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THE WAR ON TERROR

A Five-Year Retrospective

Looking From the Outside In

BY LORA STEINER

Since Sept. 11, 2001, the world has changed: New words have entered our vocabulary, new images have supplanted themselves in our minds and new fears color our world.

This year marks five years since the World Trade Center Twin Towers were destroyed, five years since the invasion of Afghanistan and five years of changes in how the United States approaches everything from foreign policy to civil liberties to economics and development.

And it's not only our own policies which have changed: from Colombia to the Philippines, from Australia to South Africa, other countries are tightening their borders, changing immigration and visa policies and responding in increasingly militarized ways.

At the same time, as David Pankratz points out in this issue, more North Americans are studying the language, history and politics of the Middle East, and there is an increased recognition that we have a role to play in addressing problems outside our own borders (pg. 7).

In 2006, the *Washington Memo* will be examining how the world has changed in the last five years, reflecting on what we have gained and what we have lost.

In this issue, Angong Acuil shares about the view of Kenyans (pg. 3), Peter Dula writes from Amman, Jordan (pg. 4), and Michael and Addie Banks write about work in New York City (pg. 6), while Bethany Spicher

Schonberg tells about how the war on terror has affected immigration (pg. 5).

We also asked several Mennonites to share their opinions about what gains or losses they believe have resulted from the war on terror. We are inviting our readers—that's you—to respond with their own experiences and stories, and will print submissions in the *Memo* and post them on our Web site.

And as always, we seek to find faithful ways to respond to terrorism and to live in a world in which violence and retaliation are counter to the ways in which Christians are guided to live: "If your enemies are hungry, give them bread to eat," says Proverbs 25:21. "Do not repay anyone evil for evil," writes Paul in Romans (12:17). "Put your sword back into its place," said Jesus to Peter, when the soldiers had come for him, "for all who take the sword will perish by the sword" (Matthew 26: 52).

John Paul Lederach, professor of International Peacebuilding at the Kroc Institute of the University of Notre Dame (Ind.), says that ultimately, an adequate response to terrorism will require us to recognize our interdependence on each other. "We do not and cannot live isolated from the world," he says.

"The quality of our security at home is related not to the size or quantity of our weapons, but to the quality of our relationships and the well-being of the human family." ■

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BY J. DARYL BYLER

What if instead of being consumed with U.S. security, our nation chose to “lose” its life for the benefit of others?

Losing Our Lives

I can’t believe how much you’ve grown!” How many times have you said this to a child you haven’t seen for several years?

Several years can make a lot of difference in a nation’s life as well.

If anyone had said in early 2001 that the United States would be spending nearly \$500 billion for military operations by 2006, they would have been dismissed as naive.

In 2001, U.S. military spending hovered around \$300 billion. The Cold War was over and, while a “peace dividend” was never fully realized, at least military spending had leveled off.

And then came Sept. 11, 2001.

So much has changed in the last five years. Runaway military spending is only part of the picture. In the name of preserving freedom and democracy, the United States is acting less and less like a free and democratic nation.

Thick metal bollards anchored in tons of concrete now ring all major buildings on Capitol Hill. Barricades and fences impede the flow of people and vehicles. No expense has been spared in trying to “terror-proof” the U.S. capital.

More significantly, the United States has sacrificed long-standing principles and treaties at the altar of national security.

National leaders now accept preventive war—going to war based on the fear of being attacked at a future date. U.S. officials equivocate rather than plainly denounce the use of torture. The Bush administration continues to explore how to build new nuclear weapons, while demanding that other countries not do so.

Might the words of Jesus be relevant for us today? “Those who try to make their life secure will lose it, but those who lose their life will keep it” (Luke 17:33).

What if instead of being consumed with U.S. security, our nation chose to “lose” its life for the benefit of others?

U.S. Americans use more than three times our fair share of the world’s resources. With only four percent of the world’s population, the United States produces a quarter of the world’s carbon dioxide emissions and accounts for more than half of the world’s military expenditures.

What difference might it make if the United States consumed less and shared more? What if instead of increasing military budgets, the United States would increase its commitment to debt relief, fair trade, development aid and diplomacy?

So much has changed in the last five years. Much of it seems for the worse.

Would that the next five years be the start of a new trend—one focused on “losing” our lives for the benefit of others. In so doing, we just might find the elusive security for which we yearn. ■

WASHINGTON MEMO is written by Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office staff. It interprets national legislation and policy, seeking to reflect biblical concerns for justice and peace as represented in the work and statements of MCC U.S. and Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches. All biblical quotes are from the New Revised Standard Version, unless otherwise noted.

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To contact the MCC U.S. Washington Office, please see our address on the back page. See our weekly commentary at www.thirdway.com and visit our web site at www.mcc.org/us/washington.

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BY PETER DULA

From Dictator to Chaos

Few corners of the planet have been unaffected by the forces unleashed by the Bush administration after Sept. 11. But with the exception of perhaps Afghanistan, Iraq is the place where the most destruction has taken place. Here are some headlines from Iraq over the last couple days: "Forty Die in Twin Suicide Attacks," "Twenty Bodies Found in Western Iraq," "Blast Kills 19 Iraqi Soldiers," "Bomb Kills Ten Marines in Falluja." Pick any week in the last two years and the headlines will look much the same.

It is a truism to say the media doesn't tell the whole story. For many, with regard to Iraq, that means the media doesn't tell us about all the good things that are happening in Iraq. But when I talk to my Iraqi friends, it means the opposite. It means, for example, that you never hear about kidnappings of Iraqis. Or that, until recently, we never heard about torture in detention centers run by Iraqis. Or that we never hear what it is like to live without water or electricity on a summer day in Baghdad where temperatures reach over 120 degrees. Or that knowing forty people died in suicide attacks on Dec. 6 is not the same as knowing their names, or their children, or spouses.

It hardly seems necessary to argue that Iraq has been a catastrophe. There are 700 attacks a week on U.S. troops. There are frequently over 100 car bombs and thousands of deaths and kidnappings each month. But apparently we do still need to argue it. An old friend recently forwarded me a mass email that offered advice to Iraq war supporters on what to say in arguments with critics of the war. Here are the first few lines: "There were 39 combat related killings in Iraq in January.

In the fair city of Detroit there were 35 murders in the month of January. That's just one American city, about as deadly as the entire war-torn country of Iraq."

The author of this message and those on this listserv who responded affirmatively to it don't seem to think that any deaths but those of U.S. troops matter in Iraq. But can that really be the case?

The papers are full of what has happened to Iraq. One of the century's most brutal dictators was overthrown only to be replaced with a violent chaos. Iraq went from tyranny to anarchy in the space of a year and everyone knows that no one knows how to fix it. But what has happened to America? What makes decent folks so completely unable to sympathize with the deaths of Iraqis? Stupidity? I don't think so. Apathy? Maybe, but then why bother with the arguments at all? Fear? Maybe. I have one friend, a supporter of the "war on terrorism," who explained the difference between him and me by saying, "You don't have kids."

Americans have never been paragons of political virtues. The debasement of American democracy began long before Sept. 11. That should have told us something three years ago. George Packer writes, in his recent book on Iraq, "It seemed fair to ask, though, how a body politic as out of shape as ours was likely to make it over the long hard slog of wartime; how convincingly we could export democratic values when our own version showed so many signs of atrophy; how much solidarity we could expect to muster for Afghans and Iraqis when we were asked to feel so little for one another." ■

What has happened to America? What makes decent folks so completely unable to sympathize with the deaths of Iraqis?

Pontius' Puddle



Levees, Walls, and the Evil We Deplore

After Sept. 11, 2001, Rep. Barbara Lee (D-Calif.) cast the lone vote against attacking Afghanistan. If the United States bombed another nation so soon after our own tragedy, we would, she said, “become the evil we deplore.”

Despite Rep. Lee’s warning, the United States launched the “War on Terror,” and invaded Iraq, in the name of spreading democracy and freedom. Meanwhile, at home, poverty and fear are on the rise, sure signs, Dorothy Nickel Friesen writes, of “secondary terrorism.”

The conference minister for Mennonite Church USA’s Western District Conference, Nickel Friesen writes in *The Mennonite* (July 20, 2004), “While international terrorism produces color-coded fear . . . losses of livelihood, identity and a way of living are the new terrorism that grips the heartland.”

“Infrastructures are taxed; public policies are inadequate; social services are burdened,” she continues. “While the rural communities are starved for people and economic viability, our urban communities are choked with people and limited resources.”

Billions of dollars for war have tightened budgets for social services. The neglect showed this fall when Hurricane Katrina revealed that the Gulf States—Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama—already had poverty rates of 20 percent or higher, far above the national average of 12.7 percent.

Still, the House of Representatives recently passed a budget bill that would deny food stamps to 220,000 low-income people—including 70,000 documented immigrants, cut \$11 from the Medicaid program and increase welfare recipients’ work hours from 30 to 40 without corresponding increases in child care funding.

Not surprisingly, fear of international terrorists and anger at economic hardship is often directed at immigrants to the United States. Talk shows and local newspapers accuse immigrants of taking jobs, increasing crime and crowding schools and hospitals. And anti-immigrant vigilante groups called “Minutemen” are gaining participants across the country.

This despite the fact that many immigrants already live in fear of discrimination and deportation, are routinely denied worker protections or social services (even though they pay taxes) and—in some cases—come from countries impoverished in part by U.S. economic policies.

In response, members of Congress seem determined to outdo each other’s anti-immigrant bills, variously calling for a 2,000-mile border wall, military troops on the border or local police enforcement of immigration laws.

Still, amidst the broken levees and border walls are signs of hope. Many U.S. Americans are recognizing that democracy and freedom are only rhetoric unless they are accessible to all. Some are calling on the government to fund social services that empower low-income communities, and pass immigration reform that legalize undocumented immigrants. Others are seeking changes to U.S. foreign and economic policy, understanding that our homeland will never be secure unless our neighbors are secure, as well.

And as this *Memo* goes to press, plans are in the works for religious leaders from across the country to gather in the Capitol Rotunda on Dec. 14 to pray—in protest and hope—while Congress debates the Senate and House budget proposals.

“The groaning of creation is, actually, a sign of new life (Romans 8:22),” writes Nickel Friesen. “Let us be part of this new creation, assisting in birthing the fruits of the Spirit.” ■

BY BETHANY SPICHER
SCHONBERG

Not surprisingly, fear of international terrorists and anger at economic hardship is often directed at immigrants to the United States.

BY MICHAEL AND
ADDIE BANKS

Michael and Addie Banks
are peace evangelists and
pastors of the King of Glory
Tabernacle (Bronx, NY).

We are discovering that
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For Such a Time as This

After Sept. 11, New York City acquired a limp. The towering megaliths that paid homage to this city's image as an international and economic power collapsed under the rage of self-appointed martyrs who made a sacrifice of violence. New York's infirmity became apparent as it evolved into becoming an occupied city—not in the actual sense but psychologically.

The random searches commuters experience on buses and trains, bag check lines at museums, routine detaining of commercial vehicles, increased traffic jams on major bridges and arteries of the city are signs of the times. On holy days the periodic presence of the National Guard flanking entrance doors of prominent houses of worship in Manhattan are meant to make worshipers feel safe and secure. This gives one the sense that global terrorist activity has strongly pervaded the fabric of local urban life. In other boroughs, many of the less prominent synagogues and mosques we have visited since Sept. 11 have succumbed to similar practices, hiring security guards in order to "worship in peace."

From the vantage point of pastoral ministry in the Bronx, the post-Sept. 11 global complexities of conquest and control ultimately rebound upon people whose voice and interests are considered non-essential. It is in this broken stride that we find ourselves enabled by the message of the Gospel of peace "for such a time as this." We see the marriage between peace and evangelism becoming relevant to our community as we advance options that are rooted in the life and teachings of Jesus.

The post-Sept. 11 environment has created windows of opportunity that have increased dialogue and collaboration with individuals and grassroots community organizations including mosques and synagogues. Consequently, our ministry paradigm is being shaped on three levels. First, there is the practical expression of faith. We proclaim faith in response to a culture of fear. The imminent presence of Christ in our daily lives and the resurrection story inform this faith. Hospitality between neighbors defuses the alienation produced by the media and manufactured misinformation. More than ever we see the need for a unified vision among local Anabaptist congregations and the need for sharing resources.

Second, assumptions that governed the spiritual formation of our congregation have expanded to include equipping the church to respond to trauma. In addition, we are discovering that studying scripture in view of the geopolitical implications of U.S. government policies at home and abroad demands that we clarify and strengthen our allegiance to the "Way of Christ."

Finally, we must respond as a peace church that not only advocates peace and justice but also engages the prophetic imagination in order to *demonstrate* the Way. The Groundswell Project, a peace and justice resource center, was birthed out of this challenge. It has provided our congregation with another means to fulfill our vision to "express the reconciling transforming love of God through Jesus Christ." To paraphrase Hebrews 12:12, Sept. 11 has caused us to "strengthen our feeble arms and weak knees. And close up the gaps in our walk of faith so that the lame we encounter will not be further disabled but rather healed." ■

Readers Say

How has the world changed since Sept. 11, 2001? We welcome your stories and thoughts, reflecting on personal, national or global gains or losses. Mail them to the MCC Washington Office, 920 Pennsylvania Ave. SE, Washington, DC 20003, or email them to lsteiner@mcc.org. We may edit letters for length and clarity.

David Pankratz, of Winnipeg, Manitoba, writes:

Gains have included:

1. The ending of sanctions in Iraq;
2. A recognition by more people that there are problems outside North American borders that we must deal with;
3. The removal of Saddam Hussein, and the (however remote) possibility of a representative government in Iraq; and
4. More people in North America studying Arabic and Middle Eastern politics.

Losses have included:

1. The use of a metaphor (the war on . . .) for dealing with terrorism that evokes images of killing and eliminating rather than one that invokes understanding and transformation (“anti-terrorism initiative,” etc.);
2. Enormous federal budget deficits;
3. The loss of international goodwill towards the United States (a result of how the war on terror was handled, not a direct result of the war on terror itself, which initially united the world);
4. A growing “militarization” of the world—Japan has been pressured to change its constitution to allow its troops to operate outside of Japanese soil; and
5. The equation in some minds of Islam/Arabs with terrorists.

Mary Riley writes via e-mail:

The losses are so obvious, and tragic: first and foremost, of course, tens of thousands of lives—American soldiers (and civilians), Iraqis, Afghans, and others. The war on terror is, like all war, essentially war on people. No longer can the various “democratic” institutions operate for the people, even as they struggle along still in part, by the people and of the people, because war is always against the people “on the ground,” as the newscasters like to say. And when it comes down to it, we are all “on the ground” are we not? At some point in each day now, and we know it and feel it. We feel that, I think, keenly, and the “quality” of our daily lives is in many ways has almost immeasurably changed. The very parts of our souls that measure “security” and “home” and “land” have been twisted into that terrible mantra, “Homeland Security.” . . . We didn’t get to vote on that.

In a way what has changed since the so-called “war on terror” isn’t very much except that now it’s “out,” it’s on the table—what was covert is obvious.

In . . . any world where a few live in comfort, ease and wealth, and the many live in poverty, disease and hopelessness, it will always be a world where if there is not “a war on terror” (of the internal, peace-bent, nonviolent kind) one must ask, “Why isn’t there?” ■

Gains from the war in Iraq have included the removal of Saddam Hussein and the (however remote) possibility of a representative government in Iraq.

—DAVID PANKRATZ

The very parts of our souls that measure “security” and “home” and “land” have been twisted into that terrible mantra, “Homeland Security.”

—MARY RILEY



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SOUND THE TRUMPET!

ISSUE	SUMMARY	ADVOCACY NEEDED
DEBT	In 2005, world leaders took a step towards alleviating global poverty when they agreed to cancel 100 percent of the debts of 18 impoverished countries, which were owed to the IMF and the World Bank. The Jubilee Act (H.R. 1130) would commit the United States to working for debt relief for 50 additional countries, without imposing harmful economic conditions at the same time.	Encourage your legislators to co-sponsor the Jubilee Act. If your representative is already co-sponsoring the bill, thank him or her for doing so. For more information on the bill, contact the MCC Washington Office.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

New Resource from MCC

Children of the Nakba is a new video which tells the stories of Palestinian refugees. Between the years of 1947 and 1949, hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were expelled from their land, an event known in Arabic as the *Nakba*, or "Catastrophe." Both Palestinians and Israelis are children of the *Nakba*, heirs to a story of dispossession. To order, call 1-888-563-4676 or visit MCC's Web site at www.mcc.org.

Calendar

Ecumenical Advocacy Days, March 10-13, 2006. This gathering draws hundreds of Christians from all over the United States to discuss faith and public policy. This year's tracks cover Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Latin America, domestic, Jubilee and economic justice, eco-justice, and global security. For more information visit www.advocacydays.org or call (202) 230-2276.