

(OLS continued from page 1)
the long run....”

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ASSASSINATING TEENS

BY SCOTT HANDLEMAN

Tulkarm, West Bank

On Sunday evening, a vanload of Israeli undercover police zoomed into the Palestinian city of Tulkarm, jumped out of their van and murdered six youths at close range.

Two days later, the city is still in mourning. Most of the stores are closed. At midday, a long line of men, families of the dead, assembled to receive visitors.

I spoke with Rami Shantir, a balding man in his early 30s, at the mourning recep-

tion. The Israelis shot his cousin Muhammad in the head.

Muhammad Adnan Mahmoud Shantir was 18 years old and had just graduated from high school. The previous weekend he had had a graduation party. He got good grades in school and was pursuing plans to enter the university. Shantir had two older brothers and five sisters. His mother is a widow. His father, a shopkeeper, was murdered by thieves in 1999.

He was on the way back from the mosque when he saw two friends in the street, having a bite to eat. They exchanged greetings. Shantir's friends were members of the Al-Aqsa Martyr's Brigades and had been marked for assassination by the Israelis. Shantir had just taken leave of his friends when the van of assassins pulled up. They shot him in the head as he was walking away.

Of the six killed, three were 18, two were in their mid-twenties, and one, an unarmed Palestinian security officer, was 34. Three were wounded, including an elderly man who was shot in the legs. Eyewitness international observers report that soldiers arrived on the scene after the assassins, and prevented Palestinian ambulances from reaching the dying.

The Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* took its line from "military sources." It claimed that the six were members of the Al-Aqsa brigade, and were "on their way to carry out a terror attack near Tul Karm." Local tv reported the same story: six militants killed. Locals deny this. It appears that two of the victims were targeted members of the brigades, two were innocent passers-by, and the status of two others is unclear. Rami Shantir pointed to Muhammad's high marks of 80.4 in economics as evidence that he had life plans beyond martyrdom. Otherwise, why take the trouble to earn good grades?

The walls of Tulkarm are already posterized with photos of the newest martyrs. Muhammad's poster bears the stamp of the Al-Aqsa Brigade. He looks every bit the well-groomed economics student, incongruously brandishing a semiautomatic rifle. Semiautomatics are a favorite prop in the photo studios. West Bank streets are plastered with "martyr's" posters," issued in remembrance of suicide bombers or victims of Israeli terror. Most hold weapons.

International law prohibits the extrajudicial killing of civilians. Even those who support guerilla activity or terror operations must be arrested and tried. To date, Israel's High Court has refused to issue an injunction against the government's policy of ex-

trajudicial assassination.

WHAT MOORE LEFT OUT

BY FRANK BARDAKKE

I can't claim to have read everything, and I couldn't bear to punch it in and hit search, but when I finally saw *Fahrenheit 9/11*, one enormous omission jumped out that no one I know of has commented on, and which might be worth a few paragraphs of a Counterpuncher's time: where is the anti-war movement?

Remember: before the US invasion of Iraq, we all marched in several enormous demonstrations, the last of which was the largest, world-wide co-ordinated protest in the history of humanity. And then, as the war began, thousands of protesting people were arrested across the United States. Well, there is nothing about any of that in the movie. Not an image, not a word.

Mr. Moore has made an anti-war movie which neglects to mention what was a hugely popular anti-war movement. And add to that curiosity that Moore could easily have used the world-wide protest of millions of people as yet another way of ridiculing George Bush. Again remember: Bush told the press that he ignored the demonstrations because I never pay attention to focus groups. Moore, a master of filmatic juxtaposition, could have done wonders with that.

Why does it matter? Because the absence of the anti-war movement is another way that Moore leaves us with nothing to do but, as the maimed soldier in the movie puts it, go home and work for the Democrats. If he had included some images of protest, we would have been offered another option: resume our independent action against the war.

But Moore is not interested in that. He is only interested in helping the Democrats defeat Bush. And although his movie effectively tells millions of people about some of the horrors of the war, it simultaneously disarms them, as defeating Bush will have little effect on the war in Iraq, unless we rebuild an independent anti-war movement.

And isn't that a main problem with all this election nonsense? Instead of protesting against the war, people are busy working out their various election strategies. But who you vote for has always been less important than what you work for. And voting for Kerry or Nader or whomever is much less important than (perhaps even a distraction from) what we used to call our main task: returning to the streets, in massive numbers, against this god-damn war. CP

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Published twice monthly except
August, 22 issues a year:
\$40 individuals,
\$100 institutions/supporters
\$30 student/low-income
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Richard Ben Cramer's "How Israel Lost"

BY HEATHER WILLIAMS

With demolitions and assassinations by the Israeli Defense Forces continuing apace, bombs from Gaza and the West Bank killing Israeli preschoolers and civilians riding buses, neocon solutions for a McDonald's-friendly Middle East going south next door in Iraq, and al Qaeda forces winning hearts and minds from Berlin to Bangkok, it would appear to be a time when the gatekeepers of critical opinion in the mainstream book world might give some credit for bold reportage on Israel and Palestine. In particular, that credit might not be so difficult to hand out when the author is Richard Ben Cramer. Best known as the biographer of Joe DiMaggio and the author of *What It Takes*, a pop-psych romp through the 1988 elections, Cramer returns in his latest book to his longtime beat in Israel, which he began covering for the Philadelphia Inquirer in the late 1970s.

The official response to *How Israel Lost: The Four Questions* (Simon and Schuster, \$24.00) confirms that straying from the official script on Israel in any kind of big picture fashion is still the sort of thing that can screw up a celebrated career in no time at all. Snippy reviews by self-declared centrists in the Boston Globe, Washington Post, the New York Times, as well as shrill diatribes from the right in the National Review and the Jerusalem Post all scream that Cramer should have stuck to baseball if he wanted any more Pulitzer prizes. Given the blackout of serious high-level debate about Israel's activities in the occupied territories and the viability of any sort of independent Palestinian state, such prompt, blanket dismissal of a new book on Israel virtually comes as a recommendation.

Cramer's device in his book is answering four modified Passover questions: Why do we care about Israel? Why don't the Palestinians have a state? What is a Jewish state? Why is there no peace? Predictably, each critic in turn ignores Cramer's answers to those questions, but provide readers with four preemptory answers as to why they ought not to bother with Cramer's book. The likes of Jonathan Dorfman, Barbara Slavin, Jonathan Rosen, and Tom Gross ignore the best of what is

Cramer's book and stick to the standard four lines that will steer most casual readers elsewhere: Cramer is naïve and arrogant; Cramer gets the facts wrong; Cramer is a self-hating Jew who only claims to love Israel; Cramer has nothing new to say.

What the response really suggests is that it may be one thing for journalists to report discrete violent facts in Israel and the occupied territories, but it is quite another to call attention to a pattern of state actions, or much less to point out that violence against civilians is official policy happily sanctioned by the courts. Thus, the current state of casual knowledge: readers see a picture of a gerrymandered security wall cutting off starving populations from their olive groves, a portrait of a suicide bomber, a sprinkling of Red Cross statistics on appalling rates of malnutrition among Palestinian children, or a fifth paragraph of a story on a deadly bombing in Tel Aviv that mentions *oh-and-by-the-*

Writing fairly about the Palestinians means (even if you are Jewish) being called an enemy of the Jews

way IDF troops promptly killed twice that many Palestinians (armed and unarmed) in response. But no one offers any no strong conclusions as to what these horrors add up to. What makes *How Israel Lost* genuinely worthwhile has less to do with new conclusions about the state of conflict in the occupied territories or even groundbreaking interviews with major players on either side than it does with building big, counterintuitive arguments through miniature models—stories of lives made and ruined, villages built and razed, corrupt fiefdoms erected and consolidated, projects of peacemaking conceived and abandoned. Despite the richness of twenty-five years of interviews and stories from the field, Cramer had a lot of

practical and probably financial reasons not to put them together in a book so critical of Israel and the PLO. He should be congratulated for doing so.

There are two well-worn arguments that Cramer's book undoes very nicely. The first—the standard for right-wingers whose reading doesn't veer that far from this week's *People Magazine*—is that electoral democracy automatically makes Israel more worthy than its neighbors of U.S. support and also automatically makes it a better-faith bargaining partner. The second—the standard for liberals and self-declared centrists who see themselves as anguished friends of Israel—is that Sharon's break with Clinton-era peacemaking is the problem and that a return to an Oslo-like agreement is the solution.

As for the claim that Israel and its supporters claim that Israel deserves favor because it is a democracy and its neighbors are not (a favorite line of ex-Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu), Cramer suggests problematically that it is precisely Israel's representative institutions combined with changing demography that have made durable peace unlikely. Cramer discusses at length the rise of the Knesset's right wing coalition-from-hell, attributing it to a combination traditional right-wing militancy, the pragmatism of Russian émigré settlers (many of them non-Jews who, of course, were brought to Israel in order to populate the occupied territory and create more "facts on the ground"), and tactical intransigence on the part of the ultra-orthodox (many of whom, despite their part in expansionist military policies, hold their ground and compel other sectors rightward by condemning the idea of a Zionist state). Cramer further excoriates the record of an Israeli Supreme Court that refuses to issue injunctions against demolitions, security checkpoints, enclosures, land expropriations, or even torture and assassinations that end the lives of dozens of innocents along with their targets. Given Ashcroft's Justice Department memos to the White House on torture that would air the month his book appeared on the shelves, Cramer's analysis of Israel's impact on its patron is quite prescient:

Maybe it's also true, the old Bible (**Williams continued on page 6**)