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## Front Page

Mar 21, 2003

### The French strike back

By Julio Godoy

PARIS - Intellectual force has arrived to back the political and popular French opposition to the United States over the question of Iraq.

In new debates, books and columns, French analysts are going back to the days before September 11, 2001 to recall US interventions from Chile to Guatemala to Vietnam. Historian Christine Durandin argues in *La CIA en Guerre* (The CIA at war) that the US secret services intervened in all Latin American countries since the 1950s, and that "everywhere these interventions prepared the way for brutal military dictatorships".

The interventions never led to "nation building", Durandin said by way of challenging US claims that the "war against terrorism" can be used to build the foundation of modern societies in the Arab world. Durandin's book has become a bestseller. The first edition published earlier this month is already sold out.

Other books look at the background of many US leaders, particularly the Bush family. Prize-winning investigative journalist Eric Laurent looks at the dealings of the Bush family since the 1930s in *La Guerre de Bush* (Bush's War). Laurent digs up dealings with Nazi industries in Germany, and with Saudi Arabian business houses accused of financing Islamic terrorist groups. Bush "dined with the devil", Laurent says.

Based on his own investigations and on material published in the US, Laurent says that President George W Bush's grandfather, Prescott Bush, was a banker who invested in industries rearming Nazi Germany. Laurent says that in 1942 the US government placed sanctions on four companies of the Bush family - the Union Banking Corporation, the Holland-American Trading Corporation, the Seamless Steel Equipment Corporation and the Silesian-American Corporation.

Former president George Bush senior, he says, did business with the family of Osama bin Laden for 20 years, much of it through the Carlyle Group, an investment company. And the Halliburton enterprise in Texas, a leading provider of engineering services, has been a partner of the bin Laden group since 1994, Laurent says. Halliburton's CEO until the end of 2000 was Dick Cheney, now vice president.

In the late 1980s, Saudi Arabian banker Khalid bin Mafouz, Osama bin Laden's brother-in-law and main shareowner of the now closed Bank of Credit and Commerce International, saved one of President George Bush's several unsuccessful oil enterprises from insolvency, Laurent says.

Other new books point to the demise of the US empire. Emmanuel Todd's *Après l'empire* (After the empire) looks at what the author calls the "decomposition of American hegemony".

Todd, a renowned social scientist who predicted the end of the Soviet Union in the late 1970s, bases his conclusions on the US dependency on foreign capital. Todd says that the US commercial deficit more than quadrupled during the 1990s. "In the period from 1973 to 2000, during which the US enjoyed its longest economic expansion, the commercial deficit went up from \$100 billion to \$450 billion," Todd says.

"To pay for this deficit, the US needs to keep importing foreign capital," he says. "If this capital flow were to stop, the US economy would collapse. Despite the repeated claims about US power, the truth is that this country is both a beggar and predator. This cannot last very long."

Todd says that US militarism is nothing more than "fuss" aimed to impress the world. "When you think that the US government only dares to wage war against military gnomes such as Iraq, you have to realize that the whole thing is only to pretend that they are mighty."

Todd says that the US isolation in its war plans against Iraq (give or take a few not so might nations) is an indicator that the world has begun to see the US decline as a superpower. "The fact the Germany, for the first time since World War II, has dared oppose a US military project especially shows this awareness."

Bernard Henri Levy, sometimes reviled as the "jet-set philosopher" who supported US military action in Somalia, Serbia and most recently Afghanistan, now opposes the war on Iraq. "Saddam Hussein is certainly one of the most brutal dictators of our days," Levy says. "But he doesn't represent a danger for the West. A real danger is Pakistan, a dictatorship with clear links to Islamic terrorism, and which has the nuclear bomb. Rather than attacking Iraq, the US should worry about Pakistan. Instead, Washington sees Pakistan as an ally."

(Inter Press Service)

**P** Print article  
**@** Email article  
**\$** Currency converter

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