

REVIEW

Capitalism's War?

by Michael D'Abramo

Milan Rai, *Regime Unchanged*. Pluto Press, 2003. 230 pp. \$16.95 (paperback)
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Since the beginning of the US-led war on Iraq, there has been serious debate concerning both the causes and the legitimacy of the war. Some argue US unilateralism is undermining diplomatic efforts to solve future conflicts peacefully, while others maintain hegemonic leadership may actually maintain stability in the long-run. Milan Rai, in his forthcoming book *Regime Unchanged: Why the War on Iraq Changed Nothing*, makes the case that the war was illegitimate, illegal according to international law, and cause for concern for those "with an open mind who is willing to test official justifications for the war on Iraq against the available evidence."¹ Rai claims that the Bush administration has consistently lied, distorted evidence, and continually changed the goalposts in order to effect leadership change in Iraq. Unfortunately, he veers off course in an attempt to connect alleged US and British support for Nazism in Europe and Japan after WWII, and supposed US support for fascism in Iraq. He implicates the media as complicit in a global cover up of the West's promotion of fascism throughout the ages in order to maintain market access. Rai concludes that the war in Iraq is a continuation of capitalist exploitation, and implores the anti-war movement to stand against the rising tide of fascism.

The book begins with an outline of the events leading to the point of war including the inspections process, Secretary of State Colin Powell's address to the UN Security Council, and the other efforts to obtain a second Security Council resolution authorizing the use of force. Rai maintains that the anti-war movement forced the Security Council to oppose an immediate attack without first exhausting the inspections process. Rai continues by claiming that, "The problem was that the United States was opposed to the work of the weapons inspectors."² As such, "[t]he point was not to *prove* that the inspectors were incompetent, but to build this impression in the public mind."³ And thus after patience for the inspections regime wore thin, the US and UK rushed to war.

It is at this point Rai's argument attempts to connect Nazism during World War II to the US use of Ba'athist officials in a post-war Iraq. Rai's assessment requires the reader to make a huge leap of logic in order to grasp what is a nonsensical

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argument that contains a conspiratorial tone. Rai maintains that, “[t]he record shows that much of the Nazi system *was* left in charge of Germany in the aftermath of 1945, and within days of this editorial being published, the British, and U.S. governments were straining every nerve to re-nazify Iraq and to leave Ba’athist leaders in very serious forms of power.”⁴ Unfortunately, Rai does not give advice as to what the US should do with Ba’athist officials who have suddenly found themselves without employment under an occupying power.

Rai concludes by indicting the US and UK as sponsors of capitalist exploitation, using fascism as a means to promote stability in the periphery. He insists that, “[t]he war on Iraq was indeed ‘capitalism’s war,’ designed to reinforce positions of disparity internationally, between the Great Powers and the colonial area.”⁵ The war in Iraq, therefore, is merely an extension of this philosophy.

Milan Rai delivers a rendition of the war in Iraq that is supposed to garner the sympathies of the anti-war movement, anti-globalizationists, and other groups among the political left. As such, people involved with the protest movement may find this book interesting. However, Mr. Rai’s contribution to the study of the war in Iraq is limited at best, leaving the reader with a less than compelling argument. His book’s reliance on anecdotal evidence detracts from the argument he attempts to deliver. If Mr. Rai is indeed trying to construct a compelling Marxist critique of capitalism and its effects upon international peace, he fails to deliver. Instead, the reader is left with a poorly thought out explanation of events that may or may not indict the capitalist system as the primary cause for war on Iraq.

Notes

¹ Milan Rai, *Regime Unchanged* (London: Pluto Press, 2003), xix.

² Rai, *Regime Unchanged*, 64.

³ Rai, *Regime Unchanged*, 80.

⁴ Rai, *Regime Unchanged*, 118.

⁵ Rai, *Regime Unchanged*, 174.