

# Information and Propaganda

One of our political leaders once declared that propaganda may have a stronger effect on people than the atomic bomb. He meant that whether propaganda takes the form of true or false information, it can play a highly significant role in shaping **public opinion**; in other words, in shaping people's minds and attitudes as a whole.

In our days information is no more static. It has become a dynamic tool, a powerful force widening its sphere through swift and easy communication; making its way into every place and locality. It thus travels, and from local information may in the long run become so widespread that it would exert its influence on the minds of world leaderships as well as on the world inhabitants everywhere .

As for propaganda, its influence is hard to remove, especially when ordinary or common people are subjected to it, and common people form the majority in every country. Propaganda thus becomes a force for peace or for war, for good or for evil, for construction or for destruction.

Nations today are so interdependent culturally, economically and politically that they recognize the importance of information transmitted to them and about them. They insist that it be true and well founded.

I believe that shaping of public or world opinion depends on information which may be accurate and trustworthy or false and misleading. The importance of information has recently made it a science for which a new term, "informatique" has been coined. This science aims to study the technological and psychological methods which help make communications quick and accurate.

In Lebanon, the newly established **Center of Automatic Information** (Nov. 1983) reveals the concern of this country for the subject. For having been since time immemorial, a crossroads of cultures due to its strategic geographical position, Lebanon is also trying to become a crossroads for information. In fact, the large number of newspapers published daily in the country in Arabic, French and English, and the even greater number of weekly magazines belonging to different

religious, political, cultural or social groups well illustrate this trend.

It may be appropriate to add here that it has been the policy of Al-Raida to offer what it considers to be true and unbiased information about a specialized and most important topic: "Women in the Arab World".

We at Al-Raida try as much as we can to transmit regionally and internationally a better understanding of the Arab woman, her traditional role, her place in today's society and her aspirations and potential for the future.

Following the Lebanese policy of openness to cultures, we intend to keep working towards a better understanding between women and men in Arab countries as well as to participate in moving public opinion towards the adoption of stands which might help develop world cooperation and understanding.

It is an ambitious plan but we hope that our efforts, no matter how small and limited, will not fail to have some effect.

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