

TRIBUNAL ACCUSES GEORGE BUSH OF WAR CRIMES

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IRAQ LIES IN RUINS, and the embargo is choking the last life from it. Three hundred thousand Iraqi children will die this year as a result of the destruction of the country. Food and medicine bought before the embargo have not been allowed in.

"Can we possibly keep silent as a thousand Iraqi children die each day," asked Gabrielle Gemma, who spent three weeks in Iraq in April.

Gemma is a member of the Commission of Inquiry of the International War Crimes Tribunal, which met in Montreal last weekend. The tribunal is charging U.S. president George Bush with crimes against humanity.

Bush, Colin Powell, Norman Schwarzkopf and other U.S. officials are charged with 19 war crimes, including crimes against humanity, crimes against peace and violation of the Charter of the United Nations. In addition, tribunal members charge the war contravened the Geneva Protocol on Human Rights. Article 52 of Section I of the protocol guarantees general protection of civilian objects.

The tribunal has heard evidence in Hong Kong, Malaysia, Japan, Australia, Turkey and Belgium. By the end of next month it will have visited more than 50 cities on five continents. The findings of the hearings will be presented to the United Nations and the International Court of Justice in early spring.

The U.S.-led war against Iraq started Jan. 16 and lasted 42 days. U.S. forces flew over 110,000 air sorties during the war, indiscriminately bombarding homes, factories, food depots and hospitals — all structures that support day to day civilian existence.

WAR ON CIVILIANS

Rene Dumont spent a month in Iraq in September as part of a United Nations team of observers.

"It was not a war, it was a massacre," said Rene Dumont, an eyewitness to the war and the first

to speak at the tribunal.

"The war served two purposes," he testified. "To kill Iraqis and to destroy the infrastructure of the country."

Among the many civilian structures reduced to rubble, Dumont visited the infamous baby milk plant in Baghdad. U.S. bombers destroyed the plant during the war, claiming it manufactured chemicals for weapons. Dumont was allowed to wander through the rubble without any restrictions, and saw no evidence that the plant was used for chemical weapons.

He also visited a centre for

human scale," said Roberts.

"What I saw in Iraq was a massacre, carried out by a technical juggernaut. These people had no chance of protecting themselves or of defending themselves."

He said that he had witnessed widespread destruction of civilian facilities — warehouses, schools, and entire industrial suburbs flattened by B-52 carpet bombing. Non-military facilities were consistently destroyed, including passenger and cargo lanes, aqueducts, markets and telephone exchanges.

During his stay in Iraq, Roberts survived three waves of night bombing in the area of Baghdad. "The disorientating effect of the bombing is a form of psychological warfare," he said.

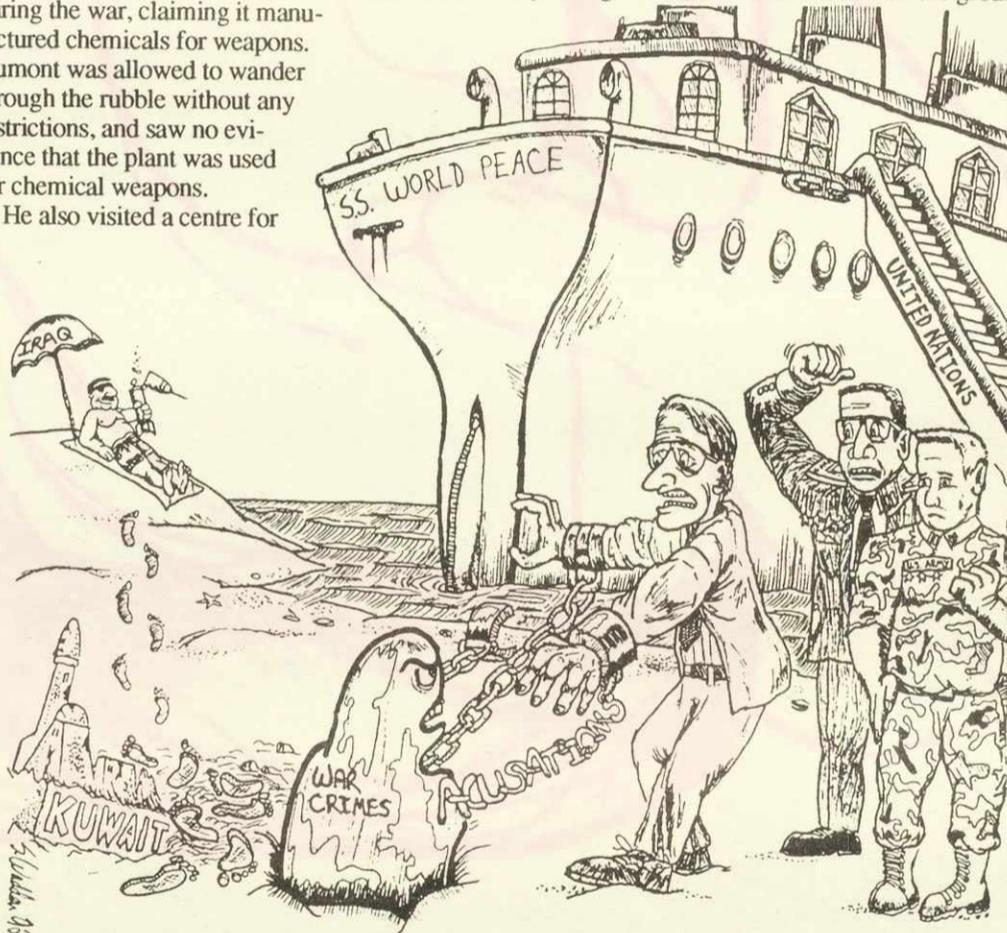
"When you've been kept up 10 nights in a row, you begin to lose

were't used for military purposes, he said.

Roberts described a child he had seen "with his stomach ripped open," and another who had lost a leg from the bombing. A week before the bombing ended, the Red Crescent Society of Jordan estimated 113,000 Iraqi civilians had been killed. Sixty per cent were children.

In Babylon, an Italian-built textile-weaving plant employing 2,400 women was destroyed, killing two women, Roberts said. Altogether 26,000 facilities were destroyed, including 80 per cent of the oil refineries, according to reports distributed at the tribunal.

Roberts came forward because he is upset with the contradiction between the official myth of "bloodless surgical strikes" and what he saw on the ground.



"Come on George, We're gonna miss the boat!"

the nation-wide distribution of agricultural goods 18 km northwest of Baghdad, which was completely destroyed. Iraq imports most of its food, producing only 30 per cent of its total requirements.

Paul Roberts, an award-winning BBC documentary maker and Oxford professor, was the only Western writer to travel in Iraq during the conflict.

"The carpet bombing in Iraq was worse than in Cambodia," Roberts, who covered that U.S. war in the early 1970s, told the tribunal.

Robert spent several weeks travelling with Bedouins and Kurds, assessing the on-going damage. He recently wrote a report about the damage in Iraq for *Saturday Night* magazine.

"The bomb blasts hit me in the chest and knocked the wind out of me. The bombing of Cambodia, by comparison, was a war on a

your sense of reality."

The bombings nearly always started in the early evening and continued until morning. The schedule was so regular that infants began wailing every evening at that time, anticipating the air raids.

Every morning the wounded were carried outside where they awaited ambulances, Roberts said. But the ambulances never came.

"There were no doctors," said Roberts. "Saddam had sent them to the front."

Roberts emphasized the targeting of civilians and infrastructure as a fundamental goal of the war. As almost all facilities in Iraq were constructed by foreign companies that were part of the U.S.-led coalition, the Pentagon had access to information about the exact locations of various buildings. There was no excuse for hitting so many buildings that

"When I reached Istanbul and watched CNN, I saw that what was being presented was not what was going on at all," he said.

SUBSERVIENT TO THE U.S.

Another tribunal witness, Charlotte Paquet, accompanied Dumont on the UN trip to Iraq to study post-war conditions. Paquet said the far-reaching effects of the bombing had "destroyed a nation and ensured its subservience to the U.S."

Local Iraqis told her conditions on the front were better than those in Baghdad.

"War is not supposed to be an attack on the population of a country," she said.

Paquet condemned the ongoing embargo of Iraq. The coalition of countries arrayed against Iraq cannot support the 18 million war victims in Iraq with foreign aid, nor is the coalition likely to do so in the future, she said.

Today, 90 per cent of the Iraqi population is unemployed and food and resources of all kinds are scarce, Paquet said. Turkey has refused to deliver 32,000 tons of milk that had been purchased prior to the war, or to pay for 100 million barrels of oil.

"The country needs to rebuild itself, to stop the dying, and we won't allow them to stop their own suffering with the current embargo," Paquet said.

COERCION AND PROPAGANDA

American reliance on Middle East oil increased from five per cent in 1973 to 10 per cent in 1989, according to reports distributed at the tribunal. The CIA estimates that by the year 2000 one-quarter of all American oil will come from the region. Japan and Germany import even more of their oil from the region — over 90 per cent of their total consumption.

The U.S. used this dependency to coerce Germany and Japan into supporting the war. When the U.S. first asked Japan for money to pay for the war, the Japanese offered to put up \$1 billion. But the U.S. repeatedly threatened Japanese imports with punitive restrictions if it didn't contribute more. Eventually, Japan pledged \$12 billion.

Canada is not guiltless, either. Illegal weapons were used in the conflict, including napalm and fuel air explosives (FAEs), which engineering professors at McGill University conducted research on in the mid-1980s. U.S. and Canadian bombers attacked Iraqi military personnel and civilians fleeing Kuwait on Feb. 25 using napalm and FAEs.

Roberts said one flatbed truck was found containing nine bodies. The occupants' hair and clothes were burned off, and their skin was incinerated by heat so intense it melted the windshield onto the dashboard.

Zuhair Kashmeri, senior editor at Toronto's *Now* weekly, also criticized Canada at the tribunal for its comportment during the war. He recently wrote *The Gulf Within*, a book on how Canadian police services targeted Arabs during the war for security investigations.

"The Arab population of Canada was pinpointed as being terroristic and evil, creating a wave of resentment against them," he said. "This kind of government-sponsored racism mobilized popular support of the war."

Kashmeri also said the government and media collaborated on a propaganda campaign to convince the Canadian public that the war was a good thing. Voices of dissent and the Arab community were marginalized, he said.

Prior to the propaganda campaign, 57 per cent of Canadians opposed the war. But after it started, he said, polls found a majority of Canadians supported it.