

WARS

The war was not forced upon the United States by a declared enemy but by its own President and an acquiescent Congress, as well as by a coterie of neocons who had urged invasion of Iraq since the U.S. failed to depose Saddam Hussein at the end of Gulf War I. Also in the sparse coalition of willing allies were American business interests who hoped to reap gazillions of dollars from in postwar Iraq, especially in oil, military supply and reconstruction contracts.

The Bush administration was determined to make war against Iraq from the start and only went through the motions of United Nations approval essentially because of worldwide dissent and protest. The President failed at diplomacy, which had been his intent. He barely went through the motions, showing his contempt for the UN throughout; he was unable to justify his "feckless and unnecessary" desire for war.

The people who wanted war with Iraq were ideological conservatives in the White House whose theologically inspired historical vision is that perpetual warfare (a Christian *jihad*) is the means to protect and expand the American neo-empire which is being called the 'New World Order', a term also used by Adolf Hitler for his Nazi nightmare of world dominance (the also-called 'Thousand Year Reich') back in the 20th century.

It is not too difficult to cut through the smoke and mirrors and realize the people of the USA have been hoodwinked about the war in Iraq — from absolute certainty that "weapons of mass destruction" were about to be launched against our sacred soil to the Bushites' abnegation that they had not "intentionally" misled the nation about the presence of WMDs.

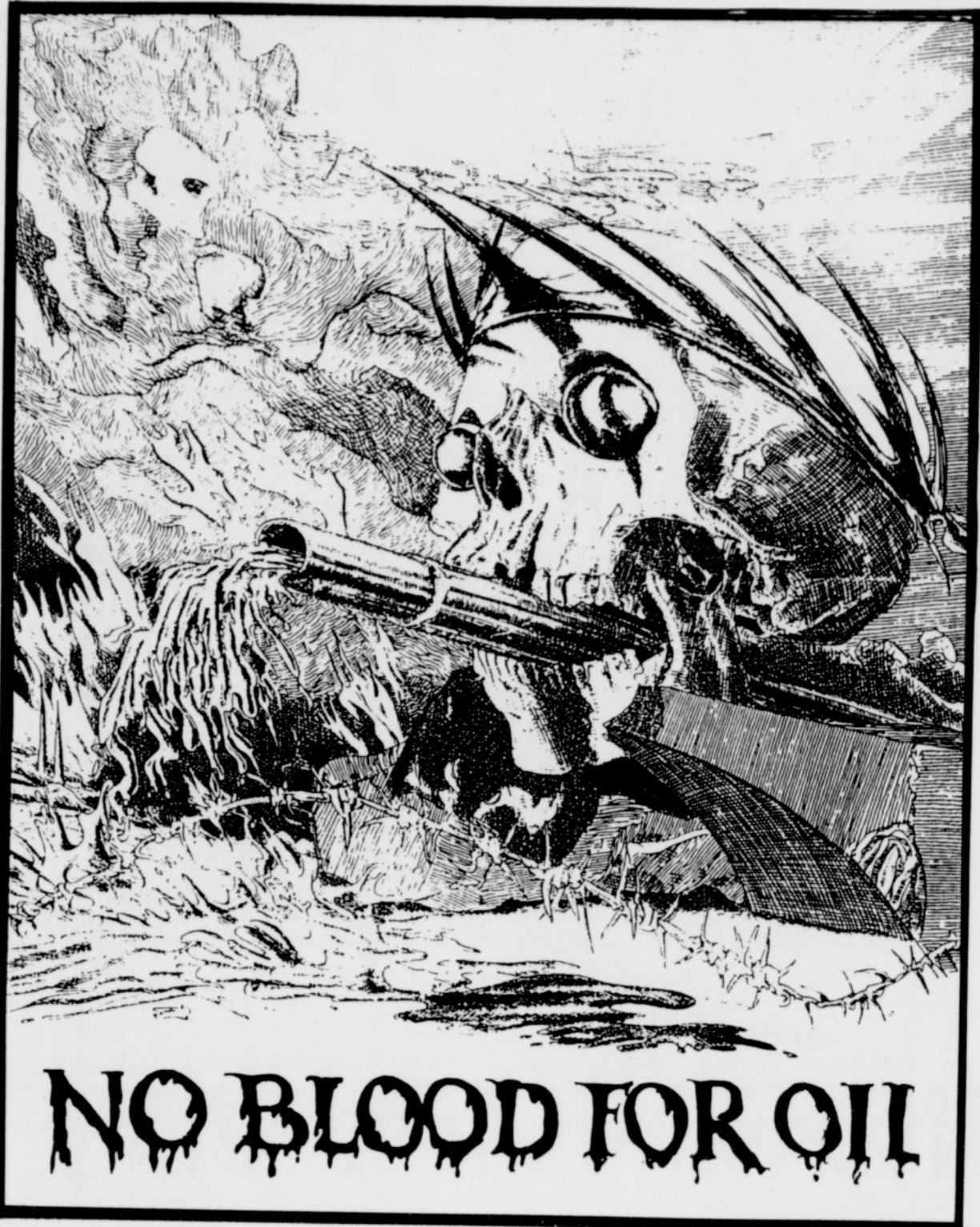
The Bush administration stalled a 9/11 investigation by Congress until after the Iraq invasion. The report showed Saddam Hussein was not involved in 9/11 or with Al Qaeda. If the report had been released in January 2003 as scheduled it would have revealed there was no reason to attack Iraq. This was coupled with the Bush administration's fabrication that Iraq was about to purchase weapons grade uranium from Niger.

Just after his reelection last year, Bush declared an end to the search for WMDs. Daniel Schorr's question on NPR of why there hasn't a great wave outrage over news there are no WMDs in Iraq was answered by a woman who wrote that the media neglects to publicly broadcast the anger and betrayal felt by so many.

President Bush asserts America's cause of preemptive invasion as moral and just. But there really is no such thing as a just war, only defense or revenge against unjust acts of violence or aggression. A certain cause might be considered just, but no such claim can be made for the carnage that results.

Every community in the USA is divided over the Iraq War and despotic policies of the Bush administration. Portraying opponents of the war (or the Bush Presidency) as heretics and apostates and threatening to constrain them with repressive laws is not quite the freedom and human rights the war on terrorism is claimed to be. The President seems to brashly disregard any "evil" among his avaricious friends and patrons and their blatant warprofiteering, and sermonizes about freedom and democracy while these same cohorts make an intolerable grab for power in the form of corporate autocracy that severely erodes much of the basic fiber of democracy. A greater schism than already exists in the U.S. might result as large numbers of Americans feel betrayed and the craftily engineered campaign against dissent and dissenters backlashes despite increasing draconian laws legislated to squelch dissent.

The unilateral U.S. surge to absolute military superiority isolates it more than ever. Its projection of unprecedented power might prove to be what most Americans do not want; the public doesn't desire to be the world's foremost aggressor nation, nor does it wish to assume the risks. The power of the American democracy lies in the hands of the citizenry which eventually will



HENK PANDER (1991)

have to say "enough" to U.S. imperialism of the sort envisioned by administration neocons who crave U.S. dominance all over the world.

The U.S. is in a deep hole in Iraq, more vast and queasy than the infamous Vietnam quagmire; the war has drained the empire of troops which might in an extreme scenario force it to draft pre-teens and elderly veterans to fill the ranks as Hitler did in the final days of the Third Reich — and yet the President, an avowed but teflon war deserter, swaggers on the world stage like a Gilbert & Sullivan generalissimo.

The Bushites, who have lied about not considering a military draft, will be virtually compelled to instigate one if they carry out their threats (and ambitions) to make war on Syria, Iran and possibly North Korea. Perhaps that understanding is a major reason they are turning toward diplomacy for now, aware they are unable to carry out their intimidation until the military is up to strength.

A distinction between *just* wars and *unjust* wars (made in medieval times by the Christian church to justify its religious wars) is equally or more important in regard to a war's conduct as to its reason. The main distinction is the prohibition of intentionally targeting civilians in a war to be considered a 'just' war, nor should disproportionate force be used. But as the wholesale

bombings by both sides in World War 2 indicate, the differences are too often degrees of propaganda than reality.

Reasons for not going to war with Iraq were clearly stated by the opposition prior to the invasion. Some of the more salient points were that war with Iraq would not make America safer but would instead increase anti-American sentiment and perpetuate a cycle of terrorism; destabilize the Middle East, including Israel/Palestine and neighboring Arab nations; undermine international cooperation; take the lives of U.S. soldiers (more than 1500 so far) and innocent Iraqi citizens (accounts range from 30,000 to 100,00); and would cost from \$100-200 billion a month, as well as defy international law, including the United Nations charter.

The most persistent opposition to war with Iraq was from realization that multitudes of innocent citizens would be killed, injured and maimed. Millions throughout the world and the United States demonstrated against the war before and after invasion of Iraq. Peace activities became more intense as the velocity toward war accelerated, and every act to prevent or forestall war was criticized, downplayed and ultimately ignored by the Bush White House with arrogant disregard for any other possibility than war.

Dissent against the war has been undermined with the virtual decree that everyone support American troops in Iraq whether or not they support the war, which is similar to deploring a crime but praising the criminal; in this case, taking offense against the killing should not interfere with encouraging the killers.

The logic we must support our troops once a war has begun is an incentive to always start a war — which Germany was twice punished for doing as well as for supporting its troops. Politicians say we must support a war while it is being conducted and discuss opposition to it at the "appropriate time," which they mean after a war is over — this is absurd; it is during a war that it must be examined and questioned, something we have held Germans responsible for not having done.

The real shock and awe of the Iraq War has been the incessant assault on American civil liberties by the Bush administration which is turning the U.S. into a homeland security state that relies on martial law rather than democracy. The national dialogue is reduced to pious simplicities in which "patriotic" Americans can do no wrong and the rest of the world is either with us or against us, which includes "unpatriotic" Americans who disagree. War protesters are equated with terrorists and implied to be traitors.

The Bushites are taking a great risk threatening the possibility of continuing (and certainly escalating) war in the Middle East. It is possible they recognize this is the last chance for a unilateral grab at world resources — a situation the U.S. has itself precipitated with its war in Iraq — and although the UN is in crisis as a result of U.S. actions, it is not quite shattered and might very well strongly rebound with a sort of world versus USA faceoff that will most likely force the U.S. to stand down with what it has already grabbed. Muslims throughout the world view the war in Iraq as an act of imperialist aggression and are responding.

The United States is not exporting democracy to the Middle East — if democracy takes hold it will be because the people in those countries desire aspects of it adaptive to their cultures. The real purpose of America's position in the Middle East is to wrest control of the world's major oil supply before its capacity peaks and declines (the global oil peak is predicted to be this year). If democracy does take root in Islamia, it will be a petroleum byproduct.

The United States will not quit Iraq until an overwhelming majority of Americans demand withdrawal as they finally did in Vietnam. By then the nation's prestige and credibility, which is the usual rationale for continuing a war, will have long been lost in the horrors and atrocities American troops will have committed to defend America's prestige and credibility.

A few veterans of the Iraq War have formed Iraq Veterans Against the War, helped and nurtured by members of the still extant Vietnam Veterans Against the War. IVAW is yet minuscule but already despised by the neocon warmakers of the Bush administration who disparage them as "misfits" and of course "traitors." But they will grow as more women and men return from the war, maimed in spirit and conscience as well as in body and mind. "We are few but we are crazy," is a Spanish adage — indeed, if a person returns from a war who is not crazy, he or she is truly crazy.

The following is an excerpt from a longer article written last year in this newspaper about the Vietnam Veterans Against the War, 'Winter Soldiers'.

Antiwar veterans movements have been virtually unnoticed in American history. Yet that history abounds with veterans taking arms against their military masters from the very start. Former colonial veterans of the French & Indian War fought against their old army and set up a republic two centuries ago. The Army split down the middle in 1861 and comrade fought comrade for four immensely bloody years until the Union was restored. Of more subtle consequence was the 'Whiskey Rebellion' of 1796. Revolutionary veterans banded together to protest the taxing of whiskey. Their methods were radical yet peaceful, but the new U.S. Army was sent to suppress them with force at the order of President George Washington. Confederate veterans formed armed groups after the Civil War to resist the plundering 'Reconstructionist' governments that took up occupation in the South — an entire Southern army division defected intact to Mexico but dissipated before it could fight because neither Juaristas nor occupation French wanted it: the luckless ambition had been for its officers to lead a combined Confederate/Mexican army back across the border to fight Yankees again.

In 1932 the 'Bonus Army', made up of World War 1 veterans, marched to Washington, D.C. (starting out from Portland, Oregon) to demand promised war benefits as a desperate attempt to survive the Great Depression. They built a shanty-city outside the Capitol and were forcibly dispersed by the Army; a few were killed, many beaten.

In World War 2 a U.S. Army division in Europe went on strike until some of its demands against intolerable conditions were met. The ringleaders were arrested.

Following the war, almost the entire Pacific command nearly mutinied when it was learned several army divisions as well as naval forces were to be sent to China to combat the communist forces of Mao Tse Tung. The mutiny was quickly

averted by keeping the promise made at the start of the war that troops would be sent home when it was over.

Also after World War 2, thousands of servicemen angrily protested a year-long continuation of the draft for occupation duties in war devastated Europe and Asia, and were only appeased when they were told that new draftees would replace them and they would get home sooner as a result.

There have undoubtedly been countless such revolts against the military system however limited in scope and action, whether or not successful. With the exception of renegade officers leading military coups and setting up dictatorships, the actions of soldiers turning against their nations' military in the name of peace and anti-militarism have largely gone unreported and remain unknown — in that context it would seem that the only combat veteran in Western history known to attempt the philosophical collapse of militarism was Socrates.

If there has ever existed a well-researched and documented history of rebellion within military institutions objecting to militarism and the ethic of war, it has been well hidden from curious eyes. What information is known has been confined to obscure texts and memoranda. However important the specifics may be in piecing together the pattern, the greatest importance is the fact that revolt within the military machine is an enduring tradition in itself. Just as radical opposition has always existed at the core of every civil/political system, so it has inside every military arm of those systems.

Within this tradition of revolt can be understood both the roots and vacuum of the rebellion against the Vietnam War by a number of its veterans. The roots lie in the constant insurrection throughout military history; the vacuum exists in the suppression of that history. Vietnam veterans who opposed the war had to start from scratch with little workable knowledge of precedent in what they attempted. Yet because they were left to their own imaginations, the members of VVAW instigated the most significant revolt against war by war veterans in American history.

The United States could use a newer confederacy of disaffected soldiers and veterans to act as a conscience to the raw and sordid perpetuation of warfare. Perhaps it is an explanation for the egregious attacks upon the VVAW — the dread that today's war veterans will form a similar opposition and have more force and support from lessons learned as a result of the precedent VVAW set. At the same time, VVAW should probably change its name to reflect its newer crops of veterans, perhaps American War Veterans Against War to encompass future wars as well as the most recent.

—MICHAEL McCUSKER
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