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'In a dark time the eye begins to see'
~THEODORE ROETHKE

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GARY VISKUPIC

WHY IRAQ?

INTERVIEWS BY MICHAEL McCUSKER

The real war in Iraq has begun. The photo/op blitzkrieg is over. Now the war settles down to a daily bitter skirmish that might last years — not quite a mirror image of Vietnam; but every patrol and search and destroy incursion of the U.S. occupation forces against native insurgents will probably kill or wound one or two or more Americans, and as in Vietnam the survivors will overreact in revenge, most likely against noncombatants which will increase the hostility (also like Vietnam).

The reconstruction of Iraq is taking on an aspect of deconstruction. Local elections in Iraqi cities have been voided by the American viceroy and their positions filled with hand-picked surrogates, most of them officers of the Iraq military and/or former Baathist party members. Political and religious factions the U.S. attempts to exclude from participation in the "democratization" of Iraq agitate for American withdrawal from the country.

Iraqi cities and military positions were relentlessly attacked with immense carnage during the invasion phase of the war, first with missiles and jet bombers, next with artillery, tanks and soldiers. No real count has been made of Iraqi dead, perhaps because the overwhelming

majority are obviously civilians and U.S. public affairs people are sensitive about revealing the cost in their lives, probably for the fact that as resistance increases so will the death toll of Iraqis. Their deaths or injuries are explained as unavoidable accidents — yet in a sense serve as partial if distorted revenge for 9/11.

If indeed the real purpose of the war has been disguised with the charade of weapons of mass destruction, it will soon be discovered in the postwar period of American occupation. Contracts with U.S. firms to reconstruct Iraq are an intimation of the future. But most pertinent will be if Iraq's oil fields and profits are turned over to Iraqis as promised. Now the spears rattle for continued combat operations against unfriendly forces in Iraq, and American troops might soon be ordered into invasion of yet another Middle East nation.

Anna Myers, who just graduated from Astoria High School, Class of 2003, asked a set of questions about Iraq for a senior project (taught by Dale Flowers). Two of those questions are the basis of the following interviews which are featured to commemorate this 24th anniversary issue of the resurrected NCTE ('The Born Again Bird'):

What do you think of the Iraq War?

Do you have any concerns about the war?

LEE MILLER

In a most un-Christian manner the executive department, instead of turning the other cheek has done unto others before it was done to us. Assuming Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, as evidenced by their use against the Kurds, where are they now? This issue was not important then because Saddam Hussein was also murdering Iranian soldiers whom the Reagan administration considered enemies at the time. Saddam received chemical compounds from which to derive nerve agents and microbes to culture from the U.S. government. Why was a tyrant chosen as an ally, except for the hypocrisy and expedience of Republican agenda?

It appears that although the CIA and FBI both insisted that there was no information indicating the possession of these weapons and United Nations inspectors found none prior to occupation, President Bush employed a falsehood in order to instill hatred and fear in America as an excuse and pretext for invasion of Iraq. Bush has destroyed his own credibility and rendered his provocative policies irrelevant.

It wasn't just poor intelligence — rather Bush knew better, and chose to lie about it. The objective was to force the American people into a state of perpetual paranoia and anxiety. The legerdemain is to keep citizens apprehensive and enflamed against a generalized 'other' in order to draw attention away from atrocious Republican fiscal and social policies. Outrageous deficit spending on arms and prisons, along with the destruction of the Bill of Rights may proceed in the United States according to the hidden Republican agenda. These tactics worked for the Nazis in order to exterminate Jews and enslave the German people. It is a pity that the American nation is gullible enough to fall for this war propaganda and give away their rights.

Under the auspices of a perpetual "war on terrorism," there will be no limit to the number of sovereign nations invaded. However, as the Greeks, English and Russians

learned, it is easy enough to invade a country like Afghanistan or Iraq, but it will be a bloodbath to stay there. The fact is that even our "allies" in Afghanistan and Iraq do not want us to stay.

The reason, in part, for attacking Afghanistan was to get Osama bin Laden, and Iraq to get Saddam Hussein (aside from control of the world's second largest oil reserve). From this viewpoint, the war on terrorism is an utter failure. Remember that most of the people and money involved in the 9/11 atrocity were from Saudi Arabia, by coincidence the largest oil reserve in the world — therefore, Bush's war must ultimately lead the U.S. to Mecca.

Afghanistan and Iraq were relatively easy to invade; however it is expensive and deadly to post occupation garrisons overseas, and as we annex more countries they will become targets of guerrilla warfare. The economic costs will be crushing, even to persons not yet born. Every week a handful of soldiers will be killed here and there. As our forces are slowly bled to death, how long will Americans tolerate the growing number of bodybags?

Iraq was never associated with 9/11 except through propaganda. The weapons of mass destruction embarrassingly not having been found, the link between Saddam Hussein and Al Qaida unproven, the Bush administration hype has been that the occupation of Iraq is justified by a regime change in Iraq. Regime change is good, and most importantly, look forward to it in the Oval Office.

A tainted interpretation of the Bible regards these as the 'End Times'. By this view, a crusade against the Islamic states is a "just" war, and it is all right to spend future generations' money on weapons and exploit resources unto extinction, since when Armageddon comes, Jesus will resurrect and save all the smug, self-righteous Republicans, cast everyone else into Hell, and restore the earth.

PAT LAVIS

The war on Iraq allows Great Britain and the United States to allocate Iraqi oil and benefit from the income. We also demonstrated we can conquer a small nation at will. Did we make a change?

There are no more death camps in Iraq, but there are still some 49 nations where people still disappear. Most of these are our "friends" or don't possess oil reserves.

The U.S. cited weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. There were and are none. What about nuclear powers India, Pakistan and Korea? They really do have nukes!

Thousands of people died in this war, and casualties continue to mount as we occupy the country. We were the aggressor and Iraqis, even though free of Saddam Hussein, resent that we remain.

Why have we ignored the United Nations and people all over the world who did not want this war?

And what really is our motive? The dollar, of course. But has the war profited the U.S.? What have we lost in exchange?

JOHN PAUL BARRETT

War? I saw an occupation, a rout, yet another country left in near chaos, hospitals, museums unguarded, public utilities destroyed, looted, hindsight, manipulation, lies, spin... and at the very end of it all, greed, simple, unbridled avarice. What else could it possibly be?

I see rising Nationalism in the guise of patriotism, civil liberties and rights threatened, suspended, an already stacked Supreme Court moving even farther to the right. I see Fascism writhing beneath, a world of good will and support squandered by this administration like William Bennett at a crap table. I see

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