



Straight Talk

by Muriel Sluyter

Now what for Iraq?

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Greetings, Gentle Reader,

The war is winding down.

In liberated areas, the villagers hold up signs for troops to read. One of them, among other things, said, "I love George Bush."

A child gave a soldier a Christmas card that read, "Thank you for liberate us. Thank you for help us. You are a great army."

Our home-grown, anti-Americans, especially the President Bush haters, must despise these kinds of things. It gives the lie to everything they believe in.

Iraqis have been too terrified to express such sentiments until now. To do so meant torture and death.

To illustrate how they have lived, women and children have been forced into trucks and driven into checkpoints so Americans would fire on them. Men have been forced to run down American troops with trucks, otherwise their families would be tortured and killed.

Saddam cut off water and food supplies to the southern area of Iraq in anticipation of the attack, then mined the harbor so supplies could not be brought in.

The people were in desperate straits by the time the humanitarian mission began to function. Even then, Iraqi enforcers and soldiers dressed in civilian garb muscled their way to the front and took much of the supplies, until coalition soldiers put a stop to it.

There are still some members of the vicious element hiding among villagers, but the people are becoming increasingly brave and exposing them. Let us hope this phase moves rapidly so the innocents of Iraq can begin to live as human beings again, and soon.

It looks as though Sad-dam, his sons, and a hefty number of the most vile people in his government may have been blown up. One can hope.

Although, no matter what happens, the information minister will continue to insist that all is well in Saddam's Iraq (some of our major newspapers eagerly agree with him) until he is personally pulled off the stage and away from the mic. It may take the use of a vaudevillian

shepherd's crook to do the job.

He is really strange.

Soon the question will be, who will lead the reconstruction of Iraq.

Security Council representatives, especially the French, Germans and Russians, want the United Nations to do it.

Dr. Khadhir Hamza said, "We don't want the U.N. It is very inefficient. It is very corrupt. The U.N. would be the worst choice."

Surprise, surprise!

There is one curious question: If Saddam has been blown up, what happens to the billions of dollars in his Swiss bank accounts?

President Bush says all such money should be used to turn Iraq into a modern, productive country. He says it came from oil money that belonged to the people right from the beginning.

But the Swiss may find an angle that will let them keep that money. It wouldn't be the first time.

Those countries that helped Saddam be the monster he has been, want to get in and grab some of the oil money the Iraqis will have. The oil producing infrastructure is old and decrepit and they want the gravy-train contracts necessary to modernize it.

Some of our more self-deceptive citizens accuse our president of having the same motives. They say this war is about oil. If they were Bush, it probably would be about oil, and they cannot conceive of his being more honorable than they.

Fortunately, all Americans are not as predatory as them. Most of us, including the president, want to see Iraq become what it is capable of becoming: a stable, productive member of this world's community of nations.

Hasten the day!