

Rebel Girls' Rag

A FORUM OF WOMEN'S RESISTANCE

Vol. 5 No. 2

75¢

MARCH / APRIL, 1991

News & Views from Toronto Socialist Feminist Action



photo: Konnie Reich

Inside

- U.S. WAR IN THE GULF: EXPOSING THE "NEW WORLD ORDER"
- IT'S NOT OVER -- BRING THE WAR HOME!
- BLACK FAMILIES AGAINST THE RACIST WAR
- ANGELA DAVIS, ELLEN GABRIEL & ME
- LOOSE LIPS SINK SHIPS: MEDIA ON THE MIDDLE EAST
- LINE IN THE SAND

Rebel Girls' Rag

A FORUM OF WOMEN'S RESISTANCE

Vol. 5 No. 2

75¢

MARCH / APRIL, 1991

News & Views from Toronto Socialist Feminist Action

THE U.S. WAR IN THE GULF: EXPOSING THE "NEW WORLD ORDER"

By U. Hammer

On January 16, 1991, the U.S. led multi-national forces which had gathered in the Persian gulf at the outset of the war launched a massive military strike against Iraq. The U.S. government claimed the goal was the "liberation of Kuwait." Later, they expanded their goal to include the destruction of the Iraqi military force. It was further extended to include the "security of the Gulf." It is critically important for those interested in the fight to end this war, and the terror it has unleashed on millions of people, to understand what this war is really all about.

There are few people who believe that the objective of this war is the liberation of Kuwait. A quick look at U.S. foreign policy reveals that the United States has never had any concern for the sovereignty of any nation, or the liberation of any people. During the last decade alone we can site the U.S. invasion of Grenada and Panama, the "low-intensity" war against Nicaragua, the continued support of right-wing death squads in most of the rest of Central America, particularly El Salvador; the continued campaign of terror and destabilization against Cuba; the support of the racist apartheid system in South Africa; the bombing of Libya, the support to continue the occupation of Palestine and the repression of it's people by the racist apartheid state of Israel; the support of Saddam Hussein in his attempt to contain and destroy the Iranian revolution, and the political and military support to the right-wing Mujahedeen of Afghanistan.

If the present military invasion is not the liberation of Kuwait, then what are the U.S. objectives?

The United States has three main objectives in the Gulf. First to strengthen its control of the middle east oil through the establishment of permanent military stations in the gulf.

Secondly, this would strengthen the U.S. position economically vis-a-vis Japan and the European community who most heavily depend on Middle Eastern oil. This is very important because with the end of the "cold war" and rapid decline of Soviet Union as a major world power, we are seeing the emergence of a more classic form of inter-imperialist conflict. Emerging is a tripolar world economic system of competition - the North American block, dominated by the U.S., the European Economic Community, dominated by Germany, and Japan which now is in the process of creating a South East Asian block.

Finally, the U.S. is interested in undoing, once and for all, the so-called Vietnam syndrome and returning to the good old days when it could intervene anywhere, anytime, and under any pretext. The U.S. right-wing undertook this project some years ago. The invasion of Grenada and then Panama set the stage for the current invasion, which was designed to free the U.S. from the ghost of Vietnam in the "new world order". At the same time, the U.S. wants to send a message to governments which pursue different policies from the U.S. that such policies will not be tolerated. More importantly, it is designed to prevent revolutionary movement's from attaining and maintaining governmental power for any length of time. It is for these reasons that the United States started this bloody war, and it is for these reasons that a victory for U.S. imperialism is the worst evil not only for the people of the Middle East, but for all progressive forces around the world.

From the very start of the "crisis", the U.S. made sure to politically position itself to justify the murder of thousands of people in the Middle East. U.N. resolutions generally sponsored and rammed through by the U.S. state department gave the desired appearance of world condemnation. Deadlines, "peace" proposals and last ditch diplomacy efforts all helped to construct the notion that the U.S. had "no choice" but to go to war.

The role of the United Nations as a tool for imperialist domination of third world countries is well documented elsewhere. What has been less clear and a source of some confusion for anti-war activists has been the role of various Arab governments in this war. The U.S. propaganda machine has made a point of constantly reminding it's own population and as well as the rest of the world that there are several Arab governments actively participating in the military campaign against Iraq.

The Arab governments that have aligned themselves with the U.S. have had some very direct interests, usually of an economic nature, in their support of the U.S. war. Even then, in some cases there has been some heavy arm-twisting involved to ensure compliance.

The participation of Arab governments in the U.S.-sponsored multi-national forces was essential to mask the U.S. intentions in the Gulf. At the same time, however, their participation could very seriously jeopardize their very existence and in the long run, consequently, the U.S. interests. Therefore, it has been necessary for them to receive



photo: Konnie Reich

massive rewards for their participation. These rewards have been important not only to induce these regimes to take the political risks, but also to avert some of the economic stress put on their populations that could further fuel mass anger and revolt.

For its participation, Egypt, the principal world beneficiary of U.S. aid after Israel, will see its military debt of some \$7 billion to the U.S. written off. Its debt to Saudi Arabia has also been forgiven and new financial assistance will be provided. As well, the defeat of Iraq will place Mubarak in an excellent position to become the official representative of the Arab world which would be advantageous to American and Israeli interests in the region.

Syria, a long time foe of Iraq, will be bailed out of its grave financial crisis by the gulf oil sheiks. It is also awarded by the U.K. lifting its veto on the 146 million ECU promised by the EEC. An Iraqi defeat will also present an opening for Asad to consolidate his influence over Lebanon and enhance his position vis-a-vis the Palestinian liberation movements. It will also be spared of the threat of retaliation by Iraq for Syria's support of Iran during the eight year long Iran-Iraq war.

The Saudi ruling family has, of course, always been a trusty U.S. ally and would not object to the establishment of permanent U.S. military installations on its territory. Also, the Saudi rulers have a great number of financial interests in the western world and stand to gain more from stability of western economies than increases in the price of oil. It is therefore very important for them to disallow "price-hawkers", such as Iraq and Iran, from increasing their power and influence in OPEC. The reinstatement of the Kuwaiti sheiks to their previous position will ensure status-quo with respect to this problem.

Practically all of the foreign governments who have supported the U.S. sponsored invasion of Iraq will be

rewarded in one form or another. Even advanced imperialist countries such as Canada stand to benefit from their unquestioning support for U.S. foreign policy in the Gulf. Canada was rewarded with a seat at the free trade negotiations with the U.S. and Mexico, something the U.S. had refused prior to the Gulf war.

On the other hand, countries that did not support the U.S. policy in the Gulf were quickly punished. Yemen, for instance, had its U.S. aid cut from over \$20 million a year to less than \$3 million. This does not include the revenue lost due to the expulsion of Yemeni workers from Saudi Arabia.

Governmental policies notwithstanding, it is important to keep in mind that the majority of the people of the Middle East, both Arabs and non-Arabs, are opposed to the U.S. war against Iraq. Regardless of the ceasefire, the pro-U.S. governments could find themselves in a very precarious position. This mass force, which is many times mightier than the military machine of the U.S. led coalition forces, will inevitably have a direct impact on the course of the war and the decisions of the "coalition forces."

Despite the ceasefire, the war must continue on the home front including organizing against the imposition of sanctions against Iraq and on-going U.S. backed troops in the Middle East. The people of various western countries have demonstrated their opposition to their imperialist governments. It is our task to build these movements into large and broad-based on-going opposition. It is only with a strong movement at home that we can prevent further slaughter of the people of the Middle East and other nations at the hands of Western imperialism. We must demand:

NO U.S. INTERVENTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST. TROOPS OUT NOW! STOP ECONOMIC SANCTIONS AGAINST IRAQ!

Rebel Girls' Rag

A Forum of Women's Resistance

Vol. 5, No. 2

March/April, 1991

Published by:

Toronto Socialist Feminist Action

P.O. Box 70, Station F

Toronto, Ontario M4Y 2L4

Date of issue: March 1, 1991

Published four times a year in
Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Second class mail registration
number 7769.

We are a socialist-feminist group which operates on the principle that mass action is our most effective instrument of change. We believe that the oppression of women touches every aspect of our lives and that the liberation of women will require fundamental changes in the structure of society.

We hold bi-weekly meetings where our policy and overall direction are determined. Smaller committees work on specific events or issues and in different constituencies.

We welcome new members. For more information, phone 531-2369.

This issue was put together by:

Sunitha Alburquerque, Iman Aojazairi, Laurie Bell, Julia B., Debi Brock, Carolyn Egan, Nancy Farmer, Mary Gellatly, Shelly Gordon, Miriam Jones, Judy Koch, Gillian Morton, Sharmani Peries, Jocelyn Piercy, Christina Starr, Jennifer Stephen.

Signed articles do not necessarily reflect the views of the Toronto Socialist Feminist Action, but those of the author.

IT'S NOT OVER! BRING THE WAR HOME!

We were told by the press, the pentagon, and George Bush that it was Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, not U.S. economic interests or the U.S.-led carnage, that turned the situation in the Gulf into a conflict between the West and the Arab world. The anti-war movement must continue to make clear that it is the racist, profit-seeking powers which form the biggest barrier to Arab aspirations for self-determination and for control of their own resources. It is the hundreds of thousands of U.S.-led troops, the hundreds of U.S. nuclear warheads, and the threat of the permanent presence of U.S. or U.N. troops that are the deadliest forces of oppression in the region.

The task of the anti-war movement is not over now a ceasefire has been declared. We must continue to make clear our opposition to Canadian and U.S. intervention in the Gulf by demanding: NO sanctions, the removal of all foreign troops from the Middle East, and an END to the occupation of Iraq. It is critical that we stongly support International Women's Day, organized with the theme "Women Say Stop the Racist War from Oka to the Gulf," and continue to build the March 23rd Day of Action against continued intervention in the Gulf.

Many of us have been shocked by the speed of the military defeat of Iraq but the political questions still remain. The U.S. desire to establish itself as the major economic and military power of "the new world order" has been made perfectly clear, and anti-war activists must build on this understanding in order to defeat further interventions of this sort. The popular hatred of western imperialism has been brought to the boiling point in many areas of the world--one million went out in a general strike in Yemen against the U.S.-led coalition invasion--and there will be a lot of reflection on why the war was fought and on the tremendous cost in Iraqi lives. The war against Iraq will not solve any political conflicts; it will most probably deepen and widen the contradictions.

It is our role to "bring the war home" as was done during the Viet Nam era. We are facing a global recession,

layoffs, increased taxes, cuts in social services, in health and education spending. The working class, which includes a majority of women and people of colour in this country, is under a vicious attack. We must make the links and fight back strong.

Building the participation of the labour movement has been an important aspect of the anti-war movement. The cost of a war fought for capitalist oil profits was (and will continue to be) paid for by all working people, both Black and white, who have died fighting and who will pay in social program cuts and increased taxes. Anti-war activists did outreach to the unions, strengthening the link: opposition to the war means opposition to plant closures, to social cut-backs, the GST, and the rest of the Tory attack on workers in Canada. We must not let the ceasefire loosen these links.

We must also continue to oppose the racism implicit in the liberal position taken by some women's organizations (most notably, NOW in the U.S.) who see the war merely as product of a macho/male dominated world or who oppose it on the grounds that they cannot defend the "gender apartheid" regimes in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. Likewise, we must challenge the racism within the disarmament movement, exemplified by the call for the demilitarization of the Middle East without calling for the disarmament of the most violent power of all: the U.S. We should also question the tactics of environmental groups who echo the pentagon's propaganda by blaming much of the environmental catastrophe on Iraq.

An anti-racist focus and class perspective has been taken up by many of the coalitions opposing the war. In Toronto, the Toronto Coalition for Troops Out of the Gulf, Black Families Against the War, and the March 8th Coalition for International Women's Day (1991) have been built by and with the participation of activists involved in issues such as anti-racist struggles against police violence and the ROM's cultural imperialism; the fight for Native self-determination; the battle for reproductive rights; the fight against the Tory agenda which has been led by the labour movement; anti-imperialism; and the Palestinian and other struggles for self-determination in the Middle East.

For any movement to be strong, we must have unity. Unfortunately, the anti-war movements in both Canada and the U.S. have been divided, earning headlines like "Split Peace Soup--Why the Anti-war Movement is Marching With Two Left Feet." In Toronto the proliferation of anti-war groupings led to a number of smaller demonstrations rather than large united actions. As anti-war activists who organized against the Viet Nam war noted, the challenge is not just to explain why the war is wrong but to convince people that their participation is crucial to the process of change.

The ceasefire is on, but the war is not over. The effects of the Gulf war, from the further destabilization of the Middle East to the economic impact on participating nations, will be felt for decades. We must continue to struggle to bring the war home in our fight against U.S. imperialism.



Black Families Against the Racist War

It is easier...for a Black youth in Canada or the United States to go to prison, or to go to war, or to go to heaven than it is for a Black youth to get an education and to get a job.

Black people have fought and have died and have returned wounded physically and emotionally from every war fought by imperialist countries like Canada and the United States. These wars have not been fought against racism and apartheid; these wars have not been fought against sexism; these wars have not been fought against poverty; and these wars have not been fought against the transnational corporations that destroy the environment and deface humanity.

None of the wars in which Black people have fought and died--Grenada, Panama, Korea, Viet Nam, World War II, the Boer War, the American War against the Philippines, the war for American independence, the War of 1812-- were fought for the liberation of Black people and of working class people.

There has never been a war fought by the West that was fought for the benefit of Black people. Some of these have included the Haitian Uprising against France to end slavery and the revolution in Southern Africa to break the back of apartheid.

Black people have not only died in

these wars, but in every war that the West has fought they have died in larger percentages. In fact, the percentages of Black people in the armies and in the body bags returning from the war has only been exceeded by the percentages of them who filled the prison systems and the unemployment lines.

There is no need for affirmative action for Black people to go into imperialist armies to die when they are denied affirmative action to get into universities to study and into jobs to care for themselves and their families.

We, people of African heritage, condemn the coalition of imperialists and colonized countries now ranged against the Iraqi people.

We condemn George Bush and his clique of criminals that include the like of Mulroney for their militaristic adventures in the Persian Gulf, murdering and maiming with the criminal intention of dividing up the natural resources of the region among themselves.

As African peoples we must not forget our own history, how Africa was plundered using superior weaponry we did not possess. We, the descendants of slaves, have a direct historical link with what is happening in the Persian Gulf today. It is our duty to condemn it.

We are Africa! We are Black! We won't go to fight Iraq!



MOVEMENT BRIEFS

Forum on the Middle East

The Arab Palestine Association is organizing a public forum on the Middle East, to be held at the Novotel in Mississauga, on Saturday, March 9th, at 7:30 pm. speakers include representatives from the three major political parties and P.L.O representative to Canada. For more info., call 858-0292 or 858-2311.

Lesbian Youth Peer Support (LYPS)

This new group, run by and for lesbian youths, started in January. LYPS meets every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month; their next meeting is March 19. From 7:30 to 9:30 p.m. at 464 Yonge St, Rm. 32, the AIDS Committee of Toronto.

Strategies for Womens Liberation

Cherie MacDonald, longtime pro-choice activist, will be speaking about strategies to build the women's movement on Sunday April 7 at 7 p.m., 455 Spadina Ave, Rm. 211. Sponsored by the Socialist Challenge.

Five Feminist Minutes

This benefit for the Elizabeth Fry Society of Toronto will present 16 short films by and about women. Filmmaker Janice Cole will be present. Thursday April 4th at 7:30 p.m.; Euclid Theatre, 394 Euclid Avenue (at College). Admission is \$20 (\$10 for students). Call Signy Madden at 924-3708 for info.

Pro-Choice Victory! But the Fight Continues.

For only the second time in its existence, the Senate defeated legislation from the House. In a stunning tie-vote of 43-43, Bill C43 was defeated on Jan. 31, 1991. But the fight for reproductive choice is by no means over. Access has noticeably declined since the old law was defeated in Jan. 1988, largely as a result of the threatened legislation. We have a lot of ground to recover! We must play watchdog to the provinces, and guard against anti-choice attacks. We must fight the worst social cutbacks in generations, and the devastating dismantling of Federal transfer payments.

Come out on the Day of Action for Access, May 25th, 1991, 12 noon at Queen's Park. No woman should have to pay!

To get involved, phone OCAC at 969-8463. OCAC meets every second Tuesday at 7:30pm at Trinity St. Paul's Centre, on Bloor at Robert.

Forum: The War in Context - Iraq's Past, Present and Future

Wednesday, March 13, 8pm

The forum will look at the history of the Middle East and the possibilities for a lasting peace in the region. Panelists: Aida Graff, Atif Kubursi, David Dewitt, and Anatol Rapoport. Moderator: Ted Scott.

St. Lawrence Centre, 27 Front St. E. Free Admission. Sign Language interpretation.

Canada Nicaragua Women's Solidarity: International Women's Day Celebration.

Featuring the Rebel Girls and Friends. Proceeds to Tools for Peace and Nicaragua's Women's Health Clinic. Sponsored by Toronto Socialist Feminist Action.

Thurs. March 14, 9pm. Sneaky Dee's, on College at Bathurst.

\$8.00-\$6.00 unemployed/students.



"The harassment and discrimination that the Arab Canadian Community is suffering will test whether or not racism will prevail in Canada."

Aida Graff
Arab Community Centre of Toronto

Angela Davis, Ellen Gabriel and me.

by Susan Beaver

This introduction and the following poem were given by Sue Beaver as part of a talk organized by Black Women at OISE and U of T on January 17, 1991.

It is very satisfying personally, vital, and refreshing politically, when people of diverse backgrounds, cultures and experiences come together to say "NO" to our common oppressors and common oppression. To the women of Black Women at OISE and U of T, to the many women who helped organize this event, I say "comrade". May the association be a long one.

We, unlike the state, do not have unlimited resources to make our politics, our analysis, law. We do not force our views on those around us with a canon of institutions. We face a mountain of obstacles on the way to justice and unity. The courts, the police, the laws, the army all conspire to keep us--whether we are of the First Nations, African, women, of any of the sacred colours, mixed, or any of those who have challenged the state--in what they consider is "our place".

What the governments of Canada and the media showed me this past summer is what they truly think of First Nations people, how little they know. A few hundred years ago, we were less than human. It was considered great sport for newly arrived European men to hunt down and shoot "indians". I asked myself how much has changed, how much has misunderstanding been replaced with respect. On July 11, 1990, I got my answer.

I was therefore not too surprised to see the Canadian Armed Forces, to see Mulroney's government, supporting an American war in the Persian Gulf. For this war shows me once again that those two fundamental values upon which what is know as Canada and the United States were based, imperialism and profit, are still firmly in place.

To begin, I have a poem that I wrote that arose from the injustice this past summer. I wrote it when I saw the vast ignorance about my people, I wrote it when I saw the inability to see the cause as just and which would deny First Nations people what is rightfully ours. I wrote it in anger and I wrote it in defiance.



English and Biology

by Susan Beaver

I will teach you to say
"First Nations"
I will demand respect
for my rules
and for myself

You will look closely
study
the grammar
both of injustice
and dignity

Not to defend your innocence
in the canon of lies known as
Canada's history
but to more
eloquently pronounce
Justice

You will look into my eyes
"indian" comes to your mouth
come to your mind

I come with my lover

who knows my skin is soft at night
hard by day

I will teach
the anatomy of a people
that if you flood the Piegan
I will choke and sputter
my lungs filled with water
if you drill for oil in the Lubicon
territory

the wind blows through
the holes in my heart
point a gun at the Mohawk
and we
as a people
all see the barrel

You will look at a body
a people
learn the differences

to be considered educated,
you must learn to identify
Tlingit and Algonquin
pronounce Huron and Beothuk

not to separate its parts
but to more fully understand
the whole

I will sit down with you
I will whisper it gently in your ear
I may stand up against you
I will raise a flag and shout it

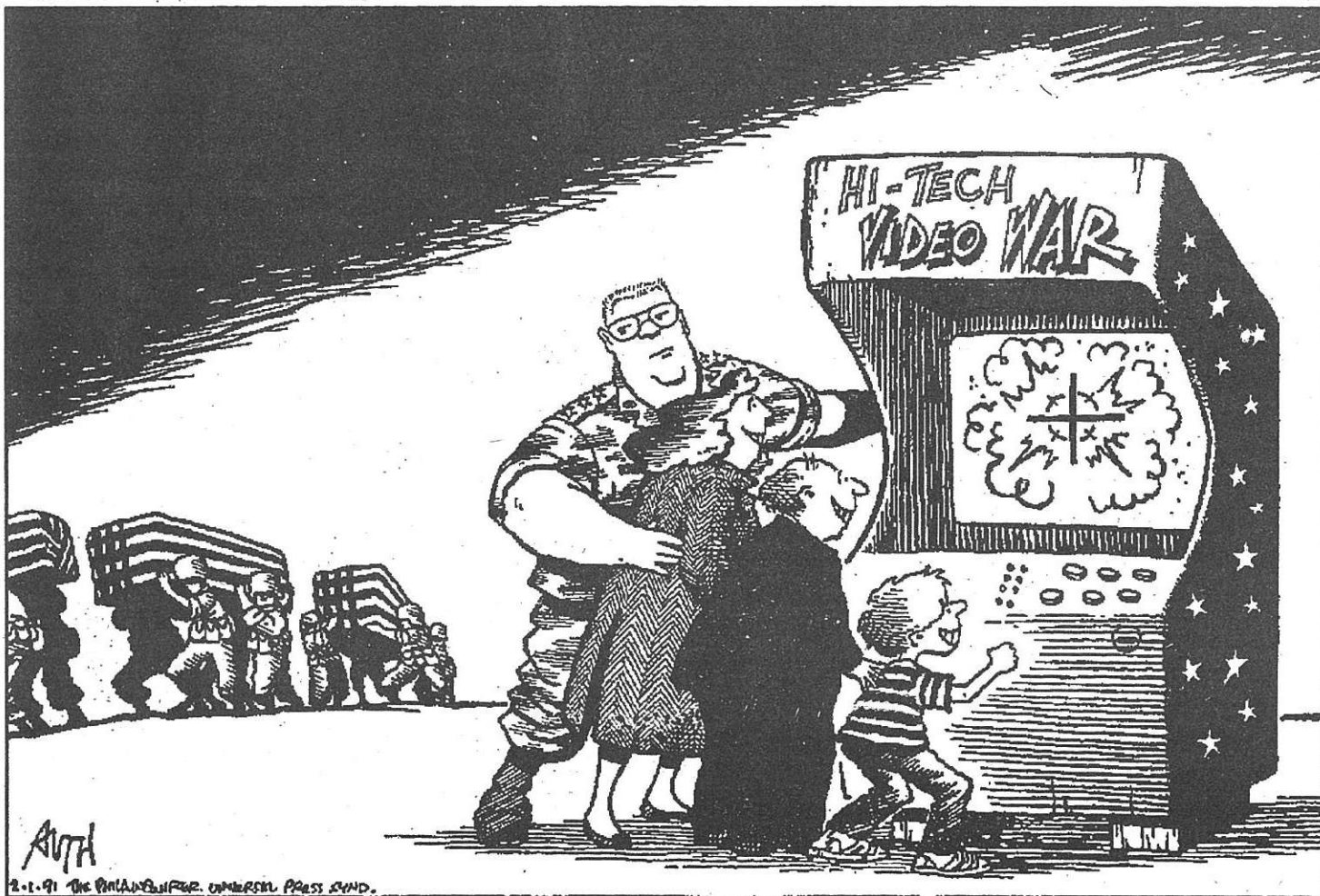
you will learn to say

I will teach you my language
not Mohawk or Cree
not Ojibway or Micmac
I will teach you to say
Nation
First Nation.

© Susan Beaver, 1991

LOOSE LIPS SINK SHIPS

MEDIA ON THE MIDDLE EAST



by Miriam Jones & Joe Galbo

For several years there have been "Contra" video and pinball games in local video parlours. Now media consumers of the "theatre" in the Middle East can have the real thing: front-row seats in a war that, technological-ly, is "an extraordinary achievement" which "boggles [the] mind" of retired Vice-Admiral Dan Mainguy, according to the *Star* on Jan 18. Worse, thanks to soothing media analyses pointing out this video-game phenomenon, consumers are somehow supposed to be absolved by their very admission of the process, and so can still share the "euphoria," guilt-free, along with the smiling pilots splashed across our pages and screens the day after the bombing of Baghdad began. How can one otherwise account for the poll released by Southam News on Jan. 23 in which 53% of Canadians felt that Canada should not be actively involved in combat, while 73% felt that the United States was correct in waging war? People seem to have accepted at face value the Pentagon falsehoods about a bloodless war, "precision" bombing, and "smart" bombs. Because the war has been portrayed so antiseptically, the decimation of the civilian bomb shelter in Baghdad which killed over 300 people had

a jarring effect on Western media consumers. For the first time, victims of "smart" bombs were visible. But even so, the incident has largely been discounted by the efficient spin doctors in the Pentagon.

The small media controversy that does exist functions with the blessing of the state as a sop to our collective conscience: it has been the sober refrain from the first days of the bombing: "the first casualty of war is truth." There have been many letters to the editor to that effect, as well as a number of articles by pundits on both the right and the left. So we have mouthed the cliché, clicked our tongues, and compulsively turned on the TV again. What other choice have we? We are enforced in our helplessness, or so the state would have us believe. We are snared in an ironic game of detached involvement, hooked to the electronic medium that involves us in the war, but divorced from its consequences.

From the opening salvos of this war, mainstream media coverage has been self-referential. Given a lack of access to concrete information due to Pentagon censorship and restrictions, the media have been left, in war-induced benzedrine-frenzy, to intense navel-gazing. Much of the coverage is about the coverage for lack of anything

more substantial. Such being the situation, one might assume a certain level of critical distance on the part of the media, but this is far from the case. If there were any alternatives it might not be so bad; but for many people, the parameters of how we think about this war are set by CNN. The Pentagon reinforces this when they themselves cynically quote from CNN reports in their own briefings to reporters.

The war was, at least initially, a radio war on television with CNN's Peter Arnett and Bernard Shaw reporting through a hotel telephone. When the first images of the bombing and the air defenses were shown a few days later, what most struck people was the sheer "beauty" of the scene: "It's like the 4th of July!" said an awed Bernard Shaw. Even peace activists stranded in Baghdad who witnessed the bombing attested to its "magnificence." Television, especially television news, thrives on the spectacular. And war provides not only such aesthetics of annihilation, but also the normalized television from which to see the destruction. Viewers saw lively graphics, maps and charts, often accompanied by Wagnerian musical effects, as well as file-footage of oil-covered birds which it passed off as the first "victims" of the war long after thousands of invisible Iraqi

civilians had been killed.

It must be said very clearly: the media as an institution is in favour of this racist war. Further, it is building, shaping and creating public support for the war with its coverage. Instead of watching debates between so-called experts (mostly Western, predominantly white, all male, allegedly representing the political spectrum from "liberal" to "conservative") engaging in free debate over timely questions such as "exactly how bad is Saddam Hussein?", we should be asking substantive questions: who owns the media? And to whom are they responsible? There is a simple answer: to the corporations and the multinationals. But that capitalist interests control the media, and that the news reflects those interests, is hardly new information. The way in which the media attempts to build mass consent, against our own interests, is more interesting.

It cannot be said too many times: this war is about oil dollars. It is about Western capitalist panic that the flow of Saudi and Kuwaiti dollars to the United States, Japan and Europe might be disrupted by the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. Iraq, and by default the Iraqi people, are themselves expendable. As far as the United States is concerned, Iraq is no substitute for pro-Western, "democratic" Kuwait, where ninety-five per cent of the population, including women and the disenfranchised foreign workers who make up sixty per cent of the population, cannot even vote. One has only to look at the recent upsurges of optimism on Wall St. and at the TSE to know what a relief this war has been for big business.

The "new world order," a phrase not heard since the post-WWII era when Roosevelt first used it, was not going quite the way the USA had planned it. The "Evil Empire" was undergoing Perestroika and Glasnost, and the Pentagon and the whole military-industrial complex were in a quandary. A new evil emperor was needed, now that "Gorby" no longer fit the bill. The American fascination with evil is worth comment. The United States is one of the most religious fundamentalist countries in the Western world. The metaphor of evil has deep resonances in American culture. It has been reported that seventy per cent of Americans believe in the devil. And there is no com-

promise with the devil. Thus, the Pentagon knows that it can give free reign to its political agenda for unconditional surrender and expect unqualified public support.

For the military, this war was a godsend, and they were going to play their cards right. That is the one point where they and the anti-war movement agree: No more Vietnams! During the Vietnam war, the United States government fed the media figures of the numbers of North Vietnamese people they claimed to have killed. Eventually at the end of the war someone added up all those figures, and discovered that the total number exceeded the entire populations before the war of both North and South Vietnam combined. The Pentagon is not being any more subtle this time around: they are just changing their tactics.

Initially no numbers were released at all. This should not have been a surprise, as they still have not released the casualty figures from their attack on Panama in 1989. Now some figures are being released from the Gulf, but instead of the inflated bravado of the Vietnam era, we are witnessing war as waged by a "kinder, gentler nation": the numbers are so ludicrously low, especially those pertaining to "collateral damage," they would justify some hard questions about the efficacy of the US war machine. It is all part of the efforts of the Pentagon, through their tightly controlled release of "information" to the media, to have us believe in a sanitized, bloodless war. The Bush administration has even decided that there will be no solemn arrival ceremonies and no press coverage for the bodies of the American soldiers returned to Dover Air Force Base, the Defense Dept. mortuary.

As the war continues into its second month, there are inevitable slippages in control. Various stories of particularly brutal instances of "collateral damage," such as the US decimation of the civilian bomb shelter in Baghdad and the British bombing of the open-air market in Fallouja which killed over 130 civilians, are receiving media coverage. But even so, military sources are scrambling to do their best to cast doubt on the veracity of any reports coming from Iraq. And the media dutifully reports their remarks, however dubious.

Indeed, the media undercuts every item it runs from Iraq by its superimposition of the phrase "cleared by Iraqi censors" on every piece of television footage and in every print report. Viewers are being conditioned to scrutinize everything that comes out of Iraq, but to accept unquestioningly information from Pentagon sources. CNN, sensitive to criticism about Peter Arnett's reporting, makes sure that there are at least three references to censorship in each report that comes out of Iraq. In those instances when Iraqi censorship has been lifted, as in the coverage of the destruction of the civilian bomb shelter and its inhabitants, or of the spontaneous demonstrations at the funerals in the following days, viewers are nudged by the media conditioning they have already received into believing it is their patriotic duty to self-censor any information that does not match the Pentagon reading of the war.

Concurrent with such control, of course, there is criticism, explicit or implicit, of any dissent. Some commentators are quoted as calling anti-war demonstrators out and out "insurrectionists," thus calling into play outmoded notions of patriotism and loyalty which last had any value in WWII. More subtly, one can examine the media coverage of the anti-war movement. Bill Moyers pointed out in an interview with CNN for a show tellingly entitled "The Press Goes to War" (26 Jan.) that a mere twenty-nine minutes of air-time had been devoted to political dissent in the entire four months of buildup to the war. What he did not add, is that whenever there is any coverage of anti-war activism, it is invariably immediately followed or preceded by coverage of a pro-war march or other activity. Such reportage obscures the relative numbers involved in each of these political positions, and undercuts the

numerical superiority and strength of the anti-war movement.

While the media is minimizing the anti-war movement, it is trying to obscure, in a heavy handed way, the fundamental racism of this war, even while it is participating in and constructing that same racism. How else are we to explain the choice on Jan. 26, just as one example, of both CNN and CTV to air interviews with a man and a woman of colour, respectively, who each made remarks supporting the war in the gulf? This from the same media which unabashedly distrusts any information from Arab, not just Iraqi sources, while at the same time constructing all other information as "disinterested."

George Bush incites Arab - bashing every time he mispronounces Saddam Hussein's name. Every time he says it, he appears to have some discomfort, some hesitation in getting his tongue around those difficult foreign sounds. It comes out more often than not like "Sodom." Every time he speaks he constructs Saddam Hussein as a focus of hatred. He is not coy about it; he has more than once invited assassination attempts on Saddam Hussein's life. And every time he personalises this war, and speaks as though it were a schoolyard contest between two boys, he obscures the fact that the United States army is virtually perpetrating genocide against the Iraqi people he claims to have nothing against. Further, this hatred is extended to his country's own citizens: The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee claims a total of 95 reported acts of violence against or harassment and intimidation of Arab-Americans since Iraq invaded Kuwait. This is by far the highest number in the six years the organization has been compiling figures.

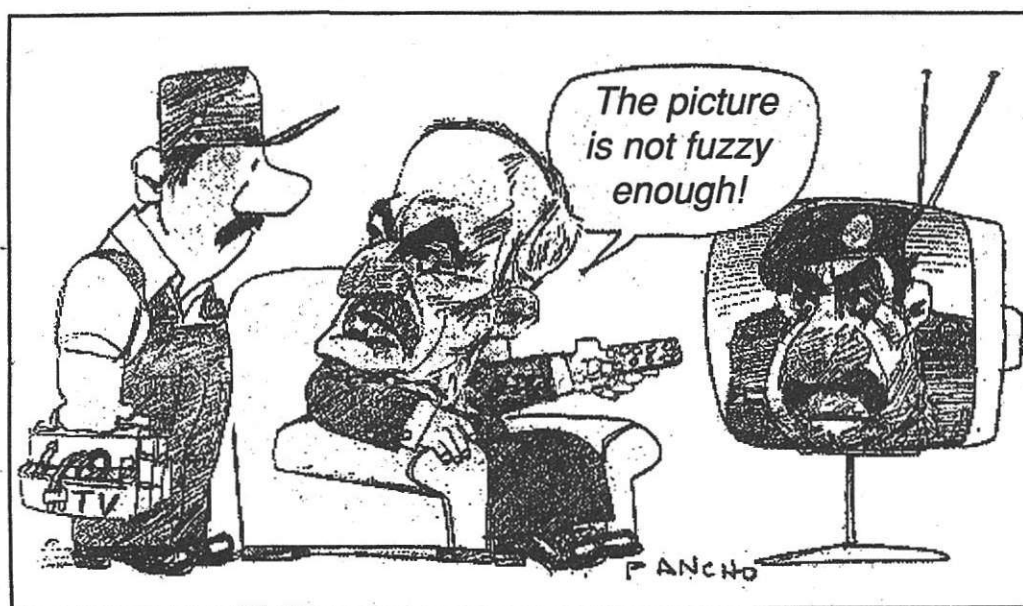
Vulnerable and disenfranchised people everywhere are victimized by this war. There are no "warring nations" here; there are special interests warring against the world in a bid for global hegemony. The racism of this war is not solely focused on the people of Iraq. We must look



a little closer to home, to the poverty draft. It is no coincidence that in a country in which ten per cent of the population is black, thirty per cent of the American troops overall are black, and fifty per cent of the enlisted women are black. It is also no accident that fifty per cent of the troops at the front are black. Similarly, the maritime provinces, where unemployment is high, supply a grossly disproportionate percentage of Canadian troops.

And yet who is interviewed? Who exemplifies the "Allied" forces in the media? Generally, white men, in touching clips complemented by stories of the wives and children back home. The use of term "allied" is itself an affront to history. Pentagon spokespeople themselves slip up, by referring, on occasion, to the US, er, Coalition troops. More chillingly, there was Gen. Colin Powell's recent vow to isolate and "kill" the Iraqi army. He backtracked, and maintained he meant to kill the army itself and not individuals: as spurious a piece of double-speak as this war has produced yet.

The anti-war movement cannot dissent in ignorance. We must understand the role the media is playing, and expose it as best we can. We must read, write and speak for alternative views; we must organize and be visible. Mainstream media is enforcing helplessness and passivity in the face of this apolitical "tragedy", this battle between good and evil. It must be exposed for what it is: an imperialist, racist war fought for oil money, and ultimately, global hegemony. If not, after this, who will stand against the United State? No one who watches CNN.



LINE IN THE SAND

by Atif Kubursi

The following are extracts from a lecture given by Atif Kubursi, Professor of Economics at MacMaster University, at the Marxist Institute in October, 1990. This talk was given prior to the outbreak of war.

The United States can possibly reap all the advantages it can dream of by maintaining the situation it is in now, but no escalation. This would mean that the United States has proven that it can project its power as an unchallenged superpower, in the absence of the Soviet Union. It can do this at no cost to profit as the Japanese, the Germans, the Saudis and other Arab countries are coaxed to pay for the costs of the expedition. It is also a situation in which there are really no disadvantages--no corpses come home--no casualties. It is a situation where the military industrial complex is in an optimum state. All of the pressures that could exert it to reduce the defence budget as a dividend of peace have been shelved.

Today the military industrial complex is in a very comfortable position of increasing its production and its budget without any objection. It is also a situation where the United States is sitting in a very fundamental strategic position to influence the supply of oil, its price, and in a way to exercise leverage on the two competitive economic powers that are challenging the United States on the world market. The United States depends to the tune of 45%--some would say up to 50% on imported oil. It does really depend on Canada, Mexico and Venezuela to produce, with limited but escalating dependence on the gulf but in no measurable way to what Japan, Germany and Europe depend on the gulf. Japan depends on the import of oil to the tune of 98% of its requirements. Europe 96%. The United States is in a very strong position to exert political and economic pressure on its two supposed allies to fall into line and to pursue courses which the Americans will dictate. The United States was the major beneficiary of OPEC. It may not have been involved in the formation of OPEC, but it is in a position to exploit it.

Iraq moved into Kuwait out of a sense of vulnerability, and not out of strength. They went to Saudi Arabia's border in order to make sure that the jugular of the west was in range of Iraq artillery, knowing then this was the only place where they could prevent the west from hurting Iraq, and that it is much easier to fight from these borders, than to fight over Iraqi borders.

The Iraqis have felt that the disappearance of the Soviet Union from the world arena and as a countervailing force to the Americans has left the Arabs exposed and weak, has left the Third World exposed and vulnerable, and has left the United States unchallenged and with full freedom to operate in the Third World and the Arab world. And that the Arabs do not really have the countervailing force to stop that incursion. Iraqis, as do all the Arabs, import up to 70% of their food require-

Iraq has tried to play a more fundamental role in the oil market. It tried to convince other OPEC members, particularly other gulf producing countries, that it was in their interest to see oil prices go up. Iraqis needed it very badly. They had come out of an eight year war with a war-ravished economy; they have already lost \$150 billion in physical damages, not to count the human suffering. They needed every single penny for reconstruction, and they have very limited options other than oil. They argued very strongly with their colleagues in OPEC that this was the time -- the world market was very favourable -- to raise prices. They tried to organize a quota production system to raise the price to \$25.00 and failed because Kuwait and the United Arab Emirates consistently violated the OPEC agreement. The Iraqis recognized that the Saudis were behind the increased production

dollars worth.

Side by side with Iraq, brothers... On the one hand in Iraq there are sixteen million people suffering from the ravages of war, having to eke a living from hand to mouth, and only fifty kilometres away their brothers, with \$30,000 per capita income (by any standards an underestimate) practising consumption, waste, and asking Iraqis to pay a debt owed them for fighting in defence of their brothers and to stop the fundamentalists from encroaching over the gulf. In the time that Iraq was preoccupied with war, Kuwait massively increased production by over-exploitation of the oil fields which are contested on the border between Iraq and Kuwait -- a situation which the Iraqis interpreted, and rightly so, as a provocation. Saddam Hussein saw it as part of a general conspiracy. He had for months before the invasion been the butt of a campaign to have him portrayed as the most dangerous man in the world.

In that respect he felt vulnerable, and he knew that he could not count on his brothers in the gulf to act in a way that would protect or shield Iraq from these designs. I suppose under these circumstances he felt that he had to act, decisively and fast. The result was the invasion of Kuwait, and ensuring that the jugular of the west, the oil supplies of Saudi Arabia, is within reach of his military might so that the west would think twice.

It was not and is not oil which motivates the Americans and the Europeans to go into the middle east. The most important reason is that Iran/Iraq war did not come out the way that they hoped it would. At one time Kissinger was asked, "Who would you like to win, Iran or Iraq?" and he was quick to answer, "I want both to lose." The fact that Iraq emerged from that conflict victorious, with its armies intact with tremendous improvements in logistical power, was interpreted as an intolerable and unacceptable outcome of the war. But what *really* is Iraq threatening today? What sort of power do you really think Iraq is? All of a sudden that power is elevated to such high proportions of vitality and strength that we have forgotten it is really no comparison to the Israeli power. And indeed if Iraq has chemical and biological weapons, what about the nuclear weapons that exist [in countries other than Iraq?]

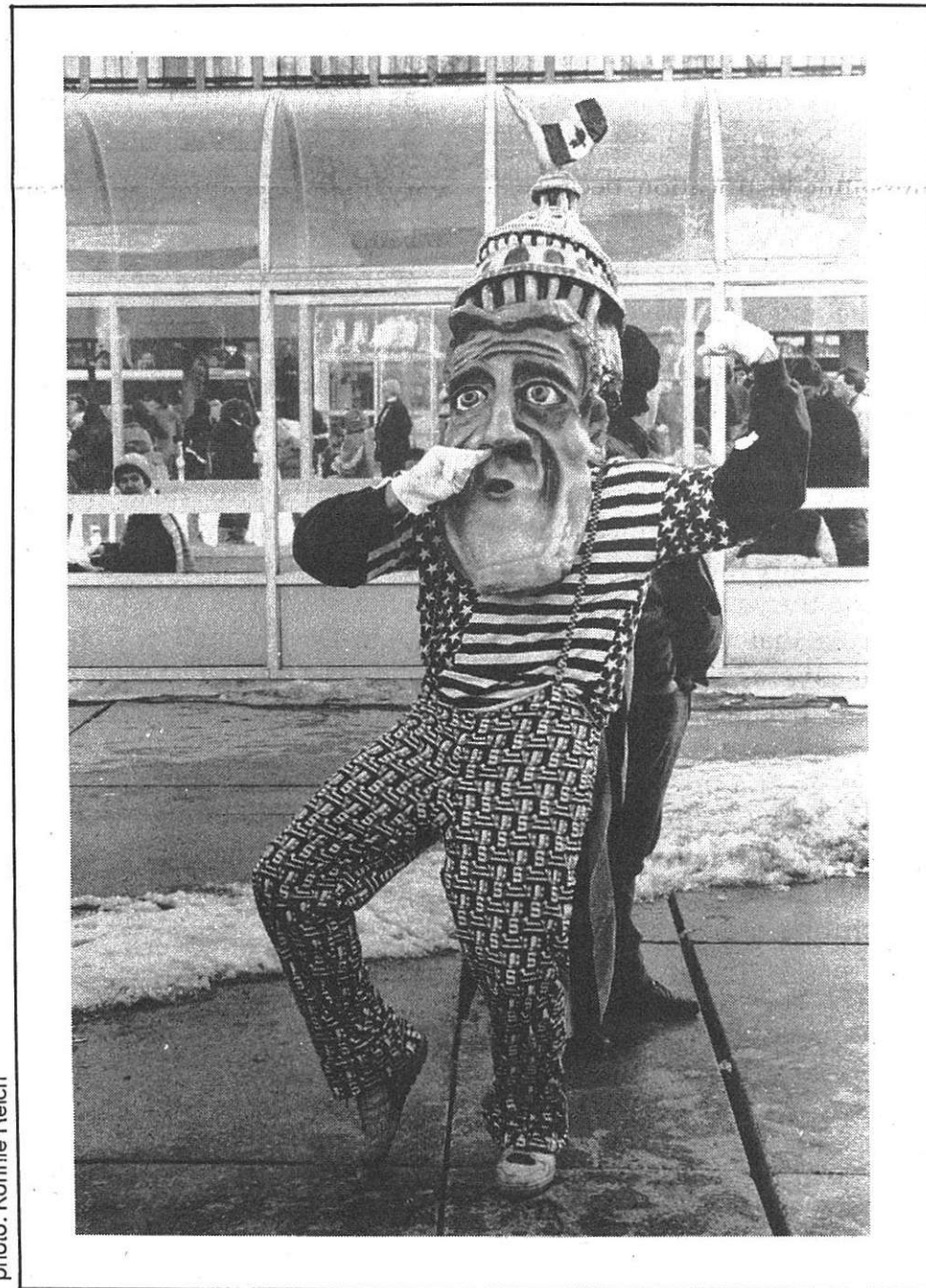


photo: Konnie Reich

ments, do not produce much of their weapons, are dependent for their industries on the spare parts that they bring from the west. They have only one strategic weapon -- an opportunity resource -- and that is oil.

of oil by the Kuwaitis and the United Arab Emirates. The Kuwaitis are the last people who need this oil. They are deriving up to twice as much from their investments abroad, of which they have six hundred billion

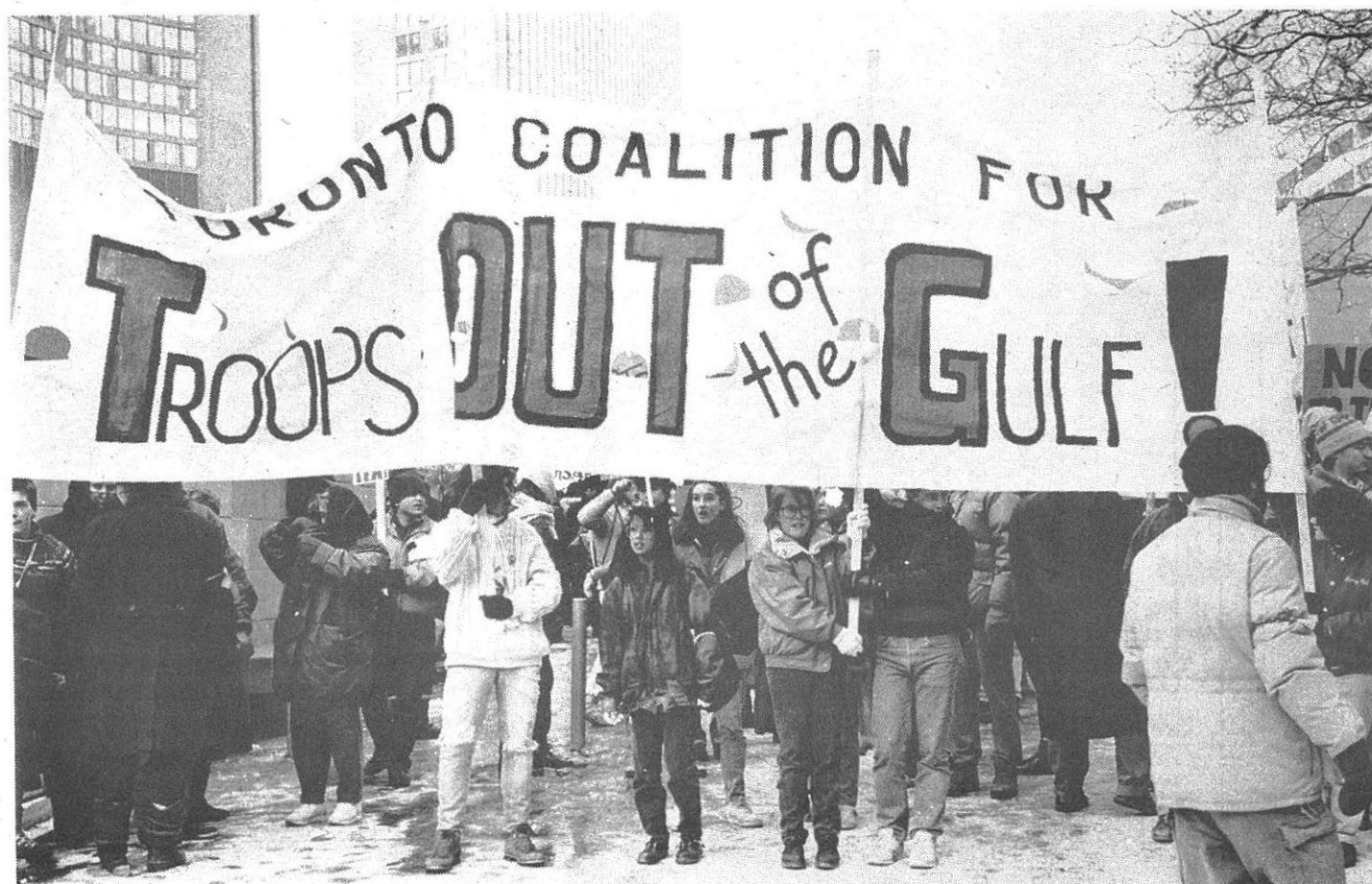
The issue here is national leadership, national decision-making. And these aspects, seems to the world order that is emerging today, intolerable, unacceptable. Implicit in the invasion is a world order that won't allow the Third World to make national choices, independent choices. At stake are independent courses of action. The Third World is supposed to toe the line and accept the dictates of the superpower.

One could argue that the most important issue here is the national power of Iraq, of which the Arabs are very jealous. The Lebanese want it to check the Syrians from swallowing Lebanon. The Jordanians have argued very strongly that in the absence on an Iraqi power to check Israeli adventurism, Israelis would think they can, and perhaps will, move hordes of Palestinians en mass from the West Bank and from Gaza into Jordan. They are saying it publicly. Jordan is a Palestinian state. Where would you put two million Soviet jews? Where would you get the housing, where would you get the water? (Israel today, without the two million jews coming from the Soviet Union, has a water deficit of three hundred million cubic metres.) The Israelis feel that the Iraqi power might counter-balance and check them from using the free hand they have gained. Today they are using Saudi money and American blood to do the dirty work they might really want to do themselves.

There is every reason to believe that there are at least four superpowers in the region who have an interest in provoking war, in changing the status quo that has worked totally against them.

The linkage that Mr. Hussein and other Arabs have been able to bring to the forefront between the gulf and the Palestinian question is very threatening to the Israelis. They have every incentive to upset the unfolding of circumstances which has been working against them.

The Turkish are trying to resurrect their strategic role at the expense of Iraq. Their strategic worth was derived from being a listening post for NATO, and an advance post for NATO against the Soviet Union. Now, with the new world order that is emerging, Turkey has lost its strategic role as a post. It is trying to resurrect itself as the



projection of western power in the middle east. But it also is close to the northern oil fields of Iraq, and has a pipe that takes the oil to the mediterranean shore. It would be nice for them to move only a little bit south and control the oil fields. A weak Iraq would give them an interesting and compelling justification, because it seems to be a Kurdish area and the Kurds have been quite a bit of trouble for the Turkish government. They have done it before. They moved during the Iran/Iraq war, with the acquiescence of Iraq, into Iraqi territory to put down a Kurdish uprising. They may very well use the precedent another time, but really to get oil.

But the factor that is becoming more important than oil is water. Turks have built twenty-one dams, the largest of which is capable of holding more than a billion cubic metres of water and which would require that the Euphrates, which goes through Syria and Iraq, be cut for a period of three years just to fill it. Well they tried, three months ago, to cut the flow of the Euphrates. Iraq threatened Turkey; they were ready to attack the dam. Turkey obliged. Today is a golden opportunity. A weak Iraq would give Turkey a free hand for sequestering water for their own benefits, one of which is already a long term agreement: a contract with the Israelis to supply them with two million cubic metres. That would be nice--taking Iraqi and Syrian water and giving it to the Israelis. The Turks have a long history of

trouble with Iraq.

The Syrians have taken a very strong position against Iraq, hoping to dismantle their power, fearing that Iraqi energy may be used against them. And I doubt the Saudis are much in favour of a war. They would have to bear the brunt of the fighting, have very high casualties, and their ability to exist as a state afterwards would be so much comprised.

And what about Iran? Iran is in a very interesting position. On the one hand, it is caught in Islamic solidarity. It cannot possibly allow another Muslim country to suffer, particularly since the majority of the population is Shiite, at the hands of this embargo, no matter what the history between them is. On the other hand, there are some basic interests here. Iran would not be too unhappy to see Iraq's energy and power checked. I don't think Iranians would be unhappy about seeing the price of oil go to \$65.00 with them as the only country in the gulf still capable of producing. With Iraq's power so much checked, Iran could emerge the superpower in the gulf.

What about Egypt? The Egyptian economy has shifted gears. It used to be dependent on commodity producing sectors. It has a viable, efficient agriculture sector, it has a good industrial infrastructure sustaining a vibrant industrial manufacturing sector [but] it has shifted emphasis away from the commodity producing sector, shifted the so-

cial fabric of society from productive into being a compradorian system. The major group of beneficiaries are those who align with serving the interests of foreign capital. Today the Egyptian economy depends on remittances from abroad. They depend on tourism. How many tourists can be persuaded to come to see the pyramids and smell the mustard gas? Egypt couldn't possibly depend anymore on the Suez canal. The embargo has ensured that very few ships are coming in, and most of them are military ships. So in many respects the Egyptian economy has been compromised in a very substantial way. If the Egyptian support of the Saudis and the Americans is purely economic reasons then they have no interest in seeing the situation deteriorate further.

...The colonial powers [want] Iraq left as a land locked country that can be contained. Iraq needs secure access to the gulf. It wants to see higher oil prices so it can derive sufficient revenues to reconstruct, rebuild its economy and society. I don't see how this is inconsistent with the interests of everybody in the world, with those who are advocating conservation, those who are looking for alternatives to oil, those who are trying to see that the world has some semblance of equity and justice in the distribution and allocation of resources. Iraq is not in conflict with the long term interests of the west, unless [the west] does not want to tolerate national decision-making.

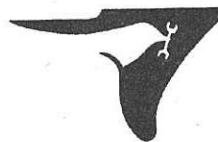
THE REBEL GIRLS



Photo: Deborah Barndt

Songs to carry the struggle onward-
with a traditional blend of humour, politics, and harmonies.

Proceeds to Tools for Peace and Nicaragua's Women's Health Clinic.
Sponsored by Toronto Socialist Feminist Action. Poster design by Blackbird.



International
Women's Day
Celebration
Canada
Nicaragua
Women's
Solidarity

Thurs., March 14

Sneaky Dee's College
&
Bathurst

9pm \$8.00, \$6.00 unemployed/students

SUBSCRIBE TO THE REBEL GIRLS' RAG

Rebel Girls' Rag provides a vehicle for socialist-feminist activists to analyze, discuss and report on our political work and our visions. It is the voice of an activist organization. Subscribe now! Donations will assist us in our work.

I wish to subscribe to Rebel Girls' Rag and enclose \$10 for a one year subscription (5 issues): and enclose a donation of _____.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

Postal Code: _____

Phone: _____

Send cheque or money order to: Toronto Socialist Feminist Action
P.O. Box 70, Station F, Toronto, Ontario M4L 2L4