

Whether or not it comes to war, the Gulf crisis marks a turning point in the post-Cold War era. The ideological East-West war between communism and the 'free world' is over; the war between the developing world and the highly industrialised nations - the West, or the North - is just beginning.

Saddam's Iraq is the nightmare of this new era for the West - an emerging state armed with conventional, chemical and possibly biological weapons bursting in on the rich man's banquet. Even worse, the West finds itself confronted by the leader it so readily armed during the ten-year Gulf war in an attempt to use him to crush the Islamic revivalism of Iran.

Saddam has not only laid bare the soft oil-dependent underbelly of the Western economy, but it also capitalised on the weakness of the selective Western appeal to morality and international law to pre-serve an unjust status quo.

Crying foul over the breach of Kuwaiti sovereignty rings hollow given the long US record of military intervention in the Caribbean and Latin America.

US moral outrage looks skin-deep - for instance, in May 1987 Washington was only too ready to forgive Iraq for an Exocet missile attack on the frigate USS Stark in the Gulf that left 37 American seamen dead. Saddam was regarded as a good guy bolstering the forces of light against the darkness of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

And yet, even then, Baghdad's programme against Kurdish separatists was being carried out as brutally as to day, torture and arbitrary imprisonment was widespread, political opposition within Iraq was as non-existent as it is now. To wheel out these arguments several years later as a justification for military intervention in the Gulf betrays the bankruptcy of the Western cause.

Washington has over-personalised the crisis, daubing Saddam as an international devil in the mould of Fidel Castro and Colonel Gadaffi. Saddam has responded with dexterous manipulation of international television to defuse this image and called for a Holy War against the Infidel West.

The West has few real friends in the Middle East and Saddam has played the card of Arab nationalism masterfully, weakening the resolve of even the closest US Arab allies by threatening to draw Israel into any conflict and repeatedly demanding some resolution of the Palestinian question as a condition of a settlement over Kuwait.

Seizing on the opportunities created by the virtual withdrawal of the Soviet Union from the Middle East stage, Saddam has opened a political Pandora's box, leaving the US and its Western backers looking flat-footed. Decades of arrogant manipulation of the politics of the region have finally come home to roost.

Just as the victory of the Vietcong over US forces in Vietnam marked a military turning point in the post-World War Two global order - Uncle Sam was no longer regarded as invincible - so Saddam's invasion of Kuwait marks a turning point in the post-Cold War era, for he has demonstrated the economic vulnerability of the West.

While the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) nations were able to muscle in on the West's booty with the huge oil price rises of 1973-74, Saddam has gone a step further and, abandoning economic means, simply taken what he wants by force.

In the eyes of many in the developing world, he has done nothing worse than adopt the bullyboy tactics that the West has been using for a century or more to ensure a ready supply of cheap labour and raw materials from Asia, Latin America, the Caribbean and Africa.

There was profound symbolism in the embrace shared by Saddam and Zambian President Kenneth Kaunda, for long an unofficial spokesman for the poorer nations, in Baghdad just two days after the failure of the Geneva peace talks.

And this despite the fact that it is the economies of the developing world that have suffered most from the fall-out of the crisis and would be so badly hit economically if war was to occur. Overnight Saddam has become an international hero in continents he has rarely, if ever, expressed any concern about.

Saddam's success is the result of the failure of the rich nations to nurture a vision of an economics and politics allowing for the growth of the poorer nations.

This Western indifference has backfired for it has created the conditions in which Saddam could become powerful enough to invade Kuwait, in which such an invasion could actually become conceivable and even, just possibly, practical.

His move has been so radical that it has taken London,

A couple of migratory birds in flight over the Dhaka skies. During the winter, such birds - in astounding numbers - arrive in this part of the world from as far as Siberia in the Soviet Union. —Star Photo.

How the West has Made a Hero of Saddam

In the eyes of many in the South, Saddam Hussein is a hero, both resisting the bullyboy tactics that the North has used for so long to monopolise global economic resources and using them for his own ends. In this, the invasion of Kuwait marks a turning point in the post-Cold War era. As the Associate Editor of Gemini News Service argues, whatever the outcome of the Gulf crisis, the West can no longer regard the developing world simply as a resource to be exploited and manipulated, or, if it does, then it is at its own peril. by Tom Aston

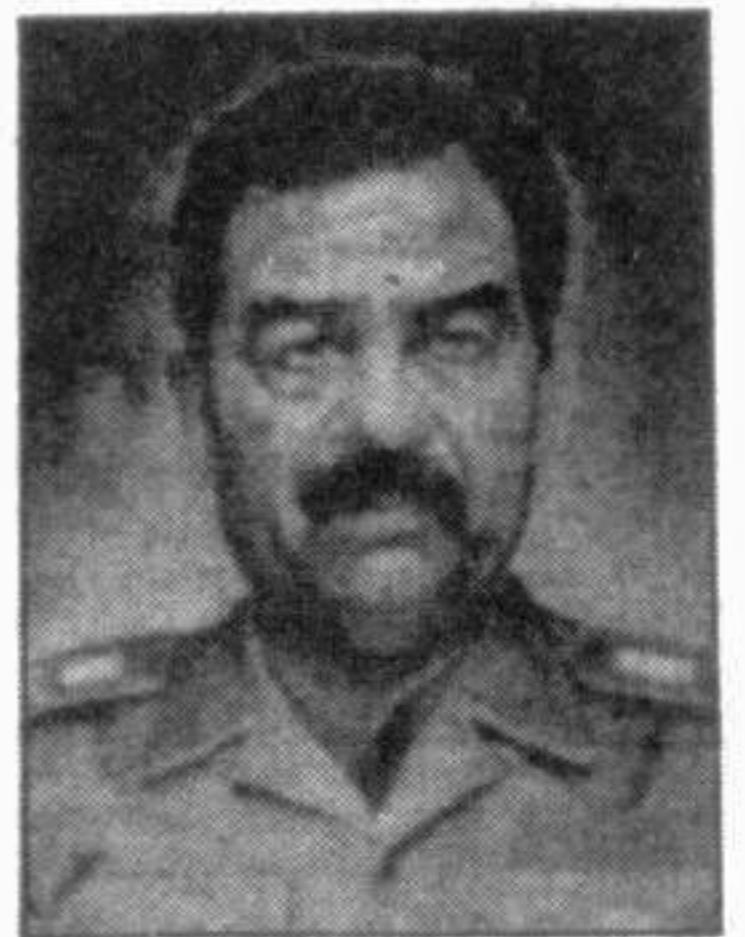
Washington, Brussels and Paris by surprise.

And his diplomacy has been so cunning that the Western alliance has been left with little option but to threaten to judgement him to death - the nightmare scenario - despite the huge price it will have to pay militarily and economically in doing this.

Apart from the global environmental impact of a war, which is likely to hit the developing countries worst of all, an attack on Saddam is likely to leave the West with a legacy of profound Arab hatred even among the peoples of its so-called allies.

The real horror of such a war has yet to permeate the minds of the Western public, mainly due to the blinkered media coverage given to the military build-up in the Gulf. Tim and again British and US servicemen have been interviewed on television and radio describing the war as a 'job that's got to be done, so let's get on with it.'

Reports have pointed to the battle-readiness of the allies' air and ground forces, emphasising their technical superiority, largely ignoring the terrifying reality of modern warfare and the battle-hardened Iraqi forces that Allied troops will have to flush out of extensive trench networks.



The civilian casualties of a conflict would run to hundreds of thousands, yet those who have questioned the necessity of war have fallen victim to the anachronistic label of 'apeaser'.

It is ironic that the West is not more prepared to give economic sanctions against Iraq a chance to bite, for any war would ultimately be about retaining the economic status quo and the costs of war would

be so huge as to offset the economic benefits for a considerable time after hostilities ceased.

Politics has been reduced to its most crude level - that of brute force - and as both sides sound the drums of war, both are seen in all their ugliness. The failure of Western policy in the Gulf has never been more stark for it has made an unlikely hero of Saddam in much of the developing world and revealed the lie on which the affluence of the North is based.

To resort to war to try to conceal this failure would, in the long-term, only exacerbate the instability of the North-South divide. In the short-term, peace through sanctions would be a safer option.

In the long run 'a new politics' is needed in Washington, London, Paris, Brussels and Bonn so that another Gulf crisis becomes an impossibility. The North must tear down the economic Berlin Wall it has built around the South and give up its ostrich-like indifference to the genuine needs of the developing world.

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Organisations like the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) are attempting to spread the use of the copper T IUD, but are finding resistance to its higher price.

In the countryside, sterilisation and vasectomy are widely used. Often, people are not actually forced, but are strongly persuaded to have such operations under the threat of heavy fines.

One poverty-stricken province, Gansu, with a high level of mental handicap because of iodine deficiency and inbreeding, is using forced sterilisation in a desperate attempt to stop the handicap being passed on to the next generation.

In the first 14 months of the policy, some 5,500 forced sterilisations were carried out on mentally handicapped women in Gansu. Provincial television has shown pictures of groups of women being taken away in open cattle trucks to the hospital. The goal in Gansu is to sterilise most of the 260,000 mentally handicapped residents by the end of next year.

Such policies seem unlikely to be extended to the rest of the country, since officials in Beijing are aware of the human rights questions raised.

The Gansu policy is an example of just how much control each province has over its own childbirth rules and regulations. Provincial policies vary widely. In some places exceptions are allowed to the one-child policy and the level of fines imposed for extra births vary.

In the early Eighties, the one-child policy was implemented in a very heavy-handed way, with the result that there was a backlash.

Catherine Sampson is a British freelance journalist based in Beijing.

China Faces Baby Boom Despite Birth Control

In what could be seen as a victory of human fertility over birth control, China is about to enter its third baby boom as a large number of women, the result of earlier booms, enter their child-bearing years. As Gemini News Service reports, the problem of over-population is exacerbated by widespread dodging of birth control regulations.

The most populous nation in the world will face a population crisis in the next decade. The Nineties will bring China's third baby boom, as 12 million women a year, the selves Cultural Revolution boom babies, enter their child-bearing age already make up more than one quarter of the population.

The fourth national census, completed in October, found that China's population, at 1,133,682,501 was about 15 million over target. And Western experts believe the margin of error in the census may have been in the tens of millions.

There are 40 babies born every minute in China, and 49 abortions for every 100 live births. The birth rate has dropped from 24 per 1,000 in the Eighties to 19 per 1,000 today, and officials claim proudly that this means 200 million fewer babies were born over the last decade.

But in a victory of human fertility over birth control, 115 to 17 million babies are expected to be born per year in the next five years. And during the Nineties the number of women of child-bearing age will grow from 280 million to

340 million.

More than a third of all births are illegal, that is an estimated nine million per year. Despite the official one child policy, between 1980 and 1987, the average Chinese family had 2.47 children.

In the countryside, the policy is regarded as yet another intrusion by the state into private life and considered as a rule to be evaded or bent. Most people see their childbearing options simply in terms of their nuclear family, not in the terms which the government constantly uses: of future famine and disaster if population growth goes unchecked.

Where families have been successfully kept small, this has usually been as a result of threats and fines rather than any increased understanding of over-population.

Some 88 per cent of married women of child-bearing age use birth control, and the preferred method is the Intra-Uterine Device (IUD). Yet this contraceptive device is blamed for 70 per cent of China's abortions and unplanned pregnancies. The type of IUD used in China is a stainless steel ring, cheap but with a failure rate about 14 times that of the copper T IUD used elsewhere.

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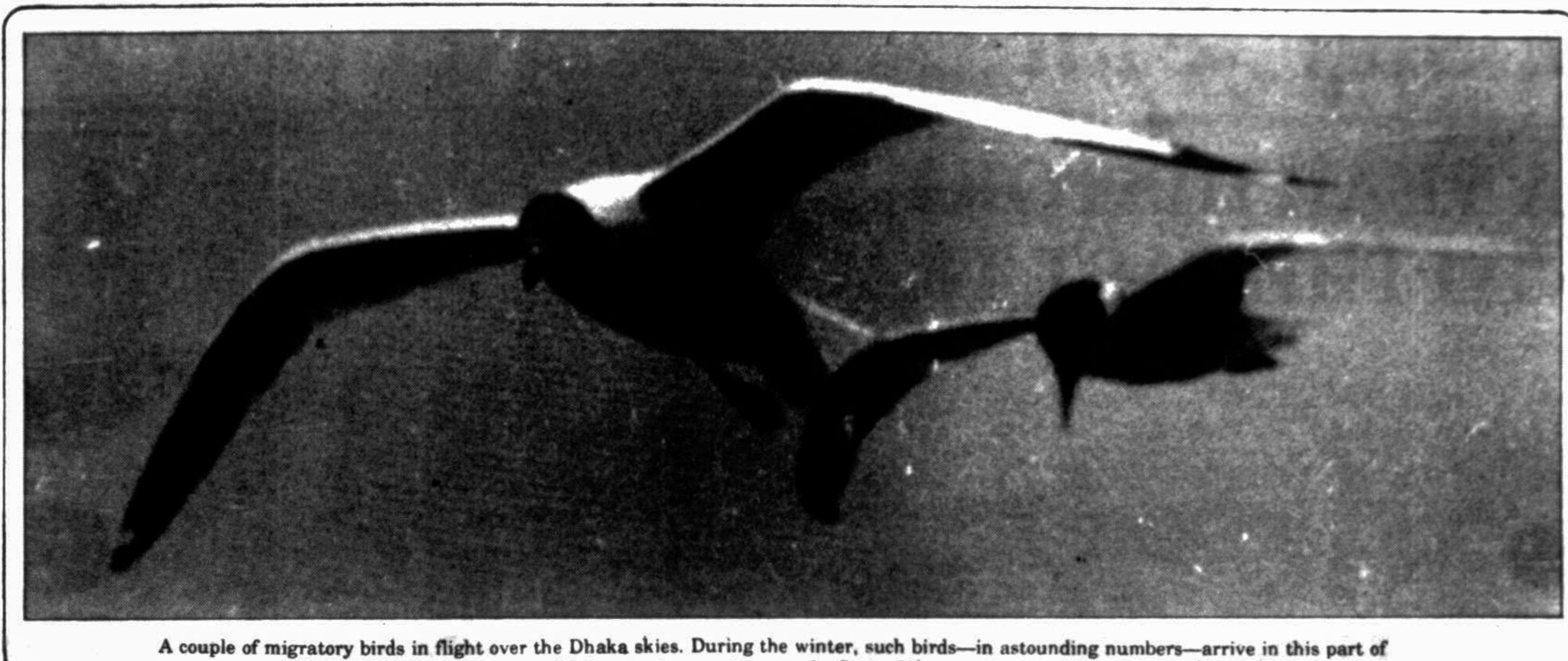
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UNFORGETTABLE JUSTICE MURSHED

Kabir Chowdhury

I first met Justice Mursheed almost probably some time in the mid-fifties at a national seminar where issues like the interrelationship between nationalism and culture were discussed and debated. He spoke brilliantly. His talk displayed his firm grasp of the many dimensions of the subject, intellectual breadth and range, ability to develop his point of view through lucid logical arguments bolstered by quotations from great writers of several languages, many erudite references and wonderfully felicitous phrases. It was a treat to listen to him. One could immediately see that he was interested in the subject, that he spoke sincerely and with conviction and that here was true learning and not its pretence, which unfortunately we came across, not infrequently, in quite a few of our academics. I was also a participant at the seminar and he later complimented me on my paper. It was most gracious of him and a source of encouragement to me.

Grace, urbanity, good-natured wit and humour, kindness and sympathy and a capacity to appreciate the other man's point of view were characteristic of Justice Mursheed's personality. In many ways he was a true aristocrat in the best sense of the term. He was also firmly committed to the ideals of democracy, to upholding the cause of justice against extreme odds and to keeping the flag of liberty flying in defiance of all kinds of pressures from the highest quarters.

Everyone knows about his role during the mass uprising of 1969. During the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971, a lot of pressure was brought to bear upon him to collaborate with the Pakistani occupation junta which he consistently resisted with success. One also recalls in this context his valuable, conscientious and earnest efforts in organizing the defence of the Agartala Conspiracy case in which he threw himself selflessly after resigning from the post of Chief Justice in late 1967. He was very sensitive to the question of cultural freedom. The North must tear down the economic Berlin Wall it has built around the South and give up its ostrich-like indifference to the genuine needs of the developing world.

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task of interpretation begins. flourishes, lives and progresses in the currents of human need to which it steadfastly responds". Justice Mursheed was ever aware of these cur-

Bhattacharya's Case" and "Pan Case" are still regarded as historic for his brilliant exposition of constitutional law, among other things.

Justice Mursheed is no longer with us. But his example rests with us as a source of noble inspiration. Today, we are in dire need of men like him, men who can act in accordance with the ideals that Justice Mursheed upheld and fostered. I am reminded at this point of the closing words of the Presidential address that Justice Mursheed delivered in 1967 at a seminar on the Rule and Law. Let me quote:

"The spirit of liberty is the spirit which seeks to understand the minds of other men and women; the spirit of liberty is the spirit which weighs their interests alongside its own without bias; the spirit of liberty remembers that not even a sparrow falls to earth unheeded: the spirit of liberty is the spirit which emanates from the faith that there may be a kingdom where the least shall be heard and considered side by side with the greatest. In that spirit lies hidden, in some from, the aspirations of us all. In that spirit, I ask you to pledge our faith".

Moving words! and very pertinent at the present moment when the spirit of liberty seems to be threatened in so many parts of the world including our own little corner by the forces of tyranny and oppression.

What to do with the videotapes is a question that all the couples face. Many cause them soon after filming, fearful children or household help will stumble across them. When tapes become public, the humiliation can be intense. The sheriff of Morris County, Kans., filmed his wife and himself with a rented video camera and mistakenly returned the camera to the store--with the tape inside. Copies quickly circulated around the town of Council Grove. Eventually, the sheriff had to resign, and the couple left town.

But other couples treasure their tapes as a reminder of some of the most loving-in all senses of the word-moments of their lives. Nina and Fred keep their small video library under lock and key to protect it from prying eyes. But they are aware that someday their children may discover the revealing films. If that happens, says Nina, "we would be embarrassed, but we wouldn't be ashamed."

Men and women often find do-it-yourself videos more appealing than standard triple-X fare. For one thing, couples tend to emphasize story line as well as visuals. More important, notes psychologist Lorrie Barbut of San Francisco "it's not just plumbing shots of anonymous people." One Minneapolis, Minn., couple combined a sleazy script with agile camerawork.

"I was a door-to-door salesman, and she was the housewife," says Michael, in reality a business manager. During the taping, the pair stopped the action to move the camera around the bed, adjust the zoom lens and do retakes.

Despite such antics, he experience ultimately proved moving emotionally. Viewing the tape, says Michael, we saw how much real affection there was between us; it was there in how we touched each other. You don't have the same awareness of that while you're making love."

SEX LIVES AND VIDEO TAPE

Americans delight in making private moments public. Witness the success of America's Funniest Home Videos, which has been called "the hottest show on TV." But the succession of gags and goofs surrounding birthday celebration and family outings is tepid fare compared with the truly incendiary movies U.S. viewers are making for home consumption only, the subjects? Their sex lives. Popping their camcorders and dropping their inhibitions, more and more couples are videotaping their closest encounters.

Do-it-yourself dirty pictures are an old, if not exactly honored pastime. But technological advances have repeatedly changed the nature and allure of the game. Polaroids, for example, enabled people to take seductive snapshots without having the pictures developed by strangers. Soon after the arrival of the VCR, people who wouldn't be caught dead in a downtown porn house became comfortable with seeing sex tapes at home. Erotic movies account for an estimated 10% to 20% of video rentals. And when affordable, lightweight camcorders became commonplace during the past few years, X-rated home movies were the inevitable next step. No one keeps statistics on the trend, but psychologists say an increasing number of couples are making tapes.

None the less, most people approach the idea with a bit of nervousness. Joe, a lawyer, and Tara, a financial analyst (the names in this story have been changed), had been married a few months and were watching an adult film at their New York City apartment, when Tara kiddingly suggested, "Why don't we make our own?" Two months later, after consultation with a therapist, the pair re-created their wedding night on camera. Joe wore his tuxedo, Tara her bridal gown at least initially.

Like sex, the videotaping experience ranges from dis-taping and laughing said O.K. One night he came home from the office and found Sarah in a negligee and the video camera running. He blew up, calling her a whore and a slut.

For some couples taping can become part of an ongoing power struggle. "Sometimes an element of coercion is involved," notes Eaker-Well. "It's nothing overt, more subtle. Usually the man instigates the filming, and the woman goes along. But she isn't comfortable." Laurie was badgered into making several sex tapes by her husband Tim, a retired policeman. He intimated he would have an affair if she did not agree. Then Tim insisted on filming a foursome with another couple whom he and Laurie had met in a bar. Angry and upset, Laurie now wants to destroy all the tapes, but Tim has hidden them.

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