

'No, No to All The Chalabis'

by Scott Thompson

On April 22-23, 2003, two million Iraqi Shi'ite Muslims held their first pilgrimage since Saddam Hussein had come to power, to the old cities of Karbala and Najaf. The pilgrimage and demonstrations, set up by religious authorities, were a masterpiece of self-organization with little means. Clerics called for an end to the U.S.-U.K. military occupation; but, the dominant chants were against the "Quislings." One such was "No, No, to all the Chalabis," in a reference the U.S.-installed politicians such as Ahmed Chalabi, the darling of the Vice President Dick Cheney's neo-conservative chicken-hawks. This showed it to be a lie that Shi'ite Chalabi, who spent years in exile, would be welcomed as a "liberator."

The demonstrators also chanted that they "don't want a Shi'ite or Sunni State, but national unity under a Constitution." Chalabi et al. had been saying that a Constitution could not be written for six, eight, or ten months or longer. Another falsehood, since, as Lyndon LaRouche emphasized in his campaign statement calling for immediate restoration of Iraqi sovereignty, and an end to the U.S. occupation, a Constitution already exists.

'Man Who Would Be King'

Today, Chalabi is still head of the Iraqi National Congress (INC), the fraud-ridden exile front-group that is the favorite of Cheney's neo-cons. Worse yet, Chalabi is a member—and one of the nine "rotating Presidents"—of the discredited Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) "provisional government." In this role, Chalabi has done his best at war-profiteering, carving up the post-war carcass of Iraq so that the patrons of his neo-con boosters—George Shultz's Bechtel and Dick Cheney's Halliburton—get the best pieces.

Through Mohammed Mohsen al-Zubaidi, secretary of Chalabi's INC, who proclaimed himself Mayor of Baghdad, the INC gained control over the Occupation's Ministry of Oil. Chalabi shares the Cheney-acs' "vision" to build an oil pipeline from Iraq to Israel for the sale of cheap oil. With the awarding of 100's of billions of dollars of Iraqi contracts under the control of the Pentagon neo-cons, Chalabi is getting in on the action, including via a partnership through his nephew with Marc Zell, Doug Feith's law partner, who is a leader of right-wing Israeli settlers' movement in the Palestinian territories.

Chalabi is not in favor of general elections, but he is "the man who would be King," a role recently promoted in a

2-1/2 page feature in the *Washington Post*. The *Post* says that it was Chalabi who tirelessly lobbied for the Iraq war. In reality, Chalabi spent a decade planting disinformation about Iraqi "WMD" with the U.S., British, and Israeli intelligence services to try to justify an Iraq war. But that took a coup d'état by Dick Cheney's neo-cons, through the 9/11 attacks.

In mid-September 2001, the neo-conservative cabal led by Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz held a meeting of the Defense Policy Board, headed by Richard Perle, to argue for an immediate war against Iraq in retaliation for 9/11. Chalabi, and anti-Islam Professor Bernard Lewis, were brought in for a two-day session to give "evidence" that Saddam Hussein was responsible for 9/11. When President Bush didn't immediately buy the neo-cons' Iraq war, plans were set into motion for an "intelligence coup" against the President, with Chalabi as the neo-cons' key source.

The tool was to become the Office of Special Plans (OSP), authorized by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld at the behest of Wolfowitz and Undersecretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith. The OSP accepted Chalabi's "information," that had long been rejected as tainted, exaggerated, and unreliable by professional intelligence agencies. Chalabi was "accepted" because he is a neo-con insider, whose relationship to Wolfowitz goes back to the 1960s at the University of Chicago, when Leo Strauss, and pro-nuclear war utopian, Albert Wohlstetter, recruited their kindergarten of future neo-con imperialists. In the mid-1990s, Chalabi again worked closely with Wolfowitz, Perle, and Feith—and Cheney—at the Likud-linked Jewish Institute for for National Security Affairs (JINSA), planning an Iraq war.

In October 2002, the *Philadelphia Inquirer* warned about Chalabi, reporting that a senior U.S. military official "expressed grave fears that civilian officials in the Pentagon might be blindly accepting assertions by Chalabi and his aides that a U.S. invasion would trigger mass defections of Iraqi troops and a quick collapse of Iraqi resistance." Another official is quoted: "Our guys working this area for a living all believe [that] Chalabi, and all the guys in their Bond Street suits, are charlatans."

But Chalabi's financial falsehoods are most notorious. He was convicted of 13 charges of criminal fraud in Amman, Jordan, and has a pending 22-year prison sentence, after he looted his Petra Bank in Amman in 1993. Chalabi was dumped by the CIA for running up his expense account—and providing faulty information. He survived by gaining the favor of the British Foreign Office, where those like the late Ministry official Derek Fatchett promoted him. In 1998, when the JINSA-based neo-cons pushed through the Iraq Liberation Act, some \$97 million was available to Iraqi opposition groups, and the INC wanted it all. In 2001, after bitter infighting, the State Department agreed to pay the INC \$1.1 million a month, but auditors found "financial management and internal control weaknesses." Do you trust this man with \$87 billion?