

Turning Myths into Truth

Fodder for the Mindless

by WILLIAM A. COOK

The lies used by the Bush administration to rally support for its illegal actions in Iraq and Palestine have moved with glacial slowness before the public. The reason, we have learned, exists in the main stream media that controls news fed to the public. Alison Weir, Executive Director of "If Americans Knew," established, for example, that 150% of Israeli children's deaths (more than one story on some) were the subject of front page articles and photos in the San Francisco Chronicle while only 5% of Palestinian children's deaths made it to the front page. Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting noted that NPR reported on 89% of Israeli children's deaths and only 20% of Palestinian children's deaths. These studies mirror the reality for most American, corporate controlled media.

Recently, an Ariel Sharon advisor, Dov Weisglass, revealed to Ha'aretz that the "ulterior motive behind Sharon's unilateral decision to withdraw from the Gaza strip" was not to further the peace process but to "freeze it" in order to prevent "the establishment of a Palestinian state." Where did you read about this in America's main stream media? In another news article last month, Ha'aretz editorialized that Israel is responsible for the terror that exists in Palestine! That confession also went unnoticed in the US. The sin of intentional omission more often than not creates the perceptions we hold on issues of great significance. The elite powers that control the message control what we think is true. Let me offer three examples of intentional deception that fabricates a myth that becomes truth.

Ha'aretz, the Israeli newspaper not controlled by the right-wing Zionists of Sharon's racist administration, editorialized a couple of weeks ago on a matter of paramount concern to America, the cause of terrorism in Israel and the mid-east, a matter not mentioned at either of our national conventions, and unreported in the main stream press: "The underlying basis of (this) terrorism lies in the territories. Nowhere else. The main motivation for the war against us is the aspiration to shake off the cruel yoke of the occupation. The checkpoints, the humiliations, the suppression and the mass imprisonment are the true infrastructure of terrorism." This editorial exposes the truth about terrorism in Israel and elsewhere in the mid-east and gives lie to the myth that it is the Palestinians that have caused the terrorism that afflicts that state. It denudes the fiction that Sharon perpetrates and uses as a collar around Bush's neck in order to lead him to accept the state terrorism that he imposes on the Palestinians.

This editorial decries the blatant and unfounded accusations made by the Chief of Staff, Moshe Ya'alon and the military that blames Syria for the terrorism in Israel. "The

attempt to cast responsibility on Damascus is intended to avoid having to cope with the true causes of terrorism," Ha'aretz argues. "Colonial regimes have always accused external sources of intervening in the liberation struggles waged against them, in order to undermine the justice of the struggles," a point that America has to face in Iraq as it imposes its will on a people that has no desire to be suppressed. The Ha'aretz editorial blows open the whole charade that Israel and its American apologizers use to defend its occupation and oppression, friends like AIPAC, the now exposed conduit for American classified information to Sharon.

"Palestinian terrorism was not engendered in any external command post. It had its birth among the rubble in the territories, in the hearts of the children who saw their parents humiliated and their lives trampled underfoot. Anyone who truly wants to put an end to terrorism must fight the occupation. Any other war is pointless," a point that makes a mockery of AIPAC's and Wolfowitz' and Sharon's push to "change regimes" in Iran and Syria even as it bares the insidious intent of their efforts. Deception destroys discernment of truth and omission of any reference to this argument, made by a major newspaper in Israel, can be nothing more than intentional deception.

Consider now a second myth that has prominence in America, one defended by Israel's most renowned apologist, Alan Dershowitz, in his most recent book *The Case for Israel*. According to Dershowitz, "Jews were a substantial majority in those areas of Palestine partitioned by the United Nations for a Jewish state." The official UN estimate of the population of mandatory Palestine allocated to the Jewish state, according to Dershowitz, although he provides no source for his numbers, only the claim that they are authoritative, are 538,000 Jews and 397,000 Arabs. Interestingly, he does not question the accuracy of the population numbers provided by this writer in a CP article that appeared 4/6/03 (figures Dershowitz questions), he simply changes the base of the argument and thus allows himself to offer numbers that fit his argument.

What he does not provide, what he omits to record, are numbers based on historical and archeological data collected in a huge tome that identifies the populations of every village within the pre-1967 borders of Israel, titled appropriately, *All That Remains*, a work edited by Walid Khalidi a distinguished historian and one time Senior Fellow at Harvard's Center for Middle Eastern Studies. In this work, Khalidi accounts for 418 towns and villages that were systematically raised by the Jewish military, citing exact population statistics for each location, statistics that appear as they did in the Mandate Government's 1945 Village Statistics. Each of these 418 towns and villages had been in recorded existence since the 16th century inhabited by an overwhelming Arab population.

The statistics tell the story. In excess of 390,000 inhabitants of these towns and villages were forced to move in 1948, in addition to an estimated 254,000 inhabitants of cities in

the same areas and 70,000 to 100,000 Beduins, a mobile population driven out by the Jewish forces. Another 13,000 were killed in the battles that took place in these areas. The total amounted to an estimated 54% of the population in the areas that constituted the UN proposed land to be given to the Jewish state. Khalidi's accounted for population of approximately 727,000 Arabs gives the lie to Dershowitz' figures even if one accepts his argument that the population of the proposed Jewish state only should be the basis of determining that the creation of it was justified.

But statistics do not tell the human side of this catastrophic movement of people. These major urban areas—Acre, Beersheba, Baysan, Lydda, Majdal, Nazareth, al-Rama—were emptied of their Palestinian residents. "Their immovable assets—commercial centers, residential quarters, schools, banks, hospitals, clinics, mosques, churches, and other public buildings, parks and utilities, all passed en bloc into the possession of the nascent State of Israel. Also appropriated intact by Israelis were the personal moveable assets: furniture, silver, pictures, carpets, libraries, and heirlooms—all the accoutrements of middle-class life of the erstwhile Palestinian residents."

In *All That Remains*, Khalidi provides two maps, divided by areas that constitute the proposed Jewish state, with graphics that demonstrate the population comparison between Palestinian and Jew. There are 8 areas that make up the proposed state: Safad, Tiberiae, Baysan, Haifa, a large section of Tulkarm, Jaffa, a sizeable section of Al Ramla, and Beersheba; a separate area designation is provided for Jerusalem. Only in Jaffa did the Jewish population outnumber the Arab, including Jerusalem which had an Arab population of 62% versus 38% Jewish. One might note that Dershowitz mentions only that western Jerusalem had a majority of Jews; how deceptive. He also notes that Hebron, not designated as part of the proposed state, had a Jewish population for thousands of years, a fact somewhat at odds with the population statistics in 1946 when there were less than 1% Jews in the area.

Hidden within the myth that Jews were the larger population in the proposed Jewish state thus making legitimate their right to the land, is another myth, more insidious than the first: Palestinians left that area of their own accord or upon the demands of the Palestinian authorities. This myth opens the door for innocent Israelis to claim the deserted land for themselves. But according to Henry Siegman, in a rebuttal letter in the *New York Review of Books* to Benny Morris the Israeli historian who had questioned a Siegman article, "The issue I addressed in my article is whether the mass exodus of 700,000 Palestinian Arabs from the areas in Palestine assigned to the Jews was the consequence of the chaos of war or whether it was 'planned'—the result of a deliberate decision by Jewish leaders to expel Palestinian Arabs from these areas. I noted in my article that in the revised edition of Morris's book, he writes that he had conclusive evidence that there was indeed a deliberate decision by Ben Gurion to expel—the term 'cleanse' is used extensively—700,000 Palestinian Arabs. Their flight was therefore not

the unintended collateral damage of a war started by the Arabs but the result of decisions and actions taken by the Yishuv's top political and military planners." Siegman goes on to point out that Morris does not object to the decision to "expel" Palestinians from their land because he understands that a Jewish state could not exist in an area where the Arab population outnumbered the Jews: "Without the uprooting of the Palestinians, a Jewish state would not have arisen here." The title of Siegman's article suggests the consequences of the lies that give feigned legitimacy to illegal actions: "Israel: the Threat from Within."

My third myth, presented as truth universally, may best be presented by Elsa Walsh from her article for the New Yorker (3/24/03), titled "The Prince." The article is something of a brief biography of Prince Bandar of Saudi Arabia and his political manipulations in our nation's Capital. Walsh writes "But when Dennis Ross showed Bandar the President's (Clinton) talking papers Bandar recognized that in its newest iteration the peace plan was a remarkable development. It gave Arafat almost everything he wanted, including the return of about ninety-seven per cent of the land of the occupied territories; all of Jerusalem except the Jewish and Armenian quarters, with Jews preserving the right to worship at the Temple Mount; and a thirty-billion-dollar compensation fund." Arafat, as Walsh notes, agreed to accept the proposals as offered by Clinton, but only as the basis for new talks. The world heard that Arafat had refused the proposals and offered no explanation or alternatives.

Did Clinton's papers offer Arafat "everything he wanted" as Bandar claims? In 1993, Arafat sent a letter to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, September 9, stating most pertinently these points: The PLO recognizes the right of the state of Israel to exist in peace and security; the PLO accepts United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, the 1948 and 1967 borders and right of return; the PLO commits itself to the peace process all outstanding issues will be resolved through negotiations.

Did Clinton offer Arafat all of the land captured by the Israelis in 1948? Did he offer a return to the borders as delineated by the UN in 1967? Or did he offer Arafat 97% of the West Bank and Gaza? Did Clinton provide a set process for the refugees, a right to return to their homes whether in the remaining Palestinian land or in Israel? Did Clinton's plan provide for recognition of the right to exist of a Palestinian state, a state recognized by Israel?

It's clear that Clinton did not offer Arafat everything he wanted. Arafat had no option but to refuse Clinton's proposal or accept it only as a basis for new negotiations, and that he did. It's instructive to note that the one-sidedness of Clinton's offer was so blatant that Yossi Beilin, an Israeli architect of the Oslo Accords, and former Palestinian minister Yasser Abed Rabbo, worked for two and a half years to create the Geneva Accords to right the wrongs of the original proposals. The GA, while not official,

stipulates the immediate recognition of a Palestinian state by the state of Israel. It addresses forthrightly the issue of refugee right of return and compensation for their suffering and loss of homes in accordance with UN Resolutions 194 of 1948 and the principles of International Law. And it notes that the relations between Israel and Palestine shall be based upon the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. Furthermore, it makes the borders that compose the state of Palestine those of June 1967 in accordance with Resolutions 242 and 338. Most of the settlements are to be disbanded and territorial integrity to be respected by both parties. Palestine will be a non-militarized state protected in part by the creation of a multinational force established and deployed in Palestine. Finally, a joint committee will monitor the crossing borders, an item originally in the Oslo agreement but later cancelled by Israel. This document addresses the issues Arafat had to contend with, without which he could not commit his people. Curiously enough, the GA offers a resolution to the dilemma addressed by Ha'aretz in its editorial, a just resolution to the conflict that rages in Palestine.

There you have it, three myths presented as truth to a world benumbed, especially in the US. All three exist because our press and our talking heads, especially those that snarl on FOX or obsequiously fawn disbelief on CNN or MSNBC, intentionally omit the requisite investigation of the truth or coddle to the power of corporate America and to the belief, in itself a myth, that we must not question our one true friend in the Middle East, the "Democratic" (sic) state of Israel. But, then, myths are the staple of those who want to know without engaging the mind or the senses. Besides, a little blather about issues of no consequence coddles the public mind and doesn't really disturb their contentment.

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