

The Brutalities of War

by Janet Jagan - March 24, 2007

The famous Frenchman, Alexis de Tocqueville, who visited America in 1831 and published succinct accounts of his visit made this discerning remark: "I predict that any warrior prince who may arise in a great democratic nation will find it easier to lead the army to conquest than to make it live in peace after victory...." Tocqueville surely hit the nail on the head as regards the Bush invasion of Iraq. The longer the occupation army remains the deeper the US gets into the morass of hate, pain and suffering.

Like all wars that have no ideological content, as in wars for freedom or resistance to conquest or to protect minorities, etc, the Iraq war has pushed the world's most powerful nation into a snake pit of filth and horrors.

What could be called the crimes of the century occurred in Iraq during the last two years, during US troop occupation of that country. One of the most vile of the many murders by US soldiers occurred in Mahmudiya, south of Baghdad in March last year. At a court-martial held in the US, one soldier admitted to a plan by him and fellow soldiers to rape a 14-year-old Iraqi girl. They planned the attack over drinks and a game of cards, choosing the particular girl because there was only one male adult in the family and thus it would be easier to handle.

The house was invaded by the soldiers who took the girl's mother, father and small sister into another room while they raped the girl and at the same time shot dead the three family members and then poured kerosene over the girl's body and lit her on fire, to cover up the crime.

This was obviously a pre-meditated crime involving five US soldiers who used every device to cover-up the shocking crime. These criminal soldiers have gotten off relatively easy; one was sentenced to 90 years with the possibility of parole in 20 years, one was discharged from the army and is awaiting a civilian trial and the others are awaiting sentencing. But if this were all, it would be bad enough when one concludes what war does to the victors as well as the conquered. Both are destroyed in one way or another.

A number of US marines are charged with the killing of 24 unarmed civilians during 2005 in Haditha, Iraq, another attempted cover-up. It took over a year for the cover-up to be uncovered and the perpetrators of the dastardly acts to be charged.

In another atrocity, three US troops have been charged with murder for killing three Iraqi prisoners and threatening to kill a fellow soldier who wanted to report the incident to the US military authorities. And in Italy, prosecutors have called for the indictment of an American soldier for the shooting of an Italian intelligence agent at a checkpoint in Iraq last year.

A Reuter report said that: "Along with the widely publicized abuses of Iraqi prisoners at the Abu Ghraib prison (sexual humiliation, etc), the killings have damaged US prestige and led to international condemnation."

The brutalities that have taken place in Iraq since the US invasion are reminiscent of the massacre of innocent Vietnamese civilians at My Lai in 1968, when American GIs raped, looted and killed 400 unarmed men, women and children. This was one of the most shameful acts of the Vietnam War, which divided the US so sharply in the 60s.

All of these point to the fact that wars bring out terrible brutalities that can exist in so-called civilized man. War not only threatens all of humanity, but it brings with it the possibility of releasing in people the savage nature that lies hidden beneath modern advances.

When we look at war-torn areas of the world, like Iraq and Darfur, for example, we see almost a reversal of all the advances made by man through the ages. One of my colleagues who writes frequently on this page, Dale Bisnauth, ends his articles by the word "Peace!" I do the same!

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