

Editorial

Bush Forced to Eat “Old European” Crow

Following his re-election last November, U.S. President George W. Bush stated that it was time to mend fences with Europe. However, the condition he set for this mending of fences was for France, Germany and Russia to get over the invasion of Iraq and line up behind U.S. foreign policy. He reiterated this position in his inaugural address in January. However, on his February state visit to various European countries Bush was forced to adopt a much more conciliatory tone.

In a meeting with NATO countries, Bush offered concessions on Iraq in return for NATO assistance in establishing order in that country. The U.S. armed forces are facing a manpower crisis in Iraq as the resistance to the occupation spreads and the Americans are exposed as being incapable of maintaining the occupation, let alone win the war. In

addition, many of the countries that participated in the “coalition of the willing” have been quietly withdrawing their troops from Iraq. As a result, the U.S. was quite desperate to obtain a commitment of NATO troops to serve in Iraq. Despite Bush’s declaration of a victory in this regard, the fact of the matter is that no such commitment was forthcoming. France committed a grand total of one officer to the “Iraq desk” at NATO headquarters in Brussels. Various other countries offered to train Iraqi security forces in a third country. Canada pointed to its current presence in Jordan where RCMP officers are training Iraqi police officers as evidence of its commitment to Iraqi security, but did not offer to increase its support.

In a further effort to line up support from European countries, Bush made a speech in Brussels in which he

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Commentary

Haiti - The Forgotten Occupation

One year after the U.S.-led coup that overthrew Jean-Bertrand Aristide, the democratically-elected president of Haiti, the situation in that country continues to worsen. The alleged reason for the removal of Aristide by U.S. Special Forces was his failure to curb political violence in the country. However, since his overthrow and the occupation of the country by “peace-keeping” forces from several countries, including Canada, the level of political violence has soared to levels not seen since the days of the Duvalier dictatorship and the reign of terror of the Tonton Macoutes. The Caricom Community of nations (CARICOM), which has never recognized the legitimacy of the removal of Aristide, recently expressed deep concern over the deteriorating human-rights situation in Haiti, including serious

abuses at the hands of police and the indefinite detention of Aristide supporters.

The U.S.-installed government of Gerard Latortue routinely patrols Haiti’s poor neighbourhoods, killing suspected Aristide supporters. Reporters have also come under attack, with one being summarily executed because he had witnessed the murder of a 17-year old girl. The Letortue government celebrated its first anniversary in power by executing 25 Aristide supporters in various poor areas of Port-au-Prince. Far from attempting to halt this indiscriminate slaughter, the “peace-keepers” from various countries appear to be facilitating it. There are numerous reports of peace-keepers beating suspected Aristide

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called for the creation of a contiguous Palestinian state in the West Bank. This is something which the European Union (EU) has been demanding, but which the Israelis, with U.S. backing, have adamantly opposed. However, Bush fell short of demanding the dismantling of the apartheid wall being constructed by the Israelis which, in conjunction with the steady expansion of illegal Jewish settlements, threatens to cut Palestine into several small "Bantustans". It was reported that the European officials present nodded and smiled at Bush's pronouncement, but there is no indication that they actually believed what he was saying.

Perhaps most telling was Bush's complete failure on the issue of Iran's nuclear power industry. For several months the Bush administration has been talking tough about Iran, dismissing as irrelevant the position of the European countries, including Britain, that this crisis can only be resolved through diplomatic means. Bush and U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice have threatened to introduce a resolution to the UN Security Council invoking sanctions against Iran if it does not dismantle its nuclear research programs. Vice-President Dick

Cheney has openly hinted that the U.S. may unleash Israel to bomb Iran's nuclear facilities, as it bombed Iraq's nuclear facilities in the early 1980s. As part of his European "fence-mending" tour, Bush also met with Russian President Vladimir Putin and demanded that Russia end its nuclear cooperation with Iran. However, Bush struck out on all fronts. France, Russia and China all indicated that they would oppose a U.S. resolution in the Security Council, with China threatening to veto such a resolution. In the end, Bush left Europe endorsing the EU strategy of diplomacy and "constructive engagement" with Iran. In the case of Russia, Bush had no sooner left the country than the Russian government announced the signing of an agreement with Iran to sell it large quantities of nuclear fuel for its reactors.

The Bush administration has now backed itself into a tight corner. It has tried to bully its European allies to no avail. Now it is trying a different tack and has made significant concessions to Europe, but with little or nothing to show in return. If anything, Bush's conciliatory tone has emboldened the Europeans and underscored the strategic weakness of U.S. imperialism, strengthening the trend towards a multi-polar world.

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supporters and then turning them over to Latortue's police to be killed.

Haiti also appears to be rapidly becoming a beachhead for every country intent on establishing its influence in Latin America. In addition to the U.S., France and Canada, countries such as Brazil and China also have troops in the country. Brazil has been struggling against the neo-liberal policies championed by the U.S. and is attempting to expand its influence throughout South America in order to force a better deal from the Americans. For its part, China is desperate for sources of energy to fuel its booming industries and for markets for its commodity exports. It is increasingly competing with the U.S. for both in South and Central America.

The participation of Canadian peace-keepers in Haiti was partly to appease the U.S. over Canada's failure to openly support the U.S. invasion of Iraq. At the same time, the Canadian government is

representing the interests of various Canadian corporations and U.S. subsidiaries which have business interests in the Caribbean and Latin America. Having troops on the ground in countries such as Haiti provides those corporations with leverage and contacts for the pursuit of business interests.

However, while the occupation of Haiti may be good for business, it brings nothing but humiliation, misery and death to the Haitian people. What is going on in Haiti has nothing to do with democracy or with preserving the peace. Rather, it has everything to do with destroying a political movement which has attempted to organize the poorest of Haiti's poor to fight for their own interests. All those countries which are involved in this illegal and immoral occupation are guilty of crimes against humanity and attacks against democracy.

Foxes Guarding the Henhouse

The Bush administration and the Republican Party have been quietly manoeuvring to remove Kofi Annan as Secretary General of the United Nations ever since he opposed the U.S. invasion of Iraq two years ago. They hoped to prove that, under his leadership, the UN oil-for food program had allowed Saddam Hussein to divert oil revenues into his own hands and helped to sustain his regime. They appointed Paul Volcker, former chairman of the U.S. federal reserve, to investigate and report on this alleged UN corruption. Volcker issued his report in early February and the Bush administration, as well as various Republican senators who were pushing the issue, have been strangely silent about the issue ever since.

Volcker's report stated that the major source of external funds for the Saddam Hussein regime was violations of the economic sanctions outside of the oil-for-food program. The bulk of these violations consisted of \$4.6 billion in illicit sales of oil to Turkey and Jordan. Furthermore, according to Volcker's report, the members of the UN Security Council,

including the U.S., were aware of these violations but did nothing because Turkey and Jordan were U.S. allies. Volcker reported that there were some minor cases of corruption within the UN oil-for-food program, but Kofi Annan had taken action against those involved.

Shortly after the release of Volcker's report, the U.S. inspector general for Iraq reconstruction published another report about the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA), the U.S. agency which governed Iraq from April 2003 until June 2004. He reported that over a period of 14 months \$8.8 billion went missing, half of which consisted of oil revenues belonging to the Iraqi people. A British adviser to the Iraqi Governing Council reported that the CPA was demanding bribes of up to \$300,000 in return for awarding contracts. In addition, billions of dollars of Iraqi money simply disappeared following the U.S. takeover. Eight hundred million was handed over to U.S. commanders without receipts. Another \$1.4 billion was flown from Baghdad to the Kurdish

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For Your Information

Mr. Negroponte's Credentials

U.S. President George W. Bush has nominated John Negroponte as the first director of U.S. national intelligence. Negroponte, once he is confirmed, will be responsible for overseeing all of the intelligence gathering carried out by different U.S. agencies, including the CIA, FBI and the armed forces. Until his nomination, Negroponte was serving as the U.S. ambassador to Iraq. He was also the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations from 2001 until 2003, and played a key role in misleading the UN with presentations of flawed or completely fictitious intelligence reports about Iraq's weapons capabilities that the Americans used to justify their illegal invasion of Iraq.

Negroponte's appointment will make him the second person closely associated with torture who has been promoted in the second term of the Bush administration. The exposure of the torture of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Ghraib prison, which the U.S.

administration claimed was perpetuated by a few rogue soldiers occurred while Negroponte was the U.S. ambassador in Iraq. Last month, Roberto Gonzales, the lawyer who wrote crucial White House memos authorizing the use of torture, was also promoted to attorney general.

Negroponte is perhaps most closely associated with the Iran Contra scandal of the 1980s; as U.S. ambassador to Honduras from 1981-1985, he was responsible for organizing the shipment of arms to the Nicaraguan Contras in the hopes of toppling the Sandinista government. With the permission of the Honduran regime, the Americans used Honduras as a base not only to funnel arms to the Contras but also to train them. Honduran police and military officials, with support from American military personnel, provided training on everything from laying land mines and terrorizing civilian populations to torture.

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regional government in Irbil and cannot be accounted for.

In addition, huge sums of money have been paid to various companies supposedly for the purpose of reconstruction projects, but there is little or nothing to show for this money. A subsidiary of Halliburton overcharged the Pentagon \$61 million for fuel with the full knowledge of senior military officials. When the inspector general advised the U.S. army to withhold payments from companies found to be overcharging it, his advice was simply ignored. There are also reports that at least \$500 million of Iraqi oil revenues were stolen by the U.S. to help pay for its occupation of Iraq, an act which is illegal under international law. In the early days of the U.S. occupation when priceless Iraqi antiquities were being looted from museums under the watchful eyes of American troops, there were numerous reports that these treasures were ending up in the hands of American military commanders, who in turn were selling them to wealthy American collectors.

In other words, compared to the U.S. pirate army and the robber barons involved in the "reconstruction" of Iraq, the corrupt UN officials were petty thieves, and any call for Kofi Annan's resignation would surely backfire on Bush himself.

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During that era, Negroponte made headlines for his close personal friendship with General Gustavo Alvarez Martinez, the chief of the Honduran national police force and the head of Battalion 316, a Honduran death squad responsible for the kidnapping, torture and murder of hundreds of activists and opposition leaders. The battalion was also implicated in the murders of Sandanistas and FMLN members in neighbouring Nicaragua and El Salvador. During the Salvadoran truth commission hearings of the 1990s, Martinez was named as personally responsible for carrying out several assassinations of high-profile FMLN leaders. The Honduran regime, at the recommendation of Alvarez, gave the Americans permission to use Honduras as a training base for the Contras.

Iraqi Iraq deaths: in excess of 100,000
(Source: The Lancet)

U.S.
Combat deaths: 1479
Total Wounded: 11,047

British
Combat deaths: 86

International Iraqis
Deaths: 81

International civilian deaths: 767

Journalists: 32

U.S. employees: 22

Estimated Cost of Iraq War: 27.56 billion
(Source: National Priorities Project)

Two Years On
IRAQ
A War Still Raging
A Country Still Occupied
And People Still Dying

MARCH 19
International
Day of Action

End the Occupation
Remember
ACT SPEAK
OUT

March Against
the War & Occupation
Saturday 12:30@Legislature

Followed by a programme at
Broadway Disciples United 395 Broadway

Organized by the No War Coalition for further information call 775-6178

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