

“Liberation”: Beware the Ides of March

20th Anniversary of the Gulf War Mass Murder of Thousands of Iraqis

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“To plunder, to slaughter, to steal, these things they misname empire; and where they make a wilderness, they call it peace.”
(Publius Cornelius Tacitus - 55-117)

Al Jazeera asked, randomly, people in Libya, whatever happened, what did they think about US led “humanitarian intervention.” All replied with one word: “Iraq.”

The 2nd of March 2011, marked the twentieth anniversary the mass murder of thousands of Iraqis by the US 24th Mechanised Infantry Division, two days after the ceasefire, a final murderous act in the forty two day carpet bombing of Iraq. It also began the continuation of the silent decimation of a nation and people through a United Nations flagged siege of historic severity. Denied were food, medications, medical and dialysis equipment, scanners and X-ray machines and all supplies needed to rebuild a country now reduced to “a pre-industrial age.”

It also denotes planning of the illegal bombings for the following thirteen years, then the destruction of Iraq, starting on 20th March 2003; the murder of a legitimate government - and final destruction of civil society, previously denied even life support. Indeed, even oxygen cylinders were embargoed.

Millions of words have been written of the war crimes committed in Operation Desert Storm. The burying alive by US troops of young Iraqi conscripts in the desert, the Basra Road massacre, the deliberate destruction of t water purification plants, electricity, schools, hospitals, food stores, factories, farms and broadly fifty to seventy five percent percent of all livestock, from chickens to buffalo. Not enough, however has been written about the crime which makes even these, with the genocidal, possibly over three million dead, from 1991 to now, pale. The destruction of the gene pool in generation after generation, the mutilation of future generations until a time unknown.

Professor Malcolm Hooper, Emeritus Professor of Medicinal Chemistry at the University of Sunderland, wrote a detailed Report on this destruction which may never end : “The most Toxic War in Western Military History.” This poisonous, near eternal, environmental and body burden (Depleted Uranium residue from weapons, 4.5 *billion* years) has now been added to, in orders of magnitude, from the March 2003 invasion.

Ironically, anniversary of the start of the 1991 bombardment (17th January) this year, fell on Martin Luther King Day. Marking it, the President stated on the White House website, that

progress is: " .. underway at the memorial being constructed ... in Dr King's honor." President Obama: " ... visited the site with the Environmental Protection Agency's Administrator, Lisa Jackson ... When completed later this year, the memorial will serve to remind us of Dr. King's hope, sense of justice and quest for equality." The cynic might think the President and the EPA Administrator might be better placed marking Dr King's aspirations by visiting the poisoned lands of Iraq, Afghanistan and Balkans in which all Dr King's "dream" have become arguably, his worst nightmare, courtesy US-initiated actions.

Iraq's infrastructure, education and progress is "liberated" backwards a hundred years, with America's imported fundamentalists dominating. Electricity is often just an hour a day even in Baghdad, social security and government rations have been cut to Iraq's up to seventy percent unemployed (figures differ) and foreign workers are imported by foreign companies, whilst skilled, willing and graduate Iraqis sit desperate and idle. US puppet "Prime Minister" Maliki, allegedly still clutching his foreign passport, has done nothing to put a quota on overseas workers, thus giving Iraqis a chance of a living, in their own land. But then, his orders are from his Master's voice.

Perhaps the most chilling of all, in a country pre-embargo and invasion, considered an example of the advanced and secular in the Middle East, there are now so many widows created by the invasion and subsequent violence, unsupported by government welfare, and with children to bring up, that "temporary marriages" are spreading across the country. A woman is married for two days, two weeks, whatever, and paid an agreed amount for sharing her bed and body. Legalised prostitution, with a religious fig leaf over it, to which the desperate resort. Welcome to the "New Iraq", courtesy Uncle Sam and the now "Middle East Peace Envoy", Tony Blair.

Just eight months after the invasion I met a group of Iraqi professionals, anti the former regime to a man and woman. How was everything going? I asked. There was a moment's silence as they caught each others eyes, then: "We wish Saddam was back."

Wholesale killings, of pilgrims, people going about daily business, sitting socialising in the evenings on their flat roofs, in the balmy air; in schools, hospitals, cars, on foot,. Mosque and Church attacks and bombings, unheard historically, the wholesale destruction in cities and towns, from Basra to Baquba, Samarra to Falluja, Tel Afar to the holy cities of Najav and Kerbala, continued year after gruelling year.

Hilary Clinton paid her first visit as Secretary of State to Iraq. The woman who wrote : "It Takes a Village .." (to raise a child) stood in the country where countless villages had been destroyed and declared that " ... Iraq is going in the right direction ... I really believe that, on the whole, Iraq is on the right track (there was) overwhelming evidence of really impressive progress." She spoke the day after suicide bombers killed seventy one people outside Baghdad's most revered Shia shrine and a further seventeen in Muqdadiah, north of the capital. (Guardian, 25th April 2009.) Suicide bombers, also unknown in Iraq, too, came in with the invasion

Currently those exercising their "audacity of hope", demonstrating for jobs, electricity, clean water, normality, are being killed, disappeared, tortured, in a country where Donald Rumsfeld told Iraqis they were : " ... free to live their lives and do wonderful things ... that's what's going to happen here." (Department of Defence, news briefing, 11th April 2003.)

Meanwhile, Britain, whose formerly declared “ethical foreign policy” has become somewhat tarnished, marked this twentieth anniversary of decimation by phasing out aid to Iraq, declaring that it was concentrating on countries with the highest infant mortality. Iraq’s infant mortality (CIA Factbook) is 48.5 per thousand live births. Libya’s, in context, is 18.5 (Iceland, Sweden under 4.) Other agencies have Iraq’s infant mortality at up to 128. Either way, it is an appalling, shaming figure in a country still occupied (however renamed) thus welfare the responsibility of the US occupier – for which fellow invader, Britain, bears an equal responsibility.

In, Kunar Province, Afghanistan, 1st., March heralded the shooting dead, from the air, by their US liberators, nine children, collecting firewood for warmth, in the freezing mountain winter. Noorullah Noori, of the local development council, is quoted as saying that four of the boys were seven, three eight, one nine and one twelve. A thirteen year old was wounded. (McClatchy.) The previous week, the Afghan government and local residents claim sixty five civilians were killed in the same province. General Petraeus called the first a “tragic mistake” for which he would: “... apologise”, to families and government – and the second: “insurgents.”

But the eyes of the world are not focussed on invasion’s atrocities, they are fixed on the latest bogey man, the one Tony Blair, in 2004, brought in out of the cold, and said the West could now do business with. They certainly did. But this March, “Operation Intervention Libya” (I made that up, liked the acronym) is in the air. Two US Navy warships and four hundred marine are already off shore readying for “humanitarian efforts.” The Iraq hand book has been dusted down, assets have been frozen, sanctions have been slapped on at breath taking speed and a “no fly zone”, mooted, to protect the population.

As with Iraq, Libya will be isolated, prohibited from using its own air space but the US and its allies will bomb with impunity. It’s leader has already been likened to Hitler and Pol Pot. We have had the “Butcher of Baghdad”, the Butcher of Belgrade”, the “Butcher of Benghazi”, is only a matter of time. As I finish this, it is announced that the International Criminal Court is to investigate crimes committed by Libya’s regime, during the uprising. Not those of Bush, Blair, Obama, Cameron’s continued support for the deaths of certainly approaching two million since Afghanistan’s invasion in 2001.

Martin Luther King said:

“I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality.

“I refuse to accept the cynical notion that nation after nation must spiral down a militaristic stairway into the hell of thermonuclear destruction. I believe that unarmed truth and unconditional love will have the final word in reality. This is why right temporarily defeated is stronger than evil triumphant.

“I believe that even amid today’s mortar bursts and whining bullets, there is still hope for a brighter tomorrow. I believe that wounded justice, lying prostrate on the blood-flowing streets of our nations, can be lifted from this dust of shame to reign supreme among the children of men.

“I have the audacity to believe that peoples everywhere can have three meals a day for

their bodies, education and culture for their minds, and dignity, equality and freedom for their spirits. I believe that what self-centered men have torn down men other-centered can build up.

“I still believe that one day mankind will bow before the altars of God and be crowned triumphant over war and bloodshed, and nonviolent redemptive good will proclaim the rule of the land.

” ‘And the lion and the lamb shall lie down together and every man shall sit under his own vine and fig tree and none shall be afraid.’ I still believe that *We Shall* overcome!’

We can only, fervently, hope.

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