

# Memo for the masters of war

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I'M A father-to-be, very much at peace with the world. But, thanks to politicians who seem to glory in the rhetoric of war, I fear for the future of a child yet unborn.

As my wife nurtures our baby deep within the sanctuary of the womb, other men and women speak of winners and losers in the Gulf, as though it were nothing more or less than some diplomatic board game that was being played out in the sand.

I am, quite simply, fearful for the future. And fearful for the future of our child who may never see the world on the expected arrival date of 7 April next year, simply because there may be none left for the child to inherit.

And this is not some sentimental ramble induced by thoughts of coming fatherhood. It is nothing more or less than the expression of naked fear which gnaws into me as politicians and military men talk of moods changing, of military advantage, and the boys being home by Christmas.

Such utterances are acceptable because this generation

The growing prospect of war in the Gulf horrifies **Hugh Docherty**, who in this personal view of what may unfold, remembers his parents' message.

has chosen to forget what war is all about. We have been treated to tank commanders talking about "a scrap", as though human life — most of it a mere 18 to 20 years older than our unborn baby — is not to be torn, burned, and gassed into oblivion.

That terrifies me as part of the generation whose parents suffered the horrors of the Second World War and who passed down the message to us, children of the peace-loving Sixties, that war was an obscenity.

It is doubly obscene because it takes place to order, when the politicians tire of trading insults and half-truths, to get down to the serious business of making sure that all those munitions and weapons of destruction, each one lovingly refined for maximum killing effect, are fired off at other human beings for the good of the armaments industry.

And politicians frighten me, too. There are those who would

lead the rest of us, brought to power through struggle, leadership battles, talk of victory and power.

Power is what they crave, regardless of the circumstances, and one is no better than another. The people who would bring us the Gulf war have already brought us the First and Second World Wars, Vietnam, the Falklands, and Northern Ireland, this century.

There is much talk that Saddam Hussein must be stopped. There is much talk of victory, and the lessons of history seem to have been discarded entirely.

I feel I want to detach myself from a country determined to put itself on a war footing. Like the vast majority of people in Scotland today, I want nothing more or less than the peace that I have been fortunate enough to enjoy during a lifetime of 40 years, to continue for the benefit of our child.

And I feel a hideous sense of

being helpless to stop the process that men and women who live in another world from mine, seem committed to starting. I didn't give them a mandate to kill on my behalf. And I gave them no go-ahead to engage in costly and foolish grand adventures in the Middle East.

Of course, it's not fashionable to say such things as the knives sharpen. But, being sensible in time of war has never been fashionable. Wild emotions, very close to those used by politicians in their squabbles with one another, take over, and commonsense and regard for human life, even if it is encased in lumbering pieces of metal, painted desert camouflage in some vain hope to outwit modern radar, is tossed aside.

I don't want our baby to be part of a world like that. And neither do I want our 14-year-old to tramp away in a few years.

Our baby deserves life in abundance. New life should never be threatened by the politician's same old lie, nurtured over their Gulf with the reality of life for the rest of us.