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## Israel's 'Moral High Ground' It keeps getting lower...

**T**he other day on CNN's *Reliable Sources*, *Washington Post* reporter Tom Ricks revealed the true face of the utter ruthlessness that underlies Israel's actions on the ground in the Middle East:

Howard Kurtz: *"And joining us now here [in] Washington [is] Anne Compton who covers the White House for ABC News, and Thomas Ricks, Pentagon reporter for the Washington Post and author of the new book **Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq**. Tom Ricks, you've covered a number of military conflicts, including Iraq, as I just mentioned. Is civilian casualties increasingly going to be a major media issue? In conflicts where you don't have two standing armies shooting at each other?"*

Thomas Ricks, reporter, *Washington Post*: *"I think it will be. But I think civilian casualties are also part of the battlefield play for both sides here. One of the things that is going on, according to some U.S. military analysts, is that Israel purposely has left pockets of Hezbollah rockets in Lebanon, because as long as they're being rocketed, they can continue to have a sort of moral equivalency in their operations in Lebanon."*

Kurtz: *"Hold on, you're suggesting that Israel has deliberately allowed Hezbollah to retain some of its fire power, essentially for PR purposes, because having Israeli civilians killed helps them in the public relations war here?"*

Ricks: *"Yes, that's what military analysts have told me."*

Kurtz: *"That's an extraordinary testament to the notion that having people on your own side killed actually works to your benefit in that nobody wants to see your own citizens killed but it works to your benefit in terms of the battle of perceptions here."*

Ricks: *"Exactly. It helps you with the moral high ground problem, because you know your operations in Lebanon are going to be killing civilians as well."*

Just when you thought Israel's **high moral ground** couldn't get any lower, they go and do something like this. Maintaining the moral high ground is always a dicey matter for a brazen **aggressor**, but making sure some of your own civilians **die** as you **wantonly slaughter** your neighbors is unique in the annals of war propaganda. Not

even **the Nazis** pulled crap like that.

I don't like to make such comparisons, but in view of Ricks' reportage it is clearly *not* hyperbole. And so what has been the response of the Israelis and their American amen corner? On a later program, Howard Kurtz **had this to say**:

*"One other note. On Reliable Sources two weeks ago, Washington Post Pentagon reporter Tom Ricks said he'd been told by U.S. military analysts that Israel was leaving some Hezbollah rocket launchers intact because the killing of Israeli civilians provided an image of moral equivalency in the war. Post editor Len Downie, responding to a letter from former New York mayor Ed Koch, says he told Ricks he should not have made those statements.*

*"Ricks told the **New York Sun** that he accurately reported the comments from analysts but that, quote, 'I wish I hadn't said them, and I intend from now on to keep my mouth shut about it.'"*

Translation: What I said is true, and I promise never to say it again.

Here is a textbook example of what scholars **John J. Mearsheimer** and **Stephen Walt** call "**the Lobby**" in action, and some pretty quick action at that. No sooner had Ricks' comments hit the airwaves than the Lobby went into overdrive, screeching the old familiar refrain, the standard response to any suggestion of Israeli government perfidy: "**Blood libel!**"

That was their "**rebuttal**" to professors Mearsheimer and Walt when they wrote that the Lobby has effectively seized control of American foreign policy. They've always come back with the "**blood libel**" canard when confronted with footage of IDF soldiers shooting at Palestinian teenagers armed with slingshots. That was their **reply** when Fox News' **Carl Cameron** reported that the Israelis may have had foreknowledge of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and not told us. It's their stock answer when backed against a wall, and I doubt that anyone takes it seriously anymore.

Besides which, the average human being, reading former New York mayor **Ed Koch's** **blovation** addressed to Ricks' editor, hasn't the foggiest idea what a "**blood libel**" is, historically. Even given this arcane knowledge, how is accusing Israelis of sacrificing their own children the equivalent of the old "blood libel" – which averred that Jews used the blood of Christian children in a religious ceremony involving the making of **matzohs**? (See, I told you it was obscure, not to mention weird). The difference is that the "blood libel" was **popularized** by crazed anti-Semites in Czarist Russia, while Ricks was citing "**a senior Israeli official.**" That official, and not Ricks, is the proper object of Mayor Big Mouth's ire. But let's be clear: Ricks' only sin is letting the cat out of the bag.

Koch's **letter** is revealing in more ways than he intends. In his usual, overwrought style, he tells us that when he first heard Ricks' statements about the IDF deliberately risking Israeli casualties for the sake of public relations,

*"I was shocked. ... Still, I thought to myself, anything is possible in a war. There are crazy people on both sides of every war, but, Dear God, I hope this never happened."*

In other words: he was shocked precisely because he found Ricks' reporting all too believable. As do I.

The reason I believe it is due to the unique position of Israel as a settler state, i.e., a foreign graft affixed to a Middle Eastern tree. While not denying the **historical attachment** of the Jewish people to Palestine, what I mean to say is that the impetus for the creation of the Jewish state came primarily from **abroad**: Zionism was a movement founded in **the ghettos of Eastern Europe**, not a national liberation movement spawned in the Holy Land itself. As such, it has always depended on foreign support, and not only from the **Diaspora: military aid** from the United States is **central** to its survival strategy. That's why media coverage, and "the narrative," is so important to the Israelis – important enough to sacrifice a few of their own on the altar of "public relations."

**Leave it to the Huffington Post** to chime in with the *New York Sun*, actually *celebrating* the silencing of a Pulitzer Prize-winning reporter. And Hollywood is **not far behind**, with a recent full-page ad in the *Los Angeles Times*, paid for by Israeli gazillionaire **Haim Saban**, that attacks the Lebanese for daring to **defend themselves** and makes no mention of the **1,300-plus** Lebanese victims of Israeli aggression. **Tears for Darfur**, but none for Beirut: that's the "liberal" wing of **the Amen Corner** for you.

In his interview with Kurtz, Ricks had this to say:

*Kurtz: "Tom Ricks, the New York Times reported the other day, quote, 'Israel is now fighting to win the battle of perceptions,' which to me says the battle of headlines. And, in fact, an Israeli cabinet minister was quoted, not by name, as saying, 'That the narrative at the end, is part of the problem.' I'm starting to hear echoes of Iraq."*

*Ricks: "Echoes of Iraq, yes. But also the Israelis are very sophisticated in their handling of the media. They consider it part of the battlefield, officially. The word 'narrative' always comes up with conversations with Israeli national security officials. They consider shaping the narrative, the battle for the narrative, to be key as part of any war fighting. So they see the media as part of the battlefield. And, in fact, there's some belief from our reporters that they have occasionally targeted the media."*

Sure they've targeted the media, and not only **on the battlefield** – you'll notice that Koch and **CAMERA** didn't dispute this rather more sensational accusation – but **in this country as well**. That's what organizations like CAMERA are all about. The minute you say anything about Israel that (a) is true and (b) discredits the Jewish state, a tremendous ruckus is raised, and no **slimeball** is spared in the slinging. After all, if they'll sacrifice *their own citizens* for the sake of "the narrative," then what won't they do to foreign reporters who have the gall to expose their methods?

The "**narrative**" Israel is trying to sell the American public is that the Jewish state is once again being targeted by "terrorists" – yet the **pictures** coming out of Lebanon show us who the real terrorists are, no matter how hard CAMERA and its allies, including **AIPAC**, work to "spin" the story in a more favorable direction. Their only alternative is to go into **denial mode** and claim that the photos are "staged" – a

macabre tactic that mocks both the living and the dead. In the case of Ricks' reporting, they can only **harass** his editor until he issues a one-sentence "rebuke" – in an exercise of power that the Lobby always denies having. Because, you understand, to even write about how they engineered this "rebuke" is, in itself, a "blood libel."

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