

Occupation is not liberation

While few Iraqis would mourn the loss of the Saddam Hussein regime, there is little joy at the prospect of US occupation. The US leadership is now attempting to impose on the bleeding body of Iraq a puppet government which will be firmly under the control of the Pentagon.

The often stage-managed scenes of jubilation soon gave way to widespread looting that US soldiers did nothing to stop. By their inaction the US authorities, in fact, encouraged this anti-social behaviour.

"It is only the thieves and the looters who are celebrating", commented an Egyptian lawyer to the BBC.

While many Iraqis will be pleased to see the end of the Saddam Hussein regime, this does not mean that they support a US and British occupation and the seizure of their oil resources by US and British corporations.

The puppets move in

The Pentagon has appointed the pro-Israeli General Jay Garner as its military controller of Iraq. He is answerable to the Pentagon, not to the US State Department.

The US military has flown to Iraq its preferred candidate, Ahmed Chalabi, to head an Interim Iraqi Authority.

Chalabi has lived in the US since the 1950s and is wanted in Jordan for banking corruption – making him a very suitable candidate for the US authorities.

He was flown to Iraq together with plane loads of US-trained "freedom fighters".

US Secretary of State Colin Powell, who is often touted as a "dove", declared last week that the US military will select emerging leaders in post-war Iraq and that the United Nations will not play a leading role in the political transformation.

Speaking at a special briefing at the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research (AEI) Dr Reuel Marc Gerecht laid down the agenda expected of Chalabi.

(The AEI is a very influential player in the development of Bush's "endless war" strategy. Dr Gerecht is a Fellow of the AEI, and was a Middle Eastern specialist for the CIA and political and consular

officer for the US Department of State during the Bush Senior and Reagan years. Other fellows at the AEI include Newt Gingrich and Richard Pearle.)

Dr Gerecht said Dr Chalabi "must have the ability to conjure up the illusion of American power and backing behind you, at the same time maintaining you distance from the American Government.

"So you have to be able to say that the Americans are behind you but you cannot be seen as an American puppet. I suspect that Mr Chalabi's going to handle that fairly well ..."

As a warning to the US and British occupiers, two people selected by the US as future leaders are reported to have been executed. Former Iraqi General Nizar Al-Khazaraji and Islamic scholar Majid Al-Khoi'i are reported to have been "chopped into pieces with swords and knives inside the Ali Mosque" in Najaf.

Last weekend there was an anti-American demonstration took place in Baghdad with student demonstrators shouting a slogan that has rung out in many countries: "Go Home Yankee!"

While Bush and Blair talk about democracy and liberation, the reality is entirely different.

New colonialism

Referring to a group of Iraqi exiles that met in London and appointed a six-person council, Dr Gerecht said, "... we'll certainly include them, may even begin with them..." in the Iraqi Interim Authority.

He went on, "It [the Interim Iraqi Authority] will receive some simple ministries, like the ministry of Agriculture, first, and receive the difficult ministries, like the ministry of Defence and Interior, last, or Education, that's another difficult ministry."

In this way, the US Pentagon



"It is only the thieves and the looters who are celebrating"

intends to create its own puppet government answerable to the US and under its control.

Reuters newsagency reports that "The Defence Department is considering putting in place an advisory board of former US oil industry executives to help run Iraq's oil industry, the head of which is likely to be Philip Carroll, a former chief executive of Shell Oil Co."

US Vice President, Dick Cheney, a former oil company executive, spoke of "an organisation to oversee the functioning of their oil ministry".

US troops are being rushed to the northern Iraqi city of Mosul, the main centre of Iraq's oil industry confirming the US's aim of controlling Iraq's very rich oil industry.

Tony Blair's statement that US, British and Australian troops will

not stay "a day longer than necessary" is similar to assurances made in connection with Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan.

When Bosnia was overrun, NATO governments declared that troops would remain for one year. They are still there five or more years later. US troops remain in South Korea after 50 years.

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Looting deliberate

Arab media has slammed the United States for chaos in Iraq, charging that US forces have encouraged vengeance attacks and looting to ensure that a compliant government is installed. The Lebanese newspaper *Al-Safir*, said the crisis was "a deliberate plan" by US commanders "who let chaos reign to justify sending additional troops and appear with their agents as the sole solution in the eyes of the population. "The main danger is that of looting and settling of scores taking on a religious and clannish tone and leading to civil

war", the newspaper warned. Another Lebanese newspaper *Al-Mostaqbal* said, "It appears this situation serves the Americans' purposes, because Iraqis will then accept any kind of authority, in particular one tied to the US administration, and the hawks will attain their goals." The Saudi newspaper *Al-Watan* claimed: "What is taking place in Iraqi cities has never been seen in medieval ages or even deep in history when the law of the jungle was predominant."

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Unite to defeat the US

The Australian and other Western-controlled media are carrying out an enormous propaganda blitz to convince their readers that the Iraqi people are welcoming the US troops as "liberators" and that these "liberators", having devastated the country, are really there to help the Iraqi people.

The truth is vastly different. The scene of a statue of Saddam Hussein being toppled in Baghdad's Justin Square, opposite the Palestine Hotel in which foreign journalists were staying, was a stage-managed affair. The Square was occupied by US tanks, a US vehicle pulled the statue over and there were very few Iraqis. No more than 150 persons, including US troops, were present.

The military occupation of Iraq is central to the US objective of humiliating and dominating the Islamic countries. The question of weapons of mass destruction and regime change are the excuses used to justify the invasion. The seizure of Iraqi oil is only one part of the strategic aim of the US leadership.

One of the US's key aims is to intimidate other countries to submit or suffer the same fate as Iraq, Afghanistan and Yugoslavia. The Bush administration has even served notice on European states that their views and interests are as irrelevant to the US as those of the United Nations. The UN was rendered incapable of preserving peace and upholding its Charter by the US and the UK.

On the surface the US may appear to be all powerful. But there is another side. The US aggression and crude policies have brought into existence the strongest and most active anti-war movement that the world has ever seen. It signals a mass awakening to the danger to all countries contained in US bluster, threats, aggression and war.

On its own, however, the anti-war movement was not able to stop the US war machine and, on its own, may not be able to stop the next wars of aggression against Syria, Iran, Lebanon, Cuba, North Korea or other countries.

The tens of millions of people who demonstrated have been let down by many governments.

Blair sold Britain to the US, dreaming perhaps that by riding into battle on an American tank, Britain may be restored as a great power. John Howard also sold Australia to the US expecting that with US aid and muscle, Australia would be a power to be reckoned within Asia and would profit from war and "reconstruction" contracts.

The governments of the Arab countries also capitulated to US threats and bribes. They also fear their own people who hold strong anti-American sentiments.

The Governments of France, Germany, Russia and China tended to limit their opposition to words rather than taking decisive action that could have stopped the US invasion.

Another serious difficulty is that many Americans have been swept along by Bush's war rhetoric (especially since the war started) and the idea that they are the new super race with the right to rule the world.

Feelings of frustration, betrayal, hopelessness and bitterness will, in the short-term, be felt widely among the people in many countries. But these feelings must give way to clear-headed determination and confidence that the situation can be rectified. Radical economic and political policies need to be popularised throughout the world.

Governments that do not express the needs of the people and encourage their participation in political and social affairs have to be replaced.

For the first time in many decades millions of people have taken to the streets in Middle Eastern and other countries. Millions have awakened to the danger. This experience will not be lost.

All states that value the independence and freedom of their countries from occupation and domination must now join forces and make common cause for peace and independence.

A combination of radical people's movements together with governments truly committed to peace and independence are capable of giving hope that the US rampage will be stopped.

PRESS FUND

George Bush, the thief of Baghdad, is gloating over his successes to date. Although fighting is continuing, he's already announced his intention to set up an interim military occupation force. He's even said to be considering the eventual appointment of an administration headed by an Iraqi monarchist who hasn't been back to the country since 1957. How's that for democracy! We'll keep you posted over developments, but in the meantime we still need your contributions for the Press Fund. Our grateful thanks go to the following contributors, for their generosity this week:

B Appleton \$20, M H \$50, Phocion Vourous \$50, M Whisson \$5, DL \$100, T Bartlett \$100.

This week's total: \$325. Progressive total: \$3875.

The crisis that won't go away

The headline in the *Financial Review* ran: "All talk and no action as Doha deadlines slip away". The article beneath it lamented the failure of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to meet deadlines in securing trade agreements. Part of the reason can be found in the intransigence of the transnational drug companies in their pursuit of profits, making demands on under-developed nations that those nations cannot accept.

by Tom Pearson

For example, the WTO was to have eased trade strictures on intellectual property rights so nations grappling with HIV-AIDS could import affordable generic drugs. Such "concessions" would eat into the profit bottom line and so are unacceptable to the drug cartel. Any wonder that nations resist such blatant arrogance and exploitation.

And such is the depth and breadth of the crisis that the so-called Western democracies have introduced fascistic legislation under cover of anti-terrorism measures to crush popular resistance to vicious austerity programs. After all, globalisation is not a volunteer-based community program.

It is the imposition of dictatorial trade, investment and other economic measures that include increased exploitation of labour and unfettered access to natural resources.

This will not save the system from crisis: it is but a postponement of the next inevitable crash. Nor will war resolve the contradictions that are everywhere making themselves evident.

The International Monetary Fund blames the current economic quagmire on the Wall Street crash

that began in 2000, exacerbated by the war on Iraq. Other economists point to the war plus the SARS virus hitting jobs and profits.

Corporate number crunchers are using these and other phenomenon to take the razor to jobs. Around the world workers are being laid off in their millions, thrown on the scrapheap in the name of rationalisation, downsizing, trending down and any number of other euphemisms for the sack.

The odour of desperation is pungent.

The increasing scarcity of water around the globe has seen a corporate strategy for turning this basic means of existence into a commodity to be sold for profit at the highest price.

There are plans now in Australia to "mine" and "bank" water, for it to be privately owned and sold.

Increasingly capitalism is denying more and more people the very basic necessities of life, and more and more people are joining the many movements against its policies and demanding their needs be put before profits.

Above this chaos, anarchy and slaughter, the banner of "freedom and democracy" has been hoisted.

Iraq, bombed into the ground by the US, has been "liberated".

The USA is the "land of the free" with more than two million people in its jails, the biggest prison population in the world.

These contradictions arise out of a system based on exploitation and oppression. Capitalism has no solutions for the people. Death and destruction, as we are now witnessing in Iraq and Afghanistan, are tools of trade. So too are the fascistic laws.

As the public representative of the most extreme gangster elements imperialism, Bush in cowboy guise swaggers on the stage as a heroic figure fighting a lone fight for freedom.

He is the individual battling against all that fetters "man's" freedom, using the considerable power at his disposal. This is the media line and the capitalist illusion – one man alone civilising the world and salvaging it from terror and anarchy.

Bush's "liberty" is lies and propaganda, trying to hide the real causes of inequity and social upheaval. And Bush the individual represents corrupt, criminal and depraved capitalist interests.

Driven by the crisis of the system everywhere, Bush and his gangster cronies have resorted to naked violence, to a drive for world domination.

But the crisis will not go away until Bush and his class everywhere are disposed of. ☛

Liberating Iraq Bush style: A few notes

US forces invading Iraq often call Iraqis "ragheads" and "camel jockeys". Asked about "ragheads", Cpl. Jeb Moser, 21, said, "They're all just ragheads to me, the same way they used to call the enemy 'gooks' in Vietnam."

Lance Cpl. Christopher Akins, 21, of Louisville, Kentucky, when asked whom he considered a raghead replied, "Anybody who actively opposes the United States of America's way ... If a little kid actively opposes my way of life, I'd call him a raghead, too."

When a young Iraqi boy stooped to pick up a rocket-propelled grenade off the body of a dead paramilitary, US Army Private Nick Boggs made his decision. He unloaded machinegun fire and the boy, whom he puts at about 10 years old, fell dead on a garbage-strewn stretch of waste land.

Nick Boggs said, "I did what I had to do. I don't have a big problem with it." – Lett Tayler, *Newsday*.

"We'll shoot them down like the morons they are", said top US military officer, Brigadier-General John Kelly commenting on fighting in Baghdad. "They appear willing to die. We are trying our best to help them out in that endeavour."

At the time of the Vietnam War an American general declared that

the US had to create a "generation of murderers". It seems the US military did its best to do that.

Scrawled on the wall of what was described as one of Saddam Hussein's palaces, already wrecked by bombing were the words: "USA wuz here".

An article in *The Washington Times* quotes Pulitzer Prize-winning

historian David McCullough as saying, "We are raising a generation of people who are historically illiterate."

Australia's Minister for Defence, Robert Hill claims that one of the aims of the occupying armies is to bring education to the Iraqi people!

Baghdad's archaeological museum has been looted. US army troops did nothing to stop this vandalism of a museum that houses the relics of one of the oldest civilisations in the world. ☛



“US OUT! UK OUT! OZZ OUT! UN IN!”

While not as large in number as the big February and March actions, tens of thousands of people took part around Australia in the ecumenical services, rallies and marches on Palm Sunday. They were not fooled by the media hype that the war is over or that Iraq has been “liberated”. The various placards and banners indicated a growing awareness of what “endless war” means. There was considerable co-operation between the churches and No War committees, united in opposing the US’s invasion and occupation of Iraq and Australia’s involvement.

All of the actions were noteworthy for the broad cross-section of people taking part. They came from the churches, trade unions, local peace groups, ethnic communities, youth organisations, medical and other professions, as well as many individuals. Many made it a family occasion.

The placard: “US OUT! UK OUT! OZZ OUT! UN IN!” (written vertically) captured the sentiments of many of those marching.

In **Sydney** 20,000-30,000 people marched from Belmore Park to the Domain. The march was preceded by an ecumenical service with prayers from Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Jewish and Muslim religious leaders. All expressed support for peace on behalf of their faiths.

At the Domain speakers exposed the nature of the war, called on the Howard Government to bring the troops home.

In **Melbourne**, 15,000-20,000 people took part. A march from Treasury Gardens met up with those participating in an ecumenical service in Flinders St.

The speakers and the service, as in Sydney, reflected the breadth of the movement against the war. “Bring the Troops Home” and “No More Wars” were amongst the most prominent slogans.

An estimated 6000 marched in **Brisbane** and heard speakers who took up such questions as the danger of a new arms race, the role of the US base at Pine Gap, US plans for global domination.

The main theme in all of this was NO WAR.

In **Perth** the Association of

Heads of Churches prayed for peace at a non-denominational service in the Supreme Court Gardens. “We take our stand against war”, said Lutheran Rev Geoff Burger.

MLA Giz Watson said the war in Iraq was a tragedy, “the breakdown of international law must be put right.”

Then later in the day, around 1000 people took part in the No War Alliance march and rally. Speakers included representatives from the churches, Youth and Students Against War and ex-serviceman Vic Williams. Mr Williams called for the immediate return of Australian troops.

Over 5000 took part in **Adelaide**, with the support of all the major churches and many other religious and community organisations. The protest was also part of the ongoing NOWAR coalition campaign.

People gathered in Victoria Square and in front of St Peters Cathedral before marching to Elder Park. Local band Mandala played a set of thought provoking songs before Brian Deegan took the stage to introduce the guest speakers.

Brian became widely known in Adelaide when he went public with his protest against the Howard Government’s abuse of the memory of the Bali bombings to justify its war drive. Brian’s son Josh died in those outrageous attacks last October.

Yasmin Ahmed of the Islamic Foundation noted that the suspicions of the peace movement about the motives behind the war on Iraq



Photo: Avante Media Australia

Where are the WMDs – part of the Adelaide protest

have been confirmed. “We knew that they would be dividing up the oil fields.”

The Fair Go For David committee was represented by Kay Bilney. She drew attention to the extreme injustice being inflicted on Australian citizen David Hicks, who is being held in a US military concentration camp in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. David was captured in Afghanistan during the US invasion of that country.

With the “war on terror” as an excuse, US authorities have now held David for 15 months without charges being laid against him and without legal representation. Kay urged the people present to write to their Federal Member to protest this violation of human rights.

Actions in 60 countries

On Saturday April 12, anti-war demonstrations took place Argentina, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brazil, Burma (Myanmar), Canada, Chile, Croatia, Cyprus, Denmark, Dominican Republic, Egypt, Ecuador, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Haifa, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Macedonia, Mexico, Morocco, Mongolia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Pakistan, Paraguay, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Puerto Rico, Russia, Scotland, Slovenia, South Korea, Spain, Sudan, Sweden, Switzer-

land, Syria, Taiwan, Turkey, UK, U.S., Uruguay (April 11), Venezuela, Yemen. In Australia the actions were on April 13.

Tens of thousands of demonstrators marched in central Washington, DC against the invasion and occupation of Iraq by US and British forces.

Organisers estimate that 100,000 people marched through London’s Hyde Park, waving banners saying “No Occupation of Iraq” and chanting “Bush, Blair, CIA, how many kids have you killed today?”

Demonstrators waved multi-coloured banners and flags including those of many Muslim countries. Palestinian and Iraqi flags were very conspicuous. ✪

Statement on Opera House action

On the morning of March 18, 2003, Australia became an aggressor in a war for the first time. Also on that morning, with my friend Dr Will Saunders, I painted the message “NO WAR” on the Concert Hall sail of the Sydney Opera House. I did this as an act of civil disobedience against a war I feel is illegal, immoral and will have terrible consequences for our country.

I do not intend to use the court system as a political platform and I also understand that legally, my actions are to be judged on what occurred at the Opera House.

But having watched our Prime Minister and his government ignore the wishes of the vast majority of the Australian people and flout the international statutes and safeguards of the United Nations and the Geneva Convention, I felt betrayed by our democratic system and that my act of civil disobedience had to be as strong as possible while not being violent.

I also wish it to be known that we asked a lawyer and another friend to be present when we ascended the Opera House.

I provided the lawyer with my mobile phone number to give to the police, and a written explanation of what we were doing to my friend to hand to any Opera House staff that may have been distressed.

I spoke with the police from the top of the Opera House and assured them we would co-operate with them and would not struggle.

Although I have previously used civil disobedience within environmental and peace related issues, I have never used graffiti and do not intend to again.

Last week I made contact with the Sydney Opera House and sought to establish the exact costs of cleaning the paint off the building, with a view to paying this out of my own wages and a number of offers of help that Will and I have received.

I also wish to state that I have been moved on a daily basis by the messages of support we have

received for our action, not only from Australians, but ordinary people from a large number of other countries as well.

This began following our arrests, when, in the loading dock of the Opera House, large numbers of the staff applauded us into the police vehicle. I do not feel personally gratified by what took place, but I do feel very strongly about the issue our action related to.

I would like to apologise to all Australians who were offended by my actions, but would also like to point out that this was a day in our history like no other. I wish to raise all funds associated with the costs of the clean up and that NSW taxpayers do not foot the bill.

It has also been suggested repeatedly by some media commentators in the weeks following our action that we must have received inside help from somebody within the Opera House. This is not true.

We simply approached the building and climbed it from the outside. We had nothing to hide with our action and I have nothing to hide now. I am looking forward to covering the costs of the clean-up and getting on with my life. I have no intention of breaking the law in this manner again.

David Burgess ✪

Support the Opera House NO WAR activists

Dear Friends,

On Wednesday April 16, Will Saunders and I go to court to face the charges over our painting of “NO WAR” on the Opera House last month. We are both charged with malicious damage (5 years max, \$2000 max) and wilfully marking a building with paint (\$440 max).

There is the possibility that extra charges will be laid and the CEO’s office of the Opera House yesterday informed me that damages will be round about \$100,000.

If any of you feel able to provide me with a character reference (use a letterhead if you can) or a simple letter of support, it would be very helpful

It would also be really good if you could attend the case. I don’t expect everybody to agree with what Will and I did, but character references will be very important. Please also forward this to anyone you know anywhere who supported us.

Thank You

David Burgess

Send support to: David Burgess c/
The Wilderness Society
PO Box K249
Haymarket
NSW 1240
& fax to:
(02) 9282 9557

Case to be heard at:
The Downing Centre Local Court
cnr Elizabeth & Liverpool Streets, Sydney, 9.30am ✪

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Help The Guardian get around.

Mobil move explodes "Partnership" myths

Last week the South Australian Government's Economic Development Board (EDB) convened an economic summit. Speakers from business, government, trade union and community organisations held forth on the many challenges facing the ailing SA economy.

by Bob Britton

Bob Hawke – the consummate conciliator – chaired a number of sessions, as was entirely appropriate. The conference (and the EDB itself, for that matter) was an election promise of the Mike Rann-led ALP opposition just over a year ago.

The proposal was an attempt to show that the Labor Party still had that ability it supposedly had in the Hawke/Keating years to see the "big picture" of managing a capitalist economy.

In scenes reminiscent of the Accord years, when similar conferences took place in the old Federal Parliament House in Canberra, the House of Assembly chamber was given over to discussion of South Australia's worrying economic situation.

The air was thick with talk about "revitalising" the public sector (and cutting it), streamlining the bureaucracy to facilitate business, promoting the "clever" state and, of course, "new partnerships"

between governments, corporations and workers to achieve presumed mutually held ambitions.

The majority of contributors carried on in this vein even though Exxon Mobil had effectively put a bomb under most of its cherished notions just a couple of days before when it announced the closure of the Port Stanvac refinery and the loss of 400 hundred jobs.

Another 1500 related jobs are directly threatened by the announcement.

Locally refined fuel apparently costs between \$18.40 and \$19.40 a barrel to produce while fuel from Mobil's huge Singapore refinery can be landed for \$19 even. For some reason, fuel sourced from Port Stanvac is thus to be deemed woefully uneconomic, as is fuel from virtually all other Australian refineries.

A recent survey of oil companies operating in Australia said that they lost \$472 million between them in 2001, which translates to negative 10.6 per cent return on investment.

These mysteries of oil company

mathematics are the reason given for Mobil's decision to move to warmer climes.

In the past their alleged problems have been used to resist even the most modest claims from unions whenever an EBA came up for renewal. They have been used to gain a considerable amount of corporate welfare from successive state governments.

Opposition industry spokesman Rob Lucas said a mouthful during the week when he told the press: "Former governments in the past have worked quietly with management and we've seen the survival of Port Stanvac".

Two years ago, State Parliament voted to reduce Mobil's local government rates to the Onkaparinga Council from \$1.2 million to \$500,000.

In 1994 charges on imports of crude oil were abolished. Wharf services fees of about \$150,000 were written off.

However, these and other taxpayer funded sweeteners have simply been pocketed by this largest of the word's corporations and have not successfully cemented the hoped for "partnership".

Anger in the community has been heightened by the trademark

secretiveness of the company. Right up to the day before the announcement, Mobil representatives were claiming to be "undecided" about the refinery's future.

The morning the bombshell was dropped, the logistical manager for the Asia Pacific region just happened to be at the site, as were staff from Beyond Services. They were there to offer financial planning tips and advice on alternative employment to the soon-to-be redundant workers.

Bluster from the state government has died down very quickly. The toughest of their threats now relates to the cleaning up of the 350ha site that Mobil has occupied for the last 40 years.

The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) has called for more stringent legislation to legally force companies to remediate contaminated sites. The EPA currently has very little power to insist on such "good citizenship" and no power at all when it comes to contamination committed before 1995.

Company government relations manager Alan Bailey said that Mobil was "... quite happy to meet our environmental obligations ... we will have no problem with what was proposed by the EPA".

Mobil has dismissed as fanciful claims from a former employee broadcast on a Channel 7 *Current Affairs* program that asbestos and various chemical residues had been buried in pits on the site over a number of years.

Mobil wants to cease production of fuel in May this year and lubricants in July. It would prefer to mothball the plant or use it as a "tank farm" for others to store chemicals until profits from refining become more to their liking.

State Treasurer Kevin Foley is quick to damp down any talk of compulsorily acquiring the land: "To move into Parliament with legislation is an extremely bold move by any government and we would need to think that one through in the clear light of day."

Mobil agrees. Alan Bailey added "It creates a less secure environment for future investment if governments take action like that without reasonable cause."

So there you have it. Though experiences like this latest one with Exxon Mobil have caused a reduction in the numbers of open advocates of corporate handouts, there is still a chorus of people wanting "alliances" and "partnerships" with the bosses.

The problem is that the "partner" with nearly all the economic and political clout in this instance has squeezed what it wants out of SA and has decided to go and form "partnerships" with the people of Singapore and India instead.

It would be naïve to expect corporations to behave in any other way.

Clearly discussions are needed and some timely decisions on how the organised labour movement can effectively re-engage in the class struggle.

Action needs to be taken in the context of a wider campaign to form a people's government that will put major economic assets under public ownership.

Please spare us another rehash of the message that bosses and workers have common interests. ☘



Qantas uses economic conditions to sack workers

Last week Qantas management announced that it was going to sack 1700 of its workforce. This comes on top of recent reductions equivalent to 3500 full-time positions. The company pleaded financial problems, pointing to the downturn in the industry since the start of the war and the impact of the SARS virus in Asia.

The Australian Services Union (ASU) described the company's actions as short-sighted, with the company acting in undue haste.

For some time now Qantas has been using the depressed economic conditions in the aviation industry to argue against wage rises and defend attacks on the working conditions of its staff.

Yet Qantas made a profit of \$350 million last year, some of which could surely be used to maintain jobs and services during the downturn.

Assistant National Secretary Linda White said that Qantas had not informed ASU members who was being sacked or when the sackings would occur.

Ms White said the union expected to be holding series of meetings over the coming weeks and would be demanding that Qantas abide by its enterprise bargaining agreement provisions.

Under the existing agreements,

there are a number of steps that must be exhausted before redundancies can be made. These include:

1. Redeployment and/or job swapping where there is a reasonable skill and location match.
2. Employees taking extended leave and exhausting accumulated leave.
3. Employees taking periods of unpaid leave.
4. Full time employees converting to part time.
5. Full time employees converting to jobshare.
6. A process of expressions of interest in which a suitable number of volunteers may be found.

The day after Qantas announced the job cuts, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) and equivalent body in New Zealand issued a draft ruling rejecting its proposals for a \$550 million investment in Air New Zealand.

Qantas management has ex-

pressed outrage at the draft ruling that a proposed alliance between Qantas and Air New Zealand is not in the public interest and should not proceed.

Under the alliance, Qantas would gain a 22.5 percent stake in Air New Zealand and the airlines would agree on flight schedules and fares on common routes.

This agreement would particularly affect passengers travelling between Australia and New Zealand. The Trans-Tasman route, which accounts for 16 percent of all travel to and from Australia and is the biggest sector of the national air passenger market.

It is a crucial transport link for both countries.

The agreement would mean that Qantas would dominate the route and could set exorbitantly high (monopoly priced) fares.

The ACCC warned that it would also jeopardise competition on the vital Australia/North America route, on which Air New Zealand no longer operates.

At the moment the two other carriers on this route are United Airlines and Air Canada, both of which are in financial difficulties.

ACCC Chairman Professor Allen Fels commented: "If the proposed alliance goes ahead they will jointly control more than 90 percent of the (trans-Tasman) market. The market would move from a two-airlines market to an effective one-airline market.

"Passengers will be denied choice and increased air fares will be inevitable. Even if Virgin Blue enters, the alliance would still dominate the market. ...

"The Alliance would deter Air New Zealand from re-entering the (Australia/North America) route and providing critical competition to Qantas if either of the other operators ... falters, as is currently conceivable."

In this situation Qantas would

also be left as virtually the sole operator on this route.

"In Australia, the proposed alliance would see Qantas domestic operations capture those passengers flying internationally with Air New Zealand. ... The alliance would shrink the portion of the domestic market available to other carriers and constrain them from entering or expanding that market", Mr Fels said.

It is clear that as long as Qantas' main purpose is to make profits for shareholders, it cannot ride-out the lows without causing pain and hardship to its workforce.

There is only one way of overcoming that – that is by returning the national carrier returned to public ownership and control. ☘

No Guardian next week

Due to the Easter break the next issue will be on April 30.

Culture & Life

Two weeks ago I thought I had done enough on the Dies Committee and anti-Soviet propaganda, but last week's *Guardian* article on the Hollywood Ten reminded me that the hey-day of that Committee (more properly called the House Unamerican Activities Committee or HUAC) came when Martin Dies was no longer with it.

by Rob Gowland

The 1944 Congressional elections saw the defeat of three members of Dies' committee. The Committee's Chairman, Representative Martin Dies announced that he would not be seeking re-election.

The sorry record of this US Congressional organ of pro-Nazi, anti-Soviet propaganda and agitation looked as though it would finally come to an end.

Victory over the fascist powers was in sight and progressive American opinion looked forward to converting the wartime anti-fascist coalition of United Nations into a permanent organisation to preserve world peace and prevent the rise of a new aggressor.

"But on January 3, 1945, during the first hour of the opening session of 79th [US] Congress, Representative John Rankin, in a surprise legislative coup, effected the passage of a bill by a vote of 207-186 converting the Committee into a permanent body." (Sayers and Kahn, *The Great Conspiracy*).

The Committee's new Chairman to replace Dies was J Parnell Thomas, but its most outspoken member was a Congressman from Mississippi, Representative John E Rankin, and it was clearly Rankin who called the tune.

Who was this Rankin who so determinedly wanted Dies' anti-Soviet work to continue? The official Nazi German propaganda agency *Welt-Dienst* (World Service) had described him as an "outstanding American".

This was not surprising, for Rankin was one of those who unashamedly characterised the Second World War as part of an "international Jewish plot". "In the opinion of Congressman Rankin, ... the real enemy of the United States right along had not been the Axis but the Soviet Union" (Sayers and Kahn).

Under the leadership of its new President Harry Truman, the US had abandoned the anti-fascist alliance in favour of a policy of confrontation with the Soviet Union even before the War against Germany and the Empire of Japan had been won.

Truman was from the anti-Roosevelt, right wing of the Democrats. It was Truman who had proposed, while still a Senator when Germany attacked the USSR, that the US should support Germany and the Soviet Union alternately, so that they could destroy each other.

Now he oversaw the launch of the "Truman Doctrine", a policy intended to "roll back Communism", accompanied by blatant interference in European and Asian affairs and what would soon be called "Cold War".

It would be accompanied at home by anti-Soviet and anti-Communist propaganda of the crudest kind. The House Un-American Activities Committee, recognising that its time had come at last, led the charge, issuing one lurid press release or "official report" on the "Communist conspiracy" after another.

The anti-Communist frenzy was intended to silence the left in the USA. On January 1, 1947, *The New York Times* reported that HUAC had what the paper was pleased to call "an ambitious program of investigations covering 'Communist' activities in many enterprises, including labour unions, education and motion pictures".

Communist and other militant unionists would be barred from office, educators who refused to toe the official line would be dismissed. The popular mass media of television and movies would be sanitised by forcing writers, filmmakers and performers to either publicly recant and then toe the line or never work again.

Another HUAC objective, reported the *NY Times*, was to "expose and ferret out the 'Communists and Communist sympathisers' in the [US] Federal Government".

On March 22, President Truman issued an Executive Order calling for the investigation and removal of "disloyal Government employees". Among the agencies listed by Truman to investigate US government employees was HUAC.

Two days later, the former US Ambassador to the USSR, the rabidly anti-Soviet William C Bullitt, was testifying before HUAC during hearings on a bill to outlaw the American Communist Party. Bullitt was questioned by Representative Rankin.

Rankin: Is it true that they eat human bodies there in Russia?

Bullitt: I did see a picture of a skeleton of a child eaten by its parents.

Rankin: Then they're just like human slaves there in Russia?

Bullitt: There are more human slaves in Russia today than ever existed anywhere in the world.

Rankin: You said before that sixty percent of the members of the Communist Party here are aliens. Now, what percentage of these aliens are Jews? ... Is it true, Mr Bullitt, that the Communists went into the southern states and picked up niggers and sent them to Moscow to study revolution? Are you aware they teach niggers to blow up bridges?

Bullitt, you may remember, was the person who secured entry to the US for the anti-Soviet adventurer and self-proclaimed intelligence agent Walter Krivitsky.

Next week: McCarthyism, the Truman Doctrine and Patriotism. ☸



President Harry Truman abandoned the anti-fascist alliance



Here's a fine example of the crisis of capitalism. Leigh-Mardon, the company that makes most of the credit cards in Australia (Visa, MasterCard, etc) is \$80 million in debt. The company was taken over by US-based American Banknote Corp in 1996. American Banknote itself recently filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Most of the \$80 million is owed to off-shore banks and financial institutes. The staff of 300 in Melbourne (cut from 600 in 1999) are now confronted with the classic restructure (read major job cuts) and most likely the loss of their entitlements because the plan is to sell the company and use the money from the sale to pay off the banks.

PM Howard's nasal whine was in full voice two weeks back saying Baghdad's hospitals were coping well with the victims of war, claiming this as a sign that the war was going "extremely well". But a week's a hell of a long time in a war and now not even the tightly controlled media coverage of the carnage can keep a lid on the blood letting of innocent civilians. Now, as the Greens in the Senate have noted, Howard has lapsed into silence. Well, as you would expect: an accomplice in mass murder will avoid incriminating himself.

Here at home the suffering of asylum seekers continues under the Government's inhumane mandatory sentencing regime, with the Democrats describing those imprisoned in the high tech Baxter detention centre as suffering "an epidemic of despair". An Iranian couple, for example, are expecting a baby. They have been locked up for three years. Like many other children of asylum seekers, their child will be born and remain in detention. Not surprising really, when you consider that Howard came to government on a torrent of racial vilification of refugees and over the drowned bodies of 353 of them.

CAPITALIST HOG OF THE WEEK: is Telstra head Ziggy Switkowski. Here's Ziggy summing up the privatisation of the national telecommunications provider in a nutshell: "There is no doubt that, as we improve productivity and make our processes more efficient, employment levels will trend down." "Trend down" is one of those soft terms corporations use to cover their ruthless job-cutting programs. And, of course, there's no mention of increased service to users. Switkowski was referring to Telstra's outsourcing of thousands of jobs to Swedish telco Ericsson as part of a \$280 million cost-cutting drive. Up to 2500 Telstra workers will be hit by the move. You see, with just a few months before the end of the financial year, Switkowski and his fellow money-grubbing board members and the other major Telstra shareholders, have to deliver on "market expectations" of a \$3.8 billion profit. This is the fattening up of Telstra for full privatisation.

Occupation is not liberation

continued from page 1

Howard's subservience

The Howard Government is continuing to play its despicable and subservient role to the US, declaring that it will become part of the occupation of Iraq and part of the puppet administration being set up by the Pentagon.

Despite some conflict between the Pentagon and the US State Department as to which group of quislings should control Iraq, the Australian Government is siding with the Pentagon which contains the most hawkish and war-mongering group in the Bush Government.

Initially there were statements from John Howard and Defence Minister Robert Hill that Australian forces would be withdrawn once the fighting was over. It is now being said that they will remain for an unspecified period to carry out operations in some "niche" capacity.

Howard has confirmed that Australia has personnel in Kuwait under the command of US General Jay Garner. They include officials from AusAID, Defence, the Treasury, the oil industry and other sectors. "Australians could constitute a mini-Canberra in Kuwait", writes

Peter Hartcher in the *Australian Financial Review (AFR)* (9/4/03)

Another *AFR* journalist Geoffrey Barker wrote in the same issue, "Never before has an Australian Government seemed so supine before a US administration and so intellectually helpless before its public rhetoric".

In typical imperialist fashion and with breathtaking cynicism, Australian companies are lining up to win contracts for so-called "reconstruction" in Iraq.

First they destroy (and that carries contracts for the armaments industry) and then move in to gain contracts and profits to rebuild what they have just destroyed.

This "reconstruction" will be billed against the Iraqi people who will be expected to pay the corporations for years to come.

Weapons of mass destruction

Hans Blix, the chief of the UN weapons inspector teams, has exposed the dishonesty and lying of Bush, Blair and Howard concerning weapons of mass destruction.

Interviewed by the Spanish newspaper *El Pais* Hans Blix said, "There is evidence that this war was planned well in advance.

I now believe that finding weapons of mass destruction has been relegated ...

"By the start of March the hawks in both Washington and London were getting impatient ... you ask yourself a lot of questions when you see the things they did to try and demonstrate that the Iraqis have nuclear weapons, like the fake contract with Niger."

He said that the war was "a very high price to pay in terms of human lives and the destruction of a country" when the threat of weapons of proliferation could have been contained by UN inspections.

Blix went on: "The United States maintains that the war on Iraq is designed to send a signal to other countries to keep away from weapons of mass destruction. But people are getting a different message. Take the announcement North Korea has just made. It's tantamount to saying 'if you let in the inspectors, like Iraq did, you get attacked'."

In a radio interview Britain's Home Secretary, David Blunkett also let the truth slip about weapons of mass destruction. He said he would rejoice the "fall" of Saddam Hussein and his regime - regardless of whether any weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq or not. ☸

Tales from working life: Ju

“That’s tri-acid – don’t let that get on you. You won’t feel it burn but it’ll go through your skin looking for the calcium in your bones.” Did he just say what I think he said? I stood straining to hear the various warnings and instructions given to new workers by John in the chroming plant at an aluminium foundry in Adelaide’s western suburbs.

by Justin Naylor

I could barely make out the stream of information coming my way above the noise from overhead cranes dunking wheels and other components into big vats of seething, bubbling chemicals lined up down both sides of the long corrugated iron shed.

“Be sure that you communicate with the bloke alongside you when you lift the yolk out of this bath. If it combines with the liquid in the one beside it, you’ll get a cyanide gas and probably kill the people in the near vicinity.” I don’t believe this. How did I manage to become part of this horrible Dickensian scene?

“Oh, and this is the chrome. It’s a carcinogen. If it lands on you and we wash you thoroughly enough, you’ll be OK. There’s a shower and eye washer over there”. I look toward a piece of old corroded equipment nestled among the heaving great vats of chemicals. An accident would be a very public affair, I noted.

“Anyway, these splashes don’t happen very often. Once in a while a component will fall out of its yolk but you’d have to be pretty unlucky”, John chimed in, shattering the mental picture I had of some poor soul being dowsed so that some chemical or another would stop eating him.

Later, the very first person I spoke to had been splashed with chrome on his neck within a week of starting at the plant. This cast some doubt on the reassurance that accidents were pretty infrequent.

But back to the question of how I’d got into this situation in the first place: I’d put my name down with a labour hire firm about a month before when a friend told me that some jobs were coming up at an automotive components factory down south.

I still only had a part time job delivering cakes for a local bakery paying \$312 gross per week for 24 hours’ work. So I went down to the labour hire company’s offices with high hopes, thinking that I had something akin to insider information.

I was deflated a little when I was ushered into a room with another batch of about a dozen hopefuls.

We were told to start filling in a pile of very noseey forms about a centimetre thick while Michelle got our manual dexterity test ready. She came back and gave us a colour blindness test, which I flunked hopelessly. Shit and shit again.

My annoyance nearly broke my concentration for the job of piecing together a little plastic gismo containing electric motors and felt gaskets. Still, I exceeded the minimum of fourteen units completed in ten minutes.

I left the office a little worried that my colour blindness would exclude me from manufacturing jobs when there are so many absolutely able-bodied people banging on the door. I’m not exactly young any more, either.

Imagine my surprise when Matthew from the labour hire mob rang three weeks later to offer me a

start at the foundry at 7.30 the next morning. I told him I would still be on my cake run. I start that at 4.30 in the morning and wouldn’t be back until way after the start of the shift in the chroming plant.

Even though I was a casual, I felt I would have to give some sort of notice to the new owners of the bakery. Oh well...

Later that day I got another phone call from Matthew. How about working the afternoon shift? It starts at 3.30 in the afternoon and knocks off at 11pm. It involves a 40-hour week at \$17 an hour instead of the \$13 on offer for the day shift.

“How about it”, he asked. “It’s a bit fummy and the work can be a bit heavy and dirty.”

“I’m not scared of hard work and I’ve worked at some filthy jobs”, I replied.

“Where do I go?”

“Just present yourself to security at the gate and ask them to page John from the chroming plant. Wear a long sleeve shirt, long pants – no tracksuit pants – and steel capped boots. You’ve got a pair of those?”

“Sure I have,” I lied.

The next day, I presented myself to the guys in the little zincaluminum building near the gate. My initial impressions were negative.

I thought this place was a big employer that might be able to offer good conditions out of its big profits. It’s got a big contract to supply components to an American company. It had recently been given a big cash injection from the State Government to keep doing what it does so well.

It’s certainly a big employer, but the complex of battered corrugated iron buildings and grimy walkways boded badly. The workers leaving the day shift in the almost uniform heavy blue drill work clothes made it look like a jail.

While I was waiting for John, a procession of job hunters came up asking in broken English where they could find Rebecca from recruitment. They were nearly all Middle Eastern, African, central and south Asian blokes. Desperate, skinny blokes that looked as poor as church mice.

One of them had hateful looking, cheap gum boots on. He must have been trying to pass them off as steel caps. I drifted off onto all sorts of lines of thinking when I looked down and compared them to my shiny, new \$70 Blundstones.

John was quite a while coming so I had time to talk to the older security guard. He seemed a nice old guy. “Where did you park your car?” he asked.

“I had to park it two blocks away in front of someone’s house. The car parks were full.”

“You might like to move it during your dinner break. When the day shift people leave you’ll find a spot. A lot of people have had things pinched out of their cars when they’re parked outside. You only get a 20-minute break but you get paid for it. Nobody complains about the pay around here.”

I thought I’d try another topic. I told him I was lucky to be getting a

start through a strange sequence of events. I originally put myself in touch with the labour hire company because a lot of people were sacked from their jobs at a car part factory for failing drug tests. That’s how I got on the books.

I added that I was sorry for the people that lost their jobs but, then again, I don’t think it’s good for drug-affected workers to be using dangerous equipment.

The atmosphere in the hut became serious. “You might like to keep your attitude on drugs a bit private, mate. There’s a lot of Gypsy Joker bokie sort of blokes working here that might not appreciate it.” I was a bit stunned but managed to get out a “Thanks for the advice, mate”.

Finally, John arrived to take me to where the chroming was done. We passed dark halls where guys stood at big buffing belts, wrestling large components to achieve a high polish.

They were covered head to foot in the grey powder coming off the belts. They had plastic suits, masks and goggles on. I marvelled at how they withstood the heat and how long they had to stand and carry on this struggle.

Trucks carrying sand disappeared into other huge dusty structures and everywhere there were forklifts carrying cast pieces with the dag still hanging off them.

John showed me the facilities, such as they were. A big dingy hall served as a canteen. A few dispensing machines with expensive sandwiches stood beside the ubiquitous Coke machine. The Asian blokes looked to be the best organised. They brought tiffins with curry and rice.

My guide-cum-supervisor finished my orientation in a little office with a computer and some samples of chemicals. He ticked off the things he was obliged to tell me on a yellow form.

Told inductee about smoking policy? A box got a tick.

Warned about chemical hazard – tick again.

Informed him about union representative? “Those blokes are around”. Another tick went on the list.

My notion that a big workplace like this would have to be organised suddenly looked shaky.

I was then handed over to Andrew to learn the first of my jobs. I’ll have to mask the centres of the wheels with nylon blocks so they don’t take the chrome in the baths.

I’ll then have to put them in yolks and stands ready for another bloke to pick them up with the crane operated by a clumsy looking remote on a long chain. I was doing well and I started to imagine that it might all work out.

I asked Andrew what the chances were of getting permanent work. “None. They sack you before you’ve been here six months so they don’t have to offer you permanency.”

“How long have you been here?”

“A month. If you keep your head down, Matthew will probably get you other work.”

At dinner I sit with a young sandy haired bloke. Sure enough, he’d also been brought in by a labour hire company and held no hope of staying more than a few months.

He was on a lucky streak,

though. He had just finished doing some labouring on the Alice Springs to Darwin Railway. Hot hard work, he told me. “This is much better. The money’s good, too.”

I had only finished half a shift and I was already wondering whether \$700 gross was as good as a lot of these guys reckoned.

Back in the long shed, I continued the endless routine of mounting wheels and hubs, checking them for scratches and cracks as I go. Fred is a supervisor who strolls up and down all night with his head up in the air and his hands behind his back. He would stand right behind you, checking what you were doing.

It was slightly unnerving and I’m sure it showed on me. He, on the other hand, remained almost inscrutable behind his sunglasses. I was doing well for my first night, though, Andrew later volunteered.

Every now and then, the big door at the end would slide back and a group of people would stand gaping into our now gloomily lit workshop.

A haze hovered over us as the vapours from the vats became too much for the ventilation system. They were there as guests, mostly residents concerned at the presence

of the huge complex in their neighbourhood, I was told.

They were at a level such that only their head appeared above floor level. Some shiny new wheels (worth around \$2,500 a pop) were placed in their line of sight. I wondered what their impressions might be. Could they see anything? Would they be reassured by what they saw?

I also wondered what this little guy was doing with what looked like a tray of drinks in plastic cups. He got the murky looking cordial from the heated tubs, though. I presumed he was taking the samples out to John so that he could check the proportions of different chemicals.

Andrew – my indefatigable workmate and trainer – had no suggestions and apparently no interest in what the whole process involved. He kept his kitchen gloves on and was wary of the vats that might kill you but beyond that, nothing.

As the front of my shirt started to drip with yellow liquid, I began to feel a little unsafe.

We worked right up to the hooter. Don’t even think about bundying off and leaving even a minute early or half an hour might be docked from your pay.



Just Another Day



I walked out with Andrew with some pride that I'd learned so much and impressed the others by keeping up. I also doubted that I could keep this worrying work up. I was exhausted and I knew that I would have to be at the bakery again at 4.30 the next morning.

I would have to take a shower and get to bed, hopefully before midnight. I knew I couldn't keep both jobs. If I stayed at the foundry, the delivery job would have to go. I'd told the bakery boss what I was doing and he wanted me to stay another week until I decided which job I was keeping so that he could have time to find a new driver. I gave into this request at the time but now I wondered how I could possibly deliver on my promise.

The next morning I went to the bakery and joined the other drivers and packers in doing what we do. I knew that most of my workmates worked this job and another one or two at the going rate of \$11 or \$12 an hour in order to secure a modest lifestyle. They are permanently tired. They have precious little weekend. They make silly mistakes out of tiredness and boredom. They resist all my attempts to get them

to join the Misso's [Miscellaneous workers] union.

In the van I started to feel comfortable and a bit privileged. The only hazards I faced were back strain, possible traffic accidents and fumes.

I suddenly thought that it must be possible to organise with the foundry workers around workplace hazards. They are the easiest issues to get agreement around. You don't have to argue about the "right" of the bosses to scoop off the proceeds of the workers' efforts and other topics where the bosses have forward defences inside workers' heads. I'll go back!

The next instant I had doubts. I began to think that I could actually die or at least be exposed to things that could undermine my health longer term. This latter conclusion seemed pretty reasonable.

I rang my wife on my mobile and asked her what she thought. I was hoping she'd agree that we ought to pass up the \$700 gross pay packet from the foundry and hang out for something better. I knew she would agree – we're not that hard up! Some of the dreams we had just the day before yesterday were out the window, though.

I rang Matthew at the labour hire outfit and told him frankly that I couldn't go back because I thought the job was too risky. I was relieved when he told me that it's OK. I'd given him time to find someone else for the next "afternoon" shift and that he understood my concerns.

So, I'm still driving the van. Like everybody else at the bakery, I hope for something better where I could get more sleep. A government job is everyone's ideal, like the one a former driver, Cliff, managed to get at the Housing Trust with his electrician's skills.

Or Carmen who is now a hospital orderly with good wages, sick leave, recreation leave ... everything!

A lot of Australians (and Americans and Italians and Brits...) live like this. More and more of us work bits and pieces of casual work and/or stints of contract work.

It seems that at the same time as our conditions deteriorate, the forces like the unions are in a sort of hibernation for want of support and an injection of that "have a go" spirit. How much longer do we have to wait? ❖

Death and destruction haunt Iraqi landscape

As the US-led assault stormed through Iraq last week, it left a trail of death, destruction and chaos – wrecked cities, villages and farms; water systems destroyed; families decimated. It also left a trail of bitterness among the Iraqi population.

by Susan Webb

While the US military controls main thoroughfares and key points, the majority of the country's population is not under US or British control, Middle East expert Stephen Zunes told the *People's Weekly World*.

Zunes, a professor of politics at the University of San Francisco, said he expects the US will be facing "ongoing guerrilla war for a long, long time".

"This is a foreign policy disaster", Zunes said. By placing itself as an occupying force in the heart of the Mid-East, he said, the US has put itself in a "counter-insurgency situation", and could end up alienating the majority of the population.

The number of civilians killed now tops 1200, with thousands more horribly injured. The latest civilian deaths include several foreign journalists killed by US fire.

More than 100 US soldiers have been reported killed, with others wounded and missing.

As the US assault ravaged Baghdad, the International Committee of the Red Cross reported hundreds of civilian victims arriving at hospitals each day. Many are children.

Ali Ismail Abbas, 12, was asleep when a missile destroyed his home and most of his family, leaving him orphaned, badly burned, and with both arms blown off.

"It was midnight when the missile fell on us. My father, my mother and my brother died. My mother was five months pregnant", the sweet-faced, traumatised boy told Reuters from his hospital bed.

Safa Karim, 11, was struck in the stomach by an American bomb fragment. Near death, bleeding internally, she writhed in pain with a massive bandage on her stomach, a tube down her nose and four scarves holding her wrists and ankles to the hospital bed. A relative said, "She has been given 10 bottles of drugs and she has vomited them all up".

Baghdad hospitals are overwhelmed and running out of supplies, and face power and water outages.

Basra, Iraq's second largest city with a population of 1.5 million, has an acute shortage of drinkable water and signs of dysentery in children.

"This war has further degraded an already precarious situation", said Nathaniel Raymond, a spokesperson for Oxfam, an international aid organization.

Iraq was in crisis before the war due to 12 years of economic sanctions, he told the *People's Weekly World*. Now, because of the instability created by the US-British invasion, Oxfam and other aid workers are sitting at border cross-

ings in Syria and Jordan, unable to reach those in need.

They are waiting for security to be re-established under a United Nations presence that will enable them to carry out their humanitarian mission.

Ten members of Abid Hassan Hamoodi's family were killed by two US missiles that destroyed their house in Basra. Hamoodi, 72, told the *Washington Post* he lost his wife, a daughter, a son and seven grandchildren. He dug out three other family members from the collapsed brick with his bare hands.

"What was the purpose of the American invasion of Iraq?" he asked the US reporter. "Was it to topple Saddam Hussein, or to kill innocent people? ... You came to save us, to protect us. That's what you said. It's now the contrary. Innocent people are killed."

Hamoodi, a retired oil company manager and head of a prominent Shiite Muslim family, voiced an anger widely expressed by Iraqis. Though they welcome the end of the hated Saddam Hussein regime, many are enraged by the civilian casualties and humanitarian disaster caused by the US-British invasion on top of years of punitive sanctions.

"I won't shed any tears for Saddam Hussein", Hazzim Yousif, an Iraqi-American from Michigan, told the *World*. "How come all of a sudden the US Government doesn't like him? It's the apex of hypocrisy. His party was put in power by the US".

Progressives in Iraq oppose war and dictatorship, Yousif said. They wanted the world community to topple Saddam peacefully through the UN. "Now the US has stepped into a swamp".

"The Bush administration is already giving contracts to American companies [for Iraq] like they own the place", Yousif said, "but they are going to find Iraq a very difficult country to rule and exploit."

"The Iraqi people have a great history of resisting foreign invaders. If the Americans think they can install a puppet government, the Iraqi people are going to reject it".

Stanford University history professor Joel Beinin says the Iraq war "has the potential to be a mess on all fronts".

The war is part of a broader Bush administration foreign policy that Americans should be concerned about, he told the *World*.

"It's important to start talking about American imperialism".

The author can be reached at suewebb@pww.org
People's Weekly World
www.pww.org ❖

Iraq Liberation Front

A newly formed Iraq Liberation Front (ILF) has come into existence out of the collapse of the regime of Saddam Hussein. A statement entitled "Aggression Ends, Liberation Begins", said the new Front comprises local representatives of armed groups and resistance brigades, some still manning positions in Iraq along with Arab volunteer fighters. It includes many former members of the Iraqi army, Republican Guard and Iraqi Special Forces, says the declaration.

"Iraq may lose the war, but it will never surrender or die", the declaration says.

The document does not state if the ILF is Islamic in orientation or Marxist but it emphasises a pan-Arab view which considers all the Arab nations to be one Arab nation. The founders of the Front seem to reflect Islamic and nationalist trends in Iraq.

It charges that those chosen by the coalition to lead an interim government are all CIA agents.

The ILF is determined to "liberate" Iraq from the fake liberators, George Bush and Tony Blair's occupation forces. "All of the Front members share a common concern; feeling the bitterness of defeat at the hands of the occupation forces."

The ILF has started accepting volunteers and is calling on other "national powers" in Arab countries to support the newly-formed liberation body with money and weapons in order to liberate Iraq from the Anglo-American occupation.

"We would have been able to resist for years. So what has happened? How did everything collapse suddenly like this? Who gave the keys of Baghdad to Hulagu* this time?", asks their statement.

"Historians must analyse how the tragedy came about. As for us, we are busying ourselves at this moment with making history, not with sitting down to relate it.

"We will not permit ourselves to be ruled by the Zionist general Garner, the close friend of Sharon.

We will not permit ourselves to be ruled by the thief of Baghdad named Ahmed Chalabi, or others on the list of CIA or the Mossad collaborators.

"Proud Iraq will never accept the distribution of its territory or its wealth to the war criminals and invading murderers, or the sectarian or ethnic fragmentation of its people in accordance with the plans of the modern Mongols – the Zionists and the Americans.

"The whole world will witness an epic of legendary liberation that will not close until every inch of its revolutionary soil has been purged.

"All that we seek is the backing of the one Arab people throughout the Arab homeland from Tangier to Doha. What is happening in plundered Palestine, in the south of the Sudan, and the dirty threats against some fraternal states, cannot be separated from the barbarous assault on Iraq.

This is all one wound. This is one battle. This is against one enemy. And we must also take a stand in the trench of armed struggle as one people."

The National Front for the Liberation of Iraq.

<http://IslamOnline.net>

* Hulagu (1217-1265) was a grandson of Genghis Khan, at the time when Baghdad was the religious and cultural



"We will not permit ourselves to be ruled by those on a CIA list"

capital of Islam. Hulagu seized and sacked Baghdad as part of the Mongol attempt to subdue

the Islamic world, but was defeated by an Egyptian army in 1260 ☪

South Africa Farm workers under attack

The South African Agricultural, Plantation and Allied Workers Union (SAAPAWU) reports that 3000 workers have been dismissed at ZZZ Farm (Duiwelskloof, Limpopo) following the downing of tools in support of their demand that management comply with new minimum wage rates.

This follows a work stoppage that took five days by all workers in support of their demand. All attempts by the union to meet with management as far back as the March 26 failed due to management refusal to meet with the union officials.

At the request of SAAPAWU, the Provincial Department of Labour visited the Farm on two occasions, March 27 and 28 to try and persuade the employer to comply with the law.

On both occasions the Department of Labour did not succeed. The company continued to act in defiance of the law and the Inspectorate.

The union believes that had there been a clear enforcement mechanism in place from the Department, perhaps these workers could have not been dismissed.

ZZZ Farm is one of the biggest employers in the farm sector and has a history of being a law unto itself and not complying with labour laws.

Employers in the Agricultural

Sector are geared towards circumventing the new Agricultural Sector Wage Determination, which sets out common minimum standards for all farm workers.

The union is concerned that this may be part of a joint employer strategy testing the waters and creating a precedent for other farmers to follow.

It has approached the national directorate of the Department of Labour to intervene.

The unfair dismissals have caused members and their families' serious hardship as most of them are now expected to vacate their farm dwellings without proper notice.

In reaction to the new Agricultural Sector Wage Determination, workers are being retrenched in large numbers from other farms. In certain instances they are expected to leave the farm once they have been retrenched.

The law as it stands does not prevent evictions, but sets out a legal process in which labour tenants may be evicted. ☪

New improved Sermon Tank

"A very evil and wicked religion", is how Billy Graham's son Franklin described Islam after 9-11. "I believe the Koran teaches violence, not peace", added Franklin Graham, who is one of George W Bush's favourite theological friends, having given a prayer at his inauguration.

After consulting with US government officials in Jordan, Franklin (who runs a Christian charity group called Samaritan's Purse) said he had relief workers "poised and ready to roll into Iraq" to help Muslims with the necessities of life, and more important, to start the conversion process to Christianity.

Reconstruction of Iraq, according to Bush, is to be a privatised venture funded by grateful taxpayers. But apparently there will be room for men of the cloth.

"Franklin Graham obviously thinks it is a war against Islam", said Ibrahim Hooper, spokesman for the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

"This is a guy who gave the invocation at President Bush's inauguration and believes Islam is a wicked faith. And he's going to go into Iraq in the wake of an invading army and convert people to Christianity?"

And Franklin Graham won't be alone. Waiting with Samaritan's

Purse workers in Jordan are relief workers for the Southern Baptist Convention, which has no use for Allah, to put it mildly.

All in all, Iraq is a bonanza for church people. At Camp Bushmaster, army chaplain Josh Llano offers filthy soldiers a dip in his private 500-gallon pool of cool, clear water to get clean.

But there's a hitch. "It's simple", he said. "They want water. I have it – as long as they agree to get baptised." So, to get clean the soldiers first must endure a 90-minute sermon from Llano. "They do appear physically and spiritually cleansed", Llano said.

Village Voice ☪

Sinn Féin pins Britain down on peace

Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams told the Sinn Féin 2003 Ard Fheis in Dublin last weekend that the British Government has made "substantive movement or commitments to movement on key issues" in recent talks on the peace process in Ireland.

He stressed that "these commitments have been achieved solely by the Sinn Féin negotiating team."

Adams also said that "no decision to support the current policing proposition" was made by the Party's National Executive (Ard Chomhairle).

He assured the annual conference that no such decision would be taken without a specially convened Ard Fheis and before a full debate involving Sinn Féin's whole membership.

Adams recalled that the Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) and the Irish Government had gone along with British Government's stance on policing. The SDLP later claimed credit for British concessions that were actually won by Sinn Féin.

"The broad nationalist consen-

sus was broken on this issue", he said. "It was left to Sinn Féin to carry forward the demand for an end to politically partisan policing and for an accountable, representative, human rights based, and civic police service.

"The results of some of that work can be seen in the amendments to legislation going through the British Parliament at this time. Other elements of it will become public if the British keep to their commitments in the time ahead."

Adams stressed that rather than confronting the SDLP on policing, "I want to see a consensus re-established on the policing issue as well as on all the other outstanding aspects of the Good Friday Agreement."

Adams also reached out to the Protestants and Loyalist working class

communities which "in many ways have been abandoned", calling for "a prolonged and consistent policy which will remove social grievances and reduce alienation is essential."

"Let the message go out from us here today, to Loyalist and Unionist working class areas – we understand what is happening to you and we know such problems must be addressed."

Sinn Féin is also taking steps to ensure a higher number of women candidates in elections in the North and South of Ireland, Gerry Adams revealed, saying "we have to increase our representation of women at all levels within the party and at all levels of political representation".

He declared that Sinn Féin is firmly opposed to Anglo-American imperialism's war on Iraq and demanded that the Big Powers "declare war against world poverty" instead.

New Worker, paper of New Communist Party of Britain ☪

Sydney
Walk against the war coalition
No war on Iraq
No Australian involvement
Iraq Peace Vigil
Every Friday 5.30 – 7.30 pm
Sydney Town Hall
Contact:
Hannah Middleton 0418 668 098
Bruce Childs 9386 1240
Nick Everett 0409 762 081
John Hallam 02 9567 7533

Sydney
May Day function
After the March,
celebrate May Day
with dancing, delicious food
and live entertainment
Sunday 4th May,
starting at 5.00pm
Greek Community Club
206 Lakemba St, Lakemba
Donation: \$20, \$10 children
Presented by CPA
and fraternal organisations

Middle East CPs call for a co-ordinated worldwide struggle

Representatives of the Jordanian Communist Party, the Sudanese Communist Party, the Syrian Communist Party, the Palestinian People's Party, the Lebanese Communist Party and the Egyptian Communist Party held an emergency meeting to discuss co-ordination among the parties for the struggle against the Anglo-American aggression on Iraq and to define common action for future confrontation.

The participants in this meeting reiterated their condemnation of the barbaric and destructive invasion that the fraternal Iraqi people are facing and expressed their solidarity and pride over the Iraqi steadfastness and courageous resistance against the unprecedented killing machine and destruction in defence of their homeland.

The US Administration and the British Government have defied the will of the international community and peoples worldwide by launching global war against the whole world using Iraq as the immediate battlefield and the Iraqi civilians as the first target.

The declared and secretive objectives of the aggression include:

- Undermining the bases of the system of international relations and its legitimate agencies;

- Imposition of the control of one super power that decides the fate of peoples and strengthens a uni-polar world order;

- Reshaping the geo-political map of the region to impose domination that maintains the interests of the USA and empowers its strategic ally in the region, Israel, to conquer the heroic Intifada of the Palestinian people in order to solve the Palestinian problem by keeping the Israeli occupation and the Israeli settlements.

Iraq and the region have been chosen because of their important strategic position and their oil resources to assist in the implementation of the global plans of

the US. The US Administration has utilised several of the weak points in the structure of the existing Arab system, especially the presence of differences and weaknesses and the absence of democracy and public participation.

The heroic Iraqi popular resistance nurtured by Iraqi patriotism has been a surprise to the warmongers, who are thrown into a war that nobody knows when or how to get out of it. The aggressors are paying a high price and the war is turning into a political dilemma.

One of the major weak points is the stand of most of the Arab countries who unfortunately are supporting the aggression. Such a stand stimulates the US Administration to threaten Syria for its opposition to this aggression and for its call to stop the war and withdraw the invading troops.

The parties signing this communiqué consider themselves in an emergency and are constantly alert. They call upon their comrades, partisans and friends to be in the first ranks of the Arab popular movement in supporting the Iraqi people.

They call all the Arab national and progressive forces to:

- Form the widest front of resistance against this aggression using all means and potentials;

- Fight against the aftermath of the war whether locally or regionally;

- Pressure their governments to change the policy of giving facilities to the invaders and behave according to what their national and

patriotic duty dictates and according to the Arab defence treaties.

Our parties have started and will continue communications with the communist parties, the left, the progressive and the democratic and peace forces worldwide who are against the US aggressive policy of domination.

They will exert their common efforts to work together to launch initiatives and organise regional and international vigils against this war. They will struggle to stop the war and for the withdrawal of the invaders from Iraq.

This will continue until self-determination through the free will of the Iraqis is achieved with democracy, pluralism and equality for all citizens whether Arabs, Kurds or from other nationalities.

We call upon Arab peoples to unite forces. This stems out of our grave concern over the independence and sovereignty of our homelands.

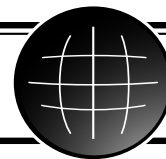
We declare our readiness to undertake joint actions with all the patriotic and national forces in spite of any differences in thinking and policies in order to face this big battle imposed by the Anglo-American aggression against our peoples and against our Arab nation.

We believe that the firm stand against this aggression and the call to undermine any achievements of the objectives of this aggression will open up new horizons of common struggle in the Arab world and worldwide to defeat the American global plan.

Jordanian Communist Party
Sudanese Communist Party
Syrian Communist Party
Palestinian People's Party
Lebanese Communist Party
Egyptian Communist Party
April 2, 2003 ☪



The war on Iraq is a precursor to global conflict



Global briefs

RUSSIA: "Russia has only two reliable allies – the army and the navy", said the Russian Defence Minister Sergei Ivanov, commenting on the war in Iraq in an article in the Russian press. Mr Ivanov went on to say that the Russian military recognised the need to strengthen their own forces in the light of the current world crisis. "With the international security system coming apart at the seams, they (the army and the navy) must provide a reliable defence", he said.

ISRAEL: Thousands of people took part in a demonstration organised by the Communist Party of Israel, the Young Communist League of Israel and the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (Hadash) on March 29 in Nazareth. Jews and Arabs from CPI, YCLI, Hadash and other progressive peace movements from all over Israel arrived in Nazareth to protest against the war in Iraq. The demonstrators demanded an end to the war for oil, condemned the Arab regimes which are co-operating with the US and called for an end to the ongoing Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories.

USA: The US military said it hadn't yet found any weapons of mass destruction. It believed there was a diminishing threat that Iraq might use them as US troops take over more territory. The USA launched the war claiming that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction – even though the UN inspectors hadn't been able to find any. A Russian military expert and Vice-President of the Academy of Geopolitical Studies, Mr Ivashov believes that the USA will falsify evidence to prove that Iraq has the weapons. Speaking at a recent press conference, Mr Ivashov recalled that the USA had so far failed to offer the world community any convincing evidence of weapons of mass destruction. "In the long run the USA will resort to falsifying such evidence. The USA has to find something to justify its aggression against Iraq", Mr Ivashov said.

IRAQ: Jay Garner, the retired US general who will be overseeing humanitarian relief and reconstruction in post-war Iraq is president of an arms company that provides crucial technical support to missile systems vital to the US invasion of the country. The company is Virginia-based SY Coleman, a subsidiary of defence electronics group L-3 Communications. It provides technical services and advice on the Patriot missile system being used in Iraq. SY Coleman has also worked on the Arrow missile defence system, deployed in Israel, and is involved in the US national missile defence (Star Wars II) program. Garner's business background has alarmed the United Nations and aid agencies, which are already opposed to the US administration of Iraq outside of the UN's authority. The agencies described the appointment of an American linked to the arms trade as the "worst case scenario" for running a post-war Iraq.

Esso exposed

"DON'T buy Esso!" was the message of environmental campaigners picketing the Exxon Mobil HQ in Aldwych, central London last week. They are calling on people not to buy Esso petrol from the company that is doing all it can to sabotage the Earth Summit in Johannesburg.

by Renée Sams

The picket, organised by the Campaign Against Climate Change, gave reasons for not buying Esso products because firstly the oil giant denies that burning fossil fuels like oil and gas causes global warming.

Secondly, Esso refuses to spend even one dollar of its US\$15 billion-a-year profits on research into renewable energy.

And thirdly, Exxon Mobil has done more than any other company to undermine the Kyoto Protocol and is now working harder and putting in more dollars than any other

company to sabotage the Earth Summit.

The United States is responsible for a staggering 25 per cent of all the pollution that causes global warming.

A leaked letter from "31 organisations and individuals" (with vested interests in the oil industry) to George W Bush said: "We applauded your decision not to attend the Summit in person" and "we strongly support your opposition to signing new environmental treaties".

The letter says: "Even more

than the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, the Johannesburg Summit will provide a global media stage for many of the most irresponsible and destructive elements involved in critical international economic and environmental issues."

The President's friends show their contempt of the environmental movement calling their agendas "anti-freedom, anti-people, anti-globalisation, and anti-western".

And it goes on to say "...the least important global environment issue is potential global warming, and we hope that your negotiators at Johannesburg can keep it off the table and out of the spotlight."

Among the organisations that sent the letter are many involved in anti-Kyoto activities, and seven of them are known to be funded by Exxon Mobil, a company which has millions of dollars to spare for their devious campaign tactics.

Exxon is generous to supporters of President Bush. Last year alone it gave US\$280,000 to Fred L Smith and Myron Ebell of the Competitive Enterprise Institute.

Craig Rucker of the Committee for a Constructive Tomorrow received US\$35,000, and Steven Hayward from the American Enterprise Institute got US\$230,000. Many other supporters were also helped in their reactionary activities. New Worker ☪

Sydney

Remembering Jenin: Film Night

First Anniversary of the Jenin Massacres

In commemoration of those who were killed, and in support of the on-going Palestinian struggle for freedom, the PHRC will screen two films.

Jenin, Jenin is a documentary by Palestinian filmmaker/actor Muhammad Bakri, who says it is about "human suffering as such – about a wounded soul, a demolished home, a felled tree, a picked flower, a broken heart".

After Jenin is a documentary filmed immediately after the first major withdrawal of Israeli forces from Jenin and other West Bank towns, following the month-long military offensive in April.

6 for 6.30pm – 8.30pm, Friday 2nd May
Tom Mann Theatre 136 Chalmers St, Surry Hills
Cost: \$10 minimum donation

What does a free and fair media really mean?

We have had to suffer months of propaganda for the full-scale, apparently endless war now raging in the Middle East. Informed predictions of the outcome of such a conflict varied from difficult to foresee to a catastrophic clash of civilisations. We now know some of the realities of the carnage in Iraq.

The triumphalism of some outlets cannot hide simple facts. This war has little connection with Saddam Hussein. Its only nexus with weapons of mass destruction is the means now used to terrorise a supposedly-defeated nation.

Change sought by Australia, the US and UK was in no way intended to help the Iraqi people. Humanity seems totally in discard.

Because my partner's daughter recently graduated in journalism from LaTrobe and I formerly worked with the Iraqi Newsagency, have had a lot to do with Al Jazeera and am very familiar with the sites in Baghdad being systematically destroyed, in this household we are taking a very close interest in the emotionally-draining, intensely sad media coverage.

We are very, very angry, but have to try to put that aside and help with some effective work to redress this terrible wrong.

The media, in our view, has an interest in doing the same.

Al Jazeera, whose staffer was criminally murdered yesterday, is an independent satellite television network based in the pro-American Persian Gulf nation Qatar.

It is understandable that Al Jazeera's workers are upset. Yet those workers are doing a competent, highly ethical job in commenting non-polemically and running balanced vision of this war as they honestly see it.

For Al Jazeera a warship is a warship, a dead child is a dead child, a murdered journalist is a murdered journalist, John Howard is John Howard.

Reporting live whenever possible what they are and what they say leaves viewers better prepared to understand this challenge to collective security, and indeed to our own survival. Better prepared, anyway, than by massively-financed spin.

I have seen Al Jazeera's horrifying vision played out day and night and can understand the outrage and trauma felt by Arabs and Muslims the world over.

For journalists, I am sure that nothing will ever exceed emotions of horror and anger at coverage of the shelling of the press corps at the Palestine Hotel and missile-launch against Al Jazeera's Baghdad office.

The Palestine Hotel housed most of the international press corps. TV vision had identified it worldwide for exactly what it was.

Its positional co-ordinates had been supplied by the press corps to United States, British and Australian commands. The offending tank, whose rambo crew was parked only a few metres from the hotel it shelled, was not under fire or threat.

Al Jazeera had a special interest in detailing its position in Baghdad as its Kabul office was targeted and destroyed by United States bombing in the Afghan War.

The Americans had no reserve in displaying to the world a US version of democracy and freedom of the press by firing that missile at Al Jazeera's office and shelling the Palestine Hotel.

A "regrettable accident", said the United States Depart-

ment of Defence. "We don't target journalists".

Not much. Tareq Ayoub, Taras Protsyuk and Jose Couso are now dead. Tareq's cameraperson, Zuhair al-Iraqi, is not expected to live. They represented Al Jazeera, Reuter and Telecinco Spain.

So the propaganda emanating from governments in Australia, the United States and Britain must be the given, unassailable truth. Say or show anything else and the penalty is death.

Not much of a prospect for a daughter and a young Australian graduate qualified for a career in journalism.

Our Federal Government insisted on war instead of peace. The world did not want change by this means. And now the situation gets worse.

If the Iraqi Government set out to ethnically cleanse the Kurds, the Coalition is doing the same to anti-US and anti-Turkish dissidents in the Iraqi Kurdish enclave. Another disastrous war to spread across five nation-states.

Bombing of Baghdad, a city once revered as the jewel of the East, still goes on day after day although Iraq is in no position to respond. The Coalition aim is to claim full command of the capital and demand recognition of an illegal entity.

International law and practice forbids such a process. Arab, Islamic and many non-aligned nations are unlikely in the lack of a UN role to recognise the occupiers as the government of any part of the nation.

Governments and financial institutions in civilised nations are unlikely to turn over Iraqi assets to such claimants.

Iraqi people are victims as much as liberated. If they were coerced into being a cheer squad for Saddam Hussein, the invaders are now demanding the same compliance.

For more than a week Baghdadis have had no power, hence no water or electricity, and no 'phones. Sanctions have denied to hospitals basic drugs and medical equipment.

What is allowed is in short supply, with a siege of much of the City and occupation of airports preventing any top-up.

Arab and Islamic nations are not accepting the story that many Iraqis have defected, or cut and run.

Most of the world admires their bravery and is asking basic questions about an invasion and occupation lacking in legal or ethical basis.

Releasing pent up hostilities by bombing Iraqis and threatening to crush them under the tread of tanks provides no basis for government in a nation which was established by overthrowing a British-client regime.

If we can really stretch things and conclude the Coalition powers were poorly advised and bothered to understand a little of Iraq and its rich and diverse culture, surely they must now get the message from Arab and world reaction to a slaughter which they said was not going to happen.

Those who know Iraq believe this reality will merge into endless quasi-war sustained by internal and external resistance. Iraqis do not know how to give in.

Australia has had a lucrative trade relationship with Iraq for 55-years. As one of the powers launching this illegal, Islamophobic aggression Australia is observably now widely-loathed throughout the Middle East.

Australia is compounding misrepresentation and denial with

fantasies about new contracts and trade prospects and expanded friendships in a democratic Arab world, mono-Western-cultural and cleansed of Islam.

Fortunately such a world does not and cannot exist. It certainly cannot be brought about by bombs and butchery.

This disaster was not of our choice. It was knowingly imposed on us and confronted majority opinion.

To Mr Howard: "Just stop insulting our intelligence, please, analyse with real people a deeply dangerous situation and thus free us from your gaggles of self-serving experts."

Your triumphalism is promoting the authoritarian state you say you deplore. Can't you understand a clash of civilisations will edge us ever closer to an unwinnable world conflict against peoples whose faiths, intellect and courage are in no way inferior to ours?"

As a 38-year member of the Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance, I believe Baghdad and the death of those workers compels the union to require of media operators a basic health and safety concern.

That is to work for survival of its reporters in the field. And to help do so by reacting to the extremity of this crisis and telling us what it means for free and fair media in the future.

Bill Hartley
CEO Australian-Iraqi Friendship Association

Labor surrenders in first days of war

The Labor leadership has surrendered its anti-war stance in the first few days of the attack on Iraq. "It's all too hard", Simon Crean (in effect) said, and "the war will be over soon". No point in demanding the recall of Australian troops, Crean has announced.

While this might seem to be a response to the barrage of war propaganda from the Australian media ("reporting from the front line with our troops"), it is really a response to the slip in anti-war feeling as reflected in opinion polls.

Public opinion against the war has softened, because of the barrage of war propaganda. Crean is now charting a course close to that swinging opinion, as is typical of Labor leadership.

The same opportunism was seen in the NSW state election, with Labor chasing Green credibility on an alleged anti-war stance.

So Deputy Premier Andrew Refshauge spoke at one anti-war rally, and "Labor opposes the war" stickers appeared, although Bob Carr suggested "discussion groups" instead of street demonstrations (which he had previously condemned as "violent").

All this is to remind us that Labor is thoroughly untrustworthy in the anti-war movement, and at best will only follow, rather than lead the movement.

Worse than that, though, as Crean has shown, they will act to muddy the waters.

The war in Afghanistan is not over, let alone the war in Iraq.

Tim Anderson
University of Sydney

Culture and Life
appears on page 5
this week.

"Regime change"

It may seem strange to some people but somehow the "liberation" of Iraq does not feel right. Let's forget about Saddam Hussein for a second. I think the unease comes from the fact that the trigger-happy Americans are a very real threat to the world peace.

Having decided to use "pre-emptive" strikes against any country it doesn't like, it essentially has put itself outside the legal norms of behaviour. The war in Iraq was illegal and continues to be so.

I am also furious about Kofi Annan's remarks that the UN should "legitimise" the war. Why should it? There has never been anything legitimate about it. The USA is the strongest nation militarily at present.

And may I suggest the most hated nation on earth? And how does this nation behave? Fraudulently, deceitfully and aggressively.

The USA officials have managed to spin so many lies in such a short period of time, it's incredible. Falsified documents, misinformation, cover-ups ...

Not only lowly public servants who have little choice when pushed but people like Colin Powell, presidents and prime ministers.

So much suffering inflicted on the civilian population in Iraq and, frankly, so much still to come with the occupiers. Such a waste of people's lives and aspirations.

Somebody may be rejoicing about all that loot that multinationals will manage to extract from the country. They may welcome this "liberation".

To my mind, it's a war of aggression and occupation. The least we can do is to start seriously thinking about "regime change" at home and work towards world peace.

Roger Gaudio
Sydney

What I really want

Apparently, opposition to the war in Iraq is synonymous with:

- supporting Saddam Hussein's brutal regime;
- supporting the September 11 terrorists;
- supporting al Qaida;
- supporting terrorism of any form including bad graffiti;
- supporting brutal military regimes all over the world;
- giving aid and comfort to brutal military regimes all over the world;
- anti-Americanism;
- being anti-war under any circumstances;

being juvenile, easily manipulated and gullible;

being un-Australian, unpatriotic and disloyal to our troops.

The list goes on and on and on.

Well I'm tired of other people telling me what I do and don't believe in. I'm fed up with having my views dismissed and marginalised by my elected politicians.

I want to tell you what I want. I want a safe, secure world for all the children. I don't care if they live in Iraq, or the USA or Broken Hill. I want a world at peace.

I want children everywhere to have access to fresh water, basic health services, an education and housing.

How the hell is bombing the crap out of Iraq going to come anywhere near to achieving that.

Saddam Hussein is a terrible man. He has done terrible things and his people suffered terribly under his leadership, excluding the damage caused by war and international sanctions. But why was Saddam able to do what he did?

Because of American foreign policy. America educated, trained, armed, encouraged and finally brought Saddam to power in Iraq. America taught Saddam how to be a brutal despot.

One of the greatest threats to world peace is American foreign policy. It is American foreign policy that needs to be put on trial.

The UN was unable to find any evidence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. Yet how much more hard irrefutable evidence do we need before we are prepared to indict America for crimes against humanity?

How much clearer can the evidence be that American foreign policy is the greatest modern-day threat to world peace and stability?

Just look at the histories of Afghanistan, Yugoslavia, most of Central and South America, Israel and most of the Middle East. At every point you can see the dirty filthy hand of American foreign policy.

Killing Saddam will not bring about freedom for the Iraqi people. It will not put food on their tables.

It will not provide education and healthcare for their children.

It will not stop terrorism.

It will not hale in a new era of democracy and freedom in the Middle East.

It will not be the end of American intervention in foreign politics for the benefit of the American capitalist economy.

It will not be the end of anything except the lives of thousands upon thousands of people.

Julie Messenger
Sydney, NSW



Rob Gowland previews

ABC & SBS public television programs

Sun April 20 ~
~ Sat April 26

Pinocchio, the wooden puppet whose nose gets longer if he lies, was the invention not of Walt Disney but of an Italian writer and journalist, Carlo Lorenzini, from the Tuscan village of Collodi. An astute political commentator during Italy's struggle for independence from Austria, Lorenzini settled in Florence, where he adopted the pen-name Collodi.

The first weekly instalment of Pinocchio's adventures was published in 1881. Like the Russian classic *The Little Humpbacked Horse*, published at almost the same time, a children's fantasy was used to depict the impoverished and inward looking life of the poor and the peasantry.

Since then, Pinocchio's adventures have appeared in more than 3000 editions in 63 countries translated into 83 languages.

The first film version (hand coloured!) appeared in 1911. Scenes from this recently restored film appear in the very comprehensive *Pinocchio: The Story Of A Puppet* (SBS 8.30pm Sunday).

[Hand-colouring was one way of overcoming the lack of colour film: using a very fine, single-haired brush, rows of women seated before very large magnifying glasses would colour in the scenery, the costumes, the objects in the film, applying the coloured paint direct to every frame

of the film (and there were 10,000 frames for every ten minutes of screen time!). The result is delicate, unreal but beautiful.]

We also learn that Pinocchio became an enduring figure in advertising campaigns from the 1920s onwards, "since he made an excellent long-nosed lying salesman".

In the latest version of Pinocchio's adventures, a film by Roberto Benigni, the wooden puppet has been modernised into a sophisticated robot, named Pino. (Whether his nose still magically grows if he fibs I've no idea.)

Pinocchio's nose certainly grows in Luigi Comencini's captivating 1972 television series, *The Adventures of Pinocchio* (screening over six weeks on SBS 3.00pm Saturdays). The series stars Gina Lollobrigida, Nino Manfredi and Andrea Balestri.

In 1935, as part of the Works Progress Administration, established by US President Roosevelt to get unemployed Americans into some form of productive work, the Federal Writers' Project was set up.

The writers it employed were drawn from the "relief rolls" and, like the Federal Theatre Project and similar schemes, it was enacted largely on the initiative of the Communist Party.

One of its notable achievements was to send teams of young writers across the country, but especially into the still heavily segregated South, to interview some 2000 former slaves about the reality of slavery in the US.

These interviews were written down in the vernacular of the people interviewed and filed in numerous volumes in the Library of Congress. Now, with the aid of top African-American actors including Angela Bassett, Samuel L Jackson, Vanessa

Williams, Oprah Winfrey and Don Cheadle, these memories of an horrific existence have been brought to life.

Unchained Memories: Reading From the Slave Narratives (ABC 9.30pm Sunday) is one of the most compelling, rivetting documentaries you are likely to see this year.

We have had 100 years of Hollywood sanitising and misrepresenting slavery in the USA, so as not to estrange the Southern market or encourage revolutionary ideas amongst the Black population. Programs like this are a refreshing and much-needed alternative to the image of "kindly massa" and his well-fed, well-treated "faithful darkies".

The stories told here are of constant brutal beatings, rapes, dismembered families, humans treated and viewed as cattle, of huge profits made out of cruel, backbreaking dawn till dusk labour, sometimes seven days a week.

Written by Mark Jonathan Harris and directed by Ed Bell and Thomas Lennon, *Unchained Memories* is brilliantly put together, working simultaneously on three levels. There is the pure archival record, the photographs of the elderly ex-slaves, film records of the South in the '30s and photos and engravings of the slave era itself.

Then there is the reading of the ex-slaves' testimony. Instead of a simple voice-over narrative (as in *The Civil War* or *Mark Twain*), here the actors reading the reminiscences before a microphone are filmed.

A photo of an old woman on a porch will fade in to a close-up of a black actress (often much younger) reading the old woman's recollections with spirit and feeling. You are acutely aware that this is an actress,



Archival photos (*Unchained Memories*)

no one is trying to hide that fact, and it makes all the difference.

And then we have the third level: the actors are filmed even as they themselves react to the reminiscences. One actress is clearly appalled at the way the ex-slave she is impersonating still speaks with pride of meeting her quota of cotton picked in a day, a quota set by a massa who cared not a jot whether it was excessive or cruelly heavy or even if it killed his slaves or not.

The actors bring tremendous conviction to their readings. Oprah (who turns in a splendid dialect performance that might surprise those who only know her from her talk show) at one point looks at a photo of the former slave she is about to impersonate and remarks that the Depression-era shack in the background is actually bigger than the one where she herself grew up.

Made by cable channel HBO for Time-Warner, the program is narrated by Whoopi Goldberg, and the closing credits are rolled over Paul Robeson's rendition of the moving *No More Auction Block*.

Did you know that when you order a book or video from Amazon in the US by email, the order will almost certainly be processed in India. Or that if you are a Coles-Myer card holder and you phone Customer Service, your call will be dealt with by a call centre operator in New Delhi, not Melbourne.

The call-centre "industry" is expected to bring India an income of billions of dollars by 2006. A sub-industry is the training of call centre operators.

As the Australian documentary *Diverted To Delhi*, screening

on *True Stories* (ABC 10.00pm Thursday) shows, this training involves indoctrination in not only the accent but the culture of the US, UK or Australia. It is a ghastly form of brainwashing: cultural imperialism at its sharpest, in fact.

Thirty percent of Indian university graduates are unemployed. They are desperate for work and will degrade themselves to work in the new call centres (for a princely \$40 a week!).

US, British or Australian companies are happy to outsource their customer services to India because it's so cheap: not only are the wages minimal, but as one executive observes, companies don't have to pay for such things as superannuation, health care, holidays, etc.

Developed capitalist countries like the US and Australia have been exporting manufacturing processes (and the accompanying jobs) to the Third World for years, but now, with modern telecommunications, administrative, sales, IT and customer service jobs can also be exported to low-wage countries.

Shall We Dance (ABC 10.25pm Saturday) was the seventh musical Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers made together. Directed by Mark Sandrich, it has more straight comedy than some of their other films (Fred's parody of a Russian ballet star, for example, imperiously ordering Ginger to "twest!").

The film is set to a classic Gershwin score (including *Let's Call the Whole Thing Off*, *They Can't Take That Away From Me* and *They All Laughed*) and set in some classic RKO settings by Van Nest Polglase and the unsung Carroll Clark. ✪

May Day Actions

ADELAIDE:

"Workers of the World, Unite"
Thursday 1st May, 630pm
May Day Dinner,
Hilton Hotel, Hilton
Saturday 3rd May, 10am
Gather at Victoria Square
March to Rymill Park
Sunday 4th May, 10am
Dedication Service
at Workers' Memorial
Port Adelaide
Followed by BBQ
at Semathore Workers' Club
(08) 8212 3155

MELBOURNE:

"Stop Howard's war on workers"
"Demand a people's budget"
Thursday 1st May, 10am
Trades Hall Council
Sunday 4th May, 2pm
Gather at Trades Hall Council
(03) 9662 3511

PERTH:

"Peace and Humanity"
Sunday 4th May, 1130am
The Esplanade, Fremantle
March at 12 noon
through Fremantle
Family concert from 1pm
(08) 9328 7877

DARWIN:

Saturday 3rd May, 630pm
Dinner at Stella Maris
Monday 5th May, 530pm
Trades and Labor Council
Wood Street
March to Esplanade for a concert
(08) 8941 0001

SYDNEY:

"Struggle for peace and workers' rights"
Sunday 4th May, 12 midday
Rally Hyde Park North
March to Town Hall Square
(02) 9264 1691

BRISBANE:

"Unions for working families"
Monday 5th May, 10am
Assemble Mary Street
March to Musgrave,
South Brisbane
1120am to 4pm, speakers,
entertainment, stalls, kids' rides
(07) 3846 2468

ACT:

Thursday 1st May,
Peace Rally, 12 midday
Garema Place, Civic
1st May, 7pm
Dinner "Jimmy's Place"
Tickets
ACT Trades and Labor Council
(02) 6247 7844

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65 Campbell Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010
Phone: (02) 9212 6855
Fax: (02) 9281 5795

Email: guardian@cpa.org.au

Editor: Anna Pha

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Sydney

Politics in the Pub

Every Friday night 6pm – 7.45pm

Gaelic Club, 64 Devonshire St, Surry Hills

(across from the Chalmers St exit and Devonshire St tunnel at Central Station)

Dinner afterwards in the Royal Exhibition Hotel across the road

April 18 Good Friday

April 25 Anzac Day

May 2

INDONESIA UPDATE

Max Lane, National Chairperson ASIET

George Aditjondro, Lecturer Sociology & Anthropology, Newcastle Uni

The Gaelic Club, like all clubs, is required to have non members sign in.

To avoid queues you may wish to become a social member for \$5.

Inq: Pat Toms 9358 4834 pbtoms@bigpond.com ; Jan O'Leary 9818 3737, jol@pnc.com.au PO Box 325 Rozelle NSW 2039 ; Win Childs Fax 9660 6554

We see too much We know too much That's our best defence

We now glimpse the forbidden truths of the invasion of Iraq. A man cuddles the body of his infant daughter; her blood drenches them. A woman in black pursues a tank, her arms outstretched; all seven in her family are dead. An American Marine murders a woman because she happens to be standing next to a man in a uniform. "I'm sorry", he says, "but the chick got in the way".

by John Pilger

Covering this in a shroud of respectability has not been easy for George Bush and Tony Blair. Millions now know too much; the crime is all too evident.

Tam Dalyell, Father of the House of Commons, a Labour MP for 41 years, says the Prime Minister is a war criminal and should be sent to The Hague. He is serious, because the prima facie case against Blair and Bush is beyond doubt.

In 1946, the Nuremberg Tribunal rejected German arguments of the "necessity" for pre-emptive attacks against its neighbours. "To initiate a war of aggression", said the Tribunal's judgement, "is not only an international crime; it is the supreme international crime differing only from other war crimes in that it contains within itself the accumulated evil of the whole".

To this, the Palestinian writer Ghada Karmi adds, "a deep and unconscious racism that imbues every aspect of Western policy towards Iraq". It is this racism, she says, that has cynically elevated Saddam Hussein from "a petty local chieftain, albeit a brutal and ruthless one in the mould of many before him, [to a figure] demonised beyond reason".

To Colonial Secretary Winston Churchill, the Iraqis, like all Arabs, were "niggers", against whom poison gas could be used. They were un-people; and they still are.

The killing of some 80 villagers near Baghdad last Thursday, of children in markets, of the "chicks who get in the way" would be in industrial quantities now were it not for the voices of the millions who filled London and other capitals, and the young people who walked out of their schools; they have saved countless lives.

Just as the American invasion of Vietnam was fuelled by racism, in which "gooks" could be murdered with impunity, so the current atrocity in Iraq is from the same mould.

Should you doubt that, turn the news around and examine the double standard. Imagine there are Iraqi tanks in Britain and Iraqi troops laying siege to Birmingham.

Absurd? Well, it would not

happen here. But the British military is doing that to Basra, a city bigger than Birmingham, firing shoulder-held missiles and dropping cluster bombs on its population, 40 per cent of whom are children.

Moreover, "our boys" are denying water to the stricken people of Basra as well as to Umm Qasr, which they have controlled for a week.

It is no wonder Blair is furious with the al-Jazeera channel, which has exposed this, and the lie that the people of Basra were rising up on cue for their liberation.

Since 11 September 2001, "our" propaganda and its unspoken racism has required an imperial distortion of intellect and morality.

The Iraqis are not fighting like lions, in defence of their homeland. They are "cowardly" and subhuman because they use hit-and-run tactics against a hugely powerful invader – as if they have any choice.

This belittling of their bravery and disregard of their humanity, like the disregard of thousands of Afghans recently bombed to death in dusty villages, confronts us with a moral issue as profound as the Western response to that greatest act of terrorism, the willful atomic bombing of Japan.

Have we progressed? In 2003, is it still true that only "our" lives are of value?

These Anglo-American invasions of weak and largely defenceless nations are meant to demonstrate the kind of world the US is planning to dominate by force, with its procession of worthy and unworthy victims and the establishment of American bases at the gateways of all the main sources of fossil fuels.

There is a list now. If Israel has its way, Iran will be next; and Cuba, Libya, Syria and even China had better watch out. North Korea may not be an immediate American target, because its threat of nuclear war has been effective.

Ironically, had Iraq kept its nuclear weapons, this invasion probably would not have taken place. That is the lesson for all governments at odds with Bush and Blair: nuclear-arm yourself quickly.

The most forbidden truth is



Palm Sunday Rally for Peace – Sydney

Photo: Anna Pha

that this demonstrably militarist British Government, and the rampant superpower it serves, are the true enemies of our security. In the plethora of opinion polls, the most illuminating was conducted by the US *Time* magazine among a quarter of a million people across Europe.

The question was: "Which country poses the greatest danger to world peace in 2003?"

Readers were asked to tick off one of three possibilities: Iraq, North Korea and the United States. Eight per cent viewed Iraq as the most dangerous; North Korea was chosen by nine per cent. No fewer than 83 per cent voted for the United States, of which, in the eyes of most of humanity, Britain is now but a lethal appendage.

Only successful propaganda, and corrupt journalism, will prevent us understanding this and other truths.

Rupert Murdoch has been admirably frank. In lauding Bush and Blair as "heroes", he said, "there is going to be collateral damage in Iraq. And if you really want to be brutal about it, better we get it done now."

Every one of his 175 newspapers carries that sinister message, more or less, as does his American

television network. The 80 villagers rocketed to death on Thursday are proof of the urgency he describes; other victims in other countries are waiting.

For those journalists who see themselves as honourable truth-tellers, there are difficult choices now: rather like the choice of the young woman at the GCHQ spy centre in Cheltenham who allegedly leaked documents revealing that US officials were trying to blackmail members of the Security Council; rather like the two British soldiers who face court martial because they exercised their right, enshrined by the Nuremberg judges, to refuse to fight in a criminal war that kills civilians.

For journalists who are not "embedded" and are deeply troubled by the kind of propaganda that consumes even our language, and who, as James Cameron put it, "write the first draft of history", similar courage is required. Brave Terry Lloyd of ITN, killed by the "coalition", demonstrated this.

The threats are now not even subtle, such as this from British Defence Secretary, Geoff Hoon.

"One of the reasons for having journalists [embedded]," he said, "is to prevent precisely the kind of tragedy that occurred to an ITN

crew ... because [Terry Lloyd] was not part of a military organisation. And in those circumstances, we can't look after all those journalists ... So having journalists have the protection of our armed forces is both good for journalism. It's also good for people watching."

Like a mafia boss explaining the benefits of a protection racket, Hoon is saying: do as you are told or face the consequences. Indeed, Donald Rumsfeld, Hoon's superior in Washington, often quotes Al Capone, the famous Chicago mobster.

His favourite: "You will get more with a kind word and a gun than with a kind word alone."

How do we face this threat to all of us? The answer lies, I believe, in understanding the extent of our own power.

Patrick Tyler wrote wisely in the *New York Times* the other day that America faced a "tenacious new adversary" – the public.

He says we are entering a new bi-polar world with two new super-powers: the Bush/Blair gang on one side, and world opinion on the other, a truly popular force stirring at last and whose consciousness soars by the day. Wasn't it the poet Shelley who, at a time like this, exhorted us to: "Rise like lions after slumber"? ☺

Communist Party of Australia

Central Committee:
General Secretary: Peter Symon
President: Hannah Middleton
Australian Marxist Review:
Executive Editor: Hannah Middleton
65 Campbell St, Surry Hills, 2010
Ph: (02) 9212 6855 Fax: (02) 92815795
Sydney District Committee:
Rob Gowland, 65 Campbell St,
Surry Hills 2010 Phone: (02) 9212 6855
Newcastle Branch: 303 Hunter St
Phone: ah (02) 4926 1752

Wollongong Branch:
Leanne Lindsay
PO Box 276 Corimal 2518
Phone: (02) 4225 1339
Riverina: Geoff Lawler
PO Box 1016 Wagga 2650
Phone: (02) 6921 4316
Fax: (02) 6921 6873
Victorian State Committee:
Andrew Irving PO Box 3 Room 0
Trades Hall Lygon St Carlton South 3053
Ph: (03) 9639 1550 Fax: (03) 9639 4199

Brisbane Branch: David Matters
PO Box 2148 Salisbury East 4107
Phone: (07) 3398 9623
South Australian State Committee:
Marie Lean
Room 5, 1st floor, 149 Flinders St,
Adelaide 5000 Ph: (08) 8223 1888
West Australian Branch: Vic Williams
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Phone: (08) 9337 1074
Albury-Wodonga: Mick Woodall
Phone: (02) 6040 3366

Website: <http://www.cpa.org.au> Email: cpa@cpa.org.au

No Guardian next week

Due to the Easter break
the next issue will be on
April 30.