

Propaganda War

By Mitchell Bard

Israel is fighting an intensifying battle that, though bloodless, threatens her survival. The war is being fought on three fronts: in Israel, in Washington and on the campuses of American universities. This is a war of propaganda between Israel's supporters and detractors. It is the battle on the campus that may be the most important because it is a fight over the future of U.S. relations with Israel.

Most people are familiar by now with the increase in anti-Israeli activities taking place on campus, but let me cite a few recent examples. At the University of California in Berkeley, the Moslem Students Association passed out highlights of the *Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion*, at Arizona State, an Israeli flag was displayed with a swastika in place of the Mogen David, and the spring edition of the UCLA black student newspaper printed an anti-Israel article that featured a map of Israel with not only Judea, Samaria, and Gaza labeled as occupied, but the entire State of Israel identified as "occupied since 1948."

The struggle uses words rather than guns, but this time, Jewish activists may be losing. The cause involves the lack of commitment and morale for our troops, the length of our supply lines, and the lack of ammunition.

The commitment of our troops is a significant problem. To give one example, UCLA has approximately 6,000 students, of those well under 10 percent are active in Jewish activities. In the last year, the average attendance of Israel Action Committee meetings was less than 10 — good compared to past years. The numbers vary from campus to campus, but UCLA is not atypical. What can we do to motivate Jewish students to become more active on campus?

There is no doubt that the single best idea is to get students to Israel. I have yet to

meet a student who has come back from Israel unaffected. Students return with a stronger sense of commitment to the State of Israel and to Judaism. How do we get students to Israel? We already have a wide range of programs, but what we have to do is expand them and make them less expensive. One yeshiva offered a program to Israel for \$450, including air fare, and received over 200 applications from the five cities where the program was advertised. They were able to take less than 100. The yeshivot have recognized this and are doing a much better job than the non-orthodox community of providing opportunities to travel economically.

An innovative program idea is a trip to Europe for Jewish students. Many students like to tour Europe during summer break, especially after graduating from college. They are not interested in just going to Israel; they want to go to see the sights of Europe. We should provide tours to Europe — not just tours of Jewish cemeteries and synagogues, but a regular tour with perhaps a stop or two at places of particular Jewish interest, designed primarily for the person with no great interest in "Jewish sights." The difference between our tour and the ordinary tour, however, will be an added stop — Israel. We have to tap that group of individuals who would not otherwise go to Israel, encouraging their commitment to Israel and desire for an extended stay. The key will again be affordability, and this requires scholarships and subsidies.

One of our biggest problems is that the lines of supply are too long. Most Jewish organizations are headquartered in New York or Washington and many campuses, especially on the West Coast, are too far away to have effective communication. We need more regional organizations, not only regional but centralized, with the express purpose of housing information for campus activists. As it is now, you have to call a dozen different organizations, none of which knows what the others are doing. The American Zionist Youth Foundation

is actually set up to handle the job but does not do it because it has chosen to emphasize aliyah programs political activity. The Anti-Defamation League is also set up regionally, but currently does not have the staff or resources to commit to the fight on campuses. Given its professional staff, expertise and experience, ADL could be made into an effective command center. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee is trying to take the initiative, but it also doesn't have the staff or the resources to do the job. Either the priorities of existing organizations must change or a new organization must be established to deal exclusively with campus politics.

Student activists also lack ammunition. Too much of the material used on the campus is provided by the Israeli consulate. While some of it is very good, much of it is so blatantly propagandistic that it is readily dismissed as propaganda and consequently of no use on the campus. We need to have an American public relations firm developing pamphlets and displays discussing the major issues of the Arab-Israeli conflict in a way that American students can understand and appreciate. Then one organization can take responsibility for putting these materials in the hands of campus activists.

One example of the ammunition problem is the growing concern regarding Israel's involvement in Central America. There simply is little or no information we can use to combat the kind of attacks that are being launched by our antagonists.

There is also a need to train Jewish activists. We need more workshops like the ones developed by the ADL and AIPAC. By taking a more localized approach, preferably on individual campuses, we can run local leadership workshops currently offered irregularly by existing organizations. Thus, we not only develop general leadership skills, but also address the problems that are specific to a given campus. Most students cannot afford the time or money to go on a leadership training program in Israel, New York, or Washington, but they can go to a day-long workshop on their campus.

There is a very severe need to have

students involved in the organized Jewish community. As it stands now, students see the community as a place where only large financial contributions have a voice. Not only don't students have the money for such donations, but the perception that money is the vehicle for influence in the community is likely to have a negative impact on students' views of Judaism and activism. We have to bring college students onto the boards of the various organizations so that they will not only feel like a part of the Jewish community at-large, but will also be able to express the needs and concerns of the campus community directly to the people who can provide the resources needed to fight the war on the campuses.

Additionally, money has to be contributed to Hillel councils for the express purpose of supporting political activism on campus, providing subsidies to allow students to attend policy conferences in Washington, for trips to Israel, and for political speakers. Depending on the rules governing a particular campus, it might be advisable to donate money directly to Israel Action Committees.

The Arab lobby has been successful in parading its speakers around the nation's campuses; the pro-Israel community has been much less successful in putting together a similar group of articulate spokesmen for campus speeches. Too many of the well-known speakers for our cause charge exorbitant sums that are beyond the financial reach of student organizations. We must either find the money to pay these speakers or convince them that the war on the campus is too important to be auctioned off to the highest bidder.

I am amazed at how concerned adults are about what is happening on college campuses, yet how little is being done to translate that concern into action. I am convinced it is because most people do not know what they can do to help; perhaps these suggestions will help begin the counterattack needed to insure that the fight to preserve a strong U.S.-Israel relationship is won. ■

Mitchell Bard's work has appeared in the Chicago Tribune, Commentary and Midstream.

The Branch

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their pockets that is so heavy, that pulls their belts and belt-loops down so? What is it that is so heavy in the flesh under chins and eyes? Not a one of them is without an unshaven patch or two. They are too close to each other to tell whether one or more than one has applied the after-shave lotion which floats in and around the staleness. Mrs. Schneiderman is not impressed with them. In the silence of their study of the market, they can hear her lips puckering and pouting as she thumbs through stacks of index cards. They are not impressed either, but they keep their heads, and their voices, down.

"I'm going money market," Max says to himself loud enough for all to hear. His words float alone over the breathing of men and machine. There is in them some hint that he has not made a decision but a request for advice. The silence rumbles on as if a cue had been missed, but, just a beat or two late, Henry says. "Let the brokers beware." Henry, that master of timing, counts to five in his head before he adds, "Max is taking his money elsewhere." Max is immune to the masterful irony. What he has saved and earned is not much to you but it is everything to him. "Money market," he continues, "safe and sure, and if anything exciting happens on Wall Street you fellows can worry about it. Wake me up when its over." Henry will not let it alone: "First Federal is giving silverware," he says with a straight face and the inflections and timbre of sincerity. "First National gives hair curlers," says the other

Max. "People's gives pantyhose," says Louis, breaking into his famous laugh which is a sequence of five snorts, a long sigh, and two more less violent snorts. "Pantyhose" says the other Max. "Hair curlers" say Henry and Louis together. "Silverware, silverware," says Max himself, "you are all too good for silverware? What will you need for silverware after the brokers have sold you up and down the river? Are those leatherette diaries or those market guides, the paper so thin, the type so small, a better bargain? It's all going to come down, down, mark my words. And some of us will have knives and forks and spoons and something to use those things with, and some others will have leatherette diaries with nothing to write into them and piles of books of useless numbers on cheap paper. How long will that keep you warm?" Max raised a fist as high as his ear. One by one he looked into the faces around him. He paused, preparing to pull the pin of his next word as if it were a hand grenade. "Money market" he knew would be his next and last words, but as he rehearsed and tested and relished the tonal possibilities he could confidently imagine imparting to them, he saw the faces around him lift toward his fist and stay there. He turned, cocking his chin, toward where the other eyes met, and met the crossed arms and defiant, bony chin of Mrs. Schneiderman.

Her reading glasses hung down from her neck on a chain of blue beads. Her well-defined nostrils directed their black pupils down and to her right, at Max. And above

that ghastly apparition, her upper face, furrowing brows, penetrating eyes, even the large ears, seemed to be taking part in Mrs. Schneiderman's expression of her fury. She sucked her lips in, noisily, once, twice. "Mrs. Schneiderman" — it was Louis who addressed her from his kindergarten chair, the 10 fingers of his small hands pressed together, each pad against its counterpart on the opposing hand, before him on the lip of the table. She did not flinch. The center of her lips turned inward. The mouth narrowed, readying. "Yes, Mrs. Schneiderman," said Wallace, as if Louis had indeed gained her attention and asked the question he now repeated, "what do you think of the money markets, in today's difficult economic times." The expression of Max's upturned face changed from guilty apprehension to a mask of sincere curiosity. It was obviously a mask and that is how Max wanted it. Looking as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth was his contribution to the present party. Mrs. Schneiderman hauled her blue beads down into a long crease on the side of her neck. You could hear her nostrils pumping air. "First Federal is giving silverware," said Henry. The other Max had his mock solicitude ready from before: "First National gives hair curlers," he said. Then there was silence, that special silence of suspended irony, of laughter held back for yet another moment. Mrs. Schneiderman strode into it: "This is a library," she said, "a public library. It is not a private club." Herself and the five men were the only people in sight. "Out of consideration for

others who may wish to use the library for the purposes for which it was intended, reading and study, would you . . ." Max could not resist. He knew better, but he did not care. Holding on to his mask of cherubic innocence against the explosion he knew was coming, he took into his cheeks the bit of breath it would take, let his lips close gently, and got out, "Pee . . ." before Louis, whose line it was by right of invention and prior use, and whose daring in the face of authority had made this entire adventure possible, hurried to claim his rights: "People's gives pantyhose," he said. He spoke with the conviction, if not the diction, of the helpful banker on the television, the friend of widows and orphans. But the room was spinning around now. Mrs. Schneiderman was tottering, her nostrils flailing. She was hanging herself from her rope of blue beads. Her ears were flapping, her long lips sucking the blood out of each other. The other men were filling their cheeks with the air the words would need. Even now they were expelling it through gently closed lips. "People's gives pantyhose," the men said, proud of their unison. ("Men of Harlech" at least one of them remembered singing in high school.) "People's gives pantyhose," rang out in defiant and proud chorus across the reading room. No one appeared behind the circulation desk. Louis broke into his famous laugh which is a sequence of five snorts, a long sigh, and two more less violent snorts. Mrs. Schneiderman, beaten, beaten again, smiled wanly to the library's clients and made her way back to her station. ■