

15 Years Since the Fall of Baghdad: A Broken Statue in a War Built on Lies

By [Patrik Paulov](#)

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"The terror is over after 35 long years - therefore all those who demonstrated for peace were wrong". The headline is from an article in the Swedish evening paper Expressen on April 10, 2003. It was the day after Baghdad had fallen to the hands of the military coalition led by US.

A similar euphoric mood was found in all major Swedish media portraying the events on April 9 2003, the day when the US troops entered the Iraqi capital. We saw pictures from Paradise Square in central Baghdad where alleged freedom yearning masses crushed the great statue of **Saddam Hussein**. We learned that the American soldiers were welcomed with flowers and cheek kisses.

The feeling given was that the war was over after only three weeks.

Fifteen years later, it is a surreal experience to scroll through the newspapers from the start of the war on March 20, 2003, and the following dramatic weeks. Certainly, there were depictions of civilian suffering and victims of war. But this was not the main subject.

Today it is obvious that the consistent reporting during these weeks served a higher purpose.



It was about giving legitimacy to a war launched in violation of the UN Charter. It was about weakening the strong anti-war movement that filled the streets around the globe for months. It was about convincing the widespread war-critical opinion in the western world that, despite all, the invasion would be a good thing.

Because when “Residents of Baghdad put flowers in the cannon pipes on Marine corps tanks”, as Swedish Expressen wrote in an extra edition on April 9, then the brothers-in-arms Bush and Blair must have done the right thing.

But the fall of the multi-million city of Baghdad was as much a hoax as the lies about Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction, that the United States and Britain used to motivate the war.

The masses at Paradise Square were in fact only a few hundred people. It is visible on the overview images from the Reuters news agency, which was later published. The square was also surrounded by American tanks and it was actually one of them that pulled over the statue.

I do not deny that the Iraqis at the square might have felt real joy regarding the fact that the oppressive regime of Saddam Hussein’s was gone. But the demolition of the statue was primarily a spectacle.

It was staged for the international journalists who suitably lived at Palestine Hotel just nearby Paradise Square.

The Iraqis, regardless of their views about Saddam Hussein and the Baath Party regime, were hardly excited about being bombed and invaded by foreign countries. It is a fact that the countries behind the invasion in 2003 were the same countries that, long before the war, were responsible for causing mass death and great suffering in Iraq.

A few months before the events at Paradise Square, I traveled around Iraq.

I visited the poor city of Basra in the south, where many children were traumatized by living throughout the threat of the American and British battle planes that everyday flew in the sky.

I went to Mosul in the north and met Yazidis, the minority that was exposed to vicious abuses when terror group ISIS later occupied the region.

I talked to doctors in hospitals in Baghdad who lacked both incubators and common drugs because Iraq was banned from importing them. Incubators, medicines, and even pencils were on the list of “prohibited products”, as some Western countries in the UN Sanctions Committee on Iraq claimed that Iraq could use these products to manufacture weapons of mass destruction.



It was obvious that the when war broke out in 2003, the Iraqis were already a plagued and depressed people. And it was obvious that no matter of their views of the regime and its brutal oppression of political opposition, very few Iraqis wanted a new destructive war.

You can not liberate people and give them a better life by bombing, invading and occupying their country.

I talked to many Iraqis during my stay in Iraq. The interests behind the war were something everyone talked about.

“It’s the oil. If we were poor, no one would have wanted to attack us, no one would have bothered about Iraq”, as the pediatrician **Murtada Hassan** in Baghdad stated.

Carl Bildt, the coming Swedish minister of foreign affairs had another point of view. On January 28, 2003, he wrote an article in the International Herald Tribune which concluded:

“Removal of the Saddam Hussein regime is the only way peace can be achieved. The next few weeks should be the beginning of the end of decades of war for the peoples of Iraq and for the region.”

Fifteen years after the start of the war we know what happened. It was not the anti-war movement but all those who cheered loudly about the victory of freedom that was wrong. The truth is that the development in Iraq became even worse than anyone could imagine.

The war brought mass death, devastation, hunger, illiteracy, sectarian violence and the birth of the terrorist group ISIS, causing fatal consequences for millions of people both inside and outside Iraq’s borders.

The war brought torture to a rare extent. A couple of the Iraqis whom I met before the hell broke out were eventually seized by the occupying power and were placed in the infamous Abu Ghraib torture prison.

Bush and Blair and all others who backed the attack on Iraq have committed one of the

worst war crimes in our time. It's a shame that they are not convicted of their crimes.

And all mainstream media in Sweden – it was not only Expressen – played along by uncritically spreading the lies and propaganda that came from Washington and London. It is no wonder that the MSM today is quiet about what they reported fifteen years ago.

The events on April 9, 2003, at Paradise Square are important to remember. Not because some Iraqis destroyed a statue but because it symbolizes how the western powers shattered Iraq and laid the foundation for the chaos that still characterizes the Middle East.

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Patrik Paulov is a journalist at Swedish Proletären (www.proletaren.se).

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