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L. Paul Bremer III, Malcolm McConnell, *My Year in Iraq: The Struggle to Build a Future of Hope*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006. Pp. 416. ISBN 0743273893.

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Ambassador Lewis Paul (Jerry) Bremer III is a sixty-five-year-old preppe (Phillips Exeter, '59), Yale ('63), MBA (Harvard '66), and retired Foreign Service officer (1966–1999). After retirement from the Department of State, he worked with consulting firms such as Kissinger Associates and Marsh & McLennan and was picked by Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld in 2003 from a list of fifty candidates to become Presidential Envoy to Iraq. Called on by President George W. Bush for that tough and complex job, Ambassador L. Paul Bremer accepted, “because I think I can help.” Worried that other appointees already in Iraq might interfere with his work, he asked the president for “full authority to bring all the resources of the American government to bear on Iraq’s reconstruction.” The president agreed, giving him full executive, legislative, and judicial authority, and with it full responsibility for the future of Iraq.

Ambassador Bremer turned to the job immediately with all his skill, energy, and determination. Fighting daily the simultaneous political and bureaucratic battles of Washington and Baghdad, he got up every morning for 418 days to fight again. He made some serious mistakes and was often frustrated, but he never shirked and he never quit. The foundation that he built in Iraq still supports whatever is firm and solid there, politically, economically, and psychologically. And now we have his memoir.

Ambassador Bremer does not state his purpose in writing his memoir, but he has produced a detailed *personal* account of his actions and thoughts as the Administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq from mid-May 2003 to late June 2004. I stress *personal*, because the book is all about Jerry Bremer: how little he slept, how hard he worked, how frustrated he was with squabbling Iraqi politicians, and how he confided every night in e-mails to his wife, Francie. He does not question his decisions, but explains each as being the best available course of action, describes how he arrived at it, and names those with whom he coordinated and cleared it.

The book is ghost-written by Malcolm McConnell in the same relentlessly folksy style that McConnell used in General Tommy Franks’s memoir. The Ambassador’s private thoughts are spelled out in italics and all his many conversations, personal and professional, are put in quotes as if they were taken from verbatim transcripts, although clearly not all are. People are addressed by their first names: Don and Condi, Clay (McManaway) and Liz (Lineberry). The result is a coy and mind-clogging book that is a chore to read but is important to anyone looking to understand the transition of Iraq to an Interim Government after the U.S. invasion.

Suggested Supplements to Bremer's *My Year in Iraq*

- Cordesman, Anthony H. *The Iraq War: Strategy, Tactics, and Military Lessons*. New York: Praeger, 2003. —By a top Mideast military analyst; last eighty pages on the occupation.
- Diamond, Larry. *Squandered Victory: The American Occupation and the Bungled Effort to Bring Democracy to Iraq*. New York: Times Books, 2005. —By a senior political adviser to the CPA, Jan–Apr 2004.
- Etherington, Mark. *Revolt on the Tigris: The Al-Sadr Uprising and the Governing of Iraq*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell U Pr, 2005. —British view from the governor of Wasit Province, Oct 2003–Jun 2004.
- Glantz, Aaron. *How America Lost Iraq*. New York: Tarcher, 2005. —By a reporter for Pacifica Radio, critical of the CPA and focused on Iraqis.
- Gordon, Michael E., and Bernard E. Trainor. *COBRA II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*. New York: Pantheon, 2006. —Two experienced writers on the plans, the invasion, and, in the last 100 pages, the occupation of Iraq.
- Packer, George. *The Assassin's Gate: America in Iraq*. New York: FS&G, 2005. —My pick for the best book on the occupation. Packer writes for the *New Yorker* and won an Overseas Press Club prize for his reporting on Iraq.
- Phillips, David L. *Losing Iraq: Inside the Postwar Reconstruction Fiasco*. Boulder, CO: Westview Pr, 2005. —Phillips worked on the State Department's "Future of Iraq Project" and covers the planning for an occupation of Iraq up to the handover in June 2004.
- Schultheis, Rob. *Waging Peace: A Special Operations Team's Battle to Rebuild Iraq*. New York: Gotham, 2005. —The author was embedded with Civil Affairs Team-A 13 for six months of hard work in a Baghdad suburb.
- Shadid, Anthony. *Night Draws Near: Iraq's People in the Shadow of America's War*. New York: Henry Holt, 2005. —A Pulitzer-winning account of the effects of the war on the Iraqis.