

# International VIEWPOINT

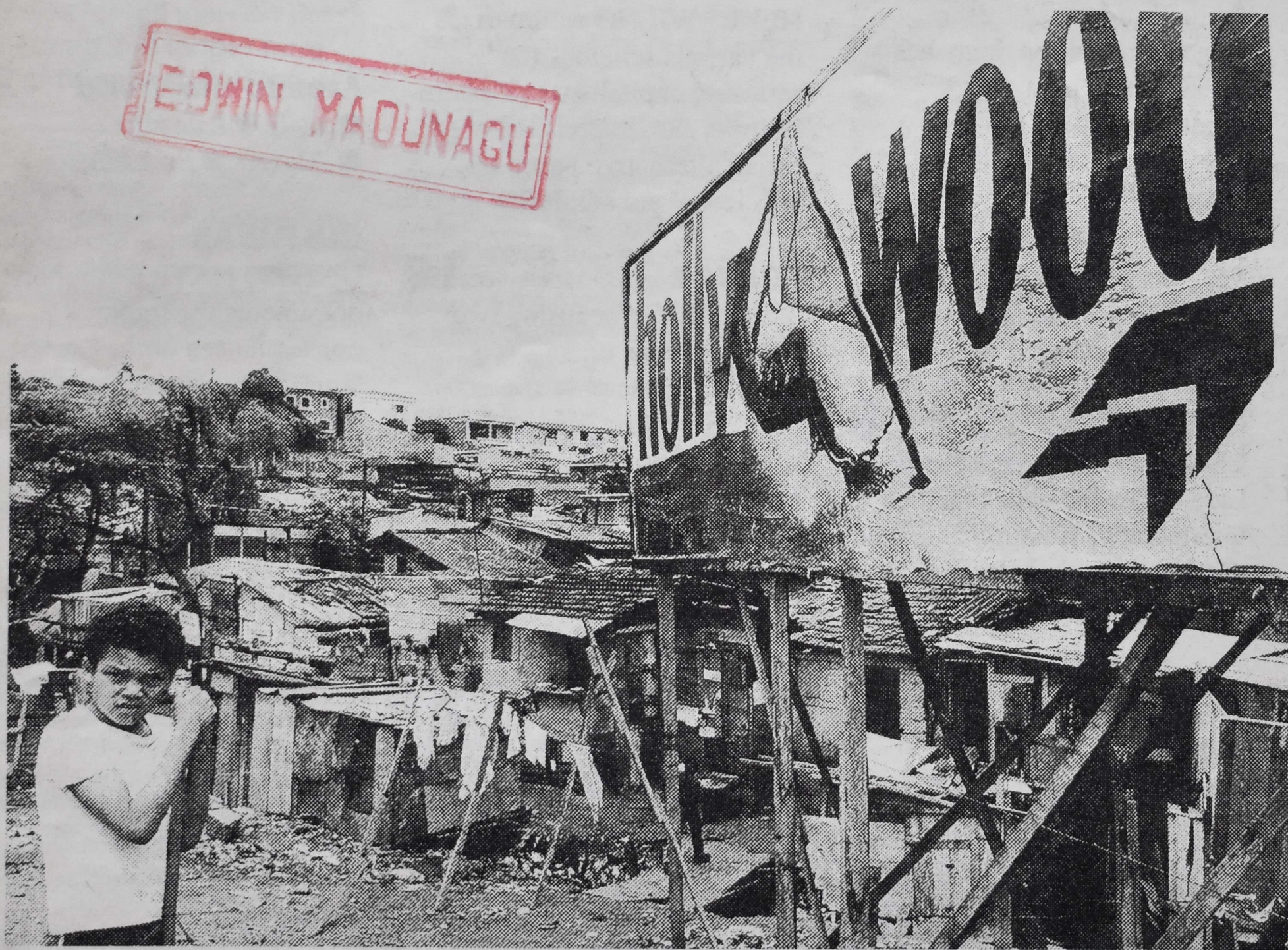
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## The new Monroe doctrine

EDWIN YADUNAGU



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# Defend US war resisters!

**FOLLOWING its "triumph" in the Gulf war, the US ruling class is now trying to make an example of those GIs who refused to participate in the assault on Iraq. Jeff Mackler, coordinator of the January 26 Mobilization to Bring the Troops Home Now, the western United States coalition which organized the 250,000 strong antiwar protest in San Francisco on January 26, and now coordinator of the Tahan Jones/Erik Larsen Defense Committee, looks at the cases of the war resisters.**

**JEFF MACKLER**

**C**ORPORAL Tahan Jones, one of the nation's most outspoken GI resisters, turned himself in to the Marine Corps at Treasure Island, San Francisco, on May 15. This time, the handcuffs and restraining belt used the month before on his Marine comrade and fellow conscientious objector, Erik Larsen, were forsaken.

The national outcry against Larsen's treatment might have convinced the Marines to act with a modicum of restraint toward Jones — at least when the cameras were on.

Recent protests included a letter to President Bush signed by 33 Catholic bishops, which supported not only "religious" but "selective" conscientious objectors (that is, those opposed to only "unjust wars").

The Marine Corps didn't bother to inform Jones that he had been charged — that same day — with "desertion in time of war". Jones thus faces the death penalty for exercising his constitutional right to speak out against the slaughter of the people of the Middle East.

Within 24 hours of reporting to the Marines, his attorney, John Murko, appeared in court to bring a writ of habeas corpus to prevent his client from being separated from his defence supporters. It was only then that the government lawyers blithely informed him that Jones had been charged with a capital offense.

Of the 24 initial GI resisters who were sent to Camp LeJeune, 18 are now imprisoned there with plea-bargained sentences of up to two years. Most became victims of what Erik Larsen's attorney, Robert Rivkin, describes as the Marines' "three-pronged strategy of iso-

lation, intimidation and incarceration". The remainder of the Camp LeJeune detainees await court-martial trials.

Rivkin, among the nation's most prominent military legal authorities, describes the Marines' kangaroo court conduct as "unprecedented".

He says that there has never been a case before where all soldiers charged with the same offence are isolated and sent to the same military facility for trial, thus denying them reasonable access to attorneys, witnesses, financial

resources, and families.

A recent proceeding at Camp LeJeune against resister Sam Lwin shocked many in attendance. The overt prejudice of government witnesses and other excesses apparently embarrassed authorities and resulted in what is considered, under the circumstances, to be a light sentence. Lwin received a dishonourable discharge and four months in the brig. This sentence was further reduced by 36 days because of Lwin's previous illegal imprisonment.

Lwin's fight for freedom was aided by the lawyers and supporters of the New York based GI defense committee, Out Now.

His sentence was a far cry from the multi-year plea-bargained terms received by many other conscientious objectors, whose only crime was to say "no" to what is now considered by many to have been a war of genocide against a virtually defenceless population. The 1,000 to 1 kill ratio is unprecedented in modern warfare.

## Amnesty International takes up cases

Amnesty International has indicated that imprisoned conscientious objectors will be considered "prisoners of conscience".

Of the estimated 2,500 GIs who resisted participation in Operation Desert Storm, only three have been threatened with the death penalty — Jones, Larsen, and Kevin Sparrock. Sparrock's "crime" is having reported for duty eight hours late!

Riding high on a government-orchestrated, media-induced patriotic fervor, the bipartisan warmakers are pro-

ceeding as if GI rights do not exist. In violation of all regulations, the Marines have held two Article 32 (preliminary) hearings in the case of Erik Larsen without Larsen's attorneys even being present. Another hearing has been set

without Larsen's agreement for June 4.

In a May 23 letter to the assigned Investigating Officer, Major J.F. Blanche, Larsen's lawyer protested the above violations, and Major Blanche's "capricious" rejection of a defence request for a continuance until June 17.

Major Blanche rejected the June 17 date because he stated he was leaving Camp LeJeune on the following day.

"What you seem to have overlooked", Rivkin wrote, "is that Pfc. Larsen is facing charges that could result in very severe consequences, even a death sentence, and that his due process rights take precedence over your convenience. If it is inconvenient for you to hear this case, the appropriate action is for convening authority to appoint a different Article 32 investigating officer".

Rivkin pointed out that Blanche proceeded to deny all 24 witnesses requested by the defense, "before having heard any arguments by the defense and even before Pfc. Larsen's civilian attorney had had a chance to appear for his client!....A non-Article 32 investigating officer might have issued such a ruling out of ignorance. For a military judge to have issued such a ruling where the accused faces a possible death sentence is an outrage almost beyond belief".

Rivkin reminded Major Blanche that Larsen had secured a Federal District Court order on May 2 holding that the Marine Corps had violated his client's procedural due process rights. The Marines were given 60 days to hold a new hearing on Larsen's application for CO status. Apparently, the Marines seek to ram through the required Article 32 hearing and the actual court martial trial before this time.

Rivkin is calling on the Marines to "relieve the current Investigating Officer of his duties and appoint someone who is fair and impartial", not to mention accessible.

## Families form defence committee

The families of Tahan Jones and Erik Larsen have formed a joint defense committee which is preparing for a long and costly legal and political battle. Estimated legal expenses are \$60,000. Contributions are urgently requested.

Checks should be made payable to:  
The "Jones/Larsen Defense Committee", Box 225, 1678 Shattuck Ave., Berkeley, CA 94709. Phone 415/841-1201. ★

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