

World politics and the environment

By Bob Reno

"It is clear that the environmental crisis which is confronting the world will profoundly alter the future destiny of our planet. No one among us, whatever our status, strength or circumstance, can remain unaffected. The process of change challenges present international policies. Will the growing awareness of 'one earth' and 'one environment' guide us to the concept of 'one humanity'?"

The above question was addressed by Indian's Prime Minister Indira Gandhi to the plenary session of the United Nations' 1972 Stockholm Conference on the World Environment. It would seem to hold potential as "the" question of the twenty-first century, regarding humankind's relationship to the world environment.

Today's world is organizationally based on the notion of absolute national sovereignty — a doctrine that seemed rational enough for centuries, at a time when communication and transportation were painfully more slow than today, and

when the world and its resources were thought to be (literally) infinite. But today this "sovereign thinking" has become an increasingly dangerous anachronism that may even threaten our very existence, in light of the advanced state of military technologies.

The phenomenon of human interaction has been radically transformed from a local to a global level. As international relations grow more and more complex and global in scope and nature, it becomes increasingly clear that national sovereignty as a model for world organization is dangerously obsolete. And this is especially so when environmental problems come into focus. The invisible currents of the oceans and the atmosphere are no more likely to exhibit the prescribed respect for national boundaries and sovereignty than are the oil slicks and smog pockets they carry with them. Responsibility for such phenomena as these, because of their very nature, must be shared collectively.

Swedish Prime Minister Olaf Palme noted at the Stockholm Conference: "In the field of human environment there is no

individual future, neither for human beings nor for nations. Our future is common. We must share it together." And if the future is to be shared by all alike, so must the responsibility for shaping and determining that future be equally shared.

United Nations Secretary General Kurt Waldheim said on the floor of the Stockholm Conference: "The quality of the atmosphere and of our oceans can be nothing else but the product of the behavior of nations. The United Nations has no intrinsic value, no power of its own; it cannot clean a single river for you. But it can bring governments together..." That's precisely what it did at the Stockholm Conference. But what were the results? Of this, surprisingly little has been made known, at least to the general public.

This Thursday night the Eugene community will have the exceptional opportunity to hear William Bassow, Senior Public Affairs Officer of the United Nations Environment Programme, speak on the proceedings at the Stockholm Conference, and on world environmental issues as they relate to the international political arena. Although world politics

may seem irrelevant to environmental questions, in this case the two are inescapably interrelated. For to the extent that nations are unwilling to discard sole notions of impregnable sovereignty, 'national castles', they'll also find themselves incapable of coping successfully with the problems and demands of the one and only world environment.

It was mentioned earlier that no one among us can remain unaffected by world environmental issues and international environmental negotiations such as those at Stockholm. Since this is not one of those cases where what we don't know about won't affect (perhaps hurt...) us, it would seem unfortunate for any of us to fail to take advantage of this opportunity to find out first hand what the world powers are doing for the world environment, and what the world environment may do to the world powers.

Note: Mr. Bassow will appear on KZLZ-FM's "American Circus," broadcast live from the Bavarian restaurant Wednesday at 7 p.m.

Iran--the two billion dollar fortress

On February 21st the Pentagon announced the sale of more than \$2 billion worth of military equipment to Iran. This sale, kept secret for months, marked the biggest single arms deal ever arranged by the U.S. It included laser bombs, the light guided bombs used against the North Vietnamese people in the latter stages of the Vietnam War. Helicopter gunships, F-5E supersonic interceptors, F-4 fighter bombers and C-130 cargo planes were also included in the deal. Three hundred military personnel were sent along with the arms to join the thousands of U.S. advisers already stationed in Iran.

For years the U.S. government has been transforming Iran into a military fortress and recently it has stepped up this process. From 1970 to 1971 Iran's military budget has increased from \$779 million to \$1,023 million per year. This exceeds the combined annual military budgets of Iraq, Libya, Syria, Jordan, Tunisia, Ethiopia and Morocco which totaled \$900 million in 1971. In June of 1972 Iran also bought modern British equipment totaling one hundred million pounds sterling. Iran, then, has been singled out to be a fortress for the imperialists' armaments. The recent U.S. arms deal is both a climax of this arms build up and an indication of the growing importance of the Shah's U.S. appointed role as gendarme of the Persian Gulf.

Importance of Persian Gulf

Economically and strategically it is a key area for U.S. imperialism to control. The Persian Gulf contains 2-3 of the world's oil resources excluding the Soviet Bloc countries. Besides its quantity, the gulf oil has the highly attractive feature of being very cheap. In fact it is 30 times cheaper to produce than Texan or Alaskan oil. This is due to the paying of starvation level wages to the workers, reducing the work force and the greater oil yield of the wells themselves.

Politically the Gulf is an important arena for the power struggle between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. Both vie for control of the area's rich resources and strategic location.

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In the Persian Gulf, the Nixon Doctrine emphasizes division of responsibility between U.S. imperialism and its lackey, the Shah, which is the strongest military force in the area. Already the Shah's regime has begun to do the bidding of imperialism. It has stationed troops in Dhofar where a fierce national liberation struggle is now being waged. Similarly it sent troops and armaments to oppose the just struggle in what is now the People's Democratic Republic of South Yemen. Clearly, the Shah functions as a repressive tool against the liberation struggles in the Gulf and considering its recent arms purchase, will do so more intensely in the near future.

The Shah, as a loyal U.S. lackey, has spent billions on arms at a time when the Iranian people need schools, doctors, food, and housing. 40 percent of the Iranian families live in one room. Public education in Iran has yet to reach in the 1970's the level Japan reached in the 1850's. There is only one doctor for every 3,233 people and only 5 percent of these doctors practice in the villages where 65 percent of the people live. During one month each Iranian consumes an average of only 2.7 pounds of meat. Under these circumstances the Shah allocated over \$2 billion to purchase arms. Where, in fact, is this coming from but from the impoverished people.

Struggle of the Iranian People

The Shah's so-called "White Revolution" has failed to improve the living conditions of the people. Instead, the economic condition of the workers and peasants has worsened and repression by the Iranian government has increased. Dissatisfaction and unrest has spread among the people. Protest is being voiced from all sectors of society. Workers strikes in protest of intolerable exploitation have occurred at the oil refineries, the textile plants, and the assembly line factories. Student strikes against the Shah's celebration of 10 years of "white revolution" shut down the universities at Tehran and Tabriz early this year. Similarly, student protest closed the

university at the time of the Shah's celebration of the 2,500 years of monarchy. Broad masses of people protested against the Shah's regime during the bus strikes of '70 and '72 and during the 2,500 year anniversary bash, thousands were arrested. Armed guerrilla activities which began in Siahkal in '71 spread to other parts of the country. The increasing frequency of these protests indicate the intensification of the people's struggles and the growing strength of the underground movement.

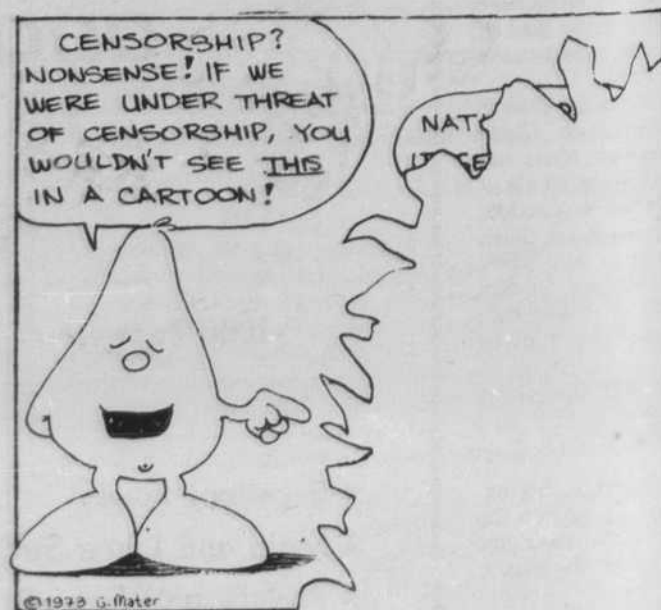
Propagandizing the U.S. Public

In an attempt to secure the backing of the American public for stepped up imperialist aggression in the Middle East, the U.S. has begun a propaganda campaign about the energy crisis. Articles have begun to appear in the press deceitfully claiming that American families will shiver in winter cold,

deprived of heat sources, while Middle Eastern leaders are "hoarding" immense oil and gas reserves. Although alternative energy sources such as nuclear power and uranium have been available for decades, the U.S. capitalists have neglected to develop them. Instead, they aim to secure as much profit as possible from the "cheaper" Middle East sources, from the exploited labor of the Arab and Iranian workers.

We in the I.S.A.U.S. strongly condemn the purchase of arms by the Shah and the motives behind the U.S. government's sale. We invite all progressive and anti-imperialist organizations and individuals to join us in breaking through the press blackout by exposing the imperialist conspiracy and the Shah's puppet role as U.S. appointed gendarme of the Persian Gulf.

Submitted by the Iranian Student Association



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