A handbook for the Africa Peace Tour

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ON USING APARTHEID, MILITARISM AND THE US SOUTHEAST AS A RESEARCH GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY ACTION

Introduction:

The aim is to help US audiences understand the way US military involvement in Africa has a negative impact on wages, working conditions and the general quality of US life in the US.

THE ARGUMENT

The basic explanation is that US transnational corporations are contributing to and taking advantage of the changing international division of labor spurred by the on-going technological revolution to maximize their global profits by penetrating Africa (as they had earlier in Latin America). There, in that vast continent, three times the size of the United States with a population of 500 million, they hope to gain access to the rich mineral, agricultural resources and the lowcost labor reserves generated by distorted past economic development. South Africa, where in the '60s and '70s US transnationals poured three fourths of their manufacturing investment all of Africa, constituted the initial entry point. US military support for oppressive governments (from Liberia and Somalia to Zaire) or intervention to undermine those seeking to create conditions for improved working and living conditions (eg in Angola where the US is this year planning another $50 million to support UNITA) aims to provide an opening wedge to the rest of the continent (For background, see Chapters 1-4; for additional background, and list of US transnational corporations that have operated in South Africa, see The Roots of Crisis in Southern Africa <Trenton: Africa World Press for Oxfam America, 1986.).

As the book illustrates, US investments in mines, agriculture and factories in South and southern Africa put the impoverished victims of apartheid in direct competition with the workers of the United States, contributing to unemployment, anti-union policies, and lower wages. (For impact on US farms, mines, textiles and hi-tech industries, and finance, see Chapters 5-9; ). US militarization that supports this process, leads to cuts in the US social welfare net and hastens environmental degradation, further undermining the US quality of life (For data, see Chapter 10).

Support for peace, liberation and development in Africa provides a viable alternative that would provide jobs and rising living standards for peoples on both sides of the Atlantic (see Part IV, pp. 207ff)

EG: THIS YEAR'S PENNSYLVANIA-OHIO PEACE TOUR

For community organizers and speakers in any state, as in Pennsylvania and Ohio, the book illustrates the consequences of this process (the handbook for the Penn-Ohio Africa Peace Tour speakers provides an example of how to use the book).
Changing international specialization and exchange has causes serious problems for the people of Penn-Ohio communities (microcosms of development everywhere in the US). For each, as in any community in the United States, the argument can be explained to show how the process affects the lives of the community members:

1. For labor:

   Talking to coal mining communities in Appalachia:

   Throughout the region, the mining companies have used the same tactics as used earlier by Shell-BP and Fluor (with major holdings in South Africa - see pp.121-23) to break the miners' union. The union leadership understand this and strongly support the international Shell boycott initiated by the anti-apartheid forces.

   Talking to steel workers in Pittsburgh:

   Pittsburgh, formerly home of the world's largest steel industry, now faces widespread unemployment as US transnationals like USX buy steel from factories in places like South Africa (which established four subsidiaries in South Africa where wages are a fourth or less those of US steel workers); see Chapter re mining.

   Talking in Penn-Ohio inner-cities - like those of Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Youngstown, etc:

   High rates of unemployment and poverty, especially among blacks and women, reflect the way US transnationals have moved operations in coal mining, steel, rubber, etc. overseas to oppressive third world countries like South Africa; note that IMF and World Bank urge all African countries to go into manufacturing labor-intensive exports, aggravating global competition based on further impoverishment of labor.

2. Hi-tech, usually military related: Cities like Pittsburgh have attempted to attract hi-tech firms

   Pentagon and associated firms use taxpayer dollars, (and the world's largest debt) to design military hardware that supports repressive governments and undermines development efforts; in Africa, this contributed to starvation of an estimated 11 million Africans this year alone; with longrun negative consequences for workers and further dichotomization of life in the US (see especially Chapter 8, pp. 145 ff). Hi-tech industries tend to dichotomize US urban economies, with a few people benefitting from high paid management-engineering types of work, while the companies contract with local or overseas firms (whichever will do the job for less) to
do the 2/3 of the work that is unskilled and low paid.

Note IBM, with plants in the Penn-Ohio area, continues South African operations since "divestment" through sales of technology to its South African spin-off (See pp. 66-67, 153-155.)

Mad scramble to spend taxpayer money on military neglects destruction of environment resulting from poor planning and worsened quality of life. Could put skills to far better use (see Chapters 11-12, pp. 207ff).

3. Military spending - mainly in Southern US where costs are lower; but all areas are affected by high taxes and costs of military establishment -- note: one day of bombing costs about $1 billion, besides all the destruction it causes

To pay for the war, Federal government has cut welfare expenditures, destroying safety net for lowpaid and unemployed workers.

"Recession" threatens to aggravate all these problems.

4. Message for all: Plan now to reconvert, use peace dividend to build a better, more integrated life for US citizens; support liberation and self-reliant development in Africa to lay the basis for peace and jobs on both sides of the Atlantic (see Chapter 12, pp. 235, for possibilities of mutually-beneficial trade).

FOUR STEPS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH FOR ANY COMMUNITY

1. Read up the history -- almost always someone has written a book about the particular state, even for the particular community, that describes the general structure of the political economy. Take specific note of characteristics that relate to the basic argument.

   eg: The Tricentennial History reports for Ohio and Pennsylvania give some background; but local university or public libraries can assist you to find local histories.

2. Look at the Appendix of the Handbook (from the Department of Commerce book, the State and Metropolitan Area Data Book, available in almost every major university or public library for your state and for comparison, the data for the US) It gives 1980 statistics, mainly based on the 1980 census, that is, the beginning of the Reagan era (if you can obtain the 1990 data from this year's census, it would be very helpful to assess trends of change).

   You can look up line items for particular community relating to population characteristics, employment, wages, etc. This may help you identify problem areas and possible explanatory hypotheses - (ie tentative explanations)- for further research and discussion with people in the community.
eg re Pittsburgh labor market area, comprising Beaver Country, and Allegheny, Fayette, Washington, and Westmoreland.

Take Allegheny: On p. 2, see that population of about 1.4 million has declined, presumably as people who became unemployed left state; on p. 4, note that 10.36% of population is Black (you can also obtain information about age, percent born outside of state, etc.); you may want to find out more about their living and working conditions compared to those of the rest of the population.

On p. 6, you can see what percent of people living in Allegheny work in manufacturing compared to services. The 1980 average per capita income in Allegheny of $10,609, a little over the national urban average of $10,111, which might reflect relatively high wages union members received (but you would have to check that hypothesis against other facts).

On p. 8, you can tell what percent of the persons in Allegheny lived below the poverty line in 1980, and compare that to the national average of 12.4% (top of p. 7).

P. 11 tells how the unemployment rate changed after 1980, going from 6.6% to 13% (doubled) in 1982, and then dropping to 10.5% in 1983 -- in all cases, well above the national average (see top of p. 10). The recorded data suggest what may have happened as a result of the impact of plant closures and afterwards; but you need to find out if the 1983 drop in unemployment represented people leaving the area; or they no longer received unemployment compensation so the government no longer had a record of them; or they just gave up on the job search, leaving the family with less money; or, if they got jobs, whether they earned as much money as before.

P. 13a shows a sharp fall in employment from 1980 to 1984 in both Ohio and Pennsylvania, far higher than on average in the US as a whole, in mining, construction, manufacturing and transport and communications, presumably as plants closed throughout the states, and the 'multiplier' effect negatively reduced employment in related sectors. You need to find out what happened after 1984 by further research. P. 14 shows that Allegheny manufacturing employment, where wages were $21,690 (compared to a $16,514 national average; see p. 13b), dropped 19%, from 1977 to 1982 compared to a 2.5% decline nationally. This suggests employers in plants earning higher wages tended to close them down faster than where they were lower.

P. 18 shows that Ohio had less millionaires per 100,000 people than the US average, but Pennsylvania (with its eastern business-financial center in Philadelphia) had more. In both cases, the data suggests a skewed income distribution, but you would need to do more research to find out how skewed it might be in a particular community like Allegheny.
p. 20 shows that, despite the increased unemployment, fewer residents (both families and children) received aid to families with dependent children in 1984 than in 1980; this reflected the Reagan administration cuts in welfare as it expanded expenditures on the military. More research should help expose the consequences of unemployment and the loss of the national social welfare safety net on particular families in Allegheny (and other communities).

3. **Explore local resources:** Local Chambers of Commerce, unemployment agencies, social security offices, etc., may have further information to answer questions your initial efforts have generated. Local universities may have professors and students who have researched and written up evidence relating to your hypotheses; consult with them to discover what they have done. Also, local public libraries may have locally made studies. That is, use your imagination!

   eg. In the local Universities somebody may have written a Masters or PhD thesis on Allegheny. Or a professor may have done a study as a consultant for a state agency. At least, people in the Sociology, Political Science, Economics, or History Departments may be able to tell you about who is working on relevant questions.

4. **Participatory research:** Discuss your explanatory hypotheses with local church, trade union, PTA, NAACP, and other community group leaders to get their ideas and any evidence they may have relating to any aspect of the basic argument or specific explanatory hypotheses you have formulated. Ask for illustrative anecdotes of the kind given in the book on Apartheid, Militarism and the US Southeast. Most people don't have specific statistics at their fingertips, but they may have seen how specific actions by transnationals and the military affect particular aspects of their communities. Your job is to help them understand the relationship of these anecdotes to the larger picture.