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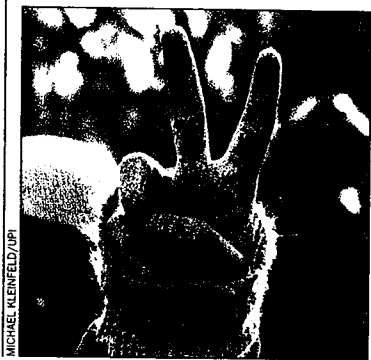


Marching for Saddam

By J. MICHAEL WALLER

Many veterans of Cold War 'peace' protests have become leaders in the new pro-Saddam antiwar movement, but their revolutionary

affiliations and bizarre extremist positions have mainstream Americans wondering who might be using whom and for what purpose besides peace.



MICHAEL KLEINFELD/UP

M meet the leaders of the antiwar protests who sought to spread their defense of Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein worldwide on Feb. 15-16, going to the streets with a style and message that seemed eerily familiar:

- One urged U.S. troops to mutiny and murder their commanding officers.
- One is a leader of the International Committee to Defend Slobodan Milosevic, the former Yugoslavian leader on trial for war crimes.
- One was made an "honorary nephew" of North Vietnam's Ho Chi Minh during the Vietnam War, returned home wearing a ring made from the wreckage of an American fighter plane and later became executive director of an alleged Soviet front organization that reportedly took its marching orders from the KGB.
- Several organized protests in soli-

parity with the FARC narcoterrorists of Colombia.

- Others have been waging campaigns in support of convicted cop-killer Mumia Abu-Jamal.

- Many of the most influential are professional radicals with a fanatical devotion to the late North Korean communist dictator Kim Il-sung and his communist dictator son, Kim Jong-il.

- None has criticized Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein.

In a globally coordinated campaign, these and other aging veterans of Cold War “peace” protests are running today’s antiwar movement. This has other antiwar activists pulling at their hair. They argue that the affiliations and extremist positions of the current organizers risk discrediting the cause. Some even have gone public with these complaints. Writing in the *Washington Post*, sixties-era historian Michael Kazin, a professor at Georgetown University, says the American left is “sharply divided” about leadership of the protests. “The organizers of the recent Washington and San Francisco marches refuse to say anything critical of Saddam Hussein,” Kazin lamented.

But the critics don’t have much clout with the “antiwar” leadership, as they themselves recognize, because they aren’t doing the organizing or paying the expenses to mobilize hundreds of thousands of people into the streets. Today’s protests require huge amounts of work and are coordinated worldwide. United for Peace and Justice (UPJ), one of the two main groups that ran the Feb. 15-16 protests across the United States, claims simultaneous demonstrations were held around the world in more than 300 cities, including Baghdad.

Peace activists are torn between joining the Axis of Evil or not protesting at all. Some look the other way. Some rationalize involvement. “We can’t divide the peace movement, you know,” said a paid antiwar organizer at Our Lady of Mercy Church in wealthy Potomac, Md.

The demonstration planners are, in fact, professional agitators who have mass protest down to a science, having participated in or run grass-roots mobilizations since before most of today’s picketers were born. Critical authorities on U.S. radicalism say the track record of the leaders reveals not a principled opposition to war but a calculated commitment to undermining U.S. security and foreign policy, regardless of their ideology, and exploiting the naïveté and idealism of whatever influential or mainstream people can be persuaded to join them. That’s how a group such as the International Action Center (IAC) could support Milosevic’s mass murder of

Muslims on the one hand, and back Islamic terrorists and Saddam on the other.

The organizers divide into two distinct groups: the IAC and Act Now to Stop War and End Racism, known as International ANSWER, lead one group, and UPJ heads the other. IAC and ANSWER are front groups of the Workers World Party (WWP), a tiny Marxist-Leninist group whose leaders display a fanatical devotion to the late North Korean dictator Kim Il-sung and his son and successor, Kim Jong-il (see sidebar). According to longtime homeland-security analysts, UPJ’s leaders built their political-organizing careers in the old Soviet-funded Communist Party USA (CPUSA).

Indeed the very concept of “front groups” — umbrella organizations set up by communists to trick liberals and innocents into supporting the party line — has been a veritable hallmark of Marxist agitation since the 1920s.

Many are tempted to laugh off the idea that graying old extremists are running current protests, and they roll their eyes at hearing the “C”-word, even Moscow having given up communism. But many others, especially liberals in the peace movement, are not at all amused. “I think the demonstrations would have been twice as big had the organizers been from a wider range of antiwar groups and not so dominated by this tiny Marxist-Leninist faction,” said Stephen Zunes, chair of the peace- and justice-studies program at the University of San Francisco.

The IAC has felt the sting. In a statement it blasted those who “dishonestly claim that ANSWER is a ‘front’ group in order to diminish the coalition,” though it acknowledges “the presence of socialists and Marxists, in particular members of the Workers World Party.” Their critics, IAC says, are racists: “Those who claim that ANSWER is a ‘front’ organization demonstrate their own racist and elitist perception of reality.”

And ANSWER has ripped what it calls “a repugnant red-baiting campaign against the ANSWER coalition because of its role as a principal organizer of the mass grass-roots movement of opposition to war throughout the United States.”

The WWP is nothing if not consistent. According to a 1974 congressional report, it split from the Socialist Workers Party in 1959 in a dispute over the Soviet invasion of Hungary three years before. The Socialist Workers opposed the invasion, while Workers World partisans supported it. “In 1968, the Workers World Party supported the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the communist Warsaw Pact armies,” the report continued. The party, which never numbered more than a few hundred people, supported the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese army against the

United States during the Vietnam War, according to the congressional report. Some of its activities were coordinated with enemy military actions. An April 8, 1972, internal letter “To All Branches” of the party urged participation in “antiwar” demonstrations in support of a Viet Cong offensive in South Vietnam. The letter’s author, John Catalinotto, remains in the party as managing editor of its weekly *Workers World* “newspaper,” and occasionally represents the IAC.

Party members received revolutionary training in Cuba as members of the Venceremos Brigades in the 1960s and early 1970s, and at about that time the party oriented itself ideologically with North Korea. Deirdre Griswold Stapp, a voice of the party and currently editor of *Workers World*, described how the party functioned in a 1972 report to the Cuban Communist Party. Explaining its “inter-



Who is paying? Becker, a director of ANSWER and the IAC, traveled to North Korea to denounce the United States.

national relationships,” she told Cuban leaders about the WWP’s new contacts with North Korea, via a front group called the American Servicemen’s Union, according to congressional investigators. “The chairman of the American Servicemen’s Union, Andy Stapp, recently visited the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and opened friendly discussions with the party there,” she wrote. She later married Stapp.

In a speech to the 6th Congress of the League of Socialist Working Youth of Korea, the youth branch of North Korea’s ruling party, Andy Stapp praised “Comrade Kim Il-sung, ever victorious, iron-willed, brilliant commander and outstanding leader of the international communist and working-class movements,” according to a transcript published in a congressional report. “As instructed by Marshal Kim Il-sung, the outstanding leader of the international