

DEMONS & MONSTERS

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ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL MILITARY MACHINES on the face of the planet, backed by the world's mightiest superpower, has managed to attack and kill a group of sleeping children. The brutal attack on the village of Qana is not the first such atrocity - but not even the US media's sanitized images and unabashed cheer leading for Israel can mask this savagery.

Israeli bombs have turned much of Lebanon into rubble. The ferocious bombing has blackened beaches with spilled and burning oil, released toxic materials, threatened cultural and artistic treasures and destroyed enormous amounts of plant and wildlife. Fires burn out of control, uncollected garbage spreads disease and people cannot get food, water medical care, because emergency workers are targeted for air attack.\

Hundreds of thousands of Lebanese have lost all their belongings and become refugees. Meanwhile, in the midst of this human catastrophe, and with little press coverage, the assault on Gaza has continued unabated.

Tel Aviv's evolving justifications for this premeditated onslaught - the capture of two Israeli soldiers, later transformed into a plea of self-defense - are transparent lies, like the US claim of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq. In fact, anyone looking for WMDs can now observe them in plain view - the systematic targeting of the infrastructure of Lebanon. Aping the destruction of Iraq by its US mentors, Israel is waging a war against children, the elderly and the weak - tens of thousands of who are threatened with disease and hunger.

Despite the crocodile tears of George Bush and Condoleezza Rice, they are as guilty of the slaughter as those who dropped the bombs. They have rushed the delivery of more precision-guided missiles to Israel and blocked the call for a cease-fire. Washington has funded, armed and given the go ahead for the blitzkrieg - with the enthusiastic support of both the Democratic and Republican parties.

Bush and Rice blame Hezbollah for the bloodshed, but the real causes of both this war and the parallel US occupation of Iraq were quietly revealed this week, as Exxon Mobil Corporation announced a 36 percent raise in second quarter profits to \$10.4 billion. It is the second largest quarterly profit for a company in history. Total revenue for the period was close to \$100 billion.

Exxon Mobil's report came one day after ConocoPhillips reported profits of more than \$5 billion in the quarter. Their revenue had risen to \$99.03 billion from last year's \$88.57 billion in the same period. BP Plc, Europe's biggest oil company, said second-quarter profit climbed 30 percent as net profits reached \$7.27 billion.

The misery of millions of human beings due to US and Israeli military action translates into rising gasoline prices and big profits for the oil corporations. Exxon Mobil celebrated by giving its outgoing CEO Lee Raymond a retirement package worth \$350 million, even as the US House and Senate gutted a raise in the minimum wage. From the point of view of oil company flunkies like Bush, Cheney and Rice, things are going well enough in the Middle East to "stay the course."

Israel is a colonial-settler regime that has grown through periodic military conquest. Every time Tel Aviv

invades, annexes or occupies land by force of arms, right-wing American supporters dutifully step forward to legitimize the crimes by invoking the holocaust and demonizing the Arab people. Such is the case now. Atrocities committed against Jews, both real and fictitious, are used to justify the expansionist aims of the Israeli regime – just as such incidents by Native Americans were used to rationalize their extermination and bloody slave rebellions were used to inflame the public and garner support for the enslavement of Africans.

To justify the expulsion or oppression of people they must first be made less than human – you must build walls around them or brand them all as terrorists. With Israel's latest venture, US politicians, pundits and intellectuals have once again hastened to rationalize the carnage.

When I hear those hate-filled voices, it brings to mind my experiences growing up in the only Jewish family in a segregated white working-class neighborhood. The anti-Semitism (anti-Jewish xenophobia) I faced was not the genteel discrimination from denial of membership in a country club – but the more direct approach of the rock, stick and fist. I was a kike, a money-grubber and a “dirty Jew.”

At the same time, I would board a bus for a lengthy ride to the other side of town to attend Hebrew school. There I was told that my real enemies were fanatical black-robed mullahs that wanted to drive the Jews into the sea. They were terrorists. They were “dirty Arabs.”

What I came to realize is that racism is for suckers – it is a tool to keep people divided and weak. And having initials in front of, or behind, your name does not necessarily make you any less of a racist punk.

Over time, the civil rights movement and colonial revolutions challenged racial stereotypes and began to break down the racist assumptions about African-Americans. That process also led many Jews to reject anti-Arab sentiment, in spite of those who continue to promote Jewish suprematism.

Malcolm X used to speak of the house slaves and the field slaves. The house slaves identified with the master and protected their relatively privileged position. The field slave had only their chains to lose.

Not surprisingly, some leading champions of Zionist aggression have come to act like voluntary house slaves. They identify with the historic oppressors of Jews in order to attain privileged positions. Kissinger faithfully served Nixon, who was constantly using anti-Jewish slurs. The family fortune of George Bush came from doing business with the Nazis, but Joe Lieberman is still eager to be his stooge.

Prominent pro-Israeli intellectuals like Allen Dershowitz and Paul Wolfowitz are like modern-day Judenrat (Jewish committees that administered the ghettos on behalf of German fascism.) They – and others that advocate torture and ethnic cleansing - are of the same ilk. They applaud building ghetto walls around Palestinians and advocate the concept of collective punishment.

But as the history of Jews reveals, it is those who attempt to demonize a people that lose their humanity. In the darkest of pogroms, Jews never lost their compassion or aspirations for human solidarity, and neither will the people of Gaza and Lebanon. Palestinians have been robbed of their land and wealth, but they continue the fight for social justice. The Zionist rulers of Israel now possess land and wealth, but they have lost their humanity.

Today I watched the news and saw a grief-stricken Lebanese man stand over the rubble of the Qana mas-

sacre. He asserted that the air strike was deliberate. Although he is in the military, he explained that the Lebanese would not allow themselves to be turned into monsters – that they would never harm Israeli children. This is our response, he said, and walked to a nearby tree, cut off a flower and placed it on the ruins.

I have painted murals with Arab and Jewish workers and artists in Iraq, Israel and the Occupied Territories. I have never heard a threat or unkind word, but I have frequently heard Muslims ask Allah to help Israelis to find their hearts. What stands in the way of Jewish-Arab peace and solidarity are the artificial divisions created by western imperialism.

The rockets of Hezbollah are no match for a modern military, but the Israeli war machine is far from invincible. In their blind fury, the US and Israel have revealed their fundamental weakness. The Israelis can barely take a small Arab village and the US cannot defeat the Iraqi resistance. The US and Israel may kill hundreds of thousands, even millions; they may expand the war to Syria or Iran, but they will never defeat the people of the Middle East.

After murdering hundreds of civilians, turning much of the population into refugees and destroying the Lebanese economic infrastructure – what has Israel achieved? The combat ability of the Hezbollah fighters remains intact and they continue to launch coordinated missile attacks against the northern cities of Israel. Haifa and surrounding areas have been disrupted, forcing thousands of Israelis to flee south, creating yet another refugee problem. The war in Lebanon, just like the US occupation of Iraq, is draining Israel of important resources and fueling a growing opposition to the war.

The Israeli government has called up thousands of reservists as they contemplate an invasion by ground troops. But despite their arrogance and massive arsenal, they are no match for the resistance. The rate of military casualties incurred by Israel in the ground warfare with Hezbollah is almost equal, as compared to the Occupied Territories, where dozens of Palestinian fighters are killed for every Israeli soldier.

That is the historic problem of imperialist occupation – it cannot be accomplished from the air. It must be done on the ground. Hezbollah has high morale and growing popular support. They are skilled guerillas, capable of inflicting serious damage to invading ground forces. As Ho Chi Minh predicated about the US debacle in Vietnam: “You can kill ten of our men for every one we kill of yours. But even at those odds, you will lose and we will win.” Despite the slaughter of over 2 million Asians and over 50,000 American GIs, he was proven correct.

Today, Israel cannot even take and hold the town of Bint Jbail. The US and its allies are too weak to maintain reliable puppet regimes - all that is left is to rule through terror and direct military action. Zionism – the ideology of a Jewish religious state based on the expulsion of the native inhabitants, cannot solve the growing problems that face Jewish people. Likewise, Hezbollah, a religious fundamentalist organization that advocates an Islamic republic, cannot solve the problems of the Lebanese people.

There will be no peace in the Middle East until there is justice for the Palestinians. A two-state solution for Palestine is a pipe dream. There is only one answer to the cycle of violence – the establishment of a democratic, secular Israel/Palestine. Impossible? No more impossible than the success of the civil rights movement in

the US or the overthrow of apartheid in South Africa. Simply put, there is no other solution.

Today, a new working class is being forged in Israel, comprised of Jews, Arabs and immigrant workers. Much of that group lives in poverty – and it is they who face the prospect of war without end. Eventually, the Jewish people will be forced to confront the truth and recognize the bankruptcy of Zionism. Solidarity between Arabs and Jews is an attainable, historic necessity. That possibility strikes fear in the hearts of the western ruling classes and explains their frenzied claim that any criticism of Israel is anti-Jewish.

Jewish people have a proud history of social struggle. The Jewish working class gave us Yiddish Theater, Klezmer music, intellectuals, scientists, artists and enough revolutionaries to fill a thousand prisons. The heritage of that class and has nothing to do with Israel's rulers or their US apologists. Supporters of Zionism have about as much right to wrap themselves in the mantle of Jewish accomplishment as George Bush does to claim the Republican Party as the continuity of a the abolitionist movement.

The spirit of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising will not be found in the Knesset or with those in the US who call for further bloodshed. That legacy lives in the streets of Gaza, in the anti-war demonstrations within Israel and with the growing international movement demanding an end to US and Israeli wars of occupation.