

Chapitre/Chapter 32

Pacifists Abroad: Resistance to U.S. Imperialism Outside the United States and its Cooptation by the Democratic Party, 2001-2006

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Placed in the historical context of pacifist movements in the United States, our subject is very contemporary, as it concerns American anti-war efforts outside the US since the immediate aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks and the subsequent war on Afghanistan.

Following the U.S. aggression in Afghanistan, we created in Montpellier, France an anti-war group called “Americans for Peace and Justice”. There was nothing remarkable about this, but we believe that our experience with this group, and our group’s relations with similar groups created between 9-11 and the war on Iraq in March 2003 (there are six million United-Statesians living outside the boundaries of the United States), illustrates some basic problems or questions faced by all “pacifist” groups in the contemporary world.

On the surface, “pacifist” action is simple – one is opposed to war; one is in favor of peace. As a moral imperative and ethical practice, this is clear. However, the question is more complex when one attempts to eliminate the causes of war and the use of institutionalized violence. Pacifists diverge importantly, both philosophically and practically, in this regard. Such divergences proved important in the orientation and activities of our group. For us, the bombardment of Afghanistan, and the subsequent invasion and occupation of the country was an imperialist act for which there was no convincing justification. Like so many others, we perceived this aggression as yet another intolerable display of wilful destruction, cultural blindness and economic rapacity – all cloaked in moral righteousness.

In Montpellier, on the occasion of the first demonstration against the attack on Afghanistan, Lawrence McGuire took the initiative to mobilize the local “Americans” against the war. Lawrence prepared a large banner (made of linoleum) proclaiming: “Americans against War”, as well as printed articles from Common Dreams, CounterPunch and Z-net. Larry Portis was the only person of American origin to respond to McGuire’s internet appeal.¹ The idea of creating a group was suggested by a French journalist at this first demonstration. After discussion and investigation, we officially created Americans for Peace and Justice as a legal association (similar to the status of a ‘non-profit’ in the U.S.) under the French law of 1901. Our intention was to create an official entity capable of establishing its presence in the community and in the communications media for the purpose of influencing public opinion.

APJ is an anti-war group, but we wished to leave it open to a broad perspective on questions of social justice. Our “mission statement” declares:

“We oppose the settlement of conflicts by force, while recognizing the right of people to defend themselves against infringement of their human and civil liberties.

Our objectives are:

- 1) To promote peace by opposing war and all forms of oppression
- 2) To promote justice by identifying and denouncing the political and economic sources of injustice.

¹ <http://www.americansforpeaceandjustice.org/History/Documents/Linoleum.htm>

Along with others who share our objectives, we take public action to achieve these aims.”² Once the group was created, at each new demonstration we attracted more and more members. Soon, we were an active member of a coalition of progressive groups planning the anti-war demonstrations in Montpellier.

By February 2003, we were aware that many similar groups of U.S. citizens against the war(s) had been created in Europe and elsewhere outside the United States. In July 2003, an initiative was undertaken to federate these groups in a coalition to be called “American Voices Abroad” (AVA). McGuire went to Berlin to participate in the creation of AVA. This was done, and it was an excellent idea. However, after two other AVA conferences, a problem emerged: the authority of AVA in relation to the member organizations remained unclear. By 2004, APJ decided to withdraw from AVA.

In fact, the misgivings about AVA were part of a more general and profound ambiguity inherent not only in AVA, but also in our group and in the other newly created anti-war groups. The compelling question had become: how should anti-war groups orient themselves in relation to the U.S. elections in 2004?

Our position, which was not shared by all members of our group, was that APJ should not support any candidate in this presidential election, and especially not Senator John Kerry. Our reasoning was that Senator Kerry’s position on the issue of the war and occupation in Iraq was not fundamentally different from that of President George Bush.

The problem was that, on the one hand, our position had the potential of dividing and thus weakening our component of the movement against the war. On the other hand, diverting energies to support candidates who could not be expected to end the war could prove even more crippling to the anti-war movement. We also realized that our efforts to oppose U.S. imperialism were limited by certain political attitudes of many of our fellow United-Statesians.

The political culture and mentality of people raised and educated in the United States is undoubtedly too complex to discuss adequately here, but there appear to be two major factors which may explain the difficulty experienced by most U.S. expatriates in opposing established political institutions. First, most U.S. residents of other countries are not immigrants; they are temporary residents or expatriates. In brief, they are privileged people with ideas and perspectives typical of elite social classes (no matter how relative these social and cultural distinctions may be). Second, the framework of the U.S. two-party system is a conceptual horizon that most United-Statesians have difficulty surmounting. For a great number of those who consider themselves political progressives, support for the Democratic Party seemed to be the only practical alternative to George Bush’s policies, and yet the Democratic Party does not seem to have an alternative policy.

But the key point is that when electoral politics were accepted as a focus for political activism, then, in the context of the invasion and occupation of Iraq, it was inevitable that most of the work would go towards defeating Bush and voting for whatever Democrat won the primaries and stood against Bush, and that the issue would change from ‘Against War’ to ‘Against Bush’, a fundamental change in focus.

² <http://www.americansforpeaceandjustice.org>

The two-party status quo exerts a co-optive force on pacifist groups who consider U.S. electoral politics important. And to argue against electoral politics puts you far outside the acceptable political spectrum if US citizen groups abroad are your starting points for organizing. When you group together on the basis of *nationality*, which our groups did for various reasons (for example media attention, feelings of personal responsibility, etc.), then you begin your group without a basis of shared political viewpoint. And so within each group you have people who view US politics from the standard point of view of ‘liberals’ and ‘conservatives’ and others who view US politics from an economic basis, for example, or a historical basis, or a structural basis, or typically from a combination of such viewpoints. On the other hand, many of the people in these groups have been outside of the US a long time, and many were involved in the civil rights and antiwar movements of the 1960’s. Such a spectrum of people was noticeable within our group, and present at the three congresses of American Voices Abroad. Discussion of this attempt to federate U.S. citizen antiwar groups outside the United States is essential in understanding the activities of the anti-war movement today.

Lawrence McGuire attended the first Congress of American Voices Abroad in Berlin during the week of July 4, 2003. The Congress was organized by a very active Berlin group, and included a week of film, an evening of music, and two intensive days of discussions and workshops. An open invitation had been sent out, via the internet and email. There were representatives from groups, as well as individual attendees, from all over Europe.

Arriving in Berlin as President of APJ, McGuire found that there was already a plan to form a coalition, in fact the name was already created, American Voices Abroad, but the coalition had no mission statement, although the conference itself had a coalition statement for the participants to sign, and numerous suggested action proposals had already been put on the table.

It was assumed by many of the attendees that electoral politics would be a central area of work and concern. (In fact many of the attendees were active members of Democrats Abroad, though they did not come as representatives of that organization.) For example, one of the main organizers of the Berlin Congress proposed a future conference where “A key goal is to inspire a sister city to hold a 2nd AVA Congress, where we will be able to review our progress, adopt a more structured organization, and perhaps take a position on the 2004 election. Ideally, this second gathering will be held in advance of the first presidential primaries in January 2004.”³

Among the proposed action initiatives scheduled for discussion was one about voter registration and voting, another was about creating a 100,000 member voting block based on signing a voting pledge, which was called a ‘media tool for shaping elections’ focused on the doctrine of pre-emptive war (so called Bush Doctrine), and the Patriot Act. From the beginning, therefore, the issue of electoral politics was central to a meeting of groups of U.S. citizens against the war, pacifist groups if you will.⁴

The Berlin Conference was a great success for bringing together US antiwar activists from all over Europe. In spite of the partial focus on electoral politics and its potential for dividing and weakening the coalition, the first mission statement was quite progressive, including a mention of economic and social justice. AVA dedicated itself: 1) To promote peace, to

³ Email from Nicolas Levis

⁴ <http://americansineurope.org/old/>

oppose wars of aggression, (and to take action toward these ends in relation to U.S. policy.) 2) To promote economic and social justice (in U.S. policy.) 3) To affirm the rights of all people to democratic self-determination and the right to resist injustice and tyranny. 4) As a coalition, to maintain non-violence in our tactics and direct actions. 5) To raise awareness that a fully and accurately informed public is essential to the survival of democracy.⁵

Subsequently, there were two more Congresses of the AVA (American Voices Abroad) coalition. At the second Congress in Prague in November 2003 electoral politics was more and more the central topic of discussions. One of the main topics was the '100,000 for 2004' project which its proponents described as "...not a project of Democrats Abroad, and certainly not of Republicans Abroad. It is a non-partisan effort to "create a voting block of 100,000 registered voters dedicated to 1) ending the Bush Doctrine of Preventive War and 2) Repealing the Patriot Act." By signing the little pledge form, all you are saying is that you will vote in the primaries and national elections for a candidate that stands for the above two actions."⁶ Significantly, this initiative died when pro-war Kerry became the Democratic Party Candidate and so the 'pledge' would have meant a promise to vote for Ralph Nader, which, it became clear, was *not* the aim of the initiative's proponents.

In May 2003, in Paris, the Third and last AVA Congress occurred. Again the issue of electoral politics was front and center, (although for the first time the Palestinian issue was discussed in a workshop) with a clear division not only within the coalition, but within individual groups, concerning whether to work actively for the election of a pro-war Democratic Party candidate.

In November 2004, shortly after the election, APJ (Americans for Peace and Justice, Montpellier, France) withdrew from the coalition, with a proposal to work directly with established groups throughout Europe. The Paris group Americans Against War, AAW, withdrew from AVA in the spring of 2006. As of this writing (June 2006) AVA is a shell of its former self, basically a network of individuals rather than a coalition of groups.⁷

APJ withdrew because, after three congresses, the decision making structure of the coalition was still undemocratic, based on a 'liaison' from each group (no matter its size) having one vote. Thus a vote from our group of 25 members could be nullified by a 'liaison' from a one or two person 'group'. In addition, a majority of liaisons it turned out were also active members of Democrats Abroad,⁸ even though at the time Democrats Abroad had endorsed the pro-war Democratic Party candidate John Kerry.⁹

⁵ <http://www.avaworld.net/> The current AVA mission statement is an expanded version of the original

⁶ http://www.americansineurope.org/pledge_form.pdf

⁷ <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/avadiscuss/> Here is the current listserve for AVA

⁸ For example:

(the late) Linda Deak: Democrats Abroad, The Netherlands

Meredith Wheeler: Democrats Abroad, France, Southwest Chapter

Elsa Rassbach: Democrats Abroad, Germany

Julie Wornan: Democrats Abroad France, Paris Chapter (membership unknown, but active with Democrats Abroad, see footnote 36 below)

Eugene Sensenig-Dabbous : Democrats Abroad, Lebanon

Ann Wertheimer : Democrats Abroad, Germany

Antje H. Lewis : Democrats Abroad, Austria

⁹"Sen. John Kerry received the most support from the delegates attending the regional and global Democratic party conventions in Edinburgh, Scotland on March 27-28, 2004." <http://www.democratsabroad.org/stay-informed/overseas-democrat/2004/06/002713.php>

Democrats Abroad, first formed in 1964, has had since 1976 state-level recognition by the Democratic National Committee, and because of this is sometimes referred to as the 51st state, since there are 6 million US citizens living outside the United States, a population greater than in 35 states combined. Democrats Abroad has 8 members on the Democratic National Committee. It also sends 22 people, with 9 votes, to the Democratic National Convention every four years.¹⁰ In addition, there is a 'special' category of ex-patriot Democrats, the ones with a lot of money to contribute: "The newly founded DexPat Leadership Council (DPLC) was created to keep our most generous Democrats living abroad tightly connected with the Democratic Party.The goal of the DexPat Leadership Council is to provide resources that will help Democrats win elections and get our country back on track, not least to regain its standing in the global community."¹¹

The governing body of Democrats Abroad is the Democratic Party Committee Abroad (DPCA), which oversees Democrats Abroad's activities. This body is itself steered by the an Executive Council of officers. The DPCA is comprised of the Chair and Vice Chair of each Country Committee, and the elected international officers (the Executive Council) of the DPCA (International Chair, International Vice Chair, Secretary, Treasurer, Counsel, Regional Vice Chairs), as well as six of the eight representatives of Democrats Abroad to the DNC. However, on the website of Democrats Abroad International it is impossible to find out the officers of this worldwide influential organization, and the same is true for many individual country chapters, though it is quite easy to join and contribute funds via the Democrats Abroad website.¹²

To show exactly how Peace and Justice activists are co-opted¹³ by working within the Democratic Party we must look at the institutional framework of Democrats Abroad. As mentioned above an elite council controls the organization, the Democratic Party Committee Abroad ("DPCA"), which in turn is controlled by an Executive Committee of Democrats Abroad International. The Executive Council of the DPCA controls Democrats Abroad and it is elected, but not democratically elected by a majority vote of Democrats Abroad members. Instead they are elected via a system of elite party control. Consider section 3.6.b of the Democrats Abroad by-laws:

"(b) Entitlement to vote shall be as follows: each elected DPCA [Democratic Party Committee Abroad] officer and each DNC [Democratic National Committee] member representing Democrats Abroad--one vote; each Country Committee--one vote;

each Country Committee which has paid its dues to the DPCA for the current year and is represented at the meeting by a member of its Country Committee shall also be entitled to additional votes, based upon the number of members for which dues have been paid for the

¹⁰ <http://www.democratsabroad.org/about/history/>

¹¹ http://www.democrats.org/a/p/democratic_expatriot_leadership_council_dexpats.html

¹² <http://www.democratsabroad.org/about/bylaws/>

¹³Also there are more direct attempts at co-option. Mark Cramer, current President of the Paris antiwar group AAW said there were "...at least 20 examples where the Democrats had entered AAW and then disrupted or attempted to co-opt or absorb." <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/aawfrance/message/11476> Also interesting is the Democrats Abroad France reaction to the proposed visit of Cindy Sheehan in the spring of 2006. Although Democrats Abroad France had sponsored events supporting Sheehan in the Summer of 2005 (see <http://www.demsfrance.org/speakers.htm>), their Chair, Connie Borde, refused to involve Democrats Abroad France with organizing the proposed visit, (see <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/aawfrance/>) perhaps a result of Sheehan's strong criticism of pro-war Democratic Party politicians in the Fall of 2005.

then current year ("Supplemental Votes"), as follows:

100-500 members--..... 1 Supplemental Vote
501-1000 members--..... 2 Supplemental Votes
1001 or more members--..... 3 Supplemental Votes"¹⁴

In other words a Democrats Abroad chapter with fifty members has one vote, and one with 1050 members has four votes. In addition *each* elected DPCA officer, who constitutes the 'Executive Committee', has the *same* voting power as a Democrats Abroad chapter with 99 members: one vote. It must be concluded that "Democrats Abroad" is not a particularly democratic organization. For peace activists, working within Democrats Abroad is consequently more than difficult. Even if peace and justice activists have a majority of people in Democrats Abroad they can easily be stymied by the power of the elite Executive Council of the DPCA. No majority rule here, no democracy.

There is another mechanism in the by-laws of Democrats Abroad which serves to co-opt peace and justice activists and any contesting movement that may emerge within Democrats Abroad. In section 5.9 of the by-laws it is stated that "A Country Committee or Committee in Formation may be suspended from full membership by unanimous vote of the Executive Committee or by a majority vote of the DPCA if ... it engages in conduct which seriously prejudices the interests of the Democratic Party of the United States, the DNC, or Democrats Abroad."¹⁵ Thus, any movement within Democrats Abroad which challenges the pro-war pro-imperialist leadership of the Democratic Party can be interpreted, easily, as 'prejudicing the interests of the Democratic Party', and so the offending chapters ('country committees') can be expelled. The six to ten officers on the DPCA Executive Committee could, if necessary, kick out whole chapters based upon how they interpret the interests of the Democratic Party.

The interests or, rather, the aims of the Democratic Party nationally dominate Democrats Abroad's organization and activity. As mentioned in Article One of its by-laws: "Democrats Abroad is the organization which represents all United States citizens resident outside the United States who wish to adhere to the principles and further the aims of the Democratic Party of the United States of America."¹⁶

What *are* the aims or principles of the Democratic Party? On the home page of the Democratic Party we searched and found nothing. This means that 'principles' and 'aims' can be interpreted however anyone in power wishes. Certainly, criticising the leaders of the party and their pro-war and pro-imperialist policies could be seen by those leaders as *not* furthering the aims of the party. And in fact, we have found not a single official criticism of the Democratic Party by any Democrats Abroad Chapter. However with an 'anti Bush' message and a lot of money and organized groups, Democrats Abroad can attract potential antiwar activists. But the energy of these activists is wasted as Democrats Abroad follows, inevitably because of their charter and by-laws, the dictates of the leadership of the Democratic Party.

To its credit, over the past few years Democrats Abroad has passed a number of antiwar resolutions. In November of 2002, they passed a resolution opposing the planned war in Iraq, and later another resolution calling for withdrawal from Iraq and another opposed to the U.S.

¹⁴ <http://www.democratsabroad.org/about/bylaws/#four>

¹⁵ <http://www.democratsabroad.org/about/bylaws/#five>

¹⁶ <http://www.democratsabroad.org/about/bylaws/#one>

use of torture.¹⁷ However, these and other recent resolutions always targeted U.S. President George Bush and said nothing about the Democratic Party itself, which supported Bush and the war before and after the invasion of Iraq. And, in 2004, as mentioned, Democrats Abroad fully supported a pro-war Presidential candidate, Senator Kerry.

It should come as no surprise that most of the people who control Democrats Abroad, the Executive Committee of the DCPA, and the Executive Committees of individual chapters all over the world, come from the political and financial elite of the U.S. Above the individual chapters of the Democrats Abroad sits The Executive Committee of Democratic Party Committee Abroad (DPCA). Its current Chairperson, Michael Ceurvorst, is a retired U.S. career diplomat with the U.S. State Department, a former US Consul.¹⁸ The important position of legal counsel for the Executive Committee of the DPCA (responsible, for example, for the legal interpretation of the by-laws mentioned above), is held by former Democrats Abroad Chair Joseph Smallhoover,¹⁹ a corporate lawyer based in Paris, whose firm offers "...first class legal services to French and multinational clients across a broad spectrum of industries, from pharmaceuticals and biotechnology to construction and heavy industry. Areas of particular expertise include mergers and acquisitions, international joint ventures, banking and finance, investment funds, private equity, pharmaceuticals and biotechnology, litigation and international arbitration and domestic employment and tax law."²⁰ The treasurer of the DPCA Executive Committee, Stanley Grossman, is the owner of a medical science company based in the UK.²¹

If we turn to a powerful individual chapter of Democrats Abroad, Democrats Abroad France (which, with the UK chapter, founded Democrats Abroad in 1964), with 2400 members, we find the same pattern. The Chairperson of Democrats Abroad France, Connie Borde, is the spouse of a corporate lawyer, Dominique Borde²², who attended the elite World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland in 2004 and was quoted in the *International Herald Tribune* praising a speech there by Vice President Cheney: "Dominique Borde, a French law firm partner, praised Mr. Cheney's tone. But he said the vice president offered little evidence that the United States planned to pay more heed to France or other allies in formulating its foreign policy." Mr. Borde is quoted as saying that "This is a world where economic might prevails. We're not run by an empire. We're run by a democracy."²³ Mr. Borde "...specializes in mergers and acquisitions, securities law and arbitration...is a permanent member of the International Chamber of Commerce." And has "... established long standing partnerships with many of the world's top financial institutions, Fortune 500 companies and other leading corporations."²⁴

¹⁷ <http://www.democratsabroad.org/about/resolutions/>

¹⁸ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Democrats_Abroad

¹⁹ see <http://www.abcg.org/c2k/smhoover.htm> and <http://www.montrealdemocrats.com/about/index.htm> and <http://www.dechert.com/lawyers/lawyers.jsp?pg=detail&id=414> Smallhoover is connected with the DLC, the right wing of the Democratic Party: "The DLC faction is headed by Joseph J. Smallhoover who has been dubbed 'Little Napoleon' by his detractors. Based in Paris, Smallhoover is a partner in Dechert LLP, DA's International Counsel and a 22-year veteran of Democrats Abroad infighting."

<http://www.democrats.com/node/8021>

²⁰ <http://www.dechert.com/offices/offices.jsp?pg=detail&id=10>

²¹ See <http://www.democrats.com/node/8021> and <http://www.drinkdetective.com/>

²² <http://www.demsfrance.org/contact.htm> and

http://www.uexpress.com/printable/print.html?uc_full_date=20001108&uc_comic=rr

²³ *International Herald Tribune*, January 25, 2004 Mr. Borde apparently finds no contradiction between a 'world where economic might prevails' and 'democracy'.

²⁴ <http://www.paulhastings.com/ProfessionalDetail.aspx?ProfessionalId=210784>

Similarly the Vice-Chair of Democrats Abroad France, Rey Riemer, is with the International Chamber of Commerce and the American Chamber of Commerce in France.²⁵ He is a member of a Task Force which: "...follows developments in the OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development of importance to U.S. business interests in Europe. It has regular meetings with the U.S. Ambassador to the OECD and senior advisers."²⁶

On the executive committee of Democrats Abroad France is another corporate lawyer, Tom O'Neill, who specializes in the privatization of publicly owned businesses such as Gaz de France.²⁷ The executive committee of Democrats Abroad France also includes Harolyn Mitchell from the Paris-based Forum for Women Entrepreneurs & Executives,²⁸ which "...accelerates women's opportunities to start, manage, lead and invest in market-leading companies by providing its members with powerful access to powerful networks."²⁹ Yet another, Michele McCabe, is a senior manager of human resources at a large consulting firm, IneumConsulting.³⁰

Clearly, if we look just at the Executive Committee of Democrats Abroad International, and at the Executive Committee of one powerful chapter, Democrats Abroad France, we see that power is held by a political and financial elite similar to that which controls the Democratic Party in the U.S. itself.

A brief look at other Democrats Abroad leaders reveals the same pattern. One of the eight representatives sent by Democrats Abroad to the Democratic National Committee, Jamey Dumas, is working on a PhD at Centre for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence (CSTPV) at the University of St Andrews in International Relations. Her work is said to be "...focused on the efficacy of targeted attitude change efforts in counterterrorism and counterinsurgency efforts..."³¹ The conferences of CSTPV are sponsored by 'anti terrorism' companies such as QinetiQ "...one of the world's leading defence technology and security companies. In today's world the challenges faced by governments to detect, identify and respond to both defence and homeland security threats requires the most advanced technical capabilities science can offer."³²

Another representative to the Democratic National Committee is Brent O'Leary, the Japan Asia Legal Compliance Counsel for Bloomberg LP, regarded as a premier site for news and financial information.³³ Yet another, Leo Perez Minaya, is "...a heavyweight businessman and financier in Latin America, and organizer of a billion dollar development project in Santo

²⁵ <http://www.demsfrance.org/contact.htm>

²⁶ <http://www.amchamfrance.org/taskforces.html>

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<http://www.linklaters.com/locations/USCareers/english/summer/profiles/profilepage.asp?ProfileID=153&localnavigationID=4734&CountryID=&RegionID=&RoleID=&practiceareaid>

²⁸ <http://www.demsfrance.org/contact.htm>

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<http://www.linklaters.com/locations/USCareers/english/summer/profiles/profilepage.asp?ProfileID=153&localnavigationID=4734&CountryID=&RegionID=&RoleID=&practiceareaid>

³⁰ <http://management.journaldunet.com/0412/041261ineum.shtml>

³¹ <http://www.democratsabroad.org/about/dnc/jdumas.php>

³² See <http://www.st-andrews.ac.uk/academic/intrel/research/cstpv/pages/index.html> and

<http://www.qinetiq.com/home/aboutqq.html>

³³ <http://wonkspot.com/gators/who.htm> and

<http://72.14.207.104/search?q=cache:mfKIUsTE8cJ:www.demsjapan.jp/dlfiles/Articles/NYTCaucus.pdf+bloomberg+lp+Brent+O%27Leary&hl=en&ct=clnk&cd=7>

Domingo.”³⁴ A Former UK and Germany Democrats Abroad Chair, Mike (Cox) Michener was, in 2005, “...working for the State Department as their single expert on putting a democracy in Iraq...up to his eyes working on the new Iraq constitution.”³⁵

This brief description of the structure of Democrats Abroad and some of its individual leadership shows clearly that ‘working from within’ in order to change the policies of the Democratic Party might well prove to be futile for any committed peace and justice activist. The organizational structure is designed to limit the power of individual members, and the organization is legally bound to support the Democratic Party leadership in the United States which, itself, is composed of corporate interests tied to U.S. imperialism.

* * *

Our intention has not been to expose or denounce, but rather to inform and clarify the divergences and differences which have occurred within an extension of the U.S. movement against the war. Our conclusion is two-fold. The first conclusion concerns conflicting social and political forces in relation to economic and strategic interests. The second conclusion concerns conceptual problems and philosophical debates within anti-war movements in general.

For approximately one century, the Democratic Party in the United States has represented the interests of industrial and financial capital in the U.S. and throughout the world – all the while claiming working people, disadvantaged ethnic groups and progressive elements of the intelligentsia as its social constituency. Beyond this orientation, during the past 140 years, the Democratic Party and the Republican Party have jointly exercised control over the electoral process to the point that the “two-party system” is considered by many to be unchangeable. The result is that any rejection of this situation is said to be irresponsible. Even Michael Moore – known for having said that the problem is not the “lesser of two evils,” but rather the “evil of two lessers” – supported the Democratic Party in 2004. This kind of support is maintained in spite of the fact that the Democratic Party, while critical of Bush, supported the war and the military occupation of Iraq, and continues to do so at the time of this writing. Democrats Abroad *is* the Democratic Party outside the United States. As we have shown, this organization – far from democratic in structure and in its functioning – is a strong, and perhaps crippling, influence on the anti-war activities of United-Statesians in Europe.

Our second conclusion involves the culture or mentality of United-Statesians, and their role in ensuring support for the Democratic Party. Why do people, who are sincerely opposed to U.S. military aggression and to other forms of U.S. hegemonic force, continue to either adhere to the Democratic Party or to work with it?³⁶

Again, there is no one answer to the question. On the one hand, we cannot exclude from consideration the possibility that some people collaborate with Democrats Abroad out of cynical personal interest. Historically, most progressive, oppositional movements have had

³⁴ <http://www.democrats.com/node/8021> and <http://www.dr1.com/news/2002/dnews040802.shtml>

³⁵ <http://www.wonkspot.com/wire/index.php?blog=2&m=2005&w=32>

³⁶ For example, two of the most active and influential members of the Paris antiwar group AAW (at least until the Spring of 2006), Julie Wornan and Jim Cohen, also maintained strong ties with Democrats Abroad. See <http://www.demsfrance.org/foreign.htm>

One of the active members and liaisons of American Voices Abroad, Meredith Wheeler, also started a Democrats Abroad chapter in Toulouse, who were very active in supporting pro-war Senator John Kerry, see <http://www.aokerry.com/aok/france/index.html> and <http://www.democratsabroad.org/countries/fr/chapters/>

the participation of self-interested individuals who advance their own interests as go-betweens, as liaisons between insurgent movements and established authority. In doing this, they present the image of being “responsible”, “pragmatic” activists, in contrast to others qualified as “extremist” or “sectarian”.

On the other hand, it is not always cynical self-interest that encourages people in the belief that collaboration between established institutions and popular movements will bring about meaningful change. Many people are sincere in this belief. We believe, on the contrary, that such thinking is unrealistic, and destructive of any potential for the structural changes that would limit the possibilities for more wars such as those carried out in Afghanistan and Iraq. Most fundamentally, the problem is conceptual; it is a problem of vision and understanding. What is needed is radical, institutional change, not a change in policy. “Radical” means going to the root of a problem. It means treating the cause and not simply the symptoms of a problem.

Here, the problem is the imposition of hegemony through the use of physical force causing massive death and suffering, social and environmental destruction, and the encouragement of civil war. In regions whose natural resources are coveted by identifiable economic actors, occupation can best be justified by creating political and social chaos.³⁷ Once the conditions for national or regional harmony have been destroyed, the foreign power can pose as “liberator” and the vector of democratic processes. More than simple hypocrisy, such cynically orchestrated violent activity must be understood as part of a *system* – a set of inter-related elements functioning according to established mechanisms and rules –, a system in which economic production, governmental institutions, political processes (including political parties) and education combine to determine behavior and thinking. For more than one century, opponents of this system refer to it as “imperialism”. It is an economic system that emerged as a result of the transformation of productive techniques and commercial practices. The fact that imperialist policies and actions are frequently carried out and supported by people who sincerely believe that the good of humanity depends on their charitable and judicious inclinations does nothing to change the nature of the system. And it should not change our appreciation and understanding of this system.

The important implication of this analysis is that if wars such as those recently carried out in Iraq, Afghanistan and ex-Yugoslavia by the United States government and its allies (and those threatened against Syria and Iran), are produced by a need to defend interests integral to the functioning of a system, it is not enough to call for a change of governmental policy. A popular movement *can* force changes in policy. This was done during the war in Vietnam, but it took ten years before the withdrawal of U.S. military forces from Vietnam was forced, at least partially, by a change in public opinion.

This can, and likely will happen in the case of Iraq. However, pacifist movements directed only at a change of policy will never remove the causes of international conflict and the encouragement of civil wars. Most wars can be shown to have structural causes; they are wars produced by an economic system mediated by politicians whose personal interests are inextricably linked to the needs of this system. The Democratic Party is not a monolithic entity, but its leadership is tied to the defence of financial interests that are inseparable from

³⁷ See, for example, Tom Engelhardt <http://www.commondreams.org/views06/0705-29.htm> “What they [the Bush Administration] were eager to do was put the strategically most significant and contested regions of the planet “in play,” using the destabilization card, always assuming in every destabilization situation that if worse came to worse...even chaos would turn out to be to their benefit.”

the structure of economic processes.