

Bus No. 37

March 9, 2003

By Robbie Friedmann

The most recent suicidal-genocidal bus bombing took place on bus No. 37 on top of Mt. Carmel in the city of Haifa last week killing 16 and injuring dozens. The bombing shattered the short-lived illusion of and desire for (relative) tranquility which in turn was based not on lack of terror attack attempts but on the successful thwarting of such missions by Israeli security forces (more than 120 successes since the beginning of the year). This bombing symbolizes the horrific vulnerability to terrorism of "soft targets" anywhere. It also signifies the relentless efforts by the terrorists to inflict as much harm as they can at the cost of their own lives. Not exactly a promising formula for an incentive to change the "world-view" of the clergy and political leadership who are directly responsible for this scourge. Moreover, the level of support they have in the population is indicative of the depth of hate and blood-thirst so evident by the act of "extremists" against a backdrop of a climate and environment that support it.

Yet, the hate is only an instrument that facilitates political ends and cold calculated interests. Hate itself is not enough to murder people indiscriminately. Serial murderers perhaps prove this point best. Otherwise it is very hard to explain the recent bombings in Columbia or the Philippines. Hate simply serves the interest handlers not just the perpetrators, it enhances the climate against which it makes it *easier* to carry out these despicable acts and the claims they make for any *legitimacy*. It also has the real risk of throwing the world into gang-like warfare if not stopped in time.

Just examine the vociferous language coming out from the *extremist* camp. The recent Bin Laden sermon ("Bin Laden's Sermon for the Feast of the Sacrifice," MEMRI, Special Dispatch - Jihad and Terrorism Studies, March 5, 2003, No. 476) does not merely include rhetoric against the infidels but it laments the outcome of the historic 1916 [Sykes-Picot](#) agreement which shaped the map in the Middle East for decades to come and equates it to the Bush-Blair agreement (even if the parallel between the two is rather far-fetched): "... Now we find ourselves confronted once more with the spirit of the Sykes-Picot agreement [under another name]: the Bush-Blair agreement, which is conducted under the same banner and for the same purpose -- the banner is that of the cross, the purpose is the destruction and plunder of the Nation of Allah's beloved [Muhammad]..." and then he ends with an ominous (if not surprising) message: "I am happy to inform all of you - and our brothers in Palestine in particular - that your brethren who are engaged in Jihad continue to pursue the way of Jihad, targeting the Jews and the Americans. The Mombassa operation is just the first drop which heralds the approaching rain..."

And the *brothers in Palestine* seem to continue along the line of blood-libel propaganda ("Israel Puts Bombs in Toys to Kill Children," Itamar Marcus, Palestinian Media Watch Bulletin, March 5, 2003) expressing loyalty to Iraq as they did in 1991 and attacking the U.S. ("Palestinians: Iraq is *Brother*, Bush is *Rambo*, US is Arab-Devouring Alligator," Itamar Marcus, Palestinian Media Watch Bulletin, March 3, 2003) defining the U.S. as the *enemy of Islam* ("PA defines USA as an enemy of Islam" Itamar Marcus, Palestinian Media Watch Bulletin, March 4, 2003). Moreover,

they are now investing the same 'educational' (read: indoctrinational) efforts to teach their children to hate the U.S.A. ("[PA Youth Movement Verdict in 'Field Trial': President Bush Guilty of War Crimes](#)," MEMRI, Special Dispatch - Palestinian Authority, March 7, 2003, No. 477). This is an important point because it was the Palestinians who have orchestrated the Belgian precedent of trying "international war criminals" and they are already showing their hand at what awaits the U.S. in the international arena.

Despite *efforts* the Palestinians are seemingly making at constitutional reform ("About the Palestinian Constitution," MEMRI, Inquiry and Analysis - Palestinian Authority, March 4, 2003, No. 126) they still "insist upon the refugees' rights of return and compensation," and "Jerusalem is the capital of the future Palestinian state." This means the destruction of Israel and that should not be surprising given the rhetoric, symbols, insignia as well as maps, and school material that show the Palestinian map superimposed on Israel's aiming to replace and eliminate it. Little wonder then that their murderous operatives glorify their heinous acts ("A Suicide Bomber's Imaginary Letter to his Mother," Itamar Marcus, Palestinian Media Watch Bulletin, March 2, 2003).

The Palestinian efforts are nothing more than the deceptive tactics of Saddam Hussein but not less dangerous. And they add U.S.-based propaganda to their homeland production of terror, lies, and deception. Proficient killers have very little compunctions about lying and they do so extensively. In addition to imaginary charges and claims that have mostly been proven baseless (i.e., the *massacre* in Jenin (that never happened)] Palestinians have now shifted their propaganda to the American Churches after realizing that there is well-grounded support there for Israel. The *Holy Land Trust* has launched an effort to convince Christians in the U.S. that Israel - not the Palestinians - is victimizing Christians in *Palestine*. At least one Arab-American reporter does not buy this propaganda and points out the horrendous abuse that Christian Arabs (and non-Arabs) suffered from Palestinians ("[The truth about Christians in 'Palestine](#),'" Joseph Farah, WorldNetDaily.com, February 28, 2003).

All this increasingly - if at a maddeningly slow pace - narrows the room that Palestinians have to gain legitimacy for their methods of terror and deception. Their terrorist action and financial corruption now speak for themselves and even their European friends are recognizing it. Yet there are always those who will blindly support them irrespective of how evil their deeds will be. One such supporter is an American Arab professor (yes another one) who argues that the reasons for the current wave of violence are not Palestinian intransigence but rather their *excessive moderation*. One shudders to think how the Middle East look will like if they will show their *extreme* side. This truly gives a whole new Orwellian interpretation to "moderation." ("Wrong-Way' Corrigan," Barry Rubin, The Jerusalem Post, Mar. 3, 2003).

On the face of it the Pax-Americana envisioned for the Middle East seems to auger well for Israel but not necessarily so. Part of the problem lies in not fully knowing the outcome of the American efforts as well as some of the unintended consequences of the war. While there are those who suggest that the fall of Saddam will trigger a domino effect of other regimes falling, depending on the length of American presence and the outcome of the effort it could also trigger a far larger war between the Arab world and the U.S. which could be disastrous for both the U.S. and Israel ("Israel: A Regional Earthquake?" Leslie Susser, The Jerusalem Report, March 10,

2003).

The famous New York Times *expert* columnist expresses his own misgivings. He is now actually in favor of war and agrees with Bush's *vision* but he has concerns that Bush may not be able to carry the vision out ("[The Long Bomb](#)," Thomas L. Friedman, The New York Times, March 2, 2003). One can only wonder why anyone is paid to be concerned. Most of us do it for free. He could have done much better by pointing out what is the basis of the concern and perhaps how to fix it (assuming the concern is even grounded). In a follow up, Friedman now blames Bush for using the rhetoric of a *war of necessity* when it is actually a *war of choice* ("[Fire, Ready, Aim](#)," Thomas L. Friedman, The New York Times, March 9, 2003).

He implies that a war of choice is arbitrary and capricious made out of luxury not necessity. Yet he fails to distinguish that choice in this case means that there is a necessity but we have the *luxury* of not waiting until it becomes too damaging. There is nothing capricious or arbitrary about such decision. Many in history wish they might have had the same opportunity but they did not and it cost them dearly. One third of the Jewish people did not have that *luxury* and was murdered by the Nazis in the Holocaust. President Bush is absolutely correct when he uses the terms that Friedman criticizes: This is a war of necessity and we do not need anyone's permission to do it. Most of those who oppose it now will jump on the bandwagon after its success and will even dare to say they have been with us all along....

The Carter-Friedman school is at it again. Former president Carter laments that he still does not see *justification* for war ("Carter: The case for a *just war* does not Hold," Jimmy Carter, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution: 3/9/03). He enumerates several reasons and then suggests we do NOT go to war because it "will enhance our status as a champion of peace and justice." According to him war should be "our last resort." And if we go to war "by defying overwhelming world opposition, the United States will undermine the United Nations as a viable institution for world peace." Given the U.N. dubious achievements in that Department (not very visible in its [U.N. flashy website](#)) this in itself could be one of the better incentives to go to war. Or should Carter be reminded that the U.N. directly has contributed to the Six Days War when it went AWOL on its mission and left its post in the Middle East after President Nasser threatened it?

Given Carter's *impressive achievements* as president he is writing as if his religious background gives him a better moral ground than, say, President Bush who also is driven by faith. If Bush will take Carter's advice he will be spending much more time in his Texas ranch as another failed president who has misunderstood the international scene and the forces operating therein. Luckily, Carter can write opinions but not influence policy and Bush does not seem to be responsive to his missives.

Of course, what the theoretical analysis of crude *cost-benefit* and *justice* does not take into account is the matter of choice and how it is defined. It could be well argued that the U.S. does not really have a choice (and neither does Israel). Israel bombed the Iraqi nuclear facility out of commission and was rebuked for it but has clearly delayed Iraq's nuclear capability by at least 2 or three decades. By choice - this emanated out of necessity. If there will be no reaction, or if the reaction will not be planned for the long-term with as many consequences played out in advance to plan for the worse-case scenarios, the outcome could even be worth than advocated by the

doom-seers because then the West will find itself not ready for the war that has already virtually been declared against it. That is why the Friedman-Carter semantics only exacerbate and confuse the discussion rather than constructively help clarify it.

Indeed, the weakest visible link in the vision offered by the Roadmap for the Middle East (and a key component of Pax-Americana) is the vision of a Palestinian state. The all-or-nothing (for both sides) campaign the Palestinians have embarked on should serve as the best signal that whatever solutions are offered they will be decoded by the Palestinians in terms of how well they serve their long-term interest of annihilating Israel and fighting against the West ("Beware, Pax Americana ahead," By Michael Freund, *The Jerusalem Post*, Mar. 4, 2003). The mere premise that should the Palestinians have a "state of their own" it will behoove them to behave as if they are part of civilization has been refuted time and again.

Some interpret the inconsistent signals coming from President Bush as indicative of the opposite of *read my lips*: namely, his lips say *Palestinian state* but his actions belie it ("Father of their country?" By Daniel Pipes, *The Jerusalem Post*, Mar. 4, 2003). One can only hope that this is true. The problem with this perception is that it ignores the shaping of a new rhetoric that is supportive of a Palestinian state and hence is conducive to creating rather than delaying it. So at best, it is erroneous but at worst it will be disastrous because there will not be a way to turn back once it becomes a fact. That should be one of the key developments to watch for. For the time being (until after the war in Iraq) the U.S. seems to have placed the plans for a Palestinian state on the back burner thus infuriating the Europeans (including Blair).

Others do not buy into the possibility of democratization to begin with ("Forget about democratization," Meir Litvak, *The Jerusalem Post*, Feb. 27, 2003): "To try and completely change the Middle East, while ignoring local processes and structures that have been created over time, is rather ambitious. One can influence the region, but there are often times unintended consequences. As for democratization, it is impossible to introduce it from without, since such a process needs basic preconditions that don't exist in Iraq". Yet the fact that democratization may not be as obtainable as it is desirable "doesn't mean that you can't get anything better than Saddam Hussein; anything is better than him. What the US can seek to create in Iraq is a setting that will generate a less dangerous, more benign regime than Saddam Hussein's. That is attainable. Otherwise, one can not reshape a region and erase its history."

But some do understand that there is a linkage between the Saddam and terrorism and a larger threat even if a "written contract" is not always so immediately evident ("No Distraction: Why liberating Iraq is crucial to beating Terrorism." James Taranto, *The Wall Street Journal*, March 6, 2003).

Yet, the Iraq crisis provides an opportunity to truly reshape the landscape of the Arab states in the Middle East and it is up to the liberators not to miss that opportunity. It is worth noting the history of the current Arab states, their ruthless addiction to violence, their linkage to terrorism, and the danger that these regimes pose to their people and the rest of the world to realize that we are on a cusp of major political and strategic changes. One of the best contexts against which to understand the current crisis and future hopes is provided by Amir Taheri in a must-read article ("Freedom for Araby?" Amir Taheri, *The Jerusalem Post*, Feb. 27, 2003).

Another must-read comes also from a Middle Easterner who places (the battle on) Iraq in proper context ("Why should the Middle East be turned upside down?" Muhammad Oueiny, February 2003) and explains why this opportunity to re-shape the Middle East must not be forfeited: "We must attack Iraq. We must totally conquer the nation. Saddam must be removed from power, and killed if possible, and the Baath party must be shattered. Syria, Iran and Saudi Arabia should be dealt with as soon as we are done with Iraq. They are the major symbols of decay in the world and are hindering the Middle East at large from moving to the 21st century with their disinformation campaign and pounding rhetoric."

The abject failure of Arab society is well documented (including in a recent U.N. report) yet "The only Arab nations which have prospered have done so entirely because of the accident of mineral wealth..... They created superhighways and in every way implemented the trappings of western prosperity. Or rather, they paid westerners to create all those things for them. They did not build or create any of it themselves. It is all parasitic. And they also buy the technical skill to keep it running." These countries have restrictions on the free flow of information, subjugation of women, inability to accept responsibility for individual or collective failure, the extended family or clan as the basic unit of social organization, they are dominated by a restrictive religion, have a low valuation of education, and low prestige assigned to work.

Queiny argues that modern Arab/Muslim violence is "not to gain revenge for some specific action in the past on our part. It is not an attempt to influence our foreign policy. Their goal is our destruction, because they cannot keep hold on what they have and still think of themselves as being successful as long as we exist and continue to outperform them." And he points out that "Both al Qaeda's terrorist attacks, and Saddam's attempts to incorporate other Arab nations into Iraq, spring from the same deep cause. But when I say that al Qaeda and Saddam are not the real enemy, it is because they both arise due to a deeper cause which is the true enemy. If we were to stamp out al Qaeda as a viable organization and reduce it to an occasional annoyance, and remove Saddam's WMDs no matter how, by conquest or inspections, someone else somewhere else would spring up and we would again be in peril. We cannot end this war by only treating the symptoms of al Qaeda and Saddam, though they must be dealt with as part of that process. This war is actually a war between the modern age and traditional Arab culture, and as long as they stagnated and felt resentment quietly, it was not our war...But the danger isn't Al Qaeda as such, though that is the short term manifestation of the danger. This war will continue until the traditional crippled Arab culture is shattered. It won't end until they embrace reform or have it forced on them. Until a year ago, we were willing to be patient and let them embrace it slowly. Now we have no choice: we have to force them to reform because we cannot be safe until they do." And Queiny means cultural not political reform. Otherwise if the U.S. will not act (with or without allies) it "will be the continuing target...as long as this resentment continues to boil, which it will do as long as Arab culture is not shattered and reformed."

Queiny's position is reinforced when viewed from an American perspective. The western tendency to exercise an exaggerated amount of self-blame and taking responsibility even when inappropriate is literally backfiring and not accepting of any legitimate foundations of ANY western moral standing ("The Present Farce: Should we laugh or cry as we watch history come full circle?" Victor Davis Hanson, National Review, February 28, 2003).

Those who devoid the current development from proper historical context and evasively circle around historical similarities are only helping to further exacerbate the situation rather than resolve it: "The world, not America, has gone off the deep end just as it did some 70 years ago when faced with similar choices between cheap rhetoric and real sacrifice. And so just as the tragedy of Pearl Harbor for Americans put an end to all the nonsense of the 1930s, let us hope that the memory of September 11 and the looming showdown with Iraq will do the same for the present farce as well."

Israeli intellectuals have added their voices to those who are against war in Iraq. The most recent one is the prominent writer Amos Oz ("The protesters: right for the wrong reasons," israelinsider, March 7, 2003) who brings up the same beaten-out arguments used by the anti-war camp around the world. His arguments are as groundless as those of the international demonstrators, even if he is well-intentioned as some of them are. While he is accepting of the use of some force to curb aggression he argues that force alone "...is liable to redouble the hatred, despair and lust for vengeance that it set out to defeat." And this is yet another example why he is wrong because he assumes that violence is based on *despair* and *hatred* and he either ignores the already existing level of violence or is willing to accept it as given.

A well argued rebuttal to Oz suggests ("Icons are also fallible," Isi Leibler, israelinsider, March 7, 2003) that "We have many examples of outstanding artists, scientists, and gifted writers who became imbued by a calling to resolve various problems of mankind. Whilst some regarded their solutions as equivalent to holy writ, the reality is that frequently they possess no inherent wisdom giving them greater insight to these problems than the average man in the street. Perhaps the time has come for us to stop saying amen or politely deferring to views expressed by eminent people if they cannot be substantiated on their own merits." Indeed, if what passes today for modern day "intelligentsia" would stick to writing, acting, directing, and performing fiction we might be better off than with their attempt to create or shape realities of which their understanding is rather limited or twisted.

So as the diplomatic heat level goes up at the U.N., as ground preparations move up a few notches in Kuwait and Turkey, and as Israel is getting ready for an Iraqi attack, the biggest challenge the West is facing is in releasing itself from an OMS (Ostrich Mind-Set). The longer leaders and demonstrators and peace-mongers refuse to see the true nature of the threat against the West, the heavier and more costly will be the price of sobering up from the dangerous illusions in vogue. It appears that at least the current U.S. administration understands the challenges of international terrorism and the threats posed by rogue states. Once it places the Palestinian threats in the proper perspective the world will be even better off.