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Iraq

US occupation turns sour

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The US, with Britain in tow, has used its massive firepower to smash the régime of Saddam and complete its occupation of Iraq. In the eyes of Bush, Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz, this represents a resounding military victory and another step along the road towards their master plan for a New American Century: the achievement of total US hegemony based on their concept of 'full spectrum domination'.

[<https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/03iraq.jpg>]

They have been so quick off the mark to put Syria in their sights as the next 'rogue state' in line for 'regime change' that they have embarrassed Tony Blair and new Labour in Britain. Never the less it is clear that the fall of Iraq is far from the end of the road in the concept of permanent war put forward by the Republican right.

The war itself did not go completely to plan. The US military were surprised that the Iraqi army failed to surrender (and the regime collapse) in the first few days, but resisted where it could. In the end they got what they wanted by the use of indiscriminate military force, but the task of bring the country under the control of the invaders will be more difficult as a result. Most Iraqis were defending their country not the regime.

Huge numbers of Iraqis have been slaughtered in the invasion. No figures for soldiers are yet known - although the figure of 5.000, which has been mooted, is ridiculously low. The massive use of air power must have produced tens of thousands of military casualties.

The invasion has reduced Iraq to anarchy and chaos, and brought it to the verge of a major humanitarian disaster. US and British forces have stood aside while hospitals have been looted of essential equipment - despite the obligations of occupying forces under the Geneva Convention. The looters seem to have no brief either for the former Saddam régime or the one to be imposed by the USA. US forces have been clear as to their priorities. They secured the oil fields and the Ministry for oil (the only Ministry not sacked) before they secured either hospitals or power and water supplies.

Despite demonstrations and cheering by some Iraqis when the invasion force arrived in Baghdad, it is already clear that the Iraqi population as a whole rejects the occupation and is increasingly hostile to it. This is partly because of the chaos to which it has reduced them, and partly because their country had been invaded by a foreign force. In any event some demonstrations, like that where Saddam's statue was toppled, were set up by the US Army and exaggerated by the media.

There are now daily demonstrations in Baghdad against the occupation outside of the Palestine hotel where the US military has its headquarters and in other parts of the country. The removal of Saddam is one thing - the occupation by the US is quite another.

In Mosul in the north, we have seen the first direct repression by the occupying forces of demonstrators on the streets, protesting the occupation. At least 12 demonstrators have been killed and over 60 injured, by US troops attempting to quell demonstrations against the imposition of a governor for the town by the USA.

Britain and the US insist that it is not an invasion but a war of liberation - and at the same time refuse to allow the Kurds or other minorities to establish separate states. This is one of the principles spelled out by Rumsfeld that will have to be adhered to by any puppet regime that is set up.

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The US is going ahead with the installation of General Garner as a colonial governor. Garner is a pro-Israeli general - and head of an arms manufacturing company - who will be unelected and unaccountable to any of the Iraqi people.

The Pentagon and the State Department have been quarrelling over which Iraqi exile they should install as head of a puppet regime. The front-runner is convicted fraudster Ahmed Chalabi, a banker who has not lived in Iraq for many years and whose close links with the CIA make him their ideal candidate.

The first meeting designed to establish a puppet regime was held on April 15 at the Talil air base outside Nassiriya. Attendance was by invitation of the US military only. It was boycotted by the main organisation from the Shia Muslim majority: the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq.

The occupiers may well lose control before they make much progress on this. While the meeting was under way, a huge demonstration of Shias was taking place in Nassiriya, calling for the Americans to leave the country and for an Islamic state in Iraq. The people of Nassiriya were overwhelmingly hostile to the appointment of Chalabi as head of any 'interim Government'. There was also unrest amongst Shias in Basra, controlled by the British army, and in Kut.

As this goes on, there is the obscene spectacle of the handing out of contracts for the reconstruction of Iraq to a preferred list of US companies, many of them key contributors to Republican Party funds.

Then there is the much-vaunted Road Map for Palestine, planned by Bush as part of a post-war initiative, to change the politics of the region to the benefit of the USA by imposing a straightjacket on the Palestinians. The only effect the war has had on the Palestinians to date is to strengthen Sharon even more, and to increase the daily death toll of Palestinian people.

Most of the world - outside of Britain and the USA, where majorities now support the invasion despite the continued opposition by large minorities and the Stop the War movement - remains opposed to the war and the occupation.

The UN continues to be sidelined despite the efforts of Tony Blair to persuade Bush to let them get involved in the post-war situation. And the divisions that opened up between the USA and key countries of the European union (France and Germany in particular) remain in full force. They know that the ideology behind US policy is aimed straight at its imperialist rivals in Europe.

We were told that the war was being fought because of the existence of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), yet not a single WMD has been found, even though the occupying Americans now have access to the whole country and its population. Pentagon spokespeople continue to say that they are 'certain' that something will be found.

Meanwhile the anti-war movement must step up the campaign for the occupation to be ended and for the Iraqi people to decide their own future. The US and Britain insisted that the war was designed to liberate the Iraqi people. If that were the case there is an easy answer - get out and leave it to the Iraqi people to decide their own government.

We fight for self-determination of the peoples of Iraq, and demand free elections to a constituent assembly with no interference from any foreign presence - whether it be the Anglo-America coalition or the UN.

Imperialist troops out of the Gulf!

End the occupation of Iraq!

Solidarity with the Iraqi people!