
News and Abstracts

Anatomy of a Dictatorship - Part III

Although the title of *The Bush Agenda, Invading the World, One Economy at a Time* (2006) bears the current President's name, the broad scope of that agenda, like the content of this very readable book, neither began with nor will it end with the Bush administration. Yet, in a mere 300 pages author Antonia Juhasz recounts the origins of that agenda---a corporate controlled world--from Bretton Woods in 1944 all the way through to the WTO, NAFTA, CAFTA and (no surprise) MEFTA.

Short histories of four prominent corporate players (Bechtel, Chevron, Halliburton and Lockheed Martin) and of some of their principal officers and directors (Cheney, Rice, Rumsfeld and Schultz) provide a gaudy backdrop to the devastating results of 'free trade' in resource-rich but power-poor countries.

"It needn't be so", says the author, and her book contains suggestions for change that are well worth consideration. In this article we take a third and final look at what that catastrophic agenda has wrought in Iraq.

Contrary to the Hague Convention's dictates and the provisions of the U.S. Army's Law of Land Warfare, the U.S. government swept away Iraq's existing Constitution and imposed a new set of laws. This maneuver was publicized as a positive development because of the previous regime's notorious brutality. The intention and the results, however, are proving to be far from benign.

In previous articles our series has noted the deleterious effect on daily life of Iraqis living under several of the 100 Orders issued under the U.S.-controlled Coalition Provisional Authority. Of all the Orders, however, Order #39 stands out as the most far-reaching. Why? Because of two words: *foreign investment*. Having failed to achieve their goals at WTO meetings in Seattle (1999), Cancun (2003), and Hong Kong (2005), and bruised by serious push-back on NAFTA, those operating on behalf of transnational corporate interests at last found nirvana in Iraq with a simple stroke of a pen by Bush's man in Baghdad, L. Paul Bremer III.

Under Order #39,

- (1) all 192 of Iraq's state-owned enterprises, with the exception of oil, are subject to privatization,
- (2) Iraqi businesses may become 100% foreign-owned,
- (3) all preferential treatments heretofore enjoyed by Iraqi-owned businesses are lost,

(4) foreign investors can remove all funds and profits from the country TAX-FREE,

(5) foreign entities may obtain 40-year leases, with unlimited renewal options, over land and buildings that remain restricted to Iraqi ownership, and

(6) legal disputes can be resolved in international tribunals, thus avoiding Iraqi courts altogether.

Juhasz comments: "More than any other Order, [#39] fully embodies the Bush Agenda in Iraq; the creation of a U.S. corporate haven that will act as a model and jumping-off point for the rest of the region".

Early consequences of this drastic rewrite of Iraqi life have been the utter failure of re-electrification, of road and building reconstruction, of resumption of water and sewage services, and the re-opening of schools and hospitals.

One wonders if the U.S. Government thought the Iraqis wouldn't notice this betrayal. But notice they did. Today, the world sees images of rage, fear and partisanship in Iraq. What the mass media neglect to tell us is that these images and stories are the fruits of years of U.S. empire at work.

To learn how this has transpired, both in Iraq and in other countries around the world, we recommend you read this interesting and challenging book.

Thoughts on Resistance

"A lot of my resistance seems to come out of the sense of refusing to live in fear. I think our culture is so enmeshed in fear and the media and the government are so into fearmongering that one thing I try to be constantly mindful of is that fear is useless. It's not that you can't be afraid. I mean we're all afraid sometimes. So it's not that you can't be afraid, but you can't let your fear debilitate you from doing what we really need to do."

Jackie Allen-Ducot, who participated in the Griffiss Plowshares Action in 1993 when she was twenty. She now lives with her family in a Catholic Worker house in Hartford, Connecticut.
