

FREE PRESS

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Free Press 62 has been delayed to allow us to concentrate on fundamental issues of media freedom raised by the Gulf War. Our full time workers, volunteers and National Council members are working flat out to monitor media coverage, expose the suppression of news and challenge censorship. This is putting enormous pressure on both people and money.

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The Great British Silence

Behind the sanitised media-speak are dead bodies,
writes JOHN PILGER.

In 1972 I watched American B52s bombing southern Vietnam, near the ashes of a town called An Loc. From a distance of two miles, I could see three ladders of bombs that curved in the sky; and, as each rung reached the ground there was a plume of fire and a sound that quaked the ground beneath me.

This was operation Arc Light, described by the Pentagon as "high performance denial interdiction, with minimised collateral damage": jargon that echoes today. The B52s were unseen above the clouds; between them they dropped 70 tons of explosives in a "long-box" pattern that extended several miles. Almost everything that moved inside the box was deemed "redundant".

On inspection, a road that connected two villages had been replaced by craters, one of them almost a quarter of a mile wide. Houses had vanished. There was no life; cooking pots lay strewn in a ditch, no doubt dropped in haste. People a hundred yards from the point of contact had not left even their scorched shadows, which the dead had left at Hiroshima. Visitors to Indochina are today shocked by the moonscape of craters in Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia, where people lived.

The B52s now operating over Iraq are the same type of 30-year-old aircraft. We are told they are bombing Saddam Hussein's Republican Guard, and the "outskirts of Baghdad". Before the introduction in Vietnam of military euphemisms designed to make palatable to Congress new hi-tech "anti-people" weapons, the term used was carpet bombing. This was vivid and accurate, for these aircraft lay carpets of death, killing and destroying comprehensively and indiscriminately. This is what they were built to do; and that is what they are no doubt doing in a country where most people have neither shelters, nor are 'dug in'.

The other night, on television, a senior ex-RAF officer included the current B52s raids in his description of "pinpoint strikes... part of the extraordinary precision work of the Allies". John Major and Tom King constantly refer to this "remarkable precision" and, by clear implication, the equally remarkable humanitarian benefits this brings to the innocent people of Iraq, although further information about these benefits is curiously unforthcoming. The British media amplify this.

Indeed, so zealously have the London-based "media response teams" spread the authorised word that the Controllers of Information in Whitehall have had to rein them in, rather like the Soccer and his apprentice. George Bush has wagged his finger. Come on guys, lets not be "overly euphoric". John Major's autocue has said as much.

Beware, wrote Robert Louis Stevenson, of "your sham impartialists, wolves in sheep's clothing, simpering honestly as they suppress".

The first authorised version of the war was, of course, the Euphoria Version, put out by Bush himself and the autocue here. This has now been replaced by the It Won't Be Easy Version. According to the Controllers of Information, the "phenomenal surgery" of Allied technology, alas, failed to "take out" most of the Iraqi Air Force and the Scud missiles. The echoes from Vietnam grow louder. The fabled "tunnel" has returned. Wait now for the "light".

Protesting far too much, Bush says comparisons with the Vietnam war are inappropriate. Listen carefully to General Colin Powell, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and himself a product of the Vietnam



war, and the vocabulary and mentality are the same. The principal weapons used against Iraq, such as the tomahawk cruise missile, have a "circular error probability". This means that they are targeted to fall within a circle, like a dart landing on a dart board. They do not have to hit, or even damage, the bullseye to be considered "effective" or "successful". Some have hit the bullseye - the Tomahawk that demolished the Ministry of Defence in Baghdad is the most famous - but many, if not most, clearly have not. What else have they hit? What else is within the circle? People maybe? The autocues say nothing. The collusion of silence in the media is almost total.

General Powell has also referred to "minimised collateral damage". Like "circular error probability", this term was invented in Vietnam. It means dead civilians: men, women and children. Their number is "minimised", of course, although we are not told against what benchmark this is measured. Of course the Iraqis have no wish to admit they are bleeding badly, preferring to exaggerate the numbers of enemy planes brought down - exactly as the British did during the Battle of Britain.

The common feature of the Euphoria Version and the It Won't Be Easy Version is
Continued on p2

Media freedom and the Gulf crisis

The following statement, endorsed by the National Council of the CPBF, was issued on the eve of the war.

The Campaign for Press and Broadcasting Freedom believes media coverage of the Gulf crisis has failed to provide the public with the comprehensive information and range of views necessary to allow individuals to come to a fully informed view of the crisis.

It has highlighted how the concentration of ownership in the press and the lack of proper democratic accountability in broadcasting, especially in times of acute national and international crisis, inhibits the proper flow of information and analysis to the public.

The CPBF takes no position on the question of how the Gulf crisis should be resolved. But we are profoundly disturbed that, editorially, all twenty one national newspapers have endorsed the use of force - and the overwhelming majority have backed war sooner rather than later.

This has coloured analysis of the historical origins, nature and possible resolutions of the

crisis, and the potential consequences of war. With rare exceptions, it has meant little space has been given to the range of informed opinions critical of the official position.

Broadcasting organisations have interpreted their obligation to be impartial extremely narrowly, focusing on the opinions of the government and the leaders of the main parliamentary opposition parties. Because these parties share a common perspective on the issue, broadcast coverage has remained within a narrow framework bounded by the official interpretation of the crisis. The views of many people deeply critical of government and opposition policy have received no regular exposure on mass audience news bulletins.

The government's plans to further restrict news coverage in the event of hostilities should be openly resisted by both the press and broadcasting organisations in the interests of the public's right to have full information on which to base its judgement of the conflict.

The guidelines put forward by the Ministry of Defence are so blanket it would be almost

impossible to report a war with them. The unprecedented prospect of triple vetting by the British, American and Saudi military censors in forward areas, when the access of the media has already been strictly limited, is unacceptable.

For the past decade the CPBF has consistently challenged 'the myth that only the private ownership of the newspaper industry provides genuine freedom, diversity or access'. We have also challenged 'the myth that the present forms of ownership and regulation of broadcasting guarantee editorial independence, democratic accountability or high programme standards' (CPBF Aims and Objectives).

Coverage of the Gulf crisis is the most glaring example of the need for major reforms in the ownership and control of the media.

Just as the CPBF campaigned against government attempts to suppress the Real Lives and Zircon programmes, against the Spycatcher ban and the 1988 Broadcasting Ban, so we will campaign against the distortion of the issues surrounding the Gulf crisis and against government manipulation and censorship of the media.

We will continue to campaign for reformed media characterised by plurality of ownership, diversity of views and genuine forms of public accountability.

15 January 1991

The Great British Silence

Continued from p.1

manipulation. What is distinctive about this war, compared with even the Falklands war is that media scepticism has been surrendered without a whimper. There have been rare exceptions, notably in the *Guardian*. Lies dished out are lies swallowed whole. Video-game pictures are believed by intelligent people; no suspicions are raised, no context is called for. That journalists have a duty to overcome the bureaucracy of deception and not to serve it, is apparently not on anyone's agenda.

During many years reporting wars and coping with propaganda, I have never known such manipulation in a self-proclaimed free society. Thought control in democracies is normally a subtle process, but these days the manipulation, in some respects, is not unlike that in totalitarian states.

Witness the advertisements for war and products of death that cover editorial pages. John Major's congratulatory message to the BBC was affirmation of the media's role.

Myths linger, of course. In the old eastern European regimes, most people were in little doubt about the state's ability to lie and distort, and so they developed a cynicism that allowed them to read between the lines. We need to acquire this skill urgently.

Television's satellite and video game wizardry merely reinforces our illusions. The system of "sound-bites", perfected by CNN, means that if truth intrudes, it is quickly rendered obsolete. Genuine, informed analysis is out of the question. There are few salient facts and no blood. An emotional screen is erected between us and reality, and our sensibilities are manipulated accordingly. Pilots are represented as heroic, as heirs of "the few" who faced the Luftwaffe

Truth is turned on its head. No one doubts the pilots' courage; but the original "few" were up against equals, not those of a third world country - regardless of the current propaganda about the "massive Iraqi machine". Equally, the Israelis are described as showing "extraordinary courage" in the face of "this outrageous attack" on them, while the people of Iraq are devoid of human form, let alone courage. Unlike the Vietnamese, they are not even stick figures allowed to flit like phantoms across the screen, bit players in an American "tragedy".

The manipulation began long before the war started. In order to prepare them, the British people were denied an understanding of the complexity of reasons behind the crisis in the Gulf. It was not mentioned that Britain invented Iraq and divested it of Kuwait in order to divide and rule the region, laying the roots of this war. That the Americans had helped to put Saddam Hussein in power, providing him with a hit list of his opponents, was suppressed. That Britain, America and other "allies" sustained his murderous regime was relegated to the letters page.

Remember the United Nations? The UN role is now hardly mentioned; as an instrument of US policy it has served its propaganda purpose. Once the countdown to 15 January had begun, sanctions, the fraudulence of the American deadline and the legal shakiness of Resolution 678, in relation to the UN Charter, were obsolete issues.

Beware, wrote Robert Louis Stevenson, of "your sham impartialists, wolves in sheep's clothing, simpering honestly as they suppress".

This article first appeared in New Statesman and Society, 25 January 1991. It is reproduced here with the kind permission of John Pilger.



One of the most sickening aspects of media coverage of the Gulf war has been the journalist as story. Baghdad blitzed - John Simpson cracks his ribs. Kate Adie in army fatigues in the Saudi Desert when for all she knew she might as well have been on Blackpool beach.

According to *Music and Media* (9.2.91) Spain had its own local hero in Eric Frattini (you can recognise him above) "who kept the country's largest radio network, 235-station Cadena SER, enthralled with live broadcasts from Tel Aviv. Frattini got to within 10 kilometres of where an Iraqi missile hit the city, detailing the mayhem of the attack." Makes a Scud missile look accurate.

Truth and the casualties

Not content with minimising news of Iraqi casualties, the government is planning a disinformation campaign on the NHS and British casualties.

The Department of Health has been accused by the CPBF of preparing a disinformation campaign to mislead the media and public about the ability of the NHS to cope with casualties arising from the Gulf War.

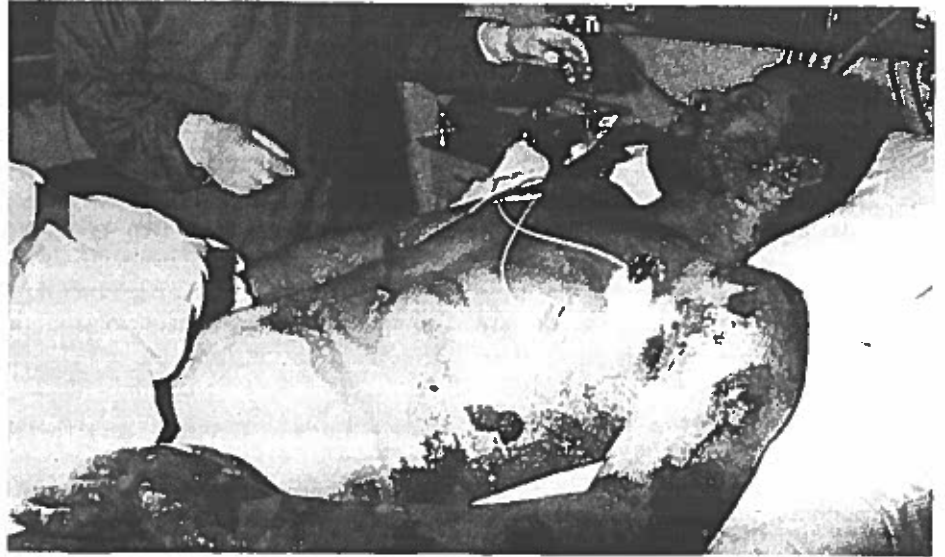
The Department's own secret contingency planning reveals that very heavy casualties are expected from the Gulf which will cause massive disruption to the NHS and civilian patients. Specialist units, such as burns units, will be under severe pressure, and inadequate medical knowledge exists for dealing with the victims of chemical warfare. However, this will be denied by regional health authority and district press officers working to guidelines, *Gulf Contingency Planning, Dealing with the Media*, issued by the Department of Health's Information Division.

In the media guidelines, NHS press officers have been provided with model answers to twenty five possible questions. Question 4 asks: "How much knowledge does the NHS have for dealing with chemical/biological injuries?" The suggested answer is: "NHS staff and hospitals have plenty of experience of dealing with the effects of toxic chemicals and with infection. We are confident that we can cope with such cases if arising as a result of attacks in war.... Full clinical guidance has been made available to NHS clinicians."

According to the Department of Health's own confidential *Guidance for Clinical and Administrative Medical Staff* this is simply not true. The conclusion of Appendix Six which deals with chemical warfare casualties states: "The management of C.W. casualties will present new problems for doctors in the UK... The compounds likely to be used in CW differ from those encountered in ordinary clinical toxicological practice..."

Only limited clinical guidance is available. The same appendix lists seven types of chemical weapons but clinical information is only given for nerve agents, mustard gas and lewisite. The confidential advice admits doctors may not know what they are dealing with. It says of nerve agents, "experience in the management of severe organophosphorous insecticide poisoning is of course extensive but the precise details of how nerve agent poisoning may differ from OP insecticidal poisoning are imperfectly known."

Media and public alike could also be misled about the prospects of casualties



The wounds of war are largely unfamiliar to NHS staff.

recovering. In answer to the question "What are the chances of recovery from chemical injuries or biological infection?", NHS press officers are advised to say: "Medical advice provided by our clinical advisers is that persons initially surviving attacks from chemical / biological weapons have a good chance of recovery."

The secret advice to senior medical officers is far more cautious. It warns that, "experience of insecticide poisoning has shown that after apparently successful initial treatment patients may deteriorate at any time during the first two or so weeks post poisoning".

Indeed, concern is expressed over the delayed effects of "a range of (non-chemical) compounds including various smokes still used on battlefields. Pulmonary oedema produced by such compounds may be of delayed onset and may still present a problem when casualties arrive in the UK. The transport of such casualties in aircraft at reduced cabin pressures (and therefore at reduced PO₂ levels) may also produce problems."

The confidential advice also expects "heavy pressure on burns, intensive care and neurosurgery units. Such pressures may arise, in part, from staff shortages, particularly of nurses and technicians."

However, if journalists ask whether casualties will overwhelm the NHS, they will be told, "the available facilities will more than meet the number of casualties which could be referred to us in the worst case scenario".

Analysis of the *NHS Plan and Procedure Guide* for Gulf support has already revealed that this involves planning for a possible 18,500 casualties - over 50% of British forces in the Gulf. 11,000 beds are

being prepared in military hospitals and a further 7,500 in the NHS.

Nevertheless, if asked "How many beds are the NHS providing to deal with Gulf casualties?", NHS press officers are being advised to say: "No request for specific numbers of beds have yet been made by the Ministry of Defence." In fact, there has even been secret planning to deal with the eventuality of having to hold casualties at civilian airports. The DoH's confidential advice reveals that: "Facilities for transferring and if necessary holding casualties at civil airports which may be used have been scrutinised, through a joint initiative involving the Department of Health, the Department of Transport and the RAF."

Speaking at a House of Commons press conference held by the CPBF and the Medical Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons, CPBF National Organiser Mick Gosling said: "The media's guidelines amount to a systematic attempt to downplay the number of casualties expected, minimise the impact these will have on the NHS and civilian patients, and disguise the new problems medical staff will face if they have to deal with chemical warfare injuries."

"There is no justification for such a disinformation campaign. It has nothing to do with the security of Allied forces in the Gulf and everything to do with reassuring nervous public opinion. Already the military censors in the Gulf control all the news we receive of the war. Now the virus of secrecy and disinformation appears to be spreading to the Department of Health. It would be a disgrace if the casualties of war became victims of the propaganda war."

As Allied planes dropped the equivalent of a Hiroshima bomb on Iraq in the early hours of Thursday 17 January, the British media scrambled to establish hot air supremacy.

"100% success" screamed the banner headline of the London *Evening Standard*, outblitzing its tabloid rivals. At first the men from the Ministry of Defence and the Pentagon let this line run. After all, to win a real war you have to win the propaganda war. Nothing beefs up domestic support like early success and the promise of a quick, bloodless (for our boys) victory.

Operation Desert Fog continued with public opinion being acclimatised to military reality. The gung-ho journos, whose knowledge of combat is limited to fighting their way to the bar at El Vino's in Fleet St, had to be reined back. There could be no quick victory against Iraq's military machine.

Television audiences which had been encouraged to view this war as some kind of hi-tech video game, to marvel at the weapons of death rather than see their deadly consequences, had to be disabused. Hence the astonishing spectacle of a military briefing where the top brass tell journalists... "this is not a video game". *Who suggested it was!*

Finally, one week and 10,000 bombing missions later, the circle was completed. We were told Iraq's military forces are largely intact. The air force is buried underground in hardened bunkers. Runways can be repaired in 24 hours. Even that spectacularly exploding air ministry in Baghdad had a command bunker underneath built to withstand a nuclear bomb blast.

The military also confessed that 80% of missions "effective" does not mean 80% of targets destroyed. It is simply a claim that 80% of planes have reached their targets and dropped their bombs. One wonders about the other 20%. While B52s can apparently rain bombs with an accuracy never demonstrated in Vietnam, the world is asked to believe that cloud cover has hampered reconnaissance which would show just what has been flattened on the ground.

According to Victorian Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, there are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies and statistics. But even he would have paled in the face of military briefings.

Lies, Damned Lies and Military Briefings

Mick Gosling looks at the role of the media in the propaganda war.

The only real images of war we saw in the first week were on the streets of Tel Aviv and on the faces of captured air crews.

In the middle of the night of 24 January, and ITN correspondent in Saudi Arabia lets slip the truth: "The hard information available to the public is so slight that it is impossible to make any hard judgement on the progress of the war."

"Our people do not expect that kind of information and we are not used to giving it. You are not going to get in Britain the kind of information you get from hard-hitting questions in America. You will not get a climate in Britain for this type of thing."

**Brigadier Farrah-Hockley, former
NATO Commander-in-Chief**

All we knew was that we were one week into a war where all sides are promising carnage - and one week into the propaganda war aimed at getting public opinion to accept it. Having been carpet bombed with non-news, the cycle started again. President Bush announced that operation Desert Storm was "right on schedule"...

The second week saw similar Allied claims of military success. Our "surgical" strikes were contrasted with the indiscriminate Scud missiles of Saddam. Whereas Scuds have killed a handful of civilians no comment has been made of the fact that just one civilian death for each allied bombing raid would mean 40,000 Iraqis dead.

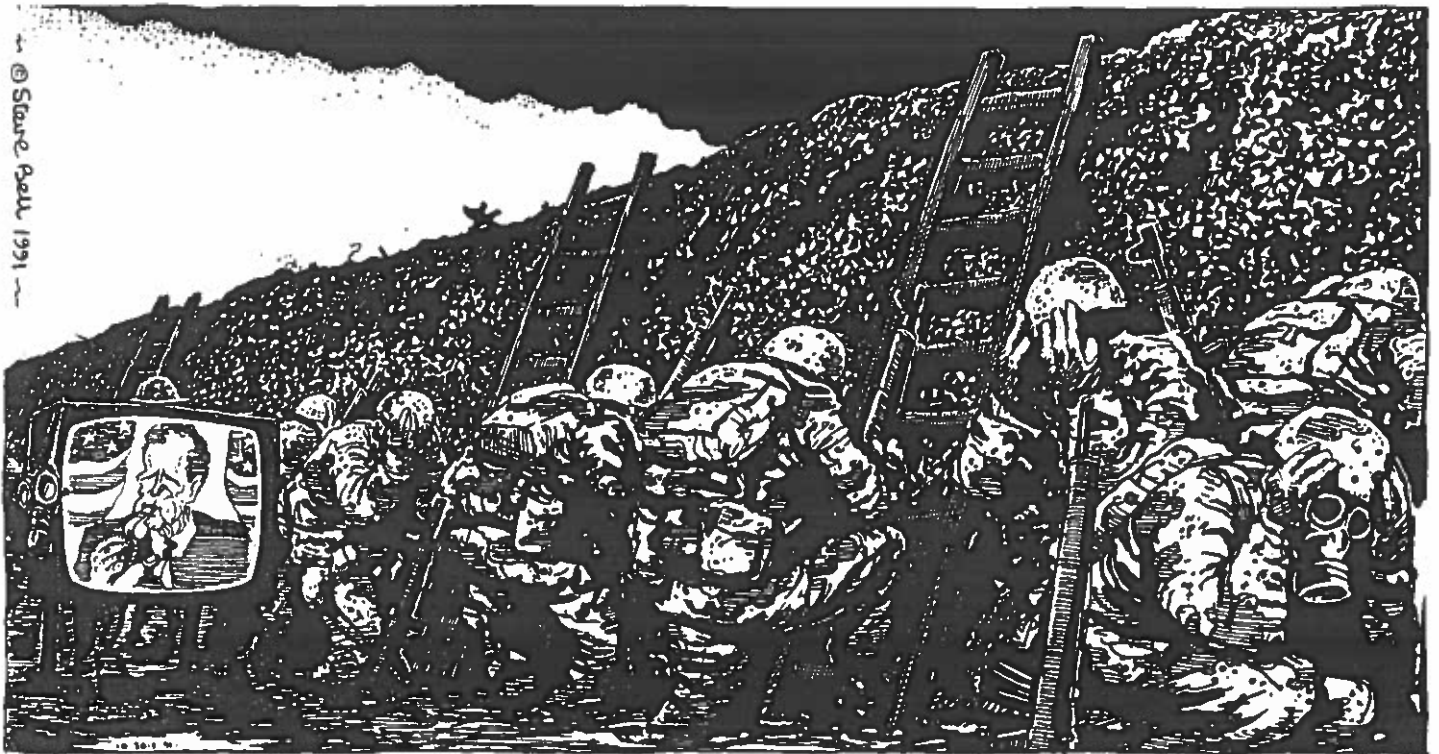
Instead there is talk of "collateral damage".

Compare the airtime and acres of print coverage devoted to the flooding of the Gulf with oil, all those heartrending pictures of dying birds, with the absence of coverage of Iraqi civilian deaths. Indeed, the peace campaigners who were derided for warning that war would bring environmental disaster, now find their arguments hi-jacked as justification for continuing the war.

The carpet bombing of Iraqi ground forces is termed "degradation". The comment of a retired US paratroop commander that Iraqi troops would "melt like butter off toast" was reported once at night and then suppressed. By contrast Saddam Hussein is demonised for all his works. The war is becoming a crusade and US and British aims are changing. The mendacity of ministers on both sides of the Atlantic, who imply UN Resolution 678 calling for stability in the Middle East encompasses the overthrow of Saddam, has not been subject to serious scrutiny in news bulletins and most of the press. The media machine has slid along behind the war machine.

Why has this saturation news coverage produced so few hard facts and so little informed analysis? When journalists and broadcasters speak portentously of "the fog of war", they present tautology as explanation. There is nothing foggy about the grip the military exercises over the media in the Gulf. It is total, and backed by (that dirty word) sanctions. And it began the moment the Allied forces set foot in the Saudi desert.

Strict Media Ground Rules, covering fourteen categories of "not releasable information", were laid down by the Allied Joint Information Bureau and policed by military minders. Journalists could only report what the military allowed them to see.



Point 3 of the Rules stated: "You MUST remain with your military escort at all times, until released, and follow their instructions regarding your activities." This is followed by the classic newspeak that "these instructions are not intended to hinder your reporting", a fig-leaf dispensed with since the war started. Journalists subservience to the military was underlined in Point 6: "If you are not sure whether an action you will take will violate a ground rule, consult your escort officer PRIOR TO TAKING THAT ACTION."

The weapon of control is access. Any reporters or crews freelancing or wandering away from their military escorts are warned. Do it again and they might as well pack their bags as their military escorts will be withdrawn.

David Feingold, London Bureau Chief of Cable News Network, puts it bluntly: "the rules are there and the military run the operation. We are used as conduits of information and disinformation." (See *Free Press* 61)

Many journalists have been more than willing to participate in this charade. But an even greater shame is that of the newspaper and television editors who have perpetuated it. Until the eve of the war they gave little or no publicity to the censorship operating, yet alone challenged it.

The representatives of our 'free' media loyally trooped off to carefully vetted meetings with the Ministry of Defence on the 3rd and 7th January, to be briefed on how the MoD/Allied

"The final political decision rests with the people. And the people, so that they may make up their minds, must be given the facts, even in wartime, or perhaps especially in wartime."

Paul Scott Mower, editor of the Chicago Daily News, during World War Two

forces would organise media coverage in the event of war. The prospect of triple vetting by British, American and Saudi censors hardly raised an eyebrow.

On the ground in the Gulf only two British "Media Response Teams" have been allowed forward with the 4th and 7th armoured divisions, comprising one television crew, one radio reporter, two print journalists and one photographer.

Their material is pooled through a forward transmission unit where it is censored by the military before it is transmitted to London. The other source of information is military briefings. To ensure the home front stays firm, the MoD has issued 'guidance' to editors on the release of information.

When the BBC bridled, not against the ground rules but against this guidance, the MoD promptly displayed its access weapon. A

Graphic reproduced by kind permission of Steve Bell

Ministry spokesman was quoted in the *Evening Standard* (14 January) saying: "We would have to think hard about allowing any reporters to accompany our troops if their editor was carrying reports which jeopardised security." The BBC promptly issued its own guidance which is equally restrictive.

The consequence is that we are witnessing the most censored war in recent history. There are 32 areas on which information cannot be published without the approval of the MoD.

These include progress of battles, munitions supplies and equipment short-comings, specific ship or aircraft losses and rules of engagement - of particular interest as the Allied commanders have been careful to avoid ruling out the use of nuclear weapons. Even the consequences of terrorist attacks would be censored.

These restrictions are more concerned with maintaining domestic morale than protecting Allied forces in the Gulf. By accepting them the media is failing in its duty to supply people with both the information and the range of opinions they need to form their own views of the war.

"The final political decision rests with the people," wrote Paul Scott Mower, editor of the *Chicago Daily News*, during the Second World War. "And the people, so that they may make up their minds, must be given the facts, even in wartime, or perhaps especially in wartime."

Media unions oppose censorship

Media unions and civil liberties groups are united in their opposition to government censorship of the Gulf War. The National Union of Journalists' Executive meeting on 3 February voted 23 to 1 to condemn censorship of the media, call for an immediate end to the war and support the activities of Media Workers Against the War and Liberty (National Council for Civil Liberties).

The ACTT and BETA, who are currently merging to form the Broadcasting Entertainment and Cinematograph Trades Union, have taken similar positions. The ACTT's General Council of 27 January authorised "an investigation into reporting restrictions on the Gulf War with a view to initiating an industry-wide campaign for the fullest information to be made available to the British people." The ACTT is also seeking through the Welsh and Scottish Trade Union Congresses and the Scottish Labour Party Conference to affirm that "full and accurate media coverage of the conduct and consequences of the war is both proper and necessary in a democracy and a precondition for informed public debate." It is calling for a campaign in support of organisation's and individuals whose objective is "the responsible discharge of the media's obligations".

The All Industry Censorship Group - which involves media unions and employer's organisations, the British Film Institute, the CPBF and anti-censorship groups like Index and Article 19 - have expressed their growing concern. In the words of ACTT's Roy Lockett, there is an "underlying suspicion that the restrictions are indicative of an attitude which does not regard the media as independent conduits of factual information but as potential propaganda arms of the state."

In instructions to all chapels on the eve of war, the National Union of Journalist's reminded members that they are bound by the Union's Code of Conduct to "strive to eliminate distortion, news suppression and censorship". The NUJ is asking for the labelling of material subject to explicit censorship, a demand agreed at the *Guardian*. The NUJ's principles and guidelines for reporting emphasise that "journalists in the field are not there as public relations officers of the British Army. They are not on 'our side'; their duty is to report truthfully."

No CPBF, No Comment?

Ever wished you were better informed about being disinformed? With the CPBF you can be. For only £2.50 and a large SAE we will send you copies of the **Ministry of Defence** and **BBC guide-lines** on reporting the war plus a copy of **Rejoice: Media Freedom and the Falklands**, the CPBF pamphlet that tells you how it was done last time.

We can also supply bulk copies of *Free Press* at 25p each, post free. Order both from CPBF, 96 Dalston Lane, London E8 1NG.

The union also urges journalists, including editors, not to succumb to self-censorship and to use established news criteria and their own judgement in deciding what stories to publish, not "rules or restrictions imposed by the military or politicians".

While supporting all anti-censorship activities within the media, the CPBF is also backing Liberty's (NCCL) campaign to defend civil liberties in time of war. Freedom of information is a central demand in this. Liberty also highlights the right to a fair trial. In a statement the organisation says: "Iraqis and Palestinians are being arrested, detained and deported for reasons of so-called national security. They have no right to representation, to details of the reason for their detention and no access to a fair and open appeals system." Liberty wants fair treatment and natural justice for all detainees. It is also concerned that all Iraqi nationals, regardless of circumstances, have been denied entry to Britain since 18 January, and at the rise of anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism in Britain.

OWN GOALS

The role of the western arms manufacturers in equipping the Iraqi military is a sensitive, censored subject. The BBC has twice cancelled a *Panorama* special on the role of British companies in the Iraqi "supergun" saga. Less well known is that Allied forces could, quite literally, be blown up by their own weaponry. According to *Jane's Defence Weekly* (2.2.91), "Iraq's most modern self-propelled artillery system is the French GIAT Industries GCT 155mm system of which 85 were delivered. Prior to hostilities, Saudia Arabia had loaned Iraq some of its 51 GCT's and it is assumed that these were returned."

SHORTAGES

Munitions and equipment shortages are not something the MoD, and therefore the media, want to talk about. Ground rules etc. News reaches *Free Press* however, that at least one Territorial Army regiment has been seriously "degraded" a few thousand miles out of range of Iraqi artillery. The Royal Yeomanry TA regiment has had the engines removed from its Fox and Saracen reconnaissance vehicles for shipment to the Gulf.

PORNOGRAPHY OF WAR

Those American pilots who returned from their first bombing raid over Baghdad saying it was the best 4th of July show they had ever seen and just like *Top Gun* might well have thought they were still at the movies. According to the *Washington Post* many of them had been watching porn films before flying. The story was sat on by the Pentagon.

Meanwhile British tabloids have been filled with lurid flights of fancy about the likely sexual fate of one captured US woman soldier. "Beauty in the butcher's lair" was the headline on a *Sunday Mirror* "exclusive" (3.2.91). Editors for War are currently working on a fast breaking story that the beastly Boche raped their way across Belgium in 1914.

Fighting Media Bias

If you don't think you're getting the facts and only half the arguments in media coverage of the Gulf crisis do something about it.

Get on the phone-ins, send letters to editors and complain to the broadcasters.

The BBC and ITV have to keep a record of your complaint if you ask for it to be logged. Complaints are passed on to editorial committees. SO PUT THE PRESSURE ON.

WHAT TO DO:

1. Register your complaint by telephone.
2. Ring the relevant number below and ask to speak to the Duty Officer.
3. Say you want your complaint logged - they can't refuse to accept it.
4. Make your complaint brief and precise.
5. Check it will be passed on.

If you see a particularly good item or programme ring in with congratulations. This can defend programmes which are attacked as insensitive, undermining morale etc. and create pressure for more diverse coverage.

BBC News & Current Affairs 081 743 8000

ITN & Channel 4

071 833 3000

TV-AM News 071 267 4300

BBC Radio News and Current Affairs 071 580 4468

BBC World Service News 071 240 3456

Independent Radio News 071 333 0011

The money behind the war lobby

Funding for a multi-million dollar campaign to support US military policy in the Persian Gulf came from unknown sources - but the affiliations of its leaders point to Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Unification church, the Kuwaiti government-in-exile and the US far right.

The coalition for America at Risk, a Virginia-based organisation, placed more than 700 TV ads in an effort to "defeat the liberal Democrats who think the president is stepping on congressional prerogatives." (Jack Anderson and Dale Van Atta, *Washington Post*, 9.12.90) The group also took out full-page ads in major papers and established a network of 50 speakers.

One co-chair of the campaign was Sam Zakhem, who served as ambassador to Bahrain under Reagan and Bush. Zakhem also served on the board of CAUSA International, the unification Church's main political organ, and attended the founding conference of CAUSA North America in 1983 (*City Paper*, 18.8.89).

In an interview in 1987 with the *Middle East Times*, a paper owned and controlled by Unification Church members, he described the outlook shared by both the US and Arabs as "Godism", which is a word Moon uses to describe his theology. Zakhem went on to denounce Israel: "They have a communist party in Israel and they are highly socialistic in Israel. The Israeli system is really a communist system. The only system that is [more] communist is that of communist China." (Zakhem later claimed he had been misquoted about Israel..)

The headquarters for America at Risk was the public relations firm Keene, Shirley and Associates. Keene, Shirley is also known for its PR work with the American Freedom Coalition, a Moon-led

right-wing umbrella group. America at Risk also worked with direct-mail expert Richard Viguerie, a former officer in the Freedom Coalition and a Moon ally since the '60s.

Another right-wing activist connected with America at Risk was William Kennedy, described by the *Wall Street Journal* (30.11.90) as "a registered Kuwaiti agent trying to profit by managing Kuwaiti flight capital". Kennedy explained his political approach to the *Journal*: "When George Bush makes a decision, I support him." America at Risk distributed material provided by Citizens for a Free Kuwait, a Kuwaiti-funded public relations effort.

A third co-chair was Scott Stanley Jr., who edited *Conservative Digest* when it was published by William Kennedy, and also served as editor for the John Birch Society publication *New American*.

Given the connections of the America at Risk leadership, it is disquieting that the *Washington Post* (30.11.90) seemed to have accepted the group's claim to be funded "entirely by private citizens." The Iran-contra affair might have taught the *Post* to be sceptical of well-funded "private" endeavours in support of US foreign policy.

Research: *Fred Clarkson*. This article originally appeared in the Jan/Feb edition of *Extra!*, the journal of FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy In Reporting), a US based national media watch group. It offers criticism in an effort to correct bias and imbalance and to focus public awareness on the narrow corporate ownership of the press.

Media workers up in arms

It was standing room only when 800 journalists, printers and broadcasters packed into London's Conway Hall on Monday 28 January to launch Media Workers Against the War. Newspapers and television were savaged for censored and biased coverage of the Gulf conflict.

Adverts, pop songs, and dozens of programmes have been pulled from the schedules as the broadcasting authorities have demonstrated their "sensitivity" to the government's propaganda machine. The disappearance of Cher's *Bang Bang* or Phil Collin's *Something In The Air Tonight* from BBC playlists is laughable. Removing John Lennon's *Imagine* and *Give Peace A Chance* is clearly politically inspired.

While the public is asked to accept Iraq being bombed back into the Stone Age, programmes dealing with the causes and consequences of war are stopped. Foremost amongst these is a *Panorama* programme on the role of British arms manufacturers in supplying Iraq with its "supergun", twice pulled from the schedules by BBC chiefs. Not to be outdone, Channel 4 pulled a documentary on the experience of life under air bombardment in World War Two based on the letters of a German mother to her children in England.

Anger and frustration at this media manipulation spilled over in the MWAU meet-

ing. *Guardian* columnist Edward Pearce said he was reminded of the First World War when Horatio Bottomly used *John Bull's Weekly* to promote gung-ho patriotism and persecute conscientious objectors. He attacked the war-mongering editors of the tabloid press who "stand at the gates of hell and usher other people in... They are unwilling to make the leap from their screaming headlines to the body bags coming back from the Gulf."

Attacking journalists and broadcasters who failed to take their professional and ethical responsibilities seriously, Pearce said there was a culture of servility and deference to authority in news organisations which was all pervasive and insidious. It permeated down from the highest editorial level to the lowliest hacks.

Daily Mirror columnist Paul Foot attacked the military's ground rules and MoD's guidance for Gulf reporting. "What kind of people are these that can't stand the truth. If this is a good fight, we can surely talk and write about it."

Anit-Vietnam veteran Tariq Ali proposed a radical solution to news management "Let's do away with the illusion that we are getting news. We might as well hand over the BBC and ITV news to the MoD and put a General on to read it. At least then we'd know where we stand."

Media Workers Against the War.
Further details from 071 737 3741

WAR REPORT

War Report has been launched by a group of independent journalists. It aims to be a quality tabloid newspaper reporting the stories on the war in the Gulf not covered in the mainstream media and opinions which have been ignored or downgraded.

War Report will challenge the overall style and content of the media's coverage and will seek to stimulate a wider and fuller public debate in Britain about the war.

The first issue (price 50p) led on a story that the US is planning to use napalm or possibly even more deadly fuel-air explosives against Iraqi troops.

War Report needs help with stories, production and distribution.

Contact 52 South Park Rd,
London SW19 8BZ
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Notice of CPBF Annual General Meeting

Sun 28 April 1991 9.30 - 4.30

**University of London Union,
Malet St, London WC1**

(BR Euston, Tubes: Russell Sq., Goodge St)

The 1991 AGM of the CPBF will take place on Sunday 28 April.

All individual members are eligible to attend and vote.

Affiliated organisations can send voting delegates on the following basis:

below 1,000 members, 1 delegate; 1,000 - 10,000 members, 2 delegates; 10,000 - 50,000 members 3 delegates; 50,000 - 100,000 members, 5 delegates; 100,000 members and over, 10 delegates.

MOTIONS from individual members or affiliated organisations must reach the national office not later than **MONDAY 25 MARCH**.

NOMINATIONS FOR THE NATIONAL COUNCIL, which meets monthly in London, are invited in the following categories: individual members, 6 seats; members of the NUJ, 4 seats; workers in print, 4 seats; workers in broadcasting, 4 seats; other trade unions, 4 seats; other organisations, 6 seats; CPBF regional groups, 2 seats each; CPBF sections/sub-groups, 2 seats each. The deadline for nominations is **MONDAY 15 APRIL**.

REGISTRATION. Individual members and delegates are urged to register in advance to allow the national office to plan conference packs and refreshments. We are asking individuals to make a contribution of £2 each, and organisations a contribution of £5 per delegate, to cover the cost of these items and child care.

CHILD CARE ARRANGEMENTS. Members or delegates requiring child care facilities are asked to contact the national office not later than **MONDAY 15 APRIL**. We need details of names and ages of children and any dietary or medical requirements in order to plan proper arrangements.

NATIONAL OFFICE. 96 Dalston Lane, London E8 1NG.
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