

The media and the Middle East

If the myth of 'objective' news reporting that sometimes still prevades the western news media needed yet another nail in its coffin, the recent events in the Middle East provided that. There are few other issues where the institutions that control our information are so strikingly biased in their coverage, or so inept in their presentation of facts.

Think for a moment of the popular image of the Middle East conflict created in our minds by the western media: valiant little Israel, heroically defending itself against its hostile and seemingly irrational Arab neighbours. David against Goliath.

With this image in our minds, it becomes very easy to support, or at least to justify, all the Israeli actions. After all, given such an image, who wouldn't support such an underdog?

But like all myths, once we begin scratching the surface, the truth begins to appear. Our news media begins to be seen, not as the 'objective' transmitter of facts, but rather as a highly selective partisan of events, reporting little that contradicts the outlook of the wealthy families or corporations that own them. And Israel begins to appear, not as the heroic underdog but as the alien aggressor who stole, by terror and deception, someone else's homeland, and who has refused ever since to recognize the national rights of those whose land she took.

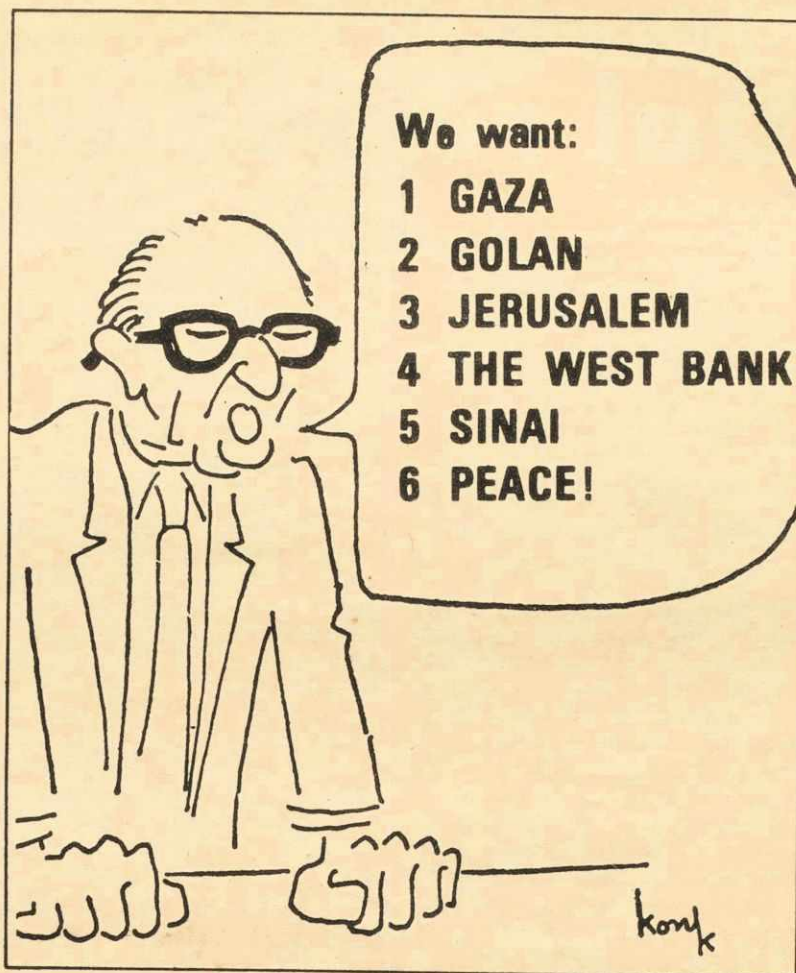
The events of the last several weeks in the Middle East are yet another example of this myth-making. The image created (or rather built upon) in the reporting of the events by the media goes something like this: Israel, the avenger, invades southern Lebanon as a retaliation for the Palestinian raid into Israel. Israel's sole purpose was to clean up the Palestinian terrorists, in order to protect her sovereign territory. A few Lebanese civilians may have been killed in the invasion, but that's unavoidable and certainly unintentional. And Israel shall be leaving the conquered territory 'shortly'.

This is the image of Israel which the news media, and the Israeli leadership themselves, would want us to believe. It might make good copy, but it has little to do with the truth.

In scratching the surface for the truth, we first come across this principal historical argument, which forms the whole backdrop to the question: two groups of people have a claim to the same piece of land. Which claim is more just? Does the land belong to the people who have lived there continuously for the past 4000 years (the Palestinians) or to the people who have not lived there as a community for almost 2000 years (the Jews)?

This recognized, and other myths begin to crumble: the Palestinians were not nomads wandering on desert land, who generously left when someone else came along and offered to make the desert bloom. They were forcibly expelled from their already fertile and blooming land by people who came not to live with them, but in place of them.

Now the events of recent days may begin to stand up in sharper relief. The Arab-Israeli conflict is not a border dispute, nor is it a religious war, but a struggle to regain a lost homeland. The Israeli invasion of Lebanon is not a 'retaliation' to protect



sovereign territory (even Israeli army officers have admitted such a raid had been planned for months; only a pretext was needed) but an attempt to protect and possibly extend the borders of an already occupied homeland.

But perhaps the biggest myth which the western news media (with few honourable exceptions) let grow was that the principal Israeli targets in Southern Lebanon were Palestinian resistance fighters. But as the **Manchester Guardian** reported (one of the few exceptions): "The only real effect of the vast quantity of Israeli ordinance discharged into the Lebanese countryside of the last week has been to kill and wound large numbers of civilians, destroy the homes of thousands more, and to trigger an exodus of refugees."

As they say, truth is the first casualty.

by Michael Lynk



Larger lode for miners

To the Gazette:

The introduction to the letter of thanks from the West Virginia miners which you published last week might have given the mistaken impression that only \$96 was forwarded to the miners. For the information of the many generous persons who contributed to this donation, I would like to point out that the entire sum of \$216.47 Canadian was forwarded in two equal parts to the miners' support committee in Berkley and in Morgantown, West Virginia, and of course converted into American funds.

Yours sincerely,
James MacLean,
Halifax-Dartmouth OXFAM
Committee

Disgruntled microfilm fans

To the Gazette:

The following is a letter sent to Dorothy Cook, University Librarian.

Dear Mrs. Cook:

We should like to express our dissatisfaction with the operation and services of the Special Collection Section of the Killam-Library; Specifically, the microfilm; microfiche facilities. It is extremely difficult given the condition and

limited number of readers for students to take advantage of the micro materials collection.

The problems are:

1. Hours: These should be the same as in other sections of the main library.

2. Non-functioning Readers and Printers and / or worn parts; e.g. scratched lenses and glasses, broken crank mechanisms: These should be repaired or replaced immediately.

3. To avoid line ups, a greater number of machines are required.

Yours truly,
Susan Williams
David Angus
Neil Armstrong
Executive Dalhousie History Society

Student Union sincere ?

To the Gazette:

The following is the text of a letter sent to the Dalhousie Student Union.

Dear Sirs:

Enclosed is a copy of a letter sent to the University Administration in response to your President's request for our co-operation in the rally scheduled for Thursday, March 30th.

The decision to support your request was made with some difficulty. Your suggested demands

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The Gazette is published by the staff of **The Dalhousie Gazette**. The views expressed in the paper are not necessarily those of the editor or staff. We reserve the right to edit material submitted for space or legal reasons, or if considered offensive to our readers.

The deadline for advertising is the Friday noon preceding publication. Articles and letters are due Monday noon. No unsigned material will be accepted, but anonymity, if necessary, will be granted. Letters should not exceed 600 words, and must be typed if more than 100 words.

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Editor: Valerie Mansour

News Coordinator: Jeff Round

Sports Coordinator: Peter Hayes

Advertising Director: Anita Lathigee

Circulation Manager: Joe Wilson

This issue was brought to you by:

Danièle Gauvin, Harvey MacKinnon, Denise Roberge, Mark Simkins, Anu Rautaharju, Judy Pratt, Murray Kingston, Matthew Adamson, Eric Lawson, Mark King, David Angus, Michael Lynk, Marc Allain, Leo Jacobs,