

opinion

Productivity has lower priority

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friend told me that Israelis have had to adopt this attitude in order to survive in their environment.

There are other problems with Israel besides the inhabitants. Israel is a very expensive place to live. Although produce is relatively inexpensive (corn is 20 cents a pound in the market), wages are low, even by Israeli standards. Taxes are two to three times higher than in the United States. At the Weizmann Institute, a full tenured professor might make five or six hundred dollars a month. Socialism, I was told, has resulted in a rough equalization of salaries between different status levels within a profession or industry. Everyone at Weizmann earns roughly the same: for example, a graduate student might earn four or five hundred dollars a month. The problem is that the equalization has hurt more people than it has helped.

I was surprised to hear many Israelis call their country the 51st state of the union. Most Americans think they are referring to military aid; they seem to feel Israel would be destroyed by its Arab neighbors if American military aid were stopped. Few Israelis share this belief. It is at a cultural and economic level that they feel their ties to the United States.

Israelis don't consider American military aid as a vital necessity, probably because they spend so much time supporting the military themselves. Three years of military service for men and two years for women are required of Jewish citizens after they graduate from high school. Thereafter, every Jewish citizen must spend one month every year in the reserves.

The mandatory military service takes a tremendous toll on the country. Few students have the motivation to attend college after spending two or three years in the army: most would rather get married and start a family.

Do not let the induction of women into the army deceive you into thinking that Israel is not a sexist society. Women serve in the

army and maintain one or two jobs at home — in addition to caring for a household — only because the country is so desperately poor. In the army, women hold only clerical or mundane positions. At Weizmann there were few female faculty members, but all of the secretaries were female.

Many Israelis come across as tired, worn down, and cynical — characteristics which they attribute to the military, the heat, and the government. While many Jews of European descent have unrealistic dreams of getting rich, most other people in the country, including the Arabs realize that they are trapped in a racist, sexist social system.

I'm glad to be back in Massachusetts. I won't be going back to Israel.



Past defense systems also had flaws

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invading. Construction required 300,000 troops, and all of China's criminals. The Wall worked admirably against the Tartars, but the emperor's despotic policies drove the lower and middle classes to revolt, and Shih's dynasty was overthrown 50 years after the Wall was built.

Some critics of SDI call it a "Magenot Line in outer space." They refer to the shield built from Longwy (on the border with Belgium and Luxembourg) to the Swiss frontier. The French thought the Line impenetrable, but their army neglected to extend it westward, along the Belgian border. For the past 2000 years whenever the Germans invaded France, they took the Belgian route. During World War II the German high command was almost as confident in their defenses at Normandy, breached on D-Day.

Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger expects the SDI system to be 99 percent effective by the mid-1990s. How effective are the current systems for protecting us against things that go boom in the night?

It is reasonable to assume that SDI will be much more complex than our best tactical fighter jet, the F-15. Right now, at any given time, 84.2 percent of the Air Force's F-15s are mission-capable,

and the best they have ever done in an exercise is 95.8 percent. If SDI is this reliable, it means that about 15 percent of the components will not be functioning at any time — or 15 percent of the time, the system will not work.

Of course, the F-15s achieved this rating with continuous maintenance and testing, and are aided by the skill of a human pilot. Testing and human control of SDI equipment would be next to impossible. Maintaining satellites in orbit will be difficult, especially considering that the F-15's mean time between failures (in 1979) was half an hour. Imagine having to maintain a space station and continually shoot up spare parts, to fix SDI satellites. Imagine the problems the satellites will have distinguishing American repairmen and devices

from intruders. Imagine the consequences if one of these failures goes ignored.

It appears that previous attempts to build physical shields against invasion have achieved less than the desired result, and the military has no record of reliability in defense comparable to what SDI demands. If SDI is successful, its directors will make military history. But with this dismal record before us, can we afford to risk its failure?

(Editor's note: the author would like to thank Lt. Col. John Buchanan (formerly of the Marines, now working at the Center for Defense Information) and Lt. Col. David Evans (Operations Officer, Third Marine Division, trained in nuclear weapon targeting) for the information they provided that was invaluable to this column.)

feedback

SACC challenged to SDI debate

(Editor's note: The Tech received a copy of this letter, addressed to Richard A. Cowan G) Mr. Cowan:

On behalf of the MIT Republican Club and the MIT Students for National Defense, we invite you or any other representatives

of the Science Action Coordinating Committee or the Disarmament Study Group to a student debate on the topic of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI).

This would be scored by a neutral moderating group, such as the Debate Society. The topic of the debate would be "Should the United States pursue SDI?" The debate would have two members on either side and would occur on Oct. 30 at 8 pm. If this time or date is not convenient, please let us know about any difficulties in your reply.

Since last year's rallies and leaflets were not conducive to reasoned reply, we believe that a debate would be a much more productive and appropriate ground for student discussion of this topic. Please respond by Oct. 1 so that arrangements can be made for the actual running of the debate. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

J. Grant Swank, Jr.
Walpole, MA

John P. Berlin '88
Brett V. Gaspers '87

feedback

MTG musical was below par

To the Editor:

Last evening my wife and I planned to enjoy ourselves by seeing the Musical Theater Guild performance of *Man of La Mancha*. What we had anticipated never came off. It was not an enjoyable evening spent on being entertained by first-class thespians. Instead, we were given juvenile acting, sloppy performances, and unconvincing lines.

I know this is the gamble one takes when going to see a public performance, but one would not

have thought that such would be the fare from the MIT Musical Theater Guild. No doubt the evening proved an exceptional disappointment to many who were anticipating starting the new school year with a quality night out.

Whatever happened to the exquisitely fine craft of genuinely portraying convincing character roles so as to grip the audience's soul?

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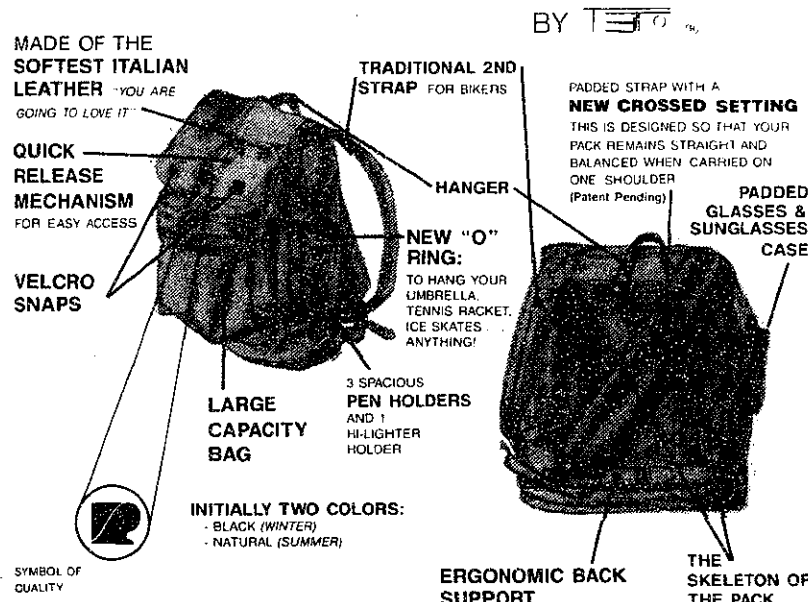
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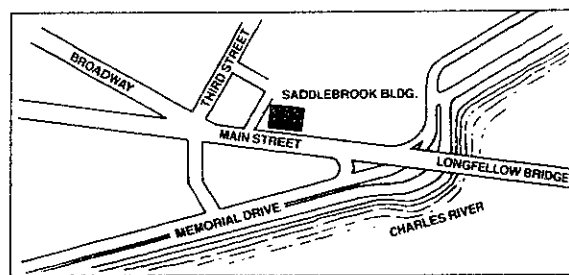
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