



Campaign Against Sanctions on Iraq

Newsletter May 2000

The Campaign Against Sanctions on Iraq (CASI) is a registered society at the University of Cambridge. Its members are all volunteers; its committee members are students. CASI is exclusively concerned with the humanitarian consequences of sanctions on Iraq. It does not support Saddam Hussein's regime and is not opposed to military sanctions on Iraq.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to CASI's first newsletter of 2000. The period between this publication and its predecessor has seen some significant events and important changes both internationally and for CASI. As for the latter, CASI's November conference was the largest and probably boldest venture we have yet made, representing a large financial risk as well as an immense effort by all those involved in its organisation.

After some uncertainty the event was a great success, bringing together groups and individuals from a great variety of backgrounds and with an impressive speaker list including: a Foreign Office official outlining UK policy, academics giving their analysis of the humanitarian situation and members of the UK Iraqi community giving a more personal testimony to the effects of sanctions. Orders are now being taken for the conference proceedings, details of which follow the related article.

Internationally there seems to be a growing chorus of concerned voices. Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, the world's two largest dedicated human rights organisations, have begun to take important steps to lend their voices to the cry. The past months have seen hard-hitting documentaries by campaigning journalist John Pilger and equally powerful articles by serious news magazines like *The Economist*. The online version of *The Economist's* 8 April three page feature on Iraq contained links to CASI's website, and then to that of the US State Department. Awareness of the toll taken by the sanctions seems to be reaching a new height.

Pressure is mounting for change, with the high profile resignations of Hans von Sponeck (Denis Halliday's successor as UN Humanitarian Co-ordinator) and Jutta Burghardt (head of the World Food Programme in Iraq) in February, followed by the UN Secretary-General's scathing March 10th report. These pressures led to Se-

curity Council Resolution 1293, a step to improving, but not to lifting, the sanctions.

Unfortunately, the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1293 and similar activities can be used to draw attention away from the heart of the problem. We are now in a situation where we must take care to distinguish between processes which work towards the resolution of the crisis, involving the lifting of sanctions; and processes which aim at 'improving' the sanctions, and so though they may go some way in alleviating the suffering of the Iraqi people, can be used to avoid addressing the fundamental cause of the problem.

The winter months have also been a time of change for CASI, as we look to the future of our organisation. Our Annual General Meeting in February saw the selection of a new committee and the re-organisation of the committee structure in an attempt to de-centralise power and bring more people to the fore. Hopefully this will lead to an increased capacity to press forward with new projects, improving our ability to disseminate accurate and fair information about the sanctions. Almost ten years and, if Unicef's estimates are accurate, a half million children's lives down the road, we have a long way to go before we can rest yet.

I hope you find the following useful and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours,
Yousef Ghazi-Tabatabai
Co-ordinator, CASI

This newsletter has been sent to a larger number of people than usual so as to advertise the conference proceedings (see back page). Should you wish to continue receiving our newsletters and are not already a member of CASI (indicated by an [M] on your address label) we ask that you join CASI (by sending in five pounds) to guarantee receiving future newsletters on paper. Should you also receive this newsletter by email, and would be happy with 'just' an email copy in future, please let us know, so we can reduce our costs. Full contact details are given on page 13.

Security Council Resolution 1284, was passed on 17 December 1999 over the abstentions of China, France, Malaysia and Russia. It represented the culmination of almost a year of debates on Iraq (see CASI's October 1999 newsletter). The resolution was analysed in depth in a CASI Occasional Briefing (24 December 1999). The following presentation is briefer but more up to date.

SCR 1284 has four parts. The first replaces Unscm, the UN weapons inspectors, with a new body called Unmovic (UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission). While Unmovic takes over all of Unscm's responsibilities there are indications from 1284 that it is designed to be more independent of Member States of the United Nations than Unscm was. This modification seems primarily designed to address the revelations that Unscm acted beyond its mandate by allowing other countries to use it to spy on Iraq. Unmovic's new chair, Hans Blix, was appointed on 27 January, about 10 days behind schedule, after a number of other candidates had been rejected. Blix is the Swedish former head of the International Atomic Energy Agency. On 8 March, 17 "commissioners", members of an expert advisory board, were named, including Blix as their head. On 6 April, his organisational plan was sent to the Security Council for approval, which it received a week later.

The second part of SCR 1284 reminds Iraq of its responsibilities to return Kuwaiti and third country prisoners and property taken during the Gulf War.

The third part offers some improvements to the "oil for food" programme. In particular, the cap on Iraq's permitted oil sales was removed. Given the tight control over Iraq's permitted imports, the cap has always seemed politically motivated. The cap's removal is a potentially important step as the "oil for food" programme has been recognised from its inception to be insufficient to meet Iraq's humanitarian needs, not least due to underfunding.

The part of SCR 1284 also permits "green lists" to be drawn up by the UN Office of the Iraq Programme. The lists would then be sent to the Sanctions Committee for approval. Items on the approved lists could then be imported into Iraq at a later date without Sanctions Committee approval. Four lists have now been approved by the Sanctions Committee: food and educational materials (1 March) and agriculture and health materials (29 March). Two members of the Sanctions Committee, presumably the US and the UK, removed items from the lists.

SCR 1284 also allows the Government of Iraq to domestically purchase some of the goods in the "oil for food" programme. Prior to 1284, "oil for food" had not allowed the Government of Iraq to submit

contracts for the purchase of domestic produce. UN Agencies could purchase locally for their work in Iraqi Kurdistan. This policy has had detrimental effects on the economy of South/Central Iraq as it meant that domestic producers found themselves competing with essentially free imported foods. Many Iraqi farmers are felt to have taken fields out of production as a result; there are not good data on how extensive a problem this was, though, as the UN does not monitor abandoned fields. This perverse effect of OFF may also have encouraged Iraqi farmers to export their produce, a claim that has been made repeatedly by UK government spokespeople (c.f. Baroness Symons' remarks to the House of Lords on 4 February 1999). No UN data have been published in support of these claims, nor have their proponents, to our knowledge, presented any evidence in their defence.

This section of SCR 1284 also allows a "cash component" under OFF, the ability to pay for local costs of implementing the OFF programme. These include installation and staff training costs; The Economist magazine pointed out on 8 April that currently "[t]he UN also cannot spend money training Iraqi doctors or teachers - an obstacle no amount of imported medicines or textbooks can make up for".

The final section of SCR 1284 discusses the possibility of suspending sanctions. Its language is just as unclear as the language in SCR 687 (1991), which set out the conditions for lifting sanctions: if Iraq co-operates for 120 days "in all respects" with a work programme that has yet to be drawn up, then the Security Council will consider suspending sanctions, although subject to a number of restrictions, also unspecified. This section of 1284 explicitly acknowledges that the sanctions cause hardship by stating that the "fundamental objective" of suspending sanctions is "improving the humanitarian situation in Iraq". Thus 1284 re-affirms the formula adopted in 1991: humanitarian conditions in Iraq will be held hostage to the political disputes between the governments of Iraq and the members of the Security Council.

SECURITY COUNCIL RESOLUTION 1293: MORE OIL SPARE PARTS ALLOWED

Security Council Resolution 1293, was passed on 31 March 2000. It follows the 10 March report of the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to the Security Council [S/2000/208], which presented the report of the oil experts commissioned by SCR 1284. Relative to 1998, when the team of oil experts last inspected Iraq, they again found Iraq's industry in a "lamentable state" and noted that, "the decline in the condition of all sectors of the industry continues, and is accelerating in some cases" [§ 24]. They

found that the Iraqi Ministry of Oil had taken high risk measures to increase its production of oil, "in expectation of the arrival of spare parts and equipment in 1998 and thereafter" [§ 25].

The "expectation of the arrival of spare parts" was based on SCR 1175 (19 June 1998), which allowed Iraq to import up to \$300 million in oil spare parts every 180 day Phase of OFF. Nevertheless, by 31 January 2000 about 50% of the contracts for oil spare parts submitted by the Government of Iraq had been placed on hold by the Sanctions Committee [S/2000/208, § 51]. This meant that Iraq was not receiving the spare parts that it might have expected.

Noting that Iraqi oil production had declined by about 10% by volume [§ 48] in the weeks before their visit, the oil experts explained:

49. ... the recent decrease in the production and export of crude oil can be attributed to the failure to replenish depleted wells, the delays in implementing wet crude treatment projects and the loss of producing wells - 56 in the south alone. Other contributing factors include the failure to carry out major plant and equipment overhauls, delays in the repair of the pipeline systems, the further decline in conditions on the Mina al-Bakr loading platform [Iraq's Gulf oil export facility] and limitations in the crude oil storage and transportation system. These are all factors that have arisen because of the lack of necessary spare parts and equipment.

50. Exacerbating this situation is the fact that some applications have been placed on hold for a lengthy period of time, and when they are subsequently approved the suppliers have in certain cases been unwilling to perform as contracted because of significant changes in their costs or other related factors. As a result, the Government of Iraq must either renegotiate the contracts or identify new suppliers.

In addition to expressing concerns about contracts on hold, recommendations had also been received from May 1999 onwards that the \$300 million figure be doubled to \$600 [S/2000/208, § 54]. This recommendation was finally acted upon by SCR 1293, which authorised this doubling. CNN reported that:

After refusing for months, the United States agreed to the measure and sponsored the resolution to try to deflect criticism of its tough line on Iraq sanctions, which has come under increasing fire at home and abroad. ["Iraq welcomes Security Council decision to increase oil equipment purchases", 31 March 2000]

They also reported that the "U.S. did release some [oil spare] parts recently, and the move was recip-

rocated by Baghdad with an increase in oil production that may help ease world oil prices". The US government has been concerned with rising oil prices during an election year. Prior to passage of SCR 1293, the Iraqi government seemed to be signalling that it would not increase production.

SCR 1284 AND IMPROVEMENTS IN THE HUMANITARIAN SITUATION

SCR 1284 offers two means of improving the humanitarian situation in Iraq. The first relates to the elements of the third section of 1284: lifting the oil sales cap, the import "green lists", domestic purchase and the cash component. The second relates to the possibility of suspending the sanctions. It seems unlikely at present that either of these sections will lead to significant improvements in conditions in Iraq.

For the cap's removal to improve the humanitarian situation in Iraq two further steps are necessary. First, Iraq's oil infrastructure must be capable of taking advantage of the removed cap: the sixth 180 day "phase" of "oil for food", which ended in December 1999, was the first in which Iraq managed to reach the cap, and this owed partly to increased oil prices (the cap had been specified in dollar value rather than volume of oil). To this end, SCR 1284 also commissioned oil experts to assess Iraq's oil infrastructure and to report back to the Security Council.

Second, the revenues in the UN escrow account must be used to improve the humanitarian situation. Under "oil for food" there are two sides to this. On one side, the Government of Iraq must contract for imports. There seem to be at least two ways in which this takes place imperfectly: the government is often slow to find what it regards as suitable suppliers; and the government's definition of "suitable" is felt to include political suitability. On the other side, the Sanctions Committee seems to share the imperfections of the Iraqi government: it is often slow to scrutinise contracts and has placed holds on significant numbers of contracts.

The combination of these factors has meant that, of the \$13.2 billion paid into the UN escrow account by 31 January for humanitarian purchases throughout Iraq, only \$6.7 billion of goods had been delivered to Iraq, with a further \$2.7 billion in the works. To the 31 January, Iraq had sold a total of \$21.5 billion of oil [S/2000/208, § 203].

As to the "green lists", these contain items that the Sanctions Committee has always approved in the past. The lists are therefore unlikely to allow new items into Iraq. They are certainly not designed to help Iraq repair its civilian infrastructure (electricity, water, sewage), whose poor state (bombed

in 1991 and not properly repaired since) may be central to Iraq's continuing public health problems. Some feel that the chief benefit of the "green lists" will be to reduce the amount of paper used in the Office of the Iraq programme: on some days they circulate 50 to 60 contracts to all 15 members of the Sanctions Committee. Green list contracts don't need to be circulated.

We know of no knowledgeable source who feels that the cash component, another promising measure offered by SCR 1284, will be implemented. The problem seems to be that the mechanism for doing so will not be agreed upon. On the one hand, the US government will not allow the government of Iraq to disburse the cash, although it is responsible for the running of OFF in South/Centre Iraq. On the other hand, the Iraqi government is unlikely to allow UN Agencies to do so, for at least two reasons. First, it is concerned that UN Agencies are not sufficiently accountable (there are stories of senior UN employees being pensioned off around Europe on "oil for funds" funds rather than returning to their less pleasant home countries). Second, the Iraqi government is concerned about the UN taking over Iraq's economy. This fear may reflect both the government's desire to prevent challengers to its own rule but also a more technical economic fear: the government pays less for services than do UN Agencies. Increased Agency control of money might therefore mean that the money stretches less; it may also bid up the price of services in Iraq, making other purchases more costly too.

The second means of improving the humanitarian situation offered by SCR 1284 is the possible suspension of sanctions. It seems extremely unlikely that this will ever occur as SCR 1284 requires that the Government of Iraq trust that the US will interpret generously its vague terms.

There is not, then, much reason to believe that SCR 1284 will necessarily lead to much improvement in the humanitarian situation in Iraq. Indeed, it has never been presented this way by the US and the UK, the only two permanent members to vote for it. They have presented it instead as a symbol of international determination that Saddam Hussein must comply with their demands. White House National Security Adviser Sandy Berger believed that the resolution gives the sanctions "a greater degree of legitimacy and acceptability around the world" [Reuters, "U.S. Says U.N. Vote Adds Legitimacy to Iraq Embargo", 19 December 1999]. The US stance therefore seems consistent with its position on the various OFF resolutions over the years: offer limited humanitarian improvement in return for shoring up sanctions' legitimacy. Indeed, Madeleine Albright made this explicit when she explained her support for the "oil for food" deal offered in SCR

986:

Frankly it is the best of all possible ways to make sure that the sanctions regime remains in place so that Saddam Hussein is not entitled to pretend he is concerned for his people and shed a lot of crocodile tears [US Information Agency, "US looking forward to Iraqi oil sale agreement", 16 April 1996]

The Government of Iraq has yet to accept SCR 1284. As a result, Unmovic is not yet in a position to enter Iraq. As a result, it cannot draw up its work programme and Iraq cannot start to co-operate with it. One strand of thought believes that the Government of Iraq will eventually realise that it must co-operate with 1284, and will eventually do so. The other strand, observing that the government seems more stable now than it was when it first allowed weapons inspectors in, believes that the Government is under no pressure to give in. Thus acceptance of SCR 1284 has become another battleground for the US and Iraqi governments to fight on, to the detriment of Iraq's population.

HOLDS AND "DUAL USE"

Under the sanctions, imports to Iraq require the approval of all 15 members of the Sanctions Committee. Contracts that are not accepted or rejected outright may have "holds" placed on them, ostensibly to allow the Sanctions Committee to obtain further information relating to the contract at hand. With very few exceptions, only the US and the UK place holds. This reflects both the more hard line position taken by the US and UK towards Iraq and also the resources required to properly scrutinise contracts, which smaller missions do not have.

On 27 March, the UN disclosed actual figures on holds for the first time [Office of the Iraq Programme, "Weekly update for the period 18 to 24 March 2000", 28 March 2000]. Reuters credited the US with \$1.67 billion in held contracts, and the UK with \$140 million, some of them overlapping with those of the US ["US unblocks some Iraq contracts; \$1.67 billion held", 27 March 2000].

The announcement of these figures probably reflects the continuing attempts by some UN staff to influence the behaviour of the US and the UK. This dates back to at least 23 October 1999 when the Secretary-General wrote to the Security Council expressly to remind the Council of his concern "about the growing number of applications placed on hold" [S/1999/1086]. While "some effort ha[d] been made recently ... in lifting holds on drought-related applications ... the number of holds overall continue[d] to increase". In particular, the following sectors were mentioned: telecommunications (100% of Phase V contracts on hold), electricity (65.5%), water and sanitation (53.4%) and oil spare

parts and equipment (43%). The two most common reasons cited for holding a contract were insufficient details (e.g. a contract to sell “pumps” to Iraq) and concerns about end users.

The end user concern is a claim that a contract may have “dual use” capabilities. Security Council Resolution 1051 (1996) established a list of items considered to have “dual use” abilities. This list was to be maintained and updated by Unscm (and now by Unmovic). If the Government of Iraq sought to import contracts containing items on this list, Unscm/Unmovic was required to be notified in addition to the Sanctions Committee. If the contract was approved in spite of its “1051 notifiable” items then Unscm/Unmovic would add the items on the contract to its database and reserve the right to inspect them at will within Iraq. As Unscm/Unmovic has been absent from Iraq since former Unscm Executive Chairman Richard Butler withdrew inspectors before the US/UK bombing in December 1998, the US and the UK argue publicly that they must be more cautious about approving “1051 notifiable” contracts.

One military expert feels that Iraq’s civil power needs are so great that the Government of Iraq will give them a higher priority than “dual use” activities. Nevertheless, this expert feels that the US and the UK are not interested in this sort of sophisticated reasoning, and therefore place blanket holds for political reasons. There are, however, felt to be differences between the approaches of the US and the UK over holds.

The US has allegedly changed the way that it explains its decisions to hold or block contracts. Apparently, while the US used to note that contracts contained “goods notifiable subject to 1051”, they now tend to note that “goods are dual use”. While the former is a technically meaningful statement, the latter is not. This shift in US practice is felt to be intentional, and may reflect a desire to avoid allowing its decisions to be judged against objective benchmarks. In its defence, the US has claimed that Unscm/Unmovic interprets its own 1051 lists too narrowly. Some individuals close to this process feel that the US is now less interested in thinking carefully about Iraq than it was in 1995 - 1996 and that, since the December 1998 bombings, the US strategy has been limited to spoiling tactics.

On the other hand, it is claimed that the UK attempts to adhere closely to the 1051 lists unless it is concerned that the companies involved may be front companies for Iraqi intelligence services or otherwise suspect. This difference in approach has led some British officials to express concern in private about the behaviour of their US counterparts.

When presenting the Secretary-General’s 12 November 1999 report to the Security Council, Executive Director of the Iraq Programme Benon Sevan presented the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation’s estimate that holds had “resulted in ... the loss of as much as 20,000 tons of wheat production. FAO also estimates that delays in the arrival of vaccines have resulted in the loss of around seven million kilogrammes of meat.” The UN Development Programme estimated that “Iraq could potentially achieve a 50 per cent increase in electricity supply if these holds were released”.

In his 10 March report [S/2000/208] the Secretary-General promised the Security Council that the UN Office of the Iraq Programme:

will continue to provide information to the [Sanctions] Committee on the impact of holds on applications in the implementation of the programme with a view to encouraging members of the Committee to lift such holds. [S 105]

In response to this pressure, the US released \$111 million of holds, mostly on humanitarian supplies (including cranes, forklift trucks, car batteries and refrigeration equipment) and oil spare parts. At the same time, the US announced new holds so that, as of 19 April, total holds in the humanitarian and oil sectors had climbed to \$1.72 billion [Associated Press, “U.S. places more holds even as it announces releasing”, 27 March, 2000; Office of the Iraq Programme, “Update for the period 8 to 14 April 2000”, 19 April 2000]. A particularly famous hold released by the US was that placed on a harbour dredger for the port of Umm Qasr, Iraq’s major port of entry. Silt accumulation in the harbour restricted its use, something noted by the Secretary-General in his 12 November 1999 report [S 24] and his 10 March 2000 report [S 72]. Five NGOs attacked the hold in a joint press release on 23 March, causing the US Deputy Representative James Cunningham to announce the next day in the Security Council that the US had released the hold.

The Security Council again discussed holds on 20 April. Benon Sevan encouraged the Council to take this matter seriously and to put in place a mechanism to more speedily address holds. He regretted that previous meetings on the subject had produced “much talk but no result”.

OTHER UN DOCUMENTS

On 12 November 1999, the Secretary-General’s report at the end of Phase VI of “oil for food” was submitted to the Security Council [S/1999/1162]. In South/Central Iraq, it noted a “marked improvement in the timeliness of the submission of applications for the commodities necessary to bolster the nutritional value of the food basket, such as pulses, milk

and cheese” [§ 16]. At the same time, “the caloric value of the food basket, as was the case during previous periods, has fallen short of the Programme targets”, largely due to “under-procurement of some commodities” by the government of Iraq [§ 40]. The government of Iraq had, though, contracted for the first time to purchase all the targeted nutritional goods allowed it under “oil for food” [§ 51]. However, “[f]urther development of the [targeted nutrition] programme will require ... large-scale social mobilization. This would, however, require a cash component, agreement for which has not yet been reached” [§ 52].

In the north of the country, “distribution efficiency rates ... remained lower ... than in the centre and south of the country”, although they had improved [§ 73].

On 14 January, the Secretary-General submitted two reports arising from SCR 1284 to the Security Council. The first, S/2000/22, reported on how the third part of SCR 1284 (on humanitarian provisions without sanctions’ suspension) was being implemented. It updated the Security Council on steps being taken but does not otherwise contain interesting information.

The second report, S/2000/26, responded to a request made in a previous Security Council Resolution to produce a detailed list of spare parts necessary to allow Iraq’s oil industry to meet the oil sales cap of \$5.256 billion per 180 day Phase that Iraq faced prior to SCR 1284. This report, based upon an oil expert’s mission to Iraq, is probably superseded by the mission called for in SCR 1284. That mission is reported on in S/2000/208, which has already been mentioned.

S/2000/208 was submitted on 10 March and covers a wide array of topics in some depth. Its introduction reminds the Council that:

despite the great increase in the range of resources available to meet humanitarian needs throughout Iraq, with a very substantial quantity of inputs to be delivered, the programme was never intended to meet all the humanitarian needs and must be assessed in that context. [§ 10]

The six oil experts who travelled to Iraq in January found that the:

lamentable state of the Iraqi oil industry had not improved [since 1998]. It is apparent that the decline in the condition of all sectors of the industry continues, and is accelerating in some cases. This trend will continue, and the ability of the Iraqi oil

industry to sustain the current reduced production levels will be seriously compromised unless effective action is taken immediately to reverse the situation. [§ 24]

It went on to note that Iraq’s “recent decrease in the production and export of crude oil can be attributed ... the lack of necessary spare parts and equipment” [§ 49]. The Ministry of Oil had therefore decided to reduce production in the interests of safety and oil field husbandry until spare parts arrived.

The government of Iraq had continued to under-purchase proteins for the food basket in the South/Centre of Iraq but reduced the nutritional shortfall by using its own stocks. These disbursements were repaid in kind [§ 125]. While its targeted nutrition programmes seemed slow in starting up the government of Iraq now seemed to be providing them with sufficient support [§ 130]. Although medical supplies were increasing it was of concern that “complementary inputs”, allowing, for example, clean drinking water were also required [§ 135]; the value of sanitation contracts on hold exceeded that of those delivered [§ 148]. Furthermore, the erratic arrival and distribution of drugs “may have contributed to the increase in deaths attributable to cardiac, diabetic, renal and liver disease” [§ 137].

The Secretary-General was pleased by the performance in the agricultural sector and noted that “oil for food” had “helped to slow down the

rate of deterioration of local food production, but [was] not sufficient to increase production at the national level” [§ 144]. The education sector continued to fail to “provide an appropriate teaching and learning environment” [§ 152]. The installation rate of delivered electrical supplies (96%) exceeded that of any other sector but was still unable to prevent network deterioration because of the scale of inputs required and the fact that twice as many goods were on hold as had been delivered. This created emergencies which, in turn, required even more expensive repairs [§ 156]. For most Iraqis, the power was out for between 9 and 18 hours a day [§ 157].

In the north, there had been a “significant drop in acute malnutrition and the decrease in chronic malnutrition” [§ 165]. “Full courses of drug treatment are now being provided for chronic illnesses” but insufficient medicines and medical supplies were being procured, in part because “local health information systems remain largely ineffective in identifying priority requirements” [§ 168]. Agricultural performance was, in some cases, “exceeding the tar-

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gets” set in spite of “[f]requent interference by the local authorities ... [in] certain projects” [§§ 172, 174].

The educational sector was also improving but textbooks were delayed, in part due to “operational deficiencies in the public printing facilities in Baghdad” [§ 181]. The electrical sector was still lagging, in part because of the emergency efforts related to the “drought and the preventive nature of dam rehabilitation” and in part because of the time taken to build an electrical grid and the government of Iraq’s refusal to provide technical details of the existing grid. The “technically most efficient” way to build the north’s electrical supply would be “[r]econnection to the national electricity grid”, requiring a significant expansion of Centre/South generating capacity [§§ 187-188].

In conclusion, S/2000/208 is a wealth of information. At the same time, it has frustrated some UN staff who feel that it has glossed over important details that are known to the UN in Iraq but which have been lost along the way.

THE US POLITICAL SITUATION

As we understand it, US policy makers see themselves as facing a dilemma. On the one hand, they recognise that their policy has inflicted incredible suffering on an entire nation and may cause longer term problems in the Middle East. On the other hand, they are highly publicly committed to this policy and are not being offered a face-saving exit by the Iraqi government.

Their problem, then, may be similar to the one they faced when they realised that their war in Vietnam needed to end. One of the main differences now, though, is that their Iraq policy is not nearly as politically embarrassing or costly at home. As a result, the current administration’s strategy seems to be centred on an attempt to keep Iraq out of the news. One Congressional aide told us that the rumour was that there were to be no front page stories on Iraq until after the elections. Certainly presidential candidates have seemed happy to respect this, with one exception. Pat Buchanan, contesting the candidacy for the Reform Party, spoke to the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington on 16 December 1999. He referred to Denis Halliday’s assessment that:

5,000 Iraqi children die every month from the impact of sanctions on Iraq’s water supply, sanitation, diet, and medical care. The deaths come from dysentery, cholera, and malnutrition, which lowers resistance to other diseases. Halliday holds America, the principal advocate and enforcer of UN Security Council sanctions, responsible for the deaths of 60,000 Iraqi children every year, and of 500,000 since

1991. If his figures are correct, more Iraqi children have been lost in nine years to U.S. sanctions than all the American soldiers killed in combat in all the wars of the 20th century. [Toward a More Moral Foreign Policy]

On 1 February a letter signed by 70 members of the US House of Representatives was submitted to President Clinton. It asked that he “de-link economic sanctions from the military sanctions currently in place against Iraq”, remarking that the sanctions had inflicted suffering on ordinary Iraqis while leaving the regime untouched. It also noted that the “goal of these sanctions, however, seems to have changed” from a disarmament goal to a regime change goal. House Minority Whip David Bonior (D-Michigan) called the sanctions “infanticide masquerading as policy” [Washington Post, “U.S. Looks At Easing Sanctions On Iraq; Pressure Mounts For Increasing Humanitarian Aid”, 25 February 2000].

On 2 March Congressman Conyers (D-Michigan), one of the initiators of the 1 February letter, introduced the “Humanitarian Exports Leading to Peace Act of 2000” to the House of Representatives (HR 3825 IH). It would modify US laws enforcing the 1990 UN sanctions to allow the export, with some restrictions, of:

food or other agricultural products (including fertilizer), medicines, medical supplies, medical instruments, or medical equipment, or with respect to travel incident to the sale or delivery of food or other agricultural products (including fertilizer), medicines, medical supplies, medical instruments, or medical equipment. [section 3]

If passed, Congress would “take all necessary steps to end the suffering of innocent populations, primarily children and the elderly, by allowing the free flow of humanitarian aid to Iraq without threat of prosecution” [section 6].

February’s letter produced a response from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). This began by remarking that “[f]ew world leaders pose more of a potential threat to US and western interests than Saddam Hussein does”. It believed that “[i]f UN sanctions were lifted, funds from Iraqi oil exports would go directly to Saddam Hussein, not the Iraqi people” and therefore urged Clinton “to stand firm in continuing to support the UN sanctions regime until Iraq abides by all relevant Security Council resolutions”. It avoided quoting UN documents and contained simple factual errors. For example, it claimed that the sanctions regime “directs that ninety percent of the revenue gained by Iraq for the export of its oil be spent on providing food, on satisfying the humanitarian needs of the

Iraqi people, and on covering the costs of the inspection regime". In fact, 30% of the revenue generated under "oil for food" is spent on compensation payments, leaving only 70% for the items that they mention. In spite of these errors, 73 representatives had signed it by 24 March.

This willingness to sign a factually incorrect letter that failed to recognise that a dictatorship is not a representative form of government may be explained in part by the comments of Toni Berry, on the Iraq Desk at the U.S. State Department. Speaking on 24 January to US members of Voices in the Wilderness, she is reported to have said that, "Congress would never go along with a change in policy that alleviates suffering as long as Saddam Hussein is still in power".

Independently of these letters, Congressman Tony Hall (D-Ohio) spent five days in Iraq (16 - 20 April) on a trip facilitated by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. While his press release upon his return made clear his belief that "lifting sanctions at this point would be irresponsible" he also felt that "Iraq's people are suffering terribly, and it was heartbreaking to see their pain firsthand. I left Iraq convinced that a great deal more could be done to address its people's humanitarian needs, and I am determined to do all I can to persuade the U.S. Government to take these steps" ["Hall Calls for Smarter U.N. Sanctions that Spare Innocent Iraqis", 24 April 2000].

This momentum may be continuing as a number of Representatives are now asking US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright for a meeting at which Iraq policy can be discussed.

PARLIAMENTS CRITICISE THE SANCTIONS

On 10 February the British House of Commons' Select Committee on International Development published its second report on "The Future of Sanctions". While this examined the use of sanctions in general those on Iraq were given the most attention. It reported that not all of the "humanitarian distress is the direct result of the sanctions regime", noting both a "tendency to blame all such distress on sanctions in the absence of clear evidence" and the willingness of "Saddam Hussein ... to manipulate the sanctions regime and the exemptions scheme to his own ends" [§ 39]. It went on to claim, though, that:

This does not, however, entirely excuse the international community from a part in the suffering of Iraqis. The reasons sanctions were imposed in the first place were precisely the untrustworthiness of Saddam Hussein, his well documented willingness to oppress his own people and neighbours, his contempt for humanitarian law. The international com-

munity cannot condemn Saddam Hussein for such behaviour and then complain that he is not allowing humanitarian exemptions to relieve suffering. What else could be expected? A sanctions regime which relies on the good faith of Saddam Hussein is fundamentally flawed. [§ 40]

The report recommended that, "careful thought must now be given as to how to move from the current impasse without giving succour to Saddam Hussein and his friends" [§ 41]. It concluded by noting that, "[w]e find it difficult, however, to believe that there will be a case in the future where the UN would be justified in imposing comprehensive economic sanctions on a country" [§ 42].

Select Committee reports are usually responded to within two months by the ministries concerned. This deadline has now passed but we have yet to hear of any official response. The House of Lords has also taken a concern in this issue: on 21 March Lord Hooson, a Liberal Democrat, Lord Moynihan, a Conservative, and Lord Islwyn, a Labour peer, all asked clearly informed and pointed questions that recognised the that the sanctions have caused ordinary Iraqis and their failure to "topple Saddam Hussein and his regime".

While these are certainly good signs they do not yet seem to represent a breakthrough. As we understand the situation, the UK's Iraq policy is to support the US policy. Central to this government's perception of its role in the world is its "special relationship" with the US, which it regards as allowing it to intermediate between Europe and the US.

This "special relationship" has been rejuvenated under the current government but is not immune to slight. Britain's moves to normalise ties with Libya after Libya's co-operation in the Lockerbie bombing trial in 1999 have been cited as an important case study. Although the US State Department knew that normalisation with Libya was inevitable it apparently made it very clear that it did not want the UK to be taking a lead in this without Washington's approval. As the US Administration is more publicly committed to its low intensity war against Iraq than it was to its Libya policy, it is felt to regard any challenges to this as much more serious as well.

One lobbyist with almost thirty years of experience says that he has never seen politicians react to an issue as they do to Iraq. He claims that everyone freezes when Iraq is mentioned, even people who have known him as friends for decades. At the same time, he does feel that there is a growing group of parliaments who are becoming increasingly aware of this issue.

The Canadian House of Commons' Standing Com-

mittee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade submitted its own report on report on the sanctions on Iraq on 12 April. It recalled the "actions of the Iraqi regime of Saddam Hussein in the 1980s and early 1990s" and cited the humanitarian and disarmament panel reports to the Security Council (March 1999). It expressed its deep concern that "evidence presented to the Committee that in the past year the humanitarian situation in Iraq has in fact seriously deteriorated" and quoted "certain witnesses" who believed that SCR 1284 "will not, even if implemented, enable Iraq to create the economic conditions necessary for ending the humanitarian crisis." It therefore recommended that Canada restore diplomatic ties with Iraq and:

Notwithstanding the adoption of Security Council Resolution 1284, urgently pursue the "de-linking" of economic from military sanctions with a view to rapidly lifting economic sanctions in order to significantly improve the humanitarian situation of the Iraqi people, while maintaining those aspects of the multilateral embargo necessary to satisfy security requirements and contribute to the overall goal of regional disarmament;

Canada's foreign minister announced that it was providing CDN \$1 million (about US \$680,000) for the refurbishment of Iraqi schools [Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, "Canada Announces Humanitarian Assistance For Iraq", 17 April 2000]. The Iraqi government has refused the donation, but Canada pointed out that it will be given to Unicef for use in Iraq. A week prior to this Canada announced that it was sending a new naval vessel to the Gulf to support the embargo [Department of National Defence, "Defence Minister renews Canada's contribution to the Arabian Gulf, 12 April 2000].

On 13 April the European Parliament passed a resolution on Iraq. It noted that "the Iraqi people are in a tragic situation as a result of the imposition of sanctions" which, "in nine years, have not succeeded in weakening the Iraqi regime, which caused the conflict and bears most of the responsibility for it". It then called on the Security Council to clarify the terms in SCR 1284, and for "the lifting of sanctions [to be] announced as a matter of urgency" while still "exercis[ing] vigilance with regard to the Iraqi regime". It also asked that "attention is drawn to the need to abide by the rules of the UN Charter and that, consequently, military action not authorised by the Security Council is discontinued".

The next week saw the Security Council discussing its use of sanctions throughout the 1990s. Their discussions were centred on "The Sanctions Decade", a report commissioned by the International Peace Academy in New York. New Zealand's Minis-

ter of Foreign Affairs and Trade welcomed the Security Council's proposals for improving sanctions but claimed that "they did not go far enough". He noted that sanctions, "could cause devastating suffering and long-term degradation to civilian populations, far in excess of the damages inflicted by armed conflict and war" and that, when they had been "imposed on authoritarian regimes they often led to manipulation and profiteering by the elite" [New Zealand Government Executive, "New Zealand pushes for change on UN sanctions", 18 April 2000].

One of the common threads in recent parliamentary statements about Iraq is an interest in "smart sanctions" as a means of targeting a government but not a population. The appeal of "smart sanctions" seems to derive from the knowledge that the "un-smart" sanctions on Iraq have caused incredible hardship. Recognition of this is certainly a positive development. Nevertheless, this interest in "smart sanctions" may betray a confusion about the nature of dictatorial regimes: while overseas bank accounts of target governments can be frozen with some work, a dictatorial government is often able to expropriate resources directly from its population. The call of the UK Select Committee on International Development for steps that "move from the current impasse without giving succour to Saddam Hussein and his friends" seems to have failed to grasp the true dilemma facing British and American policymakers: healthier and richer Iraqis means that there is more available for the government of Iraq to take.

NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (NGOS) CRITICISE SANCTIONS

Since our last newsletter Amnesty International (AI), Save the Children Fund UK (SCF), Human Rights Watch (HRW), and other NGOs have become more vocal about the consequences of the sanctions on Iraq. This is an excellent sign as AI and HRW, the world's two best known dedicated human rights organisations, have been hesitant in the past to act on the suffering in Iraq caused by the sanctions.

Since February, AI USA has been promoting a petition noting that signatories are "deeply concerned about the humanitarian situation in Iraq since the imposition of UN economic sanctions". Their Annual General Meeting over 10 -12 March passed a motion which resolved that "some economic measures are a violation of International Humanitarian Law and fall within Amnesty International's mandate" and called upon the "International Executive Committee to write a letter to the UN Security Council and the UN Secretary General calling on the UN to de-link economic measures from military sanctions".

AI UK's AGM passed three Iraq motions on 16

April. The first noted that there was sufficient evidence about suffering resulting from the sanctions from international humanitarian organisations for AI to “express its concern’ and mention the recommendations of other organisations” without any change in their mandate. While AI’s current mandate prevents them from taking a position on “whether or not civil rights are violated by sanctions, blockades and embargoes” they noted that “AI could oppose human rights abuses that arise from sanctions, blockades and embargoes”, without taking a position on these instruments in general. It therefore decided to “campaign urgently on the issue of human rights abuses arising from particular sanctions regimes where there is sufficient evidence from internationally recognised organisations” and to ask the International Executive Committee to “urgently extend” its mandate. This motion passed “overwhelmingly”.

The second motion recognised and supported the positions taken by various UN bodies and supported the petition of AI’s International Secretariat to the Security Council. It decided to circulate the petition to local groups “for action as they see fit” and to publish an article on the effects of the sanctions in AI UK’s Journal. This too passed overwhelmingly.

The third motion supported the US motion.

On 4 January 2000, Human Rights Watch sent a letter to the President of the Security Council and an attached explanatory memorandum. In their letter, HRW wrote that SCR 1284 “by no means addresses the full extent of the crisis” in Iraq. It also noted that, “[r]estoration of the civilian economic infrastructure is essential to returning child mortality rates and other public health indicators to the levels and trajectories that existed prior to the embargo and war”. While recognising the human rights abuses committed by the Iraqi regime, and pointing to its own work in drawing attention to them, the letter nevertheless believed that:

Charges that Iraqi malfeasance and incompetence are entirely responsible for the severity and extent of the humanitarian crisis, moreover, are not credible. The Council should not use the high degree of Iraqi government culpability for the humanitarian crisis to obscure its own share of responsibility. The severe deprivations and widespread pauperization facing the great majority of Iraqis today cannot be dissociated from the unprecedentedly comprehensive and protracted character of the embargo. The Council should not continue the sanctions without substantial modification, in order to address the continuing humanitarian crisis and the inadequacy of the current humanitarian program.

The letter went on to recommend that the Secu-

rity Council:

1. implement all of the recommendations of the UN Humanitarian Panel report “promptly and without condition”, including those not incorporated into SCR 1284;
2. “Restructure the sanctions regime ... by permitting the import of civilian goods and investments in the country’s economy while strengthening prohibitions on imports of a military nature”;
3. “Establish an international criminal tribunal to try Iraqi government officials and former officials”;
4. instruct the Sanctions Committee to “conduct its operations with greater transparency and to monitor closely the humanitarian impact of the sanctions”

On 23 March HRW issued another statement, this time in conjunction with Save the Children Fund UK and four other US organisations (Global Policy Forum, Mennonite Central Committee, Peace Action Education Fund and Quaker United Nations Office). Hanny Megally, HRW’s executive director for the Middle East and North Africa, was quoted as saying that, “the U.S. should stop pretending that the sanctions have nothing to do with the dire public health crisis confronting millions of Iraqis.”

Save the Children Fund UK has been active in Iraq since 1991; its work is currently restricted to Iraqi Kurdistan as the Iraqi government does not allow NGOs active there to work in South/Central Iraq as well. More recently, they have also been engaged in advocacy in the UK on behalf of Iraqi children. On 25 January they issued a position statement on The Impact of Sanctions on the Children of Iraq, in which they stated that:

Nine years of sanctions have deprived a vast number of children of their right to realise their full potential. Both the targeted and sanctioning states have a responsibility to ensure that Iraqi children can grow up in an environment that protects and provides for their physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. The comprehensive economic embargo has severely constrained the Iraqi State’s capacity to exercise its responsibilities for social welfare and prevents Iraqi children from ensuring their rights to a safe and secure future.

They have since issued two press releases and written two letters to editors of daily newspapers criticising the sanctions. SCF has consistently stressed the need to view Iraq’s humanitarian problems from a long term perspective. They have been critical of the “hand-out” approach that has marked it to date, believing that this is, “not only undermining [young Iraqis’] rights, but perpetuating the next generation’s hostility towards the international community” [“Charity calls on UN to remember

Iraq's children", 22 March 2000].

On 29 February, SCF, the Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding (CAABU) and the All-Party Committee for European-Arab Co-operation held a panel discussion for Members of Commons and Lords. The parliamentarians present were primarily not publicly associated with the situation in Iraq. They were particularly concerned with what practical steps they could take to influence this government's policies, given the central role currently given by British foreign policy to a close relationship with the USA.

The Red Cross movement, which is independent of the UN, has also been increasingly vocal about the effects of the sanctions on Iraq. In December 1999 they released a report entitled, "Iraq: a decade of sanctions". It claimed that, "[as] in war, it is civilians who are the prime victims of sanctions" and that

The "oil-for-food" programme, introduced by UN Resolution 986 in 1995, has not halted the collapse of the health system and the deterioration of water supplies, which together pose one of the gravest threats to the health and well-being of the Iraqi civilian population.

MORE UN RESIGNATIONS

On 13 February Hans von Sponeck, Denis Halliday's successor as UN Humanitarian Co-ordinator, announced his resignation, which took effect on 31 March. Since November 1999, von Sponeck had been under public attack from the US State Department. In a 5 November briefing, State Department spokesman James Rubin explained its position:

we do not believe it is appropriate for a UN official, whatever private views he's entitled to have, to challenge the position the United Nations Security Council has taken about the wisdom of the sanctions regime. That decision has been made, and to question it exceeds his competence and authority ... he has issued reports about subjects he knows even less about, which is the effect of civilian casualties throughout Iraq in the no-fly zones... We do not believe that this gentleman deserves to be leading this important effort.

In spite of US attacks on von Sponeck, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan had protected him in November, extending his term until 25 April, rather than complying with Washington and replacing him [Reuters, "U.N. official critical of Iraqi sanctions may leave job in April", 11 February 2000].

Before announcing his resignation, von Sponeck told CNN in an interview that:

As a U.N. official, I should not be expected to be silent to that which I recognize as a true human tragedy that needs to be ended... The very title that I hold as a humanitarian coordinator suggests that I cannot be silent over that which we see here ourselves. [Reuters, "Top UN Official Urges End to Iraq Trade Sanctions", 8 February 2000]

In the same interview, he acknowledged that "oil for food" had done some good but that it did not "guarantee the minimum of that a human being requires which is clearly defined in the universal declaration of human rights". In an interview given on 16 February to Al-Jazeera, the Qatari TV station, he explained:

I do not think it is fair to make the civilian population subject to bargaining... (by) the government of Iraq on the one hand and the other in the Security Council. The real victims are those who walk the streets of Baghdad, Basra and Mosul.

At a 1 March press conference in New York, von Sponeck stated that, "Education is the key concern that I have." Displaying photographs of children sitting on the ground in bare classrooms, he declared, "Here is the new generation of Iraqis prepared for leadership." The sanctions had led, he said, to "an intellectual embargo". He told of how some "parents sent their children out in the morning and refused to allow them to return home until they had earned one and a half dollars for the day". [UN News Centre,

"Press briefing by outgoing Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq"; Agence France Presse, "Iraq suffering 'intellectual embargo' under sanctions: von Sponeck"]

As he prepared to leave Baghdad on 29 March, von Sponeck explained that, "I cannot any longer be associated with a programme that prolongs sufferings of the people and which has no chance to meet even basic needs of the civilian population" [Reuters, "Top UN official leaves Iraq, says programme failed"].

On 15 February Jutta Burghardt, head of the World Food Programme in Iraq, also announced her resignation. While her resignation had initially been described by some in New York as coincidental, she clarified her position by noting that, "I fully support what Mr. von Sponeck is saying." The Wash-

"AS A U.N. OFFICIAL, I SHOULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO BE SILENT TO THAT WHICH I RECOGNIZE AS A TRUE HUMAN TRAGEDY THAT NEEDS TO BE ENDED"

- HANS VON SPONECK, FORMER UN HUMANITARIAN CO-ORDINATOR IN IRAQ

ington Post claimed that the von Sponeck and Burghardt resignations followed their conclusion that SCR 1284 “provided false hope that the suffering of ordinary Iraqis would soon be eased”. [“U.N. Aide Who Quit in Protest Plans Report on Airstrikes on Iraq”, 17 February 2000]. Ms Burghardt has told journalists that she has promised the WFP that she would not speak to them until 1 April.

DROUGHT UPDATE

The drought that began last year has continued. In December 1999, the Associated Press reported that, “More than 1 million sheep were reported to have perished and yields of wheat, barley and other cereals were at least 70 percent lower than expected after too little rain this past year”. Dr. Al Khair Khalaf-Allah of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization in Baghdad added that “The present state is so perilous Absence of rain this year is going to have a catastrophic impact on animals, orchards and vegetable growing areas in addition to other crops” [“Iraqis Pray for Rains”, 2 December 1999].

The ICRC claimed in its 14 December 1999 Special Report that 1999 had been the driest year since 1932, with only two inches of rain falling to date, 5% of the annual average. The report felt that the:

potential consequences for agriculture and drinking water supplies are devastating... The Iraqi water board has no solution to this alarming situation, and UN Resolution 986 [oil for food], which at the best of times provides slow and incomplete solutions to the serious water and sanitation problems in Iraq, does not make provision for such exceptional situations.

By reducing the amount of water in reservoirs the drought has also reduced Iraq’s electrical generation capability. The Secretary General’s 12 November “oil for food” report to the Security Council had indicated that a “list of drought-related applications on hold was prepared and resulted in the release of a number of these applications” [S/1999/1162, § 20] but we have not heard of further Sanctions Committee action in this respect. UN agencies sought to implement emergency responses to the drought, reducing the amount of money available for the rest of “oil for food”.

OIL: SMUGGLING AND THE FUTURES MARKET

The sharp rise in oil prices over the past year has also seen an increase in Iraqi oil smuggling. Selling outside of “oil for food” both allows the Iraqi

government control over proceeds and allows it to avoid the 30% deduction for compensation claims. One of the main means of smuggling oil out of Iraq had been to run vessels along Iranian coastal waters, where they could not be intercepted by the US-led Maritime Interdiction Force. It seems that Iran is taking steps to reduce smuggling through its waters, possibly both to shore up the international price of oil by taking some Iraqi oil off the market and to see whether the US will respond to the conciliatory gesture [Stratfor.com, “Iraqi Oil Smuggling and the U.S. Dilemma”, 13 April 2000].

The government of Iraq may seek to use Syria as an alternative smuggling route; it has opened an interests section in Damascus for the first time in 20 years [Reuters, “Iraq Diplomats Back in Syria After 20 Years”, 26 February 2000]. The UAE and Bahrain are opening embassies in Iraq [Stratfor.com, “Bahrain, UAE Reopen Baghdad Embassies”, 5 April 2000].

Oil may also have given the government of Iraq another means of making money. According to energy industry sources, OPEC officials have often taken positions in the oil futures markets. By betting on the outcomes of the same OPEC meetings that they were attending, this was an easy way to make money. This practice has apparently improved but “oil for food” has made a gift of this to the government of Iraq. As Iraq’s oil sales are now highly politicised, and as Iraq is not part of the OPEC discussions, Iraq’s government is felt to have more ability to influence the price of oil than it has had in the

past. While industry sources are certain that the government of Iraq is using the futures markets to generate revenue for itself, we have been unable to obtain estimates of the quantities of money felt to be involved.

BOMBING CASUALTIES

On 24 March, Russia’s Ambassador to the UN, Sergei Lavrov, claimed in a Security Council debate that:

the United States and Britain, since December 1998, had invaded Iraqi airspace nearly 20,000 times, hitting food warehouses, oil pipeline stations, and last year killing 144 people and wounding 466 others. [Reuters, “Under attack, U.S. defends keeping Iraqi sanctions”]

A source for these data was not mentioned but Lavrov’s figures were not contested. Two weeks later, French foreign ministry spokesperson Anne

“THE UNITED STATES AND BRITAIN, SINCE DECEMBER 1998, HAD INVADDED IRAQI AIRSPACE NEARLY 20,000 TIMES”

- SERGEI LAVROV, RUSSIA’S AMBASSADOR TO THE UN

Gazeau-Secret quoted very similar figures of 175 dead civilians and nearly 500 injured since the start of 1999. These were Iraqi figures. Ms Gazeau-Secret called the bombings “pointless and deadly”; Foreign Minister Védérine has called them “inefficient and cruel” [Agence France Presse, “France alarmed at fatal US-British air-raids on Iraq”, 7 April 2000,].

The Washington Post reported on 17 February that Hans von Sponeck was preparing a final report on the consequences of the bombing. Responding to James Rubin’s criticism that the sources for this information were Iraqi, von Sponeck noted that “U.N. staff workers witnessed 23 of the 99 airstrikes investigated by his

office. He said he personally witnessed three attacks” [Washington Post, “U.N. Aide Who Quit in Protest Plans Report on Airstrikes on Iraq”].

In the original 24 March debate Kofi Annan said that he hesitated to speculate on “whether Iraq would cooperate more or better [with weapons inspectors] the moment the bombing stops. But I don’t think the bombing helps” [Reuters, “Annan says bombing doesn’t make Iraq cooperate”, 24 March 2000]. China has called on the US and the UK “to cancel the no-fly zones over Iraq and stop military actions against the country” [Agence France Presse, “China urges US, Britain to cancel Iraqi no-fly zones”, 7 April 2000].

Private reports suggest that, as in the case of holds placed on contracts, the UK may be attempting to rein in the US. It is felt that the RAF encourages USAF to remove ‘borderline’ targets from its approved target lists. It has been suggested that USAF pilots on patrol will often claim that “the wire has been tripped”, the prelude to bombing, when RAF pilots have detected no threat.

NATIONAL NEWS

The National Petition launched in August of last year, coinciding with the ninth anniversary of the sanctions’ imposition, was handed in to Downing Street in November with 16,000 signatures. This was less than had been hoped for, a performance that some felt reflected the relatively short period of time over which signatures were collected. Thanks are due to all who collected signatures (and who continue to send in copies of the petition!), and especially to the New Internationalist magazine for distributing copies of it.

On 3 February the Foreign and Commonwealth Office held a day of seminars on Iraq. Three of their core Iraq staff are leaving this year for other positions in what seems to be a routine transfer.

On 6 March Carlton TV screened “Paying the Price:

The Killing Of The Children Of Iraq”, a hard-hitting documentary by John Pilger, Denis Halliday and Felicity Arbuthnot. Aired at prime time, it reached a considerable audience and contributed to debate in the British, Irish and European parliaments and press. It has also generated interest and positive reviews in the United States. We expect that this documentary represents a significant step forward in public awareness about the situation in Iraq. Copies of the film can be ordered from Carlton at 020 7 486 6688, 25 Knightsbridge, London SW1X 7RZ.

As we write, the sixth delegation of Voices in the Wilderness UK is making its way to Baghdad. They are taking with them medicines and educational supplies with an export permit. As on previous trips, they have announced to 10 Downing Street their intent to break British law by doing this. 10 Downing Street has again not responded.

On Saturday 6 May, the Mariam Appeal is holding a “Day and Night for the People of Iraq” in Kensington Town Hall, London as a fund-raising event. In addition to guest speakers Denis Halliday and Hans von Sponeck it will feature various workshops, video showings and an evening ‘oud performance by Naseer Shemma. Tickets for the day only are £7.50 (£5 concessions for OAPs, unemployed, etc) while those for the night alone are £25 (£17.50). Combined tickets cost £30 (£20). For more information, contact Tricia Meehan at 020 7 872 5451.

AFTERWORD

If you are wondering how you can get more involved in campaigning for a lifting of the non-military sanctions on Iraq, please get in touch with us. We are always happy to discuss ideas or point you to groups in your area.

Financially, CASI now has about £800 in our bank account. We are always happy to send newsletters to anyone who is interested, and are fortunate to be able to afford this. If, though, you wished to help with their distribution and do not mind receiving them by e-mail, please let us know: this will reduce our expenses somewhat. Otherwise, if there is not an [M] (for Member) on the address label on this envelope, we would also encourage you to consider membership. Lifetime membership costs £5.00; we are happy to accept larger donations. Upon disbanding, all CASI funds will be donated to a charity working in Iraq.

The CASI website is at <http://www.elcome.to/casi> CASI can be reached by email at soc-casi@lists.cam.ac.uk, by fax on 0870 063 5022, by telephone on 0468 056 984 or by post at CASI, c/o Yousef Ghazi-Tabatabai, Trinity College, Cambridge CB2 1TQ, UK.

COMING SOON: PROCEEDINGS OF THE CASI CONFERENCE

ANDREA BRADY AND ELIZA HILTON

On 13–14 November 1999, over 150 delegates from five countries arrived in Cambridge to attend a conference entitled ‘Sanctions on Iraq: Background, Consequences and Strategies’. Eighteen speakers from four countries – including prominent historians, diplomats, public health specialists, anthropologists, journalists, activists and Iraqi citizens – chronicled Iraq’s manifold suffering under the sanctions regime. In session after session, the audience contributed their challenges, questions, private reflections and professional experiences. The result was an impassioned debate. While the whole dynamic of this dialogue cannot be reproduced in print, the Proceedings will offer the speeches that launched it.

The texts of the Proceedings were edited with their authors’ help from transcribed recordings. They invite readers to engage critically with this narrative of disaster. For the many possible ‘narratives’, as Eric Herring points out, deserve our most alert and critical attention. The official narratives of containment and relief which justify governmental positions are beginning to be questioned: few may now believe that sanctions effectively ‘contain’ Saddam Hussein’s weapons development programme with minimal human suffering. But who can provide a more reliable account of the impact of sanctions on the state of Iraq, from public health to weapons of mass destruction to family and social ties? And how can we validate that account, except by comparison with other viewpoints?

These Proceedings offer a variety of viewpoints, sometimes conflicting and often mutually elaborating, which reflect the contradictions inherent in the official line. Although Ivor Lucas paints a damning portrait of Saddam Hussein, he disassociates sanctions from Hussein’s personal rule. George Joffé questions the conventional wisdom on the relation between British and American policy in the Gulf and access to oil; Chris Doyle deconstructs the ambivalent relationship between Iraq, the Middle East, and the West; Hugh Macdonald disentangles the accusations and the facts of Iraq’s weapons programmes.

Some of the speakers draw our attention to the silent costs of sanctions: Nadjé Al-Ali sows some seeds of optimism in the creativity and endurance of women, but surveys the moral and social impact of hardship on Iraqi families. Nikki van der Gaag recalls the wasted artistic and archaeological treasures of Iraq; Harriet Griffin reflects on the life of Iraqi refugees. Emad Salman and Felicity Arbuthnot, provide compelling personal testimony to the dolorous conditions of life in Iraq.

Most of the speakers undermine British and American governmental doctrine on the validity of sanctions, but perhaps none more powerfully than Richard Garfield. Garfield negotiates ambiguous public health data to substantiate the human cost of sanc-

tions: Iraq is the only instance of a sustained increase in mortality outside of war, famine or genocide in a population of more than 2 million in the past two hundred years. Later, Doug Rokke unveils an environmental and medical catastrophe with a 4 billion year half-life – one for which Iraq, its hospitals and infrastructure eviscerated by sanctions, is now completely unprepared. The shocking consequences of the use of Depleted Uranium munitions he exposes are matched only by the chilling and continued indifference of the US and British governments.

The courageous work of activists and humanitarians is also profiled here. Representatives of Save the Children (UK) Rita Bhatia and Andrea Ledward outline the operational constraints, challenges and potential victories of humanitarian groups working on the ground in Iraq and in the halls of power. From another perspective, Milan Rai offers a brief history of activism on Iraq’s behalf.

The informative speeches by the defenders and framers of governmental narrative (Jon Davies for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Anis Nacrou for the French Embassy) were given off-the-record; they have elected to prepare statements instead.

The Proceedings do not impose one particular conclusion on these varied presentations. However, a few certainties can be said to have emerged over those two November days: that the failure to incorporate an evaluation component into sanctions provisions has been exceptional and disastrous, preventing humanitarian agencies from obtaining vital data to shape their programmes; that mechanisms to trigger the end of sanctions are complex and political; that the logic of linking compliance in weapons inspections with suspension of sanctions is incomplete; and that the sanctions regime is largely dictated by the will of Washington.

We hope that the Proceedings, like the conference that inspired them, extend the community of people actively campaigning for the end of sanctions in Iraq. But however they are read or used by activists, humanitarians, students, policy makers, the interested, the curious, or the concerned, we are privileged to have joined in the chorus of Iraq’s 22 million suffering people. Like them, we wish to give witness to this unspeakable tragedy.

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