

FIGHTING THE ROBOTS By Si Frumkin,

I am not sure whether a book has already been published blaming the United States for the recent Mumbai terror attacks but I am willing to bet that it will be. It didn't take long for articles in our major publications and TV pundits to start looking for and explaining reasons for the ultimately unreasonable. The New York Times alone had three articles just within a week of the terror attacks; the violence was blamed on, among other things, the Kashmir controversy, Indian nationalism, globalization, American foreign policy, Afghanistan and even a simple misunderstanding when the terrorists (sorry, there were no *terrorists* – they were *militants*), by accident, stumbled upon a small building that had no identifying markings and just happened to contain several Jews that had to be murdered by people who had probably never met a Jew in their lives. .

Mumbai and 9/11 were similar in many ways – the victims were innocents selected at random and the fanatics who murdered them never explained what their motivation was. Both, Al Qaeda's Bin Laden, the mastermind of 9/11, and Hafiz Saeed, the leader of Lashkar-e-Taiba and organizer of the Mumbai attack are equal opportunity haters; they hate Shiites, Hindus, Christians, Jews, women who wear bikinis, all infidels and democracy which they say is a "Jewish and Christian import from Europe". But the most important similarity, I believe, is that there were never any demands made, then or later – no ransom, release of prisoners, conversion to Islam – nothing! This is confusing to most of us who believe that there should be logical explanations for human behavior and that it is unacceptable not to find them.

I believe that the search for a logical explanation for these indiscriminate Islamic murder sprees is a hopeless enterprise. It is based on the assumption that has been exposed as absurd again and again: that human beings are logical and sensible creatures and that, therefore, there must be logical reasons for their behavior. Therefore, seemingly illogical behavior must be analyzed, studied, understood and –

hopefully, if it is done right - changed by mutual understanding, accommodation and compromise for the benefit of all.

The problem with this is that it doesn't work. It doesn't work when we meet adversaries whose mindset is so different from ours that we are totally unable to reach *mutual* understanding. Putting it in the simplest terms, our beliefs and convictions seem just as weird to them as theirs seem to us. Just think of the basic sci-fi film where robotic aliens invade our planet and can only be stopped by force – negotiating and trying to reason with a robot is pointless; he cannot be expected to understand us and there is really no need for us to understand him.

Humans are not robots, but some are so different from what we consider to be human that we must accept our inability to understand and empathize with them. It would have been pointless for a Jew on his way to the gas chamber to tell a German guard that he didn't deserve to die – the victim's feelings and personality were irrelevant during the Holocaust for those who murdered them; they did their patriotic duty and slept very well afterwards. The sociopaths like Charles Manson and many others, never understood their victims or regretted murdering them. The Iraqi terrorists who blow up school buses filled with children of the same nationality and religion as themselves do not feel guilt – they are proud.

Britain's P.M. Chamberlain believed in 1939 that he had understood Hitler and was certain that he had achieved "peace in our time" – just before Hitler started World War II ; Jimmy Carter was terribly hurt, surprised and personally offended when Brezhnev invaded Afghanistan breaking a solemn promise not to do so (Jimmy's response was cancelling U.S. participation in the 1980 Olympics) ; a significant number of Americans still believe that Saddam Hussein could have been negotiated with; Palestinian leaders, against all logic, prefer violence and poverty to peace and prosperity; and our president-elect seemed sure during his election campaign that reasoning with our declared enemies would lead to mutual understanding and peaceful resolution of all conflicts.

The bloody 20th century has given birth to an ideology that we are unable to understand. Its goal is death of all “infidels” - Americans, Europeans, Jews, Christians, Hindus, heretical Muslims – all of us who deserve to be dead because, well, because we are what we are. Just as European Jews in the 1940s couldn’t, there is nothing that we can do or should do – we must die because of what and who we are. Our death is the most important goal of this ideology, so important that it is literally worth dying for – thousands have done so and are glorified as holy martyrs for it.

These robots in human form are sincere, dedicated, brave and selfless. They *know* that they are right and they cannot be reasoned, argued with or persuaded. They are a terrible enemy bent on destroying everything that we consider to be good and holy. Negotiations and concessions cannot solve the problem – this culture war, this crash of civilizations can have only one victor.

In the movies the robots always lose. I hope the real robots will lose this real battle as well.