

IRAQ'S WATER WEAPON

By Peter Fend

ON MARCH 23RD, ABC news carried a report on Iraq's "secret weapon" in the Iran/Iraq war: water. It seems Iraq has constructed an elaborate waterway barrier which bogged down the recent Iranian offensive in the marshy north. The report used satellite pictures obtained after a long bureaucratic battle by Lower East Side artists Peter Fend and Ingo Gunther. Their work with satellite data has led them to a controversial analysis of Iraqi strategy in the war.

While military experts continue to assert Iraq is taking a defensive position in the war, Fend and Gunther insist the waterway is a long-planned part of an offensive strategy. European media have covered their startling conclusions. But the American media have been reluctant to get their feet wet. A CBS report last fall bowed to State Department pressure to change the story, and the national dailies have refused to cover it. And while ABC addressed Fend's findings in their coverage of the Iranian offensive, it depicted the channel, which now extends into Iranian territory, as a border defense only. Here is the full story by Peter Fend.

The Iran-Iraq war has become a Fact of Life. The Defense Department has said that if World War III begins, it will begin there. Oil companies have declared that a war there would destroy the "lifeline" of the West. Half a million people have died. All oil company assets in Iran, and most in Iraq, have been lost. But the war, according to most news reports, is not a disaster of crisis proportions.

The prevailing opinion, instead, is that the war will go on for a very long time, and that nobody will win. President Saddam Hussein of Iraq will get the territory he sought. He will not gain control of the delta from the Tigris to the Euphrates rivers at the Head of the Gulf, and he will not "liberate" the Arab-populated southwest of

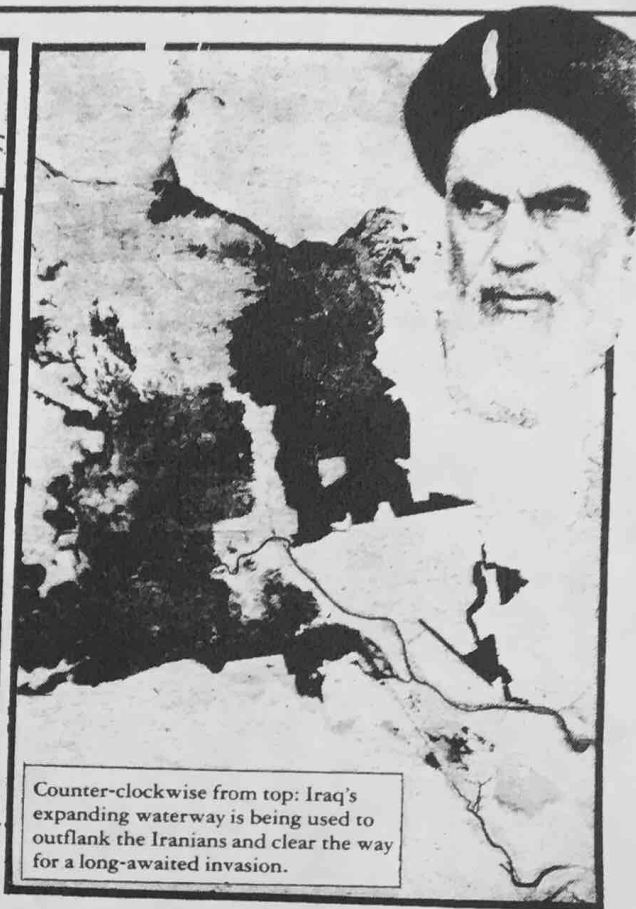
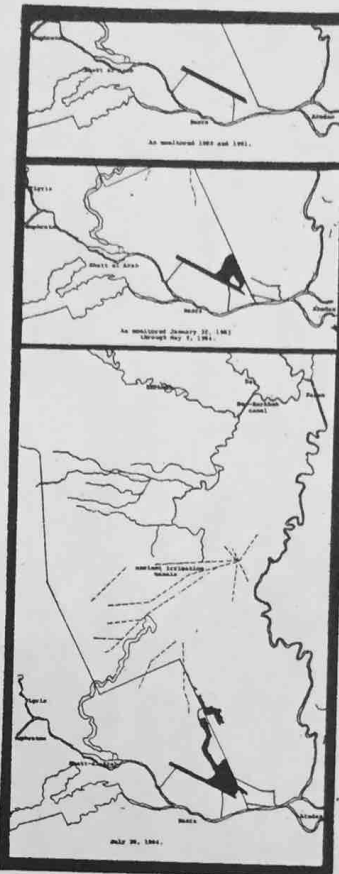
Iran—the main oil sector of Iran from Tehran's grip. Conversely, The Ayatollah will not win. He will not spread his Islamic Revolution beyond the borders of the Iran defined by border agreements earlier this century, and will neither defeat nor depose Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Since the Ayatollah won't give up, the war will go on forever. The *New York Times* reported after the latest huge Iranian defeat, "the war will eventually, but not soon, peter out into a state of war in which there are few, if any, major military operations."

We, Ingo Gunther and Peter Fend, have spent a year of our lives getting possession of, processing, analyzing and reviewing with experts throughout Europe and the U.S. satellite data covering the primary battlegrounds of the war since before the war began. We have a very different view from that published by the *New York Times*. Our findings have been published in the *Financial Times* of London, regarded in recent polls as the single most reliable newspaper in the world, and broadcast on ABC, CBS and European TV networks.

The Times however, will only report that the waterway structure is 50 feet wide, although it's never less than a mile wide; and it was started in 1983 despite the evidence of construction in 1977, three years before the war began; and of military effectiveness in 1980 (when the Iraqis launched their invasion of Iran).

The structure we speak of is one of the most ingenious and largest river construction projects in history.

Beginning at least in 1977, two years after a very unsatisfactory border agreement with Iran, the Iraqis have built a diversion from the Tigris-Euphrates which has gradually and relentlessly expanded into a new river system of its own, which cuts Iranian forces off from Iraq. They continue to build, despite intense Iranian fire.



Counter-clockwise from top: Iraq's expanding waterway is being used to outflank the Iranians and clear the way for a long-awaited invasion.

As we have learned, remote-controlled earthmoving equipment digs out channels and storage reservoirs and then rushes the stored-up waters into the channels, stretching out tentacles upon dry land. Heavy armor and artillery set up positions just behind the extending channels, forcing back the Iranians. Most of the construction since mid-1984 has been inside Iran, although military experts told us last Fall that Iraq would not dare to re-invade Iran.

Iraq officially announced its first re-invasion of Iran on January 28, 1985. Iraq is not trying to just not lose the war. It is not trying to just defend itself from Iranian attack. It is trying to achieve its initial war aims of conquest as old as the construction project itself. The International Institute for Strategic Studies has at last acknowledged that two artists with satellite data were correct in their predictions; and the Royal Institute for

International Affairs conceives a look.

The facts suggest that the Iraqis aim to conquer southwest Iran, known as Khuzistan. The main barrier to invasion is Iran's biggest river, the Karun River. When the Iraqis get close to that river, as they did in 1980-81, the Iranians open the floodgates up north, near the mountains, and flood out the Iraqis. Artillery, armor and soldiers get washed away; up to 60 tanks have been lost in a single day. To succeed in crossing Khuzistan, the Iraqis must gain control of the Karun up north, and of all the rivers that flow from the mountains into Mesopotamia and converge in a bundle at one point—the site of ancient Susa. They tried to get there with tanks and men, and failed. Now they are extending their functioning river northwards towards the river-bundle. They bring up troops behind, creating a shield which Iranian forces cannot pierce. As of January, 1985, this shield is con-

tinuous along the entire Iran-Iraq border south of the ancient river to which the Iraqis intend to connect; a conduit through which the river can flow to the sea, rather than—as before—ending up evaporating in salt flats. Now the Iraqis need only bend the shield this way and that, they need only continue their robotic excavation work and inrush of pent-up waters, until the shield drives into Iran, allowing the Iraqis to outflank the Iranians now overextended inside Iraq. With a pincer move, from two sides, with extending walls of water, and classical military formation, the Iraqis could wipe out the Iranian offensive positions, gain access to the bundle of rivers in the north from which the Iranians have been able to flood and block with water any Iraqi advance, and could securely occupy part of Iran. From there, a straightforward invasion across Khuzistan becomes easy. And Iran would be forced to submit.