

Seen

PRIME MINISTER

GULF EDITORIALS

The rapidly-changing situation in the Gulf means that the news pages this morning are somewhat out of date. The editorials, however, generally give backing to a firm military response from the west to the Iraqi actions.

The Sunday Times, Sunday Telegraph and News of the World call for an early strike against Saddam. The Sunday Times says that "it is to Bush's credit that he has organised an international resistance to Saddam; if it results in war, there should be no doubt that, like the war against Hitler, it would be a just war, to be pursued until Saddam has been toppled. And if war with Saddam is inevitable, better it comes now rather than later".

The Sunday Telegraph says "that Bush should attack Iraq now.". Peregrine Worsthorne says "without the Iraq challenge the extent of European isolationism would have remained obscure. It is now out in the open for all to see".

Support for military action also from the Sunday Express and the Sunday Mirror. The Express says "daily the net closes tighter around Saddam and his brutal regime. He is hemmed in. For him the issue now is one of survival. For neither George Bush nor Margaret Thatcher is going to suffer a loss of nerve. The Mirror says "we have to make it clear that whatever the cost, whatever the threat there will be no retreat from the defence of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf States and no stepping back from freeing Kuwait from illegal occupation. There should be no slackening in the build up of forces to deter his conquest of the Middle East."

The Correspondent emphasises the need for a mandate from the Security Council to enforce the embargo. If the Security Council will not move beyond the measures it has taken so far, then legitimate national interests will force Britain and the US to move without a UN crutch. It would then become imperative to appeal to our European allies. If they wish to maintain the flow

of oil, protect their nationals and preserve the stability of this crucial region, they cannot sit on their backsides and rely on others to do the dirty work. If the hub-vaunted unity of Europe is to mean anything, it must mean a Europe that pulls together come the crunch.

The People says that Saddam's treacherous tactics should not be treated as the trigger for the all-out war which some see as inevitable. If the civilised world stands firm against a defiant dictator, there is still a hope of ending the Middle East's agony by a peaceful means.

The Observer and the Mail on Sunday demand immediate recall of Parliament. The Observer says that "this affair cannot be run with the Prime Minister and virtually the whole Cabinet on holiday, and public responses left to the trembling lip of a junior Foreign Office Minister. Mrs. Thatcher's place is in Downing Street, to which she should return this weekend. The House of Commons should then be recalled as soon as possible". The Mail on Sunday says that the Government has brutally sidelined Parliament by failing to recall.

The Independent on Sunday says that "a statesmanlike and gradualist policy acted out in the UN is unlikely to withstand domestic political pressure in Britain and the US. The awful fact is that by taking thousands of civilian hostages, Iraq has made military intervention by the US and Britain more rather than less likely. If the fighters and the marines go in the casualties will probably include some western hostages. It is a dreadful prospect, but it is no reason for changing western policy."



PP PHILIP AYLETT

19 August 1990

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