

Empire Flounders in Iraq

Fifth Estate Collective

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Thirteen months into Operation Iraqi Humiliation (actually 14 years into the Bush Family's well-financed takeover Of the Middle East), all of the predictions made by activists and other assorted radicals a year ago about the utter stupidity of the Empire's expansion into the Fertile Crescent appear to have been fierce understatements.

Horrific images jump at our psyches from every media source—television, newspapers, the Internet. Heavily armed American GIs sic menacing dogs on a terrified, naked Iraqi, whose only defense is squeezing his legs together. In retaliation, an Iraqi Al-Qaeda subgroup beheads a hapless American and records the event on video tape to assure its brutality will be seen by the world. (If it was indeed Al-Qaeda instead of a conspiracy master-minded to take the heat off Rumsfeld's little shop of horrors.)

It's a descent into madness: the modern day equivalent of the Viking berserkers (or some backwoods family feud going on for generations), who fought so endlessly with their enemies that eventually none of the combatants remembered the origins of the conflict, nor could either side stop the bloodletting.

The madmen who run the modern empire dream of victory based on might while the madmen who constitute the resistance depend on faith. This is a pathological prescription for a descent into ceaseless violence. So much for the lessons of history.

During the late 1960s, many North American revolutionaries celebrated the defeat of the United States in Vietnam, believing a global guerilla war was the best strategy to rout the ruthless US war makers once and for all. Today, as we condemn the US and UK imperialism in Iraq and recognize the legitimacy of an anti-colonial struggle, we should in no way support any theistic sect of misogynistic reactionaries. However, if the US was to get its ass kicked out of this benighted region it has so malevolently coveted, perhaps this would usher in a few decades-long "Iraq Syndrome." The further erosion of imperial arrogance can only be welcomed—but would be a small consolation for the damage already done.

As the world reels from the bizarre erotic cruelty of US soldiers, prison guards, and their private mercenary pals, their bumbling military commanders still issue optimistic reassurances to the ministers of propaganda that the "liberation" continues and that insurgent Iraq will be pacified. While military contractors pay intoxicating salaries to day-labor despots recruited from the remnants of death squads (including some killers-for-hire who cut their teeth in Botha's South Africa and Pinochet's Chile), the fundamentalist rebels work for their faith and ideology.

Commenting from death row, political prisoner Mumia Abu Jamal explains, "Many of the people who are now in Iraq, especially those in the reserves are cops and prison guards. The treatment of Iraqis at Abu Ghraib has the dark precedence in the prisons and police stations across America."

The public condemnation of these crimes abroad is wed to the collective denial of their existence at home. If it is only the "bad apples" who do such dirty deeds, what do we then say of the massacre of 15,000 civilians in the Iraq war so far? Bad orchards? Intolerance and ignorance, malice and might: these American values are smugly cloaked in a deacon's certitude by the mad dogs who run this country and aspire to run the world along the same lines.

How can anybody still blather about supporting "our troops" with the blood on the walls from Abu Ghraib to Abu Jamal's cage in SCI Green? How can they claim to export "democracy" when Americans are as divided along

the lines of rich and poor, light and dark, guard and prisoner as are Iraqis? We may ask for truth, justice, and peace, but all we get is faked remorse, orchestrated regret, and more marching orders. We want the world of war turned upside down—not a world of vast complexity reduced to a world- view of caricatured simplicity of “bad guys” and “good guys.”

How can we fashion the most meaningful response to the latest outrage and disaster perpetrated by the empire? It’s unlikely that we’ll hear much from American liberals, preoccupied with rationalizing their support for John Kerry. The continued carnage in Iraq requires a profound resuscitation of American radicals’ focused, full-time resistance—not the part-time sign-holding and letter-writing that passes for dissent.

With the hopes of Seattle and Chiapas, Quebec City and Cancun fast fading into memory, the tasks facing the miniscule international anarchist milieu are enormous. While most Americans seem numb to politics, drugged by the temptations of television, and jaded by the humiliations of work, a power-fill contemporary model exists which is worthy of emulation. The recent widespread uprising in Bolivia which stopped cold the ecological and financial rape of the country by the World Bank and forced the sitting president from office shows what is possible by a determined population, even when confronting a modern state.

We have to imagine an American intifada. The popular sentiment is there as could be seen in the massive, world-wide anti-war demonstrations in February 2003. Our movements need to regroup, revise, and reload before this summer’s opportunities for creative insurrection pass us by.

The debate over whether Iraq represents a Vietnam-style “quagmire” for the rulers neglects that the resistance to this war is also revisiting tactics and long-range strategies as well. Obviously, they didn’t learn from their ignominious defeat; but we, at least, can learn from what worked and what didn’t for the opposition. Anti-war activities ricocheted then between the romantically violent and the rhetorically nonviolent, making it easy to mythologize certain media images of the anti-war counterculture, like flowers stuffed into an MP’s rifle in Washington DC. The 1960s and ‘70s were a time of massive demonstrations and underground bombing campaigns, cultural insurgency and ratcheted-up demands for equality, all of it bearing a vision that we could, in the process of stopping a hideous war, bring about a combination of world revolution and the Age of Aquarius.

Now, we need to answer the call history has presented. The contemporary barbarities and butcheries remind us that war, a hideous revelation of the system’s core nature, is a descending spiral to the torture chambers of a living hell.

While much of political activity over the last two decades has been of a rear-guard, defensive, “please, sir, don’t kill everything so fast” nature, it may be the appropriate time to start asserting revolutionary dreams once again. The empire is floundering, run by psychotic, fearful men, incompetent to the task of running the machine.

This may be our opening to turn those dreams into reality.

— FE Collective,

Tennessee, Detroit, and the World

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