

FROM PAGE 11

Risking

a "holy war" against the West, previously associated with the fundamentalist camp. Both Egypt and Syria have recently used repressive measures against growing fundamentalist opposition movements within their borders.

In the emerging post-Cold War global order it is virtually impossible that the U.S.S.R. will forcefully oppose the U.S. military presence in Saudi Arabia. But does this mean that it is also impossible that this latest Middle East crisis will escalate to World War III? Unfortunately, the answer is no. The U.S. military presence only makes more likely the possibility of a radical realignment in the Islamic world which could lead to an oil crunch as drastic as that of the mid-'70s and a renewed drive against Israel. The post-Cold War order could descend rapidly into a massive contest between the newly united European/Christian world and a newly united Arab/Islamic world.

The widespread presence of nuclear weapons in the Middle East makes this prospect all the more terrifying. The massive U.S. fleet which has been sent to the region is bristling with nuclear missiles, and the smaller British and French fleets are also probably nuclear armed. Israel already has several hundred nuclear weapons, and Pakistan, whose liberal President Benazir Bhutto was just ousted in a coup d'etat, has a somewhat smaller nuclear arsenal. Iran and Iraq are well on their way to developing nuclear weapons, and Libya is not far behind. Egypt and Saudi Arabia have recently sought to procure intercontinental ballistic missiles, which also indicates a probable interest in developing nuclear weapons. Iraq, of course, also has a formidable chemical weapons arsenal. The destruction which could be wrought by a full-scale military conflict in the Middle East is nearly as unthinkable as that which could have been wrought by the U.S.-Soviet conflict which loomed ominously during the Cold War era.

Perhaps the greatest irony lies in the fact that the very thing being contested in this war which the U.S. is preparing to fight is the same thing which is destroying our planet day by day — oil. With the world dependent on oil, even the peacetime economy is an incessant war on the biosphere. Oil is making the air of our urban areas unbreathable. Oil is contributing to the greenhouse effect and acid rain. Oil development is laying waste to pristine wilderness areas from northern Alaska to the rainforests of Latin America, contributing to the massive die-back in species diversity. Oil spills are fouling our coastlines from Prince William Sound to Staten Island. The ubiquitous use of oil-derived plastic packaging is creating solid-waste nightmares for our cities. Over-reliance on oil-derived fertilizers is destroying the natural soil fertility of our vital agricultural heartland, threatening a second Dust Bowl. This is the silent war — the war on the planetary ecology which has been waged continuously throughout the 20th Century, accelerating horribly since World War II, but which has only started to make headlines in the last couple of years. The global economy which the U.S. is currently risking global war to protect is an economy which is daily propelling us deeper into a global ecological collapse, a future of dying forests, depleted soils and catastrophic climate shift.

Charles Komanoff, an energy analyst in New York City says that he finds the U.S. troop deployment objectionable on three counts. "First of all, we coddled and supported Hussein for a decade when he was our enemy's enemy. We gave him agricultural credits, the CIA gave him information. Now all of a sudden we're calling him another Hitler. Secondly, the idea that this is 'our' oil — meaning U.S. industry and over-consumption — is implicit in our going into the Middle East. Finally, if not for the complete dismantling of energy conservation policy under Reagan/Bush, we would be virtually independent of Middle East oil by now. By falling off the energy efficiency wagon after 1986 we missed a chance to reduce daily oil consumption by an amount equivalent to Kuwait's daily OPEC quota."

Komanoff says that between 1978 and 1986, the energy efficiency of the U.S. economy (arrived at by dividing Gross National Product by consumed British Thermal Units) increased by 3% a year. "Since 1986, the improvement has been virtually negligible — a few tenths of a percent per year. If we had continued to improve at the previous rate, our current oil consumption would be 1.7 million barrels a day less. Kuwait's daily quota is 1.6 million."

Komanoff attributes the improving efficiency of the first six years of the '80s to the Carter energy policy starting to "kick in." This policy called for automobile mileage standards, improved efficiency for electric appliances and utility subsidy of private small-scale cogeneration — and it was derailed by Reagan. "Reagan lowered the standards for increased fuel efficiency. With oil below a dollar a gallon, manufacturers don't sell on the basis of fuel efficiency, so Detroit and Madison Avenue started

pushing power jeeps. Reagan managed to hold up legislation for improved efficiency standards for electric appliances for years. Federal research on renewables and conservation was gutted. We could have had prototypes and working demonstrations of super-efficient cars, appliances and buildings in place by now. MPG standards could have become more stringent instead of being frozen at 27-and-a-half miles per gallon. It should be at 40 by now.

"Oil wells and stretch limousines became the energy symbols of the '80s. The ethos of Reaganism sparked a binge of overconsumption which was reflected in rampant condo and shopping center development on much of our remaining countryside, much of which is bankrupt now. Much of the savings and loan defaults is due to real estate developers going belly up — a direct result of the interest deregulation of '81. It sparked an orgy of over-development. Now the country's economic system is absorbing the half-trillion dollars of bad loans, just as our country's ecological system is absorbing the catastrophe of the loss of much of our open spaces."

DONATO (TORONTO SUN, TORONTO, CANADA)



World War III

The American "way of life" which Bush says we must defend in the deserts of Saudi Arabia is, fortunately, not static and unchangeable. In the Second World War, the U.S. public was asked to undertake massive lifestyle changes in support of the war effort. Recycling and conservation were the order of the day, women entered the industrial workforce for the first time to replace men who had been sent overseas to fight, and signs at the railroad stations asked, "Is This Trip Necessary?" Of course these changes were quickly reversed in the economic boom of the '50s. Perhaps it is time for the U.S. to unite around an effort of similar scale — only this time not at the bidding of our national leaders, but in spite of them; not in support of a Third World War, but to build an ecologically sound economic order which can head off a Third World War.

Bill Weinberg is environmental editor of the New York City weekly newspaper ("The One, The Only, The Original") DOWNTOWN, from which his article has been reprinted.

Old Town Framing Co.

922 Commercial St. Astoria, OR 97103 Phone (503) 325-5221

ESPECIALLY Spirited...
posters by —
Michael Parkes
Mc Escher
H. Bosch
ghoulish & exciting!!
325-5221.

TOM HANNEN

SELF-PORTRAIT 20 3/4" X 13" MIXED MEDIA

OCT. 20 - NOV. 16, 1990
Reception Saturday, Oct. 20, 2-4pm

Ricciardi GALLERY
108 TENTH STREET
ASTORIA, OREGON 97103 TEL 503/325-5450