

WAR IN THE GULF: THE ANTIWAR MOVEMENT; NEWS FROM FRONT BLUNTS PROTESTS

PETER APPLEBOME, Special to The New York Times . New York Times , Late Edition (East Coast); New York, N.Y. [New York, N.Y.]21 Jan 1991: A.12.

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ABSTRACT (ABSTRACT)

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FULL TEXT

Before the bombs began falling over Baghdad, David Pierce was a staunch opponent of military action in the Middle East. Now he feels that the United States has no choice but to keep fighting.

"A lot of people who were against fighting the war have switched sides," said Mr. Pierce, a 40-year-old carpenter from Takoma Park, Md. Despite his doubts, he came with his wife and two children to Saturday's antiwar demonstration near the White House.

Mr. Pierce said he went to clarify his own thinking and to show moral concern. "Things aren't as clear-cut to me anymore," he said, "but I just think now that we've started fighting, we have to stay the course."

Mr. Pierce's change of heart reflects a big obstacle facing the nation's budding antiwar movement. After picking up enormous momentum before the American attack on Iraq, the movement has been slowed by a number of forces, including the rally-round-the-flag spirit of a nation beginning a war. Not a Video Game

"It's a very difficult time," said Bonnie Garvin, spokeswoman for the National Campaign for Peace in the Middle East. Her organization is planning a demonstration here for next Saturday, which organizers hope will attract more than the 25,000 who showed up for the march on Saturday.

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If the antiwar movement is to catch hold, it will be because of people like Roger Quillen and his wife, Lynn. "We own our property, our own business and our home, but I'd give all my material possessions up in a minute if it would bring peace," said Mr. Quillen, a 48-year-old lobsterman and fish market owner from Charlestown, R.I., who joined the march on Saturday. Seeking a 'Smarter Way'

People like Paul Foley, a 35-year-old department store worker from Boston, Emile Gourieux, a 19-year-old student from Bowling Green, Ky., and Patience O'Connor a 43-year-old planner and real estate developer from Washington,

came to the protest with a deep fear that the war is a moral calamity.

"I just think there's a smarter way to do this; we're looking at so much blood being shed," Ms. O'Connor said. "What we're doing is deflecting all our energy away from problems at home."

Such concerns are widespread. Before the conflict, polls showed the nation deeply divided on whether to fight and confused about the reason for war. But the beginning of fighting has produced a strong surge of support for the war and for President Bush.

A New York Times/CBS News Poll of 908 adults interviewed Saturday found that 74 percent of the respondents approved of the war effort and 82 percent approved of the way Mr. Bush was handling his job. The poll had a margin of sampling error of plus or minus three percentage points. *If the War Drags On?*

Antiwar organizers say such a pro-war surge is common and will dissipate if the war drags on, and if the high-tech air war is replaced by a bloody ground war with higher casualties.

Already the movement is split, with the coalition that sponsored Saturday's march representing the more radical edge. Its organizers call for an immediate withdrawal of American troops from the Middle East, the removal of American bases from the region and an Arab solution to Iraq's takeover of Kuwait.

The National Campaign for Peace in the Middle East was formed in response to fears that the coalition leaned too far to the left.

There was no ideological uniformity at Saturday's rally, and no consensus. Some protesters called for an immediate withdrawal of American troops. More common were calls for a cease-fire, and negotiations or renewed reliance on economic sanctions. *United on Fundamentals?*

Opponents of the war say that their differences reflect diversity rather than fundamental division and that the peace movement has a far more broad-based grounding than the protests against the Vietnam War in the 60's and 70's.

In fact, the movement has already seen local protests, participation from veterans and families of servicemen and mainstream support in a way rarely seen in the Vietnam protests.

An example is the Piedmont Peace Project in Kannapolis, N.C., made up of about 500 cotton mill workers, farmers, truck drivers and other workers. Some, like Oneil Russ, a 55-year-old meat inspector and veteran, have children in the gulf.

Members say the war offers nothing for working-class people. Linda Stout, the group's director, said: "We constantly remind people we're proud of our folks in the military. But at the same time, they didn't join to fight a war for oil profits."

Antiwar protests have cropped up not just at universities with a history of protest activity but also at places like the University of Montana, where 20 protesters disrupted a nationally broadcast basketball game Thursday night by lying on the court.

But Ms. Stout and Ms. Garvin agree that even among working people skeptical of the war there is a deep cultural divide with the most prominent elements of the antiwar movement. *Disgust With Flag Burning*

And a groundswell of pro-war rallies and angry comments on radio talk shows and in letters to newspapers indicate that the harsh views toward antiwar protest that marked the Vietnam era may be as strong now.

Still, antiwar activists say their movement has reached a level that took years to develop in the Vietnam era.

Supporters say that, once the costs at home and abroad become clear, deep doubts will resurface. "My brother is on his way over there, and he completely supports what I'm doing," said Jeanne K. Whalen, who was carrying a sign reading "Love Our Troops – Hate the War."

Photograph

Despite a strong show of support for the President since war began, about 25,000 people attended Saturday's antiwar demonstration at the White House, calling for a cease-fire and reliance on sanctions. Paul Gourieux traveled from Bowling Green, Ky., to express his sentiments. (Lisa Berg for The New York Times)

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