

Will George Bush's Mideast war be his political undoing?

by Kathleen Klenetsky

President Bush launched "Operation Desert Shield" fully expecting that it would boost his political standing at home—partly by diverting attention from such embarrassments as the galloping savings and loans crisis and the overall collapse of the economy—and bring glory and riches to the new Anglo-American global order that he and Margaret Thatcher have ordained.

But Bush's decision to send massive military forces into the Mideast could actually prove to be his political downfall.

Opposition to the President's Mideast policy is definitely on the rise, fueled in part by rapidly worsening domestic economic conditions, as well as by the new round of warnings, coming from such ominous sources as the Soviet Chief of Staff (story, page 39), that Bush's colonial adventure in the Gulf could trigger World War III.

Anti-war ferment is taking hold, not only on campuses, but across a broad spectrum of the American population, from church leaders and minority spokesmen, to former government officials, and some members of Congress. There are growing signs that elements of the Establishment are becoming increasingly unhappy with Bush's handling of the crisis, if not with the intervention itself.

Reality sets in

In the aftermath of the jingoistic fever that initially gripped the country, people are sitting back and thinking a bit more rationally about whether the U.S. deployment to the Mideast is justified, and whether Bush's alleged objectives are worth what most experts agree would be a particularly bloody war.

This phenomenon is evident in a new poll, taken at the end of September by a group called Americans Talk Security. A majority of those polled said they support Bush's goals in the Mideast—but a whopping 9 out of 10 said they did not think the U.S. should start a war to achieve them. Even more revealing, 47% of those surveyed said they believed that, if war does break out, the U.S. government would lie to the American people that Iraq had started it, when the U.S. actually had.

Another poll, conducted by ABC News and the *Washington Post*, turned up similar results. Although 78% said they supported Bush's handling of the crisis, only 48% said they

would approve invading Kuwait to force Iraq out, if that meant war. And 52% said they would oppose the permanent stationing of American forces in the Gulf.

The lack of trust in the administration is making itself felt on Capitol Hill, where a small, but growing, number of key congressmen are breaking ranks with the President, and with their colleagues. House Banking Committee chairman Rep.

"We should have listened to MacArthur"

The following statement was issued on Sept. 27 by Lyndon LaRouche, congressional candidate in Virginia's 10th Congressional District:

Some years ago, Gen. Douglas MacArthur gave a most eloquent and insightful warning against the folly of the United States pitting itself against the cause of developing nations; against the rights of the nations of the former colonial world, to gain the same access to national sovereignty, to the economic development, using scientific and technological progress, capital-intensive, energy-intensive development, that we as a nation fought to gain when we fought our oppressor, King George III's Britain, back in the 18th century.

We have repeatedly ignored General MacArthur's warning. The Truman administration, misled by the Harriman forces (which are close to George Bush), made a fatal error in Korea, and turned that situation into a no-win war, the first of a series of no-win wars, which destroyed the morale of the American people and the defense capabilities of the United States. That error was repeated again and again, through the colonialist mentality from the New York banking community and social democrats, who are social-democratic dogs for larcenous, usurious bankers.

We made the mistake in Africa, we made it in Central America, we made it in South America, we made it in Indochina; we are making it again in Asia, and in the Middle East.

Henry Gonzalez (D-Tex.) introduced a resolution Sept. 5 calling for withdrawal of all U.S. forces from the Mideast by Oct. 1; the resolution has been referred to the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and, according to Gonzalez's office, has elicited an overwhelmingly positive response from his constituents.

On Sept. 28, Gonzalez gave a stinging denunciation of Bush's policy, comparing it to that of ancient imperial Rome, and calling U.S. tactics during its invasion of Panama "Hitlerian." "On August 2, we were in session," Gonzalez said, in remarks on the floor of the House. "Saddam Hussein invaded what was known as Kuwait, a nation drawn in the sand by British oil colonialists back some years ago. . . . We do not have the perspective to see ourselves as the world sees us, particularly in that part of the world. That part of the world and everywhere else sees us as the country stepping into the shoes of the two departed colonial powers, Great Britain and France."

Gonzalez continued: "The thing the men who wrought

the Constitution feared the most were king-made wars, but today, do we have Presidents, co-equal, not dominant, not greater in power but co-equal, independent and separate from the other two organs of government, or do we have Caesars? To me this is more evocative of the Caesarian period in Roman history, which you recall emerged from a republic. The Caesars were not like we picture a modern dictator, like Hitler, or something like that. No, they wanted to be popular with the populace. They wanted to play for public opinion. They did not want to be disliked. But they assumed total and complete power, and they first had to overcome what we have called the original Roman way of doing things, our Constitution."

Another Democratic congressman, Rep. Bob Traxler from Saginaw, Michigan, has announced that he is "unalterably opposed" to the U.S. Gulf deployment. A political power by virtue of his membership in the House Appropriations Committee—the panel that has final say over federal spending—Traxler said: "I do not believe in what we are doing. I

That message from Douglas MacArthur should be heard again, and again, and again. You are not a lily-livered pinko, as some folks say, if you are opposed to this war in the Middle East, which Mrs. Thatcher is so eager to have Mr. George Bush conduct. On the contrary: As General MacArthur says so eloquently, implicitly, you are a true patriot of the United States; and those who want this war, are not.

The following excerpts are from Gen. Douglas MacArthur's speech to the Joint Meeting of the Two Houses of the U.S. Congress, April 19, 1951:

Men since the beginning of time have sought peace. Various methods through the ages have been attempted to devise an international process to prevent or settle disputes between nations. From the very start, workable methods were found insofar as individual citizens were concerned, but the mechanics of an instrumentality of larger international scope have never been successful. Military alliances, balances of power, leagues of nations, all in turn failed, leaving the only path to be by way of the crucible of war. The utter destructiveness of war now blots out this alternative. We have had our last chance. If we will not devise some greater and more equitable system, Armageddon will be at our door. The problem basically is theological and involves a spiritual recrudescence and improvement of human character that will synchronize with our almost matchless advances in science, art, literature, and all material and cultural developments of the past 2,000 years. It must be of the spirit if we are to save the flesh. . . .

Long exploited by the so-called colonial powers, with little opportunity to achieve any degree of social justice,

individual dignity, or a higher standard of life such as guided our own noble administration of the Philippines, the peoples of Asia found their opportunity in the war just past to throw off the shackles of colonialism, and now see the dawn of new opportunity, a heretofore unfelt dignity, and the self-respect of political freedom.

Mustering half of the Earth's population and 60% of its natural resources, these peoples are rapidly consolidating a new force, both moral and material, with which to raise the living standard and erect adaptations of the design of modern progress to their own distinct cultural environments. Whether one adheres to the concept of colonization or not, this is the direction of Asian progress and it may not be stopped. It is a corollary to the shift of the world economic frontiers, as the whole epicenter of world affairs rotates back toward the area whence it started. In this situation it becomes vital that our own country orient its policies in consonance with this basic evolutionary condition rather than pursue a course blind to the reality that the colonial era is now past and the Asian peoples covet the right to shape their own free destiny. What they seek now is friendly guidance, understanding, and support, not imperious direction; the dignity of equality, not the shame of subjugation. Their pre-war standard of life, pitifully low, is infinitely lower now in the devastation left in war's wake. World ideologies play little part in Asian thinking and are little understood. What the people strive for is the opportunity for a little more food in their stomachs, a little better clothing on their backs, a little firmer roof over their heads, and the realization of the normal nationalist urge for political freedom. These political-social conditions . . . form a backdrop to contemporary planning which must be thoughtfully considered if we are to avoid the pitfalls of unrealism.

don't see it in the national interest, and I'm compelled to raise my hand and say I dissent. . . . We need to come home. We have serious economic problems that deserve our full attention."

Implicitly discounting Bush's argument that Operation Desert Shield is meant primarily to get Iraq out of Kuwait, Traxler asserted that "There's no reason for us to be in the sands of Arabia except oil. There is no threat to our homeland," he added. "We could develop an energy policy that would free us from foreign oil. We chose not to do that. I want the U.S. energy independent and the troops home to build this country for the economic warfare of the next century."

Traxler's local newspaper, the *Saginaw News*, has reported that 63% of the voters polled support Traxler's stand. Traxler is up for election in November, while his Washington office reports that mail responses are running 60-40 in his favor. Sen. Bob Kerrey (D-Neb.) has also expressed opposition to Bush's neo-colonial adventure.

Cracks in the Establishment

Fissures are also becoming visible in what had been a pretty solid Establishment consensus behind the U.S. intervention. CBS News' "60 Minutes" segment Sept. 30, which drew a parallel between the 4,000 civilian deaths in the U.S. attack on Panama, and the U.S. military strategy in the Gulf (story, p. 60), strongly suggests that certain policymaking factions are either unhappy with the Mideast intervention, or unhappy with Bush, or both.

James Webb, Ronald Reagan's Secretary of the Navy, called any Middle East conflict involving U.S. ground troops an "unpardonable error," in a speech in Washington Sept. 27. Webb charged that the Joint Chiefs of Staff "overreacted" by sending large ground forces to Saudi Arabia. "My bottom line," said Webb, "is that in terms of putting ground troops in, in a situation like this, all of the unpredictabilities go off the scale."

Webb continued, "How many American lives are worth retaking Kuwait? I think anybody who says we should do that ought to look into a TV camera and tell the mothers and the loved ones of the soldiers that are there that their son's death is worth that price."

Webb made his comments at a forum sponsored by *Insight* magazine, affiliated with the generally pro-Bush *Washington Times*, at which other prominent Washington figures also criticized Bush's policy. James Schlesinger, who has served as both Defense Secretary and Secretary of Energy, and is certainly no dove, warned that a U.S. war with Iraq would not lead to a new era of peace and cooperation that Bush has said it will, even if the U.S. is victorious.

"We're unlikely to see that new world order," said Schlesinger, warning further that the American population won't tolerate a long, drawn-out conflict. "Given the underlying instabilities in the Gulf, it provides every disenchantment of

the American alliance," he said.

Other Establishment types are prodding Bush to find a political resolution to the conflict. Historian Arthur Schlesinger, writing in the Oct. 1 *Wall Street Journal*, asked: "Would it not be better to regard our objectives as bargaining chips, accept an Arab solution, pull our ground forces out of Saudi Arabia and declare victory? Better this than a savage and protracted war in which few Americans are likely to believe or long support."

Grass roots opposition

But it's among the general population that opposition to Bush's lunacy is growing fastest, fueled by a national leaflet headlined, "Stop Bush's Gulf Madness or Face World War III," issued jointly by Virginia congressional candidate Lyndon LaRouche and Nancy Spannaus, a LaRouche Democrat running as an independent for the U.S. Senate from Virginia.

LaRouche associates are holding demonstrations and forums across the country, to inform people that Bush's Mideast policy is actually based on an Anglo-American strategy of seizing raw materials supplies throughout the Third World, and to lay out the parameters for a just and enduring peace in the Mideast. (See also *Documentation*.)

The Schiller Institute, a policy think tank founded by LaRouche's wife, Helga Zepp-LaRouche, has held two emergency seminars on the Mideast situation, one in Washington and one in New York, which drew wide-ranging representation from the diplomatic community and the media. The theme of the seminars was how a peaceful solution to the Persian Gulf crisis could be developed, based on an ambitious economic development program for the Mideast.

Anti-war sentiment is especially strong on the campuses, where ad hoc anti-war groups are sprouting by the dozens. A Schiller Institute forum at East Los Angeles College Sept. 27 drew over 100 students, and turned into a three-hour-long discussion of the history of British colonialism in the Third World, and what kind of economic program is necessary to produce a global recovery. The meeting concluded with the formation of the East L.A. College Ad Hoc Anti-War Committee.

Former Attorney General Ramsey Clark, who founded The Coalition against Intervention in the Mideast in August, has also been holding a series of well-attended conferences on the Gulf crisis.

It can be expected that once the impact of the deadly budget "compromise" worked out by Congress and the White House at the end of September starts to be felt, Bush's war will get much less popular, fast.

savagely assaults the already-diminishing living standards of the working and middle classes, and especially the elderly, the President is going to find it difficult indeed to maintain broad-based, popular support for his Gulf adventure. In fact, he'll be lucky if he doesn't find himself the target of a nationwide impeachment movement.