

Hezbollah's Hollywood Hero

By Jacob Laksin

FrontPageMagazine.com | July 6, 2004

Fahrenheit 9/11 has sealed Michael Moore's status as one of the richest figures of the crackpot Left. Projected to take in \$100 million, the Bush-bashing film grossed \$21.8 million in its first three days, topping the \$21.6 million reaped by his 2002 box-office blast, *Bowling for Columbine*. But success has come at a price. Former leftie faithful are now less inclined to believe multi-millionaire Moore, with his ritzy spread on New York's Upper West Side, is the champion of the great unwashed (despite his personal appearance). Thankfully, Moore has found a new audience receptive to his message: terrorists.

News that *Fahrenheit 9/11* was coming to the Middle East has triggered delight among the region's would-be suicide bombers. In fact, Front Row Entertainment, the United Arab Emirates-based distributor of *Fahrenheit 9/11*, was recently contacted by organizations affiliated with Hezbollah. Hezbollah asked if they could they please help Front Row promote the film? After some initial, short-lived hesitation, Front Row Managing Director Gianluca Chacra greenlighted the idea. "We can't go against these organizations as they could strongly boycott the film in Lebanon and Syria," he announced. Apparently, they could not: How could they disappoint all those smiling terrorists?

So how can one explain Moore's appeal among the bloodthirsty? Moore's longstanding sympathy for their work is a good place to start. Though it's largely forgotten today, in the early '90s Moore was workshopping an idea for a movie about the Palestinian Intifada. The project, provisionally titled *Yitzhak and Me* or *West Bank Story*, was never made. But John Foren, a reporter for the *Flint Journal* in Michigan, Moore's adopted hometown, had no illusions as to what it would look like. "If Michael touches that [the Intifada], you're going to see the real Michael," Foren told the *Washington Times* in 1990. "And it's not something that people are going to love."

Were Moore to make such a film today, all signs indicate it would be a valentine to the Palestinians' newest terror campaign, the second Intifada. One clue comes from Moore's book *Dude, Where's My Country?*, in which Moore contends that Israelis "know they are wrong, and...would be doing just what the Palestinians are doing if the sandal were on the other foot." (In other words, the world would be flooded with Jewish suicide bombers.) Another clue is Moore's naked contempt for the Jewish state. As Moore told an audience in Liverpool, Israel is part of his personal axis of evil: "It's all part of the same ball of wax, right? The oil companies, Israel, Halliburton."

The terrorist attacks of September 11 only strengthened Moore's view of the real enemies. Reflecting on the carnage of the day, Moore first denied al-Qaeda's responsibility: "Am I being asked to believe that this guy who sleeps in a tent in a desert has been training pilots to fly our most modern, sophisticated jumbo jets...?" Then he thundered against the United States: "We abhor terrorism -- unless we're the ones doing the terrorizing." Finally, he screamed racism: "Maybe it's because the Ay-rabs are much better foils. A key ingredient in getting Americans whipped into a frenzy against a new enemy is the all-important race card." And that was all on September 12.

Which highlights yet another reason terrorists want more of Moore: he also wants Americans to die. "I'm sorry," he crowed on his site, "but the majority of Americans supported this war once it began and, sadly, that majority must now sacrifice their children until enough blood has been let that

maybe—just maybe—God and the Iraqi people will forgive us in the end.” But if he’s hostile to the American cause, Moore’s heart goes out to the mujahedeen. In the killers of Coalition troops and Iraqi civilians, Moore sees true heroes. “The Iraqis who have risen up against the occupation are not ‘insurgents’ or ‘terrorists’ or ‘The Enemy,’” Moore has fumed. “They are the REVOLUTION, the Minutemen, and their numbers will grow—and they will win.”

Does Moore seriously mean to say that Iraq would be better off under a reign of terror? Well, *yes*. Indeed, in what is arguably the most execrable of *Fahrenheit 9/11*’s serial lies, Moore insists Iraq was a far better place with Saddam Hussein running it. In Moore’s Iraqi Utopia, giddy kiddies spent their days flying kites (at least those who didn’t have their hands hacked off). Enter Coalition forces. In Moore’s view, they inflicted a humanitarian disaster that dwarfs Saddam Hussein’s cruelty. *Fahrenheit 9/11* thus plays like an advertisement for Saddam and the Ba’athist torture machine, a point Moore happily concedes. As he recently told ABC News, “I’m just trying to present another side of the story.”

That this side of the story bears little relation to reality makes it singularly appropriate for *Fahrenheit 9/11*. For instance, Moore spends half the film contending that the Bush administration permitted members of the Saudi royal family to escape after September 11, allowing them to leave before U.S. airspace was opened. Unmentioned is this detail: the order to spirit the Saudi royal family from the country was actually given by Moore’s favorite anti-Bush official, Richard Clarke. Instead, Moore interviews an FBI agent who states the Saudis should have been interrogated before being afforded special protection. Moore seems not to know that the FBI *did* in fact clear members of the bin Laden family, the vast majority of whom happen not to be infidel-smiting fanatics. Clarke, in turn, has defended his decision to green light the flights, telling ABC: “The Saudis had reasonable fear that they might be the subject of vigilante attacks in the United States after 9/11. And there is no evidence even to this date that any of the people who left on those flights were people of interest to the FBI.” Similarly lost on Moore are the findings of the 9/11 Commission, which determined that the Saudis flights did not leave before U.S. airspace was reopened. There is little wonder, then, that Moore’s conspiracy theory never gets off the ground.

Fahrenheit 9/11’s distortions don’t end there. A maestro of the deceitful edit, Moore whittles down a quote from Condoleezza Rice to suggest that the Bush administration is lying when it denies ever having alleged Iraqi involvement in the 9/11 attacks. Says Rice in the film: “Oh, indeed there is a tie between Iraq and what happened on 9/11.” Gotcha? Not quite. Here is the uncorrupted version of Rice’s quote: “Oh, indeed there is a tie between Iraq and what happened on 9/11. It’s not that Saddam Hussein was somehow himself, and his regime, involved in 9/11, but, if you think about what caused 9/11, it is the rise of ideologies of hatred that lead people to drive airplanes into buildings in New York.”

It speaks to the consummate dishonesty of Moore’s approach in *Fahrenheit 9/11* that even when he is being technically accurate, he is not telling the truth. Deploying a statistic from a *Washington Post* article, Moore claims that President Bush spends 42 percent of his time on vacation. What Moore neglects to point out is that this number includes weekends, cutting the more accurate number of vacation time to around 13 percent; or that many of the days he counts are actually *working vacations*, which Bush spends in the company of foreign and domestic leaders.

With duplicity in such great abundance, it should come as no surprise that Moore is feeling defensive about *Fahrenheit 9/11* -- so much so, that he’s assembled a “war room” of experts to beat back any critic who would challenge the film’s accuracy. Plainly aware that the guardians of his credibility

would have their work cut out for them, the millionaire filmmaker didn't skimp on talent. He's enlisted a team of fact-checkers, captained by a veteran of *The New Yorker* magazine's crack fact-checking team; he's also tapped Chris Lehane, a Democratic Party strategist, to dig up dirt on his critical opposition. Shaken by the barrage of condemnation of *Fahrenheit 9/11*, Moore's even taken to consulting with lawyers to lodge defamation suits against anyone who "maligins" his new film or "damages his reputation." Huffs Moore: "Any attempts to libel me will be met by force. The most important thing we have is truth on our side. If they persist in telling lies, knowingly telling a lie with malice, then I'll take them to court."

The attempt to squelch any considered debate over his film is a typical Moore strategy, says Jason Clarke. Co-author (with David T. Hardy) of the recently released *Michael Moore Is A Big Fat Stupid White Man* and proprietor of Moorelies.com, Clarke notes that Moore's work regularly raises more questions than the filmmaker wants to answer. "For many years," explains Clarke, "Michael Moore has been consistently evading and deflecting any and all inquiry and skepticism into his work and his public persona."

Clarke and Hardy's book intends to change that. Having marshaled numerous examples of innuendo, wild speculation and flat-out falsehood from Moore's 15-year career, the authors are determined to spoil Moore's holiday from criticism. As for Moore's "war room," Clarke says: Bring it on. "We know from studying his persona closely that any challenge to Moore must be serious and direct," observes Clarke, "to demonstrate that we will not be afraid of his attempts to marginalize us into conspiracies or worse." If Clarke and Hardy have their way, Moore's fact-free record will soon be public knowledge. Thus raising the question: Dude, do you have enough lawyers?