Reader asks about US bombing of baby milk plant during Gulf war

4 September 1998

Greetings,

In your editorial, 'What are the real reasons for the US missile strikes?' you assert that the alleged biological weapons plant bombed by America was, in actuality, the 'baby milk plant' Iraq said it was.

I am curious, when you report that ' ... postwar investigations confirmed that the factory had no military purpose,' what reports would you be referring to?

I like to give editorial writers the benefit of the doubt, but this information clearly should have been part of the editorial, since the credibility of the investigators weighs heavily upon one's ability to accept your assertion that the investigations' findings were truthful or accurate.

Many thanks,

SH

Dear SH,

There are three sources for our reference to the US bombing of the baby milk factory in Iraq and the investigations which confirmed that the factory had no military purpose. The first two are newspaper accounts published after the first three weeks of the US bombing campaign.

The French daily newspaper *Liberation*, in its issue of February 2, 1991, interviewed Michel Wery, director of Pierre Guerin, the company which built the plant. He said that the plant had actually produced infant formula and baby food. 'It would have been impossible to transform this into the making of chemical products,' he said. The French company began building the plant in 1977 and it began producing milk products in 1979, and then was closed during the Iran-Iraq War, when French technicians left Iraq.

After the end of the Iran-Iraq War, technicians from New Zealand installed new equipment in the plant in the spring of 1990 to make cheese, while French technicians were restarting the baby milk production line. Two of the New Zealand technicians, Malcolm Seamark and Kevin Lowe, were interviewed by the *Washington Post* in an article published February 8, 1991, confirming that the plant had been a civilian facility with no military value. 'There was no way you could make chemical warfare with the plant I saw,' Lowe said.

The last reference is from a symposium in Southfield, Michigan on the impact of the Gulf war on children, held April 27, 1992, and reported in the May 8, 1992 issue of the *Bulletin* newspaper, forerunner of the *WSWS*. The speaker was Chris George, assistant director of Save the Children, the well-known charity, and he cited the destruction of the baby milk factory as one cause of the shortage of infant formula in Iraq which had driven the price of a single can up to $80. He also made reference to a UNICEF report on Iraqi mothers and children, issued just prior to his speech, which noted that the monthly government ration of infant formula was sufficient for only two days.

We should also note, in a negative confirmation of our account, that none of the multitude of postwar US and UN reports on alleged Iraqi efforts to produce biological weapons ever cited the example of the baby milk factory. You can be sure that if the reverse was the case, and credible evidence of weapons production had been found at the bombed factory, the American media would have trumpeted this fact.

Thank you for your inquiry,

Martin McLaughlin

WSWS editorial board

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