

‘Second Superpower’ Jams Up The Works of New Mideast War

by Elisabeth Hellenbroich and Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

The struggle over war or peace, in mid-February, effected a paradigm shift in world politics. On one side, the “last remaining superpower” and its teetering British sidekick, scorning anti-war demonstrations of tens of millions worldwide and growing resistance among other nations, signalled imperially that its patience is running out, and that it intends a new UN resolution to justify a pre-emptive war on Iraq in the coming weeks. On the other side is what a Feb. 17 *New York Times* editorial called a second superpower—mobilized world opinion.

The dilemma became crystal clear during the UN Security Council session on Feb. 14, which ended in a diplomatic defeat for American Secretary of State Colin Powell. As the reports by the UN weapons inspectors Hans Blix and Mohammed El-Baradei were unexpectedly positive, the majority of the 15 Security Council members—excepting Spain, the U.K., and Bulgaria—spoke up against the uncompromising position of Powell, who rejected continuing inspections in favor of disarming Iraq through military means, unless Iraq were to display the weapons of mass destruction Powell believes it possesses. French Foreign Minister Dominique de Villepin, forcefully expressing the near-universal view, said, “Efficient inspections must be achieved through full cooperation on the part of Iraq. . . . Give the inspectors the chance, since no one can imagine that a war could lead to a more just world. War is always a sign of failure.”

Citing French intelligence investigations, de Villepin squarely denied Powell’s Feb. 5 report of a provable link between Iraq and the al-Qaeda terror network. He then recalled the “moral responsibility” of heads of government and state: “We are the custodians of conscience; we shoulder responsibility. And it is an old country, France, a continent like mine, Europe, which is telling you this today, which has known wars, occupation, barbarism. An old country which

does not forget, and which knows everything it owes to the freedom fighters from America and other places during the Second World War.” De Villepin’s speech was received with applause, a unique and historic gesture for the Security Council.

Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan followed unequivocally: “The majority here believes that the inspectors should be given the time they need, and that everything must be done to secure peace.” Echoing de Villepin’s reference to “the old European continent,” and “old France,” he declared: “China is an ancient civilization. Our ancestors circulated ideas before our time, that peace is the best possibility for cohabitation of peoples. Peace and development are also the most important conditions for co-existence among peoples. . . . Only when we seek a political solution, can we fulfill the expectations of trust and hope on the part of the international community, which it places in the Security Council.”

Unforeseen Worldwide Demonstrations

On Feb. 15, the day of huge global rallies, Democratic Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche described the Bush Administration’s dilemma: “We have come to a point, that the war is still not prevented. But, we have seen the world move from a point of pessimism about an inevitable war, to a strong conviction, even from leaders of nations who had shown cowardice or wavering beforehand, who are now determined, on behalf of the human race as a whole: This war shall not happen!” LaRouche recalled the famous words of President Abraham Lincoln, “You can not fool all of the people, all of the time.” And he noted, “Unnecessary great wars happen, repeatedly. But, nonetheless, sooner or later, again and again, the people realize: They can not be fooled all of the time.”

That weekend saw the biggest anti-war demonstrations,

worldwide, since the Vietnam War. In more than 600 cities in 72 countries, tens of millions of people took to the streets. They addressed themselves not only to the United States government, but also those others loudly supporting the war course (Italy, Spain, the U.K., and several Eastern European countries), and flouting the overwhelming opposition of their citizens. The message was that war will give birth to a monster; mankind does not want a new empire, but peace through development. And of course, the “coalition of the willing” was warned, that those heads of state who scorn the expressed opposition of their people in such a crucial matter, could be thrown out of office very soon.

The most dramatic example was Prime Minister Tony Blair’s Britain, where the U.S. war-hawks’ most faithful ally could become their Achilles’ heel in the gamble for war. The 2-3 million people whom Blair later insulted as “useful idiots for Saddam Hussein,” took Iraq as the catalyst for pent-up rage

over the economic and cultural collapse of the country. The Feb. 20 London *Times* reported Blair was simultaneously facing a growing rebellion in his own party, and had apparently not yet succeeded in convincing the political establishment of the need for a war.

Inside the United States as well, demonstrations took place across the nation. In New York 250,000 protested, with pickets like: “Thank Germany and France.” Further demos took place in 12 other cities, including Chicago, Philadelphia, Miami, Seattle, Detroit, Los Angeles, and Texas’ capital Austin. The *New York Times* editorial, “A New Power in the Streets,” compared the global demonstrations to the uprisings in Eastern Europe in 1989, and to “Europe’s class struggles of 1848.” It noted, “The fracturing of the Western alliance over Iraq, and the huge anti-war demonstrations around the world this weekend, are reminders that there may still be two superpowers on the planet: the United States and world public opinion.” In his attempt to disarm Iraq, Bush “appears to be eyeball-to-eyeball with a tenacious new adversary: millions of people who flooded the streets.”

Support for Vatican, Not Rome

Three million Italians demonstrated in Rome and other cities, to express their displeasure with Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi’s high-handed policy (he had signed a letter supporting the war policy with seven other European leaders, which was then decisively rejected by the European Union on Feb. 17), and their solidarity with Pope John Paul II. The Vatican, led by the Pope’s personal initiatives, is trying to



The catalytic seed of the huge demonstrations of Feb. 14-15 against war in Iraq (here, in Paris) was planted last Summer when Lyndon LaRouche’s forces began global mass circulation of many millions of leaflets and pamphlets exposing the war party, and rejecting the war’s “inevitability.” LaRouche forces’ banners are seen in the march.

exhaust all diplomatic means to find a diplomatic solution to prevent war. Thus, after receiving German Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer (currently chairman of the UN Security Council), the Pope received Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Aziz, and UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. Tony Blair was scheduled to meet the Pontiff on Feb. 22. In addition, the Pope sent his envoy Cardinal Roger Etchegaray on a special mission to Baghdad, where he held talks for 90 minutes with Saddam Hussein, and told the press that “Saddam Hussein wants to avoid war, and is aware of his responsibility towards his people.” Speaking of the Vatican, Etchegaray said, “We have our own way of expressing ourselves—as the Holy Father says—we are the normal conscience of mankind, which desires peace and longs for it.”

How great the tensions are between the Vatican and the U.S. Administration was shown in a sharply-worded statement issued by the director of Radio Vatican, Pasquale Borgomeo, in response to remarks made by National Security Advisor Condoleezza Rice, Powell, and Bush. Bush had referred to the worldwide demonstrations as “irrelevant,” and said he could not make policy decisions on the basis of “focus groups.” Powell had accused France, Belgium, and Germany of being “afraid.” Borgomeo used unusually harsh language on Radio Vatican, contrasting the Papacy’s diplomacy to Washington’s “tone of a salvation mission and the attitude of a crusade.” The United States seems to take “diplomacy for a waste of time, international law for a monkey wrench,” and “the United Nations for a Club of Sophists,” said the broadcast.

In Spain, 3.5 million people in 56 cities poured into the streets against a war, with 1.3 million in Barcelona and 1 million in Madrid. The protesters were vehement against the “irresponsible policy” of Spanish Prime Minister José María Aznar, one of Bush’s closest allies in the countdown to war. Aznar declared the voice of the people left him unmoved, and had no effect on government decisions; he is now politically completely isolated. The Socialist leader José Rodríguez Zapatero commented, “all of Europe and Latin America knows that the voice of Aznar is not that of Spain.” Should Aznar not give up his intransigent position, said Zapatero, the Spanish people would soon present him with the political bill.

In Berlin, the largest demonstration since the founding of the German Republic in 1945 brought 500,000 into processions throughout the capital. Among their placards: “Schröder Is No Bush Fighter”; “Jobs and Education Instead of War and Armament.” Stuttgart, Mainz, Heilbronn, Konstanz, and other cities saw demonstrations.

In Paris, 200,000 shouted, “Better To Fire Bush Than Missiles.” Thousands also demonstrated in Brest, Toulouse, Lyon, and Nice. Other cities involved in the protests were Brussels; Athens, with 200,000; Stockholm, with 30,000; Moscow, where thousands gathered in front of the U.S. Embassy; Minsk, with 2,000; Kiev, with 1500; Tokyo; Seoul; Zagreb, Budapest; Warsaw, where 3,000 took part; Sofia; as well as São Paulo, with 30,000; and Havana with 5,000. In Australia, the protest wave mobilized 250,000 people each in Melbourne and Sydney, over two days, targeting Prime Minister John Howard, a close ally of Washington’s war faction.

Turkey, Iran, and the Kurds

Several factors have emerged since the Feb. 14 weekend, to throw further monkey wrenches in the war drive. One involves the standoff between the Turkish government and Washington. Prime Minister Abdullah Gul has reiterated, as has party leader Recep Erdogan, that Turkey will not come to agreement on the stationing of U.S. troops on its territory (80,000, Washington hopes), without written guarantees of the financial compensation Turkey demands. Reports vary, but this compensation, of several forms, is in the \$30 billion range. It was announced Feb. 19, that the Turkish Parliament would not even address the issue until the following week, thus delaying, if not undoing, the deployment. More than 90% of the Turkish population opposes any war.

Perhaps more decisive than the money, although less openly discussed, is the haggling over territory inside northern Iraq. Turkish sources confirm that a deal has been struck, allowing Turkey to enter northern Iraq alongside American troops and take control over some territory, to which the Turks lay historical claim harking back to the Ottoman Empire period. The squabble now is, how much and which land will the Turks get? The United States insists it will control the oil fields around Mosul and Kirkuk. A further complicating fac-

tor, potentially explosive, is the Feb. 19 report that 5,000 troops of the Iranian-backed Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution of Iraq (SCIRI) entered northern Iraq, allegedly to defend the Iran-Iraq border against elements from the Iraqi-based Mujaheddin al Qalq (MKO), or other forces—i.e., the United States.

Denied by SCIRI leader Ayatollah Mohammed Bagher al-Hakim, the report provoked concern in Washington for several reasons. A secret U.S.-SCIRI agreement had reportedly given SCIRI some political power in a post-Saddam Hussein government, on condition that they *not* enter the country during an American invasion. Secondly, regional experts note that SCIRI would not move such a contingent north, without the approval of political forces inside Iran. If Turkish troops are already inside northern Iraq with American forces, and Turkey is preparing to take its piece of the pie, then forces in Iran, especially among the conservatives, would want to move, to stake their claim as well.

For months, the so-called “Iraqi opposition” of the Iraqi National Congress (INC), the SCIRI, and the two leading Kurdish parties in northern Iraq, have been meeting in London and Washington, to make concrete plans for a post-Saddam constitution and, of course, a power-sharing deal. U.S. mediator Zalmay Khalilzad, also de facto ambassador to Afghanistan, had given Kurdish leaders the unwelcome message in early February, that the United States planned for Turkish troops to enter Iraq. Then, in mid-February, it was announced by the Bush Administration, that a U.S. military figure would take over power in Baghdad for two years, utilizing structures and personnel of the current political system. This news flew in the face of pledges the opposition thought it had. Iraqi opposition leader Ahmad Chalabi reacted: “I’m very disappointed that our friend America is acting this way,” indicating his displeasure with having been removed from the list of future Iraqi government personnel. Kurdish leaders have issued veiled threats, since the announcement of the U.S. transitional government idea, that if the Turks invade Iraq, they will turn to Iran for help.

Many reports of the situation in the Kurdish region in northern Iraq are unclear, unconfirmed, speculative—but it cannot be ignored that the area is already considered “up for grabs.” Ironically, in some of the past year’s war scenarios, the very delicate situation stemming from historical, ethnic, economic, and political realities, had been taken into consideration. The most realistic analysts recognized that, if Turkey invaded the area, it would set off reactions among the Kurds, which could include the declaration of a Kurdistan entity, which would ignite the Kurdish populations in Syria, Iran, and Turkey itself. And intelligent forecasts had recognized that Iran would react to a Turkish invasion. But Khalilzad’s negotiated mess recalls those of the British, who promised the same land to different entities in the wake of the Ottoman Empire break-up. Those ethnic and political groups which the United States thought it had as allies, no longer are.