

By the Shores of Lake Geneva

by S. Bari

The charm of Geneva lies in the walks by the lake and in the gardens, and in sipping drinks at bistros. A few years ago, a great deal of Arabic was heard among the visitors, as well as American English. This year one hears an increasing amount of Japanese. Due to the tourist invasion every summer, natives are hard to spot. A Travelogue.

An old joke in Europe: Heaven is where the lovers are Italian, the policemen English, the cooks French, the mechanics German—and everything is run by the Swiss. Hell is where the lovers are Swiss, the policemen German, the cooks English, the mechanics French—and everything is run by the Italians. As with so many stereotypes, this one too has a ring of truth in it. It has neither the charm of Paris, nor the history of Rome, it has neither the seduction of the Riviera nor the passion of the Mediterranean islands, but Geneva has splendid and peaceful scenic beauty, and it is wonderful to visit a place where the phones work and the trains leave on time.

Geneva is spread along the banks of the Lake Lemán, or Lake Geneva, the deepest and largest lake in the Alpine region. The lake is lined with hotels, banks, and parks. Further away rise the mountains: to the North, the rounded tops of the old Jura range dominate the short and ornate city skyline; to the South, the Alps, sharp-peaked and icy, tower over the lake as they march towards Italy. This is the view for which Geneva is renowned.

The Mont Blanc, the tallest Alpine peak, is occasionally visible. But many a hapless tourist guide looks for it on an overcast day, when layers of mist have veiled the mountaintops. The guide quickly points to a nearer peak, with a picture-perfect snow-capped, and announces to the unsuspecting tourist: "the Mont Blanc." In this way, many visitors come away content, having really seen what the locals call the "American Mont Blanc."

By the lakeside, pansies, petunias, tulips, and roses are splashed over the huge and intricately designed flower beds. In fact, flowers adorn almost every imaginable spot in this city: balconies, windows, traffic islands. All summer-long, cafes and ice-cream stalls line the walk along the lakefront. A 130-meter tall fountain shoots up out of the lake: nearby, people lounge, read, and eat lunch, sometimes getting sprayed by the "Jet d'Eau" as the wind changes. Cross the lake in a tiny "mouette" boat, chugging by the swans and mallards, or walk down the busy Mont Blanc bridge.

The Champs-Élysées of Geneva is the Rue du Mont Blanc, particularly attractive in the evening. All the watches and jewelry you could wish to buy are on this street. Bucherer and Rolex, Cartier and Piaget line the sidewalk. Teenagers and young couples stroll around, while street performers display their talents.

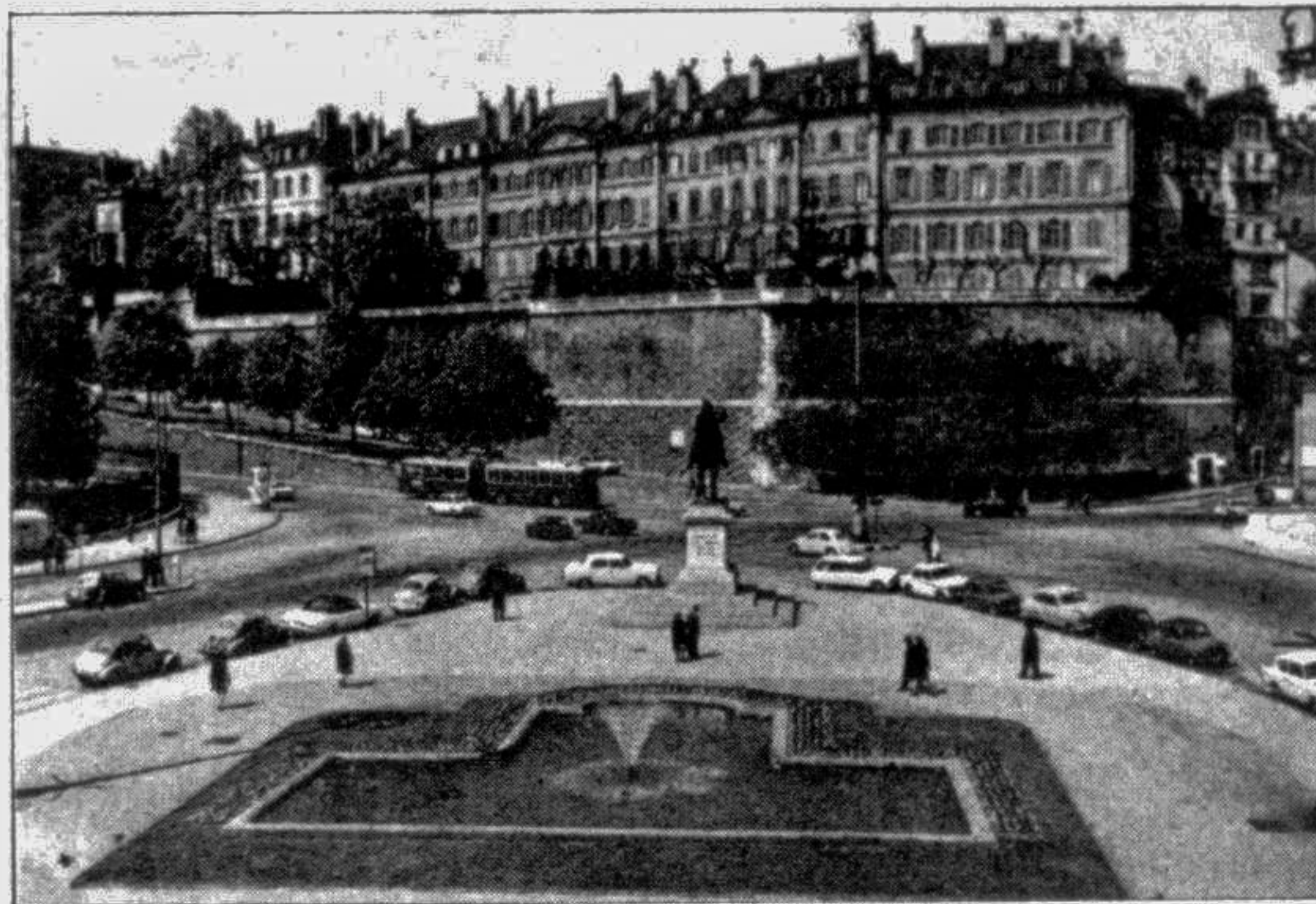
The charm of Geneva lies in the walks by the lake and in the gardens, and in sipping wine at bistros. A few years ago, a great deal of Arabic was heard among visitors, as well as American English: this year one hears an increasing amount of Japanese. Due to the tourist invasion every summer, natives are hard to spot, except when a T-shirt proclaims, "I am not a tourist; I live here."

Boat rides on the lake can last from 15 minutes (a crossing to five hours zigzagging to the other tip of the banana-shaped lake to visit the city of Montreux). One of the most popular tours is the "Famous Residences" tour which points out, among others, the home of the King of Saudi Arabia, and Lord Byron's former summer getaway.

Also mentionable is a house once rented by Percy B. Shelly and Mary Shelly. Few people know that it was on these quiet shores that Mary Shelly wrote "Frankenstein" and chilled generations of readers.

The old town, established in the 15th century, is narrow and cobbled, like many European towns. The roads are steep, and strolling around is no easy job. Some very dainty and interesting shops are tucked away in side roads. The plain cathedral of St. Peter's is notable only in its Calvinist nature. Indeed, many aspects of Geneva still bear the stamp of Calvin. The nature of the Genevese is said, they are famous for their austerity and reticence. Laws are strict (no loud noises after ten p.m., no mowing the lawn on Sundays). For the record, less than one-third of the population is native.

At the foot of the old town lies the Parc des Bastions, seat of the University, where Calvin and Knox stare morosely down at the clicking cameras of the tourists. The park is expansive and restful, dotted with stu-



Geneva University and the old town.

dents preparing for summer exams under departments founded by Calvin himself in 1559.

The high smooth walls of the old town border the park. From these walls an old woman poured a giant pot of boiling water on to the invading army of the Duke of Savoy. In 1602: she thus saved the beleaguered Protestant enclave. Geneva still remembers her on the night of December 12th, every year, and breaks large pots made of (what else?) Swiss chocolate.

For night life, make sure you have a lot of cash. Cafes and nightclubs are fairly popular, but drinks are expensive. For a glitzy evening, the Hilton offers a discotheque, and the Grand Casino is open to anyone over 18.

The United Nations grounds deserve a visit. The white facade of the Palace of Nations, as it is called, dominates the wide crossroads which is home to the World Health Organization, the International Telecommunications Union, and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Tours of the main UN building are available, lasting about 40 minutes. The atmosphere is subdued and efficient, and the cafeteria bursts with dozens of different languages. The grounds are charming, with large well-kept lawns, and old, impressive trees. Peacecocks strut nonchalantly by the monument to Man in Space. A tiny pond is topped by an ornate golden globe, a present from Woodrow Wilson, and coins thrown in the pond help the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

Geneva has been likened to the Tower of Babel for the languages and races seen on its streets. At the same time, the surroundings are exquisitely Swiss: spanking clean, coolly efficient, and discreetly beautiful. The population of barely 200,000 receives more than 2 million visitors a year. Shouldn't you find out why on your next trip to Europe? Take a break from France and Italy to enjoy trains that run on time and streets that actually sleep. But then go back for some excitement. On your way down South, the train conductor will tell you without a trace of a smile, "We can tell you exactly when the train will reach the Italian border, but after that, we cannot guarantee arrival." As it happens, the train is 2 hours late, and you had better keep a sharp eye on your luggage in Italy.

A Day on a 'Crazy' Brazilian Beach

Cezar Pessanha, 28, rises from the mattress where his wife and nine-month-old daughter are still sleeping. He staggers to a broken window and peers over the roofs of the surrounding shacks. A wall of dark clouds tumbles across the sky. He studies the clouds for a few seconds and wonders what the skies are like over Ipanema Beach in Rio, some 40 miles away, where for the past five years he has made his living by selling *picolés*, the local version of a Popsicle. It is a summer Sunday, and even if the weather doesn't clear, there will still be others.

"Bring me a beer. Ah, que vida dura [What a hard life]!" Carlos are raised by the sea. With nine beaches within a 20 minute drive from downtown, it is no wonder that from the day they are born until the day they die, their lives revolve around the *praia*. It is an extension of their home, an office, a playground and a social club, all in one. The beach is where they learn to walk, find friends, meet future (and past) husbands and wives, make important business decisions and, finally, retire.

Copacabana is the city's longest and most famous beach, but it is lined with ho-

selling everything from sandwiches, skewered shrimp, fruit salad and Arabian delicacies (peddled by a man dressed up like a sheik) to hats, magnum's, suntan oil, even tattoos and bikinis (including the microscopic model known as *fiodental*, or dental floss).

Pessanha is resting before his third trip down the beach near the rocky division between Ipanema and Copacabana known as *Arpoador*. It is done to surfers, their teeny-bopper girlfriends and many poor people, whom Dias and many of the area's residents resent and derisively call sub-

Copacabana is the city's longest and most famous beach, but Ipanema is Rio's favorite

enough perhaps to buy 150 of his *picolés*. Pessanha pulls on his clothes, kisses his wife and little girl goodbye, and is out of the house shortly after 6. He picks up 200 of the ice-cream bars from the depot and packs them into an ice-filled Styrofoam box, then boards a bus for Rio. He arrives in Ipanema at 9, just as the sun breaks through the clouds.

At about the same time, Sergio Dias, a Rio businessman, and his wife Leila Leal, a high school teacher, are waking up in a nearby apartment building. Dias, like Pessanha, looks out the window first thing. "Maravilha [Marvelous]!" he says, voicing the thoughts of thousands of Carlos, Rio's citizens, whose most fervent prayer during the week is for a sunny weekend. After a leisurely breakfast, the couple gather the only possessions they will need for the rest of the day—aluminum beach chairs, a newspaper and some money for beer and snacks—and as they have been doing most Sunday's for the past 18 years, head off to the Ipanema beach. "It's the most important thing in our lives," says Dias, 44, as he settles into his chair. "Hey, Edson!" he yells, motioning to his favorite vendor.

and restaurants and caters to tourists as well as locals. "Ipanema has tourists too, but Ipanema will always be Rio's favorite," says Edson Ferreira, the vendor, rushing to sell Dias more beer. "It's not just the beauty, the mountains and the sea. It's the people and the culture too."

Home of The Girl from Ipanema, the 1960s song about a beautiful teenager, as well as the *culto do corpo* (body cult), Ipanema is more than just one beach. It's a series of highly diverse and intriguing micro-communities that give the coastline a myriad of personalities. "It's fascinating," says Pessanha, as he takes a break in the 102°F weather and exchanges one of his *Dragão Chines* [Chinese Dragon] *picolés* for a lemon-based drink from another vendor. "You have areas for jocks, cute women, the liberals, artists and intellectuals, families with little kids, gays, even an area where pilots hang out. I feel as if I visit 20 beaches every day. But it's all Ipanema."

The one thread holding these multi-flavored groups together—other than sand, surf and sun—is the hundreds of vendors like Pessanha who tramp up and down the beach

urbanites. Pessanha, a suburban himself, says he understands how the locals feel. "They have a point," he explains, "because now you have many more *rotas da Praia* [tour young beach rats who steal from unsuspecting bathers]. It's much more dangerous now."

Half an hour later, Pessanha, having sold all his *picolés* stops to rest again. "Best spot on Ipanema," he says, "but I would never tell that to my wife." He is surrounded by gay men, but he is staring unabashedly at a group of topless women who are sandwiched among the men. Over the past few years, the area has become a favorite spot for many Rio models who like to go topless without being hounded by dirty old (and young) men. The women "love us," says Magno Junior, 23, a university student. "They feel safe around us because we're decent and know how to behave properly. Right, guys?" He turns to his friends, who all laugh.

Pessanha smiles. "Crazy beach," he says, picking up his Styrofoam box and heading home. —J.M.

Ground war to begin at several points

Allies to encircle, divide Iraqi troops, retake Kuwait

WASHINGTON, Feb 23: A ground war for control of Kuwait, which seems increasingly likely, could be a frustrating, bloody affair despite weeks of punishing Allied air attacks against entrenched Iraqi troops, US military officials say, reports Reuters.

Even if American-led coalition forces use speedy armoured columns and highly mobile airborne and amphibious troops in coordinated drives to encircle Iraqi troops and artillery, close combat will take a toll on the attackers.

"It's not going to be a snap-war is a bloody thing," Army Lieutenant-General Tom Kelly, a senior official with the Joint Chiefs of Staff, told reporters this week.

"I can still draw up 15 scenarios every day that will cause us a lot of problems," Gulf US Commander General Norman Schwarzkopf told the Los Angeles Times newspaper.

Senior Pentagon officials, who asked not to be identified, stressed there were still a half-million Iraqi troops in and near Kuwait and that minefields, chemical artillery shells, allies.

"Even if you don't take them head on, it will probably be

frustrating at points to say the least. Don't look for this thing to be over in a week," said one of the officials.

The official refused to give any hint at the timing for a ground war after Iraqi President Saddam Hussein vowed in a speech on Thursday that his country would continue the struggle in the Gulf war, confident of victory.

At the White House, spokesman Marlin Fitzwater implied President George Bush had not yet made a final decision on when to launch a ground offensive.

When and if Bush gives the order for the attack by elements of a 700,000-strong coalition force, it is expected to result in an attempt to encircle, divide and conquer rather than a broad, head-on charge against entrenched Iraqis.

Instead of thrusting whole Allied divisions across 100 miles (160 km) of Saudi border into Kuwait at once, defence officials have indicated that a ground war would begin at several points, including an amphibious landing in north-eastern Kuwait and a strike into southern Iraq west of Kuwait.

The attack could come as early as this week, the same week that US marines 46 years ago launched an attack on the Japanese-occupied island of Iwo Jima in the Pacific. Those forces had been softened by a massive air and naval bombardment, but the attackers suffered nearly 23,000 dead and wounded in capturing the jungle island during World War II.

All but about 200 of the 23,000 Japanese defenders died, many in suicide attacks.

Major-General Harry Jenkins, Commander of a 17,000-man US marine amphibious force in the Gulf, told reporters on Wednesday that he would try to avoid a direct attack on Iraqi defences in any risky assault on the beaches of Kuwait.

He said aboard the command ship USS Nassau in the Gulf that an amphibious landing would likely cause substantial damage to civilian property on the coastline.

Jenkins, who commands an amphibious force that has been at sea for six months, said possible operations for his troops included a full-scale landing, or more limited operations, or

even a decoy assault or feint to tie down coastal defence troops while Allied ground forces launched attacks elsewhere.

He said that much of the Kuwaiti coastline is urban and that buildings, many of them fortified by Iraqi troops, would be targets for naval gunfire and air strikes before marines hit the beach.

In Saudi Arabia on Thursday, US Marine Brigadier-General Richard Neval suggested that fighting to liberate Kuwait city, for example, could be very difficult.

They (Iraqis) have woven themselves into the very fabric and structure of Kuwait city, he told reporters.

US Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Colin Powell and his Gulf commanders stress that mobility and air power are keys to isolating and chopping up Iraqi defenders, many of them in underground bunkers.

"I'm not going to go stupidly into what he (Saddam) believes is his strength... We will go against his weaknesses with our strengths," Powell told reporters returning with him from a visit to Saudi Arabia last month.

Gulf crisis

War to gear up democratisation: Naguib Mahfouz

ZURICH, Feb 23: Naguib Mahfouz, the Egyptian winner of the 1990 Nobel Prize for Literature, believes that the Gulf War will speed the process of democratisation in the Arab countries, a Swiss weekly reported Friday, says AP.

The independent Das Magazin said that in an interview, the Palestinian problem. According to the weekly, he blamed Iraq's President Saddam Hussein for the war.

"A peaceful solution was in the hands of Saddam Hussein," Mahfouz was quoted as saying. "He should have pulled back" from Kuwait.

In reply to a question, he said there was "no doubt" that the war had opened a new chapter in Arab history.

"All at once, the war has exposed all Arab problems," he went on, according to the weekly. "It has shown under what enormous pressure we live. The reason for the crisis are the dictatorial regimes. There would have been no war if Iraq had a democratic government."

"Another reason for the crisis is that the Arabs spend their money in Europe and not in our countries," he added. But the future will change that. We will see more cooperation among Arabs and also more democracy.

"Democracy requires a long process of education," he was quoted as saying.

UN Council in anxious wait

UNITED NATIONS, Feb 23: The UN Security Council, which for months has played a key role in the Gulf crisis, waited and watched on the sidelines on Friday as Moscow, Washington and Baghdad did a diplomatic dance about peace plans, reports Reuters.

Secretary-General Javier Perez De Cuellar praised the Soviet Union "for having made such an important effort" with a peace plan it put forth and said he considered Iraq's willingness to withdraw from Kuwait "really very, very important."

But all eyes were on the 15 members of the Security Council, who authorised the resolutions that led to the military action against Iraq over its invasion of Kuwait last August.

Ambassadors of the council members were on standby waiting to be briefed by the Soviet Union on the latest details of its peace plan negotiated in Moscow with Iraq's Foreign Minister.

Earlier on Friday, the United States demanded that Iraq begin a mass withdrawal

from Kuwait by noon (1700 GMT) today or face a ground campaign. The White House said withdrawal was a last chance for Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein to "save his country."

Soviet Ambassador Yuli Vorontsov was expected to call a meeting or at least informal consultations at which time the United States and other Allies were expected to present their conditions for peace. But diplomats said Vorontsov had not yet received instructions from Moscow.

There was uncertainty about what the council could do even after it was briefed on the Soviet proposals.

"Any ceasefire will have to come from the Allied coalition fighting the war," said a western diplomat on the council. "The United Nations authorised war but didn't declare war on Iraq so it can't declare a ceasefire either."

Another said he believed the Soviet plan "was the beginning of the end but only the beginning and it's quite a long end."

Post-war Iraq to be yet another Lebanon?

NICOSIA, Feb 23: One of the grimmest post-war scenarios in the Gulf is that Iraq, ravaged by war, could become another Lebanon, a cauldron of disorder and a breeding-ground for terrorism, reports AP.

If the war topples Saddam Hussein and his Arab Baath Socialist Party, some analysts believe a power vacuum could lead to armed conflict between ethnic and religious factions.

"The risk of civil war is very real, very likely," said an Asian diplomat in Baghdad, one of the few remaining in the Iraqi capital. "The frustration, the desire for revenge could explode like a volcano."

Even some government officials in Baghdad now privately speak of turmoil and bloodshed in Iraq if Saddam is toppled, which increasingly appears to be an American and British objective.

One Iraqi official, speaking on condition he was not identified, said that after years of repression, "many, many

people have old scores to settle."

Lack of a strong central authority left Lebanon vulnerable to 15 years of civil war in which as many as 150,000 people were killed.

Palestinian refugee camps there, constantly attacked by Israel and Arab rivals, have been recruiting grounds for guerrilla organizations for decades.

Iraq has 40 times the land area and six times the population of Lebanon, raising the possibility of even greater chaos.

Many analysts believe the military or security forces in Iraq with outside help could contain the divided nation while it's reconstructed with billions of dollars in Arab and Western aid.

But the punishing allied bombing offensive, which has destroyed much of Iraq's infrastructure and caused thousands of civilian deaths by Iraqi count, is likely to foster deep hatred for the West.

Iraqi radio mum over Soviet plan

LONDON, Feb 23: Iraqi official radio resumed its daily broadcasts Friday with a message of defiance that contained no reference to any acceptance of the Soviet peace proposals for the Gulf war, reports AFP.

The radio, monitored in London by the BBC signed on at 0230 GMT, at least half an hour earlier than usual.

"This is Baghdad," it said. "Here is the graveyard of the criminal invaders, who were alarmed to find among the Arabs someone that can stand up to their ambitions or aspire to a better future."

"This is Baghdad, the house of peace, and the house of war if imposed. In peace, it is paradise, and in war, it is a fire that burns the aggressors."

It went on: "This is Baghdad, the city of the world. To those who antagonize it, and fortunate are those who support it. This is Baghdad, the radios of the Republic of Iraq and the voice of the Masses."

In Moscow earlier Friday Soviet spokesman Vitali Ignatenko said Iraq had given a "positive reply" to the Soviet offer, which among other things calls for an unconditional Iraqi pullout from Kuwait.

Patriot knocks down Iraqi Scud

RIYADH, Feb 23: A Patriot missile knocked down an Iraqi Scud over eastern Saudi Arabia early Friday just hours after the defence missiles intercepted two others, US military officials said, reports AFP.

The interception occurred at 2:30 a.m. Friday 23:30 pm (Thursday) as air raid sirens wailed in the capital and the eastern city of Dhahran, but there were no reports of injuries or damage, the official central command said.

The all-clear was given in 10 minutes.

No Scuds were sighted in the Saudi capital and US officials did not give a precise location for the interception.

Two Iraqi Scud missiles were fired late Thursday afternoon at north-central Saudi Arabia in the second daylight attack since the war began January 17, officials said earlier. Both were said to have been intercepted by US Patriot missiles.

Scuds now being fired from Baghdad

NORTHERN SAUDI ARABIA, Feb 23: Iraq has started firing Scud missiles from inside its capital, Baghdad and is now aiming at military rather than civilian targets, according to US Patriot anti-missile battery commanders, reports Reuters.

A Pentagon spokesman accused the Iraqis of using Baghdad's civilian population as shields for their missiles, which are priority targets for Allied bombers.

Colonel Joseph Garrett, Commander of the 11th Air Defence Artillery Brigade, said on Friday that Iraq's switch to military targets for the missiles — a Soviet weapon adapted to extend its range —

reflected the American and Allied build-up to a land assault to liberate Kuwait after a month air war.

"They were targeting civilians. Now they're trying to target some of the more tactical targets, where troops and equipment are located," he told reporters.

He said highly successful Patriot defence batteries were being moved north to guard forces poised to invade Iraq and Kuwait.

"We think he is going to fire more at tactical targets and probably less at civilian targets," said Lieutenant-Colonel Kevin Campbell,



RIYADH: Saudi journalists watch in anticipation US President George Bush's TV address over the Soviet peace proposal at the Hyatt Hotel press room, here, February 22.

— AFP/UNB photo