

<http://divergences.be/spip.php?article213>



John Fiske

Saddam Hussein: This was a guilty verdict on America as well.

- Archives - Archives Générales 2006 - 2022 - 2007 - N° 5 (Janvier/January 2007) - International - Irak -

Date de mise en ligne : Monday 25 December 2006

Copyright © Divergences Revue libertaire en ligne - All rights reserved

Source: The Independent, Nov. 6, 2006

<http://divergences.be/sites/divergences.be/local/cache-vignettes/L131xH400/11-3-46359.jpg>

So America's one-time ally has been sentenced to death for war crimes he committed when he was Washington's best friend in the Arab world. America knew all about his atrocities and even supplied the gas - along with the British, of course - yet there we were yesterday declaring it to be, in the White House's words, another "great day for Iraq". That's what Tony Blair announced when Saddam Hussein was pulled from his hole in the ground on 13 December 2003. And now we're going to string him up, and it's another great day.

Of course, it couldn't happen to a better man. Nor a worse. It couldn't be a more just verdict - nor a more hypocritical one. It's difficult to think of a more suitable monster for the gallows, preferably dispatched by his executioner, the equally monstrous hangman of Abu Ghraib prison, Abu Widad, who would strike his victims on the head with an axe if they dared to condemn the leader of the Iraqi Socialist Baath Party before he hanged them. But Abu Widad was himself hanged at Abu Ghraib in 1985 after accepting a bribe to put a reprieved prisoner to death instead of the condemned man. But we can't mention Abu Ghraib these days because we have followed Saddam's trail of shame into the very same institution. And so by hanging this awful man, we hope - don't we? - to look better than him, to remind Iraqis that life is better now than it was under Saddam.

Only so ghastly is the hell-disaster that we have inflicted upon Iraq that we cannot even say that. Life is now worse. Or rather, death is now visited upon even more Iraqis than Saddam was able to inflict on his Shias and Kurds and - yes, in Fallujah of all places - his Sunnis, too. So we cannot even claim moral superiority. For if Saddam's immorality and wickedness are to be the yardstick against which all our iniquities are judged, what does that say about us? We only sexually abused prisoners and killed a few of them and murdered some suspects and carried out a few rapes and illegally invaded a country which cost Iraq a mere 600,000 lives ("more or less", as George Bush Jnr said when he claimed the figure to be only 30,000). Saddam was much worse. We can't be put on trial. We can't be hanged.

"Allahu Akbar," the awful man shouted - God is greater. No surprise there. He it was who insisted these words should be inscribed upon the Iraqi flag, the same flag which now hangs over the palace of the government that has condemned him after a trial at which the former Iraqi mass murderer was formally forbidden from describing his relationship with Donald Rumsfeld, now George Bush's Secretary of Defence. Remember that handshake? Nor, of course, was he permitted to talk about the support he received from George Bush Snr, the current US President's father. Little wonder, then, that Iraqi officials claimed last week the Americans had been urging them to sentence Saddam before the mid-term US elections.

Anyone who said the verdict was designed to help the Republicans, Tony Snow, the White House spokesman, blurted out yesterday, must be "smoking rope". Well, Tony, that rather depends on what kind of rope it might be. Snow, after all, claimed yesterday that the Saddam verdict - not the trial itself, please note - was "scrupulous and fair". The judges will publish "everything they used to come to their verdict."

No doubt. Because here are a few of the things that Saddam was not allowed to comment upon: sales of chemicals to his Nazi-style regime so blatant - so appalling - that he has been sentenced to hang on a localised massacre of Shias rather than the wholesale gassing of Kurds over which George W Bush and Lord Blair of Kut al-Amara were so exercised when they decided to depose Saddam in 2003 - or was it in 2002? Or 2001? Some of Saddam's pesticides came from Germany (of course). But on 25 May 1994, the US Senate's Committee on Banking, Housing

and Urban Affairs produced a report entitled "United States Chemical and Biological Warfare-related Dual-use exports to Iraq and their possible impact on the Health Consequences (sic) of the Persian Gulf War".