in the magazines

*Hard Times* (May 4-11) has edited and excerpted from a radio interview the remarks of Jacques De Connay, a French journalist who recently returned from Southeast Asia where he reported extensively from the war zones for *Le Monde*. With regard to Laos:

"I wish I knew the purpose of the [American] bombing. I personally think... that the bombing aims not at destroying the North Vietnamese forces in transit through Laos or the forces based in Laos, but aims at destroying the Pathet Lao infrastructure. . . ."

"I think that the U.S. is mostly interested in destroying the Lao left. That's what they are trying to do. I would even say that they are trying to physically destroy the Pathet Lao leadership. I met Prince Souphanouvong, the President of the Central Committee of the Pathet Lao, in a big cave. This cave is surrounded by craters; everywhere craters. The Americans must know where the Central Committee meets. It cannot be a secret. And they are trying to kill those people. . . ."

"It is true that there are North Vietnamese in the area, but I don't know how many there are. A few weeks ago the U.S. Embassy said there were 50,000 North Vietnamese troops, and suddenly President Nixon said there were 67,000. I don't know how they got their figures. There is one thing I'm sure of—the more the U.S. bombs the Pathet Lao zones, the more pro-Communist peasants are scared of the bombings and are obliged to flee down to the Mekong Valley, the more the Pathet Lao will require military aid from the North Vietnamese—because they need men. . . ."

"In my opinion, in Laos there are two movements: a reactionary movement backed by the U.S.; and there is a Communist movement: the Pathet Lao and its friends—that's all. This is, I think, the end of any middle-of-the-road movement. And what's true of Laos is true of South Vietnam. And what's true of South Vietnam I think will be true of Cambodia pretty soon. The people, don't have any choice. You are on one side or the other. You can't be in the middle of the road any more. If you want to be—and there are people who wanted to be in Saigon—you are put in jail or you are forced to go into exile in Paris or somewhere else. . . ."

"For more than six years, the Symington Subcommittee's report on Laos shows, the United States practiced a policy of official deception about its extremely extensive military operations in Laos.

"It did not do so idly or haphazardly," says Murrey Marder of the *Washington Post* (April 21). "The policy of official deception was carried out deliberately and systematically, for what officials at the highest levels of government were convinced were sound reasons of national security. Many of those officials are still in the government today. They are still just as convinced that the reasons for deception were and are fully justified, and that U.S. operations in Laos are a 'model' of an efficient, successful, relatively low-cost, effectively clandestine, counter-guerrilla operation."

Whether successful or not, Marder continues, the real question "is whether a handful of counterinsurgency zealots should have the right to define our national interests for us in this fashion, and then involve us in a dangerous and entangling mission without the public knowing anything about it. This is the critical moral issue raised by the Laos hearings. . . ."

"It is argued by many officials, members of Congress—and even newsmen as well—that nothing vitally new has been disclosed about U.S. operations in Laos that was not, or should not have been, known to any careful reader of his daily newspaper."

"This is basically correct. But there is a fundamental difference in a nation that claims a standard of 'higher morality' between admitting its actions officially, and having knowledge of them seep out."

"Newspaper accounts can be disavowed; a report that is inaccurate even fractionally—as accounts of secret operations are very likely to be—can be officially dismissed as containing 'numerable inaccuracies.' This often has been the official response to enterprising news reports about Laos—or Vietnam, or Cambodia. It is hardly a satisfactory answer to the national moral questions raised by such clandestine military operations, therefore, to counter that 'everyone knew about them anyhow, so there was no real deception."

"Nor is it any moral 'out,' as Sen. Symington noted, to shift blame to the Central Intelligence Agency for operational activities it was directed to perform by the nation's leadership. The moral responsibility is government-wide. . . ."

"From an editorial in *America* (May 16): "Whatever the merits or the outcome of our military expedition into Cambodia, Mr. Nixon chose to cloak his announcement of it in a rhetoric that profoundly troubled many of his listeners. He defined the crisis as a test of national character and will. Vowing that we will not be humiliated,' he spoke in terms of possible national defeat and stated that the credibility of the United States was at stake. He warned that if the nation acted 'like a pitiful, helpless giant,' totalitarianism and anarchy would threaten freedom throughout the world."

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NATO would be. A new president in America and an American vote at the U.N. raised unrealistic hopes, which were later dashed by subsequent U.S. voting and action. Marcum's excellent analysis of these forces in relation to Portugal gives cause for reflection on the U.S. position toward Southern African independence, especially viewed across the haze of Vietnam and Cambodia. One cannot read the book without drawing parallels between an army of Portuguese commanded by those who speak of their "civilizing mission" and their campaign against international communism, and an army of Americans in Southeast Asia. The fact that brutality is contagious, also gives us cause to read the book carefully. Marcum mentions summary execution; others have written that men died from beatings in Angola in 1961 and 1962, and in 1963 I heard soldiers brag of collecting African cars as a hobby.

In 1961 the Africans threw themselves at the Portuguese in uncoordinated attacks armed with muzzle loaders, gas-pipe weapons and "garden tools." The Portuguese replied with NATO small arms, made-in-America vehicles, airplanes and napalm. The Portuguese are still fighting in Angola and now they are sorely pressed in Guinea Bissau and Mozambique also.

The arms and material do not now come so directly or freely from the American government, but American aid still bolsters a Portuguese "order" that keeps whites supreme though outnumbered twenty to one.

Thus, when John Marcum completes his second volume and brings the story to the present, it will undoubtedly indicate the further corrosion of African trust in America's words of support for self-determination.

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He asserted that if the United States failed to act in Cambodia, it would become a second-rate power and "accept the first defeat in its proud 190-year history."

"The unqualified nature of this appeal to national pride leaves the implication that a nation demonstrates its character and maintains its credibility only by offensive military action. Associated with this implication is the notion—supported by a curious reading of American history—that restraint is a symptom of national weakness. Concern to avoid humiliation and defeat manages to overshadow consideration of the risk to millions of lives in an expansion of the Indochinese war. All these elements must disturb those sincere men at home and abroad who believe it right to apply standards of unusual moral sensitivity in the exercise of American power and to the language with which our Chief Executive explains that exercise."

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Israeli journalist Yaakov Sharet encountered Noam Chomsky at a symposium on the "New Left and Israel" last February, and prepared for Jewish Frontier (May) an examination of "some aspects of Professor Chomsky's"—and the New Left's—"attitude" toward the Middle East conflict.

"It seems that the 'Vietnamization' of the Israeli-Arab conflict is even more satisfying for the American New Left non-Jewish Jew than would be his identifying himself with the Viet Cong in Vietnam. For if the second course reflects hate and hostility toward one's own political establishment, the first fulfills deep-rooted urges to sadism, masochism, cannibalism (of both father and mother) and fratricide—all combined—which the enlightened Jew, loyal only to universal causes, is currently experiencing, dropping-out not only from American society but from the Jewish fold as well; mistaking rootlessness for total freedom..."

"All this, of course, is done for the sake of humanity, in the name of the "tortured" and 'downtrodden' Palestinians of the occupied territories who daily... legally cross the so-called former 'Green Border' into 'Old' Israel for work—in spite of Al Fatah threats and terrorism, supported by Russians, Chinese, French, militant blacks, and New and old Leftists. At the same time, Israel's overwhelming superiority—strategic, tactical, scientific, moral—permits Israel to behave more liberally by far than any other occupying force in history, although Noam Chomsky still dares to equate Israeli response to terror and attack with the Nazi holocaust. Here again, we see the eager acceptance by a non-Jewish Jew of an Arab lie, made possible, only by a total ignorance of Middle East reality. In addition, there is a willful persistence in adolescent daydreaming; for only in such dreams are all problems neatly solved—if only your solution is accepted, particularly the nonsensical idea that Palestinian binationalism is popular with the Arabs..."  

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Three articles on "The Jewish Tradition of Protest and Dissent" may be of interest to readers. All are to be found in the Winter issue of Judaism quarterly: "The Prophets as Dissenters," by Binah Lipis Shaskolsky; "Rabbinic Reflections on Defying Illegal Orders: Amasa, Abner, and Joab," by Moshe Greenberg; and "The Rabbinic Ethics of Protest," by Reuven Kimelman.