

MANIFEST DESTINY

FROM PAGE ONE

Nam in his justification for his mass mobilization of American armed forces to fight the war in the Persian Gulf. He claims that its protraction and inconclusiveness were the reasons the war fell out of favor with Americans and that a short decisive war in the Persian Gulf will be popular with the public. He overlooks the immediacy of the cost the current war threatens to produce or gambles that its brevity, if indeed it is brief, might contain public outcry at the price. Viet Nam lasted as long as it did without mass protest precisely because the casualty rate of American combatants was generally low until finally, after many years, the rising and cumulative death count became too much, the cost too high for a purpose steadily muddled and bungled as the war dragged endlessly on. A hard clash against Iraq's defenses by ground troops and tanks will be staggering in its violence, comparable in scale to Verdun or Stalingrad, and American deaths within only a few weeks might well equal those of the entire Viet Nam War. Of course the war might end at that point and the mass howl of rage and pain from the homefront could soon die to a collective whimper, unlike the protracted antiwar protest of the Viet Nam decade.

It doesn't matter the purpose of this new war, it is the same as every other. Someone wishes to extend his power through violence. Others wish to check him and implement their own power in the same manner. "History is the register of the strife of authorities," Bernard de Jouvenal wrote in his book, "On Power." "Always and everywhere man takes possession of man, to bend him to his will and adapt him to his designs; so that society is seen to be a galaxy of authorities which arise, grow and fight each other."

Or as Jonathan Swift wrote in a letter to Bolingbroke in 1729: "...for I will venture all I am worth that there is not one human creature in power who will not be modest enough to confess that he proceeds wholly upon a principle of corruption."

Despite boisterous and bellicose mutual denunciations, Saddam Hussein and George Bush are quite similar. Each wishes to impose political power over a vital point of world commerce, and each is capable of expending masses of human lives to obtain or defend his goals. Of course Bush represents a corporate arrangement of often conflicting multi-national interests ("New World Order Army" in the vein of Cromwell's "New Model Army") who are agreed they do not want their supply of oil controlled by a regional despot who is not a member of their hegemony, whereas Hussein exerts an archaic personal tyranny. He is publicly a man of bluster and bombast who seems at least forthright in his savage avarice, in contrast to the sales manager guile of Bush. Hussein is reminiscent of local emirates or bandits who now and then choked off the ancient Silk Road and extorted tariffs and tolls until either Rome or China or some other displeased power (perhaps armed by them) sent an army to chase him off. Saddam himself has been made a dangerous adversary by the nations arrayed against him who previously armed him to maintain a rather ruthless status quo in the Middle East, which they thought would protect their interests in the region. Hussein, who was once "the enemy of our enemy (Iran), therefore our friend," has not changed, though our rhetoric about him has. Closer to the truth is that we might have underestimated him, and more pertinent, overestimated our influence over him.

The chants and slogans of "No Blood for Oil" might seem simplistic; but so are the political pieties to disguise the very real purpose of

TALK OF WAR

Guns fire, ships rock, tanks are driven, airplanes soar, practicing and preparing, as there is talk of war.

January 15th is the deadline, if Saddam doesn't leave Kuwait, America will shoot, no longer will they wait.

The first day of war, thousands of people will die, and the million dollar airplanes, will be shot right down from the sky.

Whoever wants to have a war, really is insane, we may not even beat, the terror Saddam Hussein.

My brother is dressed in camouflage, waiting to see if he'll stay alive, for if there is a brutal war, it will be difficult to survive.

I wish the talk of war would end, my brother would come back in awhile, I would be so happy, I would have an endless smile.

— ZETTY McKAY (AGE 12)

Zetty McKay is the daughter of Roger McKay, an artist who lives in Astoria.

punishing a smalltime tyrant who would put a chokehold on the world's major supply of petroleum. Appeasement and aggression are the pivotal platitudes in the exhortation to suppress, even destroy Saddam Hussein. He is likened to Hitler not only as a vicious demagogue, which devalues the real evil Hitler represented, but Hitler's moves into the Rhineland, Austria and Czechoslovakia are raised as examples for being rid of Hussein now, before he is capable of producing nation smashing nuclear weapons or developing fully a potential for biological and chemical warfare.

Demonizing an enemy is common and ancient. The enemy are vermin or subhuman and represent antlike civilizations that are offensive to the true god and national interests. Decimation of an enemy is the goal. Dehumanizing the enemy is the policy. Extermination is the method. We think we know how many millions perished in the Nazi death camps, Russians, gypsies, cripples and homosexuals as well as Jews. No one will ever know how many hundreds of thousands of Chinese were napalmed during the Korean War, or how many Vietnamese were killed by routine indiscriminate artillery fire or airstrikes. (Bush claims we fought in Viet Nam with "one hand tied behind our back," dismissing the million or more Southeast Asian deaths and the ecocide of Indochina by American arms.) B-52s are presently attempting to bomb into rubble the lives of thousands of Iraqi soldiers. This might save an equal number of American lives and severely maul the Iraqi army's capability or willingness to put up a hard fight. Little sympathy is shown Iraqi soldiers as human beings — or, for that matter, despite U.S. military claims to the contrary, Iraqi civilians whose deaths or injuries are

explained as unavoidable accidents (while Saddam Hussein's use of Scud missiles is called terrorism). Iraqi cities and military positions are relentlessly attacked with immense carnage, first with missiles and jet fighter-bombers, next with artillery, tanks and soldiers.

More than a million men and women are poised to destroy each other in the Persian Gulf. How many are already dead or injured from bombs and missiles is anyone's guess so far. This war could have been prevented but now its fact overshadows what might have been done and assumes could not have been done with any chance for success. Both Bush and Hussein claim righteousness; Saddam invokes holy war against the infidels who have massed their armies on sacred Arab soil; George Bush claims that America's cause is moral and just. There really is no such thing as a just war, only defense or revenge against unjust acts of violence or aggression. Perhaps a certain cause might by circumstance be considered just, but no such claim can be made for the carnage that results.

Dissent in this country against the Gulf War has been craftily undermined with the virtual decree that everyone must support American troops in the Gulf whether or not they support the war. That is rather like saying one can deplore the deed but praise the doer; in this case, taking offense at the killing should not interfere with cheering on the killers. There is no little bit of schizophrenia involved here, and once again the Viet Nam War is misconstrued. The shabby treatment Viet Nam veterans received is invoked as a *causa belli* to condone war in the Gulf through patriotic sympathy for those who are waging it. Much abuse has been heaped upon the antiwar movement of the Viet Nam era for perceived contempt for veterans, and though that certainly occurred, the greater antipathy for Viet Nam veterans was exhibited by the government itself in its denial of Agent Orange claims, its stinginess with the GI Bill, and its refusal to tend to the psychological and medical problems of the veterans, instead tightening up eligibility for treatment or compensation.

A people will generally support a war once it is initiated, if for no other reason than they feel there is not much else left for them to do. That support is considered essential for conducting a war to its end in victory or defeat. In this era of the supposed common person the focus of support is upon the average soldier, sailor and airman(woman), who are not responsible for the wars they fight in but who make them possible. Bellicose war fever is whipped up to discourage questions of a war's purpose or cost, and to disguise the contradiction that supporting a soldier's warlike duty is a sure way of killing or injuring him (or her). Paradoxically, this support leaves the soldiers little recourse but to carry out what they perceive to be the public will until they are wounded or die.

The anti-Viet Nam War movement learned that lesson as veterans returned to join them in dissent, and they began to demand an end to the war to stop the killing and maiming of American soldiers as well as the Vietnamese who were perishing in uncounted numbers.

The only real way to support the troops of any armed force is to remove them from harm's way and bring them home alive and unhurt.

Although George Bush calls the members of the armed forces "America's finest," they are far from it in social or economic terms. With the exception of the officer corps and perhaps many of the highly skilled technicians who run the nintendo-type electronic war, the "grunts" who will bear much of the bloody combat, are



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