

## 'Shelton Plan' goes into action against Iraq

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

In the last week of February, the daily U.K.-U.S. bombing sorties in northern and southern Iraq, have escalated to the level of all-out war, whose aim is to prepare the terrain for the violent overthrow of the Saddam Hussein government.

Following the "made-for-TV" capture of Kurdish Workers Party (PKK) leader Abdullah Ocalan (see *EIR*, Feb. 26, p. 32) on Feb. 15, the offensive against Iraq moved into high gear, with the invasion of 20,000 Turkish troops into northern Iraq. Just days later, on Feb. 19, the high-ranking Shi'ite cleric, Imam Mohammed Sadiq al-Sadr, was killed with his two sons in the southern Iraqi city of Najaf. The assassination immediately triggered protests among Iraqi Shi'ites, in Iran, Jordan, and also Iraq. While Tehran issued relatively moderate statements denouncing the crime, the Shi'ite Iraqi opposition group, known as the Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI), claimed that the Iraqis had killed the cleric, and that in response, hundreds, if not thousands, of protesting Iraqis had been brutally repressed. The SCIRI leader, Mohammed Baqir Al-Hakim, after meeting with other Iraqi opposition groups, including the Communist Party and Kurdish parties, issued a joint statement on Feb. 22, calling on all Iraqis to rise up against the Baghdad regime, and stated that "international support should be made use of in the current situation."

The Saudi press gloated over the news of riots, editorializing on Feb. 22, that this was the "beginning of the end of Saddam's regime." *Al-Riyadh* wrote, "If these demonstrations in the Iraqi cities are only a protest against this hideous crime, the second step which will follow is an internal, comprehensive rebellion whose elements already exist without need for the Iraqi authorities to speak about a conspiracy or foreign intervention." And the daily *Al-Bilad* wrote wishfully, "What is happening in Iraq is the beginning of a massive revolution against oppression and dictatorship."

The move by the opposition groups, calling for insurrec-

tion, conforms to the script which U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Henry H. Shelton has been following, according to which, under massive U.K.-U.S. aerial fire power, such uprisings should take place in the southern and northern "no-fly zones," under the banner of the motley collection of opposition groups authorized by the Iraq Liberation Act. In fact, beginning Feb. 21, the U.K.-U.S. aircraft escalated their bombing, expanding raids beyond the "no-fly zones" (allegedly in response to Iraqi provocations) to eliminate every imaginable Iraqi military target, including anti-aircraft defenses, military camps, and air bases. On Feb. 21 alone, 42 sorties by warplanes over southern Iraq were reported by an Iraqi military spokesman. They included carrier-based F-14s and F-16s, along with Saudi-Kuwaiti-based F-15s which were backed up by two radar planes, an AWACS and an E-2C, which remained inside Saudi air space. British Tornados based in Kuwait also participated in the operations.

Shelton himself toured the region during that week, visiting Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Bahrain. When asked by *Al-Hayat*, whether the plethora of recent visits by U.S. officials had been to prepare a new offensive against Iraq, Shelton replied that "all options are open, especially if Iraq attacks one of its neighbors." He added, that the U.S. was committed to helping "the Iraqi opposition inside the country and abroad," and explicitly stated, "we will continue to extend every possible assistance to change the [Iraqi] regime."

His talks in Jordan with King Abdullah must have been successful, judging from the outcome of subsequent talks the new monarch had with Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammed Saied Al-Sahhaf. Although Abdullah was cited saying Jordan would not be used as a springboard for operations against its neighbor, Al-Sahhaf stated after the meeting that he "did not see any indication that Jordan had changed its attitude toward Iraq," and cancelled a press conference which he was to hold in Amman. Opposition leader Laith Shubeilat spelled out for

*EIR*, how outside pressures on Jordan have been exerted, to maintain its adherence to the anti-Iraq strategy (see interview below).

Significantly, as all the pieces began to fall together exactly as identified by Lyndon LaRouche in his document, "Why Shelton Must Be Retired Now" (*EIR*, Jan. 15), Iraqi government leaders began to speak out publicly, exposing the Shelton doctrine, albeit not by name.

On Feb. 21, the *Jordan Times* reported on remarks made by Iraqi Vice President Taha Yassin Ramadan, in an interview with the U.A.E. daily *Al Khaleej*. Ramadan charged that an attempt had already been made in December, during the air strikes, to invade Iraq. He said, that the opposition troops entered Iraq on the second day of the air strikes, Dec. 18. The plan, he said, was for "the Americans and British to lead intensive aerial raids, and under this cover, ground troops supposedly from the opposition were to enter Iraqi soil, because the Americans did not want to sacrifice their soldiers." He went on to say, that the troops "attacked all the vital installations to isolate the south from the center: communications, television, and radio." Then, "On the second day, U.S. planes dropped notes to the army, telling the soldiers, 'If you don't fight against civilians, we will not attack you,' because they expected civilian demonstrations."

Ramadan continued: "Those who call themselves the Islamic opposition entered from Iran. When they crossed the border, some gave themselves up when they saw the security situation, some fled and others were killed." He said that Baghdad had "taken precautions because we knew they would try to carry out this plan through those who have lived far from Iraq for years." Significantly, Ramadan added that he thought there was a parallel plan to send troops into the north as well, toward "Mosul, Kirkuk, and other towns."

Similarly, following the assassination of the Shi'ite scholar, the daily *Al-Hayat* reported on Foreign Minister Al-Sahhaf's remarks, in which he charged that "American agents" had perpetrated the crime. He told reporters, the Iraqi "government has obtained serious, and credible information on the plans to divide Iraq." Announcing that this information would be released soon, he stressed that the United States and Britain are preparing for a major land offensive. British press outlets quoted Al-Sahhaf, to the effect that the U.K.-U.S. air strikes were "part of U.S. preparations for a ground attack."

### **The war party mobilizes in Washington**

Promptly, inside the United States, the London-based Iraqi National Congress, an umbrella opposition group, released an open letter to President Clinton, calling for implementation of the Shelton plan: from recognizing a provisional government, to consolidating the safe havens in north and south; from lifting sanctions to these areas controlled by the puppet government-in-waiting, to "assisting the provisional government's offensive against Saddam Hussein's regime logistically and through other means." The letter also calls for launching a "systematic campaign against . . . the Republican

Guard divisions" and to "position U.S. ground force equipment in the region, as a last resort, we have the capacity to protect and assist the anti-Saddam forces in the northern and southern parts of Iraq." The letter sports the signatures of prominent individuals, such as Stephen Solarz and Paul Wolfowitz, all associated with George Bush or Al Gore, all politically aligned with the Principals Committee; there are no partisans of President Clinton to be found.

Meantime, Britain's Derek Fatchett, Minister of State for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Member of Parliament and a Privy Councillor, arrived in Washington on Feb. 25 to brief a closed-door meeting at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) on Iraq. Fatchett laid out the strategic purpose of the bombings: "We went into this with no broader strategic aim, but other consequences have flowed from it. The bombing is weakening and dislodging the grip of Saddam Hussein, who had a completely irrational response to our flights over the 'no-fly zones.'

"The bombing is moving toward the center of Iraq to within 30 miles of Baghdad. Of course, the bombing arises from 'hot pursuit' of those who target our aircraft. . . . But, the bombing comes closer and closer to Baghdad. We are taking out very significant military installations."

In response to a question of whether the bombing would help or hinder the Iraqi opposition forces, Fatchett said: "There has been a step change in the internal foundations of Iraq. Continued U.S.-U.K. bombing has shaken the foundations of Iraq. Saddam Hussein has become like the guy in the bar, who asked everyone to hate him and they did. We have shaken his own self-confidence. We have done considerable damage to the Republican Guard. One question is how deep is the Shi'a discontent, because they represent a real threat to his regime. They form the majority of the Army, though not the Republican Guard. . . . While we don't have the ability to arm the Kurds in the north, who have some organization, or the Shi'ites in the south, the bombing shows that they have some U.S.-U.K. support. Our bombing in the 'no-fly zones' has shaken Saddam Hussein further. . . . I would say that this step change has now entered the final chapter of Saddam Hussein's rule."

Fatchett also reported on British machinations inside the UN Security Council, which, he said, had succeeded in bringing the French over to their position. He added that the UN body was sufficiently preoccupied with the Balkans, to ignore what is going on in Iraq. Whatever is being discussed on Iraq, he said, is in the context of the three new panels which have been set up, on monitoring, humanitarian aid, etc. Fatchett denied that Britain or the United States had any intention of dismembering Iraq, or had been involved in any attempts to stage a coup through Iraqi military figures. He stuck to his contention that the "final chapter" had been opened.

The British are committed to seeing the Shelton doctrine applied to the end in Iraq, and would like to ensure that the United States, President Clinton in particular, take the blame for the bloodshed and chaos which will ensue. If this plan is

implemented, Turkish troops engaged in the northern terrain will quickly find that they cannot eliminate the PKK guerrilla forces in direct combat, and will be drawn into a morass reminiscent of the Afghanistan disaster. In the south, where, Fatchett confirmed, the Shi'ite option is to be used, civil war would erupt, and the social dislocation would immediately spill over into predominantly Shi'ite Iran.

One most significant feature of the Iraqi developments, which the British have not addressed, is the publicly stated awareness, on the part of the Baghdad leadership, of what the contours of the British-American gameplan is. To the extent that the truth about the ongoing aggression becomes known, specifically, the strategic objectives of the British and their colleagues in the Principals Committee around Gore, Albright, Shelton, and U.S. Defense Secretary William Cohen, the chances are greater that catastrophe can be averted.

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## Interview: Laith Shubeilat

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# Jordan is unprotected from New World Order

*Laith Shubeilat is acknowledged as the leading opposition figure in Jordan. He served as an independent Islamist member of Parliament during 1984-93, and decided against running for reelection, for political reasons, although he had been elected with the largest number of votes cast for any candidate. An engineer by education and profession, Shubeilat has been the head of the Jordanian Engineers Association, the most powerful of the professional associations in the country. He has been a harsh critic of the peace process with Israel, and has led a relentless battle to defend the sovereignty, the national economy, and the people of Jordan, from the ravages of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) programs. He has been in the forefront of efforts to defend Iraq. Shubeilat was arrested, tried, and convicted on politically motivated charges, twice, and was incarcerated, before being pardoned by the late King Hussein.*

*He was interviewed on Feb. 23, 1999.*



**EIR:** If you've seen *EIR* recently, you know that we are

campaigning to try to stop this intervention into Iraq. Lyndon LaRouche put out a paper, some weeks back, in which he demanded that Gen. Henry H. Shelton, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Defense Secretary William Cohen, be retired. This was circulated in Washington and internationally, and has had an impact. LaRouche is saying these people are insane: They think they could go in with air cover, and then ground forces, and set up some kind of beachhead in northern and southern Iraq, and then overthrow Saddam Hussein's government, and so on. They think they can do this without civil war, without destabilization.

You know the Iraqi situation well. You were in Baghdad, and you met with people there. How do you evaluate it, and how do they look at it?

**Shubeilat:** They certainly look at it as a conspiracy, that all are conspiring against them, especially the Arabs. That the bombardment in December was given a green light by most of the Arab governments, unfortunately. But fortunately, the Iraqis were very well organized, very well prepared for the bombardment. The rockets were flying overhead, but the Iraqis didn't care. All crime stopped. No crimes were registered by the police during the days of the bombardment.

After a week of bombardment, Saddam Hussein made his famous speech, in which he asked for the toppling of the Arab regimes. Basically, what he was saying [to the Arab regimes], was that if you do not agree with me, and you are talking to the Iraqi people, fine. I'll deal the same card: I'll talk to your people. Let's see whose people will listen to which leader. Number two, he was telling the Americans and the Kuwaitis and everybody, look, first the United Nations Security Council said that Iraq should get out of Kuwait. Fine, we got out of Kuwait. Then, you imposed another condition, and another, and another. Now, you say you do not accept the regime. Well, this is the regime that made all the agreements with you. Fine, you don't accept this regime, then there are no agreements. I do not agree with all the agreements that we have signed.

He went on a very advanced diplomatic offensive, and the Arab regimes could not answer; none of them could really answer with convincing language. They could not counterattack against Saddam Hussein's stance with rhetoric. So, he emerged as the strongest regime politically, while all the Arab regimes became endangered, because they lost a lot of their legitimacy, by conspiring against the government of Iraq. That's why they rushed for a summit [of the Arab League]: so as to make it look, to their people, as if they were meeting for Iraq. But as time passed, they even renounced the summit, and they are back, conspiring with the Americans and the Israelis against Iraq.

**EIR:** Was that the meeting in Cairo, which the Iraqi Foreign Minister Al-Sahaf left in protest?

**Shubeilat:** Yes, it was in preparation for the summit.

**EIR:** How do you evaluate the situation now? There is a