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Peace News is now produced in cooperation with War Resisters' International (WRI) and incorporates the former WRI Newsletter.

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This month's volunteers: Welcome, Philippa Edwards from Boston, our nearly fulltime pre-Triennial helper. Thanks also to Helena Forsyth, Christine Schondorff, Caroline Simpson, Jim Huggon, Martyn Lowe, and David Morris.

Deadlines for PN 2345 (available from 25 July)

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Events.....15 July

News and letters15 July

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COMMENT

Gulf War shows it's time to set our own agenda

BRIAN MARTIN

● In the Gulf, the agenda for the peace movement was set by George Bush. That is something to worry about.

The Gulf crisis poses difficult questions for supporters of nonviolent action against aggression. How could non-violent action have been used to stop Saddam Hussein? After all, he had been massacring his opponents for years.

The main focus in the Western peace movement was to support sanctions and to oppose the invasion of Iraq. Sanctions were not really nonviolent since they were backed by force.

There were some important nonviolent actions against war in the Gulf. Perhaps the most courageous was the Gulf Peace Camp, set up by nonviolent activists from a range of countries on the border between Iraq and Saudi Arabia.

Yet, it must be said, simply opposing the invasion of Iraq provided no answer to the question of how to use nonviolent action to challenge the occupation of Kuwait. Therefore, as well as supporting such nonviolent interventions, it is also important to look more broadly at the Gulf situation and draw lessons for the future development of nonviolent struggle.

Could nonviolent action have been used to stop Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait? Hardly. Living in a vastly unequal and authoritarian society, the people of Kuwait could not have been expected to provide united nonviolent resistance against an invasion. What then is the role for nonviolent defence?

An important clue comes from the massive hypocrisies involved in the US-led coalition against Iraq, in which Saddam Hussein was portrayed as the epitome of evil. Numerous governments proclaimed outrage at the invasion and occupation of Kuwait, yet they did nothing about the invasions of Panama and Grenada by US forces. Nor have they taken much action against the occupation of Gaza and the West Bank by Israel, or the invasion and occupation of East Timor by Indonesia. Governments

were silent when Iraq used chemical weapons against Iranians and against Kurds in Iraq. They eagerly sold weapons to Iraq, in spite of Saddam Hussein's horrible human rights record. Most blatantly of all, they supported the Iraqi invasion of Iran.

These hypocrisies have been pointed out often, but one implication for the peace movement has been seldom noticed. The key point is that the agenda for the peace movement was set by those governments — especially the US government — which suddenly decreed that Saddam Hussein was the greatest danger in the world. Most of the media have taken their cues from their governments, and popular opinion has thereby been shaped.

Although there are some two dozen wars around the world at any given time — such as those in El Salvador, Ethiopia, Angola, Afghanistan, Cambodia, and the Philippines, many with massive loss of life — the US government declared that Iraq's invasion of Kuwait took precedence over all others. (Indeed, most of the other wars were ignored or forgotten by the world's major powers, in spite of their complicity in many of them.) The peace movement response did not challenge this view.

The result is that supporters of non-violent action put themselves in the situation of having to provide solutions to a crisis created by government and military priorities. The crisis, by its origins and constitution, made non-violent intervention extremely difficult.

In retrospect, the key time to intervene nonviolently against Saddam Hussein was earlier in his rule, in the '80s. The powerful '80s peace movement, though, took little notice even of the Iraq-Iran war, preoccupied as it was with nuclear weapons. Another reason for the neglect of the Iraqi regime's excesses was the support given to it by a host of governments of all political persuasions. This support took the form of diplomatic recognition, exports of weapons and other equipment, and turning a blind eye to brutality and the use of chemical weapons.

The agenda in the '80s for the dominant powers was to tolerate or encourage Saddam Hussein. The peace movement as a whole did not challenge this agenda.

There were many things that could have been done in the '80s to support the nonviolent opposition within Iraq: publicity, boycotts, rallies, communication networks, peace camps and peace brigades, and so on. But aside from the regular efforts of groups such as Amnesty International, little was done in this regard.

The implication of this analysis is that supporters of nonviolent struggle need to make much more effort to set the agenda for nonviolent intervention. Rather than putting almost all effort into promoting nonviolent defence in one's own country or into intervening elsewhere according to government-dominated agendas, there should be much more energy devoted to developing networks and ongoing campaigns to support nonviolent struggles in other countries according to criteria and priorities set by nonviolent activists.

Part of any challenge to repression and aggression in other countries must involve a challenge to governments, especially their diplomatic support of brutal regimes and their exports of arms and technologies of repression. This challenge can be called nonviolence against-hypocrisy.

Initially, such efforts may not do a lot to challenge the dominant agenda. But until promoters of nonviolent struggle do more to set the agenda, they will be continually asked to solve problems at the wrong time and the wrong place. How much better it would be to take the initiative and help to provide solutions to problems that governments prefer to ignore.

Brian Martin's essay "Social defence — arguments and actions" appears in *Non-violent Struggle and Social Defence*, to be published by War Resisters' International on 28 July (price £5).

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NEWS

The US Top Ten of censored news stories

● "If the press had given as much attention to the Middle East as we did to Donald Trump's sexual problems, we wouldn't have gone to war" noted California lecturer Carl Jensen in naming the Gulf crisis the "most censored news story of 1990".

A panel of 15 journalists and academics selected the US media's flawed coverage of the Gulf crisis as the most underreported story of the year. This is the 15th year Jensen's Project Censored has compiled a list of the 10 stories it feels have been deliberately overlooked.

Rather than asking "Should we go to war?" or "Can war be avoided?" the judges observed, the big media ques-

tions were "Will we go to war?" and "Can we win?"

Pete Williams of the US Department of Defense gave substance to Jensen's conclusions by noting, in an October 1990 interview, that "reporting [on the Gulf deployment] has been largely either a recitation of what administration people have said or an extension of it."

Numbers 2 and 3 on this year's list reflect domestic banking concerns — the savings and loan crisis, the use of tax dollars to save it, and the CIA's role in triggering it. In at number 4 are the findings of Soviet scientists that the US and USSR space programmes are contributing disproportionately to the destruction of the ozone layer. Number 5 is a

suppressed attempt by a former Drug Enforcement Agency agent to expose the official US war on drugs as a fraud.

At number 6 in this year's list was the fallout from 1989's war — the invasion of Panama and its still-unclear bodycount. Unexplained blanks in the Pentagon's budget figures are in at number 7; an attempt to overturn the US bill of rights by introducing a state of emergency over the drug war took eighth position. George Bush's still unexplained role in the Iran-Contra scandal is in ninth place, and the parlous state of the nation's banks, in the wake of the collapse of the savings and loan companies, takes the tenth and final slot.