

Bush's policy: Make Iraq an Auschwitz

by Joseph Brewda

According to the estimates of Patriarch Bidawid of Iraq and others (see *Feature*, p. 35), as many as 500,000 Iraqi soldiers and civilians may have been killed in the month-long Persian Gulf war. Electrical power plants, civilian air-raided shelters, baby food factories, bridges, and mosques were the typical targets of 120,000 bombing sorties. Something on the order of \$100-200 billion of damage was done to the Iraqi civilian infrastructure, several regional sources say.

Despite the informal cessation of hostilities at the end of February, U.S. forces still occupied the southern portion of the country as of March 15. Civil strife—spread by the United States, Turkey, Iran, and Israel—is apparently raging in the Shiite south and Kurdish north. At a press conference in Ottawa, Canada on March 14, President Bush threatened to resume the war with Iraq—this time for allegedly using helicopters to crush these externally manipulated riots. A few days before, Bush threatened to bomb Baghdad if Iraq used chemical weapons against rioters, although there is no evidence that Iraq intends to.

Meanwhile, the U.S. administration is calling for continuing U.N. sanctions, including an embargo, on Iraq indefinitely. *This includes restrictions on emergency medical relief and food.* After Iraq announced that it would comply with all the U.N. resolutions, including “war reparations” demanded, new conditions were found. On March 10, the United States announced that it would maintain the embargo until Iraq submits to “disarmament,” which is not even a formal U.N. condition.

Mass death through disease

In the first week of March, the head of the Iraqi Red Crescent, Ibrahim Ahmed Nouri, reported that “cholera and typhoid are spreading in Iraq” in a letter to various world charities, requesting emergency assistance.

There are 4.5 million inhabitants in Baghdad, and 18 million inhabitants of the country. According to a February UNICEF report (see *EIR*, March 15, 1991), systematic bombing of Baghdad's electrical power stations and sewage plants, among other damage, has reduced the amount of clean water available to the Baghdad population to approximately

5% of its pre-war levels. As of late February, UNICEF reports, there was not one functioning toilet in the city. Within a month, the average daytime temperature in Iraq will exceed 100°F.

Yet the U.N., under U.S. pressure, is maintaining its sanctions and has not allowed medical or food relief to Iraq except through the U.N. or the Red Cross. To date, Red Cross sources report, emergency water purification systems sent by these agencies to Baghdad since the end of the fighting can only provide 240,000 liters of fresh water a day.

An average person in good health needs about 150 liters of water per day (of which most is for washing and toilet facilities, and 2-5 liters a day for drinking, depending on the climate). Cholera victims require as many as 30 liters of drinking water per day to survive. International relief agencies have, in sum, only supplied clean water for the equivalent of 1,600 inhabitants of Baghdad, and none for the rest of the country. Baghdad's once impressive water system, now functioning at only 5% of capacity, can hardly be expected to provide enough water for even a quarter of the 4.5 million population, even if all water needed for industrial purposes were neglected.

Meanwhile, the supply of food, medicine of all kinds, and functioning hospital equipment and the power to operate it remain in short, often desperately short, supply.

An estimated 1 million Baghdad residents have fled the city because of such conditions. However, the rest of the country is in similar shape, and in some respects perhaps worse.

Starvation looms

U.S. destruction of Iraq's irrigation pump sites will probably devastate the spring wheat and barley harvest, as will the lack of fuel for agricultural equipment. Before the embargo, Iraq imported 75% of the calories it consumed.

According to a Congressional Research Service study published Feb. 26, “Allied bombing of refineries, fuel reserves, roads, and bridges (and loss of electricity that supported flour mills and perishable food storage facilities) will seriously hamper food availability and distribution” in Iraq.

The report adds, “Even if a plentiful crop is harvested [this spring], getting the food into usable form and getting it to the population will be seriously impaired.”

In other words, it can be expected that millions of Iraqis will die of cholera, typhoid, malnutrition, and malnutrition-related diseases over the coming months, without the emergency relief that the U.S. and U.N. have so far refused to provide.

One physician involved in relief efforts bitterly told this news service that the U.S. branch of Red Cross refuses to do anything. The U.S. branch is now led by Elizabeth Dole, the former Bush labor secretary and wife of Robert Dole, the U.S. senator who was a prime booster of Bush's war against Iraq.