



Roger Kaplan

ISRAEL, LEBANON, AND THE UNITED STATES

Mistaking David for Goliath.

The Israel Defense Force's invasion of Lebanon in June and its siege of Beirut, which continues as these words are written, were an extraordinary military and political achievement. With dazzling skill and courage, the Israeli air force defeated the Syrians, while on the ground the "Peace for Galilee" campaign settled the score with the PLO. Tremendous opportunities for peace in the Middle East and by implication for the promotion of Western interests were apparent even in June: With the most radical and bellicose Arab forces defeated and the Soviet Union, which had been backing them, either unwilling or unable to help them, there was reason to hope that, despite the sufferings brought on by the war, significant diplomatic advances would be possible after the fighting stopped.

Yet—with notable exceptions—the reaction in the United States was one of shock, fear, and disapproval. The focus, almost immediately, was on Israel: not to salute its victory, but to deplore its allegedly excessive use of force. In order to do this, Israel's operations in the South of Lebanon had to be misrepresented, as indeed they were, almost grotesquely.

Thus, on June 23, the *New York Times* ran an editorial the representative passages of which were as follows:

If this was the battle to end the battling, let Israel prove it by the quality of the peace it offers. If American weapons were justly used to break the PLO—and to kill uncounted thousands of noncombatants in the process—let Americans take the lead in defining the purpose to which the victory is put.

To be sure, Mr. Begin covets "not one inch" of Lebanon. But driving the PLO rockets out of range of the Galilee did not require a bloody march to Beirut and all that bombing of strongholds in civilian centers. Israel fought—and now bargains—to destroy the PLO's military power and to intimidate Palestinians against collaborating with it.

Roger Kaplan is a writer living in New York City and a frequent contributor to *The American Spectator*.

It should be noted by way of comparison that during that same week the cover story headline in one of West Germany's most popular weeklies, *Stern*, read: "Wissen die Israelis noch was sie tun?" Do the Israelis know what they are doing?

The prevailing notion was that the Israelis were on a rampage, and it was a notion that seemed to be accepted with very little difficulty. Initial reports were of the same cloth as the editorial reactions, and frightening numbers regarding civilian casualties were circulated, with some help from field officials of the International Committee of the Red Cross. When the ICRC reduced its estimates the media paid little attention; it was not until July 14 that the *Times* admitted in a front-page story that the numbers in June had been grossly inflated. The Israelis asserted that about 400 civilians were killed in the fighting in the South and pointed out that the wounded were being transported to Israeli hospitals when necessary, and that Israeli troops were being acclaimed as

liberators. They also pointed out that there were only some 510,000 residents in the area where there were, supposedly, 600,000 homeless.

One measure of the Israelis' success in Lebanon was in fact the degree to which they were able to protect from harm the civilians, whom the terrorists used as shields. They went to considerable lengths to do this, and suffered greater casualties as a result. Nonetheless, comments in the form of short articles and advertisements came thick and fast—even from individuals whose support for Israel is beyond question—and they strongly suggested that the exaggerated reports on civilian deaths were being taken at face value. When these reports became less tenable, the cluster bomb issue was used in the same way: to focus the blame for the fighting on Israel and avoid the realities of the situation.

Some claimed Israel had no legitimate (that is to say, security) reasons for going into Lebanon. What, one might ask in reply, would the United States do if Maine were bombarded by a hostile organization in Quebec which the Canadian government could not, or would not, control? Others scolded the Israelis for spoiling the President's European trip. But what nation can ask its citizens to wait under a downpour of Katyusha rockets for other countries to finish their diplomatic ceremonies?

If the objections to the "Peace for Galilee" campaign were shallow, the tone in which they were made was often one of striking vehemence. In the *Times* a Columbia professor described the military operation as being "of such selfish savageness that we do not want to recognize its implications." A *Washington Post* columnist described Saad Haddad, one of the Christian leaders in Lebanon, as "Israel's bought and paid for puppet," while Bashir Gemayel, another Christian leader, was called "a thirty-three year old oppor-



tunistic gunslinger." Bad enough in and of themselves, such characterizations, taken out of Lebanon's bitter context of civil war and anarchy, were meant to convey the notion that Israel runs a crime syndicate in Lebanon. A highly regarded foreign correspondent wrote in the *International Herald Tribune* that the Israelis were engaged in "a chain of murders" that would please Hitler, and a *Wall Street Journal* columnist, knowingly or not taking up this obscene theme, said that Prime Minister Begin had in mind a "final solution" for the Palestinians.

Now it is certain that the Israelis, who themselves have been debating quite energetically the merits and tactics of the campaign, may be forgiven if they sometimes seem to shrug their shoulders in frustration in response to questions put to them in the media capitals of the West. The immense stocks of ammunition which they found in South Lebanon could leave no doubts in their minds (if any were left) about what would happen if the PLO ever got inside a town in the Galilee. There would be no leaflets telling the people to get outside while the armed men fought it out; it would be everybody over there by the open pits and start the machine guns.

But what about us, here? While there have been, to be sure, comments and re-

ports refuting some of the points of view I have cited, the dominant tone has been one of begrudging the Israelis their success, or else it has been openly hostile to them. And this hostility has cut across party lines, coming from conservatives as well as liberals (though, as a matter of fact, the Democrats, assembled in Philadelphia, were the ones who expressed support for Israel, while nothing was heard from the Republicans). It is true that Israel has been losing the esteem of intellectuals and opinion-makers for at least ten years (support among the general public remains strong), but never has there been such a concentrated barrage of ill-feeling, not to say antagonism.

There are, it is true, the personalities of Begin and Sharon: They are said to be abrasive and bad publicity for their nation. And their temperaments are supposed to be of a piece with Israel's post-1967 character, rough-riding, arrogant, and expansionist. Yet these are the men (among others) who gave back the entire Sinai! They may make it a little easier for American politicians determined to find fault with them, but the substance of Israeli defense policy would not change under a Labor government.

What has been far more upsetting to many American observers than the vagaries of personalities has been the robust willingness of Israel to use force to defend

itself—its existence, to be exact. As the United States has lost confidence in its role in the world, and the role of its own power in particular, it has also become skeptical about the use of power by others. We have developed, as Dorothy Powers said of the British before World War II, "a determined refusal to believe in the possibility of evil." So we chastise allied states for behaving morally—what else is the defense of one's country?—and close our eyes to the continuing violence practiced by states over which we have little or no control.

Israel, particularly since 1967, has been a reminder of a reality that, in many respects, we have sought to avoid—namely, that the world is violent and that if the free nations do not meet violence forthrightly they will lose their freedoms and perhaps all else as well. Israel has had no alternative to defending itself actively, no choice but to carry the battle to its enemies. Our tremendous power, on the other hand, has allowed us to delude ourselves about our own defensive activities, and so we imagine they are not as necessary as they are. The national defense is discussed but, to put the matter simply, it is not a family matter the way it is in Israel. Perhaps we should consider ourselves fortunate that this is so, yet the fact remains that we tend to ignore realities which, however unpleasant, need to be faced honestly. □

R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr.

THIRD WORLD DERANGEMENTS

Seven years after Daniel Patrick Moynihan parlayed a *Commentary* magazine foreign policy essay into a high diplomatic post, R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr. renders his scholarly findings on the origins of Third World statecraft and awaits the call from 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

In those magistral realms where the legendary transformation of the Third World is excogitated and monitored, is Dr. Gunnar Myrdal often thought of as one honey of a cheerleader? I think not. Sociologist, anthropologist, professor of economic development, and Swede, Dr. Myrdal is an esteemed visionary, an early adept of Uniworld, a patron and mentor to that amazing repository of virtue—the Third World.

Yet ponder this: Sometime around the year 1960 A.D., someone slipped Dr. Myrdal a manuscript, *Blossoms in the*

R. Emmett Tyrrell, Jr. is editor-in-chief of The American Spectator and a syndicated columnist. He is presently at work on a study of liberal enthusiasms.

Dust. It is the chronicle of Kasum Nair's year-long trek through the podunks of the great Indian subcontinent, undertaken at a time a) when hope swelled for turning primitive environs into societies on the Western order and b) just before the Western order took on many of the customs of those primitive environs. Nair interviewed Indians from all walks of life, that she might "assess the impact of development upon the individuals and communities involved." The author is an honest woman; hers is thus an appalling narrative, peopled by a congeries of dim souls not one of whom really shared Dr. Myrdal's faith in Uniworld. Some were no more capable of envisaging it than they were capable of mastering ancient Greek or performing the rumba. Others opposed it violently. India,

as *Blossoms in the Dust* made clear, would never become a land of instant Swedes. So tight was the hold of India's holy men, castes, and ignoramuses, that the place might not even rise to the level of a West Virginia until the turn of the century. Nonetheless, when the time came for Dr. Myrdal to compose the book's foreword, the cheerleader in him leapt to life:

As the Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, never ceases to stress, the problem facing the country . . . is how to bring about a social and economic revolution by peaceful means. India . . . moulding all her public life . . . national down to . . . local level. . . framework of democracy. . . universal suffrage. The hope . . . reform . . . total remaking of social and economic relations . . . carried out by the people themselves . . . a minimum of direction . . . without resort to compulsion. . . reforms need