

The Illusion of Iraqi Sovereignty

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The great film director Jean Renoir produced possibly the finest anti-war film of all time in 1937 called "The Grand Illusion." In it, two French prisoners of war escaped a German POW camp in World War I. They trekked toward Switzerland, a neutral country. The Germans almost caught them, they crossed the Swiss border, at which time the Germans put down their guns. The French were free — temporarily. One asked the other, "What will happen now?" The answer was, "We'll go back to our unit in France and then be ordered back to action." The questioner then queried, "Wouldn't it be nice if there was no war?" His comrade quickly asked, "What are you? An illusionist?" Hence the name for the movie.

Today, if one mentions the U.S. government propaganda statement that Iraq will regain its sovereignty on June 30 of this year, the question "What are you, an illusionist?" will be an apt reply.

Bush has repeatedly stated that the U.S. invasion of Iraq was for liberation. "We will stay in Iraq not one more minute than necessary," he constantly tells the world. If that were true, the U.S. forces should have been out of the country a long time ago. No weapons of mass destruction were found and the former Iraqi government was toppled, albeit illegally. Anyone who believes Bush's tape-recorded response is either naïve to the point of numbness, or a total fool.

On June 30, 2004, the U.S. states that the appointed Iraqi government (many of whom had never been to Iraq prior to 2003) would take charge. Let's look at the particulars, however.

First of all, the U.S. retains the rights to Iraqi oil. Next, the new Iraqi military will be under the command of the U.S. And, finally, the largest embassy in the world will open in Baghdad: a monstrosity staffed with thousands of people, many spies and counter-insurgency personnel.

The new Iraqi government has been told that it, and its successors will have to consult with the U.S. embassy on all decisions except in matters such as the issuing of marriage licenses or assessing traffic fines. No decision of any merit will be made without the okay of the embassy. If the Iraqis find this too constricting, all they have to do is look around and see some of the more than 100,000 American troops that will be in the country indefinitely, as well as thousands of "civilian contractors," many of whom are paid mercenaries, soldiers of fortune.

Bremer has already appointed lackeys to posts that even the new Iraqi government can not change. These appointments are on the books for years, possibly decades.

Let's look at the new ambassador to Iraq. He is the current U.S. ambassador to the U.N., John Negroponte, another right wing nut who was resurrected from the rubble of wackos that Bush tapped for his advisors and Cabinet members after his own appointment to the presidency.

Negroponte earned his stripes while he was the ambassador to Honduras from 1981 to 1985. In his position, he played an instrumental role in the U.S. support of the Contra death squads in Nicaragua. Negroponte also strengthened the military leadership of General Gustavo Alvarez Martinez in Honduras.

In 1982, the Honduran press ran 318 stories of murders and kidnappings by the Honduran military. In 1995, Baltimore Sun reporters Gary Cohn and Ginger Thompson detailed the

activities of a secret CIA-trained army unit, Battalion 316, that used, according to the reporters, "shock and suffocation devices in interrogations. Prisoners were kept naked and, when no longer useful, killed and buried in unmarked graves."

A former official who served under Negroponte, Rick Chidester, maintains he was ordered to remove all mention of torture and executions from the draft of his 1982 report in the human rights situation in Honduras. During Negroponte's stint as ambassador, U.S. military aid to Honduras escalated from \$3.9 million to over \$77 million.

During Senate hearings in 2001, Negroponte testified that he did not believe the abuses were a deliberate part of Honduran government policy. He said, "To this day, I do not believe that death squads were operating in Honduras."

When Bush announced the recent appointment for Negroponte as ambassador to Iraq, he described Negroponte as "a man of enormous experience and skill who has done a really good job of speaking for the United States to the world about our intentions to spread freedom and peace."

Bush is very comfortable with the murky characters he has around him. Negroponte is ideal for the neocons. They admire Bush because he is so intellectually lame that he gives these sub-human entities the power to do anything they want without his intervention.

In the past couple of weeks, even some of the U.S.-appointed Iraq stooges have finally caught on to what is really occurring. Their complaints have been strongly squashed and in such a manner that they know better than to issue future protests. The fait accompli is in hand.

Saddam Hussein's Ba'ath Socialist government was not middle of the road. In the Arab world, Saddam was either the savior of the Arab people or the devil who needed to be deposed. However, the Iraqi Ba'athist government represented a true sovereign Iraq. No U.S. military stationed on Iraqi soil; no ownership of Iraqi oil by the U.S.; and no U.S. ambassador to okay government decisions.

In their wildest dreams, I doubt the Iraqis who opposed Saddam would have thought that with his demise would come decades of serfdom. And, with all the dirty-trick elements in place, the new "sovereign" Iraq — the grand illusion — will make Saddam's Iraq look like Disneyland.