

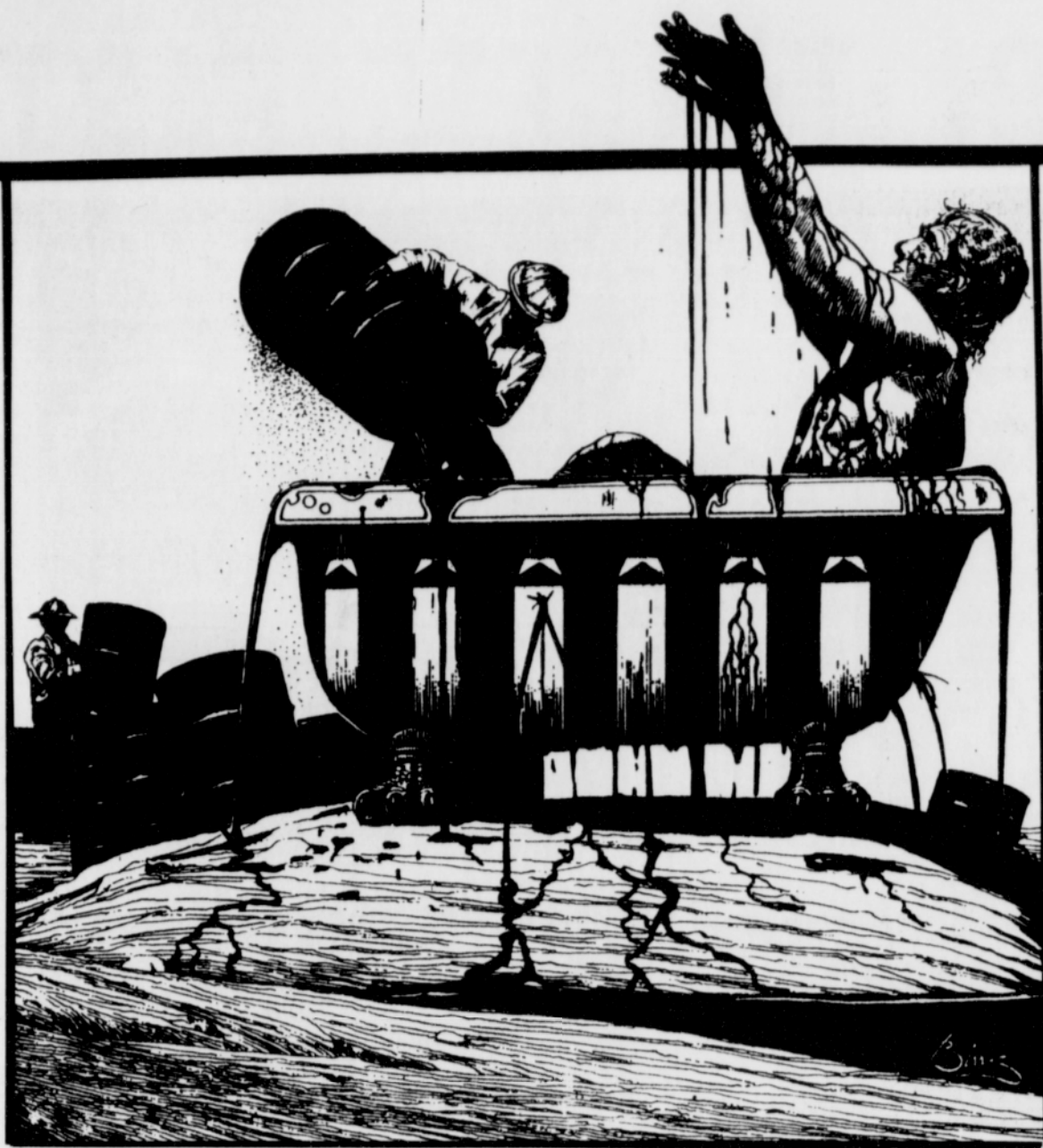
preme military power, but like Saddam Hussein's army which invaded Kuwait a year ago pay its bills through theft of its victim's treasury, the U.S. is unable to financially support its military colossus. The President insists that his coalition partners be forthcoming on their portions of the Gulf War debt, which he pressured upon them. The American war industry, overjoyed that most of its products seem to work reasonably well, hosts bazaars of its wares and lobbies for billions more dollars to replenish the nation's armory, hundreds of millions worth of which were expended over Baghdad and Iraqi army bunkers in Kuwait. The baroque chorus of war merchants wants for more and better Nintendo weapons, big ticket stuff to keep the USA number one. The parsimonious Congress (a majority are members of the party out of power) desires to cut military expenditures; the weapons makers insist that military installations be sacrificed to ensure continuance of high-tech weapons programs.

The invasion of Kuwait by Iraq on August 2 last year unleashed a frenzy of bellicose patriotism in the United States. Within days marriage of convenience with a dictator was reversed; the divorce occasioned the swiftest and most massive military mobilization in history. Americans poured into Kuwait's large oil rich neighbor Saudi Arabia until they outnumbered the barrels of oil they were there to protect, joined by troops of several other nations, and for five months they waited to remove the muzzle from their monstrously powerful war machine. Homefront patriotism was cleverly stage-managed, a yellow ribboned war fever that insisted all Americans support the troops sent to the Persian Gulf. No matter how anyone might regard the purpose or conduct of the war and the buildup that made it possible, anyone who was not cheerleading for the troops was highly suspect of lacking proper public spirit. Protest against the mobilization and subsequent war was severely undermined by a schizophrenic warcheer for the warriors. The movement for peace (which included many who thought economic sanctions against Iraq should be relied upon, and others who saw the war as a tragic farce) was on the defense to prove its patriotism through affirmation of support for those engaged in something the war's opponents abhorred and openly protested. Even religious doctrine that urges forgiveness of the inner though not the sin does not make such a demand. To forgive a sinner is to acknowledge crime. Americans who opposed their nation at war were urged to separate their feelings about the war from those who made it possible — by actually approving of them separate from they did. Support of the troops was, of course, distorted into support of the war; and in converse, criticism of the war implied disapproval of the troops. Opponents of the war were insinuated to have betrayed the troops.

The enthusiastic outpouring of love and support for the American G.I., unmatched since World War II, an era of great military success and resolve many government hucksters attempted to evoke during the long months the troops waited in the desert for the shooting to start, has not particularly translated into adequate veterans benefits now that most of them are home from their victorious war. While they were at war the government pruned veterans' benefits by several hundred million dollars in favor of the video weapons systems while distracting the public with rally around the flag rhetoric. And now that they are back from the war, an increasing number seem to show signs of stress similar to reactions by Viet Nam veterans (also their predecessors whose postwar psychoses were little publicized), but the government is preoccupied with prosecuting a few soldiers and marines who refused to fight.

John Reed saw the sinister side of soldiers and anticipated the civic consequences of military rule. "I hate soldiers," he wrote. "I hate to see a man with a bayonet fixed on his rifle, who can order me off the street. I hate to belong to an organization that is proud of obeying a caste of superior beings, that is proud of killing free ideas, so that it may more effectively kill human beings."

This is not the currently popular attitude toward members of the armed forces. It is, however, an historically accurate one. These



CHRISTOPHER BING

very troops the nation is exhorted to love and cherish can be turned against its citizens and round up political activists. The chilling thought is that in turbulent times like these, such repressive actions might have popular support, at least initially, as happened during the Viet-Nam War with police and national guards.

A year after the war started we might by now recover from the spell it held over most of us for so long. The last parades should be over soon, and yellow ribbons vanish like seasonals. How many more medals from grateful nations can General Schwarzkopf fit onto his broad chest?

While America continues its long victory celebration, tens of thousands of Iraqis die of starvation, disease and lack of medical attention, most of them children and elderly — the delayed "collateral damage" of the U.S. bombing campaign. Outbreaks of typhoid, cholera, meningitis and bubonic plague are reported, perhaps at epidemic levels in the summer heat. Thousands of people injured in the bombing of January and February die in clinics and hospitals for want of medicines, and they die from infections caused by a lack of clean water, antiseptics and electricity. A Harvard study of

the effects of the war has revealed that more than fifty thousand children have already died as a result of "delayed effects" of U.S. bombing, a suspiciously high number, as all of them might be, yet tragedy stalks Iraq. The same Harvard study estimates that at least 170,000 more children under five will die from epidemics and malnutrition directly linked to the bombing campaign. Even half that number represents a large bite in succeeding generations, which a small nation like Iraq could not afford in even the best of times. The loss of these dead children will seriously delay Iraq's full recovery from the war. Also missed are the hundred thousand or more young men who were made into measures of pudding by U.S. and allied bombs. Perhaps the pilots did call it quits after they realized further airstrikes on Iraq or its army would be butchery, but by then Iraq was crushed.

As we go marching into the new world order we should think about the erosion to our own principles of liberty and self-determination by embracing world military supremacy, not entirely unlike Rome's exchange of a republic for the rule of Caesars soon after it became the world's first superpower. With more influence than property, the U.S. acts as industrial civilization's police force, which presumes that the real job of a cop is to not only protect the status quo but enforce it. To hope that democracy might successfully coexist with military rule is to have missed the point that the U.S. has functioned as a war technology since World War II, and much earlier. The long reign of military supremacy at home has compromised the nation's fundamental principles and caused economic disaster.

Viet Nam taught us that a war cannot long continue without public support. That was the argument behind the frenzy of patriotism that accompanied the Persian Gulf War. However, it is a better argument for refusing to endorse a war so that it might quickly end or perhaps never begin. The war parties always attempt to capture patriotism as their own, and portray dissent against their wars as treachery. But dissent is necessary. It is the true act of patriotism, and it is a more reasonable way to support the troops than sending them to distant parts of the world to fight peasant armies of other boys and girls.

Edmund Morris wrote of the first Roosevelt and his "splendid little war" with Spain in 1898, "It took war to heal the scars of war; attack upon a foreign power to bring unity at home. But what future war would heal the scars of this one?"

— MICHAEL PAUL McCUSKER

POP QUIZ

The scene: thousands upon thousands of human beings are killed. Their corpses are slopped onto one another like compressed disposable diapers. The bodies are shovelled and scraped into countless anonymous pits, then efficiently and surgically covered.

This is all done in the name of a superior nation and an eventual tidy and moral victory. A god is named to be on the side of the Victors, Architects of Fashionable Atrocity.

Many citizens of the Politically Correct Nation are too numbed or afraid or ashamed to speak out or attempt to interfere for fear of appearing not to support the omnipresent mass hysteria currently rated Best Opinion by the latest government-sponsored poll. (Now we can understand Polled Herefords a little better.)

PopQuiz: the year and place is: (a) 1944, Germany; (b) 1991, Iraq; (c) 1952, Siberia; (d) all of the above; (e) not applicable, doesn't matter, what's on TV tonight, support our god.

— ALAN RICHARDS

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