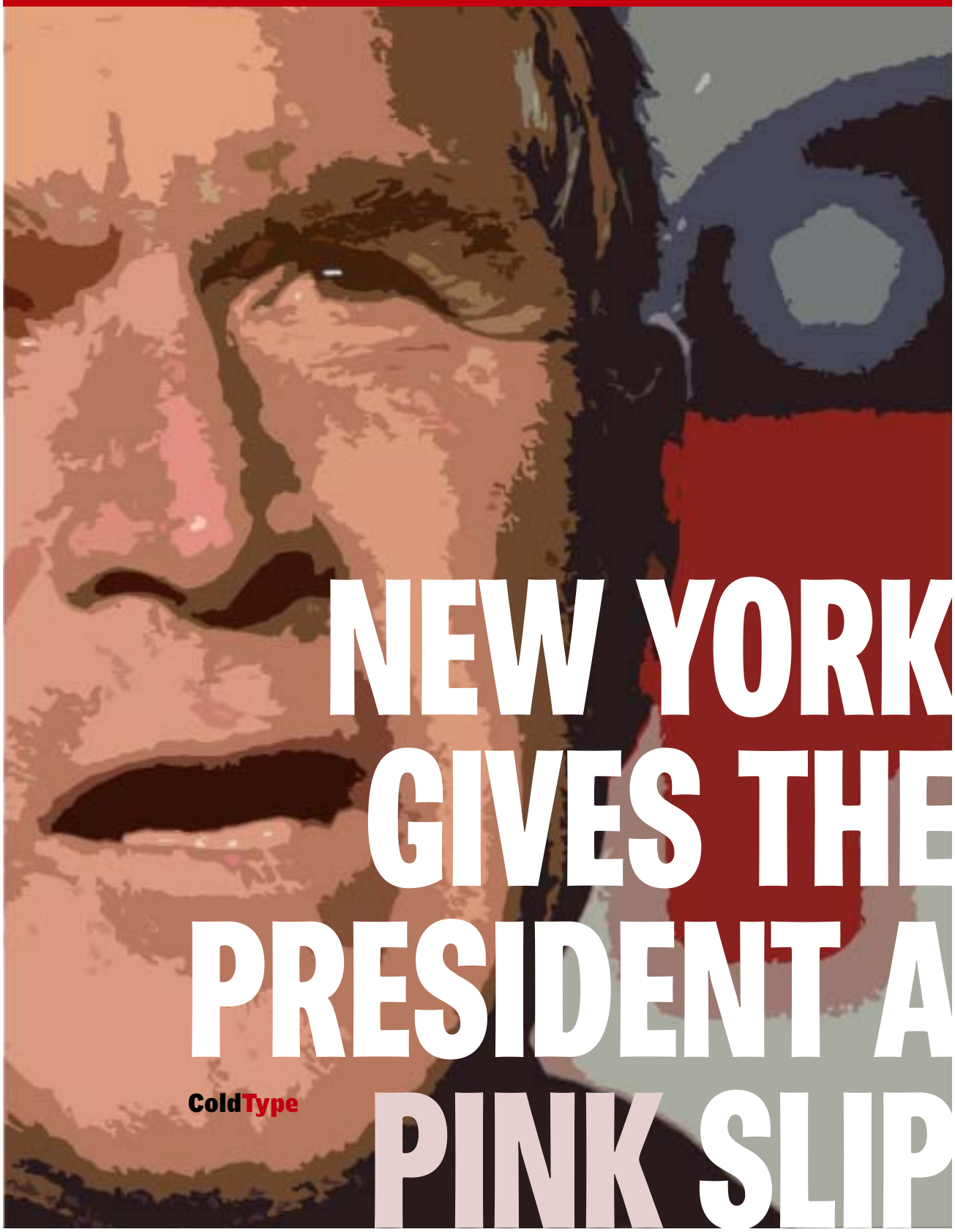
TOM ENGELHARDT



NEW YORK GIVES THE PRESIDENT A PINK SLIP

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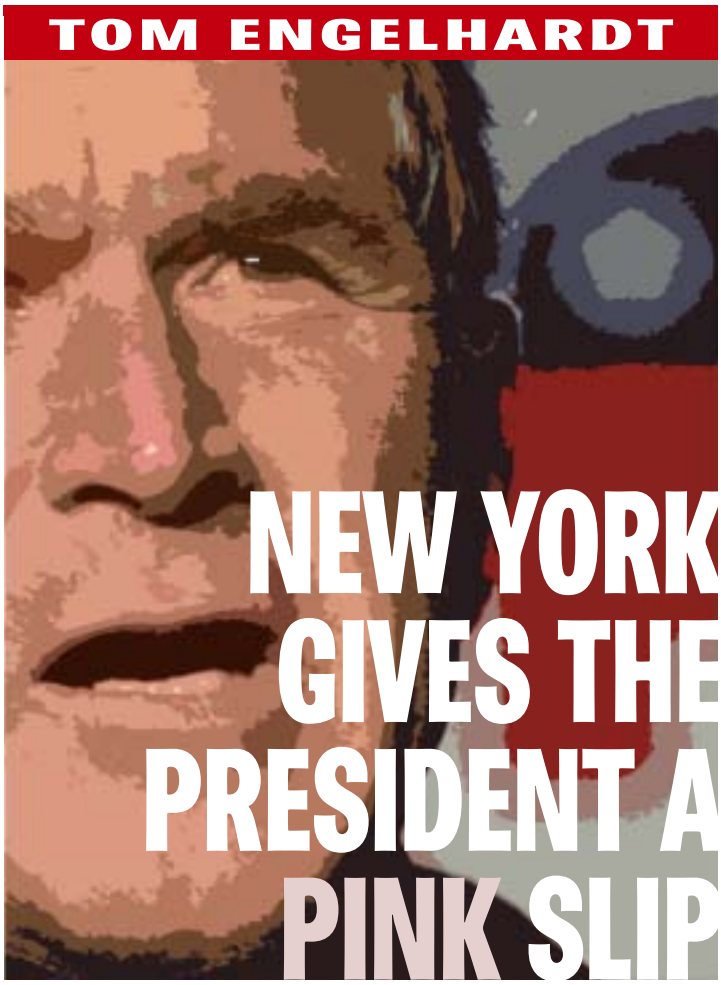

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ColdType

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It's the perfect day for a march. Sunny, crisp, clear, spring-like. The sort of day that just gives you hope for no reason at all, though my own hopes are not high for New York's latest antiwar demonstration. I haven't received a single email about it. Many people I know hadn't realized it was happening. I fear the outreach has been minimal and despite all the signals of danger (of another war, this time with Iran) and of possibility (nosediving presidential approval polls, an administration in disarray, and the Republican Party in growing chaos), I approach this 30 block march with something of a sinking heart.

This is only reinforced by the scene that meets Nick Turse and mI as we leave the subway at 18th street and head east about an hour before the demonstrators are to step off. The streets are still largely empty of all but the police, gathered in knots at every corner. Their blue sawhorses ("police line do not cross") rim the sidewalks seemingly to the horizon and everywhere you

can see stacks of the metal fencing with which the NYPD has become so expert at hemming in any demonstration. None of this inspires great confidence.

Sometimes, though, surprise is a wonderful thing. Who would have guessed that several hours later I would be standing on Broadway and Leonard Street looking back at perhaps 20 packed blocks of demonstrators – bands, puppets, signs by the thousands, vets by the hundreds (if not the thousands), huge contingents of military families, congeries of the young, labor, women, the clergy, university and high school students, raging grannies, radical cheerleaders, and who knows who else – an enormous mass of humanity as far as the eye can see and probably another 10 to 15 blocks beyond that. It was enough to make the heart leap. I had no way of counting, no way of knowing whether what I saw was the 300,000 the organizers claimed or merely the vague "tens of thousands" mentioned in most media reports. It was, to say the least though, a lot of people, mobilized on limited notice.

As someone who lived through the era of Vietnam protests, this demonstration had quite a different feel to it, and not just because of all the military families (and the surprising number of people I talked with who knew someone, or were related to someone, who had served in our all-volunteer military in Iraq), but because no one in this demonstration had the illusion that the White House was paying the slightest bit of attention to them. The same, by the way, might be said of the mainstream media. On the ABC and NBC prime time news this night, the reports on this huge demonstration, sandwiched between what would be billed as major stories, would zip by in quite literally a few seconds each. In each case, if you hadn't been there, it would be easy to believe from the reporting that this event had essentially never occurred.

As I often do, I spent as much time as I could prowling the crowd, talking to as many protesters as possible. A demonstration of this

size is a complex beast, one I would hesitate to characterize. I've tried instead to offer below some of the voices I ran across – or at least as much of each of them as my slow hand could madly scribble on a pad of paper. As modest as the cross-section I encountered was, I had the feeling that, while the march was calm, lively, and upbeat, many of the demonstrators had no illusions about what the future might hold. The ones I met were almost uniformly disappointed in, or disgusted with, the Democratic "opposition," fearful of a new war in Iran, realistic about how hard it will be to get the President's men (and so our troops) out of Iraq, and yet surprisingly determined that those troops should be brought home as soon as humanly possible.

Perhaps such demonstrations are now not for the Bush administration, nor really for the mainstream media either, but only for us. Perhaps they are a reminder to all those who attend and to those numbering in their hundreds of thousands, if not millions, on the political Internet that we are here, alive, and humming. That is reason enough to demonstrate.

Throughout these years, signs – individually made, hand-lettered, sometimes just scrawled (not to speak of masks, puppets, complex theatricals, elaborate visuals of every sort suitable for a world of special effects) – are the signature aspect of such demonstrations. Here are some of the signs that caught my eye, not necessarily the wildest among them, but ones that give something of the flavor of the event:

"From Gulf to Gulf, George Bush, a category 5 disaster"

"Drop Bush, Not Bombs."

"Fermez La Bush"

"No ProLife in Iraq."

"1 was too many, 2400 is enough"

"War is terrorism with a bigger budget"

"Axis of Insanity" (with George, Condi, Don, and Dick dressed as an Elmer Fudd-style hunter)

"One Nation under Surveillance"

"G.O.P. George Orwell Party"

"How Many Lives per Gallon?"

"War Is Soooooo 20th Century"

"Civil War Accomplished in Iraq-Nam"

"Give Impeachment a Chance"

"I'm Already Against the Next War"

"Expose the lies, half-truths, cut and paste rationales for going to war"

"Mandatory Evacuation of the Bush White House"

And here are some of the voices that go with such signs:

The Soldier and the Machine

Demond Mullins is a 24 year-old student at Lehman College in New York. A handsome young man in wrap-around shades, he wears a desert camo jacket with Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) on it. He tells me he was an infantryman in the Baghdad area from September 2004 to September 2005, part of a National Guard unit attached to the First Cavalry. He will be among a relatively modest IVAW group of perhaps 20 to 30 young men who will lead this demonstration.

"What got me here? I had just returned home and was having a lot of trouble transitioning back into civilian life. Then one day, a professor of mine gave me an email for an IVAW event. I met the vets against the war and it was my first time talking about my

experience there. I felt easy with them.

"I lost friends over there. Here's a bracelet." He briefly brings his wrist up so that, for a moment, I can see the black band, one of several bands. "Your unit makes these and the whole unit wears them. In my battalion, we lost twenty-five guys, but I wear this one because he was my closest friend there and he died six days before my birthday."

I ask him to let me have a closer look. On it, the band has rank, name ("I don't want you to use his name..."), and "December 1, 2004, KIA, Baghdad, Iraq" as well as the phrase, "Something to believe in."

"I ran all those missions and I don't know why. I don't know what their lives and the lives of Iraqi nationals were spent for. I thought they showed a blatant disregard for human life. I was just tired of being part of a machine destroying the Earth – and I'm speaking of the military-industrial complex. I wanted to be part of a force saving the Earth."

"My Nephew Died for This?"

Like so many people on this brilliant day, she's wearing sunglasses. She stands behind the IVAW contingent, part of the startlingly large group of military families against the war that are leading off this demonstration. She's Missy Comley Beattie – she spells it out carefully for me – a member of Gold Star Families for Peace. "My nephew was killed on August 6, 2005 in al-Amariyah. He was a Marine."

She comes from red-state Kentucky, but now lives in New York. She's wearing a tiny gold peace sign around her neck and a Code Pink T-shirt. "I write like three articles a day. It's an obsession. I was told recently that I'm an embarrassment to my [Kentucky] community for my stance on the war. I won't tell you who said that.

But I have my brother's support. It was his son who died. My mother's a former chair of the local Republican Party. Now, she's a screaming progressive. Actually, my mother tells me that things are beginning to change in Kentucky. She sees a lot more anti-Bush letters-to-the-editor in the papers than she used to.

"I think that people in the red states are increasingly opposed to Bush. But to be honest, I suspect it's the rising costs at the pump, not the human costs that are doing it. It's also that so many people just don't pay attention and the death rates are always submerged beneath the Ken- and Barbie-like TV anchors as they talk about the crime of the week. And keep in mind that Bush doesn't allow people to see the bodies come home.

"When my nephew was little we were close, but now I live here. I talked to him before he joined the Marines and urged him not to do so. Then I urged him to join something like the Coast Guard, but he was attracted to the bravado of the Marine Corps. He'd say to my father, 'Why settle for second best when you can be best?' I even tried to convince him to go AWOL.

"Cindy [Sheehan] and I were arrested on March 6, seven months to the day after my nephew died, and the reason I sat down with the others was this: My nephew actually went to Iraq because he thought he was fighting for our freedom. I never believed that, but I sat down because the police wouldn't even let us walk on the sidewalk to give our petition to the U.S. Mission to the UN. I thought: My nephew died for this? So I sat down, spent twenty-two hours in jail, and now here I am."

Released (and Still Raging) Granny

She's 78, has four grandchildren, and was once a preschool teacher. She's wearing a straw hat covered with flowers and dripping with buttons ("Granny Peace Brigade," "He lied, they died," "Weapons

of Mass Deception," "Keep America Safe and Free"). She has on a "Make Levees, Not War" T-shirt and she's one of the 18 members of the Granny Peace Brigade, who protested at a military recruitment center in New York's Times Square, were arrested, brought to trial for "disorderly conduct," and just this week found not guilty by a judge. A hand-made sign she's carrying says, "Now we're all safe. The grannies were acquitted!"

The eighteen are awaiting their moment as part of the lead contingent in this antiwar march. She's standing as I approach her and agrees to talk, but says, "Let me sit down first," and lowers herself gently into the wheelchair I hadn't noticed right behind her. "I'm a member of the raging grannies," she begins and then has the urge to explain the wheelchair. "I had a hip replacement. That's why I'm in a chair. I can walk a little ways, but not two miles!"

Her name, she tells me, is Corinne Willinger, and she wants the Iraq War over yesterday. "How do we do it? We get out. I don't see that we're doing any good there. We haven't prevented a civil war, we've fomented it!

"I think that the Bush administration is one big mistake and I hope the people will correct the error as soon as possible. Whatever this administration touches, they turn it into s-h-i-t. The Yiddish expression is drech. That includes the aftermath of Katrina, the push to go into Iran, the treatment of the Palestinians, the fact that the rich in this country are getting richer and the poor poorer."

She pauses a moment. "There's lots more, but I can't think of any of it right now." And she laughs in a warm, friendly way.

As for her recent trial, she says, "It was nerve-wracking. Others took it better. I felt we were doing the right thing and I thought it important to get as much publicity as possible, but – I'll be honest –

I got very nervous. We had heard the judge was fair, but a stickler for the law and you never know what a verdict is going to be."

I ask about her hopes for the future and she responds, simply enough, "I hope that we will not have to see any other wars like the ones we've conducted even before Vietnam – and all in countries very different from us. Why do we have to travel to foreign countries to get involved in business that's not ours in the first place? There has to be a way for the American people to live without war. We're now so involved in this war in Iraq and the possibility of going into Iran that we can't solve our own problems."

Books Not Bombs

The Grannies are just behind us, singing "God Help America," their version of God Bless America, as we set off with nineteen year-old Aaron Cole, in a green shirt over blue jeans, carrying a sign that reads "Books Not Bombs" and another, "Join the Campus Antiwar Network," that he tells me is his friend's. ("I'm just holding it for her.") He's here, he says, "on behalf of the hip-hop caucus RYSE," and when I look bemused, he adds, "Basically, it's my friends over here," and he indicates two young men with him. "They started the organization at the University of Maryland. I go to City College, but I'm helping out on their caucus.

"Young people in many ways have the most power to change the country because, literally, we are its future. It's young people who are being killed in Iraq and locked up in large numbers in jails here. The fact that there's such a lack of awareness and radical activity is a sign that, as young people, we're not taking responsibility for the country we're inheriting, or shaping the destiny of our people."

Behind us, the Grannies have just launched another song with

the lines, “We’re the Raging Grannies, we’re as mad as mad can be…”

“Activism on campus is too low,” he continues.

I ask why he thinks this might be.

“Apathy,” he says.

“Television,” mutters one of his friends.

“To a large extent, it’s pop culture, the images the media offers, bombarding people with values destructive to their well being.”

Are his friends here?

“Some are, but a lot of young people won’t come to something like this. There has to be more of an incentive to come down than just an antiwar protest. That’s the truth of it. It can’t just be a cause. For whatever reason, they’re not going to come out and show their numbers unless there’s a concert or some kind of entertainment. If it’s just going to be standing around or walking in the street, they’re not as likely to do it. Unfortunately, they’d rather stay home, get high, and watch TV.”

Sleepless Nights

She’s holding the end of a large banner: “Military Families Speak Out, Chicago, Illinois.” The person at the other end of the banner has directed me to her. When I approach Ginger Williams and ask if she’d consider a brief interview, she replies with spirit, “Bring it on!” And then goes: “Whoops! Maybe that’s the wrong thing to say…”

She’s 54, wearing a black U.S. Army baseball cap, a Support-Our-Troops T-shirt and button, and a black backpack. When asked what she does, she replies, “I’m a nurse, homemaker, mother, protester, whatever you got.”

Her son returned from his first tour of Iraq only three days earlier. "Sean was at Notre Dame and volunteered for Army ROTC after September 11th. He's been in two years, a first lieutenant with the 101st Airborne. He just served eleven months in Iraq where he commanded convoys that guarded trucks that are mainly owned by Halliburton. He wasn't wounded, thank God. We had a lot of sleepless nights.

"I was against the war from the start. My husband was an infantryman, a Vietnam Vet. He was strongly against it. But my son believes in the mission. He believes he's there to bring peace and stability to the region. We disagree but we get along. We raised him to think for himself – and he did. He says he's going to volunteer to go back.

"I hope that my son's right, but I think the only chance that things will end in Iraq is if we get out. We're just inflaming matters by being there.

"I've been to Fayetteville, to Washington, to Camp Casey. Everywhere I go, I keep thinking this is going to be the turning point. That march on Washington in September, then when John Murtha came out against the war – Marine, congressman, purple-heart winner. I thought that would be it. Now, I'm kind of pessimistic really. It doesn't seem to matter what we do. And you know what I'm really upset with – all the Democratic leaders who won't take a stand!

"I confronted [Illinois Senator] Barack Obama at a town-hall meeting and asked him what he wants us to do. He buys into the idea that there'll be a slaughter if we get out. I think there's a slaughter now. So I'm disappointed in him."

I wonder whether anything gives her hope. "Let me think. That's a tough one." There's a long silence. "Yes, the fall elections. If the

Democrats can win and make Nancy Pelosi speaker, maybe she'll put the war and withdrawal on the agenda."

Carrying the Flag

Andy Hadel, 47, is in a grey t-shirt, brown slacks, and sandals. He's carrying an American flag over his shoulder on a silver pole. He identifies himself as a designer and design teacher.

"There are two reasons I carry the flag. First, one of the principles our nation was founded on is to dissent when things aren't working. To speak out is a patriotic function, a high-level of citizenship. Second, re-appropriating this symbol for those who are anti-war is important. When you look at Fox News, when you see President Bush, you always see them wearing American flag lapel pendants. It's become a traditional image by now to think the flag means pro-war patriotism, so what I'm trying to do is take the symbol back. I pay taxes. I'm a citizen. In the act of dissention I believe I'm fulfilling my highest level of citizen's responsibility.

"I don't know where I got this flag. I've had it for years. I think I bought it at a flag store. Believe it or not, you don't need a card from the Republican Party to do that!"

Raising the Dead

The photos – striking faces, each with a rank, a name, and a place – are mounted on a cord that stretches for blocks. Almost 2,400 photos means many, many blocks, and so that cord is held up by scores of people strung out along its length, living faces to go with the dead ones. Hermon Darden, pastor of King's Highway United Methodist Church in Brooklyn, is among them. He's in clerical black and wearing his white collar. He introduces me to three other men. "He's from Maryland and they're from southern New

England, also from the United Methodists."

Are the holders of this exhibit of the dead all Methodists, I ask, and the next holder down promptly clears his throat and shows the pin he's wearing: "Another Quaker for peace."

Darden speaks in the inspiring rhythms of a minister. He's got short, black hair, and a tiny black mustache flecked with grey. He was lost and now is found.

"I came looking for the clergy contingent but couldn't find it and these people welcomed me. They took me in and this is good enough for me, holding up these names. Probably there is no greater statement that can be made than to lift up the pictures of these children killed by an unjust war. Did you know that most of those who died were under twenty-five. They were the young. A generation is being decimated for a war that has no foundation or ethical justification. We're simply fighting to secure oil when we could secure alternative means of energy.

"What we need to do is ensure that our votes actually count. And our votes cannot count if we can't be sure the machinery used is validated. We deserve a paper trail and, it seems, neither the Democrats, nor the Republicans have taken a serious stance about voting machines. "And then we have to have some honest folk running for office who will put an end to corporate hustling and exploitation. Halliburton and Bechtel have been doing this for generations. This is not new. And you know what else we need? We need more people to take to the streets.

"I also think the media, which is owned by just a few companies, has kept a lid on protest information. They have not adequately reported what people such as ourselves feel about the war.

"At my church in Brooklyn, we announced this demonstration for several Sundays and it was at our [United Methodist] conference

website as well. “You know,” he concludes, “I participated in the Vietnam protests and unfortunately this is just déjà vu.”

The Lieutenant from Okinawa

Ed Bloch (“And don’t reverse the first and last names!”) at 82 is undoubtedly not the oldest veteran to be in this demonstration, but he may be the oldest one walking its length. He wears his soft, khaki campaign cap and his old Marine officer’s jacket, cinched at his waist with a belt. It has his battle stars and his first lieutenant’s bars from World War II. (“I was a rifle platoon leader in the battle for Okinawa.”)

When I ask whether this could possibly be his wartime jacket, he replies, “They made the damn uniform of such great material in those days. It’s 61 years old.” It fits him amazingly, though he assures me that a friend “moved the buttons for me.”

The executive director of the Interfaith Alliance of Albany (New York), he is accompanied by younger friends, but he walks as if alone in this vast crowd. His step, strangely enough, is both halting and steady. He progresses at an even pace. He stands ramrod straight, a bearing that could only be called military and, as it turns out, he carries a burden.

“After the war against Japan ended,” he tells me, “the First Marine Division was sent into China, right into the middle of their civil war, to work with the Japanese and the Chinese puppets and hold down the territory for the arrival of Chiang [Kai-shek]’s troops. While I was there, I committed atrocities. I committed atrocities with the Japanese on a small Chinese town.”

He walks on, his pace never breaking, while I consider this.

Then he says, in a segue that makes great sense if you think about it: “The reason that [Senator] Ted Kennedy is more honest

than most of them down there is Chappaquiddick. It moved him in the direction of remorse. It made him understand."

On Iraq, he's clear as day. "Everything I believe screams out that there is no substitute for peace in a nuclear age. For certain, this continued war is bringing up the fundamentalists all around the world to do the suicide attacks and everything else. Our attacks just confirm what their leaders have told them."

I ask him what he might tell George Bush and his top officials if he had the chance. "My immediate instinct is to say, "Drop dead," but I don't think that sounds very good. The fact is we just have to get out right now. We have to remove those young people like the ones with whom I served from harm's way in an imperialist war for oil."

And he walks on alone in the crowd.

Bring My Dad Home

He is eleven years old – with a friend and the friend's mother. He stops shyly for just a moment at my request. He is carrying a sign he's made that says, "Bring My Dad Home. Stop the War."

He admits that this is his first demonstration. ("It feels pretty cool.") His father, he tells me, in as few words as possible, is somewhere outside of Baghdad and in the Army Reserves. When asked about the war his father is fighting, he says: "I think we need to stop the war because there's no need for it. Oil's not worth blood."

I wonder how his dad feels about this. "I never really asked him," he replies and heads off with his friend.

Hoosiers for Peace

The three university students have bused in from Indiana for this

demonstration, their first big one. He's in a white T-shirt and a jean jacket. He carries a "Hoosiers for Peace" sign and a small American flag. The last thing he expects is to be interviewed and he's hesitant – both with his name, "Dave," and with his words. His decision to come was "a moral stance against the war." No more need be said.

What does he think will happen in this country? "I think George Bush is going to ride out his term without any kind of consequences," he replies and stops. Then, after a moment's thought, he adds, "But it's good to be here to support democracy, to support the right to dissent."

An awkward silence descends as he and his friends fidget, unsure what to do next. Finally, he adds another thought: "My father's a Vietnam vet and I'm against war altogether. My father went to the original Gulf War protests [in 1990] and I'm here now because of the things he's taught me and for the guys my age who are out there."

Another silence with the hum of the crowd and distant drums behind us. Finally I ask whether he knows anyone who's actually gone to Iraq. "I know three guys who were in Iraq."

And what, I wonder, did they tell him about their experiences.

"I never asked them about it, but if it was anything like Vietnam, I'm sure they don't want to talk about it."

"We Remember Vietnam"

Behind the huge Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) banner, the large contingent of vets, with the signature somewhat disheveled look of their generation, are chanting, "Hey, hey, Uncle Sam, We remember Vietnam, We don't want your Iraq War, Bring our troops back to our shore." Bill Perry of Levittown, PA, who

anchors one end of the enormous banner, is wearing a t-shirt and black vest with military unit patches all over it. He digs into a wallet and hands me his card, which indicates that he's the National Coordinator of the VVAW.

"I was a paratrooper with the 101st Airborne Division in 1967-68 during the Tet Offensive just as the mood of the country was beginning to swing big time. It became quite clear then that the Vietminh – the Vietcong the Americans called them – had the support of the people in the countryside. Leaving aside the strategic arguments, the economic arguments, the moral arguments, if the people don't want you and the people don't need you, there's no need to be there and we're approaching that moment in Iraq now."

He promptly offers me a micro-history and analysis of the various Shia, Sunni, and Kurdish groups in fragmenting Iraq. "The whole purpose of going over there was to break up the country into three countries – leaving the middle part, where most of the people are, without oil and making sure the Iraqis more generally lose control over their oil."

What exactly would he do about Iraq, I ask.

"I would immediately withdraw and let the Arab League and the U.N. sort it out because there's much less animosity against them. Eighty percent of Iraqis dislike us. Eighty percent of Iraqis are Arabs. That's why the Arab League makes sense. The Kurds are the twenty percent that embrace globalism and capitalism. Condi and Rumsfeld want them to succeed.

"I think eventually things will play out, but the problem is the U.S. wants to retain those fourteen permanent bases of ours in Iraq to control everything from the Caspian oil that can be pumped to China and India to the Middle Eastern sources that supply Europe."

The Other Engelhard(t)

I approach the two mothers, each with children in strollers and ask the nearest if I can interview her. She agrees, but then the other leans closer, reads the press pass hanging around my neck ("Tom Engelhardt, Tomdispatch.com"), and says, "I'm an Engelhard too, just without the final T." So I interview the other Engelhard – Margaret known as Meg – at this rally. She's 42, from South Orange, New Jersey. She's with son Cory ("almost three" and on his father's shoulders) and Jasper, who rises from his stroller to tell me proudly, "I'm four and a half, almost five!"

I wonder whether this is Jasper's first demonstration. No, Meg tells me, she went out with him when we began bombing Afghanistan back in 2001 and that, she adds, was "his first demonstration – externally."

She tells me she knew someone who died in Iraq. I ask whether she has hopes for the political future. "That's a tough question," she says. "I'm very worried about increased aggression toward Iran. I'm happy Bush's approval ratings have fallen so low. I feel like less of a minority than I did three years ago.

"What I hope for is that we would get Democrats elected in the mid-term elections and so, some sort of resolution from Congress to withdraw. I can't imagine more than that."

Pink Slipping Bush

She's at the front of the vigorous, dancing, chanting Code Pink contingent, all of whom wear something pink, including in some cases day-glo pink wigs. She's holding high a frilly, full-length pink slip on a pole topped by the sign, "Give Bush a Pink Slip." She herself wears a pink feathered hat and pink camo-style pants. ("We've done a lot of counter-recruiting actions.") She's Courtney Lee

Adams, a 43 year-old musician and copyeditor, who first got involved with the group at the time of the Republican National Convention in New York.

"I was worried that this demonstration wasn't going to be well attended, so I'm relieved. I was at an event last night and a lot of people didn't even know this was happening, so I expected the worst.

"Maybe I'm crazy, but I feel encouraged. There's much more mainstream opposition out there than there was. I'm still immensely disappointed in the Democrats. I don't understand why they're not riding this momentum when it's so obviously out there. But to hell with them! Seriously, we're not waiting for them to act.

"In New York, Code Pink is very focused on pressuring Hillary Clinton. Bird-dogging her is what we call it. After all, she's our senator. We want to see the troops come home now, no permanent bases, true reconstruction, no invasion of Iran. And I'd like to see Bush impeached. There's another case where there isn't much support among Democrats in Congress, but there's lots of support for it out there. Isn't it strange, actually, that it seems like there's more opposition from old-fashioned conservative Republicans than liberal Democrats?

"The big thing is: No permanent bases in Iraq. This is going to be a tough one. I'm sure they're going to try to pull some troops out, do the old bait-and-switch, getting our position in Iraq off the PR screen and hanging on to those bases. I fear that's going to prove to be a long, hard fight."

Earphones

He's right at the end of the march, among the last demonstrators. He's wearing a grey, winter knit cap over his long hair, perhaps fit-

ting for someone from the chilly state of Vermont. He's 15 years old with a sweet, open face. His name is Jacob. He's bused down with his older brother, part of the Central Vermont Peace and Justice contingent and, though everywhere around him noise wells up and instruments are being played, he has two large earphones clamped over his ears. When I stop him for an interview, he's initially unsure, but his friends encourage him.

It's his first large demonstration. "I came to protest against the war. I've participated in a bunch of small demonstrations [in Vermont] and I wanted to go to a major one. It's been fun, exhilarating.

"My second cousin has just gone into the Marines, but I want to get our troops out as quickly as possible after stabilizing the country first, because otherwise the lives there would have been lost fully in vain."

As for his thoughts on the Bush administration, "They need complete reform."

As he's ready to leave, I ask what he's been listening to. He shows me the CD and says, "It's Oriental Sunshine. I think it's a band from the seventies, kind of underground music. It has," he says with awe, "a sitar player."

Note: It seems appropriate to recommend Anthony Arnove's book, Iraq: The Logic of Withdrawal. *Clear and concise, it presents in a nutshell the background for, and the arguments for, getting our troops out of Iraq. It is the book to take with you, if you are planning to argue the case with family members, friends, co-workers, or others – Tom*