

Letters to the editor
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as has become his bread and butter, if not his red meat - the papers do pay him - in his February 1 column Roy Meachum ~~again~~ damns Israel. But this time with the ~~xxx~~ faintest praise - and that only long after the rest of the civilized world had done so, including some Arab states. Belatedly he says it was a good thing that Israel did not ~~retaliate~~ retaliate for Saddam Hussein's terror bombing of Israel.

Whether or not the case, this suggests, so much time having passed, that he awaited Arab approval before bestowing his own approval.

But even this too little, too late and almost invisible gesture at what has always been missing from his columns, he had to sully ^{it} with his customary rewriting of his ^{unjustly} story to condemn Israel and its first and widely-revered first Prime Minister, almost its founding father.

This time he quotes the ^{on} expert he considers best-informed ~~on~~ all things Arabic ^{and} almost everything else as his authority ^{himself}:

"Over the years this column has pointed out 'killing begets killing.' It ~~is~~ called upon the Israeli government to break the vicious round of murders legalized, on both sides, by the continuing state of war that exists with all its neighbors, ^{Egypt.} except Israel."

While I do not recall that over the years he has ever condemned Arab murders of Israelis - it took him years to make ^{even} scant ^{wholesale} mention of Arab murder of Arabs - he does insist on what he has to know ^{is} false, as this quotation makes clear, that Israel ~~is~~ ^{insists on the} at a state of war. ~~But~~ ^{except} not only with its "neighbors" - it is the entire Muslim world other than Egypt.

~~There~~ ^{is} ~~was~~ ^{that} this noted authority states what is not true ~~is in stating~~ it is Israel that insists on this state of war. That is, as he very well knows, the exact opposite of the truth. It alone has offered to and ⁱ tried to make peace with those powers that ^{from the day} to this day ~~insist on being in a state of war against Israel.~~ ^{Israel was established insist on continuing as a state of war.}

This includes some who ~~said~~ they'd switch sides and join Mr. Hussein if Israel dared defend itself against his Scud terrorization.

In what I ~~was~~ ^{more than} quoted he also says ~~that~~ is false, that the state of war between those

states and Israel "legalized" the murders and other terrors ~~started~~ by some Palestinians, including to this day the PLO. There is no legalization of this at all and it is only in retaliation that Israel has taken any steps against them. *see individuals, not those states.*

The
~~is is~~ another matter about which he contorts and misrepresents history in damning ben Gurion for his alleged Old Testament policy of an eye for an eye, which he also says "never suited" that old man who wanted only peace.

Where in history, including our own, and from our very earliest days to the present, was this not every nation's policy? Save with Hitler and Hussein, where they "atrocities only the devil could begin to equal?"

Why
 What else are we in Saudi Arabia for now, giving up the lives and the best years of our youth and increasing our national debt, ~~at the same time for?~~

There is an area of his expertise I do not contest: ~~xx~~ continuing to get you to publish his propaganda disguised as columns as a means of misleading and deceiving those who depend on ~~the~~ the papers to inform them honestly. *to pay him and*

Harold Weisberg
 Harlan

Roy Meachum



2/1/91 **Restraint**

So far, the only encouraging news this war has brought bears a Tel Aviv dateline. It offers the first genuine hope for permanent peace in the region.

In an admirable display of considerate responsibility, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir decided to forego immediate retaliation for Iraq's Scud missile attacks. Furthermore, as the *Baltimore Sun* reported, a survey among Israelis gave 80 percent approval to their government's restraint.

I wonder what David ben-Gurion would have to say. The man considered the nation's chief founding father formulated the policy of exacting a terrible vengeance for each challenge to the Jewish state.

While the policy seemed justified by the Old Testament's admonition about an eye for an eye, an even swap never suited Mr. ben-Gurion and his successors. They adopted the line that frightening punishment would eventually silence their enemies.

In simple fact, the strategy did not work. Over the years the practice of excessive revenge was responsible for Israel's alienation from the family of nations. Since its Arab neighbors and people in occupied Palestine were its chief targets, the principle of punitive revenge served chiefly to justify critics' charges that the Jewish state was a "racist bully."

At any rate, from the outset the well-orchestrated punishments against camps, towns and family homes enraged more than frightened. They created new enemies. They played directly into the Middle East's tradition of blood feuds, which demanded striking back at equally innocent Israelis.

Over the years this column has pointed out "killing begets killing begets killing." It called upon the Israeli government to break the vicious round of murders legalized, on both sides, by the continuing state of war that exists with all its neighbors, except Egypt.

I must confess I never thought that Mr. Shamir could be the prime minister to show the restraint that, for the first time in over 40 years, offers the glimmer of hope that peace might eventually come to the Middle East.

More surprisingly, Mr. Shamir's decision came in the face of the

greatest provocation in his country's history. Not even in those early days when the future existence of the Jewish State was truly doubtful, did Mr. ben-Gurion have to contend with anything comparable to Iraq's Scuds and their random destructiveness.

Military censors cleared the *Sun* story that reported over 3,000 buildings had been damaged or destroyed in Tel Aviv, which epitomizes the modern return to the ancient Jewish kingdom. Built facing the Mediterranean between the world wars, it resembles more Spain's Costa de Sol than any other spot in the Middle East. Its population contains virtually no Arabs.

In what the Israelis call their War for Independence the city heard air raid sirens, but only briefly. Egyptian bombers were quickly chased from the skies. In 1948, there was no danger from chemical and biological weapons. No need for the gas masks that have already accounted, in the first two weeks, for a pair of deaths by suffocation.

At this writing, the small nation's

casualties directly resulting from Iraqi missiles include hundreds wounded and two reported fatalities. The psychological damage will take years to heal.

Tel Aviv has become a place where families are afraid to go to bed. Despite cajoling from their mayor, people flee the city as dusk approaches, looking for the safety of the countryside. Most return for work and school when morning robs the launching crews of the darkness that protects them from U.S. reconnaissance satellites.

The rain of terror from Israeli skies is reminiscent of that suffered by London during Hitler's final days. But at least England had the comfort of fighting back, knowing allied armies were steadily advancing on the German launch sites.

It takes a special kind of courage, especially for a people dedicated to solving their own quarrels, for any government to deny its citizens the catharsis that can come only from counterattack. In its present dilemma Israel chose the virtue of patience over the slashing exercise of pride the world expected. Bravo!

Granted, Mr. Shamir's response was very much conditioned by American assurances. The

immediate dispatch of patriot anti-missile batteries, manned by U.S. hands, provided visible proof that this country was more than willing to guarantee the nation's survival. American uniforms in their streets have a substance words cannot carry.

In refusing to fight, Israel frustrated the strategy behind launching the Scuds. There can be no doubt that Iraq relied upon the ben-Gurion legacy. A massive counterstrike could have splintered, if not shattered, the coalition engaged in liberating Kuwait.

Among the world's 800 million Muslims, many suspect Saddam Hussein is the victim of a Zionist plot. Photos of Israeli jets over Iraq would be received as instant proof the suspicions were fully correct. Iran announced that it would come to Mr. Hussein's aid, in the event Mr. Shamir changed his mind.

Furthermore, Washington, Bonn and other Western capitals have announced their willingness to grant further billions to Mr. Shamir's government, to defray costs incurred by the gulf war. Nothing published about the offers has posed the condition of Israel's staying out of the fight; it is there.

In brief, there are compelling reasons in this instance for Mr. ben-Gurion's official heirs to look the other way, to ignore the provocation. The new-found restraint is still a remarkable demonstration in statesmanship that must be saluted.

However, the greatest hope for peace eventually to find its way in the Middle East comes with the poll that showed ordinary Israeli citizens overwhelmingly backed the decision to forego revenge. It can only be hoped that the nation's hardliners were paying attention.

No matter what happens in the current fighting in Arabia, as Anwar Sadat preached, wars and terrorism will continue to plague the Middle East until the Palestinian question is resolved. Its resolution depends most on the restraint and confidence in international support that poll confirms Israelis backed in these desperate hours for their nation.