The Hague, Terror, a Movie: What is Real?

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By Robbie Friedmann

Another week in the Middle East found Israel not defending itself in the International Court of Justice at The Hague, yet suffering additional terror attacks. A bus was bombed ("Palestinian Suicide Bomber Kills 8 Others on Jerusalem Bus," James Bennet, *The New York Times*, 22 February 2004) and its victims too quickly became yet another statistic. The week also showed numerous shooting and missile attacks on Israeli villages and passengers; a shooting (inside Israel's borders) claimed the lives of a young married couple who were on their way to a party leaving behind a 2.5 year old orphan. Little wonder Channel 2 TV in Israel reported, somewhat gleefully, that marine experts predicted The Hague will be under the waters of the Atlantic Ocean in 15 years. In fact, the secular anchor ended the report by stating that "there is god." Who said TV only brings facts to the viewers?

To those thinking the declared Israeli unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip augers well for Israel's security, all they have to do is read what Palestinian leaders are saying about it ("Dahlan: Gaza Pullout Victory for Intifada," Khaled Abu Toameh, *The Jerusalem Post*, 21 February 2004). The Hizbullah terrorist organization prided itself for kicking Israel out of South Lebanon, and this is what inspired the Palestinians for the current 3.5-years' strategic wave of violence against innocent Israeli citizens. Now, already, they present the Gaza withdrawal as a victory for the Palestinians. No doubt it is, and hence it promises little for anyone who is expecting a peaceful resolution of the conflict. Encouraged by this achievement, the Palestinians will aim at additional Israeli withdrawals. They view all of Israel, not only disputed territories, as their target.

And by no means do the Palestinians limit their appetite to Israel alone. Their rhetoric is global, seeing themselves as victims of a world "conspiracy" and despite Euro-American support for their "national aspirations," they continue unabated with their hatred and violence against the West ("Relentless PA Hate Incitement against the U.S. and the West," Itamar Marcus, Palestinian Media Watch Bulletin, 27 February 2004).

U.S. President George W. Bush, who promised to establish a Palestinian state by 2005 (provided they adhere to the Roadmap), is depicted not merely as a leader of the "enemy United States," but also as "the enemy of all civilization . . . the Fuhrer of the globalization era . . . a greater danger than Hitler, leading the world to destruction." "The new Fuhrer [Bush] will return the world to the Stone Age, while Hitler only left tens of millions of dead."

Instead of cooperating with the Americans to find the murderers of the three Americans in Gaza (likely murdered by Palestinian "militants" closely associated with Arafat) they claim the U.S. pressure to find murderers of Americans is "extortion" and threaten "The Palestinians will shake the earth under the feet of the blood and oil sucking neo- imperialists - the American European Russian alliance." Examine the rhetoric coming from those who feel entitled to kill and feel "offended" when that "right" is questioned. The same mentality displayed by the Palestinians is

also evident in their mentors, the Iranians. Following findings by the International Atomic Energy Agency of evidence of nuclear grade elements, the Iranians lashed out at the IAEA in "classical" propaganda style that again included virulent references to Jews and Americans ("Iranian Government Daily: The U.S. & 'Zionists' have Bribed the IAEA to Fabricate Lies About Iran's Nuclear Progress," MEMRI, Special Dispatch - Iran, 25 February 2004, No. 667).

American endeavors to bring the spirit of democracy to the Middle East are noble, but it might be easier to convince a lion to become a vegetarian. Frankly, it is not surprising to see who are those who most vehemently oppose the American efforts. The two "strongest allies" in the Arab world are Egypt and Saudi Arabia ("Riyadh and Cairo Give Thumbs-Down to Washington's Middle East Reform Plan," AFP, 25 February 2004). Not exactly exemplar democracies, one represents a repressive theocratic kingdom, the other presents itself as a "Republic" but is truly a dictatorship. Little wonder they see democracy as a threat to what they represent. And why would they not? Even a lion has to be forced to be vegetarian.

Tom Friedman found a roundabout way to condemn terrorism. Via a superficial look at young Indians who have found employment with American companies outsourcing various customer service functions, he contrasts that with Arabs/Muslims who are "so lost" they "can find dignity only through suicide and "martyrdom.'" Nice to see him elevating the value of life and good business practices but he still has no understanding of what motivates suicide bombers ("30 Little Turtles," Thomas L. Friedman, *The New York Times*, 29 February 2004). Being "lost" is not their driving force. And even if Friedman will "show them the way" they will reject it because they do not see themselves as "lost." On the contrary, they think everyone who is not a Muslim is lost.

The increase of antisemitism, evidenced particularly (and in accelerated fashion) in the last three to four years in the Middle East and Europe has exposed what George Will aptly calls the politics of elimination. The difference is, the elimination propagated by extreme Right-wingers for decades is now in vogue for the Left, who adopted the pet cause of the "victimized" Palestinians ("The Left's Antisemitic Chic," George F. Will, *The Washington Post*, 25 February 2004).

These politics and avid anarchists have carried that flag for years. Unfortunately, among their leaders are "intellectuals" like Noam Chomsky who recently received the attention of an expose worth reviewing ("The Hypocrisy of Noam Chomsky," Keith Windschuttle, NewCriterion.com, FrontPage Magazine, 2 May 2003): "Chomsky has declared himself a libertarian and anarchist but has defended some of the most authoritarian and murderous regimes in human history. His political philosophy is purportedly based on empowering the oppressed and toiling masses but he has contempt for ordinary people whom he regards as ignorant dupes of the privileged and the powerful. He has defined the responsibility of the intellectual as the pursuit of truth and the exposure of lies, but has supported the regimes he admires by suppressing truth and perpetrating falsehoods. He has endorsed universal moral principles but has only applied them to Western liberal democracies, while continuing to rationalize the crimes of his own political favorites. He is a mandarin who denounces mandarins. When caught making culpably irresponsible misjudgments, as he was over Cambodia and Sudan, he never admitted he was wrong."

Last week this e-Letter reported on the radicalization of a mosque in Chicago as evidence of how radicals are gradually taking over the Islamic narrative in the U.S. There is now a report that radicals are still trying to take over but without the same measure of success ("Islam in Conflict in Cleveland," Stephen Schwartz, Tech Central Station, 24 February 2004). Indeed some measure of hope emanates out of the story of the Cleveland mosque where members of the community - still fearful and intimidated by the radicals - are taking proactive steps to resist their influence and counteract it.

This is an important point because it demonstrates the need but also likelihood - not very high - that a desired change might come from within the Islamic community in the U.S. Indeed, if there is any hope the fanatic narrative of the radicals will ever give way to a different - moderate - rhetoric that hope lies in the process identified in Cleveland ("The Courage of Muslim Moderates," Jeff Jacoby, *The Boston Globe*, 22 February 2004): "Ultimately, only Muslims can decide whether Islam's future lies with the militants or with the moderates. But those of us who are not Muslim can help the cause of reform and moderation by promoting and encouraging the moderates, and by repudiating the extremists they are brave enough to challenge."

In a week consumed by a movie interpretation about the last 12 hours in the life of Jesus, the realities of current Arab/Muslim antisemitism and anti-Americanism are far more threatening than any potential antisemitic sentiments that such a movie may engender. After all, thus far the coverage of Michael Jackson's tribulations (the trials may come later) has occupied more media time than the Gibson movie and he will in all likelihood have grossed far more money than Gibson's movie will. But as serious a topic as Gibson's movie is, it is high time the world focuses on the real threats that are visible and identifiable, not with those that are only perceived. The discussion about Gibson's movie will subside fairly soon. The Islamist threat - that mixes religion and death - is still there wide open for us to recognize.