

'ANTI-WAR CALLS WOULD BRING MORE CARNAGE'

BY TOM BRADSHAW

11:00 - 01 July 2004

A Leading political scientist at the University of Bath has criticised anti-war campaigners in the city who yesterday mounted a protest at the "sham" handover of power in Iraq. Professor Stefan Wolff, who has advised the Foreign Office on international conflicts, said the Bath Stop The War Coalition's call for American and British troops to be immediately withdrawn from Iraq was misguided.



Prof Wolff said such a move would lead to further carnage and bloodshed, with Iraq lapsing into civil war.

Members of the Stop The War Coalition have been handing out leaflets in the city centre objecting to Monday's handover of sovereignty in Iraq, claiming that the strong presence of US troops in the war-torn country means it is still effectively in American control.

Judith Eversley, from the Bath branch of the Stop The War Coalition, said the new Iraqi prime minister, Iyad Allawi, was just an American puppet.

"This handover is a sham," she said.

"Firstly, the politicians being given power have no mandate from the Iraqi people. They have been hand-picked by the US occupiers.

"Secondly, the prime minister chosen for Iraq by Washington is hardly a democratic choice. He has long been an agent of the US Central Intelligence Agency.

"Finally, and most important, the US retains effective power in Iraq because American forces will be answerable to no one.

"The new Iraqi authority will have no real power over security, legislation, finance or oil revenue."

A spokesman for the anti-war coalition added: "Only full military withdrawal from Iraq will allow the Iraqi people to rebuild their country and create democratic institutions of their own.

"Britain should bring its troops home rather than impose a regime in the name of democracy."

But Prof Wolff, who has written eight books on international conflicts, said that the immediate withdrawal of troops would be a recipe for greater strife in Iraq.

He said: "The Stop The War Coalition's proposal is not taking account of the very complex realities that have been created in the aftermath of the invasion.

"Pulling the coalition out of Iraq would create a situation that is akin to civil war because there are no credible Iraqi security forces in place that could handle a terrorist threat.

"The terrorists are not just opposed to the coalition forces, they are also opposed to the interim government.

"Pulling out the international forces would leave the interim government completely unprotected.

"We would have a much bloodier conflict on our hands.

"It would be between different ethnic groups, different religious factions, and between supporters and opponents of Saddam Hussein.

"Until there is a credible security force established in Iraq, I think it's wiser to maintain international involvement and that includes military involvement."

Prof Wolff conceded that the new members of the interim Iraqi government, who were sworn in on Monday, could be perceived as being American stooges.

He said: "These people to some extent have been hand-picked, but there has also been significant involvement from the United Nations.

"Because they have been chosen doesn't mean they are corrupt, criminal and people who won't work for the best interests of Iraq.

"In 18 months there will be a fully elected, democratic government in Iraq with its own constitution."

The handover of power in Iraq was scheduled to take place yesterday, but was moved forward by two days.

On Monday, the Coalition Provisional Authority's power ended and its chief administrator, Paul Bremer, returned to America.

However, 138,000 US troops still remain in Iraq.