

tion, invoked the “True America.” “What we see today is not the great America, which we have known all the time. The America which we knew was the America of freedom and scientific progress, not the one we see today.” He described in fascinating detail how President Eisenhower put an end to the British-Israeli-French attack on Egypt in the Suez War in 1956, as an example of great American leadership. Al-Kubaisi had referred to the ideas and work of American Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche, in an address at the Zayed University in Abu Dhabi in November 2002.

On the other side of the river, Shi’ites were attending Friday Prayer in al-Kadhimiya, at the Shrine of Imams Jaafar Assadiq and Mousa al-Kadhim. They, too, went out to demonstrate against the occupation. They crossed the bridge and joined their Sunni compatriots in a display of national, non-sectarian unity. The slogan was “No Shi’ite, no Sunni will sell out this country.”

The danger of sectarian division and strife in Iraq depends on the intentions and acts of the U.S. and British occupation and politicians in Washington. The continued deterioration of the Iraqi people’s living standards and the political instability in the country, would create conditions for such a disastrous development. The intention of the “war party” in Washington, to “move to the next target,” leaving Iraq a mess, is what could make such a development likely in the short term.

## Oil Robbery Under Way In Occupied Iraq?

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

The United States, having allegedly “won” the war in Iraq, now finds itself in an inextricable bind regarding its plan to exploit Iraq’s massive raw materials resources. The misinformed view of Vice President Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld, Richard Perle, et al., had been that, after a speedy coup d’état against Saddam Hussein, an American puppet regime would crank up oil production, expand exports, reap handsome revenues, and use them for “reconstruction” of the infrastructure that the combination of bombs, looting, and arson had destroyed. Contracts for “reconstruction” could be earmarked for faithful corporate war supporters, like Bechtel and Halliburton, while non-American companies would be excluded. Furthermore, to ensure total control over oil and the industry, the U.S.-sponsored regime would declare all Saddam-era contracts with other parties null and void. This would remove Russia, France, and others from the field of competitors.

That was the plan. Thus, as soon as Baghdad had “fallen,” April 9, President Bush declared that the UN sanctions against



*The American Pentagon’s “Iraqi face,” Ahmed al-Chalabi, returned to Iraq after nearly 50 years in Europe, wants to head its government and build a pipeline to bring its oil to Israel.*

Iraq should be immediately lifted, so that Iraqi oil could be exported, the economy reactivated, and reconstruction begun.

### Tearing Up UN Resolutions

But this declaration is utterly illegal. The Russians and French objected, correctly, that the sanctions could not be lifted by fiat, or by American imperial decree. Sanctions had been imposed, in the wake of the 1990 Iraqi intervention in Kuwait, through a United Nations Security Council resolution, which specified that they could be lifted only after a UN inspections team had certified that Iraq did not possess weapons of mass destruction. Thus, diplomats from Paris and Moscow argued, the UN inspectors should return to Iraq and complete their task. If a clean bill of health were delivered, then the sanctions could be lifted. For his part, UN inspections chief Hans Blix confirmed on April 23, that his team could be back on the scene within two weeks.

Although the French, in a conciliatory gesture, offered a compromise formula—“suspension” of the sanctions, pending delivery of a report by a “mixed” team of inspectors (the UN official team along with the ad hoc group of inspectors which the United States had assembled) U.S. Ambassador to the UN John Negroponte maintained his hard line, rejecting any role for the UN inspectors. He said the United States saw no UN role “for the time being or the foreseeable future.” Instead, he stressed that the U.S.-led coalition “has assumed responsibility for the disarming of Iraq.” The handpicked, well-paid inspectors assembled by the United States would continue scouring the land, until they came up with, or contrived, some sign of weapons of mass destruction.

The significance of the French and Russian position, is that it stresses, rightly, that the UN must be the body which decides on the sanctions. It is the UN which has controlled Iraq’s oil revenues through the Oil-for-Food program, and the Security Council decided on April 24 that this should remain so, until an independent Iraqi government comes into being. Furthermore, the recognition of a new Iraqi government, they both agree, is a responsibility of the UN.

One leading German expert on international law, Prof.

Dieter Blumenwitz, summarized the fundamental argument in an interview with *Die Welt* on April 12: Removing the government of a state (“regime change”), and installing a new government in the occupied territory, a puppet or “quisling” regime, is banned by international law, as established in the Code of War Conduct (The Hague Convention of 1907) and the 1947 Geneva Conventions. Any such regime should be viewed as an instrument of the occupying power, and not acknowledged as a legitimate government. All measures decreed by such a government are in violation of international law. An Iraqi post-Saddam government can be established only by the Iraqi people, through the help of the UN.

The United States, disregarding these instruments of international law, argues that both the UN sanctions and the UN Oil-for-Food program have been rendered “irrelevant” by the war. Furthermore, Washington has arrogated to itself the right to form an Iraqi government of its choosing. In the meantime, the United States assumes the right to direct Iraqi economic policy, in particular, to pump oil. At a “town meeting” of Baghdad civic leaders April 24, addressed by the American “Viceroy of Baghdad,” Gen. Jay Garner, it was announced that 70,000 barrels a day of oil were already being pumped in southern Iraq.

Garner also announced, “I think you’ll begin to see the governmental process start next week. It will have Iraqi faces on it. It will be governed by the Iraqis.” He could have added: “It will market the oil.”

### **Coalition ‘Retains Absolute Authority’**

From the onset of the aggressive war against Iraq, U.S. and British politicians have been asked the question, “Who, in a post-Saddam, era, will control Iraqi oil, its production, export and revenues?” U.S. Undersecretary of State Marc Grossman, in remarks to Italy’s *Corriere della Sera* on April 20, gave the standard reply: the “Iraqi people.” When asked to be a bit more specific, he said, “some Iraqi authority.” The London *Financial Times* on April 21 reported on the coming-into-being of one such “authority.” A man named Fellah al-Khawaja had presented himself in Baghdad, as representing the “Co-Ordinating Committee for the Oil Ministry” which, in turn, is under the auspices of the local government, a self-declared entity under a self-declared mayor, Mohamed Mohsen al-Zubaidi. The committee, according to the report, issued a list of people allowed into the ministry. (The Oil Ministry, unlike 35 other ministries, leading museums, libraries, etc., had been immediately seized and protected by American troops.)

U.S. authorities, in both Iraq and Washington, embarrassed by al-Zubaidi’s assertiveness, have issued disclaimers. Lt. Gen. David McKiernan, commander of the ground forces in Iraq, made perfectly clear that the U.S.-led military coalition “alone retains absolute authority within Iraq.” Al-Zubaidi presumably asserted the right to become Baghdad mayor, by virtue of the fact that he is secretary of the Iraqi National

Congress (INC), the organization of exiled Iraqis which is officially backed by the Pentagon. Its leader, Ahmed Chalabi, is the crown prince, designated by Rumsfeld to lead a new government—what General Garner indicated was “an Iraqi face.”

A Chalabi government, according to the Washington blueprint, would be the entity to market Iraq’s oil. Not only that: Chalabi has gone on record endorsing a project to revive an old, pre-1948 pipeline from Iraq to Israel, which would provide Israel with cheap Iraqi oil. State Department sources say that a Chalabi regime would have at the “top of the agenda” a peace treaty between the new Iraq, and Israel. The “vision” of reviving the pipeline goes back to 1975, when Henry Kissinger signed a Memorandum of Understanding, whereby Israel would be guaranteed oil supplies and energy in time of crisis, by the United States. Once the Iraq war came on the Washington agenda, the pipeline project began to be openly debated. As for who would build the necessary infrastructure, the answer should be obvious. The *Financial Times* reported, “The plan was promoted by the now Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, and the pipeline was to be built by the Bechtel company, which the Bush Administration last week awarded a multibillion-dollar contract for the reconstruction of Iraq.”

The “vision” would become reality in the manner cited above: Chalabi would be installed as a leader of a new Iraqi government, whose task would be to jack up Iraq’s oil production capabilities (with help of Bechtel et al.), export it (also to Israel), and allocate the revenues to “reconstruction,” with juicy contracts for Bechtel, Halliburton, and other friends of Cheney.

Developments on the ground, since the fall of Baghdad, have drawn a radically different picture, of self-organization among Iraq’s real political, religious, and social forces, whose unifying slogan has become: No to Saddam Hussein! No to America! No to Chalabi! There is no way that a Chalabi government, or any other quisling of the United States, can rule in Iraq. Chalabi himself, who set up headquarters at the Hunting Club in Baghdad, has become virtually a prisoner in his own compound, kept alive only by the 700 “Free Iraqi Forces” who protect his every move. On April 21, it was reported that Chalabi had barely escaped an assassination attempt, in which one or more of his bodyguards were killed. That attempt may not be the last.

The United States is under extreme time pressure to put something together, if not with Chalabi, then with some other “Iraqi face.” The Oil-for-Food program runs out on June 3, and Washington must have an interim Iraqi administration in place by that time, to be able to claim that this entity “owns” the oil, and can sell it.

The hitch, again, is that no government (interim or otherwise) will have international legitimacy in this respect, unless it is put in place through the UN process. And that, at the moment, does not seem very likely.