

Letters to the editor
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10/30/91

Toy Meachum, renowned expert on the Middle East in particular, national and international affairs and all other things great and small (most often the latter) as he so often reminds us, has once again displayed his remarkable sense of timing: he knows the very moment to open his big mouth ^{h/} to accommodate his own ^m ~~feet~~ ^{feet} and those of his Muslim friends.

In his column marking the opening of the Madrid preliminaries to what some hope against reason will lead to peace in that troubled area, he pontificated, "Let us abolish the notion that millions and millions of Muslims stand ready to demolish the Jewish state."

That very day, in Iran, which the day before had offered its army for an Arab attack on Israel, in the words of the Reuters dispatch, "Iranian radical Ali Akbar Mohtashemi, who helped create the anti-Western, fundamentalist underground in Lebanon, told the Iranian legislature in Teheran, 'All participants in the Madrid conference are enemies ~~of~~ of Islam and must face the death sentence. It is the duty of the world's Muslims to carry that out.'"

As Tom Brokaw put it the same day, the Iranians believe that these Madrid "talks are treason and all participants should be killed."

Not to ^{be} ~~be~~ outdone, Iraq had been calling for military attacks on Israel.

"Millions and millions of Muslims" do not want to "demolish the Jewish state," Meachum says, without noting that demolishing the Jewish state remains in the PLO's charter, yet either of these Muslim states has a Muslim population ^{much, much} greater than that of all the other ^{states} ~~states~~ in the area combined, *Israel included.*

Not that there are not "millions and millions of Muslims" in these other states that also ^{want} ~~want~~ Israel "demolished." As an also great number of Muslims in "the occupied territories" demonstrated they ^{also} ~~do~~ to mark the opening of these Madrid talks.

Including Israel ^{its} in what Meachum referred to as "those quarrelsome people" ^{he} ~~Meachum~~ says they "raped and murdered, citing their victims' differences to justify their crimes."

Of Israelis this is totally false. It is true of the Muslims, most recently demonstrated by Iraq in Kuwait.

Lost in his usual dream ^{NY} that he floats above Olympus, Meachum also states that "the Soviet Union's disappearance (no doubt the reason Bush had Gorbachev in Madrid!) destroyed the last reason for Israel to maintain its status as the Middle East's super power."

Aside from the unexceptional Meachum monstrous exaggeration at the very least Syria, Iraq, Iran and Saudi Arabia, aside from a great store of other military equipment, ^{and overwhelming numerical superiority} have rockets and planes capable of destroying Israel, two with rockets of over a thousand-mile range, and the Saudis are getting, if they do not already have, military planes with a range great enough for them to attack into Europe as far as Greece. ^{Syria also has many SCUD rockets}

So, even if the USSR had "disappeared," that has nothing at all to do with what Israel has to be able to defend itself against.

Big as is the Meachum mouth, all those feet he has just put in it should once again do what ^{it} has not done so often in the past, ^{teach him even his} that ~~his~~ mouth is not big enough for him to get into it and swallow all the misinformation ^{and} ~~is~~ not one-sided propaganda ^{he} ~~his~~ fobs off on his trusting editors and readers.

There is much more quite wrong with this column, but is any more necessary to expose him and the extent to which he goes to indulge his hatreds? ~~and~~

Harold Weisberg

Harold Weisberg

Roy Meachum



Part 10/30/91
God willing

God willing, enough Arabs and Israelis remained in Madrid this morning for the Middle East peace conference to begin.

By the time Frederick started waking up, Spain was preparing lunch. All kinds of things could have taken place while you and I slept.

It must be counted a modern miracle Israel, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and representative Palestinians agreed to come together at all.

The Biblical prophecy of "wars and rumors of wars" has constantly applied in the lands that spawned the West's three major faiths. Even during those times of rare general peace those quarrelsome peoples managed to keep rivalries alive. They raided, raped and murdered, citing their victims' differences to justify their crimes.

No wonder most Americans agree with the former president, who said of the Middle Easterners that they have "always" been killing each other: True, as I said, but so has the rest of mankind.

This was formerly the way of the entire world, readers may recognize. Until recently similar observations applied to "civilized" Europe: Today's Yugoslavia serves to remind how thin the veneer still is.

A case can be made that much of our national impatience with the troubled region stems from ignorance and prejudice, a single monster with twin names. Anything that human beings do not understand they have a tendency to hate and fear. Some of both emotions exist in most Americans' attitudes toward Islam and Judaism, the area's chief religions.

Except for whatever lingers from reading the Bible, few people in this country have any knowledge of the Middle East. Last winter's Desert Storm provided a crash course, which drew attention solely because of the involvement of U.S. forces. Interest plummeted once the bleeding ceased.

In the long run, the briefest shooting war in American history left a legacy that may endure. For the first time Arabs were understood to be good guys.

Of course there had been Nobel Peace laureate Anwar Sadat, but he was from North Africa. The Middle

East begins on the Suez Canal's far bank, especially after Egypt's president signed the Camp David accords.

Since settling with its most powerful neighbor in 1979, Israel has dominated its corner of Asia. Its army and air force have regularly mauled any cross border threats. The once-feared Intifada faded into nothingness, helped by bloody divisiveness among factions of the Palestinian uprising.

Let us abolish the notion that millions and millions of Muslims stand ready to demolish the Jewish state. Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait was merely the most egregious example of how the region's ancient rivalries survive.

Moreover, the divisions within each Arab nation continue to make impossible the joint unity necessary for a serious challenge to Israel's existence. Big-mouths alone can never hope to challenge America's

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oldest ally in the Middle East.

Once invited, Israel's closest neighbors had no choice but to show up in Madrid. Post-Desert Storm realities demand the Arabs hang around until the end, however bitter or sweet.

George Bush's tidy little war also collapsed Israel's claims that survival depended on its own resources. The claims have never been true. At any rate, the Soviet Union's disappearance destroyed the last reason for Israel to maintain its status as the Middle East's super power. Desert Storm completely arrogated that role for this nation.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak

Shamir and his right-wing colleagues will no longer be able to rattle the Soviet saber to elicit further billions from an increasingly reluctant American public. They must now rely on campaign contributions to manipulate elected U.S. officials.

But those prospects are bleak. Given this country's skyrocketing domestic needs, candidates in future races could find themselves in trouble for advocating the diversion of more money to a nation whose leaders spout defiance and truculence at the United States.

Before showing up in Madrid, Mr. Shamir reasserted Israel's intention to keep the West Bank and other occupied land. He continued to support new developments in the territories, despite objections from both the White House and the state department.

In addition, having prevented Soviet Jews from emigrating elsewhere, Israel now argues its resources are inadequate to handle the flood. It demands American taxpayers guarantee loans for absorption costs.

A Shamir walk-out in the conference, on whatever basis, would make awkward attempts to justify the \$10 billion guarantee. It could place his Washington lobby in an unprecedented hole with the White House, already particularly sensitive because of Israeli officials' allegations of anti-semitism against Mr. Bush.

With his re-election facing unexpected difficulties because of a lagging economy, this president has the capability of turning Yitzhak Shamir into next year's Willie Horton, by hanging tough against the Jewish community.

On further thought, I have little doubt everyone was on hand when the Madrid conference convened today. The rest of the world can now only hope a formula may be found to bring peace at last to the very troubling Middle East, God willing.

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THE WASH

THE MIDEAST PE

Start of Talks Prompts Arab, Iranian Protests

Reuter

NICOSIA, Cyprus, Oct. 30—Thousands of Lebanese and Iranians denounced the opening of Middle East peace talks today at rallies in Beirut and Tehran, and Palestinians clashed with one another and with Israeli security forces in the occupied territories.

In Beirut, on the ruins of the former U.S. Embassy, where 63 Americans and Lebanese were killed by a suicide bomber eight years ago, about 10,000 pro-Iranian Muslim militants demonstrated. "We will fight," they chanted. "Death to America, death to Israel."

Iranian radical Ali Akbar Mohtashemi, who helped create the anti-Western, fundamentalist underground in Lebanon, told the Iranian legislature in Tehran, "All participants in the Madrid conference are enemies of Islam and must face the death sentence. It is the duty of the world's Muslims to carry that out."

The Los Angeles Times reported from Jerusalem:

Israeli soldiers fatally shot a 19-

year-old Palestinian in Hebron, and Israeli security forces said about 20 others were wounded by army gunfire in Gaza; 11 other Palestinians were wounded in Nablus.

Authorities said rival Palestinian factions, those supporting and opposing the Madrid talks, fought with chains and knives. An estimated 40 Palestinians were injured in the fighting, Israeli sources said. The combat occurred mainly between supporters of Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat, who favors the talks, and adherents of Hamas, an Islamic fundamentalist movement that opposes the meeting.

In the Gaza Strip, demonstrators marched in support of Arafat and the talks. They stoned mosques after Hamas and other radical groups had forced shops to close as a protest against the Madrid conference. Four Hamas members were reportedly stabbed by supporters of Arafat and the talks.

Five thousand Arafat sympathizers marched in support of the peace

See PROTESTS, A34, Col. 1



Muslim fundamentalist women chant