Beneath the psyche of the Middle East

By Rob Wasserman

Last week the Middle East suddenly exploded. PLO terrorists hijacked an Israeli bus on its way to Tel Aviv killing thirty civilians, and Israel responded by launching a terror campaign into Southern Lebanon in retaliation taking over one hundred lives. After the smoke finally cleared this weekend, it appeared that all the peace initiatives of Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, as well as those by Israeli Premier Menachem Begin and President Carter might be in vain.

What's more, now the United States is in an even more involved position in this area, as the US has called for a UN peace-keeping force in Lebanon, and also because of Begin's plans to visit the US later this week. The United States has increased its position as peacemaker in the Middle East since the Carter Administration decided to sell arms to Egypt and Saudi Arabia, as well as to Israel. These sales to warring factions apparently occurred because the US wanted to decrease the relative efficacies of the different fighter planes in the event of another Arab-Israeli war.

The importance of American opinion in the delicate situation in the Middle East is odd, because most Americans cannot begin to understand the forces and tensions behind these conflicts. America has not fought a war on its own ground since the Civil War, and American territories are either daughters of wealthy publishers (Patry Hearst), or products of the United States' own military establishment, as in the case of David Borkowski.

Perhaps the only inhabitants in the United States who can understand the Arabs are the American Indians, who are only recently beginning to receive some financial retribution. During the Israeli War of Independence in 1948 many of the Palestinians fled the new state of Israel hoping that an Arab victory they could soon return to their homes. The last thirty years have been a frustrating experience for the Palestinians, as Israel retained the strong military presence in the Middle East.

The Israelis, too, are quiteWithout the turn of events over the last decade. A large reason that Israel was given statehood by the UN was sympathy for the Holocaust of World War II where six million Jews were killed. After thirty years, however, the world has begun to forget this tragedy, and this along with the increased importance of Arab Oil has meant that Israel has lost the backing of most of the countries in the world.

Perhaps the most discouraging fact for the Israelis was the October War of 1973 where Israel suffered heavy losses and was forced to take the Arab armies seriously. This was a heavy blow for the Israelis, who take a great pride in their military prowess. This attitude contributed to the decision to invade Lebanon last week, this is a single act which might set back months of diplomacy, including Sadat's visit to Jerusalem.

The Palestinians, too, are making drastic mistakes by their acts of terrorism. Last month Palestinian terrorists killed an Egyptian editor, and as Egypt has not condemned Israeli intransigence in Lebanon, this act brings those two sides closer as far as diplomatic relations are concerned. The PLO played right into the Israeli hands last week, giving Begin added justification for his tough stand on keeping occupied Arab land for Israel's security.

Arabs and Israelis have not always been at each other's throats, however. Iraq and Jordan under the Midhe Arabian Moors were more much tolerant of the Jews than were the Crusading Christians. Arabs and Jews are also both part of the same Semitic ethnic group, and many Israelis are of Eastern origin, such as Moroccans or Yemenite Jews.

The situation in the Middle East is a complex one both politically and emotionally, and it is hard to understand why the tension is so high. Nevertheless, if any progress toward a peaceful solution in the Middle East is to be taken, all sides must take into account their opponents feelings and hopes.

And Greytak graffiti tasteless

To the Editor:

I am appalled that graffiti threatening both to Professor Greytak have marred the walls of MIT. That is no pride in a civilized community for threats of physical violence over academic differences, no matter how passionately held.

It must be assumed that the appearance of these anonymous threats in the weeks after the faculty debate about drop date is in response to Professor Greytak's position. To respond to his arguments in that way is intolerable. Free debate is the essence of a university.

If we are able to identify the perpetrator(s), we will press charges before the Committee on Discipline.

In the final analysis, it is up to all of us to condemn force and the threat of force as the ultimate obscurity in an educational environment.

Carola Eisenberg
Dean for Student Affairs
March 15, 1978

Don't renovate Senior House!

A recent letter appeared in this column from three residents of Senior House, who desired that this fine dormitory be renovated. In case it has been forgotten, let us bring back memories of the recent "renovation" of Becky's (ask any junior or senior who used to live there).

Senior House is run down, yes, but it has a personality, and one that we would like to see conserved. Though the plumbing and wiring may be old, they work, and on occasions switch to turn the power back on is far more desirable than the problems that would arise from a poorly-done renovation.

To do the job properly, Senior House would have to be shut down for a long period of time (Becky was done in a summer, and then we would create an additional strain on the overcrowding situation -- not to mention forcing 200 happy residents to find other lodgings while repairs are made.

We residents of Senior House plead: do not renovate us!

Deborah Leman '78
Paul E. Hoffman '78
Suck J. Campbell '78
Mikey Chaplin '78
"Willy" A. Smith '79
James Lewis '81
Ken Sebultsz '79
"the color coordinated hall"
Shil Srivastava '71
Dede Strouse '78
Dede Strouse '78
March 15, 1978

Spring Drive thanks

To the Editor:

On behalf of the Technology Community Association and the American Red Cross, we would like to thank all those members of the MIT Community who contributed, in one fashion or another, to the 1978 Spring Blood Drive.

The total number of pints collected to extend special thanks to Jack J. Campbell '78, the color coordinated hall, Shil Srivastava '71, Dede Strouse '78, and Paul Rinear '81.

To extend special thanks are Dr. Greytak's position. To respond to