

ANOTHER SIDE OF THE WAR

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[W]e have about 50% of the world's wealth, but only 6.3% of its population ... Our real task in the coming period is to devise a pattern of relationships which will have to dispense with all sentimentality... We should cease to talk about vague and... unreal objectives such as human rights, the raising of living standards, and democratization.

— George Kennan, U.S. State Dept., Policy Planning Study 23 (1948)

We live in an awkward age of war, where discussion is curtailed by the iron curtain of fear, and the choking fog of uncertainty.

At this time, when the American military is embarking on an open-ended, and virtually unlimited expedition overseas, in search of undefined 'enemies,' and in pursuit of a goal that seems more appropriate for international police than an imperial military, there is a strange circumscription of national dialogue. At this time, more than any other, U.S. foreign policy, which should be in the very forefront of the national debate, hides in the shadows, like sellers of illicit, somewhat tainted substances, like crack cocaine, or smut.

Nations, no less than people, can be caught up in the very real grip of madness, as Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy well-proved over a half century ago. Apartheid South Africa, which waged armed war against children, who were armed with little more than the righteousness of their African resistance, is yet another. And one need not go across the Atlantic to see similar instances of national madness, as evidenced by the notorious MOVE bombing in Philadelphia, where, as one cop said ominously, "We saw the children as combatants!", or the equally mad expressions of state terrorism as shown in Waco, Texas, or the Ruby Ridge incidents.

"Power", to paraphrase Lord Acton's well-known axiom, "does more than corrupts, it makes men mad."

It is precisely in this time of madness, of emotional depth and mental unhingement, that other voices need to be heard, and other perspectives leavened into the debate. For, if madness has one cure, it is reason.

Mr. Enver Masud may be one of the voices that adds some of that reason. An engineering management consultant who once worked for the World Bank, USAID in Egypt, and in half a dozen countries over the earth, Masud can hardly be termed an 'Islamic fundamentalist' (whatever that is), or even a radical. He seems to be a fairly bourgeois fellow, who grew up in an Indian Muslim family of wealth, means and influence, who never really engaged the deeper waters of his faith, until later in life. His father was the Indian ambassador to Saudi Arabia, and his mother is the descendant of a noble family in India.

A year ago, Masud wrote and published a book that was the compilation of perhaps five years of commentaries written for the little-known Washington, D.C.-based newspaper, Eastern Times, called **The War on Islam** (Arlington, Va.: Madrasah Books, 2000). In it, Masud critically engages, questions, and controverts many of the big stories of the day, from the 1991 report that "Libyan terrorists" were sent to the U.S. by President M. Ghaddafi to assassinate Americans, including the President (in fact, these were 350 Libyans, trained by the U.S. CIA to knock off Ghaddafi!), to the massacre of hundreds of Palestinians in Lebanese refugee camps under the direction of Israeli then-defense minister (now President) Ariel Sharon in 1982.

Using American, British, and other sources, Masud raises important questions, and also provides remarkable answers. While *The War on Islam* was published long before the events of 11 September, 2001, it still has important lessons for those who wish to examine an opposing view. Consider the comments he prints of Americans who were critical of the U.S. bombings in Sudan and (yes) Afghanistan in 1998: "It is dangerous to divorce terrorism from politics, yet the U.S. media continue to talk about an abstract war against terrorism without mention of the issues or context that lie behind them." ; or, "Terrorism is a political act, a response to U.S. foreign policy. It is an act of war waged by people too weak to have a conventional army or one large enough to take on the United States."

The first quote was written by Graham E. Fuller, former vice-chairman of the National Intelligence Council of the CIA, for the *L.A. Times* (8/24/98); the second was by Charley Reese, an ex-soldier who does a column for the *Orlando Sentinel* (8/18/98), the title of which told the story: "Face It: U.S. Foreign Policy Contribute to Acts of Terrorism." One really wonders if these guys could, or even would, write the same kinds of things today.

What is perhaps more troubling, is not whether either man would write such thoughts today, but whether a publisher of a newspaper would print it today!

As experience has shown, this is a very real question, that becomes even more provocative in the face of reports that a number of newspapers in the nation have withdrawn the wildly popular comic strip, *Boondocks*, because of some of its pokes at the National Security State. *Boondocks*, for the few who don't know, is a daily feature which, ala *Doonesbury*, pokes fun at American political, cultural, and racial mores. Its central character, a tiny revolutionary boy named Huey Freeman, raises the ire of the adults around him, with his questions, observations, and actions. In one banned strip, he calls up the FBI's so-called terrorist hotline, to tell them that he knows someone who is a terrorist, and proceeds to spell, "R-E-A-G--", for former U.S. President (and Libya bomber) Ronald Reagan.

Although Aaron McGruder's strip runs in over 200 U.S. papers, roughly a dozen have pulled the most recent strips since the events of the 11th of September.

Similarly, I doubt few of America's papers would run the thoughts, opinions and ruminations of Enver Masud. It is indeed, for this very reason that his thoughts may prove valuable to thinking people in America, who really take offense at how the corporate media treats adults like kids, who need to be protected, not from bombs, or plummeting planes, but from non-conventional ideas.

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