

THE LINK

Published by Americans for Middle East Understanding

Room 771, 475 Riverside Drive, N.Y., N.Y. 10027

Vol. 13, No. 2

April/May 1980

The Arab Stereotype On Television

By Jack G. Shaheen

In recent years the mass media have exploited to an excessive degree the stereotype of the Arab, in spite of the known detrimental effects of such exploitation. Stereotyping is not only a crime against Arabs and Arab nations, but also against the human spirit.

"Without mass media," writes Jacques Ellul in *Propaganda*, "there can be no modern propaganda." Ellul says that propaganda operates on many false assumptions: "half-truth, limited truth, and truth out of context." Propaganda, in my opinion, does more than change opinions; it leads men to action. One cannot deny the powerful conditioning of the media on behavior and thought.

"Stereotypes deal with category," observes Professor Ayad Al-Qazzaz, "thus overlooking the difference found among people with regard to a trait." "They are erroneous, or half-truths, rather than accurate statements about the reality to which they refer," says Al-Qazzaz. He believes that in most cases stereotypes are acquired in a second-hand manner rather than through personal and direct experience. "Once formed," says Al-Qazzaz, "the stereotype tends to persist, even in the face of contradictory evidence and experience; contradictory evidence is seen as an exception; it does not affect the stereotype."

Journalist Djelloul Marbrook points out that the Arab today connotes: terrorism, hijack, intractability, sullenness, perverseness, cruelty, oil, sand, embargo, boycott, greed,

bungling, comedic disunity, primitive torture, family feuds and white slavery. Marbrook asks how long it will take before the Arabs will be associated with the following terms: artist, poet, diplomat, statesman, economist, devout worshipper, philosopher, journalist, craftsman, singer, farmer, technician, academician, scientist and family member.

The negative portrayal of Arabs prompted syndicated columnist Nicholas Von Hoffman to write, "no religious, national or cultural group...has been so massively and consistently vilified." Because of such stereotyping, most Americans do not view Arabs objectively.

"Arab is a word that people learn to hate when they hear it on television," said a young Jordanian to writer Jonathan Raban. "They never connect it with you," he said. "The English people perceive Arabs as being terrorists or millionaires; it means you are not a human being."

There is within our nation an absence of understanding of who the Arabs are and where they have been. How many Americans are aware that Arabs were world pioneers in introducing hospitals and traveling clinics and, like every minority, have made positive contributions to our society? Television has failed to offer such positive portrayals. There is never a human Arab, never a good Arab. I have never seen an Arab hero.

When I use the word "Arab," I think of 100 million people in the great expanse of the Arab world. They are city dwellers, suburbanites, villagers, farmers,



Some dress in robes, others in trousers, coats and ties. Some Arab girls go veiled in the streets, others in the latest European fashions. There are white-, brown- and black-skinned Arabs; Arab Christians, Arab Muslims and Arab Jews. Television, however, ignores this reality.

The medium has failed to show what Arabs have contributed to civilization. Arab scholars, for example, preserved the ancient Greek theory that the world is round. They wrote commentaries on ancient philosophical and medical texts such as the works of Plato and Aristotle. Omar Khayyam was a mathematician-astronomer-poet. Arab scholars developed algebra, geometry and trigonometry. They contributed to the theory of music, being the first to give a specific time value to musical tones. The guitar

About This Issue

Jack G. Shaheen is a Fulbright scholar who spent the academic year 1974-75 conducting research on Middle East media systems and teaching mass communications at the American University of Beirut. Now professor of mass communications at Southern Illinois University, Dr. Shaheen has worked as a television newsman and arts critic and has written numerous articles on the stereotyping of Arabs for national and international publications. His feature article in this issue of *The Link* is the result of his research for an upcoming book intended to make television producers and executives more aware of Arab stereotyping and of the media's responsibility to reflect a wide range of positive roles for all people.

Photos are courtesy of ABC-TV, CBS-TV, Columbia Pictures Television and NBC-TV.

Our book review selection, *Perspectives on the State of Israel*, contains readings collected and annotated by Cathy Mellett, a graduate student at the Acadia Divinity College in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. Our book reviewer, Dr. Henry Fischer, is Curator

in Egyptology at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, in New York City, and member of A.M.E.U.'s Board of Directors.

Americans for Middle East Understanding is pleased to announce the formation of its National Council. Distinguished Americans from the fields of business, education, government service and religion were invited to lend the prestige of their names in support of our effort—now in its thirteenth year—to create in America a deeper understanding of the history, culture and current events in the Middle East. Their names appear on p. 16.

As a sequel to this issue, our next issue of *The Link* examines how current Jewish educational material stereotypes the Arab people in much the same way that Jews themselves have been negatively stereotyped. The issue also looks at several new organizations within the American Jewish community which are seeking a basis for Arab-Jewish reconciliation.

John F. Mahoney,
Executive Director

was an Arab instrument. Arab architecture inspired the Gothic style. Crusaders learned how to build military fortifications from their Arab antagonists. Arabs introduced oranges, the cotton shrub, the mulberry bush, sugar cane and date palms. And, the Arabs gave the West chivalry and the idea of romantic love.

This report is based on five years of television viewing. Since returning from the American University of Beirut in 1975, I have attempted to document those programs which falsely portray Arabs. At times, members of my immediate family and several university associates assisted, by calling my attention to programs that I did not view. The findings, therefore, are limited in scope and direction, and do not reflect any organized attempt to monitor all programs. Although this report primarily

focuses on prime-time entertainment shows, it also contains some information on news documentaries.

Throughout my research I considered the possibility that the stereotyping of Arabs was the result of a continuing campaign by pressure groups to discredit the Arab, thus preventing the development of American-Arab relations. Perhaps, I thought, television program producers and network executives are not fully aware of the cruel and vicious humor being transmitted. Perhaps they distort and exaggerate because they have little knowledge of the peoples of the Middle East.

Regardless of the reason, the objective of responsible television professionals in a truly open and democratic society would be to eliminate the great wrong they are doing. The false images of the Arab world directly affect the perceptions of all American television viewers.

Today's Arab is straight out of an old Sidney Greenstreet movie. States *Newsweek*: "He is swarthy and bearded,

rich and filthy, dabbling in dope smuggling and white slavery; swaddled in white robes, he carries a curved knife, rides a camel and abuses young boys." "He knows," the magazine observes, "a thousand vile curses such as 'May the fleas of a diseased camel infect the hair of your first born.'"

From the early 1900's to the present, motion pictures provided an image of innocuous exoticism. Producers of early films, such as Thomas Edison, emphasized exotic harems and seductive belly dancers. The early motion picture industry also typed Arabs as camel riders and good fighters.

The creation of the State of Israel, however, brought about a new Arab image in both motion pictures and on television. Today's motion pictures, which eventually appear on television, stress cowardice, terrorism and greed. In "Black Sunday," based on Thomas Harris' novel, Arabs want to blow up the Super Bowl. If successful, thousands of innocent Americans will die, including the President. In "Network," the Saudi Arabians are singled out as mystical media merchants who want to control American television and America.

Today's video Arab attempts to kill his brother, sister or father. He is also the white slaver; an inepet terrorist; an uncivilized ruler who enforces punishment too horrible to mention; and an ugly, spoiled playboy intent on buying up the United States.

At a time when news presentations of Middle East affairs are becoming more balanced, entertainment programs provide an unjustifiable and erroneous portrayal of the Arab. Comedies and dramas contend that Arabs are innately cruel and decadent, that their leaders are either blood-feuding Bedouin or oil-blackmailers and that they spend their free time abducting young virgins from California to sell in "Arabia."

Nearly every other week for the past five years an entertainment show projecting an anti-Arab image has appeared in prime time.

As an American, I am sensitive to the stereotyping of minorities. But because of my Arab heritage I am particularly sensitive to any form of Arab stereotyping. Arabs are often degraded in novels, motion pictures, magazines, school textbooks, comic strips and editorial cartoons. Linguist Noam Chomsky wrote, "The American press is regularly disgraced by racist caricatures of the 'Arab sheiks' who are bent on destroying Western civilization by raising the price of oil."

A \$5.00 voluntary annual subscription is requested to cover cost of postage and handling for *The Link* and Public Affairs Pamphlet series.

"The cartoon Arab," notes Edmund Ghareeb, "is often represented with a mustache or a beard, shadowy jowls, a hook nose, flowing aba and kaf-fiyah, and wearing dark eyeglasses. He goes barefoot and wears sandals, at times carrying a dagger and more recently a kolashnikov. The background is usually a desert with oil rigs, or with a limousine. He is shown with a face that gloats, leers, scowls, or laughs fiendishly."

Comic strip characters mirror Ghareeb's editorial cartoon image. "Broom Hilda," "Lolly," "Short Ribs," "Berry's World," "The Wizard of Id," "Funky Winkerbean," "Dennis the Menace" and "Brenda Starr" are a few of the numerous strips that caricature Arabs and Arab culture—a distortion not endured by other minorities such as Jews, blacks or Hispanics.

The creators of "Brenda Starr" and "Dennis the Menace" failed to answer my letters in which I asked why they were ridiculing Arabs and explained that I now have to hide the comics from my children. Brenda Starr's Sheikh Oily O-Le-Um, who delights in riches and harems, is the sneakiest of sheiks. But on Thanksgiving Day, 1979, my favorite cartoon kid, Dennis, said,

"Dewey's havin' meat loaf. His Dad says some Arab is eatin' THEIR Thanksgivin' Turkey."

William Greider explained in *The Washington Post* that acceptable villains make our troubles manageable. "The search for acceptable villains proceeds," said Greider, "not as an exercise of thought, but more like a muscle spasm, a reflexive jerk caused by the secretion of some unidentified enzyme deep in the human mind."

Television is the dominant communications force in our country. Media scholar Erik Barnouw explains its impact:

Viewers feel that they understand, from television alone, what's going on in the world. They unconsciously look to it for guidance as to what is important, good, and desirable, and what is not. It has tended to displace or overwhelm other influences such as newspapers, school, church, grandma and grandpa. It has become the definer and transmitter of a society's values.

For two million Americans of Arab descent, the belligerent anti-Arab bias is an inescapable fact of daily life. Most minorities have come into their own on the television screen. Blacks have

graduated from their janitorial and servant jobs to become doctors, lawyers and scientists. Latins are no longer seen as Frito Bandito or Chiquita Banana types. The American Indian does not massacre helpless whites. The Oriental no longer acts like the shuffling coolie or barbaric villain. Television, for the most part, has discontinued pejorative characterizations of women and other minorities. Only the Arab has been excluded from television cultural reorientation.

During a televised wrestling match, for example, the announcer emphasized the unsavory character of Akbar the wrestler. "Akbar likes to hear the cracking of bones, and when he makes faces he is ugly, ugly." Akbar, added the announcer, is from Saudi Arabia and is so rich that he wrestles not for money, but for the pleasure he gains from inflicting pain on others. In truth, this scourge of the Middle East is a native Texan. Another "Arab" terror is Abdullah the Butcher, a dirty fighter with pointed shoes who shows no mercy to other wrestlers. Although Abdullah's promoters claim he is an Arab from the Sudan, he is a black from the United States.

Hollywood Creative Force Preserves Ugly Image

Why does this Arab image persist? Understandably, wartime generates stereotypes of the enemy. The Japanese became devious, sadistic creatures, while Italians seemed cowardly. During the cold war, America had its hate-image of Communist China. Today, the People's Republic of China is considered almost an ally. Yet we are not at war, nor have we ever been at war, with Arabs.

I think the ugly Arab image exists in part because few Arab-Americans are members of the creative force in Hollywood where the programs are written and produced.

Ben Stein, in *The View from Sunset Boulevard*, says that writers and producers are the real creative force in television. "They are all white males," he writes. "Almost never younger than thirty-five, the writer tends generally to be Jewish or Italian or Irish."

There are, according to Stein, eight major TV show contractors: Universal, Mary Tyler Moore (MTM), Tandem (TAT), 20th Century Fox, Paramount, Quinn Martin, Spelling/Goldberg and MGM. They provide the three networks with "almost all the creative content of prime-time TV shows."

Yet, Stein contends that television represents the views of only a few hundred people in the western section of Los Angeles who "believe all the things that are being illustrated on television." "It is a highly parochial, idiosyncratic view of the world that comes out on TV screens," he believes.

It appears that TV producers and writers perceive Arabs in an adversary role. As a result, prime-time TV shows fail to project any benevolent feeling about the Arabs. From children's shows to commercials, to prime-time adventure dramas, news documentaries and situa-

tion comedies, television proclaims there are only bad Arabs. Hollywood repeatedly shows Arab men as primitive rulers buying up America and opposing equal rights for women. The entertainment capital also perpetuates the myth that the modern Arab has harems and operates white slavery rings.

To me, this anti-Arab entertainment image influences a great deal. The contempt felt by many Hollywood writers and producers toward Arabs and their culture affects the attitudes of Americans and their political representatives. As the world's leading exporter of television programs, America transmits those sentiments far beyond its borders. The impact of Hollywood's Arab reaches Europe, the Third World, and particularly the Arab states where viewers see the Arab in all his and her stereotyped humanity.

The Seventies Placed Arabs In Harsh Light

As we look more closely at examples of improper characterizations within the last five years, we need to remember certain guidelines for what constitutes responsible handling of the Arabs and their culture. Stereotyping is a human problem which merits a human approach. Perhaps such guidelines are found in the words of former United States Senator James Abourezk. "When I say Arab, think of another minority, think of a Jew, think of a black, think of an Irishman or an Italian." Perhaps then we can better understand the significance of stereotyping that occurred in television's more recent days.

During the 1978-79 season of "Vegas," a sinister sheik was in a hotel with bodyguards who were as inept as they were ugly. Tony Curtis, one of the "Vegas" regulars, threatened to fight with the sheik. Curtis said to his friend, "The last war took only seven days; this one won't last more than a few hours."

In another "Vegas" episode, Cesar Romero told a showgirl, "You as a person mean nothing. But your body and your looks are worth \$25,000 to anybody who likes blonde hair and straight teeth." Romero informed his associate that, "We'll take this girl and the others and leave for the Middle East in our chartered plane." In a "Fantasy Island" episode Romero played an Arab sheik with several wives. His problem: deciding which one to spend the night with.

In another "Fantasy Island" episode, a meek schoolteacher wanted to become an Arab sheik with a harem. Giggling, scatter-brained Arab girls began to grant him all his wishes—but not his college heartthrob who posed as a belly dancer. She was in the harem to save his life because the "real sheik" planned to murder the schoolteacher. The teacher and his sweetheart easily managed to elude the bloodthirsty Arabs, portrayed as unsavory, inept assassins.

Three short-lived series in 1979 were "Whodunnit," "The American Girls" and "Sweepstakes."

Sheik against sheik described the "Whodunnit" episode, "A High Price for Oil," featuring a host of Arab schemers and ruthless oil developers. The good character was a police officer, Lt. Horowitz, who was "unimpressed by Arab royalty." When one Arab character drew his sword, Horowitz said, "Tell

fats to put the toothpick away. This is Beverly Hills, not the desert."

Wealth and sexual appetites were exaggerated. Sheik Khalim, ruler of Mammoonia, struggled to decide which of his four wives to spend the night with. He was anxious; the chosen one must "be prepared and bathed."

He had difficulty obtaining land. "Are you thinking of buying property in Palm Springs?" his aide asked. "No," said the sheik, "I'm thinking of buying Palm Springs."

Khalim purchased five jets: four white ones for his wives, a blue one for his brother. But there was no brotherly love in the mythical kingdom of Mammoonia. His brother, Prince Zaid, killed Sheik Khalim.

In "The American Girls," a group of wealthy, international businessmen bid on young women at an auction. They planned to take them God-knows-where. Only one was identified: the Arab.

In "Sweepstakes" the stereotyping was more subtle. On learning that someone was willing to pay nearly a half million dollars for a piece of property in the United States, the show's hero said, "Who, Arabs?" As we know, the Arabs are always being charged by the media with buying up America,

when in fact the leading investors in the United States, according to columnist Nick Timmesch, are: the Dutch, \$9 billion; the British, \$7.4 billion; the Canadians, \$6.5 billion; the Germans, \$3.2 billion; the Swiss, \$2.7 billion; the Japanese, \$2.6 billion; and the French, \$1.9 billion. "While there are highly publicized cases of individual Arabs flaunting their oil wealth," added Timmesch, "the vast majority of the 100 million Arabs are a poor but emerging people."

The top-rated television series "Charlie's Angels" began the 1977-78 season with two 2-hour specials. One, "Angels on Ice," pitted Arab against Arab. Six dissidents attempted to assassinate their countrymen in a crowded auditorium—a familiar theme. What distinguished this episode from others were the table manners. A group of Arab assassins watched an exotic dance while eating a meal. They used no utensils or napkins, but instead sloppily shoved food into their mouths with their hands and sucked food scraps from their fingers.

"Angels on Ice" also showed the dissidents preparing to use weapons that would kill scores of innocent people in



The American Girls



Police Woman



The Bionic Woman

less than two seconds. In the end, actor Phil Silvers menacingly uttered to one of the captured dissidents, portrayed as bungling fighters: "You ain't so tough... you camel eater!"

In a 1979 "Angels" episode, a star-struck "Arabian" Princess entered an all-women's marathon race. Her father, backward but rich, had just bought Rodeo Drive in Beverly Hills. The princess was progressive, competitive and highly protected, while her father and his bodyguards shed a less-than-favorable light. It was the Angels, not the Arab bodyguards, who rescued the princess from would-be abductors.

Arab women seldom have a television role, usually restricted to bowing and fetching food and drink. They do not even perform an occasional belly dance, provided instead by the show's American heroine. In "Charlie's Angels" and "Bionic Woman" episodes, the stars commanded the attention of the camera and the burning lust of evil-eyed Arabs.

In a two-part story of "The Six Million Dollar Man," Mahmoud, an Arab diplomat, conducted blackmail of the highest order. An indestructible machine called Deathprobe was on its way to an American city where thousands, perhaps millions, of innocent people would be killed. Mahmoud refused to stop Deathprobe unless Steve gave him two nuclear bombs for his small Mideast country.

"The Bionic Woman" also featured a two-part episode on the nuclear theme. All nations were urged not to test atomic weapons because an explosion would set off a bomb that would destroy the world. They all complied with the warning and curtailed testing, except, an Arab leader, who proceeded with an atomic test, thus reinforcing in the notion of social irresponsibility and human insensitivity.

In another episode of "Bionic Woman," Jamie became a harem girl. She then berated a young Arab boy about the status of women in his country, falsely implying that harem life was a normative experience for young, attractive Arab females.

Other series showing Arabs as white slavers were "Police Woman" and "McCloud." Arabs abducted young girls to mythical kingdoms of Ramat and Aramy for enslavement in harems. Unless they submitted to their new masters, one of two things would happen: death or "branding for life."

"Police Woman" exploited the white slavery theme when one good Arab, half-French, tried to stop others from abducting underage American girls to

Ramat. The Arabs had already killed one girl and were in the process of forcing another teen-ager into the arms of a seamy prince. The prince, wearing tinted glasses, awaited his 15-year-old prize in his private helicopter.

In the "McCloud" episode, "Our Man in the Harem," Arabs abducted a beauty contestant, placing her in the nearest bordello in Aramy. McCloud came to the rescue, knocked out four Bedouin types with six solid western know-how punches and rode into the sheik's estate. The sheik, learning his nephew was a heartless white slaver and a man who accepted bribes, decreed, "You are to be beheaded...on the day of my birth."

Justice in the Arab world was usually depicted as a barbaric system. In one "Hawaii Five-O" episode, Prince Rashid's first wife planned to kidnap her ex-husband's second wife. During the abduction Rashid's friend and bodyguard, Ali, was killed. On hearing of Ali's death, Rashid said, "I wish we were in a less civilized country where Ali's death could be avenged—an eye for an eye."

In another "Five-O" show, inept Arab bodyguards sought to protect O.P.E.C. ministers meeting in Hawaii. McGarrett offered his assistance, but the Arabs, though threatened with assassination, were arrogant and aloof. Fortunately, McGarrett considered the bodyguards as bumbling incompetents and took matters into his own hands; the Five-O team, not the bodyguards, saved the ministers' lives.

Both episodes of "Five-O" offered a somewhat balanced portrayal of Arabs. True, some standard myths were perpetuated, but there were good as well as bad Arabs. Yet in a third "Five-O" program, the characters referred to a dog as "Mohammed."

In most television shows, Arabs were busy fighting among themselves. In the absence of harmony or good will there was only hate and murder. This brother-against-brother theme began in "Cannon" and the "Columbo" series. In "Columbo," one of NBC's Mystery Movie series, an Arab emissary was the assassin who killed two emissary associates for political gain. Once in captivity, however, he begged to be tried in the United States. If released to Arab authorities, he said, "a fate worse than death" would await him.

The "Cannon" series made its debut in the early seventies and three of its programs focused on shoddy Arabs. In the 1974-75 season, a young Arab student accused of drug smuggling and murder

was innocent. His friend, an Arab teacher of mathematics, was the culprit. In another episode Arabs kidnapped a young girl. There was one good Arab kidnapper who made it possible for the girl to escape. The others left in disgrace. In yet another "Cannon" episode, the abductors of a Middle East prince demanded a \$5-million ransom. The leader of the kidnappers was a former State Department employee deported from the Middle East because of "shady oil dealings."

Just when it seemed the prince might be killed, his brother, Prince Hassan, appeared. Prince Hassan killed the two kidnappers, including the State Department renegade and went to his brother—not with an embrace but with a gun.

Cannon arrived to stop the violent act: "You kill your brother and we'll send you home to your father, and what he'll do to you I wouldn't even want to think about it."

The "Cannon" episodes discredited Arabs as human beings and revealed several anti-Arab myths. One episode suggested the State Department was as corrupt as the Arabs (keynoted in the "McCloud" program, "Harem"). Television Arabs resembled vengeful rogues who kill friends, brothers or sons for material, political or spiritual gain.

Another series of the mid-seventies was "Medical Center," produced by Frank Glicksman, also responsible for the new 1979 series, "Trapper John, M.D." In one "Medical Center" program, the wealthy son of an Arab potentate fell in love with Esther, a Jewish widow. Esther, imbued with courage, struggled to support her young son by running a kosher deli. In contrast, Pete Rashid was TV's rich, spoiled Arab who acted irresponsibly.

When Rashid was in the hospital, Dr. Gannon jokingly said, "When you're on your feet you can buy me a hospital." Soon afterwards Gannon's associate observed, "Some lunatic wants to buy the Medical Center so he can give it away as a gift." Unable to buy the hospital, Rashid purchased Gannon's apartment building and had the doctor's apartment refurbished. Dr. Gannon was not impressed. "While you're at it why don't you hit me with my own private gas pump?" Rashid responded: "They told you? It was supposed to be a surprise."

Rashid's father appeared on the scene; he was obnoxious and prejudiced. When he learned that his son wished to marry Esther, he said, "Love? With a Jewess? What does love have to do with honor, duty, Allah?" He turned away from

Rashid, telling his bodyguards, "My son is a fool; we will take the necessary steps." Eventually, love conquered hate and the program ended on a happy note. This same theme about Arab riches and backward behavior reappeared in a "Trapper John, M.D." episode.

In the late seventies, "Wonder Woman" and "The Feather and Father Gang," portrayed Arabs as money-mad playboys and belittled Islam as a religion. In "Wonder Woman," a miserly Arab businessman schemed to raise oil prices to underwrite an even more diabolic plot—cornering the world's gold market. Not only was the businessman crooked, he was also brainless: the fact that his Caucasian cohort intended to bilk him was obvious to everyone but the Arab.

The leading performers of "Feather and Father" posed as Arabs in flowing robes. Entering a room, they uttered garbled, outrageous noises as they bowed their bodies to and fro—supposedly imitating the chanting prayers of Muslims. To some viewers, the scene seemed an amusing form of sacrilege, but it was still profane. Television has frequently stereotyped Islam as unmitigatedly harsh in its code of justice, repressive toward women, and incompatible with modern society.

A high school teacher with super-human powers headlined in the 1977 NBC-TV program, "The Man With the Power." The teacher's powers came, literally, from the blink of an eye. He managed to save an Arabian prince from kidnapers, who conspired with Princess Siri's Arab bodyguards. Eventually, the bodyguards met a fate "too terrible to talk about." The episode concluded with Princess Siri apologizing for the irresponsible behavior of her fellow Arabs. Now westernized, she boasted, "I can do the funky chicken."

In a M*A*S*H episode, the treatment was more subtle. An Arab word meaning love took on a unique meaning. As actor Jamie Farr led an imaginary camel around the base, he kept referring to the animal as habebe (loved one). When Farr went to the mess hall, he returned with two plates. At one point, Farr abruptly stopped, scolded his habebe, and began cleaning up imaginary camel dung.

Syndicated programs such as "To Tell the Truth," "The Gong Show," "The Merv Griffin Show" and "The Phil Donahue Show" have at times undercut the Arab. Panelist Peggy Cass, during a "To Tell the Truth" show, accused Arabs

of illegally occupying space on American Indian reservations in order to sell jewelry. After an awkward pause, the panelist retracted the statement. A "Gong Show" contestant, who ridiculed Arabs, won the best performance award.

Merv Griffin, on returning from the Middle East, said he would always treasure his 45-minute bath in Tel Aviv. He had never felt so dirty in all his life when he was with Bedouin in the Arabian desert.

On the Donahue show, guest Ayn Rand made extremely offensive remarks about the Arab people. She also said, "Israel is the only shining light in the Middle East." The National Association of Arab-Americans sought to provide me with a transcript of the Rand remarks so I could apply for equal opportunity to the Federal Communications Commission. The N.A.A.A. sent a \$3 check, the standard cost of a Donahue transcript. Multimedia, the show's production company, returned the check with the following reply: "Transcript for Ayn Rand not available."

Stereotyping also occurred in television commercials. A recent TV ad for *Life* magazine featured a number of slick photographs, including a group of uniformed Palestinians grasping automatic weapons. *Life* promised to "show Palestinian terrorists" to its readers.

In a TV spot for Frigidaire, a fat, robbed sheik casually ordered 150 new refrigerators for his 75 wives. The script was provocative:

Sheik: Your finest refrigerator, please.

Salesman: (walks over to some Frigidaire refrigerators and describes their excellent features)

Sheik: (enthusiastically) I'll take 150 for my wives.

Salesman: You have 150 wives?

Sheik: Only 75, but they get very thirsty.

Although this commercial received initial approval by the three networks, former Vice President of Program Practices at CBS-TV, Van Gordon Sauter, refused to allow additional airings of the Frigidaire spot. At his direction, CBS yanked the commercial. Frigidaire executives, however, did not respond to my letter requesting an explanation for their sheik/harem commercial.

Some companies are more sensitive to the stereotyping problem. When I wrote to Volkswagen of America, Inc. to express my concern about VW's "sheik" commercial which showed Arabs in an unethical and prejudicial manner,

I received a prompt reply from John Slaven, Manager of Advertising. Slaven said, "It is our intention to sell cars through advertising and hopefully not to offend people in the process, as we have obviously done in your case. Please accept my personal apologies for having done so, and I hope that our response will be viewed by you in a positive way."

Telecast by the three major networks, the "sheik" commercial showed bearded, robed and mysterious-looking Arabs with dark glasses snapping their fingers at veiled women. The sheiks were very upset because of the Rabbit Diesel; it did not use gas so their "entire community is in jeopardy."

Henry Weinhardt Winery of Washington State, in a TV spot aired in the San Francisco area, showed a greedy Arab at an auction of Weinhardt's rare wine. An attractive, young, blonde woman accompanied the Arab. On discovering the bidding had closed, the robed Arab shouted, "I bid \$400." Silence. Then with a cynical smile, the auctioneer said, "The bidding is closed." After seeing this ad, my friend, an American-Arab businessman in the Bay Area, called San Francisco's ABC's affiliated TV station and complained. The ad was taken off the air.

The J. Walter Thompson agency produces nutritional ads for "Captain Kangaroo," a show with millions of regular young viewers. The Thompson Agency created a spot for tooth care by developing an animated Arab rascal who acts as tooth decay. Fortunately, Donn O'Brien, Vice President of Program Practices at CBS-TV, rejected the Thompson spot.

Young people age 12 to 18 spend one-fifth of their waking hours watching TV; by the time of graduation the average high school senior will have spent 12,000 hours in the classroom and 15,000 hours in front of the TV set. "Many children develop well-formed attitudes about ethnic groups," writes Dr. Carlos Cortes, "including prejudices and stereotypes by the time they reach school."

Several cartoon series slandered the Arabs: "Woody Woodpecker," "Bullwinkle," "Johnny Quest," "The Little Drummer Boy," and Public Television's "Electric Company."

"Woody" included an Arab dancing girl, pursued by an Arab sheik who appeared from the hump of a camel. Sheik El Rauncho snatched the dancer, but Woody came to the rescue, gave the sheik a good beating, and marched off with the heroine.

In "Bullwinkle," Sheik Faraut handed out wristwatches to his friends. His generosity was deceptive. The watches, warned Bullwinkle, will explode. Not so, said his buddies, who tossed the watches in the air. They exploded, failing, fortunately, to hurt anyone—only the credibility of the sheik.

In "Johnny Quest," a modern, urbanized Arab dignitary made friends with Johnny and his pals. All was well until the dignitary decided to doublecross his American friends in the name of Arab unity. He viciously attempted to dispose of them with

dent for Research, recently responded to my current note saying, "I believe I understand the basis for your criticism, but, after screening a couple of segments that contain Spellbinder, have come to a somewhat different conclusion."

Palmer continued, wondering "how this character as you interpreted him could have survived this long the scrutiny of our own ethnically diverse staff and advisers." Palmer contended that Spellbinder is simply a magician. "I do not say your observations should be ignored," he added. "The series is in its third year of reruns, however, and no

The popular "Sha Na Na" displayed the "Arab as female sheik" theme. Oil wells, diamonds, harems and fast camels dominated the sound, "Ahab the Arab." A female sheik tempted her male admirers, who expressed love-sickness by making sounds while perched atop fake camels.

One "Johnny Carson Show" featured Joan Rivers, an excellent comedienne. She was not very soul-searching this particular night. Upset because Arabs had purchased a Beverly Hills club where she once worked, Rivers implied the whole world was under their control. Concerning Arab fashions, she told viewers, "I'm not sure if it's the wife or the husband because they're all in bedsheets."

On CBS's "One Day at a Time," a popular comedy series, the two teen-age daughters of Ann Romano, a liberated divorcee, were shocked to learn that their dates were not taking them to a fast-food restaurant. One daughter chided her boyfriend, "What'd you do, mug an Arab?" In another episode, a group of young Americans protested the arrival of an Arab at an airport. The protest was conducted by one of the show's leading actresses. She was convinced that Arabs in general, and this Arab businessman in particular, are not only trying to buy up the country but also were responsible for inflation and world chaos. The Arab businessman was perceived as a male chauvinist because he refused to let Ms. Romano handle his promotional campaign.

"One Day at a Time" is a production of Norman Lear, considered to be television's great liberal thinker. Mr. Lear is also responsible for the "All That Glitters" series that featured the ugliest, most overstuffed female Arab buffoon I have ever seen. Lear also produced "Forever Fernwood," containing an Arab sheik who wanted "to buy a piece of Ohio" and who operated with members of the Mafia from the trunk of a car. Islam was "just a slice past the wrist," said an actor in "Fernwood." "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth."

Television series also imply that Arab men are unable to love their own women. It is further implied that Western women are not attracted to Arab men. From the films of Rudolph Valentino onward, Western women always rejected Arabs. In "The Sheik" and "Son of the Sheik," the women never really succumbed to Valentino's charm—not until he removed his flowing robes. Then they discovered the sheik was an Englishman.

One of my favorite shows is the "Rock-



One Day At A Time

several poisonous snakes. Due to his own ineptness, he failed.

"The Little Drummer Boy," a Christmas special televised each year, featured an oversized, unsympathetic scoundrel in typical Arab clothing, who continually exploited the show's protagonist, a poor innocent drummer boy wearing a yarmulke.

The vigorous hero of "Electric Company," Letterman, constantly righted the wrongs of Spellbinder, a short grubby-looking character resembling an Arab with Indian features. The music was middle eastern and the costuming and animation suggested that Spellbinder was an Oriental troublemaker. Although his mischievous deeds appeared harmless (he was always doing the *wrong* thing), his constant teasing and naughty behavior served to perpetuate a racist notion for millions of children.

My initial letter to the Children's Television Workshop, written a few years ago, was not answered. Dr. Edward Palmer, CTW's Vice Presi-

dent for Research, recently responded to my current note saying, "I believe I understand the basis for your criticism, but, after screening a couple of segments that contain Spellbinder, have come to a somewhat different conclusion."

Palmer continued, wondering "how this character as you interpreted him could have survived this long the scrutiny of our own ethnically diverse staff and advisers." Palmer contended that Spellbinder is simply a magician. "I do not say your observations should be ignored," he added. "The series is in its third year of reruns, however, and no review or renewal of its elements is planned within the foreseeable future... the stations in the Public Broadcast System have purchased the rights for continued airing of the series."

Even though "Electric Company" is in reruns, some positive steps should be immediately taken. CTW should proceed to conduct research on the character of Spellbinder. Discussions with staff members should be supplemented by selected sampling of viewers. Should the data and discussions indicate that there is racism, Spellbinder's segments could then be edited out of the series. Two evening programs for young children, "Sha Na Na" and "Hardy Boys" offered contrasting images. "Hardy Boys" depicted Egyptians in a fair manner—though there were more bad Egyptians than good ones. The episode was set in Cairo and the boys encountered forgers intent on making a fast million or two. Fortunately, an Egyptian police official helped them in capturing the scoundrels.



Alice

ford Files." Not long ago an episode featured a beautiful woman working with Rockford. She was an Egyptian—that is, she pretended to be an Egyptian. Usually attracted to his female clients, Rockford never falls for a lovely Arab.

Another "Rockford Files" focused on an American security guard who killed an Arab student. The guard begged Rockford, "Don't let them take me over there. They'll chop off my head and put it on a pole." In a third "Rockford" episode, an Arab sheik ordered his son to kill his sister. He sought the death of his own daughter, Princess Khedra, because the code of the desert demanded her death. Khedra allegedly "brought shame to the family household" as she slept with another man. Rockford was aghast. "Families are supposed to stick together," he said.

Remember the "Tarzan" series? Produced nearly fifteen years ago, one program portrayed Arabs killing black women and men. I thank my son, Michael, for calling my attention to "Tarzan." He was watching TV one morning and called me, saying, "Daddy, Daddy, they've got some bad Arabs." The *Louisville Courier-Journal's Sunday Magazine* reported that in "Tarzan" "white women are constantly carried off by villains—savages, great apes and Arabs!" This primitive theme of Arabs exploiting and killing blacks and seducing virgins continued in the 1979 Warner Bros. motion picture, "Ashanti." The currently popular "CHiPS"

showed an Arab playboy, in America to learn highway police techniques, speeding nonchalantly in his flashy sports car. He showed no respect for the law and little concern for the safety of others. When confronted by police officers, he unsuccessfully attempted to bribe them. On learning that money can't buy justice, he began to understand the importance of law enforcement. The final scene suggested that when the playboy returned to his country, where he would be in charge of the traffic division, all speeding offenders, regardless of their financial status, would be ticketed.

Although "Hunter" and the "Sonny and Cher Show" have been off the air for a few years, and "Get Smart" is in reruns, it's worth remembering how those programs treated Arabs. In "Hunter," Arab assassins were easily defeated by the series star, James Franciscus. A "Sonny and Cher" cast sang "This Land is My Land" while standing on a map of the United States. Suddenly, out of the shadows, Arabs appeared. Instead of joining in the song-along, they sneaked off with selected states. In "Get Smart," an Arab prince with 33 wives presented himself as a bumbling idiot, whose diet consisted of "camel's ears boiled in goat's milk." In order to prevent Arabs from assassinating the Prince, Agent 99 and Maxwell Smart received help from an Israeli agent.

The situation-comedy series "Alice" reflected the range of false images on entertainment programs. One episode

depicted an Arab oil baron who:

1. Had three wives but sought to make Flo, an American waitress, his fourth, because "in my country red hair is considered hot stuff."
2. Would take his bride-to-be and all her friends to his country in his modest 747.
3. "Is one of those Arabs who is buying off the whole country."
4. Complained that he had a terrible experience at the gas station; he filled up his tank and had to pay too much for the gas.
5. Quoted his wise father who, among other things, said: "A man with no friends must dance with his camel."

When Flo discovered the Arab had other wives, she abruptly threw his \$100,000 engagement ring into a bowl of couscous, after boasting "I'm rich enough to eat with my fingers." Perhaps television's most shallow handling of Arabs occurred in "The Pirate." On learning that producer Howard Koch would be responsible for the adaptation of the Harold Robbins' book, I wrote to him offering my services as an academic adviser. Production companies actively seek out experts when filming controversial programs. Weeks later, Koch's secretary wrote, saying my assistance would not be necessary; there was no explanation offered.

"The Pirate" ignored the reality of the political structure of Lebanon (there is supposed to be a "king of the Lebanon and sole ruler"). Beirut's airport was shown not as an ultra-modern facility but as an isolated airstrip, occupied by camels and Bedouin. More shocking, however, was the repetitious characterization of the Israelis as civilized and just, in contrast to the primitive and corrupt image of Palestinians. "The Pirate" concluded with the final destruction wreaked by the Israelis on a Palestinian-populated village. Koch contended it is a morally correct act of Israeli daring.

Again Arabs were maligned. A sheik threatened to have his American wife stoned to death unless she obeyed his will. The sheik's daughter kidnapped her half-brother and step-mother and turned them over to the Palestinians. Subsequently, a Palestinian leader raped the sheik's wife; he then tried to kill the son and daughter. The only missing items in "The Pirate," wrote *TV Guide* critic Judith Christ, "are credibility, taste and the kitchen sink."

Another good example of propaganda disguised as entertainment was "Evening in Byzantium," a four-hour television special, based on Irwin Shaw's book. TV

writers Michael Sloan and Glen Larson adapted the Shaw book. Mr. Larson has worked on several television series. In some shows, notably "Six Million Dollar Man," "Quincy," and "Switch," he offered balanced views of Arabs. In "Six Million Dollar Man," an Israeli and Arab pilot, initially seen as spoiled, nationalistic enemies, became friends. "Switch" created an Arab intelligence agent—modern, bright and sought after by the series star, Robert Wagner. To my knowledge, Larson's female agent was the first and only time an Arab woman had been portrayed in an appealing manner.

Because of Larson's established fairness, I was interested to see how he would adapt Shaw's "Byzantium." The book was a touching love story about an older man in love with a younger woman. Shaw did not mention Arabs.

However, the television special revealed ugly Arabs and Arab terrorism.

York and Washington, D.C. Fortunately they were stopped in the nick of time.

As propaganda, "Byzantium" sustained the TV image of Arabs as blackmailers, terrorists and oil-rich desert sheiks without integrity.

At the time of this writing, early January 1980, the 1979-80 television season already typecast Arabs in several prime-time dramas and comedies. The stereotyping, with few exceptions, was more subtle but still present. Aaron Spelling's and Leonard Goldberg's new series, "Hart to Hart," debuted with an episode that focused on an international card game that took place in a large hangar in the middle of a desert. One of the gamblers, an Arab sheik, was silent during the shuffles. Abruptly, Jennifer Hart rushed into the gambling room, saying they couldn't leave the desert because their plane's gas tank was empty. The sheik told his bodyguard, "Fill it up." Jonathan Hart nodded,

Billie was silent. The conversation switched to another topic.

In an otherwise outstanding television special, "The Kid From Left Field," Arabs were again slighted. The team's manager, intent on raising money and desperate for funds, said, "I wonder if the Arabs like baseball." The original version of "Left Field," in 1953, did not mention Arabs.

"Archie Bunker's Place" is a Norman Lear production. The quoted material that follows may not be exact. I did not have a tape recorder, nor did I receive a transcript. Yet I believe this synopsis is an honest reflection of the program. The theme was the energy crisis and when Archie approached his bar, he noticed everyone bundled in warm clothing. Upset, he decided to turn up the thermostat. His partner said no, they must save energy. "Well," sighed Archie, "it's the Arab's fault anyway." He told a few jokes, "Did you know a man discovered a pill, that when you put it in your gas tank your car will go 500 miles?" "What happened to him?" asked the men. "The Arabs bought him and he's livin' high in the Saudi Arabia," said Archie. Archie then explained that another inventor came out with even a greater product. "What happened to him?" said the men. "Nothing, the Arabs killed him," sighed Archie.

In a "Charlie's Angels" episode this season, producers Spelling/Goldberg repeated the Arab-as-white-slaver theme. An American professor and his associates kidnapped beautiful sorority girls for sheiks who were "willing to pay millions."

The December 8, 1979, telecast of "Saturday Night Live" presented a sitcom spoof on Arabs, based on the 1960's series "The Beverly Hillbillies." The original hillbillies were lovable, innocent country folk, while in "Saturday Night," "The Bel-Airabs" were paranoid, treacherous camel drivers.

The segment began with the "Hillbillies" theme music; the words are changed:

Come and listen to my story 'bout a man named Abdul,
A poor Bedouin barely kept his family fed.

And then one day he was shootin' at some Jews,

And up through the sand came a bubblin' crude.

Oil that is,
Persian Perrier,
Kuwait Kool-aid,
Saudi Sodie.



Archie Bunker's Place

Larson's "Byzantium" maintained TV's depiction of the P.L.O. in the form of a terrorist group called the P.L.F. And while Shaw's work was a book about love, Larson's TV special was about Arab terror. Three heavies with swine-like features portrayed three sheiks. The Arabs have never looked worse to the more than 30 million viewers.

"Evening in Byzantium" concluded by showing the P.L.F. murdering scores of innocent people in a Cannes movie theatre. They killed hundreds of airplane passengers en route to the United States. They also planned to drop nuclear bombs on Los Angeles. New

smiled, and departed with Jennifer.

On "WKRP in Cincinnati," one of the regular players dressed like an Arab sheik. He appeared briefly, then left saying that he wanted everyone to say he's rich. He also sought to have people come to him for oil. But he will not give them any—oil or money.

A detective on "Lou Grant" guarding Billie saw some Arabs in a television news story on the Middle East. He became furious, "It's our oil," he shouted. Billie responded, "Our oil?" "We drilled it," stated the detective, "it was our technology. If it weren't for us they'd still be riding camels over there."

The spoof centered on an Arab family living in the exclusive Bel-Aire area. Despite their new-found wealth, Abdul, the father, and Mudhat, the son, held fast to TV's view of Islamic customs. Two unscrupulous Americans, who wouldn't fool a ten-year-old, attempted to swindle Abdul and Mudhat.

Another American arrived, denounced the culprits, and wanted to call the police. The Arabs refused, however. They delivered the justice of the desert: one hand was removed from each swindler.



Charlie's Angels

An Arab Granny, present throughout, wore a chador and jumped and jabbered meaningless syllables.

I wrote Bettye King Hoffman, Vice President, Program Information Resources, NBC, expressing my concern about the "Bel-Airabs." Ms. Hoffman promptly responded explaining:

I hope you will bear in mind that during the years this program has been on the air, just about everyone and everything has been satirized. If you have watched the program, you know that the satire and humor, while irreverent, is not malicious.

A "Trapper John, M.D." episode, telecast on December 23, 1979, underscored GONZO's problems with Arabs. The CBS promo stated, "Gonzo's lifesaving scalpel produces an unexpected reward from his grateful patient, the wealthy sheik's beautiful daughter." "Both Gonzo and the westernized girl, Aliya," stated the promo, "strongly object to the sheik's marriage plan for

them, but when they so inform the sheik, he decrees that Aliya shall be banished to the loneliness of her homeland."

This "Trapper John, M.D." episode, initially scheduled to be telecast in early November 1979, was pre-empted by a special CBS News Report on Teddy Kennedy. I wrote three letters to the network's Office of Program Practices expressing my concern about the possible false portrayal of Arabs and requested that I be given the opportunity to screen the episode before it was re-scheduled. I

did not receive a response.

The sheik in "Trapper John, M.D." had a hospital room resembling a page out of the *Arabian Nights*, complete with Arab musicians and belly dancer. Like Rashid in "Medical Center," the sheik offered Gonzo a harem, his own hospital, or the state of Pennsylvania. Gonzo refused. He did, however, accept the sheik's half-million dollar donation to the hospital fund.

But, the sheik insisted, Gonzo must have something personal for himself. "A man like that needs more than his work," noted the sheik. When Gonzo opened the door to his trailer he was immediately confronted with the sheik's gift — Princess Aliya. "My father, the sheik, has sent me here, I am yours," she purred. "My what?" gulped the astonished Gonzo. "Your wife, maidservant, slave, whatever you wish...your will is my will." The scantily clad Aliya started to undress Gonzo. Shocked, he ordered her to "catch the 10 o'clock camel and go home."

Aliya refused, explaining that, "I don't dig this any more than you do, Doc. I was born over there but I've been going to school over here since I was ten. My father is the product of another world; he's still living in another time. New ideas can be very painful to him or anyone around him."

She feared that, unless she married Gonzo, her father would send her back "over there" where she would have one of two jobs—"sweeping up camel dung" or "working on a pipeline." Eventually Gonzo convinced the sheik to let the liberated and westernized Aliya marry the man of her choice. The sheik gave his blessings and the episode concluded with the Arabs departing in an over-stuffed white Cadillac.

When I wrote to producer Frank Glicksman in 1977 concerning the "Medical Center" episode, he failed to answer. Most TV program producers have not responded to inquiries related to the stereotyping of Arabs. Research assistant Joanne Myler and I have received only four responses to the more than 50 letters sent to producers.

The co-ordinator for Spelling/Goldberg Production, J. Bret Garwood, however, did respond, indicating such stereotyping was not taking place on "Charlie's Angels." Commenting on ethnic images of other minorities and on Arab oil money, Garwood said, "First of all, let me say that our production company does not knowingly engage in any slurring of any racial or ethnic group. You cite our 'Charlie's Angels' episode, 'Angels on Ice,' as presenting an unfair and biased image of Arabs. Apparently you overlooked the fact that both 'good' and 'bad' Arabs were going to be assassinated." I assume the "good" Arabs were the ones who never spoke.

Garwood's next statement was of interest: "The fact that the terrorists were Arabs seemed logical in as much as Middle Eastern terrorists have made newspaper headlines around the world in the last few years."

Garwood explained that "attitudes do not change over night. The Irish and the Italians faced the problem of ethnic slurring...other groups such as blacks, Poles, Southern Whites and Puerto Ricans are still struggling upward to this level of acceptance."

He concluded his letter: "Within the next few years, many Arab countries will rise to a position of financial power, derived from the sale of oil. It is hoped that some of these surplus funds will be used for humanitarian purposes throughout the world."

Few News Programs Showed Evenhandedness

Television news presentations of Middle East affairs are gradually becoming more balanced in tone and treatment. During the early and mid-70's, however, news documentaries offered selective overviews of Arab life and culture.

Some broadcast journalists may have run the risk of being ideologically seduced on VIP tours arranged and financed by Israeli lobbies. In 1974, for example, the Zionist Federation advertised a media tour of Israel for editors and writers in *Broadcasting*, the trade magazine for media managers and broadcast journalists:

A limited number of TV and Radio News and Program Directors and Commentators will be accepted as participants in a ten-day subsidized communications media tour...at the all inclusive cost of \$331. Participants will have the opportunity for an in-depth study tour; meet personally with their counter-parts of the country in the aftermath of the October war.

In a "60 Minutes" segment, the same year, CBS correspondent Mike Wallace discussed the Israeli propaganda effort in the United States. Wallace said, "For a quarter century, the Israelis have had it pretty much their own way in the propaganda war." He also said that Jewish leaders were on "a first-name basis with major columnists and commentators." Wallace contended that the Arab effort has had little, if any impact.

It was Mike Wallace who stood up against pressure from some Jewish leaders associated with the American Zionist Federation. In another "60 Minutes" segment, Wallace reported that the Jews of Syria were being treated fairly.

CBS received numerous complaints from the Jewish community; they believed Wallace was not telling the truth. Mike Wallace returned to Syria and did a follow-up for "60 Minutes" on the conditions of Jews in Syria. He emphasized there was little, if any, discrimination in Syria. Moreover, he spoke about the harassment he received from Zionists in his earlier report.

In the 1977 "60 Minutes" segment "The Arabs are Coming, The Arabs are Coming," correspondent Morely Safer staged an event. The segment began

with Safer in the back seat of a Rolls Royce. Next to Safer was an actor playing the part of a sheik. When the Rolls Royce pulled up in front of the hotel, the actor-driver turned to the actor-sheik and asked, "What shall I do with the car, sir?" Responded the actor-sheik, "Keep it." The scene does not appear in the CBS transcript I received.

Safer interviewed an Arab who was gambling, then said: "They (the Arabs) are rarely interviewed, because it seems that the Arabs are a reserved, formal, stiff-upper-lip kind of people."

The 1974 CBS documentary, "The Palestinians," received acclaim as excellent broadcast journalism. Yet CBS correspondent Bill McLaughlin implied throughout the documentary that all Palestinians were terrorists, saying "They can, believe me, say violent things.... They were raised to die for Palestine." McLaughlin continued, "Many of the guerrillas are too young to die for Palestine, but their parents fill in the blanks adding more color as the years pass.... All the guerrillas have in common is a claim to the same land and a readiness to shake hands with the devil if he'd show them the way home."

In the 1975 CBS Special Report, "Death of a King: What Changes for the Arab World?," correspondents Marvin Kalb and Bill McLaughlin reported on the assassination of King Faisal. Marvin Kalb said that a plot against Faisal was possible, because, when he was in Riyadh with Dr. Kissinger, he saw lots of people with "shifty eyes" and "heard about" plots. But Kalb never told viewers any more about what kind of plotting or his source of information. If we are to judge events in Saudi Arabia based on "heard about" and "shifty eyes," then we will surely be misled.

In July, 1976, the St. Louis public television station, KETC-TV, telecast "Dateline Israel with Arnold Forster." But local newspapers, *TV Guide*, and KETC-TV's *Guide* listed the show under the heading, "Documentary Theatre; Palestinians and the P.L.O." Readers assumed, from the title and the descriptions, that the documentary would present a balanced point of view.

It did not. "Dateline Israel," produced by the Anti-Defamation League, was a one-sided presentation by the Israeli Am-

bassador to the United Nations. The Ambassador referred to all Palestinians as terrorists, while viewers saw selected film clips of bombings and killings. No Arab spokesman appeared to express views on living in occupied Palestine.

After writing to KETC-TV, the Federal Communications Commission, Public Broadcasting Service and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, I and Dr. Clovis Maksoud were given an opportunity to respond. We appeared in a public affairs program on the station in March 1977—nine months after the telecast of "Dateline Israel." The reason for granting us air time was that the station was in violation of the Fairness Doctrine, which states that both sides of a controversial issue should be expressed.

ABC-TV's 1978 documentary, "Terror in the Promised Land," marked a drastic change in network policy. No sponsors supported the telecast. Yet for the first time viewers witnessed a probing, sensitive exploration of the Palestinians. Producer/Director Malcolm Clarke received strong criticism from some members of the press for showing Palestinians as people—not terrorists. *Saturday Review* TV critic, Karl Meyer, felt that only Palestinians, not Israelis, were men intent on killing scores of innocent people. His article was titled, "Supping With the Devil."

A "20/20" telecast in 1978 showed Americans and Arabs having a great time doing the Oriental dance. Host Hugh Downs pointed out that belly dancing, an art, should be referred to as Oriental dancing, practiced by more than a million American women. The telecast recorded the practice-study visit to Cairo by women from nearly every corner of the United States. For the first time on television I saw Americans and Arabs laughing and dancing together. There was respect for one another and when the American dancers performed, the Egyptians were enthralled.

The segment concluded with reporter Thomas Hoving saying, "It's hard to imagine that the bad image of the stereotype of the Oriental dancer in the West will quickly disappear. But the ever-increasing popularity of the form makes it equally difficult to believe it won't be eclipsed."

Recently, in December 1979, "20/20" took a more serious view of the Arab

world and examined events in southern Lebanon. The segment focused on Lebanese Major Haddad and his Israeli sympathizers. No attempt was made to speak with the average Lebanese or the Palestinians. Viewers heard instead the one-sided views of Haddad and the Israelis.

A special NBC News White Paper, "No More Vietnam's...But," examined America's need for foreign oil and the possibility of military intervention in oil-producing nations. The report illustrated the attempt of Arab nations in the Gulf to manage their limited supply of oil.

Correspondents Edwin Newman and Garrick Utley offered an overview of unstable political conditions in certain

Gulf nations. Arab leaders spoke out about energy and politics. It was a well-balanced and carefully researched documentary.

On February 21, 1979, correspondent David Brinkley, in the NBC Nightly Newscast, told viewers: "...the United Nations Human Rights Commission (in Geneva) voted to condemn Israel for placing settlements in the occupied territories and destroying homes of Arab terrorists..." In point of fact, the U.N. Commission condemned Israel for "destruction and demolition of Arab houses."

President of NBC's News Division, Lester Crystal, defended Mr. Brinkley, in response to my communication: "I think the problem here is one of over-

condensation, which is a burden we carry in television news because of the small amount of time we have." Crystal added: "This has been passed on to the people involved, and we appreciate your bringing it to our attention."

The primary purpose of the television documentary is to offer a balanced view of complex issues. Arabs and Arab nations have not received a fair deal in most documentaries. Even some news programs distort the Arab image. In November, 1979, an advertisement appeared in the *Los Angeles Times* for KABC-TV's five-part "News Close-Up" series on the energy problem. Pictured were desert Arabs perched on top of an American flag, covered with splashes of oil.

Media Criticism, Self-Regulation Fails to Consider Arab Image

Sadly, government reports and scholarly works carry no comment regarding misleading portrayals of Arabs on television. The United States Commission on Civil Rights recently updated its controversial report, centered on Asians, Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, black Americans, American Indians and women. When I asked why Arabs were not included in this report, the project director responded, "They do not appear frequently enough to be countable in studies." Just recently I wrote another letter to the Chairman of the Commission, Mr. Arthur Flemming, and requested information concerning the fact that Arab stereotypes were not discussed in the Commission's revised study. Mr. Flemming has not yet responded.

The authors of *Stereotypes, Distortions and Omissions in the U.S. Books*, published by the Council on Interracial Books for Children, Inc., had access to an "unfinished work by the United States Civil Rights Commission." This work sought to "identify stereotypes, distortions, and omissions in history textbooks." The text, like the Commission's report on television, provides excellent guides to sexist and racist stereotypes of women, black Americans, Asians, Mexicans, American Indians and Puerto Ricans. "We seek for ourselves and our readers," say the authors, "to stimulate thought about, and engender

respect for, the experiences, viewpoints and aspirations of third world people and women throughout history—and today." Regrettably, discussion of Arab stereotypes was not included in the book.

American films have always had a special relationship to American ethnicity. Randall Miller's new book, *The Kaleidoscopic Lens: Ethnic Images in American Film*, reveals "how the movies gave immigrants a view of what one had to do to be 'American' and, in turn, how other Americans came to view these ethnic groups." The book focuses on nine different ethnic groups in American life—blacks, Asians, American Indians, Hispanics, Irish, Italians, Germans, Jews, and Slavs—and the portrayal of these ethnic groups in American motion pictures.

Miller's analysis of ethnic images in film is an important contribution to ethnic studies. It is also a valuable step in making one more aware of prejudicial screen images. But there is a glaring omission. Like the Civil Rights Commission's report on TV stereotypes and the Interracial study on stereotypes in children's books, the Arab is not discussed.

Initial correspondence with network censors and TV producers brought discouraging results. Asked why Arab stereotypes exist, Jerome H. Stanley of NBC said, "If you have observed

negative stereotyping of Arabs on television, you have the advantage over us, inasmuch as we have never been contacted by any Arabian or Arab-American organization to set forth for our edification examples of such stereotyping." (On my recommendation executives of the National Association of Arab-Americans met with network officials in January 1979. I later met personally with representatives from NBC and CBS).

Julie T. Hoover of ABC said that "any negative stereotyping of a minority group on television may have the effect of reinforcing prejudice and is, therefore, potentially damaging to an image of a group." Hoover denied, however, that there is a false image of Arabs on ABC. The network's attorney Larry M. Loeb agreed with Hoover. Recently he told me that he disagreed with my suggestion that ABC has unfavorably characterized Arabs in general. ABC's policies prohibit the slandering "of any individual or group on the basis of age, color, national origin, race, religion or sex," wrote Loeb.

CBS executive Van Gordon Sauter explained that Arab stereotypes on TV exist because "The Arab world is considered dramatic and mysterious (an illusion heightened by years of misrepresentation of one form or another in all the mass media), and thus is drawn upon for fictional source material."

Despite Stanley's, Loeb's and Hoover's denials and Sauter's expression of concern, many nationally-produced entertainment programs continued to single out the Arab as either the arch-convict with excessive wealth or the terrorist.

In the fall and winter of 1979, I met with Donn O'Brien, Vice-President, Program Practices, CBS, and Bettye King Hoffman, Vice-President, Program Information Resources, NBC, to discuss the Arab TV image. I asked Mr. O'Brien if he had ever seen a good Arab on television. He replied, "No." Nor could he offer an explanation for Arab stereotyping. He agreed, however, that television's Arabs are shown as belligerent warmongers and covetous desert rulers. Both Hoffman and O'Brien were concerned and receptive to the problem. Yet, as witnessed in the stereotyping of Arabs in the 1979-80 TV season, their sincerity and awareness cannot guarantee a fair and honest portrayal.

Producer-director Buzz Kulik said, "I think...every show we do, whether it's fiction or nonfiction, has some political meaning." As the world's leading exporter of television programs, America produces extremely influential messages. Although the power of any single TV production to influence is

limited, constant repetition of stereotypes is overpowering. The images not only effect concepts of national identity, but may also manipulate attitudes about national policy.

In spite of the distorted TV image, I hope for more accuracy in the future. As stated in NBC's Broadcast Standards for television:

Television is a home medium designed to appeal to audiences of diverse tastes and interests. Television programs should reflect a wide range of roles for all people and should endeavor to depict men, women and children in a positive manner, keeping in mind always the importance of dignity to every human being.

Herminio Traviesas of NBC's Program Practices Department said, "Part of my job is to listen to groups—not to be pressured when enough of them are telling us that we are doing something that is hurting them in front of the viewing audience."

But the networks, in spite of Traviesas's statement, respond to pressure—pressure that is justified. In the early 1960's, Italian organizations complained that too many gangsters in the prohibition era series, "The Untouchables," were Italian. Eventually, the number of

Italian villains was sharply curtailed and an Italian became the assistant to the show's hero.

Norman Lear and CBS-TV decided not to telecast "Mr. Dugan," the new series about a black congressman, scheduled to premiere in March, 1979. At a private screening of the first episode for members of the Black Caucus, the kindest criticism came from Representative William Clay of Missouri: "It portrays blacks in a demeaning manner."

Even children's programs benefit from justified criticism. In 1978, ABC introduced an Asian cartoon character, Samurai, to integrate its extra-terrestrial super heroes force. "For years Asians have been typecast as leaders of Oriental evil, or unthinking subservients to Anglo justice and intelligence," writes Dr. Charles Cheng of UCLA. Cheng and his associate, Marsha Hirano-Nakanishi, met with ABC officials to discuss the anti-Asian image. After intensive discussion, ABC decided to create the Samurai hero. ABC also invited a group of Asian-Americans to discuss the overall treatment of Asians in children's programming. ABC's commitment to fair play is one level by which minority groups, including Arab-Americans, can influence TV programming.

Methods To Follow When Stereotype Appears

Until now the Arabs had no organized group actively monitoring television. Now members of the American-Arab community may take constructive action through the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, recently formed under the guiding hand of former Senator Abourezk. The Committee address and phone: 1129 20th Street NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20036; (202) 293-5900 or 296-8350.

Any active committee must be formed with the specific purpose of monitoring television programs. When there is a gross distortion, letters must be written, phone calls placed and meetings arranged. This must be a unified effort if the stereotyping problem is to be even partially solved.

The principal instrument by which to achieve more balance is the Fairness Doctrine, administered by the Federal

Communications Commission. The Fairness Doctrine requires that broadcasters, in covering the discussion of controversial issues of public importance, present representative and contrasting viewpoints in overall programming. Although the Fairness Doctrine does not apply to entertainment programs, perhaps a legal case could be made for eliminating ethnic slurs and stereotypes.

The National News Council investigates complaints against TV news programs and documentaries, but not against entertainment shows. Complaints should be sent to the news organization, with a copy to the News Council (see address on p. 14). Include the name of station and network and the date and time of the broadcast. The complainant must "sign a waiver of his right to seek legal or administrative redress on the same sub-

ject matter"; complaints must be filed within 90 days of the telecast. If a formal complaint to the F.C.C. is also filed, however, "it is unlikely that the Council would entertain your complaint," said Sally L. Stevens of the Council. The F.C.C. can take legal action; the Council cannot. The Council's findings are sent to the local station, the network and the complainant.

Even though legal means to curtail stereotypes do not currently exist, other types of pressure may be successfully applied. When a distorted Arab image appears, a number of steps may be taken: alerting appropriate minority organizations; writing letters to the station, the F.C.C., the National News Council, the network, producing agencies, advertisers and editors; and meeting with your legislators and local TV station managers.

The Major TV Show Contractors

Aaron Spelling Prods.
10201 W. Pico Blvd.
Los Angeles, California
213-277-2211

MGM Television
10202 W. Washington Blvd.
Culver City, California
213-836-3000

MTM Enterprises
4024 Radford Avenue
Studio City, California
213-763-8411

Paramount Television
5451 Marathon
Los Angeles, California
213-463-0100

Quinn Martin Prods.
1041 N. Formosa
Los Angeles, California
213-851-1234

Tandem Productions
5800 Sunset Blvd.
Los Angeles, California
213-467-7666

T.A.T. Communications
5752 Sunset Blvd.
Los Angeles, California
213-462-7111

20th Fox Television
10201 W. Pico Blvd.
Los Angeles, California
213-277-2211

Universal Television
Universal City
Los Angeles, California
213-985-4321

Network Executives

Mr. Donn O'Brien
Vice-President
Program Practices
CBS, Inc.
51 West 52nd Street
New York, New York 10019

Mr. Herminio Traviesas
Vice-President
Broadcast Standards Policy
NBC, Inc.
Thirty Rockefeller Plaza
New York, New York 10020

Ms. Julie T. Hoover
Director, East Coast
Department of Broadcast
Standards and Practices
ABC, Inc.
1330 Avenue of the Americas
New York, New York 10019

Regulatory Agencies

Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20554

The National News Council
One Lincoln Plaza
New York, New York 10023

William B. Arthur
Executive Director

Book Views

Perspectives on the State of Israel

By Cathy Mellett

High Butte Books, McGraw, Nebraska, 1979, 132 pp., paperback, \$5.95.

The objective of this little book is to illustrate, by the statements of writers of widely divergent opinions, the principal themes debated in connection with the creation of Israel. For most readers of *The Link*, these themes will be familiar, along with much of the material that is used to illustrate them. Yet nearly everyone will find something new in *Perspectives*, a compilation that obviously received a great deal of thought. Equally important, it contains some valuable items that are not readily available; a conspicuous example is "Making the Desert Bloom," a description of pre-Zionist Palestine by Richard W. Bevis and Zaynab Yaki.

Perspective will prove helpful to study groups or seminars that are designed to promote discussion and further reading. Were it intended for private meditation, the content would have taken the form of a frank rebuttal of the principal arguments of Zionist ideology. Those arguments have received daily exposure

since 1947 and earlier, and scarcely require much introduction. Miss Mellett offers an excellent rebuttal of the myth of "making the desert bloom." Equally good are the refutations that: Palestinian Arabs had made no progress on their own apart from Jewish help or stimulus (Henry Cattin, pp. 46-50); that Israel was needed as a refuge for the Jewish survivors of Nazi Germany (Morris Ernst, pp. 70-75, and again, as quoted from another source by Moshe Menuhin, p. 77); and that Israel is not a colonial enterprise, but a direct continuation and renewal of its origins in the Middle East (Maxime Rodinson, pp. 86-90; Edward Said, pp. 93-99). The selection by Rodinson and Said are particularly brilliant, and are aptly entitled "The Real Source of the Conflict" and "The Essence of the Conflict." Rodinson points out that:

They [the Zionist settlers] were altogether of a different world — the European world. Not only were they foreigners, they were also Europeans, that is to say, they came from that world which was everywhere known as the world of the colonizers, of peoples who dominated their neighbors by their technical and military power and by their wealth. That they may have been the poorest and most

underprivileged of this other world mattered not — they were of it....

And Said:

The tragic blindness of Zionism lies in its having been born not only in the European oppression of the Jews, but amongst and as a part of the European oppression of black, yellow, brown and red peoples. Zionism chose to ally itself not with the oppressed, but with the oppressors.

To this series of rebuttals one might add others: The peculiar (but still repeated) contention, for example, that the Palestinian refugees fled voluntarily, which is refuted by Erskine B. Childers.¹ Or the contention that the Syrians wantonly, and without provocation, rained destruction on Israeli settlements from the Golan Heights prior to 1967. A quite different picture is given by the general who commanded the United Nations peace-keeping forces in that area.² Or the contention that the Arabs in Israel have fared better than the Arabs of other countries in the area; their problems have been analyzed by one of them, who has subsequently been persecuted to the point of being forced into exile.³

The only real criticism of Miss Mellett's book is one that I make with hesitancy. I realize that she is more

widely read in this particular field than I am. I clearly think many of her selections are superb. Yet I wonder if, in some cases, she might not have found passages that would more aptly illustrate her point. S.D. Goitein, for example, is described as "one of the best known and most respected scholars to elaborate the concept of age-long hostility" between Arabs and Jews. The selection she takes from Goitein's writings does not elaborate on that theme, however, but concludes:

The Westernized Jewish people is again connected with the original scene of its history, the Orient, while the Arabs, although revived under Western impact and with Western help, still are inclined to oppose the West and with it Israel as its closest representative.

This statement actually comes very close to the true, and more recent, source of hostility, as described by Rodinson and Said, even though it

misses the mark. For it would be more true to say that Arab opposition to the West is the result, rather than the cause, of opposition to Israel.

Notes

¹*The Transformation of Palestine*, ed. Ibrahim Abu-Lughod, pp. 165-202.

²Carl von Horn, *Soldiering for Peace*, pp. 86-88, 127-158.

³Sabri Jiryis, *The Arabs of Israel*.

Reviewed by Henry G. Fischer

Books To Order

New Selection

Cathy Mellett, *Perspectives on the State of Israel*, High Butte Books, 132 pp. \$5.95 (paperback).

Statements of many different opinions on the creation of the state of Israel.

Helpful for study groups and seminars. See book review, p. 14. Our price, \$2.80.

Uri Yvner, *Israel Without Zionists: A Plea for Peace in the Middle East*, Macmillan Publishing, 278 pp. \$1.95 (paperback). A remarkable description of Israeli politics, as presented by a member of Israel's Knesset and the sole representative of a party that believes in the transformation of the Jewish state into a pluralistic and secular one that is able to achieve reconciliation with the Arabs. Our price, \$1.70.

Robert B. Betts, *Christians in the Arab East*, rev. 1978, John Knox, 318 pp. \$12.00. A comprehensive study of the Arabic-speaking Christians and the role they have played in the Middle East from the time of the Islamic conquest up to present day developments. Valuable demographic statistics and a comprehensive bibliography included. Our price, \$7.75.

John H. Davis, *The Evasive Peace*, revised 1976, Dillon/Liederbach Inc. 136 pp. \$5.95. Factual background to present Arab-Israeli dilemma, with a prescription for peace in Middle East. Our price, \$3.60.

Simha Flapan, *Zionism and the Palestinians*, Croom Helm (London), 361 pp. \$24.95. Spells out Zionist views on the Palestinians prior to 1948 by

outlining assumptions shared by most Zionists. In spite of differences within the Zionist movement, these assumptions continue in the present. Our price, \$15.50.

A.C. Forrest, *The Unholy Land*, Devin-Adair Co. 178 pp. \$3.95 (paperback). The author's personal, informed and uncompromising stand against what he considers to be imbalanced and distorted news coverage of the human tragedy brought about by the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East. Our price, \$3.60.

David Hirst, *The Gun and the Olive Branch*, Faber & Faber, 367 pp. 6.50 pounds. Aptly subtitled "The Roots of Violence in the Middle East." In tracing these roots, the author dispels a number of myths about both Arabs and Zionists. A carefully researched and documented account. Our price, \$8.05.

Stephen D. Isaacs, *Jews and American Politics*, Doubleday & Co. 302 pp. An investigation into the role Jews play in American politics. It explodes many myths on this subject and shows how Jews have recognized and exerted the power they have. Our price, \$3.85.

Sabri Jiryis, *The Arabs in Israel*, Monthly Review Press, 314 pp. \$12.50. Expanded version of Jiryis' original authoritative account of the deprivation of Arabs living in Israel. Our price, \$7.85.

Alfred Lilienthal, *The Zionist Connection: What Price Peace?*, Dodd, Mead & Co. 800 pp. \$20.00. Covers the Arab-Israeli conflict from the time of Herzl to Camp David. It treats the subject from every angle. It is well-documented; the research involved is monumental. Contains much information of which Americans are mostly unaware. One authority has said that it

should be read by every responsible citizen in the West. Our price, \$12.75.

Middle East Mosaic series, Friendship Press.

David H. Bowman, *Conflict or Community*, 47 pp. \$2.75. Our price, \$1.85.

Robert A. Elfers, *Sojourn in Mosaic*, 88 pp. \$2.95. Our price, \$2.00.

Alan Geyer, ed., *Peace, Justice and Reconciliation*, 64 pp. \$2.75. Our price, \$1.85.

John B. Taylor, *The World of Islam*, 56 pp. \$3.95. Our price, \$2.60.

Anthony Pearson, *Conspiracy of Silence: The Attack on the U.S.S. Liberty*, Horizon Press, 179 pp. \$9.95. An account of the Israeli attack on the Liberty during the June 1967 Middle East War and the ensuing lack of publicity and information. The author believes it was not an accident, as the Israelis claimed, and gives reasonably certain conclusions as to why the attack took place and the reasons for the cover-up. Our price, \$6.85.

Ephraim Sevela, *Farewell, Israel*, Gateway Editions, 295 pp. \$12.95. The author's disenchantment with Israel, which he had thought would be the fulfillment of his dreams, is emotionally expressed in his treatment of what he calls Israel's "racism" and the disintegration of the world's Jewish communities. Our price, \$8.10.

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□ The Bechtel group of companies has produced a 16mm color film, "In Arab Lands," describing the Arabs' long history in the Arabian Peninsula, the origin of their Islamic faith, their contribution to Western knowledge, and the current process of their industrialization. Free loan prints are available from Bechtel Public Relations, 50 Beale Street, San Francisco, CA 94105, or from Bechtel offices in Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., Gaithersburg, MD, Houston, and Ann Arbor, MI. Or, contact any of the national film distributing offices of Modern Talking Picture Service.

□ The Middle East Institute Film Library has a fine selection of 16mm films on the history and culture of the Middle East, many Mideastern countries, Islam and Judaism. Films are available for use by: elementary and secondary schools at \$6.00 per film; colleges and universities at \$10.00 per film; and others for \$15.00 per film. For complete catalog and rental conditions write: The Film Library, The Middle East Institute, 1761 N Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036; (202) 785-1141.

□ "International Byline" is a series of half-hour talk shows produced on location at the United Nations. Hosted by Marilyn Perry, this syndicated series gives representatives of Middle East countries an opportunity to have direct access to the American public on a regular basis. Recently interviewed were: Ambassador al-Haddad of the Yemen Arab Republic, Ambassador Kikhia of Libya, Mr. Zehdi Terzi, Permanent Observer of the P.L.O. to the United Nations, and Mohammed Abdu Yamani, Minister of Information of Saudi Arabia. For complete catalog and price list of video cassettes, write: Marilyn E. Perry Associates, 211 E. 70th Street, New York, NY 10021; (212) 744-5079.

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The Link aims at maintaining contacts among Americans who believe that friendship with the people of the Middle East is essential to world peace, who would contribute to this goal by spreading understanding of the history, values, religions, culture and economic conditions of the Middle East, and who would—in this context—press for greater fairness, consistency and integrity in U.S. policy toward that area.

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