

# MOVEMENT ALIVE

Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Party from power and replace it with a Bush sanctioned government.

Add to that the renewed American allegiance to brutal dictators from Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Georgia, and all points between; a pointed campaign for America to dominate energy resources in every country with Islamic populations from Nigeria to Indonesia, to the Caspian Sea; the reinstatement of power of Afghanistan's Northern Alliance warlords; and the targeting of Islamic minority communities in the United States itself.

The Bush administration has already handed a wealth of arguments to Islamic terrorist groups worldwide. As an Arab diplomat recently told Reuters News Service, "With Bush as a recruiting sergeant these people will be in business for another generation."

We need to remind people that the terrorists whose attacks Bush has used to give his efforts legitimacy wear no uniform, answer to no central authority, and work from no single national state. And that their efforts were fueled in part by past American actions, like supporting Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan to oust the Soviet Union in the 1980s.

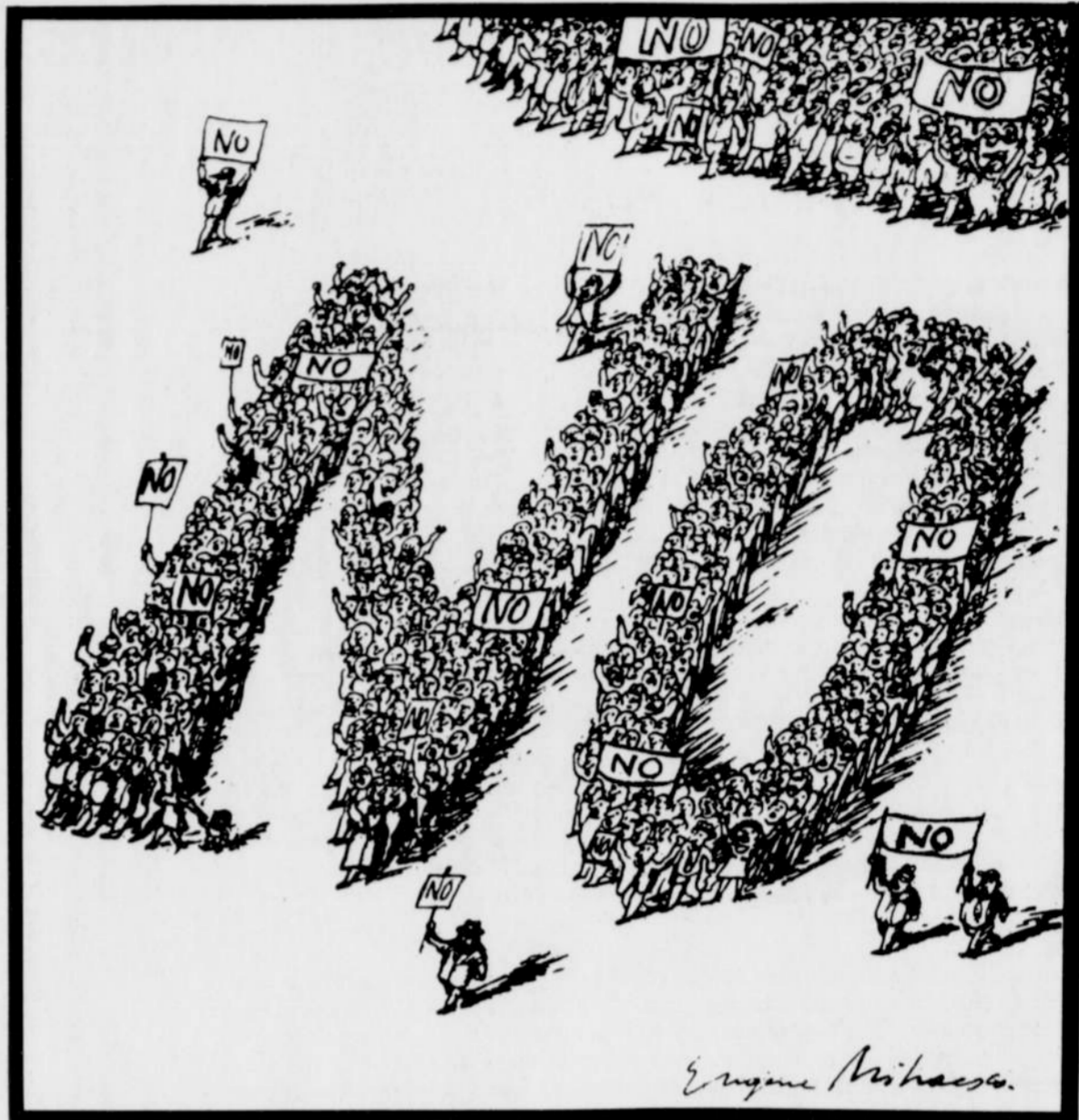
As a result, their efforts can ultimately be prevented, not by war, but a combination of police work and persuasion — ensuring that such tactics are embraced by dozens, not millions, and then working to render those dozens as ineffectual as possible. Ignoring this not only puts our soldiers in the Middle East at risk, it risks the lives of ordinary Americans at home. We need to talk about this. We need to be clear that those who have rushed to war, not those of us who oppose it, are the real betrayers of trust and security.

From its embrace of might-makes-right and preemptive war, to its rejection of international treaties and norms, to its crude taunting of elected leaders and populations of America's historic allies, the Bush administration has taken the United States from being the object of the world's sympathy and solidarity to inspiring global resentment and anger.

That, in turn, not only helps isolate the U.S. from its historic allies, it also incites the violent fringe who are willing to kill more innocent American civilians. Facing crises that have built on our own government's actions, we have no magic solutions to resolve every possible global problem. But at any point our country can make the world safer or more dangerous, more respectful or more brutal, more sustainable or more environmentally destructive. And in every one of these choices, this administration is inviting the worst possible consequences. The more we elaborate this, the more we will have credibility even if the nightmare scenario occurs and 9/11 turns out to be just an opening act for further death and carnage.

But we can't just appeal to fear. Two themes link the millions who recently marched worldwide: They recognize that war on Iraq is a practical and moral disaster. And they reject the Bush administration's attempts to impose their vision on the world. Which means we also need to challenge this administration's raw arrogance, the contempt with which they view not only those who challenge their vision, but also the process of democracy itself.

We need to do this in a way that reaches even to those who once called themselves administration supporters. Now that Saddam's armies have quickly folded, we need even more to challenge the apostles of empire who insist that because our armies dwarf those of every other nation, we have the right to impose our will however we choose. We need particularly to



EUGENE MIHAESCO

resist scenarios where the U.S. turns military victory into regional and economic dominance.

We might point out that Bush's disregard of world opinion on Iraq has ample precedent. From the moment it took office, this administration has sought more power and less accountability than any U.S. administration in living memory. The assault on democracy began with the 2000 election, emerged early on through Enron-crafted secret energy policies and massive wealth transfers masked as tax reform, and has continued with the gutting of core civil liberties and laws requiring government openness. Since this government's relationship to both the world and its own citizens is bullying arrogance, we need to make challenging that arrogance a central focus.

An ethic of accountability would link the casual way this administration approaches this war's potential human and political consequences, with the ease with which they make other lives and communities expendable. We should connect

the dots between Bush's tax cuts for the wealthiest, his cuts in every program that serves the poor and vulnerable, and his cavalier dismissal of every major environmental crisis that we face. We need to highlight the broad-spectrum recklessness of such choices, then challenge the distracted powerlessness that makes too many citizens accept in resigned silence whatever is handed down.

When we are not challenging this recklessness, we need more than ever to express our vision in human terms, not with abstract rhetoric, to put human stories and faces on the issues we address. We need to do this without self-righteousness or ideological abstraction, and with compassion for how easy it is to feel overwhelmed by a world spinning out of control. We need to stand up and not be intimidated.

We need a long-term perspective for the perseverance that creates real change. Contrary to the prevailing myth, Rosa Parks didn't just step onto a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, but had been an NAACP activist a dozen years, part of a supportive community that taught people to persist despite every setback. Because we can't foresee every twist and turn, we need to view our involvement as a long-term process. If we give up simply because things get difficult, we create self-fulfilling prophecies of despair.

It is particularly important to not berate ourselves or our activist compatriots for having failed to stop the war in Iraq. We did this during the first Gulf War. That was what burned people out. We need the faith that if we keep on long enough and keep raising critical questions, our actions will have an impact in ways we can rarely foresee. We need to remember this even when our efforts appear utterly futile, when we seem to be rolling the proverbial rock up a hill only to watch it roll back again and again.

Even if we succeed we may never know when our actions are mattering most. The heads of the Eastern European police states insisted their hold on power was secure until almost the moment peaceful revolutions erupted and the Berlin Wall came down. So did the white rulers of South Africa almost to the moment Nelson Mandela was freed from prison. During Vietnam Richard Nixon seriously considered using nuclear weapons and at one point threatened their use, then backed down in the face of the nationwide Moratorium demonstrations and a huge march in Washington, D.C. Publicly, Nixon responded to the protests by watching a Washington Redskins football game and declaring the marchers weren't affecting his policies in the slightest, sentiments that fed the frustration and demoralization of far too many in the peace movement.

Yet privately Nixon decided the movement had, in his words, so "polarized" American opinion that he couldn't carry out his threat. Participants had no idea that their efforts may have helped stop a nuclear attack.

Whatever the impact of our protest on an administration drunk on its own power, it shows the rest of the world that vast numbers of ordinary Americans disagree and helps deflect anti-American sentiment, perhaps even violence, away from U.S. citizens. Dissent gives us back our dignity as we resist attempts to intimidate and silence us, and challenges and changes us at a personal level.

Global protests have handed the White House United Nations setbacks, prompting daily anti-European tirades that sound an awful lot like those of a petulant child finally being told "NO". If enough ordinary citizens here at home have the courage to keep saying "no" to reckless actions, there is no telling what we can stop. And if we accompany that "no" with a "yes" that demands a world where humans are treated with respect, there is no telling what we can create, for only by persisting do we have a chance to break the cycles of endless enemies, retaliations and deaths of ordinary people caught in the crossfire.

Paul Loeb is the author of *Soul of a Citizen: Living With Conviction in a Cynical Time* (St. Martin's Press) and three other books on citizen involvement. Geov Parrish is a columnist for [www.workingforchange.com](http://www.workingforchange.com), the *Seattle Weekly* and *In These Times*.

## THE IRAQI CRISIS: WHAT NOW?

BY DAVID A. HOROWITZ

We are living in momentous times. At enormous risk to global goodwill and its future security, the United States has reclaimed the emancipatory mission of a historical identity forged in the American Revolution, the Civil War and World War 2. Governments do not take to arms without direct reference to national interests. In the post-9/11 world, these are framed by a determination that no dictatorial state be permitted to offer a potential base for international terrorists with access to portable chemical, biological or nuclear weapons. The broader lines of this policy have been outlined in Tony Blair's insistence that mass murderers be put on notice that the world has the will and means to confront their ideological fanaticism. The rapid fall of Saddam Hussein's bloody regime under a unique set of circumstances signals the bankruptcy of the delusory posturing by which many of the Middle East's religious and political autocrats have kept their populations under sway and threatened world peace.

Many critics, myself included, hoped that the United States would work with its European allies in pursuing a more stringent weapons inspection regime as a prelude to United Nations support for military action. Three factors contributed to the Bush administration's rejection of this approach. First, the White House felt that UN inspectors could never find Iraqi weapons without help from the regime's intimidated scientists. Second, the French began to signal that under no circumstances would they approve a Security Council resolution for armed force. Third, military deployment in the region, which gave credibility to inspectors, faced logistical complications if intervention was extensively delayed. In the end, Resolution 1441 was sufficiently ambiguous about the use of force to leave daylight for military action under international law. A precedent for mobilization outside UN approval had been set when NATO, not the Security Council, provided the umbrella for Bill Clinton's use of troops and air power to end the genocidal ethnic cleansing of European Muslims in Serb-dominated Bosnia and Kosovo.

Some observers (including myself) warned of possible reverberations of an invasion of Iraq: fierce resistance by nationalists and the horrors of urban warfare; huge civilian deaths, refugee flows, and humanitarian disasters; the torching of oil wells; bitter inter-ethnic fighting; interference by Turkey or Iran; use of chemical weapons against coalition forces; furious anti-American outbursts and resulting instability among Middle East allies; irreparable strains in international relations; and increased terror attacks within the United States. Other opponents of military action dismissed Gulf War 2 as an

imperial adventure by Washington right-wingers designed to assure U.S. hegemony in the region, take control of Iraq's oil, and eliminate opposition to Israel. The cost, predicted one Oregon peace publication, would be 500,000 Iraqi deaths, 460,000 refugees, and millions of famine-ravished civilians.

It now seems clear that the critics underestimated the unpopularity of the Ba'athist police state as well as the humane competence of the liberation forces. This may be a result of the congenital aversion to military affairs in bastions of liberal culture like Portland State University. Why else would so many intellectuals fail to realize that military planners learned from Vietnam that indiscriminate bombing and insensitivity to local cultures can doom any campaign? Unofficial estimates suggest there may have been as many as 2,000 civilian casualties in the Iraq war, although Saddam's misfired missiles, loyalist paramilitary executions, attrition among the regime's irregular forces, and disinformation from Baghdad make it impossible to determine the extent of U.S. responsibility. The loss of innocent life is an inevitable and terrible part of war, but careful selection and omission of bombing targets and cooperation with Iraqi locals on the ground most likely spared thousands from this fate and kept the total relatively low.

Much of the credit for the Iraq campaign belongs to the well-trained and idealistic young men and women who serve in the U.S. military, arguably the most successful multicultural, ethnically diverse and democratic institution in the country, if not the world. It is instructive to contrast the commitment of these ordinary citizens to the cynicism about national goals and the depressive mentality that pervades much of academic culture and the remnants of the peace movement. I have described antiwar protesters in a recent interview as pathetic members of a "confessional cult" mainly engaged in a conversation among themselves. Rather than celebrate this development, I regret that the moral smugness, ideological rigidity and marginalized nature of the peace lobby has left American public discourse without a creditable opposition that can reasonably examine the strategic choices that most certainly await us down the road.

*David Horowitz is professor of U.S. cultural and 20th century history at Portland State University. He is the author of Beyond Left & Right: Insurgency & the Establishment. His most recent article in the NCTE appeared in the Jan/Feb 2003 issue ('Peace Activists Must Broaden Their Horizons'). His comments are from a faculty panel and forum at PSU. He and his wife Gloria Myers, also a writer and historian, live in Portland and Arch Cape.*