

# Notebooks for Study and Research

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## The Gulf War and the New World Order Andre Gunder Frank & Salah Jaber

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This special issue of NSR provides thorough analyses of the Gulf War, from the invasion of Kuwait (August 1990) to the aftermath of operation 'Desert Storm' (January/February 1991), its meaning for the Third World, detailed assessments of the Western policies and of the changing Middle-East scene.

**Andre Gunder Frank** (born 1929 in Berlin), Professor of Development Economics and Social Sciences at the University of Amsterdam, has taught in departments of anthropology, economics, history, political science and sociology at universities in Europe, North America and Latin America.

Frank's recent work has been in the fields of world system history, contemporary international political economy, and social movements. His books include *World Accumulation 1492-1789* (1978), *Crisis in the World Economy* (1980), *The European Challenge: From Atlantic Alliance to Pan-European Entente for Peace and Jobs* (1983) and *Resistance in the World System. Capitalist Accumulation, State Policy, Social Movements* (1990 in German w/ Marta Fuentes Frank).

Frank's earlier work was primarily on dependence and "the development of underdevelopment". It became known especially through his book *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America* (1967) of over 120.000 copies in 9 languages. His publications in 24 languages include 30 books, chapters in over 100 edited readers or anthologies and 300 articles.

**Salah Jaber** (born 1951), a revolutionary Marxist from the Arab region, was active as a militant in Lebanon until 1983. He is presently member of the leadership of the Fourth International, contributes regularly to its publications as *International Viewpoint* and *Inprecor* and is editor of the Arab theoretical review *Al-Mitraqa*.

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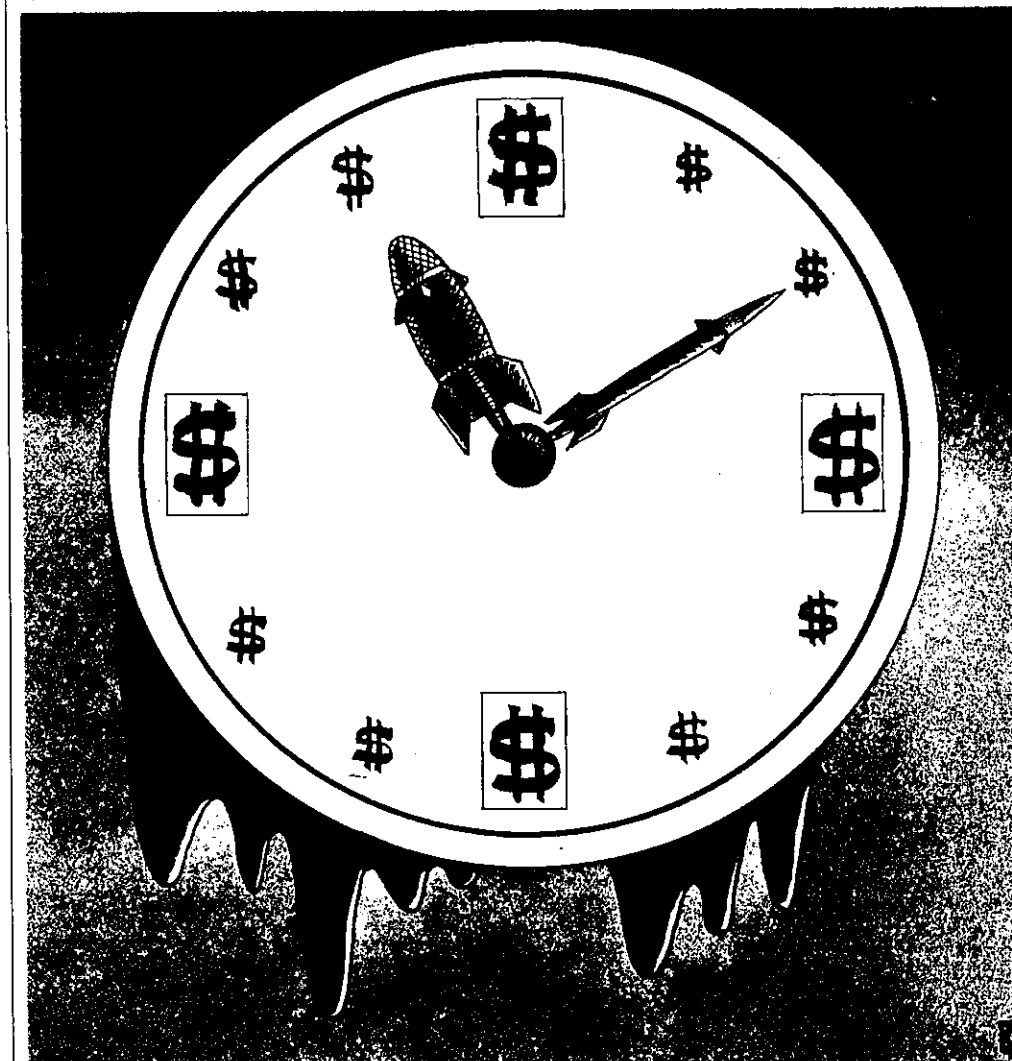
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# The Gulf War and the New World Order

Andre Gunder Frank  
Salah Jaber



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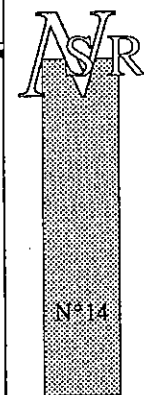
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\* NSR 4, available as Daniel Bensaïd, *Stratégie et Parti*, Paris: La Brèche, 1987. CER 4 is composed of two updated chapters of Michael Löwy's *The Politics of Uneven and Combined Development*, available from New Left Books, London.  
\* CER 14 is a collection of articles by Norman Geras and Paul Le Blanc, *Marxisme et partie 1903-1917 (Lénine, Luxemburg, Trotsky)*, published in English elsewhere.

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FOREWORD

The bloody war in the Arab-Persian Gulf during January-February 1991 was not a simple "regional conflict" but a major international event. The Western powers made it a symbol of the "new world order" they want to impose in the aftermath of the crisis of the Soviet bloc, through institutionalizing the new balance of power, establishing tighter control over UN bodies and consolidating their domination of the Third World countries. Relations between the imperialist countries themselves are tending to change in the aftermath of this conflict, as the US government tries to compensate for the economic decline of the United States by affirming its military leading role.

Major propaganda efforts were made, in Washington, London and Paris, to camouflage the reasons for and goals of this conflict. Certainly the Iraqi regime was and remains a murderous dictatorship. Saddam Hussein's anti-imperialist statements cannot convince us that the invasion of Kuwait by his troops in August 1990 was in any way an act of liberation.

But George Bush has no cause to envy Saddam Hussein for his demagoguery. The occupants of the White House have never hesitated to support, or indeed to establish, dictatorships so long as they were considered "friends". When US interests so require, they can breach the same "international law" and UN resolutions in whose name the Gulf war was made. The same goes for the governments allied to the United States. Still today Bush, Major and Mitterrand do not propose to drive out Israel from the Arab territories occupied in 1967 nor Indonesia from East Timor.

The Gulf war was the occasion for a masterly manipulation of information, while it is obvious that without political openness there is no democracy. It was accompanied by great political confusion in the ranks of the militant left internationally. Because of this, as well as because of the objective importance of the conflict, we thought it important to publish this special issue of the *Notebooks for*

*The cover design and illustrations on pages 1, 34, 65 and 69 are by Youssef Abdelké, a Syrian graphic artist. A former political prisoner (1978-80), he now lives in France. The cartoons on pages 7, 16 and 31 are by Plantu, a well-known French cartoonist. They are taken from Plantu, "Reproche-Orient", Le Monde-Edition, Paris, 1991.*

*Study and Research* as soon as possible.

The first part of this Notebook is an unpublished analytical piece by Andre Gunder Frank. Prepared for publication in May 1991, it reworks, develops and brings up to date the content of four previously-published articles.(1) The second part brings together articles written by Salah Jaber between September 1990 and May 1991 for the magazine *International Viewpoint*.(2) This selection of articles - although written in the course of events - provide thus brought together a coherent overall analysis.

The two sections of the *Notebook* are broadly complementary. Each author sets out to look at the general elements of this war. But Andre Gunder Frank centres his analysis on the international political and economic context, the evolution of the world balance of power and its implications for the Third World, the policy of the United States and the violation of democratic rights represented by the manipulation of information. Salah Jaber deals in more detail with the Middle East scene, from Iraq to Kuwait, from the Kurdish tragedy to the establishment of the "new order" in the Arab world.

The *Notebook* as whole is a substantial and well-documented dossier whose analyses will, we hope, stand the test of time. It should be of use to all those who opposed the dirty war in the Gulf and want to prevent the recurrence of such bloody tragedies.

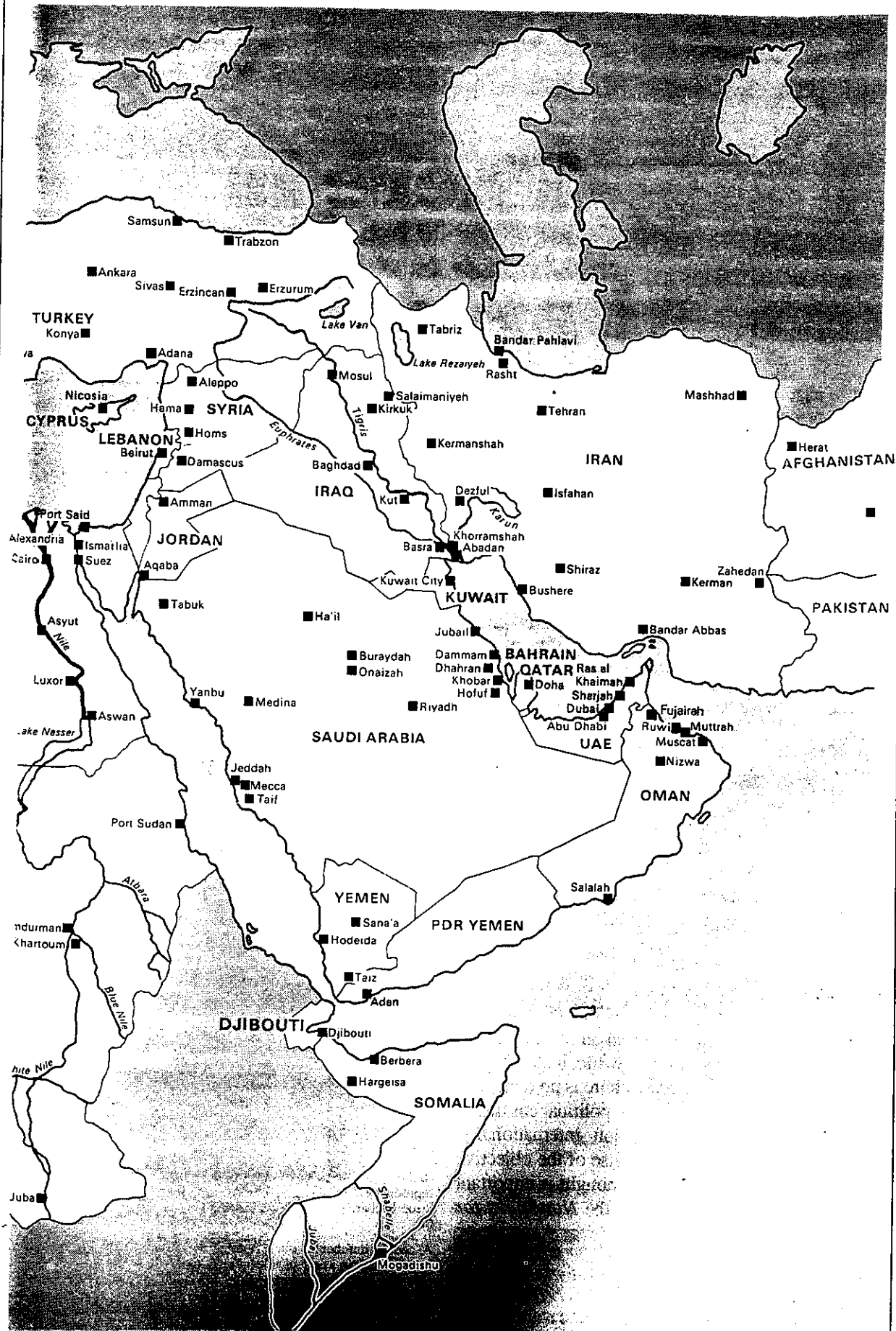
Penny Duggan  
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1. For Andre Gunder Frank's previous articles on this question see the bibliography on page 34.  
2. These articles, originally written in French, appeared in the fortnightly magazine *International Viewpoint*. The English translation has been checked by the author for publication in the NSR. The articles not reproduced here can be obtained by writing to *International Viewpoint*, 2 rue Richard Lenoir, 93108 Montreuil, France. Fax (33-1) 43 79 21 06.

A certain number of our subscribers receive *IV*. The publication of these articles in a collection can nevertheless be useful for them. But, to take into account this fact and to make up for the extended suspension of publication of the NSR for practical reasons, we are only considering this as a single issue (at 72 pages it would usually be a double issue).

Our general rule is only to publish in the NSR original works or those which have never been translated into English or are very difficult to find. On this occasion we have made an exception, given the nature of the subject.

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Andre Gunder Frank

# Third World War:

## A Political Economy of the Gulf War and New World Order

### Introduction to Third World War

The Gulf War may be termed *Third World War* in two senses of this title: First, this war aligned the rich North, the rich oil emirates or kingdoms, and some bribed regional oligarchies against a poor Third World country. In that sense, the Gulf War was a *Third World War* by the North against the South. It was massively so perceived throughout the Third World South, not only in Arab and Muslim countries but also elsewhere in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Masses of people in the Third World manifested their opposition to this war and the North, even if it meant taking sides with the dictator Saddam Hussein, for whom little love was lost. Indeed, the popular expressions of racism and xenophobia in the North also were manifestations of this same perception that this was a war between "us" in the North and "them" in the Third World South.

The second sense of *Third World War* is that the Gulf War may dangerously mark the brutal beginning of a *Third World War*, following upon the First and Second World Wars. Not only was the tonnage of bombs dropped on Iraq of world war proportions. The Gulf War and the New World Order it was meant to launch signify the renewed recourse by a world wide "coalition of allies" to mass destruction of infrastructure and mass annihilation of human beings. The allies led by the United States chose to wage a major destructive, brutal and unnecessary war and renounced dialogue and negotiation as their preferred instrument to settle a relatively minor international dispute. In so doing moreover, they clearly signalled their threat to build the New World Order on repeated recourse to this same military force and annihilation against any other recalcitrant country or peoples - as long as they are poor, weak, and in the Third World South.

With the conclusion of the cold war, the Third World (Hot) War is not to be fought between East and West, or West and West, but between the North and the South. Since the Second World War, West-West wars have been obviated, and the East-West cold war has been fought out in regional hot wars in Korea, Vietnam, Angola, Nicaragua, and other parts of the Third World. Now, West-West cold conflicts are also to be transmuted, as in the Gulf War against Iraq, into the ever existing North-South conflict and into Third World War at the expense of Third World peoples on Third World

\* Acknowledgments: Beyond the people directly cited in the text, for this consolidation and extension of my four earlier essays on the Gulf War cited below, I benefited by reading Praful Bidwai, Noam Chomsky, Craig Hulet, Holly Sklar, and Joe Stork. I gleaned general information and some data from them, which is not exclusive to them or did not seem specific enough to cite or ascribe to them directly. Marta Fuentes and Barry Gills helped me by critiquing an earlier draft.

soil. Of course, the North-South gap and conflict itself is also becoming ever acuter. The Gulf War signals that in the New World Order the North reserves the right and threat to turn any Old World Order North-South cold conflict into a North-South hot war at the expense of Third World people on Southern soil at any time of Northern choosing. Therefore, the world is threatened with the *Third World War*.

This essay examines the Gulf War and the New World Order in this global context. However, it also concentrates on the political economic motives, actions and their consequences of the major actors in the unfolding of this tragic drama. The major actor in the Gulf War for a New World Order certainly was President George Bush. However, he has never told the truth about his reasons, actions, or purposes in promoting and fighting the Gulf War. Indeed, George Bush deceived the American public and the world already earlier on. To go no further, the dominant theme in his election campaign to the American presidency was "Read my lips"! He promised the American people and in effect the world "no new taxes" and "a kinder, gentler presidency." Instead, what we got from President Bush is his New World Order War in the Gulf. Poor American people and Poor World! They did not listen when Bush's Democratic Party rival Michael Dukakis explicitly warned us all that George Bush was making false promises. The Bush campaign also featured promises to be "The Education President" at home and "To Take Care of the Environment." Once elected, President Bush first raised new taxes, which will have to rise further with recession and war. Then he neglected education and the environment, which will also suffer more for the war.

President Bush made this war, and in order to make the war he gave us the big lie both about the war and about his new world order. Therefore, it takes some inquiry to unravel the immediate economic and more underlying geopolitical economic reasons; the economic buildup, political escalation, belligerent pursuit and the human and material damages; and the domestic and international costs of this Gulf War for New World Order. Finally, we may inquire into the resulting place of the United States in this New World Order. The purpose here is to contribute to the clarification and answer of these important questions.

Therefore, this essay concentrates on the actions and responsibility of the Bush Administration in the United States in the Gulf War. This essay consolidates, amplifies, documents and updates the author's four earlier writings and publications on the Gulf crisis and war, which are listed below. One of these earlier essays still

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included "a curse on both your houses" in its title, because then it still seemed important to stress and critique the responsibility of *both* sides to this conflict. However, more recently it has become both absolutely and relatively more important to analyze and help expose the American Bush administration's much greater (ir)responsibility in the tragic unfolding of events. In the meantime also, much more evidence on the same has also become publicly available. I draw on the relatively limited amount of this evidence made available abroad, primarily through the *International Herald Tribune (IHT)*. In any case, the actions of the United States and its allies carry much more weight and importance than those of any country or its leader in the Third World. Therefore, the analysis below concentrates on the world shaking actions and consequences of the major actors in this drama and on their responsibilities in and significance for the "new world order."

### False Western Pretexts for Going to War in the Gulf

The violation of international law through the invasion and occupation of Kuwait by Iraq under the presidency of Saddam Hussein is beyond dispute. However, the allegation that the Gulf War was to protect the "principle" of world order, international law and the Charter of the United Nations from lawless might-is-right violation is a lie. Indeed, this pretext is the height of cynicism, especially by President Bush, but also by his Western allies and others who supported him in the United Nations.

Many similar aggressions and violations of both the UN Charter and UN resolutions have gone without any such response, or often even without any notice. Indonesia invaded and ravaged East Timor and Irian Jaya with genocide without having the world take hardly any notice. Apartheid in South Africa, but less so its continual aggressions against its neighbouring Front Line States in Southern Africa, led to embargoes by the UN and its members; but no one ever suggested going to war against South Africa. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan merited condemnation and opposition, albeit of course not by the Security Council; but certainly no counter invasion of the Soviet Union. The Iraqi invasion of Iran received, but did not merit, de facto political and even military support by the same coalition of allies, which then waged war against Iraq's invasion of Kuwait.

Indeed, among the very same states who allied themselves in a coalition to "liberate Kuwait" from aggression and occupation by Iraq several engaged in similar aggression and still today maintain their military occupation of others' territory: Israel invaded and still occupies the Golan Heights, West Bank, and the Gaza Strip in violation of UN Resolution 242. Israel also invaded Lebanon and de facto still exercises military control over southern Lebanon. Syria invaded and still exercises mil-

itary control over parts of northern Lebanon. Turkey invaded Cyprus in 1974 and still occupies part of it militarily. Morocco invaded and took over the Western Sahara. Only recently, the United States waged war on Nicaragua for a decade through the "contras," invaded and still occupies Grenada, and invaded and still exercises military occupation over Panama. Thus, the coalition allies included at least a half dozen states (not to mention France in Africa and the South Pacific and Britain in the South Atlantic) who themselves recently subjected other UN member states to military invasion and still occupy them or parts of their territory. This dirty half dozen clearly did not "defend Kuwait" to defend the international law that they were and still are breaking themselves. Like the other coalition members and demonstrably the mortal enemies Syria and the United States, they allied themselves with each other each for their own sordid realpolitik reasons. As the foreign minister of Australia, whose hands are not so clean either, explained, "the world is littered with examples of acquisition by force."

Significantly however, hardly anyone except some Latin Americans - not even President Hussein and certainly not President Bush - has made the obvious linkage of the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait with the American one of Panama. Only eight months before President Hussein invaded Kuwait, President Bush himself invaded Panama. The US foreign invasion of sovereign Panama cost 4,000 to 7,000 lives (far more than the simultaneous domestic violence in Romania), used armed brutalization of part of the population, caused wanton destruction of property for which no amends have ever been made. Moreover, Panama is still "governed" by a "president" and two "vice-presidents" solemnly installed by the United States on an American military base and under effective US military occupation and rule to this day!

President Bush's "Just Cause" for his invasion of Panama with 27,000 troops to catch one drug trafficker was a cynical lie. So much so that a year later in Panama the drug trade remains business as usual (*IHT April 20-21, 1991*), and in the United States President Bush's Justice Department has been unable to unearth a single shred of documentary evidence to use in court against General Noriega. Indeed, he may never get to court, not the least because Noriega himself probably has evidence on George Bush since their days of friendly collaboration no so long ago. The real reasons for President Bush's invasion of Panama have still not been revealed. Noriega's defense lawyer now claims that the real issue in the US-Noriega falling out was not reported drug dealing but Noriega's late 1980s refusal, despite CIA threats, to help the CIA backed contras invade Nicaragua (*IHT May 17, 1991*). Another reason for the invasion may have been the need to replace the no longer usable bogey of the Soviet evil empire with a new one in the personalized form of a narco-terrorist in the Isthmus - until a better bogey became available in the Gulf. However, more material incentives have also been sug-

gested: in the short run, to forestall a deal with Japan, which was a threat because of Panama's accession to a majority on the Canal Commission on January 1, 1990. There is also increasing evidence that a longer run reason for the U.S. invasion and continued occupation of Panama is to maintain control over the Canal by forestalling the execution of the Carter-Torrijos Treaty. It stipulates the American handover of all of the Canal and its "Zone" to Panama on January 1, 2000. What limit then is there to cynicism when President Bush can now appeal to God, morality, and international law to condemn President Hussein's invasion and occupation of Kuwait, when he himself did and still does the same in Panama?

Unfortunately, lying cynicism is not limited to Presidents Hussein or Bush and their immediate supporters. No Security Council resolutions were passed, or even proposed, to protect President Bush's new world order from his own violation of the sovereignty of Panama. On the contrary, President Bush received only acquiescence or even outright support for his violation of international law and human right in Panama. So had President Reagan when he invaded and occupied sovereign Grenada (which also is still administered by the United States). Indeed, the entire European Community, not to mention the United States, also already supported Prime Minister Thatcher when she escalated her war against Argentina and its military junta (notwithstanding that she literally torpedoed on the ocean all efforts in Lima to defuse the situation and prevent war in the South Atlantic, and that she threatened to nuke the Argentine city of Cordoba). The Malvinas/Falkland War was the first major war of all the West against a single Third World country. The latter received no support of any kind from any other country in the North, and only moral support regardless of political ideology from its regional partners in Latin America. Therefore, it cannot be credible that today the same old Western NATO allies - and now the ex Warsaw Pact foes and new allies to boot - appeal to God and justice from their high moral horses to condemn another violation of international law and to band together to wage war against a Third World country for the same. There must be other - even more cynical? - reasons at work.



### Immediate Economic Reasons for Going to War

#### Foreign Oil

The most obvious economic reason for the war has been oil. The real price of oil had again declined, especially with the renewed decline of the dollar in which oil is priced. Iraq had some legitimate demands, both on its own behalf against Kuwait and on behalf of other Arab states and oil producers. In pressing these demands by resort to invasion, Saddam Hussein threatened some other oil interests, clients of the United States, and the success of its "divide et impera" policy.

President Hussein invaded Kuwait for political economic reasons: to shore up his political capital at home and in the region in the face of increased debts from the Iraq-Iran War and declining earnings from oil revenues with which to settle these debts. *Time (August 20)* observed that:

"the uneven distribution of wealth-producing resources - the gap between haves and have-nots - is fuelling a regional crisis, a struggle with severe implications for the entire world's standard of living." The same issue of *Time Magazine* also quoted an adviser to President Bush: "this has been an easy call. Even a dolt understands the principle. We need the oil. It's nice to talk about standing up for freedom, but Kuwait and Saudi Arabia are not exactly democracies, and if their principal export were oranges...we would have closed Washington down for August. There is nothing to waver about here."

Later, placards carried in street demonstrations around the world expressed the same still more simply: *no blood for oil*.

That world renowned moral authority, Richard Nixon, aptly summed up both the recessionary and the oil reason, and to boot he managed to do so under the title "*Bush Has it Right: America's Commitment in the Gulf Is Moral*." Nixon wrote:

"When Senator Bob Dole said we were in the Gulf for oil and Secretary of State James Baker said we were there for jobs, they were criticized for justifying our actions on purely selfish grounds. We should not apologize for defending our vital economic interests. Had America not intervened, an international outlaw would today control more than 40 percent of the world's oil....(However) it will not be just a war about oil. It will not be a war about a tyrant's cruelty. It will not be a war about democracy. It will be a war about peace....That is why our commitment in the Gulf is a highly moral enterprise" (*IHT Jan. 7, 1991*).

It is hardly necessary to recall that before this same Richard Nixon resigned the US presidency to evade

congressional impeachment for fraud and deceit, he directed a war to bomb Vietnam "back into the stone age." It was said that "we had to destroy it to save it."

### Domestic Recession

Another immediate economic reason for going to war was to counter domestic recession or at least its political consequences at home, as Secretary of State Baker suggested. Indeed, both presidents Hussein and Bush started this war to manage their own domestic political economic problems in the face of a new world economic recession. There was also recent precedent for the same. During the last world recession, both General Galtieri in Argentina and Prime Minister Thatcher in Britain started and escalated the Malvinas/Falklands War in 1982. The reason was that they both faced political problems at home, which were generated by the world economic recession. Only one of them could win the war gamble and thereby assure his/her political survival. Significantly, that war already pitched the entire West (and its nuclear arsenal) against a single country in the South.

Why was American reaction against Iraq's invasion of Kuwait so strong? The United States went far beyond what most initially considered appropriate, likely or possible, indeed beyond what most people deemed desirable before it took place, as we will observe below. So why this reaction here and now and not, for instance, when Iraq attacked Iran or when Israel invaded Lebanon, not to mention its continued occupation of Arab territories? Part of the explanation of course lies in the differences in American interests among their clients and enemies.

However, the timing of this American response abroad also is immediately related to economic needs and political conflicts at home. President Bush's failure to deliver on his electoral promises of a domestic renewal program was eating into his popularity ratings, and the oncoming recession reduced them further. The recession, the growing budget deficit and the end of the cold war fed Congressional threats to the Bush-Cheney Pentagon budget. President Bush reacted with much historical precedent. We may note that the incumbent administration in the United States, whether Republican or Democratic, had already escalated incidents or opportunities to gear up the war machine in response to all previous recessions since World War II.

Truman's massive response in the Korean War in 1950 followed postwar demobilization and the first recession in 1949, which many feared might replay the depression of the 1930s. During the 1953-54 recession, the United States intervened in the military overthrow of the constitutionally elected Arbenz government in Guatemala. The 1957-58 recession was followed by Eisenhower's intervention in Lebanon in 1958. The 1967 recession was important in Germany and Japan and only incipient in the United States; because the latter avoided it through President Johnson's massive escalation

to war in Vietnam. Yet Vice President and Democratic candidate Johnson had run and won his 1964 electoral campaign against the Republican Goldwater on the promise against war in Vietnam. The 1968 Vietnamese Tet offensive and the 1969-70 recession were followed by renewed American escalation in Indochina, including Cambodia. The 1973-75 recession also resulted in further escalation of the war in Vietnam.

The 1979 recession and Democratic President Jimmy Carter initiated the Second Cold War. The two track decision to install cruise missiles in Europe and to negotiate with the Soviet Union from strength as well as the 3 percent yearly increase in NATO budgets came before the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in December 1979. The unexpected strong American response, which was not expected by the Soviets or perhaps anyone else, followed not only the invasion but also the 1979 recession. The 1981-82 recession brought on Reagan's military Keynesianism and massive arms build up, not to mention his Nicaraguan Contras policy and perhaps his over-reaction in Grenada. As already noted above, Margaret Thatcher also over-reacted analogously and received a new lease on her political life in the Falklands/Malvinas War when economic recession and political demise threatened her government in 1982.

Threats of recession and military budget cuts also prompted President Bush already to over-react massively in Panama. Even greater recessionary threats, decline of his popularity over the tax/deficit issue, and military budget cuts then drove him to over-react again even more against Iraq. Reports in the American press suggest that the Democrats have to shelve much of their proposed Congressional "peace dividend" cuts to the Pentagon budget. Of course, hardware and logistics for U.S. intervention in the Third World will receive an additional boost.

## World Geopolitical Economic Reasons for Going to War in the Gulf

### The World Recession of the 1990s

The discussion by the US administration and press about whether the Gulf crisis brought on the recession or not is totally turned around; for both the timing and the causation were the other way around. For the recession of 1989-1990-1991 began months before Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and led first to President Bush's "Just Cause" invasion of Panama and then to the Crisis and War in the Gulf. As Richard Nixon noted, even Secretary of State Baker let on undiplomatically that the American stance in the Gulf was to maintain jobs at home; and The Chairman of the President's Council of Economic Advisers, Michael Boskin, was quoted by the *International Herald Tribune* (Jan. 3, 1991) to say that the American economy would have been even worse off

if military operations in the Gulf had not helped stabilize it.

The recession began with the renewed cyclical decline in the rate of profits in 1989, which continued in 1990. The recession became evident in 1990 – some time before the Gulf Crisis and War. A very small sampling of newspaper headlines and some text (mostly from the *International Herald Tribune*) from 1990 sets the tone: "U.S. Profits: Sign of a Slump (for second year in a row)," "1.3% Fall Forecast for U.S. (3.4 % annual rate in the last quarter of 1990)," "Amid Signs of a U.S. Recession, Bankruptcies Hit a Record," "U.S. Firms' Debt Service Burden Grows," "U.S. (corporate and municipal) Debt Downgrades Hit a Record in 1990," "Portfolios of U.S. Banks are Shakiest in 15 Years," "20 Big Banks Head for Failure. U.S. Agency Says Many Will Need Bailouts," "U.S. Deposit Insurance (of bank accounts) is 'At a Low'," "1991 Bank Failures Threaten U.S. Fund. Most Large Institutions Are on Verge of Insolvency, Congress Study Says," "This Is a Rescue? The S&L bailout is faltering - and the meter keeps running," "No End in Sight. Politicians Hurl blame as the U.S. savings and loan crisis races out of control" – but not only at the S&Ls, and not only in the USA.

The recession is already world wide: Canada and Australia are in severe recession. "U.K. Slump Worse Than Expected." France, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, even Switzerland ("bank profits down") have reduced or negative growth rates. Africa is in depression. In Latin America, GNP declined 0.5 per cent and per capita 2.4 per cent in 1990, on top of a 10 per cent decline in the 1980s. Now it is the turn of Eastern Europe with an over all 20 percent economic decline in 1990, and of the Soviet Union. Also "China Sees Threats to Growth" and so does India, whom the crisis largely bypassed in the 1980s.

Are Japan and Germany exceptions? Can and will they be the replacement locomotives for the world economy during the early 1990s? "Without World Recovery, Bonn (Germany) Fears a Slowdown." "Germany's East: Bleaker Yet." "Economy Feels Strains as Price of Unity Mounts." "German Trade: No Moscow Miracles Foreseen" to restore exports and jobs lost. Bundesbank President Karl Otto Pöhl declared the economic consequences of German unification a "catastrophe" and drove the D-Mark down several cents the next day.

In Japan, as well as in Korea and Taiwan, growth rates have also declined already. The Japanese speculative bubble has burst. "Japan's Big Banks Brace for Bad Results." The stock market declined 40 percent in 1990; real estate prices plummeted; and Japanese investors and speculators transferred funds inward from abroad to help them cover their losses at home. That is also why in 1990, for the first time since 1986 and now that the United States needs it most, the net flow of Japanese capital was out from the United States to Japan.

The prospects for a severe recession in Japan and the East Asian NICs are quite real. Either way, the prospects for economic cooperation instead of competition by Japan in the world economy are quite dim. "G-7 Aides Disagree on Policy;" "G-7, by Default, Gives Japan Go-Ahead on Loans to China." If Japan primes the pump or steams up its locomotive at all, it is likely to do so in its own region in Asia, as Germany would if at all in Europe.

Thus, the threat that world recession in the early 1990s will be even more severe than in the early 1980s is quite real. As I wrote in 1989 about "Blocking the Black Debt Hole in the 1990s":

"The question is less one of a soft or hard landing than whether the world economy has already bottomed out, or whether the next recession will be still deeper once again. This is a serious danger, because the next recession threatens to exacerbate all these imbalances and to accelerate their resolution by sucking the world economy into the black hole of debt (to use the expression of MIT economist Lester Thurow). The accumulation of domestic and foreign debt in many parts of the world is likely to inhibit further domestic reflationary finance (call it Gramm-Rudman in the United States) to combat recession just when it is most needed in the next recession. That would be among other things to forestall the bankruptcies of junk bond financed corporations and banks dependent on interbank loans. Both US and Japanese monetary policies would be damned if they do and damned if they don't....

The continuing world economic crisis is exacerbating the accumulated regional and sectoral imbalances especially among the world's major trading regions of America, Europe, Japan, and their Third World and Socialist trading partners. They will find it ever more difficult to manage the growing conflicts between financial debt speculation and real economic productive investment, through the already conflicting monetary, fiscal, exchange rate, trade, security and other policies. Therefore, another (again more severe?) recession threatens also to spark another (also more acute?) crisis within the crisis. More of the same muddling through is likely to become impossible. Any possibility of reimposition of the old American dominance (or an alternative Japanese new dominance) in a multilateral world economic and financial system or its coordinated management by the G7, G5 or G3 is improbable in such a recession. (A US bomb and Japanese yen based Pacific basin political economic consortium is possible but rather unlikely, and one including Europe even less likely). The most likely possible alternative resolution will therefore be increasingly neo-mercantilist regionalization of the world economy into American dollar, Japanese yen and German led European ECU / D

mark zones and/or trading (and political?) blocs." (Frank 1990c)

**West-West Competition**

Additional underlying reasons for the belligerent American stance leading to the Gulf War was the defense of American economic and geopolitical interests world wide. The primary threats to these American interests are competition from Japan and Germany, or from a Japanese led Asia and a German led Europe – all the more so now that the Soviet "threat" is virtually eliminated. As we observed, the cold war is over and Japan and Germany have won! The Reaganomics of the 1980s helped eliminate the Soviet Union from the running but at the cost of mortgaging the American economy and even its government's budget to the Japanese and the Europeans. The United States is now economically dependent on continued capital inflows from its principal economic rivals, which the Japanese already began to withdraw. In response to even deeper recession and/or with greater deliberation, the Japanese now threaten to pull the financial rug out from under the United States and its dollar altogether. At the same time, trade and other economic disputes grow ever deeper at various points including the GATT Uruguay rounds. Japan was distinctly uncooperative, and Europe refused to budge more than a few percent on the issue of agricultural subsidies. The road to "Europe 1992" was made more difficult by the 1989-90 events in Eastern Europe and by Britain's intransigent foot dragging.

The July 1990 Houston Summit of the G (Group of) 7 industrial countries confirmed the live-and-let-live "Sinatra doctrine": Each one does it "my way," and the others nod approval, as long as they have no other choice. At that Summit, Prime Minister Kaifu of Japan announced a large scale program of loans to China, and Chancellor Kohl of Germany a similar state guaranteed loan of 5 billion DM to the Soviet Union. President Bush reiterated his "Enterprise for the Americas Initiative" for a free trade zone from Alaska to Patagonia (and \$ 7 billion remission of debts out of the over \$ 420 billion!), which he had already hurried to announce a week earlier. In each case, the other two listened, acknowledged, and did nothing either to participate or to stop it. Thus, they consecrated what the Soviet spokesman Gennadi Gerasimov had in another context baptized as "the Sinatra Doctrine."

Germany's first priority was and is reunification. The economic and social costs are enormous, and they are borne mostly by the people and their government(s). So far private industry in the West of Germany has been very slow to invest in the East of Germany - and much less even in the East of Europe. How long it will take Germany to get up the steam to put its locomotive in motion remains to be seen – in Central and Eastern Europe. Little of this locomotive power is likely to be visible in the world economy elsewhere. On the contrary, as an economy that has been very dependent on exports to the world market, Germany itself has already

suffered from declining export markets due to the recession elsewhere in the world economy.

In June 1990, the former editor of the American foreign policy establishment's *Foreign Affairs*, James Chace, wrote in *International Management. Europe's Business Magazine*

"Auf wiedersehen USA. There will be a European challenge.... Europe has ... turned Servan-Schreiber's thesis on its head. Today it is the United States that is fearful of Europe's economic strength and worried about its own relative economic decline....Approaching 1992...if there are severe economic dislocations or, let us not forget, a global recession, there is no telling how the new Europe will react....From this prospect arises the even more frightening spectre, to Americans at least, of a Fortress Europe dominated by great industrial groups that could freeze all competitors out of its market. If this should happen, the risks to the United States would be huge.... The likelihood that the Europeans will eventually form a pan-European security system of their own will further reduce U.S. power and influence.....Washington is almost desperately eager to remain in Europe. "The United States should remain a European power in the broadest sense, politically, militarily and economically," said U.S. President Bush in a speech last month."

Two months later, Saddam Hussein offered President Bush an opportunity to meet the European challenge.

**Using Military Strength to Compensate for Economic Weakness**

Bravo for American power celebrated the "serious" London paper *Sunday Telegraph* (Jan. 20, 1991) in a five column editorial: "bliss is it in this dawn to be alive; but to be an old reactionary is very heaven.... Who matter are not the Germans or the Japanese or the Russians but the Americans. Happy days are here again." The same paper added farther down the page, "this is not going to be a multi-polar world. If there is to be a new world order, it will be based on US military power with Britain playing a key role. Saddam's scalp will be its first trophy." Thus the London *Telegraph* also makes its own the observation of the aptly named American **National Interest**: "The fact (is) that the military power of the United States was the only thing capable of mounting an effective riposte - when the economic power of a Japan or a Germany was virtually irrelevant." Since World War II, the United States has not been able to use its military might against Japan and Germany; and it can no longer do much for them either, now that the Soviet military threat is waning. However, the United States still can - indeed without Soviet encumbrance now all the moreso - use its military might in and against countries in the Third World. In other words, the Gulf Crisis offered Presi-

dent Bush a black golden opportunity to try to redress declining American hegemony against its principal economic rivals in Japan and Germany by playing the only - that is military - ace he still has up his sleeve. Of course, at the cost of Iraq and the Third World, where this war was "played" out. Without exception, all East-West wars since 1945 were fought on Third World soil. Now the West-West competition is to be fought out in the South as well.

**East-West, North-South**

Oft used labels aligned the old world order along East-West and North-South axes and conflicts. In recent years, however, the East-West ones have waned while the North-South ones have waxed ever more. So have, albeit to a lesser degree, West-West conflicts among North America, Western Europe, and East Asia led by Japan. Thus, recent history was marked by "Political Ironies in the World Economy" (Frank 1984/1987). Since 1945, world economic conditions were shaping international and national politics and social movements. In particular, the economic conflicts and opportunities generated by the world economic crisis since 1967 would prove more important in shaping international relations and domestic policy than the ideological and political cold war between the United States and the Soviet Union. Many East-West conflicts were a sham and largely a cover for the always real North-South contradictions. None of the 14 "revolutions" in the South since 1974 was what it appeared to be or would turn out as was hoped or feared:

"These observations among others suggest the further irony that much of the East-West conflict, especially between Washington and Moscow, is a smoke screen cover for North-South conflicts.... The world economic and technological development that is now passing through a crisis of regeneration, is perhaps, again ironically, likely further to diminish if not eliminate the importance of the East-West political division of the world much more than the North-South economic division, which it is likely to accentuate still further." (Frank 1984/1987)

Under the title "The European Challenge" (Frank 1983/84), I also argued that world economic conflicts made greater "Pan-European Entente" (as per my subtitle) politically both possible and desirable, all state policies and obstacles of political blocs and their ideological inclinations notwithstanding. This inefficacy of "voluntarist" state policy and politics, especially for "national development" in a world economy, was also the basis for the rise to greater importance of alternative social movements in the West, South and also in the East (Frank and Fuentes 1989,1990). In the meantime, all of these and related analyses and forecasts, which seemed unrealistic in the ideological climate of their time, have become hard reality. However, these "ironical" turns and consequences are only logical repercussions of the changing world economic conditions. Now the cold war is over, and Germany and Japan have won! However,

the United States still has the military power and the political ambitions to try to defend its place in the world order – now all the more so at the expense of the Third World South.

**Political Economies of Escalation**

The escalation of the Gulf crisis was marked by three important new departures in recent international political economic relations:

1. The energetic American response in the Gulf was visibly over a political economic issue. The issue is oil without any cold war ideological overtones. The conflict about oil and the massive American response was barely masked behind appeals to the "defense" of small states in international "law."

2. This mobilization was entirely against (a part of) the South without any pretence of an East-West ideological cover. Popular reaction in the United States - and some physical attacks and threats against innocent neighbours - was directed against the Arab bogey. Not for nothing are the image of the Arab and of the "terrorist" often identified in the popular mind. The end of the cold war and of the Soviet Union and its Warsaw Pact as a credible enemy require the legitimation of another target. Actually, much of the ostensible East-West conflict had always been a convenient cover for the underlying North/West-South conflict. Now, there is little alternative other than to bring that North-South conflict out into the open. Private enterprise drug traffic and individual terrorism are useful but limited alternative targets. They are better targets if it is possible to make a state sponsorship connection, as (wrongly) claimed about Libya. In Panama, the ostensible "enemy" was **narcoterrorism**. The two were combined and personalized by General Noriega and served as readily available ideological replacements for the no longer operative red menace/ Soviet bogey. Significantly of course, the target was also (in) the Third World. It is even more useful now to be able to mobilize for real war against a bigger Third World state and its supposed threat.

3. The third major departure in the Gulf is the near unanimity and alliance in the North against the South. The lineup against Iraq from West to East, includes the United States, Western and Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, China and Japan, as well as American client states and governments whose arms are easily twisted, as in Egypt and Pakistan. That new alignment is a major difference, new departure, and ominous threat for the future of "international" relations. *Time Magazine* commented on "the astonishing unanimity of purpose.... It is rare that a victim's fortunes are so directly tied to the health of the Western economies." In view of the same, British Prime Minister Thatcher commented "I cannot remember a time when we had the world so strongly together." By "world" she means the "North," which is what counts. Yet, as *Time* quotes a Bush aide who watched his boss calculate, "he knew that to be effective, the lineup against Saddam had to

be perceived as more than just the rich West against a poor Arab." This lineup was prepared with care and time.

## Economic Buildup and Political Escalation of Crisis and War in the Gulf

### Public Iraq-Kuwait Disputes and Secret Kuwaiti-US Agreements

The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait was not an unexpected bolt of lightning out of the blue. Its utilization as a pretext by the United States to launch its new world order through the most destructive war since World War II appears increasingly as malice aforethought.

"Stealing Kuwait was not simple greed or national hatred. Theft on a national scale (of what had been Iraqi before the British created Kuwait) had become the only possible access for war-devastated Iraq to... the modern standard of living that Western nations and small oil-producing emirates of the Gulf enjoy today as a matter of right.. The strength of this almost suicidal drive to emerge from poverty and backwardness ... was the motor." (Jim Hoagland, IHT March 5)

Iraqi grievances against Kuwait were an old inheritance from colonial times, which was newly aggravated by Kuwaiti action and perhaps provocation. The disputed border between Iraq and Kuwait was arbitrarily drawn through the old Mesopotamian sand by the British before they had to abandon their colonial empire. However, the British deliberately did so to deny Kuwait's oil and access to the sea to the populous Iraqis and to reserve them to a rich emirate, which would be more subject to Western influence.

Indeed, the resulting division among Arabs in Iraq and Kuwait was only one example of their division into six large and populous but poor countries and six artificially created smaller states with oil reserves ruled mostly by emirs. These have scarcely shared their oil derived riches with their poor Arab "brothers" and have preferred to use them to flaunt their luxury at home and invest their surplus funds abroad in the West.

Iraq never quite resigned itself to this colonial and neo-colonial arrangement and its borders with Kuwait. In particular, Iraq claimed two small off-coast islands, which would increase its access to the sea and tanker born exports of its own oil. Moreover, the border between Iraq and Kuwait obliged them to share the Rumaila oil field beneath. Iraq accused Kuwait of surreptitiously siphoning off increasingly more than its fair share of oil from this common field while Iraq was occupied by its war with Iran. This war left Iraq undercapitalized and in US \$ 30 billion debt to its rich neighbours. Therefore, Iraq asked its rich Arab neighbours, including Kuwait, to forgive this debt and supply it with

another \$ 30 billion. They tentatively offered \$ 10 billion each, but then reduced their offer to an insulting \$ 500 million instead. Moreover, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia had started to add injury to insult by increasing their own production of oil and thereby driving down the price of oil on which Kuwait depended to recoup its wartime losses. Long before its recourse to the invasion of Kuwait, Iraq repeatedly denounced and demanded relief from all these measures, which it regarded as injurious affronts to itself. To no avail.

On the contrary, information is emerging both quite publicly and less so that the overproduction of oil by Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to drive the price of oil down was a deliberate attempt to weaken Iraq. "The Kuwaiti government was acting aggressively - it was economic warfare" according to Henry Schuler, the Director of the energy security program at the Washington Center for Strategic and International Studies, which has often been linked to the CIA.

Saddam Hussein and other Iraqis repeatedly complained about this economic warfare against them and demanded better and fairer treatment from their Arab neighbours instead. To this end, Hussein convoked an Arab summit in Baghdad in May 1990 and complained of "economic warfare," but to no avail. In his Revolution Day speech on July 19, President Hussein called the oil price policy by Kuwait and the other Emirates "a poisoned dagger" thrust into the back of Iraq, which was left alone as the only real defender of Arab interests.

King Hussein of Jordan was an intermediary in negotiations between Iraq, Kuwait and other Arab states. Michael Emery, writing in the New York *Village Voice* cites King Hussein as his source to make the following statements among others:

"Parties to the Arab negotiations say the Kuwaitis ... had enthusiastically participated in a behind-the-scenes economic campaign inspired by Western intelligence agencies against Iraqi interests. The Kuwaitis even went so far as to dump oil for less than the agreed upon OPEC price ... which undercut the oil revenues essential to cash hungry Baghdad.

The evidence shows that President George Bush, British prime minister Margaret Thatcher, Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, and other Arab leaders secretly cooperated on a number of occasions, beginning August 1988, to deny Saddam Hussein the economic help he demanded for the reconstruction of his nation.... However, Washington and London encouraged the Kuwaitis in their intransigent insistence." (*Village Voice* March 5, 1991 reprinted in *Open Magazine Pamphlet Series No. 9* and also cited in *International Viewpoint*, April 15, 1991)

The Iraqi foreign ministry has distributed the transla-

tion of a supposedly top secret report to the Kuwaiti Minister of the Interior by his Director General of State Security. It is dated 22 November 1989, informs of a meeting with the Director of the CIA in Washington, and reads in part:

"We agreed with the American side about the importance of exploiting the deterioration of Iraq's economic situation in order to put pressure on the Iraqi government to consent to the delimitation of the borders. The CIA offered its own ideas about how these pressures might be exercised through extensive cooperation between the CIA and ourselves and that the coordination of these activities be established at a high level....The American side offers us a private telephone line to facilitate the rapid exchange of information." (cited in part by Emery *ibid.*)

Emery also reports on a July 30 meeting between King Hussein and the foreign minister of Kuwait, who is the brother of its ruling Emir. Emery notes that "despite Saddam's army on their border, the Kuwaitis were in no mood to listen." Emery asks:

"Why were the rulers of this tiny city-state sure of themselves? Apparently, the Kuwaitis thought they knew something the Iraqis didn't. In their July 30 meeting... (Kuwaiti foreign minister) Sheik Sabeh shocked the Jordanian delegation by saying: 'We are not going to respond to (Iraq)... If they don't like it, let them occupy our territory...we are going to bring in the Americans...'" (Emery, *ibid.*)

The Kuwaiti Crown Prince had told his senior military officers that they would have to hold off any Iraqi invading force for 24 hours and the "American and foreign forces would land in Kuwait and expel them" (Emery, *ibid.*)

### Setting the American Trap for Hussein

"The Americans were determined to go to war from the start," and Saddam Hussein "walked into a trap" according to the former French foreign minister Claude Cheysson (IHT March 11). "State Department officials...led Saddam Hussein to think he could get away with grabbing Kuwait...Bush and Co. gave him no reason to think otherwise" (New York Daily News, Sept. 29). The Former White House Press Secretary Pierre Salinger has written at length about how this trap was set (but unfortunately I have not yet had access to this documentation). Bits and pieces of the jigsaw puzzle trap are also emerging elsewhere, however; and some may be summarily put together here. The belatedly publicized July 25 interview between President Hussein and American Ambassador April Glaspie is literally only the tip of the largely submerged iceberg of this trap setting story.

Evidence is emerging to suggest that the Persian Gulf war is the result of a long process of preparation, much more so than the Tonkin Gulf one in Vietnam.

For a decade during the Iran-Iraq war, Saddam Hussein's Iraq had enjoyed US and Western military, political and economic support, including \$ 1.5 billion of sales approved by the U.S. government. George Bush had been a key figure in the Reagan Administration's support for Iraq. After the conclusion of Iraq's war with Iran and the accession of George Bush to the American presidency, US policy towards Iraq became increasingly confusing at best and/or the product of a downright Machiavellian strategy to deceive Iraq and set a trap for Hussein.

In March 1990, the "U.S. Bungled Chance to Oust Hussein, Report Says" (IHT May 4-5, 1991). According to a belated U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee staff report, rebellious Iraqi military officers had sent out feelers asking Washington for support for a coup against Saddam Hussein. However, the Bush administration rebuffed them, and they desisted.

The (forced?) resignation and the testimony to Congress of former Undersecretary of Commerce for Export Administration Dennis Kloske revealed that in April 1990 he recommended "at the highest levels" the reduction of high tech sales to Iraq. He himself sought to delay these exports by tying them up in red tape to compensate for the lack of such action by the Bush administration. Still during the last week of July, the Bush administration approved the sale of 3.4 million in computers to Iraq. The day before the invasion of Kuwait on August 1, the US approved the sale of \$ 695,000 of advanced data transmission devices (IHT March 12). As Kloske later testified, "The State Department adamantly opposed my position, choosing instead to advocate the maintenance of diplomatic relations with Iraq" (IHT, April 11).

A month later in May 1990, the National Security Council (NSC) submitted a white paper to President Bush "in which Iraq and Saddam Hussein are described as 'the optimum contenders to replace the Warsaw Pact' as the rationale for continuing cold war military spending and for putting an end to the 'peace dividend'." Yet the same NSC toned down an April 30 speech by Vice President Dan Quayle adding "emphasis on Iraq misplaced given U.S. policy, other issues" (John Pilger, *The New Statesman* Feb. 8).

At the State Department, Secretary James Baker had promoted John Kelly to Assistant Secretary of State for Middle Eastern Affairs. Kelly visited Baghdad in February, "the records of which he is desperately trying to deep-six (bury)" (William Safire, IHT March 26, 1991). However, it has been revealed that Kelly told President Hussein that "President Bush wants good relations with Iraq, relations built on confidence and trust." Moreover, Kelly then rebuked the Voice of America and countermanded the Defense Department on statements, which he considered too unfriendly to Iraq. On April 26, Kelly testified to Congress that Bush administration policy towards Iraq remained the same and praised Sad-

dam Hussein for "talking about a new constitution and an expansion of participatory democracy." Still on July 31, two days before the August 2 invasion of Kuwait, Kelly again testified to a Congressional sub-committee "we have no defense treaty with any Gulf country."

Kelly had sent the same message to President Hussein through the U.S. American Ambassador April Glaspie. In the July 25 interview with President Saddam Hussein, she told him that "we have no opinion on ...conflicts like your border dispute with Kuwait...I have direct instruction from the President... Secretary of State James Baker has directed our official spokesman to emphasize this instruction." "Mr. President (Hussein), not only do I want to tell you that President Bush wants better and closer relations with Iraq, but also that he wants Iraq to contribute to peace and prosperity in the Near East. President Bush is an intelligent man. He is not going to declare economic war against Iraq." In her testimony to Congress, which the State Department deliberately delayed until after the end of the war, Ambassador Glaspie was asked "did you ever tell Saddam Hussein...if you go across that line into Kuwait, we're going to fight?" Ambassador Glaspie replied "No, I did not."

In the meantime on July 19, Defense Secretary Dick Cheney told the press that the US was committed to defend Kuwait if attacked. However, his own press spokesman Pete Williams immediately repudiated Cheney's statement as spoken "with some liberty," and the White House told the Defense Secretary that from then on he was to leave making statements to itself and the State Department. On July 24, Iraq moved two divisions to the Kuwaiti border, and on July 25, the same day as the Hussein-Glaspie interview, a Kuwaiti military attache working in the Basra consulate informed the government of Kuwait that Iraq would invade on August 2. Two days later the director of the CIA warned President Bush of the likelihood of coming invasion. On July 31, "a Defense Intelligence Agency analyst, Pat Lang, bluntly warned in a memo that Saddam Hussein intended to invade. Mr. Lang intended his memo as 'a thunderclap' to top policy makers ... but it drew virtually no reaction" (IHT May 3, 1991 citing Bob Woodward). On August 1, Secretary of State Baker told his colleague Soviet Foreign Minister Shevermadze, as the latter waited till March 1991 in turn to tell Moscow News, that the United States "has proof that aggression is possible" by Iraq. Yet, time and again, President Hussein was and continued to be reassured and emboldened by the Bush administration and its Department of State, as well as by the US Senate minority leader Bob Dole, who also went to visit him. Little wonder, that many observers in Washington and elsewhere concluded that the Bush Administration (deliberately?) gave Saddam Hussein the green light to invade Kuwait. Moreover as the *Village Voice* (January 22, 1991) also revealed, since then US intelligence sources also learned from their "assets" in Iraq that President Hussein was personally informed of the

American reactions, took each to be yet another sign of Bush administration acquiescence with his intentions, and then seemed genuinely surprised at the very different and belligerent American reaction to his move into Kuwait.

President Hussein also may have had additional reasons for his move beyond the immediate ones of his oil related grievances with Kuwait. The stalemate in his war with Iran incited him to try for a realignment of the regional balance of power once again. It is useful to recall that Mesopotamia (Iraq), Persia (Iran), and Egypt always, and occasionally the Arabian peninsula also, have disputed but never achieved hegemonial regional overlordship for long since the Sumerian Sargon tried around 2,500 BC!

Immanuel Wallerstein (*Economic and Political Weekly*, April 27, 1991) suggests four reasons that may have made the time ripe for Hussein to make another move to that effect:

1. The world debt crisis for which seizing Kuwaiti assets offered some relief at least to Iraq;
2. Israel's recent foreclosure of peace talks and increased intransigence with the Palestinians, to whom Hussein's move seemed to pose no further loss and might enhance their bargaining power;
3. The end of the cold war and the crisis in the Soviet Union deprived him of their support but thereby also of American fears of the same; and
4. the collapse of the ideology of national development through domestic efforts suggested the need for more drastic measures. These included seizing Kuwait first as a bargaining chip, and when that failed, then as Iraq's 19th province. The likelihood of much adverse response must have seemed remote, particularly in view of the repeated green lights by the Bush administration.

#### Springing the Trap on Hussein by Foreclosing any Diplomatic Way Out

Between the Iraqi invasion on August 2, 1990 and the start of American bombing on January 17, 1991, President Hussein gave clear indications of his willingness to negotiate an Iraqi withdrawal on at least six separate occasions. Three times, he unilaterally took steps, which could have led to withdrawal. President Hussein made repeated statements indicating that he was serious about withdrawal, which would include Iraqi "sacrifices" for a negotiated package deal. On more than one occasion, President Hussein and his foreign Minister Tariq Aziz also told UN Secretary General of their desire for a negotiated solution. All these Iraqi and other initiatives came to naught, because the American Bush administration wanted and arranged for them to fail. We briefly review only some of these initiatives to avoid the Gulf War, which the Bush administration in the United States insisted on fighting.

British Prime Minister Thatcher was in Washington in early August and egged President Bush on to take a completely intransigent hard stand to deny Saddam

Hussein any step back or way out. We should recall that President Hussein himself first claimed he was only helping a rival government in Kuwait, which had asked for his help. Only after the first still not clear international response, did he take the next steps to complete military occupation, then to annexation, and finally to making Kuwait the 19th province of Iraq. In the meantime on August 3, the day after the invasion, the inveterate Jordanian mediator King Hussein got Saddam Hussein to agree to attend another hastily convened Arab summit on August 5 and then to begin to withdraw from Kuwait again on condition that there should be no condemnation of Iraq. Nonetheless, under pressure by Washington and London especially on Egyptian President Mubarak who received a call from President Bush, by the evening of August 3 a majority of the Arab League had already issued a condemnation at the urging of Mubarak. He immediately received the remission of the US \$ 7 billion Egypt owed the United States. It was a deliberate and ultimately successful drive to scuttle all attempts at a negotiated diplomatic settlement of the Iraqi claims, which many people even in Washington considered reasonable and negotiable.

US troops "to defend Saudi Arabia" arrived there on August 7, after several days delay. However this delay was only necessary to overcome the resistance thereto of the Saudi government who felt no danger of any possible attack by Iraq. It appears that the Pentagon then duped the Saudis with allegations that US satellite pictures showed Iraqi troops massing on the Saudi border ready to invade. Later Soviet satellite pictures examined by American exports showed Iraqi troops in Kuwait that numbered not "even 20 percent the size the (US) administration claimed. We don't see any congregations of tanks, or troop concentrations. The main Kuwait air base appears deserted" (St. Petersburg Florida Times cited in War Report No. 617, March 23, 1991).

However, Emery comments again:

"But Saddam's intentions were actually less critical at this juncture than Western intentions. In another conversation King Hussein had around this time, with then prime minister Margaret Thatcher, the Iron Lady let it slip that "troops were halfway to their destination before the request came for them to come." (*International Viewpoint* April 15, 1991, p. 21)

Indeed, Iraq sent another proposal to negotiate, which was received on August 9 in Washington. The next day, the NSC recommended its rejection as "already moving against (our) policy." Former CIA director Richard Helms tried to find consideration for the Iraqi initiative, which a State Department Middle East staffer called both "serious" and "negotiable." However, it was not so considered by the Bush administration, where Helms found no one and "nothing in this that interested the US government." On August 12, Iraq again proposed its own withdrawal from Kuwait

linked to the withdrawal from their occupied territories by Syria and Israel. The US, of course, rejected all "linkage," and Iraq then dropped this negotiating demand according to Yasser Arafat. Two weeks later, Iraq made still another offer of withdrawal linked to some settlement of its old demands about the two islands, the Rumaila oil field, and oil production. The offer reached the Bush administration on August 23 but was rejected out of hand. Indeed, as the *New York Times* diplomatic correspondent noted on August 22, any and all such Iraqi initiatives with "a few token gains for Iraq...(like) a Kuwaiti island or minor border adjustments" had to be blocked lest they might "defuse the crisis."

Therefore also, Iraq's "serious prenegotiation position" was again dismissed by the United States on January 2, 1991. The US and UK also threatened to veto the French proposal on January 14 to avert the start of bombing after the January 15 UN deadline for Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait. The February 15 Iraqi offer to withdraw was again dismissed as "linked" to the Israeli-Palestine problem. The February 20-22 Soviet initiative to preclude the ground war was rejected, etc. Indeed countless further Iraqi, Irani, Jordanian, Algerian, French, Soviet, and other initiatives, including those by the UN Secretary General, to negotiate a peaceful settlement of the crisis had to be and were effectively blocked by the Bush administration. It wanted and planned its New World Order war instead. Far from "going an extra mile for peace," President Bush deliberately deceived one and all with his and Secretary Baker's "negotiations" instead to camouflage his own war plan, to be reviewed below.

The Jordanian King Hussein remarked "I've been convinced for a while that there was no effort to dialogue, there was no effort to reach for a diplomatic solution, and there was preparation from the word go for war" (Emery, *ibid.*)

#### Planning Mr. Bush's War

"According to a reconstruction of major internal deliberations and decisions by President George Bush and his senior advisors ... offensive military planning began in earnest in September, and on Oct. 30, a week before congressional elections, Mr. Bush secretly approved a timetable for launching an air war against Iraq in mid-January and a large-scale ground offensive late in February that would strike deep into Iraqi territory to encircle President Saddam Hussein's army... General Schwarzkopf had introduced the concept of offense from the very beginning. ... The dimension of the planned military buildup were closely held by Mr. Bush and his inner circle.... The plan required almost doubling the 200,000 U.S. forces in the Gulf.... That critical decision increased U.S. troops from 230,000 to more than 500,000.... Mr. Bush showed no hesitation in making the decision to increase troop strength,



but decided to keep it secret until Nov. 8. Why? 'Nov. 8 was a very important date because it was after Nov. 6' a White House official said, referring to the election. ... In the two hour meeting (on October 30), Mr. Bush made two fundamental decisions: first, to set in motion the machinery for a midwinter war against the Iraqi Army and, second, to win a UN mandate for that war. To that end, he dispatched Mr. Baker on a round-the-world tour to round up support for a Security Council resolution authorizing the use of force" (*Thomas Friedman and Patrick Tyler, IHT March 4, 1991*).

Yet two days after this important war plan meeting, on November 1 "*Bush Denies He Prepares U.S. For a Gulf War. Says He Wants to Refocus Attention on Hostage Plight*" (*IHT Nov. 2, 1990*). Later President Bush would repeat again and again that "*no one wanted war less than I did.*" But did he ever tell the truth?

"Mr. Bush's decision to use military power was opposed by a bewilderingly mixed bag of radical Democrats, moderate and conservative Democrats, conservative Republicans and Republican right-wingers. The strongest intellectual cases against going beyond sanctions were made by Republicrats like Zbigniew Brezinski, James Schlesinger and Paul Nitze. All are staunch conservatives; all are renowned advocates of a muscular U.S. national security policy. Then there was Edward Luttwack, the mother of all conservative strategists ... (and) Pat Buchanan. Eight of nine recent secretaries of defense favored staying with sanctions. This group included none other than (President Reagan's Secretary of Defense) Casper Weinberger. Two recent chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral William Crowe and General David Jones, were even more reluctant to use force than Mr. Weinberger. This unique brew of Bush critics was joined by probably 90 percent of American and European experts on Arab affairs." (*Leslie Gelb, IHT March 11, 1991*)

"This is becoming one man's war. It is George Bush's War; the only thing that matters is what he thinks. In Washington, people who know Mr. Bush say he is a man obsessed. There is no point in arguing with him about this matter, but men very close to the president say privately that anyone who tries to disagree is risking access and position.... What does the President want? More war, less talk. As commander-in-chief, he is operating like a medieval king. This chief seems to be in command alone, with technical advice from his military leaders." (*Richard Reeves IHT Feb. 26, 1991 my emphasis, AGF*)

In this context, it is even more revealing then to find from Bob Woodward's later expose that:

"last fall, General Colin L. Powell, chairman of

the Joint Chiefs of Staff, had serious reservations about the Bush administration's shift toward an offensive military strategy in the Gulf and repeatedly suggested "containment" of Iraq...short of war.... He finally raised the issue with Mr. Bush.... Mr. Bush, according to Mr. Woodward's account, answered "*I don't think there's time politically for that strategy.*" The book does not elaborate on the president's political considerations. After that meeting, General Powell felt he had gone as far as he could (*IHT May 3, 1991*)

— without, perhaps, risking his access and position!

The ultraconservative American columnist Charles Krauthammer notes in the *IHT, March 5, 1991*:

"Remember how roundly, and correctly, Mr. Bush was criticized for being unable to articulate the justness of the cause.... So he did it, as they say in the Middle East, by creating facts. Four times since Aug. 2 he made unilateral decisions that were bold and generally unpopular. Yet each action reshaped the debate.... Fact 1, Aug. 7: the initial U.S. troop deployment ... found 56 percent (of polled Americans) opposed. Announcement of the deployment, framed as a defense of Saudi Arabia, drew immediate, 81 percent approval....

Fact 2, Nov. 8: doubling the ground troops. That put the United States on a war footing and created a great wave of Democratic opposition. But there was little the Democrats could do. Mr. Bush had used his power as commander in chief to create a political fact.... Fact 3, the launching of the war itself. But here, too, Mr. Bush had constrained the debate with more facts, in this case the already established United Nations deadline.... Having prepared the battlefield, as the military briefers like to say, Mr. Bush won. By a hair, but he won. Then Fact 4, the ground war.... Ten days before the ground war, the CBS/New York Times Poll found only 11 percent of Americans in favour of launching one. When asked again after the ground war started, 75 percent approved.... My point is merely to note the magnitude of his political achievement and the most unusual way in which he did it: not with language but with action." (*Charles Krauthammer, IHT March 5, 1991*)

COMPARATIVE ADVERTIZING



## Fighting and Lying to Win the War

Two propaganda blitzes dominated the war: one was that it was valiantly waged against "*the world's fourth largest army*" with a highly trained "*elite Republican Guard.*" The other one was that therefore the coalition forces had to put on history's first high tech "*Nintendo*" like electronic war with "*smart bombs*" - at least courtesy of US and UK military command video taped briefings for CNN and other TV networks around the world. Hardly anyone then noticed that these two features of the war were mutually contradictory in principle, and empirically false in practice.

However, former French Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson declared:

"I categorically reject notions about avoiding unnecessary damage. The allied goal of annihilating Iraq's economy was bound to involve civilian casualties.... 200,000 - a massacre, with a terrifying impact.... Why don't you ask why the air war lasted 40 days instead of the 15 as planned." (*IHT March 11, 1991*)

Only after it was all over, did a bit of the truth emerge about what finally the *International Herald Tribune* headlined "*Desert Mirages: In the War, Things Weren't Always What they Seemed. U.S. Overestimated Size and Ability of Iraq's Armed Forces.*" It did so deliberately to help justify the carpet and terror bombing of both the military and civilian "assets" of this Third World country with a population of only 17 million souls. The Pentagon presented sanitized images of a new kind of high tech war between machines, not men. We saw videos of outgoing Patriot(ic) American missiles impacting on incoming Iraqi Scud missiles. However, we only learned later in the war that the Patriots only hit the Scud propulsors and did not destroy their warheads, which still hit buildings and killed people. We also were not shown that both missiles fell back to the ground to cause damage. Indeed only on April 18 did the *IHT* reveal that "*the Patriot may have caused as much damage as it prevented.*"

The military commands also released many videos of precision guided smart bombs taking out hard targets in Iraq. However, they neglected to show that these bombs still were not smart enough not to miss 10 percent of their targets. Still less did they mention that the smart bombs accounted for only 7 per cent of the tonnage dropped. Of these, the 3 percent of the total dropped by the new Stealth bombers accounted for 40 percent of the target hits, which included roads, bridges, power plants, irrigation works - indeed "the works." The *New York Times* editorialized a bit late on March 25, 1991 (*IHT edition*):

"The bulk of the damage found by the UN team was not accidental or "collateral," but the intended consequence of the successful air campaign to destroy Iraq's war machine by attacking its

industrial base and urban infrastructure. The findings raise questions about how much of that bombing was needed, or justified. That debate will go on...."

*The Times* and other "responsible" media, however, did precious little to start the debate before or during that bombing, when it should have been avoided, limited or stopped. When the American targeters hit first the only powdered milk and infant formula factory in the country and then a civilian air raid bunker / shelter, the Pentagon insisted that they had correctly hit military targets. CNN and its Peter Arnett was hounded as a traitor to the cause for sowing doubts after having loyally already aired hundreds of hours of war propaganda. In the pot calling the kettle black, the US Commanding General Schwarzkopf said "*I did resent CNN aiding and abetting an enemy who was violating the Geneva Convention*" (*IHT March 28, 1991*).

Nonetheless it was later revealed that only 60 percent of the laser guided bombs hit their intended targets and the other 40 percent missed (*Boston Globe Jan. 29, 1991*). Moreover, we may ask what happened to the 97 percent of bombs that were not from Stealths or the 93 percent of the bombs which were not smart enough to get on TV? Answer: 75 percent of them missed their assigned targets and did only "collateral" damage. In English, they carpet bombed and terrorized both the civilian population and its conscripted sons in the Iraqi army. Indeed, that was of course the deliberate purpose of using squadrons of Vietnam age B52s and their notoriously inaccurate high altitude bomb runs. Indeed, some bombs were so big that they would not fit into the B52s and had to be carried in and shoved out of even bigger transport planes.

The United States again used Vietnam fame napalm and cluster "anti-personnel" (not anti-person/s?) bombs and fuel explosion bombs. These bombs suck oxygen out of their target area and wantonly asphyxiate their victims of mass destruction, if they did not kill them through the concussion waves of their explosion. *The Los Angeles Times* (Feb. 24, 1991) also reported on the first wartime use of more "efficient" new anti-personnel weapons: "*Improved conventional munitions (ICM) can kill four times as many soldiers.*" Adam and Bouncing Betty bombs bounce off the ground to detonate at the more lethal groin level. The Beehive is "*perhaps the ultimate concept in improved fragmentation...and spins at high velocity, spitting out 8,000 flechettes - tiny darts with razor edges capable of causing deep wounds.*" The fragments of white phosphorous howitzer shells "*can continue to burn hours after they have penetrated a soldier's body, creating deep lesions.*" According to the propaganda, the "Hitler" Hussein had and threatened to use fuel explosive and chemical "poor man's atom bombs." However, Iraq never used any such weapons. The Americans did not threaten. They not only used their tried and true old napalm and other anti-personnel weapons. The Ameri-

cans also used their first opportunity, of course in the Third World, to try out their new weapons of mass destruction and annihilation on their poor defenseless Iraqi victims. The Iraqis never fought back. Except for the Western propaganda value scud missiles, the Iraqis were never reported to have even tried to drop a single bomb or shell on allied troop formations.

The United States also violated United Nations International Energy Commission regulations to which it had agreed not to bomb nuclear facilities, because of the danger of uncontrollable contamination. Despite this ban and danger, American bombs were dropped on Iraqi nuclear facilities anyway. "In one of these cases, the bombardment resulted in what Iraq described as 'radiation contamination of the region'.... Thousands of Iraqi weapons have been described by Baghdad as buried beneath the contaminated debris of Iraqi storage sites and production factories" (IHT May 2, 1991). Contrary to Allied assurances as well, bombs also damaged ancient archeological treasures from Sumerian and Assyrian times (IHT May 6, 1991).

## Human and Material War Damages and Costs

### The Casualties of Direct Hits and "Collateral Damage"

No one knows, or probably ever will know, the resulting number of Iraqi casualties in an unnecessary war that could and should have been avoided. The world's "fourth largest army" from a population less than 50 percent bigger than New York City had been decimated without any means of self defense from the air before the long heralded but only 100 hour allied long ground offensive even started. Only after the war, several press sources repeatedly reported American military and CIA estimates between 100,000 and 250,000 Iraqi primarily military dead. In his televised interview with David Frost, the American commanding general Norman Schwarzkopf referred to "50,000 or 100,000 or 150,000 or whatever of them to be killed." A Saudi military commander told CNN of 100,000 Iraqi troops dead and 200,000 wounded. A French military intelligence source told the *Nouvelle Observateur* that 200,000 were killed. The Muslim Institute referred to "up to 500,000 Iraqi civilians killed or injured by Allied bombs" in the April 12 IHT. The eleventh hour or last minute destruction of the two convoys, one 38 Km long with 5000 vehicles, retreating out of Kuwait, whose grisly remains were televised around the world, cost the totally unnecessary and unjustifiable death of further countless thousands of Iraqi soldiers and civilians, as well as of Kuwaiti hostages. Pilots later said that the retreating Iraqis were "basically just sitting ducks" and "it was like shooting fish in a barrel" (Washington Post Feb. 27, 1991). The British Independent (Feb. 28, 1991) found it "sickening to witness a routed army being shot in the back." Otherwise, hardly

any protest was murmured, and even that was rejected by on high.

At war's end in Iraq, a United Nations commission of inquiry found a country in "near apocalyptic" conditions of catastrophe with its economy, society and people bombed back into the pre-industrial age. The civilian economic infrastructure had been deliberately destroyed. There is no more electric power to treat urban sewage, to provide drinking water or to irrigate agricultural land. US President Bush wants "not one dime" spent on Iraqi reconstruction and, instead, had the Security Council adopt a cease fire resolution to force poor Iraq to use some of its future oil earnings to pay for the reconstruction of rich Kuwait. The Emirate, in turn, has reserved and assigned over 70 percent of its reconstruction contracts for American companies like the Bethel construction company, which sacrificed itself to supply the Secretaries of State and Defense to the previous administration!

That is, "The New Way of War is to Bomb Now and Kill Later," as the April 17, 1991 IHT headlines a column in the *Washington Post* by the vice president of the World Resources Institute, Jessica Mathews. As a direct result of carpet bombing Iraq's infrastructure back into a pre-industrial age:

"the International Committee of the Red Cross, which normally expresses itself in the most understated language it can devise, warned last week of the seeds of a "public health catastrophe of immense proportions." It was referring not to the plight of the 1.5 million Kurds but to that of the other 14 million Iraqis. The principal threat is contaminated water and lack of sanitation.... Dr. Jack H. Geiger, president of Physicians for Human Rights, who has just returned from Iraq, says he would not be surprised if the nationwide toll may soon reach "many tens of thousands." ... The (UN) secretary general's mission expects "a catastrophe...at any time."

Food is scarce....The June harvest is questionable, with no electricity to run irrigation pumps and no gasoline for harvesting combines. Food now available cannot be stored because of lack of refrigeration. Seeds for next season's crop were destroyed. Famine is in imminent prospect....

The extent of present and anticipated human suffering demands some clear answers to these questions. With whom were the allied at war, Saddam Hussein or all Iraqis? If not all Iraqis, which?... How far does America's and other coalition members' responsibility extend for Iraq's suffering? If Iraq cannot pay for what its people need while also paying reparations, what should be done? Finally, unavoidably: Was it worth it?"

In answer, Gulf War US Commander in Chief General "Stormin" Norman Schwarzkopf declared:

"I have a great feeling of a great victory. Anyone who dares even imply that we did not achieve a great victory obviously doesn't know what the hell he is talking about." (IHT April 13-14)

The same General Schwarzkopf had also declared that if there ever were any conflict between his ethics and his duty, he would of course chose his ethics above his duty. In 1983 already, he valiantly used 6,000 troops to conquer mighty Grenada and its unarmed Cuban construction workers at the cost of still untold casualties. Early on in the Gulf conflict, he had given public assurances that anyone evacuating Kuwait would of course be guaranteed safe passage, for otherwise it would be unreasonable to expect them to leave. Then, he killed every last member of the 5,000 vehicle retreating convoy. Now, General Schwarzkopf also says "never say never" to the well earned proposals of a nomination to the presidency of the United States. In the meantime, Stormin Norman intends to retire with "multimillion dollar book offers" for his memoirs and/or a multimedia book and film deal (IHT 13-14 April). For the victory euphoria among some people in the United States seems to know no bounds.

So it was certainly "worth it" for them, since President Bush aptly noted that "By God, we've kicked the Vietnam syndrome once and for all." Vietnam had been "bombed back into the stone age," but the humiliated Americans were forced to withdraw in defeat anyway. Now the "great victory" over Iraq is the corner stone of America's "new world order."

### Other Human Costs

There were already been many other important casualties even before the first shot was fired: the millions of refugees in the Gulf region; the millions of people who lost sources of their livelihood from the occupation of Kuwait and the embargo against Iraq. The many Third World countries from which the guest workers came lost the remittances of foreign exchange from these workers. Moreover, they now return home penniless to augment the masses of the unemployed. The price of petroleum temporarily skyrocketed for the old Third World countries in the South and the new Third World countries in Eastern Europe. Hundreds of millions of people around the world saw their most urgent problems (like renewed famine in Africa) even more neglected by the attention, which was focussed on the Gulf. All of these suffer from President Hussein's occupation of Kuwait and President Bush's escalation of the same into a major war. Post war refugees by the millions were also foreseeable. As in all occupation and war, the rape of women multiplied. All of these casualties were bound to multiply again in the course of the war itself and even after the "liberation" of Kuwait. Yet only some of these costs and casualties merited little concern at best, and then only when it was necessary in order to tie some regional governments into the alliance, like Tur-

key and Syria, or maintain them neutral, like Jordan and Iran. Most of these momentous problems and their literally untold costs to countless millions of people have received no, or virtually no, attention from the "responsible" presidents, their allied prime ministers, their governments, the United Nations, or the mostly war-mongering media. The direct financial costs of the war to the coalition allies, from which the United States seems to be making a net profit, are better considered in the discussion below of the American New World Order.

### Ecological Costs

The Ecological costs of the war have been enormous, but so has been their western propaganda use to extend and intensify the war. That way, the ecological costs were increased still further. The oil spills in the Gulf were blamed on the Iraqis by the Pentagon. The media showed heart rendering images of oil stricken birds. As it turned out, these pictures were taken during earlier oil spills elsewhere. The purpose, of course, was to whip up even more anti-Hussein sentiment to justify the escalation of the war. After all the propaganda, the ecological damage turned out to be less than advertised. Wildlife conservationists now estimate that 1/2 of 1 percent of the birds in the area were affected. The percentage of Iraqi people killed was very much higher, but their pictures did not go around the world. As to the oil slicks themselves, Claude-Marie Vadrot of the *Paris Journal de Dimanche* (Feb. 3) writes "none of the existing slick in the Gulf have resulted from voluntary action or piracy, and four out of five are the responsibility of allied forces." The first one was from the January 19 allied bombardment of three oil tankers. The second one from the January 20 bombing by French and British planes. The third one can be attributed to Iraqi bombardment. The fourth is due to allied bombardment of Al Ahmadi, and the fifth oil spill if from the bombing of Boubyane Island by British planes.

The 500 Kuwaiti burning oil wells were indeed set afire by the Iraqis, who had announced from the very beginning that they would have to use this measure. It was one of the few available to them to defend themselves from superior force in general and from threatened amphibious attacks across the Gulf waters in particular. Moreover, having been incited into this war by Kuwaiti oil competition and duplicity, Iraq now assured itself of a long respite from this competition by setting fire to the Iraqi oil wells. The resulting man-made environmental damage from smoke is unprecedented, at least in its regional impact. However, this damage also is much less than was advertised, and it has been noted that the same oil would eventually be burned one way or another somewhere else anyway. Less has been said of the ravages to the desert environment by over a million troops with their heavy equipment and its destruction. However, the responsibility for the wanton disregard of all this environmental threat and damage must be shared if not carried by the coalition allies and their American leadership, who pushed ahead with their war plans in total disregard of this problem. So much for the promis-

es and commitment of President Bush and others to safeguard the environmental future of wo/mankind.

### Political Costs of the Gulf War: Violation of Democracy at Home

The Gulf War fought against a ruthless dictator in the South by the great democracies in the West violated or subverted the most important bases and institutions of democracy. The United States Congress, other Parliaments, and the will of the vast majority of the people in the West were violated. Freedom of the Press was actively censored, and the Free Press guardian of democracy self-censored itself. As much by omission as by commission, the media deliberately misled the public. Participant democracy in civil society and its organization through social movements were bypassed and neutralized or sterilized. On the other hand, racism and chauvinism flourished and were used to aid and abet the war effort on the home front. The Gulf War was falsely fought in the name of "democracy." The war witnessed one of the sorriest days for real democracy in the West, not to mention the newly democratic East.

#### Setting Up and Blackmailing Congress

Another major institutional casualties of the Gulf War were the American Congress and other parliaments. The constitutional mandate of Congress to keep the President in check and balance, and especially to exercise its authority to declare war for good cause were subverted. President Bush skillfully manoeuvred Congress with deceit and blackmail reminiscent of and functionally analogous to the Tonkin Gulf affair. (That was when President Johnson faked a Vietnamese attack in the Tonkin Gulf to deceive Congress into authorizing escalation in Vietnam in 1964). All through the autumn, the American Congress and public were against a US war in the Gulf. However, President Bush manoeuvred and blackmailed Congress to back him up to go to War in the Gulf by adept and deceitful timing.

Congress would surely have refused to vote Mr. Bush war powers in November or perhaps even in December. That is surely also why President Bush did not send his war resolution to Congress before he had crossed so many Rubicons, that Congress could hardly deny its support to the American men and women, whom President Bush had sent to the battle front. A crucial step by President Bush was to double the number of troops in Saudi Arabia by bringing in 200,000 more American NATO troops from Germany in November. He brought them, not as initially announced to rotate them with, but now to add them to, those already there. Thereby also, the mission of the American troops was changed from the supposed defense of Saudi Arabia against a possible attack by Iraq to the "liberation" of Kuwait through the planned American attack of Iraq itself and to the defeat of its military forces. In view of this commitment by President Bush, the ever astute

Henry Kissinger then observed that any withdrawal without victory now "would lead to a collapse of American credibility, not only in the area but in most parts of the world" (quoted in the *International Herald Tribune* Jan. 17, 1991).

These far reaching decisions were made before the November 6 American congressional elections. However, they were deliberately withheld from the public and Congress before the elections and only implemented thereafter. The same day of the above cited eventful meeting at the White House,

"on Oct. 30, Mr. Bush and Secretary of State James Baker briefed congressional leaders but said nothing explicit about the president's war policy. Later that day Mr. Bush doubled U.S. troop levels - a decision not disclosed to the public until the election was past" (*New York Times* editorial "Bush the Warrior" in *IHT* May 6, 1991).

Neither the American public, nor the American Congress, would have agreed to this deliberate escalation towards war by President Bush if they had been given a choice. That is why President Bush gave them no choice, but instead deceived them and pursued his covert policy of faits accomplis.

Then, President Bush deliberately delayed seeking authorization of his war plans from Congress until January, because he knew he would be refused until he could put together a strong enough foreign hand to finesse and blackmail an ever patriotic domestic Congress. In the meantime, Bush and Baker used diplomacy to build up an international coalition for the Gulf. Especially crucial was UN Resolution 678 to set a January 15 deadline for Iraq and for Bush to use the over half a million armed forces he had sent to the Gulf. Some American commentators remarked on the irony that President Bush was able to get the authorization for going to war in the Gulf from the United Nations, which he was unable to get from his own American Congress. Then, of course, he used the one in his faits accomplis policy to get the other as well.

Thus, President Bush used the powers of his office first to overcome congressional and popular opposition, then to get reluctant approval, and finally to achieve jingoistic enthusiasm for his war. President Bush had already made over 400,000 American troops ready for battle in the Gulf, which in itself exerted pressure on Congress now to accept this fait accompli and to authorize their use. Moreover, President Bush threatened to give the order to send them into war with or without the approval of Congress, to whom the Constitution reserves the right to declare war (which it never did in Vietnam). Even so, in its pre-deadline resolution nearly half the Senate still dared to oppose or at least to delay the use of these troops for war. However, President Bush's war resolution passed, the January 15 UN deadline came and went; and the US Commander in Chief

gave the order to fire. Then, of course, Congress - the Senate voted 98-0 - and the American people were faced with President Bush's (so far) final fait accompli, which now oblige them to rally around their troops, their flag and their President.

President Bush's strategy to blackmail the American Congress was particularly effective through its use at the eleventh hour before going to war. Another conservative commentator asks us to:

"recall the circumstances of the key congressional vote on Jan. 12, four days before Mr. Bush launched the air war.... Some number of legislators - quite possibly the number that tipped the balance - made their decision not on the basis that war had become necessary and feasible. No,...they felt that a vote to authorize force offered the only chance remaining to squeeze Saddam into backing off. In short, whatever the president and his advisors may have thought, the vote in Congress was finally carried not by those who had determined that war was inevitable and who were ready for it, but by those that hoped that war was still avoidable. At that moment, moreover, there was little awareness evident anywhere in Congress that the United States and its allies were going to wage the sort of fantastic high-intensity military campaign, air and ground, that materialized." (*Stephen Rosenfeld IHT* March 11, 1991)

Thus, President Bush won. The American Congress was denied its constitutional mandate to exercise checks and balances on the President, and especially on his ability to wage war. Through all this deceit by President Bush, the two major institutional safeguards against war, the United Nations and the United States Congress, became major casualties of President Bush and those who supported him before the first shot was even fired in the Gulf War.

Other parliaments in the West were also bypassed and/or bamboozled into supporting and paying for a war whose real reason and purpose was never explained to them or their voter constituencies. The easiest task was perhaps in Britain, where all substantive discussion of the matter in the House of Commons was avoided, and attention was focussed on the change of parliamentary and government leadership. President Bush's most enthusiastic foreign support did come from Britain, first under the leadership of Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and then under that of her successor John Major. The *London Telegraph* (January 20, 1991) offers an interpretation in a column entitled "To the point": "Britain goes up in the world" again thanks to its support for President Bush in the Gulf, which "suggests that Britain, not Germany, is the more natural leader for a Europe aspiring to greater political unity." In support of this thesis, the same paper also cites "so influential an American organ of opinion" as the *Wall Street Journal*. Moreover, by February 14, the *International Her-*

*ald Tribune* would report that "Britain has a new credibility within the EC that has been bolstered, for the time being at least, by the Gulf crisis, officials said." Unmentioned but perhaps not irrelevant is the consideration that the recession ridden British economy and the London financial "City" still need the continued financial support of the Kuwaiti and other oil sheiks and that in this same recession the unpopular Tory government was in dire need of a political boost. A jingoist war in the Gulf offered both.

In Japan, in Germany and even in France the heads of government had more trouble bypassing their parliaments and/or twisting their arms to exact support for Mr. Bush's war. All in turn were subject to blackmail and arm twisting from Washington, also ironically exercised through Secretary of State Baker's trip around the world to pass the hat for financial contributions to the "common cause." Considerable powers of persuasion by the governments of the United States and their allies were necessary and exercised, because the people and their elected representatives in these countries had much trouble understanding just what they were supposed to contribute their taxes for, or why.

#### Free Press Censorship, Self-censorship and Orwellian New Speak

The Gulf War was accompanied and indeed prepared by the biggest media blitz in world history. However, when war breaks out, the first casualty is the truth - it was said already during the Crimean War 130 years ago. Poor Joseph Göbbels. Hitler's minister who made the management of racist and totalitarian war propaganda synonymous with his name, would have had to start again in Kindergarten to learn today's high-tech news management of Orwellian New Speak to brainwash a global population via instant satellite TV. If democracy relies on informed people, all semblance of democratic procedures were thrown to the wolves. They clad themselves in sheeps' clothing not to misinform Little Red Ridinghood but supposedly educated responsible adult citizens and voters. "Managing the news was seen as part of the war-winning effort" as the TV reporter Geoff Meade observed from his posting in Saudi Arabia. Indeed.

The Pentagon managed press (sess?) pool was the most successful military weapon used in the war. The pool was designed to permit a military monopoly on gathering, assembling, and disseminating information through commission and especially omission. Far from denying military secrets to the military enemy in Iraq, however, the pool was intended to and did operate to create secrets for and foreclose or neutralize potential civilian enemies of the war on the home front. The military command not only prescribed and administered sanitized news drop by drop for its dissemination by an obedient medical corps of news doctors. The Pentagon news pool also prevented unlicensed practitioners to operate on or near the battle field. Moreover, woe was to any independent free-lance or indeed network news-

man or woman who dared to ask "anti-military" questions about the patient or to see him outside of established visiting hours and places, or to disseminate any medicine not prescribed by the Pentagon's team of news doctors. Big Brother Pentagon immediately blacklisted these undesirable newspeople and denied them access to the socialized medicine of the military blood news bank. An information pamphlet was also circulated to US troops in Saudi Arabia urging them to avoid any mention to newspeople and others of 19 different topics ranging from American good relations with Israel to questionable ones with some Arabs.

Therefore, there were the severest penalties for filming, writing, speaking, editing, publishing or otherwise broadcasting any news or any ever so mild critique of the real or video shooting war, which was not to the Pentagon's complete liking. Newspeople were threatened not only with de-accreditation, but also with deportation from Saudi Arabia and environs. Very few took the risk or left on their own account, as a CNN reporter apparently did rather than forsaking her integrity.

The self-censorship by the press at home probably exceeded even the military's blackout of battlefield news and its analysis, which might have fed the patient at home with even a modicum of the information he might have used to question the aims and prosecution of this war. *Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR)* for instance summarizes "Eight (Self-)Censored Stories National Media Ignored" in the United States:

1. Secret U.S. arms shipments to Iraq during the Reagan Administration;
  2. The diplomatic scandal of Ambassador Glaspie's signal that the U.S. would not oppose Iraqi invasion;
  3. The Kuwait connection of its financial clout in the U.S. and the conflict of interest of National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft;
  4. Racism and bigotry in the U.S. military;
  5. Slave labor in the Gulf;
  6. The true cost of the war including interest and veterans' benefits could be more than 10 times the official estimate;
  7. The army that wasn't there poised to invade Saudi Arabia; and
  8. Bush's family ties in the Gulf"
- (quoted and paraphrased from *Extra*, May 1991, p. 16)

These and many other stories were deliberately ignored, because their airing by the media might have sown some doubts in the public mind about the justification of this war and thereby reduced home front support for the same. Instead, the news were managed to rally home front support for the war before, during, and after its bloody prosecution in Iraq - and to manage public perception of the political, military and missile/bomb aims and victims of the war. They were sanitized through newly mounted video cameras accompanied by comments in Orwellian Military NewSpeak. It covered

the whole gambit from the poisoned alphabet soup of new acronyms for military technology and terminology to the sanitized verbs used to "soften up," "degrade," "suppress," "take out," "down," "cleanse," "neutralize" and "eliminate" mention of killing real people by the hundreds of thousands. The famous "collateral damage" was not limited to the "target rich environment" of Iraq, but was worldwide - or was all of that damage to informed public opinion and democracy deliberate as well? If so, the media blitz war was successful - and not so.

For the evidence is that on the home front itself there was still much dissatisfaction with the press - for failing to contribute enough to the war effort! Once the shooting started, barrages of letters, phone-ins, interviews, and public opinion polls in the US and UK at least gave vent to public demand for even more sanitized news censorship and management of their own brainwashed opinion. 80 percent of Americans supported the restrictions on the press and 60 percent wanted even more military control over the press and information (*IHT Feb. 1, 1991*). So where then was the denial of democracy? Was it in managing public opinion less than it wanted? Or was the abrogation of democracy to be found in the brainwashing of people who for the whole second half of 1990 knew neither what such a war should be fought for, nor wanted it to be fought to begin with - that is before the missile and video shooting started?

Little wonder that Anthony Lewis could belatedly summarize in the *New York Times* under the title "Docile Media Hawked the Official View of the War":

"Most of the press was not a detached observer of the war, much less a critical one. It was a clique applauding the American generals and politicians in charge. In the press I include television, its most powerful component now and the most egregious lapdog during the war. For the most part the networks simply transmitted official images of neat, painless war. Or worse: put a gloss of independent corroboration on those false images. And they were false.... Perhaps the most dangerous shortcoming of the press was its failure to keep asking whether the war was necessary or wise. Once the bombing started that fundamental political question was mostly put aside...."

The May issue of Harper's Magazine ... (carried an article) by the editor, Lewis H. Lapham and is entitled "trained seals and sitting ducks" (which observed that) the administration well understood ... that it could rely on the media's complicity in almost any deception dressed up in patriotic costume" (*IHT May 7, 1991*).

### The Violation of Participant Democracy in Civil Society

The London *Sunday Telegraph* (January 20, 1991) offered good advice to Western and other governments:

"Not that the danger from the peace movement has wholly passed....If things start going wrong in the Gulf, we may need to have recourse to jingoism, if only to combat the fire and fervour of the peace movement.... For so long as primitive, irrational pacifism can continue to cloud the minds of men - as it can and does as never before - so long will it be necessary for there to be an equally strong emotional antidote on the other side.... It would be a foolish Western leader who threw this indispensable, if ancient and primitive, psychological weapon (of jingoism) onto the scrap-heap before victory was assured."

The London *Telegraph* must be proud to have such attentive and obedient readers in Downing Street and the Mother of Parliaments, in the White House and Capitol Hill, and of course in Baghdad and all over the Arab and Islamic world too.

The decisions and faits accomplis to go to war were made at the highest national and international levels. These governmental leaders not only failed to consult their populations and voters. As we noted above, President Bush deliberately even avoided putting the issue to the people's elected representatives in Congress until long after the Congressional elections and his subsequent doubling of American Gulf troops in November 1990. In so doing, these government leaders also pulled the rug out from under the social movements in civil society both in the United States and Western Europe, after these movements had already been bypassed in Eastern Europe. The mobilization of civil society around a myriad of local, national, and international issues of gender relations, environmental issues, and the peace movement itself received a brutal blow. Even the director of that old cold war think tank, the International Institute for Strategic Studies, observed in the *International Herald Tribune* (February 11, 1991): "the current collapse of pacifist movements in Western countries, not the least Germany, is one of the notable features of the war."

That, of course, is one front in which the media played out their assigned roles. A few thousand Western hostages in luxury hotels merited banner headlines and major TV coverage, while several hundreds of thousands of destitute Third World refugees from Kuwait and Iraq went virtually unmentioned. Saddam Hussein's retention of Westerners as his "guests" unfortunately facilitated the further popular image equation with the hostage syndrome. In the United States early on already, popular reaction - and some physical attacks and threats against innocent neighbours - was directed against the Arab bogey. Not for nothing were the image of the Arab and of the "terrorist" often identified in the popular mind. When Hussein launched his Scud missiles against Israel, he helped rally widespread sympathy and media support around the world for Jews and the war in defense of Israel. For that reason, many Jews themselves already supported the war against Iraq since

(before) the beginning. Hussein intended his attack on Israel to mobilize support for him among Arabs and other Muslims; but its effect was to rally much more support for the war against him elsewhere. The same Saddam Hussein who had received scant media and popular attention when he gassed his Kurdish citizens was then vilified as a new "Hitler," who had to be fought like the old one. Critique of this false comparison and the western war aims was then unjustly branded and dismissed as "Anti Semitism."

In Europe, the media confronted people with a choice between the Iraqi Saddam Hussein and the American George Bush. With *that* choice, the man in the street and in front of his TV set chose the white American. More women, fortunately or wisely, refused that false Hobson's choice and opted for peace instead. Nonetheless, European civil society rapidly became shot through with rabid racism and chauvinism directed against any and all Arabs and Turks - in total disregard of the fact that many governments of Arabian countries and Turkey (which also has its eye on some Iraqi petroleum producing territory) were loyal and active members of the allied coalition of the Americans and Europeans. Thereby, these West Europeans may also have demonstrated a preference for replacing cheap non-European labor from the South by the newly available source of European cheap labor from the East. Perhaps it was not altogether accidental that half a dozen countries in Western Europe chose that time to lift visa requirements for entry by Poles, who came by the train and busloads to look for work.

Nonetheless and very significantly so, western people in Europe, and of course in the United States as well, demonstrated that they were not entirely duped by the myths that their leaders and the beholden media propagated about this war and the supposed "principles" for which it was fought. Instead, these people in the North demonstrate through their own belligerent action against colored immigrants or workers from the South on the streets at home that they feel and understand the War in the Gulf was between *their* North and the South. In the ex-East, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, people as well as their governments sought advantage by siding with the *Western powers* in the Gulf War. They vented their spirits against Third World workers and students brought into and still residing in their societies and neighbourhoods by the previous regimes.

At the same time, the people in the South felt and understood the same thing about this war. That is why all around the equator not only Arabs and not only Muslims, but all kinds of other people in Asia, Africa, and Latin America demonstrated against the United States and its war against the Third World. They also demonstrated in support of Saddam Hussein who, however cynically, has been cast in the role of defender of the South. The cruel fact is that in *popular perception and feeling* in the North as well as in the South, this was a

war between "us" and "them"! Alarming, this terrible war was also fought out in the streets, schools, and institutions of civil society around the world. What's more it continues to be fought there long after the allied bombing stopped in Iraq. Thus, another one of the major political, social, and cultural costs and damages of this war has been to feed aggression and pitch neighbour against neighbour in civil society neighbourhoods West, East, and South. Many people experienced and some testified to heightened tension and aggressiveness on Western city streets during the war. Soon after the war, serious racial disturbances broke out in the American capital, Washington, and in the European "capital" Brussels. Moreover, the war and its macho imagery on TV meant another big step to the (re) masculinization of society everywhere. The war and the world appeared (probably accurately) run by men. Women were portrayed in their roles to keep the home fires burning on or near military bases in the United States while waiting for their men to return from heroic duty in the war. Western TV prominently featured only two women in male settings, the American soldier made prisoner by the Iraqis and the BBC reporter Kate Adie. Thus, the war and its TV rendition also set back women's position in society and their demands and struggle for more equal rights.

Thus deliberately or not, the Gulf War bypassed, undermined, violated, subverted, and otherwise seriously damaged the most precious democratic institutions and processes in the very democracies who supposedly went to war to defend democracy against tyranny. This violation and sacrifice of democracy, in addition to the negation of peace and threat of future wars, are a terrible price to pay for the new world order.

## More Political Costs of the Gulf War: the International Dimensions

### *The Peace Dividend Cancelled*

The most important and most obvious international political cost of the war is to peace. This sacrifice of peace, however, has several dimensions, not all of which have received the attention they merit. Perhaps the most significant one is the (deliberate?) cancellation of the "peace dividend" in its broadest sense, which was perhaps naively expected from the end of the cold war. The hoped for peace dividend was not limited to the conversion of military production to civilian use or the diversion of military budgets to social needs. More importantly, the peace dividend promised a transition from cold war and its associated hot wars in the Third World to a new era of peace, such as that which broke out in several Third World countries in 1988-89. Then, the United Nations successfully intervened to that effect in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, Iran-Iraq, Namibia, if not Nicaragua; and its blue helmets were awarded the Noble Prize for Peace. The end of the cold war and its associated stalemate between the superpowers in the

Security Council held out (vain?) hopes that the UN could finally begin to meet its chartered responsibilities to keep the peace. Most important perhaps however, the peace dividend was to be the de facto renunciation of war as an instrument of foreign policy in the settlement of international disputes, as enshrined 45 years ago in the United Nations Charter.

The Gulf war has dashed all of these peace dividend hopes. Most important and most dangerous as a post cold war precedent for the "new" world "order" is the renewed resort to war, this time by a coalition of allied Western powers with some southern and eastern support. They waged war without any clearly defined cause against a solitary small Third World country. This war clearly announces that military might is right in all senses of the word. Ominously, this war also threatens the repeated resort to similar wars in the future. The linkage of this war to a supposed "new world order" is serious, because it demonstrates for all to see that this "new" "order" is being initiated and constructed, and then is to be maintained, through the wanton destruction of the weak by the military force of the powerful. To do so moreover, the Western allies pervert, divert, and subvert the world's and their own most precious institutions. The world's United Nations institution is perverted. The Western allies own "defensive" military NATO institution is diverted or converted into an offensive instrument against the Third World South. Western parliamentary institutions are subverted to lend anti-democratic after the fact blessings to the war. Civil society is bypassed west, east and south, except to use the emergence of inflamed racism and virulent chauvinism to support the war. In the recently "liberated" East, the first international policy decisions by the newly "democratizing" governments are to support a war against the South in hopes of thereby meriting a few crumbs from the Western table. Several Third World and Arab governments are literally bought and paid for to lend their support and coverup of this charade against one of their own. The media around the world are coopted, censored, and self-censored to present the whole package as the beginnings of a just peaceful new world order! We may proceed to examine some of this new world order blueprint and construction a bit more carefully.

### *Perversion of the United Nations Peace Mission for War*

The first and most major institutional sacrifice and cost to peace was the perversion of the United Nations. Secretary General of the United Nations Javier Perez de Cuellar has declared outright that "this is a US war, not a UN war" and "the Security Council is controlled by the United States, Britain and France."

The conservative American columnist William Safire wrote under the title "Consider These White Lies And the Truths they Veil":

"This is not a UN enforcement action; that part of the UN Charter has never been invoked. Instead this is a collective defense authorized by the Security Council, similar to the Korean

defense, which means that the resolutions ... cannot be revoked without American concurrence.... America shows obeisance to the UN, but obedience is a white lie: The fighting coalition determines ... (William Safire, IHT Feb. 26).

President Bush and his Secretary of State Baker put together a coalition in the Security Council first to condemn Iraq, then to impose an embargo, then to authorize military teeth to enforce it, and finally to legitimize recourse to war. In all, they got twelve UN resolutions in their pocket, as President Bush and Mr. Baker never tired to point out. However, they do not say how much their diplomacy paid, bribed, blackmailed or strong-armed some member governments to do their bidding. Most significantly, President Bush manoeuvred the United Nations into legitimizing his actions, without revealing that each step of the way would be irreversible nor how it would lead on to the next step to war. Yet the *Washington Post* (*International Herald Tribune Jan. 17, 1991*) quotes a senior official and long time aide to President Bush to the effect that he has been prepared for war since August. The London *Sunday Telegraph* (*Jan. 20, 1991*) agrees: "President Bush and Mrs Thatcher took the decision to go to war long before there was any hope of getting UN sanction, and they did so with a justifiable clear conscience." President Bush "always knew what he was going to do and has now done it in his own good time in the most favourable diplomatic and military circumstances."

The United Nations surely did not know, and certainly was not told by President Bush. The UN is not likely to have given him its support for the purpose President Bush had known and prepared for "in good conscience" since August. The UN is not likely to have voted the same way after the shooting started, if it had the choice. But it did not. Indeed, the Security Council was never again convened on the Iraq war until it ended. Only then was the Security Council again convened by the United States to legitimize its demands for unconditional Iraqi surrender - and by implication the entire war and devastation, to which the United States and its coalition allies had subjected the people of Iraq.

The Security Council violated the United Nations Charter on several counts in particular and shirked its general responsibility to the world to keep the peace. Instead, the Security Council and the United Nations institution and prestige was perverted to "legitimate" war.

Under the UN Charter, the Security Council mandate is to preserve the peace, not to authorize or legitimize war. Moreover, the Charter enjoins or bars the resort to war under Article 42 until the Security Council (not the President of the United States) determines under Article 41 that all peaceful means to resolve a dispute have been exhausted. Clearly, this was not done before this war. Then again, the Security Council, and

not President Bush, is supposed to decide what to do next with the means at its disposal, not those of the United States and its coalition allies. Moreover, under Article 42 the forces to be used are those of the United Nations, which can "include" those of member states. The armed forces used in the Gulf war, however, were not the UN blue helmets, and the coalition allies did not even, as in Korea, fight under the UN flag. Resolution 678 stipulated that "all necessary means" could be used to evict the Iraqis from Kuwait if they did not leave on their own by January 15. Of course under the Charter again, what "all necessary means" may be is to be determined by the Security Council and not by the United States. Finally, of course, all the political and military decisions were made by the American President and military commander. For their own reasons and purposes and without any advice or consent from the United Nations, the American led coalition clearly used far more deadly means than necessary. As observed above, the United Nations Security Council was never again convened or consulted during the course of the war. Its pursuit therefore was condemned only in their own names by the Secretariat staff of the United Nations!

In fact however, even the procedural legality of the Security Council resolutions is in doubt on several counts under the UN Charter. One of these is that under the Charter's Article 27, Clause 3, all five permanent members of the Security Council must cast an affirmative vote for a decision to be valid. However, China did not vote affirmatively, but abstained on the crucial Resolution 678 to use "all necessary means" after the January 15 deadline for Iraq to get out of Kuwait. Only by convention, but not by the Charter, is an abstention not counted as a veto. (The United States used the same sort of convention to marshal UN support for its war in Korea, while the Soviet Union was temporarily boycotting the UN and China was denied its seat). Thus by all counts, this war was not a United Nations war. However, the war was falsely presented as being sanctioned by the United Nations and the 12 resolutions, which the United States exacted from the Security Council to use in flouting and deceiving public opinion in the world. In so doing and in the service of its own questionable motives to say the least, the United States deliberately subverted the institution and prestige of the United Nations.

The imposition of the January 15 deadline and the commitment of military forces to the Gulf war by other countries were other ineluctable steps on the road to war. These steps were (deliberately) made necessary by the foregoing ones to begin with. That is, both presidents Hussein and Bush built up military forces and political positions, which made further escalation necessary. The American military forces and perhaps the coalition alliance could not be maintained in the Gulf without further escalation. In particular, it was realized that the military forces could not continue to sit on their hands indefinitely and especially not after the onset of the sandstorms in the Spring. Then and during the

Islamic holy month of Ramadan, these forces also could no longer go on the offensive. Therefore, it became necessary to get an earlier deadline for them to be put into action. Better sooner than later, and the Security Council obliged with a January 15 deadline for Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait.

Of course, the United States had the enthusiastic collaboration of the United Kingdom, the reluctant cooperation of France, the silent acquiescence of the Soviet Union, and the abstention of China among the permanent members with veto powers on the Security Council. They and some other members of the Security Council lent their votes and/or their silence to this perversion of the Charter and this hijacking of the name and prestige of the United Nations for this sordid war. Instead of preserving the peace, the United Nations was used to further an illegitimate and unnecessary war. The cost of this precedent to the people and peace of the world could not be higher. It will have to continue to be paid for years to come. American beguine neglect and payments arrears in the UN were less damaging than US (mis)use of the UN to further its own imperial ambitions. The United Nations itself became the first major casualty of the Gulf War.

Indeed, "the diplomatic activity of the UN was impeded from the very beginning" and "The US and the United Kingdom, mainly, was opposed to the Secretary General's involvement" according to the Yemeni Ambassador to the UN and its representative on the Security Council, Abdallah al-Ashtal (*MERIP, March-April 1991, p. 9*). UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar himself said that his hands were tied and he was powerless. Why did he, like Soviet Foreign Minister Shevernadze or French Defense Minister Chevenement, not resign? At least that way he could have helped to dramatize and expose or perhaps even stop the charade of using a United Nations cover for a United States war!

#### NATO Redirected Southward

The diversion and redirection of the NATO alliance and institution by President Bush from East-West conflicts to North-South ones portends a most serious precedent for the world as a whole. Indeed de facto, President Bush already set a very serious precedent in November, when he sent to the Gulf the American NATO troop contingents, which had been stationed under American NATO command in Germany. De facto also, President Bush used NATO facilities and American supplied military hardware - and no doubt software also - for deployment to the Gulf and asked his NATO allies in Europe to step into their place with their own. This quiet diplomacy and de facto policy of faits accomplis by President Bush to transform the function and direction of NATO threatens to become one of the most dangerous legacies of the Gulf War for the rest of the world. Thus, the integrity of NATO and the peace dividend from the end of the cold war were another major casualty of President Bush's Gulf War policy even

before the first shot was fired.

NATO was also used to blackmail a reluctant Germany into active military support for the Gulf War. Germany is preoccupied with its own unification and is scarcely interested in direct support for President Bush's war policies in the Gulf. So President Bush found a round about way to involve Germany too. Fellow NATO country Turkey shares a border with Iraq. Its government has been an American client all through the cold war, and still is. Thus, it was not too difficult for President Bush and Mr. Baker to bring Turkey first into the embargo and then into the alliance against Iraq. That exposed Turkey to a potential threat from Iraq. Therefore, why not have Turkey call on its NATO allies for protection against this real or imagined threat by Iraq. Still better, Turkey could make a direct appeal to fellow NATO member Germany. It did, and Germany was obliged by NATO rules to send at least a squadron of military aircraft to Turkey. Germany, like Japan, is prohibited by its American imposed constitution from sending its military forces abroad, except in its own defense. However, it is permitted to so dispatch its military within the framework of NATO.

Thus, President Bush managed to divert both Germany and NATO from their regional concerns and potentially to engage them in his war against a Third World country in the Gulf. Turkey agreed to permit the use of its soil for American military aircraft to attack Iraq. (First the announcement was withheld; then the American flights were called "training missions;" finally it turned out they had been flying bombing missions every six hours for three days before the announcement). That is another one of President Bush's faits accomplis. It opened a second front against Iraq in the north and exposed Turkey to retaliation by Iraq. The latter, however, was constrained by what would have been an attack by a country that is not a member against one that is a member of NATO - and therefore on NATO itself. This NATO alliance includes Germany as its most reluctant member country, which would thereby have been dragged into Mr. Bush's war as well.

To short cut or indeed altogether to eliminate such problems the next time around, the Dutch now propose to restructure their NATO contingent armed forces for rapid intervention more in North-South than East-West conflicts. NATO itself is now more seriously discussing already previously tabled proposals to redirect its political attention and military organization to intervene in North-South conflicts. "NATO Military Commanders Agree To Work for a Rapid Reaction Corps," which would number 70,000 to 100,000 troops from various European countries with US air support for "maximum flexibility" (*IHT April 13-14, 1991*). For his part, the European Commission President Jacques Delors has proposed that the European Community also needs a transnational rapid intervention force to forge a military capacity and establish political authority to participate in the next conflict in its area of interest in the South or

East. Again, the Gulf War's legacy of future danger to the Third World South (soon to include parts of formerly Eastern Europe) could not be greater as the West now redirects its political and military institutions better and more forcefully to intervene there.

#### The Middle East Convulsed

Far from settling any of the longstanding political problems in the Middle East, the Gulf war first exacerbated them, and then made them even more difficult to address and solve. The strengthened recalcitrance in and by Israel through its "non" participation in the Gulf War and the political weakening of the PLO leadership, as well as of the Jordanian King Hussein, are only the most visible and interrelated iceberg tips. So are the postwar Shiite and Kurdish rebellions in Iraq. Even the mildest success of the Iranian supported Shiites is not at all in the interests of America and its European or Arab allies, for whom the mullahs in Iran are more than enough. Therefore, the Iraqi Shiite opposition has received neither western or other allied support nor publicity. However, Iraqi Kurdish demands for autonomy also threaten Turkey and Iran. Therefore, their demands for autonomy, or God forbid independence, cannot be tolerated either, and they are at best publicized and manipulated only as long as they can be used for ulterior allied motives in northern Iraq. "For Exiles, the Bitter Truth is that No One Wanted them to Win" (*IHT April 12, 1991*). That includes the democratic opposition forces in and exiles from Iraq. Who in the world except them and their people would want a democratic Iraq? No one, of course, especially if a democratic example in Iraq were to become contagious among its neighbours. Better to leave Iraq with weakened but still adequate military forces to continue the Baathist military regime, without Saddam Hussein if possible but with him if necessary, to maintain the integrity and control of the Iraqi state. For Iraq is still needed as a linchpin to maintain stability in the region, which in the aftermath of the Gulf War is now threatened ever more than before.

For many Arab governments are threatened to become further casualties of the Gulf War. Some were at risk already before the fighting started. Now the autocratic Arab governments that sided with and/or were bought off by President Bush have thereby sacrificed what little popular support and legitimacy they still had. They have further cemented their dependence on the United States, and the United States is now obliged to prop them up politically and subsidize them economically (which it can ill afford) even more than before. Popular uprisings, if not military coups or splits, are now likely in one country in the Middle East after another. That is why the Israeli ex-minister Isaac Rabin recommends that the wealthy Gulf countries contribute their oil riches especially to Egypt and Syria "to stabilize the moderate regimes in the international coalition so that they can maintain themselves in the face of the zero sympathy of their citizens" (*interview in El Pais, February 10, 1991*).

In these circumstances, it was another sham for President Bush to have promised to bring the American troops back home just as soon as possible after completing their job in Iraq. For President Bush knowingly committed American troops to "stabilize" the Middle East for a long time to come. Now the

"U.S. Weighs Command Post in Bahrain and Keeping Troops With Saudis... (which) has been a goal sought by the Pentagon for years, but was resisted by leaders of Gulf nations.... General Powell says 'We have always been anxious too have a forward headquarters in the region, and I think we may be able to get one this time'" (*IHT March 26, 1991*).

#### De- and Down-grading Europe, Japan and the Soviet Union

With the help of their "special relationship" with Britain and her sycophant governments and press, the United States already achieved major political coups in Western Europe beyond getting its support for the war itself. President Bush successfully bluffed or finessed all of the West Europeans to line up behind him - and to fall out among each other. Mrs. Thatcher lost the battle and her job, but she won her war both in Iraq and in Europe! The Gulf crisis and war would exacerbate the political and economic conflicts of policy within Europe, on which she made her stand against a more united Western Europe.

In the Gulf crisis, the West Europeans gave up all pretence at a unified and independent European foreign policy. In particular, the relatively more constructive and progressive European policy towards, and good will in, the Middle East was sacrificed. European intervention in favour of a more reasonable settlement of the Palestine-Israeli issue receded beyond the visible horizon. Israel's all purpose ex-minister, Isaac Rabin, recently declared that Israel has no use for Europe or the United Nations. For the time being, the American-Israeli line is unchallenged, except by the for now weakened Arabs themselves.

Another coup is the already observed transformation and diversion of NATO. Far from constructing a stronger post cold war (West) European pillar in NATO, let alone an alternative European security system, the West Europeans have now acceded to an already earlier American pressure, which they previously resisted: To turn the NATO thrust southeastward to intervene in the Middle East in particular, and in North-South conflicts in general. American troops, bases, material, and logistics, but also those of several European countries' NATO contingents were diverted from the defense of Western Europe against the Soviet Union to the attack against Iraq in the Middle East! They even took their central European AirLand battle plans with them to the Arabian desert.

Moreover, the Europeans not only paid their own but also many of the American costs of this diversion. Europeans even paid for the fuel that American B52 bombers used when they took off from and were refueled at bases in Europe. The "Socialist" government of Felipe Gonzalez in Spain even tried to keep this take off secret, if only because it had won an earlier referendum to keep Spain in NATO with the quid-pro-que offer to voters to maintain Spain free from the NATO military command structure and related military commitments. Since he now activated secret commitments to the United States to use Spanish air bases in case of "need," he also kept the whole sordid business secret, until the American press inadvertently let the cat out of the bag!

Thus, West Europeans supported President Bush's war politically, militarily, and financially, even with significant financial contributions from Germany. Beyond that, the European Economic Community finally also caved in on the issue of agricultural price supports, its biggest protectionist measure, which had scuttled the last meeting of GATT. Symbolically, the last deadline for GATT reconsideration was the same January 15, 1991 set by the United Nations for Iraq to get out of Kuwait - and for the United States to go to war!

For their part, the East Europeans did all they could to scramble onto the Western victory train, and Czechoslovakia even sent troops to Saudi Arabia. However it is doubtful that the rewards of any amount of kowtowing to the West in the Gulf War can compensate Central and East Europe for the major political and economic losses, which this war represents for them. Indirectly, the Gulf War certainly diverted western political and economic attention and funds at the worst possible moment from reconstruction in Europe to destruction in the Middle East. More directly, the temporary rise in the price of oil cost East Europeans dearly during the autumn and winter cold precisely when they had to start paying hard cash instead of (non)convertible rubles to pay for Soviet oil. Additionally, they had to import more oil from other areas. At the same time moreover, they lost the previously agreed repayment of Iraq's debt to them through Iraqi oil exports to Eastern Europe. They were supposed to be stepped up to repay these debts, but instead they were cancelled by the embargo against Iraq. Thus, the Gulf War came at bad time for and gave a bad time to Central and Eastern Europe.

The Gulf War participation in and consequences for the Soviet Union are less clear, but for that perhaps even more dangerous. No less but more significantly than in Central and Eastern Europe, Gorbachev's government in the Soviet Union sought to be on its best behaviour and caved in and/or sold out to the United States and its Western allies. This concession, of course, was essential to construct the charade of the United Nations cover for the American war plan. Even an opportune Soviet abstention, not to mention a veto, at the Security Council would itself have tipped the bal-

ance and would probably have changed the votes of China and France as well. However, President Gorbachev went along with President Bush, except for his and his envoy Primakov's vain effort to shore up the waning Soviet role in the area. As it turned out, its role in the Gulf War sacrificed Soviet influence over its Arab friends; the war further increased sympathy among its own Muslim population with their Islamic brethren abroad; and Soviet military leaders had to witness the miserable defeat of the Soviet weapons systems and their military strategy of its client army in Iraq. Of course, the Soviet Union also faces more serious domestic problems.

If and when these Soviet problems result in a replacement of the regime or even of the government however, Gorbachev's concessions and Soviet losses in the Middle East through the Gulf War may contribute to strengthening the hand of military and other conservative forces who demand some return to the past and/or Soviet or even Russian play with their only remaining strong, that is the military, card. After all, the intended Gulf War lesson that the threat and use of military power gets results must be making school in the Soviet Union as well. At the same time, the military-industrial complex may also play its strengthened hand in the United States, which itself also has none other left to play in the world at large. Secretary of Defense Cheney already declared on TV that if US-Soviet tensions do not continue to decline he would have to tell President Bush "I am sorry, but we cannot carry arms reductions as far and fast as we had originally thought" (*El Dia Latinoamericano*, April 29, 1991, p. 17). In that case, the beginning of a Third Cold War cannot be excluded; and the Gulf War would have done its bit to promote that additional disaster for the world and its "new order" as well.

### North-south War to Put the Third World in its Place in the New World Order

The same already quoted editorial of the London *Telegraph* (January 20, 1991) also clarifies why President Bush chose to flaunt American power against Iraq:

"(It) does sound cynical. But it also goes to the heart of the matter. For there is a clash of interest between the First World and the Third World, and no international order satisfactory to the former should rely on the say-so of an institution (like the United Nations) dominated numerically by the latter.... Sooner or later the Third World will throw up other challenges. But if the Gulf war ends as it has begun, there can be no doubt who are the masters now - at any rate for another generation.... Not only will our arms have prevailed in a most spectacular fashion. So also will our ideals" (*Emphasis in the original, Amen*).

Here we have the real significance of the Gulf War, which was promoted and led by the "ideals" of President George Bush, the Commander in Chief of the world's greatest military power, who wants to use this war to initiate his *New World Order*.

Beyond being a war between the North and the South, perhaps the clearest gulf in this War is between the rich on one side and the poor on the other. Obviously, the Western powers in this war represent above all the interests of the rich in the world. Perhaps the Texans, President Bush and Secretary of State Baker, also represent the rich Texas oil interests more than they would like to admit. However, the Saudi Arabs (the original dispatch of troops was for *their* protection!), the Emirates and the Kuwaitis are also among the oil rich, who are reputed to have placed some US \$ 670 billion worth of investments abroad (*Peter Custers in Economic and Political Weekly*, Jan. 5-12, 1991). Sukumar Muralidharan suggests that :

"the need to safeguard oil sources is only the stated agenda behind the assault on Iraq. The far more fundamental concern is the need to protect the West's pre-emptive claim on the financial surpluses of the Arab world. These are vital for underwriting the political stability of the US and the UK, which are today in irretrievable industrial decline, and desperately need the rentier incomes arising from the recycling of these surpluses.... The pathological character of the hate campaign launched against President Saddam Hussein ... speaks of a desperate vendetta against a man who has dared to challenge the financial hegemony of the west." (*Economic and Political Weekly*, March 30, 1991, p. 838)

The Kuwaitis and its ruling Al Sabah family alone have some US \$ 200 billion of investments overseas, many of them in commercial and political joint ventures in the United States and Britain. Of course, these investments and relations also afford the Kuwaitis continued income and political influence in there even without drawing up another drop of oil at home. Suffice it to ask whether the rich West would have sent over half a million troops to defend any poor country or people elsewhere in Africa or anywhere else. The other Arabs in the coalition are the American client *governments* also representing the rich in their respective countries. The poor populations of these same Arab countries were massively on the other side of this conflict in support of Iraq, whose President Hussein opportunistically declared himself their and the poor Palestinians' and other Muslims' spokesman. As we observed above, throughout the Third World South masses of the people understood that this Gulf War was designed and executed to put them in their place in Mr. Bush's "new" world order.

The deadly threat of mass destruction of anyone who might wish to take exception to or even rebel against this world "order" was pressed home demon-

strably by the bombs launched against the innocent people of Iraq and their ideological cover up at the "United Nations, the "coalition" of the Western allies, their controlling interest in the "free" press media, etc.

It is no joke that the April first cover of *Time Magazine* depicts the US "globo Cop. Coming Soon To Your Country?" *Time* took the trouble to send its reporters around the Third World and elsewhere to ask how people view the "New World Order." The introductory summary of *Time's* findings in cover story on the "Global Beat" is that:

"Critics protest that Bush's proclaimed new world order conjures up misty and dangerous visions of a militaristic American Globo-cop on the march...

(A huge placard depicting a dozen skulls surrounding the words "The New World Order" is subtitled) *An Intensely Skeptical World*. Despite Bush's view of America as "the last, best hope of mankind," people around the globe - along with New York City protesters - fear that the U.S. plans to exercise naked power to secure dominance. Even sympathizers with Bush's ideal wonder whether it can remedy the causes of war.

Said the President: "the victory over Iraq was not waged as 'a war to end all wars.' Even the new world order cannot guarantee an era of perpetual peace." Far from it: the new order, such as it is, cannot even guarantee that national interests will ever again converge as they did in the gulf war. By itself, Bush's successful "first test" of the new world order carried the seeds of future disaster....

What Bush's vision has also failed to take into account is a sense in many developing countries that the old world order was preferable. For all its nuclear terrors and proxy conflicts, the cold war balance-of-power architecture was a place that came to feel like home."

As if to rub in the point, in early April the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Colin Powell, declared in Honduras:

"We hope that in this New World Order conflicts will be solved through negotiations and not through acts of war, so that there need be no repetition of what happened in the Gulf. But if it is necessary to defend freedom, it can be done." (*El Dia Latinoamericano*, May 13, 1991, retranslated from Spanish by AGF)

In the meantime, the annual American military exercises with nuclear weapons in Korea began a month earlier and ended a month later than usual, and North Korea denounced them to the United Nations as a trial invasion of that country. Assistant Secretary of State

Richard Solomon in turn denounced North Korea, and spokesmen in the American press have already called North Korea "a potential Iraq" (*El Dia Latinoamericana, May 13, 1991*). Many more people of course, now fear renewed American threats against Cuba.

Nonetheless, President Bush finds ever newer words to describe his new world order, which:

"really describes a responsibility imposed by our success. It refers to new ways of working with other nations to deter aggression and to achieve stability, to achieve prosperity, and above all, to achieve peace. It springs from hopes based on a shared commitment ... (for) peaceful settlement of disputes, solidarity against aggression, reduced and controlled arsenals, and just treatment of all peoples. (That is) the quest for a new world order." (*IHT April 15, 1991*)

The translation into plain english or "into Christian" as Spanish speaking people say is to be found in a myriad of publications and statements from South Asia to South America. All testify to learning the first lesson in Mr. Bush's war school for the Third World in his new world order: Dare once again to lift your head against the "national interest" of the United States, whatever that may be, and you expose your country to being returned to the stone age and your population to annihilation from on high. North-South political and economic polarization is to continue apace, and no Southern political economic challenges thereto will be tolerated. That is the *Third World War* against the South! Is it also to be waged by another Third Reich?

However, there is also a message for America's economic competitors and political allies in the West (and perhaps for any rivals in what remains of the East): Military power can be used and of use as an alternative to economic strength, especially when the latter is lacking. For military power is the only thing the United States has left, and it is the only thing it is capable of still flaunting to maintain any political power in the face of the "virtually irrelevant" growing economic power of Japan and Germany, "no matter" the Russians.

Fortunately, there are some reasons to doubt the American capacity, albeit not its intentions, for the United States to rely only on its military power to carry out this role of global cop in the Third World and powerful bully on the block among its allies in the West. *Time* refers to the "pre-eminent apostle of realpolitik" Henry Kissinger who observed that the alliance and war against Iraq was "an almost accidental combination of circumstances unlikely to be repeated in the future." Indeed, the original deployment of American and other troops and equipment was "to defend Saudi Arabia" from possible, albeit never threatened, attack by Iraq. However, there was at least one other reason for the choice of Saudi Arabia as the site for the massive build-up: During more than a decade after the debacle with Iran, the United States had built up Saudi Arabia as its

client regional military power in the Middle East, next to Israel. The United States sold Saudi Arabia US \$ 50 billions of arms (in support of its own industry and balance of payments) and built up a whole network of naval and air bases, which Saudi Arabia pledged to make available to the United States for use in case of an emergency in the Middle East. Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait provided that emergency. Then, the United States shipped half a million troops and their supporting naval and air forces to Saudi Arabia, which is the only place that has the necessary ground facilities ready to receive them!

Even so, the allies had over 5 months time to put their offensive capacities in place there. Therefore, the deputy commander of the U.S. Military Transportation command observed that "we ought to keep in perspective that we've had the luxury of time - 161 days to land all that stuff without anybody firing a shot." Moreover, "47 percent of it came from foreign ships, which might not be available in the next emergency." These facts, argues the *Washington Post*, "make Operation Desert Storm an inadequate test of the U.S. military's usefulness in forging what President Bush called 'a new world order,' according to military analysts" (*International Herald Tribune February 11, 1991*).

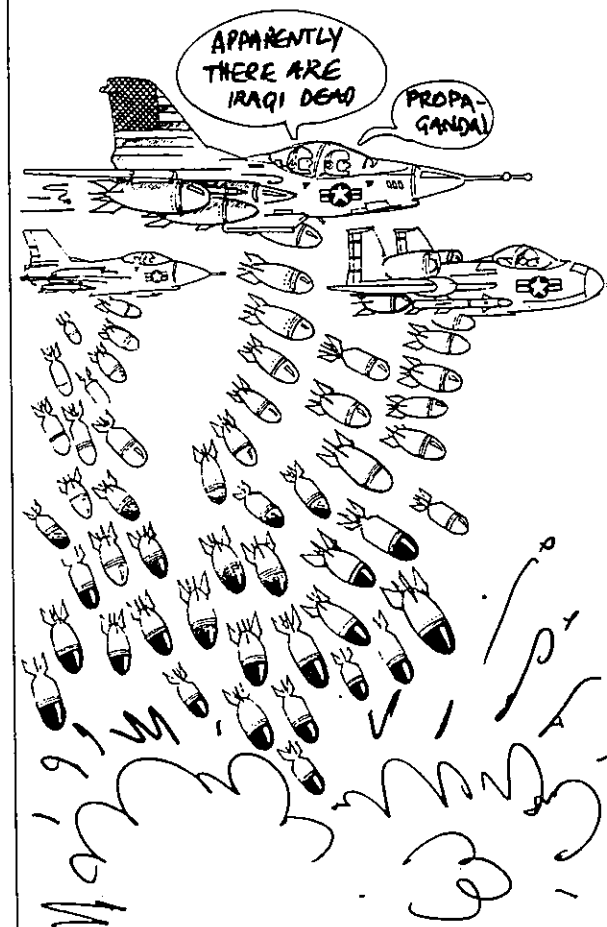
We need note only in passing how these analysts and publicists also take it for granted that "The New World Order" is to be "forged" by U.S. military intervention in one "emergency" after another. But at what political and economic cost, and can the United States afford them? In the case of the Gulf War against Iraq, the answer is yes, but perhaps also under "circumstances unlikely to be repeated in the future." For the direct out-of-pocket (and off-budget!) expenses of the war for United States have been variously estimated from US\$ 30 to 57 billion. Yet, the United States already received pledges, and in many cases payments, of direct foreign financial contributions totalling over \$ 54 billion: Saudi Arabia \$ 17 billion, Kuwait \$ 16 billion, The United Arab Emirates \$ 4 billion, Germany over \$ 6 billion, Japan almost \$ 11 billion, and even South Korea \$ 385 million. Unnamed other countries pledged additional \$15 billion. By early May 1990 all but \$ 18 billion had already been paid out (*IHT May 11-12, 1991*).

This war, therefore, was profitable business for the Wild West style gun for hire American mercenary forces, whose motto in the new world order could be "have (only) gun, will travel." Over and above these direct payments, of course, predominantly American construction and other firms, private and public including the US Army Corps of Engineers, are running away with the lion's share of Kuwaiti and other contracts to reconstruct the destruction caused by this war, at least where there is money to pay for this reconstruction.

Finally, the Pentagon and its associated military-industrial complex has already announced a major campaign of tens of billions of new arms sales for the

wholesale replenishment and extension of military arsenals in the Middle East. First the Americans and their European allies armed the Shah of Iran to the teeth. Then they sold their arms to President Hussein to cut Iran's successor regime down to size. Then the same allies bombed Hussein's war machine to smithereens. Now they propose to provide more arms to their next client in the region. It is living dangerously indeed to be an American client state in the Middle East (or for that matter in Panama and Central America), but to build them up and then abandon them is also profitable for the United States, indeed.

The old world order make work schemes in the Great Depression of paying workers to dig holes and fill them up again, or paying farmers to grow and then bury crops, were small potatoes compared to the destruction/reconstruction nice cop/bad cop schemes of the new world order. Some progress!



## The United States In The New World Order

Former National Security Advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski has made his balance sheet of the "principal benefits and debits of the U.S.- led triumph":

"The benefits are undeniably impressive. First, a blatant act of aggression was rebuffed and punished. An important political and even legal point, central to international decency, was reaffirmed.... Second, U.S. military power is henceforth likely to be taken more seriously... (and) is bound to have a chilling effect even as far away as North Korea.... Third, the Middle East and the Gulf region are now clearly an American sphere of preponderance. Pro-American Arab regimes feel more secure; so does Israel. U.S. access to oil is now not in jeopardy. Fourth, the Soviet Union ... has been reduced largely to the status of a spectator." (*IHT April 22, 1991*)

However, Brzezinski also finds some negative consequences on the scales: Iraq's defeat benefits Iran in the region; its ethnic, religious and tribal animosities are intensified and threaten 'Lebanonization'; Arabs may conclude from their bombardment that Americans view them as worthless; "and that raises the moral question of the proportionality of the response ... especially given the idea of the 'just war' (*ibid.*).

Nevertheless though Brzezinski does not explicitly say so, little doubt can remain then that the main purpose and result of President Bush's American led the Gulf War was another last ditch attempt to make former President Reagan's promise come true to "make America Number One Again." As we observed, President Reagan tried and failed to do so through the economic means of military Keynesianism and spent the United States into economic and social bankruptcy. President Bush is trying to change the global rules of the game from economic competition, in which America is losing, to military competition in which it still has a near monopoly of power. The Gulf War was designed and used by President Bush to flaunt this power both against the Third World in the South (and East) and against his own economically more powerful allies in the West. Thus this Gulf War by a pack of wolves in the West against poor sacrificial lambs in the South was used to try to turn the political economic tables among the hungry wolves themselves. The conservative American columnist Charles Krauthammer observes that:

"if we Americans want relative stability in the world we are going to have to work for it. It will come neither of itself or as a gift from the Security Council. It will only come from a U.S. foreign policy of "robust and difficult interventionism."... We have entered a period of Pax Americana. Why deny it. Every other nations would like to be in America's position. Why be embarrassed by it?" (*IHT March 23-24, 1991*)



Lest there be any disbelief, we may appeal to the authority of President Bush and the American people themselves. President Bush:

"We saved Europe, cured polio, went to the moon and lit the world with our culture. Now we are on the verge of a new century, and what country's name will it bear? I say it will be another American century."

The same August 1 issue of *Time* observes that:

"Some of Washington's closest European allies wonder whether the scheme is not just an exercise in nostalgia - a wishful excursion back into the 1950s, when America has both the will and the wallet to dictate to the rest of the planet."

However, that is precisely what both President Bush and the American people are doing. For the two most important reasons and explanations for the American flag waving and yellow ribbon chauvinistic popular enthusiasm for the war (once it started) and the victory were precisely: 1. The Gulf War offered Americans the opportunity to "lick the Vietnam syndrome" of defeat by a poor Third World country. 2. A Gulf War victory could assuage their deep down feelings of shame for being economically bested by the Japanese and other Asians - abroad and at home! By "taking (it) out" on and "neutralizing" or "eliminating" a half million poor Iraqis, these proud Americans could also eliminate their self doubts and again be "proud to be an American" in "God's Country"!

The opposite side of the same coin is displayed by John Lewis Gaddis in *Foreign Affairs*, published by the American establishment's Council of Foreign Affairs:

"A kind of division of labor has developed within the international community, in which the United States contributes the troops and weapons needed to sustain the balance of power while its allies finance the budgetary, energy and trade deficits American incur through their unwillingness to make even minimal sacrifices ... of life-style and pocketbook." (quoted by Jim Hoagland, *IHT April 23, 1991*)

In plain English, of course, this "balance" is to keep the otherwise rambunctious Third World peoples in their place in the South, which is assigned to them in both the Old and New World Order.

However, over the short run even the Europeans and Japanese also sat up and took notice of America's military business success in the Gulf War. In world markets, foreign interest in America revived to share its victory bonanza. Stock markets and the dollar shot up. Political and economic negotiators began to knuckle under the Americans, for instance regarding the above mentioned European and Japanese agricultural price supports and other obstacles to the American way in the GATT Uruguay round negotiations. Also, there is "For U.S., New Clout in OPEC." "I think we are going to

see a closer relationship between the Gulf oil producers and ourselves. We had been laying the foundations for some time, and the house was built very quickly when the war came" observes the US Assistant Secretary of Energy (*IHT March 6, 1991*). Moreover, "Gulf states are much more open to military cooperation with the United States now than before the Gulf War" (*IHT May 11-12, 1991*). American control of the Middle Eastern oil on which Europe and Japan are dependent could come in useful as a bargaining chip to extract future political economic concessions from them on a myriad of other potential conflicts of interest.

So how long will or can this second Western honeymoon and this new Middle Eastern house, both made in heaven over Iraq, last? Only time will tell. Or is even that honeymoon an illusion? The Chairman of the US Senate Commerce Committee writes under the title "Trade Wars: Time for an America That Can Say No": "Last year we won the Cold War. This year we won the Gulf war. Now it is time to win the war that really matters for America's future: the trade war - the no-holds-barred struggle among nations for market share and standard of living in a largely zero-sum world market place." (*IHT March 27, 1991*)

The perhaps ironic question remains whether in the long run this North-South War in the Gulf will recoup American hegemony or help destroy it. President Bush is well aware of this major question. He devoted much of his January 1991 State of the Union Message to the Gulf War and gave his answer directly to this question and perhaps indirectly to why he went to war against Iraq in the first place: America's responsibility to "defend freedom" is greater than ever and therein its golden age lies not behind, but before it. The 21st century too will be an American century, he said. President Bush may not be deliberately bluffing when he says so; but does he have the political economic cards in his hand to make his prediction come true? Or may the ultimate economic irony be that this gamble at prolonging the American century through yet another war will cost the United States so much as to become its last Indian summer Swan song?

The longer term question remains whether the *bravo for bravado* of President Bush's *new world order* will really save the United States or even himself. Or will President Bush's adventurism bankrupt and sink the United States even further than his mentor Ronald Reagan, who promised to make "America Number One Again" and nearly bankrupted the United States instead? It well may, especially in face of the new world economic recession and the "virtually irrelevant economic power of Japan and Germany" to whom President Bush had to send Secretary of State Baker hat in hand to help finance his war in the Gulf.

This recession/war is not likely to turn out like previous ones. World War II pulled the United States out of

the Depression and made it hegemonic. The Korean War pulled the United States out of the recession of 1949 and launched the military Keynesianism, which helped ward off the feared economic stagnation. The Vietnam War was enough for the United States to avoid the recession, which hit Germany and Japan in 1967. It was not enough to prevent the recession of 1970, and certainly not to ward off the first severe post war recession of 1973-75. On the contrary, the Vietnam War already weakened the United States relative to its Japanese and German rivals. The costs of that war obliged the United States to abandon the fixed exchange rates and the institutional mechanisms established at Bretton Woods, and then to devalue the dollar.

For American economic power, it has been downhill ever since. President Reagan's recklessness and "Reaganomics" (which in good time George Bush himself baptized as "Voodoo Economics") put the American economy at the mercy of Japanese bankers and German industrialists. It is even more at their mercy for financial and political support during the new recession, which began in 1989-90 before the crisis in the Gulf, and then during the war in the Gulf itself. Any severe and prolonged recession would still sink the American economy and President Bush. Unfortunately, the President would take many innocent people - and a few of his not so innocent sycophants - down with him.

At home in the United States, the Gulf War distracted attention from the deepening recession. That may have been another one of its purposes, particularly in distracting public opinion from increasing bankruptcies and unemployment. However on the policy making level, this diversion of needed attention from the recession may have been a short sighted or even ostrich policy. It can become costly in the middle run, if it lets the recession get all the moreso out of hand. Moreso, because even without the distraction of the war, the U.S. government and Federal Reserve have scarce anti-cyclical economic policy instruments left to combat recession. Most measures to stem the recessionary tide at home, like lowering the rate of interest as the Fed did in early 1991, only open the floodgates even more to a lower dollar and reduce or reverse the capital flows from abroad, which the American economy also needs to remain afloat. The debates about how war and victory affect domestic consumer confidence or spending and therefore the outlook for recession or recovery are largely beside the point. They are largely attempts to blame the recession on the war, while if there is any such causation, it is the other way around from the recession to the war. The main recessionary forces were both prior to and independent of the war; and, as observed above, they may have given President Bush an additional impulse to go to war.

Probably more important than the wartime or post-war confidence of consumers at home in the United States, is the confidence of international capital and of allied governments elsewhere in the West. The more

important effects of the recession and war will play themselves out via the reactions of private capital and the decisions by governments and central banks in Europe and Japan. Still during the war, the German (Central) Bundesbank, and following it per force the Dutch and some others, already followed the US interest rate decline by raising their own rates of interest, to the dismay of the more recession ridden United States, Britain and France. The fixed exchange rates within the European Monetary System were brought under pressure, the dollar immediately plunged, and capital was attracted to Germany. As usual, the intervention of the central banks to shore up the dollar was to no avail. The Bundesbank president defended his decision by saying that he was contributing to "stability" in fighting against inflation in Germany, which is Europe's most important - but also still healthy - economy. Let the Devil take the hindmost! True, the dollar rose again against the mark after the American victory in the war and the revelation of the costs of German unification. And then the dollar began to decline again. Its and American fortunes remain unstable at best.

So, how long will the Japanese and the Europeans, other than the British with their "special relationship" but most depressed economy, continue to lend a helping hand of private and public funds to support the American War in the Gulf and the American economy at home? That is the question. For without foreign active political and material economic support, the United States no longer has the domestic economic base even to finance this war, let alone to build a "New World Order" of its own design.

"A Victor in War, U.S. Is Pinned Down on Economic Front" is the front page headline, whose story quotes a British diplomat:

"There's no question after the Gulf war, that the U.S. is the only superpower in the world. It is also clear, however, that there are limits to that power, particularly in the economic arena." (*IHT, April 22, 1991*)

After another week of American-German disputes about interest rates and other economic policies:

"a final lesson of the week's events is the vivid contrast between the leverage America still has in high politics of war and peace, compared to its deepening impotence to dictate economic policy. In the Gulf conflict, the United States was able not only to win broad support from its allies ... but when Washington needed allied support for its economic strategy, it was politely but firmly rebuffed." (*Robert Kutner, IHT May 3, 1991*)

Walter Russell Mead correctly observed in the *International Herald Tribune* (Feb 7, 1991):

"At a time of diminishing national resources and power, the United States has not lowered its foreign policy horizons, it has universalized them. The mirage of universal alliance against instabili-

ty, led but not paid for by America is potentially the most dangerous idea in U.S. foreign policy in the last generation. It raises expectations that cannot be met...It tempts Americans to take on responsibilities beyond their resources. While they want the post- Cold War order to evolve in (New World Order) ways that defend American primacy, America's associates want it to diminish."

There is the rub! The Soviet Union never had the economic clout to support its claim to being a super power. Now it is being downgraded into the position of an over-armed Third world/rate power. The United States was long obsessed with its political and ideological security in (successfully) defeating the Soviet Union in the cold war. In so doing, the United States neglected to maintain its real economic base in competition with its real competitors in Japan and Europe. So now the Unit-

ed States no longer has sufficient economic clout to be a super power either.

Yet with President Bush waiving the American flag, the United States rushed in where angels fear to tread. It rushed into War in the Gulf in a probably vain attempt to shore up its declining power on the world stage one last time by the only means it has left and knows how to use - its military power. However, without an adequate economic base, military power is insufficient to keep a great super power afloat. On the contrary, the foolish use of its military power may instead sink that power. It is not for nothing that Paul Kennedy became a best seller (apparently not in the Bush White House or the Pentagon) when he wrote that foolish military overextension beyond the economy's means to support it is the basis of *The Rise and FALL of the Great Powers*.

May 20, 1991



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## Salah Jaber The New Imperialist Crusade

For the second time in three years, an imposing multinational imperialist armada has been concentrated in the Arab-Persian Gulf and surrounding area. The fundamental objective remains the same, that is, to defend and consolidate imperialist domination over this region. A region of the greatest strategic importance, because it produces the greater part of the world's oil exports, and contains the largest share of the planet's reserves of this fuel, which remains the principal energy source in the ecologically irrational world in which we live.

The scenario of the new imperialist crusade is, however, different in many respects from the one in 1987. The "villain" this time is no longer Iranian but Iraqi. The imperialist intervention is being carried out under cover of the United Nations, as in the case of the Korean War, except that today — a sign of the times! — it enjoys the complicity of the USSR and China. And, finally, this time some of the imperialists' Arab or Muslim partners are directly involved on the ground alongside them.

Besides the various Gulf emirs, the imperialists' allies include the Saudi kingdom, which has been transformed into a gigantic US military base; Mubarak's Egypt, which receives the second largest share of US aid, after Israel; the Morocco of Hassan II, who is not embarrassed to intervene against the annexation of Kuwait, although he keeps trying to annex the Western Sahara; and a Pakistan dominated by military officers linked to the Pentagon. This combination has been joined by Baathist Syria, Iraq's "brother" enemy, which is hoping to be rewarded by a substantial Saudi and Kuwaiti contribution to solving its grave financial problems.

The scenario is different, and the production's budget too has been considerably increased. (1) The cost of the US deployment alone exceeds a billion dollars a month. The number of soldiers sent by Washington has already reached 100,000, and the Pentagon has made preparations to send double that number. The United States has concentrated a staggering panoply of engines of destruction and slaughter in the area. None of the most recent electronic gadgets for mass murder has been left out, from the invisible bomber to the latest model tank, including the whole range of state-of-the-art missiles.

Not in the last 17 years, that is, not since the US withdrawal from Vietnam, have we seen such a buildup of an imperialist expeditionary force. Thus, despite the

1) These movie metaphors are inspired by the American media's treatment of this conflict. You only have to consider the theme tune used by the American network CBS, under the title "Showdown in the Gulf."

vast gulf between the bloody bourgeois dictatorship of Saddam Hussein and the Vietnamese revolution, the stakes of the confrontation underway are comparable to those in Indochina in 1965-1975 in one fundamental respect — its outcome will determine the extent of US imperialism's political and military dominance over the world, especially the Third World, for a whole period.

Freed from the "Vietnam syndrome" in a world where the Soviet deterrent is weaker than it has ever been, the American empire will no longer recognize any limits. That is why it is vital and urgent for all anti-imperialist forces in the world to mobilize to prevent imperialist aggression, and if it takes place, to work to defeat it, or at least to make its political cost as high as possible. Should we be taken aback to see that this time the imperialist mobilization is directed against a bourgeois dictatorship and not anti-capitalist forces, as was the case in China, Korea or Indochina? In fact the imperialist rulers are no more tender hearted toward bourgeois nationalism when it dares to threaten their vital interests, than they are toward anticapitalist nationalism.

Modern history is full of examples of Third World bourgeois leaders who have been pilloried by the imperialists. Without going back very far, Argentina's Peron, the Egyptian Nasser or the Algerian FLN were also compared to Hitler in their time. More recently the Libyan Qadhafi, the Syrian Hafez El-Assad, the Palestine Liberation Organization of course, and above all Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini have been accorded such a characterization.

However, it is true that among all these cases, Saddam Hussein's dictatorship is the regime most similar to bourgeois totalitarianism of the "national socialist" (Nazi) type. The tyrant of Baghdad came to power in 1968 through a counter-revolutionary putsch whose primary objective was to crush both a Che Guevara-inspired guerrilla focus in the southern part of the country and a left split from the Iraqi CP which was in the process of combining with the guerrillas.

In the following decade (1969-1979), Saddam Hussein ruthlessly crushed any source of opposition to his personal dictatorship, and even the expression of the slightest independence from him. The Kurdish rebellion; Communists of all tendencies; and even fractions of his own party, the Baath (Party of the Arab Socialist Resurrection), were drowned in blood. Every recalcitrant group or even individual was liquidated or neutralized. The inexorable rise of Saddam Hussein had culminated in the concentration of all power in his hands before the war that he unleashed against Iran in September 1980. To top it off, he organized an official

personality cult as revolting, intrusive and grotesque as all such mascarades.

Saddam Hussein's dictatorship rests on a civilian, military and police bureaucracy organized in concentric circles, based largely on family and clan ties and origins in the tyrant's native province (Takrit). This bureaucracy's privileges come from the Iraqi state's oil revenues. The latter, however, are not sufficient to meet at the same time the development needs of a country that has virtually no other source of foreign currency than oil, and which has to import the bulk of its food; the cost of maintaining a social base with various gratuities and payoffs, including the maintenance of a multitudinous bureaucracy; and a burdensome military budget made necessary by the permanent "pacification" of the part of Kurdistan under Iraqi domination and by conflicts with neighbors over territorial questions (the Iran of the Shah and then of the mullahs) or water problems (the Euphrates river question with Turkey) or political differences (Syria).

In 1974, a war of liberation was unleashed by forces in Iraqi Kurdistan, with the support of the Shah of Iran, the United States and Israel, all of which wanted to tame an Iraqi regime that was trying to outdo Egypt and Syria, its rivals for regional leadership, in anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist saber-rattling.<sup>(2)</sup> The year after, the Baathist regime, which had not yet been able to take advantage of the 1974 oil boom to step up its arming, found itself within an inch of defeat.

It was forced to save itself by settling the territorial dispute (on land and in water) with Iran on the Shah's conditions. The result was the Algiers accord of March 1975. In exchange, Tehran abruptly stopped giving aid and refuge to the Kurds. Having made the mistake of choosing such unreliable and ill-intentioned allies, their struggle ended in a debacle.

The following years, a breathing space for Baghdad, were devoted to perfecting Saddam Hussein's totalitarian dictatorship, as well as using the considerably increased oil revenues and the credit facilities they offered by virtue of the capitalist principle of "lending only to the rich." The Iraqi regime, an enlightened bourgeois despotism in the socio-economic sphere, was able to register some positive achievements — infrastructural works, investments in industry and agricultural, extension of literacy and education, improvement in the status of women and partial secularization of the society.

At the same time, Saddam broadened his social clientele by swelling the administrative, political and police apparatus. Above all, in the context of the stampede to buy both traditional and sophisticated arms in which all the oil states in the region participated (with

2) This was the period following the October 1973 Arab-Israeli war, which saw efforts for a negotiated settlement of this conflict.

the Shah leading the pack) he acquired considerable military means.

The sale of arms<sup>1</sup> to the oil countries was and remains one of the main mechanisms by which the imperialist states, as well as the bureaucratic workers' states, recycle the capital they inject into these countries in return for the imports of black gold. The arms industry is a major sector in most of the economies of both categories of states mentioned.

Saddam Hussein's Iraq supplied itself with arms mainly from those countries with the least ties to the Shah of Iran, and which had not contributed to bringing him near to defeat in 1975. They included, on the one hand, the USSR and its satellites; and, on the other, French imperialism, which after 1974 considered Baghdad its favored client in the Middle East. In the nonmilitary field, the French shared the Iraqi cake with the Germans and the Japanese.

The presence of the Iranian imperial army on its flank had both a deterrent and frustrating effect on an Iraqi dictatorship that dreamed of effacing the affront it suffered in 1975. Aware of Iran's advantages from the military point of view (a population three times larger, as well as greater financial means and correspondingly superior greater military means), Iraq tried, without success, to buy Hafez El-Assad's Syria (the aborted unification project of 1979) and get itself coopted to the rank of regional Arab leader in the aftermath of the isolation of Sadat's Egypt as a result of its US-sponsored Camp David accords with Israel.

The collapse of the Shah's regime in 1979, with the ensuing disorganization of the Iranian army and above all the break in this army's ties with its main tutor and supplier, the United States, offered Saddam Hussein an un hoped-for opportunity to take revenge on his neighbor. He took the chance all the more willingly because the new regime of the mullahs mounted an intense "Islamic" propaganda campaign against the "atheistic" government in Baghdad, appealing in particular to the Shi'ites, who represent the majority among the Iraqi Arabs (while Saddam's clan is Sunni).

In attacking Iran, the Iraqi despot had several objectives. The first was to reverse the consequences of his capitulation in 1975; as a prelude to the hostilities, he renounced the Algiers accord concluded with the Shah. Next, in the context of dismembering the Persian empire, he sought to take the region of Khuzistan (Arabistan), Iran's main oil-producing region which was inhabited by an oppressed Arab ethnic minority. That would have made Iraq the world's main oil exporter, considerably reinforcing its potential in all spheres. Finally, he wanted to establish his regime as the dominant regional power, getting the other Gulf oil states, which were as worried as Iraq by the Khomeini regime's subversive behavior, to finance the Iraqi war effort.

Such were Baghdad's motivations in the war against Iran — bourgeois nationalist expansionist objectives. Saddam Hussein was not moved by any intention to serve Washington's interests, according to a black-and-white vision of things held by some supporters of Iran whom we had occasion to criticize. (3) This view cannot integrate, with any coherence whatever, either Washington's secret contacts with Iran (Irangate) or still less the present behavior of the Iraqi regime.

The gamble taken by Saddam Hussein in 1980 was very risky, even adventurist. Carried away by his megalomaniac ambitions, he seriously overestimated his army's capacities against a large country with a much greater population. He did not foresee that by arousing a Persian nationalist reaction, his invasion of Iranian land would reinforce the cohesion of the mullahs' regime and therefore its ability to resist and later to mount a counterattack. In 1982, the Iraqi army became bogged down in Iran, and then went into retreat. The war was now on Iraqi soil.

In their turn, the expansionist Persian-Shi'ite nationalist Iranian mullahs made the same mistakes as their enemy had before. At the cost of terrible strain on the capacities of the Iraqi population; with increased support from its financial backers and its arms suppliers in both the West and East, who were frightened by the prospect of an Iranian victory; and by an increasing recourse to the deterrent horrors of chemical weapons, the Iraqi regime was able to turn the situation to its favor again. In 1988, Iran was forced to accept the ceasefire that it had stubbornly rejected when it was still in a position of strength.

Iraq emerged victorious from the military adventure launched by its tyrant, but at what a price! For Iraq alone, the war meant 300,000 dead and many more wounded, handicapped, widows and orphans. The overall material cost (destruction, lost earnings, the cost of the war effort) was around \$250 billion. Iraq was burdened with more than \$60 billion in debts. It was a Pyrrhic victory in the full sense. Furthermore, the conflict with Iran was not settled, and therefore it was necessary to maintain a swollen army of a million soldiers, out of all proportion to a total population that the most generous estimates put at 17 million (that is, one in every 17 inhabitants were in the army).

Even before the war against Iran, the absorption of an important part of the Iraqi people's productive capacity in the military and bureaucratic apparatuses, as well as the lack of skilled manpower, and indeed the chauvinist policy of Arab colonization of the Kurdish areas, had led Iraq to open its doors to vast contingents of Egyptian immigrant workers (both skilled and peasants). Their numbers increased considerably during

3) See "Imperialism and the Gulf War," *International Viewpoint*, No. 132, December 21, 1987.

the war, reaching close to 2 million. The result was that a million Iraqis mobilized for war were replaced in production by Egyptians, with the oil emirs of the Gulf largely footing the bill.

Iraq became, to some extent, an Arab replica of the state of Israel, an overarmed state, whose place in the international (Israel) or regional (Iraq) division of "labor" was determined by its military role. However, the financing of Iraq to a degree equivalent to that of Israel would require \$20 billion a year. Even subtracting Iraq's oil income from this total, Saddam Hussein would need annual financing on the order of \$10 billion, without counting the enormous bill for rebuilding the country and the weight of its accumulated debt. Kuwait's oil income would just about cover the military effort and Kuwaiti capital invested in the West the reconstruction work.

Here was a terrible temptation, especially since the burden of the Iraqi regime's financial crisis was growing. The war was over. The Gulf money bags were cutting back their payments to Saddam Hussein considerably. They felt that they were caught in the trap of an endless racket, since militarized Iraq's appetite seemed insatiable. They no longer had any illusions that the many "loans" to the Baathist regime would be repaid. As a result, Iraqi finances started to go under. Less and less able to pay back old debts, Iraq had more and more trouble in getting new ones. Even France, which not long ago encouraged it to buy, cut off credits and held back its deliveries.

The standard of living of the Iraqi population, maintained with difficulty during the war, started to plummet. It was necessary to "trim the fat." This took the form, not without problems, of beginning to send back the Egyptian workers. Foreseeing the growth of popular resentment, Saddam tried to gain some buoyancy in the same way as other dictatorships with statized economies — by offering facilities to the private sector and a simulacrum of multi-candidate elections (with all the candidates devoted to the despot). But in view of the gravity of the problem such expedients were no use.

The dictator tried to force the emirs to provide the funds he required by direct threats. He demanded that they officially write off Iraq's debts and pay him a substantial contribution toward rebuilding the country. From Kuwait alone, the most vulnerable because of its tiny size and common border with Iraq, he demanded \$30 billion. After all, had he not fought for their interests as well? Had he not defended the "Eastern Gate of the Arab Nation" against the Khomeinite Persian menace? Was it not right that the emirs foot the bill in dollars, since Iraq had paid in human lives?

Confronted with the stubborn refusal of the Gulf princes, Saddam raised his voice to point out, for the benefit of Iran, which had an equal interest in this aspect

of the dispute, that Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) by their unrelenting greed in exporting far more oil than justified by the real needs of their Lilliputian states, were responsible to a large extent for the low price of crude, and were thereby depriving other exporters and their own needy populations of billions of dollars.(4) In July, Saddam publicly threatened the emirs that he might resort to tough methods. Nothing happened. He massed troops on the frontier of Kuwait, but got no more results.

The emir of Kuwait stuck to his stubborn attitude, encouraged by the Saudis, Great Britain and the United States, which were highly upset by the Iraqi blackmail. Saddam was left without any other choice. It was double or quits. Either he resigned himself to the inevitable collapse of his regime by renouncing its claims to the role of regional gendarme and "trimming" his armed forces — and then having to face popular discontent and the hostility of innumerable enemies with accounts to settle. Or else he upped the ante, in the illusory prospect of a success that would solve all his problems. It was illusory, because once again his megalomania blinded him to his own limitations with respect to the scope of his ambitions.

On August 2, Iraqi troops overran the territory of Kuwait, almost as easily as if it were a routine exercise. Saddam Hussein's tendency to improvisation was once again striking. For him, like Napoleon, "you get involved and then you see." That is a valid maxim as long as you make sure you have an avenue of retreat. The characteristic feature of adventurism is neglecting this second aspect. Initially, it was announced that the Iraqi troops had intervened at the request of a Kuwaiti "revolutionary" government — a detail reminiscent of certain Soviet interventions in the past. But the lack of a minimum of political preparation in Kuwait for an invasion decided on in the heat of the moment was evident.

Saddam announced his intention to withdraw in exchange for the objectives for which he had crossed the Rubicon. To this end, his close friends of recent years, King Hussein of Jordan and Yasir Arafat offered their good offices. However, at this stage giving way was still more unthinkable for the emirs, especially now that world imperialism was mobilizing to come to their rescue. The Iraqi dictatorship, no longer able to retreat without losing everything, proceeded to an outright annexation of Kuwait. For the occasion, it was recalled that Iraq had long claimed this territory on which Great Britain had established an "independent state."

4) There is a wide-spread idea that Kuwait acted to bring down the oil price in the sole interest of the imperialists. This idea has some validity with respect to Saudi Arabia, but not for the state of Kuwait, which is more keen to pursue its own interests than the neighboring kingdom. In reality, if the Kuwaitis are exporting more than they need for the intangible needs of their state, it is because they are trying to maximize their profits, like any capitalist. The capitalization abroad of the income from their oil — an art in which they are past masters, for which they have won the admiration of international big capital — is much more profitable than leaving the oil in the ground, where its real price is declining inexorably.

With the imperialist deployment, Saddam Hussein's double or quits has reached a fateful level. He could accept compromise solutions that would leave him a financial or territorial gain. But now the stubborn party is Washington, which has taken direct charge. Bush, with the approval of Thatcher, Mitterrand and other minions, is categorical — no concessions, an unconditional Iraqi withdrawal. Caught up in the toils, Saddam Hussein is preparing for a test of strength. In view of the scope of the challenge, he had to free his hands on the Iranian front. Making yet another turnaround, he accepted all Tehran's conditions for ending the state of war between the two countries.

The 1975 Algiers accord, which was declared null and void in 1980, was reactivated. The despot has once again changed the target of his Arab nationalism. The "Christian West" has replaced the "Persians." When you aim for Kuwait, Iraq's natural outlet to the sea, you can easily cede half of the Shatt-el-Arab to the Iranians, another Middle Eastern people and brothers in Islam.

The government of the mullahs, delighted with this manna from heaven, did not need much urging to accept the offer. At the same time, Iran could savor the spectacle of Iraq in its turn suffering an even more virulent hostility from the "international community," including from those who had only yesterday armed and financed it against Iran. In tragic farcical style so familiar in Middle Eastern politics, Washington even proposed an alliance against Baghdad to Tehran, calling on the Iranians to mass their troops against the neighboring country. For the moment, they have wisely declined the offer of Great Satan, with which they have no interest in getting too implicated.(5) Iranian president Rafsanjani, who escaped by the skin of his teeth from the Irangate affair, knows something about that.

#### The reasons for the imperialist intervention

Why has world imperialism mobilized to such an extent, and why is it taking such an intransigent attitude? The question has to be raised, because fundamentally the United States and its minions did not own Kuwait's oil any more than they do Iraq's. Some have thought this was a battle over the price of oil. But the imperialists are sharp eyed when it comes to commerce. It is clear that the only means OPEC has to affect the oil price is to cut its production.

And Saddam Hussein has not annexed Kuwait to cut off the emirate's oil exports. To the contrary, he has a much greater interest than the emirs themselves in exporting as much as possible. He blamed them for producing more than they needed. But his own needs are enormous. The exporters that have a real possibility for affecting prices are those — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait

5) The enlightened interest of the Iranian merchants, who are the most advantaged class under the regime of the mullahs, would be to break the blockade of Iraq, at the high prices that the latter would not hesitate to pay (in oil, if necessary).

or the UAE — that have a wide margin for maneuver, given their excess capacity for export by comparison with the inelastic part of their needs.

On the other hand, it is clear how much the "international law" evoked by the "international community" is worth. In the last 25 years alone, there have been so many invasions and de jure or de facto annexations that it is hard to count them. Let us take the annexations. For 23 years Israel has occupied Arab territories as populous as Kuwait, and officially annexed part of them. In 1971, the Shah annexed three Gulf islands belonging to the UAE. In 1975, Hassan II's Morocco annexed the Western Sahara. These spoiled children of imperialism have never suffered the least sanctions from their godfathers. Moreover we do not have to remind people that the imperialist great powers in the forefront in the Gulf conflict have maintained their annexations of a whole number of "overseas" territories.

As for the occupations and invasions in recent history, were the US actions from Vietnam to Panama, the Turkish invasion of Cyprus, South Africa's invasion of southern Angola, Iraq's own invasion of Iran, Israel's invasion of Lebanon, or the USSR's interventions in Azerbaijan and Lithuania, carried out in accordance with "international law"? Does not South Africa's apartheid regime deserve at least the same enthusiasm for sanctions and embargoes as the annexation of Kuwait? This talk about "law" is gross hypocrisy, coming from those who trample on it everyday around the world.

What then are the imperialists' real motives with respect to Iraq? Let us start with the reasons of convenience, for which the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait is only a good pretext. For the United States, followed by France and Great Britain in particular, it offers an argument against any demand for a substantial reduction of military appropriations. Such pressures have been very strong lately, with the need to cut budget deficits coinciding with the East-West détente and calls for disarmament. The main lesson drawn by Bush a few days after the Iraqi operation (the Baltimore speech) was the need to keep the arms appropriations untouchable and be prepared to face new threats to American interests, like the Iraqi one, which would certainly arise, despite the Soviet debacle.

This means, at a time when a new recession is beginning, that social cutbacks are indispensable. If budgets are to be cut, it is social spending that will be sliced. Once again, it is the oil exporters who are supposed to be responsible for this crisis. Since Saddam is the new Hitler of modern times, people have to get ready to shed "blood, sweat and tears" in defense of the big principles. One can imagine what Ronald Reagan, a much better actor than Bush, could have offered by way of a show on this occasion and theme.

There are still greater stakes for Washington. At a

time when the economic power of the American empire is in sharp decline against German and Japanese competition, the United States is trying to restore the balance by playing on its unchallenged military supremacy.

The message is simple: "We are the world's gendarmes, the protectors of the imperialist order. This costs us a lot, while others who profit as much as we, if not more, from the maintenance of this order are not able to contribute effectively to the effort (for example, they are more dependent on Gulf oil than we are). It is only just therefore that they help to finance for exertions, or even give us trade advantages by way of compensation". Bush said this publicly in substance on August 30. The arrogance of US imperialism is at a peak.

As for the direct motives of the imperialist intervention in the Gulf, these are fundamentally of two sorts. On the one hand, there is the defense of the Kuwaiti and Saudi states (as well as the UAE). Once again, "law" has nothing to do with it.

In reality, for a long time, the Kuwaiti and Saudi ruling classes have been an integral part of imperialist world capital, not in the sense that their states (which have all the features of dependency) are imperialist, but in the sense that these classes have invested ("recycled") the better part of the assets accruing from their oil increases in the economies of the imperialist mother countries.

In this respect, the London *Guardian* recently published a very interesting article.(6) It listed the big pieces of the Kuwaiti state's \$100 billion investments in the industrialized economies, showing that Kuwait is the main foreign investor in Japan and Spain and one of the main ones in Britain and the United States. But where this article offered an innovation was in introducing the concept of an "economy in exile" with respect to these immense assets of the Kuwaiti state, today deprived of its territory.

The ruling classes of such states own and run the state in a way that combines features of feudal lordship with the methods of the board of directors of a stock company. Their ability to do as they please with "public property" is not limited by any oversight outside their own narrow ranks. They are the state. They are multinational holding trusts, for which territory is by no means essential. Imperialism defends them, as it would defend any of its big private interest groups.

Moreover, their use of their oil incomes benefits the imperialist economies almost as if the money was in the hands of the imperialist companies themselves. Even more so, since a not inconsiderable part goes for uses that are unproductive or unprofitable for the buyers but highly profitable for the imperialist sellers, which would

6) *The Guardian Weekly*, Vol. 143, No. 9.

not be the case for ordinary private companies. For the United States, Saudi Arabia is a second Texas. For Britain, the Kuwait Investment Office (KIO), which owns 10% of the Midland Bank and British Petroleum (BP) is the equivalent of a big British investment trust.

It is not Kuwaiti or Saudi ownership of the oil fields as such that interests the imperialists. Iraq does not threaten their oil supplies, because it has no other choice but to sell to them, which it has always done. What interests them is the use of the oil income, its recycling in their economies by exporter states that are rich, because they are underpopulated, with respect to their incomes. Hence the notion of "capital surplus" which is a real scandal when applied to states that were carved out for this purpose, from an area of the world where all other states are weighed down by debt and misery.

Along with this economic motive,(7) is a politico-military one. The imperialists cannot allow a regional power to emerge that is militarily outside their control, a state with hegemonic ambitions directly rivaling imperialist hegemony. This is the case with Iraq, a regional power beyond imperialism's control.

That country is not independent, because it is structurally dependent in all spheres, aside from oil and dates. It is, notably, entirely dependent as regards arms. But it is uncontrollable, as Qadhafi's Libya can be, following a political course that the imperialists cannot predict — with the important difference that Saddam Hussein's military resources are much greater than those of Qadhafi.(8)

When, on top of this, such an uncontrollable power starts to challenge the great powers' carving up the world into states in disregard for national realities and complementarity, thereby threatening to set a contagious precedent, it is high time to slap it down. This is the name of the game today. No one should be taken in. It is only hypocrisy when Moscow and Peking, who have agreed to give UN cover to the imperialist intervention, pretend today that they have only endorsed the blockade and are opposed to a military offensive against Iraq.(9)

The imperialist powers will not be satisfied with a simple return to the status quo ante, which would leave Iraq not only its war booty but also the possibility to prepare for new adventures jeopardizing imperialist interests. They are haunted by the idea that Iraq, which already has chemical weapons, could considerably reinforce its deterrent strength by joining the club of nuclear powers. For Bush, Thatcher and company, the

7) French imperialism has invested a lot in Iraq. It would like to see the Iraqi economy reflat by a reduction of military and unproductive state spending. Its interest is in seeing that this is done without too much damage, in order to maintain Iraq's capacity for repaying its debts and for importing. That is the reason it is showing little enthusiasm for a direct aggression against Iraq.

8) Qadhafi also had his Kuwait in Chad (the Aouzou strip).

9) Cuba's abstention in the UN Security Council on this question is deplorable coming from a country that has suffered so much from the American blockade.

watchword today is clear. Saddam Hussein is to be destroyed, as Carthage was for the Romans.

To this end, two possibilities are envisaged. The first would be overthrowing (or assassinating) Saddam Hussein from within. This is the domain of the secret services, first of all of the CIA (certainly with the collaboration of the Israelis), the domain of covert action. But the chances here seem slight. Saddam Hussein is a specialist. He travels from bunker to bunker, with a surfeit of precautions, and his police control of the state apparatus is very tight. In fact, the CIA has already tried on several occasions to eliminate the Iraqi dictator, notably in concert with the Saudis in 1985-1986.(10) It did not even manage to shake his regime.

The military option remains. The imperialists know, however, that it would be very hard to get domestic public opinion to accept seeing a lot of compatriots killed in a fight for the emir of Kuwait or the Saudi monarchy — the most reactionary in the world and more repressive than the Saddam Hussein regime itself as well as far more retrograde. Nonetheless, any confrontation on the ground, whatever tactic is adopted, is going to be very costly in human lives against an Iraqi army with eight years of combat experience facing a numerically superior enemy. The main mission of the US land forces deployed in Saudi Arabia is in fact to protect the kingdom, in particular the oil fields bordering on Kuwait and Iraq

The no. 1 offensive option is air power. That is Iraq's Achilles Heel. It has a few sophisticated toys for aerial combat and anti-aircraft defense, but remains in the poor house and vulnerable in this area. The Iranian airforce was in a dilapidated state, notably because of the lack of US spare parts (cf. Irangate), and Iraq has no real combat experience against a state-of-the-art airfleet. The region's desert geography, furthermore, makes it ideal for air power to play the decisive role, as illustrated by the Israeli-Arab wars since 1967.

The Pentagon has already worked out a plan for massive destruction from the air of strategic targets in Iraq (military concentrations, arms factories, infrastructure, communications and energy facilities). The American generals are getting ready to "flatten" Iraq by carpet bombing. They are rejoicing at the prospect of finally getting a serious chance to use such murderous gadgets as the Stealth bomber, whose prohibitive cost had aroused an outcry. They are getting ready to stage *Apocalypse Now, Part II*, for real, as soon as they get the green light.(11) Such an action, the least costly in soldiers among the imperialists' military options, would destroy Saddam's military power, if not the regime itself.

10) For them it was a matter of removing an obstacle to settling the Gulf conflict.

11) Alarming and light-minded references have been made to the possibility of resorting to nuclear weapons in response to Iraq's using chemical ones.

The major risks of such an operation are the consequences it could have internationally and in the Arab world, which are being carefully weighed by the policy-makers in Washington. Some of them are warning against the risk of a generalized upsurge throughout the Arab world, a sort of *Intifada* on a much bigger scale, which would do severe damage to the pro-imperialist Arab regimes. These latter, moreover, are very worried by the prospect of a large-scale military offensive against Iraq. They are trying to wash their hands in advance in front of their populations.

At any rate, the imperialist military forces will only withdraw from the region after irreversibly neutralizing Iraq, with or without Saddam Hussein. What is at stake is the authority and hegemony of world imperialism.

This is why revolutionaries cannot hesitate, whatever aversion we may have for the Iraqi despot. Everything possible has to be done to oppose the imperialist intervention, to force the withdrawal of the imperialist troops and end the blockade inflicted on the Iraqi people. This is a task in particular for anti-imperialists in the countries involved in the intervention. The cost of any imperialist aggression against Iraq has to be maximized. In the Arab countries in particular, revolutionaries should prepare several *Intifadas*, not in favor of Saddam Hussein but against the imperialist aggression and its accomplices. In any confrontation between Iraq and the imperialists, we are resolutely on the side of Iraq.

### The question of Kuwait

But what about Kuwait itself? It is a much more complicated question and a source of confusion. While there is virtual unanimity on the revolutionary left on the need to defeat imperialism, there is a broad spectrum of positions on the question of the annexation of Kuwait. This goes from those who call for a withdrawal of the Iraqi troops from this territory and self-determination for its population to those who support the annexation or even defy the Iraqi regime not to capitulate.

It is no paradox that the Palestinian masses on both sides of the Jordan river, those in the region for whom the right of self-determination is most important, are precisely those who are most energetically expressing their support for Iraq. To be sure, they have illusions about the Iraqi regime, illusions fostered by the close ties between the PLO leadership and this regime. However, more fundamentally, they do not class the Kuwaiti state in the category of the oppressed but in the class of creations of imperialism serving its interests, like the Zionist state.

Is this view well founded? It is unquestionable that the Kuwaiti state owes its existence to British imperialism. Of course, you could argue that all the states in the Arab region are products of the imperialist dismemberment of the Arab realm of the Ottoman

empire over the last two centuries. Nonetheless, with the exception of a few such artificial ones as Jordan, these states correspond to the Ottoman administrative units or to regions that remained free of Ottoman domination (Morocco, North Yemen), and therefore have a long continuity as states. But this is not a decisive difference.

The real difference is that these states include native populations that for the moment accept their state framework and could surmount it in the direction of a federation union or fusion with others if they had the active will to do so. This is not the case of the oppressed national minorities such as the Palestinians or Kurds. It is not the case either of the oil mini-states of the Gulf (Kuwait, the UAE, Qatar). The latter are bases established by British imperialism in a semi-desertic area with the purchased collaboration of ruling clans coming from the Bedouin tribes of the Arab peninsula.

The strategic importance of these bases for the British empire's naval dominance was increased in the twentieth century by the discovery of the oil riches lying under the soil. They became oil concessions for the imperialist companies. British imperialism therefore had every interest in making them so-called separate "states" and later "independent" ones in order to preserve its dominance over them and their wealth, enclaves free from the anti-Western subversion to which the other normally populated states of the region became exposed very early.

The creation of the "state" of Kuwait at the end of the last century was done against the will of the Ottomans, who demanded the withdrawal of the British and the attachment of the territory to their province of Basra, the south of today's Iraq, of which Kuwait is a natural extension leading toward the waters of the Gulf. Under a British protectorate, this "state" was maintained by London against the will even of its own Iraqi agents (and the Iraqi population) under the monarchy that Britain set up in Iraq in 1921.

London had Kuwait firmly under its control, with the territory's few tens of thousands of inhabitants. Alongside an Iraq that would have eagerly annexed it at its birth, Kuwait was entirely dependent on British protection. The English, moreover, were clear-sighted about the precariousness of their domination of Iraq challenged by rebellions as early as 1920. In 1958, the monarchy that they sponsored was finally overthrown by a republican, nationalist coup d'état carried out by forces openly hostile to them.

The new regime called still more forcefully on London to cede Kuwait. But with the growth of the territory's oil production, this was even less a possibility. And when in 1961, London granted an entirely formal "independence" to its protectorate of Kuwait (300,000 inhabitants at the time), a British military force had to be sent to prevent Iraq from

annexing it. The conflict was finally settled by Kuwait paying Iraq a sum of money in return for its recognition as a state.

Like the other oil emirates, Kuwait owes not only its creation but its survival to imperialism, as the events under way well illustrate. Applying the concept of self-determination to territories cut out by imperialism around mineral resources in order to be able to exploit them more easily, dividing them from larger units from which they are not distinguished by any national, ethnic, cultural or linguistic features, amounts to giving the privileged minorities that live in such enclaves preemptive rights over these riches, at the expense of the overwhelming majority who live in the larger units of which they are a natural part and who find themselves therefore deprived from sharing the benefits. This is a total perversion of the democratic content of the principle of the right of peoples to determine (by majority decision) their own fate. The formalism of bourgeois law always perpetuates injustice when it bases itself on inequalities that arose from natural circumstances or oppression.

Many states could have been created by imperialism in the Third World like the oil emirates, if the relationship of forces with the local peoples had permitted. Principalities or mini-republics could have been set up in every oil field, in every gold-mining area, where it would have been easy to find a majority of inhabitants to vote for "independence," that is, for not sharing the subsurface wealth with other regions of the country to which they belonged. Only a genuinely distinct ethnic character of the region in question would, from a democratic point of view, justify recognizing a right to self-determination. Inversely and contrary to anti-democratic formalism, we cannot recognize any sovereignty of majorities planted on the territory of other nations or ethnic groups through coercive colonizing processes.

The Kuwaiti case does not satisfy even the most formal conception of majority rights. In the three oil emirates, only a minority of inhabitants (40% in Kuwait) hold citizenship and enjoy, in a very unequal way moreover, the rights and privileges to which this status entitles them.(12) The great majority of the producers are excluded from this, and treated as second or third class citizens, depending on whether they are Arabs or South Asians, in the context of a system that a British journal rightly did not hesitate to call apartheid.

It is a glaring fact that with millions of Arabs unemployed, the oil emirates imported labor power from the Indian subcontinent, or even from South East Asia. Such workers are reduced to conditions close to slavery (notably the bulk of domestics). They offer the advantage of passivity, since they are anxious above all

12) Of the 40% of Kuwait's inhabitants who hold citizenship in the emirate, less than 10% enjoy the right to vote, which in any case remains quite formal, since the emir is free to act as he chooses and dissolve his poor excuse for a parliament, as he did recently.

not to lose wages, which however wretched loom large in comparison with the deep poverty of their countries of origin.

These highly artificial states were designed to free "surplus capital" and recycle it to their imperialist protectors and tutors. In them, a minority lives in a wallow of luxury that is an insult not only to the great poverty of the neighboring populations, but also to the unenviable conditions of the vast majority of their immigrant workers. The latter, even the Arabs among them (mainly Palestinians and Egyptians) have far less rights and social advantages than the immigrants in the imperialist countries.

The most elementary justice demands the reattachment of these emirates to the more populous regions from which they were cut off by imperialism. Moreover, given their character and composition, we cannot expect the workers who live in them to take power. These states will always have sufficient means to maintain as many well paid mercenaries as necessary to keep their wage slaves down.(13)

From this standpoint, we cannot, in itself, condemn the invasion of Kuwait and its annexation by Iraq. Our attitude to this question is not based on formal principles, but depends on our political analysis of what is at stake. A revolutionary regime based on genuine democratic, popular power in Baghdad might have been led to annex Kuwait manu militari, if it had the means. Of course, it would have done so in a very different way, with the active participation of the workers living there, and in the manner of a liberation army and not an army of occupation, as Saddam Hussein's troops did. (14)

Should we therefore support the annexation of Kuwait by Saddam Hussein, while condemning his methods? We cannot do that either, because Saddam Hussein is not the representative of the people of Iraq but its oppressor. We support turning over the wealth of Kuwait to those who work there and to the Iraqi people. This will not be done under the dictatorship of the despot of Baghdad any more than it was under the mini-potentate of Kuwait, who today is in exile. Therefore, we can neither support the annexation under way or demand that it be ended. In fact, no one should be fooled. Whatever the democratic intentions those who demand Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait may have, the only real alternative today is the reestablishment of the emir.

Revolutionaries are not obliged, in this case, to choose between the devil and the deep blue sea. They

13) The armies of the emirates and Saudi Arabia are largely made up of mercenaries ("immigrant soldiers" to repress immigrant workers).

14) The Iraqi despot's narrow nationalism shows up also in his inability to appeal to anti-imperialist forces throughout the world. His conception of things is reflected by the taking of Western hostages, which nothing can justify, and which has helped to turn international public opinion against him.

should take a hard-and-fast position only against imperialist intervention, for the reasons already explained. On the ground, the Arab revolutionaries genuinely devoted to the interests of the proletariat should refuse to take part in any confrontation between Arab troops, whether those of Saddam, Fahd, Mubarak, Hafez El-Assad or Hassan II. The workers have nothing to defend, nothing to gain, in such a war between inferior predators. They should oppose the sending of troops from their countries to the area of conflict, like the heroic Iraqi soldiers and officers who have paid with their lives for refusing to participate in Saddam Hussein's new mad adventure.

It is necessary to call on the soldiers of the Arab armies to fraternize and turn their weapons on their leaders. It is necessary to put forward the perspective of a socialist sharing of all the resources of the Arab nation, opposing their current division among ruling classes subordinate to imperialism.

In Iraq or among Iraqis in exile, revolutionaries must above all denounce the despot's folly, which is continually leading their country into massacres for the sake of his megalomaniac ambitions. His revolutionary overthrow remains an urgent task; the survival of Iraq is at stake. They have to explain that the Iraqi people's

right to regain Kuwait cannot be justly demanded, without at the same time supporting the right of the Kurdish people to self-determination and to recovery of their oil producing areas (Kirkuk) colonized by Arabs.

While it is necessary to call for lifting the freeze on Iraqi assets abroad, rejecting a method used more and more commonly by the imperialists toward states that oppose them, we cannot demand that the Kuwaiti state's \$100 billion be turned over to Saddam Hussein, nor given back to the emir. Moreover, it is necessary to demand the freezing of the "private" assets of the Kuwaiti reigning family, which amount to several tens of billions of dollars! These funds should be turned over to Iraq for rebuilding the country, as soon as its people are able to freely elect their government.

These are the general lines of a revolutionary attitude based on the class interests of the proletariat. The questions are complex, and the answers have to be carefully balanced to avoid becoming identified with any of those involved in this conflict. The only simple and unqualified response is resolute opposition to the imperialist intervention.

September 4, 1990 (IV 190)

## Talking Peace and Preparing for War

George Bush's offer to send US Secretary of State James Baker to Baghdad for a "face-to-face" with Saddam Hussein seemed quite surprising given that it came at the end of a month full of political and military preparations for war. While Iraq announced on December 6 the release of all hostages, the US administration kept upping the ante.

Three weeks before Bush's offer, Washington had announced a significant reinforcement of the already massive American deployment in the Gulf. By January the number of soldiers in place should rise from 230,000 now to 430,000. To this must be added another 100,000 or so "allied" troops, from Arab countries, Europe and elsewhere. The original reason given for assembling the extra 200,000 troops, some of them from the National Guard, was to relieve those already there. The idea was to rotate the troops on the ground, which would be indispensable in the case of a long stay. This seemed in line with a "peaceful" strategy of strangulation by blockade.

The Bush administration, however, has turned these new troops into pure and simple reinforcements, at the cost of sowing disarray among some of the military top brass, who were caught on the hop. The Pentagon big shots are in fact rather worried about the morale of their

troops in Saudi Arabia, who are feeling ever less in sympathy with their obscurantist and puritan hosts.

They are, furthermore, experiencing huge logistical difficulties in sustaining the quarter of a million troops already on the spot, who were deployed in record time — in particular in comparison with the build up of forces in Vietnam between 1961 and 1969. The Pentagon is already using more than a hundred cargo ships to ferry supplies to the Gulf, a region which normally imports almost all its food.

At the end of November, the American press learned that the increase in the number of troops was going to be accompanied by an important boost in the air forces deployed in the Gulf. The number of aircraft is to increase from 1,600 to 1,900. The 300 extra will include a second squadron of the radar-invisible F-117 Stealth bombers — the most expensive and sophisticated airplane in the Pentagon's repertoire. Furthermore, "the ground support units for the airforce have started to build up stocks of spare parts and munitions sufficient to ensure several hundred combat sorties per day."(1)

In addition to the logistical problems, the total cost

1) *International Herald Tribune*, December 1/2, 1990.

of these military expenses continues to grow, a serious issue for a state which is already \$6,000bn in debt. The Bush administration has already forecast a record budget deficit of \$254bn for 1991. In October alone, before the dispatch of the latest reinforcements, military spending had passed \$24bn, an increase of 17% on the previous month (\$20.5bn).<sup>(2)</sup> This is hardly the \$50bn reduction in the federal budget deficit promised as part of the "peace dividend" before Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait.

This prodigality has, of course, an economic rationality. It is intended to spare the military and paramilitary sector, which is of decisive weight in the United States, from the pangs of recession. But it depends to a very great extent on external financing, and this can only make the American debt worse. Bush hoped to avoid this by getting his rich allies and protégés — the Gulf oil monarchies, Germany and Japan — to make direct financial contributions to the intervention against Iraq.

Thus, the monthly budget report for October notes, on the credit side of the balance, \$1.63bn provided by the "Defence Cooperation Account," that is to say the contributions of Washington's rich allies. This sum however covers only a third of the growth in costs between October 1989 and October 1990, which is some \$5bn, or 26% more. The result is the record deficit forecast for the coming year, and an aggravation of a problem which is weighing heavily on the global economic outlook, and besides which the Third World debt is small beer.

For all these reasons, the "long haul" strategy, otherwise known under the euphemistic name of "sanctions", is in fact ruled out as an option for Washington. When administration officials say they are convinced that the embargo will not be enough to make Saddam Hussein back down, what they are really saying is that the US is not able to maintain its present effort for a long time. Henry Kissinger spelt this out with particular frankness in his deposition to the Armed Services Committee of the US Senate: "The presence of a large force puts pressure on Saddam Hussein, but it also makes it more difficult to sustain it for an indefinite period of time. And this is why we will come to a point of decision...sometime in the next few months."<sup>(3)</sup>

This is the background to the sending of the new troops. Their size was decided between General Powell, head of the US joint chiefs-of-staff, and General Schwarzkopf, commander of the forces present in the Gulf. This decision answers the needs of an "offensive punch" to borrow the phrase of Bob Woodward, the well-known *Washington Post* reporter. As he explained it: "the political objective set by President Bush is to 'evict the Iraqi army from Kuwait'. The military task is as a consequence to realize this objective rapidly and

with minimum losses, which implies massive firepower."<sup>(4)</sup>

According to Woodward, General Powell and the Defence Secretary, Dick Cheney, are the proponents of the Pentagon's new military doctrine, which was put to work during the invasion of Panama in December 1989.<sup>(5)</sup> This strategy, according to the *Washington Post* journalist, entails: "secrecy, the figurative 'decapitation' of the enemy leadership and the crushing shock of combat power intended to be so formidable as to prove invincible... 'The doctrine represents a reaction to, and a rejection of, the gradualism of Vietnam.'"

More precisely, in this specific case of confrontation with the Iraqi army, which is a wholly different proposition to Noriega's, the Pentagon aims to achieve its objectives with the minimum of ground combat. They are counting first and above all on the airforce, envisaging: "days — and perhaps weeks — of intense, round-the-clock aerial bombardment designed to pulverize ground fortifications and terrorize and demoralize Iraqi troops."<sup>(6)</sup>

In its December 10 edition, *Newsweek* magazine gives more detail on the American generals' plan: "the offensive would begin with a massive aerial bombardment. At H-hour, warplanes would take out Iraqi air defenses and chemical-tipped missiles aimed at Israel, as well as Saddam's command links to his forces. The US Air Force believes it can destroy half of Saddam's forces within a week. In Baghdad, Saddam's headquarters would be flattened. But in general, civilian targets would be spared. At the Pentagon, military planners believe Bush would order a halt to the bombing after several days to give Saddam a chance to surrender."

It would be at this point, according to the plans, that the ground forces would go into Kuwait. According to *Newsweek*, this would be a frontal land attack, since the option of a flank attack by air-lifted and naval troops has been found to be impracticable (the Marines' disembarkation exercises in Saudi Arabia have been lamentable). Washington would prefer — for political reasons, but also, and above all, to minimize its own casualties — that Saudi and Egyptian troops should bear the brunt of this ground fighting.

These latter however are not enthusiastic about the idea and are not militarily reliable. Thus the air phase is decisive for the whole scenario, and the Pentagon would hope that it alone would be enough to make Saddam Hussein back down, or provoke his overthrow, or at least the demoralization and disintegration of his army, little inclined to sustain another massacre for no result, as in the war with Iran.

To complete its war preparations, on November 29

4) *IHT*, December 3, 1990.

5) See *International Viewpoint*, no. 177, January 29, 1990.

6) *IHT*, December 12, 1990.

2) *The Wall Street Journal*, November 26, 1990.

3) Quoted in *Newsweek*, December 10, 1990.

the White House gained the approval of the United Nations Security Council for military action. The January 15, 1991, deadline gives the Pentagon exactly as much time as it needs to deploy the reinforcements and prepare for the attack. This was the context behind Bush's November 30 proposal for a meeting with Saddam Hussein.

In fact, the American president has been confronted since September by a constant erosion of support in the United States itself for his aggressive policies. In November alone, he suffered a series of political reverses, including a unanimous resolution from the National Council of Churches demanding the immediate withdrawal of the bulk of American forces from the Gulf region (except those required for the embargo, and on the condition that these act under the UN flag). There have also been a number of anti-war declarations by retired generals and military experts testifying before the Senate's Armed Services Committee. The previous month had seen a political offensive by the Arab and world supporters of a compromise that would allow Saddam Hussein to withdraw without losing face.<sup>(7)</sup>

Bush had to act without further loss of time. He had to show both that he does not want war and that he had made sure that, if it happens, it takes place in the best possible conditions for his troops. He has to answer both those who accuse him of not seriously exploring the opportunities for a bloodless resolution of the conflict and those who accuse him of being light-minded about the realities of war with Iraq and of underestimating that country's capacities. Thus, at one and

7) See *IV*, no. 194, November 12, 1990.

the same time, we see the further build-up of the forces on the ground, in line with the doctrine of overwhelming superiority, and the offers of discussion.

Certainly, Bush is ardently hoping that Saddam Hussein will give in to the threats against him, thus sparing the American president a war which, whatever the Pentagon's plans, will be very risky. The minimal demand for Washington is that the Iraqi dictator takes his troops out of Kuwait without getting anything in return.

That is to say, he must submit totally to the will of the United States and its allies, since there would be no other way in which his regime could survive financially. Even if this happened, as Dick Cheney put it in a TV interview: "We still are going to be faced with an Iraq that has enormous military capability and has developed a desire to develop even more nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles etc... It would be important to fashion in the international community a set of sanctions that were targeted specifically on these technologies."<sup>(8)</sup>

If, however, Saddam Hussein does not give in, which is far from certain, given his track record, there will be war. In his November 30 speech, Bush declared to American public opinion: "I assure you that if military action is required, it will not be another Vietnam... This will not be a prolonged war." Rather, his generals' plans point indeed in the direction of another Hiroshima.

December 6, 1990 (*IV* 197)

8) *IHT*, December 3, 1990.

## Apocalypse Now - Part II

Never in history has a war, and its plans, been "so-much foretold"<sup>(1)</sup>, so far in advance. The offensive unleashed by the United States army and its allies in the night of January 16/17, 1991 corresponds in detail to the scenario developed by the Pentagon's strategists since the start of what it was convenient to describe as the "Gulf crisis".

At the time of writing, less than 48 hours after its start, the offensive has only begun. Nonetheless, phase 1 will certainly run according to plan, since it depends on air forces and missiles, in which the aggressors have crushing and comprehensive superiority. The Pentagon has, of course, prepared several variants for the subsequent phases corresponding to the range of possible results of phase 1.

Two conclusions need to be drawn at this stage. They

1) "Une guerre tant annoncée" the title of an editorial in *Le Monde*, January 18, 1990.

allow us to resolve the debates which have been taking place inside the anti-imperialist and anti-war movements around two closely connected questions: that of the real objectives of the imperialist intervention and that of the real relation of forces, beyond all the fantasies stemming from contradictory motivations and leading to contradictory conclusions.

The fact that the scenario developed by Washington and "so much foretold" can be implemented with such ease, proves firstly that it was necessary to take this scenario seriously, as we have always done.<sup>(2)</sup> Secondly it shows that this scenario was perfectly plausible — contrary to the belief of those who took for good coin George Bush's rantings comparing the stakes in this war to those in the Second World War, or Saddam Hussein's blusterings about certain victory.

Until the last minute, two huge errors of interpreta-

2) See *International Viewpoint*, nos 190, 191, 194 and 197.

tion of the US administration's designs were current among well-intentioned "doves". The first was to believe that the main function of the massive forces deployed against Iraq was deterrence, aimed at defending Saudi Arabia and persuading the Iraqis to withdraw from Kuwait. The second was to imagine that, if force was used, due to Baghdad's obstinacy, this would take place in line with the objectives set by the United Nations Security Council, that is the removal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait.

From the start we have insisted that Washington's real objectives went far beyond the dispute between Iraq and Kuwait. "International law" was the least of George Bush and co's concerns. For them the issues were:

1. To defend their hegemony in a region of the world which not only contains the world's largest reserves of oil, but also puppet states which "recycle" enormous oil revenues to the direct or indirect profit of the imperialist governments and economies;

2. To affirm the absolute political and military supremacy of the United States in the "new world order" after the collapse of the Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe and the growing paralysis — and collusion — of the bureaucratic regime in the Soviet Union;

3. To justify, in this context, the maintenance and even reinforcement of the American armed forces, with financial contributions extracted from the rich beneficiaries — whether other imperialist countries or the oil monarchies — of the American military umbrella;

4. To compensate for the decline in the US' economic position in the face of German and Japanese competition by underlining the importance of US military power, which had tended to be minimized in the euphoria of world detente with all the fine words about economic competition replacing war; and using this military role as a lever for gaining commercial and financial advantages.

For all these reasons, and because of the considerable stakes involved, Washington, as we have constantly emphasized, had set itself the objective not of "liberating" Kuwait, but of destroying Iraq's military/industrial potential.

This was the minimum, non-negotiable programme for the Bush administration: not only to remove the Iraqis from Kuwait, but to remove Iraqi pretensions to regional hegemony in defiance of the US, and in this way to set an example to the rest of the world. This objective had to be reached at whatever cost — whether by military or "peaceful" means.

Thus the only choice left to Saddam Hussein was whether to capitulate without a fight or be crushed by force — to grovel or be forced to grovel.<sup>(3)</sup> This analysis completely ruled out all the chimerical "Arab solutions"

3) *IV* 191.

and other compromise formulas. As we have stressed, the intransigence in this conflict has not come from Saddam Hussein, but the American president. The Iraqi dictator was certainly ready for a variety of possible compromise formulas.

Even ruling out any Iraqi territorial gain, in line with Bush's "principle" of "no reward for aggression" (4), a compromise would have been possible on the basis of the proposal made by Saddam Hussein himself on August 12, 1990, ten days after the invasion of Kuwait.

The despot of Baghdad had then realized the hole he had dug himself into. He had marched blindly into the trap set for him by Washington.<sup>(5)</sup> After vainly threatening the Emir of Kuwait to extract from him the funds needed to refloat the Iraqi state, he then invaded Kuwait, promising to withdraw three days later with the hope of getting a satisfactory deal.

Then, faced with the refusal of the Kuwaiti ruler to negotiate, he proclaimed the latter "overthrown" and later announced the sheer annexation of Kuwaiti territory, pursuing his flight forward faced with American and world reaction. On August 12, Saddam Hussein proposed a global discussion on the presence of his army in Kuwait and those of the Israeli forces on the West Bank and Gaza and of Syrian forces in Lebanon.

The aim of this manoeuvre was not to justify the continuation of the occupation of Kuwait, but to allow him to withdraw without losing face. This became more and more clear as time went on. The behaviour of the Iraqi troops in Kuwait, which they pillaged, carrying off everything to Iraq, was evidence that their presence there was not considered irreversible.

The Iraqi leader wanted to be able to boast that he had won not a "reward" for himself — he had probably understood that there was no hope of this — but a "victory for the Arab cause." He would probably have been satisfied with a decision to hold an international conference on the Middle East, in exchange for the withdrawal of his men.

The American administration torpedoed this prospect whenever it presented itself — right up until the rejection of the French proposal at the UN Security Council on January 14. Bush categorically and explicitly ruled out not only any compromise or "reward for aggression" but any way out that would allow Saddam Hussein to save face.

The fact that an American president surrounded by a multitude of advisers, including psychiatric experts,

4) This "principle" is not, of course, applied to Israel — plans floated by the US government for Israeli withdrawal from any part of the territories occupied in 1967 always involve big concessions by the neighbouring Arab states.

5) It has been well documented that the US government allowed Saddam Hussein to believe that it would not intervene in his conflict with Kuwait.

chose to violently and systematically insult the megalomaniac of Baghdad — calling him "worse than Hitler" and stating that in case of war he was going to "get his ass kicked" was not a matter of impulse. These words were calculated to provoke Saddam into hardening his position and thus justify the military smashing of Iraq.

The feeble diplomatic efforts of the White House, such as the Baker-Aziz meeting in Geneva on January 9 this year, were exclusively designed to soothe American public opinion and win support from the US Congress. The idea was to make the Iraqis appear intransigent, when they refused the only choice on offer, total and unconditional surrender.

The letter from Bush to Saddam Hussein that the Iraqi foreign minister Tarek Aziz refused to receive owing to its insulting nature intimated worse than surrender. The letter spelt out the Americans' threat: not only the "liberation" of Kuwait by force, but the "destruction" of "the Iraqi military establishment", adding in this terrible sentence: "What is at stake here is not the future of Kuwait — it will be free, and its government restored — but rather the future of Iraq."

Washington's real objective could be read from the very deployment of the forces in the Gulf. The "logic of war" was deliberately chosen by the US administration from the beginning. The forces deployed bore no relation to the stated objective, that of forcing the Iraqi army out of Kuwait, even basing oneself on the doctrine of overwhelming superiority enunciated by Powell-Cheney.<sup>(6)</sup> The figures are well known.

We will only add this commentary from *Newsweek* (7) on the 2000 airplanes of the imperialist air armada: "Essentially the same force that NATO arrayed against the Soviet bloc in Central Europe, it represents a 40-year effort to negate the Warsaw Pact's numerical advantage through advanced technology. But the Iraqis have only about 650 operational jets, of which only between 65 and 75 are top-of-the-line Soviet models. The allied air forces face good defenses by Third World standards, but nothing comparable to the forest of surface-to-air missiles in the Warsaw Pact".

This shows the degree to which the forces were without relation to the means chosen by the UN Security Council to force an Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait: an embargo, and de facto a blockade. The White House's arguments against those, including members of the US Congress, who supported the option of a long-term blockade as a "peaceful means" of obtaining Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait were in this respect of unequalled absurdity and hypocrisy.

The Bush administration explained that the size of the forces deployed ruled out a blockade lasting perhaps one or two years, if only for financial reasons, not to mention

6) *IV* 197.

7) *Newsweek*, January 21, 1991.

the morale of the troops and the immobilization in one place of the bulk of the US intervention capacity. If this was the case, however, why could not Bush deploy forces suitable to the aim of a long-term blockade?

Bush himself added: the liberation of Kuwait is an urgent task, since the Iraqis are pillaging that country — as if destroying the country were a means of saving it from pillage.

All the evidence thus points to the fact that the war was desired by Washington, and that its objective was from the start the destruction of Iraqi military/industrial capacity. All those who have contributed to conferring "international legitimacy" on the American action and have maintained the fiction that the objective of the troop build up in the Gulf was the restoration of the "sovereignty" of the Kuwaiti state over its territory — that is, the restitution to the Emir and his family of their property — have been accomplices of the American aggression.

This is the case of the Congress "doves" who voted through war powers, taken in by Bush's claims that the threat of war was the only way to get Saddam Hussein to withdraw without a fight. And, of course, it is also the case of that false innocent, the European social democracy, since, from the start, following the example of the French "socialist" government, it has supported all the American resolutions at the UN, including the one authorizing the use of force after January 15, 1991 — which amounted to an abandonment of the "peaceful" blockade strategy.

Worse still, it has actively participated in the US war preparations. French forces are now involved in the aggression, under American operational command, with the feeble and hypocritical caveat that they will only do their killing on Kuwaiti territory.

The social democratic leaders along with other "democrats" of imperialist Europe have used and abused the false arguments of the democratic battle against a terrible dictatorship, echoing Bush's hypocrisy. The value of this pretext can be seen from the fact that it is here being used to justify an alliance with the world's least democratic and most obscurantist state, Saudi Arabia, which even the intervention troops have found hard to put up with.

It should also be pointed out that this so-called battle for democracy has involved the deliberate over-riding of the majorities of public opinion opposed to the involvement of their country in this war. The grandiloquent speeches accusing the pacifists of wanting a "new Munich", referring to the complacency of the imperialist democracies toward the Third Reich in 1938, are as wild as the line peddled by Bush and his agents on the theme of the "new Hitler". Comparisons between Nazi Germany, with its formidable industrial power and Saddam Hussein's Iraq, a technologically backward country, which exports only oil and dates and depends on imports



in all other fields, including arms, are ridiculous and fantastic.

On the other hand, support for the destruction of a country by the United States, the world's premier military power, for reasons which have everything to do with the latter's hegemony, at a time when it is in an economic recession, amounts to a contribution in reality to the formation of a Fourth Reich — at the moment formally democratic — whose New Order is this time called the "New World Order".

The complicity of the Kremlin bureaucracy under Gorbachev — who only yesterday was passing himself off as the champion of peace — is vile. Moscow has literally sold itself to world imperialism, and first of all to American imperialism, its main opponent on the world stage for the past four decades. From the ignominious transaction undertaken at the Helsinki summit on September 9, 1990 (8) until the vote on November 29, 1990 at the UN Security Council authorizing the use of force against Iraq — preceded by the promise of \$6bn in credits from the oil monarchies of the Gulf (9), of which \$1bn from Kuwait — Gorbachev will at least have succeeded in dispersing any remaining illusions in the heads of the anti-imperialist militants of the Third World as to support from the USSR for their cause.

The brutal and bloody repression of the Lithuanian national movement by Kremlin troops, profiting from the concentration of the world's attention on the Gulf, the reaction of Bush — solely interested in Gorbachev's support for his Gulf policy — to this, German Chancellor Kohl's declaration reproaching the Lithuanians for being "too much in a hurry", the green light given by Washington to Syria in Lebanon, and the reception of the Chinese foreign minister by the White House, smack of the distribution of racketeering zones of control by mafia bosses. Only complete idiots can see in this a new world era founded on respect for law.

The choir of hypocrites knew what to expect in the Gulf. They were perfectly conscious of the real objectives of Washington, as we were ourselves and as was anybody not taken in by the lies in the imperialist media.

We warned against the Apocalypse Now — Part 2 which the Pentagon was preparing in Iraq.(10) We stated that, when Bush assured the world that: "this will not be another Vietnam, it will not be a prolonged war", he was speaking the truth, since his generals were preparing instead another Hiroshima.(11) We were proved right, but reality has gone even further.

In the course of the first day of bombardments, more than 20,000 tons of bombs were released on Iraq, with a power estimated at one and a half times that of the atomic

8) *IV* 190 and 191.

9) *International Herald Tribune*, November 30, 1990.

10) *IV* 190.

11) *IV* 197.

bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Compare this figure with the 3,000 tons dropped daily "in the heaviest of the raids that, in the last year of the Second World War, razed the German cities" (12) or with the 40,000 tons dropped in two weeks in December 1972 on Hanoi and Haiphong.

In much less than 24 hours on January 17, the American and allied planes made more than 1,300 sorties over Iraq and Kuwait, that is, as many as in all of those terrible two weeks at Christmas 1972 in Vietnam.(13) This is indeed the biggest air-raid in history.

The United States intends to continue this onslaught on Iraq at this rhythm for several days, and a month if necessary, according to *Newsweek*.(14) Their action combines almost playful elements, evoking Coppola's film and a weapons' test on real targets, as with the crime in Japan.

Leaving aside the unprecedented mediatization of the conflict and its "video game" aspect on the technological level, there is also a bet between different parts of the American army on the possibility of winning this war using only air power — which would be the best thing for Washington, since it would lead to few dead and wounded soldiers.

This game is not just for fun. There are real gains to be won. The same *Newsweek* explains candidly that the role of the different branches of the armed forces in this combat will determine the number of billions of dollars that they will be allocated in future Pentagon budgets. Iraq has thus become a vast field for experimentation with the American army's latest gadgets and the object of competition between its different corps.

This macabre game has, evidently, nothing to do with the "liberation" of Kuwait. This is also shown by the choice of targets: not only military targets, but also nuclear sites, chemical and biological factories, communications' centres, power stations and so on.

Who can tell how many Bhopals or Chernobyls the destructive fury of the US air force is risking. Who knows how many victims of the bombing and its consequences there will be. We don't know, and, most terribly of all, nor do the Pentagon or White House. The stakes in their eyes are worth putting in danger entire populations, not only that of Iraq but also the neighbouring countries, to which Saddam Hussein has promised to take the conflict.

This carnage and destruction — aimed not at destroying a despot but his people and his country — must be stopped. Iraq, the new Carthage, is in the course of being destroyed by today's Romans, capable of vastly greater murders and violence than those of antiquity. It is neces-

12) According to a military expert quoted in *Le Figaro*, January 18, 1991.

13) *IHT*, January 14, 1991.

14) *Newsweek*, op. cit.

sary to maximize the cost of this imperialist aggression, as we have been preparing to do since the start of the build up.

The strong antiwar movement which preceded the unleashing of the aggression and which continues to grow, in particular in the countries taking part in the anti-Iraq crusade and in the Arab countries, can significantly hinder the US actions, and, at the least, win the cessation of the bombing. It must continue without relenting and be stepped up until the withdrawal of all imperialist forces from the Gulf region.

For the same reasons that motivate the imperialist aggression we wish for the defeat of the imperialists with all our heart. But it is no use having illusions. The only real possibility for creating the conditions for a political defeat of imperialism — and even in Vietnam its defeat was political rather than military — today resides in the development and radicalization of the mass movements opposed to the aggression. Even this requires that Iraq resists for a long time, which is by no means certain.

The American army's control of the sky gives it an immense advantage in these open desert regions and allows it to carry out the work of destruction without great difficulty. No technologically inferior army could resist. There remain the urban zones where a very determined army could hold out for a long time, even against an enemy disposing of far more powerful firepower. This was demonstrated by the defenders of Beirut in the face of the Zionist army in 1982.

But how determined will the Iraqi soldiers be in Kuwait, which is where the Pentagon wants to dislodge them from? The bulk of Saddam Hussein's troops concentrated together there in an ill-thought out way that exposes them to huge losses, are made up of the "people's army", a kind of militia created by the Ba'athist regime, badly fed and poorly trained. These men, among whom are many Egyptian workers drafted by force, were motivated to go to Kuwait by the prospect of unrestricted looting and rape — when they could have easily been disciplined by Ba'athist terror.

It is even probable that Saddam Hussein has chosen to send this mass of militia men to Kuwait because they are the least reliable of his fighters and might turn their weapons against him. The fact that the access from Kuwait to Iraq is held by Saddam Hussein's elite forces, the famous Republican Guard, can thus be understood not only as a defence of proper Iraqi territory but as a force to dissuade the troops massed in Kuwait against any desertion and retreat. These troops thus find themselves between the imperialist hammer and the Ba'athist anvil.

The murderous folly of George Bush is only equalled by that of Saddam Hussein. He has dragged his country into a new ill-thought out adventure, which is now costing Iraq whatever and whoever escaped the destruction

and massacres of the crazy war against Iran.

Even if you believe that there was something progressive in the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, it is clear that the relation of forces made it a senseless and thus criminal undertaking, the last madness of a dictatorship at bay. Even the Bolsheviks gave away a part of their territory at Brest-Litovsk owing to the balance of forces.

Here is the difference between revolutionary realism and the blindness of a psychopath playing double or quits, in this way hoping to win a refulgent place in the pantheon at the expense of his murdered country. The other side of this tragedy are the immense illusions in Saddam Hussein amongst a significant part of the Arab masses, and above all the Palestinian masses.

These illusions are certainly the product of years of frustration and bitterness in the face of imperialist and Zionist arrogance. But they are illusions all the same, and dangerous ones, since the awakening may be brutal and disillusion turn to despair. Twenty three years ago, in 1967, a generation of Arabs placed immense hopes in Nasser's Egypt. They believed in the invincibility of his army and his "rockets". The shock when these same masses realized that their hero had capitulated in six days was terrible. Nasser was an incomparably more progressive and popular figure than Saddam Hussein. The balance of forces between his army and the Israelis was far more favourable than that between the Iraqi army and the coalition it faces. Even so he was defeated.

He was technologically inferior to the Israelis and could not conceive of a strategy based on the revolutionary mobilization of the peoples of the whole Arab region, the break-up of the Zionist consensus by a fraternal appeal to Jewish workers and support from the worldwide anti-imperialist movement.

This lesson must, once more, alas, be learnt by the Arab masses. Two decades of defeats and the extreme weakness of the revolutionary movement have allowed the lessons of 1967 to fade away. The people of the *Intifada* itself have forgotten that, at its height in 1988, it gained more by its own popular, self-organized activity than from all the champions of bourgeois nationalism.

It is the *Intifada* that has shown the way, and not Saddam Hussein. It must be extended to the other Arab countries, including Iraq. Had it triumphed there before the present war, it would have been able to take possession of a considerable potential to put at the service of the Palestinian cause and the revolution, a potential which the madness of the Baghdad despot has given imperialism the opportunity to destroy. Imperialism will win a round, but not the whole battle. It will defeat Saddam Hussein, but not the Iraqi workers that he has oppressed. The task of the moment is, more than ever: two, three, many *Intifadas!*

## Blood and Oil Money

As the gigantic inferno of the Gulf War flickers out, the time for drawing the balance sheets has arrived. It will take some time for the most terrible one, the human toll of the most murderous Desert Storm in history to become fully known. However, it is already clear enough that it is numbered in tens of thousands of deaths — perhaps a hundred thousand or more — and in hundreds of thousands of people harmed physically or materially, by being left with no shelter or resources. And the number of people of all ages who have suffered psychological damage as a result of the dreadful experience, unprecedented in history, of six weeks of intense and uninterrupted bombing (with more than one air sortie per minute) will certainly run into millions.

The cost of the damage wrought by the war is estimated in hundreds of billions of dollars — a large part of Iraq's economic infrastructure (industry, transport, communications) has been destroyed. To this formidable waste should be added the hundred billion dollars spent on the coalition's war effort. It is not possible to put a figure on the ecological disaster, but it is sure to be enormous, and is not limited to the one of the worst oil slicks in history and the massive carbonic cloud rising over the Kuwaiti oilfields.

Only in the course of the coming days, months and years, will it be possible to draw the full balance sheet of all these aspects. But there is one area where some conclusions can even now be drawn — subject to correction in the future, since they involve variable elements — that of the political balance sheets of the main protagonists of this spectacular introduction to the century's final decade.

Let us begin with the most powerful: the United States. Whatever the imponderable long term consequences, the US victory in a war that it to a large extent desired goes far beyond the strictly military success — which was no surprise, almost without risks and certainly without any really merited military glory.

### A victory without risks

Schwarzkopf is no more Montgomery than Saddam is Rommel. The coalition's military undertaking was essentially, 95%, a matter of air power and ballistics. In this area, the coalition's superiority was so overwhelming that it enjoyed near exclusive use of these means from the start of the battle. Apart from a handful of Scud missiles, which compared technologically to the American Patriots and Tomahawks are worth about as much as the German V2s of the Second World War, Iraq suffered, without any means of responding, an unprecedented deluge of iron and fire which would have put an end to

any land army submitted to the same treatment in the same conditions.

Thus, the coalition's land offensive, after more than five weeks of intensive bombing, was hardly more "heroic" than the mission of the pilots, who frankly explained that they felt as if they were playing video war games. The assault that began on February 24 was not, furthermore, a purely ground offensive, but a combined air-land operation. Alongside continued bombardment from planes and missiles went the Coppola-style charge of the "tank-killer" Apache helicopters. There was nothing original in all this. It was a 90s remake of the Nazi Wehrmacht's *Blitzkrieg*, with the immense advantage of complete control of the skies — an absolutely decisive factor in a desert war.

Even if Baghdad had, despite everything, been informed (by the Soviet military for example) of the movement of enemy troops preparing the "big surprise" promised by their commanders — that is, the deeper than originally intended breakthrough to the north and west of Kuwait — it would not have been possible for the Iraqi forces to take the necessary countermeasures.

This was not only because their command networks had been extremely disorganized, but also, and above all, because they could not make any move without air cover. Thus these forces had to passively and painfully submit to the hell that was unleashed on them for 40 days.

And hellish it was! After two weeks of bombing with indecisive results — shown by the Iraqi capture of Khafji on Saudi territory on January 30 — the US went onto a higher stage of violence, an "escalation" in the Vietnam tradition. As we predicted (1), the American bombing became less and less "surgical" and more and more devastating, with stepped up use of B-52s. The troops massed in Kuwait and southern Iraq were systematically carpet bombed with weapons deceitfully categorized as "conventional". Among the more horrible of these, the fragmentation bombs, the massive 15,000 pound "daisy-cutters", napalm and fuel-air explosive CBU's (cluster bomb units).

These killing machines, particularly the CBU's, already used in Vietnam, are more terrible than chemical weapons. Protective suits can guard against the latter, but not against the shock and fire waves of explosions which are as strong as those of small atomic bombs, but without the radioactivity. As in Vietnam there was a hypocritical pretext for their use: then it was to clear the jungle, this time to de-mine the ground and set fire to trenches filled with oil.

1) *International Viewpoint*, no. 200, February 18, 1991.

After three weeks of such treatment coming after two weeks hardly more bearable, what army would have been in a state to fight, and fight blindly, moreover? Certainly Saddam Hussein has more reason to accuse the allies — who postponed the land battle in order to profit to the maximum from their absolute superiority in long-distance attacks — of being cowards, than Bush has to be "proud" of his soldiers.

But it would take a good dose of stupidity to believe that, out of chivalric bravura, the coalition was going to abstain from exploiting a decisive advantage to the full. Quite the opposite. The coalition wanted even to avoid the land battle, hoping at the start that the bombing would suffice to defeat the Iraqi regime and its army.

As a result, the war that has just ended has been the most technological, the most capital intensive, in history. Never before has the determination of the troops played such a limited and marginal role as in the coalition's aggression against Iraq. And this was a big change for Baghdad, from the poorly equipped Iranian "human waves" of the eight-year war. It was quite illusory to draw conclusions from that war that would be valid for this. Both imperialist propaganda, with its talk of the "fourth army in the world", and its deliberate exaggeration of the danger that this presented for the "world order", and Iraqi Ba'athist propaganda, exalting the invincibility of troops hardened in battle against a numerically superior enemy, fostered this illusion.

For anyone not taken in by this double deception, the military victory of the coalition was never in doubt. It was an inevitable result of the unequal strength of the United States and Iraq. We have constantly emphasized this, ruling out, from the start of the bombing, the idea that the Iraqi troops would put up determined resistance even where they could — that is, in the urban areas.(2)

There was no room for illusion on this subject, knowing the nature of the Iraqi regime and its real relations with the population. That is why the rout of the Iraqi army was no surprise to us.

But the American triumph is nonetheless of enormous significance: Bush has been able to keep his promise that this would not be "another Vietnam". The New York Times has even felt able to affirm, rightly, that *Vietnam — or the Vietnam syndrome — had been "buried in the Iraqi desert."*(3) And so it has — militarily and psychologically.

The collective therapy represented by this war for the imperialist ideological consensus in the US, both for the morale of the army and the psycho-political conditioning of the population, requires no commentary. From this point of view as well, the war represents the crowning

2) *IV*, no. 199, February 4, 1991. The Israeli military expert, Ze'ev Schiff, recently made the same assessment of the Iraqi army's ability to resist the allied offensive by regrouping in Kuwait City (*International Herald Tribune*, February 20, 1991).

3) *IHT*, February 26, 1991.

moment of Reaganism. Washington should light a candle to the despot of Baghdad — the ideal enemy — for providing the perfect opportunity by invading Kuwait for a demonstration of its strength — with the bonus of an un hoped for degree of national and world consensus.

Indeed, in keeping quiet, in the interests of mystifying Iraqi and Arab opinion, about the real number of victims, Saddam Hussein shored up the imperialist myth of the "surgical" and "clean" war, depriving the anti-war movement in the coalition countries of a fundamental moral argument.

On the military level, the crushing of Iraq has decisively confirmed the Pentagon's new doctrine, which was worked out precisely in response to the Vietnam trauma.(4) This is the doctrine of a massive strike, based on absolutely overwhelming superiority, in contrast with the gradual and prolonged escalation that the US undertook in Indochina between 1964 and 1973. That was the main lesson that Washington could draw from its defeat in Vietnam. The human and political factor is a weak spot for the imperialist forces, and time works against it. Thus technology — in which, by definition, imperialism always has the advantage — should be used to the maximum in the shortest possible period of time.

By passing the test in Iraq, this doctrine also vindicates the Reaganite choices with regard to developing super-sophisticated weapons, choices that were strongly questioned in their time owing to their prohibitive cost compared to their expected use. Ken Adelman, who was director of arms control in the Reagan administration, can now crow: "Without President Reagan's victories in Congress during the defence battles of the 1980s, we would not be enjoying such Gulf victories in 1991."(5)

He attributes these successes to what he calls the four Ss: "stealth, sea-launched cruise missiles, SDI-like defenses and space systems". The trying out of these arms on real targets in the Gulf will provide the Pentagon with a powerful argument in the budgetary battles to come. The prestige won by the \$100m F-117A "stealth" fighter, which cannot be detected by radar, will be used for example to justify the production of the \$850m-\$1bn "stealth" B-2 bomber.

### Guns and butter

It is, however, true, that the main objections to the Reaganite choices were economic rather than military. In this respect the very way in which the war in Iraq was conducted — without regard for cost, because of the importance of the issues — also speaks in favour of adopting the most expensive options. The leap forward in the American administration's military budget will be justified at the expense of social spending, with, in the last analysis, an economic rationality. The Gulf War,

4) *IV* no. 197, December 24, 1991.

5) *Newsweek*, February 18, 1991.

has, in fact, firmly established the United States as the undisputed leader in the production of military goods and services, followed a long way behind by France and Britain.

Since a large part of the American armed services and the means they consume is financed by governments other than that of the US — such as the Arab oil monarchies, Japan and Germany — this part moves from domestic consumption, aggravating the chronic domestic budget deficit, to exports, improving the balance of payments.

More generally US military-political supremacy is being thrown into the balance to compensate for its relative economic decline. Since the start of the crisis we have described this stake (6), underlining the fact that it was oil money more than oil which Washington sought to control. This is assured through its hegemony over four states — Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar — of a very peculiar kind, states whose specific function is to “recycle” petrodollars in the imperialist economies or in ways from which they profit.

The present world economic situation confirms the considerable importance of this latter aspect. After years of surplus liquidity (according to the logic of capitalism) there has been since 1990 a period of contraction in disposable capital in the world.

The annexation of East Germany by the Federal Republic has absorbed and will absorb German financial resources for several years to come. Japan's financial and stock market problems, added to the uncertain international economic outlook caused by the recession in the US, is now leading to a sharp fall in Japanese capital exports, notably long-term. This is taking place at a time when the capital requirements of Eastern Europe are estimated at \$300bn in the coming five years, and the US requirement for external financing at \$100bn for 1991 alone.(7)

In this global context, the Arab oil monarchies, those suppliers of tens of billions of dollars of “excess” capital, acquire critical importance for imperialism and above all for the imperialist power most greedy for foreign capital — the United States. By imposing itself as the main and irreplaceable “shield” of these regimes, American imperialism is guaranteed the lion's share in the various forms of recycling of petrodollars, to the detriment of all its competitors, including its coalition allies. The capitalist rationality of Kuwaiti investment decisions abroad, and the inclination of the Saudi and UAE rulers to act similarly according to economic criteria, will be replaced in a lasting way by the political-military priority given to the United States, to whom the oil monarchs will do obedience in the manner of feudal vassals to their suzerain.

However, the subjective will, if not the objective capacity of the oil monarchies untouched by the destruc-

tion, to import civilian material and equipment has shrunk severely. Less than ever, after the Kuwaiti experience, will they be inclined to increase the mass of workers in their territories.

The million Yemeni workers expelled from Saudi Arabia during the crisis, on the pretext of punishing the government of their country of origin for refusing to join the anti-Iraqi coalition, along with the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians expelled in one form or another from the Gulf monarchies owing to the solidarity of their people with Iraq (8), or those from all over the world who have fled from Kuwait, will only be replaced in part, mainly by Egyptian workers, in payment to Mubarak's regime for its role in the coalition.

With the exception of Kuwait, the main forms of petrodollar recycling by the three other monarchies will be, on the one hand, deposits of all kinds — notably the purchase of American treasury bonds, to finance the US budget deficit, which is continuing to grow (9) — and on the other the tens of billions of dollars to be spent on sophisticated weaponry, which, of course, will be more than ever supplied by the United States.

In this field, indeed, the Pentagon's murderous toys have proved their worth, and will not be bought solely out of obligation. It is also a safe bet that the last Israeli inspired resistance in the US congress to the sale of the most modern weaponry to the Arab oil monarchies will fall away after “Desert Storm”, all the more so as Washington's control over the armies of these states is more firmly established. For Kuwait, recycling is bound up with reconstruction. There is a big market here — estimates vary between \$40bn and \$100bn for the three to five years ahead.(10) In the present world economic climate this is really a godsend, in particular for an economy in the middle of a recession, as is the US. Before August 2, 1990, the US provided only 12% of Kuwaiti imports, behind the European Community and Japan. Now the Americans are grabbing the majority of the orders in the nauseating rush of the blood-suckers of world capitalism for Kuwaiti yellow and black gold — of 181 postwar contracts already signed by the Kuwaitis, 130, or 72% have gone to US companies. These are worth some \$270m out of a total of \$356m — that is 76%.(11) On the stock markets of the US, as well as in other countries expecting to get a slice of the cake, the shares of construction, engineering, and oil and infrastructural equipment companies have been rising sharply.

8) Let us note in passing that the imperialist media, present in force in Saudi Arabia since August 2, 1990, and full of concern for workers fleeing Kuwait and Iraq after the invasion, have said almost nothing about the plight of the million Yemenis and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians expelled from the fundamentalist kingdom. They have also managed to overlook the ban on leaving imposed on many others who wanted to go home to await the end of the crisis.

9) *IV* 197.

10) The market for the reconstruction of Iraq is even bigger. However it is too hazardous for the moment to be taken into account.

11) *Newsweek*, February 25, 1991.

The economic circuit set up by this war for the US is mind-boggling. American arms such as the Tomahawk cruise missiles at \$1.3m apiece rendered surplus to requirement by disarmament on the European front, have been destroyed over Iraq and Kuwait.

Now they can be entered into accounts under the heading “war effort” and to a large extent paid for by the US's rich protégés. They have, meanwhile, wrought massive destruction, which, in the case of Kuwait at least, gives rise to big orders benefiting American companies, notably in the oil sector, often tied to the industries that supply the arms. The vicious circle is thus completed.

The genealogy of the firms involved, as well as the CVs of the leading actors — such as Bush himself, whose ties with the oil sector are well-known — are quite revealing. We find, for example, that the FMC Corp. of Chicago which builds the M-2 Bradley armoured troop carriers is going to supply oil installations; that Raytheon, which makes the Patriot anti-missile missile is going to contribute to the reconstruction of Kuwait City airport; that the godfather of the Tomahawk programme in the 1970s, W. P. Clements, joint Defence Secretary under Nixon, is an oil tycoon, and was twice governor of Texas subsequently; or that among previous top directors of Bechtel, the firm which is placed to pick up a large part of the reconstruction work, are to be found George Schulz and Caspar Weinberger, and so on. It really is the military-industrial-oil complex that is pulling the golden chestnuts out of the fire of the Gulf War.

All the above listed factors have to be taken into consideration, and not only military spending, if we want to assess the effects of the war against Iraq on the American recession. The guarantee of a politically motivated capital inflow, relatively insensitive to the level of interest rates, can make it possible to keep these rates at a level low enough to be compatible with a relaunch of economic activity. Kuwaiti orders, along with arms orders can also give a decisive pull to key sectors of the economy. There are however too many imponderables in the present highly unstable economic situation to allow confident predictions. But what must be underlined here is that, far from being a “sacrifice” for Washington in the minds of the decision makers, the Gulf War has been a juicy enterprise, if not for the American economy as a whole, then at least for those sectors to which they are most closely tied. They, furthermore, put their money on a short war and won their bet.

### The fruits of aggression

From the global strategic point of view, the US have come out as the big winners from this massacre. In the immediate term, Bush has gained all his objectives. American military supremacy has been effectively invested to renew and reinforce their global political leadership and to improve the terms of the economic competition with their imperialist partners. Europe has appeared disu-

nited and unable to collectively and independently affect the course of the conflict, although its interests were even more directly involved than those of the US. The famous European defence seems a distant dream today. The French social democrats have proved faithful to their Atlanticist tradition, and have partially liquidated the Gaullist heritage.

The attempt by the Soviet Union, meanwhile, to climb back in through the window after leaving by the tradesman's entrance, failed. Under Shevardnadze's reign as Soviet foreign affairs minister, Moscow sold off its influence in the Middle East, in the building up of which it had invested so much previously. The Gorbachev leadership approved the use of force against Iraq in exchange for a fistful of dollars from the oil monarchies. (12)

Pressure from the Soviet army, disturbed at the strategic implications of the Gulf war and the disastrous effects of the abandonment by the Kremlin of its former Iraqi ally, pushed Gorbachev to try to regain centre stage. The last minute Soviet peace proposals were aimed at saving Saddam Hussein's regime, and notably the elite Republican Guard, the main defence of the dictatorship, from collapse.

If the attempt had been successful the result would have been the maintenance in power of a Saddam, who, although much weakened militarily, would still have disposed of not inconsiderable means. The Iraqi despot would also have kept intact his prestige in the eyes of the Arab and Muslim masses (including in the Asian republics of the Soviet Union itself). Finally, Iraq would have had no choice but to depend more than ever on Moscow to rearm, as well as rebuild, given the complete degradation of the country's relations with imperialism.

Thus, the maintenance of the Ba'athist regime is firmly in the interests of the Kremlin, which, with the Palestine Liberation Organization now in the same basket as Saddam Hussein, while preserving its authority among the Palestinian masses, would have continued to dispose of very important political instruments in the Middle East.

Thus it is understandable why Washington systematically worked to block Gorbachev's manoeuvres. In the final days of the conflict the issue was no longer war or peace, but the aftermath of the war.

The US had to attain its main objective of the final weeks of the war whatever the cost. Not so much the overthrow of Saddam Hussein — an accessory objective, not worth big risks by Bush (13) — but the dismantling of the Republican Guard massed in southern Iraq. The problem for the American administration is that, unlike in Grenada and Panama, it does not have a satisfactory replacement for the Iraqi dictator. The Iraqi oppo-

12) *IV* no. 199, February 4, 1991.

13) *IV* 200.

sition is a conglomerate of tendencies, going from pro-Iranian Shi'ite fundamentalists to pro-Soviet Communists, to which should be added the Kurds, themselves divided into several tendencies.

All told, Washington would prefer even Saddam Hussein to such successors. The United States administration wants to avoid persisting chaos in Iraq that would threaten the stability of the whole region. Such catastrophe scenarios have been ruled out from the start: "A vitiated, leaderless Iraq might be even more dangerous for US interests. The defeated nation could fall victim to the same internal feuding and external pressures that have torn apart Lebanon for 15 years." (14) wrote *Newsweek* magazine in October 1990, referring to the Shi'ite and Kurd problems and Turkish, Syrian and Iranian ambitions.

The magazine continued, referring to US secretary of state James Baker: "US policymakers are prepared to live with an armed, still hostile Saddam for the foreseeable future, but he would be held in check with a continuing embargo of military hardware and a 'tripwire' of Arab or UN forces along Iraq's borders with Kuwait and Saudi Arabia."

This option was presented as an alternative to war. In fact, it is coming to pass now, via a war whose objective was to destroy the offensive military potential of the Iraqi army and to reduce its size by two thirds. In this way the threat this army presented to imperialist order in the region would be removed, at the same time leaving the Iraqi state the means to defend itself against internal and external dangers, which, in destabilizing Iraq, would destabilize the entire region.

Washington wants to see Saddam Hussein overthrown from within his own entourage, so that the regime can be both preserved and redirected. However a revolutionary overthrow of the tyrant would be a worse outcome for the United States and its Arab protégés than his remaining in power.

14) *Newsweek*, October 29, 1990.

## The Tragedy of the Iraqi People

America walks tall once more. She is as proud of her victory as if it were that of David over Goliath. The American commander in chief, Norman Schwarzkopf (known as "the bear"), weighing in at 240 pounds, gives an original interpretation to the role of David; after his extraordinary exploit in overcoming mighty Grenada, he now finds himself at the centre of an upsurge of self-satisfaction over the brave deeds of American arms in the Gulf. Among these one which will certainly establish a new legend: the massacre of a huge number of soldiers and civilians fleeing along the highway leading from

The American administration has lost no opportunity to restate its commitment to the "integrity of Iraq". This clearly means that it opposes the right of self-determination of the Kurdish people, although it has just employed half a million troops to defend the "rights of the Kuwaiti people." What this latter principle means in practice can be gauged from the first act of the restored Emirate: martial law, installing wholly arbitrary rule, has been decreed, to the great annoyance of the Kuwaiti liberal bourgeois opposition.

The ruling family has fixed as its first task the hunting down of undesirables — Palestinians and others — and the disarmament of the population that stayed behind in Kuwait. This is the least privileged part of the Kuwaiti population, without the means to go into gilded exile as many Kuwaitis were able to do, who have picked up the arms left behind by the fleeing Iraqis. The heir to the throne calls this "the cleanup". The stupidity of believing that the imperialist war would lead to the introduction of "democracy" in the region is already clear.

The Iraqi defeat is a bitter pill for the Arab mass movement to swallow, and above all for the Palestinians threatened with new expulsions from their territories.

This is a time of great danger for all the anti-imperialist struggles directly confronting a United States now more arrogant than ever. Cuba is particularly threatened. We should not be discouraged. On the contrary, it is necessary to redouble our efforts to prepare for the next round; at present we must oppose any further embargo against exhausted Iraq and demand the immediate withdrawal of the imperialist troops from the Gulf region.

Imperialism has won a battle against an adversary of its own choosing. It has not won the war, and cannot, indeed, win it, since it endlessly produces its own gravediggers. Even the military victory over Iraq has much enlarged and radicalized the anti-imperialist front of the Arab masses. This will rebound against imperialism in the medium or long term.

March 1, 1991 (IV 202)

Kuwait City to Basra.

As the victory circus goes on — with such Hollywood-style stunts as the return of the US ambassador by helicopter, 16 years after another US ambassador was forced to flee Saigon in similar fashion — the extent of the carnage wreaked by the "surgical war" in Iraq and Kuwait is only slowly coming to light.

It will take many years for the effects of this sledgehammer surgery to heal, leaving behind terrible and deep

marks. And to complete the image of what, apart from radioactivity, was the equivalent of an atomic bomb attack, terms of artificial night and nuclear winter are being employed to describe the effects of the huge poisonous cloud produced by the burning Kuwaiti oilwells, already considered as one of the worst ecological disasters in history.(1)

The dimensions of the slaughter and the disaster, the terrible devastation left in Kuwait and Iraq by the clash between the Nero of Baghdad and the Truman 2 of Washington, makes the sight of the worthy representatives of world capitalism crowding round the holders of the petrodollars to grab the postwar contracts all the more revolting. Bush, crowned emperor by the US Congress and the imperialist media, is now, in the fashionable phrase, turning his attention to "winning the peace" after having won the war. Or to put it another way, the US administration is hoping to strike while the iron is hot to shape the regional *pax americana*, without which the military victory will soon lose its lustre. Thus, in the aftermath of the great battle, politics becomes the continuation of war by other means.

Washington's first big political challenge is, of course, Iraq itself. All those in the West who believed, or claimed to believe, in the "anti-fascist" character of this war are today facing embarrassment.(2) When George Bush ordered the ceasefire on February 28, what remained of the Iraqi army in southern Iraq was in such disorder that the fighting had turned into a killing game with human targets. The coalition troops could have easily continued their advance to Baghdad, or at least to the gates of the capital, in order to provoke the overthrow of Saddam Hussein.

This they chose not to do — and certainly not out of some sudden interest in sticking to the mandates of the UN security council. In Grenada and Panama, for much less than the invasion of Kuwait, and against regimes which, in comparison with Iraq's, were almost democratic, Washington's troops did not hesitate to depose the existing regime and replace it by one dependent on the USA. But in these two countries pro-American alternative with a degree of legitimacy and stability existed. This was not, and is not, true of Iraq.

We have pointed out before (3) that the White House and its Saudi protégés are far more frightened of a power vacuum in that country than of Saddam Hussein. The spectacle offered by the Iraqi opposition at its meeting in Beirut on March 10 to 13, was not one that the supporters of the new regional order — a sub-division of the "new world order" — could view with relish. This mosaic of

1) See article by George Mitrailias in *International Viewpoint* no. 202, March 18, 1991.

2) Among these can even be found people on the left, and not only people lacking a grasp of the facts of the situation, but experts such as Fred Halliday in Britain. The latter has written: "The military action against Iraq was legitimate, just as in the 1930s and 40s it was justified to support the war against fascism." (*The New Statesman and Society*, London, March 8, 1991).

3) *IV 202*.

tendencies united only in their hostility to the tyrant of Baghdad, and divided on everything else, would find it very difficult to establish a minimum of stability in Iraq, if they had to set up their government on the rubble of the Saddam regime's military-police apparatus.

Ba'athist totalitarianism, especially in the last decade, has been of the kind that leaves apparently either chaos or the maintenance of the old apparatus, in part or in whole, as the only two alternatives. Even worse from the point of view of Washington and its protégés, the main forces likely to emerge from this chaos are tied to Damascus, Tehran or Moscow, and would be very difficult to integrate into the projected *pax americana*. Thus the only way to understand Bush's appeals to the Iraqi people — and, explicitly, to the Iraqi military — to get rid of the tyrant is as appeals to the Ba'athist leaders to sacrifice Saddam Hussein on the altar of the supreme interest of their regime and its stability.

The Saudis have kept lines open to the opposition forces solely with the aim of being ready for anything. Furthermore, they have been promoting dissident Ba'athists who could contribute to the maintenance of the regime once it has got rid of some of its leaders. But all in all Riyadh, like Washington, would find it a hundred times more preferable to deal with a weakened and "tamed" (in the apt phrase of a top American official (4)) Saddam Hussein than to risk the big leap in the dark involved in a total collapse of the regime. This is the political calculation that is determining their concrete military attitude to developments in Iraq.

Other reasons could be found perhaps for the failure of the coalition troops to march on Baghdad when the road lay open before them, but it is the only explanation for the fact that the six weeks of intensive air and missile attack spared the Iraqi forces massed in the north of the country, in Kurdistan and even in the capital. Washington's objective was never to destroy and dismantle the whole of the Iraqi armed forces, but to cut them down to "acceptable" size, around 200,000 to 300,000 men, incapable of threatening their neighbours, but sufficient to dissuade those among the latter who had hegemonic ambitions, and to crush the Shi'ite, Communist or Kurdish oppositions.

The attitude of the American troops in Iraq (5) perfectly illustrates the basic choice that has been made. And this choice has determined the events that have been taking place in Iraq since the end of the allied offensive. Baghdad's military forces have been smashed in the south of the country, creating a power vacuum. The lid had been taken off the pressure cooker, and a mass uprising has ensued, an uprising of a population that has suffered for many years a terrible and unbearable tyranny, and which, furthermore, has borne the brunt of Sad-

4) *International Herald Tribune*, March 11, 1991.

5) The Arab members of the coalition have restricted themselves to Kuwaiti territory.

dam's two insane wars.(6)

According to several sources, this uprising was essentially spontaneous. Soldiers from the routed army joined in, notably soldiers originally from this region. It will have been hard for Tehran to resist intervening in the uprising, given that the southern Iraqi towns are in their majority Shi'ite and near to the Iranian frontier. Iraqi refugees from the pro-Iranian Shi'ite fundamentalist current were infiltrated back into Iraq. But that does not mean that we can describe the revolt as such as Shi'ite, in the sense of an uprising motivated by communalist objectives, and even less as fundamentalist or pro-Iranian, as has been done in the mass media.

In fact, the main pro-Iranian fundamentalist current, led by Mohammad Baqr Hakim, has not been putting forward its basic programme and has been rallying, as was seen at the Beirut congress, to the general democratic demands, which are a lot more popular than the call for an "Islamic Republic" even among the Iraqi Shi'ites. Tehran is also well aware that its men are unlikely to be supported by a majority of the Arab population — whether Shi'ite or Sunni, let alone the Kurds. The regime of the mullahs also fears the appearance in Iraq of a "chaos" that would favour the liberation of Kurdistan, the resurgence of a powerful Communist movement (7) and the appearance of liberties long-suppressed in Iran itself, with contagious effects inside the latter country.

From this point of view, the proposal of the president of the "Islamic Republic", Rafsanjani, on March 8, has been much misinterpreted in the West. The media have seen Rafsanjani's appeal to Saddam Hussein to withdraw from the political stage as indicating support for the insurgent masses. The reality is quite different. In fact, the Iranian president was calling on the Ba'ath party to get rid of the despot and rule in alliance with the (pro-Iranian) opposition.(8) This appeal came after an offer of cooperation from Saddam Hussein himself, who had sent his Shi'ite lieutenant Saadun Hammadi to Tehran. Saddam has also made a similar offer to the Kurds, proposing to reactivate the accords on Kurdish autonomy of March 1970.(9)

The hand extended by the despot was rejected, not owing to intransigent opposition to his regime, but to his person. Tehran and its supporters as well as the Kurds linked to Iran consider Saddam Hussein's withdrawal as

6) The south of Iraq was in the front line of the Iraq/Iran war as well as the war that has just ended.

7) The Iraqi Communist Party can take advantage of the non-participation by Moscow in the military coalition, the credit won by the Kremlin's last minute attempts to stop the war, and the fact that, whatever the regime in Baghdad, it will inevitably be largely dependent on the USSR. The fact that Moscow has maintained the 1972 Friendship and Cooperation Treaty with Iraq and has refused to promise not to deliver arms to that country, as was requested by the British prime minister John Major when he met Gorbachev in Moscow at the start of March (see *IHT*, March 7, 1991), also shows the Kremlin's thinking.

8) "It is impossible for the Ba'ath Party to govern alone, especially under the leadership of someone no longer wanted by the world, the region or the Iraqi people" (*IHT*, March 9-10, 1991).

9. *IHT*, March 8, 1991.

a basic condition for making their collaboration with the Ba'athists credible. That is to say that the calculation of the Iranian leadership, or at least of Rafsanjani, is the same as that of the Americans or Saudis, insofar as the maintenance of the Ba'athist regime minus its chief is concerned. The rivalry is over who will exercise influence in Iraq and cut out the other.

In consequence both of the two camps — Tehran on the one side and Washington/Riyadh on the other — are trying to throw spanners into the other's works. The anti-American rhetoric coming out of Tehran during the last days of the coalition offensive, preceded by the offer of refuge to Iraqi planes on Iranian soil, had the aim of facilitating the possibility of an alliance with Baghdad against the coalition. In return, the American forces in southern Iraq have given the green light for Saddam Hussein's regime to drown the uprising there, which is supported by Iran, in blood.

As a matter of fact, on top of the two military choices cited above, there is a third, even more blatant one. The American army could, without the slightest problem, block the route to the south to all reinforcements of men and tanks from the north and centre. All it would have had to do, indeed, would have been to include a prohibition on such movement in the ceasefire conditions, given that the shattered Iraqi regime is exclusively preoccupied with crushing its own people and has docilely accepted all the conditions set out by Bush in Washington and New York and by Schwarzkopf in Safwan.(10) In the same way, Baghdad could have been prohibited from using air space for military ends, which would have prevented the use of Iraqi army helicopters against the popular rebellion.

But the American forces have done the opposite. They have allowed Saddam Hussein to move his soldiers, his tanks and his helicopters throughout Iraqi territory, including towards Basra. They have allowed, and continue to allow, him to crush the popular uprising in the south and centre in a bloodbath. The scant information that filters out on this subject, through the Iraqi iron curtain re-established with the complicity of the coalition, talks of massacres with heavy arms and executions of the insurgents by the hundreds — all perfectly likely given that Saddam's is one of the world's most bloodthirsty regimes.

In the face of protests in the United States from those who believed in the myth of the democratic crusade against the new Hitler, Bush felt obliged on March 13 to "confess to some concern" on the subject of the use of helicopters. A few days earlier, Pentagon General Brandtner declared that the US would even permit Saddam Hussein to use the planes now in Iran against the rebellion, if he could get them back, and if they did not threaten the coalition troops.(11)

10) The site of the meeting on Iraqi territory between the Iraqi military chiefs and those of the coalition.

11) *IHT*, March 11, 1991.

Bush's "concern" on the subject of helicopters, derisory as it is when set against his expressed concern over the "instability" of Iraq, was preceded by a warning from Bush to Baghdad against using chemical weapons. Faithful to the definition of "conventional" weaponry developed by the Pentagon, the Iraqi regime must thus restrict itself to bombing the areas in revolt with napalm.

The American forces are doing more than just leaving the Ba'athist dictatorship to repress the popular uprising in its own fashion. They are offering it the services of "Desert Shield" in the sense that they directly or indirectly dissuade Iran from stepping up aid to the rebels. According to the *International Herald Tribune* (March 6, 1991): "The United States, Saudi Arabia and other countries in the coalition form an imposing deterrent to any Iranian attempt to gain a foothold in Iraq, particularly if Tehran violated Iraqi territorial integrity." In the same way, to the north, Washington's ally Turkey is energetically persuading the Kurds not to go too far in their fight with Baghdad.

The Turkish president, Turgut Özal, has more than once threatened to intervene in Iraqi Kurdistan if separatist sentiments are expressed too effectively. At the start of the coalition offensive, the parliament in Ankara adopted special war powers authorizing the sending in of Turkish troops into northern Iraq if considered necessary. The limit for Kurdish aspirations set by Özal is none other than the autonomy that Baghdad, on paper, already granted them 21 years ago, and which Saddam Hussein is now offering to reactivate.

The thing on which everyone in the region seems to agree is opposition to the right of the Kurdish people to separate and form their own state. The United States, Iran, Syria and Saudi Arabia are all loudly proclaiming their support for "the territorial integrity of Iraq." Speaking to journalists who asked him what the Kurds could hope to get out of the New World Order, the French foreign affairs minister, Roland Dumas, could only come up with "the Kurds are desperate." (12) Saddam Hussein is well aware that the danger from the Kurdish side is limited. He knows that whatever advances the Kurdish forces make they cannot force him to grant more than he already accepted in 1970. He also understands that the Kurds, as a national minority, cannot aspire to take power at the centre.

The danger in the regions populated by Shi'ite Arabs, who are the majority in Iraq, is much greater, notably owing to the intervention of Tehran on the side of the insurgents. This is why the Baghdad tyrant, profiting from the safe conduct ensured by the American forces, has chosen for the time being to bring elite troops down from the north to deal with the rebellion in the centre and the south.

By doing this Saddam Hussein has exposed his remaining troops in the north to discomfiture, which has

12. *Le Monde*, March 12, 1991.

surely ensued as the masses in revolt have been joined by Kurdish nationalist guerilla fighters. He had to deal with the most pressing problem and leave the settling of accounts with the Kurds until later, and this is what he appears to be doing now. In this battle for the survival of his dictatorship, Saddam Hussein is relying first of all on his praetorian guard, the Republican Guard and his police and para-police services, which are themselves the target of terrible popular vengeance wherever the uprising has even temporarily got the upper hand.

The dictator's next concern is to attempt to stop the rest of his army from disintegrating. To this end, he has decreed an amnesty for deserters and granted monthly bonuses to all his troops, and in particular to the soldiers of the Guard who are already relatively highly privileged in terms of money, equipment and social advantages.

The cohesion of the rest of the army is ensured, with only limited success, by the same Ba'athist terror that holds down the population. Soldiers' families are taken hostage to limit the possibility of rebellion to those whose relatives live outside territory under Ba'athist control. The systematic execution of rebels dissuades the others from themselves revolting.

The outlook for the rebellion is also darkened by the de facto support given by the United States to the Baghdad regime. As a figure from the Iraqi bourgeois democratic opposition has justly protested in the *Washington Post*: "The United States, behind a fig leaf of non-interference, waits for Saddam to butcher the insurgents in the hope that he can be overthrown later by a suitable officer" (13). A commentary in the US Senate reported in *Newsweek* turn Bush's Saddam/Hitler analogy back on its author: "The position of the administration is precisely that we want to get rid of Saddam, but not his regime... It is like getting rid of Hitler but leaving the Nazis in power." (14)

The insurgent Arab and Kurdish masses of Iraq against the Ba'athist tyranny are not meeting any worthwhile solidarity on the part of the masses in other Arab countries, where these are not actually hostile for reactionary reasons, such as anti-Shi'ite communalism or anti-Kurd chauvinism. This is tragic confirmation of our apprehensions on the serious illusions present among the Arab masses, including on the left, concerning the real meaning of the Iraqi despot's actions.

In symmetrical fashion, the noble souls in the West who supported the "anti-fascist" democratic crusade of the imperialists have fallen silent today, on the pretext that there are forces even more "fascist" than Saddam — the "fundamentalists" who threaten to come to power in Baghdad. In both cases the rebels in Iraq find themselves viewed with suspicion, if not with hostility, by people who held antagonistic positions in the six week war.

13. *IHT*, March 13, 1991.

14. *Newsweek*, March 18, 1991.

The importance of having fought the imperialist aggression without giving the slightest credit to Saddam Hussein's regime or his annexation of Kuwait is now absolutely clear.

Today, just as yesterday, genuine support to the people of Iraq requires a struggle simultaneously:

- For the immediate withdrawal of the imperialist troops, who first committed the crime of the pitiless blockade and bombardment of the Iraq people and are now committing a further one by supporting the Saddam regime against them.

- For an end to all embargoes, sanctions and war reparations imposed on the Iraqi people.

- For support to the Arab and Kurdish peoples of Iraq in their struggle against the Ba'athist tyranny, for democratic liberties and the election of a constituent assembly.

- For support to the Kurdish people in their struggle for national emancipation and for their right to self-determination, including separation.

March 14, 1991 (IV 203)

## "Free Kuwait"

On March 14, the Emir of Kuwait finally returned to his country, two weeks after the "liberation" of his principality by the American forces. No doubt the poor man would have preferred to wait for one of his numerous marble, gold and crystal palaces to be repaired and law and order thoroughly reestablished. But faced with criticism from all sides, the Emir felt obliged to curtail his gilded exile in Saudi Arabia.

Acting under the friendly supervision of the United States ambassador, now High Commissioner of this new American colony, the ruling family of the As-Sabahs has set about restoring its regime and rebuilding war-torn Kuwait. The first object of the ruling caste has not been the reestablishment of essential services and the relief of the population that stayed in the Emirate under extremely difficult conditions. It has, of course, been the restoration of the prewar order, as a fruit of George Bush's new order.

From this point of view, the two main problems are, on the one hand, the postwar political regime, and on the other, the make-up of the population. The ruling dynasty had never shown much respect for the apology for democracy conceded in 1962, on British advice, to the rich opposition.

Of the 700 to 800,000 Kuwaiti citizens, who form about 40% of the emirate's population, less than 10% have the right to vote. Profoundly reactionary criteria exclude women and those whose Kuwaiti citizenship dates from after 1920. Even so, the emir and his many brothers found the parliament, wherein the liberal or nationalist bourgeoisie questioned their monopoly on power and their privileges, an irritation.

In exasperation, the emir dissolved the recalcitrant assembly in 1986 and suspended the constitution. Today the opposition — businessmen, members of the liberal professions and religious leaders — are speaking up, blaming the incompetence of the As-Sabahs for the disaster which overtook Kuwait. They have been protesting

energetically against the government's imposition of martial law and demanding the setting of a date for new elections. The reaction of the ruling family was not long in coming: soon after the "liberation" a commando tried to assassinate an ex-deputy who was distinguished by his criticisms of the As-Sabahs' financial extravagances.

A climate of repressive terror is being progressively installed in the Emirate, in the framework of martial law. The regime's armed forces, who have returned with the barons, have set about disarming the population that stayed in Kuwait under the Iraqi occupation and who have seized the arms abandoned by the Iraqi soldiers.

The men and women of Kuwaiti citizenship who stayed behind — less than a third of the total number of Kuwaitis and the same in number as the Palestinians who remained — are usually those least able to afford a comfortable exile. A large part of them, perhaps the majority, belong to the Shi'ite minority (40%), an oppressed section of the Kuwaiti population. They are also demanding the right to oversee the affairs of the state, considering themselves to have won more legitimacy than the exiles. Kuwaiti women, who, paradoxically, have probably never been so free as under the Iraqi occupation, have also been demanding their emancipation and the right to vote.

Faced with this wave of criticism, the restored regime is combining repression and division. Under the heading "repression", the country's only newspaper, which was launched by the "resistance" even before the Iraqi withdrawal, was shut down on March 19 for criticizing the government. Under "divide and rule", the Palestinians are being made scapegoats, accused, above all by Kuwaitis who have returned from exile, of collaboration with the Iraqi occupation.

It is true that a sizeable section of the community of Palestinian origin — 400 to 500,000 people, including many who were born in Kuwait or have lived there for decades — showed sympathy, at least at the beginning,

for an invasion from which they could only hope for an improvement in their status.

Subsequently, and faced with the appalling behaviour of Baghdad's troops, opinion among Kuwaiti Palestinians swung round. More than half of them fled the country in the direction of Jordan.

The great majority of these can hardly hope to return: the Kuwaiti regime is not only planning to prevent those non-citizens who left from returning, but to expel those who have stayed. The Palestinians are thus now being subjected in Kuwait to a treatment half way between what they have undergone in the Christian areas of Lebanon and what they suffer under the Israeli occupation. The Kuwaiti officials are openly talking about only allowing some tens of thousands of Palestinians to stay in their territory.

The regime is intending to drastically reduce the size of the non-citizen population of the Emirate, so that the majority of the inhabitants should henceforth be com-

posed of Kuwaitis and beneficiaries of oil rent. The plan is to replace labour with modern technology. For tasks which require a knowledge of Arabic, Palestinians will be replaced by Egyptians in recognition of the Egyptian government's role in the crisis.

For the rest, and notably for domestic labour — there were 500,000 domestics in Kuwait before the invasion, that is, 25% of the total population — the Emirate will continue to favour recruits from south and south-east Asia, who can be exploited mercilessly and have no intention to stay permanently in the Gulf.

Kuwait is an artificial state indeed, firstly and above all in its social structure, where most of the native population is privileged or simply parasitic (a third of Kuwaiti males have no job), living from vast oil revenues. This population enslaves and exploits a majority of "immigrants", who the sheikhs have now promised to reduce to a minority.

March 28, 1991 (IV 204)

## Who Are the War Criminals?

Those fine souls, the European Community governments, have proposed that Saddam Hussein be put on trial for "crimes against humanity." This will no doubt be a great comfort for the millions of Kurds who are currently living through yet another nightmare. But at least the crusaders for peace, democracy and the rights of peoples, led by Bush, Major, Mitterand and the delightful Norman Schwarzkopf can sleep soundly at night. After Operation Desert Storm we now have Operation Manna for Kurdistan. Saddam Hussein is more horrible than ever and the West remains its profoundly humanist self. All is in order in the New World Order, founded, in Bush's own words, on the "peaceful settlement of disputes" (sic) and "just treatment of all peoples." (1)

Irony seems the only outlet for the impotent rage which the terrible outcome of the imperialist military action against Iraq inspires. To the massacre directly perpetrated during the six weeks of coalition fury against Iraq and the Iraqis, are added the apocalyptic ecological and economic consequences of the "surgical war" in Iraq and Kuwait, and six weeks of carnage (up to now) by Baghdad's troops against the Kurdish and Arab populations of their own country, leading to the gigantic problem of millions of refugees fleeing from the Ba'athist terror in truly tragic conditions. All this to restore to a few hundred thousand Kuwaitis, subjects of a despotic-princely family, a sovereignty over their oil-gorged little patch of desert that is even more illusory than before.

Today, the western governments are preoccupied with the dramatic fate of the Kurdish people. Their rea-

1) Speech on April 13, 1991 in Montgomery, Alabama.

sons are not entirely unselfish. The awful plight of the Iraqi Kurds also serves to distract attention from the overall balance sheet of the coalition's military operation. The Kurdish regions were spared the six weeks of bombing. The massive flight of a terrified population from Saddam Hussein's advancing army serves to underline once more the vile nature of his regime. Here the west seeks to find an after-the-fact justification for Operation Desert Storm.

True, at the same time, the Kurds' new tragedy highlights the inaction of the coalition forces who were and are in a position to dictate terms to Saddam Hussein. The latter has even accepted United Nations' Security Council resolution 687, which should carry as its inscription the famous Roman saying, *Vae victis* — "woe to the vanquished." (2) But the western chancelleries have their line ready: non-interference—a highly flexible variable that can justify on requirement peaceful coexistence with the worst atrocities.

The French president Mitterand, that master of grandiloquent hypocrisy, has added a note of which he is particularly proud: the "duty of humanitarian interference". That is to say, the duty to ensure to the disaster-struck populations the means to remain on their territory. The fundamental aim of this (in case it has escaped anyone) is to avoid massive exoduses which, as we know, end up feeding the flood of immigrants from the Third World towards the West, whose prosperity has been built on their own distress. More immediately there is a need to stop the Iraqi Kurds from leaving their lands

2) See *International Viewpoint* no. 204, April 15, 1991.

under Iraqi Arab control for those under Turkish or Iranian domination, a development that would render even more explosive one of the most iniquitous "national questions" of this century.

It is simply revolting to listen to the western governments generously handing out plaudits to Iran and the Turkish ally for their great humanism. Apparently the Kurdish people should now feel gratitude to these two of their oppressors. They are to feel particularly grateful to a Turkish government whose soldiers have not hesitated to fire on panic-stricken crowds of Kurds, in order to prevent them from reaching their compatriots' territories now under the Turkish jackboot. And they should surely thank the Turkish government for having finally passed a law allowing the Kurds to speak their own language to each other!

The hypocrisy is limitless. These people, whose latest enthusiasm is to throw stones at Saddam Hussein for his oppression of the Kurds, pretend to know nothing about the oppression of the same people in Turkey and Iran, which is no less harsh than in Iraq. These same people, who just yesterday had no problem getting along with Saddam Hussein, now want to put him on trial for his crimes, and this at a time when they themselves have just committed a terrible crime in this region of the world, a crime whose final cost, when it can be counted, will be dizzying. They today reproach Saddam Hussein for doing what they wished him to do, and for which they have provided the means.

Even some of the warmongering editorialists of the American press are beginning to bitterly face up to the facts; thus William Safire of the *New York Times*: "Masoud Barzani of the Kurds knew he could defeat Saddam Hussein's war-weakened forces in the rugged hills if the United States denied the dictator use of the skies. The Kurds would then control the oil fields of Iraq and could negotiate autonomy. But that was when George Bush got cold feet...It turns out he did not want the Iraqi people to rebel; he merely wanted the military to change dictators...But by changing his mind about protecting Kurdish skies, the president effectively intervened on the side of Saddam Hussein. Once he gave the weapon of gunship terror from the air to Baghdad's merciless butcher, Mr. Bush abandoned tens of thousands of Kurdish fighters to death and their families to starvation." (3)

This says it all; both the real reasons why the coalition wanted the Kurds to be defeated and the real complicity of Bush and co. with Saddam Hussein.(4) Safire's only, and predictable, mistake is to believe that Bush, in ignominiously leaving the Kurds to their fate, had "changed his attitude", or to put it another way that he had ever had any intention of protecting them. One of the "president's men", the ineffable Brent Scowcroft, has stupidly, that is unintentionally, disproved the thesis of Bush's cold feet.

3) *International Herald Tribune*, April 5, 1991.

4) *IV* no.203, April 1, 1991.

"Mr. Scowcroft said the United States had prepositioned relief supplies in Turkey in anticipation of refugees at the end of the Gulf War, and in hindsight, probably should have had more supplies waiting." (5)

In sum, the United States knew perfectly well that their Gulf war would lead to a new tragedy for the Kurdish people – certainly a far more deserving object of compassion than the Kuwaiti exiles. Tents and supplies indicated what these Lords of the Earth had in mind, as they had to the Palestinians a short while ago. The fact that so many worthy souls who supported the anti-Saddam crusade believed in good faith that the coalition would raise the flags of democracy and the rights of peoples in the region is a sign of their naivety and complete ignorance of the real motives of the western powers.

The problem is that the Kurds themselves were taken in. Once more the Iraqi Kurds allowed themselves to think that the West would help them throw off the yoke. They forgot the way in which Washington abandoned them in 1975, after an agreement to that effect was signed by Baghdad and the Shah of Iran; at that time several hundred thousand Kurds had to seek refuge in Iran. They also overlooked the more recent lesson of the West's acquiescence in Saddam Hussein's gas attack on the Kurdish people in 1988.

But one cannot reproach a people for its repeated illusions when it is headed by leaderships whose visceral opportunism constantly reproduces false hopes. Thus, Talabani, the chief of the Kurdish Patriotic Union (KPU) has publicly expressed his desire that the Turkish president, the grotesque Özal, should be the Kurds' spokesman! Such is the fate of this part of the world, where the leaders of two peoples, the Palestinians and the Kurds, who are subject to several oppressors, ally themselves in an unceasing round with one of their oppressors against another, hoping always for salvation by the biggest oppressor of them all, the United States.

It must be admitted, however, that this time, the illusions of the Kurdish people do not count for much in the tragedy which has just befallen them. The void left by the short-lived withdrawal of Saddam Hussein's troops, required for more urgent repressive tasks in the south of Iraq, was an irresistible invitation to a population exasperated by its endless martyrdom to rise up in revolt. They had to seize the moment. Furthermore, the outcome was not pre-determined: nobody could predict with certainty that the Ba'athist regime would be able to stand up to a generalized popular insurrection after the crushing defeat of its army by the coalition. In these conditions the risks attendant on rebellion had to be taken, with or without illusions on the subject of external support.

Unfortunately, with the coalition's complicity, Saddam's henchmen have for the moment proved the stronger. For how long is another, still undecided, matter. The

5) *IHT*, April 15, 1991.

Ba'athist regime is fighting with the energy of a regime with its back to the wall. Its men are unleashing on the population of their own country the same fury as themselves experienced, almost without reaction, at the hands of the coalition.

But everyday that passes sees the common fate of all of Iraq's inhabitants get worse, making heavier the apocalyptic disaster inflicted on them on the combined responsibility of Saddam Hussein and the imperialist coalition. The flames of revolt in Iraq will be much harder to put out than the burning oil wells of Kuwait. New flames will ceaselessly flare up from the embers of the despair of a people, of whom the Kurds form only the minority that is today most visible in the western media.

The rest of Iraq is suffering just as much, if not more, than Kurdistan. But the governments in Washington, London and Paris prefer to pass over this disaster in silence since it is the direct result of their "liberation". This is shown by the lack of publicity given to the explosive report of the United Nations commission of inquiry sent to Iraq to evaluate the consequences of the war for that country.

This report was presented to the Security Council on March 22 by the UN's under general secretary, the Finn Marti Ahtissaari. He explained straightforwardly that Iraq had been thrown back to "the pre-industrial age" by "near-apocalyptic" bombing that had seriously affected food supplies, agriculture, water, electricity, hygiene and health. He stated that if a humanitarian oper-

ation was not launched urgently in these different domains an "imminent catastrophe" would strike Iraq, with terrible and massive human losses through epidemics and famine.

The president of the American organization, Physicians for Human Rights, Dr. Jack Geiger, returning from Iraq, estimated that the number of deaths due to this catastrophe would soon reach "many tens of thousands".

This appalling reality, currently concealed, was the subject recently of an excellent – and lone – article by Jessica Matthews in the *Washington Post*. It ended with a series of highly relevant questions: "With whom were the allies at war, Saddam Hussein or all Iraqis? If not all Iraqis, which? If the goal of getting rid of Saddam Hussein has failed, at least for the time being, should geopolitical or humanitarian concerns take precedence? Specifically, if epidemics and starvation take hold before the terms of the ceasefire's 120-day schedule are met, which is more important? How far does America's and other coalition members' responsibility extend for Iraq's suffering? If Iraq cannot pay for what its people need while also paying reparations, what should be done? "Finally, unavoidably, was it worth it?" (6)

And let us add a question of our own: who should be the first to be tried for crimes against humanity?

April 18, 1991 (IV 205)  
6) *IHT*, April 17, 1991.

## The New Arab Order and the Israeli Obstacle

Operation "Desert Storm" was conceived as a decisive step towards a political re-ordering of the Arab East under American tutelage. The American war is to be succeeded by a pax americana the first elements of which have begun to be assembled since the end of the fighting. The cornerstone of the edifice is the alliance of the six monarchies.(1) who make up the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), with Syria and Egypt the main Arab members of the anti-Iraqi coalition.

Paradoxically, the main obstacle to the regional pax americana is now the State of Israel; the intransigence of Yitzhak Shamir's right-wing Zionist government is presenting US secretary of state James Baker with considerable difficulties in his efforts to achieve an Arab-Israeli settlement under US auspices.

The representatives of the eight Arab allies, meeting

1) Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar.

in the Syrian capital on March 5 and 6, 1991, adopted the "Damascus Declaration", proclaiming the establishment of a "New Arab Order" whose name is evidence enough of its relation to Bush's "New World Order". The Declaration's two main aspects are military and economic. In the aftermath of the joint action against Iraq, the Egyptian and Syrian troops — 35,000 and 20,000 respectively — currently in Saudi Arabia and Kuwait are to remain there or be deployed in other Gulf states, and may even be reinforced (Syria is envisaging doubling its contingent).

According to the Declaration, these troops are "the core of an Arab peace force set up to guarantee the security and integrity of the Arab states of the Gulf Region." Although this military alliance claims that it is not "directed against any party", it is clear that in reality the security and integrity of the Gulf monarchies can only be threatened by the two pretenders to hegemony in the region, recently-defeated Iraq and Iran, which has found

its position strengthened by the crushing of its adversary.

These two states have long counter-balanced each other with regard to the imperialist and reactionary order in the Gulf. When Iraq was a source of nationalist subversion, Iran under the Shah held it in check. Then, when Iran became a source of Khomeinite subversion after February 1979, Iraq elevated itself into the "defender of the eastern gate of the Arab nation", undertaking its devastating eight year war against its neighbour with the financial backing of the Arab oil monarchies.

### The security of oil monarchies

The Iraqi attack on Kuwait and the redirection of Saddam Hussein's ambitions towards his Arab neighbours, have meant that, for the first time in the existence of these states, both are in the camp of enemies of the traditional imperialist order in the Gulf. This unprecedented situation required the reorganization of the defence of the local pillars of that order. An external counterweight to the two-fold Iranian and Iraqi threat had to be found.

The massive intervention by the imperialist — above all US — troops was needed to destroy Iraqi military potential, a task beyond the strength of any local force. It was also intended to create the political, and even psychological, conditions for the desired reorganization. But, for reasons both political and religious, the prolonged stationing of massive western forces in Saudi Arabia was not a likely option. Their continued presence on soil which, by religious decree (*fatwa*), is considered to form a gigantic mosque, might make them a running sore inflaming the anti-western nationalist or religious resentments of the Arab masses.

In consequence the US and its rich Gulf protégés have devised a new security system adapted to realities both new and old. This system has three tiers, with direct American military intervention the last resort. The first level is the Gulf monarchies' own armed forces, which are going to be considerably reinforced. The size of the Saudi army is to be doubled or tripled to 100,000 or 150,000 men, very likely backed up by Egyptian, Pakistani and perhaps Moroccan mercenaries. Kuwait's small army is similarly to be increased.

And, of course, this means a big guaranteed market for the US' military industry, after the live demonstration of its products' efficiency in Desert Storm. The sales already negotiated with Saudi Arabia alone by Washington have reached the round sum of \$10bn. A deal of the same order will probably be reached with Kuwait, whose arsenal has to be more or less restocked from scratch. Meanwhile, to those who, from pacifist naivety or devotion to the Israeli cause, question these arms' sales and recall the Bush administration's own declarations about arms control in the region, Washington answers by referring hypocritically to the need to establish an equilibrium of forces among the region's Arab countries (rather than between them and Israel): "The official (of the Defence

department) stated that the administration is determined to increase the arsenals of the friendly Arab states in the Gulf — countries which, he added, remain individually less powerful than Iraq. It is only in the context of the reinforcement of the weakest states, he said, that the administration would consider regional limitations on arms." (2)

In sum, far from promoting regional disarmament including that of the Zionist state, Washington would not "consider" a freeze on arms' exports to the region before it had raised the military potential of each of its most reliable allies individually to a level that could deter a potential enemy comparable to present day Iraq (and implicitly Iran). The only arms of which the Bush administration intends to halt further deliveries to the Arab countries are the NBC (nuclear, biological and chemical) weapons, as well as ballistic missiles with a range of more than 150 km (3). Washington will continue to sell other weapons, including highly sophisticated ones to its Arab allies.

Apart from the commercial angle, there is a real will in the US to strengthen their protégés ability to withstand external and internal shocks, drawing out the lessons of the great vulnerability they showed during the Gulf crisis. In any case, the planned sales will not upset the regional balance of forces, in which the State of Israel is clearly dominant. It is an open secret that the latter has a sizeable arsenal of NBC weapons and of missiles with ranges ten times the limit that Washington is setting for the Arab states.

Ironically it is Israel that is now calling for a freeze on regional military capabilities in order to stabilize its advantage after the crushing of Iraq, while sparing the Israeli economy the cost of carrying on the arms' race, at a time when it is having to deal with Jewish immigration from the USSR.

The second level of the new defence system is the "Arab Peace Force". Of the two components of this force it is Mubarak's Egypt that is presently the most reliable. It has been massively rearmed by the US since the signing of the peace treaty with Israel in 1979, the object being to replace the structural dependence of the Egyptian army on the USSR with integration into the American military system, involving joint annual manoeuvres ("Bright Star") as well as comprehensive re-equipment. (4) The last consignment of this re-armament programme, submitted this year to the US Congress, involves 46 of the latest F-16 planes with stocks of bombs and missiles.

The Syrian army remains closely dependent on Moscow for its material, and its "Americanization" is not on

2) *International Herald Tribune*, March 8, 1991.

3) *IHT*, April 29, 1991.

4) The Soviet material that has been replaced has been sold or given by Egypt to allies such as the Afghan Mujahideen or the US itself, who use Soviet arms for target practice.

the cards for the foreseeable future. That would require a Syrian-Israeli peace treaty on Camp David lines and an assurance, by this and other means, of the irreversibility of Syrian allegiance to Washington. For the moment

Damascus is an ally under strict surveillance from Washington, which nonetheless hopes that Syria's economic interests will, at a time of Soviet bankruptcy, dictate to that adept of *realpolitik* Hafez-el-Assad a firm anchorage

## A Sinister Resolution

Resolution 687 adopted on April 3 by the United Nations Security Council with 12 votes for (including the unanimous vote of the Great Powers), two abstentions and one against (Cuba) — is probably the most outrageous ever approved by this body. Even from the most formal point of view, it is worse than the one which permitted the use of force to remove Iraq from Kuwait. Indeed, the new resolution contains several innovations in the field of inter-state relations, as covered by "international legality". First of all, it is very explicitly a diktat, since there will only be a formal ceasefire and a withdrawal of the troops occupying southern Iraq if this latter country submits to all the conditions laid out in the resolution.

These are draconian: Iraq must accept unconditionally under international supervision the destruction and removal of all chemical and biological weapons, material usable in nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles with a range greater than 150 kilometers and related parts, repair and production facilities. Moreover, a total arms embargo is to be maintained against Iraq, to be reviewed after 120 days, and then "at regular intervals".

Even Egypt, one of the most prominent members in the anti-Iraqi coalition, felt obliged to protest against these clauses, whose iniquity is blatant in a region where several states, and above all Israel, possess "non-conventional" weapons. Israel in fact has more of them than all its near and distant neighbours put together, including a hundred nuclear warheads (according to American information) and the Jericho missiles, which are a lot more efficient than the Iraqi Scuds. To create a good impression, resolution 687 "notes" that its disarmament clauses seek to "create in the Middle East an area free of mass destruction weapons". This pious wish is aimed at placating the Arab states, like Egypt

and Syria, or rather public opinion in those countries. It made possible a positive vote from India, whose representative contented himself with expressing reservations.

These conditions in the resolution have nothing to do, of course, with the question of Kuwait. The pure and simple aim is to achieve the elimination of Iraq's strategic capabilities; to prevent them being restored in the future and in this way guarantee the Zionist state's regional military supremacy and the security of the oil monarchies tied to Washington. The diktat is not directed against Saddam Hussein but against Iraq as such, a point made recently by a leader of the Iraqi Communist Party: "What the Iraqi opposition finds most worrying is the United States' attitude... (Their) objective seems to be for the moment to get as many concessions as possible out of Saddam Hussein, concessions which... will be binding on those who will succeed the Baghdad dictator. In sum, the Americans are not only seeking to punish Saddam Hussein, but any government that may succeed him, which will be obliged to accept American hegemony throughout the region" (*Le Monde*, March 29, 1991).

Resolution 687 also compels Iraq to pay reparations to Kuwait, although the latter country is much richer than the former. These will be levied by force on Iraqi oil exports; a percentage (as yet to be fixed) of the income of these exports will be placed in a fund under the management of an ad hoc commission. The comparison between these pro-Kuwaiti measures and the absence of any reparations for Iran in the 1988 resolution that put an end to the Iran/Iraq war speaks volumes. The embargo on Iraqi exports will only be lifted after Iraqi "non-conventional" weapons have been done away with and the compensation mechanism is in working order. This is extortion on threat of strangulation.

Furthermore, the Security Council has taken it upon itself to fix the border between Iraq and Kuwait, instead of submitting the issue to a body such as the International Court in The Hague.

Finally let us draw attention to a clause whose significance will not escape the countries of the Third World, crushed under the weight of the debt, as it has surely not escaped Fidel Castro, who has exhorted these countries to refuse to pay it, and who, quite rightly, violently attacked resolution 687. Paragraph 17 of the latter "rules" that the unilateral cancellation by Iraq of its debt is "void" and "demands that Iraq honour scrupulously all its obligations with regard to the servicing and repayment of its foreign debt". Which augurs very well for the "new world order"! Those well intentioned people who believed in the demarcated crusade of George Bush might have hoped that free UN-supervised elections would figure amongst the conditions imposed on Baghdad. That would have been, moreover, the only positive condition which might have been included in this sinister resolution. But the massacre of Iraqi Kurds and Arabs by Saddam Hussein's army is not even mentioned. The adoption of such a resolution, which even its principal sponsor, the American ambassador, has described as "tough but fair", should clear up any illusions as to "arbitration" by the Security Council or the Great Powers assembled under American hegemony. To believe that the one or the other is going to find a "just" solution to the Palestinian question is at best a sign of bottomless naivety. From being a framework for consensus between the great powers, particularly the United States and the Soviet Union, the UN has gone back to being what it was during the first twenty years of its existence; an instrument of Washington's foreign policy.

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in the American camp.

The third level, and the last recourse, is direct intervention by the American army, and in particular the direct use of its troops on the ground. Before Iraq invaded Kuwait, American military plans for the region largely rested on Israel and the Saudi and Egyptian armies integrated into the Pentagon's regional system. At the top of this is the CentCom (Central Command) whose HQ is at Tampa in Florida and whose chief is none other than Norman Schwarzkopf.

The CentCom could also count on Turkey, but it also had its own intervention forces: the American bases in Turkey, Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean, the American fleet in the Gulf with facilities at Bahrain, and the surrounding fleets, including in the Mediterranean, as well as the Rapid Deployment Force based in the US and Europe.

The operation against Iraq showed a certain sluggishness in the American deployment in Saudi Arabia and its great vulnerability in its first phase. Military commentaries retrospectively underline the fact that if Iraq had taken the initiative in August to push into Saudi Arabia to forestall the buildup of the coalition forces, the US would have confronted a far more difficult task. The Pentagon has drawn the lessons of that experience.

Certainly, Schwarzkopf confirmed on March 24 that his army did not plan to leave a big permanent ground force in the Gulf area. He also announced however that an advance post of the American command, connected to CentCom, would be set up in the region, most probably in Bahrain. This post will be responsible for coordinating allied regional strategy and the organization of joint Arab-American land, sea and air manoeuvres, which presupposes the, if not permanent, then at least frequent presence of US troops.<sup>(5)</sup> At the same time, the permanent American fleet cruising the Gulf waters, will be reinforced.

And, above all, the direct deployment of American troops on the ground in an emergency, will be greatly facilitated by the "pre-positioning" of American equipment. Two stores are planned: in Turkey, and, of course, in Saudi Arabia. In both of these countries arms for a strongly equipped division will be stored in a way that permits the troops to be ready for combat on the spot in a few days. This improved capacity for rapid deployment, added to the capacity for medium-term deployment shown by the remarkable effort undertaken between August 1990 and January 1991 — perhaps the only genuine American exploit in this war — should, in the Pentagon's view, be sufficient to intimidate potential threats.

### Financing social order

The three-tier defence system has, as with any security system, both a deterrent, and a defensive and repres-

<sup>5)</sup> This also assumes that the allied armies have American equipment.

sive function. However, the masters of the imperialist order know that, nonetheless, this is not enough to assure the desired stability. They are perfectly well aware of the need to finish the structure off with preventive action, especially as the first two tiers are not wholly secure.

The armed forces of the Gulf monarchies are not renowned for their efficiency. Egypt and Syria, furthermore, independently of the reliability of their governments in Washington's eyes, are constantly exposed to the risks of a popular uprising that could spread to the armed forces. Their relative political fragility is a function of their precarious socio-economic situation. Unlike in the Gulf oil monarchies which rank among the richest countries in the world (per capita GNP), the populations of Syria, and especially Egypt, have been seeing a sharp drop in their living standards <sup>(6)</sup>, a source of chronic political and social tensions.

It was under the pressure of similar problems that Iraq's dictator decided to invade Kuwait, despairing of further funding by his "rich brothers." Saddam Hussein reacted to the refusal of the Kuwaitis to continue to underwrite his regime, and developed for the occasion a nationalist rhetoric calling for an equitable apportioning of the wealth of the Arab nation between all its components. Syria, for its part, has regularly milked the Gulf oil monarchies for funds using politico-terrorist blackmail in the name of the confrontation with the Zionist state.

Desert Storm has radically changed the context where rich, but vulnerable, states, gave way to pressure from poor, but militarily powerful, states determined to operate a blackmail. The energetic US intervention on the side of their rich protégés has given the oil monarchies, now confident of American protection, a feeling of freedom from any regional threat. They have been making their sense of emancipation plain, but have also been pushed by Washington to continue to provide aid to those Arab states that accept the pax americana. The racket run by states who did not shrink from subversion has been replaced by a system of contributions for the consolidation of the reactionary order, notably to states that offer their services as mercenaries.

The Damascus Declaration deals with this aspect. It is founded on the one hand on "the respect for the principle of the sovereignty of each Arab state over its own natural and economic resources", and on the other on "the reinforcement of economic cooperation" between the signatories, with a view to extending it to other Arab countries. The innovation here is that aid from the rich states will henceforth be accompanied by conditions similar to those that regulate the financing of eastern Europe by the imperialist countries. The finality of the "economic cooperation" is defined in the Declaration: "to encourage the private sector...to participate in the development process...and allow small and medium

<sup>6)</sup> The Egyptian population is growing by a million every nine months.

sized enterprises to profit from the fruits of cooperation..."

Concrete measures have already been taken or are on the way in the general spirit of the Declaration: special recompense for Egypt and Syria for their good and loyal services and a mechanism for regional financing. Syria has received \$2bn — welcome aid for a Ba'athist regime close to bankruptcy. Egypt's needs are far greater. The country has 55 million inhabitants and great poverty, and has also suffered directly from the Gulf crisis, since some two million of its people were working in Kuwait and Iraq, while tourism, a major source of hard currency, has been hit.

The Arab oil monarchies and the US are making a special effort to damp down the Egyptian powder barrel and thus safeguard their most docile ally. The oil monarchies have cancelled more than \$7bn worth of debts owed them by Egypt, and Washington has cancelled that same amount of the country's military debt. The Bush administration and its oil allies, furthermore, are putting pressure on the IMF and other imperialist creditors for favourable treatment for Egypt under the aegis of the Fund. More than 30% of Egypt's \$40bn government debts are to be cancelled and the rest re-scheduled. Two new loans of \$300m each are to be granted to Cairo by the IMF and the World Bank.

This favourable treatment, following on from the generosity shown to Walesa's Poland by the Club of Paris (cancelling 50% of Polish debt) and Washington (cancelling 70%), will surely incite the governments of the most indebted countries, including the Latin American trio (Brazil, Mexico and Argentina), to demand similar facilities. David Mulford, under-secretary at the US treasury, has answered them in advance, saying that Poland and Egypt are "politically and economically unique".<sup>(7)</sup> That is to say, both the cancellation of the debt and the provision of new financing are more than ever to be subject to "good behaviour".

The political conditions fulfilled by Egypt are clear enough. The economic conditions are to be laid down by the IMF. As usual they include the suppression of subsidies on basic goods and services. The Mubarak government is already warning the population to expect high rises in the price of electricity, petrol and other oil products, and thus in transport, as well as on basic foodstuffs, including bread and meat. Every previous attempt to implement such instructions in Egypt has led to popular riots, as in most Third World countries subjected to the same diktats.

To soften the shock, the Gulf oil monarchies are already giving priority to Egyptian immigrant workers to the detriment of Palestinians, Yemenis and others from countries that did not support the anti-Iraqi coalition. More than two million such workers have already been expelled from the oil monarchies. The number of Egyp-

<sup>7)</sup> IHT, April 11, 1991.

tians working in Saudi Arabia has risen by almost 50% in three months, going from 684,000 in December 1990 to over a million now.

The Egyptian ambassador in Riyadh has declared that the Saudi authorities are now reserving half of the work visas to be granted for Egyptians.<sup>(8)</sup> This is the main benefit for Cairo of its political attitude; immigration to the Gulf soaks up a portion of the unemployment and is the main source of hard currency for many countries via remittances.

Egypt and Syria, furthermore, will be the main beneficiaries of the Development Programme currently being got underway by the six oil monarchies of the GCC, which will dispose of a fund of \$15bn, of which a third will be available soon. This programme, in the spirit of the Damascus Declaration, will be regulated by methods inspired at once by those being employed in eastern Europe, given the similar structures of the economies, with a dominant state sector. The accent is on the expansion of the private sector, aiming to consolidate a "New Arab Order" based on free enterprise and the combination of Gulf capital, the labour power of their Arab allies and imperialist capital and technology, all under American patronage.



<sup>8)</sup> IHT, April 6, 1991.

### Zionists in transition and Palestinian tragedy

This idyllic project is almost utopian, however, given the extraordinary complexities of the region's social and political problems, as is well illustrated by the evolution of the situation in Iraq. The main hidden rock on which the *pax americana* may founder in the short term is, of course, the Israel-Arab conflict. This latter has been the main factor of political instability in the Arab region for decades and the main catalyst for the anti-American feeling of the Arab masses. The United States has had to deal with the permanent embarrassment of the political opposition between its Arab clients and allies on the one hand and its privileged military partner, the Zionist state, on the other.

The Damascus Declaration could not get away with not mentioning this conflict. Pretending to repeat the official Arab stance — "an international peace conference under the UN flag" and the settlement of the conflict on the basis of UN resolutions to "put an end to the Israeli occupation of Arab territories and guarantee the national rights of the Palestinian people" — the Declaration introduced two clear concessions to Washington. On the one hand, the "international conference" is no longer a requirement, but merely an "adequate framework"; on the other, there is no longer any mention of a Palestinian state, but only of Palestinian "national rights".

The post-Gulf war keynote speech by Bush to Congress on March 6, a few hours after the publication of the Damascus Declaration, echoed these preoccupations. He reaffirmed his administration's adherence to UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338 and the principle of a territory-for-peace swap, that is, the withdrawal of Israel from territories occupied in 1967 in exchange for the recognition of the Zionist state and its frontiers by the Arab states, and a guarantee of its security. He also undertook to respect "legitimate Palestinian rights".

Bush's speech gave the signal for a new series of Kissinger-style regional tours by his secretary of state, James Baker, the difference being that the strategy of "small steps" dear to the former, aimed at achieving separate settlements between each Arab state and Israel, is no longer on the order of the day. Actually, the front of Arab states bordering on Israel is now under American hegemony, Syria having rejoined this camp bag and baggage. Desert Storm has created an exceptionally favourable political climate for Washington's plans in the Middle East at a moment when, for a fistful of dollars, Moscow has abdicated any pretence of challenging its traditional rival.

Under these conditions, the former American opposition to a global settlement with Soviet participation has been dropped. On the contrary, it is now the Bush administration that wishes for a package deal with all the concerned Arab parties and with the support of the Kremlin.

The reason for this shift is that the area of agreement between Washington and the Arab partners, with Moscow's blessing, is now greater than ever. These partners, which include Syria and the PLO leadership, have ceased to outbid one another in nationalist rhetoric. The moderate faction of the Zionist establishment — Labour and other supporters, including ruling Likud members, of a partial withdrawal from the occupied territories in exchange for a peace treaty with guarantees — also situates itself on the same terrain.

Four key issues mark it out: two fundamental issues — the question of the Syrian Golan Heights occupied and annexed by Israel in 1981 and that of the occupied Palestinian territories, including annexed East Jerusalem; and two more trivial points — the framework for the negotiations and the problem of Palestinian representation. The Egyptian-Israeli conflict has been resolved and the fact that Egypt is taking part nevertheless bears witness to the solution of the fifth, and for a long time the most thorny, problem.

Indeed, the problem of the recognition of the State of Israel, the guarantee of its frontiers and the "normalization" of relations with it, has already been resolved by Cairo according to the wishes of the Zionist government. The full reintegration of Egypt into the Arab fold, and its close alliance with the Arab members of the anti-Iraqi coalition, without any change in its "normalized" relations with Israel, underline the fact that these relations, which led to the boycott of Egypt by other Arab countries, are now accepted, including by Syria, which has made this fact known to James Baker.

Hafez-al-Assad has always shown himself ready to face down the nationalist sentiments of the Syrian population, when his own interests have required it. From his intervention in support of the reactionary Christian camp in Lebanon in 1976 to his recent involvement on the American side against Iraq, the dictator of Damascus has made it clear to Washington that he will keep his side of any bargain even if it means risking a clash with his own people. His attitude to the US has never been arbitrary, but always adapted to the modulations in American regional policy, which is more versatile than his own.

Every attempt by the US administration to seek solutions outside of a broad regional settlement — firstly between Israel and Egypt, then in 1983 between Israel and Lebanon, and in the plans for a "Jordanian solution" of the Palestinian issue — has been opposed by Damascus, which would be isolated by such settlements. On the other hand, each time that Washington has come out in favour of a global Israeli-Arab solution, in the spirit of the Geneva conference after the October 1973 war, the Syrian regime has offered to cooperate. In each case the state of Syrian-American relations has had an effect inside Lebanon.

All the political and economic factors, both on a regional and world scale, now lead Hafez al-Assad into

the camp of the US and its rich Arab protégés. This is the only intelligent option for the bureaucratic bourgeois dictatorship that he heads. Damascus' tacit acceptance of the Egyptian-Israeli peace also indicates its inclination to be satisfied with an arrangement for the Syrian Golan Heights of the same kind as the one that led Israel to return the Sinai to Egypt, that is, demilitarization of the territory under American guarantee, including a control system.

And it is along these lines that America is now thinking (9): an Israeli withdrawal and demilitarization of the Golan, extension of the mandate of the United Nations' forces to the whole of the Syrian territory currently under Israeli occupation, with eavesdropping posts, probably under US control (Israel will ask that these be under their control, but this would be hard for Syria to accept). The principle of some such compromise over the Golan has recently been defended by the Israeli foreign affairs minister, David Levy, the health minister, Ehud Olmert, and the armed forces chief of staff, General Dan Shomron, who issued a controversial statement a month before his retirement.

These figures, none of them in any way "doves", believe that the strategic benefits of a peace with Syria are greater than those accruing from a continued Israeli military presence on the Golan. They know that the ten thousand or so Israeli settlers installed on the Syrian plateau are not deeply attached to this barren territory and would willingly accept leaving in exchange for adequate financial compensation of the kind that the US gave to the ex-settlers in the Sinai. They also think that an agreement on the Golan Heights would spare them the need for one on the occupied west bank of the Jordan.(10) The Israeli "rejection front", led by the sinister figure of Ariel Sharon, at present the housing minister, and the defence minister Moshé Arens, have nonetheless protested vociferously against any notion of a compromise over the Golan Heights, pulling the prime minister Shamir along behind them. Labor deputies have also lined up with the "refuseniks" from the governing Likud party, but their opposition will not be so hard to overcome.

Inversely, on the issue of the Palestinian territories on the West Bank and Gaza, the majority of the Israeli Labor Party are amenable to the compromise plans of Washington. The solution officially being promoted by the Republican administration, since the time of the "Reagan Plan" of September 1982, is that of "Palestinian self-government of the West Bank and Gaza in association with Jordan." This found an echo in the Amman agreement in February 1985 between Jordan's King Hussein and PLO leader Yasser Arafat proposing a Jordanian-Palestinian confederation and a joint delegation to the negotiations with Israel.(11)

The US remains inclined to this kind of settlement,

9) *Newsweek*, April 1, 1991.

10) *The Other Front*, (A.I.C., Jerusalem), March 6, 1991.

11) *International Viewpoint*, no. 156, February 6, 1989.

which, in their eyes, offers the best guarantee of control over the Palestinian territories, and is rendered all the more credible in that the PLO leadership has already accepted the principle. This is why King Hussein continues to be a key element of the regional *pax americana* for Washington. The tension between Jordan and the US due to the former's condemnation of the aggression against Iraq could not last long. In any case, the Bush administration knows full well that King Hussein was merely adapting, against his own inclinations, to the feeling among "his subjects" in order to keep his throne. Indeed, the King's increased popularity both with Jordanians and Palestinians as a result of his stance in the war will be of assistance in the implementation of Washington's plans. (12)

This explains the irritation of the administration when Congress voted through last March a motion stopping American economic and military aid (\$35m and \$20m respectively) to Jordan. Bush and his men had to explain to Congress that they had made a mistake in their understanding of the Jordanian attitude. Congress ended up giving the president the power to restore aid, if he judged this to be in the interests of a peaceful regional settlement (13).

The other key to this process is, of course, the Palestine Liberation Organization. It is true that, well before the Gulf crisis, the US had broken off its official contacts with this organization. Since then they have not been keen to re-establish them, and, indeed, have been trying to get their Arab allies to boycott the PLO and cut off its funding.

From this point of view, the recent meeting between the French foreign affairs minister and Yasser Arafat — a feeble attempt to restore the Mitterrand government's prestige with the Arab populations, and notably with those of North Africa and the immigrants in France itself, and ensure Paris' participation in the Washington-led regional process — could only futher irritate the Bush administration.

The latter knows perfectly well however that the PLO, and more precisely the Arafat leadership, which is hegemonic in its institutions, is still the most "moderate" of the Palestinian leaderships. No other (for Washington) more politically acceptable leadership with at least a minimum of representativeness has emerged, despite years of effort, notably by King Hussein. He himself now recognizes this, repeating on every occasion that he does not want to substitute himself for the PLO, but rather work with it.

He has all the more need of the PLO's collaboration in that his kingdom has to deal with the radicalization of the Palestinians who live there, and indeed make up the majority of its population. The radicalization has been further stimulated by the serious problem of the hundreds

12) *Newsweek*, February 18, 1991.

13) *IV* no. 203, April 1, 1991.

of thousands of Palestinians who have had to leave the Gulf states without resources for themselves or for the families in Jordan who lived off their remittances. The precarious stability of Hussein's kingdom is yet another reason why Washington cannot ignore the PLO.

For all these reasons, the Bush administration intends to make sure, as much as possible, of the support of the Arafat leadership for the deal that it wants to sponsor. James Baker's meetings with Palestinian bourgeois notables in the territories occupied in 1967, headed by Faisal al-Hussaini (14), who has close political and financial links with the Arafat leadership, show that he considers the latter's support indispensable, despite the desire of the Shamir government to simply ignore the Palestinians.

Inversely, the green light given these same notables by the Arafat leadership for the meeting with Baker, a few days after the cessation of the terrible massacre of Iraqis by the American army, and remembering that, in happier times, the Unified Patriotic Leadership of the Intifada ordered a boycott of Baker's predecessor George Schulz (15), shows clearly that the right wing that controls the PLO's leading bodies has decided to pursue its policy of permanent concessions to Washington to the end. The Arafat leadership hopes that the latter will in return assert the PLO's place in the regional pax americana. This is why Arafat did not hesitate to declare George Bush's speech of March 6 "positive".

The left of the PLO — the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) led by George Habash and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), led by Nayef Hawatmeh, have consistently denounced this policy and in particular the permission given to the notables to meet Baker.

They have opposed Arafat's decisions in the PLO's leading bodies to no avail. The branches of these organizations in the occupied territories have violently denounced the meeting with the American secretary of state, explaining that the latter's efforts are aimed at establishing a settlement between the Zionist state and the Arab reactionaries at the expense of the elementary rights of the Palestinian people.(16)

A communiqué from the "State of Palestine" branch of the DFLP, dated March 12, 1991, states that: "the acceptance by certain Palestinian personalities of Baker's invitation to meet him amounts to collaboration with the Israeli-American plan which aims to push aside the PLO and sow confusion among the Palestinian masses, which continue with all their might to defend Iraq against the American aggression, all the more so insofar as the forces of this aggression continue to occupy a part of Iraq and exercise blackmail on its

14) Faisal al-Hussaini is from the same aristocratic family to which Haj Amin al-Hussaini, the Mufti of Jerusalem, and the commander of the Palestinian contingent in the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948 belonged.

15) IV no. 158, March 6, 1989.

16) Communiqué of the PFLP-interior dated "early March".

people."

However, there is a great risk that the main beneficiary of the Arafat leadership's never-ending compromises will, as in 1989 and 1990, be the Palestinian Islamic fundamentalist current, particularly Hamas (Movement of Islamic Resistance). This current goes in for nationalist, anti-western and anti-Jewish outbidding, which makes it appear as the only "radical" alternative to the PLO, in a situation where the left is handicapped by the contradiction between its radical, anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist talk and the constant compromises by its leaders in exile with the Arafat leadership.(17)

The factors which make for the radicalization of the Palestinian population under Israeli occupation are working more strongly than ever, with the combination of the abrupt fall in remittances by immigrant workers in the Gulf and the reduction of the number of Palestinian workers in Israel by more than a half decided on by the Shamir government. The Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza are today experiencing deep social and economic distress, further aggravated by the fall in remittances from the PLO, which is no longer receiving funds from the Gulf monarchies.

The economic persecution of the Palestinians by the Shamir government, which has reached its height in the quasi-permanent curfew imposed on the West Bank and Gaza during the war against Iraq, is clearly meant to compel them to emigrate.

The cabinet reshuffle during the war which brought into the Zionist governmental far right a declared supporter of "transfer" — the favoured euphemism for the mass expulsion of Palestinians from their lands — is a clear sign that such an outcome is not an imaginary catastrophist scenario, but a real and immediate plan, already embarked on in the form of what one might call "low-intensity expulsion".

There is a double counterpart to this operation: on the one hand, of course, there is the mass immigration of Jews from the Soviet Union. With the collusion of Moscow, Washington and American Jewish organizations, the Zionist regime is literally obliging Jews who want to leave the USSR to go to Israel, despite the wishes of the overwhelming majority of them, who want to go to North America. By using these methods, the Shamir government envisages Soviet immigration rising from 185,000 persons in 1990 to 400,000 this year, and a total of a million in the coming few years.

The other concomitant is the colonization of the occupied territories. This goes hand-in-hand with the first, which is creating in Israel a socio-economic pressure that tends to incite a growing number of Israelis to accept the many privileges offered to candidates for colonization. The housing minister Ariel Sharon is applying himself to his job with enthusiasm: under the name Project Immi-

17) IV no. 157, February 20, 1989.

gration, he foresees the construction of more than 10,000 housing units for settlers in the territories occupied in 1967, of which more than 7,000 are to be on the West Bank of the Jordan, 2,000 in East Jerusalem and one thousand on the Golan Heights. Sharon is not just planning to expand existing settlements: he is creating new ones, in violation of previous promises to Washington.

In comparison with these deeds by the Shamir government, his intransigence on the procedural questions concerning the "international conference", now re-baptized as the "regional conference", and on the participation in the talks of Palestinians from annexed East Jerusalem (18), is only a trivial expression of a basic opposition to any restitution of the Arab territories occupied in 1967.

James Baker has made plain his irritation and that of the administration to which he belongs at the Zionist right's attitude. This is a bitter acknowledgement: as we affirmed at the start of this article, it is the state of Israel, the United States' privileged and cosseted ally, which is now the main obstacle to the pax americana in the Middle East. Washington is not however ready to throw in the towel: its interests in this part of the world are too impor-

18) The US would like to solve this problem by declaring East Jerusalem an "open city" under international control, a project that has the support of the Vatican.

tant for that. The Bush administration will do its best to surmount Israeli obstruction by putting economic pressure on the Zionist regime. The latter, meanwhile, in its characteristic fashion, is pursuing a policy well beyond its means.

The absorption of the Soviet immigrants presents enormous economic problems which has meant a lowering by 100 to 200,000 of planned immigration for this year. The Israeli economy and the living standards of the population are in marked decline. The Central Bank of Israel has sounded the alarm: unemployment could rapidly reach 20% of the active population and provoke massive emigration that cancels out the effects of the immigration from the USSR.(19)

The US therefore has good reasons to believe that it can bring its spoiled child in the Middle East to heel. Washington will probably seek to provoke a split in the Shamir government and create the conditions for the return of a more "moderate" coalition, including their docile allies in the Labor Party.

In any case the pax americana is not for tomorrow, and if it ever sees the light of day will be very fragile.

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19) Financial Times, April 24, 1991.



## Chronology

**End 19th century:** Kuwait part of Ottoman province in Basra (southern Iraq).

**1913:** British protectorate of Kuwait, recognizing Ottoman sovereignty.

**1914:** British landing at Basra, proclamation of the Emirate as "independent state under British protection".

**1920, April:** League of Nations gives Britain colonial mandate over Iraq. **June:** Treaty of Sèvres, establishing independent Kuwait, never ratified.

**July:** first popular anti-British rising in Iraq.

**August:** Establishment of the Iraqi monarchy under Faisal.

**1932:** Formal independence of Iraq under the monarchy, under British domination.

**1933:** Iraqi monarch demands from London restitution of Kuwait.

**1946:** Ephemeral Kurdish republic known as "Mahabad".

**1948:** New popular anti-British uprising in Iraq — Nationalist radicalization boosted by Palestine war.

**1958, 14 July:** Overthrow of monarchy by republican anti-feudal and anti-British coup d'état led by Abdel-Karim Qassem.

**1961, 19 June:** Formal independence of Kuwait, non-ratified by United Nations because of Soviet Union veto — Qassem prepares to annex the emirate.

**1961, 1 July:** British and Saudi military intervention to protect the emirate. Start of intermittent war in Kurdistan, still going on.

**1963, 8 February:** Qassem overthrown by bloody Ba'athist coup d'état — anti-communist repression.

**1963, 14 May:** Moscow withdraws veto against Kuwait's admittance to the UN.

**1963:** Nasserite-inspired anti-Ba'athist coup d'Etat in Iraq.

**1967:** Split in Iraqi Communist Party; big left faction known as the Iraqi CP-Central Command — Guevarist guerrilla warfare foco, led by Khaled Ahmad Zaki, in Southern Iraq.

**1968, 17-30 July:** Ba'athist putsch; Ba'ath party takes power in Iraq, liquidation of CP-CC.

**1970, 11 March:** Agreement between Baghdad and leadership of Kurdish liberation movement on autonomy for Iraqi Kurdistan.

**1971:** New anti-Kurdish governmental exactions in Iraq.

**1972, April:** Soviet-Iraq friendship and co-operation treaty.

**1973, July:** Pro-Moscow faction of Iraqi Communist Party establishes governmental front with Ba'ath party. **September:** Fighting in Kurdistan restarts.

**1974:** Broadening of Kurdish guerrilla warfare with support from Shah of Iran and United States.

**1975, 6 March:** Algiers agreement between Baghdad and Shah of Iran; Iraq makes territorial concessions to Iran — Collapse of Kurdish movement.

**1976:** Intensification of anti-communist repression, culminating in 1979 with expulsion of CP from government and its brutal liquidation.

**1979, 11 February:** "Islamic revolution" in Iran; Khomeini takes power.

**1979:** Saddam Hussein concentrates all power in own hands — Totalitarian stranglehold over Iraq — Repression of fundamentalist Shi-ite current

**1980, 17 September:** Saddam Hussein unilaterally abrogates Algiers agreement with Teheran — Mobilization on both sides of frontier.

**1980, 22 September:** Iraq invades Iranian territory; beginning "eight-year war".

**1980:** Iraqi Communist party and Kurdish movement relaunch armed struggle in Iraqi Kurdistan.

**1982:** Iraqi army pushed out of Iran; war continues on Iraqi territory.

**1983:** Turkey intervenes in Iraqi Kurdistan with Baghdad's agreement.

**1984:** Intensification Iraqi bombings in Iran, beginning use of gas and naval war.

**1984:** Re-establishment diplomatic relations Baghdad and Washington, suspended since Arab-Israeli war June 1967.

**1987:** Intervention imperialist fleet to protect commercial shipping in Arab-Persian Gulf — Resolution 598 UN Security Council for immediate cease fire and withdrawal troops; rejected by Iran.

**1988, 16 March:** Chemical bombing Kurdish village of Halabja, by Baghdad; 5 000 dead.

**1988, 18 July:** Iran, in military difficulties, accepts Resolution 598.

**1988, 20 August:** Ceasefire puts end to war — Negotiations under auspices of UN to agree on peace treaty between Iraq and Iran continue until 1990.

**1989 -1990:** Iraq bows under weight of debt — Economic liberalization.

### 1990

**July:** Tension mounts between Iraq and Kuwait; Baghdad accuses oil sheikhdoms of deliberately lowering oil prices — Iraq assembles troops on Kuwaiti frontier — Fruitless attempts at Arab mediation.

**2 August:** Iraqi army invades Kuwait; its imminent withdrawal is announced the next day.

**4 August:** Washington decides to send troops to Saudi Arabia.

**6 August:** Resolution 661 of UN Security Council, announcing embargo on Iraq which is in fact a military blockade.

**8 August:** Iraq officially annexes Kuwait, after

## Selective bibliography

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### PERIODICALS

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having tried to establish "provisional revolutionary government", and after failure of attempts at conciliation with Sheikh of Kuwait and Saudi leaders. Beginning "Desert shield" operation announced. Start of reinforcement of imperialist fleets in the Gulf and surrounding waters.

**12 August:** Hussein proposes withdrawal of his troops from Kuwait in exchange for withdrawal of Israeli troops from the Arab territories occupied since 1967, and of Syrian troops from Lebanon.

**15 August:** Baghdad accepts all Iranian conditions for peace between the two countries, Algiers agreement of 1975 is once again in force.

**18 August:** Dramatization of the Western "hostages" held by Baghdad.

**25 August:** UN Security Council Resolution 665 authorizes use of force to impose embargo.

**End August:** Intensification of efforts by PLO, UN etc. to mediate for compromise solution.

**September:** United States assure financing to their military operation by rich allies, oil states and imperialists — 20 countries participate in military operation against Iraq.

**8-9 September:** Bush-Gorbachev summit in Helsinki; confirmation of Moscow's political support for Washington in exchange for economic aid.

**30 September:** Hussein offers talks on compromise solution — very idea of compromise rejected by Washington.

**8 November:** Bush announces sending new reinforcements to Saudi Arabia with perspective of offensive against Iraq.

**29 November:** UN Security Council Resolution 678 authorizing the use of force to drive Iraq out of Kuwait, after the ultimatum for 15 January 1991.

**30 November:** Surprise offer by Bush for talks with Baghdad.

**7 December:** Iraq frees all "hostages".

**11 december:** Bush reassures Shamir of his aggressive intentions against Iraq.

### 1991

**January:** 600 000 military of anti-Iraq coalition assembled in the Gulf

**9 January:** Baker-Aziz meeting in Geneva; US threats without any real wish for a dialogue — Big anti-war demonstrations in allied countries.

**16-17 January:** Start of "Desert Storm" operation, biggest air raid in history

**18 February:** Gorbachev peace plan includes unconditional Iraqi withdrawal from Kuwait; accepted by Baghdad, rejected by Washington.

**24 February:** Start of land war by the allies in Iraq and Kuwait.

**25 February:** Baghdad orders troops to withdraw from Kuwait; Carnage on motorway Kuwait City — Basra in Iraq

**27-28 February:** End of "Desert Storm" operation.

**28 February:** Baghdad officially accepts all UN Security Council resolutions — Total surrender.