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YALE POLITICAL MONTHLY

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The purpose of the YPM is to promote debate and discussion. We espouse no one set of political beliefs. On the contrary, we print articles which represent a wide range of political opinion. The views expressed in the YPM are those of the contributors and do not necessarily express the views or positions of the staff, the Board of Directors of the YPM, or Yale University. We encourage readers to submit refutations and rebuttals and we will print all well written and throughtful responses to articles from previous issues. We encourage the submission of articles. All written material should be submitted to the editors or mailed to the *Yale Political Monthly*.

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Melvin J. Lasky Remembers Arthur Koestler

Although Arthur Koestler wrote little about politics during the last twenty-five years of his life, his reputation endures as the man of action who, in Darkness at Noon, The God That Failed, *and many articles, lectures and interviews, first tried to alert Western intellectuals to the horrific realities of totalitarian Russia. In later years, he applied his brilliant mind and formidable writing talent to an extraordinary range of ideas spanning human creativity to capital punishment. His death in March has left what Melvin J. Lasky calls an "unmendable hole" in the personal as well as the intellectual lives of many.*

A close friend of Mr. Koestler, Mr. Lasky is the distinguished editor of the noted and influential Encounter Magazine *based in London. A native of New York City, Mr. Lasky graduated from CCNY among the "generation of '39," a class including Irving Kristol, Seymour Martin Lipset, Morroe Berger, Irving Howe, Daniel Bell, and Milton Sacks. Mr. Lasky is the author of such books as* Africa for Beginners *and* Utopia and Revolution.

The Yale Political Monthly *is grateful to Mr. Lasky for providing us with this fascinating look at Arthur Koestler.*

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YPM: *The obituaries in both USA and Europe have referred to the death of Arthur Koestler as "the passing of one of the great figures of our times." Do you agree? What would Koestler himself have thought?*

MJL: Yes, I do agree. The headline in *L'Express* (Paris) over Raymond Aron's memorial article was "*Un des plus grands.*" The *New York Times* had it on the first page, and not merely because of the shock of the double Koestler suicide. The German newspapers like the *Frankfurter Allgemeine* and *Die Welt* all had long moving tributes. But it is often the case that when an important writer is no longer around, when the "living presence" is removed from the scene, his influence wanes, his memory fades. Sometimes it is a publisher who is instrumental in maintaining the reputation by maintaining the books in print. Sometimes a writer becomes by some fluke a post humous cult figure. More often the books disappear from book-shops, and a few years later the general reader—especially in a younger generation—wonders what all the literary or intellectual fuss was about. I am no prophet of literary modes or political fashions, and won't even venture to predict how Koestler's reputation will survive. Much depends on the critical literature to come, and especially the good and substantial biography that remains to be written.

YPM: *Are you thinking of Koestler the novelist, the ideologist, the scientist?*

MJL: This is complicated. One of the novels will be read, I feel sure, a hundred years from now—*Darkness at Noon.* One of the histories of science is also masterful, and will continue to command interest: *The Sleepwalkers.* And at least one long political essay—Koestler's in *The God That Failed* anthology—will not lose its excitement for a long time. But I suspect that Koestler as an intellectual of the 20th century cut such a spectacular figure that his two autobiographical volumes, *Arrow in the Blue* and *The Invisible Writing,* will remain as masterful contributions. We all often tried to persuade him to write a third volume, carrying forward the personal history from 1940. His publisher, Harold Harris (of Hutchinson's here) tells me that Koestler, together with his wife Cynthia, left a manuscript among their papers. We will have to wait and see what that amounts to. Otherwise the brilliant biographer to come has a magnificent challenge here—a "life and times" in the old classic format.

YPM: *Are you suggesting that the Writer will have to share the future limelight with the Man? How would Koestler have felt about that?*

MJL: No, for all his natural (and unnatural) vanities, he would have wanted to be the Writer. He liked to say he would exchange all of the twenty or so books (now collected in the Danube Edition) for two or three that would live 25 years after his death, and he would exchange those for one that would be read a century from now. Of that he could already be sure in his lifetime. Still, the spectacle of his stormy life in a turbulent century provides themes

of lasting historic significance. He was perhaps the greatest of the "committed intellectuals," more "various and undulating" than his French friends and counterparts who were so busy writing about engagement: Sartre, Camus, et al.

YPM: *But the political aspect of the commitment or engagement disappeared in the 1950s when he started devoting himself to scientific problems?*

MJL: True, after his famous pronouncement in 1953 that "Cassandra has grown hoarse" he rarely, if ever, took up political issues. Even in 1956, at the time of the revolutionary anti-Communist insurrection in Budapest, he hesitated to return to ideology and protest. He probably did (as his Hungarian friend, George Mikes, likes to tell it) march down to the Hungarian Legation in London and proceed to throw a number of bricks through the windows. But at the large British protest meeting about the Soviet ruthlessness in suppressing the Hungarian dissident movement under Imre Nagy, he declined to make a public speech, although the audience was shouting for him. So it was that privately we could talk, as in the old days, about the agitated public issues of the day—there was no lack of interest here, or faded sense of curiosity—but he wrote no articles, made no speeches, was untempted by book themes. From 9-to-5, he devoted himself to the historical, philosophical, psychological and aesthetical problems of science and scientists (and on every page there is a phrase and insight of great originality!); yet from 6-to-midnight, over cocktails and dinner, he would get agitated over what was happening in our time.

YPM: *How wide and specific were these "private" political interests? Did they include such burning issues of the 1960s and '70s as the student movement, Black Power, war in Vietnam, Israel and the Arab world, etc., etc.?*

MJL: As far as our own conversations were concerned, and he was a multifarious person and very different with different friends, he rarely concerned himself with specifics, with the headlines of the day. He was interested in ideas, in the large movements of world-politics and military powers, and in the elements of folly and destiny in history. He didn't refer to himself as "Cassandra" for nothing. Most of his life he was wrestling with a sense of doom, and doom kept winning. It won in Berlin and he fled from Hitler; it triumphed in Madrid, and Koestler had his "dialogue with death." France fell, and he scurried from Paris. In London the Nazi bombs fell and destruction and defeat loomed yet again. I remember when he left Europe to live in the U.S.A., he looked back at the old world with almost melodramatic fears. On his island in the Delaware—not far, by the way, from where Washington made his crossing—there were a number of old dilapidated barns, some distance from his colonial house. We once walked by, and I had suddenly to climb all the fences with him to see all the sheds and stalls. "And these," he said, "I will clean up and fix up . . . for the refugees." He always expected the worst to happen, and he had no great confidence that there was enough intellectual clarity, political vigor, or sheer institutional doggedness in our free democratic-capitalist societies to withstand a century-long challenge of the Soviet Empire. It was not only that Cassandra had grown hoarse; there were no new warnings to give. He had uttered his basic cry for libertarian resistance. It might help. What else was there to say?

YPM: *So on all these other issues he said little, practically nothing?*

MJL: Sometimes a public issue fired him. I need not mention (unless you take them to be "political" in the sense you are asking about) the campaigns against Capital Punishment, wherein both in England and France his passionate polemics proved to be something of a turning-point in barring hanging and the death penalty. But certainly more political was the special issue which he wanted *Encounter* to do in 1962 in the decline and fall of British society. He called it *Suicide of a Nation?*, but we agreed only at the last minute to add the question-mark. It was, as always with Koestler, a dramatic conception of a doom-laden issue; and if one re-reads his contributions, and most of the others which he solicited, it remains all-too-pertinent to British affairs today.

YPM: *British politics, then, rather than American or European?*

MJL: Yes, he was very much attached to England. I saw him in his various houses all over Europe, beginning with our first meeting in 1947 at his Seine villa at Fontaine-le-port. He looked like a Frenchman there, and quite like an Austrian in his chalet in Alpbach. He lived in Italy, and toyed with settling in Switzerland (presumably after the final decline and fall of Anglo-Saxony). But nowhere was he so much "at home" as in England—in that lovely old Long Barn at Sevenoaks (once owned by Harold Nicolson and Vita Sackville-West), in the last years at Denston in Suffolk, and always in that large Kensington house in London's Montpelier Square. Of course, it had nothing to do with real estate, although he did have a keen nose for property values, for what the Austrians call in a Kafkaesque way *"Realitaten."* It had, mostly, to do with his love affair with the English language; and no foreigner, except possibly for Joseph Conrad, mastered English prose so fluently, so elegantly. And it had to do with a reluctant, sneaking admiration for the residues of English political culture, the "Mother of Parliaments" and the Magna Carta and all that, feeding the libertarian traditions which were still strong in the maintenance of civil freedoms and indeed civilities. He used to say that "England is the best country to sleep in . . . ."

YPM: *Did this tend to make him feel like an Englishman?*

MJL: Never, so long as he had to listen to himself talk in that guttural tone and fractured accent! And, even more, he understood the psycho-national peculiarities of the in-

sular English pride too well. No foreigner could ever become an Englishman. This amused him, delighted him, depressed him, impressed him. He would never ever belong"; and as much as something in him always wanted to transcend his alienation, still he was deeply content to be a "rootless cosmopolitan." I had to think of how that smile of grim self-satisfaction would have come over his face, when I read in *The Times* of London a report of the suicide in Kensington, referring to "Arthur Koestler, the Hungarian writer . . . ." Hungarian? You could count the years he lived in Hungary on the fingers of one hand. He rarely and barely spoke Hungarian; and he certainly never wrote in it. And to this day not a single book of his has been translated into Hungarian for readers in his "homeland." No, he had to make do with his rootlessness, and his love-hate relationship with the land and culture in which he had established himself.

YPM: *Was this a source of personal unhappiness for him?*

MJL: Happily so. "Happiness" was not one of his human ideals, not even the pursuit of it. His temperament needed tension, his soul fed on its wounds. His achievement was to create a certain literary and intellectual order out of the chaos of his restlessness and resentment. It made for his complexity, and took the simple edge off his struggle to formulate things clearly and convincingly. It created space for ambivalence and ambiguity.

YPM: *How do you see this in the works?*

MJL: I won't take up the scientific writings, for it is fairly obvious that he was both in the Enlightenment's rationalist tradition and in a more modern quasi-mystical or "imaginative" tendency. The life of science and reason was lived by the great "sleepwalkers." There was a mystery about the recognized "acts of creation." A logic-chopping sceptic to the end, he still was increasingly attracted to the para-normal. But the point is even more obvious in his masterpiece, *Darkness at Noon.* Many of Koestler's friends secretly believed that Victor Serge's novel on, roughly, the same theme, was a better, truer, richer book: *The Case of Comrade Tulayev.* But Serge's achievement was straightforward. In Koestler there is a dark deviousness, a complexity, even (as Empson would say) a "type of ambiguity." Serge told the story of the Bolshevik tragedy; Koestler's novel lived it. The reader was trapped in history and politics; and there was not necessarily any obvious way out. Let me offer you one example. Most readers were, of course, "convinced" in the sense that they comprehended the death and degradation of the old Bolshevik Rubashov and the dialectical ruthlessness of Gletkin, the secret-policeman and inquisitor. It was, to put it plainly, an anti-Communist novel. Yet Koestler knew—and we talked about it a number of times, when I would come back from Berlin (where I was editing *Der Monat,* to which A.K. contributed regularly)—that there was a perverse paradoxical aspect to the novel. I told him of one East German student in the D.D.R., Soviet-trained in his ideology, who began to have serious doubts—until he read a smuggled copy of *Darkness at Noon,* called *Sonnenfinsternis* in the German translation. This restored his faith in the Bolshevik revolution! The tragic twisting of minds and loyalties which led to Rubashov, innocent of all the outrageous charges against him, to accept to make the great sacrifice of his life for the Party which he had served so long—this (and there were more cases than this one) proved to be darkly seductive. Doubts were banished; long live the revolution, even if it devours all its children . . . .

YPM: *Was Koestler upset by this?*

MJL: On one level I suspect he must have regretted it. One doesn't preach so loud and eloquently to let any sinners slip away to the Devil. But he certainly understood it, and knew too well the complications of brain structure (and their devious ways of plugging into the mind and spirit) not to expect the resilience of folly, especially in the self-destructive attitudinizing of ideological passions. At any rate it is, as I have been suggesting, a darkness which constitutes the strength in the shadows of the greatest political novel of our century.

YPM: *Then political novels do not necessarily have to be convincing?*

MJL: No, what I have been meaning to say is that, of course, such a masterpiece changes minds, convinces millions. In France when it appeared as *Le Zero et l'Infini* it became an immediate best-seller and a political factor in French life of truly major proportions. But this happens in its time and place. Decades later all the illusions of Sartre's juvenile *gauchisme,* so despised by Koestler, ruled the intellectual and cultural attitudes of Paris. It took another book and another writer to shock the French Left out of the "eternal recurrence" of its ideological illusions—Solzhenitsyn and the *Gulag Archipelago* trilogy. This accounts for the fact that on the French Left today there is the sturdiest democratic resistance movement to Soviet blandishments of anywhere in Europe. This, of course, pleased Koestler, but also wryly amused him. Why is it so difficult to learn, why does it take so long? And why are so many of the painfully learned lessons so quickly forgotten?

We often talked about the phenomenon of "historical amnesia," and in fact I was inspired by him to do my long intellectual history of the ideas of *Utopia and Revolution* [1977, University of Chicago Press] by his own infectious despair over political forgetfulness. I was reminded of this only the other day when reading one of the remarkable German obituary articles. This one appeared in a left-wing Berlin newspaper called *Tageszeitung.* The author was a well-known radical named Arno Widmann. He made the striking point that when he was a student he had read everything of Koestler he could get his hands on. He still had the copies of the books, and many political passages (especially in *The Yogi and the Commissar* of 1945) were heavily underlined. And yet, as he ruefully recalls, when the militance began in the 1960s

he found himself an active member of a revoultionary Marxist-Leninist group! "How could it be," he asks, "that I hurtled forward into the very same traps which Koestler had, with every possible precision, exposed for all of us?" He begins to wonder about the futility of all political literature—and this may be a clue as to why Koestler turned so sharply away from writing more such books and articles in the last 30 years. As Widmann asks, "What is all this writing for—and all this reading for—when it has no results and lasting effects, even where it has impact, indeed impressed itself on to the mind of the reader . . . ?"

YPM: *You say "sharply turned away," but earlier on you were still arguing that his concern for political events and public affairs remained.*

MJL: To be sure, it remained with him to the very end. I happened to send him only a few days before his death a protest letter to *The Times* about something or other to do with the theme of the Stalin "Moscow Show Trials." This was his old great theme, and on the Monday of the last days came back his signature. Strangely enough, *The Times* never published it—although there was an undeniable editorial interest in Koestler's last political thought returning to the noon-darkness of almost half-a-century earlier. But this is only a piquant point. Far more substantially it needs to be recorded that his public concerns became less ideological, but more personally committed. History is difficult to move; but lesser things can be accomplished: reforms, good deeds, humane changes. I mentioned the capital punishment campaign. There were also the Koestler Awards, (personally financed) which were given to inmates of prisons—for paintings, poems, novels, essays of outstanding merit. Here again he succeeded in moving mountains (if only little bureaucratic ones) to get the British prison authorities to let the "light of culture" into the cells. Koestler's own prison experiences remained too much with him, not to be moved to a life-long concern with the plight of all prisoners.

YPM: *There was continuity then, rather than disjunction?*

MJL: Koestler would have coined a catchy word for it, combining the twin thrusts of his life and work. He was, after all, in his own mirror a "Janus": not "two-faced," but with two faces looking in different directions. As in his combination of rationalism and mysticism, so in his devotion to themes in both social and natural science. I wish he had thought up a name for the strange and fascinating animal that he was. It was a verbal-mythological device for which he had a penchant. For *Suicide of a Nation?* he made us hire a cartoonist to draw a lion which had an ostrich's neck buried in the sand, and he called the "characteristically British" hybrid an old struthonian (from struthio, the Latin for ostrich).

And in Iceland where he, the "passionate duffer" at chess, rushed to watch the Bobby Fischer-Boris Spassky championship tournament, he was intrigued by Fischer's personality, so tough and yet so sensitive, and he came up with another hybrid, the Monophant, mingling the touchiness of the delicate plant with the thick-skinned beast.

YPM: *You used the phrase, "he-made-you" . . . does this imply that he was dominating, authoritarian, even overbearing to his friends and associates, which possibly led to his reputation as being a very difficult man to get along with?*

MJL: Oh yes! When he had an idea or an inspiration, he was obsessive; and when he was in the grips of an idea it had to grip you too. One had to listen and be involved. Most of the time—and especially for an eager receptive editor, always like a magpie looking out for brilliantly shining objects—one was pleased to. On occasion it got too much. This might lead to a quarrel, or rather (which amounted to the same thing) a "silent misunderstanding" which might last for a year. This happened over the *Encounter* special number on national suicide *(Nomen et Omen?).* I didn't quite agree over many points, but was (as I had promised) to let him have a free hand, and not only to write but to edit as he pleased. He was miffed, I suppose, that I withheld total agreement and full intellectual approbation. Like many inveterate sceptics he didn't like running across scepticism himself.

YPM: *Are you suggesting the intolerance of a tolerant man?*

MJL: Once again there is a bit of ambivalence here. In earlier days he made enemies easily, indulged in quarrels, excommunicated friends, refused to listen to dissenters, would declare war on certain journalists, newspapers, magazines, publishers, and the contemptible political or philosophical tendencies which they were held to represent. With the years he grew milder, more controlled and, in part, more serenly indifferent to passing agitations . . . even on important personal and professional matters. I once commissioned a long article on his scientific writings. It would have been a make-or-break event in our friendship. He knew, for example, that I had great respect for Sir Peter Medawar, the Nobel-prize winning scientist, who was a severe critic of Koestler (and I can remember at an *Encounter* literary party once, how Arthur circled around the room like a jungle cat, when both he and Medawar had turned up . . .). And when Professor Stephen Toulmin produced a very sharp essay I, of course, published it. He wrote a brief letter to the Editor for publication, correcting only one minor point of fact. He never mentioned the *Encounter* critique to me. Nor did it, as far as I was aware, trouble our relationship.

YPM: *In the end, then, he did not turn out to be the cold literary machine or the egotistical intellectual battler that appeared in the pictures given by so many interviewers and critics?*

MJL: At the memorial service for Arthur and Cynthia, held recently here in London, at the Royal Academy, there was a warmth and a loving atmosphere which I have rarely encountered at such functions. His passing left an unmendable hole in the personal, as well as intellectual lives of many many persons, hundreds of friends, thousands of readers. At the crematorium, a few weeks earlier, there were of course only a handful, present on a cold rainy day for a disagreeable mechanical ceremony. Two plain pine coffins, with handwritten labels. No religion, no prayers, no Bible, no music, no farewell. Someone read a few snippets from his *oeuvre* of fifty years, and then the fire. But the coffins on the table did not slip away. Evidently the crematorium's turn-table machinery was on the blink. Koestler who was one of the most fanatical devotees of mechanical efficiency I have ever met—everything just had to work: automobiles, refrigerators, mountain-climbing equipment, motorboats —might well have been amused. Even to the end, and beyond it, he was living his *oeuvre.* There was, if I may say so, a ghost in the machine.

Conference Politics

Gideon G. Rose

During the second course, one of the Germans rushed in and interrupted the various dinner conversations. Smiling broadly, he announced the eagerly-awaited results of the West German elections, and after some jokes and toasts from the table he moved to the other dining room with the good news. As an important official in the West German Ministry of Foreign Affairs; his job had ridden on the outcome; everyone was glad to see him keep it. The Christian Democrats' large victory pleased many, and together with the delicious food and wine made the final dinner of the weekend a happy occasion.

Over brandy and cigars later in the evening, the guests, relaxing in large leather armchairs by the fire or standing in front of the baroque decorations, discussed the world situation. The casual conversations on the recent elections or the prospect for negotiations between Israel and Jordan seemed only as important as the random political speculations of any cocktail party—until one realized that the Jordanian Chief of Staff three feet away was one of King Hussein's closest friends and advisors, or that he was talking to a Deputy Assistant Secretary of State from the U.S. Everyone there, in fact, whether as a diplomat or academic or journalist, influenced American, European, Arab, or Israeli policies on the major issues of the day.

These guests were participants at an international conference called "The Superpower Rivalry in the Middle East Conflicts," held at Ditchley Park, England, March 4-7. The New York-based Institute for East-West Security Studies sponsored the conference, trying to stimulate discussion among a broad range of experts on the Middle East. The people at the Institute understand that political decisions are not made by anonymous sweeping historical forces, but rather by individual men and women working from their individual perceptions of the situation at hand. If those perceptions are based on bad information or faulty reasoning, the politics that grow out of them will not work. And if both sides in a dispute misperceive the intentions and actions of the other, wars and conflict can be the result. It is therefore crucial to grasp clearly what the facts of any situation are, and what the perceptions of those facts by the other actors are. During that weekend, fifty-five powerful individuals learned what their international counterparts thought about the Middle East, and why. Because policy-makers seldom meet and talk openly with their opposite numbers in different countries, the assemblage of this group, the contacts made, and the views exchanged could help to bring about peace in the region. At the least, all who attended returned to their countries having learned firsthand of the others' concerns and attitudes.

Ditchley and the Power Elite

Ditchely Park is a private estate-turned-conference center about half an hour from Oxford. The old house, with its vast halls, high ceilings, and stately staircases, seems a relic from the days of *Upstairs, Downstairs* or *Brideshead Revisited.* The rooms and grounds, the morning teas and after-dinner liqueurs, exude an atmosphere of gracious and civilized living; against this backdrop, the terrorism, fanaticism, and brutal power struggles of the Middle East appeared to be dark chimeras of a fevered imagination. But Ditchley no longer caters to a social elite, a hereditary aristocracy enjoying the luxuries of class privilege. During conferences, the halls and lawns are home to a power elite of politicians and journalists and others who mold world opinion and create policy.

The Institute had four goals: to bring together international experts for informal discussion; to address current important topics in Middle Eastern affairs; to promote the name and work of the Institute; and to provide a setting for informal East-West dialogue. The conference succeeded in the first three, but failed in the last. A hundred invitations were sent out to key people in the field, picked from personal contacts and reputations. Seventy confirmed, and fifty-five actually arrived. That percentage is excellent, and the resulting group had in common only their interest and expertise: they spanned eleven countries and numerous professional disciplines, from ambassadors and foundation executives to editors and professors to independent analysts and bureaucrats. But

Gideon G. Rose, Associate Editor of the Yale Political Monthly, *served as an intern at the Institute for East-West Security Studies' conference "The Superpower Rivalry in the Middle East Conflicts," held at Ditchley Park, Oxfordshire, March 4th-7th, 1983.*

while several high-ranking Soviets were invited, they never showed. Reasons came through back channels in the following weeks. The officials invited were important: the Director of the Institute of the U.S.A. and Canada, the senior political commentators from *Pravda* and *Isvestiya,* top economic and political advisors of the Central Committee. But one was too imortant—Karen Brutents, member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and the chief Soviet idelogue for the Middle East. When Brutents was invited, it seems, the decisions of whether to send a delegation, and if so, whom became purely political with symbolic importance, and were made by the Central Committee itself. While they would have liked to participate, the Soviets saw the conference as part of an attempt to create peace between Israel and moderate Arab states under an American aegis.

Jordanian, Egyptian, Lebanese, Palestinian, and Israeli representatives attended, but no Syrians (who were invited) or Libyans or Iraqis or official P.L.O. representatives did (the American officials had made the last a condition of their acceptance). The Soviets chose not to send signals that they supported, even tacitly, an attempt to find solutions without their radical clients. The Soviet absence was a major blow to the conference—the focus was supposed to have been on the superpower rivalry in the area. In unexpected ways, however, it was a blessing. Had the Soviets come, open debate would have been stifled; moderate Arabs would have remained silent, and sensitive officials would have recited set positions. As it was, most participants felt free to speak openly: they did not feel watched, and the discussions were marked by a candor and frankness rarely heard in international exchange.

What the Iran-Iraq war means

The conference was organized around three papers, prepared by the Institute's Resident Fellows, on the implications of the Iran-Iraq War, the impact of a Palestinian entity on the West Bank, and arms control in the Middle East. For a year the Institute had brought together a team of Fellows from several nations to discuss Middle East conflicts, and the conference served to critique their work. A paper would be presented by one of the Fellows, and then the plenary session (everybody gathered together) would break into three discussion groups. After two hours, everybody would reassemble to hear summaries from the discussion group chairman, followed by open discussion.

The first topic was the Iran-Iraq war. The paper depicted the situation as Iran and Iraq fighting it out for internal reasons, with other Arab states lined up keeping both sides supplied as the superpowers sat by, interested but largely impotent. In general, the size of the plenary sessions hindered thorough discussion, but in the smaller groups a free-for-all prevailed. On Iran-Iraq, one memorable section never got beyond the question of Islamic fundamentalism, a passionate debate ensuing as various Arab participants tried to enlighten the Americans and Europeans but only succeeded in confusing things further (suffice it to say that "Khomeinism" is *not* equivalent to "Islamic Fundamentalism"). As the chairmen delivered their reports to the plenary late Saturday morning (the paper had been presented Friday afternoon, with discussion groups afterwards and on the following morning), certain common but not universal opinions appeared:

1) The conflict was caused by the specific characteristics of the rivalry between Iran and Iraq, and does not serve well as a model for other Middle East conflicts.

2) The superpowers had large interest but little control over the outcome; having armed the participants (and in the Soviet case still doing so), they yet had minor leverage.

3) The war highlighted and further fractured Arab disunity, with the Gulf states supporting Iraq but others supporting Iran.

4) The war benefitted the Israelis and hurt the Palestinians, by drawing attention away from the Palestinian problem, by showing that it was not the cause of all Mid-East tensions, and by splitting the rejectionist front.

There were debates as to what U.S. and Soviet interests were; while some said that it was important to try to end the war quickly—to lower oil prices further was one reason—most felt that although dangerous and volatile, the current statemate was the least bad alternative.

It was as if someone had written a lengthy article for a major journal, had received a precise critique, had responded, and a regular exchange followed. But the simultaneous presence of so many experts with open discussion among them compressed the process into a few hours. And while some diplomats and professors were prickly and vain, more than one would have expected were not; repeatedly a major figure would pose an open question to the plenary or discussion group from a sincere desire to know the answer, and the world authority on that subject would eagerly explain the situation. After the paper, plenary, discussion groups, and more plenary, interest on Iran-Iraq waned just as the conference moved on to the second topic. But time began to seem short; if the relatively removed Iran-Iraq war could command six hours of heated exchange, how could the far more controversial Palestinian problem even begin to be addressed in the same amount of time?

Security versus homeland

Raising more questions than it answered, the Palestinian paper was twice as long as its predecessor. Beginning with the debatable assumptions that both parties wanted a reasonable solution and recognized the basic rights of the other, it discussed what the elements of such a solution might be, and whether an independent Palestinian state or an Association with Jordan would be the optimum result. Its heart was that any solution would have to reconcile the vital concerns of each party—for Israel, security, and for the Palestinians, the desire for a homeland and self-determination. It concluded that such

a reconciliation was possible, although exceedingly complicated, and could probably take place only under the aegis of a concerned superpower willing to moderate. Both Arabs and Israelis commented in the initial plenary that while interesting and useful, the paper dealt with the problems of a negotiated settlement for which there was little hope at the moment.

Passionate discussion groups brought out the full complexity of the Israeli-Palestinian problem. There was no attempt to reach consensus, and very little was reached. Many pointed out problems that prevented serious talks even from starting—the belief of many Israelis that a Palestinian solution would not, as other Arabs say, solve the larger Arab-Israeli conflict; the two sides' different conceptions of security; and the general unwillingness of either side to make the first move. There was some agreement, however, on certain points:

1) The superpowers could improve the situation not necessarily by applying more pressure but rather by clearly stating what they stood for and the limits of their support.

2) The United States had little to gain by bringing the Soviet Union into negotiations.

The merits of a comprehensive regional peace agreement versus those of smaller, perhaps more manageable, agreements were debated inconclusively. There was disagreement over whether the Arab states had truly given up the idea of a purely military solution; over whether all parties had an interest in peace; over whether both sides were dealing in good faith. But despite the pessimistic nature of the discussions there seemed a consensus that at least the right questions were being asked, and that perhaps such papers and discussions might in the future achieve a lasting settlement. In a poll of one discussion group, for example, only half felt "hopelessly pessimistic" about the chance of either an Association or an independent state being achieved; the other half felt that maybe diplomacy could achieve something over the next several years.

Why arms control won't work

The third and final topic of the conference was arms control in the Middle East. The paper presented the pessimistic but realistic view that there would be no arms control until the underlying conflicts in the region were resolved. It stated starkly that there was no consideration of arms control in the Middle Eastern countries, and that there was little probability of it being imposed. While the discussion groups modified some points slightly, one chairman said (only half jokingly) that his group thought this was "the most solid (paper) because it's rooted in deep pessimism about any possibility of progress."

Almost everyone agreed that

1) the suppliers had multiple economic and political reasons for supplying;

2) there were too many independent suppliers to stop the flow of arms;

3) as long as the various tensions and power struggles in the region continued, there would be high demand; and

4) consequently, there was little if any prospect for any sort of arms control, and none for control of conventional weapons.

There was disagreement about the parties' interests in control of nuclear weapons and about whether a comprehensive settlement would reduce or increase arms levels (some mentioned the Egyptian-Israeli peace which was bought, in some ways, with arms sales). The conference Chairman, Harold Brown, former U.S. Secretary of Defense, made the point that a geographic limitation (as in a demilitarized zone) was a kind of arms control, and a first step. But the feeling was that certainly for the short run, and probably for the long run, the Middle East would continue to witness an escalating qualitative and quantitative arms race.

No treaties or agreements were signed over the weekend; no war or peace was declared. But those who attended, whether West Bank Mayors or American officials, Israeli and Jordanian generals or editors of *The New York Times* and *Newsweek*, came away with clearer views of what was going on in the Middle East, and with the knowledge that their allies and enemies were people, not forces. They also learned that there were hardliners and moderates within each camp, and that monolithic fronts concealed severe internal divisions. If peace comes, it will come through strengthening the moderates on both sides to the point at which they can prevail within their own councils. So although nothing was signed, the participants may use what they learned to sign or advise others to sign a treaty or agreement or declare war or peace next month or next year.

To expect lasting harmony from one weekend, however productive, would be wishful thinking. What one Israeli said in private is probably true, that "you Americans are too impressed with fancy language and a three-piece suit." Middle East conflicts are rooted deep in the desert sands; long-term solutions, if there are any, will be long in coming. But if they come, it will be through conferences like this one at Ditchley. For as long as all sides watch the battleground from the top of their heavily-armed battlements, never venturing forth to talk with or listen to the others, no solution is possible. Ditchley is that sort of neutral ground where, through the midwifery of an interested superpower, some arrangement for cohabitation may be made.

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Liberalism Revisited

William Laffer

To most people, classical liberalism is nothing but a philosophical antique, devoid of any modern relevance whatsoever. Some would say that the complexities of modern society have rendered classical liberalism inapplicable, while others would say that it never had any connection with reality to begin with. They are wrong. Classical liberal principles are relevant in any period and they are especially relevant in society today. Classical liberalism is a philosophy that is both timely and timeless.

Actually, though, classical liberalism is not a single philosophy but a set of related philosophies involving a variety of disciplines, all of which deal with the moral and economic choices involved in human affairs. As such, moral philosophy (ethics) and economics are central to classical liberalism. Ethics is the study of the choices people should make, and economics is the study of the choices people do make.

Furthermore, even within these distinct disciplines with which classical liberalism is concerned, classical liberalism does not always imply a single position or set of positions. For example, may an individual sell himself into slavery, or is his right in his own body inalienable? Does morality absolutely proscribe violating an individual's rights, even though violating one person's rights may prevent more and greater rights violations to others, or does it prescribe minimizing the weighted sum of rights violations? Classical liberals do not all agree on the answers to these and other questions. However, they do all agree on certain principles which are fundamental within the classical liberal tradition. These classical liberal principles include the importance of individual rights and the superiority of a free economy.

Classical liberal ethics is one example of why classical liberal principles are relevant in any period. Like any moral philosophy, classical liberal ethics may be thought of as a set of rules which govern the interaction of moral agents. Now one should not simply assume that human beings are moral agents. If human beings are of any special moral significance, they must be so by virtue of some attributes which they possess. These attributes, whatever they may be, are the defining conditions of moral agency, and any non-human entity which possessed them would also be a moral agent. In other words, human beings are governed and protected by moral laws if and only if they are in fact moral agents.

But what are the conditions of moral agency? According to classical liberal ethics, they are freedom, volition, and reason. A physical object is free if and only if its behavior is not uniquely determined by external forces. However, an object that has freedom but not volition will behave randomly. Volition is the internal capacity to direct behavior. Volition presupposes consciousness. Volition and freedom taken together constitute free will. However, even a freely willing being cannot be a moral agent if he does not have the capacity to perceive the content of moral law. Without reason he cannot know which actions he should not take.

Human beings *do* possess freedom, volition and reason; they *are* moral agents. Human interactions *are* governed by those rules which make up classical liberal ethics. The contributing relevance of classical liberal ethics depends on the nature of man. In any period in which freedom, volition and reason are components of man's nature classical liberal ethics will necessarily be relevant to man[1].

William Laffer '81, now in his first year of Law School at the University of Chicago, majored both in Political Science and Economics.

[1] I believe the rules which make up classical liberal ethics can be derived from the defining conditions of moral agency. However, their explication and derivation would add nothing to this essay but length. The proof that the rules of classical liberal ethics are relevant in any period does not depend in any way on the content of those rules. Furthermore, a serious and detailed treatment of free will and determinism (which I have admittedly not provided) would also be too long and complicated to include here.

A sick economy

Classical liberal economics is an example of why classical liberal principles are especially relevant in society today. The American economy's present ill health is the inevitable result of our government's progressive abandonment of classical liberal economic principles (which it never fully embraced to begin with). U.S. fiscal and monetary policies display a complete lack of understanding of the nature of poverty, wealth and money.

The U.S. government throws billions of dollars at the problem of poverty each year, yet that problem does not go away. Why doesn't it? Because no attempt to alleviate poverty can possibly be successful that does not attack the causes of poverty. Poverty is nothing more and nothing less than the absence of wealth. Hence, to discover and eliminate the causes of poverty one must first understand the origins of wealth.

Governments do not create wealth; individuals do—if their government will let them. Now the creation of wealth is not primarily a philanthropic activity. People engage in wealth-creating activities in order to have more wealth for themselves. They produce in order to consume. They may consume their wealth immediately, or they may choose to save it for future consumption. By engaging in exchange they may convert it into any form they desire. This exposition of the nature and origins of wealth leads directly to several conclusions: 1) A person's incentive to create wealth is reduced when a) he gets to keep less of the wealth he creates and/or b) he can receive wealth without creating it. 2) A person whose incentive to create wealth is reduced will tend to create less wealth. Thus, the combined effect of high marginal rates of taxation and generous income security programs is to keep incentives and production at artificially low levels[2]. Is it any wonder that our economy is so anemic? Government fiscal policies have stifled output and employment[3].

Quality not quantity

While it may not seem possible, though, our government's monetary policy is probably even more harmful than its fiscal policy. Continued high interest rates have sparked a great deal of debate about the proper conduct of the Federal Reserve and about the possibility of returning to a gold standard. Monetarists such as Milton Friedman advocate expansion of the "money supply" at a slow, constant rate as the key to controlling inflation and interest rates. However, the proper supply of money at any given time depends on the level of demand for money. A huge increase in the supply of money is fine if there is a corresponding increase in its demand. On the other hand, even slow growth in supply is too much if demand does not also grow. Any rule which determines the supply of money arbitrarily, without regard to its demand is bound to distort its value, thereby causing inflation or deflation. This is why many economists, including many of the so-called supply-siders, are saying that the quantity of money is not nearly so important as its value. They advocate restoring the dollar's convertibility into gold as the best way to preserve the dollar's value, stabilize prices and lower interest rates. Such a change would be an improvement, but it would not be enough.

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[2]Some economists may object at this point that the effect of taxation on incentives is ambiguous. They will argue that while the substitution effect of, say, a tax cut will be to increase incentives to the suppliers of labor and capital,the income effect will be to reduce incentives. Since the relative magnitudes of the two effects are uncertain, the net effect of a tax cut may actually be to reduce work and investment. Their argument is correct as far as it goes, but it doesn't go far enough. Assuming the government spends only what it collects in taxes (ha, ha, ha), the income effect of its spending will exactly cancel the income effect of its taxation, leaving only a substitution effect. (Most forms of spending, such as transfer payments, have no substitution effect.) Thus the net effect of taxation and government spending taken together is unambiguous.

[3]Again, some people (but I hope no economists) will object that taxes have been cut, and that tax cuts have failed to help the economy. The mistake is in assuming that tax rates have actually been cut. The Dallas *Times Herald* of July 1, 1982 reported on a study prepared by the Public Employees Department of the AFL-CIO:

> The study concludes that despite last fall's 5 percent reduction in income tax rates and this year's 10 percent cut, the vast majority of American families will be paying more taxes in 1982 than in 1980 because of inflation, higher Social Security taxes and increases in state and local taxes.

Clemson University economics professor Richard B. McKensie made the same point months before the AFL-CIO did in an article he wrote for the editorial page of *The Wall Street Journal,* on January 8, 1982. Professor McKensie concluded:

> Supply-side economics has not worked and will not work for one simple reason: it has never been and is likely not to be tried.

See also *The New York Times* Business Section of April 15, 1983.

It seems that the current debate has largely missed the most important point, which is that legal tender laws oughtn't to exist. Monetarists and supply-siders alike fail to question the government's monopoly on the creation of money, yet this monopoly is both ethically and economically bankrupt. Individuals ought to be able to purchase and contract with whatever medium of exchange they wish to use. Anyone who wants to should be free to compete to provide currency services. The creation of money is a banking function which bears no logically necessary connection to the provision of protective services. There is no more reason for the government to be in and monopolize the business of creating money than there is for it to be in and monopolize the business of delivering mail. As Richard W. Rahn (vice president) and chief economist of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce wrote in *The Wall Street Journal* in October of 1981:

> There is no reason why an economy cannot have competing currencies. Under free competition, the market will determine, as with any product, which is the superior currency, and eventually it will drive other currencies out of existence.

Classical liberal economics tells us whyour economy is in such sad shape. It also tells us how the vitality of our economy (or anyone else's) can be restored. Classical liberal economics calls for, at the very least, reduction of high marginal tax rates. Classical liberal ethics calls for the abolition of taxation. (Well, I think it does. Some classical liberals would disagree with me.) Classical liberal ethics and economics both call for the demonopolization and privatization of money. The only way to eliminate poverty and secure prosperity is to create a free economy. With our economy in its present state, classical liberal priciples have never been more relevant.

Beating the Drum for the PLO

Diana West

Little Drummer Girl
by John le Carré
Knopf $15.95.

Although John le Carré has abandoned the Berlin tug-o'-wall in *Little Drummer Girl,* it is not quite accurate to say that he has broken new ground with this book. Instead, he has taken his old turf along to stand on in the middle of a new landscape. From this familiar vantage point, le Carré sees the conflict in the Middle East from the same perspective that he has seen the struggle between East and West in previous novels; that is, from the point of view of what might be called an ideological egalitarian. Neither the Communist agent nor the Western agent are ever distinguished from either the grey shadows they live among or from each other. From book to book, one character or another is bound to stumble upon this irony: in *The Spy Who Came In From The Cold,* le Carré's stunning success of 1963, East German agent Fiedler remarks to British agent Leamus, "We're all the same you know, that's the joke." By now, Mr. le Carré's "joke" has become something of an old story.

Critics have long tagged the plot points connecting this kind of story together as "moral ambiguities." *Newsweek*'s le Carré spread of March 7 described his works as "thrillers that resonate with moral ambiguities," and went on to mark the spymaster's progression from "the dark and morally ambiguous frontiers of the cold war" to the Middle East, "easily the most tortured and morally ambiguous place in the world." It seems that the concept remains popular, and not just with *Newsweek. Time,* attempting to embellish on the theme, came up with this piece of poetry: "His characters must pursue moral absolutes in a dangerous world mined with ambiguities."

Despite this rather ominous characterization of the explosive nature of moral ambiguity, it happens to be an exceedingly safe outlook, as well as one with a broad appeal. Based on universal understanding and compassion for all, moral ambiguity rejects partisanship. Apparently, to be partisan is to be unwilling or unable to understand a conflict from all sides, a simplistic and increasingly obsolete practice. To understand is to empathize, and empathy is the soul of the enlightened citizen. Through le Carré's looking-glass, one sees the world as a study in grey: two sides, blurry and identical, a color-blind and cross-eyed vision. Any attempt to distinguish between the two plunges one into a quagmire of indecision, a veritable haven for those who recoil from the strictures of moral polarization. We have seen le Carré thrash between East and West before in this philosophical mire. In *Little Drummer Girl* he tried to do the same, but first he must sink both the Arabs and the Israelis in the same boat, weighing down each side with an equal share of tragedy. As the New York Times *Book Review* put it, "Mr. le Carré is careful to even up the moral odds." In his attempt to achieve a moral balance between the Palestinian Arabs and the Israelis, however, Mr. le Carré is unable to hide his bias toward the Arabs behind the pretense of evenhandedness.

Le Carré's Palestine Agony

The plot of this long and often dense book revolves around an Israeli antiterrorist team's mission to eliminate Khalil, the highly successful and elusive leader of a Palestinian terrorist network sometimes called "Palestine Agony . . . even if it was less of a name for the perpetrators than an explanation for their action." This is quintessential le Carré: his editorial morality prompted one reviewer to comment that "without condoning terrorism, the book makes the reasons for it understandable." In fact, le Carré invites the reader to cross the fine line between understanding terrorism and condoning it.

To break the terrorists' security, Kurtz, the leader of the Israeli team, has devised an elaborate plan which hinges on the cooperation of an English actress named

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Charlie. Her middle-class background and trendy ventures into radical fringe politics qualify her to be a plausible mate for Khalil's youngest brother Salim in a romance completely fabricated by the Israeli team. Once Salim is killed, as he must be for this plan to work, Charlie, actress that she is, will naturally assume the role of the bereaved and bitter lover. Kurtz assumes that big-brother Khalil will be curious enough about Charlie to reveal himself to her—and to the Israelis. There is only one hitch to setting this plan into motion: how to convince Charlie to risk her life for Israel in an effort to damage the Palestinian movement to which she is obviously sympathetic.

When Charlie is first quizzed about her feelings, she says, "I just want you to leave the poor bloody Arabs alone . . . . Stop bombing their camps. Driving them off their land. Bulldozing their villages. Torturing them." No ambiguity here, moral or otherwise. Le Carré goes on to interpret Charlie's impassioned outburst for the reader with the sober words of a reasonable parent: "She had a decent vision, when it was allowed her, of a Palestine magically restored to those who had been hounded from it in order to make way for more powerful European custodians." Presto. Revisionist historical fiction. The pitiful survivors of the ovens of Germany assume heroic proportions in le Carré's memory: they dispossessed the weak of their land, hounding them to make a place for themselves. Perhaps le Carré is ignorant of the United Nations' offer of self-determination to both Arabs and Jews in Palestine: on the other hand, the Partition Resolution would undoubtedly have complicated his story.

The lesson of the lost tribe

Also implicit in that breathtaking statement is the fundamental lesson Mr. le Carré would like to teach his readers: there is a new lost tribe of Israel, ironically and pitiably created by the Jews themselves. "Who," one character asks, "has the simple courage to tell out loud the cruellest joke in history: that thirty years of Israel have turned the Palestinians into the new Jews of the earth?" In other words, the Israelis promote "word for word the things that were formerly said of the Jews by the anti-Semites of Europe." Mr. le Carré's words cannot be dismissed merely as fiction created in the novelist's line of duty, especially in light of a Boston *Globe* editorial he wrote last June after the Israeli invasion of Lebanon began. "Too many Israelis," he concluded

> in their claustraphobia, have persuaded themselves that every man, woman and child is by definition a military target, and that Israel will not be safe until the pack of them are swept away. It is the most savage irony that Begin and his generals cannot see how close they are to inflicting upon another people the disgraceful criteria once inflicted on themselves.

With this statement Mr. le Carré invites us to draw a parrallel between Israelis and Nazis, and in so doing he reveals his own colors which are anything but grey.

Charlie's precarious mental state becomes a strategic tool in the hands of the wily Kurtz. Emotionally unstable, emotionally empty, she is susceptible to the mysterious charms of one Gadi Becker, an Israeli veteran of many wars and missions whom Kurtz has recruited to lure Charlie into the Israeli midst. In short, he both captivates and kidnaps her. Despite her political instincts and the reader's incredulity, Charlie agrees to cooperate with the Israelis and become an integral part of their new operation.

Little Drummer Girl's tangled plot unravels over more than four hundred pages, weaving a sticky web across much of Europe and the Middle East. Once again, the "spymaster" himself has spun an overlong and dull reader. The fact is, John le Carré writes a dull thriller. One can only marvel at his reputation as a great entertainer and wonder whether his critical accolades are truly inspired by his prosaic and often inpenetrable prose style, or if perhaps it is his 'enlightened' message that his 'enlightened' critics prize so highly.

The rhetoric of moral ambiguity

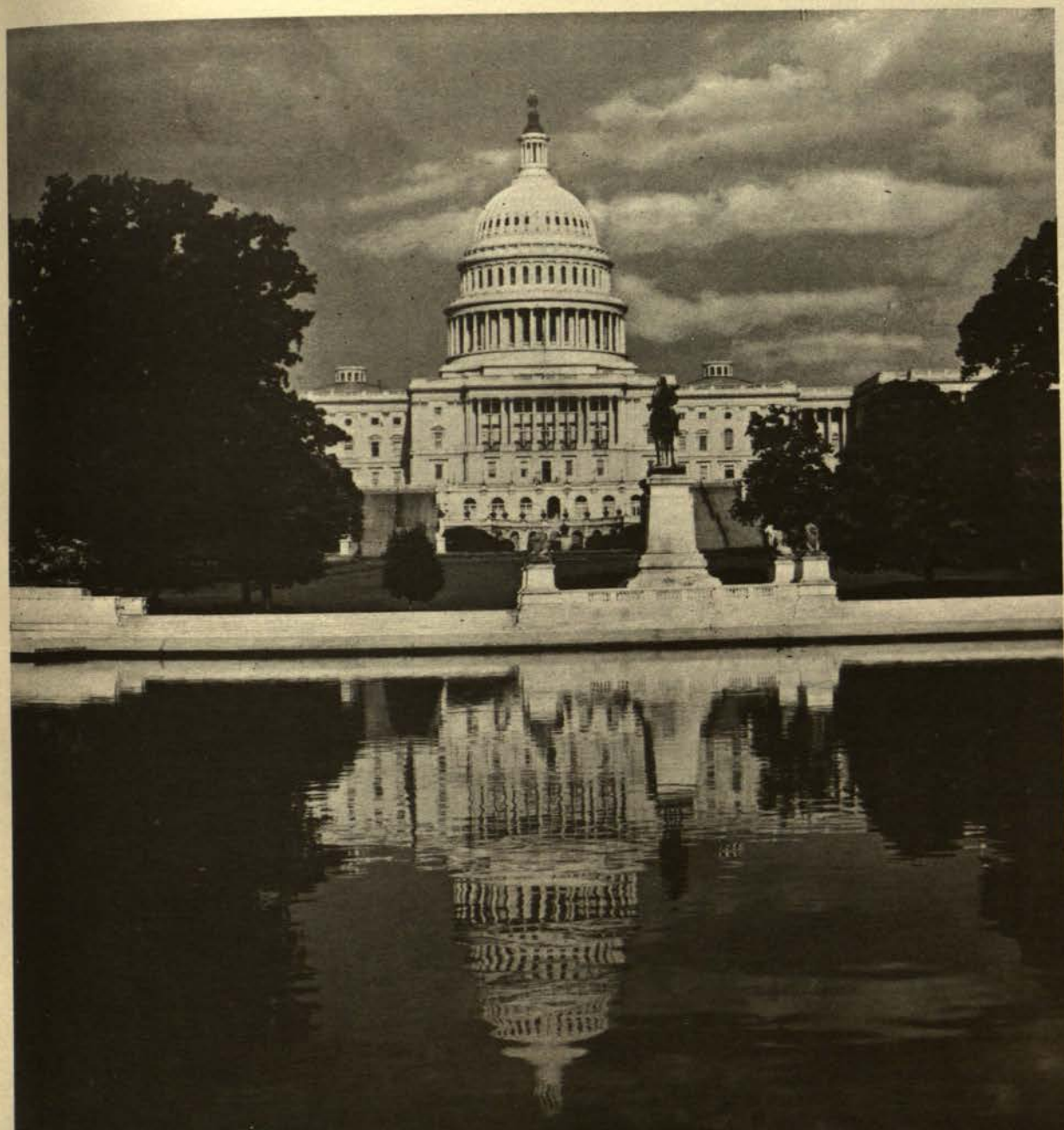
"I began with the traditional Jewish hero looking for the Palestinian 'baddie,'" says le Carré. "Once into the narrative, the reader, I believed, would be prepared to consider more ambiguous moral preoccupations." What le Carré refers to turns out to be nothing less than pages and pages of Palestinian rhetoric: his attempt to make them more palatable smacks rather unpleasantly of a sugar-coated pill whose sweet shell has worn thin before being swallowed. Becker must coach Charlie on the finer points of being a Palestinian terrorist's lover and so he literally takes the girl through the motions of a *grand passion,* all the while preaching everything she and (perhaps more importantly) the reader should know about Palestine. This means that Becker, the Israeli hero, is the source of the pro-Palestinian argument. While reading these passages, one gets the distinct impression that Charlie is not the only pupil whose education le Carré is supervising. Falsehood after lie go virtually unchallenged, unexplained, yet sanctioned by the authority of the intelligence officer who speaks them. Charlie, a quick study and already instilled with the right ideas, takes to the part she is directed to play with natural ease. Thus le Carre has at his disposal a couple of characters for whom he may write burning words of Israel-hatred with nary a blush because he has made sure to employ them both by Israel. "It will help to allay the anxieties of his Jewish readers," said *Newsweek.*

One particularly curious theme which recurs throughout le Carré's storybook version of history is his apparent obsession with Britain's role in the Middle East. His 'Anglocentric' position compels him to inflate that role and to rewrite it so extensively that Britain becomes the benefactor of the Jews and the nemesis of the Arabs. Becker dons his Arab's hat to tell Charlie

> The British gave away my country to the Zionists, they shipped the Jews of Europe to us with orders to turn the East into the West. *Go and tame the Orient for us,* they said. *The Palestinians are trash, but they will make good coolies for you!* The old British colonizers were tired and defeated, so they handed us over to the new colonizers who had the zeal and ruthlessness to cut the knot. *Don't worry about the Arabs,* the British said to them. *We promise to look the other way while you deal with them.*

Considering Britain's fight against the drive for Jewish statehood in Palestine, Becker's version of Salim's words rings strangely false. Britain saw the proposed Jewish state as a threat to her empire, not to mention her relations with the Arabs. One would think her consistently pro-Arab policies would have become enshrined in Arab lore by now, despite her role as a colonial power. But no. Salim's words condemn Britain for making "a present of an Arab territory to a Jewish lobby." *Little Drummer Girl* claims to represent both the Palestinian and the Israeli side of the conflict and yet outbursts like these go uncountered, or even worse, lamely rebutted.

Granted, this is a novel we are talking about, and not a historical document. As a piece of fiction, it is exempt from the rigors of reality: its message, nonetheless, is very real. Le Carré's Jews become terrorists and his terrorists become "the new Jews of the earth." As it is staged by le Carré, the conflict resembles a moral handicap: one side is stipped of morality, and the other side is loaded with it until they both weigh in at the same (morally ambiguous) amount. The lies and distortions which support this conclusion are protected by a shield of fiction, and made attractive by an aura of moral ambiguity. Perched atop the New York *Times* Bestseller List, *Little Drummer Girl* is endowed with what David Pryce-Jones of the *New Republic* called "the authority of a bestseller." The book cannot be corrected or retracted because a fictional statement need not measure up to the standards of truth. It can, however, ingrain a lasting image in the hearts and minds of its readers.



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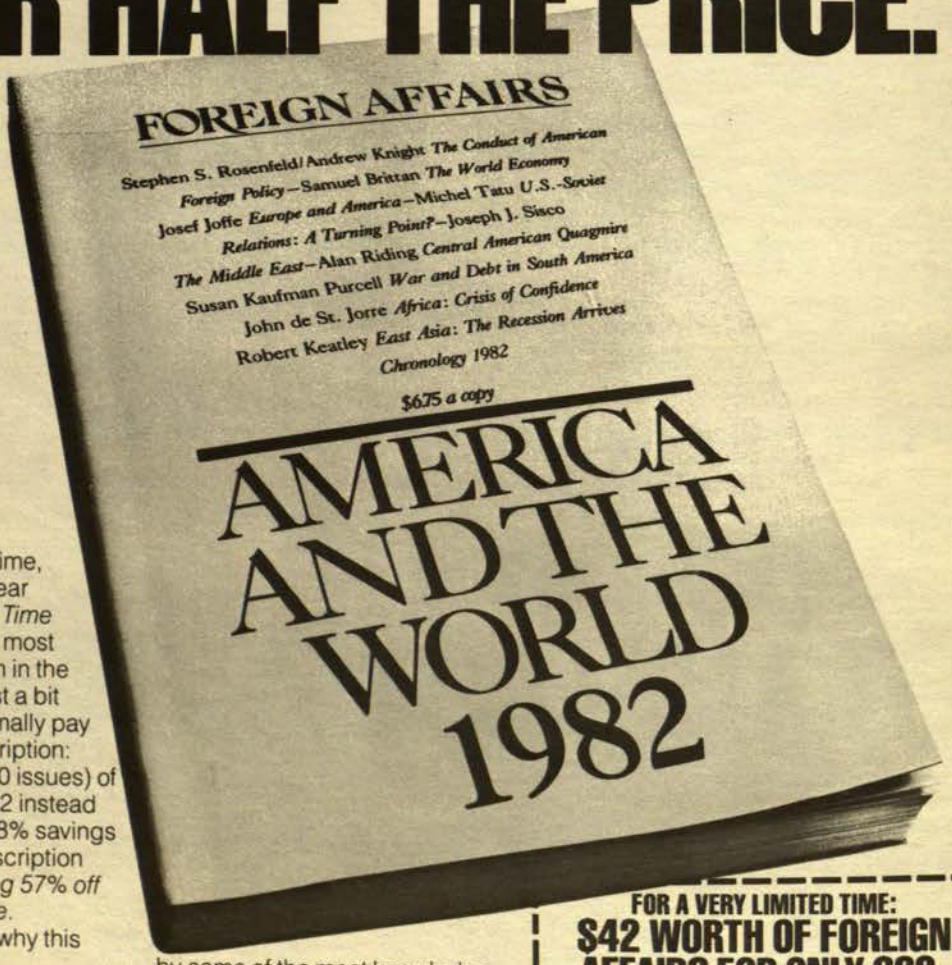

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