

Rome or China or some other displeased power (perhaps armed by one or the other Imperial) sent an army to chase the spoilers or usurpers off. Once the "enemy of our enemy" (Iran), Hussein was portrayed as a despoiler of Western civilization by the nations arrayed against him who had previously armed him in the erroneous belief he would bolster an iron status quo in the Middle East that would maintain their interests in the region.

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait reversed the Cold War marriage of convenience between the West and Hussein. 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 sent there to protect, joined by troops and war machines of several other nations, and for five months this cobbled-together coalition waited in speedily constructed desert bases and airstrips to remove the muzzle from their monstrously large 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 not cheerleading for the troops was 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 condemned and openly protested. (Even religious doctrine that urges forgiveness of the sinner though not the sin does not make such a demand: to forgive a sinner acknowledges a crime.) Americans who opposed their nation's war in the Persian Gulf were urged to separate their feelings about the war — by actually approving of the troops separate from what they did. Support of the warriors was, of course, distorted into support of the war; and in converse, criticism of the war implied disapproval of the soldiers. Opponents of the war were insinuated to have betrayed the troops, and specters of hairy creatures spitting upon returning Vietnam veterans were shamelessly lacerated upon the American public.

Not only was dissent against the war craftily undermined, the shabby treatment of Vietnam veterans was invoked as a *causa belli* to condone the Gulf War, seriously misconstruing the Vietnam War. Much abuse has long been heaped upon the antiwar movement of the Vietnam era for perceived contempt for veterans, and though that occurred, the greater antipathy toward veterans was exhibited by the government itself in its denial of Agent Orange claims, its stinginess with the G.I. Bill, its refusal to tend to the medical and psychological problems of veterans, instead tightening up eligibility for treatment or compensation, and for its unspoken but palpable reproach of the men and women who fought the war as if they were solely responsible for its flagrant incompetence, depravity and loss.

While President Bush acted as the biggest cheerleader for the troops in the Persian Gulf, referring to them as his "kids" and "America's Finest," his administration snatched away more than \$600 million from veterans programs while the war was in progress (escalated to about \$3 billion over subsequent years) in favor of funding high-tech weapons (including continuation of the perennial cash-swamp 'Star Wars').

President Bush mistakenly or purposely misrepresented the lessons of the Vietnam War in his righteous justification for the mass mobilization of American armed forces to fight the Gulf War. He claimed that Vietnam's protraction and inconclusiveness as the reasons the war fell out of favor with Americans justified a short decisive war. The Vietnam War lasted as long as it did without mass protest because the casualty rate of American combatants was relatively low until finally, after nearly ten years, the rising and cumulative death count became too much, the price too high for a purpose steadily muddled and bungled as the war dragged endlessly on. Bush's gamble seemed to be that the Gulf War would be short, and though casualties might be high, the howls of rage and pain would soon die to a collective whimper unlike the sustained antiwar protest of the Vietnam decade.

The chants and slogans by Gulf War dissenters of "No blood for oil" might have seemed simplistic: but so were the political pieties that attempted to extol the real purpose of punishing a small-time tyrant who would put a chokehold on the world's major supply of petroleum. Opposition to appeasement and aggression were pivotal platitudes in the exhortation to suppress or destroy Saddam Hussein, who was demonized not only as a Hitler but his Nazi soul brother's annexations of the Rhineland, Austria and Czechoslovakia were cited as comparisons to the invasion of Kuwait.

Demonizing an enemy is an ancient and common practice. The enemy are vermin or subhuman and represent antlike civilizations that are anathema to the true god and threatening to the 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 deathcamps in the middle of the 20th century. Russians, gypsies, homosexuals, mentally and physically crippled as well as Jews. No one will ever know how many hundreds of thousands of Koreans and Chinese were napalmed during the Korean War.



DRAWINGS BY HENK PANDER

nor how many Vietnamese, Cambodians or Laotians were killed by routine indiscriminate artillery fire or airstrikes in the decade long Vietnam War. (President Bush Sr. claimed the U.S. fought in Vietnam with "one hand tied behind its back," dismissing the million or more Southeast Asian deaths and virtual ecocide of Indochina by American arms.) Little sympathy was shown Iraqi soldiers: B-52s and fighter-bombers bombed several thousands of them into measures of pudding even before the huge allied fleets of land vehicles moved on them (the general-in-charge ordered that half the Iraqi force be destroyed from the air before the land war was to start) and killed thousands more during the liberation of Kuwait.

In late 1989, a year before the Gulf War, the U.S. made a short war in Panama to punish a defecting chieftain who no longer served the USA's interests but instead attempted like Saddam Hussein to consolidate his own power over a vital chokepoint, the Panama Canal. Bush Sr., who had once employed the renegade general as an agent of espionage, subversion and murder when he was himself chief of assassins as CIA director, exuded much of the same pious rhetoric about sacred duty to rid Panama of its new dictator — much the same boilerplate he used a year later about Hussein. Even the invasion of Panama was given a righteous name, 'Operation Just Cause'. The renegade was portrayed as a monster (a pockmarked face helped the image) and scourged for iniquities other more loyal or subservient monsters (such as Hussein) were allowed to indulge in so long as they complied with what their *arriviste*-imperial chiefs demanded of them. (The U.S. Ambassador to Iraq, the now forgotten April Gaspi, assured Hussein the U.S. would not interfere with an assault upon Kuwait). 'Our (Former) Man In Panama' is still locked away in a U.S. prison without trial: perhaps George Jr. will have him eliminated quietly.

The role of the American media in the Gulf War was as a home-team cheering section, voluntarily limiting its scope and access to the war, forming so-called media pools whose major sources of information were military PIOs and the Secretary of Defense (now Vice President under Bush Jr.) and selected high-ranking officers at the upper levels of the Pentagon (one of them now Secretary of State). The result was World War 2-type jingoistic journalism with virtually no questioning of government and military mobilization into the Persian Gulf. The country rushed into a war mentality without critical media skepticism, instead a rah-rah propaganda blitz by journalists who acted as a military auxiliary, providing only sanctioned information.

In the ten years since the Persian Gulf War the USSR has dissolved and the USA has become defacto heir apparent of the world. Its economy has risen to spectacular heights although not everyone shares in the unparalleled prosperity.

George Bush Sr. was a single-term President, but his son and namesake is the new President, father and son bookending eight years of Democrat Bill Clinton and his failed heir apparent, Al Gore.

Saddam Hussein not only survives, he thrives while his people suffer immensely from an international boycott imposed on Iraq soon after the war ended. Although Iraq has endured two ruinous wars and a decade of sanctions since Hussein took power in 1979, his regime might already possess nuclear capability despite a UN ban — it certainly has biocides and chemical warfare weapons which have been used against domestic Kurds and political rivals since the end of the Gulf War.

Hussein, who called the Gulf War *The Mother of Battles*, claims Iraq's enemies were "stamped with disgrace and shame that will never disappear until doomsday."

While most of Iraq endures deadly sanctions (fatal food and medical shortages, unclean water supplies) that have eroded the economy and virtually wiped out the country's middle class, Hussein has built large resorts as playgrounds for his favorites. Spy satellites have sighted sports stadiums, an amusement park, hospitals and advanced communications and irrigation systems, as well as new reconstruction of bombed facilities suspected of manufacturing toxic warfare agents. It is reported that Hussein's regime imports 280,000 bottles of whiskey, 230,000 cans of beer, 40,000 liters of vodka and 19,000 bottles of wine each month. While sanctions starve his people he hosts lavish dinner parties and barbecues, which mocks the sanctions as failed policy.

In the meantime American Gulf War veterans suffer from undiagnosed diseases. Contrary to years of Pentagon denials of chemical exposures in the Gulf, unclassified documents and recent surveys of veterans confirm that Gulf veterans are not as healthy as other service members who were not deployed to the war. Particularly suspect is the use of depleted uranium from nuclear weapons for conventional artillery shells and bombs.

A principal priority of the new President Bush is to "re-energize" the sanctions against Iraq and revive the international coalition his father put together to fight the Gulf War — he might just want to finish the overthrow of Saddam Hussein Bush Sr. bungled. He intends to "take a hard careful look" at the chances of overthrowing Hussein which he says will take not much more than a "turn one or two of the screws tighter." He supports a military coup, also covert action and massive bombing as well as diplomatic preparation of the Arab world for possible reemployment of American troops in Iraq. Bush Jr. is, like his father, a rich oil man who wants to keep the pipeline from the Middle East flowing and wishes to open up the wilderness area of Alaska and the shorelines of Oregon, Washington and California for oil exploration.

A large wall at the University of Rochester, N.Y., was photographed just after the Gulf War (by Roger Martin) covered with numerical hatchmarks that represented Iraqi lives lost in the war — soldiers and civilians, men, women and children. The count stopped at 45,164 though more than 100,000 were projected. Inspired by the Vietnam Memorial, a note in the center of the wall was dated April 9, 1991:

"The numbers of dead and dying are too large and far too frightening for us to truly comprehend....These deaths are the true nature of war....(These marks) symbolize the human lives we have ended and the humanity we have lost."

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?"

The late Howard Nemerov, World War 2 veteran and Poet Laureate of the USA, wrote in his 1989 collection of poems, 'War Stories'

*The reason we do not learn from history is
Because we are not the people who learned last time.*

Henk Pander drew the 'No Blood For Oil' poster for a rally against the Persian Gulf War in Portland, Oregon in January 1991. He is originally from Amsterdam and painted the official portrait of Governor Tom McCall that hangs in the State Capitol. His sons Arnold and Jacob are also artists.

Louis Alva used to be "The Volunteer" on KMUN-FM and lived in Astoria when he wrote "The Oil War Memorial" in 1990. Alan Richards lived in Naselle, Washington in when he wrote "Pop Quiz" in 1991.



Bikes & Beyond
1335 MARINE DR.
ASTORIA, OREGON

THE OIL WAR MEMORIAL

The Oil War memorial should be black. It's a good color for war memorials. Black for the color of crude oil. Black for the hearts of those whose greed demands lives. Black for the filth they have smeared in our skies, bled on our beaches, excreted across our economies.

It should soar above our heads, like the Washington Monument or the Statue of Liberty. Its awesome mass will remind us of how small we puny citizens are to the privileged few. Those persons in government and industry who decided decades ago (and now) that we should follow the policies of waste and greed. A broad cylinder of featureless black, gently rimmed at a few regular spaces down its length. A vast oil drum. Perhaps a reflecting pool of the turbid liquid at its base. There should be no names on this one. Already its victims number in the billions. Billions whose lives have been adversely affected by the renewed frenzy over energy costs. Where is room for all those names?

The Monument should be in the center of a great circular amphitheater. It should be able to seat thousands to remind us of how we all watched the Gulf War unfold on the Flickering Blue Eye. Our government does not need to put things in our houses to watch us, they know where we are every night, and they tell us all what to believe.

It would be hard to send a replica of this Memorial all around the country as we did with the Vietnam Memorial. Instead, we could remember the war by reeducating ourselves. We could teach each other how to break the addiction to waste.

—LOUIS ALVA
(NCTE, October 1990)

**NORTH COAST
TIMES EAGLE**
A JOURNAL OF ART & OPINION
PUBLISHED IN ASTORIA, OREGON
757 27TH STREET 97103
MICHAEL PAUL McCUSKER
EDITOR & PUBLISHER

HOPE L. HARRIS
LICENSED
MASSAGE
THERAPIST
503/325-2523