

# MADRE

s p e a k s

Fall 1999



## Humanitarian War?



# AND STILL WE DREAM AN EVENING OF POETRY & DANCE

MADRE: an international women's human rights organization, B'na: The Progressive Middle East Alliance, and Ibdaa: a folkloric dance troupe of Palestinian youth, explore themes of home and homelessness through poetry and dance.

WITH READINGS BY

Etel Adnan, Kathleen Chalfant, Nijmie Dzurinko, Kathy Engel, Laura Flanders, Danny Glover, Safiya Henderson-Holmes, D.H. Melhem, Sonia Rivera, and Elizabeth Streb.



© JEFF YAS

Monday, September 27, 1999 • 7:45 pm

PS 41 • 116 West 11th Street, NYC  
(between 6th & 7th Aves.)

\$20 at the door; \$15 in advance (at MADRE office)  
\$50 Limited Preferred Seating

Middle Eastern food will be available during intermission. WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBILITY  
MADRE • 121 West 27th Street #301 • New York, NY 10001 • (212) 627-0444



Voyages with a Vision

## MADRE Delegations

### Cuba January 2000

Why are people in one of the world's most equitable societies suffering from shortages of food and medicines? Meet the people who are contending with the effects of the US embargo. Visit schools, hospitals and cultural centers where free, universal healthcare and education remain a top priority. And taste the possibility of a society striving for equality and a decent life for all its people.

### Palestine May 2000

House demolitions, land confiscations and ongoing human rights violations have become the hallmark of the peace process for many Palestinian families. Visit Palestine's cities, villages and refugee camps and learn first-hand how US tax dollars continue to fund some of the worst abuses of military occupation. Meet families whose homes were demolished by the Israeli army and then rebuilt with MADRE member support. And talk with Palestinian and Israeli peace activists who have joined forces to work for justice and authentic democracy for both societies.

### Guatemala Spring 2000: in the works

Women workers in Guatemala's maquila (sweatshop) sector are organizing to demand an end to abusive working conditions. Contending with the complexities of working in a globalized economy, these women are using innovative new models of labor organizing to defend their rights — on the job and in their communities. Learn about conditions in name-brand clothing factories from the women who work there and see for yourself the strength of women pulling together to demand their rights.

## MADRE

121 West 27th Street, #301  
New York, NY 10001  
212/627-0444  
Fax: 212/675-3704  
e-mail: [madre@igc.org](mailto:madre@igc.org)  
<http://www.MADRE.org>

### Volume XV, #2

MADRE's newsletter, *MADRE Speaks* is published quarterly

Since 1983, MADRE has worked in partnership with community-based women's organizations in conflict areas worldwide to address issues of women's health, economic development and other human rights. MADRE provides resources and training for our sister organizations and works to empower people in the US to demand changes to unjust policies. Based on the priorities of the women with whom we work, MADRE develops programs that meet immediate needs in communities hurt by US policy and supports women's long-term struggles for social justice and human rights.

### Newsletter Staff

Yifat Susskind, Editor  
Amy Thesing, Design

cover: These life-long neighbors in the Former Yugoslavia were torn apart by a "population transfer" because they are of different ethnicities.

Photo by Elizabeth Rappaport



# From the Executive Director

Vivian Stromberg

Fall 1999

**D**ear friends,

We're about to leave the 20th century having experienced both the worst and the best of human potential. Thanks to MADRE, we enter the new century with a strong new activist model for both the women's and human rights movements. The MADRE model promotes the leadership of women while working with women, men and children. We define all political issues as women's issues, not just those to which we are biologically linked. And we believe that human rights work is political work. In order to right wrongs and bring wrongdoers to justice we must take a position and not try to maintain "objective distance," which might allow us to observe abuses, but not challenge or prevent them. If we've learned one thing in MADRE's sixteen years it is that we must be prepared to act. To support survivors as they struggle to regain control of their lives, and to transform the laws and social systems that give rise to abuses on the national and international levels. The challenge before us is great, and MADRE is prepared to play our role supporting women as far away as the reach of US-driven policies.

Over the years MADRE's work has made a difference to tens of thousands of women and their families. The programs you supported have meant diesel-powered corn mills, schools and clinics, an ambulance, shipments of life-saving medicines and trainings in trauma and legal counseling, reproductive health, economic rights and much, much more.

MADRE's work began in Nicaragua in 1983 and we are still working there, supporting programs that respond to the changing conditions. The partnerships and trust we have



Laura Flanders

built over the years have given us valuable opportunities to learn from and inspire each other. And although our focus now extends to Central Africa, the Middle East, Yugoslavia and Haiti, our work in Latin America remains strong with programs not only in Nicaragua, but in Guatemala, Chiapas, Mexico, and Cuba.

This year brought the devastation of Hurricanes Georges and Mitch in the Caribbean and Central America. MADRE was able to respond to both emergencies without putting our ongoing programs on hold. We sent nearly two million dollars in emergency medical relief and supported our sister organizations so they could help those families most affected. And we were once again reminded that even so-called natural disasters have political implications. Why, at the end of the 20th century, are families living on dry river beds in makeshift shelters? Or in shanty towns without potable water? Why is adequate housing, health care,

education and political power beyond the reach of so many? These families are the collateral damage of economic, social and political policies that create the conditions which make people vulnerable to "natural disasters". But there is nothing natural about the conditions of deprivation. They are rooted in policy and policy can be changed.

Creating this change lies at the heart of MADRE's conception of a women's human rights agenda. And as we head into the new millennium, we renew our commitment to ourselves, to each of you and to all our sister organizations to insist on change and to help build the world we dream.

Thank you so much for believing in MADRE.

Sincerely,

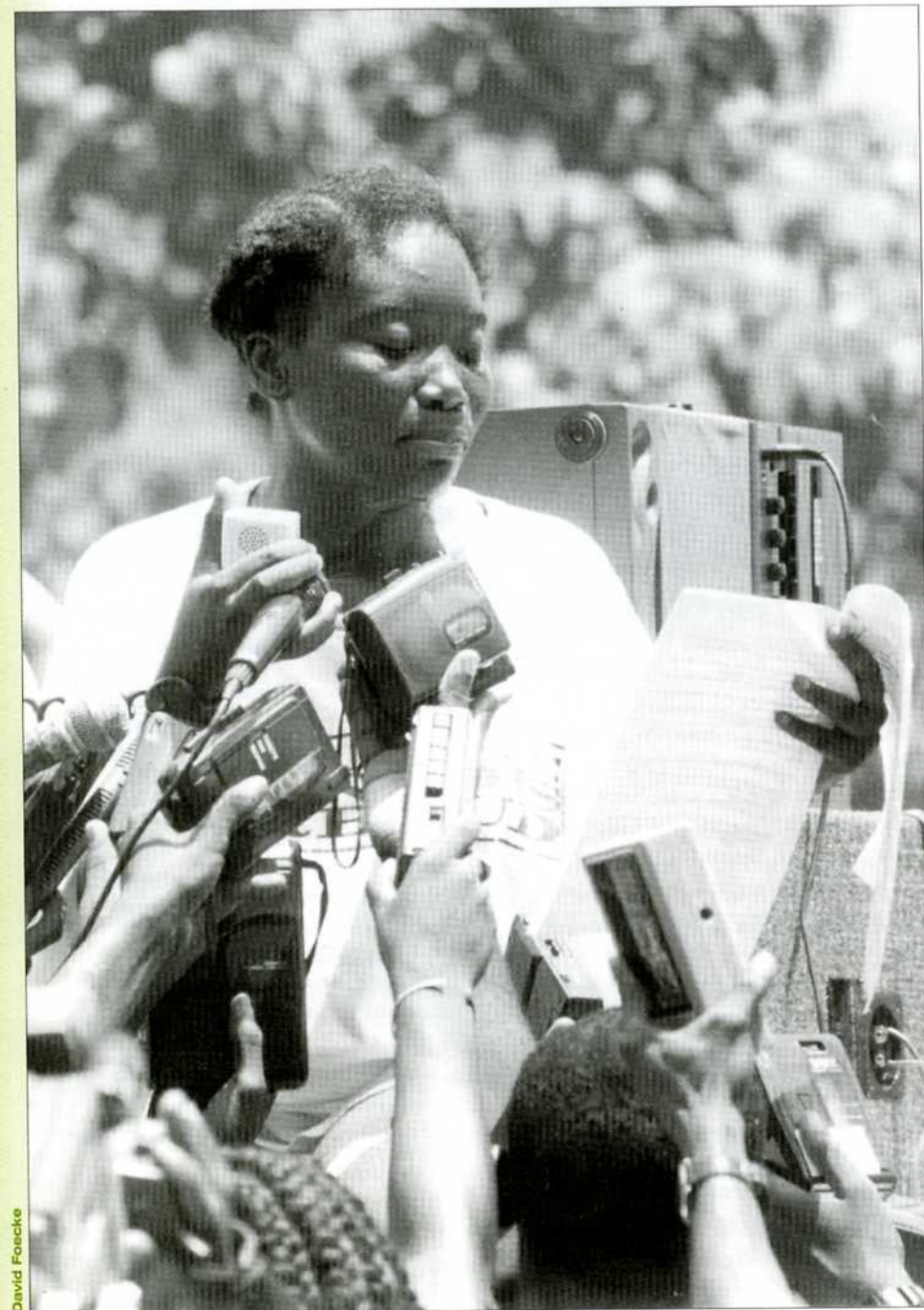
*Vivian Stromberg*

Vivian Stromberg  
Executive Director



# POLICING THE MILLENNIUM: US Intervention in the Age of Human Rights

by Yifat Susskind



David Foercke

The US could have easily brought an end to the mass rapes and killings of the 1991-1994 coup d'etat in Haiti, but that population's need was ignored.

In April, as NATO bombs destroyed homes, schools, hospitals and factories throughout Serbia and Kosovo, a three-woman MADRE delegation traveled to Palestine. We went to deliver support to our sister organizations and to learn firsthand from women and families hurt by Israel's policy of house demolition. Our agenda was Palestine, but everywhere we went, people wanted to talk about Yugoslavia. "Nobody here believes that NATO is bombing to protect the Kosovars," said Rim, a young woman from Deheishe refugee camp. Deheishe, home to MADRE's newest sister organization, Ibdaa, was erected in 1948 when 750,000 Palestinians were forcibly expelled from their homes by the nascent Israeli army — a policy that a growing number of Israelis now refer to as ethnic cleansing. Echoing a view we heard from Palestinian farmers, political activists and high school students alike, Rim continued, "No one knows the pain of being made a refugee better than we who have been refugees for 50 years. My grandmother cannot watch the tv images of Kosovo because they bring back her bitter memories of 1948. We sympathize with the Kosovars, but that doesn't mean we are fooled into believing that the US is waging a war for human rights."

In the United States, however, many people believed just that. Even many liberals expressed satisfaction that their government was finally "doing the right thing." Earlier this year President Clinton proclaimed that, "human rights has become the soul of our foreign policy," and many people cheered intervention in Yugoslavia as evidence of his good faith. Some even heralded the NATO bombing as "the first war of globaliza-



tion,” inaugurating a noble new era of the US as benevolent guardian of a global morality. But in fact, the bombing of Yugoslavia embodies four long-standing patterns of US foreign policy:

- using “humanitarianism” as a smokescreen to pursue US interests
- undermining the United Nations and international law
- sidelining diplomacy in favor of force
- and supporting repressive regimes over democratic movements

As US foreign policy is packaged and sold for the new millennium, we will surely see more “humanitarian wars.” Decoding this rhetoric and understanding the policy trends that lie beyond it is a crucial part of challenging the global reach of US aggression.

### THE HUMANITARIAN SMOKESCREEN

**N**otwithstanding President Clinton’s co-optation of contemporary human rights terminology, his sunny discourse is nothing new. In 1830 Andrew Johnson presented the Indian Removal Act to Congress, touting his policy of ethnic cleansing as a humanitarian gesture of great benevolence towards the Cherokees. In 1918 US Marines invaded Haiti, massacring hundreds, dismantling the constitutional system, enforcing massive land takeovers by US corporations, and installing the brutal National Guard, which terrorized the country for decades. This operation was designated by the Wilson Administration as humanitarian intervention. Similarly, the US invasions of the Philippines (1898), Vietnam (1954-1975), the Dominican Republic (1965), the Congo (1964), Granada (1983) and Panama (1989) as well as the US-sponsored Central America wars of the 1980’s were presented publicly as humanitarian interventions.

In 1989, with the end of the Cold War (the main pretense for four and a half decades of US aggression), the “threat of communism,” disappeared. But the impetus for intervention,



Jonathan Snow

The terminology of “humanitarian crisis” should include those 100,000 people worldwide who die every day from the structural violence of hunger, homelessness, unsanitary water and lack of health care.

namely, dominating the global economy, remained relevant as ever. Policymakers needed new threats to justify the massive military spending that would enable continued intervention abroad. Soon we began hearing about the lurking dangers of “terrorists,” “narco-traffickers” and “rogue states.” To combat these evils, the US, we were told, would have to be equipped for rapid military action anywhere in the world — maybe even in two places at once — and could not possibly risk a large reduction in military spending. (Today, “defense” spending hovers at about 80% of the Cold War average).

At home, the threats were crime and drugs, neatly embodied in young black and Latino “superpredators,” (male) and “welfare scammers,” (female). Conveniently, these were the same people deemed expendable as jobs, health-

care and housing were leeches from poor communities and rerouted into corporate coffers. In fact, corporate reach was extended worldwide as soon as the US could intervene anywhere without risking a Soviet response. In the 1990’s, Third World countries were subjected to a barrage of neo-liberal policies (such as structural adjustment and debt servicing) that, like programs implemented in the US, benefited multinational corporations at the expense of the poor. Countries that did not comply (Cuba, Iran, Iraq, North Korea, Libya — and more recently, Yugoslavia) were designated as “rogue” or outlaw states. Their punishments ranged from trade sanctions to massive bombing. But whether the means were economic or military, US interventions in the 1990’s were most often portrayed as humanitarian missions of “peacekeeping,” “nation-building” or “enlargement of democracy” — all part of the awesome responsibility incumbent on the world’s sole superpower.

### Hype, Hypocrisy and Human Rights

In the new era of humanitarianism, interventions remain conspicuously correlated with US national interest. Consider how the language of “humanitarian crisis” is used to mobilize or demobilize public opinion and even policy. In 1994, while nearly one million people were being raped and slaughtered in Rwanda, the State Department issued a directive forbidding its spokespeople from describing the massacres as genocide. Use of the word would have obligated the US, under the 1951 Genocide Convention, to take action. But intervention, as some government officials explained quite candidly, was not in the strategic interest of the US (“For West, Rwanda is Not Worth Political Candle,” *New York Times*, 4/15/94). In Kosovo, by contrast, US and NATO spokespeople were quick to conflate Serb counter-insurgency tactics with ethnic cleansing, and then ethnic cleansing with



genocide. In early April, *The New York Times* even printed select portions of the Genocide Convention to underscore the need for intervention. At the same time, large-scale massacres were underway in Sierra Leone and the Congo — African countries that, like Rwanda, are of little interest to the United States. President Clinton ignored those abuses, even as he pronounced the “moral imperative” of saving Kosovar Albanians.

In places where the US contributes directly to human rights abuses, crises that might elsewhere be termed “humanitarian” are recast as ideological crusades against terrorists, narco-traffickers or rogue states. Thus, the mass slaughter of Kurdish peasants by Turkey (a NATO member and key US arms customer) is presented as a battle against PKK guerillas. In Colombia last year, many more people were killed than in Kosovo before the bombing — but by forces officially trained, armed and funded by the US. Here the killings are attributed to the “drug war” of a government doubly distinguished as the worst human rights violator in the hemisphere and the third-largest recipient of US mili-

tary aid worldwide (after Israel and Egypt). In Iraq, three million people are dead because of US sanctions (while their “rogue” leader remains firmly in power). Every month another 5,000 Iraqi children die, mostly for lack of food, clean water and medicines that Iraq produced and even exported before sanctions took hold. Asked during a 1996 Sixty Minutes broadcast to comment on the children’s deaths, Secretary of State Albright maintained that, “we think the price is worth it.”

Only when human rights abuses threaten the interests of rich and powerful people do we start to hear about “humanitarian crises.” Kosovo may be economically marginal to the US, but the “Clinton Doctrine” holds that “stability” (defined in practice as a favorable investment climate) in areas vital to the US may depend on intervention in “remote” areas. In Eastern and Central Europe, stability is derived from two policies, and NATO has been appointed the guarantor of both: 1) to prevent any reversal of the “reforms” that dismantled the area’s communist governments (deemed plausible because of the sharp rise in poverty and deprivation

produced by the region’s shift to capitalist economies); and 2) to lock former Eastern bloc countries into a Third World economic service role of providing cheap labor, raw materials and markets to US and Western European corporations. Transferring the resources of the former Soviet Union to Western corporations has been top priority in the 1990’s. Chevron, for one, has bought rights to the oil deposits of Kazakhstan, and several other companies are maneuvering for access to the vast oil reserves of the Caspian Sea.

Throughout the springtime bombing, official rhetoric flip-flopped, alternately invoking interests and values as cause for attack. As the first bombers took off, President Clinton explained that, “If we’re going to have a strong economic relationship that includes our ability to sell around the world, Europe has got to be a key... that’s what this Kosovo thing is all about... it’s about our values” (March 23 televised address).

Conveniently, the logic of the Clinton Doctrine dictates US intervention just about anywhere. As the President explained, “Where our values and our interests are at stake, we must be prepared to [act]” (*The Nation*, 4/19/99). Of course, since “our values” (i.e., moral good) correlate perfectly with “our interests” (i.e., maintaining US wealth), any military intervention can also be promoted as a humanitarian mission.

### Humanitarian Bombing?

One way to test the integrity of Clinton’s moral claim is to look at his response to human rights abuses in Kosovo — namely, bombing. NATO’s attack created the very humanitarian crisis that the US claimed it was working to avert: the largest flood of European refugees since World War II, fleeing the bombing itself as well as Serb soldiers. NATO’s “high-air” strikes allowed Serb forces to plow through Kosovo unimpeded, while its spokespeople explained that it would be too great a risk for pilots to air-lift food or medicine to the battered refugees below.



UNESCO reports half a million deaths annually in Russia alone from increases in disease, malnutrition and poverty associated with Eastern European “economic reforms.”



NATO made no provision to care for the refugees, although Commander Wesley Clark announced before the bombing that air strikes would trigger Serb retaliation against civilians. When camps were finally erected, they were administered by NATO troops, not UN relief workers. These are soldiers with no training in humanitarian assistance, whose abuses in the camps included sexual harassment, rape and trafficking women into sexual slavery in collusion with organized crime.

In Serbia, NATO created another humanitarian crisis, attacking the civilian population and killing over 5,700 people. Another 15,000 were wounded and 7,000 permanently disabled. Using planes bearing the names of Native American victims of US ethnic cleansing (Apache, Black Hawk), NATO bombed 384 schools, including 45 kindergartens; 23 hospitals and clinics; half of the country's factories and its main water treatment and power plants. The long-term impact of such destruction is visible today in other countries where the US has destroyed neighborhoods, schools and workplaces for "military purposes." In the Sudan, massive outbreaks of meningitis and other deadly diseases have resulted from the US bombing one of the country's only pharmaceutical plants. In Iraq, half of all schools remain bombed out and less than half of the population has access to potable water. A three-fold rise in birth defects since the Gulf War is attributed to the same depleted uranium shells used against Yugoslavia, where they have contaminated Europe's largest river, the Danube.

### THE ROGUE SUPERPOWER: UNDERMINING THE UNITED NATIONS AND INTERNATIONAL LAW

The US-led attack on Serbian civilians included violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention and other war crimes. In fact, as the world's leading military power, the US routinely holds itself above interna-



Laura Flanders

President Clinton, who created the Pentagon's Department of Human Rights and Democracy, has perpetuated one of the world's worst human rights crises by bombing and maintaining sanctions against Iraq.

tional law. For example, Chapter VII of the UN Charter asserts that only the Security Council can authorize a state's use of force. Yet in the past year, the US has bombed four countries (and another four "by accident") with no UN mandate. These attacks, including NATO's war, are flatly illegal. They have escalated violence, political instability, and social and ecological destruction worldwide.

US lawlessness in the international arena took root in the 1960's, when newly-independent Third World countries began challenging US hegemony at the United Nations. As the UN became less compliant with US wishes, successive US Administrations have obstructed, or simply ignored, its laws and standards:

- The US has blocked or refused to ratify many of the very instruments created to prevent the humanitarian crises that it claims to revile: the Comprehensive (nuclear) Test Ban Treaty, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Anti-Personnel Land Mine Treaty, the Declaration on the Right to Development and key socio-economic Articles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the cornerstone of all human rights law.

- Today, the US is pressuring other governments not to ratify the International Criminal Court, which would

prosecute war crimes (including those committed by US soldiers). The proposed Court is a big improvement over the current UN Court at the Hague, which can only try governments and not individuals.

- In 1986 George Bush distinguished himself as the first head of state to be condemned by the World Court for illegally using force against Nicaragua. The US ignored this ruling.

- When expedient, the US uses the UN to further its foreign policy agenda. It has, for example, vetoed more than 40 resolutions condemning aggression by its key Middle Eastern ally, Israel.

Because the United Nations is so thoroughly dominated and disparaged by the US, some argue that the institution is simply not worth defending. In fact, the UN is not a democratic organization. Its strongest body, the Security Council, is composed of five of the world's richest countries (themselves arguably dominated by the US) and UN actions overwhelmingly reflect elite interests. But while deeply flawed, the UN currently remains our best hope for peaceful international relations. Its Charter is the only global standard for governing states' conduct. Without it, people would have even fewer protections against the abuses of government and no basis upon which to claim human rights. Those who would



# NATO

## a Global SWAT Team for the New Millennium

**T**he North Atlantic Treaty Organization, consisting of the US, Canada and 19 European countries, was founded by the US in 1949 to constrain, and potentially attack, Socialist bloc countries. NATO has fueled the US military industrial complex since its inception and is expected to generate another \$100 billion for US weapons manufacturers within the next 10 years. The alliance's *raison d'être* expired when the Cold War ended. But instead of dismantling NATO, the US broadened its membership and mandate.

### 1997

NATO is expanded to three US client states, Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, to ensure US access to Eastern Europe and maintain dominance over Western European member states.

### 1998

Secretary of State Albright announces NATO's "enhanced mission:" to intervene militarily anywhere in the world according to "Western values and interests," without the imperative of UN authorization.

### 1999

NATO attacks Yugoslavia, a sovereign, non-member state, under the banner of human rights. In the words of Polish Foreign Minister Geremek, "This operation is the first signal of the coming century. In the 21st Century, human rights will be the fundamental basis for defining international relations" (address delivered at NATO's 50th Anniversary Summit, 4/23/99).

### 2000

People concerned with peace and justice should press for dismantlement of NATO — a Cold War anachronism with a dangerous new mission.

relinquish the UN to the arsenal of US power are most often activists from the global North, for whom life-threatening human rights abuses are a distant abstraction.

But in most communities where MADRE works, local activists know that at a time when economic, political and military power are more globalized than ever, ordinary women and men also require international mechanisms to defend their interests. Democratizing the international arena and creating the means for the world's majority to resist and replace global instruments of domination (like the World Bank and now NATO) is a long-term agenda of human rights work. MADRE's sponsorship of the Women's Caucus for Gender Justice at the International Criminal Court and our efforts to bring community-based women into the process of drafting and improving international law is part of this broader goal.

### **SIDELINING DIPLOMACY, OR: "WHAT'S THE USE OF HAVING THIS SUPERB MILITARY...IF WE CAN'T USE IT?"**

**T**his question, posed by Madelein Albright in 1993, neatly embodies the Clinton Administration's approach to the use of force. The bombing of Yugoslavia was presented in the US as a last resort. But even a cursory look at events leading up to March 24 indicates that the US pursued a violent course all along. The Rambouillet talks, which lasted less than three weeks, were more a platform for US intimidation than for diplomacy. The State Department's ultimatum to the Serb delegation was, "sign on or be bombed," while the Kosovar delegation was prodded to accept the Accords by Secretary Albright increasingly shrill warnings that without the KLA on board, NATO could not initiate the bombing. The Accords then selves effectively codified a US/NATO occupation of Yugoslavia (outlined in Appendix B), prompting speculation that the US deliberately set untenable





Jonathan Snow

MADRE Board member Lilianna Cortés with a young survivor of the Reagan Administration's "democracy enhancement" program in Nicaragua.

terms that Milosevic would reject in order to then justify bombing. The KLA, for its part, signed on to Rambouillet only once it was clear that Milosevic would refuse the deal.

Some argue that the US was intent on a show of NATO force just prior to the Alliance's 50th Anniversary Summit in April. In fact, the bombing was used to inaugurate NATO's new post-Cold War mission as a global police force and to argue a need for more military spending. The corporate media did its part by reporting that Milosevic refused to negotiate. Erased from this version is the Serb delegation's counter-offer to the US at Rambouillet: a peaceful settlement monitored by UN forces and far-reaching autonomy for Kosovo (which had been the main Albanian demand until Madeleine Albright hinted at Rambouillet that KLA leaders could hold out for full succession). Authentic negotiations are, by definition, a volley of offers, counter-offers and compromise. But in this case, Serbia's very attempts at diplomacy were deemed grounds for war. The scenario recalls Saddam Hussein's offer of a diplomatic (and many argue quite workable) solution to the Gulf crisis before the US bombing of 1991. His proposal was rejected by the US, which then cited "Iraqi intransigence" as cause for launching the Gulf War. The initial

terms of settlement offered by both Saddam Hussein and Milosevic are not very different from those reached after Iraq and Yugoslavia were virtually decimated by the US.

But why would the US use force unnecessarily? As Noam Chomsky explained in an interview with MADRE, "When involved in a confrontation, you use your strongest card to shift the confrontation to the arena in which you are most powerful. The strong card of the United States is the use of force. That's perhaps the only realm of international relations where the US has a near monopoly." In fact, since the end of World War II, when the US achieved military preeminence, it has become the world's leading international aggressor. Diplomacy, by contrast, is a weak link for the US. Its foreign policy serves mostly to concentrate wealth and power in the hands of a small elite. This is an unpopular project and difficult to implement through negotiations, which are more vulnerable to public opinion than, for example, top-secret decisions to deploy bombers.

#### SUBVERTING DEMOCRACY

By the same token, authentic democracy in countries where the US seeks to exert influence is inimical to US foreign policy. If the

## Countries Bombed by the United States Since the End of World War II

China 1945-1946, 1950-1953

Korea 1950-1953

Guatemala  
1954, 1960, 1967-1969

Indonesia 1958

Cuba 1959-1961

Congo 1964

Peru 1965

Vietnam 1961-1973

Laos 1964-1973

Cambodia 1969-1970

Grenada 1983

Lebanon 1983, 1984

Libya 1986

El Salvador mid-1980's

Nicaragua mid-1980's

Panama 1989

Iraq 1991-1999

Kuwait 1991

Bosnia 1994, 1995

Sudan 1998

Afghanistan 1998

Yugoslavia 1999

## Countries bombed "by accident":

Pakistan, Albania,  
Macedonia, Bulgaria.

—Compiled by William Blum

majority of a country's population were to take part in meaningful decisions about national policy (let's consider that a working definition of democracy), it is unlikely that they would choose to direct their natural resources, labor and economic markets to benefit US investors — especially at the



# Selective Compassion: African Refugees Receive Far Less Aid Than Europeans

The concern expressed across the US for Kosovar Albanian refugees generated an outpouring of support that helped these families survive a life-threatening ordeal. This should be our response to every refugee crisis, but such support is rarely offered to African refugees. The disparity extends to the highest levels of the international arena. As the *Los Angeles Times* reports (5/21/99):

- The UN High Commission for Refugees spends 11 cents a day per refugee in Africa, and \$1.23 a day per refugee in the Balkans.
- Some African refugee camps have one doctor per 100,000 refugees. Macedonian camps have about one doctor per 700 refugees, a ratio better than in some Los Angeles communities.
- Refugees in Albania have plenty of clean water, while in Eritrea, families as large as 10 are given 3.5 gallons of water to last three days.
- As many as 500,000 Africans live together in camps, where thousands can die daily from cholera and other communicable diseases. The largest camp in Macedonia holds 33,000 people, and there have been no deaths from epidemics or starvation.



Rwandan refugees

Laura Flanders

According to the *Los Angeles Times*, "The most common explanation for the gap in resources is culture. UN aid workers say they must give European refugees used to cappuccino and CNN a higher standard of living to maintain the refugees' sense of dignity and stability." Whereas in Africa, the *Times* reports, conditions in refugee camps "are a step up in life for many."

One aid worker in Macedonia who had worked for three years in Somalia was amazed to find that special diets were available to diabetic refugees in the European camps. "In Africa, we don't have special food or diets," World Food Program worker Lynne Miller said. "There are no diabetics in the camps. They just die."

expense of their own health and welfare. Ideally, governments with which the US has friendly relations will be like the US itself: technically democratic, with much-touted two-party elections and a mostly disempowered population. But where a veneer of democracy is not practical, the US supports despotic regimes, as long as they suppress local movements against US

exploitation. The list includes Indonesia's Suharto, Iraq's Saddam Hussein, Zaire's Mobutu Sese Seko, the Philippines' Marcos, Haiti's Duvaliers, Nicaragua's Somoza, the Dominican Republic's Trujillo and Panama's Noriega. These rulers fell out of favor only once they exhausted their usefulness as enforcers of US policy. When genuinely democratic governments

have threatened US interests, the US has backed their overthrow, as in Iran (1953), Guatemala (1954, 1963), the Dominican Republic (1963, 1965), Brazil (1964) and Chile (1973).

In Yugoslavia, as elsewhere, the US has undercut democratic forces and fortified repressive leadership. One casualty of the US/NATO bombing was Serbia's democratic opposition, which was badly undermined when all Yugoslavs were called on to close ranks in the face of US attack. The movement's demise was of little concern to US policymakers, who have been working since the early 1990's to prop up a parallel "opposition," one that would restructure the Yugoslav economy according to a neo-liberal model. In July 1999, Senator Jesse Helms announced a bill to channel \$100 million "to 'promote democracy and civil society' and increase radio broadcasts by Voice of America and Radio Free Europe" in Serbia (*New York Times*, 7/24/99). The proposal is part of a larger policy of "democracy promotion" in the Balkans and throughout Eastern Europe. Here, the self-serving conflation between the language of values and interests is blatant, as "democracy" has been made virtually synonymous with market capitalism.

## The Contras of Kosovo

In Kosovo, the US thwarted Ibrahim Rugova's non-violent Kosovo Democratic League for 10 years. At the 1995 Dayton peace conference, for example, US negotiators betrayed the League's demand for autonomy in order to reach a deal with Milosevic. By weakening this moderate movement, the US helped give rise to the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), a violent, ultra-nationalist group demanding total secession from a multi-ethnic Yugoslavia. In the US, the KLA was classified as a "terrorist organization" as recently as February 1998. But by mid-year the US was arming, equipping and training these forces, whose tactics include: massacres of civilians;



targeted assassinations of anti-secessionists, including Albanian Kosovars; forced conscription; heavy reliance on foreign mercenaries; extortion of money and property from local Albanians; and burning and looting the homes of political opponents.

At Rambouillet, Secretary Albright openly backed the KLA in usurping the leadership of the Albanian delegation from Rugova's democratic faction. KLA operations, like those of the Nicaraguan contras and Haitian paramilitaries, are widely reported to be financed through drug money. Central to their program is ethnic cleansing of the Serb and Roma minorities from Kosovo. Immediately after NATO's bombing, the KLA fomented chaos and violence throughout Kosovo. The strategy, coined by Germany's Nazi Party in the early 1930's, is typically fascist: generate a desperate desire for security by inciting terror, then win popular support through "crackdowns" that prove your capability (and brutality) to guarantee much-needed law and order.

Despite their ruthlessness, the KLA first made US headlines, not as a "terrorist organization," but as a band of gallant, if roughshod "freedom fighters." As Diana Johnstone, former European editor of *In These Times*, has pointed out, the group's image underwent a make-over once State Department and Pentagon officials assessed that the KLA could effectively fill the foreign policy vacuum still gaping after the end of the Cold War, and help to stimulate new defense contracts. The key was to present the group in the fashion of the day: as a human rights rather than a nationalist cause. The humanitarian spin enabled NATO to bill itself as the defender of an oppressed minority, thereby launching its new mission as the world's self-appointed guardian of human rights.

Lost in the media glitz — and even in most serious public debate — was any distinction between human and national rights; between self-determination and separatism. National inde-

pendence is not a magic formula to be instantly endorsed whenever it is invoked. Even when a group is oppressed by its government, breaking off to form a separate state is not necessarily the best solution. Rather, each claim for independence should be evaluated according to whether it would serve the needs of the majority of those caught in the conflict. Where sovereignty would enable people to protect human rights and create a more equitable distribution of resources and political power, we might well support it. But where, as in Kosovo, calls for independence emanate from a reactionary group with a fascist structure and a feudal social vision, we should endorse alternative solutions. In Kosovo and Serbia, a democratic alternative is embodied by MADRE's sister organizations, Motrat Qiriazi and Women in Black. These are women fighting for a non-nationalist, multi-ethnic and democratic solution to the crisis in Yugoslavia (See Program Highlights).

### Rethinking Humanitarian Intervention

Given the historical record of the US, and the corporate ties that bind those who direct foreign policy and those who profit from warfare, any US claim of humanitarian intervention is suspect. In NATO's "humanitarian" war, Serb military violence became a pretext for the US to assert its dominance over Europe and establish NATO as its global strike force. But the cynicism of NATO's mission does not negate abuses committed against Kosovar Albanians. Like human rights violations everywhere, these were serious crimes that warranted international attention. No situation justifies indiscriminate bombing of civilians. Nevertheless, there may be times, like Rwanda in 1994, where military action is necessary. If we want to hold US policymakers accountable to human rights standards and international law, we need to evaluate each



Elizabeth Rappaport

Until the NATO bombing, Europe's biggest refugee crisis stemmed from the ethnic cleansing of 650,000 Serbs from Croatia in 1995 — carried out with cooperation from the US and NATO.


potential intervention on its own terms, prioritizing the needs of those communities most threatened by the crisis. Some basic questions serve as a starting point:

1) Given that few political problems can be resolved by either force or foreign pressure, will military intervention actually have the capacity to remedy the problem at hand?

2) Will force be used only as a last resort and at a minimum needed to deter greater destruction?

3) Is the local population calling for foreign military intervention?

4) Will the intervention be conducted through appropriate international bodies and sustained by a high degree of multi-lateralism, including across the divide between the global North and South?

There is, of course, no easy formula for foreign policy or morality. But the next time that "ethnic conflict," "evil dictators," or "narco-guerillas" are presented as grounds for military action, we should consult the lessons of NATO's war against Yugoslavia. 





Lauren Flinders

MADRE Executive Director Vivian Stromberg and Yolanda Castro of MADRE's sister organization, K'injal Antzetik, conduct a reproductive health workshop in Chiapas, Mexico this year.

### THREADS: Training for Human Rights Enforcement—Advocacy, Documentation & Support

MADRE's pilot program training Guatemalan women maquila (sweatshop) workers to defend their rights in the workplace has been extended to a Central America-wide network of women's organizations. Women maquila workers from Guatemala, Nicaragua, Honduras and El Salvador can now share experiences and strategies for organizing in the complex new terrain of the global economy. The result is a new and innovative model of labor organizing that recognizes the needs of women both on and off of the factory floor. Neoliberal policies like structural adjustment don't only affect women at work; they attack healthcare, education and nearly all basic services. THREADS addresses labor issues as part of the totality of women's lives, focusing on the need for workers' rights, and integrating issues of childcare, nutrition, reproductive healthcare and community organizing. THREADS' current program is three-fold: training women to utilize international law in defense of their labor rights; campaigning for corporate codes

of conduct; and teaching lobbying and political organizing skills to better equip women to fight for their workplace rights.

### SHARE HOPE: Combatting Breast Cancer in Cuba

One alarming consequence of the US embargo, which blocks Cuba from purchasing medicines and medical supplies, is a sharp rise in breast cancer among Cuban women. Mammography used to be available to all women over 40 in Cuba. Now only women who are considered high risk can get an annual exam. MADRE is launching a two-year, intensive campaign focusing on prevention, early detection, and quality treatment for women with breast cancer.

MADRE's June delegation to Cuba confirmed that recent alterations in US policy have done nothing to alleviate the public health crisis caused by the embargo. The delegation visited a health center where doctors have to wash and reuse latex gloves and met with health professionals who are resurrecting herbal remedies as alternatives to scarce pharmaceutical drugs. The delegation delivered over \$118,000 worth of medicines to hospitals and clin-



ics and over \$5,000 worth of toys to Casa Castellana, a treatment center for developmentally disabled children. As the mother of one child said, "without medicine, these children could die, but without these toys, they would not smile."

## Introducing MADRE's Newest Sister Organization, Ibdaa

The connection between home, in its variegated meanings, and women's human rights has shaped MADRE's work since our earliest days in Nicaragua. Today, MADRE's programs include support for Palestinian families struggling against Israel's house demolition policy and support for Ibdaa, a community center for Palestinian youth in Deheishe refugee camp. As refugees, young people in this community are struggling with the loss of home on a national scale. They face poverty, severe overcrowding, ongoing political turmoil and an uncertain future. In this difficult environment, Ibdaa gives Deheishe's girls and boys the chance for creative self-expression and leadership development through dance, human rights education and community organizing.

Ibdaa's folkloric dance troupe and cultural exchange project enables young people to represent their history and experiences as refugees to audiences abroad, and to articulate their vision of a just future for both Palestinians and Israelis. Ibdaa also offers a library, computer and language courses, an arts and creative writing program, a summer day camp, an oral history project with elderly Palestinians and a girl's self-esteem group.

In addition to sponsoring Ibdaa's premier US dance tour, MADRE is helping to develop the Ibdaa Kindergarten. In a society where gender segregation is the tradition, Ibdaa's organizers are determined to provide a progressive environment for their children: to bring girls and boys together in an open, creative setting of joy, learning and mutual respect. The Kindergarten's expanded premises also provides one of the only publicly sanctioned spaces besides the mosque for women in Deheishe to gather, learn from each other and develop their own leadership skills through programs that focus on health, education and legal rights for women.

## Home is a Human Right

In April, MADRE Executive Director Vivian Stromberg, Public Education Coordinator Yifat Susskind and journalist Laura Flanders traveled to Palestine. We worked with our sister organization,

Ibdaa, and delivered MADRE member support to rebuild Palestinian homes demolished by the Israeli authorities. We saw how policies designed to push Palestinians from their land, like house demolition, land confiscation and arbitrary cancellation of residency rights, have been stepped up as Israel rushes to take control of as much territory as possible before the final settlement of the Oslo process. Families whose homes were destroyed to make way for expanding Israeli settlements and US-funded road networks described their despair. But they also expressed appreciation for MADRE and peace activists like those from the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, who have joined forces with them to bring an end to this abuse and create a better future for both societies.

Two weeks after MADRE's visit, Israel's Labor Party, known as the more moderate of the country's two main political blocs, won a decisive victory in the national elections. Many people hoped Israel's new prime minister, Ehud Barak, would rekindle prospects for peace. But Mr. Barak is not as different from his outgoing Likud Party rival as many had hoped. Barak clearly outlined Israel's negotiating position on the basis of "three nos": 1) No sharing of Jerusalem as a joint capital between Israel and Palestine; 2) No return to Israel's pre-occupation borders. (In fact, Barak plans to annex territory); 3) No dismantling of Israel's illegal settlements in the occupied territories. Historically, Israel's most abusive occupation policies, including house demolitions, land expropriations, torture and breaking the bones of young protesters, have been pursued by Labor governments. Nevertheless, there is potential for change: Mr. Barak must be held accountable to the many left-of-center Israelis who elected him. Our role is to stay watchful and strongly supportive of our Israeli and Palestinian partners in the peace camp.



The MADRE-supported Ibdaa Kindergarten is bringing progressive early childhood education to the future leaders of Palestine.



programs highlights



This year, MADRE responded to two overwhelming emergencies: Nicaragua's Hurricane Mitch and the war in Yugoslavia. We were able to act quickly and effectively in the face of these crises thanks to so many MADRE members who know that when we pull together, we can accomplish more than most individuals ever dream of.



Jonathan Snow

MADRE's long-time sister organization, URACCAN, helped deliver our emergency medical relief to survivors of Hurricane Mitch.

### When Natural Disaster Means Social Disaster

Last November's Hurricane Mitch was one of the worst storms ever to hit Nicaragua. Thousands of people were killed within a few days. Tens of thousands remain homeless, their means of livelihood destroyed. MADRE responded with \$600,000 worth of emergency medicines and supplies, as well as money for food and fuel.

MADRE's support was concentrated on the north Atlantic Coast, home to historically marginalized indigenous and Afro-Caribbean communities, which were sorely neglected in the government's disaster relief effort. Years of structural adjustment programs have decimated Nicaragua's health care system, economy and infrastructure, leaving people defenseless against ravages like this storm. On the north Atlantic Coast, unemployment looms at nearly 90% and three-quarters of the population suffer from malnutrition. As massive outbreaks of disease and infection swept the country in the wake of the hurricane, MADRE's shipment was the only medical relief available to many indigenous families. Now, the challenge is to help rebuild these communities on a foundation that can withstand life-threatening storms and life-threatening policies.

### Insisting on a Multi-Ethnic Peace

Since 1993, MADRE has worked with democratic, multi-ethnic women's groups in Former Yugoslavia to combat rape as a weapon of war, support survivors and help women's groups develop and disseminate critiques of nationalist oppression. When war escalated this spring, MADRE was there as part of a three-way partnership including Motrat Qiriazhi, a rural Albanian women's educational group and Women in Black (WIB) a Belgrade-based feminist organization that advocates democratic reform and peace and justice for all ethnic groups in Yugoslavia.

Motrat Qiriazhi used MADRE support in the refugee camps to provide counseling and aid to Kosovar women who had been raped by Serb soldiers. For refugee women and their families, the needs generated by this abuse were as urgent as the need for healthcare and shelter. As Albanian families returned to Kosovo, Motrat Qiriazhi continued the important work begun in the refugee camps. In Serbia, WIB used MADRE funds to help families in Belgrade survive the US/NATO bombing. They bought and distributed food, battery-operated lamps and radios and glass to repair bombed-out windows. WIB also served as a support and information center during the bombing and assisted groups, including Motrat Qiriazhi, that worked in the refugee camps.

### Now MADRE IS MOBILIZING TO HELP

lay the groundwork for a lasting peace. Motrat Qiriazhi and WIB are enabling Albanian Kosovar and Serb women to reach out to each other across lines of conflict to develop democratic, multi-ethnic solutions to the crisis in Yugoslavia. This is not the peace of diplomats that rests on power plays and narrow self-interest. This is the peace of women who refuse to see their children relive the nightmare of ethnic cleansing and bombing. Together these women are creating community-based workshops and discussion groups, educational curricula and media campaigns aimed at cultivating long-term alternatives to the nationalism and strife that has seized their country.



# Give a MADRE t-shirt!

Support women's human rights with a gift for yourself or a friend



Roberto Lugo



Jonathan Snow

**MADRE T-SHIRT**  
 Original MADRE design printed on black or white  
 100% cotton preshrunk t-shirts in full color.  
 (please indicate color when ordering;  
 LIMITED QUANTITIES AVAILABLE)

**Adult sizes:**  
 S, M, L, XL, XXL  
 \$20 + s&h

**children's sizes:**  
 ch XS (2-4), ch S (6-8)  
 \$15 + s&h

(shipping & handling:  
 \$3 per shirt;  
 \$2 for each additional  
 t-shirt to the same address)

Mike Hayes

Fill out coupon below and return to: MADRE 121 West 27th Street, #301 New York, NY 10001

Please send me MADRE t-shirts!

ITEM	SIZE	COLOR	QUANTITY	PRICE EACH	SHIPPING	SUBTOTAL
<b>TOTAL:</b>						<b>\$</b>

I am enclosing \$ \_\_\_\_\_ for my purchase, made payable to MADRE, Inc.

NAME (PLEASE PRINT) \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_

If you have Working Assets phone service or credit card, you can easily nominate MADRE to receive a grant from Working Assets.

Give us a call at 212/627-0444 to find out how you can help.

**Please consider including MADRE in your will.**

We would be happy to supply you with the necessary information.

MADRE, Inc. is a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization.





# MADRE

121 West 27th Street, Room 301  
 New York, New York 10001  
 Telephone 212 627-0444  
 Fax 212 675-3704  
 e-mail: madre@igc.apc.org  
 http://www.MADRE.org

### Board of Directors

Dr. Zala Chandler  
 Liliانا Cortés  
 Andaye De La Cruz  
 Hilda Diaz  
 Linda Flores-Rodríguez  
 Anne H. Hess  
 Rochelle Korman  
 Margaret Ratner  
 Marie Saint Cyr

### Sponsors

Brooke Adams  
 Electa Arenal  
 Julie Belafonte  
 Vinie Burrows  
 Mavi Coakley  
 Dr. Johnnetta Cole  
 Blanche Wiesen Cook  
 Clare Coss  
 Alexis De Veaux  
 Kathy Engel  
 Rosa Escobar  
 Roberta Flack  
 Devon Fredericks  
 Tammy Grimes  
 Elizabeth Horman  
 Gale Jackson  
 Eleanore Kennedy  
 Myrtle Lacy  
 Isabel Letelier  
 Audre Lorde, 1934-1992  
 Mary Lumet  
 Patricia Maher  
 Hon. Hilda Mason  
 Member, Council of District of Columbia  
 Monica Melamid  
 Hon. Ruth Messinger  
 Manhattan Borough President  
 Holly Near  
 Dr. Roxanne Dunbar Ortiz  
 Grace Paley  
 Antonia Pantoja  
 Bernice Reagon  
 Chita Rivera  
 Sonia Rivera  
 Helen Rodríguez-Trías, M.D.  
 Digna Sánchez  
 Sonia Sánchez  
 Yolanda Sánchez  
 Susan Sarandon  
 Carlotta Scott  
 Julia R. Scott  
 Pat Simon  
 Susan L. Taylor  
 Marjorie Tuite, 1922-1986  
 Alice Walker  
 Joanne Woodward  
 Billie Jean Young

**Executive Director**  
 Vivian Stromberg

## membership

- I want to become a member of MADRE. Enclosed is my \$30 annual membership fee.
- I am a member of MADRE and want to offer further support. Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to MADRE.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
 ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
 CITY/STATE/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
 TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_  
 AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ \_\_\_\_\_

MADRE is a 501(c)(3), not-for-profit organization. All contributions to MADRE are tax deductible to the extent of the law. A copy of MADRE's latest financial report can be obtained by writing to the New York Department of State, Office of Charities Registration.

## gift memberships

Introduce a friend or relative to MADRE by sending them a gift membership in celebration of a birthday, wedding, holiday or special event. For \$30 or more per membership, MADRE will send an acknowledgement to you and an information packet and membership to the people you list below.

NAME _____	NAME _____
ADDRESS _____	ADDRESS _____
CITY/STATE/ZIP _____	CITY/STATE/ZIP _____

Enclosed is \$30 or more for each Gift Membership

YOUR NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
 ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
 CITY/STATE/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
 TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_  
 TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ \_\_\_\_\_

## Please send me information about Voyages With A Vision

- CUBA: January 2000     PALESTINE: May 2000     GUATEMALA: Spring 2000

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
 ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
 CITY/STATE/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_  
 TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_

## MADRE

121 West 27th Street, Room 301  
 New York, NY 10001

NON-PROFIT  
 U.S. Postage  
 PAID  
 New York, NY  
 Permit No. 3485