
Previously Engineered "Regime Changes" in Iraq

By Helen Shooter

Britain set up Iraq in 1922. The area had been three separate provinces — Basra, Baghdad and Mosul — of the Ottoman Empire run from Turkey. Britain's rulers wanted the territory after oil reserves were discovered there in the late 19th century. The Anglo-Persian oil company had drilling rights across 500,000 square miles in the region.

Britain seized its chance during World War I to occupy Basra and Baghdad. The allied powers defeated Turkey alongside Germany. As Lord Curzon, the British foreign secretary, said, "The allies floated to victory on a wave of oil."

He said he wanted the Persian Gulf to become a "British lake." Britain and France drew up a secret deal in 1916, the Sykes-Picot Treaty, in which they agreed to divide the Arab territories among themselves. The Bolshevik revolutionary government in Russia revealed it in 1917. It showed that Britain and France had no intention of granting the Arabs' hope for independence.

This was despite the call Britain had made during the war for the Arabs to revolt against the Turks. The British military moved quickly to subdue Iraq. The RAF bombed Kurdish areas in northern Iraq in 1919 and 1920 where there were uprisings against British rule.

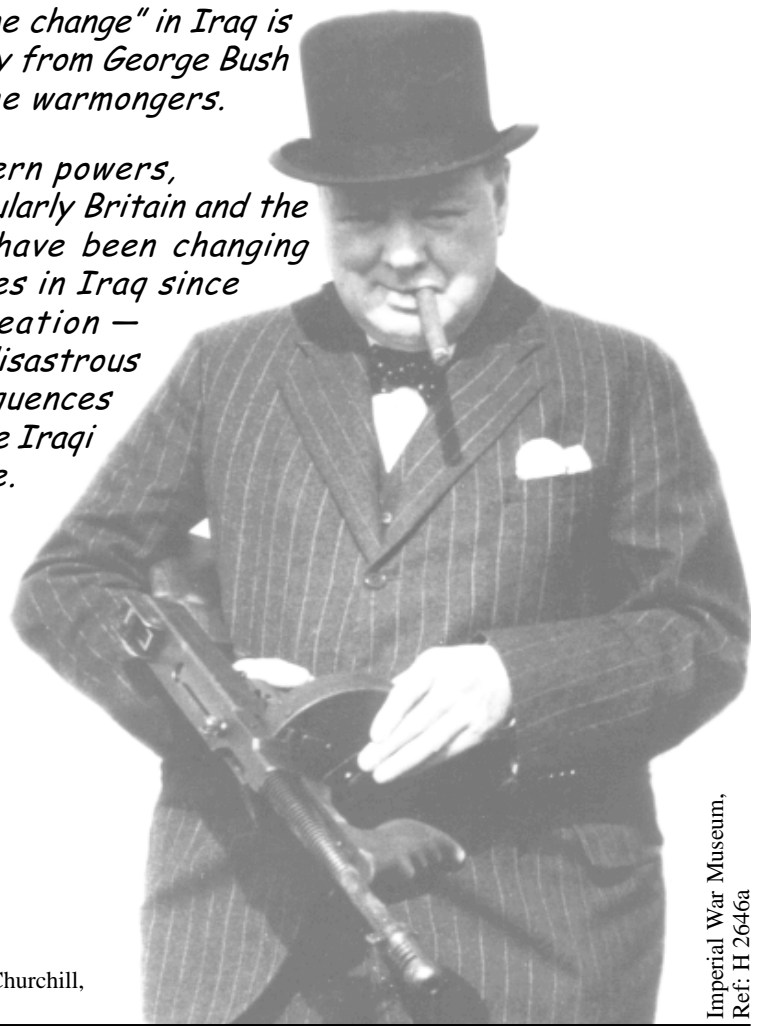
Arthur "Bomber" Harris said, "The Arab and the Kurd now know what real bombing means in casualties and damage. Within 45 minutes a full-size village can be practically wiped out and a third of its inhabitants killed or injured."

The League of Nations, the forerunner to the UN, allowed Britain and France to carve the Middle East up. Britain got a mandate to run Iraq (now made up of all three provinces) and Palestine in 1920.

It drew up the borders creating Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in 1922. The main aim in creating Kuwait was to prevent the new Iraq from having access to the Persian Gulf — this could have allowed it to threaten British dominance. Britain then manoeuvred

"Regime change" in Iraq is the cry from George Bush and the warmongers.

Western powers, particularly Britain and the U.S., have been changing regimes in Iraq since its creation — with disastrous consequences for the Iraqi people.



Imperial War Museum,
Ref: H 2646a

Winston Churchill,
July 1940

The new Middle East department of Britain's Colonial Office, headed by Winston Churchill, decided to install Emir Faisal ibn Hussain as king of Iraq. Faisal had not set foot in Iraq before he was made king in 1921.

to install a ruler in Iraq whom it could rely on. A Foreign Office official said: "What is wanted is a king who will be content to reign but not govern."

The new Middle East department of the Colonial Office, headed by Winston Churchill, decided to install Emir Faisal ibn Hussain as king of Iraq. Faisal had not set foot in Iraq before he was made king in 1921. British administrators ensured laws were passed to favour the ruling class of large landowners who came from the minority Sunni population. They rigged elections to the puppet parliament.

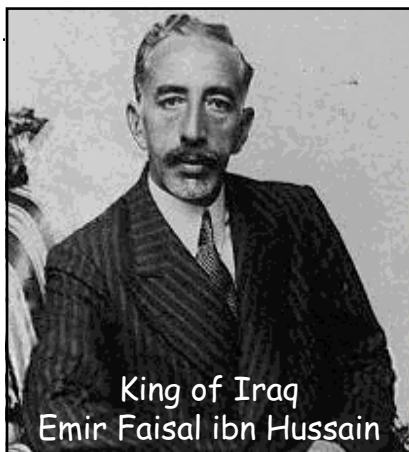
Britain and the U.S. formed the Iraqi Petroleum Company, which got the right to drill in every part of the old Ottoman Empire in 1928.

Britain's Legacy

King Faisal was under constant pressure from ordinary people, who hated British rule.

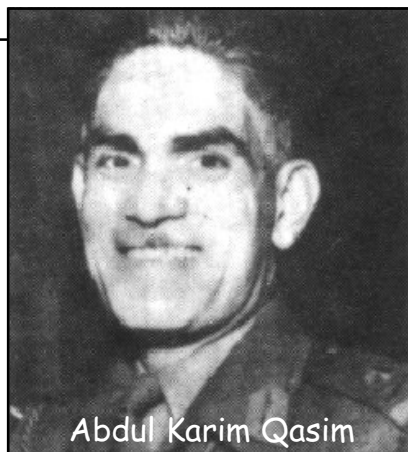
Britain finally granted Iraq independence in 1932, after a wave of strikes and protests. The British High Commission admitted the situation "reveals surprising lack of support for the present government, and unpopularity of King Faisal. Republican cries have been openly raised in the streets." But Britain retained a stranglehold on power in Iraq, keeping control over oil and maintaining air bases.

Even most of Iraq's upper classes were excluded from power. There were repeated coup attempts. Each faction that seized power used the British-equipped and British-trained



King of Iraq
Emir Faisal ibn Hussain

A British colonial official said: "What is wanted is a king who will be content to reign but not govern." For 42 years, this man - and his progeny - gave Britain the monarchy they wanted.



Abdul Karim Qasim

This popular leftist leader ended Faisal's dynasty in 1958. He began to nationalize foreign-owned oil companies but was assassinated during a CIA-coordinated coup in 1963.



Saddam Hussein

Saddam fled Iraq to Egypt after his failed attempt to kill Qasim in 1959. After the 1963 "regime change," he returned to lead the Ba'ath government's Intelligence Organization.

army to crush opposition. Iraq's rulers were prepared to use that force against workers and to defend British oil interests. Some 5,000 workers went on strike in the Iraqi Petroleum Company for higher wages.

The strike united workers across ethnic and religious lines. The government sent in mounted police who killed ten workers at a mass meeting. After World War II, Britain withdrew its troops, deciding to rely on puppet rulers to defend its oil interests.

Popular unrest and strikes grew throughout the country as the gap between rich and poor widened. The cost of living increased fivefold between 1939 and 1957. Some 80% of the population were illiterate in 1958. The pro-British monarchy in Iraq was a bulwark against radical change in the Middle East.

It was at the centre of opposing the radical movement of Gamal Abdul Nasser, which overthrew the British-backed monarchy in Egypt in 1952 and which preached radical change uniting all Arabs against imperialism. The Baghdad Pact in 1953 was a NATO-sponsored agreement among states in the region, led by Iraq, to contain Nasserism.

The rulers of Britain and France panicked when they failed to stop Nasser from nationalising the Suez Canal in 1956. The "Suez crisis" provoked a wave of anti-British agitation throughout the region. The Iraqi monarchy fell in 1958 to a military revolt led by Abdul Karim Qasim.

Qasim made popular promises of land reform and negotiations for a greater share of the oil wealth. Britain sent troops to neighbouring Jordan. The U.S. sent troops to Lebanon.

How the U.S. and Britain Backed Saddam

They were desperate to crush the Qasim government and turned to the Ba'ath Party (which Saddam Hussein now leads) to spearhead right-wing resistance in Iraq.

Saddam Hussein first gained notoriety when he attempted to assassinate Qasim in 1959.

After the Ba'ath Party seized power from Qasim their national guard attacked working class areas and murdered thousands of Communists and trade union militants. Although the Ba'ath Party was booted out by its former allies in the military after just six months, it seized power again in 1968. Western oil companies offered their cooperation to the new rulers.

The Ba'athist regime posed as anti-imperialist, but it did not champion the cause of the Palestinians. In 1970, King Hussein of Jordan launched his Black September assault on Palestinians in his country. There were 15,000 Iraqi troops in Jordan. They did nothing to help the Palestinians who were butchered.

The Iraqi regime courted support from both superpowers. In the early 1970s, the U.S. relied on Israel, Saudi Arabia and the pro-Western Shah of Iran as its principal allies in

the Middle East. The Shah, with U.S. backing, armed Kurdish rebels in Iraq, while putting down his own Kurdish population.

Iraq and Iran signed a treaty in 1975. Saddam Hussein put down the Kurdish insurgency without a murmur from the West, and consolidated power in 1978. The U.S. swung firmly behind him when the Shah was overthrown in 1979. Saddam Hussein went to war with Iran in 1980, with Western support. The U.S. was terrified by the Iranian Revolution. The bloody eight-year war saw Saddam use poison gas against Iranian troops and Kurdish civilians. There was no outcry from Western governments.

At the end of the war John Kelly, the U.S. assistant secretary of state, visited Baghdad to tell Saddam Hussein, "You are a force for moderation in the region, and the U.S. wants to broaden her relationship with Iraq." Saddam was so confident of support from the U.S. that he believed he had its agreement to invade Kuwait in 1990.

But that risked upsetting Western interests in the Middle East. So the U.S. turned against him. The U.S. and Britain have helped create every oppressive regime in Iraq and orchestrated the removal of the one government that had some popularity. We should not let them interfere today.

Source: *Socialist Worker* (London, UK), August 24, 2002. <www.socialistworker.co.uk/1814/sw181410.htm>

Iraq: A Century of War and Rebellion

Since Iraq was created, the working class in the area suffered brutal exploitation and repression at the hands of rival ruling class groups competing for power. As if dealing with these home-grown gangsters wasn't enough, they have also faced the bullets and bombs of the global capitalist powers (especially Britain and the U.S.) seeking to control the oil wealth of this part of the world.

Meanwhile, opposition political organisations such as the Iraqi Communist Party and the Kurdish Democratic Party have consistently made deals with Iraqi regimes and the glo-

bal powers at the expense of those who they claimed to be leading in resistance. Despite all this, the working class has shown itself a force to be reckoned with, toppling governments and sabotaging war efforts. This brief chronology charts some key moments in a century of war and rebellion.

1900

Since the sixteenth century the area was part of the Turkish-based Ottoman Empire. The Empire's rule is based in the cities; the countryside is dominated by rural tribal groups, some nomadic.

1912

Turkish Petroleum Company formed by British, Dutch and German interests acquires concessions to prospect for oil in the Ottoman provinces of Baghdad and Mosul.

1914-1918

Turkey sides with Germany in World War I. To protect its strategic interests and potential oil fields, Britain occupies Basra in November 1914, eventually capturing Baghdad in 1917. By the end of the war, most provinces of Iraq are occupied by British forces although some areas remain "unpacified." Co-

The British Use of Chemical Weapons in Iraq

By Geoff Simons, author of *The Scourging of Iraq: Sanctions and Iraq, Primus Inter Pariah: A Crisis Chronology 1997-1998* (1999).

Winston Churchill, as the British colonial secretary, was sensitive to the cost of policing the Empire. He was, in consequence, keen to exploit the potential of modern technology. This strategy had particular relevance to operations in Iraq. On February 19, 1920, before the start of the Arab uprising, Churchill (then Secretary for War and Air) wrote to Sir Hugh Trenchard, the pioneer of air warfare. Would it be possible for Trenchard to take control of Iraq? This would entail "the provision of some kind of asphyxiating bombs calculated to cause disablement of some kind but not death...for use in preliminary operations against turbulent tribes."

Churchill was in no doubt that gas could be profitably employed against the Kurds and Iraqis (as well as against other peoples in the Empire): "I do not understand this squeamishness about the use of gas. I am strongly in favour of using poison gas against uncivilised tribes." Henry Wilson shared Churchill's enthusiasm for gas as an instrument of colonial control but the British cabinet was reluctant to sanction the use of a weapon that had caused such misery and revulsion dur-

ing WWI. Churchill himself was keen to argue that gas, fired from ground-based guns or dropped from aircraft, would cause "only discomfort or illness, but not death" to dissident tribespeople.

His optimistic views were mistaken. It was likely that the suggested gas would permanently damage eyesight and "kill children and sickly persons, more especially as the people against whom we intend to use it have

Iraq and Kurdistan were also useful laboratories for new weapons; devices specifically developed by the Air Ministry for use against tribal villages.

"I am strongly in favour of using poison gas against uncivilised tribes."

**Winston Churchill,
British Secretary for War and Air**

no medical knowledge with which to supply antidotes."

Churchill remained unimpressed by such considerations, arguing that the use of gas, a "scientific expedient," should not be prevented "by the prejudices of those who do not think clearly." Gas was used against the Iraqi rebels "with excellent moral effect," but not from aircraft, due to practical difficulties.

In 1993, there were still Iraqis and Kurds who remembered being bombed and machine-gunned by Britain's Royal Air Force (RAF) in the 1920s. A Kurd from the Korak moun-

tains commented, 70 years after the event: "They were bombing here in the Kaniya Khoran. Sometimes they raided three times a day." Wing Commander Lewis, then of 30 Squadron (RAF), Iraq, recalls how quite often "one would get a signal that a certain Kurdish village would have to be bombed," the RAF pilots being ordered to bomb any Kurd who looked hostile. Squadron-Leader Kendal of 30 Squadron recalls that if the tribespeople were doing something they ought not be doing then you shot them.

Wing-Commander Gale, also of 30 Squadron, said: "If the Kurds hadn't learned by our example to behave themselves in a civilised way, we had to spank their bottoms. This was done by bombs and guns."

It was an easy matter to bomb and machine-gun the tribespeople, because they had

no means of defence or retaliation. Iraq and Kurdistan were also useful laboratories for new weapons; devices specifically developed by the Air Ministry for use against tribal villages. The ministry drew up a list of possible weapons, some were the forerunners of napalm and air-to-ground missiles: Phosphorus bombs, war rockets, metal crowsfeet [to maim livestock], man-killing shrapnel, liquid fire and delay-action bombs. Many of these weapons were first used in Kurdistan.

Source: Excerpt from *Iraq: From Sumer to Saddam*, 1994, pp. 179-181.

lonial direct rule is established in "British Mesopotamia," with the top levels of the administration in British hands.

1919-1920

There are constant risings in northern Iraq, with British military officers and officials being killed. Tribes in this area share a common Kurdish language and culture, but at this stage there is little demand for a separate Kurdish nation state. The issue is rather resistance to any external state authority.

Britain's Royal Air Force (RAF) bombs Kurdish areas.

Colonel Gerald Leachman, a leading British officer declares that the only way to deal with the tribes is "whole-sale slaughter." The RAF Middle Eastern Command request chemical weapons to use "against recalcitrant Arabs as [an] experiment."

1920

In the post-war carve up of the spoils of conquest between the victorious imperialist powers, Britain gets Iraq and Palestine, France gets Syria and Lebanon. The borders of Iraq are set by the great powers, setting the scene for a century of border conflicts (e.g. the Iran/Iraq war).

The British authorities impose tight controls, collecting taxes more rigorously than their predecessors and operating forced labour schemes. In June 1920, an armed revolt against British rule ("the Revolution of 1920") spreads across southern and central Iraq. For three months Britain loses control of large areas. British military posts are overrun, and 450 British troops are killed and 1500 injured.

1921

By February, the rebellion is crushed, with 9,000 rebels killed or wounded by British forces. Whole villages are destroyed by British artillery. Suspected rebels are shot without trial. The RAF plays a major role. This is shown by one report of "an air raid in which men, women and children had been machine gunned as they fled."

Britain decides to replace direct colonial rule with an Arab administration to serve British interests. Britain creates a monarchy with Faisal as Iraq's first King. Although senior positions are filled by Iraqis, ultimate control remains with British 'advisers.'

1924

Britain's Labour Government sanctions RAF use of bombs and gas against the Kurds. The effects are described by Lord Thompson as "appalling" with panic stricken tribespeople fleeing "into the desert where hundreds more must have perished of thirst."

1927

The British-controlled Iraq Petroleum Co. opens its first substantial oil well, north of Kirkuk. Tons of oil decimate the local countryside before the well is capped.

1930

The Anglo-Iraq Treaty paves the way for independence. However, the Treaty allows Britain to maintain two air bases and for British influence on Iraq's foreign policy until 1957. In negotiations, the British government contends that Kuwait "is a small expendable state which could be sacrificed without too much concern if the power struggles of the period demanded it."

Kurdish uprisings, prompted by fears of their place in the new state, are put down with the help of the RAF.

1931

General strike against new law which imposes draconian taxes (three times heavier than before) and for unemployment compensation. Thousands of workers and artisans, including 3,000 petroleum workers, take part. There are clashes with the police. The RAF flies over urban centres to intimidate strikers and their supporters.

1932

Iraq joins the League of Nations, becoming formally independent, although Britain remains a powerful influence.

1933

The Artisans Association (a union), organises a month-long boycott of the British-owned Baghdad Electric Light and Power Company. Unions and workers' organisations are then banned and forced underground for ten years with their leaders imprisoned.

King Faisal dies and is succeeded by his son Ghazi.

1934

Iraq Petroleum Co. begins commercial export of oil from the Kirkuk fields.

1935-1936

Sporadic tribal rebellions, mainly in southern Iraq are caused by government attempts to introduce conscription, the dispossession of peasants when tribally-owned lands are privatized and the decreasing power of tribal leaders. Revolts are crushed by air force bombing and summary executions.

1936-1937

General Bakr Sidqi, an admirer of Mussolini, installs a military government and represses the left. There are strikes throughout Iraq, including the Iraq Petroleum Co. (Kirkuk) and National Cigarette Factory (Baghdad).

1939

King Ghazi is killed in a car crash. Many Iraqis believe that there has been a conspiracy, as the King had become outspokenly anti-British. During an angry demonstration in Mosul, the British Consul is killed.

1940

Rashid Ali becomes Prime Minister after a coup, at the expense of pro-British politicians. The new government takes neutral position in World War II, refusing to support Britain unless it grants independence to Syria and Palestine. Links are established with the German government.

1941

British troops land at Basra. The Iraqi government demands that they leave. Britain reinvades Iraq and after the '30 days war' restores its supporters to power. During the occupation, martial law is declared. Arab nationalist leaders are hanged or imprisoned and 1,000 are interned without trial. British forces do not intervene when Rashid supporters kill 150 Jews in Baghdad.

1943

Strikes prompted by food shortages and price rises are put down by the police.

1946

Strike by oil workers at the British-controlled Iraq Petroleum Company in Kirkuk demands higher wages and other benefits. Workers clash with police and ten are killed when police open fire on a mass meeting on July 12. In August, during a strike by oil workers in the Iranian port of Abadan, Britain moves more troops to Basra (near the Iranian border). The Iraqi government suppresses opposition papers criticis-

ing this move, prompting strikes by the printers and railway workers. The cabinet is forced to resign.

1946-1947

Strikes and demonstrations against the proposed establishment of the Zionist state of Israel at the expense of the dispossessed Palestinians.

1948

The Iraqi government negotiates a new treaty with Britain which would have extended Britain's say in military policy until 1973. British troops would be withdrawn from Iraqi soil, but would have the right to return in event of war. On January 16, the day after the Treaty is agreed at Portsmouth, police kill four students during demonstrations. This prompts an uprising known as al-Wathba ("the leap"). Militant demonstrations and riots spread against the proposed Treaty, bread shortages and rising prices. Several more are killed when police open fire on a mass march of railway workers and slum dwellers. On January 27, 300-400 are killed by the police and military as protesters erect barricades of burning cars. The cabinet resigns and the Treaty is repudiated.

In May, 3,000 workers at IPC's pumping station near Haditha strike for higher wages. After two and a half weeks, the government and IPC cut off supplies of food and water to the strikers, who then marched on Baghdad,

250 km away. This becomes known as the 'great march' (al-Masira al-Kubra). Strikers are fed and sheltered en route before being arrested at Fallujah, 70 km from Baghdad.

The British military mission is withdrawn from Iraq. Martial law is declared, ostensibly because of the war in Palestine, and protests are banned.

1949

Communist Party leaders are publicly hanged in Baghdad, their bodies left hanging for several hours as a warning to opponents of the regime.

1952

Port workers strike for increased wages, more housing and better working conditions. Strikers take over the Basra generator, cutting off water and electricity in the city. Strikers are killed when police move in.

In October, students go on strike over changes in examination rules. The movement spreads to mass riots in most urban centres, known as "the tremor" (al-Intifada). In Baghdad, a police station and the U.S. Information Office are burned. A military government takes over, declaring martial law. There is a curfew, mass arrests and the banning of some newspapers. Military action killed 18 demonstrators.

1954

Government decrees permit the deportation of persons convicted of communism, anarchism and working for a

foreign government. The police are given new powers to stop meetings.

1956

Egypt nationalises the Suez Canal. Britain, Israel and France launch a military attack on Egypt. The government closes all colleges and high schools in Baghdad as huge protests, strikes and riots spread. Two rioters are sentenced to death after clashes with the police. Martial law is imposed.

1958

Popular unrest throughout the country. In Diwaniyah, 43 police and an unknown number of protesters are killed during a three hour battle in June.

A month later the "July 14 Revolution" ends the old regime. A coup led by members of the Free Officers seizes power, denounces imperialism and proclaims a republic. The royal family are shot. Crowds take to the streets and some U.S. businessmen and Jordanian ministers are killed. People take food from the shops without paying, thinking that money is now obsolete. To prevent the revolution spreading out of their control, the new government imposes a curfew. After a brief power struggle within the new regime, Abd al-Karim Qasim becomes prime minister and military commander. He rules with the support of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP) and other leftists.

Although Islamic influence remains strong, there are public expres-

The CIA's Favorite Coup Brought Ba'ath Party to Power

On February 8, 1963, a military coup in Baghdad, in which the Ba'ath Party played a leading role, overthrew Qasim. Support for the conspirators was limited. In the first hours of fighting, they had only nine tanks under their control. The Ba'ath Party had just 850 active members. But Qasim ignored warnings about the impending coup. What tipped the balance against him was the involvement of the U.S. He had taken Iraq out of the anti-Soviet Baghdad Pact. In 1961, he threatened to occupy Kuwait and nationalized part of the Iraq Petroleum Company, the foreign oil consortium that exploited Iraq's oil. In retrospect, it was the CIA's favorite coup. "We really had the T's crossed on what was happening," James Critchfield, then head of the CIA in the Middle East, told us. "We regarded it as a great victory." Iraqi participants later confirmed U.S. involvement. "We came to power on a CIA train," admitted Ali Saleh Sa'adi, the Ba'ath Party secretary general who was about to institute an unprecedented reign of terror. CIA assistance reportedly included coordination of the coup plotters from the agency's station inside the U.S. embassy in Baghdad as well as a clandestine radio

station in Kuwait and solicitation of advice from around the Middle East on who on the left should be eliminated once the coup was successful. To the end, Qasim retained his popularity in the streets of Baghdad. His supporters refused to believe he was dead until coup leaders showed pictures of his bullet-riddled body on TV and in newspapers.

Source: Andrew and Patrick Cockburn, excerpt from *Out of the Ashes, The Resurrection of Saddam Hussein*, 2000.

Thank CIA for Saddam's Rise to Power

The Ba'athist coup, resulted in the return to Iraq of young fellow-Ba'athist Saddam Hussein, who had fled to Egypt after his earlier abortive attempt to assassinate Qasim. Saddam was immediately assigned to head the Al-Jihaz al-Khas, the clandestine Ba'athist Intelligence organisation. As such, he was soon involved in the killing of some 5,000 communists. Saddam's rise to power had, ironically, begun on the back of a CIA-engineered coup!

Source: Alfred Mendes, Excerpt from "Blood for Oil," Spectr@zine. <www.spectrezine.org/war/Mendes.htm>

sions of anti-clericalism including the public burning of the Koran.

Without waiting for Qasim to deliver on his promises of land reform, peasants in the south take matters into their own hands. In al-Kut and al-'Amarah they loot landlords' property, burn down their houses, and destroy accounts and land registers.

Fearing the spread of rebellion throughout the Middle East, the U.S. sends 14,000 marines to Lebanon. Plans for a joint U.S./British invasion of Iraq come to nothing because "nobody could be found in Iraq to collaborate with."

1959

Ba'athists and nationalists form underground anti-communist hit squads, assassinating ICP members and other radicals. By 1961, 300 have been murdered in Baghdad and 400 in Mosul.

Arab nationalist officers stage an unsuccessful coup, prompted largely by anti-communism. Popular resistance goes beyond suppressing the coup; the rich are attacked and their houses looted. In Kirkuk, 90 generals, capitalists and landlords are killed in violent clashes. (These excesses are later denounced by the ICP).

1960

Qasim cracks down on radical opposition. 6,000 militant workers are sacked. Several ICP members are sentenced to death for their role in the Kirkuk clashes. Despite this, the ICP leadership continues to support the government, urged on by Moscow.

1961

War breaks out between the government and Kurds lasting intermittently until 1975. In the first year, 500 places are bombed by the Iraqi Air Force and 80,000 people displaced.

Kuwait, under British control since 1899, becomes independent. Iraq stakes a claim that Kuwait should be part of Iraq. Britain responds by sending troops to Kuwait.

1963

Qasim's government is overthrown in a coup bringing the Arab nationalist Ba'ath party to power. They favour the joining together of Iraq, Egypt and

1963: The Ba'ath strengthen links with the U.S. During the coup, demonstrators are mown down by tanks, initiating a period of ruthless persecution. Up to 10,000 people are imprisoned, many are tortured. The CIA supply intelligence to the Ba'athists on communists and radicals to be rounded up.

Syria in one Arab nation. In the same year, the Ba'ath also come to power in Syria, although the Syrian and Iraqi parties subsequently split.

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In November, the Ba'ath are removed from power in another coup by supporters of the Egyptian Arab nationalist, Nasser.

1967

After a split in the ICP, a group lead by Aziz al-Hajj launches guerrilla warfare against the state, influenced by Che Guevara and Maoism. There are assassinations of individual capitalists and wide-scale armed confrontations.

1968

The Ba'ath returns to power after a coup in July. It creates a state apparatus systematically dominated by the Ba'ath party that enables it to remain in power for at least the next 30 years.

The Ba'ath's National Guard, crack down on protests and strikes. In November, two strikers are shot dead at a vegetable oil factory near Baghdad, and three are killed on a demonstration to commemorate the Russian Revolution.

1969

The regime begins rounding up suspected communists. The guerrilla movement is defeated, with many of its members tortured to death. Aziz al-Hajj betrays them by recanting on television, subsequently becoming Iraqi

ambassador to France.

The air force bombs Kurdish areas, but the military stalemate remains until the following year when Saddam Hussein negotiates an agreement with the Kurdish Democratic Party. In exchange for limited autonomy, the KDP leadership agrees to integrate

its fighters into Iraq's army.

1973

The Iraqi oil industry is nationalized.

1974

After pressure from the USSR, the ICP joins the pro-government National Progressive Front with the Ba'ath, but the Ba'ath remain in sole control of the state. War breaks out again in Kurdistan as the agreement with the KDP breaks down. The KDP is deprived of its traditional allies in the ICP and the USSR, now supporting the Ba'ath. Instead, it receives aid from the U.S. and the Shah of Iran. The Ba'athists launch napalm attacks on the Kurdish towns of Halabja and Kalalze.

1975

The Iraqi military continues bombing civilian areas in Kurdistan, killing 130 at Qala'Duza, 43 in Halabja and 29 in Galala in April.

Iraq negotiates an agreement with Iran, withdrawing help from Iranian Kurds and other anti-Shah forces in return for Iran stopping support to the Iraqi KDP. Iran takes back the military equipment it had given to the KDP, leaving the field open for the Iraqi army to conquer Kurdistan

1978

There are wholesale arrests of ICP members who criticise the regime. Twelve are executed for political activity in the army. All non-Ba'athist political activity in the army (such as reading a political newspaper), or by former members of the armed forces, is banned under sentence of death.

1979

Saddam Hussein becomes president of the republic, having increasingly concentrated power in his hands during the preceding eleven years.

Source: From *Practical History*, London, May 2000. <www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Senate/7672/iraq.html>