

# On "Pre-emptive War"

by Carlos Figueroa

It seems a numbing task to attempt to make sense of what, exactly, lies beneath the Bush administration's language of war. When trying to express my thoughts on such political speech, I experience a state similar to what Anatole Brayard once described as, "as if my brain had something stuck in its teeth."

The ponderous language used by the Bush team in constructing the argument of the day is unpersuasive but may yet co-opt people into accepting war. For example, on February 6th, Secretary of State Colin Powell told the United Nations Security Council that "Iraq and terrorism go back decades...Iraq today harbors a deadly terrorist network headed by Abu Masab Zarqawi, an associate of Osama bin Laden...The network is teaching operatives how to produce ricin and

other poisons."

Any historian who cares to remember how the United States allied itself with the Iraqis in the 1980s would object to Powell's assertion. Powell attempts to evoke fear in order to persuade foreign ministers to consider the option of war. Powell then proceeds to teach the foreign ministers about ricin: "Let me remind you how ricin works. Less than a pinch of ricin, eating just this amount in your food would cause shock followed by circulatory failure. Death comes within 72 hours and there is no antidote, there is no cure. It is fatal." By disclosing information about ricin as a fatal poison he is trying to persuade whom exactly? What seems fatal, rather, is Powell's providing us with a short unnecessary lesson about ricin as a way to place fear in the foreground, thus attempting to justify war through an absurd argument.

In light of Powell's rhetoric, intellectuals need to communicate in a clear and palpable language in order to counter and challenge the Bush regime. If "we" do not make an effort to do so, then "we" might as well concede to the kinds of actions and convoluted beliefs

