

## Editorial

### *Emergency relief for Iraq now*

Famine and disease now threaten millions of people in the Persian Gulf region, as a result of the war. Conditions in Iraq now border on famine. The destruction of water and sanitation facilities, coupled with a lack of power-generating capacity, mean spread of disease unchecked.

We fully support the campaign for emergency relief to Iraq which is being launched by the Schiller Institute. The devastation of that nation has been so complete, that without emergency measures, the stage is set for the modern-day equivalent of the Black Death which swept Europe in the 1300s and destroyed three-fourths of the population.

Fewer than 1,000 calories per person per day are available to the people of Iraq. Over the next year, Iraq needs approximately 550,000 metric tons of rice, 3.1 million metric tons of wheat and wheat flour (in grain equivalent), plus other staples such as fats and oils, sugar, animal proteins, meat, vegetables, and infant formula.

Equipment, power, fuels, and chemicals are needed to supply 150 liters of safe water per person per day. At present, there is no system for safe water provision in Iraq. Required are: portable water purification units, power generators, diesel fuel, tank trucks, chlorine, alum and other chemicals, and spare parts.

Pharmaceuticals, equipment, staff, and facilities are needed both for primary health care (pre- and neonatal care, vaccinations, and other care) and for treating communicable diseases. Required are antibiotics and other medicaments, immunization doses (DPT, polio, measles), and basic supplies including syringes, sterilizers, blood tests, and refrigeration boxes.

Despite the cease-fire, the U.S. government has continued to pursue its genocidal policies against Iraq. Not only are there no moves on the part of the United States to provide humanitarian aid to the Iraqi people, but George Bush has put every conceivable obstacle in the way of those governments and agencies which have tried to deliver food supplies, water, or medicine. Offers of humanitarian aid to Iraq from private U.S. citi-

zens and charities and foreign governments are being blocked by Washington.

The European Commission has offered a grant to help clean up Baghdad's water supply, but the U.S. opposes it. Within hours of the cease-fire, a sum of £392,000 was offered by the EC to the Red Cross to pay for a mobile water treatment unit. EC Commissioner for the Middle East Abel Matutes, who is to oversee EC humanitarian assistance for the area, cited the dangers of polluted drinking water and epidemics. U.S. embassy officials in Europe immediately objected to the "haste" of the offer, and moved to prevent the U.N. sanctions commission from approving it.

A shipment of 50 tons of medical supplies has been jeopardized by Washington officials. Gathered by the Fellowship of Reconciliation, an interdenominational pacifist charity, the relief package has not received required export papers from the U.S. Treasury and State Departments, which are stalling, despite the humanitarian nature of the cargo. Representatives of the group have appealed to Congress to override administration stonewalling. A Fellowship of Reconciliation delegation wants to embark for Iraq on March 23 with the medicines, but they fear that administration officials may sue them.

A UNICEF arrangement for 12 refrigerated trucks to transport vaccines and other medical supplies, ordered in 1990 for humanitarian use in transport between Teheran and Baghdad, has been held up by the U.N. embargo. Seven health officials from the World Health Organization and UNICEF toured Baghdad and nearby areas Feb. 16-21, and reported on the emergency needs. They arranged for a meager 54 tons of medical supplies to be delivered.

What is needed now is an international task force to assess what is needed in detail. Even before such an assessment is completed, however, relief measures must be taken. An international outcry must be raised, so that George Bush is forced to lift the boycott which the United States is still illegally enforcing against the people of Iraq.