

Sharon: For Whom the Bell Tolls

With Yasser Arafat subdued and the Palestinian Authority successfully emasculated, Israel might have picked an opportune moment to kill Sheik Ahmed Yassin, the spiritual leader of Hamas.

FREDERIC F CLAIRMONT

The peoples of an enslaved Palestine do not have Apache helicopters. They do not have F-16s. They have neither tanks nor missiles. But here are a fighting people whose souls and minds and bodies have been forged in the cauldron of the most appalling colonial genocide, indignity, repression and poverty that has ever visited any people on earth for such an enduring span of more than half a century.

– Sheik Ahmed Yassin. April 24, 2002.

The targeted assassination of Sheik Ahmed Yassin,¹ spiritual leader of the Hamas² in the early hours of the morning of March 22 was not an aberration, but part of the unrelenting policy of state terrorism geared to the untrammelled aggrandisement of land and, as a corollary, the extermination of all vestiges of the national resistance struggle. The sheer magnitude of Israel's crimes and territorial expropriations would have been inconceivable³ without the overt, sustained, massive economic, military and diplomatic support of the US, within and outside the United Nations. Not a single UN resolution over these long years condemning Israel for its explicit crimes against humanity has not been subject to a US veto in the United Nations, the Human Rights Commission and elsewhere. Israel's stratagems continue to be bankrolled (private and public) to the tune of \$ 5bn yearly from the US and world Jewry. This rises to a cumulative sum of around \$ 270bn since 1950. A non-stop aid package that is unprecedented in economic history. And that for a country of only 6 million.

The 2-metre high, 750 km wall girdling the occupied territories at a cost of \$1.87 bn, condemned by the UN general assembly (with the exception of the US) will be paid for by US taxpayers. Israel remains the sole contemporary embodiment of an apartheid state. In its occupied settler lands with its minefields, its checkpoints and barbed wire it has spawned Bantustans that would have made its South African blueprint look like a paradise.

Not a single day passes without the slaughter of Palestinian men, women and children, a fact that the Zio-corporate US media sedulously ignores. In the slums of the over-populated Gaza strip – the world's most densely populated area – there is not a single building unscathed by tank and missile rocket fire. Many of the buildings, if they can be called that, are rickety vermin-ridden hovels that could crumble any moment. Unemployment englobes over 65 per cent of the adult labour force. Around 65 per cent of all Palestinian children are afflicted by trauma and malnutrition that is endemic. Their food supplies originating largely from the UN is precarious but even these paltry hand-outs are threatened by Sharon's embargo. The Nazis sent their victims to the gas chambers as 'the final solution'; Sharon's predilection is death by starvation.

Sheik Yassin's execution marks one of most significant milestones in the blood-drenched history of repression in the occupied territories, and in the unfinished carnage of west Asia.

The quest of the occupier and its US backers is to smash one of the most heroic resistance movements of all times by military exterminism. It signals Israel's adamant refusal, buttressed by successive US administrations, to accept an effective political solution. The US Black Hawk helicopter gunship moving on to its target at 05.30 am when the Sheik and his entourage were leaving the mosque is but a moment. In the bloody annals of occupation it is one more abomination that will neither be forgotten nor forgiven by an indignant humanity. After delivering his lethal strike the pilot exultantly shouted: "we've zapped them". This is the statement of a cold-blooded SS killer. After all the victims were Arab 'Untermenschen'. It was not a video game but murder.

When the last missile smashed into the aged, half blind, paraplegic in his wheelchair, it destroyed not only eight persons, including a 10-year-old girl, but a political and religious symbol and the idea he incarnated. The news was received immediately with shrieks of joys by the Israeli cabinet. Ariel Sharon, who

personally supervised the attack, according to Israel public radio, went on to boast "that we've smashed the head of the snake and it won't be long before Hamas will crumble". After all, he has hunted Arabs for over half a century. The predator's chase is obviously not yet over.

Defence minister Shaul Mofaz assures us that the Sheik's liquidation is not the grand finale because such targeted killings are a permanent agenda. In this cesspool of targeted murder Condoleeza Rice calls for calm. "We've got to step back and see things coolly. There's going to be better days for the Middle East". I couldn't help wondering if this woman is an extra terrestrial creature? If so from what galaxy has she descended? Or is she simply blind, deaf, above all stupid? Palestinians are being targeted and butchered daily and when they fight back she beseeches them to keep cool. Her wretched exhortation itself is revelatory of the moral bankruptcy of a corrupt and mendacious administration in which she continues to play a pivotal role.

Regarding 'the better days that are ahead for the Middle East' I was curious to know where she plucked that gem. Are there signs of it in the fierce resistance struggle in Falluja or the mass Shia uprisings in Najaf with their many dead, the hundreds of wounded and other innumerable arrests and incarcerations? Rice and her gang should finally understand that the genie is out of the bottle.

The so-called road map was always a US public relations stunt. It is dead. So is the peace initiative hammered out in Geneva. The Sheik's murder was condemned worldwide but not by the White House. Its spokesperson, Scott McClellan, justified the crime by taking recourse to the all too familiar one-liner that "Israel was acting in self-defence and that Hamas was a terrorist organisation". How often have we heard this claim and others of similar vintage. To contend, as Bush has done, that Washington did not know about the targeted killings – this one and others of its kind – is hilarious. Where Mossad ends and the CIA begins, and vice versa, is impossible to say. They have chosen to meld their common fates.

The conception and implementation of these killings has been deliberately executed with the unstinted support and knowledge of all US security agencies. There is no need for faxes, phone calls or e-mails. The Israeli army is also operating as part of the US army in its commando raids in all major Iraqi cities. Its skills were honed in battering down the homes and doors of Palestinians. Indeed, the Israeli defence forces (IDF) and its commando units are generously sharing skills learned

in the Palestinian killing fields with its US accomplices.

Yassin's murder has thrown the Arab ruling class, which has always been a backer of US imperialism into a state of disarray. In particular, this applies to 'the kept women', as one Lebanese publicist labelled Egypt and Jordan', that have been on the US payroll for years. Yassin and his movement was never a friend of the Arab ruling elites. As Crown Prince Hussian of Jordan admits leaders of the region are running scared of the Arab masses and well they should be.

This advancing cataclysm has been exacerbated by the daily hammering imperialism is receiving at the hands of resistance forces in Iraq. The Arab League, created in 1947, was never intended to blueprint far-reaching changes of a democratic and distributive nature for these oil rich neo-colonies in the Arab world. It was nothing but a façade in an Arab world confronted with the fires of the anti-colonial struggle in the immediate aftermath of the great anti-fascist victory in 1945. Its goal was social pacification designed to give the appearance of change. Its parasitical ruling classes, with Saudi Arabia the prime exemplar, grasped the nettle that its enemies were the Arab masses. Its unique path to survival was through accommodation and subordination with US and British imperialism that would guarantee its continued power and profits. Democracy, even in its most innocuous manifestations, was therefore anathema to its very existence.

The *Financial Times* has well depicted the fatuous palaverings of the Arab ruling castes "as a bunch of failed states who pay lip service to Arab unity, bicker behind closed doors and emerge with long-winded resolutions that are promptly ignored. The Arab public yawns. Dismissing these meetings as a further reminder of their governments' impotence." The cold sweat of impotence that grips the Arab League mirrors the fears of the Arab bourgeoisie. Fears that have grown by the ferocity of the Iraqi resistance to the Anglo-American raja and its Quisling regime, and not the least by the presence of Hamas.

Resurrection of Arafat

The Washington/Tel Aviv axis have nourished for years the illusion that the Sheik's obliteration would bleed Hamas and the resistance struggle. But this is a pipedream. A sick and aged Arafat holed up in his bunker at Ramallah and his corrupt Palestinian Authority is on the skids. Certainly, Sharon's election victory and the subsequent systematic destruction of Arafat's Palestinian Authority (PA) by its looting of ministries, its confiscation and

destruction of tax, administrative and police files was galvanised to ensure that the emergence of a Palestinian state became impossible. His prime minister Ahmed Korei's squeaks are wisps of air with no force in the occupied territories. It's as much a mockery to stick the label of 'prime minister' on him, as it is to label Arafat 'a president'.

Power grows out of the barrel of a gun was chairman Mao's revolutionary maxim in Yenan. In the occupied territories that gun and the organisational power against the Washington/Tel Aviv axis is wielded by Hamas and its highly structured resistance forces. The PA is squirming in the pit of its own making. Authority is in the doldrums. The belief that the PA could act as a battering ram against Hamas has always been the aspiration of the Washington strategists. Any attempt by the PA apparatchiks of bringing Hamas to heel is delusory inasmuch as such punitive measures by the PA would mean the PA is perceived as being in open collusion with the US/Israeli axis.

Indeed, Yassin's murder has boomeranged against the PA and Israel. It is for this reason that a battered Bush (joined to the pleadings of the Arab League) has told the Likud leadership to stop the planned killing of Arafat. This move has nothing to do with respect for human rights, but with the simple calculation that Arafat's liquidation would compound the US crisis in the west Asia.

The goal at this stage is to salvage what is left of Arafat's tattered PA so that he could be used to shore up the fortunes of the Sharon/Bush duo. What remains to be seen is how fast Hamas is able to regroup its forces for a concentrated counter offensive against the PA and hasten the withdrawal of Israel, as a first stage, from the Strip.

The resurrection of the ghost of Arafat is thus seen as an indispensable rampart for the continued presence of the Israeli occupant – albeit in an attenuated form. His killing would only complicate matters by pitting directly the Israeli/Washington axis with Hamas, one of the most militant elements of the Arab liberation struggle.

Of the greatest events of moral significance is that a mighty and growing Israeli peace movement is battling, with word and deed, the crimes of Sharon's cabal. Central to their message of hope is their conviction that Sharon and his cohorts must not be allowed to conceal their acts beneath the mantle of the imperishable millenary historical and cultural legacies of the Jewish peoples bequeathed to mankind. The Gush Shalom Peace Movement has warned that the Sheik's assassination was a provocative act by a government which has lost

all restraint, and is bent on perpetuating a heritage of permanent war and outrage against the Palestinian peoples and the Islamic world: an act that will inevitably cost the lives of unforeseen numbers of Israeli citizens.

And let us listen to the harsh but not cynical judgment of one of Israel's most trenchant literary critics, Ben Michael, that conjures up for us the poignant apocalyptic image of the gates of purgatory being flung wide open. His is a voice that will not and cannot be stilled for it encapsulates the authentic yearning of the peoples of Israel and the Diaspora:

The whole nation is huddled up in the corner like a little dog that urinated on the carpet, waiting for the cruel strike that will come. Only w-h-e-r-e it will come is not known. And who the working dead are that meanwhile paces amongst us – that is not known either. They were not notified in advance, nor asked permission, prior to being volunteered as a sacrifice on the altar of the Sharon-Mofaz military machine. Let us hope that their last days will be sweet, before the good earth swallows them.⁴

Sharon and his trans-Atlantic accomplice have defecated on every article of the Geneva Convention. In so doing, it has tragically blocked all roads for a peaceful solution. The Likud killers are smirking once again like proverbial Cheshire cats; but Sharon and his breed should note that such joys are ephemeral; and the moment of reckoning is at hand. After all, the Yassin file is not yet closed. [27]

Notes

- 1 He was born in the now occupied port city of Ashkelon in 1938. His family, like thousands of others, was expelled from their ancestral lands in 1948. His family migrated to the Gaza Strip where most of the 1.3 m Gazan expellees now reside.
- 2 Hamas in Arabic means zeal. It is an acronym for the Islamic resistance movement. Sheik Yassin founded it in 1987.
- 3 Assassination and targeted killings, the British historian Philip Whitchele observes were the midwives to the birth of what was slated to become the most rabid, racist and apartheid state in the world. The slaughter of Sheik Yassin was nothing more than the continuation of a deliberate policy of state terrorism that became the dynamic of the regime. These included the killing of Lord Moyle, the British resident in the west Asia in 1944; the UN appointed mediator, Count Bernadotte in 1948 by the Stern gang; and the serial bombings of hotels, restaurants, bars, markets and police stations by Menachem Begin between 1937 and 1948, later prime minister and political boss of the Likud party. To this inventory was added his mass killings of Palestinian refugees *The Financial Times*, March 24, 2004.
- 4 Quoted in the Israeli newspaper *Yedioth Achronot*, March 23, 2004.