

Disneyland by the Tigris

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Theme: [Crimes against Humanity](#)

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'We are dancing on a volcano.' Comte de Salvandy (1795-1856) Just before the 1830 revolution.

'Let them eat cake.' Marie Antoinette.

Iraq, before the holocaustal thirteen year embargo, the 2003 illegal invasion and subsequent countrywide massacre and reign of terror over its population - not by a 'few bad apples' of the US and British army, but by an entire infested, diseased orchard - was, according to United Nations indices, a largely developed country.

Having nationalised its oil, revenues were utilised for modernising infrastructure, health, education (the latter two of high standard and free.) All now lie in ruins, the might of the two 'most professional armies in the world', apparently able only to blow up bridges, not build them, orphan not heal, bereave, destroy and devastate, poison and pollute.

Iraq now lies at the bottom in every aspect of UN indices, its sick untreated, its children uneducated, the 'cradle of civilisation' victim of a scorched earth policy - from its agriculture, date and citrus groves to its archeological wonders. The orphans, traumatised, displaced, widowed, mutilated, beheaded, fleeing, stateless, dead, in just five years, equal history's most chilling infamies.

From 1st June, add starvation. The food rations, already cut to the barest minimum, of woeful quality, beset by (US overseen) governmental corruption, but on which much of the population exists, are to be abolished.

Additionally, in the nightmare scenario of everyday life in the democratic freedom of occupied Iraq, is a vast unknown: the number of amputees and limbless, those liberated from arms legs or both, by the ongoing orgial use of an eye watering array of weapons, including, allegedly, cluster bombs, from 1991 onwards. Hellfire and Maverick missiles, guided Bomb Units (GBUs) Hydra-7- rockets, cannon rounds ('in a single operation on 28th January 2007, US F16s and A-10 Thunderbolt aircraft dropped more than 3.5 tons of precision munitions but also fired 1,200 rounds of 2mm and 1,100 rounds of 30mm cannon fire, in a five square mile area near the southern (holy) city of Najav.' (See Nick Turse's meticulous: 'Did the US lie about cluster bomb use in Iraq?' 8th July 2007: <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/newsfull.php?newid=7905>)

But in the true tradition of 'only in America' fantasies, the US has a make believe answer. Not refurbished hospitals and schools, not clean water coming out of dysentery, typhoid and cholera inducing taps, not welcoming and healing orphanages for the estimated 4.5 million traumatised orphans they have created, not centres for and training of staff and technicians

to provide prosthetic limbs for maimed children and adults. Baghdad instead, is to have a Disneyland theme park (on appropriated land.)

'Iraq's daily realities of death, destruction and torture are replaced by fantasies made in America.

'The imagery and motion simulations intended for Iraqi children are to provide a "human face" to the American invaders' and breaking down the reality between '.. reality and dreams. The objective is to replace reality with a dream world.' (For full details of this obscenity see: ' War Propaganda: Disneyland goes to war torn Iraq, by Michel Chossudovsky : <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=8837>)

A constant refrain during the embargo years, in media parroting Washington and Whitehall's propaganda, was that the ever busy Iraqi President, when not personally making fairy story weapons of mass destruction, or throwing babies on bonfires, or putting fellow citizens through shredding machines (that one courtesy of the reality-challenged Ann Clwyd, M.P.,) was that he was 'building palaces whilst his people starve.' Culturally, it is incumbent upon leaders to leave behind something more magnificent than their predecessor and in dark times, they also provided work to a swathe of the population, as did maintenance, care of and repair to historic sites, of whose responsibility for and guardianship Iraqis are acutely aware.

That these great state buildings (and archeological wonders) are now illegally squatted, by illegal invaders (in contravention of yet another swathe of international law) seemingly does not strike lawmakers by the Potomac or the Thames as either ironic or criminally outside the law's provisions.

But now a land grab is about to take place comparable to the 'purchase' of Manhattan Island from the Lenapes Indians for \$24 worth of beads and trinkets in 1626, the 'best real estate deal in history.'

In an 'agreement' with the 'Mayor' of Baghdad, the fifty acre Zawra Park is to be developed into a trashy Disneyland by the Tigris, complete with malls, hotels, housing, amusements, entertainment and a museum. Iraq's National Museum with its millennias of treasures and the National Library's irreplaceable ancient volumes and manuscripts were looted and destroyed under US watch in 2003. A replacement by a Disneyland version is a concept devised by the seriously psychologically challenged.

A skateboard park will introduce the residents of a city thought to have been first settled eight thousand years before Christ, to the culture of inner city USA. Announcing his plans in Baghdad, financier Llewellyn Werner stated: 'I'm not here because I think you are nice people. I think there is money to be made here ... I wouldn't be doing this if I wasn't making money.'

Speculating as to what the 'agreement' with the 'Mayor' might have been, might stray in to libel land. Zawra Park, however, has a special place in the heart of Baghdadis. Its great zoo, summer theatre, children's game area, fountains, lakes, coffee shops, restaurant, sculptures, monuments, and Olympic swimming pool, became somewhat run down during the embargo, but nothing could take from its great, expanses of lushness, its acres of ancient palms, royal indeed, stretching skyward. Wonders in which generations of children, become adult, become mother, father, grandmother, grandfather, great grandmother ... had

played and revisited throughout their lifetime. Will Mr Werner and his RSE developers call in General Petraeus's boys with chain saws to destroy groves which have witnessed hundreds of years of Mesopotamia's history, to make way for make believe tack? General Petraeus is a 'big supporter' of the project. And destruction is his business.

The zoo in Zawra Park became one of the poignant symbols of the embargo years. With every kind of diagnostic aid and treatment vetoed for patients, by the UN, the needs of the zoo animals came low down the priority list. But Dr Adil Salman Musa, zoo Director, loved them all. He tried to create better conditions for the great brown bear, whose mate had died for lack of treatment. Year after year, the bear lay, seldom moving, except to occasionally roll in her great pool of filthy water, repairs for pipes, impossible. She was clinically depressed said Musa.

The lion too had lost his mate and his roars of grief rang across the great Park, from within his spacious den. He refused to come out roam between the sun dappled, abundant greenery of his territory.

Musa communicated with colleagues across the world for help with his animals and birds, the swinging, chattering monkeys, the array of vibrant coloured rare birds. But like the people, they were trapped by the embargo's all pervasive, silent decimation.

As parents took their children to the orphanages, unable to afford to feed them, promising to collect them when the embargo was over, families also took their domestic pets to the zoo, vowing the same. Dogs and cats looked wistfully through the bars and canaries in every paint box hue, perched on their indoor trees, tweeted and soared. Iraqis have a passion for birds.

Dr Musa too dreamed of the embargo's end, always planning for what it would bring to his zoo, his improvements, and work with rare and endangered species again with breeding programmes to swell their numbers.

When one of the three remaining Bengal tigers, Mendouh, became ill, Dr Musa somehow acquired enough vital antibiotics to inject her. But there were no anesthetic darts available. 'I held her tail, while the vet gave her the injection', he said, adding: 'This is a very dangerous practice.' He risked much for his beloved animals.

On 17th September 2003, six months into the occupation, American soldiers had a drunken party in the park. One tried to feed the Mendouh through the bars. Predictably, she bit him. The soldier shot her.

And what has happened to the lynx? On one visit, rounding a corner, I came on a surreal sight : a lynx, in a miniature carved palace, carpeted, with adequate food, looking, I thought, distinctly smug. Noting the plaque above the spacious area, the penny dropped. The lynx was a gift to the zoo, on a recent anniversary, from Saddam Hussein's eldest son, Uday.

'What happens if the lynx dies?' I asked. The young zoologist walking with me looked over his shoulder, then whispered: 'Madam Felicity, we all run a very, very long way.' I have written of Zawra Park before and its resonance for Baghdadis, the sad, the surreal, the peace and laughter of days spent there.

On 9th May, Dick Cheney, on the Paul Gallow Show in Mississippi, told Americans that the proposed development was a sign that things in Iraq were 'going swimmingly.' The

Pentagon is fast tracking this development as a centrepiece for the new Baghdad in the new Iraq. Legalities, as ever, have not appeared on the agenda. Pentagon backed purloining of a vast swathe of municipal reality with the collusion of the occupying forces is yet another shocking grand theft.

But a word of warning. The Islamic fundamentalists who the invaders brought in with them, who behead women for wearing make up or western clothes – or just not covering from head to toe – and abhor theatre, art, dance, entertainment, music, alcohol, will not take kindly to this project. Contractors should have up to date life in insurance. A lot of heads will roll between conception and possible completion.

And about those 200,000 free skateboards, the Baltimore Project which provides prosthetic limbs to Iraqi children, wrote, in July 1996, of just one child's transformed life:

'Not only can he now ride a bicycle like other boys his age, but more importantly he can go to school. There are no wheelchair ramps in Iraq, no buses equipped with lifts, no way to ease a child back into the world after amputation.'

The obscenity of this project – before limbs, wheelchairs, clean water, hospitals, schools, sufficient food, decontaminating the radioactive waste from weapons designated three times by the United Nations, as weapons of mass destruction which litters the country and the region from US and UK weapons – beggars belief. When Medical Aid for Iraqi children sent children's wheel chairs after the invasion, the US Army disappeared them. But with countless hundreds of thousands of legless, limbless children, throughout Iraq, resultant from their actions, not medical help, but free skateboards can be funded.

Oh, and where do you put your elbow pads, when you have no elbows?

Battery Park in Manhattan is named after the British battery stationed there, its monument marking the monumental disgrace upon which New York City was founded. Hard to know what to call the modern day equivalent, perhaps the 'Grand Theft Experience Park.' Suggestions welcome.

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