming with work in local crafts factories, the Township and Village Enterprises. In this county, there are thirty-one of these workshops, all of them public-private joint ventures. They make wicker furniture and baskets from the fast-growing poplars. The products, which look sort of Amish, are mostly exported to the United States and Germany.

In Fuyang there are eight Special Economic Zones (SEZs), smaller imitations of the free-trade experiments on the coast, where businesses can set up shop and not pay taxes for five years. My guide, who sells Amway and works for the local government, has asked me not to tell anyone I am a journalist; she, like everyone here, lives in constant, gnawing fear of those in power.

We meet with the deputy director of the zone, Lou Hui Hong; he seems to think I am some sort of industrial fixer and soon offers me a kickback. "If you get $20 million of investment in here, I can make sure you receive 1.3 percent of it."

Most rural migrants, like the farmers leaving Fuyang and the rebellious and now landless farmers in Da Ba, make their way to places like Shenzhen, a sprawling city of 12 million just across the border from Hong Kong. In 1979 it was just a cluster of fishing villages, but then Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping drew a circle around it on a map and created the country's first and now biggest SEZ. Here long hours of migrant toil fuel China's boom.

China's SEZs are famous for drawing businesses from Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan that subcontract for US companies like Wal-Mart and Apple. But it is abundant, cheap and disciplined labor that really drives the boom. In fact, most of the capital that has built up China's new economy is internally generated. According to some estimates, up to 90 percent of the capital accumulated during the reform era has been Chinese—either state money or reinvested profits from fast-growing Chinese businesses.

Lenovo is the textbook case of how Chinese business is growing. In the 1980s it was a simple supplier of computer parts; twenty years later, after continual reinvestment and state protection, it was wealthy enough to buy IBM's PC division.

But this fast growth based on cheap labor rests on the foundation of what can only be called China's culture of fear. At the center of that culture are several factors; crucial among them is the country's "household registration system," *hukou*. These laws essentially make internal migration illegal and connect all social services to one's official address of origin. An estimated 60 to 70 percent of industrial, service, mining and construction workers are ex-farmers, migrants from the countryside with no *hukou*—that is, with no political rights. The *hukou* system has slowly eased, but it still weighs on the minds of migrants, instilling caution and even shame. "I have no *hukou*, so I have to pay bribes for everything," says a cabdriver in Shenzhen. "The police take money from us every month."

In Chongqing a freelance porter, called a *pang-pang*, shows me the back-alley, two-room hovel where he lives with his wife, an infant and four other migrants. "I would love to live in a high-rise, but with no *hukou* they demand more money and pay less at jobs. And I will have to pay to get the child *hukou* so he can go

to school." The price for that will be roughly $2,400. All the *pang-pang* here are migrants, and they all pay petty bribes to the local police and security guards, who monitor the streets and malls where they work. Some *pang-pang* tried to organize against the bribes and get a lawyer, but it was too expensive and they were intimidated by threats that they would be deported back to the countryside.

The current culture of fear also seems to be a legacy of Mao's cultlike rule and its culminating act, the Cultural Revolution. "People don't trust each other anymore," says a young lawyer. "It's the Cultural Revolution. Children denounced parents. No one trusts each other anymore." At the revolution's peak in the late 1960s, Chinese society began to collapse into an open-ended campaign of violent hysteria, with Salem-style denunciations and self-criticism mass meetings. Warring factions of the fanatical Red Guard (grassroots student formations) fought pitched gun battles against one another and at times against the army. Intellectuals were banished to the countryside; schoolchildren were drilled to revere Mao as a god.

The official death toll was about 35,000. At least 750,000—some estimates range much higher—were charged with various offenses, jailed and beaten. In the end, the Cultural Revolution instilled a corrosive paranoia—anyone could be a snitch; obedience to authority was one's righteous duty. It's an attitude that Chinese capitalism has found very useful, because it makes peasant and worker mobilization difficult.

There is also a growing system of photo surveillance and biometric IDs—even though such monitoring is notoriously unreliable at catching lawbreakers. The effect, especially when laid over the *hukou* system and Mao's legacy, is to instill more quiet self-policing.

Yet despite all this, Chinese workers are mobilizing and demanding their rights. By one estimate a thousand people a day are engaged in industrial action in and around Shenzhen. At least that's what several labor rights organizations claim. These NGOs, based in Hong Kong, say the Chinese government secretly leaked the stats.

Over Sichuan hot pot—assorted tripe, fish and tofu boiled in clove-spiced oil—I meet two grassroots leaders of one such wildcat labor struggle. Liang Sho Shen and Lu Wen Kang are migrant workers in the city of Guangxi, just north of the Vietnamese border. They worked for the Aluminum Corporation of China, a large state-owned firm. Liang is short with awkward features but has a strange charisma. Scars cover his left arm and neck, the legacy of molten aluminum that splashed him in an accident.

He explains that migrant workers with no *hukou* were paid less than the legal minimum wage. "So, Lu and I started reading the labor law. We organized large meetings at the factory." Their only demand was equal pay for workers with and without *hukou*. "It is illegal not to pay the same rate. We were only following the law." He describes mass meetings that sound more like factory-floor rallies and work stoppages.

The workers never gave their association a name; that would have been too much like creating an organization, which is ille-

gal. And Liang insists that the workers were not "protesting" but just trying to communicate with their bosses. Protesting, of course, would also have been illegal. Apparently the bosses got the message—and decided to fire the organizers.

As the beer flows, Liang dilates on workers' rights and unfolds the confused jumble of half-discarded ideas, taboos and impressions that act as tools for, and restraints upon, building a real trade union movement. "Ideology does not matter anymore. China is socialist, but we are capitalist now. We are not interested in politics. We just want rights for migrant workers. Like Mao during the revolution."

Now that they have been fired, Liang, Lu and the other leaders are going to sue for wrongful termination. In a way, they're lucky they were only fired. On January 16 gangsters in Nanjing chopped off the hand of a migrant worker who demanded back wages.

To help labor activists like Liang and Lu organize, there are about a dozen "worker centers" across Shenzhen. These are small NGOs that offer legal advice, worker education and a chance for laborers to network. All the centers have connections with foreign-funded NGOs in Hong Kong. Sometimes staff from the centers will visit factories and dormitories where independent organizing efforts are under way. These struggles typically revolve around immediate issues like unpaid wages. Rarely is the goal creation of a lasting, independent union.

A dozen 'worker centers' across Shenzhen offer legal advice, worker education and a chance for laborers to network.

The most famous of these labor NGOs is the Dagongzhe Migrant Worker Center. Its leader is Huang Qingnan. In November 2007 Huang and others at the center were attacked by knife-wielding thugs. It was the second time the center had been trashed and the third time Huang had been assaulted. This time it was bad—the center was smashed up, several staff were injured and Huang was practically hacked to death, almost losing a leg.

Reached by phone, Huang, just emerging from the last of his reconstructive surgeries, explained the situation as it now stands. "We think the local district government attacked us," he says. "They sent plainclothes members of the municipal enforcement department. They thought we would scare off investment.

"In two or three months I probably won't be giving any interviews," says Huang. "We are starting to work with the official union, and they do not like interviews."

Why would this underground labor hero work with the government? By any measure, the state-controlled All-China Federation of Trade Unions is not an independent workers' institution. At first glance it hardly seems able to leverage concessions from business. But in China it is the only legal way for workers to organize. Across the country, at least nineteen workers are in prison for attempting to organize independently, and a dozen others have just been released. Over the past two years the labor rights movement—the worker centers in Shenzhen and their NGO allies in Hong Kong—has come around to the idea of working with the ACFTU.

And again, there are signs that elements of the central government are concerned about the rights of labor: from 2003 to 2007, the Ministry of Labor and Social Security helped migrant workers receive more than $6 billion in unpaid back wages. Most labor advocates think much more was actually owed, but it is an example of the central government siding with workers against local authorities and employers.

Huang explains that the local branch of the ACFTU is "trying to open channels" to the district-level government that attacked him. He hopes this mediation will extend legitimacy and safety to the Dagongzhe Migrant Worker Center, which has moved its offices because of the November assault and more threats.

Is this collaboration with the ACFTU capitulation or pragmatism? To understand better, I track down Han Dongfang. A legend in the Chinese labor scene with movie-star looks, Han was the main labor leader at Tiananmen Square in 1989. As a railway worker he had started an independent trade union, and it was he, more than anyone, who brought workers into the student protest.

After the June 4 crackdown, when the army killed at least a few hundred people, Han was arrested and thrown in prison. Housed with tuberculosis patients, he contracted the disease and was eventually released to die at home. But the US labor movement took an interest in his case, and the Service Employees International Union managed to bring Han to New York, where he was treated and had one lung removed.

In 1993, his health restored, Han tried to return to China but was denied re-entry. Since then he has worked from Hong Kong running a Western-funded NGO called the China Labour Bulletin. Han acts as an ally to China's underground trade union organizers, often filing lawsuits on their behalf in mainland courts.

To my surprise, Han agrees with Huang Qingnan. "There is no possibility other than working within the ACFTU," says Han. "What we are urging the workers to do is to maintain their organization, to stay in the factories, but to bring in the state union."

Is the goal to take over the ACFTU? Han, who speaks perfect English, says, "No, no. I think 'renovate' is a better word." There seems to be a growing consensus among labor activists both in China and Hong Kong: pragmatic cooperation with the ACFTU is the path forward. "We have to be realistic about the conditions, the repression, but also about the workers, how they think and view the world," says Han. "Most of them just want a little bit better life; they are busy with their families, working long hours."

This strategy starts to make sense after a young law student urges me to consider the long view: "China has serious environmental problems. There is inequality and poverty. But on the other hand, China hasn't been this prosperous and stable and united in more than 100 years. People are poor, but there is no famine, there is no war. Wages and living standards are rising. In many ways these are very good times, and people know it." ■

NO.7

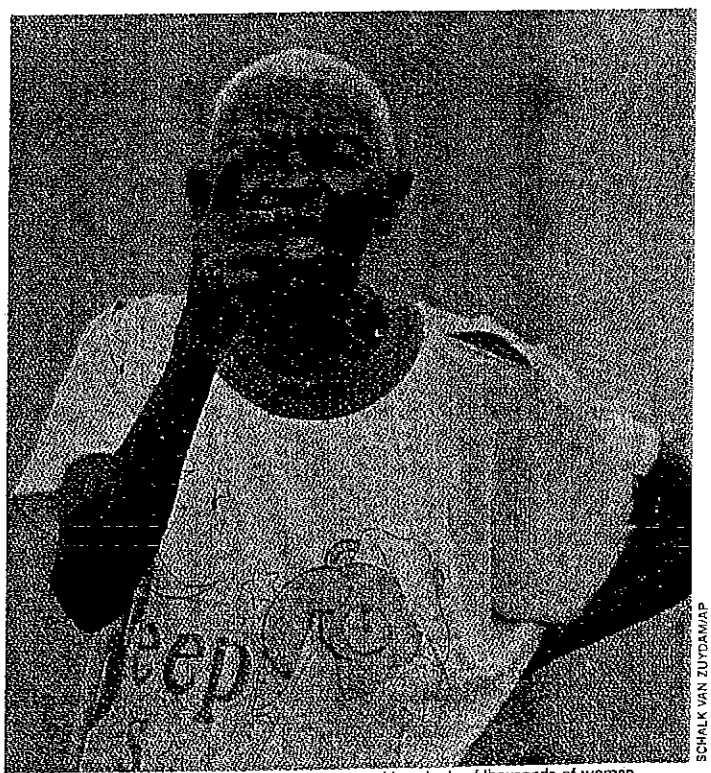
A Crime Against Society

Rape destroyed the social fabric of Congo. Now women are beginning to repair it.

by ANN JONES

Late one afternoon seven years ago, in the village of Kamanyola in eastern Congo, Fatuma Kayengela's husband sent their daughter and her cousin to the market to buy oil for the lamps. When the two 15-year-old girls turned to go back home, they found the way blocked by soldiers, who took them down the road. As darkness fell, Fatuma and her husband went in search of the girls and learned of screams and crying coming from the school. There they found the girls as the rapists had left them. They went to the police station for help, but the police said there was nothing they could do about soldiers. When Fatuma's husband grew angry, they threatened to arrest him. Thankful the girls were still alive, Fatuma took them home.

That was a brave act. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, a rape survivor is an outcast, blamed and shamed by local tradition and religion for the only crime pinned squarely on the victim. She is "dirtied," but her greater crime is that in being violated she shrinks the stature of the husband or father to whom she belongs. To regain respect he must throw her out. Fatuma's husband behaved differently: he stood by the girls. Yet as Fatuma watched her daughter's continuing suffering, she felt powerless. "At that time," she says, "I didn't even know enough to take my daughter to the hospital." She determined to learn how to help her child and other survivors of sexual assault; but because rape is a crime women and girls have learned to suffer in shamed silence, she had no idea how many there were.



SCHALK VAN ZUYDAM/AP

A woman in eastern Congo, where soldiers have raped hundreds of thousands of women

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, there are hundreds of thousands.

The DRC began its ascent to the title of Rape Capital of the World in 1994, when masses of defeated Hutu *génocidaires* (Interahamwe) entered the country from Rwanda. They

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were followed in 1996 by invading Tutsis, the RPF forces of Rwandan President Paul Kagame, who was allied with Congolese rebel Laurent Kabila against Congolese President Mobutu Sese Seko, the desiccated American creation of the cold war who had presided for decades over exploitation of Congo's rich resources and the disintegration of its flimsy colonial institutions. With an eye on those resources, neighboring countries intervened on both sides. By the time peace accords were signed in 2002, more than twenty armies and militias were battling for the DRC's gold, diamonds and coltan, and young Joseph Kabila had succeeded his assassinated father as president. His presidency was affirmed by an election held in 2006 at a cost of nearly $500 million.

Kabila heads a government fabricated (without women's participation in decision-making) to appease and include all factions (except women) among its four vice presidents and thirty-six cabinet ministers. It's one of those unwieldy governments, by now familiar in Africa, in which officials find the means to enrich themselves but nothing to support institutions or pay salaries to civil servants, teachers, doctors, soldiers or police. People in eastern Congo complain that $500 million might have been better spent, because for them, far from the government in Kinshasa, the war goes on to this day. And so does rape.

Look at the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo from the outside and it's hard to see it as anything but a war against women.

As direct targets of men at war, women and girls suffer terribly. The Interahamwe have been singled out as the worst perpetrators of atrocities, but every armed group is guilty of violating women. Men singly or in gangs rape women and girls of all ages. (Recorded victims range in age from 2 months to 83 years.) Men also cut off women's nipples or breasts, mutilate or cut off external genitalia, and eviscerate living pregnant women to remove and kill fetuses. After rape, men commonly insert foreign objects into the vagina: sticks, sand, rocks, knives, burning wood or charcoal, or molten plastic made by melting shopping bags. Killing the rape victim by firing a handgun or rifle inserted in the vagina is a common practice; some victims have survived. Rapists have blinded many women, apparently to prevent identification, and left countless others to die in the forest after chopping off their arms and/or legs. Soldiers also abduct women, and especially girls as young as 10 or 11, as captive "wives." Some escaped women and girls report being chained to trees for months, released only to be gang-raped, day after day. Many report witnessing the death of other captive women and girls, murdered as disciplinary examples or abandoned in the forest when they were no longer "serviceable."

Tens of thousands of rape victims have survived but suffer enduring symptoms of psychological trauma—depression, anxiety, sleeplessness, despair—and debilitating physical problems: crippled or missing limbs, blindness, damaged or destroyed internal organs and/or genitalia and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV. Thousands have been left with fistula, a complaint often misrepresented by male war correspondents unfamiliar with female anatomy. Broadly, fistula refers to any perforation in the tissues separating the vaginal canal from the urinary tract and/or the rectum. There are several different types of fistula, depending on where the holes occur, but the typical result is uncontrollable leakage through the vagina of urine or feces or both. In less violent times, fistula most commonly results from prolonged labor in childbirth when the fetus presses upon maternal tissues, cuts off blood supply and creates "dead" spots that give way. The younger, and therefore smaller, the mother, the greater the likelihood of prolonged labor and fistula. When women have access to adequate maternal care, fistula is easily prevented; but in the DRC it occurs in remote areas even in the best of times.

Denis Mukwege, the Congolese obstetrician/gynecologist heralded in the international press as a "savior" of rape victims, trained in fistula surgery before the war to treat such complications of childbirth; but in the past decade, as head of Panzi Hospital in Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu province, he has surgically repaired thousands of fistulas, most of them caused by traumatic injury—by brutal multiple rapes or by "foreign objects." He takes heart that in the past year or so, with a decline in militia activity in South Kivu, cases of traumatic fistula have declined as well. Yet among the surgeries he now performs for obstetric fistula, one in three patients is a teenage girl, a former captive "wife" who gave birth years ago and has been living in the forest, outcast, reeking of urine and shit, unaware that she might find help. So far, Panzi's patients have come from the vicinity of Bukavu; with the addition of a mobile unit to venture farther afield, Mukwege says, "we will find many more."

It's true that long before the war Congolese men treated women as lesser creatures, forbidden to plant money-making crops such as coffee and cotton—forbidden even to eat nourishing foods like eggs and chicken. It's true that men routinely used force if necessary to compel women's labor and sexual service. It's true that Congolese men hold notions that promote rape: that having sex makes men stronger, for example, or that having sex with a virgin immunizes against AIDS. And it's true that child rape is traditionally considered an offense only against the father whose property is "spoiled," an offense resolved by "compromise"—that is, a man-to-man payoff from the rapist to the victim's father. But all these cultural factors are insufficient to explain the frequency and unspeakable brutality of rape in the DRC in the past decade. Look at the war in the DRC from the outside and it's hard to see it as anything but a war against women. Just a few months ago, long after the war officially ended, Maj. Gen. Patrick Cammaert, former deputy UN force commander in the DRC, said, "It is more dangerous to be a woman than to be a soldier right now in eastern DRC."

It's so dangerous that a special session of the UN Security Council in June passed Resolution 1820 to demand "the

immediate and complete cessation by all parties to armed conflict of all acts of sexual violence against civilians." The new resolution built on another landmark, Security Council Resolution 1325, which called for women's full participation at decision-making levels in conflict resolution and peace building (since passing in 2000 with much fanfare, Resolution 1325 has been broadly ignored). Resolution 1820 makes clear that widespread rape of women in war prevents the very participation in public life that Resolution 1325 identified years ago as essential to devising durable peace.

But rape has another dimension as well. As Resolution 1820 notes, during armed conflict "women and girls are particularly targeted by the use of sexual violence, including as a tactic of war to humiliate, dominate, instill fear in, disperse and/or forcibly relocate civilian members of a community or ethnic group."

What does that mean? It's often said that raping women is intended to "humiliate" men. (One Congolese man revealed the typical male evaluation of a woman's worth when he compared raping a man's wife to using his table without his permission.) But shaming or provoking enemy men is merely the beginning of a process meant to destroy the life of a whole community and/or "cleanse" an area. In eastern Congo, the process works like this: husbands cast out raped wives to fend for themselves, with or without their children. Or raped wives with no visible injuries conceal the fact of rape from their husbands and try to carry on. In either case, women are afraid to venture out to gather firewood, or fetch water, or cultivate their fields. For a time women band together to work the fields, until soldiers abduct a group en masse. Terrified, women begin to neglect their crops, or soldiers steal the produce; and families suffer malnourishment and hunger. With no surplus produce to sell at market, women have no money. They can't pay school fees for their children. Girls are afraid to go to school; boys drop out too. Some men leave the village, shamed by a wife's rape. Some men leave to join a militia, voluntarily or by force. Some men leave to look for work and money in cities far away. Many men never come back. Some outcast women leave too, for cities or truck stops where they take up "survival sex," selling the only asset they have left: their already dirtied bodies.

Shaming or provoking enemy men by raping women is merely the beginning of a process meant to destroy the life of a whole community.

The localized famine spreads. People weaken and grow ill but there is no money to pay for a visit to the hospital, and the trip may be too dangerous. (There are recorded cases of women raped on the way home from hospitals where they were treated for rape.) People begin to die of commonplace conditions like diarrhea, pneumonia and malaria, which they would have survived in better days. A study released early this year by the International Rescue Committee concluded that between August 1998 and April 2007, 5.4 million "excess deaths" occurred in the DRC, most of them from easily preventable and treatable diseases. Significantly, 2.1 million of those deaths occurred after the war formally ended in 2002.

Cultural norms die too when women are raped in the presence of their families; when boys and men are forced to rape their own sisters, mothers or daughters, or are murdered on the spot for refusing; when boy soldiers are compelled to rape babies or grandmothers. So divisive is rape, and the shame and terror that attend it, that even in the best case the family may fall apart. The rare husband who stands by his raped wife finds that his brother's family no longer visits him, nor does his uncle's. The durability of extended family ties, the allegiance of kinfolk, the pleasant give and take of hospitality at the heart of Congolese life—all fade and fracture. Fragments of families pack up and move to places they believe to be safer, leaving empty houses in the village, soon looted by soldiers. In this way the community falls apart. Those who leave are desperate, penniless, often ill with sexually transmitted infections. Those who stay are old, ill, infirm. Those who return find their property ransacked, their tools stolen, their crops and livestock plundered, and that their friends and neighbors have vanished. That's the result of rape as a tactic of war—millions dead and a way of life gone. And along the roads, begging and threatening, are gangs of boys: orphans of war and unwanted offspring of rape who aspire to be soldiers.

People like Fatuma and her family try to carry on, only to find that even when "peace" comes, sexual violence against women and girls continues. The habits of warfare carry over seamlessly into the "peace." And because rape was not acknowledged as a tactic of warfare before the passage of Resolution 1820, soldiers could (and still do) continue to rape civilians while complying with "peace accords" merely by not attacking each other. "Peace building" goes on, "power sharing" governments are formed and amnesty for ex-combatants is declared, even as the leaders in these negotiations continue to wage their shadowy war on women, the wedge of war against communities and cultures. The "durable peace" the UN seeks sinks in a slough of hypocrisy because men of affairs find misogyny so congenial and essential to the arrangements they make for the world.

The number of men held accountable for crimes against women in the DRC is almost nil. One reckoning found that of 14,200 reported rapes between 2005 and 2007 in South Kivu province, where Fatuma's village lies, only 2 percent of rapists were "held accountable," whatever that means. A few men arrested, a few prosecuted perhaps, but those sentenced can be counted on one hand, and few actually stay in jail. A bribe does the trick. The failure to punish anyone for rape or torture gives everyone permission. In *The Greatest Silence*, Lisa Jackson's important film incontrovertibly documenting rape in the DRC, a soldier who laughingly admits to having raped and instigated gang rape many times (he calls it "making love") says that rape "just happens" in wartime, and that when the war is over he won't rape anymore. But why should he stop? The absence of punishment creates a culture of impunity in which those

responsible for punishing crime become complicit with criminals. Many men speak of the culture of impunity not as a barbaric breakdown of justice but as today's way of life, a free pass that encourages civilians to take up practices popularized by soldiers. And as combatants are demobilized and reintegrated into civilian life, raped women meet their rapists in the street. For them the terror continues. One in ten of the patients Mukwege treats for traumatic fistula returns to Panzi Hospital, having been raped again. Fatuma's raped daughter, who married and had a child, was raped again two years ago, this time by six soldiers who beat her husband and forced him to watch.

As for Fatuma, after her daughter was raped the first time, she went to a women's meeting called by a French humanitarian aid organization. There she learned that women could help rape survivors and fight back against the terror. She joined other local women to call a meeting in Kamanyola, and more than 1,000 women showed up. Muslim women had to drop out, grounded by their husbands, and Protestants went back to their church groups, leaving about 200 Catholic women to form the Commune des Femmes de Kamanyola (CFK), with Fatuma in the lead. GTZ, the international development arm of the German government, taught them to take rape survivors to the hospital within seventy-two hours for treatment that includes drugs to prevent STDs, HIV and pregnancy. For two years (2001–03), GTZ provided transport and medications, and CFK provided rape survivors.

Then, after the peace accords were signed, came another wave of warfare—and another wave of rape. Fatuma and the women of CFK broke the cultural silence and began to talk to survivors and their families about rape. Fatuma also began to travel to outlying communities to talk to women about how they could help survivors and hold their communities together. When the International Rescue Committee started to work in the area, in 2002, CFK applied for help. IRC specialists in gender-based violence taught them to give supportive counseling to rape survivors and told them about women's rights.

To help Fatuma's group fund itself, IRC bought them a field and trained these experienced cultivators in some advanced farming techniques. In their first season the women produced three tons of maize. IRC bought them two more fields and taught them how to organize their activities and keep useful records. The women set up an office on the main road next door to a base of the FARDC, the national army, and began to talk to the commander about what his own soldiers were doing. They began to visit the homes of outcast rape survivors to explain to husbands and mothers-in-law why they must take raped women back. (The young husband of Fatuma's daughter, who stands by her, is an influential example for men.) They visit the fathers of raped girls and persuade them not to "compromise" with rapists but to prosecute them. They publicly denounce known rapists and help take cases to court, calling rapists and jurists to account. In a province where the justice system is a shambles, CFK has seen a few cases through to convictions. Periodically a delegation travels to the prison to make sure the convicted men are still there. Some, of course, have "escaped."

At every step CFK runs up against old attitudes and new appetites for rape. Charlotte Siapata was tending her small field alone three years ago when two militiamen seized and raped her. Afraid to tell her husband, she turned to Fatuma for help. Fatuma sent her to the hospital and counseled her to stay in her home; and when her husband guessed the truth, Fatuma and others from CFK talked with him as well. Charlotte was now the "soldiers' wife," he said, and useless to him. He denied her money for food for herself and their two children. He refused to pay the children's fees, and they left school. He denied her clothing and shoes. He ordered her to leave the house. "After the rape," Charlotte says, "I could not greet anyone or pass before other people. I felt they could see my evil. Slowly I got over that because I learned from CFK that I was not the first. To be raped by gangs of men—it is very normal for women. But still my husband chased me from the house and made me suffer. And the children too." At last Fatuma led a delegation from CFK and Charlotte's family to tell her husband that he had done enough; he must go to court, divorce her properly and allow her to take her children home to her parents' house. Charlotte says, "The power of CFK made him very afraid. He looked again and he could see me in a different way." Since then, the couple has reached an understanding and had another child. Charlotte believes that God worked through CFK to bring her back to life and restore her family happiness.

Saving is what CFK does. It begins by saving rape survivors, but in effect it saves families, a village and the idea of civic life.

Now a strong leader in CFK, Charlotte helps with the cases of young girls raped in recent weeks not by militiamen but by civilians in the community. A 12-year-old raped by her teacher. A 9-year-old raped by a young boy. A 7-year-old raped by a middle-aged man. An 11-year-old raped by her father. A 7-year-old raped by her pastor. This is something new in the community since the war, and the women of CFK struggle to understand it.

CFK. If you pronounce the acronym in Congolese French with a slight Swahili accent, it sounds like Say-ev-ko—Save Co. Saving is what CFK does. It begins by saving rape survivors, but in effect it saves families, villages and the idea of civic life.

But the women worry about the future. Can they sustain their work? They need maize mills to process their harvest into more profitable maize meal, yet no international NGO has funds to carry them this last step to self-sufficiency. Will the UN let them down too?

The UN's largest peacekeeping force, MONUC, is charged with preventing armed conflict and protecting civilians in the DRC. Yet in eastern Congo its numbers are too few to patrol an area far larger than France and overrun by

militias that—despite repeated international agreements—have never been disarmed. So it should be no surprise that war rages again just over the provincial border in North Kivu; there the national army tries to turn back the forces of Laurent Nkunda, who professes to protect Tutsis from Hutu *génocidaires* in a relentless reprise of the Rwandan genocide. In Rwanda 1 million people died under orders in three months in 1994; in the DRC 5 million have died in the continuation. As I write, the roads of North Kivu are filling with a quarter-million civilians in flight, with no place to go. Cholera threatens thousands camped in the rain outside the provincial capital. Reports tell of the massacre of civilian men of fighting age—and once again the mass rape of women and girls.

CFK is only one of many women's groups organized in the DRC, just one example of what women can do, with a little security and a little help from the international community, to counteract the centrifugal force of hundreds of thousands of "acts of sexual violence against civilians" and make way for that elusive durable peace. ■

No. 8

Boston Globe 7 June 2008

Surging food costs hit poorer nations

BEIJING — Families from Pakistan to Argentina to Congo are being battered by surging food prices that are dragging more people into poverty, fueling political tensions, and forcing some to give up eating meat and fruit.

Scraping to afford the next meal is still a grim daily reality in the developing world even though the global food crisis that dominated headlines in 2008 quickly faded in the United States and other rich countries.

With food costing up to 70 percent of the family income in the poorest countries, rising prices are squeezing household budgets and threatening to worsen malnutrition, while inflation stays moderate in the United States and Europe.

Compounding the problem in many countries: Prices hardly fell from their peaks in 2008, when global food costs jumped in part due to a smaller US wheat harvest and demand for crops to use in biofuels.

Majeedan Begum, a Pakistani mother of five, said a bag of flour for bread, the staple of her family's diet, costs three times what it did two years ago in her hometown of Multan.

She can no longer afford meat or fruit.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization's food price index — which includes grains, meat, dairy, and other items in 90 countries — was up 22 percent in March from a year earlier though still below 2008 levels.

In some Asian markets, rice and wheat prices are 20 percent to 70 percent above 2008 levels, the index says.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

No. 9

Cellphone use surging worldwide, UN says

Boston Globe 20 Feb 2010

GENEVA — More than half of the people in the developing world are now cellphone subscribers, a United Nations report said yesterday, highlighting strong global growth in telecommunications.

There were an estimated 4.6 billion mobile phone subscriptions at the end of last year, compared with about 1 billion in 2002, the International Telecommunication Union said in a report. In developing nations, 57 percent of people were signed up.

"The rate of progress remains remarkable," the UN agency said.

The report tallied cellphone, landline telephone, and Internet usage in 159 countries, from the mainly European nations that are most advanced in information technology to those in sub-Saharan Africa that are the least developed.

Internet use has grown, but at a slower pace, the report said.

An estimated 1.7 billion people, or 26 percent of the world's population, were online last year, up from 11 percent in 2002.

Still, four out of five people living in poor countries had no access to the Internet, with China alone comprising a third of the people online in the developing world.

"One important challenge in bringing more people online is the limited availability of fixed broadband access," the report said.

It said general access to the Internet, telephones, and other technologies was becoming cheaper, with the cost dropping in nearly every country last year.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

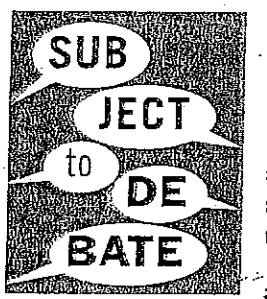
Katha Pollitt

NO.10

Global Women: Good News, Bad News

And the winner is... Iceland! According to the 2009 Global Gender Gap report of the World Economic Forum, the land of glaciers and puffins, population 319,000, is the most gender egalitarian country on earth, with women having closed 80 percent of the gap with men. Finland (2), Norway (3), Sweden (4) and Denmark (7) are in the top ten too, as is New Zealand (5). You could try harder, Spain (17) and Germany (12)—in 2007 you were in the top ten. And O, Canada: 25. Very sad.

The WEF measures the gap between women and men in four areas—economic activity, education, health and political representation—regardless of the absolute level of resources. Thus South Africa (6) and Lesotho (10) make the top ten, despite widespread poverty, illiteracy and a raging AIDS epidemic. The way the WEP measures the gap is a bit strange. Among the items not measured are reproductive rights (abortion is banned in Ireland (8), and the Philippines (9), where birth control is also hard to find, so how equal is that?); sexual violence (South Africa has the world's highest rate of reported rape); and legal inequality, to say nothing of cultural practices like forced marriage, child marriage and female genital mutilation, and the disproportionate effect of poverty on women. Thus, in Lesotho, with one of the world's highest rates of HIV, it's the desperately poor grandmothers who are raising throngs of orphaned grandchildren. Still, let's pause to cheer the fact that there has been measurable improvement for the female population in much of the world. As the report notes, "Out of the 115 countries covered in the report since 2006, more than two-thirds have posted gains in overall index scores, indicating that the world in general has made progress towards equality between men and women."



Indeed, progress can be lightning swift: South Africa advanced sixteen places, partly because a new government brought in more women. Iceland increased women's representation in Parliament from 33 percent to 43 percent in just one year (fun fact—last year Icelandic voters elected Johanna Sigurdardottir, the world's first openly lesbian prime minister, who returned the favor by appointing five women to her interim cabinet, the most in the country's history). Compare that with the United States, where it took all of the 2000s to drag Congress from 17.1 percent to 22.5 percent. Indeed, we rank 61 in political representation, for an overall mediocre score of 31, sandwiched between Lithuania and Namibia. The bottom third of the list is filled with Middle Eastern, Asian and African nations where progress for women is slow or nonexistent: India, for example, gets pretty good press as a rapidly modernizing society, but it comes in at 114, down from 113 in 2008—closer than you might think to notoriously oppressive Iran (128) or Pakistan (132), to say nothing of Chad (133) and Yemen (last place).

That women are gradually moving up in the world—the WEP maintains that globally women have closed 93 percent of the ed cation gap and 96 percent of the health gap—is definitely not picture you would get from following the headlines, where news is often unbearable. Right now, for example, Amalia young Nicaraguan, is being denied treatment for her cancer. S is twelve weeks pregnant, you see, and doctors are afraid to r violating the total ban on abortion brought in by Marxist-turne Catholic Daniel Ortega—even if without treatment she dies, a her fetus dies and her 10-year-old daughter is left motherle Amalia is not the only Nicaraguan to have suffered as a resu of this law—according to Amnesty International, it has caus an increase in maternal deaths. In Turkey, honor killings we highlighted by the gruesome murder of 16-year-old Medi Menü, buried alive by her father because she talked to boys. Fro Malaysia to Nigeria, women in the Muslim world face caning floggings and executions for violating Sharia law—for example, by being raped, like 13-year-old Aisl Ibrahim Duhulow of Somalia, stoned to death by fif men before a stadium audience of 1,000. And wh of women caught up in the thirty-three wars ragir around the globe, as in Congo, where horrific rap and tortures are pervasive? Catastrophic violence lik that can reduce one to despair pretty quickly.

Protracted struggle is the theme of the UN's Be jing Plus 15 conference, taking place in New York as write. For example, equal access to education was a key goal of th 1990 Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, and, as th WEF report found, real progress has been made—in many coun tries, females now outnumber males in schools and universities But education is no magic bullet. As Mario Osava writes, "female represent a majority at every level of education in Brazil; and th average rate of schooling among Brazilian women is more tha one year higher than that of men. Yet women continue to ear 30 percent less than men for the same work, and they occupy mere 56 of the 594 seats in the Brazilian Congress."

What's the lesson for the United States? Wealth helps, but it' not enough. It's not automatic that as a country becomes richer an more developed men and women become more equal—especially when conservative religion has power, as in the United States an many nations. To an unusual degree, Americans resist "government" solutions to women's inequality as an affront to meritocracy and individual initiative. But without paid parental leave an a reliable system of quality childcare, women will never be able to get much further toward workplace equality than they are now. Scandinavia's extensive and flexible system of support for parents, including single mothers, is one of the major reasons Scandinavia leads the world in gender equality. Similarly, countries with lots of women in parliament—Rwanda is first, with 56 percent—tend to have quota systems, at least at first. The United States seemed to recognize their efficiency and fairness when it supported quotas in Iraq and Afghanistan. But here at home? Hard to imagine.

AVP
ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE PROJECT

No.11

AVP International
what is AVP?
our workshops
our principles

AVP news

contact us

conflict is part of daily life...

...but violence doesn't have to be

The Alternatives to Violence Project is a network of volunteers running workshops for anyone who wants to find ways of resolving conflict without resorting to violence. We work in the community and in prisons.

prison workshop - USA

the thinking behind AVP

We understand that conflict is a natural and normal part of life, and that it is possible to learn new ways of handling it. By holding workshops in which the participants consider the underlying causes of friction and violence, practical ways of dealing with situations of conflict are worked out.

Our workshops build on everyday experiences and try to help us move away from violent or abusive behaviour by developing other ways of dealing with conflicts. They help us to increase the respect we have for ourselves and others.

communication skills - Johannesburg, South Africa

a short history

AVP began in 1975 in a New York prison at the request of long-term prisoners. A workshop was held for youth coming into conflict with the law. The success of this workshop quickly generated requests for more, and the programme quickly spread to many other prisons.

It soon became obvious that violence and the need for this training exists **as much outside prison as within**, and that everyone in all walks of life and circumstances is exposed to and participates, in some way, in violence, whether it be physical or psychological.

This programme has now spread to over **50 countries around the world**, including New Zealand, Costa Rica, Israel, Russia and South Africa.

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find out about AVP workshops >>

AVP International
> our workshops

An AVP basic workshop takes 2-3 full days, and explores the five pillars of AVP : affirmation, communication, co-operation, community building and transforming power.

affirmation and communication

Improving communication skills forms an essential part of our workshop. We begin with introductions, agreeing on boundaries for the workshop, sharing names, and getting to know the group.

The exercises help us improve our listening skills, and share what is good about one another (affirmation) - something we typically don't do enough of.

deepening communication skills - Hereford, Britain

co-operation

Learning to co-operate in a group can take different forms, even without communicating verbally!

AVP is an experiential programme - everything we do in our

workshops begins with our own experiences.

Before we start discussing co-operation in the workshop, we first remind ourselves how it feels to work in a group, either co-operating with the others or not!

Reflecting on what we learn from our experiences, and listening to what others have learned, helps us to grow as a person.

a lively exploration of cooperation! - Orange Farm, South Africa

community building

Group construction and trust exercises help build a sense of community, as do fun games and shared storytelling of experiences.

Doing such exercises together is fun, and also teaches us a lot about ourselves and others.

Our trained facilitators will debrief each exercise, drawing out lessons and insights from the group.

AVP workshops are great teambuilding tools - participants get to know each other much better, and build a valuable basis of trust and understanding.

trust exercise to explore community - Kerala, India

transforming power

A key element of AVP is pre-emptive conflict resolution by creatively transforming unhealthy relationships through sharing, caring, improved communication skills and sometimes even surprise and humour.

Role-plays and other forms of drama allow us to explore possible approaches to different forms of conflict.

Important insights are gained through the roleplays, which are flexibly adapted and debriefed as they run, again helping us to assess and digest whatever we learn.

Gani Fawehinmi; called conscience of Nigeria

No. 12

By Matt Schudel, Washington Post | September 21, 2009

WASHINGTON - Gani Fawehinmi, a human rights lawyer who challenged generations of military and civilian rulers in his native Nigeria and who was considered by supporters and foes alike to be the conscience of his nation, died Sept. 5 in Lagos of lung cancer. He was 71.

Without holding political office or serving in his country's powerful military, Mr. Fawehinmi became one of the most respected leaders in Nigeria since its independence from Great Britain in 1960. He transcended his country's complex web of ethnic and religious factions to advocate for a united Nigeria and became a driving force behind the introduction of democratic elections to his homeland in 1999.

Known throughout his country simply as "Gani," Mr. Fawehinmi faced continual harassment from the authorities. He was arrested more than 30 times and took to keeping a bag packed with personal items in case he should be thrown in jail. He was frequently beaten, his passport was seized, his home was searched, his office was ransacked, and his family was threatened. On one occasion, his law library - at 300,000 volumes the largest in Nigeria - was set on fire.

Mr. Fawehinmi was a master of courtroom maneuvering and was considered Nigeria's foremost lawyer. Among his countless legal battles, he questioned exorbitant payments to former heads of state, challenged the Nigerian central bank for devaluing the currency, and protested increases in fuel prices and school fees.

"I am proud to be a confrontationist," he once said.

"This was really a rare human being," Walter Carrington, former US ambassador to Nigeria, said in an interview last week. "The guy was absolutely incorruptible. He was certainly respected by all, even by some of his strongest opponents. My own view is that if they were ever to give a posthumous Nobel Prize, Gani is the person who ought to get it."

In 1994, despite a national decree forbidding new political parties, Mr. Fawehinmi formed the National Conscience Party and was promptly jailed by operatives of Nigerian strongman General Sani Abacha. A year later, Mr. Fawehinmi defended the writer and activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, who had been arrested by Abacha's regime. Despite an international outcry, Saro-Wiwa was found guilty of complicity in several murders and was executed in November 1995.

Throughout his life, Mr. Fawehinmi catalogued the personal attacks and indignities visited on him by Nigerian authorities, which often resulted in trumped-up charges.

"Continuous imprisonment or even threats of assassination will not deter me from the people's cause," he said after being released from prison in 1990. "The authorities

violated my person . . . . What is left for them is to kill me. Whatever they do, I will not give up. I shall continue until I succeed or until I die."

In 1997, when Carrington was leaving Nigeria after four years as US ambassador, armed paramilitary thugs entered the room where his farewell reception was being held.

"They burst in, with guns fully loaded and pointed at the man who was going to introduce me," Carrington recalled. "Gani stood between them, reminded them that their actions were illegal, and opened up his shirt and said, `Shoot me. Shoot me!' " An officer intervened, and the soldiers backed down.

"In the 50 years that I have been involved with Africa," Carrington said, "I would rank Gani as one of the greatest men the continent has produced. I would rank him alongside South Africa's living legends, Nelson Mandela and Bishop Desmond Tutu."

Ganiyu Oyesola Fawehinmi was born April 22, 1938, to a prominent Muslim family in Ondo, Nigeria.

He graduated from Victory College Ikare, a Nigerian Christian college, then spent two years working in the courts of Lagos. In 1961, he began to study law at the University of London, and when his father died in 1963, Mr. Fawehinmi supported himself by cleaning toilets and sweeping floors. Nonetheless, he passed his exams and returned to Nigeria in 1964.

He established a law firm, which came to have 200 employees. He also wrote 30 books, and, since 1986, had published Nigerian Weekly Law Reports, an indispensable legal publication in his country.

He received several international human rights awards, but as recently as 2002, Mr. Fawehinmi was charged with gun-running and "high-handedness." A year later, representing his National Conscience Party, he ran a largely symbolic campaign for president, holding rallies in the slums of Lagos.

Among those he leaves are his two wives and 14 children. ▪

No. 13

Iraq latest crucible for Harvard mediation-Negotiations solve tribal disputes (By James F. Smith,11/9/09, Boston Globe)

CAMBRIDGE - No longer locked in one big war, Iraq has become a land of a hundred little wars. And this promised to be one more of them, as two well-armed tribes clashed over a coveted swath of land.

One tribe brandished a promise to 2,000 acres from the current Iraqi government. The other pointed to a like promise from the regime of Saddam Hussein. Guns were raised, shots fired. There seemed no ground for compromise, beyond the familiar local remedy: blood.

But then something extraordinary happened. The tribes agreed to negotiate and, with the help of the local mayor and others, crafted a deal giving both sides enough land to meet their needs.

"They began thinking of their relationship instead of thinking about revenge upon each other," said Sa'ad Al-Khalidy, one of those who arranged the intervention.

If it sounds like a chapter ripped right out of a dispute mediation manual, well, it was. And the book was written in Cambridge.

The blood not spilled in central Iraq was another victory for the mediation movement spawned by Harvard Law School guru Roger Fisher, coauthor of the 1981 book "Getting to Yes." The Boston area has become a global hub for teaching conflict resolution theory and practice for uses in law, diplomacy, and business in farflung places.

The mediators in the Iraqi tribes' dispute had all been recently trained in methods developed by Fisher, whose landmark work in the 1960s and 1970s lives on in the many graduate school programs and companies that he and his students have forged.

Dispute resolution programs now offer master's and even doctoral degrees at some campuses, among them the University of Massachusetts at Boston, MIT, Tufts, and Brandeis. The Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School is a renowned source of expertise in the field. Conflict management experts from the Boston area also helped tackle vexing international stalemates, from Northern Ireland to South Africa, Kosovo to China.

No wonder that when the State Department wanted to encourage Iraq to move toward a culture of mediation and away from war, it turned to Conflict Management Group, or CMG, the nonprofit consulting firm launched by Fisher in Cambridge in 1984 that is now part of the international development and relief group Mercy Corps.

A total of 73 municipal officials and tribal sheiks from across Iraq underwent intensive training by CMG staffers in May and June in mediation and negotiation skills. The effort, funded by a $2.5 million State Department grant, grew out of a successful pilot program in southern Iraq that trained 19 mediators.

Already, the newly trained mediators have helped local officials tackle dozens of conflicts, mostly over scarce resources such as farmland, oil income, electricity and water as well as numerous family disputes. The goal is to build a national network of respected local negotiators.

Few countries have as much conflict to manage as Iraq. But Iraq has little tradition of mediation, said Arthur Martirosyan, who lives in Belmont and has run the Iraqi training program for CMG since 2006. Traditionally, arbitration of disputes is left up to local sheiks, whose decisions - picking one claim over another - often leave behind festering anger.

Martirosyan came to Cambridge in 1991 to work with Fisher at CMG, after getting a master's degree from Yale. An ethnic Armenian born in the former Soviet republic of Georgia, Martirosyan has used his negotiation and language

skills to mediate conflicts in Chechnya and other regional hotspots as well as the Middle East.

Martirosyan returned to Iraq last month to train 24 more Iraqi mediators, most of whom are tribal sheiks or municipal council officials. He will also offer refresher courses to program graduates - reflecting his conviction that good mediating skills take practice, like playing the piano.

Khalidy, the coordinator for central and southern Iraq based in Diwaniyah, said he has seen remarkable achievements by participants in the pilot program, who went through five intensive rounds of classes. Sixteen of them are full-time mediators, and have helped solve 32 disputes, ranging from an inheritance claim to a tense standoff involving 50 abducted police officers, all of whom were released safely.

"In many conflicts, they have been changed from enemies into partners against the problem, not against each other," Khalidy said by phone from Iraq.

Some successes are small. He described one mediation between two families: one household with young girls built a privacy wall that blocked sunlight from reaching the neighbor's house. They had argued for months, and were close to blows. A mediator helped them cool down, and get away from their hardened positions. They came up with a solution: The family that built the wall paid for a skylight for the neighboring house.

The training uses methods that Fisher devised over decades of academic study and popularized in "Getting to Yes," published in 1981. The book has been translated into 18 languages - including a new edition in Iraqi Arabic for this project.

Liza Baran, a Ukrainian who is Mercy Corps' program manager for the negotiation project in Iraq, said the sheiks appreciate the step-by-step, common-sense approach that Fisher shaped. The bottom-line goal is to help the parties identify their own interests, and the other side's interests - and then figure out ways to serve both sides.

"It's kind of like getting the ABCs," Baran said. "Here is a whole set of very systematized tools which you can apply, and it works."

Fisher, who is 88, lives in Cambridge and still goes to his Harvard Law School office several days a week. Specialists in the field note that some of his early ideas have been challenged and the field has evolved dramatically in recent years, but no one doubts his seminal role.

Paul Cramer, a Harvard Law graduate who lives in Wellesley and is a conflict management specialist for Accenture, the business consulting firm, has traveled to Iraq with Martirosyan to conduct the training. He said Iraqis had become used to having solutions imposed by a dictatorship - and they quickly grasped Fisher's premise that merely defending entrenched positions was getting them nowhere.

He recalled one mediation by a sheik named Gazzi, who was called in after a showdown between tribes over a murder. The usual solution would be for the tribe to hand over the killer or go to battle. Gazzi helped mediate one cooling-off period, and then another, giving the tribes time to meet and express their longer-term interests. They finally agreed to spare the young killer, lowering tensions in the whole community and clearing the way to progress on their deeper conflicts.

Martirosyan said that building a network of Iraqi negotiators who can then train others will extend the reach of the mediation far beyond what foreigners could achieve trying to mediate cases themselves. He said he is also talking to Iraqi universities, and several have said they want to develop courses and exchanges with American institutions.

"I think negotiation is going to be an important skill set for Iraq," Martirosyan said. "People talk about the US exit strategy. I think to a large degree it will depend how skilled the politicians are, whether Kurds or Arabs . . . There are issues that will require a lot of creative negotiation."