

BOYCOTT THE DOLLAR !

Rohini Hensman

What we are witnessing could be the beginning of World War III. A coalition of states headed by the USA is engaged in an act of aggression, in violation of international law, in opposition to the United Nations, and in defiance of world public opinion. The leaders of the coalition have already warned that their strikes will kill 10,000 innocent civilians, and the actual death toll will no doubt be much higher; it couldn't possibly be otherwise, given the terrible blitzkrieg that is being visited upon the helpless people of Iraq and the disruption of their food and water supplies. In other words, they announced in advance that this is a terrorist war in which they will knowingly be committing War Crimes and Crimes Against Humanity. The Bush administration has also made it clear that after Iraq, there will be attacks on a large number of other countries. There are striking similarities with the situation in the late 1930s. The attack, now as then, is not just on one country or a few countries but on the international community as a whole. And the price of appeasement, now as then, will be a world war much more ghastly than its predecessor.

A major difference, however, is that there is no military solution to this war. The attack can be, and to some extent has been, weakened by lack of assistance from most states, and anti-war activists must continue to put pressure on governments not to provide any form of support to the aggressors. But this has not prevented the war. Criticisms of the UN for failing to stop the war are misplaced. How can the UN pose a military challenge to a state whose stockpiles of nuclear weapons can blow up the earth several times over, a state which has demonstrated its readiness to use weapons of mass destruction in Hiroshima, Nagasaki, Vietnam and indeed Iraq itself, where 40 tons of depleted uranium left after the first Gulf War caused an epidemic of cancer and birth defects? In order to confront the US militarily, the UN would need to have similar weapons, but this is certainly not desirable: one of its most important tasks is to rid the world of weapons of mass destruction, not to amass them on its own account! The importance of the UN lies in its moral authority, and it is crucially important that this should be strengthened by consistent opposition to a war that violates its most fundamental principles. Kofi Annan made a timid step in this direction when he said that if the US and UK start a war without UN backing, this will delegitimise not the UN, as Bush and Co. were claiming, but the war itself.

This challenge to US domination of the UN would never have been achieved without the massive worldwide anti-war campaign. That is why it is so immensely important to keep up the pressure on the UN, both through demonstrations and through the appeal for an emergency session of the UN General Assembly (envisaged by **Uniting for Peace Resolution 377 of 1950**), to order a ceasefire,

the withdrawal of foreign troops from Iraq, and a resumption of weapons inspections, for an online global petition to this effect, and for addresses of UN Ambassadors who can be petitioned individually. The UN should also be asked to withdraw the sanctions against Iraq that have killed an estimated one-and-a-half million civilians, more than half of them children, and strengthened the dictatorial power of Saddam Hussein over the Iraqi population by giving him control over food supplies.

Let be realistic, however, none of this is going to deter Bush and his associates, who have so far shown as little regard for the UN and world opinion as Hitler and his associates showed for the League of Nations and world opinion. Those of us who are old enough to have been part of the Vietnam solidarity movement will remember that ultimately it was public opinion that brought the war to a halt, and what turned US public opinion against the war was the escalating number of troops coming back in body bags. But such a development is not likely today, even though US and UK troops, taken in by the lies of their leaders, did not expect as much resistance as they got. (Note the crude macho assumption that brute force will inspire shock and awe rather than anger and contempt. How typical!)

The problem is neatly summed up by the statistic that some 42 per cent of the US public apparently believes that Saddam Hussein was linked to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. A cartoon shows Bush circling the Q in IRAQ and the Q in AL-QAEDA drawing a line between them to demonstrate proof of a link, but even this is less illogical than the actual evidence he offered, which was Osama bin Laden's speech in which he denounced Saddam as a heretic and infidel! If 42 per cent of the US public sees this as proof of a link, and many more support the US invasion even if it means killing thousands or millions of Iraqis in their own country, what can we do? Clearly, systematic brainwashing has deprived these people of the power of logical thought and moral behaviour, and therefore appeals to reason or ethics will not work unless a deeper change takes place.

The longer the war goes on, the more innocent victims there will be, and the more there will be a terrorist and fundamentalist backlash worldwide. Moreover, other states may be tempted to follow the example of the Bush axis, and invade territory they wish to annexe or colonise. (Israel, of course, has done it already.) The entire world could descend into chaos. So it is in the interests of everyone (except for relations and associates of Bush who have oil and armaments interests) to end the war as soon as possible. However, the war will not end if Iraq is conquered: it will merely move elsewhere, just as it moved to Iraq once Afghanistan was

conquered. A likely next candidate is Iran, which is just feeling its way back to democracy after the US overthrew Mossadeq half a century ago, since a democratic Iran is as much of a threat to US hegemony now as it was then.

The only way to put a definitive end to the war is to force the Bush coalition to withdraw their troops back to their own countries and keep them there. But how can this be done? How is it possible to control a rogue state with huge stockpiles of weapons of mass destruction which is on a megalomaniac mission to conquer the world? In particular, what can those of us in developing countries do? Some of our governments have spoken out courageously against the war while a few like Gloria Arroyo and Roh Moo-hyun have distinguished themselves by backing it, but most have evaded the issue by saying, in effect, 'We are helpless, there nothing we can do.' But this is not true; we can and must play our part in ending the war.

This is a situation where we need to adopt the tactics of guerrilla warfare and hit at the enemy where it is weakest. The weak point of the Bush state is its economy: its in a mess, with a foreign debt so massive that any developing country in a similar state would have the IMF and World Bank breathing down its neck to implement austerity measures. Bush, on the contrary, is splurging an estimated billion dollars a day on this war. How can he do it? By using US control over international financial institutions and interest rates, of course. But this would not work if the rest of the world didn't support the dollar by recognising and using it as the de facto world currency. If that support is withdrawn, the dollar will crash.

Individuals can withdraw support by refusing to accept dollars and asking for Euro or other hard currencies of countries opposed to the war when they need foreign exchange to travel abroad, or are being paid for work done abroad. But it would make a much bigger impact if Third World governments convert their dollar foreign exchange reserves into Euro and/or other hard currencies of countries opposing the war. Governments who oppose the US-led war can see this as one way to help stop it, by undermining the ability of the US to pay for the war and bribe or blackmail other

states into supporting it. But even for the rest, it makes sense, and the anti-war movements in those countries should make them see that: the dollar is already falling, and it is in their interest not to allow their own economies to be pulled down with it. Simultaneously, governments of countries to which the US is indebted should stop extending the line of credit if they wish to oppose the war in a practical manner.

Disengaging the world economy from the dollar may involve some immediate sacrifices, but we should surely be willing to make those, if they result in saving the lives of innocents. An added bonus is that it will help to resolve the Palestine-Israel conflict: without billions of dollars of US financial support, Israel will be forced to recognise Palestine and live in peace with it. Overall, in the long run, the result will be a healthier world economy.

People living in the US will of course have to continue using the dollar, and that is absolutely fine. The objection is not to the use of the dollar as the national currency of the US, but to its use as world currency, which thereby gives the US state the power to wage genocidal wars all over the globe. Opponents of the war in the US and allied countries have done a magnificent job mobilising protest within those countries and channelling worldwide protest to put pressure on the UN, and there is now more need than ever for them to continue doing this task. It could be supplemented with a strategy of satyagraha, non-violent civil disobedience, since this is indeed a worldwide struggle for truth and freedom. In fact, there have already been examples of this, with schoolchildren playing a significant role. The answer to those who object that such actions endanger the lives of troops in Iraq is that the only honourable way to safeguard their lives (especially given the high rate of self-inflicted casualties!!) is to bring them back immediately. It should also be pointed out that while a few corporations are profiting from the war, millions of ordinary people in the US, UK, and other coalition countries are among those who are paying the price.

We, the people of the world, may appear to be helpless, but we are not. Together we can stop the attack on Iraq from developing into World War III. But we need to be decisive, and act quickly! ■

Rohini Hensman of Sri Lanka is a free-lance writer living in Bombay.

The country music station KKCS in Colorado Springs has suspended two disc jockeys for playing the **Dixie Chicks**, violating a ban the station imposed in March after the group criticized **President George Bush**. "We pulled their music two months ago, and it's been a difficult decision because how can you ignore the hottest group in country music?" the station's manager, **Jerry Grant**, told *The Gazette* newspaper. He said the DJs **Dave Moore** and **Jeff Singer** would be out a couple of days. "I gave them an alternative: Stop it now and they'll be on suspension, or they can continue playing them and when they come out of the studio they won't have a job."