

IRAQ AND HYPOCRISY

Would the U.S. allow Cuba to build a nuclear reactor? Of course not.

Would we warn Cuba strenuously before sending in planes to demolish the reactor? Sure we would -- and that's exactly what Israel did, publicly, several times since the building of the Iraqi reactor was announced.

But nobody paid any attention -- neither Iraq, nor France, which provided the reactor. Russia and Cuba paid attention when Kennedy threatened to take forceful action against missile bases in Cuba. We would have taken that action, otherwise, We would have had to.

But there's more to it than that. There's more to it than the United States or Israel protecting its citizenry against the threat of nuclear attack. There's a bit of realism to be considered, although you probably haven't heard too much of that realism expressed in the past few days.

A few years back, when the knowledge of nuclear devastation was fresh in our minds, people used to wake up worrying every morning. The mushroom cloud was never far from our minds. But a certain complacency has developed with time. At first, we began to appease ourselves with the belief that sane nations would not push the red button, because mutual devastation was assured.

Even that complacency may be overdrawn, but there's *something* to it. The American government and the Soviet government may have too much at stake to be cavalier about that red button. But something else has happened. Governments with very little sanity, very little stability, and very little at stake have begun to get the nuclear capacity. As in the case of Iraq, they can buy it with oil.

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We seem to have lost the ability to make fine judgements. Some countries are much less responsible than others. And Iraq is one of the least responsible. Israel is not only a responsible government, but America's best ally in the Middle East. The United States has been worried about the Iraqi nuclear reactor since its announcement. It would have been better if the more responsible world had effected a non-proliferation policy throughout the world. That had still better be done. In the meantime, both Israel and the world are closer to survival because of Israel's action. That's the reality. That's why Senator Cranston said, simply: "It was inevitable."

Will this defense of the Israeli action be called "another knee-jerk reaction by pro-Israel apologists?" Anyone who says that just has the wrong case. Criticism of, say, West Bank settlement policy, would be more legitimate than criticism of this action. A recent survey of Bay Area Jews shows that about two thirds of them feel that "American Jews should feel free to publicly criticize Israel;" and almost two thirds of them believe that Israel should give up as much of the "West Bank" as it does not need for security. But destroying the nuclear-bomb plant of a nearby country whose unstable leader constantly vows to destroy you -- that's quite another matter.

Sure, there's a fuss. The American government is making a fuss -- although one Israeli said he would rather live with condemnation without the Iraqi nuclear bomb, than live with the Iraqi nuclear bomb without condemnation. But the response should not exceed the minimally required amount of diplomatic and rhetorical hypocrisy.

Of course, there are those who will say that, without the most drastic response, the U.S. will further alienate the Arab countries, who began (before the Israeli action) to visit and flirt with Moscow. But these Arab countries began to flirt with Moscow *because* they have become convinced that the United States is without the will or capacity to protect them from Moscow. Nothing will convince them more of U.S. weakness and drive them further toward Moscow than if the U.S. abjectly overreacts to this Israeli action.

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This would be a good time to state your appreciation to Senator Cranston for his initial expression of realism; and to inform your other Congressmen of your sentiments. It is pure hypocrisy to believe that the Israeli action was not inevitable; or that it was not necessary for Israel's self-defense; or that it was not in the American national interest; or, indeed, that a number of other Arab countries did not quietly breathe a sigh of relief.

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