

Iraq: The Torments of Empire.

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This is the definitive version.

“The people of England have been led in Mesopotamia into a trap from which it will be hard to escape with dignity and honour. They have been tricked into it by a steady withholding of information.” T. E Lawrence, **The Sunday Times**, 22 August 1920.

1. T. E. Lawrence, better known as Lawrence of Arabia, or to his imperialist sycophants as ‘the hero of the Arab revolt’, went on to note that “our unfortunate, Indian and British [i.e. Caribbean] troops under harsh conditions of climate and supply lines, are policing an immense area, paying daily every day in lives for the willfully wrong policy in Baghdad.” Once again, it was the ‘wogs’ being sacrificed in the higher interests of preserving and extending the grab of British imperialism according to the victors’ dictates of the Treaty of Versailles. An annexation that would fling open to the new imperial conquistadores the Black Gold of a new El Dorado rivaling in its splendour, the plunder of the Indian sub-continent. Nor should it be surprising that Lawrence who was a passionate believer in the unity of theory and practice became a major shareholder in the Kirkuk oilfields and the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

2. Lawrence was not against this massive imperial aggrandizement for his duplicity and treachery of the Arab elite were the underpinnings of imperial policy in the Middle East. What he feared was that ‘illiberal policies’ would incubate countervailing nationalist currents ultimately alienating the Arab masses and undercut the occupant’s exploitative ambition. What he sought was recognition of the ‘native rulers’; not as partners or as equals, but as benevolent servants that could be formally elevated – in the words of Lord Linlithgow - ‘to the status of gentlemen’ when imperial dictates so required.

3. In the wake of the criminal invasion of a stricken Iraq, flouting the UN Charter and circumventing the Security Council, his utterance since the official end of the war on May 1 has an eerily familiar ring. The emergence of a popular revolt that Lawrence and the British imperial caste feared materialized in the twenties, but the anti-colonial struggle would be protracted with many ebbs and flows. Then, as now, oil became the overriding determinant of policies. Although the British stooge Nuri-es-said was captured on the 14 July 1958, dressed as a woman while trying to escape, it did not terminate British ownership, control and marketing of Iraqi oil. As one Iraqi historian reminds us: “Did we throw the British out? Of course not. They were the absolute masters of our petroleum industry until it was nationalized as late as 1972”. And he added: “The British got everything they came for and even more.” The ‘more’ was the region’s permanent political enfeeblement, the installation of a pliant dummy regime. that presented the fiction of independence.

4. Lawrence, indubitably the most perfidious of architects of imperial rule castigated in a genial understatement the British occupation “for a steady withholding of

information.” Indeed , if only we could wrench him from his grave to witness the strides and stratagems of the propaganda war then and now. It was a piddling affair compared to the systematically globalized barrage of corporate media and state inspired mendacity – **le mensonge d’etat** – as Ignacio Ramonet called it that had no precedent in terms of its sheer international intensity 24 hours a day hitting its grand climacteric in the immediate days preceding the Blair/Bush butchery on 20 April 2003.

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5. Only after the invasion, in the face of the unrelenting lies pouring out of Washington, and the vilification to which he was personally subjected did the all too timorous Dr Blix, head of the inspection team, muster the courage to blast Washington’s propaganda machine as “the handiwork of a bunch of bastards”. Lashing out at his tormentors on Swedish radio, he pointed out “that I never understood how those who wanted armed action could be 100% sure that they (WMD) existed, but at the same time have zero knowledge of where they were.” Blix may well have extrapolated his caustic commentary to incriminate the spinmeister in 10 Downing Street. But our world is changing fast and others are now cutting into the unreconstructed politico that is Blair in their quest for greater transparency and dignity. Who could have imagined the celerity and boldness of this drive in the tumultuous days of imperial jubilation despite the shabby cover-up as was foreseeable by the official judicial enquiry.?

6. The indefatigable spinmeister has lost all shred of credibility and stands distraught in all his nakedness. The meretricious slogans of yesteryear, ‘Cool Britannia’, ‘New Labour’ and ‘The Third Way’ have trailed him into the gutter’ with no hope that history will ‘absolve’ him as he so passionately sought. As to Bush, his accomplice in one of the gravest crimes against humanity in our times, he too is wallowing, like Macbeth, in a cesspool of blood coupled with his calamitous miscalculations.

7. Unmasked as a tormented and hapless creature scrambling to halt the breakup of his crumbling empire. His predicament recalls John Milton’s pithy comment on Charles the first: “a man blighted, friendless and forlorn.” It is my central thesis that the gravest of war crimes committed against Iraq will turn out to be one of the crucial points of inflection in the debacle of imperialism.

8. What were the victim’s alleged crimes? It was demonized as the fount of global terrorism armed with weapons of mass destruction that could be hurled against the civilized world in 45 minutes. The preachment was flimsy and timeworn.: “It is either civilization or chaos” says Powell or in Bush’s lingo: “You’re either with us or against us.” The countdown to the current racist genocide began well before the 20 April. An imperial aggressor of 290m combined with that of its jackal’s 60m or a combined total of 350m, savagely pounced on a nation of 25m. An unspeakable act of bestiality by the two richest nations in world against one of the world’s poorest nations bled white over the last decade by its sanctions and its bombings. Bush the ‘reborn Christian’ and his no less zealous Anglican began their slaughter accompanied by the hymn of Onward Christian Soldiers.

God marches hand in hand with the crusaders in that the powers of almighty providence were corralled to battle ‘the tyranny of evil’. Theirs was the noblest of

crusades executed in the name of their perverted conception of human rights, democracy and an endless array of such scurrilous concoctions. The approach to war acquired a messianic character blessed by a providential agency. A thread of ruling class hubris that runs through American history. “The US “, exclaimed Bush “has a spiritual energy that makes it uniquely qualified to contribute to the liberation of mankind.” The same phony religious exhortations were spouted by President William McKinley to justify the Spanish American war in 1898. The blowing up of the USS Maine, a job carried out by the war party itself became the pretext for the colonial war and the hypocrisy that rationalized it: “I am not ashamed to tell you that I went down on my knees and prayed Almighty God for light and guidance and the Lord heeded the pleas of his servant that there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all - Cuba and the Philippines - and educate and uplift them, and by God’s grace do the very best we could for them as our fellow men for whom Christ also died.” And so their long colonial incarceration began.

The victory over Iraq was supposed to be the high noon of Bush’s imperial America. It recalls in certain ways the Battle of Omdurman that sealed the fate of Egypt and the Sudan. With the Maxim machine guns the British expeditionary force massacred or wounded about 46,000 of the Mahdi’s army of 52,000 with a trifling loss of around 40 British dead. It was a whopping celebration in the words of Winston Churchill who participated in that massacre “of that mechanical scattering of death which **the polite nations of the earth** (italics mine) have brought to such monstrous perfection.”¹

The victories of the empire, short-lived as they are, have been achieved at an appalling price in terms of the loss of American civil liberties This was no doubt what Wendell Wilkie meant he declared in 1942 that “if and when fascism comes to American it will come under the labels of freedom and democracy” To be sure with The Patriot Act. And the avalanche of repressive legislation already on the books with more to come the fears of Wendell Wilkie have germinated. A view that blends with the damning verdict of the British philosopher George Monbiot.

“The USA is no longer just a nation. It is a religion...US soldiers are no longer terrestrial combatants: they have become missionaries. They are no longer simply killing enemies; they are casting out demons...It is not just that the Americans are God’s chosen people; America itself is now perceived as a divine project...The USA no longer needs to call upon God; it is God. And those who go abroad to spread the light do so in the name of a celestial domain. The flag has become as sacred as the Bible; the name of the nation as holy as the name of God. The presidency is turning into a priesthood.”

9. The onslaughts on 9/11 on the Twin Towers had nothing to do with Iraq. There were no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq because none existed; there were no al-Qu’aida links with Iraq because these links had never existed; Iraq did not have any 45 minute timeline for the unleashing of chemical weapons because no such chemical weapons existed. The imbecile nostrum of ‘liberation’ was one of the biggest

¹ Quoted in, Niall Ferguson, **Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power**, New York 2003

swindles of all time perpetrated by a clutch of fanatics that included the Sharonite trio of Wolfowitz, Feitch and Perle. In Blair, the US caste oligarchy found a satellite of unquestioned devotion without whom it would have been impossible to prosecute this war of colonial conquest. At his jackal's best addressing the joint session of the US Congress, and being honoured with the highest civilian award for his services Blair declaims: "I feel a most urgent sense of mission about today's world. We are bound together as never before but the danger is disorder." Here he postures as the imperial pacesetter of 'law and order'. Blair, and it is inconsequential that his political signpost reads Labour or Tory, became a servant-in-waiting because he grasped the bankruptcy of post-imperial Britain since the Suez imbroglio with the confessed recognition that his role could be nothing more than a preferred member of the US imperial servant class.

10. As part of his global mission to "deliver freedom and prosperity to countries that live in shadows and darkness" it is imperative for a shrunken Britain to align itself with what a prizefighter of imperialism as Madeline Albright called 'the indispensable nation' and the big stick that it showers on all and sundry. Nowhere is the abject subservience of Blair so glaring, so abysmally despicable as in his loyalty oath "that it is to America that we must look to lead the charge of the heavy brigades" "Destiny puts you in this place in history, in this moment in time", he beseeched his ecstatic audience. "The task is yours to do...our job is to be there with you." It would be difficult to find in the annals of that nation's history such a servile affirmation of his colonial status. As the Anglican evangelist that he is, his catchphrases remind us of the judgment of Benjamin Disraeli on Ewart Gladstone. "He could convince most people of most things and himself of almost anything." Today, a shriveled Blair stands as a hapless political dwarf whose political fortunes have been morally dumped into the gutter notwithstanding his retention of his wobbly prime ministership.

11. Lord Hutton's judicial enquiry may have proved an embarrassment for some but in the final countdown it was nothing more than a whitewash to sustain the cohesion of the British ruling class and paper over the cracks of a diseased and inalterably corrupt social and political edifice. It was in no way crucial for the unfolding of the historical drama that spells the withering of Blair and brings the American empire one step closer to its demise.. Blair contends that "history will absolve me" for the crimes that he has committed against a defenseless people but his ability to evoke so flippantly the role of history forgets what history is and is not. On that score it's apposite to recall the timeless words of Marx. "History does nothing. It possesses no immense wealth. It fights no battles. It is rather man, the real living man who does everything. It is he who possesses power and who fights."²

12. The presumed suicide of spymaster Kelly reveals the extent of the debasement, irrationality and incoherence of the political establishment; and the tempest winds tearing through the fabric of imperialism. By the same token, it has given a fillip to the resistance fighters within Iraq and the Middle East.

² Marx-Engel's Gesamtausgabe, Vol.1

13. The end of the war proclaimed on 1 May was the Kiplingesque high point of the grand imperial conquest with the recitation of Bush's baloney peddled over the last two years. "We do not know the day of final victory, but we have seen a turning of the tide." Adding the clincher that "no act of terrorism will change our purpose or weaken our resolve, or alter their fate. Their cause is lost." On 9 July, the same arrogant drivel was dribbled out by secretary of defense, Donald Rumsfeld: "We can confidently say that the world is a better place since the US led coalition triumphed in Iraq." Triumphed?

14 What the nature of this 'triumph' was is evidenced in the brutal new colonial configuration illustrated in the diktat of a Pentagon official with his Syrian counterpart. There was no need for fancy talk: "Iraq is no longer a neighbour of yours because we are the masters of this piece of real estate. The frontier that you have is no longer with Iraq; it is with the government of the United States. You won't be getting anymore-subsidized petroleum. You have no friends. You're totally isolated; You're in quarantine and we'll keep you there. If Damascus doesn't walk in step with us there could be a political eruption in Syria. We're telling you simply that your world has changed.. Such is the barefaced bullying lingo of fascism; it is the credo of imperialism whose unique merit is its clarity. Syria whose territory was bombed by Israel is demonized as the 'terrorist state' ; the victim has been metamorphosed into an aggressor; and a regime of sanctions imposed on it by both houses of Congress. A stunning triumph of the neo-conservatives and their sidekicks: the Israeli and Jewish lobbies.

15, Never perhaps in the history of any conquest was the reversal of fortune so swift. The body bags and the dead are being shipped home in greater and greater numbers. The tremours of fear and chaos are shaking the US caste oligarchy. The white man's media no longer calls the exclusive shots. For the first time in the world's history the views and vision of the oppressed are exhibited with unrivaled power by two Third World media – Al Jeezera and Al Arabiya. And that's the reasons why they have been hounded, several of their correspondents murdered, with the Quisling politicians demanding they be banned.. This is just one more ignominious illustration of the duplicity of all US administrations that preen themselves as the pristine protagonists of freedom – which means the exclusive freedom of the US caste oligarchy's views and interests – but which in reality sedulously rejects and cuts to shreds any opposing critical comments that challenges their ordained truths, or calls into question its hegemonic interests. What the BBC, and the world, calls resistance fighters has emerged nationally and conspicuously. "We have a multi-faceted war going on here in Iraq," says General Ricardo Sanchez, " our troops are being attacked and killed on a daily basis. This is a full-scale guerilla war. The sophistication of the attacks is striking" The partisans are now labeled bandits, gangsters, thugs, terrorists, death squads, bitter-enders, al-Qu'aida agents, relics of a dead regime, etc. Such are the vulgar little caricatures of a wobbling colonial occupation.

16. The social and ideological composition of the resistance movement is staggering in its pluralism.. The overwhelming mass of resistance fighters have repudiated Saddam Hussein – a former CIA collaborator . The criminal and outrageous acts of a Saddam are anathema to their goals and ambitions The resistance movement is a composite of several strands of which the resurrected Communist Party of Iraq is but

one component. It was one of the greatest illusions of Saddam and the US administration to have nourished the illusion that they had exterminated once and for all one of the major enemies of his regime.

17. Speaking under conditions of anonymity a party militant who spent several years in exile in Sweden tersely noted: “The difference between us and our Indonesian comrades is that the latter were liquidated wholesale by General Suharto and his Anglo-American backers. “Many of our comrades were caught, shot and imprisoned but we did go underground. Ours has been, as the Chinese said, ‘a long march’. Our organization never stalled. The struggle against Saddam’s tyranny was part of our struggle against imperialism. We have never veered from that course.” They are working with the organized working class and the peasantry. It thus consists of men, women and adolescents. With permeable frontiers of hundreds of kilometers it is inevitable that internationalists will continue to swell their ranks.

18.. The belief that augmenting the numbers of the expeditionary force will stem the tide of resistance is one more illusion. The prophetic words of the victor of Dienbienphu., the legendary General Nguyen Giap, to Robert McNamara who believed that victory could be attained by pouring more and more men into Vietnam is a relevant lesson. “McNamara and his advisers, “ he said“ have raised the number of invaders to around half a million . What are the consequences? They have already had recourse to the widespread use of chemical defoliants [i.e. W M D] and other terrible engines of destruction. Certainly they will boost the number of deaths and impose additional terrible sufferings on our people. It will not however loosen the grip of our battle for freedom. It will enhance it. In the end our resistance fighters will triumph.” The Iraqi resistance is paying a terrible price in terms of repression and torture. In Camp Bucca near Umm Qasr the regime is resorting to the desperate torture tactics of all occupying colonial powers. And in this sordid enterprise they’ve been abetted by the so called ‘anti-terrorists squads’ of the Israeli Defense Forces (I D F),operating under cover of the American expeditionary force, that have honed their skills to perfection in the torture techniques deployed so ruthlessly in the Palestinian occupied territories.

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19. Gone are the days when the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) chanted that victory is just around the corner. Creation of a 25-member Iraqi Governing Council (I G C) is a transparently Quisling political force. All of its members are wealthy individuals most of whom have lived outside the country for decades. American millionaire Ahmed Chalabi is illustrative.. They are akin to their fellow Quislings in the Kasai administration in Kabul. They were handpicked by much the same methods. A CPA official was not letting the cat out of the bag when he said, “that they do not have an independent existence. They were created and exist solely as a function of the CPA’s requirements.” A reflection that succinctly defines for all time the rationale of a puppet regime. All are apprehensive of the given moment and the ominous black clouds that hang over them night and day. Within a country they once called theirs they now grovel as internal émigrés.

Almost all, with two exceptions, have British, American or Middle Eastern passports. One US marine charged with ‘protecting’ them sarcastically quipped.

“The bad guys are going after these guys and some of them are going to be skinned. I hope I won’t be around when they do the job.” Such is the racist contempt of the occupiers for their wards. Another of the Quislings’ protectors encapsulated the dilemmas of the puppets and the puppet masters: “how in hell can these guys in their limousines believe we can protect them when we can’t ensure protection for our own guys?” Indeed, one of their numbers has already fallen victim to the resistance and it would be a miracle if others did not succumb to the same fate.

20..The occupation is being driven steadily into a defensive stance that consists of barricading themselves within concrete bunkers ringed by barbed wire. In Marine corps jargon it’s labeled ‘bunkerisation’. A conditioned reflex against an enemy that is everywhere but nowhere, that strikes unseen when and where he/she so pleases engendering a sense of impotence. Never have the flames of hatred between the occupier and the occupied been so searing. At least a minimum of 15 attacks are mounted daily against the occupiers. In this surrealist and panic stricken milieu, it’s no irony that the CPA has awarded a contract to an Arab engineering company to reconstruct all of the 18 underground bunkers most of which were smashed by the invaders ‘smart bombs’. The universe of bunkerdom is one of the painful contradictions of American imperialism, a grim reminder of the extent to which the vaunted ‘liberators’ are now wholly alienated from the objects of their ‘liberation’.

21.. Emblematic of this bunkerisation is the Viceroy himself, Paul Bremer, a product of the elite Ivy League, Wall Street lawyer, multi-millionaire investment banker and Republican fundraiser. A reborn Christian, like his master in the White House, he begins his daily stint with prayers and Bible reading to solicit divine succour, but providence remains impervious to his pleas. His panic ridden civilian administration is located in the epicentre of Baghdad in one of Saddam’s Hussein’s appropriated presidential palaces. Enveloped by razor wire, surrounded by tanks and armoured vehicles with the constant over fly of Apache helicopters, studded with every conceivable electronic gimmick, it is the ‘home’ of 800 employees who pass their lives behind rows upon rows of computers in this stinking air-conditioned ghetto. Leaving the bunker requires special authorization and only with an armed guard.

There are compensations with abundant dirt-cheap supplies of opium shuttled in from Kabul and available in the specially ordered comfort saloons in the Qatar High Command and Kuwait. Not surprisingly the incidence of schizophrenia and psychiatric disorders have scaled alarming proportions. among these psychologically battered creatures. Most, barring the native translators, are white-skinned non-Arabic speaking. They are cogs in a colonial wheel in a country they despise; ignorant of its culture and its language, its geography and above all the history of the colony they are working to ‘liberate’. For the resistance this is the milieu in which payback time has struck.

22. The targets of the national liberation struggle riding a rising curve are no longer exclusively confined to members of the expeditionary force. In this respect the partisans’ onslaughts bear comparison to the European resistance movement whose targets encompassed the entire swathe of Nazi collaborators. It is against this backdrop that we must firmly understand the role of the United Nations in Iraq and specifically its chief of operations Sergio de Mello, one of the scions of Brazil’s wealthiest families. Demolition of Canal House, seat of the United Nations, is

revelatory of the transition from a quantitative to a qualitative leap in the national resistance/liberation movement.

23.. It mirrors the speed at which the resistance movement emerged matched by the demoralization of the colonial occupation. The death of Ayatollah Bakr-al-Hakim, a leading Shia cleric and militant protagonist of the I G C, following swiftly on the heels of the demolition of the Jordanian embassy ³ epitomized the rising scale of retribution inflicted on the occupation and its handmaidens. The rumblings of the US debacle are omnipresent. Even within the occupation's inner sanctums in Baghdad and the Command Centre in Qatar one hears the previously unthinkable subversive question: how long can this hell continue? These three inter-related events transpired at a moment when the occupation is in the throes of profound psychological disarray. Compassless in a world it aspires to dominate but whose complexities are beyond its grasp, Washington has no exit strategy; it has no friends and its desperate bid to curry favor with the United Nations which it repudiated by its unilateral arrogance is unlikely to succeed in the servile manner that it expects. The September Big Five Geneva meeting has ended once more in a fiasco for the U S caste oligarchy and the General Assembly meeting has merely vindicated the world's loathing and repudiation of its policies of colonial repression and genocide.

24.. Driven like a hounded animal, Bush and his coterie depicted the raid against Canal House as "mass murder against humanitarian workers. These were men and women that were toiling for the building of a new Iraq, providing medical care, and helping the distribution of food." On the surface, his plausible cries of woe peppered with pious clichés are distant from the euphoric days of "shock and awe". His corporate propaganda machine peddled them as did his political ventriloquist toadies. As with every artifact of American foreign policy, it is Manichean, stripped bare of all nuances. We are in the presence of absolute good and evil with Bush, like St. George, on his white charger galloping against the legions of evildoers.. The extent to which the wheel has turned is that what once appeared even to the simple-minded as a stirring call to arms has rapidly dwindled.

25. One of Bush's aides discovers that the occupation after the war is faced with a Second Front. The analogy is apt but its user as part of the Bush cabal fails to grasp its wider implications with regard to Iraq. Let's refresh his memory. The Second Front triggered in June 1944 was an act of liberation from Nazi occupied Europe. The Second Front in Iraq is also a crucial phase in the upsurge of a bludgeoned people that rejects its shackles, and is bent on destroying a colonial occupation whose primary goal is the permanent pillage and expropriation by a predator power located 25,000 kms from its shores.

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26. Edward Mortimer, Annan's senior adviser after going through the usual motions of excoriating what he calls 'the terrorists' comes one peg closer to the truth when he says that "whoever planned the attack does not want a happy ending to the story of the Anglo-American occupation in Iraq." Let's remind Mortimer, an Englishman, that there's no such thing 'as happy endings' to any occupation, whether it be the Nazi occupation of its conquered territories or that of the tragic figure of General

³ Jordan is a client state that receives an annual US handout of \$2.2 bn. It served as a major logistical, supply and intelligence gathering point against Iraq.

Sir Stanley Maude whose bones are interred in a decrepit padlocked cemetery in east Baghdad. Happy endings belong to the world of fairy tales and fantasists because any occupation however benign it may appear remains an intrusive body wholly incompatible with national dignity. The American occupation of foreign lands as the historical record so pitilessly indicates since merely the end of World War 2, strikingly so in Latin America, Indochina and now Iraq is permanently drenched in blood.

27. Mortimer comes to the nub of the matter, however, when he observes that the goal of “the resistance was to demonstrate at all costs that the occupation is not only illegitimate but also futile, and can only lead to disaster.” The formulation is correct but calls for certain caveats. What the birth and gestation of what is already a mighty resistance phalanx pinpoints is that the colonial presence is not only “illegitimate”, a designation that is absurdly mild, but rather a horrendous crime against humanity. Kofi Annan joins the choir of condemnation against “the fanatics and violent people” and adds “that they will not be able to dictate what is happening in Iraq.” There is nothing in the record to indicate that he used such expletives to lambaste the Bush cabal when it perpetrated the foulest of crimes on April 20 and, indeed, before. Cause and effect are inseparable aspects of the dialectics of change.

28. Who’s doing the ‘dictating’ in Iraq, and in the interests of whom is the occupation dictating? Let’s be enlightened by Richard Perle, a neo-conservative celebrity, member of Bush’s inner circle. Addressing The American Enterprise Institute he spells out the goals of the occupation. “We have a responsibility not to turn Iraq over to institutions incapable of seeing this through to a successful conclusion... the last thing that Iraq needs is French statism and German labour practices.” What it does need obviously in this perspective is to shovel the nation’s economic patrimony into the grab bag of transnational corporate ownership and control, notably American, in the shortest possible time. It would be difficult in a short sentence to find such a compilation of weasel words. Who does the “we” refer to? What does a successful conclusion mean? For Perle and his cronies, it is singularly irrelevant and foolish that Iraqis should be the ultimate repository of sovereignty and decision making. This is ‘diktat’ in its clearest manifestation, and a reminder to Annan of who is dictating to whom. The Dubai manifesto is proof sufficient.

The goals of imperialism were brazenly exhibited at the G7 meeting in Dubai.. The CPA working through its puppet Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) showed the extent to which the country had been put on the auction bloc. The blueprint was unveiled in Dubai in September where the I M F and the World Bank were holding their annual meetings. The blueprint for the grab of the country’s resources was drawn up by both institutions, the US Treasury and three major US investment banks. It was the grand triumph of neo-liberalism. Unconditional foreign ownership goes hand in hand with massive tax cuts and tariffs. It is wrong to assume as **The Independent** editorial commented that the American plan to put up Iraq for sale was as insensitive as any of the mistakes made by the occupying powers since the end of the war. Let’s get the record straight. The goal was corporate conquest and the imperial plunder of the nation’s resources and here we have the perfect neo-liberal blueprint with no frills, no apologetics no empty

refurbished rationalizations. The biggest 'reconstruction' contracts have been awarded to Halliburton and Bechtel that are among the largest donors of the Republican party with close connections to the Bush family and administration. Viceroy Bremer is on the board of Halliburton.

The contracts were awarded behind closed doors with no competitive bids authorized. Finance minister Kamel al-Keylani, the Council's Finance Minister gives us the vision of undiluted economic liberalism. "The reforms will advance efforts to build a free and open market economy in Iraq and accelerate growth and Iraq's re-entry into the international economy and reintegration with other countries." As a sop to national and international public opinion the blueprint excluded oil and natural resources. But this is a fiction for the goal is the corporate takeover of the world's second largest petroleum reserves as was done so blatantly by Russian oligarchs in Russia and elsewhere. In short if the occupation succeeds these oil reserves will be grabbed lock stock and barrel.

The conquest of Iraq is all about oil. The Persian Gulf countries: Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates produce about 25% of the world's oil, and hold 65% of the world's oil reserves. US oil deposits are shrinking rapidly. Over the next 15-20 years its oil imports will account for around 70% of total domestic demand and hence the impetuous US drive to grab the world's reserves. Present world annual oil consumption is around 25bn barrels with no signs of deceleration. "That's why we went to war in Iraq," notes Dr James McKenzie, senior assistant on the climate change programme at the World Resources Institute in Washington, D.C. as reported by **The Independent**. "Gas might have comparable reserves to oil, but it's not in the right place and we don't really have the infrastructure to transport it. We won't run out of oil - but what will happen is that production will decline, and that's when all hell will break loose." US imperialism has succeeded in grabbing the nation's oil resources but given the pervasive power of the resistance they have not and cannot succeed in making the oil flow. As veteran correspondent Robert Fisk has pointed out it is this factor rather than the daily killings of American invaders that lies behind the Bush's administration's mounting panic. "Washington has got its hands on the biggest treasure chest in the world - but it can't open the lid."

Research work in the University of Uppsala claims that oil supplies will peak soon after 2010 with gas supplies swiftly following in its wake., rocketing the price of gasoline and other fuels with potentially disastrous economic consequences. The assessment of Dr McKenzie once again: "We have to accept the fact of oil and gas production peaking. It's not when will we run out, it's when will production be unable to meet demand. And 97-98% of transport depends on it. You can use coal to make methanol to power your cars or buses. But the reality is that it's all about where the oil is." It's for this reason that the vast oil and gas resources can be expected to fall into the grab bag of the mega petroleum giants and their political cronies when and if the conquest of Iraq is consummated. The \$25bn investment in one of Russia's leading petro giants is a pointer in this direction with total control as one of its corollaries is a pointer in this direction.

The architecture of public sector ownership and control is slated for demolition.. The Central Bank of Iraq will cease to exist as a regulatory body. It will

have “full independence” and investors will be granted uninhibited transfer of foreign exchange earnings. Under the new privatization offensive, six foreign banks will be allowed ‘fast track’ entry into the economy and will be permitted full ownership of the local banks within five years. Part of the blueprint is the privatization of everything from electricity and telecommunications to pharmaceutical, textile and engineering firms.. This is one of the biggest robberies of all time driven through in the interests of foreign capitalists and their native sidekicks.. The plan ensures full, immediate remittances to the foreign firms of dividends, interest and royalties. This is the meaning of diktat. As far as agriculture is concerned all subsidies and government grants of varying kinds will be slashed and foreign corporations will have access to the uninhibited purchase and sale of land. Such is the vision of liberalization unbounded.. This is the dream of the triumph of Cancun if imperialism had not been stymied in its quest for unconditional liberalization, privatization and uninhibited financial flows.

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29. The attack against Canal House was not an aberration, but imputable to the UN’s role since the onset of the nineties. Let’s listen to the testimony of a former senior UN civil servant, Mustapha El Fawzi a colleague of mine for many years. He was involved in the oil-for-food operations who now scorns the sheer hypocrisy of ‘humanitarian aid’ and the monstrous babble of ‘humanitarian intervention’.

“The US and Britain have been at war with my country non-stop for more than 13 years. It dragooned the UN bureaucracy into toppling our government. The platitude was regime change. It is the US/UN sanctions that generated the genocide that wiped out almost one million of our people. That’s the Unicef data. Let’s ignore for a moment the numbers butchered during the second war. When asked about this General Tommy Franks replied that they’re not interested in counting those numbers. But our people will not forget those numbers. They destroyed our factories, our dikes, our public utilities, and our infrastructure. The UN was nothing more than a fig leaf to carry out these atrocities”.

30.. This is not a voice in the wilderness by a justifiably grief stricken patriot but a widespread opinion in the Arab world and in the United Nations secretariat. Likewise, Mr. Halliday, former UN assistant secretary who supervised the UN’s oil-for-food programme recognized the extent to which it was riddled with graft, corruption and bad supplies. Distressingly, he added, “the people of Iraq have not forgotten that the UN has killed more Iraqis under 13 years of UN sanctions than Bush, Clinton and Bush 2 ever did.” As El Fawzi observed, it was not the UN as an institution with its Charter and its noble ideals that came to be despised by Iraqis but rather the manner in which the country had been bludgeoned with the shameless complicity of certain persons within the highest echelons of the UN’s decision makers. The US / UN duo in this respect as that of Bremer/ de Mello at a personal level are facets of the same reality. They mirror an identical set of policies in the service of imperial genocide.

31..The former presidential palace in the centre of Baghdad appropriated by the C P A had become, together with Canal House, the two most striking symbols of a hated alien presence. Canal House was seen not only as political object of uncompromising revulsion, but as a super-enclave of privilege: abundant commissariat goods and vegetables flown in daily from Jordan and Kuwait sold at discount prices plus

subsidized gasoline, lavish financial perks and the juiciest of **per diems** for its functionaries. All this at a savage moment in the nation's history when it is wracked by chronic hunger and galloping malnutrition; 60% of the country's work force is unemployed, with a further 30% grossly underemployed gasping for its survival in an overcrowded, poverty-stricken informal sector. Investments, which provide the impetus for economic growth, have ground to a halt with the nation on the brink of a catastrophic famine.

32. Canal House thus came to be evaluated not only as a repugnant enclave of a hyper-privileged caste of foreign parasites, but one more boot of the occupation firmly planted in the country's face. Indeed, the word 'boot' is now the belligerent designation to portray the tyranny of the occupation. In such an oppressive state, what is the meaning of the rantings of the Bremer/de Mello axis for the promotion of Iraqi sovereignty? Iraqi sovereignty is the victim of a homicide, a corpse that cannot be resuscitated by the white man's magic wands and potions. Rebirth when it does come, as it must and sooner than many of us expect, can only be achieved when the occupation is battered by the resistance and quits. The predator will not easily abandon his victim, but before that happens regrettably the blood flows will surge to yet higher levels.

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33. What precipitated the attack against Canal House, although sooner or later it would doubtless have occurred, was the ramming through on 14 August of an American resolution trumpeted as 'a great victory' by defense secretary Donald Rumsfeld. A resolution destined to legitimize the I G C. To extol 14 August, however, as 'a great victory' is an example of delusional thinking. It was the date that was also the high watermark in de Mello's fatal collusion with US power. For the resistance, it was the final stick that cracked the camel's back. The bulldozing of that resolution was the signing of de Mello's death warrant. As a boundlessly ambitious apparatchik, he believed as no doubt others of his breed in Canal House that they were flying on angels' wings. Rather what they had done was to install mechanisms in their skulls to tell them that they were beyond the horrors of a fate they could not divine. Such were the flights of lethal fancy that shoved them into the purgatory of exterminism.

34.. De Mello was one of the propelling engines behind that resolution. To argue as some of his well-meaning UN critics have erroneously contended that he exceeded his mandate is to grossly misapprehend the convolutions of UN power politics, and the personal design and ambitions of the man being groomed and marketed by the State Department and the US delegation to the United Nations as the future secretary general. His long service in the UN secretariat was inextricably related with US power. De Mello we must not forget was deeply embroiled with US policies that dismembered Yugoslavia.

35. He had robustly urged and applauded NATO's bombing of Kosovo and Belgrade. The same team he worked with in Yugoslavia and who partnered his fate was dispatched to Baghdad where they resumed the same trajectory of US/UN political stratagems. De Mello, in short, had become an invaluable asset to be recycled when conditions so dictated. The implosion of the De Mello asset did not signal the end of his utility in perpetuating the sordid cause he battled strenuously for. Not surprisingly his name was promptly put forward by the State Department and the US delegation

to the United Nations for the Nobel peace prize whose close imbrications to US policies and pressure requires no commentary. His death has been capitalized into a gigantic public relations publicity stunt.

36. It must be stressed that stemming from his headlong endorsement of US imperial policies, in conjunction with his clones in the UN secretariat, De Mello was in no way an undercover agent, a bedraggled spy 'that came in from the cold'. He was above board. He basked in the limelight of publicity and luxuriated openly in his US connections, his espousal of neo-liberalism that culminated in the Dubai project. There was no fakery when he flung his ideological trappings in support of American appointed Quislings. His talks with Bremer were daily and at times more frequently. They were two peas in a pod as one Egyptian journalist called them. There was no need for him to dissimulate his intimate affinities with the neo-conservatives whose ideology he embraced, and the Pentagon officials he cultivated that fathered the I G C. The Dubai blueprint for the permanent economic colonization of Iraq which he did not live to see was the fulfillment of his strivings.

37.. Several officials of the Arab League which had refused to confer their benediction on the I D C were amazed that he was traveling freely, with his American bodyguards, drumming up support for this Quisling rump. Obviously, the resistance who had studied his personal meanderings and his collaborationist utterances, inside and outside the Middle East, were knowledgeable of his pursuits.. What many in the UN secretariat deemed his reckless marketeering raises the question: to what extent he was a solitary cavalier or was he acting in concert with Kofi Annan and other leading lights within the UN secretariat given that his political and ideological coordinates were known in the secretariat.? This is a sordid dossier that future historians will undoubtedly plumb with profit, but whose general outline is quite clear.

38. It was not only his fulsome embrace of the occupation's policies that was of primordial political significance. Related to his stance was his unabashed hostility to France, Germany and Russia in the Security Council. According to **The Independent** he argued, "that the invasion of Iraq had been justified though no weapons of mass destruction were found." A stunning acknowledgement that speaks volumes, and that from a senior official of an organization whose Security Council had categorically repudiated giving the green light to such a criminal violation of the Charter.

39..His enthusiastic reception by Condoleezza Rice and Bush at the White House in March – prior to the invasion – would be sequeled by regular visits to the White House and Camp David after the invasion commenced.. It was one more insight of his untiring networking within the highest reaches of the perpetrators of this criminal war. **The Financial Times** was simply reporting the obvious: "he campaigned for international recognition of the I G C in whose formation he played a significant role," a banality that could be engraved on his headstone. To which we might add in the light of what we already know of De Mello's all-encompassing activities it would not be inapt to designate him as a racketeer in the service of American imperialism.

40.. The momentous historical reverberations of the destruction of Canal House will be with us for many years but what can be said with a degree of certainty is that it smashed the nexus between the United Nations and the imperial occupant. The US stranglehold on the UN is not of recent vintage and one that has tarnished its reputation.⁴ It of course conjectural whether this exposure of what amounts to a criminal connection is an ephemeral phenomenon or something more enduring.

41..No doubt, the shattering of the Bremer/ de Mello axis has set in motion a chain reaction within Iraq and abroad. It has vastly speeded up the demoralization gusting through the ranks of the occupant. The World Bank and the I M F whose plans and projects were being orchestrated by the US Treasury Department and the C P A have bolted to the not so-green pastures of the Jordanian neo-colony, prompting a British diplomat, under cover of anonymity, to ejaculate that “the rats are fleeing a sinking ship.” The British embassy has slashed its staff to the bone. Most of the NGO’s have already thrown in the sponge.

42.The sweet dreams of US spoliation and easy pickings have metamorphosed into nightmares without end. The predators assumed that oil revenues would pay for the occupation costs and reconstruction. At the same time, the propagandists of the imperial order swore that the war was fuelled by the noblest of human aspirations against an obnoxious tyranny that had nothing to do with such nasty little commodities as oil. The debacle in Iraq was not an isolated event, It occurred concurrently with the upsurge of the Palestinian resistance movement, the elimination of the US/Israeli imposed stooge Abu Mazem and the scuttling of the US conceived ‘road map’; rebuff by North Korea of US demands for unconditional capitulation; the crash of the Cancun negotiations that exposed the dimensions of the double-talk and decadence of an organization whose goal was the peddling of a bogus “free market multilateral trading system.”. In the present comatose condition of the WTO, imperialism has lost one of its major pillars of control and domination. The biggest of hoaxes has now crumbled like a cookie.

43..Increasingly, never mind the world,⁵ the US power oligarchy is isolated in Europe seen in the negative response of France and Germany, Russia and China to acquiesce in any new resolution that legitimizes the permanent US colonization of Iraq. The touted ‘regime changes’ in Syria and Iran brandished as the follow-up ‘to the liberation of Iraq’ are nothing more than pipe dreams dispatched to the back burner. This is matched by imperialism’s failure to gain control of the Gulf region and the Middle East. In the Afghan neo-colony, where the opium harvests are hitting record levels, the war against the US occupation and its hirelings rages with no prospects of peace and stability and economic growth.

⁴ As a permanent senior official in the UN secretariat for many years, I witnessed at first hand the insidious and toxic penetration of US corporate and blatant political peddling.. For a massively documented study of this penetration, see Phyllis Bennis, **Calling the Shots: How Washington Dominates Today’s UN**, New York 2002.

⁵ Richard Bernstein summarizes the shift in global opinion : “In the two years since September 11, 2001, the view of the United States as a victim of terrorism that deserved the world’s sympathy and support has given way in the months after the war in Iraq to a widespread vision of America as an imperial power that has defied world public opinion in an unjustified and unilateral use of military force.” **The New York Times**, 11 Sept. 2003.

44 This brief inventory of calamity has been partnered once again by the fiasco of the Cancun negotiations that exposed the ballyhoo of the promised paradise of free trade and liberalization. It revealed the depth of the chasm dividing the developed and less developed segments of global capitalism.. In the world capitalist economy bedeviled by overproduction, excess capacity, deflation, anemic effective demand and beggar-my-neighbor cut throat competition of every order; it takes little imagination to grasp that international capitalism is wallowing in a state of delirium tremens. Inter-imperialist rivalries have placed the trans-Atlantic NATO alliance under a terminal strain, with the US shoving in one direction, and NATO's European Union in an opposed antagonistic direction. No less vital are the afflictions that are transpiring within the heartland of US finance capitalism.

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45.. The foregoing comment on the tribulations of US imperialism, within and outside Iraq, is being speeded up by the burgeoning convulsions of US capitalism notwithstanding that the mega-terrorist state spends over \$400bn annually for war and preparations for war; a sum without precedence in the annals of warfare, outstripping the total expenditures of the next 20 countries. This amounts to 44% of our planet's aggregate war expenditures. Its military presence is implanted in 137 countries.

46. Yet it is a colossus with feet of clay, a supplicant mired in dismal financial straits, beseeching unsuccessfully, all and sundry, for handouts to save its already bankrupt skin. Aggregate costs of the Iraqi aggression now surpass one billion dollars weekly. With interest rate charges thrown in this number hits \$80bn yearly or 17% of a bloated budget. A number that does not embrace, in Bush's estimates, the \$87bn required for so-called 'reconstruction'. There is only one way of getting this kind of big money and that is by the ruinous policy of printing greenbacks. This fiscal year the budget deficit is expected to exceed \$455bn the biggest in US history. The money machine is spiraling out of control.

47. A figure, which, according to the US Congressional Budget Office, is slated to exceed \$500bn in 2004.. The reversal from surplus to deficit in the past three years - as a share of G D P - is the largest since 1953. Persistence of the non-stop deficit promises to continue into the indefinite future with a shriveling of the dollar's value as its corollary. This will inexorably lead to the slashing of national savings, boost the foreign debt, a drastic pullback in foreign asset inflows and the hobbling of investment. The pathology of the deficit is such that there is little possibility of growing out of it.

48. As I have shown elsewhere budget and current account deficits and ever rising tides of unstoppable debt continue to wreak havoc on the diseased financial complex of US capitalism.⁶ The same holds for the nation's net asset liabilities that measures the difference between its foreign assets and its foreign liabilities growing by 10% annually, rising to 32% of GDP by the end of 2003. Corporate balance sheet debt is one aspect of the abysmal black hole. The far grimmer side of the picture is off-

⁶ Frederic F.Clairmont , **USA: The Crumbling of Empire** Citizen's International Press, Penang, 2003.

balance sheet debt that has soared sharply over a 30 year period (1973-2003) from 8.6% of GDP to 99% in 2003.

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49. In short, what these sparse numbers spotlight is that the short and medium term viability of American capitalism stands precariously on a razor's edge. The relative decline of the American empire was discernible well before 9/11⁷. A process speeded up by an abortive and criminal invasion to redraw the map of the Middle East joined to the annexationist designs of corporate America for enhanced profits and fatter market shares.

50..Its goal as we've said was to grab access and control of the region's vast petroleum and natural resources with the complicity of a clutch of UN collaborators. The plans of empire and permanent colonization have gone awry symptomatic of the dire straits of imperialism. In this respect the sustained ferocity of the of the Iraqi resistance/ liberation struggle is an anti-imperialist catalyst of Promethean force.

⁷ . Frederic F. Clairmont, **The Rise and Fall of Economic Liberalism: The Making of the Economic Gulag** , Southbound Press, Penang, 1996.