

India rejects use of food as a weapon

by Mary Burdman

Along with the vast quantities of modern weaponry now being sent to the Persian Gulf, another weapon is being fielded by the Anglo-American war machine against Iraq: the "food weapon." This was foreseen in 1989, when U.S. congressional candidate Lyndon LaRouche warned that food was going to be used as a strategic weapon by the Anglo-American financial establishment against the nations of the South.

The U.S. and British-led faction in the United Nations Security Council has "interpreted" Resolution 661, which set up an embargo against Iraq, as a total embargo of even food and medicine—using military might. Ships attempting to bring food supplies to Iraq have been stopped by force by the naval patrols in the Gulf. The blockade threatens more than Iraq's population. Hundreds of thousands of foreign workers, mostly Asians, still in Kuwait and Iraq face starvation.

But a group of nations, led by India, is fighting back. India and other nations of the Non-Aligned Movement, representing almost the entire developing sector, which led the fight for a New World Economic Order in the 1960s and 1970s, have forced the blockaders to back down. An Indian ship carrying 12,000 tons of food sailed for Iraq on Sept. 16, and India has reached a direct bilateral agreement with Iraq that the food will be distributed to Indian citizens and to any developing-sector foreign workers—from Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Thailand, Pakistan, and other nations—who need it.

No right to stop medicine and food

"We are determined that food and medicine will *not* be used for political purposes by any side," India's High Commissioner to Great Britain, Kuldip Nayar, told *EIR* Sept. 19. "The Indian ship will land in two to three days. We want the food to be distributed to all nationals.

"Iraq must quit Kuwait, there is no question on that. However, the U.N. Resolution totally exempts food and medicine from the blockade. No one has any power or right to stop food and medicine. After this first ship, the process should expand."

Claims that Iraq's government would seize any food shipments are unfounded, the High Commissioner said. This has been cited repeatedly as a reason to prevent food shipments to Iraq. Although, Nayar said, he is sure that it has not been reported in the Western media, "after the food ship was cleared for sailing, Saddam Hussein agreed that the food will

be distributed to Indians and other foreign nationals in Iraq and Kuwait who need food. The Indian ambassador to Baghdad met with the Iraqi Foreign Ministry to make this agreement. The Indian Red Cross and Iraqi Red Crescent will distribute the food."

There is no question who is using food as a weapon. Even among the "Permanent Five" on the U.N. Security Council—the U.S., Britain, France, China, and the U.S.S.R.—there is no unanimity on the issue. Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachov not only refused to support the U.S. military deployment in the Gulf during his summit with George Bush in Helsinki Sept. 9; the summit statement also emphasized that Resolution 661 permits food imports by Iraq in "humanitarian circumstances." China voted with Cuba and Yemen on Sept. 14 for a new resolution totally excluding food from the embargo. Yet British Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd said that the U.K. would prevent countries "sympathetic to Iraq" from sending in food supplies in the guise of humanitarian aid, the *Hindustan Times* reported Sept. 9.

The U.N. Sanctions Committee is trying to shift the blame for the food warfare onto Iraq. Chairman Marjatta Rasi of Finland said Sept. 13: "The information we have is that there is still plenty of food in Iraq, but Iraqi authorities are using food as a weapon." Despite these claims, Iraq has tightened food rationing just two weeks after rationing was first introduced.

It is children who are suffering most from the embargo. The Berlin daily *tageszeitung* reported Sept. 19 that Iraq currently has sufficient vegetable and meat supplies, and that U.S. journalists there were "furious" about the lack of effect the embargo was having. But Iraq is heavily dependent on imports for foods necessary for children, including fresh milk. On Sept. 8, the London daily *Independent* reported that the U.S., using its veto power at the United Nations, had barred two Bulgarian ships carrying 26 containers of baby food from leaving Hamburg harbor for Iraq. Iraqi doctors at the Saddam Hospital for Children in Baghdad report that sick children will be dying in the hospitals in another few weeks, as supplies of fresh milk, insulin, saline drips, antibiotics, and oxygen run low.

On Sept. 14, the U.N. Security Council, "sensitive to criticism that the organization has used food as a weapon," pushed through Resolution 666, the *London Times* reported. Its intent is to extend the embargo to increase pressure on Iraq, and blame Saddam Hussein for the hungry Asians. Resolution 666 says the U.N.—which has no personnel in Iraq—must first "determine" the need for food, report back, and then any food shipped in must be distributed under the control of the international agencies, which Iraq has refused to allow. Indian Foreign Ministry spokesman Antaf Seth blasted these tactics in an interview with the BBC Sept. 12. "There will be no gain in delay except deaths by starvation," Seth said. "If that is the goal of the U.N. Sanctions Committee, I have nothing more to say to them."