

Looming war threat spurs new war-avoidance efforts

by Kathleen Klenetsky

The approach of the Jan. 15 deadline set by George Bush for war in the Persian Gulf has set off a flurry of minute-to-midnight efforts by those opposed to military conflict in the region.

Despite Bush's latest "peace" initiative, his Jan. 3 announcement that Secretary of State James Baker will be "available" to meet with Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz before Jan. 15, the President's commitment to unleashing a holocaust in the Mideast has not diminished, according to a well-placed senior U.S. diplomatic figure. Just back from the Gulf, he confirmed *EIR's* contention that hostilities are likely to be set off, by Jan. 15 or earlier, via an Israeli-staged provocation. "Bush's sophomoric statement about kicking Saddam's ass" is "indicative of the mentality dominating the decision-making process in Washington," he said.

Whether the last-ditch anti-war efforts will be enough to head off a potential global holocaust is an open question, whose answer depends in large part on the amount of moral courage which U.S. citizens are able to summon to oppose the lunatic in the White House known increasingly as King George IV.

LaRouche proposes to negotiate

The most promising initiative comes from Lyndon LaRouche, who was put in jail by the Bush circles precisely because of his opposition to the kind of Kissingerian bestiality represented by Bush's war drive in the Gulf. LaRouche's name is synonymous in the developing sector with the fight for a just economic order based on economic development, and his proposed "Oasis Plan" for establishing an enduring peace in the Middle East, centered around Arab-Israeli cooperation in upgrading the area's resources and population, has circulated widely in the region.

On New Year's Eve, LaRouche issued a statement appealing to Bush to agree to a peaceful settlement of the crisis, and offering himself as a negotiator.

LaRouche warned that a U.S. or Israeli assault on Iraq "would become the detonator of a global warfare which might not be stopped for years to come." "At the same time," he continued, "looking at the issues involved and knowing that the basis for a just and equitable peace exists through negotiations, in part, with President Saddam Hussein of Iraq, I appeal to the President to consider the lives of Americans stationed in that region; and think of the flow of body bags containing American dead. . . . That war is not worth the life or the crippling of a single American," LaRouche emphasized, "because a just and equitable peace through negotiations . . . is so obviously available." If the President doesn't believe that such a peace can be negotiated, LaRouche concluded, "he need but delegate me to negotiate it. I assure you, it can be negotiated."

Anti-war campaigns grow

The war issue is clearly dominating the U.S. political calendar. A slew of anti-war events is planned for January, culminating in a potentially large-scale demonstration in front of the White House on Jan. 19, where the featured speakers will include former U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark, founder of the Coalition to Stop U.S. Intervention in the Middle East (see box). A week later, on Jan. 26, the National Campaign for Peace is sponsoring a march on the White House.

Congress will be another key target of the anti-war movement. Congress reconvened Jan. 3, faced with the decision of whether to take a stand against Bush's war drive, or to sit back and allow him to trample over the Constitution, killing

hundreds of thousands of people in the process.

After a meeting with Bush on the morning of Jan. 3, Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-Me.) and other congressional leaders announced that they had decided to postpone any formal debate on Bush's Gulf policy, until after James Baker's meeting with Tariq Aziz—which means that Congress would only have a few days to take action before the Jan. 15 deadline.

Despite Mitchell's groveling capitulation, the anti-war mood among members of Congress has risen palpably, doubtless the result of having had to spend the December recess back home with their constituents. The widespread grass-roots opposition to Bush's war drive obviously had an effect on many members of Congress, including some who had previously been stalwart backers of the President's policy. On Dec. 30, three congressional leaders went on national television to advise Bush that Americans won't back him on a war with Iraq, unless he makes another effort to arrive at a diplomatic resolution. They specifically advised Bush not to foreclose the possibility of direct talks between the U.S. and Iraq after Jan. 3, the deadline insisted upon by the administration.

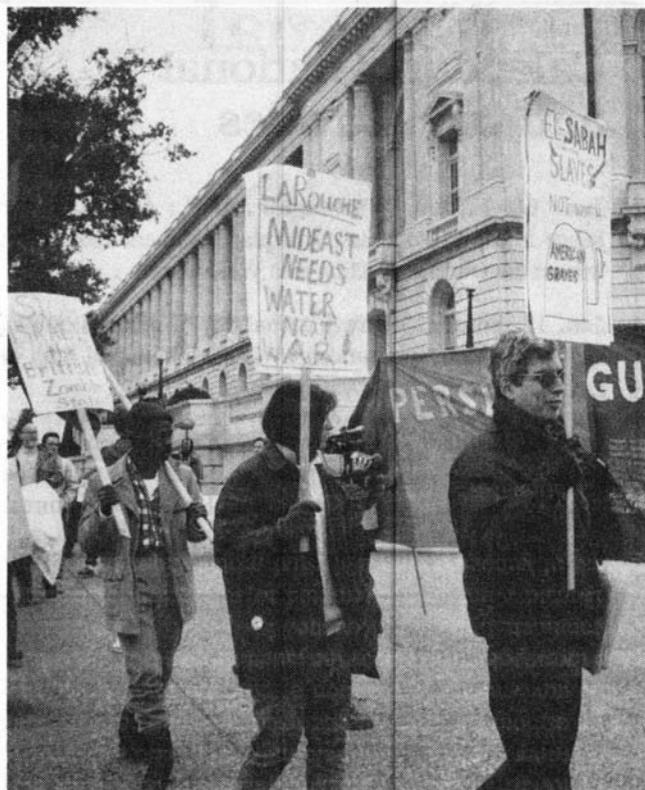
"I have sort of a gut feeling the American people are not yet committed to war, and they want to make certain that President Bush has done everything, pursued every avenue for peace, before the firing starts," said Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole (R-Kan.), who added that the administration must be prepared to sit down with Saddam Hussein himself.

In a similar vein, House Armed Services Committee chairman Rep. Les Aspin (D-Wisc.), who has also exhibited no qualms whatsoever against a U.S. war in the Gulf, said on the CBS News program "Face the Nation" that a "diplomatic effort really needs to be made . . . before the decision to go to war" is taken. Aspin's statement was seconded by Rep. Lee Hamilton (D-Ind.) who noted: "People are very, very nervous about the outbreak of war."

Following his statements, Dole met with Iraqi Ambassador Mohammed al-Mashat in Washington Jan. 2, to explore the potential for a negotiated settlement. This did not please the White House. Asked if Dole was engaging in discussions with Mashat on behalf of the administration, a Bush aide testily replied: "Absolutely not. Dole is being Dole. Like a lot of other people, he is impatient. He informed us of this meeting. He did not ask our opinion."

To what extent Dole and the other two sincerely want negotiations, or simply desire the appearance of negotiations to assuage public opinion, is unclear. But it is indisputable that their comments reflect a growing unease about the war option among the electorate, even among Republicans. According to GOP consultant Kevin Phillips, recent opinion polls show that a significant minority of Republican rank-and-filers opposes the use of force in the Gulf.

Although formal debate on the Gulf crisis has been de-



Jan. 3, 1991: A broad coalition of opponents to the Gulf war demonstrates in Washington, in front of congressional offices.

layed by Mitchell's decision, some members of Congress have gone ahead with their own individual anti-war initiatives. On Jan. 3, Rep. Joe Kennedy (D-Mass.) introduced a resolution to the House opposing offensive U.S. military action against Iraq for at least 12 months. The day before, his uncle Sen. Ted Kennedy (D-Mass.) released a letter to Bush, signed by 127 law professors from around the country, insisting that the President has a constitutional obligation to "obtain prior express congressional authorization" before ordering U.S. forces into war in the Gulf. Kennedy said that if Bush does not seek congressional approval for offensive operations, then Congress should pass a resolution demanding that the President seek authorization before committing U.S. troops into combat.

In addition, more than 110 members of Congress have signed an open letter to George Bush, drafted by Rep. George Miller (D-Calif.), which echoes Kennedy's point that the Constitution mandates that only Congress can declare war. The letter also stresses that United Nations resolutions on the Gulf crisis "must not be interpreted as an authorization for the use of American forces in an offensive capacity against Iraq," adding: "So long as neither the lives of American citizens nor our troops are subjected to immediate danger and the international economic embargo continues to exert

Calendar of national anti-war activities

Jan. 11, Friday, Washington, D.C.: Campaign for Peace in the Middle East will place banners against the war on the viaducts leading into Washington.

Jan. 12, Saturday: International day of demonstrations against the war, announced by Dr. Mohammad Said at Dec. 15 Chicago Anti-War Teach-In.

Jan. 12, Saturday, Washington, D.C.: National Campaign for Peace will deliver petitions against the war to the White House. They expect to present 1 million signatures.

Jan. 15 and 21, numerous states: Schiller Institute spon-

soring citywide vigils and actions to oppose the war and commemorate the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Jan. 15, Tuesday, Washington, D.C.: Students of Howard University intend to shut down the university with a student strike. Rally at Metropolitan AME Church in the District of Columbia.

Jan. 19, Saturday, Washington, D.C.: Lafayette Park, 11 a.m. The Coalition to Stop U.S. Intervention in the Middle East will hold a march on the White House. Speakers will include Ramsey Clark and Dick Gregory.

Jan. 26, Saturday, Washington, D.C.: March on the White House, sponsored by the National Campaign for Peace in the Mideast. Assemble 11 a.m., Lafayette Park. Buses expected from other parts of the East Coast. Cost of New York-Washington bus is \$25 round trip.

substantial pressure against Iraq (as confirmed by members of your administration and other knowledgeable observers), we believe that the initiation of offensive military action by the United States unwisely risks massive loss of life, the expenditure of billions of dollars, the possibility of severe domestic economic dislocation, and the further political and military destabilization of the region.”

Opposition from the churches

Church leaders on both sides of the Atlantic are mobilizing their people against the immorality of Bush's policy. Christians must oppose a war in the Gulf, which would lead to “scorched earth, scorched human bodies,” declared Bishop Franz Kamphaus, a senior spokesman of the German Catholic Church, in his Christmas Eve sermon. To plan such a war is incompatible with the notion of love on which Christianity is built, and would betray the hopes created by the peaceful transformation of the East bloc last year, he said.

On Dec. 20, a group of 18 U.S. religious leaders, representing the Methodist, Episcopalian, Lutheran, and other denominations, returned from a fact-finding tour to the Mideast. “War is not the answer,” they announced at a Washington press conference to report on their findings.

A member of the group, the Most Rev. Edward L. Browning, presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church—and Bush's own bishop in Washington—met with the President and Secretary of State James Baker to brief them on their conclusions. “In no way is the war option going to serve our national interest, because I believe the wrath of the Arab nations following such a catastrophe will be with us for years and years and years to come,” Browning said he told Bush. “The Middle East will be scorched beyond belief, and the recovery of such destruction would be almost impossible.”

Navy fireman won't defend slavery in Gulf

A new flank in the anti-war movement was opened on Jan. 4, when U.S. Navy Fireman Donald Alexander, Jr. issued the following statement at a press conference at the National Press Club in Washington:

“Speaking on behalf of all the black soldiers in Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf and all people of African descent, I am refusing to take part in the military of a government that is risking the lives of its citizens while pretending to protect freedom. As an American, I am committed to uphold the Constitution of our nation and defend my nation when its borders or citizens are endangered. However, I am not committed, nor am I willing, to support any political system that condones and practices chattel slavery.

“It is contradictory to me that President George Bush would recommend to Nelson Mandela non-violence as a solution to his problems in South Africa, yet threaten to engage in a war to re-establish the slave-holding country of Kuwait.

“I cannot fight in a war to uphold chattel slavery and I will do my best to educate every soldier and potential soldier about the facts of slavery.

“I know that you would like to ask me what proof I have that there is slavery in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. I call upon President Bush and the United States Congress to prove to the American people that slavery does not exist in these countries. I feel that the United States government *will not* prove that slavery exists, and *cannot* prove that it does not.

“I would like to say more, but this is now in negotiation between my attorney and the United States Navy.

“Yet, I will leave you with this thought:

“Fighting in this war in the Persian Gulf would be for me equivalent to fighting for General Lee against Abraham Lincoln.”