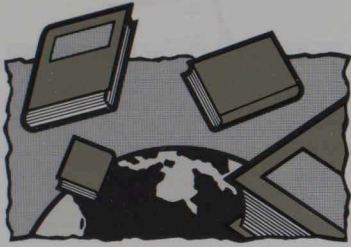


REVIEWS



Circle of Fear

Hussein Sumaida with
Carole Jerome

Toronto: Stoddart, 1991, 305 pp.,
\$25.95, cloth

By Way of Deception: A Devastating Insider's Portrait of the Mossad

Claire Hoy and Victor Ostrovsky

Toronto: General Paperbacks, 1991,
396 pp., \$6.99 paper

Arms and the Man: Dr. Gerald Bull, Iraq and the Supergun

William Lowther

Toronto: Doubleday, 1991, 298 pp.,
\$27.50 cloth

■ The new paperback version of *By Way of Deception* includes an appendix which describes the efforts made by representatives of Israel, legal and otherwise, to prevent publication of this book. The senior Mossad agents who confronted him at his Ottawa apartment, Victor Ostrovsky tells us (by the way, they drove a red medium-sized rental car with Quebec licence plates), had probably only seen the dust jacket. One wonders if the Mossad would have gone through all their subsequent efforts to suppress the book if they'd actually had a chance to read it.

Victor Ostrovsky was born in Canada of an Israeli mother, and served with the Israeli armed forces before joining the Mossad. His message is clear enough and frequently repeated: the Mossad is a law unto itself, out of control, and a menace to democracy in Israel. Unfortunately, the evidence to substantiate these claims is surrounded by endless, largely tedious descriptions of events which have either no great significance or are already very well known.

In the midst of the dross, there are serious issues. The close liai-

son with Danish intelligence services is an embarrassment to Denmark; the discussion of Mossad operations in the United States may not come as a surprise but could hardly be welcomed in Israel. For Canadians who are having difficulty getting a passport, just write to the Mossad – they are said to have one thousand of them, all blank and unused. For the most part, however, Ostrovsky's revelations deal with more mundane matters.

For those who want to brush up on techniques for staking out rendezvous and trailing suspects, an appendix provides detailed instructions. And, of course, beautiful women abound, luring, deceiving, and providing brief solace to overstrained agents. For all this, Hoy and Ostrovsky may have the last laugh. After Israel representatives went to court to try to prevent publication of the book, orders for it jumped from the projected 42,000 to over 300,000 in just a few days – better than a Mossad pension.

Those who find Ostrovsky's revelations to be rather thin gruel should not turn too quickly to Carole Jerome's latest Middle East adventure, *Circle of Fear*. The poor soul trapped in the circle is Hussein Sumaida, son of a senior official in Saddam Hussein's government who, by all accounts, is an old pal of the great survivor himself. After an absolutely dreadful childhood coping with his beastly father, and understandably mixed up about his loyalties, Sumaida set out to England to study, where, ever given to quixotic decisions, he decided first to penetrate and inform on Iraqi groups in exile (they were admittedly no more attractive than the bunch he had just left behind.) Tiring of this, he started to work for the Mossad, but then decided that he had better tell Iraq's Mossad (the Mukhabarat) that he was doing this before they found out for themselves. At this point his father was ready to see him off, but

the ever-merciful Saddam intervened, and (what else to do with wayward sons?) gave him a job in Iraqi intelligence.

After many quasi-adventures learning to be an agent, Sumaida decided to abandon both the Mukhabarat and the Mossad, and bolted to Canada, where he has applied for political asylum. Possibly inspired by the jump in sales of *By Way of Deception*, the publishers have pointed angrily to the privileged treatment afforded Mohammad al-Mashat, and demanded equal treatment (or perhaps just bigger sales) for their despondent co-author. They're right, but they're wrong: both of them should be at the bottom of the application list.

William Lowther's study (*Arms and the Man*) of our very own Dr. Gerald Bull tries hard to improve the image of Canada's international villain by portraying him as a complex personality eventually doomed by a combination of personal insecurities, scientific obsession and business naivete. Lowther places great emphasis on Bull's deprived childhood. After the death of his mother, three year-old Gerry lived first with an older sister, and then with relatives who, having won a prize in the Irish sweepstakes, took Gerry to live on an apple farm outside Kingston. Despite Lowther's efforts to find great meaning in all of this, Bull's upbringing and education is not a compelling story. Emerging from the University of Toronto, Bull was no genius, but a bright young man with a passion for ballistics.

Soon afterwards, Bull found himself working for Canada's Department of National Defence, whose officials and scientists he came to despise as stupid and short-sighted. Canadians would surely have warmed to Dr. Bull's big gun if he had continued to present it as the little man's fight against official Ottawa. Unfortunately, he took his designs elsewhere – to the United States, South Africa, a brief stay in prison, China, Iraq –

in fact, to anybody who might have a use for a longer gun barrel and a more effective shell.

Perhaps Bull really did see all of these efforts as mere expedients to help him achieve his real goal – firing satellites into orbit from a super gun. But it is difficult to believe that his increasing entanglement with Iraq was in pursuit of a higher cause. Bull's firm in Brussels, surely the most unsteady merchant of death in the history of the trade, was broke, the Iraqis offered money and first class tickets to Baghdad, Bull was off and running.

Even Bull's assassination was curiously anti-climactic. According to Lowther, the unidentified secret service that did the job (one, incidentally, that seemed very much in control) left endless hints to Bull to cease and desist, practically pleading with him to not make them do it. When it was done, those dull bureaucratic people in Ottawa did little more than raise an eyebrow, while the Belgian police were totally perplexed by a murder which their most illustrious of detectives, Hercule Poirot, would have solved without leaving his chambers.

William Lowther has written an almost interesting book which makes a conscientious effort to present Bull as something of a romantic figure – a Canadian Clyde Barrow in the international world of guns and missiles. Unfortunately, Bull is not up to the character he is asked to play. In the end, he leaves no legacy for his fellow Canadians, but only a footnote. In mid-August UN inspectors in Iraq found little Babylon, the prototype for the biggest gun in the world. They also found 1,481 artillery shells and bombs containing chemical weapons, stocks of poison gases, and, just in case anybody was in any doubt about Iraq's intentions, large quantities of the biological toxin anthrax. Perhaps the unidentified secret service did the right thing after all.

– David Cox

Mr. Cox is a professor of political studies at Queen's University, Kingston. □