

# British prepare new operations vs. Iraq

by Muriel Mirak-Weissbach

On April 27, the United Nations Security Council is scheduled to carry out a periodical review of its sanctions against Iraq. Unless a miracle intervenes—or sanctions opponents in Russia, China, or France use their veto privileges—it is expected that the body will vote to extend the sanctions, which were imposed as a continuation of Margaret Thatcher and George Bush's Operation Desert Storm in 1990-91. Thus, the unnecessary deaths, particularly of infants, the elderly, and the chronically ill, will continue.

To fend off criticism that the sanctions are creating a humanitarian disaster, the Security Council will likely talk up its oil-for-food program, whereby Iraq is allowed to export \$5.26 billion worth of oil every six months, and to use part of the revenue to import food and medicine. The program is a cruel farce, because the lion's share of the revenue goes, through a UN-managed escrow account, to pay off reparations to Kuwait and to fund the UN's own activities in Iraq. In addition, since Iraq has not been allowed to maintain and upgrade its oil facilities, it will not be physically capable of meeting the quota.

Another ploy that is being used, to mollify public concern about the human suffering, is the highly publicized special treatment accorded to isolated sanctions victims. Thus, one four-year-old Iraqi girl afflicted with leukemia, was flown to Britain for care in mid-April. The fact that the operation had been organized by Labour Party MP George Galloway, who is one of British intelligence's leading operatives in the Arab world, should remove any doubt that this, too, is a cruel joke.

## The British strategy

What is really going on, in the cat-and-mouse game between the UN and the Iraqi government, is, however, no joke. The British, who set up the operation against Iraq in 1990, maintain their policy of sanctions in order to erode the Iraqi economy, as a means of sabotaging development in the region. British policy is to destroy Iraq, as part of a broader strategy, to foment chaos and war in the Middle East. Among the scenarios churned out by British intelligence outlets and their Israeli affiliates over the past years, are plots to overthrow the Saddam Hussein government, break up the country into three entities, and/or establish a proxy government, perhaps with Jordanian assets.

The sanctions function as a means of control over the process: To the extent the British can deploy their instruments in the UN, to provoke confrontation with the Iraqi government, they can trigger a crisis, and mobilize political support for further military actions against Baghdad. This is what happened in November 1997 and January 1998, until a political solution was worked out through UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, with the backing of President Clinton.

That crisis ended formally on Feb. 23, with an agreement giving the UN inspection teams full access to the buildings they wished to enter, including Presidential palaces. The agreement also acknowledged Iraq's concern that the discussion begin, on when the sanctions will be lifted.

The British have no intention of lifting the embargo. Rather, their intent is to maintain the status quo, in order to have a ready mechanism for starting a new crisis, whenever their strategic considerations deem it useful. At present, they may be playing the peace game, with Prime Minister Tony Blair cast in the role of mediator and host to yet another Mideast peace conference. But when that fails, the screws could very well be turned on Iraq again.

## The inspector general's report

In the late-1997 Iraq crisis, the key player for the British was Richard William Butler, chairman of the UN Special Commission on Iraq since May 1997, and head of the inspections team. Butler, an Australian, is one of the Queen's own men, a member of the Order of Australia, "for services to International Peace and Disarmament." It was Butler who issued outrageous statements to the press—rather than to the Security Council to which he should report—alleging that Iraq had the capacity to wipe out Tel Aviv, with weapons of mass destruction. The escalation toward the brink of military confrontation which followed, is known.

Once the worst had been averted, the UN inspectors were allowed back, and proceeded without hindrance to inspect the Presidential palaces. Despite the fact that the inspectors found none of the weapons of mass destruction which were supposed to be tucked away in the palaces, Butler issued a report calculated to reignite tensions. The essence of his report was that "virtually no progress in verifying disarmament has been able to be reported" over the past six months.

Iraq's Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mohamad Said al-Sahaf, left for New York on April 19, to speak before the Security Council and refute Butler's claims, which he termed "groundless, false, and erroneous conclusions." Sahaf said, "We will reply completely objectively to all the falsehoods cited in Butler's report," and reiterated that Iraq had a right to demand that the embargo be lifted.

Just prior to Butler's categorical rejection of progress on the inspections front, the International Atomic Energy Agency had determined that Iraq had presented a "full, final, and complete" account of the nuclear weapons programs

which it had had in the past. The IAEA also stated, "The agency's ongoing monitoring and verification activities carried out since October 1997 have not revealed indications of the existence in Iraq of prohibited equipment or materials or of the conduct of prohibited activity." In an interview with the German daily *Die Welt* on April 20, the IAEA General Director Mohamed Al-Baradei explained what the nuclear inspectors had done since 1991: "I think that in the last six years we have destroyed or removed all objects linked to nuclear weapons, or required for the production of nuclear weapons, including nuclear material and nuclear technical installations. On orders of the UN Security Council, and with far-reaching authority, we undertake rigorous inspections and and technical verification controls in Iraq. That is, we do everything in order to make sure, that Iraq will not be able to revive its nuclear weapons program."

If the IAEA had thus determined that Iraq was not pursuing development of nuclear weapons, it would seem logical, that similar progress could be reported by the UN commission, which is charged with overseeing the elimination of biological and chemical weapons, and missiles programs. But Butler thought differently.

The IAEA bill of clean health contributed to shaping Butler's wholly negative report, and also provoked panicked responses from certain think-tankers allied to British interests. In May-June issue of the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* and in a series of interviews, David Albright, of the Institute for Science and International Security, based in Washington, D.C., argued that Iraq could easily revive its program, and that the IAEA report was wrong. Albright proposed the best way to surveil Iraq's nuclear capabilities, would be to pull out its scientists! "A more effective way needs to be found to monitor the scientists from Iraq's previous program," he said. "To render that program harmless, it would be wonderful to get the key scientists out."

## The ultimate ploy

Thus, the argument presented at the Security Council meeting will be, no matter how good Iraq looks to the IAEA, plenty of scientists can testify that there are no guarantees, and, besides, "our man" Butler has a different view. The UN will likely maintain the sanctions as a result, thus keeping the option to trigger a crisis at will.

A further, more grotesque operation, has also been cooked up by British intelligence, as a means of creating the instruments for possible unorthodox military intervention into Iraq. This is the War Crimes Tribunal proposal. Immediately following the solution to the inspections crisis in February, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, among others, issued statements to the effect that Saddam Hussein should be tried for crimes against humanity. Albright was not the author of the idea, which was first presented some years ago, in the British House of Commons. Just following the end of the inspections crisis in February, British press organs

began serializing documentaries, also broadcast on television, purporting to show that Saddam Hussein had committed such crimes.

As is frequently the procedure in such cases of British intelligence operations against sovereign governments, the "proposal" finds its way into the halls of the U.S. Congress, where it is translated into law. (This is the track pursued by Baroness Caroline Cox, of British intelligence, who has operated over four years, to testify at Congressional hearings, then force through legislation in the United States, for sanctions against Sudan.)

On March 13, 1998, the Senate passed Resolution 78, which argued that the precedent of the Nuremberg Tribunal should be revived for use today. The text states, in part, "Whereas the International Military Tribunal at Nuremberg was convened to try individuals for crimes against international law committed during World War II"; and "Whereas the Nuremberg tribunal provision which stated that 'crimes against individual law are committed by men, not by [sic] abstract entities, and only by punishing individuals who commit such crimes can the provisions of international law be enforced' is as valid today as it was in 1946," then, considering the multitude of crimes allegedly committed by Saddam Hussein (which the resolution lists in great detail), then, a new tribunal should be established, in order to make possible his being put on trial. The "crimes against humanity" listed include acts of violence against Kuwaiti citizens, firing missiles on Israel during the 1991 war, igniting Kuwait oil wells, plotting to assassinate Bush, etc. Most significant in the resolution text, is the reference among the listed crimes, to Iraq's alleged violations of UN Resolution 687. Under it, Iraq was required to "unconditionally accept" the destruction of all chemical and biological weapons, research, and manufacturing facilities.

The Senate resolution concludes that President Clinton should "1) call for the creation of a commission under the auspices of the United Nations to establish an international record of the criminal culpability of Saddam Hussein and other Iraqi officials; 2) call for the United Nations to form an international criminal tribunal for the purpose of indicting, prosecuting, and imprisoning Saddam Hussein and any other Iraqi officials who may be found responsible . . . ; and 3) . . . take steps necessary, including the reprogramming of funds, to ensure United States support for efforts to bring Saddam Hussein and other Iraqi officials to justice."

In short, the Senate resolution proposes that the United States sponsor a British operation, to establish a special tribunal for Saddam Hussein. Under those circumstances, it would not be unthinkable to mount a military operation, as was experimented against Panama's Gen. Manuel Noriega, to capture the alleged criminal. Such a scenario fits neatly into the strategic options which British intelligence has been elaborating for a radical change in the map of the Middle East and Persian Gulf.