

## DAILY HORRORS MUST NOT STOP THE LOOKING FORWARD

While events in Occupied Palestine and in Iraq repeat themselves day after day with nothing but a steady progress towards horror, analysis tend to be limited to only the latest event. And this is how people start missing the point as it is taking place when more than ever, it is necessary to shed light on what is likely to happen next.

In Iraq or in Afghanistan for instance, the United States is said to spend US\$ 65 billion annually. I doubt this will last forever. There has been no change in the Bush administration's policy there and the 'transfer of sovereignty' will be a farce as long as President Bush or US Ambassador-designated to Iraq John Negroponte are shaping it. There are many indications that the US will leave sooner rather than later. A real transfer of sovereignty will mean that Bush is prepared to change his policy and return to the international community. But his present endorsement of UN Envoy Lakhdar Brahimi does not look like lasting. Rumours that American and British officials are working on a pull-out plan are taking grounds and one can easily guess that Italian premier Berlusconi will not oppose it. A successful overthrow of Saddam Hussein was followed by a series of unforgivable mistakes and failures. The abuse of Iraqi prisoners at the notorious Abu Ghraib prison has added to this. Bush has said he will keep informed his compatriots on the transfer process through weekly meetings in a move aimed at showing that he is open to dialogue. But this is for the gallery; the matter is over and everybody knows it. Even Chalabi is jumping off the US boat. In the end, after considering all the costs of the war, it will be concluded that other roads could have been taken.

In Occupied Palestine, the horror continues steadily, with no prospects or hope for improvement: there will only be more violence. Everybody knows there is nothing to be expected from Ariel Sharon. An essential contributor to the infernal 'action-retaliation' spiral, Sharon will go on at any cost. Events in Gaza were unanimously condemned by the international community, but Sharon doesn't care and will continue not to care while Bush continues to describe Israeli incursions as 'troubling'. Most would term them war crimes. A few wishful thinkers recently expressed satisfaction that the US did not veto the UN Security Council resolution passed against Israel. But, in reality, the US did so because it knew such a resolution was totally useless. To confirm that, consider this from the Israeli Ambassador to the UN, Dan Gillerman, who said "*we were not required to stop demolishing houses; we thus shall continue*". Why, indeed, would they refrain, if all that they are doing is only 'troubling'? Especially when Bush goes on adding, as he did last week at a gathering of the America-Israeli Public Affairs Committee, AIPAC, a powerful Israeli lobby group, that "*the US is strongly committed, and I am strongly committed, to the security of Israel as a vibrant Jewish state (...). Israel, as a democracy, has every right to defend itself from terror*". Has Israel to destroy houses with people inside to be 'vibrant'? Does Israel's 'every right to defend itself from terror' include shooting Palestinian civilians like rabbits when they try to escape? Israel and now the US are increasingly becoming the most hated nations in the world. Will the American voter understand that, and accept that his/her country was going on the path of apartheid South Africa? The Bush doctrine, as expressed by people like Deputy Defence Secretary Paul Wolfowitz and Chairman of the Defence Policy Board Richard Perle, is ruining the relationship between America and the Arab world, which is not good for anybody. Even Jordan's King Abdullah admitted it, after US Secretary of State Colin Powell failed to convince Arab leaders of its good intentions during the World Business Forum in Amman. True, the occupation of Palestine doesn't prevent some Arab countries from going on with their business as usual, whatever the summits. Yet, the world's future cannot be left in Sharon's hands. The whole international order is at stake and "*its fragile nature makes any doom*

*laden scenario seem plausible*” as Philip Stephens wrote in Britain’s Financial Times. Stephens concluded by saying *“We stand at the edge of the cliff. Iraq is a disaster but the world’s future looks worse”*.

Other elements should be looked at carefully in the coming months. For instance, how long will the word ‘terrorism’ be used indiscriminately by the US as present? *“Terrorists are trying to stop Iraq’s march to sovereignty and peace”* said US proconsul in Iraq Paul Bremer. This is not correct. Terrorists who kill soldiers and civilians alike while trying to overthrow democracy by force cannot be compared to nationalists fighting for freedom from occupation. Means can be similar and people occasionally join forces –no foreigner has ever been arrested in Fallujah, though- but confusing terrorism with a fight against occupation is not only an intellectual fraud, it is a mistake. Another element for consideration is the time factor. When the Bush administration talks of bringing democracy quickly to the Middle East, it forgets that hardly 100 years ago, one could still buy a seat in the British Parliament or that women have got voting rights in France only 50 years ago. Reforms must come from within. They require some time to be implemented and it should be remembered that not all means are acceptable. Torture, blind retaliation or mass murder are not the appropriate ways. One should never lose his soul while fighting its enemies, for the enemy would have otherwise already won. This is what Sharon is now doing in Occupied Palestine, destroying the bases upon which the state of Israel was built. Lastly, it is clear that future events will be influenced by the people’s ability to take their future into their own hands. Bush has already said that *“Iraq was not yet ready to govern itself”*. He also said that *“the US would leave the country if required to do so”* but swiftly added that *“it was unlikely that this will happen”*. Bush should be reminded of a comment by British Member of Parliament Lord John Russel in the 1850’s: *“When asked whether a Nation is ready for freedom, my answer is: has there ever been any man who’d be ready to be a despot?”*

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