

Dear C Span,

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christmas card
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Can you some time soon have a Discussion on one of your Call-in Shows the lack of support from the Arab Countries to amass their Armies - Planes - Tanks - etc to fight along side of President Bush's and James Baker's build up of American military in order to take Kuwait away from Saddam Hussein's Military Masses - or even European Countries and Japan to build up their Military forces to equal Pres. Bush's build up in support to force Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait?

What ever President Bush - James Baker - Colin Powell - or Dick Cheney repeats time after time this is a War of the World against Saddam Hussein - before "We The People" of the United States - or Congress - their Representatives believe this - we have to see equal numbers of Fighting Arabs - especially Kuwaitis - Saudis - Egyptians - equal numbers of French Military - British - Dutch - Italians - Germany - Japan - Russians etc - If we see that - then we will believe this is the whole World against Saddam Hussein.

most Americans believe this is art has been right from the start between President Bush and Saddam Hussein and the Object is who gains control of Kuwait Oil - and if Saddam Hussein isn't stopped the rest of Arab Oil.

But if this Oil isn't worth fighting for by the Arabs - whose oil is in jeopardy - or isn't worth the Europeans and Japan - who depend on foreign Oil - more so than the U S A - fighting with equal Military - then why should American Blood be spilled to hold on to that oil for the world to enjoy.

This would be a good topic to discuss before January 15th - before President Bush commits our young men and women - American sons and daughters - husbands and wives to fight alone.

I think a lot of American viewers of C Sparr feel the same as I do and the writers of these mislabeled articles.

I watch C Sparr all the time - It has helped me understand my Government and see their failings as well as their Accomplishments.

Sincerely

Liberty mobilists

Reluctant Allies

The Bush Administration's anti-Iraq coalition is looking increasingly fragile, with the pro-United States Arab camp in particular decidedly reluctant to back a military option against Saddam Hussein. President Hosni Mubarak has pointedly declared that Egyptian troops would enter Kuwait only as a peacekeeping

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force and proposed a three-month waiting period before force is seriously considered. He fears that once thousands of Iraqis are killed by American bombs and rockets, public opinion in Egypt would turn violently anti-American, seriously threatening his regime.

The state-controlled news media in Syria continue to portray the Syrian troops in Saudi Arabia as a force stationed there to prevent a fight between two Arab states. Setting aside his hatred of Syrian President Hafez al-Assad, Saddam has meticulously refrained from criticizing his longstanding rival. This has brought him political gains. In Syrian cities one can see pro-Saddam graffiti and hear praise of him in conversations: This is an unprecedented phenomenon. Assad must therefore know that were a war to erupt in the gulf, causing immense damage to Iraq and its people, his citizens would be likely to go beyond defacing walls.

King Hassan of Morocco appears equally alarmed about the outbreak of hostilities. How else is one to explain his

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initiative in calling an Arab summit, a proposal conditionally accepted by Saddam?

Nor is the Saudi regime as united as it might seem from the outside. It is significant that missing from the list of the theologians — *ulema* — who endorsed King Fahd's summoning of foreign troops was Sheik Abdel Aziz ibn Baaz. The most senior religious-legal scholar in Saudi Arabia, he is as well known as the King.

Since the go-ahead to march into Iraqi-occupied Kuwait can come only from King Fahd, these internal divisions within the House of Saud are more important than all the slings and arrows directed at President Bush by domestic opponents of his hawkish gulf policy.

DILIP HIRO

Dilip Hiro's most recent book, The Longest War: The Iran-Iraq Military Conflict, will be published by Routledge in January.

Payment of individual combat-related claims under a program similar to the USAID program in Grenada would not be in the best interest of the Department of Defense of the U.S. because of the potentially huge number of such claims.

The deceptive public relations figure of 202 deaths is neither huge nor does it have the potential to become huge. At least the actuarial section of the Pentagon cannot lie. It had better not, as the gravedigging business goes into "potential" high gear.

It is irritating to be told, by pundits of almost every stripe and tinge, that the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait is the first "post-cold war" imbroglio. It is, certainly, the first post-cold war annexation. But in a very short while we shall be observing the first anniversary of the United States' invasion of Panama, which was the first and only armed, unilateral intervention by a superpower to have occurred since the fall of the Berlin wall.

I'm making the point not to stress any latent "moral equivalence" between the Iraqi attack and the American one but to suggest that the Panama episode contains unlearned lessons for America's adventure in the gulf. Almost one year later, we still do not know what Noriega "has" on the U.S. government, or what the U.S. government "has" on him. Nor do we know how many Panamanian civilians perished in the to one, or two, or five people of his or her acquaintance who can plausibly be considered a criminal.

But when does a reckoning become a purge? Recently there have been large demonstrations demanding the banning of the Communist Party in response to a call by its new (and already ex-) leader, Vasil Mohorita, to put political struggle back on the agenda. The new Communist slogan, "No democracy without pluralism, no pluralism without the Communist Party," is preposterous in one sense, given the party's notable lack of interest in democracy for forty years. But in another sense it must be taken absolutely literally, galling though that may be. An attack on party membership per se, as opposed to the prosecution of specific criminal acts (there were, after all, 1.7 million card-carrying Communists, and a party card was often a condition of employment), would put Czechoslovakia on a slippery slope.

There is also the clear risk of retribution being sought along what Garton Ash calls a "red-pink continuum." The most celebrated victims of this have been the leaders of New Forum in the German Democratic Republic, who were junked by voters along with the Communist Party because, in effect, they argued for keeping the wall up a little longer

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EDITORIALS.

Will It Sell?

The spectacle of President Bush and his crew searching the world over for a plausible reason to invade or destroy Iraq is only one of the many bizarre features of the "new world order" allegedly in formation. Presidents always lie about their acts of aggression, but until now they have generally stuck to the stories they invented at the outset. In the good old cold war days, a Communist threat was the universal rationale for every American landing from Inchón to Grenada. Now the purposes have a peculiar postmodern tilt. The bombing of

Panama was described as a kind of blockbuster drug raid, such as might star Bruce Willis. The looming war in the Middle East is, according to various of the President's men, a sequel to World War II, a full-employment program, a recession buster, a unilateral disarmament campaign (to destroy Saddam Hussein's weaponry) and a way to force democracy and women's liberation on Arabia Deserta.

None of it makes any sense. The newsmagazines and *The New York Times* publish lengthy scenarios proposing options for the apocalypse, but everyone knows that any such elaborate design would fail the minute the first shot is fired. Bush recites his mantra, "naked aggression," to the point that he is better at parodying the Bush manner than *Satur-*

day *Night Live's* Dana Carvey. But the bit is playing better in Prague than in Peoria.

The fact is, the deadly dangerous U.S. buildup in the gulf is not just another day of Bush-style electioneering, and the Administration's scattered sloganeering is so far not convincing much of America that there is any good reason for fighting and dying in the sand. Despite what Secretary of State James Baker claims, ordinary Americans' jobs will not be rescued from recession by defeating Iraq. Neither will Middle East peace be secured by flattening Baghdad. Syria, Iran, Israel and perhaps other late-blooming militarized, ambitious states will easily fill whatever power vacuum the war creates. And as for oil—as the root reason for America's rush to the gulf—it will be cheaper and more plentiful if there is a negotiated settlement.

Baker may buy, barter or wheedle enough votes for a United Nations resolution supporting the use of force, but the real problems begin with such a vote. In no way would such authorization imply a true multinational effort with any democratic base. There should be a valid and just role for the U.N. in opposing Saddam's takeover of Kuwait and similar examples of invasion and occupation, but it is impossible to see how the present configuration of power in the region can be converted from a nationalist/imperialist coalition to a true world effort. It will take more than Bush's mantras, or his bombs, to make that leap.

Backdoor Censors

Two recent setbacks for freedom of the press possess a fortuitous symmetry. One involves prior restraint and the other what might be called posterior restraint. Of graver import is the first, concerning Cable News Network's right to broadcast tapes of Gen. Manuel Noriega's telephone conversations with his lawyers. By a 7-to-2 vote, the Supreme Court refused to lift a temporary ban on airing the tapes imposed by District Judge William Hoeveler. The high court accepted the government's argument that a decision on CNN's claim of prior restraint at this time would be premature. By upholding the district judge's order the Supreme Court has introduced an element of doubt into its rulings in *Nebraska Press Association v. Stuart* and the Pentagon Papers case, which placed a near-absolute ban on prior restraint.

Although the content and the provenance of the tapes remain murky at this writing, there is good reason to believe that they reveal serious government misconduct, namely, eavesdropping on a defendant's privileged conversations with his lawyers. One can only speculate on the motives. Possibly federal prosecutors were desperate for evidence; or, for conspiracy buffs, the Administration is so terrified of what Noriega will reveal in court that it sabotaged its own case. Certainly, a stink of impropriety hangs over all this—the alleged leaking of the tapes to the Panamanian government, the purloining of tapes from a CNN employee's room by F.B.I. agents. Of course, Judge Hoeveler may lift his ban after examining the tapes; but for a judge to ban

publication of a story, even temporarily, sets a precedent for future censorship of urgent, time-bound stories.

The example of "posterior restraint" was the decision by Simon & Schuster not to publish *American Psycho*, a lurid novel by Bret Easton Ellis. This incident raises fundamental questions about the editorial independence of publishing houses owned by conglomerates. According to advance accounts in *Time* and *Spy*, the novel contains shockingly graphic scenes of rape, torture and dismemberment. Because of its depictions of gratuitous violence against women, the book had stimulated strong objections at Simon & Schuster during its journey through the editorial process. Nevertheless, it looked like a blockbuster, and the decision was made to publish it. Only after seeing the advance stories, says Simon & Schuster chair Richard Snyder, did he peruse the book. He found it in "such questionable taste" that he pulled it rather than sully S&S's good name. If you believe that, you'll also believe that Martin Davis, chair of Paramount Communications, the conglomerate that owns S&S, had nothing to do with the cancellation.

It seems inconceivable that the head of a publishing company knew so little about a book that had stirred up such in-house turmoil until he read about it in the press. Corporate P.R. and fear of controversy, rather than editorial judgment, were the determining factors.

And so the issue of free speech, corporate censorship division, does arise. If *American Psycho* is as exploitative as it sounds, we find ourselves once again defending sleaze. At any rate, Ellis's book will not be suppressed. Another publisher, Vintage Contemporaries, snapped it up and is expected to make a bundle. We plan to rush out to our neighborhood bookstore and not buy it.

The Gladiators

In order to perpetuate capitalism as the final stage of history, Washington has less Hegelian means at its disposal than Francis Fukuyama suggested. For almost forty years it has maintained a secret army, a gang of "gladiators," sponsored by NATO and apparently financed in most cases by the C.I.A., whose function has been to prevent—by cloak and dagger, by hook or by crook—a "communist takeover." And not just in Guatemala or Iran at the time of Arbenz or Mossadegh but in the heart of European civilization—in Athens, Rome, Paris and beyond.

The veil was lifted accidentally earlier this year. During his investigation of the blowing up of a vehicle full of explosives, a Venetian judge stumbled upon a secret society founded in the early 1950s and code-named Gladio—"the sword." Some of the Italian gladiators, numbering nearly a thousand, were in the military; others were civilians. They all had money, arms and protection at the highest levels. The secret was so closely held that ministers who belonged to the ruling coalition but were not members of the Christian Democratic Party claim they knew nothing about it. The Christian Democrats alone knew. The investigation quickly reached the very top, and Prime Minister Giulio An-