

MASS GRAVES

How The US And Britain Are Betraying the Iraqi People **ARROW Anti-War Briefing 44 (15 May 2003)** **WAR PLAN IRAQ Update Number 22**

figure despised by Baghdad's artists': Louai Haki, 'who harnessed artistic output for the glorification of the dictator... [was] known as Saddam's favourite poet, [he] said the Americans had been very "polite" in asking him to resume work as director-general of Iraqi cinema and theatre.' (*Sunday Times*, 4 May, p. 25)

'The American-led reconstruction body for Iraq has named a senior Iraqi technocrat to run the country's vital oil industry amid **growing unease at the number of former officials of the Baathist regime securing key posts in the post-war administration.**' (*Independent*, 5 May, p. 10)

Senior US sources at Jay Garner's Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance have 'proclaimed their success in developing agreements with leading officials just below ministerial rank in several pre-existing government departments.' The regime is being rebuilt. (*Independent*, 5 May, p. 10)

OUR SOLIDARITY IS NEEDED

Hussein Rabia was shot and dumped in a mass grave outside Najaf in March 1991, as Saddam's military forces killed Shias indiscriminately—under the gaze of US forces. He survived. 'Although this area is nominally under the control of US Marines, there was still fear on his face. **He said that there were many Baathists still walking freely in Iraq, who had to be stopped from ever returning to power. Above all, he wanted those responsible for the mass killings to be brought to court.**' (*Times*, 6 May, p. 15)

Mr Blair invokes the mass graves to justify his bloody war, but the men who were part of the mass grave machine, who staffed the torture shops, who persecuted dissident playwrights, who kept the fascist ministries running, are being restored to power by Mr Blair and Mr Bush. **This is not liberation. This is regime restoration.** ARROW has always warned that the US wanted '**leadership change, regime stabilisation**', 'Saddamism without Saddam', not real change.

The Iraqi people need our active solidarity to help stop this obscenity. They are already having some successes: former Iraqi brigadier Sheikh Muzahim Mustafa Kana al-Tamimi, appointed head of the interim Basra administration, was 'quietly dropped from the line-up' because of popular protests. (*Telegraph*, 18 Apr., p. 13) Doctors in Basra have 'successfully revolted against attempts to restore local medical administrators from the former regime to their previous jobs.' (*Independent*, 5 May, p. 10) **We owe Hussein Rabia and the relatives of those killed in the mass graves our solidarity. Stop the Bush/Blair re-nazification of Iraq.**

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A NEW JUSTIFICATION FOR WAR? A NEW LIE

No evidence has yet been discovered that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. The US and UK are therefore seeking new political cover for their illegal, unnecessary and immoral war. Before the war, British Prime Minister Tony Blair said, 'The ending of this [Iraqi] regime would be the cause of regret for no one other than Saddam Hussein.. But our purpose is disarmament.' (24 Sept. 2002, quoted in *FT*, 15 May 2003, p. 3) Now Mr Blair says, 'I hope that for those people who had some doubt about the wisdom of removing Saddam Hussein, the reports of mass graves are an indication of how brutal, tyrannical and appalling that regime was, and what a blessing it is for the Iraqi people and for humankind that he has gone from power.' (*Times*, 15 May 2003, p. 19)

REGIME CHANGE WAS THE ANTI-WAR POSITION

Contrary to Mr Blair's smears, the authentic anti-war movement never had any 'doubts' about the wisdom of removing Saddam Hussein and his brutal regime. In their statement of Sept. 2002, one hundred Iraqi anti-war exiles said, 'We are told a war on Iraq is needed to pre-empt a threat to the region and to free the Iraqi people from Saddam Hussain's tyranny. **We as Iraqis already free from that tyranny, living outside Iraq and in the western democracies, say that both these claims are false.**'

The Iraqi exiles denounced the crimes of the regime, but said, '**the remedy must not cause greater damage to the innocent and to society at large**': 'Real change can only be brought about by the Iraqi people themselves within an environment of peace and justice for all the peoples of the Middle East.' (letter, *Guardian*, 5 Sept. 2002) They called for the lifting of the economic sanctions which had had 'catastrophic' effects on millions of ordinary families in Iraq.

The anti-war movement had no illusions about the nature of the Iraqi dictatorship. But the authentic anti-war movement recognised that the United States and Britain had no real concern for the Iraqi people, and that the "liberation" they were promising was a cynical sham. At the heart of the anti-war

movement was the anti-sanctions movement—a movement which knew that the most democratising force that could be let loose in Iraq was the lifting of economic sanctions. Lifting economic sanctions, as supported former UN Humanitarian Coordinators for Iraq Denis Halliday and Hans von Sponeck (who resigned from their posts in protest against the sanctions) would have vastly improved public health AND empowered the Iraqi people to enable them to seek social change. **We supported regime change through peaceful means.**

LEADERSHIP CHANGE, REGIME STABILISATION

Washington and London are not interested in empowering the Iraqi people. They are actually empowering the oppressors of the Iraqi people. Hence these headlines: ‘Concerns grow as Ba’ath old guard takes reins of power’ (*Telegraph*, 7 May, p. 11), ‘British spark protests by reappointing Ba’athists’ (*Telegraph*, 18 Apr., p. 13) and ‘Shia clerics urge faithful to attack returning Ba’athists’ (*FT*, 10 May, p. 6).

The ‘After Saddam’ section of BBC News Online has a corner entitled ‘BAATHIST COMEBACK’: ‘in many cities former Baath Party officials are taking leading roles in the administration the US and British forces are attempting to establish. It is mainly the middle and lower ranks of officials that are taking up where they left off under the old regime, but there are reports that senior bureaucrats and ministers at the oil and health ministries have been offered their jobs back by the US military.’ (<<http://news.bbc.co.uk/>> search ‘After Saddam’)

SADDAM’S POLICE BACK ON THE STREETS

Thousands of Ba’athist police officers have been re-hired by the US and UK. Sergeant Euan Andrews of the 7th Parachute Regiment of the Royal Horse Artillery summed up the brotherly atmosphere by swinging his arm around an Iraqi by his side outside the freshly painted Basra police station: ‘Ahmed, beaming in a baseball cap emblazoned with the words “City of Basra police” in Arabic, and holding a truncheon, punches his new friend in playful camaraderie. “A month ago we were shooting at each other,” says Euan, “now we are on the same side.”’ (*Sunday Telegraph*, 4 May, p. 17) Is this the side of the Iraqi people?

Sgt Andrews was not with 40 Commando Royal Marines in Abu Al Khasib, a suburb of Basra, when they entered the police station on 1 Apr. to discover a row of torture cells: ‘In one, a meat hook hung from the ceiling, in another a thick line of hose pipe sat on the floor, with no water taps for it to attach to anywhere in sight.’ It became abundantly clear that ‘the building in this captured suburb of Basra was, in fact, a house of torture used to inflict pain and suffering on possibly hundreds of civilians.’ The soldiers also found car tyres and a live electric lead in another room, used for electrocution, and a pile of ID cards of the ‘disappeared’.

Later an Iraqi told the troops that the secret police, the Mukhabarat, also worked in the building. Corporal Dominic Conway remarked, ‘They weren’t

policemen in there, not like we understand the term. They weren’t even animals because animals aren’t that cruel.’ (*Mirror*, 2 Apr., p. 8) A few weeks later, Basra’s ‘policemen’ would be back on the streets, on the British payroll, exchanging cigarettes and friendly punches with British squaddies.

Only one newspaper seems to have reported that Zuhair al-Nuaimi, who was appointed interim head of the Baghdad police, and who then resigned, was ‘a former army general and interior ministry official’ under Saddam. (*FT*, 5 May, p. 1)

The courts re-opened in Baghdad on 8 May. Clint Williamson, US adviser to justice ministry said all Iraqi laws would apply except certain laws from the Ba’ath era. Saddam’s judges have been re-appointed. (*Guardian*, 9 May, p. 14)

INTERIM BA’ATHIST RULE

‘British forces struggling to assemble an interim authority in Iraq’s second city, Basra, are facing criticism for re-appointing officials from Saddam Hussein’s Ba’ath Party. At an inaugural city council meeting, half of the dozen members on show were said to have held prominent places in the fallen regime. One of them, **Ghalib Cubba, a rich businessman known in Basra as “Saddam’s banker”, once held soirees at which the leader known as Chemical Ali was a regular guest.** Others included the imam of Saddam’s mosque and a university lecturer who had a reputation for converting students to the Ba’ath cause.’

Brigadier Graham Binns, head of 7th Armoured Brigade, said he had spent time with each council member, adding: ‘I feel confident they are acting as a force for good. Anyone with influence was a member of the Ba’ath Party.’ (*Telegraph*, 18 Apr., p. 13) Just as influential people had to join the Party in Germany in 1945.

The make-up of the Basra interim advisory council was ‘carefully withheld from the public’ in mid-April. When told by a reporter, Mohammed al-Shatti, a Basra language teacher said, ‘There will be great anger among the people when they find out who these men are.’ (*Telegraph*, 18 Apr., p. 13)

SADDAM’S OFFICIALS RESTORED

‘Dr Ali Shenan [Janabi], the new man in charge [of the Ministry of Health] is not likely to change much... He admits that he is a former Ba’ath party member... “I did believe in the party, but that did not affect my work.”’ (*Telegraph*, 7 May, p. 11) When Dr Janabi, ‘the former number three in Saddam’s famously corrupt [Health] Ministry was presented to an all-day conference of doctors’, ‘His appointment [by the US to the position of interim Health Minister] was greeted with disbelief and charges of corruption from many doctors.’ (*Observer*, 11 May, p. 2)

Haider Mnather is a playwright who was carted off to jail and intimidated for turning out plays considered disrespectful of Saddam. ‘Imagine then his horror on discovering that the Americans were offering the job of cultural overlord in the new Iraqi administration to the man who had held it before, a