

# Roy Meachum



## 12/8/90 Anniversary

The Palestinian intifada (uprising) entered its fourth year this weekend. The anniversary arrived on a new wave of killing Israelis.

The recent round of suicidal attacks on soldiers and civilians has been attributed to the incident on Jerusalem's Temple Mount that cost 17 Arab lives but no Israeli. That view is only partially true.

As for the incident, last week CBS' "60 Minutes" demolished the Israeli government's claim the killings were justified. Jerusalem's mayor helped to outline what in this country would be called "a police riot." There was no evidence Jewish worshippers could have been the target for stones thrown by Arabs, who could not see over the Mount's high wall.

At any rate, the massacre only served to spark the inevitable escalation in the uprising, much as a traffic accident was the occasion for the intifada, on Dec. 8, 1987. The lull that started last winter could not be expected to last, not while atrocities continued against men, women and children, as both the U.S. state department and Amnesty International confirmed.

After three years when their principal weapons were non-cooperation with the occupying army and their children's stones, the Palestinians have lost faith in outside help to achieve their freedom through peaceful means. Iraq's dictator was their last chance. The White House had been the first.

President George Bush's eventual failure to bring Israel's government to peace talks was still a fresh wound on the occupied territories' hopes when Kuwait was invaded.

Fed by Saddam Hussein's lies, delirious with his appearance of strength, Palestinians around the world celebrated the dictator. When the cheering died, grim reality returned. Hussein became merely the latest in a long line of Arab leaders who attempted to deploy Israel's occupation to political advantage.

The acceptance of reality was hastened by the brutal stories of personal mistreatment brought back to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip by their countrymen. In Iraqi eyes, Palestinians realized, they were no different than the cheap laborers imported from east Asia. Their superior education and managerial skills counted for nothing; their status as "brother Arabs" even less.

To regain their cheers Hussein

threw out a ploy early last week to link his withdrawal from Kuwait to an Israeli retreat from the Palestinian homeland. The intifada activists were not fooled, any more than Washington. They continued to step up the uprising's violence as the anniversary approached.

It takes no genius to figure out that the Iraqi dictator's easiest ticket back to acceptance by his fellow Arabs can be found in the Palestinian problem. It is the single issue upon which the entire Islamic world agrees, precisely because a diplomatic solution cannot be found in the face of Israeli intransigence, backed by superior firepower.

In any event, by the week's end Palestine had disappeared from Hussein's agenda. News reports had him "settling" for the oil field whose divided control had been the pretext for the Kuwait invasion. Of course, in the manner of the Middle East, the

Iraqi promised to negotiate "everything." Freeing foreign hostages clouded matters further.

Virtually simultaneously, Israel's hard-line regime offered the possibility that it would negate any peaceful settlement of the current crisis by launching a unilateral attack on Baghdad. Jerusalem's most important newspaper, *Haaretz*, viewed the offer as a direct threat to take the nation to war if America failed to topple Hussein.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and his cohorts have every reason for concern with their present dilemma. The uprising they thought ebbing has soared back, bloodier than ever, forcing the world to pay attention. Recent weeks have brought the first U.S. votes in the UN security council, condemning the occupation government's tactics.

According to current surveys, approval of Israel has reached an all-time low among Americans, including many Jews, who now realize the Palestinians pose no serious threat to that nation's survival. The greater danger arises from the proven atrocities being committed in the name of a people whose history is cluttered with their own innocents' blood.

As a result, an Israeli offensive that would shatter any peaceful settlement worked out with Hussein could only result in the further isola-

tion of the Jewish state. And if that action should come, as seems most likely, while American forces are still in the Middle East, what then?

At the very least, an Israeli offensive would bring a rapprochement between Hussein and the Saudis. It could permit the Iraqi dictator to abandon Kuwait, as he did all his gains from the war with Iran, in the name of Arab solidarity against the common foe. Kisses and coffee would be in order.

Nothing in U.S.-Israeli agreements requires this country to back an offensive act ordered by the Shamir government. It cannot be imagined the Bush White House would be so foolish as to send America's men and women to war, in support.

No one in his right mind can believe Arabs enraged by a Shamir offensive would not seek revenge on America and its people, with our record of contributing billions to build Israel into the Middle East's superpower.

In the event of an Israeli first strike, as happened in June 1967, the Egyptians, our staunchest Arab allies, could not be expected to offer their lives, dying to protect Americans. Our troops in the Saudi desert would become sitting ducks for suicide missions of the type that slaughtered Marines in Lebanon.

Of course, if the Palestinians are granted their homeland, as Anwar Sadat urged, the single cause with the potential to unite the Arab world falls apart. Saddam Hussein would remain a pariah, as he deserves. It would stretch too far to predict the Middle East would find peace. But any local wars could be policed by the United Nations, helped by the United States.

Meanwhile, the intifada roars into its fourth year, its blood greasing the way to a modern Armageddon. God help everyone caught up in the terrible struggle, Israeli and Palestinian, Arab and non-Arab alike.