

Editorial

What a way to remember Dr. King's birthday

George Bush has left office with blood on his hands. That his last days in office should have been marked by a resumption of air strikes against Iraq was only in keeping with the brutality which has characterized his four years in office. Not only has Bush taken the American people to war against Panama and Iraq, but he has tacitly supported the barbaric Serbian regime. It might seem pointless to attack him now that Clinton has taken the helm, were it not for the alacrity with which his successors seem to be committing themselves to following in the footsteps of Bush's jackboots.

Not only has Bill Clinton endorsed Bush's unprovoked air strikes against Iraq, but he is committed to escalating an equally ruthless, if less obviously bloody, war against the elderly and the poor in the United States. Welfare, he brags, will be a thing of the past, and medical care will be strictly rationed. If Clinton has his way, we should fear that as in Great Britain, common life-saving treatments such as kidney dialysis will be denied to any but the rich.

The truth is that the vast majority of the American people and their government have traveled very far down the road to fascism. Americans have become a nation of fantasy-mongers who are willing to watch any atrocity on their TV screen, while they calmly swill their beer.

There has been a great deal of speculation lately as to whether George Bush will be indicted for his part in the Irangate affair. Clearly he was at the center of the affair when he was vice president under Ronald Reagan, but to fixate on that is to miss the point. His worst crimes were to conduct undeclared and unjust wars against Panama, Iraq, and now Iraq again.

The insane criminality of the Bush administration was characterized by the choice of the holiday commemorating the life of Martin Luther King, for the launching of Desert Storm.

Clinton is now at center stage, and his performance up to now gives little reason for hope. But the responsibility for this does not lie solely with the new President and his entourage, but also with the American people.

The majority of Americans have seemingly lost connection to the moral purpose of their lives. Not only are they prepared to tolerate the destruction of whole peoples—in Africa, in Haiti, in Bosnia—but they no longer seem to comprehend what it would mean to rebuild America. In this they are sorely behind the brave people of Iraq.

Ironically, as American missiles rained down on Iraq, the Iraqi people were commemorating the anniversary of Desert Storm with a celebration of their momentous accomplishment in rebuilding the infrastructure of their war-torn country. By dint of an extraordinary effort, most of the 142 bridges and the other infrastructure of Iraq that supported the water system and the delivery of electricity, which were targeted for destruction by the United States, have been rebuilt—even in the face of the continued embargo.

The murder of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, following on the murder of John F. Kennedy, marked a turning point for the United States. The America which landed men on the Moon, sent Peace Corps volunteers to foreign lands, and engaged in a non-violent, if uncompleted revolution to end segregation at home, is a thing of the past. A world which once turned to the United States as a bastion of freedom, now justly fears a barbarism only rivaled by that of Serbia.

Yes, the United States has a new President, but there is no way, even with the best will, that he can turn the tide of events without a moral resurgence sweeping the whole of the population. Yes, it would not be inappropriate to try George Bush for his crimes, but it were more important for the American people to ponder the awful irony of Jan. 18, when we once again bombed Iraq on the day set aside to honor the prophet of non-violence, Martin Luther King.

King believed that an end to racism in the United States would come, because he believed in the possibility of redemption for all of mankind. Let us prove that his belief in us was justified, by waking up to our responsibility, each and every one of us, to put America back on the track.