

# On the "Battle for Baghdad"

By Serge Lefort  
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*The following article was submitted April 9 by a reader in Paris.*

American propaganda, obligingly relayed by the media, had announced that the taking of Baghdad would be no cakewalk for the British and American troops. After having foisted on us the myth of the "fourth most powerful army in the world," the spin doctors pushed the myth of a Republican Guard armed to the teeth, ready to use chemical weapons to defend the regime. Well, Baghdad fell today without any resistance from the Iraqi army or the Republican Guards. Where then are the tens of thousands of soldiers and fighters? It is likely that many died in the bombing, which has been pounding the capital for 21 days, and that survivors have melted into the population like the regime's officials.

Journalists are having a field day describing "scenes of jubilation" and "rejoicing crowds." The pictures, designed to show the "liberation" of Baghdad, are, however, less convincing than is being claimed by the commentators bent on making history alongside the victors. France 2 TV, for example, shows an Iraqi bashing a poster of Saddam Hussein with a rock. He is joined by another, who disappears and then is chased by two individuals. The camera very briefly follows this scene, but then focuses again on the man, who poses for the journalists. The purpose is to "manufacture the news which people want to hear" (Rupert Murdoch's editorial policy, *Le Monde*, 5 April 2003)

Pictures of an Iraqi populace greeting the British and American troops as liberators in massive numbers are noticeably absent. The television channels broadcast a few insignificant shots over and over. Mainly we are shown scenes of looting. Fleeting images give a glimpse of several people throwing stones at a lorry loaded with stolen goods. Is it really any wonder? The images, created by obedient journalists, have been

celebrating American soldiers kicking open the doors of public buildings. The hint is given. It was a call to loot.

To impose colonisation and a docile government on the country, the Bush administration's strategists need chaos to set in. But that is a dangerous game, as it could also create the conditions for a civil war which the victors would have difficulty controlling. The British and American troops still fear the population, part of which is armed. They are letting the looting take place so as to provide a pretext, in a few days time, for a tough intervention to restore order. In the end, the American administration wants to subject the Iraqi population by obliging it to beg for food and water.

The French commentators are imploring the US to find evidence of "weapons of mass destruction". It is on this condition that Jacques Chirac is prepared to rally to the British and American coalition. You can be sure they will find something for French diplomacy to feed on so that it can shamefully slip back into the victors' camp and gather the crumbs from the festive table. A shed has already been found containing chemical substances and another with brand-new coffins with corpses from 1985 in them! It was too good to be true. The truth-twisting experts will likely find images, less spectacular, but capable of influencing public opinion.

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