

Bush defends Iraq war before a hostile UN General Assembly

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22 September 2004

President Bush's address to the opening session of the United Nations General Assembly Tuesday, together with a speech by his Democratic challenger in New York City a day earlier, provide a clear warning that the US policy of global military aggression will continue, no matter which of the two big business parties wins the November election.

Delivered to a largely sullen group of UN diplomats and foreign heads of state, Bush's speech offered little new, consisting of the usual concoction of threats, lies and hypocrisy. It was, in any case, directed more to his own right-wing political base in the US than to the governments of the world.

The tone of Bush's speech was slightly less belligerent than his previous appearances before the UN, when he condemned the international institution to "irrelevance" if it failed to support Washington's invasion of Iraq.

The message, however, was essentially unchanged—a warning to the countries of the world that any one of them could be the next target for an unprovoked US "preventive war."

There was something obscene about the unelected US president, responsible for two aggressive wars and an unprecedented attack on civil liberties in the US itself, lecturing the world about "freedom," "democracy," "peace" and the "rule of law."

Bush's abuse of these terms can only be described as Orwellian. "Freedom" means submission to US domination; "democracy," the acceptance of a Washington-imposed puppet state; and the "rule of law," the subordination of all to the strategic interests of American capitalism.

On the other hand, those who dare to take up arms to resist US occupation of their homeland are "terrorists" or "foreign fighters."

Bush was preceded at the podium by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, who last week stated the obvious—that the US invasion of Iraq was a violation of international law. At the opening session, however, Annan's remarks oozed the hypocrisy and duplicity that characterize the UN's role internationally as an instrument of world imperialism.

He proclaimed the universal principle that "no one is above the law," while saying nothing about the fact that the administration in Washington has clearly enunciated an international policy based on the law of the jungle, and has carried out a war of conquest against a defenseless country. He consistently equated the violence of those struggling against occupation with the state violence of those doing the occupying, whether in Palestine or Iraq.

The main thrust of Bush's speech was once again to justify the war in Iraq, while painting an idyllic picture and ignoring the explosive development of a full-scale war of national resistance to the US occupation of the country.

Absent from this year's speech was the claim—made last year at the UN in the face of overwhelming proof to the contrary—that the war was justified by the existence of Iraqi weapons of mass destruction.

In an oblique reference to this earlier pretext, the US president declared that the US was "determined to prevent proliferation and to enforce the demands of the world." He made the improbable claim that the US invaded Iraq—against the opposition of the majority of the UN Security Council—in order to enforce "the just demands of the world."

Bush proclaimed Iraq and Afghanistan "the world's newest democracies" and said the puppet regimes installed by Washington in the two countries would serve as "a model for the rest of the Middle East." One would hardly guess from this speech that the Afghan government's rule extends no further than the city limits of Kabul, and that the regime in Iraq controls only scattered parts of the country and is barely able to maintain security in the environs of the fortified palaces of Baghdad's Green Zone.

Both regimes are wholly dependent upon US occupation troops, while every key decision is made by US military officers and State Department officials.

Bush declared his commitment to the "value and dignity of every human life." Yet the aggression against Iraq has claimed an estimated 30,000 Iraqi lives, a large percentage of them women and children. The occupation is identified worldwide with the grossest assaults on human dignity: the

systematic torture and abuse of defenseless prisoners made known to the public in the hideous photographs from Abu Ghraib.

One would hardly guess from Bush's euphoric descriptions of the new "democratic" Iraq that the country's nominal prime minister is a murderous thug and former CIA "asset" who is hated by the overwhelming majority of the country's people.

The picture painted by Bush likewise failed to include the fact that US occupation forces are facing as many as 100 separate attacks every day, or that US warplanes are bombing heavily populated urban areas in Fallujah and elsewhere, killing dozens of Iraqis daily. Like the war itself, these bombings of civilian houses are war crimes in the full sense of the term.

Behind all of the lies and distortions, however, new and far bloodier attacks are being prepared once the November elections in the US are over. As the *New York Times* reported this week, a "senior military commander said the military intended to take back Fallujah and other areas by the year's end." It quoted the officer as saying that this offensive would begin in November or December. Giving a clear indication of the murderous nature of this planned operation, the commander declared, "We need to make a decision on when the cancer of Fallujah is going to be cut out."

Despite the intractable crisis facing the US occupation in Iraq, there is a growing drumbeat of threats in Washington against neighboring Iran and an open discussion within the political establishment and the corporate media about the desirability of a US "preventive" war against that country, under the pretext of preventing it from obtaining nuclear weapons.

This is the real meaning of Bush's statements that Iraq and Afghanistan must serve as models for the region, as well as his proclamation that the "world needs a new definition of security." He declared, "Our security is not merely found in spheres of influence or some balance of power, the security of our world is found in advancing the rights of mankind."

Washington's concern for the "rights of mankind" centers primarily on those areas of the globe that contain the greatest oil and gas reserves, and the chosen instrument for the advance of these "rights" is the US military.

For their part, the Democrats and Kerry have committed themselves to essentially the same militarist policy. While Kerry has once again shifted his line on Iraq, adopting a more heated tone, denouncing the Bush administration for prosecuting a war based on lies and for mishandling the occupation, the bottom line remains the same. "We must do everything in our power to complete the mission," he told an audience Monday at New York University.

Speaking a day earlier on the NBC television news, Senate Democratic minority leader Tom Daschle sounded the same theme. "The real issue is how can we do it better?" he said. "How can we make this work?... We've got to provide our troops more equipment. We've got to listen to our military commanders. We've got to have better intelligence. We've got to make sure we involve the international community in burden sharing a lot more than we are."

Significantly, one of Kerry's criticisms of the Bush administration was that its war in Iraq had distracted Washington from "the emerging nuclear danger from Iran."

The Socialist Equality Party warns that even bloodier crimes in Iraq and elsewhere are already being prepared.

The ongoing bombing campaign is aimed at "preparing the battlefield" for an offensive to subdue entire cities and large swaths of the country that the Iraqi resistance has turned into "no-go" areas for US troops. The Bush administration is attempting to hold off such actions until after the November 2 vote, but the spiraling crisis it confronts in Iraq could force its hand even earlier.

The struggle to put an end to this war and prevent even more dangerous acts of aggression in the future requires a break with the Democrats and the independent mobilization of working people in their own mass party, based upon a socialist and internationalist program.

The SEP is participating in this election to lay the political foundations for such a movement, advancing a socialist program that includes the central demand for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of all US troops from Iraq.



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