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Speaking to, and for, the anti-war movement

As a native-born American who remains opposed to President Bush's Persian Gulf policy, let me respond to his supporters.

First, the notion that Washington is concerned about the freedom and dignity of the Kuwaiti people is pure malarkey. Why didn't President Bush badger the Kuwaitis to accept U.S. defense forces before Iraqi troops invaded? Didn't the State Department's April Gaspie tell Saddam Hussein only days before the invasion that the U.S. had no defense treaty with Kuwait, and that we were not much concerned about border conflicts between Arab states?

Why should Hussein have interpreted that as anything but a signal that we would stand aside if he invaded?

Equally preposterous is the idea that Kuwait is an innocent player in this tragedy. Didn't Kuwait overproduce in full knowledge that depressed oil prices seriously hurt Iraq's recovery from its 10-year war with Iran? Jordan's Prince Hassan observed that the Kuwaitis acted as if they were invulnerable after the U.S. placed their tankers under U.S. protection during the Iran-Iraq war?

Was Kuwait's arrogant and obdurate refusal to even discuss the issue with Saddam Hussein part of a Washington-inspired plan to destroy Iraq after the war was over? The Iraqis have behaved wretchedly, it is true, but their belief in this scenario is nonetheless quite understandable.

Considering Washington's historic friendships with numerous brutal dictators (which include support for Saddam Hussein himself in his war with Iran), and its recent suspect diplomacy in the gulf, the U.S. has zero moral standing to lead a charge against Iraq today. I am convinced that with patience and continued international cooperation, Hussein could have been transformed into a dictator Washington could live with (like Chile's Augusto Pinochet, for example).

Finally, while I sympathize with the suffering endured under the Nazis by now-naturalized U.S. citizens such as Hermine Fischer (Public Forum, Jan. 21), I assert that I am no less a red-blooded American patriot than they. Thus I advocated long and hard jail time for the Iran-Contra gang, instead of such slaps on the wrist as they did receive for their attack on the Constitution. I oppose President Bush's imperial interpretation of his job precisely so that Fischer will not again, someday, find herself living in a fascist state.

— **Bill Becker**
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