

The Scourge of Hopelessness

Life in a Bifurcated World

By WILLIAM A. COOK

"But modern industrial warfare may well be leading us, with each technological advance, a step closer to our own annihilation."

*Chris Hedges,
War Is a Force that Gives Us Meaning*

Each day the newspapers carry stories from Israel and Iraq describing another IDF or US soldier shot; each day another story about the failed roadmap for peace and the failed promise for Iraqi freedom. Each day we witness America becoming mired in the tar baby that has been the day-to-day experience of Israel for fifty years. Each day the strong arm of vengeance sticks in the tar baby's gut accomplishing nothing but proximity to more pain and suffering. Brother Remus told that tar baby story to the plantation owner's son, a story with a long history in Africa, a story of wiliness and endurance, twin traits that enable the oppressed to survive the bitterness of occupation; would that the "Man" had heeded the truth embedded in that tale. But the oppressor is addicted to his myths of superiority, to his beliefs in only his righteousness, and to his obligation to bring his freedom and his advanced civilization to the inferior people he oppresses. Such is the blindness that afflicts those who see through the lens of force.

Hedges' observation embodies the developed nation's talisman, the power of its technology to conquer, to impose its will, to subdue a people, to exploit its resources, all to advance its own agenda, the hoarding of more wealth to its ruling class. But that ruling class is blind, not just to the tar baby, but also to the people it governs who suffer its stupidity. Nothing is more frightening than to read Woodward's *Bush at War* and realize that no one in charge not Cheney, not Rumsfeld, not Powell, not Rice, not Wolfowitz, not Tenet, not Black, not Ashcroft, no and not the President asked the most fundamental question that glared through all the dust and twisted steel that had been the Twin Towers and the Pentagon: "Why would nineteen men incinerate themselves in the most glaringly symbolic structures of wealth and power erected by western civilization?" What is the primary cause of the "evil" we have seen visited upon us? Perhaps the answer is so simple it could not be asked: "We are the cause, we the vested interests bought by wealth to the positions we hold cannot afford to recognize or accept the devastation we have wrought on the hopeless and deprived of the world."

Israel blossomed fifty-five years ago, not into a reborn land flowing with milk and honey, but into a modern technological Goliath that mimics its ancient foes as it attempts to subdue the indigenous peoples of Palestine, not with the puny shields and swords of the Philistines, but with the tanks, helicopter warships, fighter jets,

missiles, cluster bombs, and the ultimate and illusive weapons of mass destruction that give righteousness its almighty power. For half a century, Israel used every arsenal of contemporary warfare to advance its goal to acquire the fabled lands of Judea and Samaria promised them by their mythical god 2500 years ago. The original fighters used terror tactics, massacres, and ethnic cleansing to advance their cause. The current government of Ariel Sharon, one of the original terrorists, uses laser guided missiles to annihilate individuals he has determined are terrorists and any innocents who happen to be present when the technologically advanced instrument of death finds its way to its extrajudicial target. He and his coalition forces now control through illegal occupation 78% of Palestine and continue to defy the United Nations resolutions to return the land to its rightful owners. And they do this with the full approbation of their Godfather, the United States of America.

For the infliction of this oppression, Israel suffers the consequences of righteousness' two sided sword: the wily evil that festers in the soul of the oppressed and the internal suffering that bleeds in the Jewish souls who find this use of force intolerable. Yet the minority rule in Israel: the minority parties who coerce Sharon to stay the course or lose his seat of power; the minority cults of Zionist zeal who inhabit the illegal settlements; and the minority ruling class who control the corporations and industries and hence the legislation that gives them the power to impose their will. It is that last that controls ultimately. The military-industrial complex that infects Israel infected the United States over fifty years ago and continues to infect its principles with the toxic lies of compassionate conservatism and compassionate globalization..

The incestuous relationship that exists between the US and Israel breeds ever larger technological children, bigger tanks, bigger missiles, better conceptualized bombs that eradicate more people and, most importantly, better protection for their military as they press the buttons of war sending death and destruction to unseen foes who might be, "God forbid," children or mothers or the sick, maimed or elderly, the accidental detritus of modern warfare. That incestuous relationship provides protection for industries producing these advanced technological wonders ensuring their continued existence despite the havoc they wreck on Israelis to say nothing of Palestinians. That same incest also breeds, for both Israel and the United States, an ever growing family of terrorists who find purpose in their collective fight against the oppressor and release from their torment in the fanatical illusion that their God calls them to His cause, the destruction of the infidels. Ironically enough, the oppression imposed by Israel on the Palestinians is justified in the name of that same God's covenant with His people and their perceived illusion that they must defend that God against infidels as well. Illusion becomes the propellant of our technological advancement!

Indeed, the myths propel the addiction to slaughter and justify it! How else explain IDF soldiers "beating medical personnel and using them as human shields, taunting young children to throw rocks at their tanks so they could respond with

live ammunition, forcing women with infants to stand for hours in the cold a few metres from their homes, destroying food and water systems, and firing heavy machine guns into residential streets and buildings." ("Our Humanity in the Balance," May 4, 2003, Moiseiwitsch, Murray, and Penland, Winnipeg Free Press).

How else explain IDF soldiers "urinating on school computers and defecating on the rugs of homes they have garrisoned for use; accidentally demolishing the homes of innocent people that happen to be near the homes deliberately destroyed preventing the residents of entire cities from leaving their houses for weeks on end (no exceptions-not for chemo, dialysis, childbirth, buying food, attending school, or visiting your sick mother); damaging 27 Palestinian ambulances beyond repair and wounding 187 medical personnel; and assassinating people without the niceties of trial and due process, not to mention reckless shootings in which 126 innocent children aged 13 or younger (including 19 toddlers and infants aged 5 or younger!) have lost lives." (Tikkun on line, 3/4/03).

How else explain the behavior of Jewish settlers in Hebron who "regularly attack Palestinian shops, cut electricity lines and water pipes, wreck cars, and attack schoolchildren." Or this, "Plans are underway for the construction of a 'safe passage,' a settlers' 'promenade' that would link the settlement of Kiryat Arba on Hebron's eastern flank to the Old City like a wedge thrust into the heart of the city, confiscating 64 parcels of private Palestinian property and razing at least 15 houses in its wake." Or this, "Associated Press (20,12,02) and the Israeli daily Yedioth Achronot have recently quoted Palestinians in Hebron describing how 'Israeli border police have forced detainees to choose whether to have a nose, arm or leg broken.'" ("Hebron: City of Terror," 2/23/03, Ran HaCohen)

These are examples of the silent Sharon policies that allow for the systematic harassment and killing of Palestinians and the unseen erosion of their lands as Israel confiscates more and more of what was the Palestinian state before 1948. "You are leaving behind you a scorched land, a scorched country, and you are mainly leaving behind you a scorched people" the opposition leader Yossi Sarid yelled as Sharon left to meet with Bush last October 14. There are those who understand the consequences!

What, one asks in wonder, does adherence to these myths and scorched earth policies accomplish? Certainly and obviously not security for the Jewish people! Rather it creates the scourge of desperation and hopelessness wrapped around the waist of the suicide bomber that plagues Israel, as decidedly as the locusts ravaged Egypt when the Jews were the enslaved! Why, one asks in wonder, does the oppressed take on the mantle of the oppressor with such vehemence that they become blind to the plight of the afflicted? Where, one asks in wonder, will it all end or do we move ineluctably step by step closer, as Hedges states, to our own annihilation?

And what now of the United States, the incestuous relation that gives sustenance to Israel's Sharon and feeds his insatiable appetite for vengeance and retaliation? We see its fruition in Iraq as we take on the mantle of the oppressor, discarding the pseudo-garment of the liberator now that the oil and military positioning is in place. We read each day accounts of thousands demanding that the oppressor leave the country; we see the troops, our 20 year old kids, disgorge from their armored vehicles to wade through angry crowds searching in vain for "terrorists" who, also in vain, attempt to inflict some damage on the oppressor whom they see as the "terrorist"; we read of our soldiers ambushed, wounded or killed; we hear stories, even after three months in occupation, of Americans kidnapping and raping Iraqi women, the beginning perhaps of the occupier's attitude about the inferior status of the oppressed; we hear our beloved leaders decry the wily behavior of the oppressed who should be welcoming our presence, who proclaim our beneficence to those whom we have just bombed into submission; we watch in disbelief the Iraqi people, whose children are crippled because they picked up our cluster bombs thinking them toys, whose hospitals, museums, and libraries have been destroyed, whose natural resources have become the new found wealth of the western oil companies, yea, we watch them condemn us as invaders and despoilers, the newest nation to attempt to colonize their country. We have become the new Israel in the mid-east and we will suffer the same fate not only in Iraq, but also in all the haunts that we inhabit around the world, and here at home. We have sunk our invader's arms into the tar baby of the Middle East without concern for the primary causes that have festered there for more than fifty years and given birth to so much animosity that Americans must hide from the rest of the world for their own protection. We, like Israel, will build walls around ourselves to ward out those whom we oppress and wonder why it must be so.

Until and unless our leaders confront the primary causes of the world's anger against the west, no solution to our insecurity will arise. We will continue to pummel the tar baby helplessly despite our "modern industrial warfare" and, perhaps, because of it. We live in a bifurcated world of the supremely rich and the absolutely deprived, of the aggressor and the oppressed, of those willing and able to exploit both humans and natural resources without compunction and those who suffer such pillage, and, until and unless we confront head on these realities, America's obsession with Pan Americana can only secure America's insecurity. The desperate wiliness of the oppressed and their indomitable will to endure has been the story of human history; there is no reason to believe that it will change.

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