

CRIMES AND CORRUPTION OF THE NEW WORLD ORDER NEWS

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By Ariel Hirschfeld

As everyone knows, Joseph Conrad's novella "Heart of Darkness" was the basis for Francis Ford Coppola's film "Apocalypse Now." The story of the journey up the Congo River into the depths of the African forest is a tale of the discovery of the horrors of European colonialism at the height of its corrupting power. Coppola's greatness lay in showing that "Heart of Darkness" is not only the basis for the story, but a myth in the full sense of the word: a story that serves as a vital symbol of a central, crucial existential and political situation in today's world; a symbol which is not confined to the past, but reaches into the future and is realized with ever-mounting intensity and scope.

Captain Willard's journey during the Vietnam War along the river and into the depths of the Cambodian jungle was not only a military mission to eradicate a traitorous colonel (Kurtz), who had established his own army and made himself a god in the eyes of the local tribe; it was a journey into the depths of the corruption and insanity that were fomented by a prolonged war that had lost all touch with its surroundings a long time beforehand - a modern, colonialist war, leading the Western individual to shed all the tools of the consciousness and culture he bore, and thrusting him into horrific situations, which have no ancient precedent, along the lines of "Underworld." The apocalyptic state is the end of the world of the psyche. Willard's struggle is similar to the road taken by Kurtz: Both

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of them are fighting a despair so absolute that all that remains afterward, if anything, is blind survival.

"Citizen Nawee" is the Israeli "Heart of Darkness," and "Apocalypse Now" is hovering in the background, too. The comparison is off-putting: "Citizen Nawee" is a documentary film about a real person who lives in Israel - not a fictional allegory that is pitted against life, and it doesn't contain even a single iota of the grandiose epic poetics of the protean film. It has no Wagnerian music, no terrifying images of fire and engulfing darkness and, above all, no mythic ambitions. It is the straightforward, filmed tracking of the life of one Israeli. A unique man. He is 50-something and speaks fine, precise Hebrew, lives in Jerusalem's upscale Rehavia neighborhood, makes his living as a plumber, is of Iraqi origin, and his life partner (in the first period documented by the film) is a Palestinian Arab, whose residence in his home is a breach of the law. Nawee also works stubbornly and persistently to help the Palestinians living in the southern Mount Hermon area.

So the comparison to "Apocalypse Now" is harmful, because it is garish and because the vast gaps between the two cinematic works will contradict and swallow up what exists in this local, close and intimate film, which is striated by nuances and sub-nuances of feeling and pain. Nevertheless, what Nissim Mossek, the director, achieved in his years of accompanying Ezra Nawee is a journey into the heart of darkness; into the place (not the only one) where the great awfulness of this country unfolds. True, it contains no trafficking in human flesh and it contains no one who is akin to the world's Satan, but the level of corruption and the scale of crime that occur in it are no less than those in the Conrad masterpiece. Moreover, the reasons for that corruption are very much alike: They are racist.

I will first touch on the most fundamental difference: The love of Ezra Nawee and Fuad, the Palestinian, led Nawee to achieve close contact, to the point of utter understanding, with the lives of Palestinians under occupation. Not only with the constant agonies resulting from contact with the enmity of the army and the Border Police, but with the deep deterioration of the entire pageant of life under the yoke of the occupation - the ongoing neglect of all the configurations of civilization, the corrosive impression of a protracted affront, the depression that accompanies hatred as such. That love, conjoined to the strong personality, the human warmth, the wisdom, the irony and the openness of Nawee, created an open channel not only between these two people, but between these civilizations. Nawee goes through the checkpoints and undergoes with his friend the recurring arrests and trials, and is himself tried for traveling on banned roads or at prohibited times. He is not frightened by the police or by the Border Police: This is not because he disparages the law, but because he is carving out a path to something else.

That path is the river of "Heart of Darkness." It is on that path that Nissim Mossek accompanies Nawee to southern Mount Hebron and the blighted lives of the hardscrabble farmers, whose livelihood day in and day out is pillaged by the settlements that close them in - and in particular the settlement of Havat Maon, whose residents chop down their trees, poison their land and assault the local Palestinian children. Unlike the black river of the myth, this path is two-faced: **On the one hand it is one of love and concern; on the other it is a gateway to the complete opposite of the values of morality and the contours of humanity in which the Israeli, Jewish and Zionist person is educated. It is to enter the realm in which Israeli Jewish men wearing skullcaps and particularly long prayer fringes smash trees, and the next day stand on**

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a hill and mocked the ruin of the farmers who can no longer earn their daily bread. They just stand there and laugh. The film shows their laughter in a lengthy shot; a terrible hyena-like laughter. This laughter is one of the most caustic insults Judaism has had to take in all its history - and didn't come from any enemy.

This is the horrifying image of a Jew whom we did not learn about in the ancient writings. This is the realization of the order of a rabbi, who ordered the men to sit in that grove and embitter the lives of the Arabs (Amalek) to the point of poisoning the earth. And this rabbi, a new product of Judaism, who helps to create men who laugh at disasters they themselves fomented, which have sprung from the occupation. Every occupation corrupts, but the special character of the Jewish corruption requires a particular description and understanding; this is not the place for it. However, I will say that what is happening here is not the obvious continuation of Zionism or a necessary product of contemporary Jewish religiosity. In every vital process there are mutations and malignant growths. The occupation has created a habitat for malignancy.

The power of this film lies in the cogent dialogue between the film (the director, the accompanying eye) and the captivating, highly complex personality of Ezra Nawee. The film seems to insist on the act of exposure, fights for its presence. During many minutes it is clear that the cameraman who is pursuing the "plot" is at physical risk. It is obvious that the settlers of Havat Maon want to thwart and block his gaze. At one point they even knock the camera to the ground, but it keeps filming from the soil until the heel of a shoe steps on and tries to crush the lens, but it refuses to stop seeing. In the face of this gaze, the lives of Nawee and his friends play out amid an unrelenting storm of expulsions, humiliations, curses, terrible hurt; yet through it all there remains a place for love and concern - love for a dog, for cooking, and a sense of humor. The fact that Nawee is a homosexual adds more "fronts" to his struggle, on the part of his family, on the part of the conservative Arab society from which his partner came, and of course in the face of the settlers, whose contempt and loathing for him are primeval.

The film's title opens the way for an intriguing interpretation. Not necessarily because of the evocation of the classic "Citizen Kane," but because of the term "citizen." The setting of the journey and the struggle is not the "person," nor is it the state and the government: It is the point of contact, of the friction, between them: the place of citizenry. Nawee's heroic obduracy is precisely concerned with preservation of the citizenry, not the creation of an underworld within it (like Havat Maon, for example), rather protection of the image of the traditional civil individual, who faces in this case the unbridled violence of the settlers, like the woman whose olive trees they cut down, who holds in her palm a few olives and cries out for God's **vengeance**.

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Anonymous said...

no wonder that there is so much antisemitism worldwide !

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Anonymous said...

Perhaps I read this too quickly, but: This sounds like a good film to show in my community (Portland, Oregon); could you please give information about how to obtain this film? Thank you, Pam Allee, Portland, Oregon (USA), biljrat@spiretech.com

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CITIZEN NAWEE is available through,

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The documentary details,

HA'EZRAH. NAWI
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Sc.: Ron Ofer
Ph.: Meni Elias, Nissim Mossek, Elan Mizrahi, Shimi Gat
Ed.: Mossek
Music: Shlomo Mizrahi

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