

'Iraq Coup' Plan Masks Chaos: Stop the War!

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

The world entered the new year with a call by Pope John Paul II for peace, but also with an escalation of both the military mobilization of forces into the Persian Gulf, and with associated psychological warfare campaigns. The two latter developments have heightened tensions and fears that war factions in the United States and Britain may be planning for hostilities to break out right after the Jan. 27 report on UN inspections has been discussed. The buildup has occurred despite the inspectors' interim report to the UN on Jan. 9, that Iraq is cooperating fully.

For the same reason, forces committed to preventing war have redoubled their diplomatic and political efforts. On Jan. 6, Lyndon LaRouche's Presidential campaign began a million-run leafletting of the United States with his new intervention against the war party. The leaflet is titled "The Weeks of Crisis Before Us" (see *EIR*, Jan. 10).

Accelerated deployments of troops and materiel have gotten front-page coverage in an obvious attempt at psychological impact on the targetted nation of Iraq, and on the world at large. In addition to the 60,000 American troops stationed in the region, the Pentagon announced on Jan. 8 that it was shifting its planning staff of about 1,000 people from Tampa, Florida, to the newly expanded air force base of Al Salilyah in Qatar. Outgoing Marine Commandant Gen. James Jones hinted at what the ongoing military deployment to the Persian Gulf could add up to, in comments at the National Press Club on Jan. 8. He said, "In the aggregate numbers, it's somewhere around 65-75,000 Marines," or approximately 40% of Marine Corps strength. If comparable numbers from the other branches are also deployed, it could mean a total force well above 200,000-250,000 mooted in recent press reports.

In addition, F-15E and F-15C fighter planes, B-1 bombers, and a hospital ship are to be sent to the region. Two U-2 reconnaissance planes from Germany were sent on Jan. 8 to Iraq, while official requests for overflight permission were presented to several governments of the region. In tandem with the American deployments, British Defense Minister Hoon called up 1,500 reserves, to be followed by more. Hoon added that the aircraft carrier *Ark Royal*, the helicopter carrier *HMS Ocean*, three destroyers with four accompanying ships, as well as landing ships, a submarine, and mine-removing ships, were being sent.

The same day that the Pentagon announced its transfer of the planning staff to Qatar, Defense Secretary Rumsfeld reiterated that such a mobilization does not mean that war is

inevitable, but quipped that it would be "nice for everybody" if Saddam Hussein simply decided to leave.

Psy-War In Grand Style

This "voluntary exile" scenario, played up as an option seriously considered by Arab leaders, is a fraud. The foreign minister of Qatar did travel to Iraq last Summer, to float the idea there, where it was rejected out of hand. Rumors continued in the Autumn, that Egyptian and Saudi figures were involved in arranging for Saddam Hussein, with an entourage of a couple of hundred family and close collaborators, to be given asylum in some Arab country. Then, on Jan. 4, it was reported that an open letter to the Iraqi leader by "Arab intellectuals" to this effect had been issued, and published in the Lebanese paper *An Nahar*. At the same time, an Iranian paper close to Ayatollah Khamenei, claimed there had been a secret Russian-American deal to have Saddam Hussein removed, by choice or by force, and replaced by one of his generals.

The "exile" option is another version of the "regime change" which would open up chaos, anarchy, and civil war inside Iraq, with destabilizing effects reverberating throughout the region. More likely is a plan by the utopian war party to attempt a *coup d'état* against the Iraqi leader. Millions of leaflets have been dropped over Iraq, with instructions in Arabic to listen to a U.S. radio station, which is calling on the Iraqi people and military to overthrow Saddam Hussein. Reportedly, not only leaflets but also weapons have been distributed inside the country. Informed sources report discussion of scenarios whereby such a coup, if successful, would be followed by invading occupying forces, to take control over the oil.

Many governments of the region have heard this for months, and have been advised they, therefore, each should position themselves to "avoid war" and reap the benefits afterwards. Different governments have been shown different versions of this post-Hussein landscape.

On Jan. 6, American Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche expressed in no uncertain terms his condemnation of such an attitude, whether it be to an exile scenario or a coup. If Saddam Hussein were to be removed, he stressed, every government in the region would be destabilized. Thus, the only serious response to the war party's plans, is to defeat them politically. LaRouche is continuing to accelerate the international and internal U.S. pressure, which has thus far postponed the war.

The Regional Equation

Several factors in the region can contribute to thwarting the war effort. First and foremost is Saudi Arabia, including LaRouche's influence there (see accompanying article). Arab governments consider the Saudi position to be crucial, and its continuing firm "No" to war has generated optimism among Arab League members.

Another factor is Turkey, which was no less crucial to Operation Desert Storm as a base of operations. Incirlik air

base has been the launching pad for years of American and British bombing raids in the so-called “no-fly zones.” For any planned invasion, either Saudi Arabia or Turkey would be required.

Recently, Turkey has turned against the war. Prime Minister Abdallah Gul, of the new ruling Justice and Development Party, conducted a high-profile tour of the region, visiting major Arab capitals and Tehran, on a “peace initiative.” Informed sources report that Gul mainly wanted to find out what the neighboring states were thinking. What he found in every capital was opposition to military action. After talks with Jordan’s King Abdallah, Gul stated, “Our expectations are, that if war occurs, the countries in the region will be the losers. The consequences of war will be disastrous.”

While Gul was on tour, Turkey did grant U-2 overflight rights to the United States, but denied the right to base them at Incirlik. Although Turkey is a NATO member, and engaged in military maneuvers in the eastern Mediterranean with Israeli and U.S. forces in the first week of January, there have been visible glitches. On Jan. 8, the *Washington Post* quoted frustrated American diplomats, and summed up, “More than six months after the United States approached Turkey for permission to examine military bases here for possible use against Iraq, . . . a 150-person U.S. military survey team remains in Germany, waiting to be waved in. Similarly, the government has not yet decided on a U.S. request to station as many as 80,000 combat troops in Turkey as part of the regional buildup for a possible war.” These delays “have confounded diplomats and U.S. officials long accustomed to working smoothly with Turkey. . . . The stakes are particularly high, they said, because of the need to secure rich Iraqi oil fields near the cities of Mosul and Kirkuk, 100 and 150 miles, respectively, south of the 250-mile border between Turkey and Iraq.”

Murat Mercan, deputy chairman of the Justice and Development Party of Turkey, said the party is bending to public opinion which, according to a poll, is 80% against war. The reasons given for the Turkish government’s reluctance are economic—they suffered horrific economic damage effects from Desert Storm, felt by every Turk—and the political fear that a Kurdish entity may emerge.

The real story is more complex. According to regional experts, there are two distinct fronts inside Turkey: the traditional military; and the political rulers, Gul and party chairman Erdogan. The military oppose a war, but would acquiesce to American forcing of the issue. However, Turkish compliance would be bought at a high price. This includes military equipment, Patriot missiles, tanks, and the like, as well as cash aid in the billions. They would demand guarantees that no Kurdish force would prevail in northern Iraq, and, to be sure, would deploy their own military into the area. Furthermore, they want some “regional territorial changes,” as one expert put it, meaning the annexation of Mosul. This, according to a Turkish source, is what the military establishment considers its “national interest.”

The political leadership, Erdogan and Gul, oppose any war in principle, but, if the United States were to go to war, Turkey would neither support it, nor obstruct it. Different from the Saudi stance, the Turkish position is that if there were a United Nations decision for war, Turkey would go along with it.

A Bigger Conflict

The Turkish issue is not a matter of simple bargaining. A major conflict is shaping up, among Turkey, Britain, and the United States over oil fields in northern Iraq. The United States told Turkey that “only” American troops would enter there; the Turkish military want to do so themselves; and British Defense Minister Hoon visited the country on Jan. 8, in hopes of winning support for the right to have British troops move into Iraq, from Turkey. Then, there are the two Kurdish parties, living on the contested territory, who demand control.

The British “offer” will not go through. One day prior to Hoon’s arrival, Mehmet Duler, chairman of the Turkish Parliament’s Foreign Policy Committee, told NTV that his country had “serious and strong reservations” against such a move, for “historical reasons.” The British Empire was co-responsible for the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, and so Turkey is “not keen” on having British soldiers march into northern Iraq from Turkey.

Foreign Minister Yasar Yakis detonated a political bombshell with a statement to *Hurriyet*, that although Turkey did not lay claim to Iraq’s northern oil fields, in the event of war, there were historical treaties giving Turkey co-rights to the oil production. “If we have these rights, then,” he said, “we must explain them to our partners and secure these rights.” Gul immediately denied the statements, reasserting Turkey’s commitment to the territorial integrity of Iraq.

The historical rights refer to what was Villayet Mosul under the Ottoman Empire, an area corresponding then to about 90% of today’s Kurdish northern Iraq. The claim to the region has never been erased in reality. Thus, Minister Yakis’s statement of the claim to the oil from Kirkuk and Mosul. According to the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* of Jan. 9, he presented this claim to the Americans who received it “with understanding.” The demand is seen as actually a bid for funds, to compensate for the projected economic damage of a possible war. Turkey lost close to \$30 billion in the 1991 Gulf war.

This is also the background to the Turkish military’s intention to move into the region itself, if there is war, with 22,000 troops. As the *Neue Zürcher Zeitung* correctly points out, this would be a recipe for disaster: Iran and Syria would react, and the Kurds inhabiting the region would put up military resistance, leading to bloody chaos. And, of course, the United States has said it will do the job itself.

If the Turkish establishment is seriously committed to preserving its real national interests, it will recognize that any war in the region will spell disaster for the nation, and consequently resist the temptations offered it, by refusing to endorse aggression against Iraq.