

Dear Dave,

9/12/91

Apropos of what I wrote you recently about Middle East reporting in the Post in particular is today's story headed, "Israel Releases 51 Lebanese Prisoners," the carryover head, "Israel Frees Prisoner in Step toward Hostage Release."

This can be interpreted as saying that Israel's failure to release Lebanese is why those hostages had not been released.

The lead begins, "Israel today moved to break the impasse in hostage negotiations, releasing 51 Lebanese prisoners and the bodies of nine others in a step that had been demanded by Lebanese groups as a condition for their release of more Western hostages."

This is a formulation that again suggests the hostages are still hostages only because of Israel.

Nowhere in the story (and what little radio news I heard is like this) does it state that for a very long time Israel has said it would release its Lebanese prisoners when it got definitive information - and information <sup>only</sup> - relating to its seven missing men lost in the war in Lebanon. ~~is~~

There is nothing on this until the very end, where there is brief mention where, dated as a development of the past month when it goes back much farther, and attributed to the UN when Israel made its offer long before there was any UN involvement, this is said to be part of a two-step process, the first step being Israel's receipt of the information asked.

Honest reporting would have made it clear that Israel made the offer partly accepted on such and such a date and that it finally got some of the informed requested on such and such a date and within 24 hours released the <sup>51</sup> living and the <sup>name</sup> dead.

Further bearing on intent not to have a fully fair and informative story is the lack of mention of the other six missing Israelis, the failure of the Arabs to provide any information about them, and that this also can be expected to delay the release of the Western hostage(s) to be released later, assuming some now are.

It is obvious that when Israel had said it would release all those Lebanese on getting only information about its seven - about 70 to 1 - and when the Arabs do not provide information on the other six their purpose is to stall and ~~also~~ delay the whole thing. Otherwise they'd have disclosed the information. (Under the articles of war they'd have had to without any quid pro quo.)

I believe that this is a pro-Arab story, that it is anti-Israel and thus to some anti-Semitic and that this is not accidental. Jackson Diehl would not have angled the story as he did, not have included and omitted what he did, if it emerged counter to his own views. The Post would not have printed it with these flaws if they were counter to Post policy.

And, of course, Bush and Baker have not been hollering, as they have been at Israel, for the Arabs to disclose the rest of the information so the process can proceed expeditiously.

And, of course, this is the account most in the Congress and those working there and elsewhere in Washington will see more than any other account.

*Harold*