

those conservative forces who were out to curb the ABC's independence even before the war began.

With the Soviet Union passively supporting the US position, the peace movement can no longer be labelled "communist". The latest abuse by supporters of the war option derives from the 1930s when charges were laid against the peace movement of wanting appeasement and "peace at any price". One letter writer to the *Launceston Examiner* (12 February) wanted to intern all critics of the war to segregate them from loyal Australians.

There is no acknowledgment of the fact that no one in the peace movement is advocating that Iraq remains in control of Kuwait. The argument is over how to get Iraq out of Kuwait—continued sanctions and negotiations or war.

Once a war is under way it is hard to stop. After the initial rallies, the peace movement will have to develop a long-term strategy, with particular focus on bridge-building and reconciliation when the war ends, just as pacifist groups did with the people of Germany and Japan after World War Two.

Clearly we need to learn more about the Middle East, the Arab World and Islam. We have to come up with creative

suggestions to give the United Nations a constructive central role in settling disputes and peacekeeping rather than acting as a rubber stamp for US military power.

There also needs to be an awareness of how the war has allowed the rehabilitation of unpleasant repressive regimes like China, Syria and Turkey, as well as letting the forces of reaction gain the upper hand in the Soviet Union. Once more the Baltic States may be the victims of world indifference while the UN wages its Holy war in the Gulf in an eerie parallel with the events of 1956.

As for the New World Order, there is nothing new about using military force to get what you want and we have yet to hear any details of what else it involves. A real New World Order would be based on non-military solutions to conflict, an end to the global arms trade, the equitable distribution of resources, a just price for commodities and the establishment of international forums to resolve global problems like the Greenhouse effect and other problems that transcend national boundaries.

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An Orrery of Errors

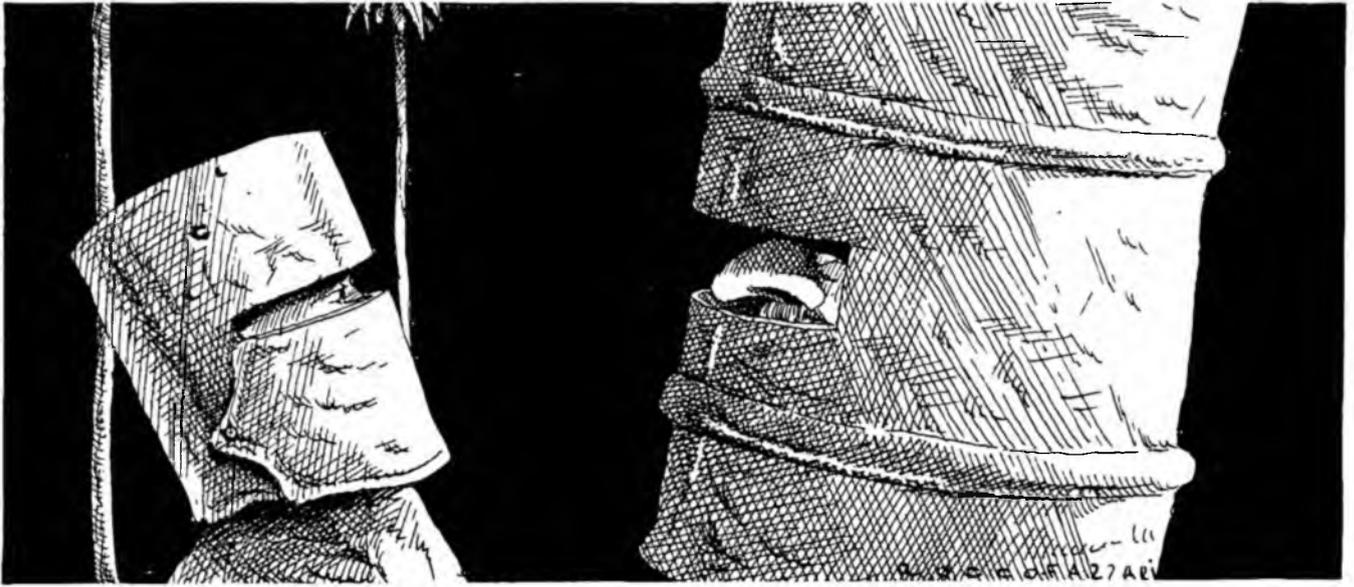
John Langmore argues that, although there were numerous opportunities to stop short of war, the war itself is not unjust.

There is no doubt that Iraq had no justification for invading Kuwait, which was an independent country with internationally recognised and accepted borders. Saddam Hussein is a megalomaniac and a ruthless dictator and nothing in his behaviour or policies has suggested that he has any willingness to act reasonably in accordance with international norms.

Nevertheless, throughout the Gulf crisis US actions have been presented to us as inevitable. Yet at every point alternatives were possible, and commonly preferable. Following the UN Security Council's imposition of the trade embargo in mid-August, the US quickly began a massive

military build-up in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf waters, describing such action as necessary to defend Saudi Arabia. But deployment occurred under US, rather than UN, control. The US should have adopted the proper procedure under the UN Charter and secured a resolution under Article 43 to create a United Nations force under the United Nations Military Staff Committee. That would have provided a more effective command structure, but would not have prevented the US from providing the general-in-command of overall operations in which the US has been by far the largest contributor.

Australia's involvement should certainly have been more carefully considered and conditional on deployment under a UN Military Staff Committee. In that way, procedures for dealing with reasonable conflict in a post-Cold War world could have been established which would have



enhanced the collective restraint on individual aggressive action and international co-operation in opposing and penalising aggression. As it now stands, the global community has regressed from its position of 40 years ago in Korea.

It is essential for Australia, too, to independently and rigorously review our response to our allies' policies because for much of the post-war period there has been a tendency for Australian governments to accept US policies. Such a stance denies Australians the opportunity to make up their own minds about Australia's long-term best interests. Hence one lesson from this crisis must be that we completely break the habit of consenting to whatever policies any US administration chooses to adopt.

President Bush said in his announcement of war against Iraq that there was "no choice but to drive Saddam from Kuwait by force". That was simply not true. Sanctions were working. Certainly his deep concern about attempts by Iraq to develop and enhance the effectiveness of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons was justified.

Yet sanctions would have denied the Iraqis much of the equipment and material they needed to make those weapons or make them more effective. There would have been a risk in delaying the alliance attack that Iraq could have armed itself with more awful weaponry. Yet it is the judgment of many experts and many political leaders, including 47 US senators, that reliance on tight, effective sanctions would have been preferable to the current war.

The CIA estimated that sanctions were 97% effective. Paul Nitze, who was President Reagan's special adviser on arms control, wrote in January: "under the current international embargo, only a trickle of goods is getting in or out of Iraq; oil exports and earnings are nil and civilian production is estimated to be down by about 40%. In time, lack of spare parts will erode Iraq's military capabilities, and civilian and production will fall further."

What should have Australia done? I think that despite the misjudgment at several crucial points in the evolution of the crisis, it was our responsibility to complete the task in which we were involved. The UN had authorised military action. Our government had committed us to this involvement. To withdraw unilaterally would have been destructive to the alliance and would have appeared cowardly. Therefore it was essential that we acted in concert with our UN allies.

We can now urge those allies to limit the war to the eviction of Iraq from Kuwait and to do this with a minimum of destruction—including, for example, limiting the attacks to targets of military significance in Iraq.

One constructive task is to look ahead to prepare for the post-Gulf world. One goal must be to make the Middle East a nuclear, chemical and biological weapons free zone. That means not only disarmament by Iraq but that Israel also give up its nuclear weapons. As long as any country in the region possesses such weapons, there can be no final resolution of conflict. That resolution also requires a complete US withdrawal, though this will not occur until stable relationships have been forged between Middle Eastern countries. That in turn requires some agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. So, one step towards permanent peace in the Middle East must be a conference on the future of Israel and the Palestinians.

War of itself will not provide the solution to those conflicts. At best it can simply force the withdrawal of Iraq from Kuwait and ensure that would-be aggressors do not profit from invasion, coercion and force. The future security of the globe depends on enhancing the effectiveness of co-operative opposition to aggression from whatever source it originates.

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