Massacre has worldwide repercussions

(Continued from page 4)

Sacks and journalists throughout Western Europe, North America, and the Soviet Union. Everyone must speak for the families of the 900 Palestinians, because their voices have been made inaudible by media ‘events’ of the recent past.

Having untangled the moral complexities of the massacre question, it is important to inquire into the repercussions of that event inside Israel. The recent demonstration of 400,000 Israeli citizens in Tel Aviv is an odd occurrence: the history of Israel and, indeed, Judaism since at least 70 A.D. has not, in the main, been one of mob reaction to political crises. On the contrary, Jews have always placed a high value on the moral and intellectual development of the individual. What the gathering of roughly 10% of the Israeli population indicates, paradoxically, is the long-term popularity of the Prime Minister’s political party and its founding ideals. Begin and his successors depend upon the growing proportion of Oriental Jews being born in Israel to convert Zionism from a socialist and Western concept championed by the Labor Party into a pro-Conservative and communitary force in the Middle East. It is their spirit of anti-Arabism and xenophobia, not of the petty bourgeois and the intellectual, which will determine the course of Israel for the foreseeable future.

The Orientalization of Israel will soon create a crisis in relations between Israel and the West that should pin the tactical blunders of the Reagan regime to the tongue. When Israel becomes in-convertible in demonstrating the horrors of its past, it will face the dilemma of whether to continue to defend its colonial presence in the region or to sever ties with the rest of the Middle East and, indeed, the Western community. The question will not be whether to export its history to the West but whether to export the West to the region.

The problem of what really happened in the Nanking massacre is that history will be exported to the West, not the other way around. The massacre has worldwide repercussions.

The event in Nanking was a microcosm of an event in Hiroshima. People who saw the event in Hiroshima, the immediate survivor, were the first to speak. They saw Hiroshima on a screen, and they remembered it. The survivors who were the first to speak were the ones who remembered that what really happened in Hiroshima was that the U.S. government decided to use nuclear weapons. The survivors of Hiroshima who came to the United States were there to tell the story of how the U.S. government used nuclear weapons. The survivors of Hiroshima who went to other countries told the story of how they were there to speak.

Book selection clarified

To the Editor:

I am writing in response to Arthur Lee’s letter of Tuesday, September 21, regarding the revision of Japanese textbooks. Lee failed to properly explain the textbook selection process in Japan.

The Ministry of Education approves textbooks for use in Japanese high schools. When reviewing a textbook, the Ministry makes recommendations and suggestions to the publishers. Recommendations must be followed for the textbooks to be approved; however, suggestions are optional. The Ministry suggested revisions in the textbooks to change the Japanese invasion of China to an “advance.” Other suggested changes included the Nanking Massacre and the Korean national uprising. Since they were suggestions, the publishers were not compelled to follow them. The Ministry approved several textbooks for use in high school history classes. Some of them describe the Japanese invasion of China as an invasion, others describe it as an advance. The approved textbooks represent a variety of viewpoints and it is up to the individual school to decide which one to use.

In writing this letter, I do not mean to imply that the Japanese government is free from any wrongdoing. I agree with Lee that “The Japanese people of today and tomorrow must know what really happened.” However, the final decision as to what “really happened” rests with the schools and teachers in their presentation of the material.

What really prompted me to write this letter was Lee’s assertion that “Japanese militarism may well be on the rise again.” Among the reasons given to support his assertion is the increase in Japan’s defense budget. (The current defense budget is slightly over one percent of the GDP.) Anyone with even a superficial knowledge of Japanese society or politics would know that this statement is simply ludicrous. Japan’s self-defense force is ill-equipped to protect the country against any major attack, much less launch a military campaign. Further, the Japanese constitution prohibits the introduction, production, or deployment of nuclear weapons. Finally, there is no other country in the world that has suffered the ravages of nuclear war. The horror of Hiroshima is still very strong in the minds of the Japanese. They are determined to see that this kind of tragedy will not be repeated.

James Mihari ’83

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