

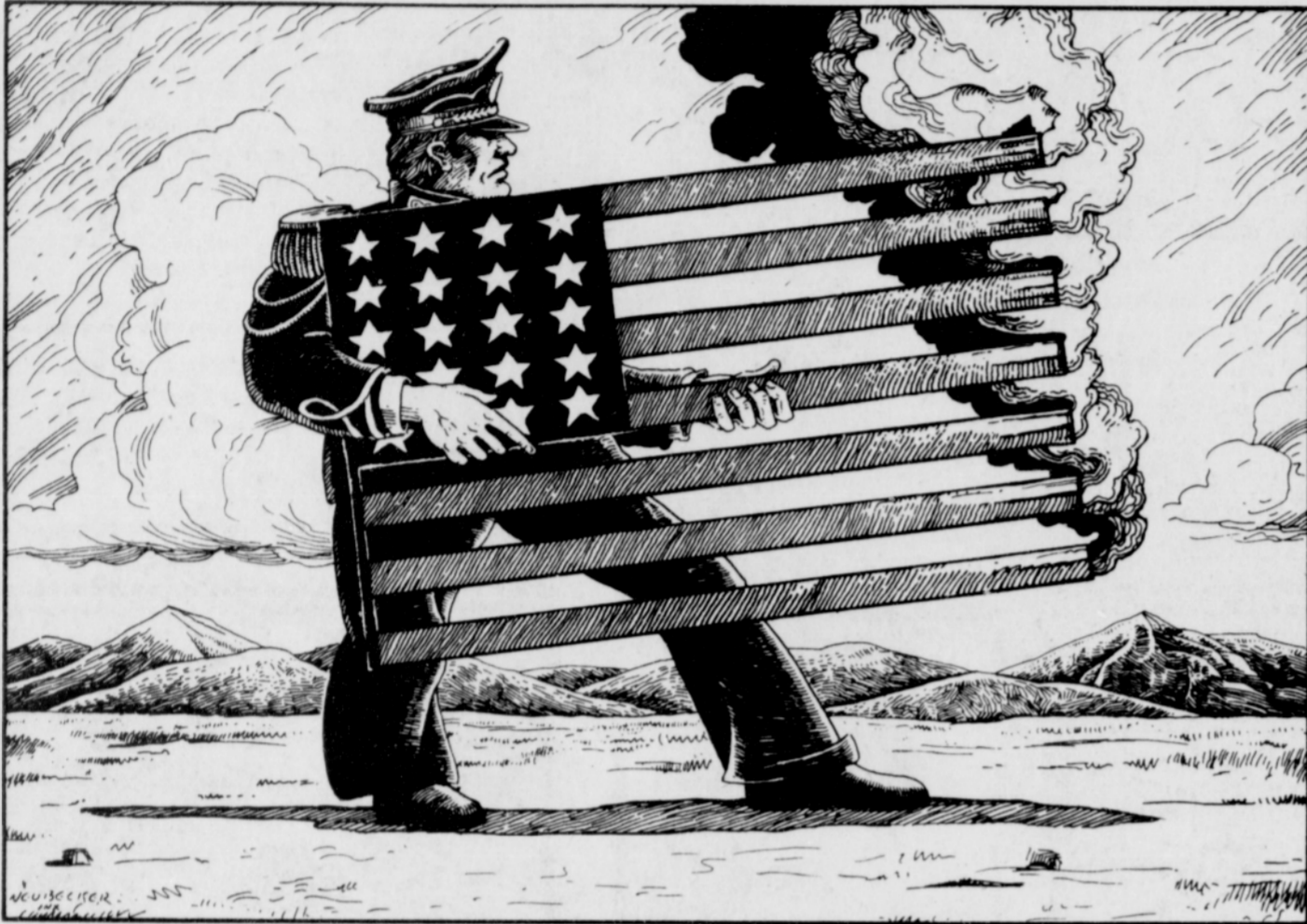


WAR & PEACE



THE HIGH COST OF EMPIRE

Robert Neubecker



by Michael Parenti

The growth of the American corporations from modest domestic enterprises to multinational giants with vast overseas holdings has been matched by comparable growth in the U.S. military establishment. Today, the United States is the greatest global military-industrial power in history. Sometimes the sword has intervened in other lands to protect the advantages won by the dollar, and sometimes the dollar has rushed in to enjoy the benefits extracted by the sword. Most impressive is the way American militarism and American capitalism have kept each other company in their travels abroad, and the way ordinary American taxpayers, consumers, and workers have had to sustain the heavy costs.

About one and a half million U.S. military personnel are stationed in one hundred and sixteen countries. The United States has more than four hundred major bases and almost three thousand lesser ones situated in almost every region of the world, and it costs many billions of dollars yearly to maintain them. Almost nine hundred billion dollars in military aid has been given to some eighty nations since World War II, and every variety of weapon is sold to foreign rulers, by U.S. corporations (ably assisted by the Pentagon). Two million foreign troops and hundreds of thousands of foreign police and militia, under

the command of various dictators and military juntas, have been trained, equipped, and financed by the United States, their purpose being not to defend their countries from outside invasion but to protect the ruling cliques from their own potentially insurgent populations.

Furthermore, U.S. corporations exert a controlling interest over the natural resources, land, labor, trade, finances, and markets of whole continents. In sum, much of the world has been transformed into an American-equipped armed camp to preserve an American-dominated politico-economic status quo.

Years ago, the economist Kenneth Boulding, among others, noted that empires such as ours cost more than they are worth. Over a twenty-year period, the U.S. Government spent two billion dollars to shore up a corrupt dictatorship in the Philippines, hoping to protect what amounts to a half billion dollar U.S. investment in that country. The same pattern holds true in other parts of the world: What we expend in aid and arms usually exceeds the value of the investments we hold. Therefore, Boulding and others reasoned, empires are losing propositions — irrational, self-defeating enterprises.

But are they really? Are they losing propositions for everyone? Who pays the costs and who reaps the benefits of empire? The truth is that those who profit handsomely from overseas investments and interventions are not the same people as those who foot the bill. As Thorstein Veblen pointed out back in 1904, the gains of

empire flow into the hands of the privileged business class, while the costs are extracted from "the industry of the rest of the people." The multinational corporations monopolize the returns while carrying little, if any, of the financial burden. The expenditures needed to make the world safe for ITT, Chase Manhattan, and General Augusto Pinochet of Chile are taken from the pockets of the people.

Is it really "our" profit from "our" oil and "our" tin, copper, bauxite, manganese, iron, gold, timber, and foods extracted from the land and labor of the Third World that we are protecting with our taxes and our sons?

In his book entitled "Empire as a Way of Life," (portions of which appeared in the July 2 issue of the Times Eagle) William Appleman Williams, the noted historian, scolds the American people for having become addicted to the conditions of empire. It seems "we" like empire. "We" live beyond our means and need empire as part of our way of life. "We" exploit the rest of the world and don't know how to get back to a simpler life. The implication is that "we" decided to send troops into Central America and Viet Nam, and "we" thought to overthrow Salvador Allende in Chile, Mohammed Mossadegh in Iran, and Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala. "We" urged the building of a global network of military and counterinsurgency bases. And "we" supported the Shah, trained the SAVAK torturers, and carpetbombed Indochina.

In truth, however, ordinary Americans have seldom known about these things until after the fact, or — on those rare occasions when they were informed — have opposed intervention or have not given very enthusiastic support. Williams implies the imperialist ideology and policy are a product of mass thinking; actually, it is the other way around: Mass thinking is a product of imperialist ideological manipulation and not always a reliable product — judging from the popular opposition to interventions in Viet Nam and now in El Salvador.

Americans pay a heavy price in blood, sweat, and taxes for the U.S. military-industrial global empire. They pay in other ways, too. As more and more industry moves overseas, for example, attracted by the availability of cheap labor and high profits, more jobs are lost at home. More than a century ago, Karl Marx predicted that in an advanced stage, capitalism would export not only its goods but its very capital. So Ford Motor Company exports not only cars but whole factories to Argentina, which produce cars that are sold in that country and elsewhere. This means bigger profits for Ford but a higher unemployment rate for Detroit.

At the same time, the Argentine junta received millions in aid from the U.S. taxpayers to keep Ford employees and other Argentine workers in line. Throughout the Third World, counterinsurgency and assassination squads trained and financed by the CIA and the U.S. military have



The First Telephone Call

"THE MAGICAL NATURE OF COMMUNICATION"

A PREVIEW OF THE BASIC CONCEPTS OF NUERO-LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING: SENSORY AWARENESS, FLEXIBILITY, UTILIZATION, REALITY MAPPING, EVOLUTION.

JULY 27, FROM 7:30 — 9:30 P.M.

North Coast Naturopathic Clinic

1235 S. Hemlock Cannon Beach

Turnaround Books



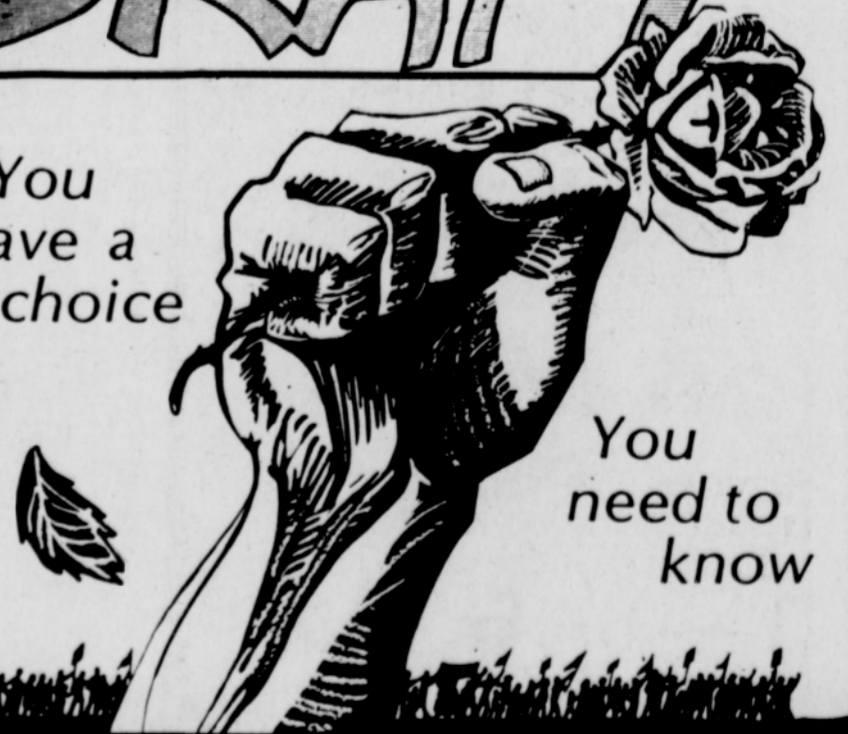
"Previously Read Books"

Paperbacks Exchanged

545 Broadway Seaside, Oregon 97138 Phone: (503)738-6414

DRAFT

You have a choice



You need to know

INFORMATION & COUNSELING

OREGON COALITION AGAINST THE DRAFT 238-0605