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## Interview: Donny George Youhkanna

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# World Robbed of Iraq's Museums, Antiquities

*Dr. Donny George Youhkanna, the national Director of Antiquities of Iraq, was in Germany in late May-early June, for meetings with archaeologists as well as political representatives. On June 3, he spoke with Muriel Mirak-Weissbach of EIR and Ortrun Cramer of the German Schiller Institute cultural quarterly Ibykus.*

**EIR:** Could you describe for us, what happened at the Iraqi National Museum at the end of the American/British invasion of Iraq?

**Donny George:** In the morning of the 8th [of April], Tuesday, at 5:00 in the morning, I woke up to sounds of heavy tanks and heavy artillery fighting. The fighting was very close, near the Ministry of Information, and the radio and television station, which is not more than 400-500 meters from the museum. This sound started coming closer to the museum, and again, we started having shooting from the other side of the museum; that was from the area where the central bus station is. Around 11:00 in the morning we started hearing Apache fighter helicopters on top of us.

All this was happening, and we were confident that these Americans would not hit the museum, because they should know this is a museum, and we know they were warned by the scholars from the United States and Britain. But, we saw some Iraqi armed militiamen—those could be the so-called Fedayeen—they jumped back into our garden, and we saw them firing against the tanks. This meant, that our museum had become a target.

It was at that moment, when Dr. Jabar Khali, the chairman of the board, decided that we should leave the building, because it was very, very dangerous. We were only four persons left at the museum: Me, Dr. Jabar, a driver, and one archeologist who lives in the premises of the state board buildings and the museum behind them.

The front doors were locked; we went through the back doors, and locked them; we had only one car outside. We went out with the intention that we would come back; as soon as the war, or the battle, would stop in the museum area, we would come back.

We went across the river to the Eastern side, to another small museum, and we waited there. Again, it was about 3:00 in the afternoon, when we wanted to come back to the mu-

seum. We wanted just to stay away a bit, until it calmed down. We tried to cross the 17th July Bridge, or Bridge of the Medical City, which is the closest bridge to the museum. When we were almost at the middle of the bridge, people were coming from the other side, asking us to go back, because the Americans were there, and the fighting was right there, nobody would let us cross.



*Map shows a few of the most important of the archeological sites—Iraq has more than 10,000 such sites registered with its antiquities authorities—for exploration of ancient Mesopotamia. While Iraq's National Museum in Baghdad is now secure, these sites are continuing to be openly looted on a large scale, as Dr. Donny George describes, by groups from both inside and outside the country.*



*Dr. Donny George before the Central Museum in Mainz, Germany, where seminars were held in early June to assess what the losses of Iraqi antiquities really have been, and international means to prevent their sale into private collections.*

The Americans had taken over the area of the museum and passed by that area. So, it was impossible to go to the museum that day.

And then, I think that was in the evening of Saturday [April 12], I heard in the news that the museum had been looted. Afterwards, we [learned] the looters entered the museum on Thursday. We don't know exactly what happened on Wednesday; but Thursday, Friday, and Saturday, looters had been roaming around inside the museum and inside our administration area. On Sunday morning, I decided that I would go to the headquarters of the Marines in Baghdad, because we learned that they had their central command headquarters in the Palestine Hotel. I decided to go there and to seek any kind of help to protect the museum. Dr. Jabar decided to come with me.

The next morning, we went to the headquarters of the Marines. It took us a few hours, until we could meet somebody there. Then we met Colonel Sarkony. He was from the Marines, from the civil affairs. We told him about what had been happening to the museum and we asked him for help to protect the building and the area there. He said, "Of course, it is our duty, and it is very important, we should protect it." We showed the location of the museum. We said, we were going to the museum. And he said, "Well, perhaps, you will go and see the armored cars there now. I will call immediately, and they will be there for sure." But we went there, and there were no guards.

Only Wednesday morning [April 16], we did have the guards at the museum. We had four tanks and a lot of personnel from the Army.

**EIR:** That's one full week after they entered Baghdad officially on April 9.

**Donny George:** Exactly. Afterwards, I learned that there was a list issued by the American Central Command, for

some places that the Army should protect. And the museum, I learned, was No. 2 on that list, and the Ministry of Oil was No. 16 on that list. Some of the journalists made some jokes, saying that maybe the American forces had read the list upside down, so they went directly to the Ministry of Oil and left the museum. I don't know, but they did not come to the museum at that time. If they had been there, it would have been a completely different situation.

What I heard later, from that friend who lives on the museum premises: On Thursday [April 10], 300-400 looters were outside the fence of the museum; I don't know, he said this number. He knew they wanted to enter the museum; because there was no government, no police, no security in Baghdad, people just went into the governmental buildings and looted. My friend went to a tank that was very close to the museum. He asked them—an Arab who was with them, with a Gulf dialect, maybe Kuwaiti, maybe Qatari, we don't know—he begged them to come and save the museum, just to move the tank in front of the museum to stop all these people. He said that some of them called, and then said: "I'm sorry, it's not our duty."

Then, these people entered. At the same time, there were others who entered from the back doors, smashed and broke through. Those ones opened one door in the front and the people came in. What we saw later, was horrible, of course. It looked as if a hurricane had hit the building from inside. They took any kind of equipment that we had: computers, cameras, levelling machines, theodolites, copying machines, photocopy machines, fridges, furniture, television sets—even my coffee machine! They left nothing. Only the papers that we had, they were just scattered. In my room, I had about a 2-foot pile of papers, just thrown away. My desk was in three or four pieces, it was completely dismantled. I found my chair about 100 meters away.

And when we went into the museum and started checking, we immediately learned that some very important pieces that were left in the galleries, were taken away.

One month before the war started, we had evacuated almost every single thing that was in the showcases. It was our duty to do that; we have done it before, twice, [when] we were expecting any kind of bombing or looting. Everything was evacuated, except for some unfortunate pieces—they were either very fragile or too heavy to be taken away, But [the looters] managed to take them.

**EIR:** Can you name some of them?

**Donny George:** There's the Warka vase, which was found in the city of Warka, by the German expedition, and it goes back to 3,200 B.C., at least. It was found in a temple, and it is a wonderful piece of art, it shows the philosophy of the Sumerians, and the development of life, and stages of life,

A headless statue for a Sumerian king, Antemena, it's also gone. Some pieces we had from a temple, called Ninhotsagh, in the site of Tell el Obeid, very close to Ur, in the south.

Those were two very important bronze reliefs, one piece of a decorated and inlaid column, and some stone rosettes. And from the Akkadian gallery, we lost the famous Barzeki bronze statue, which is more than 160 kilograms. It's a huge piece, and the most wonderful thing about it, is that it is one of the earliest large examples of casting that was made by the "lost wax technique," which is used until now. The earliest representations of this, go back to early dynastic Sumerian periods. This may be the largest piece done in this way. So, it is really a great loss for the history of art.

What the looters could not take, they smashed. They smashed some of the terracotta lions we had from Tell Harmal from the old Babylonian period of 1,900 B.C. and from the Hatrian before that. We had a showcase showing examples of stamped bricks from the early times to the Roman times. They took nine of those bricks; it looks like they chose nine bricks, it's not just random taking them. In the Assyrian gallery, we noted the statue of King Shalmanesar III was missing, and another statue was smashed. In the Hatrian gallery, they took the head of a statue. They smashed three Roman statues we found in Hatra, and took their heads away. They took the head of Nike—that's the goddess of victory—an almost complete statue made of bronze we found in Hatra. This was from the public galleries of the museum.

Then we found out, they had broken through the storerooms also. They went to what we call the old storerooms, which were in the cellars of the museum. From those, until now, we don't know what and how many pieces they took. We have our staff of the museum, working on lists and checking shelf by shelf, box by box, how much and what is taken, and of course, comparing to the ledgers that we have. So everything should be precisely known, the numbers, the description and the photos that we have.

**EIR:** Do you have complete documentation? Because it was said initially that it had been lost.

**Donny George:** No, we had our documentation hidden elsewhere. We started giving the American investigators ledgers with complete description, numbers and color photos for each piece that was missing. As for the color photos, I had ordered the system myself, after 1991 looting of the regional museums, because we had a very serious problem with the photos at that time. But since then, we have, in the ledgers and in the cards, we have, always, small—something like passport-size photos for each single piece, with a small scale, and the number. You can see it in the photo. This is how we were finding these pieces, and giving this complete information to the American investigators.

Just a few days after the American guards were there, a team of 14 investigators came to us, that were dispatched and ordered directly by Gen. Tommy Franks, from the American Central Command. And these were of great help, to tell you the truth. Because they were professionals, they were led by a colonel, Col. Matthew Bogdanus, who originally was an Assistant District Attorney in New York.

Immediately we started working together. We gave them some place in the library; they stayed there, they lived there, they had all their equipment there, and we started giving them information and photos of any single thing that we discovered was missing. Colonel Bogdanus now has left, but some other people of his team are still in the museum, tracking some pieces in the country, and working with our people to build up a complete data base put into the Internet, of what's been known that's missing. I think it is in the FBI homepage. "Lost material."

**EIR:** This should make it very difficult for anyone to try to sell these things, except for private collectors.

**Donny George:** This is what we fear, because if it goes to private collectors, then it is there for one or two generations. And since especially these large pieces are very well known, we believe that nobody will dare to buy them; not an auction house, not a museum. And everybody was alerted, and as these American investigators told, they were checking with almost every airport, every customs office, every checkpoint in the borders of the world. This was their intention, and I believe they did that.

**EIR:** It was reported that some American military were actually caught in the United States bringing home pieces.

**Donny George:** These were pieces from another museum, which was called "Gifts for the Leader." It was a museum that Saddam himself had arranged for the gifts and presents he used to have. Those were some gilded Kalashnikoffs and some painted portraits of Saddam and his sons—or two gilded American Winchesters, with a pair of spurs, they were presented by President Ronald Reagan to Saddam Hussein!

**EIR:** In your presentation the other day in Mainz, Germany, you mentioned, you differentiated very clearly between the groups of looters.

**Donny George:** Exactly. Yes. After we checked what has been happening on those three days—we archeologists are like investigators, we check everything. And I myself had the idea that there were three groups of people that went inside the museum.

Number one, were the just normal looters, I would call illiterate poor people that were looking for anything to sell for money. Number two, were the people who went into the store rooms. It seems that they had studied the route how to go there, because they went and broke through a glass door, an iron screen door, an iron door locked with bricks. The third group went into the museum and started picking up things that they knew of beforehand. And, we found some glass cutters: This means, they were prepared to come to the museum. We found a bunch of keys somewhere near the room of the director of the museum, which looked very like the key for the safe of the director, which contained the keys for the museum. And that bunch of keys is not ours. Impossible, we know our keys.



*This bronze head of an king from the Akkadian era, 2350-2150 B.C., found at Nineveh in the North, was in the looted Baghdad National Museum, considered the essential resource by Mideast scholars and historians worldwide.*



*A detail of the Warka Vase, one of the most priceless articles looted from the Iraqi National Museum in April, which now has been returned to the museum. The vase, which goes back at least to 3,200 B.C., shows the philosophy of the Sumerians on the development of the stages of life.*

And they passed by some Egyptian copies [of art works], which means they had the knowledge of the pieces, and they passed by a fake statue which we had in one of the corridors of the museum, which again means that they knew something about art, they knew what they were looking for. So, it means that there were people in the museum, in the galleries, that were well prepared to enter the museum, take these things. It was those people who broke through the museum from a point where we had a window which was not a normal window, it was built out with glass bricks, and then we had blocked it from outside, we had an iron screen from the outside.

My personal fear is that what this group has taken might not come back. Because if they had prepared everything, they must have prepared their way out. There might be some connections between groups two and three—might be, I am not sure—because they both knew what they wanted. It's not like the first group, who were just looters.

**EIR:** An Iraqi colleague of ours in Sweden is monitoring Arab TV. There were apparently some of the looters filmed, going through the museum. And he said right from the very beginning, they looked well organized.

**Donny George:** The Army should have been there and stopped them. And they were there, they were all the time there, but they did not stop them.

**EIR:** The German archeologist Professor Sommerfeld wrote in one of his articles, that the Americans told people to go in and loot, and they broke open gates for them. That was a report that he had gotten from other people.

**Donny George:** I don't know that, really. But what I am sure of is what that friend of ours, that archeologist, said. He said that he went and begged them to come and protect [the art-

works], they said, "We don't have orders." Well, this meant, go on, take what you want. But that the Americans had broken the main gate of the museum and let the people in—this did not happen. The front gates are intact, nobody entered from there, they went from the back doors, and some small doors, and the connection corridors from the administration area to the museum, but they broke through, from that wall in the museum, and they broke through another small window we had.

**EIR:** Which means they must have been very well informed.

**Donny George:** Exactly. The museum, maybe six weeks before, was opened to the public. Perhaps they were there. Perhaps, also some of them had been in the room of the director of the museum, so that they noticed the kind or make of safe she had in her room. It was one of these old safes, that doesn't have a combination number. It was just opened with the key. This is my explanation for the bunch of keys we had there. . . . She had only one key, and it was with her. We know that very well. She is a reliable woman, one of the best scholars in cuneiform that we have.

**EIR:** I'm wondering: Who would have access to the director's room? Only people who are involved in archeology, art. Maybe the people around this predatory collectors' group, the American Council for Cultural Policy (ACCP), that we've identified in the United States? [See *EIR*, April 25, 2003.]

**Donny George:** Maybe. . . .

**EIR:** It would be worthwhile to find out, who travelled to Iraq in the period before the war.

**Donny George:** Maybe. . . .

If we had not collected the material, if we had not taken the precious materials out of the building, and put them in the Central Bank; if we had not taken the 40,000 manuscripts we had—ancient Arabic, Islamic, Christian manuscripts we

had—taken them away, put them in another safe place, this would have been a huge loss for the heritage of mankind. But even so, what was lost from the museum and the store rooms, is a great loss.

**EIR:** There were reports that some items have been returned, I think from the No. 1 looters' group, probably.

**Donny George:** That's right. When we were back to the museum, we learned that a lot of people from the neighborhood were also in the museum, taking things. We contacted the mosques, and they started preaching, and calling the people to bring back these objects, because they are of great importance to the country, to the history of the Iraqi people. And immediately, we started having things, through the mosques, coming back to us. That was very important.

Afterwards we arranged with the Americans, that there was an amnesty call on the radio: That people should bring things to the museum and nobody would ask them, or there would be no court or any kind of legal action done against them. Again, we started having objects from normal people, not from the neighboring area of the museum.

Then, there was one very important action done, by some young people. Just when we went to the American headquarters, and the time when the tanks came, two young men came to the museum, and asked for me and Dr. Jabar; they wanted to have a private talk with us. They said they were in the museum on [April 10] where the people were looting and taking everything. They could not stop them, because they were so many, and almost all of them armed with machine guns, with pistols, with knives. So they decided to do exactly as the looters did, to take objects, as if they were looters. And they took the objects home, to protect them. They said, we'll bring them back as soon as we see that the museum premises is safe. I wanted to check this idea, so I started asking them about the material they had. They really started explaining material that I had noticed that was missing from the museum. We did not ask them their names, we did not ask them for their addresses, we just relied on their word of honor. About two or three days after we had the American tanks in the premises, these two young men came back and brought nine very important pieces. Among them was the statue of King Shalmanesar III. And one of the bronze reliefs from the Tell el Obeid in the South; and one piece of that decorated and inlaid column; and a nicely decorated part of a door.

So these were the kind of people who have brought things. The very last evening that I wanted to come here, a friend of mine came to my house, and said that he had some information, that there were people who wanted to sell antiquities. I sent him to the museum, I told him where to go, to use my name, tell the guards that he is my cousin. I gave him the name of one of the American investigators, he should go to him, and introduce himself, and tell him the whole story, he would know what to do.

Afterwards I heard in the news, that the American investi-

gators there had captured around 300 pieces. So I think, it was this story.

**EIR:** If I understand you correctly, all the museums now are secured. Also, what's left of the libraries. But what about all the excavation sites?

**Donny George:** This is again another huge problem. Because this happened in 1991, just after the war, where people in the remote areas, especially in the South, started digging in the sites there. They just pushed away our guards, there was some fighting between them and our guards. We had one or two guards on the site, but they were coming with 300-400 people, all of them armed to the teeth, so it was impossible for our guards to protect the sites. We managed to stop that by several measures: The last and the most effective one was, we started excavating in the South. We managed to have, at first, two teams: one headed by myself; and the other was headed by Dr. Naralah, who is the director of the museum. It stopped the looting on these very important sites. In the next year, we had six sites excavated by our people. Then, it was stopped because of this war.

**EIR:** When was it that you went there?

**Donny George:** We started in 1999. That was the beginning of these excavations. We called them "preventive excavations," or "salvage excavations," to prevent any kind of looting of those sites. When I was there, I employed 15 armed guards, where we could have duties and shifts for 24 hours. So in this way, these sites were protected. Unfortunately, the looters from those sites just switched to other sites.

But after this war, when all this chaos started, no government, no security, nothing—they went back to those sites. Now we hear of hundreds of people that are digging in huge Sumerian and Babylonian sites. And they are getting things and just selling them, just having them cross the borders to Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan—or I heard some people from the North are coming down, buying them, taking them to the North, crossing into Iran or Turkey. So, it is a real tragedy now in the archeological sites.

**EIR:** German television recently had a TV crew there, filming them digging. Is there no protection, by any Americans, or British?

**Donny George:** In the beginning, we tried so much to arrange a kind of first patrol to go and check these sites. The coordinates of these sites were given to the American forces. They did one trip with armed helicopters. Some people accompanied them; among them was Prof. Maguire Gibson from Chicago. They went up, and saw a lot of these sites, and noticed that a lot of these sites had hundreds of people on them, actually digging. He made some photos.

They came down to some of these sites, chased some of the looters, but it was not the solution, because you chase them away in the daytime, they will come back at night. And I was told by Professor Gibson, that the people in the [U.S.

Army] civil affairs, had decided that they would have almost every day, patrols by armed helicopters at these sites, and they would try to have patrols on the ground going there, until most of these important sites in the South were safe and secured. I mean, they are trying, that's true.

**EIR:** How many sites are there of great value? It must be tens of thousands?

**Donny George:** Yes, only the registered sites, we have more than 10,000 sites. Those are just registered, and every single day, when we go out and check sites, our people always find sites.

Among these sites there are huge cities. For instance, Chocha, which is Umma, in the South, is 8 square kilometers [about 1 square mile]. My site, which is Ummr Agarov, is 5 square kilometers. And this goes on for the others, Isen, Lapsa, and Shmed and Zech and Al Madinah, and Al Naseriya. These are huge Sumerian and Babylonian sites in the South. And the people around there, they know them. Some of them perhaps have worked for us, some have worked for the German expedition with Professor Ruda. They now come and dig, and get things out. There is no government, no security, nobody stops them.

**EIR:** You were talking about cross-border sales. I mean, is it true, that the borders are not controlled by the Anglo-Americans from the Iraqi side?

**Donny George:** This is true, because I have seen it myself, twice. When I crossed for the first time, when I went to London, and this time, when I came to Germany. They never checked. They just see, you have a passport, it's OK; they just open the boot of the car, look at the engine, OK, and you go. And the journalists, they don't check them.

**EIR:** In fact, one journalist had a lot of loot, a journalist going to the United States.

**Donny George:** No, it's not only one. The first day, when I crossed the border, on April 26 or 27, they had captured 12 cases at the Jordanian borders. All of them were journalists, smuggling either antiquities, or documents, governmental documents.

**EIR:** How can it be? Because after the meeting of the UN Economic, Social, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) that took place; and then, there was a meeting of Interpol, I believe, where U.S. Attorney General Ashcroft was present. It's a big country, and one can cross into another country without going through the actual border.

**Donny George:** That's right. But going through the actual borders, they were just smuggling antiquities through that actual border! When I came back from London, I talked to the guards there, I introduced myself, and I told them: "Please, this is very important. You are not checking the journalists. It's the journalists who are smuggling antiquities. Just half a kilometer away, there, the Jordanians are capturing journal-

ists smuggling antiquities."

**EIR:** Does that mean, that these groups are being intercepted on the other side of the border, by the Jordanians?

**Donny George:** By the Jordanians! We don't know what's happening in Turkey and Syria, and Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia's borders, really. But what we know is, just the Jordanians are actually checking very well.

**EIR:** I saw in a number of the reports, that the international smuggling rings are very well represented in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. That there are groups. I'm not saying that they are Saudis and Kuwaitis . . . but that the routes go through these two countries. Also Israel was mentioned.

**Donny George:** Yes. We knew that before, since 1991, some people were captured by the Iraqi police, and they told them that there are people, Europeans, sitting in Saudi Arabia, they are asking us to bring so and so and so, they are leading us to go and dig so and so and so.

**EIR:** Could you explain a little bit from your point of view, how this apparatus functions? Because, if you think it through, it requires a huge network, worldwide. You must know who the collectors are, but you also must have the contacts to the military, political protection, and what not. It seems to me, it is very much like the drug trade.

**Donny George:** It is a huge mafia for smuggling antiquities. Because even in the Internet, now you could see Iraqis who can tell you: "We have these objects, and we can take them for you to Amman, you can collect them there, we take them across the borders." And not only that, we hear that there are a lot of people inside Iraq, nearby those sites, buying these things from these looters there. They are not Iraqis, they are Europeans.

It's a very sad situation, what happens to the antiquities and to these pieces of art, that belong to mankind. They are the heritage of every single person in the world. And they are smuggled and massacred like this. The major thing is, when you get these objects outside the sites, you are taking them away from their context, which is very important for the archeologists.

If you take a word or a letter from a page in a book, then this word means nothing, if you don't have it in this book. An archeological site is like a book. We excavate page by page, read everything page by page. In this way, we know the whole history of the site. If it is looted in this way, just digging holes here and there, and tunnels between these holes, it is just extracting things from there, and taking them away, it's meaningless.

**EIR:** I read somewhere that various sites had been presented as sites which should be recognized by UNESCO as world heritage; and that only Hatra was acknowledged in Iraq, while Babylon, Nineveh, Baghdad, Ur, and others were not. In June 2003, the world heritage committee is going to be meeting,

they are going to discuss whether they can actually have these others acknowledged. What would that mean?

**Donny George:** It is very important. You see, among these sites we have inside Iraq, only Hatra is recognized. I believe it was the political situation.

Two years ago, we applied for several sites to be included. We applied the preliminary form, and we were not that much encouraged by UNESCO, unfortunately. But we insisted on Ashur, because it was in danger. I myself completed the dossier for Ashur. Then we received a committee from the UNESCO in Baghdad. We went and saw the sites, and then they helped us to enhance that dossier. Myself, and a lady from the UNESCO, and I believe Arnulf Hausleiter from Germany, arranged and completed the file for Ashur, and we sent it back to the UNESCO. If Ashur is recognized, we will feel encouraged so much to apply for other sites, for the world heritage list.

**EIR:** And what does that mean concretely in terms of security?

**Donny George:** The security will have to be done by the Iraqis, but it means that we will get the help of UNESCO experts, we will get the help of the international experts, in preservation, excavation and preparing these sites for tourism. And they will not be hit, if there is any kind of war—which, I believe, that's the final war, we don't want to have any more war.

It's important to have sites in the world heritage list.

**EIR:** Has there been any discussion among the professionals, the archeologists, and so on, on these changes in laws, that are being promoted by the ACCP lobby in the United States?

**Donny George:** This is something very important. The Iraqi laws on antiquities . . . are old laws; the antiquities law goes back to 1936. We had some amendments until 1974, or '73. Do people have the right to go and change other people's laws? This is impossible! . . . Well, government, yes, these are the people who are ruling the countries—but the laws are for the benefit of the people themselves, and this is something else!

**EIR:** There were discussions in the Pentagon—

**Donny George:** I know! They [ACCP] want to relax parts of the Iraqi laws so that they are able to export some of the items outside the country. I think this is impossible! Nobody will accept that. You know why? I tell you what kind of impact the looting of the museum and the antiquities had on the Iraqi people. I've been meeting different kinds of people: from the butcher to the grocer to a fruit seller, to a professor in the university. They all came to one conclusion: That is, all what happened to the country, can happen, but nobody would accept what happened to the museum. Because this museum just hit the heart of the people. So it is impossible to change the law! This concerns the whole population of Iraq.

If somebody would say for the Iraqis, "Okay, look here, the Americans want to change the antiquities law and they want to have some of your antiquities exported legally abroad. What do you say?" I would say, there will be another revolution in Iraq against the Americans! Because it is impossible, it is not likely to be done.

**EIR:** I have been reading that during one of the meetings in the Pentagon on Jan. 24, the treasurer of this ACCP apparently was received in the Pentagon; he had the backing of Philippe de Montebello from the Metropolitan Museum of New York, for the idea that international teams should take part in excavations in Iraq.

**Donny George:** This is normal!

**EIR:** Yes, this is normal, but with the idea that, once they find something, they'll be able to export it. Get a license to export.

**Donny George:** No! I know, this is impossible. They are not looking for science, they are looking for profit, for money!

Previously, we had this division of antiquities, the antiquities would go 50% to Iraqis, 50% to the expedition. Those expeditions were either from the British Museum—they have the objects in the British Museum—or from the universities—they have these objects in their universities. They don't want that! They want those pieces to be sold. There is no respectable expedition that will dig something, and go and sell it for them! This is looting, robbery! They try to legalize their robbery, they want to make profit, money from this kind of looting. This is horrible!

I am sure there is no single Iraqi who will accept that. I'm sure nobody will accept that anywhere in the world. Here in Germany, if you accept some non-German expeditions to come and work here, OK, this is according to law. But would you accept having them take antiquities outside the country? Nobody will accept that. . . .

If it is to show these pieces, we always have exhibitions outside. We always have the masterpieces in our museum, everybody can come and see them. We have exhibitions outside, hundreds and millions of people can come and see these things. We have publications, they can study, they can read them. But it is not that. It is the money they are looking for that they can make out of these antiquities. This is a shame!

**EIR:** Is there anything else that you might think of that could be done?

**Donny George:** I would say, every single man in the world should look for these antiquities and say "no" to these looters and these smugglers. The antiquities should go back to the Iraq Museum, because it is their natural place. The museum will be open to everybody. It is a crime to have these antiquities in the custody of one man, to put them in the cellar, to watch them, and prevent the whole world from viewing these masterpieces of mankind.