

accused of violating the Geneva Convention in their treatment of prisoners of war and their frequent bombing of civilians - a practice in which both sides indulged. Furthermore, the United Nations conducted an enquiry and issued a report confirming that chemical weapons had been used both in 1984 and 1985; a year later Iraq was identified as the country which had done this. It did not, however, respond to the Secretary-General's attempts to have this practice stopped.

In 1986 Iran launched the "Kerbala 5" offensive. The Iranian crossing of the river Chat Al-Arab, its natural frontier with Iraq, was followed by the occupation of the town of Fao which made possible an offensive against Basra, Iraq's second largest city. Baghdad once again attacked the oil complex on the island of Khary as well as that on the island of Sirri, thus reducing Iran's exports. In May 1987 Iraq attacked, apparently accidentally, the American frigate STARK in the Persian Gulf with an Exocet missile. Thirty seven members of the crew were killed. The United States lodged a strong protest and soon after announced that Kuwaiti oil tankers travelling through the Gulf would be under US protection.

Several organisations and several countries have made successive attempts to bring about an end to the conflict, but efforts by United Nations, the Non Aligned Movement and the Islamic Conference Organisation, have met with failure. The UN Secretary General's efforts at mediation did, however, lead to the suspension of attacks against civilians for nine months in 1984, and to an agreement on the treatment of prisoners of war. In the course of a speech on 4 August, 1986, the Secretary-General, Mr. Perez de Cuellar, expressed his concern that the conflict might spread.¹

The Iran-Iraq conflict which to date has caused more than a million deaths seems no nearer a solution. If Iraq has an advantage in terms of military equipment, Iran on the other hand has the benefit of vast human resources.

¹ UN Chronicle, Nov. 1986, vol. XXIII, no. 5, p. 77.