

EIR Eyewitness Report

Tavistock techniques are being used to 'break' Iraq

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

Three years ago, between Jan. 17 and Feb. 28, 1991, Iraq was subjected to an unprecedented military aggression waged by a 30-country coalition, led by the United States. The war aim, as stated in United Nations resolutions, was to force withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait, which Iraqi forces had entered on Aug. 2, 1990. The first measure imposed to that declared aim was an embargo, which began in August, on all trade with Iraq. When Baghdad ordered its troops out of Kuwait on Feb. 28, 1991, the war aim had been reached, and the hostilities were officially ended.

However, three years later, the embargo remains in effect. Every condition posed for its lifting, including a long series of U.N. resolutions drafted following the Kuwait withdrawal, has been fulfilled. Even Ralf Ekeus of the U.N. inspectors team had to admit in January of this year, that Iraq had complied with U.N. demands regarding destruction of weapons of mass destruction. He added, however, that the U.N. would have to take at least six months to "test" Baghdad's willingness to submit to long-term arms control surveillance, before the embargo could be lifted.

Meanwhile, in January, new demands were placed on Baghdad, ranging from official recognition of Kuwait and the U.N.-drawn borders, to acceptance of permanent human rights observers. A protest note issued by the U.S., British, French, and Russian U.N. Security Council members, alleged that Baghdad was using the Third River project and related land reclamation schemes in the south of the country as diabolical means to suppress the human rights of Shiites living in the marshlands. This, it was said, was a violation of Resolution 688, which called on the government of President Saddam Hussein to respect human rights. The embargo against Iraq should be continued, it said, but the Iraqi central government was ordered to supply electricity networks for

the Kurdish-inhabited safe haven in the north which had been taken over by U.N. forces. Repeated Turkish air strikes into the same area against Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) targets went unnoticed by those U.N. bodies committed to defending the human rights of the Kurdish people.

A deadly farce

Due to its arbitrary character, the embargo policy has long since lost any pretense to legitimacy or credibility. Politically, it has proven itself a farce. Yet the physical effects of the continuing blockade are only too real on a defenseless population, which has been forced to play the role of the victim in a classic psychological warfare experiment. As if proceeding according to a script authored by the London Tavistock Institute's psychological warfare experts, the embargo has placed the Iraqi population in an isolation cell and subjected it to sensory deprivation. Basic needs, such as food, drink, and medical supplies have been systematically deprived. Access to the outside, even through modern means of communication such as newspapers, has been cut. Every now and again, without warning or reason, a bright light flashes—a bomb has just been detonated. All the while, the psychological experiment director promises it will stop, as soon as just one more condition is fulfilled. With the acceptance of each new condition, the doctor in the white suit comes up with another, utterly unrelated demand. The purpose of Tavistock-style sensory deprivation is to break the will of the victim, robbing him of any sense of control over his own fate.

In the large isolation cell which Iraq has become under the embargo, 18 million people are being subjected to this treatment. The most important item being withheld is medicine. According to the U.N. terms, medicine, like food, is

excluded from the embargo. Yet, to make purchases, the Iraq government must pay hard currency cash in advance for medicine. Since the embargo prevents normal trade, Iraq has no means of selling oil—or anything else—for foreign exchange. The only funds available for such purchases are the \$3.8 billion in Iraqi funds abroad, frozen, per U.N. diktat, in accounts in Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, and elsewhere. Although the government has requested repeatedly that these funds be allocated, even without Iraqi mediation, for payment of medical supplies, the relevant governments of lands where the monies are held, have refused. Furthermore, Deputy Health Minister Shauki Tuma reported in an interview to *EIR* that Japanese, French, German, Swiss, British, and U.S. pharmaceutical firms which had received payment in cash for orders prior to the 1990 embargo, have still not delivered the pre-paid goods.

The result is that there is virtually no medicine in Iraq. People die. The first to die are those in need of continual medical treatment, such as cancer patients on chemotherapy, diabetics, dialysis and other kidney patients, and persons suffering from chronic heart and circulatory disorders. Included among those who die are persons requiring surgery. As Dr. Shauki Tuma reiterated, because of the lack of anesthetics, only emergency operations can be undertaken. Thus, if a person is in danger of going blind and needs cataract surgery—a procedure which has become so routine that it can be performed on an outpatient basis—that person today in Iraq will likely go blind. A couple of Iraqi children requiring eye surgery have recently been offered the care in Spain; hundreds more like them will wait for possible help.

People of all walks of life in Iraq are subjected to the same dilemma: They become ill, go to a doctor, receive a diagnosis and a prescription for medication, go to a pharmacy, and are told the drug is not available. Even simple items such as aspirin, routine pain-killers, and vitamins are not to be found.

Food in short supply

Food, the other item which is officially excluded from the embargo, is also in short supply, and imports are blocked by the same Catch-22 mechanism which has kept medicines out. Government-distributed rations, which are estimated to cover about 60% of the minimal requirement, were increased by one-third in January, but they do not suffice. To bridge the gap between rations and real needs, every Iraqi therefore is faced, daily, with the question of where and how to get money with which to buy something to survive until tomorrow. Fresh food items, whether from domestic production or from bordering Syria, Turkey, and Jordan, as well as dry goods and frozen food from as far away as France and Asia, are to be found on the open market, but at prices that no normal employed person can afford.

The goods come onto the black market from neighboring countries, and are purchased by middlemen, in dollars, who

then resell to retailers. Since dollars are the medium of exchange, wholesalers and middlemen are willing to pay increasing amounts of Iraqi dinars for the foreign currency, and the prices have no place to go but up. Whereas in August 1992, one dollar on the black market would bring 12 Iraqi dinars, one day in late January 1994, the rate was 120. One day later, the rate was 180, the following day it had risen to 220, and at the end of that week, the dollar was quoted at 264 Iraqi dinars.

Per kilogram prices for basic goods on the same sample day beginning the last week in January 1994, were: olives, 25 dinars; chick peas, 50; spices, 400; Iraqi flour, 35; Turkish flour, 50; dates, 35; pickles (Turshi), 25 (as opposed to 1.5 before the war); pomegranates, 20; zucchini, 40; oranges, 17; lemons, 11; grapefruit, 8; and eggplant, 15. A can of tomatoes goes for 120 dinars, and 200 grams of macaroni costs 15. The most expensive items are meat, poultry, and eggs: pasterma, which is spiced, dried meat, costs 200 dinars per kilo, a small can of powdered milk costs 250, beef is available for 195 per kilo, and lamb at 230. One frozen French chicken, weighing 1.3 kilograms, costs between 195 and 200 dinars. A two-kilo Iraqi chicken goes for 225.

To put the figures into perspective, it should be remembered that an average monthly salary is 250-400 dinars. A very good salary would be above 500, and top positions bring in 1,000 dinars. This means that a normal working person would have to pay a month's wages to buy a chicken or a kilo of meat. A dozen eggs, priced at 155 dinars, would cost him at least two weeks' pay.

That is calculated at the prices current on that day in January; in the week following, corresponding to the meteoric rise of the dollar value and the devaluation of the dinar, prices for these same staple food items rose accordingly.

Clothing prices show the same tendency. Items like women's knit suits, which cost 500 dinars months ago, have risen to 4,000 and more. A simple leather handbag, Iraqi-made, costs 500. Children's clothes, mainly of Turkish production, cost hundreds of dinar per tiny item. Unlike food and medicine, clothing is covered by the embargo, which means that even humanitarian aid organizations are not allowed to make it available.

Scraping to survive

If one succeeds in finding the means to buy food, it is only because one has found a second or third source of income. This may be doing handicrafts, performing odd jobs, changing money, or entering the world of crime. Or, cash is procured by selling off whatever one has of some value. Baghdad has become one big antique shop, with deluxe items from formerly well-to-do families on display in the big hotels. In the university area, traditional bookstores are flanked by makeshift stands of ad hoc booksellers, who are putting their own goods on sale. Many families who have built up

TABLE 1
Deaths in Iraq due to the embargo
(selected causes)

Period	Age group		Total
	< 5 years	> 5 years	
1990*	3,560	9,167	12,727
1991	27,473	58,469	85,942
1992	46,933	76,530	123,463
1993	49,762	78,261	128,023
Total deaths	140,181	257,045	397,226

* August through December only.

TABLE 2
Effect of embargo on laboratory investigation
in Iraq
(number of investigations)

Time period	Monthly average	Percent decrease from 1989
1989	1,494,050	—
1990	1,091,230	-27.0%
1991	635,446	-57.0%
1992	589,952	-60.5%
1993		
January	589,998	-60.5%
February	593,160	-60.2%
March	591,371	-60.4%
April	581,590	-61.0%
May	594,794	-60.1%
June	580,366	-61.1%
July	583,116	-61.0%
August	586,265	-60.8%
September	571,129	-61.8%
October	559,733	-62.5%
November	548,892	-63.3%
December	534,292	-64.2%
Entire year	576,225	-61.4%

precious libraries over centuries, find themselves offering valuable manuscripts for whatever they may bring on the free market.

At such prices, it is virtually impossible for all but the very rich to provide adequate nutrition and clothing for their youngsters. Children, as a result, are paying the toll of the embargo with their lives. According to the most recent statistics available, the incidence of diseases due to inadequate nutrition, such as kwashiorkor and marasmus, has skyrocketed since 1990. The total number of these plus other diseases stemming from protein, calorie, and vitamin deficiency was 102,487 in 1990, or a monthly average of 8,541; in 1991

TABLE 3
Effect of embargo on major surgical
operations
(number of operations)

Time period	Monthly average	Percent decrease from 1989
1989	15,125	—
1990	8,668	-43.0%
1991	6,507	-57.0%
1992	5,477	-63.7%
1993		
January	4,938	-67.3%
February	5,011	-66.8%
March	4,992	-65.2%
April	5,254	-61.0%
May	5,171	-65.8%
June	6,007	-60.3%
July	5,805	-61.6%
August	5,901	-60.9%
September	5,314	-64.9%
October	5,113	-66.2%
November	4,545	-69.9%
December	4,412	-70.8%
Entire year	5,205	-65.6%

the figures rose to 1,056,956 cases reported, an average of 88,079, representing a 10.3-fold increase. In 1992, there were 1,248,540 cases of such illnesses, at a monthly average of 104,045, representing a 12.1-fold increase. In 1993, the cases reached 1,390,131, at a monthly average of 115,844, or an increase of 13.6 times. In the same period of time, the number of laboratory investigations and major surgical procedures declined at an even sharper rate. The end result has been increasing mortality, as Tables 1 through 4 show in detail.

Intellectual deprivation

Those who survive the lack of food and medicine in the isolation cell which embargoed Iraq has become, are subjected to intellectual deprivation as well. No foreign publications enter the country—because of the embargo, not internal censorship. Medical publications, which report on continuing progress in the field for professionals, have not been available since August 1990. Subscription prices to routine news publications, English-language weeklies, or international daily newspapers, are prohibitive, given the foreign exchange rate, such that only the upper echelons have any access whatsoever to them.

Inside the country, the blockade has severely curtailed the availability of paper, with corresponding effects on publishing. Iraq used to print 1,150 books a year, but is now down to 40, according to a report released in January. The government requested that \$10 million be allocated from the

frozen funds for importing paper and other printing materials, to print copies of the Koran for study. This was denied without explanation. Students, who continue to study at Baghdad's prestigious centers of learning, particularly in the schools of medicine, are not allowed to take textbooks out of the country, lest they be lost. Thus, Jordanian students traveling home for winter recess could not take study materials with them. Over 40 million copies of textbooks are needed, which the Education Ministry would order printed, if the paper were available.

The embargo has had a cumulative effect on the population comparable only to the effect on an individual of deliberate sensory deprivation and torture. Whereas in the months immediately after the war, Iraqis were angry, defiant and proud, now they have become bitter and cynical. Whereas back in spring 1991, Iraqis of all social classes would make clear distinctions between the American people and the Bush regime, now those lines have blurred. Many, particularly in the leadership, had looked to the November 1992 elections in the United States with optimism, that a different leadership in Washington could recognize the wisdom of shifting policy. Instead, the Clinton administration allowed Bush's foreign policy to continue, the sanctions were renewed, indeed, sharpened at each periodic review, and, following the April 1993 "exposure" of an alleged Iraqi-backed plot to assassinate ex-President Bush in Kuwait, bombs fell on Baghdad again in June, killing civilians. As a result, there is no sympathy for America or Americans in Iraq today.

The embargo policy has produced an economic disaster in Iraq like the one which the Harvard "shock therapy" economists imposed on the nations of eastern Europe and the for-

mer Soviet Union. With the infrastructure and production breakdown and the introduction of "free market" economics at the marketplace, both have created pauperization, immense human suffering, extreme bitterness, and distrust. As in the case of Russia, Iraqis—a people justly proud of their achievements in building a modern nation on the basis of a cultural heritage stretching back millennia—have been whipped, tortured, starved, and humiliated by a power which claims to speak in the name of human rights and moral values, but seems to know only how to destroy. The United States government and its Congress, in perpetuating the embargo policy, may believe that these are the instruments of political change; but not a few diplomats in the region will in fact admit that the ultimate aim of the boycott is to remove Saddam Hussein and the entire Baath Party structure from power. The illusion is that such a post-Saddam government, a virtual puppet regime like so many installed in the developing sector nations, would hand over the nation, its vast oil resources, and productive capacity, to the wielders of a neo-colonial policy.

What is not calculated in the equation is the subjective factor: the hatred that can now boast very deep roots in the broad population against almost everything which is associated with "the West," and especially against "America." In Iraq, for cultural and historical reasons, this impulse is manifested not in religious radicalization along Islamist lines, but rather according to a cultural parameter that Washington is even less well equipped to face. Alienating Iraq, particularly its scientific and cultural elites, will, unless it is reversed, prove to have been one of the greatest, costliest errors in U.S. foreign policy.

TABLE 4
Effect of the embargo on the nutritional status of Iraqi children aged under 5 years

Year	Klashiorkor	Marasmus	Other protein-calorie and vitamins malnutrition	Total
1990				
Number of cases	458	5,193	96,809	102,487
Monthly average	41	433	8,063	8,541
1991				
Number of cases	12,796	96,186	947,974	1,056,956
Monthly average	1,066	8,015	78,998	88,079
<i>x-fold increase over 1990</i>	26.3	18.5	9.8	10.3
1992				
Number of cases	13,744	111,477	1,123,319	1,248,540
Monthly average	1,145	9,289	93,610	104,045
<i>x-fold increase over 1990</i>	27.9	21.4	11.6	12.1
1993				
Number of cases	15,128	139,346	1,235,657	1,390,131
Monthly average	1,261	11,612	102,971	115,844
<i>x-fold increase over 1990</i>	30.8	26.8	12.8	13.6