

Remarks at Northeast Ohio Antiwar Coalition October 17 Rally

Cleveland, Ohio

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The October 17 1969 cover of Time Magazine showed a hand making a peace sign with the words. "Moratorium: At War with War."

The Vietnam Moratorium was arguably the largest demonstration in US history with an estimated two million people involved.

In cities and towns across the US, students, working men and women, school children, and the young and the old, took part in religious services, teach-ins, street rallies and meetings to protest the continuing war in Vietnam.

Supporters of the Moratorium wore black armbands to symbolize their dissent and to acknowledge American personnel killed in the war

The focal point was Washington DC where more than 40 different activities were planned and about 250,000 demonstrators gathered.

Forty years later in dozens of communities throughout the US, students, working men and women, school children, the young and the old are once again gathering to call for an end to the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq NOW, to bringing all the troops home there...and everywhere... NOW, to closing down foreign military bases NOW, to spending no more money for military mercenaries and contractors NOW, to funding social and economic needs at home and cutting taxes NOW and, to end the US military empire NOW.

The war in Afghanistan was never, ever about terrorism. That was a smokescreen. It was and is about oil and natural gas.

Remember the February 1998 Congressional Testimony by John J. Maresca, vice president of international relations, Unocal Corporation? He said the Caspian sea contained enormous oil and natural gas reserves which could most economically be moved to market by building a pipeline through Afghanistan. Maresca said, "From the outset, we have made it clear that construction of the pipeline we have proposed across Afghanistan could not begin until a recognized government is in place that has the confidence of governments, lenders, and our company."

The US government, which had previously funded the Afghan Mushadeen and Osama bin Laden against the Soviets, was willing to do business along with US based energy corporations with the Taliban to get the pipeline built.

It was reported that the US representatives told the Taliban, "either you accept our offer of a carpet of gold, or we bury you under a carpet of bombs,"

But the Taliban refused to accept US conditions. The rationale of energy security changed to military invasion.

We know what happened next in Afghanistan followed by Iraq -- a war and occupation for oil also based on smokescreens.

Forty years after the Vietnam Moratorium and eight years after the start of the Afghanistan war, here we are again faced with wars without end, massive deaths and life long injuries to soldiers here and civilians there, millions displaced in the Middle East, the unraveling of what little is left of our social safety net, massive debt and deficits paying for wars and occupations, and a legacy (if not continuation) of torture and fomenting the fear of domestic terrorism to stifle domestic dissent.

What are we to do?

It all starts with us. Yes, the military forces, pro-war politicians and transnational oil and media corporations must be resisted, but the major challenge begins with ourselves:

- OUR willingness to question, challenge and resist unjust and violent policies.
- OUR desire to take time out of each day or week to educate, advocate or organize against what is going on and for peace and justice
- OUR self-discipline to stay focused and not distracted by the latest political and media side show
- OUR self-confidence to remain vocal and active in the face of a culture that reinforces the notion of letting experts like politicians and generals decide what's good for us
- OUR determination to demand from Congress an end to war and occupation funding
- and OUR commitment to march, rally, vigil, fly kites, resist and do whatever needs doing to end the wars and occupations not only in Afghanistan and Iraq but in Germany, Japan, Philippines, and everywhere else the US military has troops and bases -- to end it all NOW!

Peace.