

GULF WAR COMMUNIQUEES

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During the Gulf War, all official communiqués were written in English. Unlike Indo-European languages, Semitic languages like Hebrew and Arabic are written from right to left.

These being emotional times, there was a tendency on the part of Israeli and Arab writers to forget that their English communiqués had to be written left to right. This led to convoluted statements that looked like these:

!god suorehcert uoy tafarA (written by Saudi leader Fahd)
 !stoirtaP eht era lleh eht erehW (written by Yitzhak Shamir)
 !enitsetni llams ruoy ni ecalap a dliub slemac dnasuoht a fo
 saelf eht yaM (Saddam gives Iraqi Minister Aziz a message
 for President Bush which Aziz delivers to Secretary of State
 Baker)

To eliminate this problem, official communiqués were written palindromically. This solved the problem because palindromes read the same frontward as backward. Thus the meaning of any transcriptions that were begun right to left would not be altered.

Here is a sampling of the Gulf War palindromes. They are arranged in chronological order. When known, the author's name is given.

DRAT SADDAM, A MAD DASTARD! The Emir of Kuwait, Sheik Jaber al-Ahmed al-Sabah, curses Saddam when he discovers his country is being invaded

BOMB ARAB MOB In the case of widespread insurrection by West Bank Arabs, Israeli prime minister Shamir gives instructions to use suitable force

RATS! AID EMBARGO? GRAB MEDIA STAR Saddam hatches a plot to kidnap a CBS journalist

TAFAR, A NOMAD DASTARD, EYED RAT SADDAM ON ARAFAT A headline in The Gulf Enquirer

KARIM, IN AMMAN, I'M IRAK In this cryptic mmessage King Hussein of Jordan declares his support of Saddam

DRAT SABRA, BAR BASTARD An anonymous Likud member encourages Irsraeli-born Minister Benjamin Nethanyahu to deport an Intafadah leader

SEMITE, BE SURE NO ONE RUSE BETIMES Syrian leader Assad is sceptical of Israeli assurances that they will not retaliate against

Iraqi aggression

DRAT SADDAM! AIR RAID FOES. A CADET NEVER PREVENTED A CASE OF DIARRIA, MAD DASTARD! For obvious reasons, this poor-spelling Iraqi soldier leaves his execration of Saddam Hussein unsigned

'MAD DASH TO ME, HEBREW SNAIL', I ANSWER: 'BEHEMOTH SADDAM!' Prime Minister Shamir relates to one of his Cabinet colleagues the nightmare he had

MAD DASH, EH, SADDAM? General Norman Schwarzkopf can't resist a jibe at Saddam for the lightning-like blitz of his forces into Kuwait

ARE WE NOT DRAWN ONWARDS, WE JEWS, DRAWN ONWARD TO NEW ERA? A Gush Emunim member sees Messianic implications in Iraq's defeat

VIVA LE TEL AVIV! Moroccan-born Defense Minister David Levy celebrates the end of the Gulf War

BAR ARAFAT, A FAR ARAB Saudi leader Prince Fahd lets it be known that Yassar Arafat is persona non grata in his country

DRAT SADDAM! - ALL ITS EVIL ALIVE - STILL A MAD DASTARD George Bush rues the fact that Saddam might have his same job after November 1992, and he won't

QUIRKY QUOTATIONS

Word Ways does not often review bon mots or apt quotations since they lie somewhat away from the core of logology. However, Tad Tuleja's Quirky Quotations (Stonesong Press, 1992; \$10 paperback) is a book with a difference: not just sardonic quips in the style of Bierce's The Devil's Dictionary or Jackson's The Diabolical Dictionary of Modern English (see *Word Ways*, May 1986), but actual quotes from famous people set in their historical contexts. (For example, Bette Davis's magnificent putdown "I'd love to kiss you, but I just washed my hair" was uttered in the movie "The Cabin in the Cotton".) His favorite four authors are Bierce, Elbert Hubbard (not L. Ron), Sydney Smith (a 19th-century English divine), and Dorothy Parker. He comments "a good epigram doesn't drench you with the water of wisdom; it's a splash in the face, part taunt, part blessing. So what I've tried for is less portent, more punch..." I think he's done it.