

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Why We Are In Europe

■ Regarding the back-to-back of articles on Canadian defence policy ("Defence Policy for Nice Country") and European security ("Waking Up to Reality in Post-Revolution Europe") in your Autumn 1991 edition: It would have been useful to have [had] an unfortunately-absent third article. Desmond Morton stated the obvious in noting the importance of examining the entrails of the past when attempting to peer into the fog of the future. We appear once again determined to undertake one of our periodic withdrawals into our North American shell while awaiting to be drawn into the next European conflict. That this has occurred twice in this century already seems of little consequence.

Very little has changed in Europe. A unified multi-polar Europe was to be the motor for a new world order. Instead, it has produced yet another conflagration in the Balkans, the disintegration of the Soviet empire, and a resurgent Germany. Hardly the recipe for a peaceful future. Canadian strategic priorities obtain from our geographic position in the world and our traditional historical relationships with other nations – strong ties with Europe, and a need to balance the overwhelming influence of the US in North America.

Unfortunately, National Defence policy planners, in constantly seeking to reinvent the wheel, seem to be no students of history. Missing the obvious connection between current events in Europe and the future of Canadian security highlights the chronic myopia of Canadian political and military decision-makers. It implies that we are doomed to distinguish ourselves once again in future battles which we should have been able to prevent in the first place.

Canadian security interests are best defended by preventing conflicts beyond our shores. Active engagement – politically, economically and militarily – in the restructuring of post-Cold War Europe is the most effective means of ensuring these security interests are met.
R.E. Stansfield, Aylmer, Quebec

Stein and Gray, Comic Relief

■ The articles by Janet Gross Stein and Charlotte Gray [Autumn, 1991] on the aftermath of the Gulf War in the Middle East and Canada provided welcome comic relief. Stein writes that the war was "launched to defend the principle of state sovereignty and the legitimacy of state borders," while Gray claims that "for the first time ever, in August 1990, the Security Council was unanimous."

The Security Council has come to many unanimous decisions, but some are rather instructive. Consider the Security Council's 15-0 vote on 5 June 1982 calling for a ceasefire along the Israel-Lebanon border. (Israel replied by invading Lebanon the next day.) That day a unanimous vote demanded that "Israel withdraw all its forces forthwith and unconditionally to the internationally-recognized boundaries of Lebanon." However, no steps were taken to enforce these and many other resolutions and Israeli soldiers remain in southern Lebanon.

Consider the 15-0 vote on 22 December 1975 after the Indonesian army's invasion of East Timor, demanding that Indonesia "withdraw without delay" and "respect the territorial integrity of East Timor." However, as with the votes on Lebanon, this was just a show. The

American UN Ambassador, Daniel Moynihan, had orders from the State Department to ensure that "the United Nations prove utterly ineffective in whatever measures it undertook," as he candidly explained in his memoirs. Thus Indonesian soldiers remain in East Timor. So much for the "principle" of sovereignty and the legitimacy of borders.

Stein also states "the three principal American political objectives for the post-war period": "economic redistribution from rich to poor in the Arab world, expansion of political participation, and a resolution of the Arab-Israel conflict." She rightly concludes that "none are likely to be met." But were these the real post-war American objectives or just propaganda?

Previous strong US support for anti-democratic Arab monarchies and dictatorships (who have no interest in income redistribution) and two decades of blocking an Arab-Israeli settlement offer more than a little evidence. Stein invites us to believe that US planners are altruistic bumblerers who seek peace, democracy, and a just distribution of income for people less fortunate than themselves. They utterly fail to attain these noble goals, but apparently by accident attain for the US unprecedented power and influence. As Daffy Duck likes to say, "It is to laugh."
Rod Hill, Department of Economics, University of New Brunswick, Saint John

Defining Journalistic Boundaries

■ With regard to Jean Pelletier's "When To Speak Out, When To Keep Silent," [*Peace & Security*, Winter 1991/92] I covered the same

story from Teheran that he did – the 444-day American hostage crisis. I admired his journalism but I take issue with two of his hypotheses: "The ayatollahs knew in November '79 that in order to get their own way with the US, they would have to reach into the living rooms of America," Pelletier writes.

First, there was no cabal of ayatollahs plotting strategy against the Americans. By then, Khomeini was the single source of spiritual guidance of the largely Western-educated cabinet of Mahdi Bazargan. The other four grand ayatollahs had been shunted aside. Second, neither Khomeini nor the populist Islamic grassroots movement cared a whit about the West. The ones who did – Bazargan and his cabinet of westernized technocrats – were overthrown precisely because of it. Third, the hostage-taking was engineered by a few dozen angry, misguided students. There's no proof that the government, let alone Khomeini, had advance knowledge.

The seige did take on a life of its own, especially with increasing American media and White House attention. It was then hijacked by militant clergymen to force out the moderates and grab power. But the event certainly was not an ayatollah-ian plot to "blackmail" Jimmy Carter through TV images.

In his prescription for media reportage of hostage-taking, Pelletier writes: "The search for truth demands caution and a sense of what the boundaries are." Fine, except that he never defines those boundaries. It's one thing to bemoan, as he does, American proclivity to exaggeration – hyped-up hostage news coverage, yellow ribbons, xenophobia. It's quite another to come up with sensible guidelines for reporting hostage-taking incidents, international or local. Would Pelletier have not aired the FLQ communique, while the lives of Pierre Laporte and James Cross hung in balance?

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Institute Grants and Scholarship Programmes – An Important Notice

■ With the winding up of the Canadian Institute for International Peace and Security, the future of its grants and scholarships programmes (as well as all its other programmes) is not known. We intend to honour existing commitments and to obtain the earliest possible indications from the Government of whether it will be possible to proceed further with existing competitions for scholarships and grants. All applicants will be advised as soon as any information is available. In the meantime, they are requested not to contact our offices on this matter.