
Book Reviews

Tasteless jingoism does not help vets

by Katherine R. Notley

Triumph in the Desert: The Challenge, The Fighting, The Legacy

Text by Peter David

Random House, New York, 1991

209 pages, hardbound, \$25

This book makes much use of Americans' emotional turmoil about Vietnam and its sequelae to drown out any rational effort to resolve it, by celebrating a murderous orgy. (One colleague commented about the book's title: "The challenge, the fighting, the legacy"! What about the video game, the T-shirt, and the lunch box?") To make matters worse, the "coffee table" display book advertises that 50% of its net proceeds "will go directly to the American Red Cross Gulf Crisis Fund."

So, we have our "feel good war" and can relive it "feeling good" that we are contributing to some "crisis fund." What is this crisis fund? Included in the book's press packet, a release from the Red Cross quotes military and social services chairman, Weenonah Bayer, that the Gulf Crisis Fund will help "sponsor workshops to help husbands and wives learn to reestablish intimacy; cope with new parenthood; and, just help families get on with their lives by getting back into a routine." This while Iraqi children undergo amputations without benefit of anesthesia. The American Red Cross, which acknowledged having raised at least \$14 million for the crisis fund, could not tell this reporter how much was spent relieving the suffering of Iraqi children.

Not a penny of U.S. funding has gone to relieve the disease and starvation that attended the war, from the moment Filipinos, Bangladeshis, Indians, Palestinians, Pakistanis, and others crowded the Jordanian desert because their Kuwaiti employers had fled to the nightclubs of Cairo; up to the present, when the "bomb now, die later" policy will cost Iraq an additional 170,000 childhood deaths from cholera, typhoid, and starvation this year alone.

At a June 13-15 Commission of Inquiry into Allied War Crimes held in Brussels, a Radio Television Belgium report-



Cpt. Michael Edrington/U.S. Army

In this photo from Triumph in the Desert George Bush is shown on his Thanksgiving visit to "our boys" in Saudi Arabia last year. Will he visit them in the homeless shelters in Washington, D.C. this year?

er, Gerard de Selis, demanded the press be indicted as accessories to the "coalition's" crimes against humanity. A book like *Triumph in the Desert*, whose text is by London *Economist* columnist Peter David, would make a better prosecutor's exhibit than coffee table book.

Mockery of veterans

Another comment is especially in order, now that many months have passed since the euphoria over the Gulf "victory." At this year's Veterans Day events on Capitol Hill, the National Coalition for the Homeless and Sen. Jay Rockefeller (D-W.Va.) released estimates that 250,000 veterans are among the nation's homeless, and that fully one-third of all homeless men are veterans. Fred Karnas, the coalition's executive director, reported, "Men and women who just a few months ago served in the Persian Gulf are already showing up on our nation's streets and in shelters around the country." Those citizens who sentimentally claimed they were "supporting the troops" by cheering for the Gulf military adventure and hanging out yellow ribbons, should ask themselves about what they are doing to honor and reward those soldiers, who fought for their country in a much more difficult war, and whom Bush's economic policies have thrown on the human scrapheap.

And also: How long it will be before there is a tent city of destitute Desert Storm veterans encamped in Washington, and how will the "yellow ribbon" crowd respond if George Bush, like his model Herbert Hoover in 1931, orders the Army to disperse them?