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By Endorsing Ariel Sharon's Plan George Bush Has Legitimised Terrorism

By Robert Fisk
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What better recruiting sergeant could Bin Laden have than the President of the United States?

So President George Bush tears up the Israeli-Palestinian peace plan and that's okay. Israeli settlements for Jews and Jews only on the West Bank. That's okay. Taking land from Palestinians who have owned that land for generations, that's okay. UN Security Council Resolution 242 says that land cannot be acquired by war. Forget it. That's okay.

Does President George Bush actually work for al-Qa'ida? What does this mean? That George Bush cares more about his re-election than he does about the Middle East? Or that George Bush is more frightened of the Israeli lobby than he is of his own electorate. Fear not, it is the latter.

His language, his narrative, his discourse on history, has been such a lie these past three weeks that I wonder why we bother to listen to his boring press conferences. Ariel Sharon, the perpetrator of the Sabra and Shatila massacre (1,700 Palestinian civilians dead) is a "man of peace" - even though the official 1993 Israeli report on the massacre said he was "personally responsible" for it. Now, Mr Bush is praising Mr Sharon's plan to steal yet more Palestinian land as a "historic and courageous act".

Heaven spare us all. Give up the puny illegal Jewish settlements in Gaza and everything's okay: the theft of land by colonial settlers, the

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denial of any right of return to Israel by those Palestinians who lived there, that's okay. Mr Bush, who claimed he changed the Middle East by invading Iraq, says he is now changing the world by invading Iraq! Okay! Is there no one to cry "Stop! Enough!"?

Two nights ago, this most dangerous man, George Bush, talked about "freedom in Iraq". Not "democracy" in Iraq. No, "democracy" was no longer mentioned. "Democracy" was simply left out of the equation. Now it was just "freedom" - freedom from Saddam rather than freedom to have elections. And what is this "freedom" supposed to involve? One group of American-appointed Iraqis will cede power to another group of American-appointed Iraqis. That will be the "historic handover" of Iraqi "sovereignty". Yes, I can well see why George Bush wants to witness a "handover" of sovereignty. "Our boys" must be out of the firing line - let the Iraqis be the sandbags.

Iraqi history is already being written. In revenge for the brutal killing of four American mercenaries - for that is what they were - US Marines carried out a massacre of hundreds of women and children and guerillas in the Sunni Muslim city of Fallujah. The US military says that the vast majority of the dead were militants. Untrue, say the doctors. But the hundreds of dead, many of whom were indeed civilians, were a shameful reflection on the rabble of American soldiery who conducted these undisciplined attacks on Fallujah. Many Baghdadi Sunnis say that in the "New Iraq" - the Iraqi version, not the Paul Bremer version - Fallujah should be given the status of a new Iraqi capital.

Vast areas of the Palestinian West Bank will now become Israel, courtesy of President Bush. Land which belongs to people other than Israelis must now be stolen by Israelis because it is "unrealistic" to accept otherwise. Is Mr Bush a thief? Is he a criminal? Can he be charged with abetting a criminal act? Can Iraq now claim to Kuwait that it is "unrealistic" that the Ottoman borders can be changed? Palestinian land once included all of what is now Israel. It is not, apparently, "realistic" to change this, even to two per cent?

Is Saddam Hussein to be re-bottled and put back in charge of Iraq on the basis that his 1990 invasion of Kuwait was "realistic"? Or that his invasion of Iran - when we helped him try to destroy Ayatollah Khomeini's revolution - was "realistic" because he initially attacked only the Arabic-speaking (and thus "Iraqi") parts of Iran?

Or, since President Bush now seems to be a history buff, are the Germans to be given back Danzig or the Sudetenland? Or Austria? Or should we perhaps recreate the colonial possessions of the past 100 years? Is it not "realistic" that the French should retake Algeria - or part

of Algeria - on the basis that the people all speak French, on the basis that this was once part of the French nation? Or should the British retake Cyprus? Or Aden? Or Egypt? Shouldn't the French be allowed to take back Lebanon and Syria? Why shouldn't the British re-take America and boot out those pesky "terrorists" who oppose the rule of King George's democracy well over 200 years ago?

Because this is what George Bush's lunacy and weakness can lead to. We all have lands that "God" gave us. Didn't Queen Mary die with "Calais" engraved on her heart? Doesn't Spain have a legitimate right to the Netherlands? Or Sweden the right to Norway and Denmark? Every colonial power, including Israel can put forward these preposterous demands.

What Bush has actually done is give way to the crazed world of Christian Zionism. The fundamentalist Christians who support Israel's theft of the West Bank on the grounds that the state of Israel must exist there according to God's law until the second coming, believe that Jesus will return to earth and the Israelis - for this is the Bush "Christian Sundie" belief - will then have to convert to Christianity or die in the battle of Amargeddon.

I kid thee not. This is the Christian fundamentalist belief, which even the Israeli embassy in Washington go along with - without comment, of course - in their weekly Christian Zionist prayer meetings. Every claim by Osama bin Laden, every statement that the United States represents Zionism and supports the theft of Arab lands will now have been proved true to millions of Arabs, even those who had no time for Bin Laden. What better recruiting sergeant could Bin Laden have than George Bush. Doesn't he realise what this means for young American soldiers in Iraq or are Israelis more important than American lives in Mesopotamia?

Everything the US government has done to preserve its name as a "middle-man" in the Middle East has now been thrown away by this gutless, cowardly US President, George W Bush. That it will place his soldiers at greater risk doesn't worry him - anyway, he doesn't do funerals. That it goes against natural justice doesn't worry him. That his statements are against international law is of no consequence.

And still we have to cow-tow to this man. If we are struck by al-Qa'ida it is our fault. And if 90 per cent of the population of Spain point out that they opposed the war, then they are pro-terrorists to complain that 200 of their civilians were killed by al-Qa'ida. First the Spanish complain about the war, then they are made to suffer for it - and then they are condemned as "appeasers" by the Bush regime and its

craven journalists when they complain that their husbands and wives and sons did not deserve to die.

If this is to be their fate, excuse me, but I would like to have a Spanish passport so that I can share the Spanish people's "cowardice"! If Mr Sharon is "historic" and "courageous", then the murderers of Hamas and Islamic Jihad will be able to claim the same. Mr Bush legitimised "terrorism" this week - and everyone who loses a limb or a life can thank him for his yellow streak. And, I fear, they can thank Mr Blair for his cowardice too.

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