To the Editor:
The average MIT undergraduate, during his or her MIT career, must live through a number of experiences which can only be described as "exercises in futility." The experience I wish to think about is unfolding.

Eric von Ristad wrote a column in The Tech [April 22] in which he expressed his "opinions" about Israel. I sincerely hope that these opinions are not shared by the majority, or even a small minority, for that matter. In brief, he is mistaken.

But maybe the fault is not entirely his own. Maybe the fault belongs with the sources of information to which Mr. Ristad has been subjecting himself. I am speaking of The Times of London and the International Committee of the Red Cross, both of which Mr. Ristad quotes over-ambitiously. I am also bewildered by the few references to Israeli newspapers:

Does Mr. Ristad read Hebrew, and if he does not, why has he not read The Jerusalem Post, an English-language Israeli paper, which is surely much more accessible to him, and which would have provided him with that "Israeli" viewpoint he seems to seek so desperately? Perhaps because it is "too close," although ideologically very far from Prime Minister Begin's position, has contradicted all the reports quoted by Mr. Ristad.

But let us return to The Times and the ICRC. The Village Voice, which Mr. Ristad uses, is surely much more accessible to him, and which

First, The Times. This newspaper, more or less typical of the British media, is little more than a reflection of the recent anti-Israel attitude of the British Foreign Office and, as a result, of the BBC. While Service. Among interesting facts that come to mind is the finding during the summer of 1982 that correspondents of the British wire services were living in the same West Beirut hotel as a number of officials of the PLO, and got their "scans," many of which were followed by less "spectacular" retraction, by knocking on their neighbors' doors. Another interesting fact is a pair of photographs, published in various places of "before" and "after." Before, a British correspondent arranging a group of small children around the burst-out shell of a tank in exchange for some candy or money, and after, meaning the correspondent aiming his camera to capture an film the results of the "Israeli destruction." The correspondent was later "disciplined," and the event was ascribed by the BBC to "overzealousness"—though not in so many words.

Second, the ICRC. The ICRC should have no authority whatsoever as far as Israel is concerned. This is clear when one realizes that the Israeli equivalent of the Red Cross, the Magen David Adom (Red Star of David) is not even recognized by the ICRC, although attempts are constantly made to remedy this, while the Red Crescent, the Muslim (including, but not exclusively, Arab) version is recognized. Furthermore, the PLO has no rights derived from the Geneva Convention; the prisoners held by Israel is treated according to "prisoners of war." Nevertheless, Israel has treated them accordingly to this venerable treaty, and has allowed the ICRC to visit them. Most reports following such visits were favorable to Israel; Mr. Ristad overlooks these. In addition, the PLO refused for a long time to reciprocate by allowing their prisoners—Israelis to receive any visits from an international body. In late summer 1982, Israel released without preconditions hundreds of PLO prisoners— all teenagers who had been caught firing real weapons as Israeli soldiers. This was a violation of the Geneva Convention, and the ICRC should have demanded that the teenagers be returned by Israel and given full POW status. Finally, the ICRC admitted in the fall of 1982 that the numbers it had published concerning events in Lebanon contained gross errors. This happened after it was pointed out that these numbers were inconsistent with the actual size of the area's population, which had been entirely "wiped out" three or four times over by then.

So these are Mr. Ristad's sources, and the obvious question now is whether he is not, as an MIT student, trained to question whatever he reads to ask himself how reliable the information and its source are; to seek different accounts of a situation? It was in my impression that this was the general thrust of an MIT education—with the various courses specializing it to their areas of interest. Or perhaps Mr. Ristad has failed to notice how this philosophy extends to "real life." At least, I can only hope that this is the cause of his "mistake."

Clearly, all this has nothing to do with Ms. Kirkpatrick. However, it does concern Mr. Ristad's opinions, which he chose to express quite freely, apparently using Ms. Kirkpatrick as a mere pretext. But opinions, after all, are made to allow for changes—in time or otherwise. I hope, therefore, that Mr. Ristad will correct his "opinions" and not in fact "be lie." If I am wrong in this hope, however, then this has certainly been a perfect example of an "exercise in futility."

Armand Rosenberg '84

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