

A KILLER CONCERT

by Garth Heutel

Plan to be at the Ark on Sept 7th ... To raise public awareness about the US Army's very own terrorist training ground—the School of the Americas (SOA)—local musician Kristine Pettersen has organized a unique benefit concert. Performing with Pettersen will be blues and swing artist Jo Serrapere, funky folk-rock artist Lisa Hunter, the diverse and political ensemble Sacred Song, and others. A speaker on the SOA and a short documentary exposé of the SOA's crimes will round out a most infotaining night.

The concert benefits local participation in nationwide efforts to close the US-taxpayer-funded Georgia school, including a convoy there in November to demonstrate the power of the national movement. The event commemorates the tenth anniversary of the massacre by SOA graduates of six Jesuit priests and two women co-workers in El Salvador.

Since its inception in 1946, the School of the Americas has trained more than 60,000 Latin American soldiers in counter-insurgency warfare, designed to suppress peasant revolution against their miserable conditions throughout the hemisphere. Though this was put forward as a Cold-War battle against Soviet influence, the SOA continues a pattern of US domination initiated long before the Soviet Union even existed. Unless we stop it, the repression-train will roll on long after the end of the Cold War. As the great investigative journalist I.F. Stone pointed out, "what really stirs them up in Central America is not *Das Kapital*; there's not many peasants down there that have read all three volumes".

Michigan Senator Carl Levin, a staunch defender of the SOA, tries to argue that at its inception there was not a single democratic government in Latin America, and today every country but one is a democracy. But in fact during the SOA's lifetime the US has crushed longstanding democracies (such as Chile and Guatemala), when voters dared to elect leaders pledged to attend to their desperate needs rather than American corporate profits.

The alumni roster of the SOA also wilts Levin's flowery outlook on the school's performance. Over two thirds of the 60 Salvadoran officers fingered for crimes in a 1993 UN Truth Commission Report on El Salvador were graduates of the SOA, including 2 of 3 cited for the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero, as well as 10 of 12 cited for the El Mozoté massacre of 900 villagers. A 1998 report from the Archdiocese of Guatemala cites numerous military officials trained at the SOA as human rights abusers. And in 1996 the Pentagon was forced to release SOA training manuals, which admittedly taught torture techniques as methods of interrogation [see excerpts on board].

In response to the overwhelming evidence demanding the dissolution of the school, opponents of the school scored their first Congressional victory when the House voted 230 to 197 in favor of the Moakley amendment to the foreign operations spending bill, which eliminated about 10% of the funds to the SOA. Two bills have been introduced in the United States Senate and House of Representatives calling for the outright closure of SOA. Senate Bill S873, sponsored by Sen. Richard Durbin, is the first such bill to have been introduced in the Senate; HR732 boasts an impressive 150 cosponsors.

In addition to the legislative support, the campaign to close the SOA has generated a huge public movement. Spearheaded by the national organization SOA Watch, 7,000 people gathered at the entrance of the School in Fort Benning, Georgia last November. Of those people, 2,319 "crossed

the line" and risked arrest by participating in a funeral procession through the grounds of Fort Benning in what was the largest act of civil disobedience in this country since the Vietnam war. Because of the large numbers participating, no charges were filed against any of the demonstrators. This November SOA Watch expects at least 10,000 people to attend the vigil at the main gate and 5,000 to cross the line, with 100 risking prison.

The most recent major action occurred the first weekend of May in Washington, DC. After a rally outside the White House on Saturday that featured speakers and musicians, almost 2,000 people attended an early morning vigil on May 3rd outside the Pentagon. A nearly mile-long procession made its way around the building before stopping on the parade ground and holding a funeral for those murdered by SOA graduates. When Pentagon guards refused entry to four SOA Watch representatives who asked to speak with Secretary of Defense William Cohen, a number of people began to draw body outlines on the sidewalk around the Pentagon (using non-toxic soy-based red paint). 60 people were arrested; with 53—including 5 from Washtenaw County—charged with "throwing articles at building" (i.e., dripping paint droplets on the sidewalk). But in the face of such a rapidly-growing movement the Pentagon is clearly wor-

ried about public relations; all charges have since been dropped.

'Cuz in this country of WAR

there can be no peace

'til we all say

NO MORE

— Kristine Pettersen, "American Tune"

All of the musicians slated to perform share a common desire to use their art to effect social change. Pettersen, who performed on the US Capitol steps at the vigil last May, recently returned from a national meeting of the People's Music Network, a group dedicated to combining activist movements with music. "Music moves the spirit of the people, not just the intellect," she says. Lisa Hunter's goal is to bring music containing themes of social justice into the popular arena. Though all admit that the popular music scene today is "numbing," they are attempting to conquer that barrier by reaching out to the many fans of music who do desire to hear something more than the remaining four Spice Girls. "Music reaches deeper parts," says Jo Serrapere. "Young people especially can identify with music."

Social movements are no strangers to musical accompaniment. Dating back to the Tyler rebellion in 1381, where the peasant army confronted London royalty with both arms and couplets, music has made an invaluable contribution to numerous causes. The labor movement, the civil rights movement, the anti-war movement all have songs closely associated with them (e.g. "Ludlow Massacre," "We Shall Overcome," and "Blowin' in the Wind," respectively). These songs inspire more than just toe-tapping (and record-purchasing); they inspire action and change.

The movement to close the SOA is no exception to this history. Not only are musicians featured at every event, but the protest in May included a benefit concert featuring Pete Seeger, Iris DeMent, and Odetta, among others. Songs written by members of SOA Watch include the catchy ditty "No Mas": *No mas! No more!/We must stop the dirty war/Companeros, companeras we cry out "No mas! No more!"*

Woody Guthrie had written on his banjo, "This machine kills fascists." It is highly doubtful that Woody's or anybody's music can even approach the death toll caused by the SOA, but music nonetheless can be quite powerful. Lacking the power to kill, it maintains the power to move and to inspire. ☑

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

SOA 101: How to Detect "Guerillas"

- Sympathy w/ demonstrations or strikes.
- Energetic union organizing or recruiting.
- Worker demonstrations against the government.
- Accusing govt of not meeting basic needs of people.
- Demanding agrarian reform.
- Peasants refuse to pay taxes or rents.
- Protesting high unemployment or low salaries.
- Clergy embracing liberation theology, or concerned w/ political, rural or labor discontent, or giving adult men refuge, food, or help.
- Celebration of nat'l & religious festivals
- Demonstrations by minority groups.
- Visits of strangers to towns, cities, etc.
- Accusing military & police of corruption or brutality.
- Characterizing political leaders as U.S. puppets.
- Civilians avoid military forces or refuse to provide intelligence to government forces.
- Children don't speak or associate with U.S. troops invariably indicates that guerillas dominate the area or that they intend to launch an attack.

(*Combat Intelligence manual, pp. 161-9*)

SOA 201: How to Crush Democracy

- Capture and detain political leaders known or thought to be hostile to Armed Forces or National Government.
- Neutralize local or nat'l parties opposed to the Gov't.
- Intellectual & emotional persuasion is the principal arm of the insurrection. **WARNING!** The insurgents can resort to elections replacing unfriendly officials.

(*Commie Ideology 50-51*)

SOA 301: What to Do about These Menaces

- In all cases the mission of the military forces has priority over the well-being of civilians.
- Neutralization targets may or may not be hostile. Hostile groups: paramilitaries, labor unions, dissidents.
- Place agents in political parties, unions, youth & student groups, business, social & charitable organizations.
- Children are very observant & can provide precise info if interrogated in the appropriate manner.

(*Counterintel, 10; Terrorism & the Urban Guerilla, 112; Human Subjects 7, 75, 26*)

Next Term: Tools of Torture for Interrogators

For more info on the concert or joining the November protest, call the Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice at (734)663-1870.

For more info on the SOA, see one of the following websites (but not both, because then you'll be *really* confused):

School of the Americas Watch: www.soaw.org
US Army School of the Americas:
www.benning.army.mil/usarsa/main.htm

For more info on music and activism, read:

Greenway, John. *American Folksongs of Protest*. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia. 1953.
Pichaske, David. *A Generation in Motion*. Schirmer Books, New York. 1979.

The following people are serving sentences in federal prisons for nonviolent actions calling for the closure of the SOA. Please support them with letters and actions to close the SOA.

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