

“Hey Hey General Mackymacker, Ho, Ho Mr. Lovitt:” Woody Guthrie’s Forgotten Dissent From the Atomic Bomb to the Korean War

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Featured image: Woody with guitar labeled “this machine kills fascists”, 1943.

Woody Guthrie is an American icon best known for his 1940 song “[This Land is Your Land](#)” which has been sung in countless classrooms, political conventions, demonstrations, and even at the Obama presidential inaugural. Sometimes forgotten is the fact that the song, written in response to Irving Berlin’s “God Bless America,” has a subversive message in paying tribute to public rather than private ownership of land and property and in its striving for social equality. Woody was a radical whose worldview was forged by the poverty he witnessed growing up in rural Oklahoma during the 1910s and by the Sooner Socialist Party, the second largest in the country outside of New York City. His music celebrated working class struggles and condemned oppressive institutions and authority. Drawing on the legacy of Joe Hill, whose music inspired the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), he was active in the popular front of the 1930s, a radical social democratic movement promoted by the Communist Party and forged around anti-fascism, anti-lynching, and the industrial unionism of the Congress of Industrial Organization (CIO).¹

World War II and the Atomic Bombing of Hiroshima

Throughout the 1930s, Woody opposed American involvement in World War II, writing and performing numerous antiwar songs that excoriated Franklin Roosevelt as a duplicitous warmonger. His view shifted after 1941 when Hitler broke the 1939 Molotov-Ribbentrop non-aggression pact and replicated Napoleon’s folly by attacking Russia which then joined forces with the Western allies to fight fascism.² With the U.S. in the war after Pearl Harbor, Woody began penning songs like “Lindbergh,” which excoriated the isolationists and America First, though another of his songs expressed a secret desire for all the soldiers “on every single side” to “take off [their] helmet, unbuckle [their] kit, lay down [their] rifle ...and say, nope, I ain’t gonna kill nobody.”³

Subsequently stationed at an army base in Illinois, Woody voiced misgivings about the dropping of the atomic bomb over Hiroshima.⁴ On September 7th, 1945, Private Guthrie wrote a song based on information he had gleaned from *The Yank*, the Army Weekly, entitled “What Kind of Bomb?” It read:

"There was Tibbets, Caron Nelson and Ferebee, flew that B-29 Named the Enola Gay,

They took off from Guam, on a clear summer day, to hang out a bomb over Hiroshima Bay....

Bob Shumard grab your glasses! Watch that one go! Looks like some mean volcano bubbling up down below.

We stuck our heads out our windows to see the big show, Hiroshima! You're a good town! I hate to see you go."

Guthrie continued:

"The Jolt was so bad that it shook all the sky, a cloud sprouted up forty thousand feet high.

The heat flash so bright that it outshined the sun, we asked one another 'oh what kind of bomb.'"⁵

A follow-up song called "Talkin' Atom Bomb" warned:

"when the flash an'drash and the big fire comes, If your fone don't work and your train track's broke,

if your highway's gone and your tunnels all stuck and with you and your whole family get knocked up about nine miles, Be a little bit complicated findin' a hospital....

Only way to save yer skin from this big bomb blast, Is ta outlaw th' big bomb and I mean fast....

I don't care if th'delivery boy talks to me about private enterprizes or public ownerships ner what;

Just shows me you've gone plumb crazy thinkin' you can duck these new bomb blazes."⁶

The latter words provide a powerful colloquial critique of the nuclear arms race in terms that foreshadowed Stanley Kubrick's classic, *Dr. Strangelove*. Woody's songs were among the first to protest the atomic bombing of Hiroshima, anticipating movements against the bomb by atomic scientists and pacifist critics.⁷ A follow-up song, "World's on Fire," proclaimed

"My angel, my darling, When that atom bomb does come; Let me be your pillow; While this world's on fire. When the flames go creeping; When the smoke plume is leaping; We'll play like we're sleeping, While the world's on fire."⁸

In July 1946, Woody wrote a song protesting U.S. backing of Chiang Kai-shek in China's civil war. Woody asked Mr. Chiang if he remembered

"the exact number of common workers that you murdered, is there a record, is there a paper, is there a number of dead and wounded.... Each drop of blood spilt, shines in my memory, with borrowed firearms, with borrowed money

[reference to U.S. aid] ... Count all the peasants, count all the unionists, count all the students, count all the radicals.... Shyang Shgagy Shye, Runnerdog Chyange Kai Shek, ya kild too many millions, cowerd dog Shiang Kaie Shek, Shyag ol killerdog Shek."⁹

Woody on the Korean War



Folk singer Woody Guthrie

One aspect of Woody's social justice activism which has been ignored by historians is his passionate opposition to the U.S. War in Korea. The three major biographies of Guthrie, including Kaufman's, which centers on his radical politics, do not mention it at all.¹⁰ Over a dozen songs found at the [Woody Guthrie archive](#) in Tulsa, Oklahoma show Woody criticizing the Korean War in terms that anticipate the New Left critique of the Vietnam War. Woody lambasted the corruption of U.S. government allies, the deceit of the top military and Pentagon brass, and the toll that U.S. weapons inflicted on the Korean people. In "Bye Bye Big Brass" (1952), he dreamt up a scenario in which he is shipped off to Korea and rather than kill a Chinese soldier he encounters, he sits and talks with him by a campfire. After getting to know one another, the two hide out together and fight back against the U.S. Army when it tries to capture them.¹¹ In this and many of his other songs he anticipated the roles of Phil Ochs and Pete Seeger during the War in Vietnam.

Together with a small number of artists affiliated with the Communist Party like **Paul Robeson**, Woody spoke out against the war at a time when many of his contemporaries remained silent. The Weavers, for example, whose songs "Goodnight Irene" and "Tzena, Tzena" stood near the top of the Billboard charts when the Korean War broke out, were among those who were silent about the war, though the group was nevertheless listed as communists in *Counterattack* and *Red Channels*, resulting in the loss of bookings, disappearance of a television show and cancellation of a record deal.¹²

Hit songs of the era such as Jimmie Osborne's "God Please Protect Americans," which rose to number nine on the billboard charts, and Gene Autry's tribute to Douglas MacArthur "Old Soldiers Never Die," promoted pro-war and patriotic themes mixed with religious sentiments. Wilf Carter's hit, "Goodbye Maria, I'm Off to Korea," noted that it was "the same

old story as it [was] up to Old Glory to win another fight for liberty.” Earl Nunn’s tribute to MacArthur ended with the line: “though he did the best he could, there were some who thought he should, let the communists take over all creation.”¹³ This was a barb directed at President Harry Truman who had fired MacArthur for insubordination.

Woody was an anomaly amidst the conservative culture of the Cold War.¹⁴ The rusty-voiced Homer, as composer Elie Siegmeister called him, was part of an undercurrent of dissent who kept aflame the radicalism of the 1930s.¹⁵ Woody’s critique of the Korean War was framed in the language of the Wobblies (“IWW”) and depression era radicals like Smedley Butler, the four-star General who later produced the anti-war pamphlet, *War is a Racket*.¹⁶ His views on the Korean War also echoed those of his idol Joe Hill, the IWW songwriter who considered war a destructive manifestation of the capitalist system, though he would condone wars fought under the red flag against the capitalist bosses (as in Hill’s song “Should I Ever be a Soldier”).¹⁷

In “Korea Bye Bye” in November 1952, he wrote that he was sorry as he “did not want for [the U.S.] to bomb, fire bombs ain’t my matter, and peace is my cry. Bye, Bye, Bye.”¹⁸ Similarly in “I Don’t Want Korea” he proclaimed that he did not want Korea or to have her “as a present from the sky, I’ll not have Korea to be no slave of mine.”¹⁹

Woody’s biographer **Ed Cray** considers his writing in this period to have been polemical and not up to its earlier quality.²⁰ However, Woody was among the few at the time to recognize and respect the humanity of the Korean people. He was also among the few to speak out against a war that resulted in the death of one tenth of the North Korean population, and left Korea, according to UN reconstruction agency, among the most devastated lands in all of history.²¹

In “Korea Quicksands” (April 1951), Woody lamented the

“floods of blood of these millions that died! Korean quicksands of blood. Korean rice-lands, knee deep in blood, hip deep in blood, neck deep in blood, throw down my guns; lay down all my bombs; and there’ll be no more quick-sands of blood.”²²

Several songs referenced the destruction of the Han River bridge by South Korean and U.S.-UN forces, resulting in the drowning of refugees.²³ In “Han River Too Long,” Woody wrote “Han River too long, Han river too long, Bern down along down, Bern down along down, Han river too long.” This was followed up by “Han River Mud” in which Woody wrote “It’s a bloody, bloody flood, of Sweet Han River mud. Mud to me looks bloody.”²⁴

In “Thirty Eighth Parallel” Woody proclaimed that he would never “march across the thirty eighth parallel, except to shake his enemies’ hand” and would beforehand drop his gun.²⁵ In “Korea Ain’t My Home,” in December 1952, Woody wrote:

“Korea ain’t my home, since we’ve got germ warfare, this whole world’s not

my home, Nobody is living here.”²⁶

This was followed up by “Korea Blues:”

“I said my bad Korean blues, radio-active got my stockings, germ warfare took lotta my shoes, Oh whom will I love, my bad Korean blues. Korea send me home, send me home; I don’t belong in Korea in the first place.”²⁷



Defense Secretary Robert Lovett

In “Mr. Sickymen Ree” Woody criticized South Korea’s leader in similar terms to Chiang Kai-Shek, writing that “Mister Sickymen Ree, Dizzy Old Sigman Ree, you can’t fool pore me!” Elsewhere, Woody sang of “Wall Street GI Joes” who had “become “all stuck down in the mud with your Wall Street jeep.” **Defense Secretary Robert Lovett**—an important architect of the war—had indeed worked for Wall Street investment firms that had defense contractors as clients and others in Truman’s Cabinet served on their corporate boards. The Korean War led to quadrupling of defense budgets, from \$13 billion in 1949 to \$54 billion (more than \$500 billion in 2016 dollars) in 1953 while McDonnell, Douglas, General Electric, Boeing, Chrysler, and United Aircraft Corporations earned record profits as a result of the war and Lockheed-Georgia became the largest employer in the Southeast United States. During the Korean War, Woody sang of “Wall Street GI Joes” who had “become “all stuck down in the mud with your Wall Street jeep.”²⁸ Defense Secretary Robert Lovett—an important architect of the war—had indeed worked for Wall Street investment firms that had defense contractors as clients and others in Truman’s Cabinet served on their corporate boards.²⁹ The Korean War led to quadrupling of defense budgets, from \$13 billion in 1949 to \$54 billion (more than \$500 billion in 2016 dollars) in 1953 while McDonnell, Douglas, General Electric, Boeing, Chrysler, and United Aircraft Corporations earned record profits as a result of the war and Lockheed-Georgia became the largest employer in the Southeast United States.³⁰

Woody’s song, “Korean War Tank,” written in November 1952, ridiculed the primeval resort to violence: “Korean War tank, blang, Korean War tank, boom. I got my sights on you.”³¹ In

"Han River Woman" (November 1952) he crooned: "I didn't aim to, I didn't intend to, I didn't come to drop that damn jelly bomb! [napalm]. Han River woman, I tell you, it wasn't me dropping it, I tell you never was me that done it, wasn't dropped by people like me, just a handful of goddam bastards, bloody hyenas. Back yonder."³²

Woody's indignation was born of the fact that napalm could incinerate anything in its path and burn people's skin to a crisp like "fried potato chips," as one Marine described it.³³ Corporal Richard Peet said that the day members of his unit were struck in a friendly fire incident never went out of his mind.

"It was terrible, to see, Argylls [British soldiers] running around on fire covered in petroleum jelly, terrible, there were lads, lying everywhere burnt. 'One officer, skinned alive, took twenty minutes to die.' Those men who had napalm sticking to them, burning into them, screamed terribly."³⁴

Han River Woman foreshadowed the large popular outcry against napalm during the Vietnam War, powerfully expressed in Malvina Reynolds' 1965 song "Napalm." It asked "Lucy Baines [Johnson - LBJ's daughter], did you ever see that napalm? Did you ever see a baby hit with napalm? When they try to pull it loose why the flesh comes too...They have lots of fancy names for that napalm.... And they drop it from the sky, And the people burn and die."³⁵

In perhaps his most eloquent anti-war ballad, "Talking Korean Blues," Woody said the "whole war looks to me like a game, just like a funny little game that the kids all play. If we don't send a soldier, nor a ship, nor a plane, the reds'll win the goods and the people just the same."

Guthrie asked:

"why does Mack wanta see several thousand mowed down?

Don't he know the Reds will win out in the next round. We send our stuff to the South, they dish it over to them northerners.

Where was his brain during the last Chinese delivery? Several thousand men and planes it just ain't worth to try to keep the South from giving it to the North;

It's just not worth a single human life, to try to keep a bee off his flower and his hive....

The Korean Reds get the Christmas package either way, every little bitty baby Korean already knows that.

You are either in the Korean Red Army or else you're a messenger girl, a delivery boy for them."

Guthrie understood the war as a national liberation struggle involving near total societal mobilization against which American efforts were futile. Guthrie continues in the song:

“you see, I sometimes wonder what in the name of high heaven General MacArthur is doing so far away from home in the first place.

He don’t like it over there, I don’t think, why don’t he fold up his puppy tent and come back on home, and haul all of his psychoneurotic GIs back with him.

I know good and well them GI boys don’t like it over there because, well, home ain’t nowhere close to there!”³⁶

Though the FBI had a surveillance file on him, Woody was never hauled before the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) like Pete Seeger, or deprived of his passport like Paul Robeson. He continued to mock the inhumanity of the men making the big decisions. In “Hey General Mackymacker” (1952) Woody wrote:

“Ho, ho Mister Lovvitt [reference to Defense Secretary Robert Lovett], that blizzard sure did bite [reference to cold winter];

I don’t see you packin’ a pack, where you marched us here to die? Man are you walking or are you running?

Hey Mister Syngman Ree boy, what went wrong friend when they kicked you out of Pujon, back down south Pyongyang, was you still strolling? Or was you running?

Hey Diggedy Mackymacker, sez Christmas I’ll walk home, but you did not say which Christmas. Boy I’d just like to know will I be walking or will I be running?

Hee, Hee bigshot Monkey Machrel, if we atom bomb these communists [as MacArthur had advocated], and then they atom bomb us, nobody will be running.”³⁷

Woody’s Legacy in the Vietnam War

This song conveyed Woody’s anxiety about the prospects of nuclear annihilation and his concern for U.S. soldiers who had been sent on suicide missions by leaders who assumed few risks themselves and misled the public in proclaiming imminent victory. “Hey General Mackeymacker” paved the way for many Vietnam anti-war songs which conveyed similar themes. Country Joe and the Fish’s “I Feel Like I’m Fixin’ to Die Rag,” (1965), for example, referenced Wall Street profiteering (“Come on Wall Street, don’t be slow, why man, this is war au-go-go; There’s plenty good money to be made; By supplying the Army with the tools of its trade”) and mocked the army brass and their bloody-thirsty anticommunism. One stanza read: “Well, come on generals, let’s move fast; Your big chance has come at last; Now you can go out and get those reds; ‘Cause the only good commie is the one that’s dead; And you know that peace can only be won; When we’ve blown ‘em all to kingdom come.” The chorus of the song (“and its’ one two three, what are we fighting for? Don’t ask me I don’t give a damn, next stop is Vietnam; and it’s five, six seven open up the pearly gates, Well there ain’t no time to wonder why, whoopee we’re all gonna die.”) pointed to the absurdity, purposelessness and squandering of human life in Vietnam, which Woody had earlier sung about in Korea.³⁸

Phil Ochs’ in “I Ain’t Marching Anymore” (1965) echoed Woody in proclaiming that it was “always the old to lead us to the war, and always the young to die.” The song went on like

“Talkin’ Atom Bomb:” “For I flew the final mission in the Japanese sky, Set off the mighty mushroom roar, When I saw the cities burning, I knew that I was learning, That I ain’t marching anymore.”³⁹ Pete Seeger’s famous 1967 song “Waist Deep in the Big Muddy,” centered on a platoon of U.S. soldiers ordered by their Captain to ford the Mississippi River in 1942 despite the warnings of the Sergeant and the men that the river was too deep. The Captain refuses to listen and pushes ahead, in a clear allusion to Vietnam, and the men drift deeper and deeper into the water. Seeger wrote: “All we need is a little determination; Men follow me, I’ll lead on. We were – neck deep in the Big Muddy, And the big fool said to push on.” The outcome was in turn outlined in the final verse: “All at once, the moon clouded over, we heard a gurgling cry. A few seconds later, the Captain’s helmet was all that floated by. The Sergeant said, ‘Turn around men!’ I’m in charge from now on. And we just made it out of the Big Muddy with the Captain dead and gone.”⁴⁰ Here, Seeger was providing a variation on Woody’s anti-authoritarian fantasy in which the soldiers take over from their commanders and engineer an honorable exit from the massive destruction of an unjust war.

The Korean War displayed many features of the Vietnam War, though a large-scale antiwar movement never developed in the repressive climate of McCarthyism and in the aftermath of the Second World War, which fostered American confidence in U.S. military leaders. The fact that the American left was ridden by sectarianism and factionalism at this time and severely weakened by revelations about the abuses of Stalinism also contributed to the weakness of anti-war sentiment.⁴¹ Guthrie’s ruminations against the Korean War consequently never became the battle-cry of a generation or a movement with effects like Seeger, Joan Baez, Phil Ochs’ and Country Joe’s songs against the Vietnam War, indeed, there is little indication of the extent to which he sang them publicly.⁴²

Woody was nevertheless among activists who opposed the war and may have sowed the seeds of the 1960s anti-war protests. Sociologist C. Wright Mills was a contemporary who expressed disgust with the mechanized-depersonalized slaughter perpetrated by U.S. fighter-pilots [in Korea] with their “petroleum-jelly broiling of children and women and men.”⁴³ The Communist writer Howard Fast wrote the antiwar poem “Korean War Lullaby,” which called on Korean children to close their eyes and forget the “burning gasoline, the gentle, jellied gasoline that burns with a flame so pure and serene,” to “hear no sound of bursting bombs that fall around, and tear the flesh and rend the ground, and hear no sound of screaming pain, from the guts of a man gone half insane.” Korea, Fast went on acerbically, had been “rescued from oppression, and the ‘free world’ from depression, and all the bits of brain and bone, the wail of pain, the anguished moan, the stink of burning human flesh, lacerations bleeding fresh, are nothing, you see, since they make you free.”⁴⁴



Paul Robeson

Paul Robeson, the singer and civil rights leader who was part of the People's Songs collective with Woody, called the Korean War "the most shameful war" in U.S. history and proclaimed at a rally at Madison Square Garden, that "America's place was on the side of the Lafayettes, the heroes of the French Revolution, Toussaints, the Kosciuskos, the Bolivars—not the Quislings of Europe and the Chiangs, the Bao Dais and the Syngman Rhees of Asia." In the January 1952 issue of his *Freedom* newspaper, Robeson wrote:

"A hundred thousand American dead, wounded and missing have been listed in this war...and more than that we have killed, maimed and rendered homeless a million Koreans, all in the name of preserving Western civilization. U.S. troops have acted like beasts, as do all aggressive, invading, imperialist armies. North and South of the 38th parallel, they have looked upon the Korean people with contempt, calling them filthy names, raped their women, lorded it over old women and children, and shot prisoners in the back."⁴⁵

Woody had also considered the war barbaric. In "Bye Bye Big Brass" written in November 1952, Woody envisioned himself re-enlisting in the army and being "snuck off to old Korea" by "the warlords" after undergoing boot camp training even though "nobody asked me about taking this trip." The big brass "yell'd an' cuss'd like thunder, hands me a helmet and a gun, clips my belt, full of grenades, boys; gives me orders; Go hava little fun." Woody went on: "They'd ask me back home; son if a war comes, will you bear arms? And I told them okay, I'll bear these arms jst fast's you c'n loan me, But I can't guarantee which away."

Here Woody the rebel betrays his sympathy for the North Korean and Chinese side, and a perception of the righteousness of their cause.

"So here in Korea, I walk patrol guards, I patrolled them jungles and mountains down;

I stumbled head on to a Red Star Commynist; We dropped our weapons to the ground, we built a fire and stood here talkin;

Bill Smith's my name; his name's Ho Tung; we showed one another our girlfriends pictures; we don't wanta die; we're both too young."

Woody goes on to recount:

"I handed my weapons to Red Star Ho Tung, We carried them down to a grasstop shack.

Then a whole UN artillery division, they shell'd that shack 'till daylight crack'd.

My big brass watched me thru a field glass. Lobbed a million rounds at our Nine Dollar Shack.

Ho Tung and me just laid there laffin' when the Red Star Army got me on their tracks.

Wasn't a UN soldier stayed for that picnic. Notta man, notta cannon, notta rifle, not a tank sev'ral thousand Red Star folks danced 'round laffin.

When I showed 'em how I s'rendered my one packs. I took that uniform with my red star; they said: y'll be a hero alla your life;

We raised the rockhouse back that same day, And I live here now with my kids and wife. Hello to bloomtime all around me;

Hello to seeds, I plant for peace. Good Bye! Gbye! You Big Brass bastard! I'm gone where y'll never find pore me!"⁴⁶

This is Woody at his most defiant. He provided a singing counterpart to Australian journalist Wilfred Burchett, the first international correspondent to report the effects of the atomic bomb, and who later humanized the North Koreans and Chinese while exposing U.S.-UN atrocities in the Korean War and the U.S. and its allies in the Indochina Wars.⁴⁷ Above all, Woody was aggrieved by the terrible human consequences of the Korean War, but he was also sympathetic to the drive for national independence.

Woody's ballads lambasting the American war in Korea anticipated the 1960s counter-cultural movement whose pacifist, anti-authoritarian and anti-materialistic ethos shaped American society. During the 1930s, Woody had often lived the life of a hobo performing on picket lines and at bars and saloons from Oklahoma to California, and he identified with the dispossessed. Harking back to communalist and back to nature movements, the hippies in the 1960s adopted communal living arrangements often in rural settings, and developed a culture in which possessions were shared, organic food was grown and people lived simply and peacefully, freed from any sexual constraints.⁴⁸

Woody's youngest son Arlo wrote the hippie anthem "Alice's Restaurant," a deadpan protest against the Vietnam War draft based on his own experience evading the draft because of an arrest for littering, after he had accidentally dumped trash from the church where the titular Alice lived, rather than for telling an army psychologist that he had a lust to kill. This exemplified the government's skewed priorities. Arlo first strung a guitar at age three in Huddie "Lead Belly" Ledbetter's apartment, performed at a benefit for his father in high school and attended many anti-nuclear, pro-civil rights and antiwar protests as a child. In "Alice's Restaurant," he sang: "They wanted to know if I'm moral enough to join the Army—burn women, kids, houses and villages—after bein' a litterbug."⁴⁹ The irony here is striking as is Arlo's strong distaste for the violence and killing in Vietnam, which echoed his father's view on Korea. After Arlo was rejected for military service, the Sergeant in charge of

the induction process stated, “Kid, we don’t like your kind, and we’re gonna send your fingerprints off to Washington.”⁵⁰ Here we see Arlo’s disdain for military authority and police abuse.

On November 15, 1969, Arlo sang Woody’s song, “I’ve Got to Know” at the Moratorium Against the Vietnam War in Washington, D.C. before a crowd of 250,000. The song was first published two months into the Korean War. It asked: “Why do your war boats ride on my waters? Why do your death bombs fall from my skies? Why don’t your ships bring food and some clothing? I’ve got to know, I’ve got to know.” Pete Seeger told writers Studs Terkel and Calvin Trillin that “I’ve Got to Know” was Woody’s response to the well-known gospel song “Farther Along” which comforts listeners that the promise of heaven is reward enough for all the unfairness and deprivation experienced on earth. That was the kind of sentiment that stuck in the craw of Woody and Arlo who told the Moratorium crowd that his “old man would really dig to be here. Not only would he dig it, but I’m sure his spirit is in one of you little kids out there.”⁵¹

Woody’s assessments of the Cold War and Korean War set the stage for a grounded critique of the Vietnam War when the times favored massive anti-war protest.⁵² Woody and his protégés viewed America’s role in the world as serving the interests of a violent power bent on keeping Third World nations in its thrall.⁵³ They expressed solidarity with the political struggles of the oppressed in America and throughout the world. In the age of Trump, Woody’s message and that of the counter-culture remains resonant.⁵⁴ A new rendition of “Bye Bye Big Brass,” “Talkin’ Atom Bomb” or “Hey General Mackeymacker” by a prominent artist who ranged across U.S. wars from Iraq and Afghanistan to Syria, Libya, Yemen and Northern Africa would be welcome alongside new renditions of the Vietnam classics, with calls to bring the boys home from all 170 nations where they are currently stationed.⁵⁵

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Jeremy Kuzmarov is author with John Marciano of *The Russians are Coming, Again: The First Cold War as Tragedy, the Second as Farce* (Monthly Review Press, 2018), and an essay on the history of the Korean War “Barbarism Unleashed” (available at <http://peacehistory-usfp.org/korean-war/>) among other works.

Notes

¹ Will Kaufman, *Woody Guthrie, American Radical* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011); Ronald D. Cohen, “Woody the Red?” In *Hard Travelin’: The Life and Legacy of Woody Guthrie*, ed. Robert Santelli and Emily Davidson (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999), 140.

² Kaufman, *Woody Guthrie, American Radical*, 55, 56.

³ Kaufman, *Woody Guthrie, American Radical*, 92, 96. During his time in the Merchant Marines, Woody wrote an ode to the National Maritime Union (NMU), the country’s most radical union.

⁴ Figures in Lawrence S. Wittner, *One World or None: A History of the World Nuclear Disarmament Movement Through 1953* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1993); Bruce Stokes, “[70 Years After Hiroshima, Opinions Have Shifted on Use of Atomic Bomb](#),” Pew Research Center, August 4, 2015. 56

percent of Americans in 2015 said the dropping of the atomic bomb was justified, compared to only 14 percent of Japanese.

⁵ Pvt. W.W. Woody Guthrie, 3505th AAFBU, Squadron L, "What Kind of Bomb?" September 8, 1945, Woody Guthrie Archive, Tulsa, Oklahoma @ Woody Guthrie Publications Inc. All rights reserved. Used by Permission.

⁶ Woody Guthrie, "Talkin' Atom Bomb," date unknown but thought to be 1947, Woody Guthrie Archive, Tulsa, Oklahoma @ Woody Guthrie Publications Inc. All rights reserved. Used by Permission.

⁷ On the antinuclear movement, see Wittner, *One World or None*.

⁸ "[World's On Fire](#)," Words by Woody Guthrie, Music by Jay Farrar.

⁹ Woody Guthrie, "Chiang Kai Chek," July 3, 1946; and "Shy Yang Kye Check," Undated, Woody Guthrie Archive, Tulsa, Oklahoma. © Woody Guthrie Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

¹⁰ Kaufman, *Woody Guthrie, American Radical*; Ed Cray, *Ramblin' Man: The Life and Times of Woody Guthrie* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004); and Joe Klein, *Woody Guthrie: A Life* (New York: Delta, 1980). Mark Allan Jackson provides an analysis of many of Woody's songs in *Prophet Singer: The Voice and Vision of Woody Guthrie* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007) but neglects discussion of his anti-Korean War songs.

¹¹ Woody Guthrie, "Bye, Bye Big Brass," 1952, Woody Guthrie Archive, Tulsa, Oklahoma @ Woody Guthrie Publications Inc. All rights reserved. Used by Permission.

¹² See Dick Wiessman, *Talkin' 'Bout a Revolution: Music and Social Change in America* (New York: Backbeat Books, 2010); Ronald D. Lankford, Jr. *Folk Music USA: The Changing Voice of Protest* (New York: Schirmer Books, 2005), 18, 19, 20.

¹³ Ivan M. Tribe, "Purple Hearts, Heartbreak Ridge, and Korean Mud: Pain, Patriotism and Faith in the 1950-1953 'Police Action'" in *Country Music Goes to War*, ed. Charles K. Wolfe and James E. Akenson (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005), 128, 130.

¹⁴ In Woody's home state, in the month after the Korean War broke out, Senator Robert S. Kerr was inundated with letters demanding that he "get rid of all the communists before it was too late" and "get rid of [Secretary of State Dean] Acheson and every other red in the employment in our great country." Another letter specified that "no person who was a communist had any rights the country should respect," and another that Kerr should cooperate with the FBI in "plac[ing] all the communists in concentration camps like the Japs [sic] in World War II." Letter from an ordinary housewife, July 31, 1950; letter to Robert S. Kerr; Anthony C. Johnson, letter to Robert S. Kerr in Robert S. Kerr Collection, Box 5; Robert S. Kerr Papers, Carl Albert Center, Oklahoma University.

¹⁵ See Marty Jezer, *The Dark Ages: Life in the United States, 1945-1960* (Boston: South End Press, 1999); Daniel Horowitz, *Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of Consumer Culture, 1939-1979* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004); John Greenway, *American Folksongs of Protest* (New York: Octagon Books, 1971), 275.

¹⁶ See Melvyn Dubofsky, *We Shall Be All: A History of the Industrial Workers of the World* (University of Illinois press, 2013, reissued); Smedley Butler, *War is a Racket: The Antiwar Classic by America's Most Decorated Soldier* (Los Angeles: Feral House, 2003).

¹⁷ Gibbs M. Smith, *Joe Hill* (Salt Lake City: Peregrine Books, 1984), 36, 37. The last song Hill wrote, a day before his execution, "Don't Take Papa Away From Me" sentimentally depicts the orphaning of a little girl as her father goes off to war and is killed – mid the cannons roar."

¹⁸ Woody Guthrie, "Korea Bye Bye," November 1952, Topanga Canyon, Woody Guthrie Archive, Tulsa, Oklahoma @ Woody Guthrie Publications Inc. All rights reserved. Used by Permission.

¹⁹ Woody Guthrie, "I Don't Want Korea," 1952, Woody Guthrie Archive, Tulsa, Oklahoma @ Woody Guthrie Publications Inc. All rights reserved. Used by Permission.

²⁰ Cray, *Ramblin' Man*, 306. Cray writes that "the longer the Cold War wore on, the more his lyrics hardened into polemic. Only rarely did he equal his earlier poetry."

²¹ Marilyn B. Young, "Bombing Civilians: From the 20th to the 21st Centuries," in *Bombing Civilians: A Twentieth Century History*, ed. Yuki Tanaka and Marilyn B. Young (New York: The New Press, 2010), 160.

²² Woody Guthrie, "Korea Quicksands," April 1951, Woody Guthrie Archive, Tulsa, Oklahoma @ Woody Guthrie Publications Inc. All rights reserved. Used by Permission.

²³ Robert Neff, "[Destruction of Han River Bridge](#)," *Korea Times*,

²⁴ Woody Guthrie, "Han River Woman," "Han River Blues," "Han River Blood;" "Han River Mud," December 1952, Woody Guthrie Archive, Tulsa, Oklahoma @ Woody Guthrie Publications Inc. All rights reserved. Used by Permission.

²⁵ Woody Guthrie, "Thirty Eighth Parallel," March 19, 1951, Woody Guthrie Archive, Tulsa, Oklahoma @ Woody Guthrie Publications Inc. All rights reserved. Used by Permission.

²⁶ "Korea Ain't My Home," December 1952, Woody Guthrie Archive, Tulsa, Oklahoma @ Woody Guthrie Publications Inc. All rights reserved. Used by Permission.

²⁷ Woody Guthrie, "Korean Blues," December 1952, Woody Guthrie Archive, Tulsa, Oklahoma @ Woody Guthrie Publications Inc. All rights reserved. Used by Permission.

²⁸ Woody Guthrie, "Jeep in the Mud," November 1952. Also Woody Guthrie, "Han River Woman," Woody Guthrie Archive, Tulsa, Oklahoma @ Woody Guthrie Publications Inc. All rights reserved. Used by Permission.

²⁹ See Frank Kofsky, *The War Scare of 1948: A Successful Campaign to Deceive the Nation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996); Jeremy Kuzmarov and John Marciano, *The Russians are Coming, Again: The First Cold War as Tragedy, the Second as Farce* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2018). Lovett had been an executive with Brown, Brothers, Harriman, a company founded by Averill Harriman, the director

of the Marshall Plan which had taken on one of Hitler's top financiers as a client.

³⁰ Bruce Cumings, *Dominion from Sea to Sea: Pacific Ascendancy and American Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 340-41; A.H. Raskin, "U.S. Arms Being Produced at 7 Times Pre-Korean Rate," *New York Times*, June 25, 1952; "McDonnell Backlog Climbs Steeply," *Aviation Week*, October 16, 1950; "Industry Poised for All-Out Mobilization," *Aviation Week*, December 11, 1950, 13-14; William D. Hartung, *Prophets of War: Lockheed Martin and the Making of the Military-Industrial Complex* (New York: The Nation Books, 2011); Kai Frederickson, *Cold War Dixie: Militarization and Modernization in the American South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2013).

³¹ Woody Guthrie, "Korean War Tank," November 1952, Woody Guthrie Archive, Tulsa, Oklahoma @ Woody Guthrie Publications Inc. All rights reserved. Used by Permission.

³² Woody Guthrie, "Han River Woman," November 1952, Woody Guthrie Archive, Tulsa, Oklahoma @ Woody Guthrie Publications Inc. All rights reserved. Used by Permission.

³³ E.F. Bullene, "Wonder Weapon: Napalm," *U.S. Army Combat Forces Journal*, November 1952; Earle J. Townsend, "They Don't Like 'Hell Bombs'" *Washington Armed Forces Chemical Association*, January 1951; Robert M. Neer, *Napalm: An American Biography* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013). Napalm was developed by Harvard scientists encompassing naphthenate and coconut palm added to gasoline at the end of World War II.

³⁴ Andrew Salmon, *Scorched Earth, Black Snow: Britain and Australia in the Korean War* (London: Aurum, 2011), 223-225.

³⁵ Malvina Reynolds, "[Napalm](#)." The song was set to the tune of another Woody Guthrie song, "Slipknot."

³⁶ Woody Guthrie, "Talking Korea Blues," 1952, Woody Guthrie Archive, Tulsa, Oklahoma. © Woody Guthrie Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

³⁷ Woody Guthrie, "Hey General Mackymacker," New York City, 1952, Woody Guthrie Archive, Tulsa, Oklahoma. © Woody Guthrie Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. Used by permission.

³⁸ For background on Joe McDonald and the song, see Doug Bradley and Craig Warner, [We Gotta Get Out of This Place: The Soundtrack of the Vietnam War](#) (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015).

³⁹ Phil Ochs' "I Ain't Marching Anymore," Elektra Records, 1965. On Ochs' career, see Michael Schumacher, *There But for Fortune: The Life of Phil Ochs* (New York: Hyperion, 1996).

⁴⁰ Allen Winkler, *"To Everything There is a Season,": Pete Seeger and the Power of Song* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 125-126.

⁴¹ See Mary Sperling McAuliffe, *Crisis on the Left: Cold War Politics and American Liberals, 1947-1954* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1978).

⁴² Ronald D. Cohen and Will Kaufman skip over the Korean War in *Singing for Peace: Antiwar Songs in American History* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2015). The archival documents at the Woody Guthrie

museum do not indicate when and where Woody might have sung these songs.

⁴³ C. Wright Mills, *The Causes of World War III* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1960), 89. On Mills' career and influence on the New Left, see Stanley Aronowitz, *Taking It Big: C. Wright Mills and the Making of Political Intellectuals* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014).

⁴⁴ "[Korean War Lullaby](#)". For a profile of Fast, see Gerald Sorin, *Howard Fast: Life and Literature in the Left Lane* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012).

⁴⁵ *Against the Beast: A Documentary History of American Opposition to Empire*, ed. John Nichols (New York: Nation Books, 2004), 231; Paul Robeson, "Denounce the Korean Intervention," June 28, 1950 in *If We Must Die: African American Voices on War and Peace*, ed. Kristen L. Stanford (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008), 191-192; *Paul Robeson Speaks*, ed. Philip S. Foner (New York: Citadel Press, 1987), 297. Robeson paid a great price for his outspokenness as recording companies began refusing to issue his records or record new ones and concert halls and theatres became closed to him. His income dropped from a high of over \$100,000 (equal to around \$1.1 million in 2016 U.S. dollars) in 1941 to about \$6,000 (equal to around \$54,000 in 2016 U.S. dollars) in 1952.

⁴⁶ Woody Guthrie, "Bye Bye Big Brass," November 1952, Woody Guthrie Archive, Tulsa, Oklahoma @ Woody Guthrie Publications Inc. All rights reserved. Used by Permission.

⁴⁷ See Burchett: *Reporting the Other Side of the World, 1939-1983*, ed. Ben Kiernan (London: Quartet Books, 1986); Tom Heenan, *From Traveler to Traitor: The Life of Wilfred Burchett* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2006); Wilfred Burchett, *This Monstrous War* (Melbourne: J. Waters, 1953).

⁴⁸ Theodore Roszak, *The Making of a Counterculture: Reflections on the Technocratic Society and its Youthful Opposition* (New York: Anchor Books, 1969); Charles Reich, *The Greening of America* (New York: Random House, 1970); *Imagine Nation: The American Counterculture of the 1960s & 70s*, ed. Peter Braunstein and Michael William Doyle (New York: Routledge, 2002).

⁴⁹ Hank Reineke, [Arlo Guthrie: The Warner Reprise Years](#) (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2012), 6, 12; Braudy, "As Arlo Guthrie Sees It;" Spencer Kornhaber, "'[Alice's Restaurant' an Undying Thanksgiving Protest Song](#)," *The Atlantic*, November 23, 2016.

⁵⁰ See [here](#).

⁵¹ Reineke, *Arlo Guthrie*, 108, 109.

⁵² See Kuzmarov and Marciano, *The Russians are Coming, Again* for a thorough rebuttal of John L. Gaddis, the conservative historian who draws the opposite and wrong conclusion in his Council on Foreign Relations (Wall Street's think tank) sponsored book *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

⁵³ For further corroboration, see *The Chomsky Reader*, ed. James Peck (New York: Pantheon, 1987); Gabriel Kolko, *Confronting the Third World* (New York: Pantheon, 1990); Alfred W. McCoy, *In the Shadows of the American Century* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2017).

⁵⁴ See Rennie Davis, *The New Humanity: A Movement to Change the World* (Las Vegas: Bliss Life Press,

2017).

⁵⁵ The 170 figure comes from K.K. Rebecca Lai, Troy Griggs, Max Fisher and Audrey Carlsen, "Is America's Military Big Enough?" *The New York Times*, March 22, 2017.

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