

Third World leaders and press in backlash against Gulf adventure

A growing number of political leaders and publications in Third World countries are beginning to warn that what's really at issue in the Persian Gulf, is the Anglo-American drive to stop Third World development. They are asking whether their countries might be the next targets, if war in the Mideast is not headed off.

Venezuela

Bush's policy was criticized from an unexpected quarter: Alberto Vollmer, head of one of Venezuela's country's oldest and most powerful financial groups, and a friend of the Rockefeller family. "What guarantee is there that Venezuela, with its immense oil reserves, will not also be swallowed up one day by the U.S.A. or by England?" Vollmer asked in a Sept. 15 article in *Diario de Caracas*, entitled "Wall Street's Gurkhas." Gurkhas are the Nepalese fighters who have served as mercenaries for the British Empire for more than a century, "especially expert in slitting the throat of their victims at night and by surprise," he explained.

"Who are Wall Street's gurkhas? After [Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on] Aug. 2 . . . they appear to be the Americans, the British, some other Europeans, and a few Arabs, commanded by President Bush and Mrs. Thatcher." A declaration of war is understandable when a nation's territory is attacked, but not when one's wallet is, he wrote. "It is time that the U.S.A. and England stop being the policemen for the underdeveloped world."

Brazil

The Amazon could be the next target of invasion, after Iraq. So warned the editor of Brazil's *Jornal do Comercio*, Austregesilo de Athayde, in his column Sept. 28. "The attack on Iraq, the ravings against Saddam Hussein, could constitute a precedent for future assaults in other zones," he warned. "Our Amazon" is a likely target for such action. If it is ever proved that, in that immense forest, we are threatening the oxygen which, the ecologists say, feeds humanity's lungs. . . . Then . . . the right to the legitimate defense of the preservation of the species is imposed, as a higher law, on Brazil and her neighbors, with the same authority with which the U.N. and other powers impose themselves by force upon Iraq, and promise Saddam Hussein the same treatment with which Hitler's partners paid at Nuremberg for the Second World War's crimes of genocide."

Many in the Brazilian military are known to agree with *Jornal do Comercio's* evaluation that the Gulf campaign was intended to set a precedent for U.N. police action globally.

Argentina

President Carlos Menem, who ordered Argentine troops to join the Anglo-American force in the Persian Gulf, discovered on a trip to Venezuela at the end of September that he is no longer welcome there. Venezuelan papers derided him in cartoons and commentaries, and the government had to order employees to fill out a congressional delegation meeting, because so many congressmen refused to meet with him.

Menem "committed treason to Latin America . . . to the Third World" and "to Argentine national dignity, when he voluntarily, consciously, and abjectly prostrated the majesty of the presidency at the feet of Mrs.

the Venezuelan paper *El Meridiano* editorialized.

The Argentine publication *Informador Público* in its Sept. 28 issue published an interview with Alberto Samid, who was fired by Menem the week before for arranging a shipment of food and medicine to Iraq via Iran. As a descendant of Arabs, he said, "our Arab people are on the brink of suffering a war that will bring fatal consequences. . . . For these reasons, I couldn't agree with the posture of our government." He said he sent the shipment to Iraq "for a simple humanitarian reason. I know the suffering of the Iraqi people, there are pregnant women there, old people and hungry babies. They have gone to the extreme measure of taking over a zoo and eating the animals."

On the question of the attacks on Saddam Hussein, he said, "Any analysis must begin with the following principle: Oil is an Arab patrimony. The British and Americans want to control this Arab patrimony. Saddam Hussein and the Arab people have the same enemy the Argentines had in the Malvinas War: the British and the Americans. Moreover, the Iraqis were the only ones to back us when the British sank the *General Belgrano*. The Iraqi people were at our side when the Brits killed our boys on the islands."

Further, he said, "I don't understand such preoccupation and such prolixity now at the U.N., since we looked the other way when the Americans invaded Panama, or when the Soviets invaded Afghanistan. Now it appears that the U.N. is an admirable organization. . . . We fool ourselves, because

when it suits the great powers, they back the U.N. They have always done this, as long as it serves their own interests.”

Turkey

Saudi Arabia and the United States lured Iraq into the Gulf trap, declared Bulent Ecevit, the former Socialist Party prime minister, following a trip to Baghdad at the end of September, where he met with Saddam Hussein. Presenting the results of his meetings in the Turkish daily *Milliyet*, Ecevit expressed doubts that the international embargo will force Iraq out of Kuwait. The invasion of Kuwait has a pre-history of provocations against Iraq, Ecevit explained, elaborating the following points:

- Iraq was already close to economic ruin long before the Kuwait invasion, because of its long war with Iran, because of the losses in oil revenues caused by the war which increased the Iraqi foreign debt to an estimated \$70 billion;
- Iraq was close to ruin because of the \$102 billion it had to borrow abroad to buy weapons, because of the violation of the OPEC quotas by the other Arab countries which drove down the oil price and thereby lost Iraq \$79 billion in oil revenues;
- During the Iran-Iraq War, Kuwait moved the border with Iraq 70 kilometers northward, in order to gain access to the profitable Rumaila oil fields and steal oil revenues of an estimate \$2.4 billion from the Iraqis.

After the end of the war with Iran, Ecevit continued, Iraq approached its creditors in the Arab world on ways to renegotiate the debt, on the grounds that Iraq had carried out the war on behalf of the entire Arab world in order to contain the Khomeini revolution. The war debt should, therefore, be considered a liability of the Arab world as a whole, not just of Iraq, Saddam Hussein had argued. Ecevit also pointed out that the other Arab OPEC countries compensated for the oil that Iraq could not produce during the war with Iran, and made an estimated net extra profit of \$106 billion.

Saddam Hussein's initiative, which included a call for increasing the oil price to \$18 per barrel for a limited period of time, was turned down, and the oil price was driven down further, from \$18 to \$11, which pushed Iraq into the corner.

At the Arab summit in Baghdad on May 30, Saddam Hussein warned: "War is sometimes conducted with soldiers and bombs. But if damage is caused to an economy of this scope, it can have the same results. This posture is like a war on Iraq. If we were still strong enough to resist, we could tolerate it. But we cannot resist the pressure any longer."

Meeting the Saudi oil minister, Hisam Naziri, on July 9, Saddam Hussein warned again: "I cannot tolerate that the Iraqi people are starving and that Iraqi women have no clothes." As this warning bore the same lack of result as the previous one, Saddam Hussein used a well-known Arab saying on July 16, when he warned: "Then shall the heads roll, to stop our daily bread from rolling away."

By that date at the latest, Ecevit reported, everybody,

from the CIA to the Saudis and Kuwait, knew that war would break out, and where it would break out. They knew that Saddam Hussein had presented his situation in a realistic way and asked for a solution.

"Because these countries not only wanted to push Iraq and the Iraqi leadership into a corner, but to annihilate them," concluded Ecevit, "they lured him into the trap of the invasion of Kuwait.

"As much as it was thoughtlessness and roulette-playing on the part of Iraq to step into this trap, so it was thoughtlessness and roulette-playing as well to drive Iraq into this trap. And it is yet unclear today whether it is Iraq that stepped into the trap, or the United States and its 100,000 American soldiers in the Arab desert."

Jordan

"Maggie and company will fail," was the title of a Sept. 27 commentary in the *Jordanian Times*, on the lessons that Jordanians could draw from watching TV today: "Although Maggie and company are trying their very best to revive their empire in the Arabian Gulf and region at large, they will simply fail . . . even if they succeed in shedding a lot of blood. The will of the Arab people for independence from British, American, or French hegemony over Arab oil or territory or decision-making is irreversible. Even if the hero, in this case Saddam Hussein, is killed, the hero has created many other heroes who will not kneel to the West, even if it means the starvation of our own children."

Another Jordanian newspaper, *Al-Ray*, denounced Saudi Ambassador to the United States Prince Bandar, for his ridicule of Jordanian King Hussein's warning that a U.S. assault on Iraq could trigger World War III. The article, in the paper's Sept. 27 issue, described Bandar as "an employee of the State Department" who does everything he is asked.

"We hope that he, as he wanders in the corridors of the U.S. State Department or the CIA, will look for the real reasons behind the assassination of the late King Faisal Bin Abd-al-Aziz. If he finds the dossier, then he will read that the last meeting between King Faisal and Henry Kissinger was meant to deal with the issue of oil, as far as Kissinger was concerned, and with the issue of Jerusalem, as far as the Saudi king was concerned. The reason behind the assassination was the sentence he said to Kissinger: 'Jerusalem must come before oil.'"

Al-Ray also reported, citing intercepted Saudi diplomatic communiqués, that Bandar was key in forcing Riyadh to capitulate to a previously agreed-upon plan to occupy Saudi Arabia. Bandar wrote to the Saudi Foreign Ministry, even before U.S. Defense Secretary Richard Cheney arrived in Saudi Arabia on Aug. 6, that "I have been informed by the U.S. administration that its decision in this regard is final, whether or not Riyadh agrees to ask the United States to send its troops. Therefore, I suggest that an invitation be extended so that it would not look like an occupation by force."