

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Arab Distortions and Zionist Propaganda

■ The "Letter from Hebron" (Autumn 1990) was Orwellian propaganda which turned black into white and victim into murderer. With Jean-François Lépine serving as Middle East correspondent for the CBC and SRC, it is not surprising that some Canadians have a distorted and hostile picture of Israel.

There are no Israelis in his letter; only Arabs and their all-too-familiar myths and distortions. The suffering of the Arab residents is skillfully reported, but nowhere do we see the anti-Israeli hatred and racism which fuels the *intifada* or the cries of "death to the Jews" which none who pass near Hebron and the rest of the West Bank can escape. Mr. Lépine's Arab informants apparently did not see fit to tell him that Jews have lived in Hebron for three thousand years, sharing the holy sites with the Moslems, or that this unprotected community was cruelly massacred by Arab mobs in 1929.

The Israeli military is portrayed as being "armed to the teeth" and the source of all evils, but Mr. Lépine does not seem to know that this army is sitting in Hebron because the Palestinians and their Arab allies sought and continue to seek to destroy the Jewish people in their historic homeland. The Arabs, including the residents of Hebron, enthusiastically support Saddam Hussein and his threats to "incinerate half of Israel." If Mr. Lépine read or understood Arabic, he would know that the PLO, which has very wide support in Hebron, has declared that it has

not abandoned its policy of destroying Israel in stages. If they have a state, it would become a staging ground for Iraqi troops in a new and deadly war against Israel.

For Mr. Lépine, the Israeli efforts to limit terror may be "routine stupidity," but one doubts that he would have the same view if he were on the receiving end of these weapons. For some reason, the number of Arabs who have been murdered by other Arabs in the name of the *intifada* is also not discussed.

The source of the tragedy of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the suffering of both peoples is not found in the absurd myth of a "mighty Israeli army" trampling on innocent Arab victims. Israel is a tiny country, facing a number of Arab states, armed with an arsenal of thousands of tanks, missiles, and chemical weapons, financed by billions of dollars in oil revenues. Rather, the tragedy is the result of the continued Arab belief that they can eliminate the Jewish people and the State of Israel. Militarily defeated, the Arabs now conduct their war through the press and with propaganda, hoping to isolate and weaken Israel.

The tragedy is compounded by the unwillingness of the Arabs to admit their past mistakes, including the refusal to compromise, or to accept the legitimacy of Jewish claims to a piece of the Land of Israel. Finally, the violence is encouraged by the eagerness with which many in the media take up the Arab cause, spreading their propaganda and their racist hatred.

Publication of propaganda as "Letter from Hebron" damages the prospects for peace. It demonstrates to Israelis that the rest of the world is eager to believe anti-Israeli lies and distortions, and that international fora will con-

tinue to be biased and unable to play a useful role in ending this terrible conflict.

Gerald M. Steinberg, Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, Israel

■ I was surprised to see Jim Lederman making the statement (Winter 1990/91):

The latter argument [the Palestinians being against the American double standard of supporting Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza while opposing Iraq's similar conquest of Kuwait] made little impression on the Israelis who recalled that they did not launch the war that led to the capture of the West Bank.

It has been lately made repeatedly by Zionist propagandists in North America, and goes unchallenged. It suffers from only one flaw, the facts.

It is not even controversial that it was Israel which attacked Egypt in 1967. On Monday 5 June, waves of Israeli bombers and fighters launched an attack on Egyptian air fields virtually destroying the entire Egyptian Air Force, while it was still on the ground. Israel's ground forces then marched into Sinai and the Gaza strip. This took place to thwart the planned meeting between President Johnson and the Egyptian Vice-President Moe'eddin, intended to achieve a negotiated settlement.

Jordan and Syria, which had a mutual defence pact with Egypt, joined in the war after Egypt was attacked, much as Britain and France went to war in 1939, after Germany attacked their ally Poland.

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Who Called the Troops Out When?

■ Your last issue (Winter 1990/91) seems to me to be in error regarding the use in 1970 of the Armed Forces and the National

Defence Act. Jane Boulden states that in (October) 1970, the Armed forces were not called in by the civilian authorities under the National Defence Act. She is mistaken. I was at the time Chief of Staff (Administration) for Mobile Command in Saint-Hubert and had received the request for Quebec under that very Act shortly after it arrived in our offices. I sent it immediately to my commanding officer, but not without reading it first to ensure it complied with the requirements of the Act. It was signed by Jérôme Choquette, presently mayor of Outremont, and then the Attorney General for the province of Quebec.

As for the proclamation of the War Measures Act mentioned by Ms. Boulden, this occurred a couple of days later. Provincial and municipal police forces as well as the RCMP, implemented the measures taken thereafter; the Armed forces were not involved in any way.

As your publication is intent on being thorough, I feel a clarification on this matter would be appropriate in a future issue.
Marcel Richard, Brig.-Gen. (Ret.),
Quebec

Editor's Note:

The correspondent is substantially correct, and Peace&Security regrets any confusion created by imprecise wording in our last issue. In 1970, the use of the armed forces to aid the civil power and the invoking of the War Measures Act were two separate events. The request for aid under the powers of the National Defence Act was made by the government of Quebec on 14 October 1970. On 16 October, the government of Canada invoked the War Measures Act. □