

War on Iraq

Gateway to an American or to a New Wave of

By Fatima Resolução

As we go to press, preparations for a US-led assault on Iraq are in high gear. Although it is impossible to predict the exact course of events, the US imperialists have made their intentions to go to war crystal clear and there is every reason to believe they will proceed with their criminal plans. — AWTW

WHY THIS WAR, WHY NOW?

What is the purpose, the aim, of the impending war against Iraq? The

answer is important for two reasons.

The first is so that we can best oppose, resist and if possible, defeat what the US and its allies are trying to accomplish. As of this writing the invasion has not yet been unleashed, and already the opposition has been enormous in some countries. But twists and turns doubtlessly lie ahead. As the darkness of war gathers and the light of reason in public discourse and faint hearts goes dim, it will be hard for people to resist deception, keep their bearings

and struggle effectively unless they become increasingly clear on the interests of all the governments involved. The unity of the interests of the people of the world, including the Iraqi people, against this war and the US-led gang of murderers and thieves behind it will need to be brought out at every turn, exactly because the enemy will do their best to hide it. This unity must be constantly expanded and brought to bear in many different kinds of battles.

The second is that, without trying

A War for Oil?

Many people are saying this war is about oil. That is true, but not in a narrow sense. Two caveats must be added.

First, it is about oil not only in the sense of who gets it, but also under what conditions - and who doesn't get it at all or only gets it as long as they go along with the American "mission". It is about oil as the lifeblood of empires.

This is even more criminal - you could ask, "What planet are they living on?" - since unless alternatives to fossil fuels are brought into use within the next few decades, much of the world and its people face climatic catastrophes, rising sea levels and other calamitous consequences of global warming. But the problem goes beyond the fact that Bush is "deep in the oil companies' pockets", as some people say. Oil and power go together; the oil business was part of what trained him and his cabinet for power.

It is not entirely an accident that

all five members of the UN Security Council have oil companies with major stakes in Iraq. This is not just because they are profit-hungry, although in the end they are driven by nothing but profits. Possession of oil is a strategic advantage, crucial to the kind of profits that come when you're not just in business but also in control - monopoly capitalism.

Second, it's not just about Iraqi oil, as important as that is to Bush's plans. It is also about all the oil in the Middle East, and not just that either.

The US imports slightly more than half of the oil it uses at present and that percentage is expected to rise to about two-thirds by 2020. To diversify sources, American oil companies and the US military are aggressively moving into the Caspian Sea and Asian regions of the former USSR. Pipelines are popping up like mushrooms in the shadow of US bases. The US has also begun to take an interest in West Africa, both major proven petroleum exporters

like Nigeria, Angola and Gabon and potential ones like Equatorial Guinea. Not even Bush's supporters bother to argue that Bush sent Secretary of State Colin Powell to Angola and Gabon and re-opened the long-dusty consulate in Equatorial Guinea for humanitarian reasons.

Oil is also a core concern in US policies toward Mexico and Venezuela. The dispatching of US Green Berets, 10 helicopters and \$94 million for counter-insurgency aid to Colombia is avowedly for the purpose of securing oil and pipelines, both from guerrilla movements and European countries like Germany that have occasionally made deals with the guerrillas.

Yet because of both declining production and increasing demand in the US, oil from these countries is not expected to play more than a secondary role in assuaging American's thirst. But there is another, less obvious factor. The other European powers and Japan are almost

"Greater Middle East" Resistance to America?

to predict the unpredictable, an examination of what has happened so far gives us some framework for understanding events as they develop and for guiding our struggles and aims. This must be based not just on what our enemies have done but also on the possibilities and goals of the people in this stormy interplay of contradictions.

The US is seeking to transform Iraq from a country economically and politically dependent on imperialism but able to negotiate with several

entirely dependent on Middle Eastern oil. The decline of North Sea oil production is one of several factors likely to increase that dependency even more. (From this angle, the US's efforts to grab up non-Middle Eastern resources has a pre-emptory aspect.) Whoever controls Middle Eastern oil has an enormous leverage over Europe.

Bush's Defence Secretary, Donald Rumsfeld, likes to talk about "force multipliers", combinations of different qualities (such as accuracy and explosiveness in munitions) that increase "lethality" many times over. Bush's war aims in Iraq are to achieve a similar mix to bring the Middle East under almost exclusive American political and economic control, based on military power, in a way that multiplies American power in all three domains and gives it a lethality the world has never seen before. Once again, we're back to "big sticks" and "places to stand". ■

imperialist powers, to a neocolony entirely beholden to the US, an impotent US puppet on the model of Afghanistan's current President Karzai, or perhaps an outright colony, run by a governor appointed in Washington, just as Britain once ruled India through its Raj. This is what Bush plans for "the day after" he wins this war.

The "New Iraq" (some people in Washington are already giving it a brand name) would be a lynchpin in a newly configured Middle East, a "Greater Middle East from North Africa to Afghanistan and Pakistan", as a recent article by two former Clinton advisers turned Bush theorists put it. In this new configuration, economically, Iraq's vast oil reserves would give the US a stranglehold on the oil needs of any would-be rivals. Militarily, the vast permanent military build-up there, virtually converting Iraq into a gigantic military base, could bend and smash any wayward regimes. This new "Greater Middle East" would in turn be key to a newly configured world - an American world. With the war on Afghanistan the US grabbed one end of this part of the global map; with a war on Iraq it means to nail down the other even more crucial part.

It is important to be very clear what Bush means and does not mean by "regime change". Bush's Secretary of State, Colin Powell, said that the US was studying the historical models of the US occupation of Germany and Japan. This idea has been widely and correctly scoffed at because, despite losing a world war, those two countries were and are highly developed, imperialist societies feeding on the people of the world,

with little resemblance to a country like Iraq that has for so long been fed upon. Yet there are parallels, as well as differences. A major difference is that after the Second World War the US did everything it could to re-float Germany and Japan as partners (albeit junior) against the USSR, whilst Bush plans to turn Iraq into a US protectorate. But the way the US treated the German and Japanese ruling classes may have some application in Iraq. The aim of the "de-Nazification" of Germany and the trials of top Japanese generals (never the emperor) was to reduce US enemies to a tiny handful and dispose of them, whilst at the same time declaring the immense majority of the capitalists, military, judiciary, bureaucrats and other pillars of power "clean", despite their crimes against their own and other peoples, so that they could serve US interests.

The Bush gang has announced plans to try a dozen people closely linked to Saddam (including his family), whilst at the same time reassuring almost the entirety of the Iraqi power structure that they will be welcomed as servants of the new masters. "You want to get into Iraq the message that you're not going to kill everybody in the Ba'ath party [the ruling party]", a US official said. When the US takes over, the torture chambers will not shut down. How else can it ensure the loyalty of the Iraqis, whose labour will make the oil flow for the occupiers of their nation? Few people in Iraq or anywhere else will miss Saddam, but the burden on the Iraqi people will only be heavier and their contradiction with imperialism increasingly fierce.

Iraq is a prize and more. The

Greek philosopher Archimedes said that with a lever long enough and a place to stand, he could move the world. Iraq is supposed to provide the US with both, at least in regional terms. This is why, unlike the first Gulf War, when the US aim was to smash Iraq's military and economic

power, its oil fields and facilities, this time the US wants to take over an economy that is as intact as possible.

Iraq's proven oil reserves are ranked second only to Saudi Arabia by many oil analysts, who say that its as yet unproven reserves may turn out to be even greater. If instead of a

US-led blockade, Iraq was under a US-led occupation, whose main interest was pumping oil, it might quickly become the world's biggest supplier. That makes Iraq a potential economic lever. If Iraq fell entirely into US hands, it would give America the equivalent of veto power over the

Just Who "Gassed Their Own People" and

A few Bushite (and Blair-backed) pretexts for this war need to be dispensed with, not just because they fool some confused people, but also because they bring up past experiences that reveal the criminality of this evil axis, even in advance of what they do in Iraq.

Tony "the poodle" Blair seems to be the only head of state anywhere in the world (and one of the few in his own party) willing to publicly support Bush's contention that there is some connection between Saddam and al-Qaeda. Actually, after being criticised for getting caught at obvious lies by the American press, Bush mainly left this issue to his advisors. Perhaps to protect herself from the same charges, National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice prefers to lie by implication: "There's no evidence so far but we're learning more every day." Earlier Defence Secretary Rumsfeld and Rice tried to link the "war on terror" to the war on Iraq by asserting that 11 September suspect Mohammed Atta secretly met with an Iraqi intelligence operative in Prague. The Czech government, supposedly the source of that report, says it never happened. The head of the CIA, George Tenet, told the US Congress the same thing. In the spirit of *Alice in Wonderland*, the Bushite answer seems to be, "First the sentence, then the trial."

If we were to follow Rice's logic, we could say that while there is no proof and the whole story may never be told, the trail of incongruities laid down by many things that are known about the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon seems to

lead a lot more in the direction of the American establishment and perhaps President Bush himself than Saddam Hussein, as the German weekly *Die Zeit*, France's *Le Monde* and the British press, among many others, have pointed out.

Then there is the pretext of "weapons of mass destruction" as the *casus belli*, the reason for this war. Rumsfeld is said (by his admirers, no less) to be "obsessed" with the thought that Saddam has such weapons. He should know, because he was personally involved in giving chemical and biological weapons to Saddam during the days when the US was backing Iraq against Iran in the 1980-88 war. (Later, as famously revealed in the "Iran-Contra" scandal, the US also gave weapons to Iran to prolong the war and make sure that there was as much killing and mutual weakening of both regimes as possible.)

The US first sent anthrax stock to Iraq in 1978, with seven shipments in all in the following decade. President Reagan sent Rumsfeld as his special envoy to meet with Saddam in December 1983, and re-opened the US embassy in Baghdad. In March 1984, the day that the UN released a report condemning Iraq's use of poisonous gas against Iranian troops, Rumsfeld was meeting with Saddam's foreign minister, Tariq Aziz. In 1986, the Pentagon assigned officers to work with their Iraqi counterparts to increase the killing power of Saddam's air forces. In March 1988, that air force dropped gas bombs on Halabja, an Iraqi village under the control of rebel Kurds,

killing several thousand civilians. German companies provided the gas itself. Amidst world uproar and protest, US officials claimed that they had reviewed the evidence and found it "inconclusive". That year, under the presidency of Bush the father, Washington approved the export of virus cultures for military use to Iraq, as well as a \$1 billion private contract to build a petrochemical plant designed to be equally usable to make mustard gas. Bush senior also approved sending Iraq \$500 million in aid (in the form of subsidies to buy American farm products) and doubled that the following year. The UK, too, sent Iraq weapons-related equipment after the Halabja attack. US advisors helped plan Iraq's poison gas assaults on Iranian troops in the desperate fight over Iraq's strategic Fao peninsula in 1986 and again in 1988.

Eventually, the Iranian regime became more "reasonable" by US standards and Saddam's ambitions proved to be a less than perfect fit with those of the American imperialists; so Bush the father set out to destroy Iraqi power in 1991. After 40 days of bombings and seven years of so-called "UN inspectors" rampaging through Iraq destroying whatever they wanted, the US achieved this aim. Iraq's once very large and powerful military (paid for and equipped by the US and its allies) was almost completely gone. An estimated 100,000 Iraqis were killed by US bombs and a million more, many of them children, are thought to have died from the decade of vicious sanctions that followed.

world oil market and prices. But even more, that could very significantly decrease the economic importance of oil from Saudi Arabia and Iran. When you put this together with Bush's military plans, which reportedly include stationing 100,000 American troops or more in

"American Iraq" for the near future, making it "a place to stand", then it's hard to see how neighbouring Saudi Arabia could resist any US demands. In Whitehall, British foreign policy pundits are chattering about how the UK created the Saudi kingdom and could dismantle it just as easily.

The US occupation of Iraq and a military lockdown of the Gulf could mean that Iran may also have to give up any pretence of being independent. Then there's Iraq's northern neighbour Syria.... Further, some

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Used Nukes on Civilians?

Scott Ritter, a former US Marines officer, who, as chief of the UN "concealment inspections team", took part in wreaking havoc on Iraqi facilities, recently published a book entitled *War on Iraq*. He contends that "90-95%" of Iraq's advanced weaponry was destroyed. He also says that the nuclear programme and its manufacturing and research infrastructure and the chemical and biological weapons laboratories and production facilities were wiped out down to the last pipe and brick. Radiation detectors planted on the ground and operating from the sky have failed to detect any uranium or plutonium enrichment since then. Even if some biological weapons were hidden - and Ritter says he is sure they were not - most deteriorate quickly and would no longer be usable. An equally important factor is that Iraq is said to be down to about a dozen intermediate-range Scud missiles and a relative handful of ageing aircraft held together with glue and wires.

When the Blair government finally released the long-promised dossier that was supposed to so thoroughly document the Iraqi threat that all of Europe would be convinced, it was trashed by no less than Israel's chief of military intelligence, Major General Aharon Frakash. For his own reasons (probably to cool heads in Israel who might mistakenly buy the Bush/Blair line and thus act precipitously), Frakash said that there was no chance of Iraq acquiring nuclear weapons in the near future and that militarily Iran and even Syria were far more of a threat to Israel than was Iraq.

Even if every word Bush and Blair say were true, what right would these imperialists have to attack Iraq? Iraq has already been devastated by one Bush and another is promising to do even worse this time, so what gives them the right to dictate what kind of weapons Iraq can develop? The people of Iraq, of course, have their own score to settle with Saddam, but what right has the US to step in? Bush claims that the US can violate Iraqi sovereignty because Saddam has used biological and chemical weapons "against his own people". So have the US, Russia, the UK and Canada, just to mention a few known recent culprits.

After the Second World War, the US took over the data produced by Japan's biological and chemical warfare programme, just as they also appropriated the Nazi German rocket programme and scientists to make American missiles. The Chinese and North Korean governments and American newsmen charged that the US used these biological weapons in Korea. In subsequent decades, the US military conducted bio-warfare tests on civilians in several US cities, including spraying weak pathogens in the New York City subway system. During the 1960s and early 1970s, Canada and the UK took part in joint tests with the US that involved spraying two of the deadliest agents that Saddam is accused of possessing, sarin and VX, on their own unwitting soldiers, sailors and civilians. Are such tests still being conducted? The US has blocked the enforcement of an international treaty against germ warfare weapons. Bush declared that

no international inspectors will ever be allowed to step foot in the US, let alone do anything like what America demands that Iraq submit to, so we may never know. But it is indisputable that the US has by far the world's biggest stockpile of "weapons of mass destruction" and it has used them at home and abroad ever since Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

Russia, along with the US, possesses the world's most extensive stockpiles of chemical and biological agents. Just recently they also made use of them "against their own people", when at least 123 people were gassed to death by Russian troops when they stormed a Moscow theatre taken by Chechen rebels. Bush praised Putin for this act. Is he planning to follow suit?

Remember the reports during the 1991 Gulf War about how Iraqi troops rampaged through Kuwaiti hospitals and unplugged incubators so that babies would die? That turned out to be a complete lie invented by a publicist and accepted as fact by much of the world's press, especially in the "democratic" West. Or how about the Iraqi chemical weapons factory destroyed by US bombs that turned out to make baby formula? In the First World War, the Bushes and Blairs of that day made up the lie that German troops were raping Belgian nuns. The rules of war publicists have not changed. The ruling classes still invent pretexts hoping that their control of the media will enable them to make some people believe them until too late - or until new lies overshadow the old ones. ■

Iraq

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American reactionary theorists see the occupation of Iraq as the key to resolving the Palestinian question. They argue that "the road to Jerusalem passes through Baghdad" because they hope that direct US control over Iraq and Middle Eastern oil, the subjugation or intimidation of the other regimes in the Middle East and the stranglehold this would give the US on Europe (more on this later) would make it possible to isolate, intimidate and contain the Palestinian people through apartheid or a more massive expulsion.

But why start with Iraq? The infamous Bushite declaration about "the axis of evil" (Iraq, North Korea

and Iran), while making clear the global scope of US military ambitions, may have been mis-representative. War with North Korea is plainly not on Bush's agenda right now (the US government even concealed its knowledge of a North Korean nuclear programme). This could have to do with increasing rapprochement between the US and China. But why not attack Iran? One reason is that Saddam has been painted as resisting the US (we say "painted" because the US has repeatedly refused to accept Saddam's surrender). Saddam has survived anyway, to a large degree because of trade and political support from France, Russia, Italy and China, and the toppling of his regime is meant to bring these countries into line as well. Further, Iraq is a far more

attractive target for the US precisely because Saddam has been so weakened militarily. Today's George Bush faces a far, far less powerful Saddam than did his father, with less than half the number of soldiers, fewer tanks and other heavy weapons and practically no air force left. Iran, by contrast, might be too big a mouthful for the US to start with in the region. The prospect of easy victory is as key to American calculations as Iraqi oil. In a sense the answer to the question "Why Iraq" comes from the very conditions the US itself has created since the first Gulf War.

But if an important part of the answer to "why Iraq" is because they hope the war will be easy, then we can see how this war could be transformed from a source of strength

Guantanamo - One Year On, Decades to Go

The "Camp X-ray" tiger cages for prisoners on the US Navy base in Guantanamo, Cuba have been closed down and replaced by "Camp Delta", a permanent installation a few kilometres away. This is a bad sign for the 625 men from 43 countries interned there. Although interrogations have continued day and night for over a year, only five have been released, most of whom were very old and/or very ill. The rest are being kept in shipping containers that have been converted into tiny (2.07 x 2.43 metre) one-man cells. Their identity is secret. The outside world only knows 40 of them by name.

Over the last year the number of prisoners has doubled. Camp authorities told reporters that they are building cells for several thousand in all. Asked how long this prison camp will be in operation, the base commander replied, "We're talking years rather than months." He said that the prison was already included in his budget for the base through 2005, but he expected to include it in his 20-year plan.

The High Commissioner of the UN Human Rights Commission said that the camp is understandable as

"an exceptional measure". It is no such thing. Bush declared that these men would be held until "the cessation of hostilities" but that the US would not recognise them as prisoners of war with certain rights no matter what international law requires. In other words, the US is planning to kidnap people around the world and hold them illegally for a long time to come.

Despite its revolutionary pretensions, the Cuban government has basically gone along with the Bush government. A Cuban government-sponsored mass demonstration in Havana "against terrorism and for peace" had the particular twist of pointing out that the US carried out or backed many terrorist attacks against the island (including blowing up a Cuban airliner), but proclaimed Cuba's solidarity with the US "war on terror". The Cuban government has had very little to say about the US internment camp in Guantanamo, which is, after all, Cuban territory leased by the US (an arrangement forced on Cuba early in the twentieth century - the Castro government refuses to cash the paltry rent cheques). An official Cuban

government diplomatic note to the American government on 12 January 2002 explicitly reassured the US that Cuba did not consider the camp "a threat to the security of our country" and would not interfere in any way but rather seek to maintain, as Radio Havana described it, "the climate of détente and mutual respect that has prevailed in the area around the base for the last few years."

The men being held in Guantanamo are the ones who survived. Many soldiers captured in Afghanistan were simply murdered by gunfire and bombs or by deliberate starvation. In a particularly gruesome war crime, hundreds were asphyxiated in sealed shipping containers. In November, an American Predator (unmanned drone) missile killed six men in a car in Yemen. This kind of explicitly-acknowledged, spectacular hit represents a dramatic change from the long-standing American policy of assassination by stealth and with plausible deniability. It is a declaration that the US will kill whomever it wants, wherever it wants - the policy is as deliberately provocative as the name of the weapon used. ■

into a source of weakness. The American government is betting everything on this war, and it is a gamble. Not in many years have the stakes been higher. If the US wins in Iraq, and that means not only launching a war and winning it but winning it quickly, decisively and at minimum cost to the imperialists, then it will have achieved a major step toward its goal. But that is not the only possible outcome.

What if the war doesn't go as easily as planned? What if the planned US occupation of Iraq turns out to bring the American armed forces into direct conflict with the Iraqi people more broadly? No less than Henry Kissinger himself, a main architect of the Vietnam war, recently warned Bush of the dangers

of a "prolonged occupation". The replacement of Saddam's boot on the neck of the people of Iraq by the far heavier and even more humiliating boot of American generals, soldiers and corporate profiteers in a foreign occupation is not likely to bring stability to Iraq or the region.

Whether Bush's plans succeed or fail, they will very likely bring the US government and US troops into direct conflict with the people of a region where hatred for the US is an enormously powerful and potentially unifying force. Hundreds of millions of Middle Eastern peoples, who burn with hatred for the oppression, exploitation and national humiliation they suffer at the hands of America and its lackey Israel, may find their chief enemy no longer safely an ocean away. Bringing American troops to the Middle East could turn out to be a serious mistake.

Until now imperialism has enjoyed the great advantage of operating indirectly through puppets and flunkies and all sorts of oil and imperialist-dependent tyrants and dictators in Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, etc. Most of the time these regimes prevent and punish any kind of mass protest and outburst, especially anything really threatening to America and its allies. The only political alternatives for the peoples of these countries are seething discontent below the surface or popular explosion; imperialist domination has left them with few other forms of political expression. Now these governments are called upon to either support the US-Israeli crusade or face being replaced by regimes directly installed by the US. Is this a source of strength for imperialism or, in explosive times, a huge potential weakness?

Worry in Washington about "the Arab street" (by which they seem to mean the Arab middle classes) has given way to far darker thoughts about the dangerous "Arab basement" (the workers, peasants and poor who make up the vast majority of the region, taking the Arab countries as a whole), not to mention the non-Arab peoples and countries - of which Iran and Turkey are two volatile examples. Further, as we have already seen, the war on Iraq has already has been met with mass opposition within the US, Britain, Italy and Spain, as well as other countries, and it could expose and destabilise the other European governments that are joining in.

In 1991, the imperialists contemptuously disregarded mass opposition to war against Iraq and fought anyway. Their ability to do so, without paying a higher price, had much to do with the fact that they were able to win quickly and without serious losses. This time they face even greater opposition, not only in the Arab world but at home too.

This time, too, while they boast that they will take Baghdad in four or five days, they know it is no Kabul - instead Baghdad is a sprawling city of five million. And they are still imperialists - while they have made great fanfare about their latest generation, super-smart, ultra-clean bombs and elite high-tech troops, the US military still has every intention of sitting off at a safe distance, thousands of meters up, and bombing the hell out of major population centres for days on end. Even when in 1991 the great bulk of the fighting was hundreds of miles away, they still killed thousands of civilians, including most notoriously the hundreds who died in an underground bomb shelter hit by a special concrete-piercing "bunker buster".

Their censorship this time will be tighter than ever, their lies and denials told with the straightest faces imaginable - but the magnitude of the bloody crimes they are preparing against the people of Baghdad means they will find it virtually impossible to conceal this slaughter from the world's people. The anger and resistance



Guantanamo prison.

that has already broken out may pour forth in unprecedented ways.

There is another cardinal point to be kept in mind. As important as Iraq is, it is not the world, and the sole superpower has a whole globe to deal with. New US military doctrines and Rumsfeld's reorganisation of the American armed forces are avowedly meant to make it possible to wage several wars at once. But difficulties or disasters in an American occupation of Iraq could make that doctrine a pipe dream. The US has chosen a showdown in Iraq and adopted a strategy of concentrating overwhelming force there. But if they do not get the quick results they seek, and especially if they are tied down in Iraq or the region, then instead of an American breakthrough, the world could see a different kind of turning point, as fierce struggle breaks out

against those concentrated forces themselves and/or in other regions.

This is not a war that has been brewing for years, the outcome of a developing stand-off between Saddam and the UN. Before 11 September 2001, Iraq wasn't much of an international issue anymore. Even the US seemed to be losing interest and considered suspending its flyovers. Yet suddenly America changed its mind and imposed its agenda on the world. Why, and why now?

In fact, Bush junior is reversing the course set by his father, who halted the American military advance at a certain point out of fear of fatally tearing the fabric of Middle Eastern power relations, which seemed to be the dominant line in the American ruling class at the time. Bush junior is out to rip the whole thing up, not because he is different than his father

but because much of the US ruling class has reached a new consensus about what is possible and necessary in today's world.

In the era of imperialism, when the world's people and resources have already been divided up among the great powers, the military strength to challenge and recast the existing order is an essential factor in the quest for profits. Not just the kind of profits that come from being in business, but the kind of super-profits that come when industries, countries, regions and the planet are under the control of a single handful of monopoly capitalists. As analysed in the previous issue of *AWTW*, the US can (because it has the unrivalled military strength) and must (because it is driven by economic necessity) take advantage of this moment of both opportunity and peril.

"Mr Power" and the "Eurowimps" versus the

As an astute reader wrote in a letter to the editor of the London *Guardian*, "How ironic it would be if the verdict of history is that the cold war kept in check not Russia - the Evil Empire - but the US?" With the fall of the other imperialist superpower, America's campaign for world hegemony has become a common point of unity for most of the US ruling class, despite some differences in how to pursue it. Now it can be talked about. In fact it has to be talked about, because no big change and certainly no world-historical shift can be effected without the guidance of overall theory. Whereas a few years ago best-selling scribblers were proclaiming the end of history and ideology, a whole spate of reactionary writers have rushed to the fore with their own ideological offerings and high-sounding references to history. The comparison to imperial Rome is not considered offensive - in fact, it is often cited as a positive model.

One of today's most notorious new Roman wannabes is Robert Kagan, whose essay in *Foreign*

Policy magazine is said to be required reading in the Bush inner circle. To put it briefly, in "Power and Weakness" Kagan picks up the pop psychology argument that "men are from Mars and women from Venus", that is, they are different kinds of animals (remember, this passes for brilliance in Bushland), and applies it to the US ("Mr Power") and Europe ("Miss Weakness", or "Eurowimps", as the Bush boys like to put it). Because of its own historical experience, Kagan argues, the US understands that this is a "Hobbesian world" - a reference to the doctrines of the seventeenth-century philosopher Thomas Hobbes, i.e. a dangerous jungle where raw force is the only thing that matters. The European powers, he continues, have been so traumatised by war that they are foolishly seeking Kant's "perpetual peace". That may be very well for relations between the European states, but, he continues, choosing to quote a British colleague (Robert Copper) to make the point that Brits are not "from Venus" like unmanly continentals, "when dealing with the

world outside Europe, we need to revert to the rougher efforts of an earlier era - force, pre-emptive attack, deception, whatever is necessary." The problem, from this viewpoint, is that because of European passivity, the US has been "left to deal with the Saddams and the ayatollahs, the Kim Jong IIs and the Jian Zemins, leaving the happy benefits to others."

The solution to this impasse is simple, he concludes with dripping condescension, "Is this situation tolerable for the United States? In many ways, it is. Contrary to what many believe, the United States can shoulder the burden of maintaining global security without much help from Europe." Europe can have all the peace it wants, as long as it accepts that, as he wrote in an earlier article, "(T)he benevolent hegemony exercised by the US is good for a vast portion of the world's population. It is certainly a better international arrangement than all realistic alternatives." But "some Britons still remember empire, some Frenchmen still yearn for *la gloire*, some Germans still want their place in the

The Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement stated, "Although they claim they are targeting Saddam Hussein's reactionary clique, in fact the US goal is to subjugate the peoples of Iraq and of the whole region. It is a reflection particularly of the sharpening conflict between imperialism and the oppressed peoples and nations of Asia, Africa and Latin America, the principal contradiction in the world today." All the imperialists need the US to be the "policeman of the world" whether they like it or not, because their system's drive for profit is squeezing the world's people as never before. American war aims in Iraq and the Middle East and its increasing military presence in the Philippines and other places are one manifestation of this; famine and proxy wars in Africa, the sudden

impoverishment of Argentina and mass protests in Mexico and Ecuador are some others. More and more of the world requires "policing".

Can the US military really take on Afghanistan, the Middle East, the Philippines, Colombia and other peoples all at once? The contradictions of the imperialist system are getting wound up tighter and in some places revolution has already broken out. One thing that is certain is that we have entered an era of warfare. The American ruling class gathered around Bush has exhibited a taste and preparedness for endless war, but these wars may not unfold exactly when and where or how they want or can handle.

Finally, is it possible for US imperialism to embark on a military recasting of the world without attempting to recast American society

itself? Could such an effort endanger domestic stability and even the whole system of alliances and acquiescence on which it rests and even hasten revolution? Which war will be the "war too far"? What will be the fate of junior partners like the UK, which join in the blood-feast and clampdown, but whose people become more bitterly divided than ever?

The US means for its conquest of Iraq to be the gateway to world domination. But it seems most likely that the stage is being set for warfare on an even grander scale - wars of different types, wars against oppressed countries, nations and peoples, wars of national resistance and revolutionary civil wars and even, in the future, wars between the imperialists - for a long time to come. ■

"Barbarians"

sun." That might not be a problem if "Europeans could move beyond fear and anger at the rogue colossus and remember, again, the vital necessity of having a strong America - for the world and especially for Europe."

There is actually some truth to this view, especially if instead of US hegemony being good for "a vast portion of the world's population" we substitute "a vast portion of the world's imperialist ruling classes and their retainers and acolytes". This is, after all, clearly what Kagan means and it is his intended audience. The last issue of *AWTW* argued that globalised capitalism - the present worldwide web of exploitative relations - cannot persist without guns to back it up. As a statement from the Committee of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement put it, "US imperialism, as the leader and lynchpin of the whole world imperialist system, is obliged to be the global policeman and directly intervene militarily often and in many places. They have chosen to make Iraq the showcase for this new doctrine of unrestricted US authority."

How long will the other

imperialist powers stand for this arrangement? As long as they have to. The US stance is explicitly stated in Bush's *Mein Kampf*, a document released in September called *The National Security Strategy of the US*, which Bush says he personally edited. (The comparison is not just scurrilous. This is an outline plan for world domination just like Hitler's infamous book.) "The president has no intention of allowing any foreign power to catch up with the huge lead the US has opened up since the fall of the Soviet Union more than a decade ago.... Our forces will be strong enough to dissuade a military build-up in hopes of surpassing or equalling the power of the US." In other words, US military might will be used to prevent any other power from rivalling it - a direct threat to Europe, as well as to Russia and China.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, formerly President Carter's national security advisor, put this contradiction more bluntly. The US, he declared, should seek to "prevent collusion and maintain dependence among the vassals [Europe], keep tributaries ["the Saddams and the ayatollahs, the

Kim Jong IIs and the Jian Zemins"] pliant and protected, and keep the barbarians [the people of the world] from coming together."

The word "barbarian" comes from the Latin word for anyone who was not Roman. For today's would-be Caesars who murder millions and endanger the whole planet for profit as if that were the epitome of civilisation, the word apparently means the people of the world and anyone who will not go along with their mad, criminal dreams and their system of slavery, including in their own countries. Doesn't that describe the immense majority of the people on this planet?

Actually, however, these pundits, in their arrogance, have missed another important relationship between the vassals and tributaries and the world's people. A major reason why the other imperialist powers are reluctant at best about this war is that, for their own selfish reasons, they are worried that Bush might fail. In that case, Bush's book might have an even shorter shelf life than that of his role model. ■