

BUSH HAS NOT ACHIEVED HIS JOB

President George W. Bush has said recently: *"Who can deny us that we are now living in a safer world?"* I do. Not only do I deny it but I also accuse and blame President Bush for not 'having achieved the job'. Despite there being unanimous international support for the war in Afghanistan, today no Afghan member of government can leave Kabul at night without putting his life in danger. Because the US army there, and elsewhere, was distracted from what should have been its main goal, the fight against terrorism. The US army was given other goals and as a first step, 'bringing democracy to the whole Arab world'. US forces were diverted to Iraq, from which there was no imminent threat, where no MDW's could be found and no link at that time with Al-Qaeda could be established. For sure, the ideological crusade of the Bush Administration led to the ousting of Saddam Hussein. But that could have been achieved through other means, notably internationally approved intervention. Besides, the main issues were left unresolved. This is why Bush's handling of the 'war against terrorism' will become a key issue in an election's year. How many tragedies like the one which occurred in Spain last week will have to occur before the Bush Administration understands that nobody can fight terrorism alone? This can happen in another country tomorrow, as nobody is immune. How long will it take before the Americans realise that they cannot live 'in a safer world' because they are protected by the Atlantic? Similarly, others believe that they are safer when under the protection of their six-meter high concrete wall.

A 'global war against terrorism' cannot be led on the assumption that whoever plants a bomb is a terrorist. During last WW 2nd, many resisting nationalists killed people with bombs. Occupying nazi troops used to call them 'terrorists', just as the British used to refer to Ben Gurion, Menachem Beghin and their friends as 'Zionist terrorists'.

They now are heroes. There are no 'good' terrorists nor 'bad' terrorists but putting everyone together is not very smart, either. Equating those who killed 201 innocent people in Spain with the Palestinian bus driver, a father of five, who blew himself up at an Israeli army check-point located on his occupied land, in a gesture of absolute despair, will not help fight terrorism efficiently. Every day, the situation is worsening in Occupied Palestine. There are daily Israeli army incursions into Palestinian land, continued violence and humiliation, destruction of houses by bulldozers as in Rafah (*a UN report mentions that 1,075 houses or buildings have been destroyed since October 2000, leading to 289 deaths, among them 79 children*), the unabated erection of a concrete wall and targeted killings followed by suicide attacks.

Is that a valuable result of a foreign policy? Yet, how could it be otherwise when one reads what American Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage said in a terrifying interview in Gulf News on March 1st: the wall is no more a problem because *"the security barrier has changed its route and has shortened"*; security matters will be solved the day *"Chairman Arafat, someone we cannot deal with, will hand over security to the Prime Minister"*; Arafat *"had years and years to reach decisions"*. Armitage should realise Bush and Israeli PM Ariel Sharon never answered Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah's proposals in the 2002 Beirut Summit to offer Israel a comprehensive peace if it would withdraw to the pre-1967 borders. The Israeli army can steal US\$ 10 million from Arab Banks with total immunity provided *"that was intended to fight terrorism"*. Who will believe that President Bush *"made the right decision in Iraq after successive UN Security Council resolutions were ignored"* when Israel bluntly rejected the numerous resolutions which were passed against it over the years? What kind of law is it which says that *"the burden of proof rested on Saddam Hussein, not on the UN"* before deciding to invade the country. Did for instance the Spanish people who died in the Madrid bombings, have to prove that they were innocent before being struck?

Some analysts equate all criticism of American policies with 'anti-Americanism'. One knows that nothing positive will emerge in the Region until the US presidential campaign is over next November, although when listening to Armitage, one may rightly wonder whether this makes any difference or not. Candidate Bush will spend millions of dollars to show his face on TV screens and terrorism will go on despite the American neo-conservatives giving lectures on how to make a world safer. Unfortunately, they will have missed two major issues: nobody can fight terrorism alone, and ignoring the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will only lead to further chaos.

Luc Debieuvre, March 15th, 2004