

ZIONISM

THE REAL ENEMY OF THE JEWS

VOLUME THREE

CONFLICT WITHOUT END?



ALAN HART

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Representative**

ZIONISM
THE REAL ENEMY OF THE JEWS
VOLUME III: CONFLICT WITHOUT END?

**ZIONISM
THE REAL ENEMY
OF THE JEWS**

**VOLUME III
CONFLICT WITHOUT END?**

**BY
ALAN HART**



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Palestinian soldiers during the siege of Beirut, by the Israeli Army, who, on 6 June 1982, launched Operation Peace of the Galilee.

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**VOLUME III
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AMERICA TAKES SIDES, WAR WITH NASSER ACT II AND THE CREATION OF A GREATER ISRAEL

When Israel went to war with Egypt on Monday, 5 June 1967, with President Johnson's secret blessing, it was neither a fully functioning democracy nor a military dictatorship; it was a bit of both. The bridge between the two was built on 1 June, when Dayan was brought into an emergency government of national unity as minister of defence.

To this point, like his predecessors Ben-Gurion and Sharett, Eshkol had been both prime minister and defence minister. He was now required by Israel's political and military hawks to surrender the defence portfolio and give it to Dayan. Thereafter the hawks in the military establishment were able to impose their will on events to try to bring about a greater Israel of Zionism's mad dream.

For more than two years previously Dayan had been in the political wilderness. After a number of threats to do so, he had resigned as minister of agriculture in November 1964. The main reason for his departure from government was his opposition to Eshkol's Sharett-like moderation in general and, in particular, Eshkol's refusal, supported by Chief of Staff Rabin, to be interested in the Greater Israel project. By responding swiftly and positively to a suggestion from King Hussein for a secret dialogue when he became prime minister, Eshkol had demonstrated that he did want Israel to live within its existing borders and to make peace with the Arabs on that basis. The developing dialogue between Jordan and Israel was, of course, a red rag to Dayan's bull because it signalled that, in Eshkol's vision of the future, the West Bank including East Jerusalem (if it was not internationalized by peace) would stay in Arab hands. It would not be up for grabs by gut-Zionism if Eshkol had his way. This view was reinforced by the policy statement that came with Rabin's five-year plan for the IDF which, as I noted in the previous chapter (in Volume Two), declared that Israel could realise its national goals within existing borders.

The political wilderness into which Dayan went was not so lonely a place. He had Ben-Gurion and Peres for company after they formed a breakaway party. The three of them had hoped that it would be the vehicle through which, by democratic means, they could oblige Eshkol to do their bidding or resign.

On the day before Dayan was imposed on Prime Minister Eshkol as minister of defence, I was waiting with my ITN camera crew to doorstep him as he left the office where he devoted time to his hobby, archaeology. Because of the quality of my sources (former DMI Chaim Herzog was one of them), I knew that Israel's one-eyed warlord was about to become minister of defence. I did not expect him to say anything newsworthy on camera but it was worth a try. He was alone when we filmed him walking towards us to his car. If I asked him, "Do you think there will be war?" he would have said "No." So I settled for, "How do you see the future?" I asked the question as he was passing the camera without the intention, it seemed, of answering.

The enigma stopped and smiled. There was no mistaking the conspirator's twinkle in his one eye. Then, to illustrate the four little words he was about to utter, he made a come-hither gesture with the index finger of his right hand. "*The desert is beckoning.*" I said to my film crew, "That means Israel will go to war in a matter of days, probably on Monday morning." (Which would be 5 June.)

For Dayan the war of 1967 was the unfinished business of 1948-49.

The main point is that the creation of a Greater Israel, the second Zionist *fait accompli*, did not come about by design. When it went to war, the IDF's objective as determined by the government was not the creation of Greater Israel. That just happened on the battlefield as Dayan seized opportunities as they opened up. The opportunities were there because the Arabs were not intending to attack Israel; because of Israel's overwhelming military superiority; because the Johnson administration delayed a Security Council resolution demanding a ceasefire; *and because of what the IDF did to prevent the Johnson administration limiting Dayan's war aims once the fighting was underway.*

The Great Cover-Up of the 1967 Arab–Israeli war had to do with the IDF’s attack on the American spy ship, the U.S.S. *Liberty*, and the cold-blooded murder, by Israeli forces, of 34 members of its crew and the wounding of 171 others, 75 of them seriously. It is impossible to make sense of what really happened in June 1967 without understanding why Israeli forces attacked the *Liberty* (see next chapter).

The Six Day War marked a turning point—the embrace of Israel by the Jews of the world, who were misled to believe that the Arab Goliath was intending to slay the Israeli David.

In retrospect it can be seen that the 1967 war, the Six Day War, was the turning point in the relationship between Israel and the Jews of the world—the majority of Jews who preferred to live not in Israel but as citizens of many other nations. Until the 1967 war, and with the exception of the minority of who were politically active, most non-Israeli Jews did not have—how can I put it?—a great empathy with Zionism’s child. Israel was there and was, in the sub-consciousness, a refuge of last resort; but the Jewish nationalism it represented had not yet generated the overtly enthusiastic support of the Jews of the world. The Jews of Israel were in their chosen place and the Jews of the world were in their chosen places. There was not, so to speak, a great feeling of togetherness. At a point Ben-Gurion himself was so disillusioned by the indifference of world Jewry that he went public with his criticism—not enough Jews were coming to live in Israel.

A part of the explanation of why the 1967 war transformed the relationship between the Jews of the world and Israel lies in a single word—pride. From the Jewish perspective there was indeed much to be proud about. Little Israel with its small but highly professional defence force and its mainly citizen army had smashed what were viewed as the war machines of the frontline Arab states in six days. The Jewish David had slain the Arab Goliath. Israeli forces were in occupation of the whole of the Sinai and the Gaza Strip (Egyptian territory), the West Bank including Arab East Jerusalem (Jordanian territory) and the Golan Heights (Syrian territory). And it was no secret that the Israelis could have gone on to capture Cairo,

Amman and Damascus. There was nothing to stop them except the impossibility of maintaining the occupation of three Arab capitals.

But the intensity of the pride the Jews of the world experienced with Israel's military victory was in large part a product of the intensity of the fear that came before it. In the two weeks before the war, the Jews of the world truly believed, because they were conditioned by Zionism to believe it, that the Arabs were poised to attack Israel and that its very existence was at stake and much in doubt.

The Jews of the world could not be blamed for believing that, but it was a big, fat propaganda lie. Though Nasser had asked UNEF forces to withdraw, had closed the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping and had reinforced his army in the Sinai, neither Egypt nor any of the frontline Arab states had any intention of attacking Israel. And Israel's leaders, and the Johnson administration, knew that.

In short, and as we shall see, *there was no justification whatsoever for an Israeli pre-emptive strike.*

The summary truth about the 1967 war is this. Assisted by the regeneration of Palestinian nationalism, which became the tail that wagged the Arab dog despite the brutal efforts of the intelligence services of the frontline Arab states to prevent it happening, Dayan set a trap for Nasser, and the Egyptian leader walked into it with eyes half-open, in the hope that the international community, led by the Johnson administration, would restrain Israel and require it and Egypt to settle the problem of the moment by diplomacy. From Nasser's perspective that was not an unreasonable expectation because of the commitment, given by President Eisenhower, that in the event of the closure of the Straits of Tiran by Egypt to Israeli shipping, the U.S. would work with the "society of nations" to cause Egypt to restore Israel's right of passage, and by so doing, prevent war.

Still today rational debate about making peace is impeded by the fact that the vast majority of Jews everywhere—I would say not less than 98 percent of them—still believe that Egypt and the frontline Arab states were intending to annihilate Israel in 1967, and were only prevented from doing so by Israel's pre-emptive strike.

If the statement that the Arabs were not intending to attack Israel and that the existence of the Jewish state was not in danger was only that of a *goy*, it could be dismissed by Zionists as anti-Semitic conjecture. In fact the truth of it was admitted by some of the key Israeli players—after the war, of course. Before we look at what actually happened in 1967 and why, here is a short summary of some pertinent, post-war Israeli confessions.

In an interview published in *Le Monde* on 28 February 1968, Israeli Chief of Staff Rabin said this: “*I do not believe that Nasser wanted war. The two divisions which he sent into Sinai on 14 May would not have been enough to unleash an offensive against Israel. He knew it and we knew it.*”

On 14 April 1971, a report in the Israeli newspaper *Al-Hamishmar* contained the following statement by Mordecai Bentov, a member of the wartime national government. “*The entire story of the danger of extermination was invented in every detail and exaggerated a posteriori to justify the annexation of new Arab territory.*”

On 4 April 1972, General Haim Bar-Lev, Rabin’s predecessor as chief of staff, was quoted in *Ma’ariv* as follows: “*We were not threatened with genocide on the eve of the Six Day War, and we had never thought of such a possibility.*”

In the same Israeli newspaper on the same day, General Ezer Weizman, Chief of Operations during the war and a nephew of Chaim Weizman, was quoted as saying: “*There was never any danger of annihilation. This hypothesis has never been considered in any serious meeting.*”

Weizman: “There was never any danger of annihilation. This hypothesis has never been considered in any serious meeting.”

In the spring of 1972, General Matetiyahu Peled, Chief of Logistical Command during the war and one of 12 members of Israel’s General Staff, addressed a political literary club in Tel Aviv. He said: “*The thesis according to which the danger of genocide hung over us in June 1967, and according to which Israel was fighting for her very physical survival, was nothing but a bluff which was born and bred after the war.*”¹

In a radio debate Peled said: “*Israel was never in real danger and there was no evidence that Egypt had any intention of attacking Israel.*” He added

that “*Israeli intelligence knew that Egypt was not prepared for war.*”

In the same programme Chaim Herzog (former DMI, future Israeli Ambassador to the UN and President of his state) said: “*There was no danger of annihilation. Neither Israeli headquarters nor the Pentagon—as the memoirs of President Johnson proved—believed in this danger.*”

On 3 June 1972 Peled was even more explicit in an article of his own for *Le Monde*. He wrote: “*All those stories about the huge danger we were facing because of our small territorial size, an argument expounded once the war was over, have never been considered in our calculations. While we proceeded towards the full mobilisation of our forces, no person in his right mind could believe that all this force was necessary to our ‘defence’ against the Egyptian threat. This force was to crush once and for all the Egyptians at the military level and their Soviet masters at the political level. To pretend that the Egyptian forces concentrated on our borders were capable of threatening Israel’s existence does not only insult the intelligence of any person capable of analysing this kind of situation, but is primarily an insult to the Israeli army.*”

The preference of some generals for truth-telling after the event provoked something of a debate in Israel, but it was short-lived. If some Israeli journalists had had their way, the generals would have kept their mouths shut. Weizman was one of those approached with the suggestion that he and others who wanted to speak out should “not exercise their inalienable right to free speech lest they prejudice world opinion and the Jewish diaspora against Israel.”²

It is not surprising that debate in Israel was shut down before it led to some serious soul-searching about the nature of the state and whether it should continue to live by the lie as well as the sword; but it is more than remarkable, I think, that *the mainstream Western media continues to prefer the convenience of the Zionist myth to the reality of what happened in 1967 and why*. When reporters and commentators have need today to make reference to the Six Day War, they still tell it like the Zionists said it was in 1967 rather than how it really was. Obviously there are still limits to how far the mainstream media is prepared to go in challenging the Zionist account of history, but it could also be that lazy journalism is a factor.

For those journalists, lazy or not, who might still have doubts about who started the Six Day War, here's a quote from what Prime Minister Begin said in an unguarded, public moment in 1982. *"In June 1967 we had a choice. The Egyptian army concentrations in the Sinai approaches did not prove that Nasser was really about to attack us. We must be honest with ourselves. We decided to attack him."* The source for that quotation, in an article for Consortiumnews.com on 2 June 2009, was Ray McGovern, a former CIA officer for 27 years under seven American presidents, several of whom he briefed on a daily basis.

The official name of the central Zionist lobby in the U.S. is the American Israel Public Affairs Committee—AIPAC for short, an acronym that provokes fear on Capitol Hill and in the White House.

Four days into the Johnson Presidency, AIPAC's director of the time, Sy Kenen, sent a memorandum—"Not for Publication or Circulation"—to his executive and national committees.³ It hailed Johnson's "front-rank, pro-Israel position" as evidenced by his past performances, including his leadership of the Senate campaign that prevented Eisenhower from punishing Israel with sanctions. It made the confident prediction that President Johnson (unlike Eisenhower and Kennedy) would be no trouble, so to speak.

That being so America's most zealous Zionists must have been somewhat surprised when Johnson started out by following the Kennedy line—insisting (in private, of course) that Dimona be opened to IAEA inspection. A nuclear-armed Israel was, it seemed, as unacceptable to Johnson as it had been to his assassinated predecessor.

For the first year of his first term in office Johnson was effectively the caretaker president of a Kennedy administration, and was content to go along with its strategy for tackling Eshkol on the subject of Dimona. The essential idea was that with the reasonable Eshkol in charge, Israel could be prevailed upon to agree to IAEA inspection of Dimona and then be negotiated away from going nuclear. How was this to be achieved?

Both Johnson and Kennedy were ready to provide weapons and guarantee Israel's security—on condition that Israel did not go nuclear.

President Johnson would invite Prime Minister Eshkol to Washington for a state visit and tell him face-to-face what President Kennedy had said to Golda in Florida—that America was ready to become Israel’s main supplier of weapons, and would guarantee the Jewish state’s security, *on condition that it did not go nuclear*.

Ben-Gurion had always wanted and had always been denied a state visit to America. The underlying assumption of the neutrals advising Johnson was that giving Eshkol the prize Ben-Gurion had been denied would enhance his prestige in Israel and, as a consequence, give him sufficient credibility to confront and defeat the hawks.

Thus it was, on 1 June 1964, that Eshkol arrived in Washington for the first ever state visit to America by an Israeli prime minister. Had Kennedy lived Nasser would have been invited at the same time. (Because the public had no idea of the main business for discussion, the visit was a marvellous boost for Johnson’s campaign for election as President in his own right. Jewish Americans perceived him to be demonstrating as no other president had done what a good and uncritical friend of Israel he was).

In discussion with Eshkol, President Johnson stuck to the script his Kennedy advisers had prepared. It required him to tell Eshkol that the Israelis, in return for American promises of arms and a security commitment, should “*bite the bullet now*.”⁴ The evidence is that Johnson did not pull any punches on Dimona (the bullet the Israelis were required to bite on). At one point Johnson said to Eshkol, “*We should like to remind the Prime Minister that we are violently against nuclear proliferation*.”⁵

We will probably never know what Eshkol really thought at the time. My interpretation is that if he had been confident of his ability to control the 44 hawks, Dayan in particular, he would have said to Johnson: “Mr. President, you’ve got a deal. I have problems with some of my colleagues but, if you support me, I’ll deliver.”

As it happened, Eshkol returned to Israel in a state of chronic and painful indecision. The decision he had been called upon to make—renouncing the nuclear option in return for American conventional weapons and a U.S. security guarantee—was even more critical than President Johnson and any of his Kennedy advisers had imagined. Because

of developments at Dimona, Israel was approaching the nuclear point of no return. The question now was not could Israel produce its own nuclear weapons? The answer to that was yes. The question now was—should Israel start production and if so when?

So far as is known Eshkol confined his own expressions of opposition to the nuclear weapons option to comments about its cost, now upwards of US \$500 million a year and escalating. To trusted aides he said things like, “I don’t have the money for it”, “How many students will not go to university?” and “How many children will go without shoes?” His other line was: “There’s no threat. None of our neighbours are going nuclear. Why should we?”⁶

Eshkol knew he had time to make a decision because there was no way President Johnson was going to press him in advance of the November elections in America. He used the time to initiate a series of high-level and top-secret conferences on the bomb at the Midrasha, a Mossad retreat close to Tel Aviv. During these conferences those pushing for Israel to have its own independent nuclear deterrent countered Eshkol’s arguments by asserting that *the primary target of any Israeli nuclear strike would not be the Arabs but the Soviet Union.*

Despite what was said in public to the contrary, none of the prime movers of Israel’s bid to become an independent nuclear power seriously believed that the Arab states would dare to wage a war of destiny against the Jewish state without complete Soviet backing. Behind closed doors they were acknowledging that there would be no credible Arab threat to Israel’s existence unless the Soviet Union willed it. The assumption that the Soviet Union might will it was, supporters of the nuclear option claimed, why developing missiles capable of delivering nuclear warheads to targets in the Soviet Union was as important as work on the bomb itself. (And that meant more and more money). What those in favour of Israel having its own nuclear weapons were actually saying came down to this: If the Soviet Union backed the Arabs all the way in any war with Israel, the U.S. would not confront the Soviet Union and risk a nuclear attack on its own cities for the sake of three million Jews in Israel; and Israel would become the

sacrificial lamb on the altar of political expediency. Effectively the bottom line was, as ever, “We cannot trust the Gentiles.”

Eshkol eventually told the Johnson administration that he would defer a decision on whether or not to develop a nuclear arsenal in return for a U.S. commitment to supply Israel with conventional weapons that would match the quality of those being supplied to Egypt by the Soviet Union.

If such a proposition had come from Ben-Gurion, probably most if not all neutral American officials in the know would have said something like: “The son of a bitch wants it both ways. He’s screwing us for conventional weapons and then, when it suits him, he’ll take the nuclear route.”

But that was not Washington’s reading of Eshkol’s intention. The Americans were content to assume that the reasonable Eshkol was saying something like: “I don’t want to go down the nuclear road but I’ve got problems with my hawks... When the weapons you’ve promised start to come on stream, I’ll be in a better position to argue that Israel can rely on America.” In other words, Eshkol’s decision to put the nuclear issue on hold was the indication of an intention to renounce the nuclear option.

Was that American reading of Eshkol’s intention correct? What happened next in Israel suggests that it probably was.

Encouraged by Dayan, an enraged Ben-Gurion came charging out of retirement to lead a gut-Zionist campaign to have Eshkol removed from power. Ben-Gurion was convinced, as no doubt were Dayan and others, that Eshkol’s decision to put the nuclear issue on hold meant that he had given in to American pressure, and that it would be only a matter of time before an Eshkol-led government renounced the nuclear option.

The venom Ben-Gurion displayed when he turned against his old friend surprised even those who knew how vicious he could be. He accused Eshkol of unspecified security failures. Ben-Gurion could not say in public “He wants to ban the bomb”, so he denounced him as being “unfit to govern.” *Eshkol’s Sharett-like policy of wanting Israel to seek an accommodation with the Arabs within existing borders was denounced as “dangerous appeasement.”* And Eshkol was condemned for abandoning Dayan’s policy of massive reprisal attacks. Dayan’s own line on this, which

Ben-Gurion faithfully represented, was that by not authorising reprisal attacks from time to time, Eshkol was undermining the deterrent value of the IDF. Given that Eshkol and Chief of Staff Rabin were as one on policy matters, this was also implied criticism of Rabin. What it all came down to, Ben-Gurion insisted, was that Eshkol was “endangering the nation’s security.”⁷ In public Ben-Gurion went as far as comparing Eshkol with Neville Chamberlain, the British prime minister who had attempted to appease Hitler.

When the Mapai party assembled for its annual conference in June (1965), Ben-Gurion was apparently confident that he could command enough support to have Eshkol dumped as leader. But his confidence was not justified. His bid to have Eshkol removed from power failed. Determined to fight on, Ben-Gurion broke with Mapai and, with Dayan and Peres, formed a new political party—Rafi. Elections in Israel were five months away and Ben-Gurion’s expectation was that Rafi would win at least 25 seats, enough to make it the power broker in the new Knesset. In that event, and if he could not cobble together a government of his own without Mapai, Ben-Gurion’s price for Rafi’s participation in a new coalition with Mapai would be Eshkol’s departure.

The election campaign was ugly and driven by insults and accusations. It soon became clear that Rafi had no social or economic agenda, and that the main reason for its existence was to destroy Eshkol and everything he represented. Its only significant policy commitment was to dealing more aggressively with the Arabs. Probably the best description of Rafi was that by a lawyer close to Golda (and presumably therefore an Eshkol supporter). He described Rafi as a “neo-Fascist group.”

That, apparently, was a view endorsed to some extent by a majority of the voters. At the polls Eshkol trounced Ben-Gurion. Rafi won only 10 seats and for it the political wilderness was beckoning.

It ought to have been a moment of great opportunity because the moderate, Sharett-like Eshkol, was now indisputably the master of his own house—in a way that Sharett had never been. If there was ever a time when the political situation in Israel was right for an American President to insist that the Jewish state be serious about making an accommodation with the

Arabs—as well as renouncing the nuclear option in return for American arms and a U.S. security guarantee—this was it.

But it was not to be.

President Johnson was on his way to abandoning the Eisenhower and Kennedy policy of even-handedness. The new American policy was to be support for Zionism and its child, right or wrong. After the 1964 elections Johnson was committed, as much by default as design, to flying with Israel's hawks. There was more to the significance of the 1964 elections than the scale of Johnson's personal victory—he was swept back into the White House as president in his own right by the biggest popular vote in American history. A major effort by the Zionist lobby with campaign funds and votes no doubt contributed to strengthening Democrat control in both houses of Congress. The new line-up in the House of Representatives was Democrats 294, Republicans 141. And the new line-up in the Senate was Democrats 67, Republicans 33. It would not have been too much of an exaggeration to say that, on matters to do with the Middle East, it was the Congress of the United States of America-and-Israel.

Zionism's now more than awesome ability to influence U.S. policy for the Middle East was to be further strengthened by President Johnson's appointment of Myer Feldman as his Special Counsel. What that came to mean, as Johnson became more and more preoccupied with the war in Vietnam, was that Zionism's top man in the White House was effectively running U.S. policy for the Middle East. On President Johnson's watch Feldman was to have as much influence as Niles had had on Truman's watch.

By the time Eshkol had seen off the Ben-Gurion threat, Johnson had lost interest in the idea of pressing Israel to renounce the nuclear option. CIA Director McCone was so disillusioned that he resigned. His explanation could not have been more explicit. "*When I cannot get the President to read my reports, then it's time to go.*"⁸ Did McCone's reports reach Johnson's desk or did Feldman block them? Feldman might have told himself that the President did not need to be bothered with them because there was to be no more pressure on Israel. *The prevailing mood in Congress was not just pro-Israel but pro a nuclear-armed Israel.* Though Ben-Gurion

had lost the fight in Israel, the Zionist lobby had won it for him in Washington.

It might well have been Feldman who co-ordinated behind-the-scenes activity to kill a potentially important Egyptian initiative.

Towards the end of 1965, when Eshkol was apparently the master of his own house, Israel's then Director of Military Intelligence, Meir Amit, received an invitation to visit Cairo for a top secret meeting with General Abdel Hakim Amer. As well as being the first vice-president of Egypt and deputy commander in chief of the Egyptian armed forces, he was Nasser's close personal friend, probably the Egyptian leader's best friend. The initiative was obviously Nasser's.

Though Ben-Gurion had lost the fight for Israeli nuclear weapons in Israel itself, the Zionist lobby won it for him in Washington.

At the time Egypt's economy was in trouble and Nasser hoped that he might be able to get Israel's help to secure American economic aid if he offered to reduce the scope of the Arab economic boycott of Israel and to allow Israeli goods to pass through the Suez Canal, provided they were not under the Israeli flag. There was also the prospect that, once started, the dialogue might lead to secret talks with Nasser himself.

Amit was in favour of accepting the invitation and, more to the point, so was Prime Minister Eshkol. He wanted Amit to be accompanied by Zvi Dinstein, the deputy minister of defence in charge of his department's economic affairs. But the invitation became a subject of discussion—doves in the “Yes” camp, hawks in the “No” camp. Mossad director Harel was among those fiercely opposed to the Cairo visit. At one point, Eshkol asked the Americans for their view. I imagine he was hoping for a positive response from Washington, to give him the courage to defy the objectors.

If it is reasonable to assume that the reply needed White House input, Feldman would have been responsible for handling it. On behalf of the lobby he represented, and Israel's hawks, Feldman had put great effort into promoting Nasser as the enemy Israel and the U.S. had in common. Giving Egypt a helping hand to improve its relationship with America was

therefore out of the question. On no account should the Israelis accept Amer's invitation.

So Amit and Dinstein did not go to Cairo. *And a real opportunity to do some high-level bridge building for peace was spurned by Israel.*

This indicated that Zionism's lobby in America was the ally of Israel's political and military hawks. The lobby was not then, and never would be, a force for moderation. (As I write I am recalling a comment Peres made to me in 1980. The problem in America, he said with some despair, was the lobby. "*It's not an Israel lobby, it's a Likud lobby.*")

Eshkol was now in an impossible position. Like Sharret before him, he was unable to seek an accommodation with the Arabs in large part because peace would confine the Jewish state to existing borders—not an option so far as Israel's hawks and their allies in America were concerned—and he was unwilling to make war for the purpose of bringing about the Greater Israel of Zionism's mad dream.

Readers who like to do their own detective work might like to keep this question in the back of their minds: *Could Prime Minister Eshkol have controlled his hawks and denied them the war they wanted if President Johnson had backed him and not them?*

It was developments on the Arab side that played into the hands of Israel's hawks and gave them the pretext they needed for their next war.

In Cairo on 13 January 1964, President Nasser convened the first ever summit of Arab leaders. Simply getting them to agree to turn up was a triumph for Nasser because they were as deeply divided as ever their predecessors had been; and, like their predecessors, they were plotting and scheming against each other. *Nasser's prime but unstated purpose was to get Arab agreement on two mechanisms to prevent another war with Israel.*

The first mechanism was needed to give him the means of controlling Syria's military leaders. Representing the Ba'ath party, they had come to power in a coup the previous March and were Nasser's most bitter rivals. They proclaimed themselves to be the real revolutionaries and portrayed Nasser as a phoney—because he was not interested in war to liberate Palestine. Nasser knew their talk of war was just that—talk, empty words; but he feared they might provoke a confrontation with Israel to get

it to attack and destroy Egypt's armed forces, leaving Syria, which would not put up more than a token fight, free to claim, with Nasser humiliated, the leadership of the Arab world (at least the radical or revolutionary part of it).

Nasser's first proposal was for the formation of a United Arab Command (UAC) with his own vice-president and deputy chief of staff as its head. Its stated purpose was military co-ordination to enable the frontline Arab states to resist further Israeli aggression. *Its real purpose was to give Nasser the means of preventing the Syrians from giving the Israelis a pretext for war.* The proposal was approved by all Arab leaders present.

Nasser's second proposal was for the establishment of an organisation to represent the Palestinians. It was to be called the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

The name implied that Arab leaders were at last intending to be serious about confronting Israel to restore the rights of the dispossessed Palestinians. But nothing could have been further from the truth. As time and events were to prove, the PLO established by the 1964 Cairo summit was Nasser's puppet; *brought into being to give Egypt's President his second control mechanism for preventing war.*

In reality the proposal to set up the PLO was Nasser's response to what his intelligence chiefs were telling him about what was happening in the Palestinian underground across the Arab world. From their safe haven in Kuwait, and against almost impossible odds, Arafat and Wazir had succeeded in creating a network of underground cells that were the embryo of an independent and authentic Palestine liberation movement—Fatah. (It now had a Central Committee of ten members which constituted the collective leadership). The odds against them succeeding in creating an underground network had been more or less impossible because the intelligence services of all the Arab states had been instructed to do whatever was necessary, by all means including torture, sabotage and murder, to prevent the Palestinians organising any kind of liberation or resistance movement.

On matters concerning the Palestinians, Nasser had two main fears.

The original PLO established by the 1964 Cairo summit was Nasser's puppet, intended to control and prevent any Arab initiatives that would lead to war.

The first was strategic. If an authentic and independent Palestine liberation movement did emerge from the underground, and if it resorted to guerrilla warfare, Israel's hawks would have the excuse they needed to escalate their reprisal attacks against the frontline Arab states all the way to war—a war that Nasser knew would end with another humiliation for the Arabs. In this nightmare scenario an authentic and independent Palestine liberation movement would be the tail that wagged the Arab dog. It could not be allowed to happen.

The second fear was personal. Nasser's intelligence chiefs were telling him that Arafat was intending to assassinate him. It was nonsense but Nasser believed it.

At the time the CIA and Britain's SIS were engaged in a turf war to determine which of them would have most influence as "advisers" with the intelligence services of the most important Arab states. But in their black propaganda campaign to discredit the underground Palestine liberation movement, in order to strengthen the resolve of Arab leaders to liquidate it, the CIA and SIS were joined in common cause. The line being pushed by their agents was that Arafat and his associates were rabid Marxist revolutionaries, hell-bent on overthrowing the existing Arab order. In reality Arafat and those who had joined with him to form the leadership of Fatah were anti-Communists. In the Western tradition of political labelling almost all of them would have been described as conservatives, some to the left of centre but most to the right of it. Wazir had made a trip to Communist or "Red" China in a desperate effort to secure political support and arms, but that did not make him a Communist; and, anyway, he got nothing but tea and sympathy. The Chinese laughed at him and said that without bases from which to fight, the Palestinians should forget about armed struggle.

The CIA and SIS propaganda campaign was a manifestation of the determination of the two major Western powers to prevent a regeneration of Palestinian nationalism. If it happened the Palestine file would have to be re-

opened, and that from London and Washington's point of view simply did not bear thinking about. It would mean that they would have to confront Zionism and insist that Israel play its part in righting the wrong done to the Palestinians by implementing UN Resolution 194. If Britain and America backed away from such a confrontation, they would be admitting by default that they did not have the will, out of fear of offending Zionism, to enforce the authority of the UN. They would be acknowledging that there were indeed two sets of rules governing the behaviour of nations, one for Israel and one for everyone else.

Nasser's calculation was that the establishment of his puppet PLO would destroy the underground Palestine liberation movement in-the-making. Its cadres, Nasser assumed, would defect en masse to the new organisation when they learned that it was to have its own army—the Palestine Liberation Army (PLA), with units to be stationed in all the frontline Arab states. Palestinians everywhere would conclude that Arab leaders were at last preparing to be serious about liberating Palestine by armed struggle. (When eventually he made his peace with Fatah's leaders, Nasser told them that one of the considerations that had led him to create the PLO was pressure from Dean Rusk when he was U.S. Secretary of State. Rusk had said there was very little the U.S. could do to control Israel's hawks, and that if the Palestinians resorted to armed struggle, Israel, no matter how puny Palestinian attacks might be, would use them as a pretext for an all-out war and there would be nothing the U.S. could do to prevent it. The Rusk message to Nasser was in effect. "If you want to avoid war, you must take all necessary steps to control the Palestinians. At all costs they must be prevented from taking initiatives of their own.")

Fatah's underground leadership decided to take a wait-and-see attitude, and it sent observers to the first meeting of the Palestine National Council (PNC). It convened in East Jerusalem four months after the first Arab summit and its job was to bring the PLO into existence. This first ever meeting of what would come to be regarded as the Palestinian parliament-in-exile was attended by 422 Palestinians who were, it was said, "elected" by groups and communities throughout the diaspora.

Fatah's most senior man there was the Central Committee's intellectual giant on the right, Khalad Hassan. He was "horrified" by what he witnessed. The delegates had not been assembled for any real discussion about policy and objectives. Their presence had been required to rubber-stamp the programme and documents drawn up by Nasser's puppet master, Ahmed Shukairy, the first Chairman of the PLO.

Shukairy had been a member of Haj Amin's entourage and was a passionate Palestinian nationalist who was prepared to serve any Arab master to enhance his own prestige, in the belief that that would enable him to advance the Palestinian cause. Above all he was a demagogue. He owes his place in history to his threat to "drive the Jews into the sea". It was the greatest propaganda gift Zionism ever received. As presented by Zionism's propaganda machine, it was (and still remains) the statement that best summed up the real and unchangeable objective of Palestinian nationalism. (It was to become the cross on which the Zionists would seek to nail Arafat after he took over Nasser's discredited puppet PLO and turned it, warts and all, into an authentic Palestinian institution and began to move it in the direction of compromise with Israel).

The single most important document rubber-stamped by that first PNC was the Palestinian National Charter. It committed the puppet PLO to armed struggle for the liberation of all of Palestine. The destruction or at least the dismantling of the Jewish state was implied, and the Charter commitment was therefore a more refined statement of Shukairy's threat to "drive the Jews into the sea".

It was the Egyptian PLO that embedded the commitment to the destruction of Israel in the Palestinian National Charter. That and Shukairy's threat to "drive the Jews into the sea" were the greatest propaganda gifts Zionism ever received.

Nasser was not disturbed because he knew it was a hopelessly unrealistic statement of intent and anyway, he was not intending to let the Palestinians fight. For the moment his only concern was to have the Palestinians believing that he and other Arab leaders were serious about liberating Palestine by fighting and wanted the Palestinians to play their

part as serving soldiers in the PLA. The PLA was to be, like the Arab armies, controlled by the UAC, with Nasser himself at the top of the chain of command.

In theory Nasser now had his two control mechanisms for preventing war—the UAC and the PLO. His hope—it was hardly a strategy—was that he had won himself time to prevail upon the international community, the U.S. in particular, to oblige Israel to offer the Palestinians something. If Israel had been required to go a good way to implementing Resolution 194, Nasser would have closed down the puppet PLO and the PLA, and eliminated Shukairy if necessary. Shukairy knew that.

For a while it seemed that Nasser's plan to put Fatah out of business would succeed. As Arafat and his leadership colleagues confessed to me many years later, they lost most of their cadres. "Up to 90 percent of them defected to the puppet PLO. They said they had taken an oath of loyalty to Palestine, not to an organisation and they were looking forward to serving as soldiers in the PLA."²

Defection on such a scale reduced Fatah's Central Committee in Kuwait to being a head and a heart without a body. The policy debate which followed came very close to tearing the collective leadership apart and destroying it. (If Kuwait had not been willing to provide them with a safe haven, a place in which they could earn their living by day and discuss their organisation's policy options by night, Fatah's leaders could not have come together to form a collective leadership. There was no other place in the Arab world where they could have assembled and survived. After the puppet PLO was established, Nasser asked Kuwait to close Fatah's office and other facilities there. Officially Kuwait's rulers said they would, but unofficially they didn't).

Prior to the creation of the puppet PLO, eight of the ten members of Fatah's leadership—all but Arafat and Wazir—had been opposed to the idea of armed struggle by the Palestinians alone. The starting point of the majority's analysis was recognition of the underlying truth of the overall situation on the Arab side—Nasser and the other Arab leaders, left to their own devices, were never going to fight Israel to liberate Palestine. That

being so, there was no military option for the Palestinians alone. If Fatah resorted to armed struggle, it would find itself at war with the security services of the frontline Arab states as well as Israel. It would be liquidated and that would be the end of hope for the liberation of Palestine.

The liberation strategy favoured by the majority of Fatah's underground leaders before the creation of Nasser's puppet PLO forced them down a road they did not want to take was explained to me by its principal architect, Khalad Hassan. (But for the crisis of survival they were facing, he and not Arafat would have emerged as Fatah's leader and, subsequently, the chairman of the authentic PLO).

Khalad told me:

The first thing we did was to examine Nasser's declared strategy. His slogan was that Arab unity was the key to the liberation of Palestine. We came to know that even if he had succeeded in uniting the Arabs, he did not intend to confront Israel by force. In his view as we came to know it, unity would give the Arab regimes the necessary political and economic bargaining power to force America to use its influence on Israel. In principle we agreed with Nasser that Arab unity was the key to liberating Palestine. But we believed the unity Nasser was seeking would not come. Nasser was talking about the unity of the Arab regimes, and it was obvious to us that the regimes were too divided to be united.

Our conclusion was that unity had to come from the bottom up—from the people. So we asked ourselves a question: What was the issue or cause that no Arab could be against? Answer: the liberation of Palestine. For all Arab people liberating Palestine was a matter of honour and dignity. It was even sacred duty. So we reversed Nasser's slogan. We said that liberating Palestine was the key to Arab unity. And that gave us our strategy.

Through open debate, and using all the propaganda methods at our disposal, we intended to provoke and capture the imagination of the Palestinian and Arab masses. We thought we could create a new atmosphere in which no Arab leader would dare to ignore the subject of

liberating Palestine in his public speeches. Whatever they might think in private, we knew that Arab leaders could not speak against the liberation of Palestine in public. So that gave us our chance. Then, when the Arab leaders were coming under pressure for action from their own masses, we would engage them in dialogue. We would ask them to join us in planning a co-ordinated strategy for the actual liberation of our homeland. *We intended to ask for their support not simply because they had a duty to help the Palestinians, but because they had a responsibility to prevent Zionism from dominating the region.* If the leaders agreed to work with us there would be hope for all Arabs, including the Palestinians. If they turned us down we would lead a confrontation between the Palestinian and Arab masses and the regimes. And the aim of this confrontation would be to provoke a real Arab revolution that would end with the coming to power of regimes which would have the will to fight Israel.¹⁰

It was a strategy for a long-haul struggle to be pursued by democratic means. The two things ruled out were compromise with the Jewish state and independent Palestinian military action. When two decades later I asked Khalad Hassan why the idea of compromise with Israel had not even been considered in their early policy debates, he replied: “Liberation movements, political parties and even nations are no different from individuals. They have to pass from childhood through adolescence to maturity. We do not have the wisdom to face reality in our genes. It is the product of a learning experience in which the head has to overcome the heart.”

But after the coming into being of the puppet PLO, it was Arafat and Wazir—previously the minority of two on Fatah’s Central Committee—who determined the course of events on their side. Their arguments could no longer be refuted. The only way to keep the idea of struggle alive was to struggle. If Fatah could mount hit-and-run attacks against Israel—no matter how puny the attacks were—Israel’s predictable military response would convey a very important message to the Palestinian and Arab masses. What message? There was one Palestinian organisation that was prepared to fight Israel, was fighting Israel. And then, in due course, the Palestinians

would come to see that they had been wrong to place their faith in Shukairy's PLO.

With the puppet PLO established and capturing the imagination of the Palestinian masses, even Khalad Hassan could not bring himself to argue against the need for Fatah to resort to guerrilla action. It was now clear to him that unless Fatah acted, the Palestinians would have to settle for whatever the Arab regimes might manage to extract from Israel, and then only if the major powers were prepared to put real pressure on the Zionists. What would that amount to? A few Palestinians might eventually be allowed to return to their homes. The rest might receive some compensation. But the Palestinians would be finished as a people with an identity, a culture and an existence of their own. *Only by resorting to military action could Fatah demonstrate that the Palestinians would not be denied a real say in decisions about their future.*

Khalad Hassan's reluctant decision to support Arafat and Wazir's way, and to secure majority support for it, was confirmed by a secret discussion he had with Shukairy, to establish whether or not Shukairy had any freedom for manoeuvre. If he was something less than a complete puppet, it was possible that Fatah could come to some understanding with his PLO, for the purpose of changing it from within. Shukairy was honest in his conversation with Khalad Hassan. He said, "I was brought in to screw you." When Khalad told me that, I asked him if he was paraphrasing what Shukairy had said. He replied: "No, my dear. Those were exactly his words. 'I was brought in to screw you.'"¹¹

So it was that Fatah—its military strength at the time was seven trained fighters including Arafat himself and five rifles—took on the might of Israel and the security services of the frontline Arab states—those, as it turned out, of Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon. Syria, as we shall see, was playing a very disingenuous and dangerous game of its own, in the hope of replacing Egypt as the leader of the so-called revolutionary Arab world.

When Abu Jihad (Wazir) was recalling events some 20 years later, he had a big smile on his face. He said to me: "*We were confident because we knew we had the best recruiting sergeants in the world— Israel's military hawks!*"

In reality, and as Abu Jihad was acknowledging, Fatah's survival and growth strategy as conceived by him and Arafat depended entirely on Israel being arrogant and stupid enough to respond to Fatah's pin pricks with massive reprisal attacks that would give the authentic Palestine liberation movement the oxygen of publicity and thus credibility.

As it happened, the first military operations against Israel were launched in the name of Al-Assifa—"The Storm"—not Fatah. This was a ploy to mislead the Arab intelligence services. Khalad Hassan said: "We calculated that our ploy would win us time to establish ourselves by causing the Arab intelligence services to look for an organisation that did not exist!"

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In the first three months of 1965 Arafat and his Fatah fighters carried out ten (pin-prick) sabotage missions in Israel—seven from Jordan, three from the Gaza Strip. Initially, because of an Arab ban on reporting them, Fatah's military activities did not result in the publicity needed to capture the imagination and thus the support of the Palestinian and Arab masses.

It was, in fact, a threatening speech by Prime Minister Eshkol that let the Assifa (Fatah) cat out of the bag in which the Arab regimes were trying to keep it. Eshkol put the Arab states on notice that they would be held accountable for the activities of "the terrorists". On a regular basis thereafter Fatah was given a helping hand by Kol Yisrael (the Voice of Israel), whose Arabic news service carried reports on the activities of the "terrorists". The combination of Israel's confirmation that something was happening, plus the silence of the state-controlled Arab media, caused questions to be asked on the Arab street. Who were these Palestinians who dared to attack Israel? Did they have the secret support of Nasser and other Arab leaders—or were they on their own? Even some Palestinians who had put their trust in Nasser and Shukairy's PLO were beginning to express admiration for those who acted while others talked. But who were these crazy Palestinians?

By now Fatah's leaders were using cover names for security reasons. Abu means "father of"; thus Khalil Wazir's *nomme de guerre* was Abu Jihad, Jihad being the name of his first son. And *Intissar*, Khalil's childhood

sweetheart and now his wife, became Um (“mother of”) Jihad. Arafat, unmarried but not the homosexual he was subsequently alleged to be by Zionism’s propaganda machine, became Abu Amar—“The Builder”.

Eshkol’s threat caused Nasser to panic. On his instruction, the deputy Commander-in-Chief of the Egyptian Army issued an Order of the Day to the UAC. “I knew about the Order as soon as it was issued”, Arafat told me, “because Sweidani showed me a copy of it.”¹³ (Ahmed Sweidani was the Director of Syrian Military Intelligence and a true believer in the need for guerrilla warfare against Israel. He had assisted Arafat’s men to carry out their first attacks. Arafat and Abu Jihad were now living in Damascus, in an apartment Abu Jihad had taken. Their presence in Damascus—but not that of their organisation—was tolerated because events as they were developing suggested that a time was coming when Syria would be able to possess and play the Palestinian card for its own ends and make Arafat their puppet). *The Order to the UAC required the armies of all the frontline Arab states to prevent Palestinians attacking Israel.* And it required the intelligence services of those states to leave no stone unturned in the search for information about Assifa.

Nasser was not the only one to panic. The Soviet Union did, too. It told Nasser (who subsequently told Fatah’s leaders) that the idea of a Palestine liberation movement belonged to “folklore”, and that he should act with speed and by any means to crush the Palestinian “cowboys”.¹⁴ The men in Moscow were terrified that continued Palestinian military operations, no matter how puny they were in the scale of things, would give Israel’s hawks the pretext for war—a war that could only result in defeat and humiliation for the Arabs and a terrible loss of face and credibility for the Soviets. If the loss of face and credibility proved unacceptable, the Soviet Union could find itself in a nuclear confrontation with America. That’s what the men in the Kremlin really feared. (As had President Kennedy).

Hundreds of Palestinian refugees in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon were arrested and tortured for information. Abu Jihad recalled: “Some had their fingers broken. Others were made to walk on glass. And some had the soles of their feet beaten with sticks until the nerves were exposed in their

bleeding flesh... They paid a terrible price for our decision to give Fatah security cover by the device of calling ourselves Assifa.” ¹⁵

In most cases those who were tortured had no information to give. Those who had been members of Fatah’s secret underground cells and defected to Shukairy’s puppet PLO had no knowledge of Assifa. But little by little the intelligence services of Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon were putting the pieces together.

By September, with Abu Jihad away in Europe trying to buy small arms and explosives with what was left of the money Arafat had made from his construction business in Kuwait, Lebanon’s security services, working to their UAC brief, were closing in for the kill. They were aware that Assifa’s operational headquarters was somewhere in Beirut. The only thing not known was the identity and location of Assifa’s chief of staff. Amazingly, he was a she—Um Jihad. (That was Fatah’s best-kept secret until its leaders talked to me two decades later). Um Jihad’s apartment in Beirut was Fatah’s military headquarters.

Years later she told me: “I did everything. I prepared the military communiqués. I received the leaders of the groups to give them their orders for each military operation. I was the contact between one group and another. You can say I took care of all the needs of the fighters. I was even the one who gave them their weapons.”¹⁶

Tipped off by Sweidani that Lebanon’s security services had located Assifa’s operational headquarters, Arafat took a late night taxi from Damascus to Beirut to extract Um Jihad. If he had arrived 20 minutes later she would have been captured or killed.

And thus it was that what passed for Fatah’s operational headquarters was moved from Beirut to Damascus. In retrospect it can be said that if Syria had not been willing to give Arafat, Abu Jihad and their small band of fighters sanctuary, the authentic though still embryonic Palestine liberation movement would have been finished. Not only put out of business but totally destroyed—on Nasser’s instructions.

In reality Syria’s leaders (from coup to coup) were no different from their counterparts in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon. *They, too, had absolutely no intention of going to war with Israel to liberate Palestine.* But they did want

to possess and play the Palestinian card for their own ends—outbidding Nasser for leadership of the so-called revolutionary Arab world. Nasser had his puppet PLO; the Syrians would make Fatah their puppet.

It was Arafat himself who predicted exactly how events would unfold in Syria. He was expecting a change of regime there by means of another coup, and he said: “If certain people come to power they will try to kill me because they know I will not be their puppet.”¹⁷ (When they had come together in Kuwait to form the Central Committee, the one thing all ten of Fatah’s founding fathers had agreed was what their guiding principle had to be—real and complete independence of decision-making, not being the tool of any Arab regime, and not playing one regime off against another. They were completely aware from the beginning that if Fatah sought to exploit the divisions in the Arab world, it would never secure the support needed for the Palestinians to advance their cause.)

Arafat made the prophecy quoted above to Father Ibrahim Iyad. A Palestinian by birth and a Roman Catholic priest by calling, he was the only living soul to whom Arafat ever confessed his doubts, especially those about whether it was right to subject their people to the suffering that would be inevitable, given the impossible odds against them, if they continued their struggle by military means. Prior to the first of many confrontations with the man who was positioning himself to become Syria’s dictator, Hafez al-Assad, Arafat made two visits to a monastery on the outskirts of Beirut to share his doubts with his father confessor.

When I talked with Father Iyad many years later, he said: “I must tell you that Arafat was not a naïve man. He said to me: ‘*Father, I know very well that by fighting we cannot recover Palestine... We must fight to tell the world that we exist. We must fight to tell the world that there is a Palestinian people. We must fight in order to stir the conscience of the people of the world. If we fail to persuade the people of the world that our cause is just, we shall be lost, finished.*’ He asked me if I agreed with him. I said I did with all my heart. And I blessed him.”¹⁸

If the Syrian regime which came to power in the coup of February 1966 had had its way, Arafat would have been dead and buried by the summer of that year. And, probably, the idea of regenerating Palestinian

nationalism and the achievement of at least a measure of justice for his dispossessed people would have been dead and buried, too.

The guiding light in Syria's new leadership was its minister of defence, former Air Force Commander Assad. He was one step away—one more coup away—from becoming Syria's Stalin-like president for 30 years. (He was also, as we shall see, a collaborator, on occasions, with Israel's warlords.) Assad knew that to give credibility to Syria's propaganda claim that it was the only true champion of the Palestinian cause and was seriously committed to the liberation of Palestine by armed struggle, it would not be enough for Syria to be seen to be giving Fatah a safe haven and guaranteeing the organisation's survival. Assad knew that Syria would also have to be seen to be allowing Fatah's fighters to attack Israel.

He understood that would mean playing with fire, because it would give Israel's hawks the pretext to hit Syria with massive reprisal attacks that might well be escalated to full-scale regional war. But Assad believed that control of Fatah would enable Syria to reduce the risk of war. With Fatah nothing more than a puppet, Syria could sanction, and take credit for, a sufficient amount of guerrilla activity to serve its own pan-Arab propaganda purposes, while having the ability to shut down Fatah's operations whenever it was necessary to avoid giving Israel the pretext for going over the brink.

Though Assad was ruthless in the extreme (events would show that he was prepared to kill his own people in quite large numbers to suppress internal dissent), he was hoping to change Fatah's leadership by non-violent means. The plan was for the Syrians to put their own man inside Fatah and then assist him to take over. Arafat was to be eliminated only if he refused to play second fiddle to Syria's puppet master, Ahmad Jabril. Like Arafat, Jabril was an engineer. He had studied for his degree at the Syrian Military Academy where he was recruited as an agent for Syrian military intelligence. In 1961 he formed the Palestine Liberation Front (PLF).

Very soon after the February coup, Jabril approached Arafat with the suggestion that they should merge their two organisations. Arafat agreed without hesitation to discuss the idea. He knew that Jabril was Syria's man, but he calculated that he could more easily contain the threat of Syrian interference that Jabril represented if the PLF was in association

with Fatah. As President Johnson was to say, it is not clever to have your enemy “pissing on the tent from the outside” when you can have him “inside pissing out.”

The two Palestinians did agree in principle that their organisations should merge, but Syria’s stooge was not satisfied with Arafat’s suggestion that his PLF should have only one seat on the proposed joint Military Council. Jabril demanded nothing less than the military leadership. He justified his claim on the grounds that it was he and not Arafat who would be delivering Syria’s support for their struggle. When Arafat made it clear that he had no intention of allowing a Syrian agent to run Fatah, Jabril turned to his controllers for fresh instructions. The outcome of his discussions with them was a decision and a plan to kill Arafat.

It failed only because Sweidani, chief of staff in the new Syrian regime, warned Arafat at the last minute to stay away from the meeting he was to have with Jabril and at which he, Arafat, was to be shot by the man Jabril was going to send in his place. The man Arafat then sent to represent him was shot and killed instead, as was Yousef Urabi, a Palestinian in the Syrian military who had been set up by it to mediate between Arafat and Jabril. (Urabi was, actually, one of Abu Jihad’s most trusted friends and was about to join Fatah’s military command).

For giving Arafat the tip-off that saved his life, and then for giving evidence on his behalf, Sweidani was himself marked for murder. He beat the bullet by fleeing to China.

Arafat’s need for a witness (for Sweidani to say that Arafat was with him when the shooting happened), arose when the Syrian regime arrested and jailed him, Abu Jihad and the other 20 who made up Fatah’s military establishment. Arafat was charged with the two murders; and but for the accidental death of Abu Jihad’s baby son, Nidal, Arafat would have been hanged.

While Um Jihad was holding a crisis meeting with two Fatah colleagues in her Damascus apartment, Nidal crawled to the balcony and fell several floors to his death. Through a neighbour whom she knew to be very well connected to the regime, Um Jihad pleaded for her husband to be released from prison for long enough to bury Nidal.

Abu Jihad buried his son and then talked his way to an appointment with the minister of the interior. That won him another 24 hours of freedom. He used it to lobby a number of very senior Syrian army officers for an appointment with Defence Minister Assad.

“Nobody will ever know how much effort went into arranging that meeting,” Abu Jihad recalled. “When I entered Assad’s office he remained seated at his desk. His eyes didn’t move. They were hard and cold. His handshake was also very cold. The whole atmosphere was cold. It was like being in a refrigerator.” Apparently the temperature did not rise during the three hours of their conversation. “Point by point I explained to the future President of Syria why Arafat and Fatah could not have been involved in the murder of Urabi.”¹⁹

Abu Jihad’s own efforts were then supported and supplemented by the Central Committee members in Kuwait. Led by Khalad Hassan a number of them flew to Damascus to make representations of their own. Arafat was the last to be released. Why in the end did Defence Minister Assad decide against hanging him? Because of the lobbying efforts of his leadership colleagues, there were simply too many influential Palestinians and Syrians who knew the truth—that Arafat was innocent and had been framed. By Assad. (It was not the last time Assad plotted to have Arafat removed from the scene. As Syria’s President, he would spend the rest of his life trying and failing to destroy Arafat as the symbol of authentic Palestinian nationalism and, from the mid 1970s, the advocate of compromise with Israel. My guess is that President Assad went to his own grave regretting that he had lacked the courage of his brutal conviction in the summer of 1966).

The fact that Arafat had been prepared to die rather than become the puppet of an Arab regime had a profound consequence. All of his leadership colleagues, including his critics, concluded that Abu Amar was without equal as the defender and protector of the independence of Palestinian decision-making. And that was to be the key to Arafat’s emergence, with Khalad Hassan’s blessing, as, first, the unchallengeable leader of Fatah and then the unchallengeable leader of the Fatah-dominated, authentic PLO. *The one thing all Palestinian nationalist leaders*

could and did agree was that Arafat was “a man of cause”—one who would never allow the Palestine liberation movement to become the puppet of any Arab regime. And that in turn was why he became the symbol of authentic Palestinian nationalism.

Because of his insistence that an authentic Palestine liberation movement had to be democratic in words and deeds, Khalad Hassan had not wanted Arafat to be the leader. Khalad had feared that Arafat, because of his terrible temper and his dominating personality and ways, would become just another Arab tyrant; and that under him Palestine would become just another Arab police state—something, in Khalad’s view, not worth struggling for. Though he would remain Arafat’s biggest and most powerful internal critic when he thought he was wrong, and also his most important defender when he thought he was right, Khalad’s view of his leader on reflection was this: “Arafat was devoted to the cause in such a complete way that it made you want to follow him.”²⁰

When Arafat was released from prison, prudence dictated that he should take his leave of Syria—at least for a while. Disguised as a corporal in the Syrian army, and leading a Fatah Unit of 14 men, he crossed into northern Israel. His purpose, he told me, was to find out how long Fatah units could operate inside Israel if they were well organised, well briefed and well supplied. The moment came when, to avoid capture by the Israelis, Arafat had to cross into Lebanon and hide there. He was arrested by a Lebanese army patrol and was soon back in an Arab prison. This one in Beirut.

Arafat gave a false name and denied that he was the leader of the group. For the next three weeks he was tortured close to the point of death. “I knew they could kill me”, he recalled, “but I also knew they would never break me.”²¹

In the end, the Lebanese did discover that Yasser Arafat was the prisoner they had so nearly killed. When his torturers failed to break him, a senior Lebanese security official made contact with his counterpart in the Syrian Directorate of Military Intelligence. From the information the two intelligence services exchanged, Arafat was identified. Abu Jihad said: “That’s how we discovered where Arafat was. We got the tip-off from a

friend in Syrian Military Intelligence. Until then we were thinking that Arafat had been killed by the Israelis.”²²

Arafat said: “When the Lebanese discovered that I was Yasser Arafat, I was taken to meet the very top intelligence people. We had a good conversation for five hours. I told them many things they did not know. I told them why it was that we Palestinians had no alternative but to struggle in order to fix our identity. *I also told them why it was that those Arabs who could not see that Zionism was a threat to the whole Arab world were very foolish and very stupid.*”²³

Arafat added: “I made some very good friends at that meeting. Later these same people, Lebanon’s intelligence chiefs, told me that it was from our meeting that they began to respect our movement and me as a person.”²⁴

A free man, Arafat returned to Damascus.

There, he and Abu Jihad reviewed the situation. They had good reason to be satisfied. Fatah had survived. The security services of Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon had failed to destroy it. And the Syrians had failed to make it their puppet. More to the point, because the Syrians wanted to pose as the only true champions of the Palestinian cause, was that they would be obliged by their own logic to sanction some Fatah operations against Israel.

As an organised strike force Fatah was still a small and puny outfit and its military operations were insignificant; but that was not the point. Because Fatah had survived the idea of an independent Palestine liberation movement was alive and capturing the imagination of the Palestinian and Arab masses—so much so that the Palestinian tail was beginning to wag the Arab dog. *Nasser was beginning to lose control of events on the Arab side.*

For Nasser the situation could not have been worse. His original strategy for preventing war was in ruins.

His first control mechanism, the UAC, had failed. It had functioned only briefly as the institution through which the security services of Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon had co-ordinated their efforts to try to liquidate Fatah. Despite their agreement in principle at the first Arab

summit to create the UAC, no Arab leader had been willing in practice to have his armed forces under the command, ultimately, of an Egyptian. In reality the idea of a united Arab military command was as fanciful as the idea of political unity at regime level.

Nasser's second control mechanism, his puppet PLO, had also failed. It had not prevented the emergence of an authentic Palestine liberation movement.

The irony is that it was Nasser's attempt to re-impose control over events on the Arab side in order to prevent war that gave Israel's military hawks the opportunity to set a trap for him—with Syria's help.

There have been very many accounts of the Six Day War but, so far as I am aware, none of them ever addressed the question which is the key to understanding how the Israelis set their trap for Nasser. The question is this: *Why did Israel refrain from hitting Syria with reprisal attacks when it was the only frontline Arab state giving shelter, encouragement and some assistance to Fatah?*

The question has its own special context.

In an effort to reduce the danger of being hit by Israeli reprisal attacks, the Syrians insisted that most of Fatah's attacks should be made by infiltrations into Israel through Jordan. To facilitate this, Syrian Military Intelligence employed a number of strategies including, for example, bribing the commander of the Jordanian guard-post in El-Hamma to turn a blind eye when Fatah commandos wanted to cross the Yarmuk River. But they were strategies which fooled nobody who needed to know what was really happening, least of all Israel's intelligence community. It knew that Syria was Fatah's base and that the Syrian regime, if it wanted to do so, could put Fatah out of business in days if not hours. Also to be noted is that while the IDF was not attacking Syria, it was punishing Jordan.

So why did Israel refrain from attacking Syria? In his book *Strike Terror* the Israeli writer, Ehud Yari, said this was one of the questions which "any future historian dealing with the period will have to answer."²⁵

The answer is to be found in the events as they actually unfolded.

On 4 November 1966, Egypt signed a Defence Agreement with Syria.

It stated that aggression against one of them would be regarded as an attack on both. Naturally Zionist propaganda presented it as a belligerent step and yet more proof that the Arabs were preparing to destroy Israel. In reality Nasser was desperately seeking to secure a measure of control over Syrian military dispositions and policy. He was far from convinced that Syria would come to Egypt's aid if it was attacked by Israel but, to secure a measure of control over Syrian policy, he was committing Egypt to go to Syria's aid if it was attacked. The previous May, while Arafat and his military colleagues were prisoners in Damascus, Nasser had discussed his fears with the Soviets. They had pressed him to make a supreme effort to establish a new relationship with the Syrians—as a means of controlling them. Nasser said that any effort by him would not succeed unless the Soviets leaned on the Syrians. They did and in June the Syrians announced their interest in an accommodation with Nasser. It was, actually, the last thing the Syrians wanted. But they could not afford to offend their arms supplier. In October, Cairo and Damascus exchanged ambassadors. Then came the Defence Agreement.

Nine days later Israel launched a massive and devastating reprisal attack—not against Syria as everyone had been expecting, but against Jordan.

The IDF's target was the village of Sammu, south of Hebron on the West Bank. Its 4,000 inhabitants, all of them Palestinian refugees, relied for their protection on the local (Jordanian) police. According to the IDF spokesman the villagers were being punished for sheltering terrorists who had planted mines on the Israeli side of the border.

The attack began at 5.30 in the morning with an artillery barrage to cover the advance of 4,000 Israeli soldiers in jeeps and armoured cars supported by five Patton tanks. After the village had been surrounded and isolated, IDF demolition teams set about the task of dynamiting 46 houses and the hospital. The tanks then moved on to the police station and levelled it. The mosque was also fired on.

At 6.15 some 20 Jordanian trucks and a few armoured cars were despatched from Hebron to relieve Sammu. They didn't make it. The IDF

had prepared an ambush. The Jordanian casualties were 21 dead and 37 wounded.

Jordan's Military Command then ordered four Hawker Hunter jet fighters to intervene. As King Hussein was later to put it, they were "set upon" by Israeli Mirages. One Hawker Hunter was shot down and the other three returned to their base. Jordan's air force was small, not much more than a token, and preservation had to be the name of the game.

Israel's political and military establishments knew that Jordan's security services were doing their best to prevent Palestinian commandos operating in and from Jordanian territory and that Hussein, as a consequence, was perceived—at least by the Palestinian half of those he ruled—as Israel's policeman. So Israel's political and military establishments could not have been surprised when the attack on Sammu provoked large-scale anti-Hussein unrest throughout Jordan. In the light of his secret dialogues with Israelis, Hussein felt personally betrayed by them. They had expressed Israel's commitment to the safety and stability of Jordan. *The attack on Sammu proved that Israeli assurances were worthless.* (The previous June the king had demonstrated the firmness of his own resolve by personally ordering the closure of Shukairy's PLO offices in Jordan).

At the UN all but one of the 15 members of the Security Council voted to condemn Israel in strong terms. The U.S. representative, Ambassador Goldberg, described Israel's action as "inexcusable". Only New Zealand, for reasons unknown, was unwilling to criticise Israel on this occasion. Its representative was instructed to abstain when the vote was taken. (The Johnson administration probably did not want the Security Council to be unanimous and New Zealand was probably doing the U.S. a favour for something in return).

King Hussein was not alone in feeling that he had been betrayed. Two Israelis—Defence Minister Eshkol and Chief of Staff Rabin—had a similar sense of grievance. The scale of the attack on Sammu—the first massively disproportionate reprisal of the Eshkol or post-Ben-Gurion era—far exceeded the plan of action Rabin had proposed to the cabinet. After the attack he admitted that Eshkol had good reason to be displeased with him;

and he would later say: “*We had neither political nor military reasons to arrive at confrontation with Jordan or to humiliate Hussein.*”²⁶

The only person to whom Eshkol expressed his bitterness toward the IDF’s leaders was his wife, Miriam. In splendid contrast to her mild-mannered husband who was a conciliator by nature, she was belligerent and confrontational and, according to Avi Shlaim, terrified his aides. She expected the generals to respect her husband’s moderate line toward the Arabs and it was said that generals used to quake in their boots when she was around. She kept a diary and in it she noted what her husband had said to her during the controversy over the attack on Sammu. “*Write down that, unlike my predecessor, I am not the representative of the army in the government.*”²⁷

On one level the attack on Sammu was just another manifestation of gut-Zionism’s policy of using brute force to teach the Arabs lessons. But there was much more to it so far as the IDF’s hawks were concerned—*those who were looking for a way to provoke Nasser into giving them the pretext to go to war with Egypt.* For them the main purpose of the attack on Sammu was to test the Arab response in general and to get the answer to one question in particular. It was essentially the same question that Jordan’s Prime Minister, Wasfi Tal, had asked while the Israelis were attacking Sammu—“*Where’s the air cover Cairo promised?*”²⁸

According to the defence plan of the UAC, the Egyptian Air Force was supposed to have provided Jordan with the air support it needed when the Israelis attacked. The fact that Wasfi Tal asked the question indicated that his government hoped that there was still some life in the UAC. Egypt’s no-show was the proof that it was dead. And Israel’s military hawks had the answer to their question. Out of fear of giving them the pretext for war with Egypt, Nasser was not going to the defence of the other frontline Arab states when they were attacked by Israel—if he could avoid doing so without an unacceptable loss of face.

From here the name of the game so far as the IDF’s hawks were concerned was creating a situation in which Nasser, to avoid losing his credibility as the leader of the (so-called) revolutionary Arab world, would have

to be seen to be going to the defence of an Arab state under attack or seriously threatened by Israel.

To assist complete understanding of what was really happening at the time, I offer the following summary of the problem Israel's military hawks were in the process of discussing and solving.

Because of the universal condemnation Israel had attracted for its naked aggression in 1956, there was no way it could be seen to be initiating another war with Egypt. If it did there was a real possibility of an international clamour to have Israel branded and sanctioned as a pariah state. So to have the war they wanted, and also to reduce the risk of Israel being subjected after victory to irresistible pressure to withdraw from occupied territory on anything but its own terms, Israel's hawks had to contrive a situation in which they could claim that the IDF had made a pre-emptive strike against Egypt to forestall an imminent attack which, if not pre-empted, would threaten the very existence of the Jewish state.

It was always going to be a lie because Nasser had absolutely no intention of attacking Israel. So the challenge for gut-Zionism's masters of deception—how to give the lie the appearance of truth—was a big one.

In retrospect it can be seen that the countdown to the 1967 war started on 4 November the previous year, the day Egypt and Syria signed their Defence Agreement, in the hope, on Nasser's part, that it would enable him to prevent war.

The UAC had never functioned as Nasser had intended because of Arab rivalry; and because it had never functioned, Nasser had not regarded himself as being in default of Egypt's obligations when he failed to provide air cover to assist the Jordanians to repel the IDF's attack on Sammu. But now, with the new Defence Agreement, he was irrevocably committed. *If Israel attacked Syria, he would have to give at least the impression that Egypt was preparing to intervene to defend Syria.* Doing nothing was no longer an option.

On 7 April 1967, in the course of a seven-hour battle, Israeli Mirages shot down six Syrian MiG 21s. The following day, under the headline SHOCK FOR SYRIA, a front-page editorial in *The Jerusalem Post* said: "The significant new departure in Friday's battle against the Syrians

was the fact that Israeli planes had specific authority to pursue attackers as deeply into Syrian territory as they considered useful and that they were simultaneously sent out to patrol Syrian airspace as far as Damascus, in order to head off the planes before they reached Israel.”

The real reason for the presence of Israeli Mirages in the sky over Damascus was something else. Their main purpose was to make Syria’s leaders feel very vulnerable and very frightened. The IDF’s message to the Syrian regime was: “You are at our mercy even in your own capital.” The message was underlined by the fact that two of six MiG 21s shot were shot down over Damascus, with the debris falling on the outskirts of the city. It was a very public humiliation for Syria’s leaders. Khalad Hassan said to me: “I think it is not unreasonable to speculate that they ordered a vast supply of underwear!”

The clash of 7 April was the climax to weeks of provocation by the IDF on the Syrian front.

To provoke the Syrians to shoot, the IDF had resorted to Dayan’s tried and tested strategy of stealing Syrian land in the DMZ by ploughing. (When Bunche negotiated the 1949 Armistice Agreement between Israel and Syria, it was discovered that there were places where it was impossible to draw an undisputed border line of the map. To solve this problem Bunche came up with the idea of the DMZ—De-militarised Zone. The UN was responsible for them. Everybody who owned land in them, Arabs and Jews, was allowed to farm. No military force from either side was permitted to enter them. Disputes were to be resolved by the MAC—Mixed Armistice Commission.)

One of two most authoritative accounts of what actually happened in the DMZ during March and April of 1967 was provided by Dayan himself, posthumously.

Five years before his death from stomach cancer in 1981, Dayan had a number of private conversations with a young Israeli reporter, Rami Tal. The substance of them was published after Dayan’s death in a weekend supplement of *Yediot Aharonot*. At a point in one of their conversations, Tal had trotted out the Israeli propaganda line that the Golan Heights had had to be taken because the Syrians were sitting on top of them and menacing

Israeli settlements. Dayan interrupted him to say: *“Never mind that. After all, I know how at least 80 percent of the clashes started. In my opinion, more than 80 percent, but let’s talk about the 80 percent. It went this way: We would send a tractor to plough some place where it wasn’t possible to do anything in the demilitarised area, and we knew in advance that the Syrians would start to shoot. If they didn’t shoot, we would tell the tractor to advance further, until in the end the Syrians would get annoyed and shoot. And then we would use artillery and later the air force also, and that’s how it was.”*²⁹

The other most authoritative account was given to me by Brian Urquhart. At the time we had the conversation from which I am about to quote, he had retired from his post of Under-Secretary-General of the UN with the responsibility for conflict management. This most remarkable Englishman served four secretary-generals and was, in fact, the world’s number one trouble-shooter. (Because of his matchless grasp of international affairs and his integrity, Urquhart was respected by all leaders on both sides of all the conflicts he managed. And he never pulled his punches in behind-closed-doors exchanges with leaders. On one famous private occasion Prime Minister Begin said he should not talk with Arafat. Urquhart looked Begin in the eye and said: “Mr. Prime Minister, I am the servant of the international community, don’t you dare to tell me who I can and cannot talk to!”)

Recalling the events of March and April 1967, Urquhart said to me:

The Syrians were looking down on the DMZ from the Golan Heights. For some time they didn’t realise what the Israelis were up to. Then it became obvious. The Syrians noticed that each time an Israeli tractor ploughed a field, it ploughed one more furrow. As a consequence the Israeli fields got bigger and the Arab fields got smaller. After a while there was a tremendous fuss in the MAC. But the Israelis denied they were taking Arab land. When the MAC failed to stop the Israelis, the Syrians took to firing shots across the bows of the Israeli tractors. The next thing we knew was that the Israelis were using armour-plated tractors. The next thing that happened was the Syrians began to use mortars and artillery and they did hit one or two tractors. Then the Israelis began to answer

back and there were full-scale artillery duels. And so it went on escalating. *Today the Israelis justify their occupation of the Golan Heights by saying it was necessary to stop the fiendish Syrians from shelling the peaceful Israeli farmers. That is nonsense! It wasn't the Syrians who started it. It really wasn't. If the Israelis had not tried to push their luck as they always do, the Syrians would not have opened fire in the first place.*"

So it was, on 7 April, that Syria received a very public bloody nose, and still Nasser did not make a move. During Israel's attack on Sammu six months earlier he had not gone to Jordan's assistance. Now he had not lifted a finger to assist Syria. But this was only the beginning of the game Israel's military hawks were playing to draw Nasser out—to force him to make a move.

On 12 May, Rabin said in a newspaper interview that "only the overthrow of the Damascus regime could end the Fatah raids"³⁰ His words led to protests by Israelis of the dovish tendency. Even some cabinet ministers criticised the chief of staff on the grounds that his statement contradicted the official line—that Israel did not interfere in the internal affairs of Arab states and only acted in self-defence against Arab aggression.

Eshkol reprimanded Rabin but the very next day the prime minister himself said there could be no immunity for a state aiding saboteurs and that Israel "may have to teach Syria a sharper lesson than that of 7 April."³¹

In the light of subsequent developments—the hijacking of government policy by the IDF's hawks and their Mossad associates, I think Eshkol was talking their language in order to shore up his influence with them—as Rabin had sought to do with his warning to Syria.

The hawks had no intention of attacking Syria then, still less of seeking to bring about regime change there. Their purpose was to make Nasser believe that *was* their plan. The key to convincing Nasser that an Israeli invasion of Syria was imminent was convincing the Soviets.

Though the details of how the Israelis conned the Soviets have never been revealed, the outlines of a clever disinformation campaign are clear. It was a twin-track deception strategy. On track one there were what Nutting described as "calculated leaks" to the Soviet embassy in Tel Aviv.³² Mossad

would also have had its own direct ways of feeding stuff into the KGB's system.

On track two there were fictitious or what some Israelis called “cooked” radio messages, purporting to be communications between IDF commanders—i.e. as they deployed their forces in preparation for an invasion of Syria.³³ The Israelis knew the messages would be picked up and relayed to Moscow by Soviet spy ships patrolling the eastern Mediterranean.

As Nasser revealed in a speech after the war, the Soviet Union's warning to him of an imminent Israeli offensive against Syria was conveyed by Anwar Sadat. At the time the Soviet spy ships were passing on the Israeli transmissions, Sadat was visiting Moscow with a parliamentary group. At the Kremlin he was informed that “the invasion of Syria is imminent.” The Soviets even gave him a possible date—17 May.

The above is the context in which the question of why Israel had previously refrained from hitting Syria with reprisal attacks in response to Fatah's pinprick raids has its real significance.

Previous restraint on the Syrian front was a critical element in the IDF deception plan. It was effectively the IDF's way of signalling to the world that it was (in a phrase Dayan once used in conversation with me) “totting up” Syria's offences. The IDF's implied but obvious message was something like: “We could have responded to each and all of the terrorist attacks which had their origins in Syria. The fact that we had been restrained to date should not be taken to mean that Israel will tolerate the attacks if they continue. If they do, the day is coming when we will act decisively; and because of our past restraint, we will expect the world to understand.” In other words, the IDF's previous restraint on the Syrian front was for a ploy the purpose of giving credibility to the threat of a major offensive against Syria at a time of the IDF's choosing.

From what the Soviets and his own intelligence people were telling him, Nasser was totally convinced that Israel was about to invade Syria. The truth is that even if he had realised that the IDF's threat to Syria was a bluff to trap him into making a move, he would still have had to respond—because he was being ridiculed and humiliated for his inaction. From the previous November when he had failed to go to Jordan's aid, he had been taunted by

the charge that he was a coward, “hiding behind UNEF’s skirts”. The implication was that if he was serious about doing anything by military means, he should ask for UN observer and peace-keeping forces to be withdrawn so that he was free to act.

The taunting of Nasser was led by the state-controlled media in Jordan. But there was more to it than Hashemite anger born of Nasser’s failure to go to Jordan’s assistance when Israel attacked Sammu. Western intelligence agencies had convinced Hussein’s advisers (if not fully the King himself) that Nasser’s revolutionary programme included the overthrow of the Hashemite regime in Jordan. That was black propaganda, but it was given a degree of apparent credibility by Shukairy’s wild rhetoric. Nasser’s PLO puppet-in-chief had been proclaiming that the road to the liberation of Palestine went through Amman, which was why Hussein closed down the PLO’s offices in Jordan.

Shukairy for his part had resorted to such a threat because he was frustrated by the realisation that Nasser was not intending to let the Palestinians fight. Overthrowing Hussein seemed to be the only option.

Nasser for his part had been unwilling to control Shukairy’s wild rhetoric because it created the illusion that he, Nasser, was seriously supporting the PLO. If he had stopped Shukairy making even rhetorical threats against the Hashemites, Nasser would have been as good as admitting that the PLO was nothing but his puppet and also that there was nothing Egypt or any of the Arab states could do about liberating even a part of Palestine.

Adding to Nasser’s agony over what to do was his knowledge that the Johnson administration was in the process of abandoning the Eisenhower and Kennedy policy of even-handedness and was effectively taking sides.

As Nutting subsequently revealed, there had been a secret meeting of NATO representatives in Brussels. At it the Americans said they were convinced that peaceful co-existence with Egypt was no longer possible. Nasser, they insisted, had poisoned all hope of the U.S. working with Arab nationalism by his repeated attacks on American policy and his ever-growing co-operation with the Soviet Union. For those reasons, the

Americans had told their NATO colleagues, Washington was working on a new policy for the defence of American interests in the Middle East. It was to be based on the twin bastions of Turkey and Israel.

An account of what the Americans said behind closed doors at the NATO meeting was given to Nasser by Amin Shaker, Egypt's ambassador in Brussels. Shaker's report could be relied upon because its source was Paul Henri Spaak, Belgium's foreign minister. Spaak, it would appear, was trying to warn Nasser. His implied message was something like, "Be careful. The Americans want to see you screwed."

In fact Nasser was even more vulnerable than he could have imagined in his worst nightmare—because the Syrian regime, to protect itself, had concluded a secret agreement with Israel concerning who would do what in the event of war.

When I first learned about this secret agreement in the early 1980s, most Palestinian and other Arab leaders who knew what had happened were too frightened to speak about it—too frightened of being assassinated on President Assad's orders. In many cases I had to persuade people to talk by using the oldest trick in the reporter's book—pretending to know more than I did. The only Palestinian leader who was prepared to talk on-the-record about Syria's behaviour in the weeks before the 1967 war was Khalad Hassan. "We came to know a lot of secrets", he said. "What we learned horrified us very much."³⁴

What was the secret agreement?

Khalad told me: "It was set down in a five-point memorandum which was negotiated by Syrian and Israeli emissaries through the good offices of the Spanish government. *The essence of it was that in the event of Israel going to war with Egypt, Israel would not initiate any ground action against Syria if the Syrians gave an undertaking that their ground forces would not be redeployed from their defensive positions and would not initiate any action against Israel...* Israel's emissaries were smart enough to know that Syria's leaders would have to put on some sort of show to disguise the fact that they were betraying their Arab brothers to save their own skins. So Israel's emissaries agreed that the Syrians could lob shells in the direction of Jewish settlements from fixed, long-range artillery positions. The Israeli

emissaries knew they were not being asked to pay too high a price. The settlements might take a bit of a pounding, but the settlers themselves would be safe in their bunkers.”³⁵ (Subsequent events suggest that the only categorical assurance the Israelis gave is that Damascus would not be attacked. It may well have been that Syria’s emissaries thought they had a secret agreement which committed Israel to refrain from ground action on any part of Syria’s soil, including the Golan Heights; but the fact is that Israel never makes an agreement without an escape clause or an ambiguity that can be argued about for decades. In the early summer of 1967, the Syrians still had that lesson to learn).

Because the notion of a secret agreement between Israel and Syria was so sensational, I really pushed Khalad Hassan on the matter. I knew that what was supposed to happen in accordance with the alleged secret agreement did actually happen. I was in Israel at the time and, in addition, Arafat and Abu Jihad were in the thick of things on the Syrian front during the war, and they and others had given me their firsthand accounts of the non-engagement of Syria’s ground forces. “But what about the secret agreement itself?” I asked Khalad. “Do you know for certain that there was such a thing?” He replied, “Yes, we came to know everything.”³⁶ He was not prepared to tell me more but he did give me a promise. “If Assad dies before I do, I will tell you everything.”

Unfortunately Khalad Hassan died of natural causes some years before Assad.

So it was, with Syria’s secret assistance, that the IDF’s hawks set their trap for Nasser. For reasons of face—to shore-up his credibility as the leader of real Arab nationalism—Nasser was about to walk right into it.

On 15 May a state of alert was declared in Egypt and Nasser ordered two divisions to cross into Sinai and take up “defensive positions” along the border with Israel. Nasser had calculated that the IDF would not want to fight a war on two fronts and that his deployment might therefore cause Israel to refrain from attacking Syria. His logic would have been sound if the IDF had been intending to attack Syria. If that had been the intention, Israel’s military planners might have had a second thought about going to war. *But their only purpose was to force Nasser to make a move.*

At this point Nasser had only one foot in the trap. He had still not come out from behind UNEF's protective screen. Egyptian and Israeli forces were still separated by the blue-bereted UNEF observers and peacekeepers. But...

The following day Nasser ordered his chief of staff, General Mahmoud Fawzi, to write to UNEF's Indian commander, General Rikhye, requesting a limited withdrawal of his forces. This would enable the Egyptian army to occupy certain positions on the Sinai border with Israel and, Fawzi said, avoid the possibility of UNEF troops in being caught in any crossfire if shots were traded.

What Nasser really wanted was the best of both worlds; a token withdrawal of UN personnel from observation posts along the frontier to allow him to silence those Arabs who were accusing him of hiding behind UNEF; and UNEF to remain in place at the most highly sensitive spots—Gaza and, most critical of all, Sharm el-Sheikh.

From the record of Nasser's conversations at the time and after with visiting diplomats, it is clear that he was hoping the escalation would end there, and that the gathering crisis would be resolved by political means (as President Eisenhower had pledged). It is also clear that, in addition to not wanting war, he had no strategy of any kind and was merely reacting to events.

UN Secretary General U Thant decided that Nasser could not have the best of all worlds. He ruled that Egypt would have to make an all-or-nothing request. UNEF could be all in or all out. The terms of the General Assembly resolution which had established the United Nations Emergency Force in 1956 were quite clear—UNEF was not to be the instrument of any one nation's policy. U Thant chose to act by the rule book to protect himself, and that meant he had to ignore the fact that Nasser was not simply trying to save his face but was also attempting to avert war.

Because of U Thant's ruling, Nasser was faced with a stark choice: making an ignominious retreat (withdrawing Fawzi's letter to Rikhye) or asking for a complete withdrawal of UNEF personnel.

Nasser knew well that if he chose the latter course, he would have to fill the vacuum with Egyptian troops. Of itself the return of fighting forces

to Sharm el-Sheikh would be no big deal, but once they were there Nasser knew he would be subjected to overwhelming Arab pressure to re-impose the blockade on the Gulf of Aqaba which had been open to Israeli shipping for the past ten years. If that happened, Nasser also knew, Israel would proclaim to the world that it had a cause for war.

Retreat was out of the question. It would deal a damaging and perhaps fatal blow to Egypt's prestige and to Nasser's credibility throughout the Arab world, and, Nasser reasoned, it would remove any hope of deterring the Israelis from attacking Syria.

For two long days and nights Nasser agonised about what to do and then, on the afternoon of 18 May, he authorised the transmission to UN headquarters in New York of Egypt's formal request for the withdrawal of all UNEF forces from Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula.

Advance units of Egypt's 4th Armoured division moved swiftly into the positions vacated by UNEF on the Sinai border but... there was no order for Egyptian troops to re-occupy Sharm el-Sheikh.

Nasser still did not want to take that final step. He agonised for three more days and nights. His visitors included U Thant, who had dallied too long in New York when he ought to have been in Cairo and Tel Aviv, and the UN's chief trouble-shooter, Brian Urquhart. Years later Urquhart said to me: "I told Nasser he was a bloody fool. I said to him that if he went ahead with the blockade the Israelis would smash him. I said to him, 'Don't do it!'"

But Nasser did it.

On 21 May he ordered Egyptian troops to re-occupy Sharm-el-Sheikh and the next day Cairo announced that the Gulf of Aqaba was closed to Israeli shipping.

I came to know Urquhart very well as a friend and mentor, and to respect and admire him above all others concerned with international affairs and conflict management in particular; but I think his characterisation of Nasser in the countdown to the 1967 war as "a bloody fool" was less than fair.

Nasser would not have been foolish enough to play into Israel's hands if the IDF's hawks and their Mossad associates had not succeeded in

conning the Soviets into believing that Israel was about to invade Syria. When the Israelis had played that trick card to such good effect, it is difficult to see that Nasser had any choice but to do what he reluctantly did. In the three critical days before he ordered Egyptian forces to re-occupy Sharm el-Sheikh—when Urquhart was telling him he was “a bloody fool”—he was under immense pressure on two fronts.

After ten years of inactivity against Israel, many of his senior officers were itching to use their sophisticated Soviet equipment to wipe out the stain of Egypt’s defeat in 1956. If Nasser had not made some military moves, his credibility with his own armed forces might well have become an issue.

And there had been no let up in the taunts and jeers from parts of the Arab gallery. By asking for UNEF’s complete withdrawal Nasser hoped he had disposed of the charge that he was hiding behind the UN’s skirts; but while he had agonised for three days about whether or not to give the order for the re-occupation of Sharm el-Sheikh, Amman Radio poured scorn on his reluctance to take the next logical step. (I am myself still puzzled about why Jordan’s state-controlled media was so irresponsible. There are three possible explanations. One is that those directing the anti-Nasser propoganda were stupid and had not thought through the predictable consequences of their inflammatory words. Another is that some in the Hashemite regime below King Hussein wanted Israel to give Nasser a very bloody nose. Another, in my view the most likely explanation, is that British and American intelligence agents used their inside tracks and played a critical role in Jordan’s goading of Nasser. As Nutting noted, there were more than a few in Britain’s ruling elite who wanted to see Nasser destroyed—their revenge for 1956).

The truth, it seems to me, is not that Nasser was “a bloody fool” but that he was in an impossible position—because of the divisions in the Arab world and because of gut-Zionism’s intransigence and lust for war. In reality Nasser and real Arab nationalism were going to be hammered whatever Egypt’s President did.

There were two immediate reactions to the closure of the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli vessels—one in the Arab world, the other in Israel.

The Arab response, as described by Nutting was this; “Overnight Nasser became once more the hero of the Arab world. Even the ranks of Tuscany in Jordan could not forbear to cheer this singular act of defiance. The taunts and jeers of yesterday were forgotten, drowned in the euphoric chorus of jubilation.”³⁷

In Israel the IDF’s hawks said to themselves, in effect and perhaps actually: “We’ve got him! Now we can have our war.”

Nasser now had both feet in their trap.

From here on it was Egypt that faced the danger of attack by Israel, but Jews everywhere were conditioned to believe that black was white and night was day—that it was the Arabs who were preparing for war to destroy the Jewish state.

Nasser had, in fact, convinced himself that even if Israel did resort to force to lift his blockade, the war would not be a long or decisive one. Like Israel’s military planners, Nasser was sure the UN would insist on a ceasefire in a matter of days. So in Nasser’s mind it all came down to one question: Could Egypt’s defence forces withstand an Israeli attack for a few days without losing too much ground and too much face?

It was the right question. But Nasser came up with the wrong answer. As events were to prove, he badly underestimated Israel’s strike capacity. He also had no idea of how totally his own High Command had failed to reorganise and retrain Egypt’s armed forces. It was one thing to possess a lot of Soviet military hardware. It was quite another to know how to use it. And at the time Nasser also had no idea of Syria’s secret agreement with Israel.

But Nasser’s biggest error was to assume that war would be prevented because the governments which exercised the most power at the UN would cause his blockade to be lifted by diplomatic means—in accordance with Eisenhower’s commitment to Israel. Having taken the risk of giving Israel a pretext for war in order to shore up his own credibility, he was prepared to make whatever concessions were necessary to guarantee that international diplomacy would succeed. When it did, he could say to the Arab gallery that he had had no choice but to bow to the decision of the

Security Council. He still believed that he could have the best of both worlds.

Unfortunately, Nasser's thinking was flawed because he was still viewing American policy through the prism of the Eisenhower and Kennedy years. He believed, correctly I think, that both would have insisted on a diplomatic resolution of the crisis if they had been in the White House at the time. Despite the warning implicit in the leaked account of the secret NATO meeting, Nasser had not yet fully grasped that President Johnson would be open to the idea that Israel should be given the green light for war.

As it happened, President Johnson's own starting position was to give diplomacy a chance and restrain Israel, which implies that Nasser was not completely naïve for thinking that the international community would not allow Israel to use the closure of the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli vessels as a pretext for war. When the crisis broke Johnson was listening to all of his advisers—not just those who were Zionists or supporters of Israel right or wrong, and who were insisting that the Jewish state now had an unquestionable right to go to war.

There were a number of American and European ideas for a non-war solution. One was sending the U.S. aircraft carrier *Intrepid* through the Suez Canal to demonstrate America's concern and give muscle to a diplomatic effort to oblige Nasser to back down. Another was for the assembly of an international flotilla (“regatta”) to challenge and break the blockade.

Either of those two initiatives was likely to succeed because Nasser did want a face-saving way out of the trap. The only thing that mattered to him was being able to say to the Arab world that he had restored Israel's freedom of passage through the Straits of Tiran because of international pressure to do so.

Israel's political and military leaders were divided as usual but also confused.

The cause of the confusion in Israel's decision-making ranks was U.S. policy. As we have seen, President Eisenhower had refused to give Israel an advance green light for its next war. But, as we have also seen, Ben-

Gurion was encouraged, behind Eisenhower's back, to assume and assert that Israel would have the right to go to war if Nasser again closed the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli shipping.

As a consequence of what had happened in 1956/57, Prime Minister Eshkol and the leading doves believed that the Johnson administration would take the Eisenhower line and back them; and the hawks believed that they would be allowed by Washington to prevail.

Now that the crunch had come—now that the IDF's hawks had Nasser where they wanted him, trapped—the confusion had to be ended. Was the U.S. going to endorse and support the assertion of Israel's hawks that Egypt's blockade did constitute an act of aggression which entitled the Jewish state to go to war in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter, and thus without the prospect of being ostracised and possibly sanctioned by the international community?

It was an important question because even Ben-Gurion, still a potent force, accepted that Israel could not afford to alienate world public opinion further by going to war again without the connivance if not actually the public blessing of the U.S.

So what, actually, was President Johnson's policy?

By promoting the idea that Egypt's blockade should be lifted by diplomatic and other non-violent means he seemed to be taking Eisenhower's line, saying to Israel, in effect: "You've no cause for war. We'll solve this problem by diplomatic means".

On 25 May, Prime Minister Eshkol despatched Foreign Minister Eban to Washington for talks with President Johnson. Eban's main purpose was to determine whether or not American-led diplomatic efforts to lift Egypt's blockade were likely to succeed. But because of Eshkol's growing difficulty in keeping the hawks under control, Eban was also instructed to find out what America's policy would be in the event of diplomacy failing, and to present the case for some Israeli military action.

By now Eshkol's political survival was an issue. His former colleagues who had broken away to form Rafi were using the crisis to undermine his authority by accusing him of weakness, for which read extreme reluctance to go to war. Of the three Rafi principals—Ben-Gurion,

Dayan and Peres—Dayan was making the most political capital out of the crisis by persistently drawing attention to Eshkol’s alleged shortcomings. Dayan was campaigning aggressively for Eshkol to step down as prime minister in favour of Ben-Gurion and for himself to be appointed defence minister.

Shlaim described Dayan at the time as “the most devious, manipulative and power-hungry” of the three main plotters.³⁸ Yes indeed, but Dayan was being driven by more than personal ambition. In the privacy of his own mind, and probably without telling even Ben-Gurion about his real intentions, *Dayan had concluded that it was now or never for the creation of a greater Israel. The circumstances would never again be as favourable as they were now for the furtherance of gut-Zionism’s Palestine project.*

Eshkol had refused to budge. He had no intention of stepping down in favour of Ben-Gurion and no intention of surrendering the defence portfolio to Dayan.

Shlaim wrote: “These two weeks were a traumatic experience for the Israeli public, and they went down in history as ‘the period of waiting.’ *During this period the entire nation succumbed to a collective psychosis.* The memory of the Holocaust was a powerful force that deepened the feeling of isolation and accentuated the perception of threat. Although, objectively speaking, Israel was much stronger than its enemies, many Israelis felt that their country faced a threat of imminent destruction. For them the question was not about the Straits of Tiran but about survival.”³⁹

Shlaim went on to say that weak leadership was largely responsible for permitting the panic to spread. I think such a judgement is unfair to Eshkol. He was not weak, he was patient. He was only perceived to be weak because that was the message Dayan and his collaborators were pumping out, in order to further their own interests. Dayan’s campaign to undermine Eshkol’s authority contributed much to the panic. *But the greatest cause of it was the ignorance of public opinion—the consequence of the refusal of all of Israel’s leaders to tell their people the truth—that the Jewish state was not in danger.*

Shortly after his arrival in Washington, Eban had a preliminary meeting with Secretary of State Dean Rusk. As instructed, Eban claimed that Israel had evidence of advanced preparations by Egypt and Syria for a two-pronged attack on the Jewish state. Rusk knew that was nonsense and in his secret note to President Johnson the following morning he wrote: “Our intelligence does not confirm this Israeli estimate.”⁴⁰

Johnson already knew that Israel was not in any danger. A week or so previously he had pressed CIA Director Richard Helms for an estimate of Israel’s capacity to withstand even a combined Arab attack. *Helms had reported that Israel would win a war against one or all of the Arab states, no matter who struck the first blow, in about a week.* In the Oral History subsequently prepared for the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, Helms said: “We predicted almost within the day how long the war would last if it began.”⁴¹

At this moment in time President Johnson was, in fact, resolved to be tough with Eban and tell him that Israel should not go to war. But Johnson, had a problem, subsequently defined by senior presidential assistant Harry McPherson. In his contribution to the Oral History, McPherson said: “*The American Jewish community believed that Johnson had done nothing for them; that he was in effect prepared to see Israel suffer terribly.*”⁴²

The more complete version of the truth was that Zionism’s conditioning of American political and public opinion had been so successful that most Americans, not just Jewish Americans, were convinced that the Arabs were about to attack and that poor little Israel really was in danger of being annihilated. It was therefore obvious to President Johnson that if he took a tough line with Israel when he met with Eban, he would find himself in confrontation with Zionism—its lobby and its stooges in Congress and the mainstream media. It followed that, in order to be tough with Israel and protect his own back, Johnson would have to be absolutely sure that Israel was not in danger.

At noon on 24 May, two days before his meeting with Eban, President Johnson convened a meeting of the NSC. What he wanted, he

told the assembled agencies, was “a new reading of Israeli capability.” The CIA, the NSA (National Security Agency) and the State Department were asked to update and revise their estimates of Israeli and Arab military capabilities and what would happen in the event of war.

The result, prepared by all three agencies, was a report delivered to the President just before his meeting with Eban on 26 May. This report not only confirmed the previous CIA estimates, it indicated in some detail how Israel would achieve victory—a quick, devastating air strike followed by a ground offensive in Sinai all the way to the Suez Canal.

Was there any possibility that the fighting could go the other way? Would the Israelis be taking any risks?

That President Johnson caused these questions to be asked and answered was confirmed by Nicholas Katzenbach’s contribution to the Oral History. At the time Katzenbach was an undersecretary of state and heavily involved in Middle East matters. Katzenbach’s contribution to the Oral History included the following:

Interviewer: “What about the contingencies if the fighting had gone the other way? I know you have contingency plans for all sorts of alternatives, but were any of them seriously considered at the presidential level as far as you know?”

Katzenbach: “No, I think that nobody expected any possibility of the fighting going the other way.

Interviewer: “In other words, this was a far-fetched alternative?”

Katzenbach: “The intelligence was absolutely flat on the fact that the Israelis in essence would do just what they did. *That is, they could mop up all the Arabs in no time at all.* And so we never really decided what it is we could do if it went the other way.”⁴³

That was also the view on the 38th floor of the UN headquarters building in New York. Many years later Urquhart said to me: “We knew the Israelis could lick the Arabs with both hands tied behind their backs.”

Rusk had previously advised President Johnson that the administration appeared to have a choice: either to “let the Israelis decide how best to protect their own national interests”—i.e. to “unleash” them or

to actively, prominently, mediate a resolution to the crisis while keeping the armies of both sides at bay.⁴⁴ The Secretary of State advocated the second course. Because of America's position of world leadership, pre-emptive action by Israel, Rusk said, "would cause extreme difficulty for the United States." He added: "The question of responsibility for the initiation of hostilities is a major problem for us."⁴⁵ *He meant that whatever happened, the U.S. could not be seen to be giving Israel a green light for war.*

Rusk was probably as surprised as he was pleased by what happened next. Johnson did take a tough line with Israel.

The President presented Eban with a written statement that strongly committed the U.S. to the territorial integrity of "all" the nations in the Middle East and to "vigorous pursuit" of the available diplomatic means to resolve the crisis peacefully. The statement, which was to be sent to Prime Minister Eshkol in a letter from the President, had Johnson saying this:

*I must emphasise the necessity for Israel not to make itself responsible for the initiation of hostilities. Israel will not be alone unless it decides to go alone. We cannot imagine that it will make this decision.*⁴⁶

In his memoirs four years later, Johnson's own recall of his conversation with Eban included this:

'The central point, Mr. Minister,' I told him, 'is that your nation must not be the one to bear the responsibility for any outbreak of war.' Then I said very slowly and positively: 'Israel will not be alone unless it decides to go alone.' He was quiet, and I repeated the statement once more.⁴⁷

Johnson also told Eban it was the unanimous view of his military experts that there was no sign that the Egyptians were planning to attack Israel, and that if they did, the Israelis would "whip the hell out of them."

The message Eban had for his cabinet colleagues could not have been clearer. President Johnson, pro-Israel in his gut, was intending, apparently, to resolve the crisis as Eisenhower and Kennedy would have done—by diplomacy. He did not want Israel to go to war. Put another way, President Johnson was performing up to this moment as a statesman—i.e. not as the tool of any vested interest.

So how and why was it that, within the space of a few days, President Johnson was turned—persuaded to take sides and give Israel’s hawks the green light for war with Egypt?

The key to understanding is the secret visit to Washington on 30 May of Brigadier Meir Amit. This former DMI was now the head of Mossad. Amit travelled to America under an assumed name and probably with a disguise to match. His job was to sell the benefits for the U.S. of Israel going to war with Egypt.

Amit’s secret mission was authorised after what Shlaim described as “the night of the generals”—a stormy and very bitter confrontation between Eshkol and Israel’s top military men.

The behind-closed-doors drama was set in motion by Eban’s report to the cabinet of the Johnson administration’s position—as it was on 26 May. Two days later, on the basis of Eban’s report, the Israeli cabinet voted by a clear majority to wait for two or three weeks. International diplomacy was to be given a chance. If it succeeded there would be no war. Eshkol, Sharett-like in his preference for a non-military solution, had prevailed. But...

That evening, 28 May, Eshkol met with the General Staff to explain the cabinet’s decision. The generals were as close to revolt as it was possible to be without actually revolting. In very blunt language they accused Eshkol of weakness, muddle and confusion. The case they made for going to war without further delay was not based on any perception of present danger. As Rabin and others were subsequently to admit, there was none—they knew the Arabs were not intending to attack. *The case for an immediate strike, pre-emptive war, was the need, the generals said, to restore the deterrent power of the IDF.*

What, really, did that mean?

According to gut-Zionism’s core belief, the only way the Jewish state could survive (given that it was not interested in peace on terms the Arabs could accept) was by constantly reminding the Arab regimes that it was the military master of the region. The phrase “deterrent power” was a euphemism for “teaching the Arabs lessons” with IDF applications of brute force. In other words, gut-Zionism’s working assumption was that the Arab

armies would never be ordered to attack Israel so long as Arab leaders knew that doing so would result in humiliating defeat. The whole purpose of massively disproportionate IDF reprisal attacks had been to ram home this message. It followed that if the Arabs defied Israel and got away with it, the IDF's deterrent power would be reduced. If that happened, the time might come when Arab leaders would be tempted to believe that Israel was not so mighty after all and could be attacked. By closing the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping, Nasser had defied the Jewish state and was getting away with it. Thus the need, the generals told Eshkol, for action to restore the IDF's deterrent power.

Like Sharett before him, Eshkol was outraged by this way of thinking. He disputed the assertion that the only way to achieve deterrence was by launching an immediate attack, and he explained in detail the reasons for his opposition to a preventive war. *At one point he exploded with anger and shouted a question, "Would we live forever by the sword?"*⁴⁸ It was a Sharett-like expression of horror and despair. The context suggests that it was Eshkol's way of saying, "If you really think we can live forever by the sword, you are mad!"

After that things went from bad to worse and Prime Minister Eshkol walked out.

His own core belief was the one for which Sharett had fought and lost—that what the Gentiles thought did matter. The Jewish state would not survive in the long term if it went on alienating non-Jewish opinion. Because of its attitudes and behaviour Israel was already regarded as something of a pariah state by much of international community. At this time, with even the Johnson administration apparently opposed to Israel going to war, a pre-emptive strike had to be ruled out if the Jewish state was not to become totally isolated in the world.

The generals concluded that if they were to have their war, they had to either stage a coup or turn the Johnson administration. They had never had confidence in Eban because he had been Sharett's man and was now Eshkol's man. He had gone to America merely to ask what U.S policy was. They would now send their man to Washington to tell the Johnson administration what its policy should be. The combination of Zionist lobby

power plus that of Israel's military and intelligence establishments would prevail.

Even before he left for Washington Amit knew that he had a lot going for him. He was fully aware, for example, of what the Americans had said at the secret NATO meeting—that the U.S. was in the process of concluding that it should base defence of its interests in the region on Turkey and Israel. (Such a policy was possible because, in theory, the main oil-producing Arab states and Iran were now under Western control—i.e. the oil-producing Arab leaders and the Shah in Iran would do more or less what they were told to do.)

Amit was also aware that he would not have too much trouble getting the CIA to see things his way. The ties between it and Mossad were now so strong that the Israeli agency was, in some respects, an extension of its American counterpart. In fact CIA operations in Israel were conducted through Mossad. There was no CIA station chief in the Jewish state. CIA agents operating under the cover of the American Embassy acted in consort with Israeli intelligence agencies, with each supposedly having full access to the other's information—which meant, among other things, that a Mossad assessment became, more or less, a CIA assessment. (I think that one of the main reasons why American intelligence was so wrong in the countdown to the invasion and occupation of Iraq in March 2003 was that it was overly reliant on what was actually disinformation provided by Israeli intelligence agencies for purposes of their own—i.e. pushing the U.S., supported by Britain, into war). If the CIA could be convinced that there was a good prospect of Nasser being destroyed by an Israeli victory, it would recommend to President Johnson that Israel be unleashed.

Amit's main target was the Pentagon and its political boss, Defence Secretary Robert McNamara. The sales pitch to him was premised on the assumption that Israel was going to war. According to his own subsequent account, Amit asked McNamara for three things: American diplomatic support at the UN; American backing in the event of Soviet intervention; and, if the need arose, American replenishment of Israel's arsenal.⁴⁹

The essence of Israel's strategy as outlined by Amit was that Israel was intending not merely to destroy a vast amount of Egypt's Soviet-

supplied weapons and hopefully Nasser, too, but to capture all of the Sinai and hold it as a bargaining chip until Egypt made peace with Israel on Israel's terms.

In this context, the first of the three requests—American diplomatic support at the UN—was the most important. What this meant was that America should see to it that Israel was not to be pressed to withdraw from captured territory unless and until Egypt made peace. There was to be no repeat of 1956/57. *In 1967 Israel's aggression was to be rewarded, for the sake of peace on Israel's terms.*

McNamara was neither a military nor a political strategist. As he had proved when he was running the Ford Motor Corporation before JFK recruited him, he was a brilliant administrator and organiser of men and machines—a fanatic for detail, especially time-keeping, and ruthlessly efficient.

This U.S. Secretary of Defence was not averse to Amit's proposition for one main reason—his total preoccupation with the escalating war in Vietnam. McNamara was in the process of learning how right President Kennedy had been in his view that it was a ghastly mistake and would end with defeat for America. So far as events in the Middle East were concerned, McNamara, a Quaker, was in no doubt that America did have a moral responsibility to cause the Gulf of Aqaba to be re-opened to Israeli vessels and, knowing the man a bit, my guess is that he would have preferred it to be done Eisenhower's way, by peaceful means. But McNamara's priority in the Middle East was a quick-fix, with a minimum call on U.S. resources of all kinds, including time. Diplomacy would drag things out, might get very complicated, and could result in more misunderstandings which would raise the tension and the stakes for all concerned. If the Israelis could get it over and done within a few days—okay. The Israelis, as Amit put it, would be saving the Americans a lot of trouble.

Question: Would McNamara's attitude have been different if he had been aware that Israel's military and intelligence establishments were operating behind the back of their prime minister and were, in effect, in the process of mounting something very close to a coup in all but name?

In Amit's own subsequent version of events it was McNamara who gave him the green light for war. In reality there was much more to it. If it was McNamara who said something like, "OK, you have our unofficial blessing for war", it could only have been on the basis of the Secretary of Defence knowing that President Johnson had already given, or would definitely give, the nod. It is more than reasonable to assume that Johnson gave it after being advised to do so by Helms for the CIA, McNamara for the Pentagon, and perhaps most critical of all, three most influential Jewish-Americans—Feldman, the President's Special Counsel; Walt Rostow, the President's personal adviser on foreign policy; and his older brother, Eugene, who was an under-secretary of state. (On matters to do with Israel, few, if any, American Jews were more hawkish than Eugene Rostow. A brilliant lawyer, he was to become ferocious in his denigration of anybody who dared to criticise Israel. He supported Begin and his Likud party and he was to astonish many by insisting that there was no legal reason why Israel should not build settlements on the occupied West Bank. Rather like Ben-Gurion, he seems to have believed that international law was what Zionism said it was).

Study of the de-classified documents of the period make clear what the Johnson administration—minus Secretary of State Rusk—saw as the benefits of unleashing Israel. They were:

- Saving the U.S. a lot of trouble when it was getting bogged down in Vietnam.
- Embarrassing the Soviet Union by demonstrating how quickly and how easily those it armed could be smashed.
- Discrediting and, with luck, destroying Nasser and everything he represented (real Arab nationalism).
- Capturing Arab territory to be traded for peace on Israel's terms.
- Winning the applause of the Zionist lobby in particular and Jewish America in general.

The only thing that is not clear from the de-classified documents is when in the last five days of May, the President gave selected people in his

administration—perhaps only McNamara and Helms directly—the nod.

Secretary of State Rusk was not among those informed that the U.S. was backing Israel, taking sides. He was still working on his plan to resolve the crisis by peaceful means. A key element of it was to be a visit to Washington by Egyptian Vice President Zakharia Mohieddin, to be followed a few days later by a return visit to Cairo by Vice President Humphrey. Until the moment Israel went to war, Rusk believed that he was implementing agreed U.S. policy. In a sense he was. Lifting Nasser's blockade by all available diplomatic means remained the Johnson administration's publicly declared policy. *Like so much to do with American policy for the Middle East, the truth was not for public consumption.* Rusk was subsequently to lament that he probably helped inadvertently to press the trigger by passing to the Israelis the news that Mohieddin was going to visit Washington on 7 June—the implication being that a peaceful resolution of the crisis would then he achieved.

There is evidence that the Johnson White House excluded Secretary of State Rusk and those in his department loyal to him from the group of “orchestrators” of American policy. A special committee had been established in the White House to handle the crisis. Before one of its meetings McGeorge Bundy (the official National Security Adviser) wrote the following to President Johnson: “With a number of Dean Rusk’s staff present, you may not wish to discuss organisational assignments for the special committee’s work.”⁵⁰ That could be translated to mean, “Best to keep out of the loop those who favour an even-handed approach to U.S. policy for the Middle East.”

The task of turning the Johnson administration was made easier by the mainstream media’s misrepresentation of what was happening in the Middle East. It was not just a case of reporting and promoting Israel’s assertions without challenge. Nasser’s statements were horribly distorted by selective, slanted reporting. The greatest and most damaging distortion was the one of 26 May (the day Eban met with Johnson).

On that day Nasser addressed the Council of Trade Unions in Cairo. American newspaper headlines and news leads on television and radio bulletins quoted the Egyptian leader as saying, “We will destroy

Israel.” Nasser did indeed utter those words but... in a context that gave them a totally different meaning to the one implied by the American media’s presentation of them. The following is what Nasser actually said:

*If Israel embarks on an aggression against Syria or Egypt, the battle against Israel will be a general one and not confined to one spot on the Syrian or Egyptian border. The battle will be a general one and our basic objective will be to destroy Israel.”*⁵¹

Two sentences containing 47 words. By reporting only the last eight of them, the mainstream American media gave the impression, apparently irrefutable, that Nasser was intending to initiate a war to destroy Israel. As a consequence, American public opinion in general, and Jewish American opinion in particular, was finally convinced that poor little Israel really was about to be attacked and that its very existence was at stake.

In response to the domestic political pressures generated, the Johnson administration sent an urgent message to Nasser asking him to clarify his intentions. The Kremlin and Charles de Gaulle made similar requests. (The French President was more than a little concerned because of the advice he had given to Eban. The two men had talked in Paris when Eban was on his way to Washington. *De Gaulle said that Israel should not go to war because, if it did, it would create Palestinian nationalism which would never go away.* That was the best advice anybody ever gave Israel. Drawing off the lessons of France’s experience in Vietnam and then Algeria, De Gaulle had seen the future for the Middle East if Zionism had its way).

The following day, and again on 29 May, Nasser made public statements in which he said: “*We are not going to fire the first shot... we are not going to start an attack.*”⁵²

These statements were the public part of Nasser’s reply to the Johnson administration, the Kremlin and de Gaulle. But they were not reported in America. (It was, in fact, to be seven years before these statements became public knowledge in the West. They were included in Heikal’s book, *The Cairo Documents*).

While Amit was in Washington getting the green light for war, Dayan and his associates were causing the political crisis in Israel to be

resolved. Short of staging a military coup, the only way to restore public confidence in government—confidence that Dayan and his associates had done so much to destroy by portraying Eshkol as weak—was by forming a government of national unity.

On 1 June such a government came into being. It included the two main opposition parties—Gahal and Rafi. Gahal included Begin and his former Irgun terrorists turned politicians. Naturally these two opposition parties had a price for their participation in a national unity government. It was the inclusion of Dayan as minister of defence and Begin as a minister without portfolio.

Effectively Prime Minister Eshkol was stripped of the defence portfolio. (He might have told himself that a political coup was preferable to a military coup). Golda Meir had been so opposed to Dayan's appointment that she had tried to prevent it. She still had considerable influence as secretary general of what was to become the Alignment—Eshkol's Mapai party and its coalition allies, the controlling group of the old political order. Eshkol had welcomed Golda's stand but the National Religious Party had threatened to quit the Alignment unless a government of national unity was formed with Dayan as minister of defence. If that had happened, Eshkol would not have been the one to form the government of national unity and may have been finished politically, which might well have been Dayan's hope. (My guess is that Dayan told the leadership of the National Religious Party that if it supported him in his fight with Eshkol, he would reward it by capturing Arab East Jerusalem for keeps).

The very first thing Dayan did on becoming minister of defence, without consulting or even informing the cabinet, was to put Eshkol's plan for military action into the dustbin of history and replace it with his own.

Eshkol's plan, prepared by the Operations Branch of the General Staff on Rabin's instructions, had reflected the prime minister's conception of appropriate military action for the circumstances. It was to be limited in scope and duration. What Eshkol had in mind was more an IDF operation than a war. It was to last not more than 72 hours and lifting Nasser's blockade by direct military means—capturing Sharm el-Sheikh—was not on the agenda. The plan, named Kardom, called for the capture of only the

eastern part of the Sinai up to Jebel Libni, and holding it until Egypt agreed to re-open the Straits of Tiran to Israeli shipping. And IDF forces were to be assigned to the northern (Lebanon and Syria) and eastern (Jordan) fronts for purely defensive purposes. Most important of all so far as Eshkol was concerned was that Israel would not make even a limited military move until all diplomatic efforts had been exhausted.

In other words, without the crisis of confidence in Eshkol that was manufactured by Dayan and his associates, in order to get Dayan into government as minister of defence, there would not have been a major war.

Dayan's war plan—the part of it that he revealed to the General Staff before Israel struck—was for total war. The primary aim was the complete destruction of Egypt's armed forces and the capture of Sharm el-Sheikh. Those two objectives together implied the occupation of the whole of the Sinai and the Gaza Strip. Dayan was subsequently to say that Eshkol's war plan was “absurd”.

The decision to go to war was taken on the evening of Saturday 3 June at a secret meeting in the prime minister's house. A small group of selected cabinet ministers and advisers had gathered there to be briefed by Amit on his return from Washington. He said the Johnson administration would welcome an Israeli strike, hopefully one that would destroy Nasser, and, the best possible music to Dayan's ears, that *the U.S. would not call for an unconditional Israeli withdrawal as in 1956/57.*

Amit was concerned because he knew that Israel did not have a valid or justifiable cause for war. He was worried about the damage that would be done to Israel's image in the Gentile world if it actually struck first as things were. The Jewish state would be seen, again, as a naked aggressor. That being so it was better to wait a week. This was the time needed, Amit said, to arrange things so that Israel had a more plausible pretext for war. He proposed that they should send a ship flying the Israeli flag to the Straits of Tiran. Then, when Nasser refused to lift the blockade, Israel could say to the world, in its own chosen way, “Now you must accept that we have a *casus belli.*”

True to the instincts of his gut-Zionism, Dayan was totally unconcerned with what Gentiles might think. His response to Amit's

suggestion was, effectively, “To hell with that.” He insisted that they should go to war without further delay. He got his way that evening and, the next day, the full cabinet of the government of national unity rubber-stamped the decision to go to war the following morning.

But even as the decision was being taken, Dayan, the master of deception, was seeking to convince the media, and through it the world, that Israel had pulled back from the brink and had decided to give international diplomacy time, weeks if necessary, to cause the crisis to be resolved by peaceful means. Israel was not about to go to war.

Though I say so myself, I think I was the only one of the several hundred foreign correspondents in Israel to see through Dayan’s deception plan.

By the end of May, Israel’s armed forces—a relatively small regular army and the reserves of the citizen army—were fully mobilised and deployed. As a consequence Tel Aviv, New Jerusalem and other major population centres were less busy and quieter than usual. Max, the Dan Hotel’s barman, had been one of the first to go. He was a paratrooper. Like more than 200,000 other reservists from all walks of life, he had slipped quietly away from his work to join his unit. No goodbyes to his customers. On the first night of our friend’s absence we had drunk a toast to him ending with “Nach-nislahem Nasser!” This was the punch line of one of the IDF’s most popular songs of the time. As translated by Max it meant, “This time we’re really going to fuck you, Nasser.”

But not yet, it seemed. On Friday 2 June, Dayan’s second day as defence minister, the beach and streets of Tel Aviv (where many foreign correspondents were based in two hotels) were suddenly alive with soldiers returned from the frontlines. They were swimming, playing on the beach, strolling and drinking in the pavement cafes of Dizzengorf Street. This was evidence—even proof—that Israel was not, after all, going to war. Contrary to expectations, Dayan was standing down the IDF. Now that he had the prime responsibility for the Jewish state’s security, he wanted to be seen to be giving diplomacy a chance. The two weeks of waiting since Nasser had closed the Straits of Tiran were ending with an anticlimax. Message: no war. Somehow the dovish Eshkol had finally got his way. Or so it seemed.

Most foreign correspondents were fooled. Some called for their bills and, after filing their “No war” stories, booked the first available flights out of Israel. Other battlefields were calling. I allowed my own gut instincts to be my guide. Just before midnight on that Saturday evening I took a stroll through central Tel Aviv’s main residential area. The following is what I saw.

Away from the lights of the empty, quiet streets, blacked out, single-decker buses were strategically parked. The only sign of life in one was the glow of a driver’s cigarette. Then, as though on cue, and actually following the script Dayan had written, apartment doors opened. The last hugs and kisses had obviously taken place inside. There were no goodbyes in the doorways. Just a quick burst of interior light as each door was opened and quickly shut again. Silently, in ones and twos, like ghosts, the soldiers who had come home on Thursday were returning to their frontline positions. As they neared their assigned buses, the ones and twos became groups. And they spoke not a word to each other. My “Shaloms” drew no response.

The following afternoon, Sunday 4 June, I sat at my typewriter in our suite on top of the Dan Hotel and composed a 40-second voice piece for ITN’s main evening bulletin. I had to keep my story short because it was only a reporter’s think-piece, speculation, and the Sunday evening bulletin was less than eight minutes including opening and closing titles and music. Forty seconds meant that I had only 120 words—three per second—to tell the story. My intro was: “For some reasons I can report, for others I cannot, I think the war is going to start tomorrow morning.” And I signed off: “Alan Hart, ITN, Tel Aviv, on the eve of war.”

I didn’t think the military censor would let me say “Israel is going to war tomorrow morning”, but since I was in Israel, that was my meaning, obviously.

The censor’s office was in a building close to the Ministry of Defence. In the late afternoons for the past two weeks it had been a madhouse as scores of foreign correspondents scrambled to get their copy cleared to beat deadlines around the world. There was never any point in losing one’s cool with Israeli military censors. Even if you thought their decisions were bizarre or stupid. But that didn’t stop many reporters from shouting and screaming at them. On this particular afternoon there were no

other reporters around—no war, no reporters—and there was only one censor instead of the usual three or four on duty. He was a full colonel. He was sitting behind a post-office-like counter checking the Hebrew copy for Monday's Israeli newspapers. He didn't acknowledge my arrival or my greeting. He didn't look up. He merely raised his hand to take my copy. He read it, stamped it, signed it and handed it back to me. Approved. No deletions. No comment. I was amazed. I said, "You're sure I can broadcast this without getting myself into trouble with your superiors?"

For the first time the colonel looked up. There was arrogance in his eyes and contempt in his voice. "You ought to know that Israel is a democracy", he said. "We don't censor opinion. Your story is opinion. You are free to express it. We censor only matters of a military nature that could be of use to our enemies."

Shortly after that I sat in a small booth and delivered my text into a microphone for recording by ITN in London. My voice report would be overlaid with a picture of me and some library footage. One of the many good things about ITN was that it trusted the judgement of its reporters in the field. But... Later that evening I received the following cable from Hans Verhoven, the duty foreign editor. "REGRET YOUR GOOD SPECULATIVE STORY UNUSED STOP SQUEEZED OUT BY EVENTS STOP"

"Squeezed out" meant they had intended to run it. They had been prepared to back my judgement even though all other reporters and diplomats in all the major capitals of the world were saying "No war". But two civilian airliners had crashed—one in the English midlands, the other in France. From both locations there had been miles of dramatic footage (moving pictures in every sense) of the wreckage and distraught relatives. My speculative story had not had a chance in a short Sunday evening bulletin. At 07:45 hours the following morning Israel went to war. Fate had denied me the scoop of a war correspondent's lifetime.

Dayan was so confident of the IDF's ability to take on and beat the Arabs, all of them, that he had been quietly pleased by a dramatic event on the Arab side that guaranteed him, at least to some extent, the wider war he wanted.

On 30 May, the deeply divided Arab world was as surprised as Western diplomats and the Israelis by the unheralded appearance in Cairo of King Hussein at Nasser's side. These two Arab brothers had become enemies largely because of Shukairy's anti-Hussein campaign. Because Nasser had done nothing to curb Shukairy's rhetorical threats, the king could not be blamed for half-believing that Nasser was seriously committed to overthrowing the Hashemite regime in Jordan. That was not actually the case. Nasser had been allowing his puppet PLO's leader to let off steam against Hussein to disguise his own inability to do anything for the dispossessed Palestinians.

Hussein had been driven to seek reconciliation with Nasser by quiet, dignified panic. The Hashemite monarch was convinced that Israel was going to war and that its hawks would invent a pretext to attack Jordan as well as Egypt, for the purpose of taking Arab East Jerusalem (the Old City) and, probably, all of the West Bank. Hussein knew that even when Israel had a genuinely moderate prime minister who wanted to make an accommodation with the Arabs, there were forces that would not allow him to do so—forces for whom the creation of a greater Israel was a far greater priority than peace within existing borders.

The king also knew that without assistance Jordan would not be able to contain an Israeli offensive. Two days after the closure of the Gulf of Aqaba to Israeli vessels he had taken the precaution of asking Iraq and Saudi Arabia to send reinforcements. This request was in accordance with the procedures Arab leaders had agreed at their first summit when they brought the UAC into being. The response to the request was subsequently described by the king's private secretary, Zeid Rifai. "Reinforcements were not forthcoming. Or, to be more exact, the Saudi troops would arrive when everything was over. The Iraqis gave us a flat 'No!'"⁵³

Hussein's next throw of his defensive dice was to send his chief of staff, General Amer Khammash, to Cairo. His mission was to establish whether or not there was any life left in the UAC and, if there was, to get it focused on a plan for opposing an Israeli attack. Khammash was Hussein's most trusted adviser on military matters. He returned with the news that

the UAC was well and truly dead. As ever, Arab leaders were in complete disarray.

It was then that Hussein decided he had no choice but to attempt reconciliation with Nasser. This was the king's last throw of the dice. He summoned Egypt's ambassador in Amman and told him of his wish to meet with Nasser as soon as possible. The purpose of the meeting, Hussein stressed, was to co-ordinate their defences in the face of the Israeli threat. Late on the night of 29 May, Jordan's Prime Minister, Saad Jumaa, informed the king by telephone that Nasser welcomed his initiative. Hussein himself was subsequently to say: "Nasser never called on us. It was we who called on him."⁵⁴

Soon after the sun had risen the following morning, a chartered ALIA Caravelle took off from Amman airport for Cairo. (ALIA was Jordan's national airline, named after the king's oldest daughter).

There was a full crew on board but, as usual, the king himself was piloting the plane. He was wearing a khaki combat uniform and a cap with the emblem of his crown and his rank of marshal. There were no bodyguards and no secret service personnel travelling with him, but he was armed with an American 357 Magnum, which was lodged in a canvas holster fixed to his belt over his left hip.

Hussein had intended his visit to Cairo to be secret—because he was far from certain about its outcome and did not want to be embarrassed if he came away from it empty handed. Just before take-off he told his staff that he would probably be back for lunch. The implication was that he was not assuming his meeting with Nasser would go well.

Courteous by nature, Nasser himself was at the Al Maza air base to receive Hussein. The first indications were that it could be an awkward meeting. There were photographers standing at some distance, waiting for permission to take pictures.

"Do you think it's alright?" Nasser asked Hussein. "Or would you prefer that we keep the visit a secret."⁵⁵

"It doesn't matter", Hussein replied. "They'll find out sooner or later."⁵⁶

Nasser was dressed in a business suit. After commenting on the king's military attire, he said: "Since your visit is a secret, what would happen if we arrested you?"⁵⁷

Hussein was subsequently to quote himself as replying that such a possibility had never crossed his mind. He added: "And I cut short this awkward conversation before it took an unfortunate turn."⁵⁸

When they got down to business at the Koubbeh Palace, Hussein said it was essential for the UAC "to arise from its ashes."⁵⁹ Unless the Arabs coordinated their defence plans they had little hope of containing an Israeli attack. Nasser said he had no objection in principle to trying to make the UAC work but that it would not happen in practice— because of the divisions in the Arab world. He then made reference to Egypt's mutual defence agreement with Syria and said: "I have another solution. We can draw up a pact between our two countries right here and now."⁶⁰

At Hussein's request Nasser sent for the file containing the agreement with Syria. Hussein "skimmed the text" and then said: "Make another copy. Put in Jordan instead of Syria and the matter will be settled."⁶¹

The document was prepared while the two men had lunch. At 3.30 p.m. Radio Cairo interrupted its programme with a news flash. "King Hussein and President Nasser are about to sign a treaty of mutual defence. The ceremony will be broadcast."

Israel presented Jordan's mutual defence pact with Egypt as the final proof that a combined Arab offensive was imminent and that the very existence of the Jewish state was now unquestionably at stake. And according to Zionism's propaganda, Hussein's motive was obvious. He was "jumping on Nasser's bandwagon" (as *The Jerusalem Post* put it). In other words, Hussein had decided to join with Nasser in making war on Israel because he assumed an Arab victory and wanted his share of the glory. That's what Jews everywhere (and very many Gentiles, too) were conditioned to believe.

Nothing could have been further from the truth. Like his grandfather Abdullah, Hussein knew the Arabs were no military match for the fighting Jews and their powerful American friends. He also knew that Nasser had no

intention of attacking Israel. If he had believed otherwise he would not have entered into an agreement with him. Hussein's concerns on Jordan's account were purely defensive. Jordan's own air force was little more than a joke, and one of the two things Hussein wanted from his agreement with Nasser was air cover. Without it—because of Israel's supremacy in the sky—the Arab Legion would be cut to ribbons. But even with air cover, Jordan's land forces would not be able to keep Israeli armour at bay along a border of 650 kilometres without assistance. So the second thing Hussein wanted from Nasser was reinforcements. Under this heading the king was hoping that Nasser would be able to spare some of his own troops and prevail upon other Arab states to make a contribution.

As to the Israeli assertion that Jordan was planning to attack Israel, Hussein would later say, and it was the truth: "*Never have we contemplated an offensive against Israel! Given our relative strengths, it would have been madness.*"⁶²

The man appointed by Nasser with Hussein's agreement to co-ordinate and command Arab efforts to oppose an Israeli attack on Jordan was Egyptian General Abdel Moneim Riad, assistant chief of staff of the defunct UAC. Riad was about 50 and a serious soldier, a real professional whose judgment was determined by his assessment of reality and not wishful thinking, which made him very different from many Egyptian and other Arab generals. On arrival in Amman on 1 June, Riad was to take command of not only Jordan's armed forces and two battalions of Egyptian commandos promised by Nasser, but also, in theory, reinforcements from Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Syria.

In Riad's on-the-spot assessment, a successful defence of Jordan's territorial integrity was not possible without substantial reinforcements from Syria. He told Hussein that he believed the Syrians could check any Israeli ground offensive against Syria with a third of their forces. (This assessment was based on the view, shared by military experts everywhere including many in Israel, that the heavily fortified Syrian Golan Heights were impregnable and that the Israelis, unless they were completely out of their minds, would not even think of trying to capture them—because their losses would be too great). That being so, Riad said, Hussein should ask the

Syrians to send reinforcements to Jordan immediately. They could provide the number needed without compromising their own defence.

Hussein agreed to make the request but told Riad that he had “few illusions about the possibility of aid from Damascus”⁶³ The truth was, the king said, that up to the time they were speaking the Syrians had systematically refused to co-operate with Jordan. Hussein was indicating that he did not expect a positive answer from Damascus. Riad’s reply as subsequently quoted by the king is most interesting. He said: “Do I have your approval to send Marshall Amer a message asking him to give this request his official backing in Damascus?” Pause. “Even if it’s only for the history books...or the record, whichever you prefer.”⁶⁴

These words suggest that Riad was not going to be surprised if the Syrians betrayed their Arab brothers.

Up to this moment Hussein and others were looking upon Syria’s leaders as mere cowards. There was not yet more than a suspicion that the Syrians had a secret understanding with the IDF.

When, two years after the war, I speculated to Dayan that his response to the announcement of Jordan’s defence agreement with Egypt would have been at least a smile, he smiled. He made no comment because no comment was necessary. It was a private conversation in his home and I had already said I was aware (quoting but not naming former DMI Hertzog) that if Nasser had not given Israel a pretext for war in 1967, it would have created one within a year or so.

At the end of the first day of the war, Walt Rostow sent President Johnson an NSC report on the state of play. His cover note enclosing the secret intelligence summary said: “Mr. President: Herewith the account, with a map, of the first day’s turkey shoot.”⁶⁵

The turkeys were the planes that 24 hours previously had constituted the air forces of Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Iraq. On the first day 410 of them were destroyed, all but 24 on the ground.

Nasser had had 340 operational combat aircraft and 300 of them were smashed in less than three hours, in 17 waves of attacks at ten-minute intervals by Israeli Mysteres and Mirages. Their bombs had been specially

designed for low-level attacks. And there was one new bomb— the “concrete digger”. It was designed not to explode on impact but to bury itself in the runway and explode when the runway was being repaired. It was thus more of an anti-personnel bomb. It worked wonderfully well and the Egyptians were unable to repair any of their runways and get any of their planes into the air while the attack on their ten principal airbases was underway.

As anyone who flew into Cairo’s civil airport on the eve of the war could have seen for themselves, Nasser’s much vaunted Soviet MiGs and bombers on the adjacent military airfield were not hidden or protected in any way from aerial attack. They were drawn up in neat rows, wing-tip to wing-tip. Most of Rostow’s Egyptian turkeys were, in fact, sitting ducks.

The timing of the start of Israel’s aerial blitzkrieg was determined by a routine piece of intelligence information. At 07:45 hours the planes of Egypt’s dawn patrols would be returning to their bases to refuel and would be unable to engage the enemy. At 07:45 the Egyptian air force was at its most vulnerable. Complete surprise was guaranteed by the approach of the incoming Israeli Mirages and Mysteres—not from the east across Sinai (and thus from Israel) but from the north, low over the Mediterranean, to circumvent Egyptian radar.

Dayan’s land war for the total destruction of the Egyptian army in Sinai and the occupation of Egypt east of the Suez Canal was launched 30 minutes after Israel’s first air strike. It, too, was something of a turkey shoot. Without air-cover Egypt’s tanks, armoured personnel carriers and artillery guns were also sitting ducks. The war with Egypt was effectively won by Israel in less than the three hours it took to destroy Nasser’s air force. After that, with Israel’s tanks romping through the Sinai sand, it was just a matter of putting the sitting ducks out of their misery. Without opposition in the air, Israel’s pilots were free to take their time to line up for “can’t-miss” shots at individual Egyptian tanks, armoured personnel carriers and artillery pieces.

The IDF did not need the military assistance of any outside power to win the war with Egypt (and Jordan, and Syria) but... *The Israeli’s were given Top Secret American aerial reconnaissance support.* Later we shall see

how and why it was provided. It was all to do with time or rather speed. Meaning? There were limits to how long the Johnson administration could delay a Security Council demand for a ceasefire. It was absolutely essential for the IDF to get the job done as quickly as possible.

Israel's offensive against Egypt was an hour and five minutes old before King Hussein learned about it. At 08:50—he had just finished dressing—his telephone rang. It was Colonel Jazy, his chief aide-de-camp. “Your Majesty, the Israeli offensive has begun in Egypt. It's just been announced by Radio Cairo.”⁶⁶

Hussein was also informed that a message and order in code had been transmitted from Marshall Amer in Cairo to General Riad. Without touching his breakfast the king raced to Army Headquarters to get sight of the message and order and confer with Riad.

Amer's message (which turned out to be the Mother of All Lies on the Arab side) said Israeli planes had started to bomb Egypt's air bases and that approximately 75 percent of the enemy's aircraft had been destroyed or put out of action. Further, a counterattack by Egypt's air force was underway over Israel and Egyptian troops in Sinai had engaged the enemy and were taking the offensive.

Amer's order was to the effect that Jordan should open a new front and engage the Israelis. The implication was that Egyptian forces were doing very well on their own account and that with Jordan's participation there was the prospect of an Arab victory. The truth was that total and humiliating defeat for Egypt was already guaranteed.

After studying Amer's message and order, Hussein asked Riad what moves he had already made. Riad replied that he had ordered the artillery to take up front line positions and a battalion of the Imam Ali brigade to seize and occupy Mount Scopus in Jerusalem.

Mount Scopus was in the demilitarised zone of the Holy City. It had been UNEF's headquarters since 1948. UNEF's Commander at the time was the Norwegian General Odd Bull.

In Hussein's own subsequent version of events, “Riad then gave our Hawker Hunters the green light.”⁶⁷ Jordan had 22 of these British planes and only 16 pilots to fly them. In theory their mission, together with Iraq

and Syria's air forces, was to bomb Israeli air bases in the hope of de-grading the efficiency of Israel's air force. The day before the war, the Iraqi and Syrian regimes had told Cairo that their air forces would respond when requested to do so in the event of Israel initiating war.

It was to be nearly two hours before Jordan's Hawker Hunters took off for their first attack. (During the delay Raid ordered heavy artillery guns, long-range 155s, to shell Israeli Air Force installations within what Hussein described as "our line of fire"). Why the delay? Hussein was subsequently to say: "We were waiting for the Syrians. Without the help of their MiGs, the bombing of Israeli bases would have had a negligible effect."⁶⁸ He meant that there was no point in risking the loss of Jordan's air force, such as it was, for little or no gain.

In all the circumstances as they were, the explanation given by the Syrians for the no-show of their war planes was one that only a complete idiot might have believed. They said they had been caught off guard; their aircraft were not ready for the strike; and their fighter pilots were on a training flight. The first formal Syrian response to Jordan's request for action was to ask for a half-hour delay. When that expired the Syrians asked for another hour's delay and then, when that expired, another hour.

After the war Hussein was scathing in his much too polite way about Syria's procrastination and its consequences for the Arabs. He said: "The unfortunate delay of the Syrian air force made us miss an important opportunity to turn things to our advantage. Had it not been for the Syrians' procrastination, we could have started the bombing of Israel earlier. Then we could easily have intercepted the Israeli bombers returning from their raids on Egypt empty of ammunition and fuel, or we might even have caught them on the ground as they were being refuelled. It's not unthinkable that this alone might have modified the outcome (of the whole war)."⁶⁹

How so? Suppose that shortly after 0900 hours the Syrian air force had taken on the job with Iraq and Jordan of intercepting Israel's planes returning from attacks on Egypt to re-fuel and re-arm. With less than complete domination of the skies and its whole war momentum challenged to some extent, Israel might well have had to accept a Security Council

demand for a ceasefire before it had captured the West Bank and the Golan Heights. The opportunity to actually create a greater Israel might not have existed.

Israel's military planners had long been aware of the damage the Syrian Air Force could do to their planes returning from raids on Egypt for re-fuelling and re-arming; and that, of course, was why the IDF had been so anxious to secure a secret agreement with Syria. It effectively gave the Israeli air force a clear and unchallenged run at Egypt for more than three hours.

In retrospect it can be said without fear of contradiction that the speed and scale of Israel's victory in the 1967 war was due to five main factors:

- the fact that the Arabs were not intending to attack Israel;
- the genius of Israel's military planners and the skill of Israel's pilots;
- the complicity, for which read treachery, of the Syrian regime;
- American aerial reconnaissance (of which more later) and political support;
- and the three Arab D's: division, disunity and disarray.

If the regimes of the frontline Arab states had been capable of planning and executing a co-ordinated military response to an Israeli attack on any one of them, if in other words, the UAC of Nasser's hopes had been made to work for defensive purposes, a greater Israel could not have been created.

Be that as it may... At 1045 hours on the first morning of the war, General Riad and King Hussein agreed, despite continuing Syrian procrastination, that Jordan's Hawker Hunters should be ordered into the air to engage the Israelis. The Iraqis had signalled that they, too, were no longer prepared to wait for the Syrians and would take to the air with the Jordanians.

Then, between the giving of the orders for Jordanian and Iraqi pilots to join the air war and their actual take-off, there was a remarkable political intervention. General Odd Bull delivered to King Hussein a message from Israeli Prime Minister Eshkol. Its preamble was to the effect

that Israel's war was only with Egypt. The specific message to Hussein was, "If you don't intervene, you will suffer no consequences."⁷⁰

The timing of Eshkol's message indicates that Israeli military intelligence was aware of the decision Hussein and Riad had taken. (Israeli military intelligence had, in fact, cracked all the Arab codes and could listen to Arab military and political communications at will). In retrospect I think the main reason for Eshkol's plea was to do with his personal fear, prompted perhaps by an input from Rabin, that if Jordan became involved he, Eshkol, would have no chance at all of stopping Dayan and the hawks pursuing their Greater Israel agenda. In effect Eshkol was saying to Hussein, "If you want to prevent the creation of Greater Israel, you must assist me to contain my own madmen by not intervening."

If Hussein had not already approved Riad's order to get Jordan's 16 Hawker Hunter pilots airborne to engage the Israelis, it is possible that he might have had second thoughts when he received Eshkol's message. But it was now too late. After nearly two hours of delay because of Syrian procrastination, he was committed. If he had sought to reverse his position, he would have been in deep and perhaps terminal trouble with many of his own generals for whom Arab honour was now the issue; and, very probably, he would have provoked an explosion of popular anger that could have been the beginning of the end of his Hashemite dynasty.

The king's response to Eshkol via General Odd Bull was: "They started the battle. Well, they are receiving our reply by air."⁷¹

Jordan's Hawker Hunters made three attacks on Israel's airbase at Natanya and claimed to have destroyed without loss four Israeli planes on the ground—the only Israeli planes the Jordanian pilots saw. The Iraqis bombed the airport at Lydda. And the Syrians, finally, headed for the Israeli base at Ramat David and the refineries in Haifa. It is reasonable to assume that the Syrians were shamed into action and, also, that the regime in Damascus was anxious to do enough in the circumstances to kill any suspicion of its secret agreement with Israel.

Dayan then ordered the complete destruction of the Jordanian, Iraqi and Syrian air forces and their bases.

The first Israeli bombs of the extended air war were dropped on Amman airport at 12.30, and two hours later it was all over bar one final flourish. Two Israeli Mysteres broke away from a squadron of 12.

Their target was King Hussein.

One of the two attacking Mysteres was hit by the palace's anti-aircraft fire and crashed in flames. The other swept down, grazing the trees screening the windows of the king's private office. Its first rocket exploded against the wall. Its second penetrated the conference hall. Rockets delivered, the Mystere zoomed up, banked toward the north, turned full circle and headed back to the palace. This time it machine-gunned the king's office at what Rifai described as "point-blank range with a precision and knowledge of its target that was stupefying."⁷²

If the king had been in his private office he could not have survived. The wall behind his desk and his chair was lacerated.

After the war it was fashionable for Israelis and Jews everywhere to say that Hussein had been a bloody fool—he'd made "the mistake of his life" as even Shlaim put it.⁷³ The implication was that the IDF would have left Jordan alone if it had not intervened, if it had allowed the Zionist state a completely free hand to deal a crushing blow to Egypt and its leader. I think such a way of thinking is divorced from reality on at least two counts.

What, actually, was Hussein's choice in all the circumstances as they were? He had either to stand aside and be seen by the whole Arab world as a traitor to its cause and an Israeli stooge, or join the war of Israel's making on the basis of a pretext Nasser had provided for face-saving reasons. If he had tried to stand aside he would have been finished, probably suffering the same fate as his grandfather. That was no choice.

I am also convinced by the evidence of what happened, plus private conversations over the years with key players on the Israeli side, that Dayan, in order to take the West Bank including and especially Arab East Jerusalem, would have created a pretext to bring Jordan into the war if General Riad and King Hussein, because of Amer's false report to them, had not given him one. In 1967 Dayan was not going to be denied by anybody or any power, including the Johnson administration, everything he wanted to make a version of Zionism's Greater Israel dream come true.

It may also have been that, on Dayan's instructions, Israeli military intelligence tricked Hussein into opening the Jordanian front—to give the IDF the pretext for taking the West Bank including Arab East Jerusalem— by “cooking” the wording of Marshall Amer’s Mother of All Lies message.

As I have indicated, I was in Israel at the time and some of my excellent inside sources told me that Israeli intelligence had intercepted and reconstructed Amer’s message before transmitting it to Hussein. In other words, by a process known as “cooking” in the intelligence business, the Israelis may have intercepted and blocked Amer’s real message of the bad situation on the Egyptian front and then, having done that, Israeli intelligence may have reconstituted it to give Hussein false good news apparently from Amer, in the expectation that His Majesty would then be tempted to take some offensive action. Swept along by subsequent events including wars in Nigeria-Biafra and Vietnam, I never bothered to pursue this angle: but I was not surprised when, nearly a decade later, the story of Israel’s cooking of Amer’s message became news, highly contentious of course, but news. As far as I’m aware, the story saw its first bright light of day in two exclusive articles for the magazine *Penthouse* in May and June 1976. They were written by a respected British journalist, Anthony Pearson, who covered wars for *The Guardian*, *The Times* and *Paris Match*.

What cannot be doubted is that Dayan had an incentive to draw Jordan into the fighting—his knowledge that President Johnson’s green light for war with Egypt had been more or less conditional on an Israeli undertaking not to grab Jordanian or Syrian territory.

It is not unreasonable to speculate that Eshkol’s message to Hussein may have been triggered by the Israeli prime minister’s discovery that his intelligence people had cooked Amer’s message.

With the air forces of the frontline Arab states destroyed before sundown on the first day of the war, all Arab tanks and other armoured vehicles, and troop concentrations, were sitting ducks for Israel’s war planes. With one exception, the way was open for the IDF to expand the borders of the Jewish state at will. The exception was Syria. To grab a chunk of its territory—the Golan Heights—Dayan was going to have to do something about the U.S. spy ship, *Liberty*.

But not before Zionism's most important unfinished business of 1948 had been attended to.

Prime Minister Eshkol could not have been surprised that it was Menachem Begin, Zionism's number one terrorist-turned-politician, who was the first to insist that the national unity government of which he was a minister without portfolio should authorise the IDF to "liberate" Arab East Jerusalem, the Old City. When the cabinet met in the Knesset's air raid shelter on the first evening of the war, Begin said that Jordan's intervention had given Israel an historic opportunity.

Neither Defence Minister Dayan nor Chief of Staff Rabin were present, and Eshkol said the matter should be deferred until they had been consulted. As it happened, the actual decision to capture the Old City was taken by only one cabinet minister—Dayan, without consulting the prime minister or any of his colleagues. It was thus not formally Israeli government policy, only Dayan's policy.

The following morning, Tuesday 6 June, Dayan ordered IDF paratroops to encircle the Old City but not to enter it without a specific order from him. According to some reports he was hesitant because he knew that Hussein's Arab Legion defenders would put up one hell of a fight. In hand-to-hand combat in the narrow streets Israeli casualties would be high. *Dayan gave the order after he learned that Zionism's friends and allies in and around the Johnson administration could no longer delay a Security Council demand for a ceasefire. Taking the Old City had become a matter of now or never.*

It was in Israel's hands by 10:00 hours the following morning, Wednesday 7 June. Three hours later Major General Uzi Narkis, the O.C. Central Command, Rabin and Dayan entered the Old City through the Lions' Gate. At the Wailing Wall Dayan declared: "*The IDF liberated Jerusalem this morning. We reunited divided Jerusalem, the bisected capital of Israel. We have returned to our holiest places. We have returned in order not to part from them ever again.*"⁷⁴

At about the time Dayan was preparing to proclaim Zionism's fait accompli in Jerusalem to the world, Walt Rostow sent President Johnson "some thoughts" on "the Israeli situation and bargaining position."⁷⁵

In this memorandum, on only the third morning of the war, Rostow said it appeared that Israel would end up controlling the West Bank of Jordan including all of Jerusalem, and the whole of the Sinai peninsula up to and including the east bank of the Suez Canal. *Depending “but not much” on how fast the Soviets replaced destroyed Arab aircraft, “the Israelis for the moment are in a position to dominate militarily the region.”*

The main purpose of Rostow’s memorandum (of 7 April) was to suggest to President Johnson that it was a “perfect time” for U.S. diplomatic initiatives to encourage the Arabs and the Israelis to resolve their problems on a regional basis. “The UN role”, Rostow, wrote, “should be to set a framework within which these things become possible but not to become excessively involved in detail.” Though Rostow did not say so, the details of the post-war settlement were to be left to those calling the shots on the ground. The victorious Israelis, fully supported, of course, by the Johnson administration.

That particular memorandum was, in fact, a follow-up to one Rostow had sent to the President the previous day. In it he had said: “If the Israelis go fast enough, and the Soviets get worried enough, a simple ceasefire might be the best answer.”⁷⁶

What did that mean—what was a “simple” ceasefire?

Rostow’s own answer was: “This would mean that we could use the *de facto* situation on the ground to try to negotiate not a return to the armistice lines but a definite peace in the Middle East.” *In other words, a simple ceasefire was one that did not require Israel the aggressor to withdraw from any of the Arab territory it occupied unless and until the Arabs were prepared to make peace with the Jewish state on its terms.*

This was the Zionist approach to peacemaking, about to become American policy, that would completely change the basis for resolving the Arab–Israeli conflict—after the map of the region had been redrawn by the IDF.

Before Israel went to war on 5 June 1967, the basis for resolving the conflict was previous UN resolutions, with some regard for the requirements of international law and what was morally right. Israel was to exist within more or less the 1949 Armistice borders and, in theory, there

was to be a measure of justice for the Palestinians. *After the war, in practice and in line with Rostow's advice, any settlement of the conflict was to be determined by Zionism's demands upon the Arabs, backed by Greater Israel's overwhelming military superiority. So far as Zionism and the Johnson administration were concerned, might was now to be right in the Middle East. Put another way, the idea that justice should be a factor in the peacemaking equation was about to be abandoned.*

The unspeakable but real implication of what Rostow proposed was that Israeli aggression should be rewarded. It was a proposition that Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy would have rejected, and which any U.S. administration should have rejected because of its contempt for the guiding principles of the UN's Charter and international law, which required Israel as the aggressor to withdraw unconditionally.

In the light of the above there is more that has to be said about the real significance of Rostow's memorandum of advice to President Johnson on 6 June.

When Rostow suggested that a "simple ceasefire" would be the best answer if the Soviets were worried enough, he meant that the Soviets, if they were worried enough, would drop their insistence on a Security Council resolution demanding both a ceasefire and an unconditional Israeli withdrawal from newly-occupied Arab territory.

Rostow's calculation was that if the Soviets continued to insist on a ceasefire and an unconditional Israeli withdrawal, the President would have to choose between supporting the Soviet position (which was in accord with the requirements of international law and the principles of the UN's Charter) or risking a confrontation with the Soviet Union. Rostow assumed that Johnson, bogged down in Vietnam, would not risk a showdown with the Soviets in the Middle East. So, if the Soviets did stick to their position, there would be a Security Council resolution demanding both a ceasefire and an unconditional Israeli withdrawal. What Rostow was actually saying to President Johnson by obvious implication on 6 June was something like the following: "If you're thinking about supporting a Security Council resolution requiring an unconditional Israeli withdrawal because you're worried about the possibility of a confrontation with the Soviets if you

don't, please stop worrying Mr. President. Provided the Israelis go fast enough, the Soviets will drop their insistence on an unconditional Israeli withdrawal and will thus endorse a call for simple ceasefire—because their priority is limiting the extent of their own loss of face.”

Before the end of the third day of the turkey shoot of a war, Rostow's projection of the territorial gains Israel would make on the Egyptian and Jordanian fronts was seen to be remarkably accurate.

In Sinai the remnants of the defeated Egyptian army were in full and chaotic retreat under heavy, incessant and completely unopposed air attack. The IDF had taken Sharm el Sheikh without firing a shot. The Egyptian garrison there, controlling the entrance to the Gulf of Aqaba, had been evacuated for “regrouping” and, as a consequence, the landing by Israeli paratroopers supported by sea-borne forces was unopposed. Though there was still some mopping up to do elsewhere in the huge peninsula desert, all of Egypt east of the Suez Canal was effectively in Israel's hands.

On the West Bank serious resistance to the advancing Israelis was almost over. After capturing the Old City of Jerusalem the IDF had gone for other West Bank towns and cities. In Nablus the Arab Legion had fought with great resolution and tenacity, at least matching that of the Israelis, but when Dayan ordered the Israeli Air Force to join the battle, the end came quickly. With the fall of Nablus, Jordanian resistance had virtually collapsed and the whole of the West Bank was there for the taking by the IDF.

So... As the end of the third day of the war approached the Johnson administration concluded that it could support a Security Council resolution demanding a simple ceasefire. To be effective—i.e. to have the necessary, moral authority to cause all the warring parties to stop fighting—the resolution had to demand a ceasefire and be adopted unanimously. *For the best part of three days, in order to give the IDF the necessary minimum time to achieve its war aims as secretly agreed with Washington, the Johnson administration had been colluding with the Zionists to prevent the Security Council speaking with one voice to demand an end to the fighting.* This collusion at the UN had started with the Mother of All Lies on the Israeli

side, told for the first time at 03:10 hours, New York time on 5 June, 25 minutes after the first Israeli air strikes.

The teller of the lie was Israel's representative at the UN, Gideon Rafael. At 0310 hours he had informed the President of the Security Council, Denmark's Hans Tabor, that the "huge" Egyptian armies, which had been concentrated in Sinai, had launched a "holy war" for the reconquest of Palestine. Israel was fighting back in self-defence and had brought the matter to the Security Council in accordance with the Charter of the UN."

For Egypt, Ambassador Mohammed el Kouny had responded with a statement of simple truth—Israel was guilty of "premeditated aggression" and his country's armed forces were defending themselves.

With the Soviet Union taking the diplomatic lead and wanting both a ceasefire and an unconditional Israeli withdrawal from newly occupied territory, the Security Council had gone through the motions of discussing what could be done to bring about an immediate ceasefire; but the Johnson administration, having given Israel's hawks the green light to go to war with Egypt, had not wanted them to stop yet.

So on the first day of the war and for most of the second, the Security Council had been deadlocked—reduced to impotence by U.S. diplomatic support for continuing Israeli aggression.

Then, late in the evening of 6 June (after Rostow had suggested to President Johnson that a simple ceasefire "might be the best thing"), the U.S. had agreed to the adoption of a resolution which asked the governments concerned "as a first step to take forthwith all measures for an immediate ceasefire and for the cessation of all military activities." But that first ceasefire resolution had only asked the warring parties to end all military activities, it did not demand a ceasefire. Effectively the U.S. message to Israel was, "You can ignore this resolution."

King Hussein was desperate for a cease-fire and had wanted to respond to the Security Council's call immediately, but Dayan refused to consider negotiations with Jordan. He said: "We have been offering the king an opportunity to cut his losses ever since Monday morning. Now we

have 500 dead and wounded in Jerusalem. So, tell him that from now on I'll talk to him only through the gun barrels of our tanks!" [77](#)

So far as Dayan was concerned the IDF was now on a roll in the West Bank and would soon have all of it.

The U.S. Ambassador to Jordan, Findley Burns, was appalled by his government's apparent reluctance to require Israel to be serious about cease-fire negotiations with Jordan. On the afternoon of 7 June he reported to Washington that Radio Amman had been announcing Jordan's acceptance of the UN's call for cease-fire for several hours and that the IDF was continuing its military campaign. More to the point, he "respectfully" urged President Johnson to telephone Prime Minister Eshkol to bring a ceasefire into effect "soonest."[78](#) (The previous day Burns had reported that the Israeli Air Force was hitting "many civilian targets on the West Bank where there were absolutely no military emplacements.") [79](#)

The ambassador's report of 7 June had concluded:

I recognise IDF goal may well be total destruction of the Jordanian Army. I consider that destruction, if achieved, would have disastrous effect on this regime and on area stability as a whole. I am gravely concerned about resultant effect on public order and on safety large American community still in the Kingdom.

Shortly after that Burns message was logged into the White House communication centre, Jordan's Ambassador to the UN, Muhammad el Farra, had addressed the Security Council. He accused Israel of preventing the ceasefire the UN had called for by continuing the fighting "in order to seize more territory." He was right. (Earlier that morning UN Secretary General U Thant had reported to the Security Council that he had personally forwarded to the government of Israel a message from Jordanian Foreign Minister Ahmad Toukan accepting the terms of the cease-fire. Shortly thereafter, he said, the headquarters of the Israeli-Jordanian Mixed Armistice Commission had been seized by the IDF).

It is reasonable to assume that Ambassador Burns' request for American diplomatic action to bring the IDF to heel on the Jordanian front was one of three reasons why, as the end of the third day of war

approached, the Johnson administration decided to support a Security Council Resolution *demanding* a ceasefire. Another reason was that America's position in the ongoing Security Council debate was becoming increasingly difficult to sustain—i.e. if the U.S. was not to be seen for what it really was, *Israel's turkey-shooting collaborator*. But the main reason was that the IDF, in less than three days, had achieved the war objective as secretly agreed in advance with those who were calling the shots (essentially the Zionists) in the Johnson administration.

The situation in Sinai was as Rabin had claimed in a statement before the U.S. withdrew its opposition to a Security Council demand for a cease-fire. Israel had achieved “total victory in the war against Egypt,” Rabin had announced. “The Egyptians are defeated. All their efforts are aimed at withdrawing behind the Suez Canal and we are taking care of that. The whole area is in our hands. The main effort of the Egyptians is to save themselves.”⁸⁰

The Security Council's red card resolution was introduced by the Soviet Union's representative, Dr. Federenko. It:

1. Noted that hostilities were continuing despite the Council's previous appeal;

2. Expressed concern that this could create “an even more menacing situation in the area” and

3. Demanded that the governments concerned should cease fire and stop all military activities at 20:00 hours G.M.T. that evening (Wednesday 7 June)—10:00 p.m. in the Middle East.

Rostow was proved to have been right. *The Soviets had been worried enough to drop their insistence on an unconditional Israeli withdrawal.*

Effectively, to save itself from the embarrassment of further Arab losses, the Soviet Union too had sanctioned the idea that Israeli aggression should be rewarded. That was the real implication of not insisting on an unconditional Israeli withdrawal and allowing Israel the aggressor to keep conquered land as (in Rostow's words) a bargaining chip.

For different reasons both superpowers were now supporting a policy that demonstrated contempt for the principles of the UN's Charter and complete disregard for international law and any notion of morality in the conduct of

international affairs. The policy was Zionism's—and Rostow, following Amit's secret visit to Washington—had been its midwife.

In the early hours of the following morning King Hussein gave instructions for Secretary General U Thant to be informed that Jordan accepted the cease-fire. But Dayan was still determined to fight on—because the IDF did not yet have total control of all the West Bank.

Dayan's pretext for continuing the war on the Jordanian front was articulated by Foreign Minister Eban at the UN. Yes, it was true that Jordan had accepted the cease-fire, he acknowledged, but Egypt had not; and since Jordan and Egypt had a unified command, Israel—no matter what the Security Council demanded—was insisting that it had the right to continue fighting on both fronts until both Jordan and Egypt agreed to stop shooting.

Israel was now imposing conditions on its acceptance of a unanimous Security Council resolution. The resolution had not said that the Arabs had to stop shooting first and then, and only then, should Israel stop. The resolution had demanded that all the warring parties stop. But Israel, the aggressor, was saying, "We'll stop only if the Arabs stop first."

Nasser had been as desperate as Hussein for a Security Council resolution demanding a ceasefire, but when it came he did not accept it as quickly as the king had done. Why not?

On the morning of 8 June, Egypt's remaining armour in Sinai launched what was described as a "powerful counterattack" between the Mitla Pass and Bir Gifgafa. In fact it was not a counterattack in the usual meaning of the term. Its purpose was not to drive IDF forces back in the hope of reducing the amount of Egyptian territory that would remain in Israel's hands when the war ended. This last gasp Egyptian offensive was launched (a confirmation of Rabin's assessment) to clear a path of retreat across the Suez Canal for Egyptian forces which had been cut off and trapped by the incredible speed of the IDF's advance along the three natural routes through the desert to the Suez Canal. Nasser was not going to agree to a ceasefire when there was still something that could be done to save the lives of at least some of his soldiers. In one respect there was not going to be a repeat of 1948. Then many Egyptian soldiers had been abandoned—

lambs for the slaughtering—because of the incompetence of their commanding officers and the uncaring nature of the corrupt regime they served. It was personal experience of the 1948 debacle that had driven Nasser to the conclusion that Farouk's rotten regime had to be overthrown. On the morning of 8 June 1967 Nasser's fate was a matter for speculation, but the one thing his own people would not be able to say of him was that he had abandoned his soldiers to improve the prospects of saving himself.

When that last major engagement in Sinai was over, Nasser authorised Egypt's formal acceptance of the Security Council's demand for a ceasefire. That happened on the afternoon of Thursday 8 June.

It ought to have been the end of the 1967 war—in four days, not six. But it wasn't. Dayan was determined to take the Golan Heights from Syria (in addition to taking for keeping the whole of the West Bank).

And the prelude to that action (in defiance of the Security Council's resolution demanding a ceasefire) was the IDF's attack on the U.S.S. *Liberty*, also on the afternoon of Thursday 8 June.



For General Moshe Dayan, the creator of Greater Israel, the war of 1967 was the unfinished business of 1948-1949.

THE LIBERTY AFFAIR— “PURE MURDER” ON A “GREAT DAY”

Israel insisted (as it still does) that its attack on the *Liberty* was an unfortunate “accident”, a case of “mistaken identity”.

The attack ought to have been a sensational, headline-grabbing news story, but beyond the fact that an accident had happened and that Israel had apologized, *it did not get reported by America’s news organisations*. It was too hot an issue for them to handle and pursue. If it had been an Arab attack on an American vessel it would have been an entirely different matter, of course. In that event there would have been saturation coverage with demands for retaliation, with Zionist and other pro-Israeli columnists and commentators setting the pace and tone.

About the attack and its aftermath—the Johnson administration’s cover-up led by the President himself—retired American Admiral Thomas L. Moorer, who was appointed Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) a month after the incident, was subsequently to say to former U.S. Congressman Paul Findley, “*If it was written as fiction nobody would believe it.*”¹

The attack itself, Admiral Moorer said to Findley, was “absolutely deliberate.” And the cover-up? “The clampdown was not actually for security reasons but for domestic political reasons. I don’t think there is any question about it. What other reasons could there have been? President Johnson was worried about the reaction of Jewish voters.” (To which I add, the awesome power of the Zionist lobby and its many stooges in Congress). The former Chairman of the JCS added: “*The American people would be god damn mad if they knew what goes on.*”²

Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: “The American people would be god damn mad if they knew what goes on.”

As it happened, the institutions of government in America did not succeed in keeping the truth covered up because there were eye-witnesses

who would not be silenced. They were the survivors of the *Liberty's* crew. The first prime source of detailed information about the actual attack is the book *Assault on the Liberty*.³ It was written by Lieutenant James M. Ennes, the Officer of the Deck on the *Liberty* throughout the attack.

On 5 June 1982 there was a reunion of *Liberty* survivors in the Hotel Washington in Washington D.C. The guest speaker was retired Admiral Moorer. He told the survivors that he had “never been willing to accept the Israeli explanation that it was a case of mistaken identity.” He could not accept that Israeli pilots “don’t know how to identify ships.” It followed, he said, that there “must have been some other motive”, which he was confident “some day will be made public.”⁴

Retired Admiral Moorer’s confidence has not yet been justified. Some of the official documents have been de-classified with the most sensitive (for which, read most embarrassing) passages blacked out, but other official documents and reports remain classified, TOP SECRET, and are likely to remain so for as long as America’s pork-barrel politicians are frightened of offending Zionism.

The “motive” for the attack has to be deduced from what happened in the context of the whole war of June 1967 and Dayan’s determination to stop at nothing to create the Greater Israel of gut-Zionism’s mad dream. And the key to complete understanding is knowledge of the *Liberty's* capabilities and what its mission was.

Dayan wanted the *Liberty* to be completely destroyed with the loss of all hands on board.

A question readers might like to keep in mind is this: When Dayan ordered the attack—he wanted the *Liberty* to be completely destroyed with the loss of all hands on board—who was the Israeli general who protested and said, “This is pure murder”?

The *Liberty's* naval designation was AGTR-5, meaning that it was the fifth ship in a series undertaking “Auxiliary General Technical Research.” It was, in fact, a converted World War II Victory ship—the former Simmons Victory. It had been refitted by the NSA (National Security Agency) for use as a signals intelligence (SIGINT) “platform”—a

floating listening post. It had a very sophisticated system of radio antennae including a “Big Ear” sonar-radio listening device with a clear capability range of over 500 miles. *Up to that distance the Liberty could intercept virtually any form of wireless communication, including military and diplomatic traffic, telemetry data, rocket guidance and satellite control, among others.* It could then decode and process the intercepted messages and relay them back to the NSA at Fort Meade, Maryland, via shortwave radio or through a very special communications system called TRSSCOM, using a 10,000-watt microwave signal bounced off the surface of the moon. The U.S.S. *Liberty* was America’s most advanced spy ship.

Below decks the communications areas—which housed the computers, listening and decoding devices manned by linguistic experts and other personnel who were changed according to the ship’s mission— were off-limits to the crew, including Captain William I. McGonagle. The communications areas were under the direct control of an NSA technician (managing spook). The on-board NSA controller for the *Liberty*’s June ’67 mission was known to the crew as “the Major.” With two other civilians he joined the *Liberty* at Rota in Spain shortly before the spy ship sailed from there for the Middle East on 2 June—the day after Dayan became minister of defence. A coincidence?

The *Liberty*’s movements were controlled by the JCS and the NSA in Washington. With a top speed of 18 knots it was faster than most ships of its kind. On both the forecastle and deckhouse aft of the bridge there were two pedestal-mounted 0.50-calibre Browning machine guns. These four guns, on open mounts without shrapnel shields, were the spy ship’s only defences. Strictly speaking the *Liberty* was not an unarmed vessel but for all practical purposes it was another sitting duck if attacked.

The *Liberty*’s mission was TOP SECRET and has not been acknowledged to this day.

It was on patrol, listening, because some in the Johnson administration at executive level—perhaps Defence Secretary McNamara especially—did not trust the Israelis to keep their word with regard to the scope of the war.

The Johnson administration had given the green light for Israel to attack Egypt and only Egypt. It was understood that the IDF would have to respond to Jordanian intervention—if it happened. But on *no account was Israel to seek to widen the war for the purpose of taking Jordanian or Syrian territory*. Apart from President Johnson's public statement that he was as firmly committed as his predecessors had been to the "political independence and territorial integrity of all the nations in that area", Washington feared what could happen if the Israelis occupied Syrian territory. *If they did there was a possibility of Soviet intervention (for face-saving reasons). Soviet leaders could just about live with the Egyptians being smashed by the IDF but not the Syrians too*. Through the CIA the Johnson administration was aware of the IDF's secret agreement with the Syrian regime. So it, the Johnson administration, was reasonably confident that the Syrians would not seek to widen the war by engaging the Israelis in any serious way. *The name of the U.S. counter-intelligence game was therefore preventing Israel from attacking Syria. That was the Liberty's mission.*

When the *Liberty* was ordered to the Middle East, everybody who needed to know did know that the Israelis would have only a few days in which to smash the Egyptians—because the Security Council would demand a quick end to the fighting and Israel would have to stop when it was shown the international red card. This meant that when Israel went to war with Egypt, it would be assigning the bulk of its armour to the Egyptian front. The point? If Israel then decided to attack Syria, it would have to re-deploy armour, very quickly, from the Egyptian front to the Syrian front. The orders for any such redeployment would be given by wireless—from Dayan's Ministry of Defence in Tel Aviv to the commanders in the field and they, naturally, would talk to each other. If there was such radio chatter, the *Liberty* would pick it up and pass it urgently to the NSA in Washington. President Johnson would then demand that the Israelis abort their intended attack on Syria. *So long as the Liberty was on station and functioning, the U.S. would have some control of Israel.*

The name of the U.S. counter-intelligence game was preventing Israel from attacking Syria. That was the *Liberty's* mission.

In short the *Liberty* was the Johnson administration's insurance policy. It was there to prevent Israel's hawks going over the top and, on a worst-case scenario, provoking Soviet intervention and possibly World War III. (One could have said then, and one could say with even more point today, that with the Zionist state as its friend, the U.S. does not need enemies.)

From Dayan's perspective... Before he could order an invasion of Syria for the purpose of grabbing the Golan Heights for keeps, the *Liberty* had to be put out of business.

In what follows it is important to keep two things in mind.

First: It was impossible for the attacking Israelis not to know the identity of their target. The *Liberty* was proudly flying the standard American flag—five feet by eight feet—from the masthead on the ensign staff. The ship's US Navy markings, GTR-5, were on both sides of its bows in white letters and a figure ten feet high. It's name was clearly visible on its stern, as was the sophisticated system of radio antennae.

Second: As Stephen Green noted, "The IDF command did not have to consult Jane's Fighting Ships to learn about the eavesdropping capabilities of the *Liberty*."² Israeli military intelligence had a very close working relationship with both the CIA and the U.S. Defence Department and knew well that the *Liberty* could listen to the movement orders for IDF units—movement orders that, on the evening–morning of 7–8 June, would be concerned with rushing units from Sinai to the northern Galilee border with Syria, in preparation for an invasion.

Shortly after 2030 hours local time on the evening of Wednesday 7 June, Israel aerial reconnaissance reported to IDF Central Coastal Command in Tel Aviv a change in the *Liberty's* course. The spy ship was now steaming toward a point on the Israeli coast midway between Tel Aviv and the naval base at Ashdod. The change of course was noted on the Israeli control table. The *Liberty* was represented by a green symbol indicating a neutral craft—neither foe nor friend. It may or may not have been a coincidence (I think not) that the *Liberty's* course change came shortly after the Johnson administration had withdrawn its opposition in the Security

Council to a resolution demanding a ceasefire. (The demand meant that Israel was expected by the U.S. to comply.)

At about 22:00 hours the *Liberty's* sophisticated radar-sensing equipment detected Israeli jets circling the ship. That was not surprising given where the vessel was. The surprise was that fire-control radar was being directed at it. The Israeli jets were homing their rockets as though for an attack.

The small group gathered around the *Liberty's* radar screen playfully employed the ship's electronic countermeasure (ECM) to "spoof" the Israeli pilots. The *Liberty's* ECM equipment was of the latest and most sophisticated type and enabled the ship to distort its radar image and send it back to the Israeli planes—making the *Liberty* appear to be much smaller and then much bigger than it was. First Class Petty Officer Charles Rowley was subsequently to recall that no one took the contact seriously. The Israelis, it was assumed, were only playing games.

They were not; and there was a link between the directing of fire-control radar at the *Liberty* and what had happened an hour or so earlier. The Office of the U.S. Defence Attaché in Tel Aviv had sent a startling message to the U.S. Army Communications Centre in Washington. *By telegram in code the message was that the IDF was planning to attack the Liberty if the ship continued to move closer to the Israeli coast!*

It can be assumed that it was only a matter of minutes before everybody in Washington who needed to know did know about Dayan's threat. (Everybody in Washington's war loop knew that it was Dayan's war).

In retrospect two things seem to me to be obvious.

The first is that Dayan ordered the leaking (to the U.S. Defence Attaché) of his intention to attack the *Liberty* in the hope that the threat alone would cause the controlling American authorities to abort the spy ship's mission, and thus remove the need for it to be attacked.

The second is that Dayan ordered the jets which circled the *Liberty* at 2200 hours to direct fire-control radar at the vessel to underline the fact that he was not bluffing—that the spy ship would be attacked if it did not move away. Dayan was assuming that the *Liberty* would report to its

controllers in Washington the fact that Israeli jets had gone through the motions of preparing to attack the vessel.

As it happened the *Liberty* did not report its 2200 hours contact because of the assumption that the Israeli pilots were playing games. But the *Liberty's* failure to report the incident was of no consequence because the report of the U.S. Defence Attaché had weight enough on its own. Washington knew that Israel's one-eyed warlord was not a man who made empty threats.

There can surely be no dispute about what President Johnson ought to have done given that the lives of 286 Americans on board the *Liberty* were at stake. *He ought to have telephoned Prime Minister Eshkol and said that an Israeli attack on the Liberty would be regarded as a declaration of war on the United States of America, and would provoke an appropriate U.S. response.*

Johnson ought to have telephoned Prime Minister Eshkol to say that an Israeli attack on the *Liberty* would be regarded as a declaration of war against the U.S. and would provoke an appropriate U.S. response.

But for obvious domestic political reasons Johnson was not going to do that. Instead, and no doubt at the urging of Walt Rostow and others with influence who were for Zionism right or wrong, *the President approved the sending of an order for the Liberty to get away from Israel as fast as possible.*⁶ Over the course of two and a half hours, three frantic messages to that effect were sent, each rated “Pinnacle”, which meant highest priority. Incredibly, none were received by the *Liberty*.

To this day the U.S. Navy has not offered an explanation, so those of us who don't like mysteries have to speculate. There are, I think, only two possible explanations.

One is that the messages were inadvertently misrouted and delayed in the convoluted channels and procedures of the Defence Department's worldwide communications system. That presupposes an astonishing degree of inefficiency and incompetence. (The subsequent TOP SECRET Naval Board of Inquiry—“Review of Proceedings on the Attack on the U.S.S.

Liberty”—asserted that nobody in the Defence Department was to blame for anything).

The other possible explanation is that somebody in high authority was enraged by President Johnson’s surrender to Dayan for domestic political reasons, and took the necessary steps to see to it that the messages were not transmitted to the *Liberty*—because he believed that the spy ship’s mission was vital; in turn because he believed that the peace of the world might be at stake if Israel attacked Syria and provoked a Soviet response. This explanation supposes that there was in the Johnson administration one hell of a fight between those who supported Zionism right or wrong— even when doing so was not in America’s best interests, and those who put America’s own interests first.

Does anybody know, really know, which of those two possible explanations is the correct one?

The fact that President Johnson, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the CIA and the NSA had advance notice of Dayan’s intention to attack the *Liberty* meant that, when the early reports of the attack arrived, they had a choice. In *Taking Sides*, Stephen Green put it this way: *The choice was “either to take retaliatory action against Israel, or to become an accessory after the fact by promoting the fiction that it was somehow an accident.”*⁷

Out of fear of offending Zionism and its child it was, of course, the second option that the pork-barrel Johnson administration took, once the efforts to divert the *Liberty* away from the area had failed—making a cover-up inevitable.

At this point I must pause to acknowledge that I, like most others (the few) who write about the cover-up, would know little that was worth knowing were it not for Stephen Green’s original research. In *Peering Into Dark Corners*, the title of the first chapter of his book, he told of his epic struggle to make use of the Federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) to get access to declassified files from 22 different U.S. government agencies, mainly civilian and military intelligence agencies.

“The FOIA process,” he wrote in 1984 (how appropriate), “has in the past few years become an adversarial one with strong political overtones. Initial requests may be simply ignored for months until repeated follow-ups

elicit *pro forma* responses. Once a researcher's request reaches an active pile, he or she may be threatened with exorbitant search and duplication fees." He gave an example. In response to one particular request he was informed in writing that servicing it would require "13,000 hours of search time at \$16 per hour. If I would just send along the \$208,000, they would get cracking on the matter."⁸

Green's most chilling revelation was about the existence of Executive Order 12356. This was promulgated by President Reagan in mid-1982 to permit the re-classification of previously de-classified documents! "*The Reagan Justice Department has encouraged a number of federal agencies to avail themselves of this new 'opportunity' to return to an era when the processes of government were none of the American people's business.*"⁹

Green, who is Jewish, dedicated his book as follows—"For my father, who would have understood." Green's hope was that his book would encourage debate about the need for America to have a more distant and rational relationship with Israel.

Precisely when on Thursday 8 June Dayan ordered the actual attack on the *Liberty* has never been revealed. There was however a Congressional leak to Green from a named member—Representative Robert L.F. Sikes—of the intelligence working group of the investigating Defence Subcommittee of the House Committee on Appropriations. The leak confirmed among other things the existence of a suppressed report of a secret CIA briefing in which it was stated that Dayan had issued the order over the protests of another Israeli general who said, "This is pure murder."¹⁰

The attack, the murder at sea, was in two main phases lasting more than one hour (as we shall see, an intended third and final phase had to be aborted); and it was launched after aerial reconnaissance of the *Liberty*, in the sunlight of the eastern Mediterranean, over a period of eight hours. As all television cameramen and still photographers know, the sunlight in the eastern Mediterranean has almost magical properties. It is Mother Nature's assistance for taking perfect pictures.

The attack was launched after aerial reconnaissance of the *Liberty*, in the sunlight of the eastern Mediterranean, over a period of eight hours.

Dawn on the morning of Thursday 8 June brought with it the promise of another beautiful and clear day. Calm sea. Light, warm breezes. The off-duty crew of the *Liberty* could not have had it better if they were holidaymakers on a cruise ship. Many were, in fact, looking forward to some sunbathing on the deck.

The aerial reconnaissance of the *Liberty* started at 06:00 hours when a lumbering Israeli Noratlas (a Nord 2051) slowly circled the ship three times.

On the bridge Ensign John Scott, near the end of his watch as the Officer of the Deck, studied the plane through his binoculars.

The French-built Noratlas was a transport plane but this one had been modified by the Israeli Air Force. It was carrying not fighting men of any kind but photographers—the best the Israeli Air Force had (which probably meant they were second to none in the world)—and, to direct them, specialists from the directorate of military intelligence. The pictures that were being taken of the *Liberty* on this and several subsequent over-flights would determine the precise plan of attack.

If Dayan was to get away with it, the Liberty had to be totally destroyed with no survivors to tell the tale. And the key to complete success when the attack was launched would be taking out the *Liberty's* transmitting facilities before it could get off a call for help to the American Sixth Fleet which was not too far away. If the *Liberty* did succeed in transmitting an S.O.S. when it was being attacked, there was at least the possibility that fighter planes from the Sixth Fleet would be ordered to take on the attackers. The prospect of an aerial dog-fight between U.S. and Israeli warplanes was unthinkable. But that was what Dayan would be risking if his attack planes failed to take out the *Liberty's* transmitting facilities with their first rockets. The Noratlas's prime task was to get the pictures that would enable Israeli pilots to attack the *Liberty's* communications facilities with, literally, pinpoint accuracy on their first run.

At 07:20 hours Lieutenant James Ennes replaced Scott as the Officer of the Deck. By now everybody on the *Liberty* was well aware that their ship was being examined very, very carefully. The first thing Ennes did was to order a new flag (measuring five feet by eight feet) to be run up the main mast. The old one had been badly sooted on the journey from Rota.

At 09:00 hours, in accordance with its original operating orders, the *Liberty* made a sharp right-hand turn and reduced speed to five knots. The ship was doubling back in a westerly direction roughly parallel to the Egyptian coast north of El Arish. As Ennes ordered the turn, the *Liberty* was 25 miles from Gaza and less than 30 miles from the nearest point on the Israeli coast. *The ship was now perfectly placed to listen to IDF movement orders—orders for many Israeli units in Sinai to turn around and move north, to assist with the consolidation of Israel's capture of the West Bank and, more importantly, an attack on Syria.* (I was in Sinai at the time reporting for ITN, and I saw some of the Israel tanks that had smashed through Egypt's defences being loaded onto huge lorry-drawn trailers for transportation northwards).

As the *Liberty* was turning, a single jet aircraft was watching from a distance. Then, at 10:00 hours, two delta-winged jets armed with rockets circled the ship three times. On this occasion the planes came close enough for Ennes and other officers on the bridge to see the pilots in their cockpits through binoculars. The odd thing, or so the Americans on the *Liberty's* bridge thought, was that the two planes did not seem to have any markings.

In retrospect, it is obvious that the 10:00 hours visit was something of a trial run, to enable the pilots to take a view on whether or not the first set of pictures taken by the *Noratlas* would enable them to attack the *Liberty's* communications facilities with pinpoint accuracy.

Events suggest that the two pilots who were to lead the attack were not happy and wanted more photographs to enable them to guarantee such pinpoint accuracy. After their report, the *Noratlas* made three more over flights: at 10:30 hours—this time passing directly over the *Liberty* at a very low level, probably not more than 200 feet, at 11:26 hours and 12:20 hours.

At 13:10 hours, with lunch over, the crew of the *Liberty* conducted a series of drills including fire, damage control and gas attack. That took 40 minutes. Captain McGonagle then addressed the ship's officers and crew. In the normal course of events he would have confined himself to complimenting them (or not) on the job done in the drills. But on this particular afternoon, the fourth of the war—they could see the smoke of battle on the shoreline—he knew that his men were in need of reassurance. After the *Noratlas's* fourth reconnaissance over-flight there had been mutterings of fear. The Israelis had obviously identified the *Liberty* several times over. What, really, did they want?

McGonagle addressed the concern of his ship's company by stressing that they had been under surveillance by "friendly" forces. Given that and the fact that they (the friendly forces) could not have failed to identify the *Liberty*, the captain was implying that his men should dismiss from their minds the possibility of an attack. He was saying—without saying it—that the Israelis could not attack the *Liberty* without knowing it was the *Liberty* they were attacking.

At 14:05 hours the "friends" returned, led by three Mirages each armed with 72 rockets and two 30-mm cannons. This time there was no circling. *At high speed they came straight for the Liberty, so fast that between the time they appeared as blips on the ship's radar and the start of their attack, Ennes and others on the bridge barely had time to grab and focus their binoculars.*

For seven minutes the three Mirages made furious, crisscross runs, hitting the *Liberty* with everything they had. The first rockets fired toppled several of the ship's antennae. After the Mirages and for about another 20 minutes, the air attack was continued by several Mystere fighters. They were slower than the Mirages and therefore more efficient for staffing and dropping canisters of napalm. (Napalm is a highly inflammable petroleum jelly. In Vietnam I witnessed American ground forces using it in flamethrowers to burn entire villages. It can reduce a human body to a handful of black pulp). *The fact that the Israelis resorted to use of napalm for their attack on the Liberty is on its own proof enough that Dayan wanted there to be no survivors to tell the tale.*

That Israelis resorted to napalm for their attack on the *Liberty* proves that Dayan wanted there to be no survivors to tell the tale.

When the first attack was over the *Liberty* had 621 holes in its sides and decks, including over 100 rocket holes six to eight inches wide, not counting the shrapnel damage. As author Richard Smith wrote, Israeli pilots with the greatest ease could “butcher a large, slow moving and defenceless target like the *Liberty*,” and the Mirages’ ordnance, designed to penetrate the armour of tanks, “punched through the *Liberty*’s 22 year-old shell-plating like a hammer against an old block of cheese.”¹¹

Within a minute or so of the start of the attack Captain McGonagle had ordered a report be made to the Chief of Naval Operations. It was an order he gave more in hope than expectation of it being executed—because he was aware that the ship’s transmission facilities had been the first priority for the attacking planes. But... At 14:10 hours, five minutes after the attack started, the *Liberty*’s Chief Radioman, Wayne Smith, did succeed in transmitting an open-channel “Mayday” distress call for assistance. He was subsequently to tell the Navy Board of Inquiry that as soon as the attack started, the participating planes and/or shore-based units were jamming the *Liberty*’s radios. He recalled that five of the ship’s six shore circuits were very quickly jammed and that whoever was doing it “went searching” for the last circuit. It was on this last circuit that Smith was able to transmit the call for assistance. Because it was an open-channel transmission, the Israelis obviously heard it. The question then waiting for an answer was—would any of the warships of the American Sixth Fleet hear it and, if they did, how would they respond?

Correction:—would they be allowed by President Johnson to respond?

Phase two of the attack was executed by three Israeli motor torpedo boats (MTBs). The *Liberty*’s crew were fighting the fires caused by the air attack when the MTBs announced their arrival by opening up with their 0.20-mm and 0.40-mm guns. *Their main task was to sink the Liberty*. For that purpose—could there have been any other?—they fired three torpedoes. One struck the communications room dead centre in Number 3

hold, killing in an instant 25 of the 34 men who died in the entire attack. The 25, including the “Major”, were entombed in the flooded wreckage.

Ten years later, the consequences of the combined air and sea attacks were summarised by one of the surviving crew members, Joseph C. Lentini of Maryland, in a letter to the editor of the *Washington Star*. It was published on 4 October 1977. Lentini wrote: “In less than 39 minutes a fine ship was reduced to a bullet-ridden, napalm scorched and helpless floating graveyard. In those 39 minutes boys brought up in the peaceful aftermath of a horrendous world war experienced their first, and for some their last, trial of fire.”

The *Liberty* was now listing nine degrees and the MTBs were circling slowly, directing their canon fire at the ship’s bridge, at any activity that could be seen on the deck and also at the ship’s waterline in an apparent effort to explode its boilers.

What happened next was yet more evidence that Dayan wanted no survivors.

The order “Prepare to abandon ship!” was followed, naturally, by the lowering of the first lifeboats. *As they touched the water the MTBs moved closer and shot them to pieces.* Among the *Liberty* crewmen who witnessed this was Petty Officer Charles Rowley. He also observed the concentration of machine-gun fire on the lifeboats still stored on deck. After the attack he carefully photographed the shredded boats, thinking that one day his pictures would help to tell a story. When eventually he told it to Stephen Green, Rowley said, “*They didn’t want anybody to live.*”¹²

As the crew of the *Liberty* abandoned ship, the motor torpedo boats moved closer and shot them to pieces.

At 15:05 or thereabouts (a time to remember) the MTBs suddenly broke off their attack and departed at high-speed in a “V” formation. They went to a distance of about five miles to await further orders.

The *Liberty* now had no engines, no rudder and no power. And it was taking in water.

Nine of its officers and crew were known dead; another 25 were missing and correctly presumed to be dead (in the communications room

that had taken the torpedo) and 171 were wounded. Those who were wounded but not incapacitated joined with the other 90 who had survived unscathed and set about collecting bodies, dressing wounds, fighting fires, stringing lights and hand-operated phone sets, repairing the engines and, above all, trying to keep the *Liberty* afloat.

While they worked on those tasks, two large Israeli SA-321 Super Frelon helicopters put in an appearance and slowly circled the stricken ship. Both were clearly marked with a large Star of David. A rescue mission? No. (Presumably there had not been time to paint out the Stars of David because the attack was not going according to plan. The *Liberty* was supposed to have been sunk by now).

The cargo bay doors were open and *Liberty* crewmen could see that both helicopters were crammed with armed troops (Israeli special forces). And a machine gun was mounted in each of the cargo bays.

On the *Liberty* Captain McGonagle gave the order he deemed to be appropriate. “Standby to repel borders!”¹³

As reported by Ennes, the next voice was that of an ordinary sailor, hysterical but logical and probably speaking for many. “*They’ve come to finish us off!*”¹⁴

The Israelis had come to do just that, but not yet. For the moment the helicopter pilots and the commanders of the special forces on board were under orders to look—to take their measure of the target—and pass by. To await, like the MTBs, further orders.

How was it going to end?

At 15:36 hours the MTBs returned, accompanied by two unmarked, armed jets. They were coming for the kill. The MTBs were to finish off the *Liberty*, sink it with more torpedoes. The special forces on board the Super Frelon helicopters were to do the mopping up, shooting dead any survivors bobbing in the water.

That was to have been the third and final phase of the Israeli attack, gut-Zionism’s final solution, one might say, to the problem of the *Liberty* and its secrets. There were to be no survivors to tell the tale of what had really happened, and, just as critical from Dayan’s point of view, no survivors to reveal to the American authorities any of the information the

Liberty's complex intelligence apparatus had gathered about the IDF's preparations for an invasion of Syria in time for them to call it off.

But it did not happen. At the last minute the third and final phase of the Israeli attack was aborted. The MTBs and the two jets disappeared. Why?

The short answer is that eight aircraft from the U.S. carriers *Saratoga* and *America* were on their way to assist the *Liberty* with orders to “destroy or drive off any attackers.”¹⁵

The longer answer is the incredible story of the struggle by elements of the U.S. military to overcome the resistance of an American President to go to the assistance of American servicemen who, defenceless, were under attack by a “friend” and ally.

The first attempt to assist the *Liberty* was what Green described as a “reflexive” one, meaning that it was the instant response—human as well as professional—of Joseph Tully, the captain of the U.S.S. *Saratoga*.

The *Saratoga* had received the *Liberty's* open-channel “Mayday” distress call and enough information to know that the ship was being attacked by what Radioman Smith had described as “unidentified” aircraft.

By chance the *Saratoga* was conducting an exercise when it picked up the *Liberty's* message and four A-1 Skyhawks were launch-ready on its decks. Captain Tully was handed the *Liberty's* message by Navigator Max Morris. After a brief discussion with him, Tully ordered the *Saratoga* to head into the wind. Less than 15 minutes after the start of the Israeli attack, armed U.S. planes were in the air. The estimated flight time to the *Liberty* was about 30 minutes. The unthinkable—a confrontation between U.S. and Israeli warplanes—was, it seemed, about to happen.

Over the Sixth Fleet's Primary Tactical Manoeuvring Circuit radio network Captain Tully then informed the fleet's Commander, Admiral Martin, of the *Liberty's* predicament and his response. Martin not only endorsed Tully's action, he used the same circuit to order the U.S.S. *America*, the other carrier in Carrier Task Force 60, also to launch planes to protect the *Liberty*. But... The *America* did not respond immediately.

In Green's reconstruction of events, that was because it was not in the same state of alert or readiness as the *Saratoga*. That might not have

been the whole story. There is evidence that Captain (later Admiral) Donald Engen was not going to launch any of the *America's* planes immediately even if he could have done so—because he was insisting on playing by the rules to protect his own back and career prospects. What were the rules? Years later former Congressman Findley was to quote Engen as saying: “*President Johnson had very strict control. Even though we knew the Liberty was under attack, I couldn't just go and order a rescue.*”¹⁶

In any event it was only minutes after the *Saratoga's* launch that the Commander of Carrier Task Force 60, Rear Admiral Geis, issued an order for the recall of the A-1s and minutes later they were back on the *Saratoga's* deck. *They were not to respond to the Liberty's desperate plea for assistance.*

One inference is that Captain Engen communicated with Rear Admiral Geis and said something like, “Should we not clear this with our political masters in Washington?” And that Geis replied, “You bet”, or words to that effect.

The nearby U.S.S. *Saratoga* launched four A-1 Skyhawks to rescue the *Liberty*, then within minutes, ordered them back. They were *not* to respond to the *Liberty's* desperate plea for assistance.

President Johnson was very quickly informed—presumably by Defence Secretary McNamara—that the *Liberty* was under attack and that the *Saratoga* had launched planes to go to its assistance. Hence the order—from the President to the Defence Secretary—to recall the planes. In Findley's account the *Saratoga's* planes were hardly in the air when McNamara's voice was heard over Sixth Fleet radios, “*Tell the Sixth Fleet to get those aircraft back immediately!*”¹⁷

Initially, President Johnson was—as Green put it—determined “that no U.S. aircraft would be thrust into an adversary role with the IDF, whatever the implication for the struggling U.S.S. *Liberty*.” *Initially, and for the usual domestic political reason—fear of offending Zionism—this President was prepared to sacrifice the lives of 286 of his fellow Americans on board the Liberty.*

What was about to happen indicates that for the best part of 30 minutes or so following the political decision to abandon the *Liberty* and its

crew, elements of the U.S. military took on the President and shamed him into changing his mind. Their argument would have been to the effect that not going to the assistance of the *Liberty* was disgraceful and dishonourable in the extreme. It is reasonable to assume that this struggle with President Johnson (and those advisers he was taking most notice of—those who supported Israel right or wrong) was led initially by the Sixth Fleet’s Commander, Admiral Martin, to the cheers, no doubt, of Captain Tully. But Martin could not have prevailed without the support of the Chief of Naval Operations and most if not all of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

At about 1500 hours (eastern Mediterranean time) President Johnson changed his mind and authorised some action. At 15:05 hours a message from COMSIXTHFLT (Commander Sixth Fleet) was transmitted to the *Liberty* via plain-language radio. (For U.S. Navy file purposes the message was COMSIXTHFLT 081305Z–Z denoting Greenwich Mean Time, which was two hours earlier than eastern Mediterranean/local Liberty/Israeli time.) The message said:

Your flash traffic received. Sending aircraft to cover you. Surface units on the way. Keep situation reports coming.

As it happened this message was not received by the *Liberty* because it had no electricity and was off the air.

Question: Was it co-incidence that at about the time the Commander of the Sixth Fleet was sending his message, the Israeli MTBs were ordered to break off their attack and withdraw five miles to await further instructions? I think not. Though the *Liberty* was unable to receive Admiral Martin’s plain-language radio message, it would have been picked up by IDF monitors. That would have been enough for those around Dayan who had opposed the attack—in particular the general who had said it would amount to “pure murder”—to press for it to be called off, or, at least, for the situation to be urgently reviewed. It is also possible that President Johnson, desperate in the extreme to avoid a confrontation with the IDF, authorised Walt Rostow to use his network to inform the Israelis that U.S. warplanes were being launched to go to the *Liberty*’s assistance.

The next sequence of events, military and political, could not have been more dramatic. A writer of fiction would not have dared to invent them.

- At 15:16 hours Carrier Task Force 60 (Rear Admiral Geis now had his backside covered) ordered the Saratoga and the America to launch eight aircraft to assist the Liberty and to “destroy or drive off any attackers.”
- At 15:20 hours Admiral Martin informed the Commander of U.S. Armed Forces in Europe that aircraft were being deployed.
- At 15:36 hours (as previously noted) the Israeli MTBs moved in for the kill.
- At 15:39 Admiral Martin informed the Chief of Naval Operations in Washington of the actions being taken. The eight U.S. warplanes were going to be over the *Liberty* at about 16:00 hours, plus or minus.
- Minutes later the Israeli MTBs were ordered to abort their final attack and get the hell out of the area.
- At 16:14 the U.S. Defence Attaché in Tel Aviv informed the White House that the Naval Attaché had been called to the Foreign Liaison Office of the IDF to receive a report that Israeli aircraft and MTBs had “*erroneously attacked U.S. ship.*” It was “*maybe Navy ship.*” The Israelis, the Defence Attaché reported, “*send abject apologies and request info on other U.S. ship s near war zone coasts.*”¹⁸
- With that message in his hands, the Commander in Chief of all U.S. forces, President Johnson, ordered the eight U.S. warplanes to abort their mission and return to their carriers. And he accepted Israel’s explanation. The attack on the *Liberty* had been a ghastly mistake.

And that lie became the official American and Israeli truth.

Though it will remain a matter of speculation forever and a day—because the most relevant documents have not been declassified and

presumably never will be—I think what really happened in the final minutes of what Findley described as “an episode of heroism and tragedy at sea which is without precedent in American history” was as follows:

- Shortly before 15:36, when the MTBs were ordered to resume the attack and go for the kill, Dayan said to himself, and perhaps others, something like the following: “We’re in too deep to get out now. Let’s finish the job while we still have time, just about, to destroy the evidence... so that we can blame the Egyptians.”
- When it was clear that U.S. war planes were on their way—the IDF would have detected them—Dayan’s military colleagues (enough of them), led by the general who had opposed the attack when it was only an idea, insisted that the attack be called off, perhaps indicating that they would expose the defence minister if he did not agree. That is one possible explanation. Another is that it was Prime Minister Eshkol himself who spoke to Dayan on the telephone and said, “Stop!”

Rear Admiral Isaac Kidd was assigned the task of presiding over the Naval Board of Inquiry. Confirming a gagging order issued by Defence Secretary McNamara about not speaking to the media, Kidd instructed *Liberty* survivors who were to give evidence to refer all questions to the commanding officer or executive officer or to himself. He added: “Answer no questions. If you are backed into a corner, then you may say that it was an accident and that Israel has apologised. You may say nothing else.”¹⁹

Marked TOP SECRET, the Naval Board’s report was completed on 18 June 1967. It has not been declassified to this day.

But the Defence Department did issue an unclassified summary of the “proceedings” of the inquiry. It was a cover-up. It stated that the Naval Board had had “*insufficient information before it to make a judgement on the reasons for the decision by Israeli aircraft and motor torpedo boats to attack.*”²⁰

The contribution to the cover-up by Zionism’s apologists in Congress was swift, well co-ordinated but not very well informed. In the House of Representatives Roman Pucinski from Illinois rose to ask for

permission to speak for one minute while they were debating saline water. He said:

Mr. Speaker, it was with a heavy heart that we learned a little while ago of the tragic mistake which occurred in the Mediterranean when an Israeli ship mistakenly attacked an American ship and killed four of our boys and injured and wounded 53 others. These are the tragic consequences of armed conflict: such mistakes happen frequently in Vietnam. It would be my hope that this tragic mistake will not obscure the traditional friendship we in the United States have with the people of Israel. The Israeli government has already apologised... ²¹

The printed version of Pucinski's statement in *The Congressional Record for the day* was headlined "Tragic Mistake".

On the floor of the Senate the performances were more impressive. In the first five paragraphs of his statement, Senator Jacob Javits, pro-Israel right or wrong—and a heavyweight and persistent critic of the State Department—referred five times to the accidental nature of the attack. As Green noted, Javits even explained how such a mistake could occur.

Mr. President, I must say it is a great tribute to the valour of the troops of Israel that this morning I have heard Senator after Senator say that while they were terribly dismayed and saddened by this accident, they understood how it could take place under the terrible stresses the forces of Israel have been under in these last few weeks [i.e. because the Jewish state was, allegedly, in danger of being exterminated]. ²²

Through its mouthpieces in Congress and elsewhere, and endorsed by the Johnson administration, Zionism's message to the people of America was, effectively: "*Because the attack was a mistake, and because Israel has apologised, let's forget about it.*"

But there must have been a sense of alarm in Zionism's ranks when, on 19 June, the day after the Naval Board completed its inquiry, the following item appeared in *Newsweek's* "Periscope" section.

Although Israel's apologies were officially accepted, *some high Washington officials believe the Israelis knew the Liberty's capabilities and suspect that the attack might not have been accidental.* One top-level theory holds that someone in the Israeli armed forces ordered the *Liberty* sunk because he suspected it had taken down messages showing that Israel started the fighting. [Emphasis added.]

Except in one respect the item contained the essence of the totally shocking truth. In retrospect it can be seen that the item was in error only to the extent that the "someone", Dayan, was not concerned by any evidence the *Liberty* had gathered that could prove Israel started the war. Those in Washington's war-loop knew that. Dayan's purpose was to prevent the spy ship giving President Johnson warning of his intention to invade Syria.

But the alarm was short-lived. Zionism had enough friends in the mainstream media, and more than enough influence of various kinds to intimidate writers and broadcasters who were not pro-Israel right or wrong, to prevent what had really happened being pursued in public.

In private the one top-level American official who initially refused to be a party to the cover-up was Secretary of State Dean Rusk. Because he believed it was his duty to put America's interests first, he, like all of his predecessors, had had to live with Zionism's smears that he was anti-Israel. Rusk was outraged by the Johnson administration's collusion with Israel. In fact he was so concerned about the damage being done to America's interests in the Middle East by Johnson's decision to take sides with Israel that, at a meeting in Luxembourg, he told NATO Secretary General Manlio Brosio and others in attendance some of the truth about the attack on the *Liberty*.

We know this from a secret telegram that was de-classified in 1983 as a result of Green's persistence. It was sent by U.S. NATO Ambassador Harland Cleveland to Under-Secretary of State Eugene Rostow, Walt's brother. Cleveland's cable said:

Quite apart from *Newsweek* Periscope item, Secretary's comments to Brosio and several foreign ministers at Luxembourg about Israeli

foreknowledge that *Liberty* was a U.S. ship piqued a great deal of curiosity among NATO delegations. Would appreciate guidance as to how much of this curiosity I can satisfy, and when.²³

It can be taken as read that Walt advised Eugene to do everything he could to shut his boss up.

So far as I am aware, the question nobody has attempted to answer in public is this: *Who was the Israeli general who opposed Dayan's decision to attack the Liberty and said it would amount to "pure murder"?*

Despite the fact that in his own memoirs he went along with the fiction that Israeli pilots failed to identify the *Liberty* as a U.S. ship and that the attack was a tragic mistake, I think it was, very probably, Chief of Staff Rabin—the Israeli leader who, many years later as prime minister, was stopped from advancing the peace process with Arafat and his PLO by an assassin in gut-Zionism's name. I think so for a number of reasons.

Rabin was at one with Prime Minister Eshkol in believing that Israel could and should live within its pre-1967 war borders. As we have also seen, Rabin's own plan for military action in the summer of 1967 was for a strictly limited operation against Egypt, and only Egypt, a strategy Dayan described as "absurd."

As it was happening Rabin was opposed to the IDF's gobbling up of the West Bank. At a meeting of senior officers with Dayan present, Rabin had asked, "How do we control onemillion Arabs?"²⁴ He meant: "We won't be able to. The idea of occupation is madness. We could well be sewing the seeds of catastrophe for the Jewish state." The only response Rabin got was by way of a correction. A staff officer said: "Actually it's one million, two hundred and fifty thousand."²⁵ As Shlaim noted, Rabin had asked the question to which no one had an answer. The real point was that nobody in the military high command except Rabin wanted to think about the implications of what the IDF was doing. *More Arab land was there for the taking, so take it.*

Nobody in the military high command except Rabin wanted to think about the implications of what the IDF was doing.

Rabin was opposed to an invasion of Syria. In his memoirs he wrote that Dayan ordered the attack on Syria “for reasons I have never grasped.”²⁶ In my analysis Rabin was pulling his punches. He knew why Dayan ordered the attack on Syria—to take the Golan Heights to consolidate the creation of a greater Israel; but he, Rabin, was not going to say so except by implication.

When the *Liberty* was being attacked, the insider gossip in Israel was that Rabin had “lost his nerve... cracked under the pressure... was drinking heavily... was under the table... a disgrace.” I first heard this gossip from Israeli friends I knew to be very close to Dayan. Former DMI Herzog confirmed to me that such rumours were rife. In retrospect I think the gossip was inspired by Dayan to give him scope to discredit Rabin if the need arose—if he so much as hinted to anybody outside the command circle that he had tried to prevent the attack on the *Liberty*. (Could it not be said that the idea of attacking the *Liberty* was enough to drive any rational human being, even an Israeli general, to drink?) The idea that Rabin might have been tempted to make trouble for Dayan is not unthinkable if he shared—and he probably did—Eshkol’s private view of Israel’s warlord.

When the prime minister learned that Dayan had ordered the attack on Syria without consulting or informing himself or Chief of Staff Rabin, he thought about cancelling the order and said of Dayan, to his aide-de-camp, “*What a vile man.*”²⁷ That quotation was unearthed by Shlaim. What could have made Eshkol resort to such extraordinary language? My guess is that use of the adjective “vile” reflected most of all the prime minister’s horror at Dayan’s ordering of the attack on the *Liberty*.

As related by Seymour Hersh, Eshkol also had a pungent way of expressing his grave doubts about the wisdom of keeping occupied territory. After the war Abe Feinberg visited Israel and Eshkol said to him (in Yiddish): “What am I going to do with a million Arabs? They fuck like rabbits.”²⁸

With the *Liberty* taken out of the equation, the first indication official Washington had of Dayan’s intentions thereafter was in the form of

a “flash” telegram to Secretary of State Rusk from Evan Wilson, the U.S. Consul General in Jerusalem. (“Flash” was the highest precedencedesignation for State messages). Quoting the UN’s General Odd Bull, the telegram said that Israel had launched an “intensive air and artillery bombardment” of Syrian positions, and that Wilson assumed it was a “prelude to a large-scale attack.”²⁹ That message was sent, flashed, at about 1530 hours local time, just before Dayan ordered the MTBs to finish off the *Liberty*.

Rusk was furious and wanted to take immediate action. The fact that it took him the best part of an hour to get President Johnson’s permission to read the riot act to Israel suggests that he had a considerable amount of internal opposition to overcome. (I can imagine the Rostow brothers joining forces—Eugene in the State Department, Walt in the White House—to have the President clip the Secretary of State’s wings). Rusk’s eventual response was another “flash” message in the form of an instruction to Walworth Barbour, the U.S. Ambassador to Israel. He was ordered, urgently, to approach the Israeli Foreign Ministry at the highest level to express “deep concern” at the new indication of military action by Israel. The text of Rusk’s instruction to Barbour included the following:

If reported bombardment correct, we would presume it prelude to military action against Syrian positions on Syrian soil. Such a development, following on heels Israeli acceptance ceasefire resolution would cast doubts on Israeli intentions and create gravest problems for [U.S. government] representatives in Arab countries. *You should stress we must at all costs have complete cessation Israeli military action except in cases where clearly some replying fire is necessary in self-defence.*³⁰

After making his representation as instructed, Ambassador Barbour sought to defend the IDF’s softening up of Syria’s positions by reminding Rusk that Syria had not yet accepted the Security Council’s demand for a ceasefire (as, I add, Jordan and Egypt had actually done and Israel had falsely claimed to have done). It was true that the Syrians were still shooting from fixed positions in their own territory—but *in response to the IDF’s bombardment*; and, also, because Syria’s leaders were putting on a token

show to score points against Nasser in the Arab world by claiming that they had held out longer than him. The Johnson administration knew the Syrian regime had honoured its secret pre-war deal with Israel by not advancing its land forces from their defensive positions, so when Rusk flashed instructions to Barbour he knew that the Syrian army posed no threat to Israel.

In reality any hope the Johnson administration had of stopping the Israelis had been destroyed by their attack on the Liberty.

That evening, Thursday 8 June, Nasser intervened to stop the Syrians—in the hope of stopping the Israelis. The Egyptian President sent the following message to his Syrian counterpart, Nur ed-Din al Atassi:

I believe that Israel is about to concentrate all of its forces against Syria in order to destroy the Syrian army and regard for the common cause obliges me to advise you to agree to the ending of hostilities and to inform U Thant immediately, in order to preserve Syria's great army. We have lost this battle.

The message ended:

May God help us in the future. Your brother, Gamal Abdul Nasser.³¹

That Nasser message, no doubt like all others, was intercepted by Israeli military intelligence. In the margin of a copy of it, Dayan scribbled the following note:

Eshkol,

1. In my opinion this cable obliges us to capture maximal military lines.
2. Yesterday I did not think Egypt and Syria would collapse in this way and give up the continuation of the campaign. But since this is the situation, it must be exploited to the full.

A great day. Moshe Dayan.³² [Emphasis added].

The Syrian leadership took Nasser's advice and announced its acceptance of the ceasefire. It came into effect at 0520 hours the following

morning, Friday 9 June. So far as the Arabs and the organised international community represented by the UN were concerned, the war was over.

Six hours and ten minutes later, the IDF invaded Syria.

Dayan had delayed the attack to allow for the redeployment of IDF units from Sinai and the West Bank—a redeployment that could not be completed while the *Liberty* was capable of listening to IDF movement orders.

Contrary to Dayan's expectations and his prediction to the IDF's northern commander—General David (“Dado”) Elazar, who had never been less than gung-ho for war with Syria - the Syrians fought well. Apart from honour—the eyes of the Arab world were upon them—there were probably two reasons why they did so. The Golan Heights were thought to be impregnable and they felt secure in their bunkers and fox holes. But when Israeli paratroops and armour were landed behind them, they were effectively cut off, with nowhere to run; they had to fight or die. Because of the audacious IDF plan to capture the Golan Heights, they became less of an impregnable fortress for their Syrian defenders and more of a death-trap.

On Friday 9 June 1967, and for the best part of 24 hours, the Syrians fought with all their strength. There were great and true acts of courage under fire on both sides, not least on the part of those IDF officers who led their men into the jaws of certain death that the bunkers and fox-holes of the Golan Heights were. But by the evening of Saturday 10 June, in defiance of what had been agreed secretly with the Johnson administration before the war, the Golan Heights were in Israel's hands. The war was over. In six days the creation of a greater Israel—not the Greater Israel of the original Zionist plan, extending from the Nile to the Euphrates, but still a greater Israel, and today accepted by many as *the* Greater Israel—was a *fait accompli*. In terms of what post-1948 Zionists regarded as possible, Dayan had made their mad dream come true.

In his conversations with Rami Tal which were not made public until after his death, Dayan was astonishingly honest. At the heart of the great myth about Israel's actions on the Syrian front in 1967 is the claim—it remains an article of faith among Israelis and most Jews everywhere—that the IDF seized the Golan Heights to stop the fiendish Syrians from

shelling Israeli settlements down below. (As we have seen, it was Israeli provocations that provoked Syrian shooting in the countdown to the war). When Tal demonstrated his belief in this Israeli claim, Dayan cut him short and said the following:

Look, it's possible to talk in terms of 'the Syrians are bastards, you have to get them and this is the right time,' but that is no policy. You don't strike every enemy because he is a bastard but because he threatens you. And the Syrians, on the fourth day of the war, were not a threat to us.³³

Israel's last land grab of the war did provoke the threat, a real and serious one, of Soviet military intervention. For some hours there was the prospect that gut-Zionism's territorial ambitions and what Lilienthal rightly called "Israel's unconscionable use of military force" would provoke a superpower confrontation and possibly World War III. But at the brink, catastrophe was averted by use of the White House-Kremlin hot line.

For Israel's hawks and those in the Johnson administration with whom they conspired, there was one big disappointment. The humiliation the Israelis had heaped on Nasser did not bring about his downfall, but... There was a moment when it had seemed that he was finished.

On the evening of 9 June, live on television from his home and headquarters in Manshiet el-Bakri near Heliopolis on the road to the airport, Nasser resigned. He was looking drawn and haggard and appeared to be a broken man. The explanation he gave his people for the catastrophe Egypt had suffered was short and simple. He had listened, he said, to the warnings of President Johnson and the Soviet Union not to strike the first blow.

That said, Nasser announced he was resigning the presidency in favour of Vice-President Zacharia Mohieddin, (the man who, on Nasser's instructions, and given the chance by the Israelis, would have made the necessary concessions in discussions with U.S. Vice-President Humphrey to avert war).

Nasser did actually resign but before the next day was out, in response to mass demonstrations in his favour, he was President again.

Israelis, leaders and ordinary folk, had their own explanation for this turnaround in Cairo. The whole thing had been stage-managed. Nasser was not serious when he resigned. He was playing a game. The popular demonstrations in his favour had not been spontaneous. His secret police had bullied and bribed Egyptians to take to the streets to demand that Nasser stayed in power. (Israel's intelligence chiefs knew that the CIA's plan for toppling Nasser included paying Egyptians to take to the streets to denounce him. They assumed that Nasser had done the same thing in reverse, so to speak).

My Israeli friends, and many others who said such things, were kidding themselves. It was what they wanted to believe. The truth about what happened in Cairo is this.

Nasser did not inform his chosen successor of his intention to resign and, consequently, he did not ask Mohieddin if he was prepared to take over. Mohieddin did not want to be President in any circumstances, but especially in those now prevailing in Egypt and throughout the Arab world because of the scale and speed of Israel's victory which, for the Arabs, was an even greater humiliation than that of 1948. Like all Egyptians and other Arabs, Mohieddin did not know that Nasser was intending to resign until he said so live on TV and radio. As soon as the broadcast ended, Mohieddin drove at top speed to Nasser's home—to refuse the succession for himself and to tell the resigned President that he could not abandon his post while remnants of his army were still trapped in Sinai.

An argument followed. Nasser insisted there was no going back on his decision. "You are now responsible", he said to Mohieddin, "you cannot refuse."³⁴ Mohieddin gave as good as he got. He told Nasser that he had no right to choose his successor. Only the National Assembly could decide who would be president.

Nasser resigned, then the Egyptian people took to the streets to demand that he remain in power.

While the two men continued to argue, the cabinet was assembling in another room for a meeting Nasser had called to ratify his hand-over of power to the vice-president. Meanwhile, in the streets outside, the people

were having their say. Contrary to what Israelis believed at the time, it was an entirely spontaneous happening. The best summary description of it was in a report filed to *Le Monde* by the perceptive Eric Rouleau, one of the best French correspondents of his generation. He wrote:

In the twilight and semi-blacked-out streets, hundreds of thousands, some of them still in pyjamas and the women in nightgowns, came out of their houses weeping and shouting, ‘Nasser, Nasser, don’t leave us, we need you.’ The noise was like a rising storm. Tens of thousands threatened to kill any deputies who did not vote for Nasser. Half a million people massed along the five miles from Nasser’s home, millions more began to pour into Cairo from all over Egypt to make sure that Nasser stayed.³⁵

The following day, while the IDF was going for the Golan Heights, the National Assembly, by a unanimous decision, invited Nasser to remain as President.

It might have been that he resigned in the hope and even the expectation that his announcement would trigger a popular response in his favour, but there can be no doubt that it was spontaneous. Why, really, did it happen?

In my analysis the best way to explain it is by comparing perceptions.

Zionism had succeeded in selling its lie for the war. As a consequence (generally speaking), Nasser was perceived in America and throughout the Western world as the common enemy in general and, in particular, the Arab aggressor who had gone to war to annihilate the Jewish state. If that’s what you believed, whether you were Jewish or not, the events in Cairo following Nasser’s resignation statement were perplexing. He had led his people to catastrophe. He was a disaster for them. Surely now they would see that and, if he did not quit, they would overthrow him. Or ought to.

The perception of the people of Egypt and almost all Arabs everywhere was rather different and rooted in reality. In it the Zionist state was the aggressor and the Arabs were the victims of aggression. There were,

of course, some Egyptians who realised that Nasser had made mistakes and miscalculations which had contributed to the disaster—he had given Israel's hawks and their American conspirators the pretext they wanted for war. But such criticism as there was of Nasser for his leadership failings was the small-print on the invoice for catastrophe.

In summary: The vast majority of Egyptians, and very many other Arabs, still saw Nasser for what he really was—the symbol of their wish not to be dominated, not to be controlled and exploited by the combined forces of emerging American imperialism (replacing British and French imperialism) and its Zionist ally.

That's why Nasser survived.

I think the best account of the 1967 war by any Jewish writer, Israeli or other, is in Avi Shlaim's revision of modern Israel's history: but I think his conclusions about what really happened on the Israeli side in the war miss a fundamental point. (I remain puzzled by the fact that he did not mention the attack on the *Liberty*, let alone the reasons for it). Shlaim wrote:

Dayan's various accounts of the reasons for war against Syria are so alarmingly inconsistent that one indeed needs to be a psychologist to fathom his behaviour. But one thing emerges clearly from all his contradictory accounts: the Eshkol government did not have a political plan for the conduct of the war. It was divided internally, it debated options endlessly, it improvised and it seized opportunities as they presented themselves. It hoped for war on one front, was drawn to war on a second front and ended up by initiating war on a third front. *The one thing it did not have was a master plan for territorial aggrandisement.* Its territorial aims were defined not in advance but in response to developments on the battlefield. Appetite comes with eating. The decision-making process of the Eshkol government during the war was complex, confused, convoluted. It did not bear the slightest resemblance to what political scientists like to call 'the rational actor model.'³⁶

The notion that one needed to be a psychologist to fathom Dayan's intentions was inspired by a remark made by Eshkol's aide-de-camp, Israel

Lior. He said that, hard as he tried, he was unable to fathom Dayan's intentions, and thought his decisions needed to be examined by a psychologist no less than by a historian.

In Shlaim's overview a greater Israel was created by chance. It just happened, was not policy. In my analysis that conclusion is both right and wrong. Right because Israel's national unity government did not go to war with the intention of creating a greater Israel of gut-Zionism's mad dream. *Wrong because Dayan did.* From the moment he became Defence Minister and consigned to the dustbin of history the Rabin-Eshkol plan for limited military action, it was his war, not the government's war. It was Dayan who took most if not all of the critical decisions, and in the case of his decision to attack Syria, he took it without consulting or informing Prime Minister Eshkol and Chief of Staff Rabin until after the attack had been launched.

Dayan's "appetite" for more land came not from "eating"—not simply because the opportunities to eat were there. He was hungry because he was a gut-Zionist—conditioned by centuries of persecution, traumatised by the Nazi holocaust, driven by the belief that Gentiles were never to be trusted and, above all, convinced that the world would one day turn against the Jews again. I know he was convinced because he told me so. When that day came, Israel had to be big enough and secure enough to serve as the refuge of last resort for all the Jews of the world. Israel confined to its pre-1967 borders was not big enough and did not possess sufficient natural resources, water especially. (In retrospect I find myself wondering if Dayan had thought through the possible implications and consequences of his triumph on the battlefield—permanent occupation and more ethnic cleansing and possibly even genocide if the Palestinians could not be broken and continued to struggle for their rights).

Had Dayan thought through the possible consequences of his triumph on the battlefield—that Israel would have to undertake a permanent occupation, more ethnic cleansing, and possibly even genocide if the Palestinians could not be broken?

I once said the following to Dayan in private conversation: "What you really fear is that a day will come when the major powers will require

Israel to be the sacrificial lamb on the altar of political expediency—just as in 1947 and 1948 they required the Palestinians to be the sacrifice on that altar.” Dayan replied, “You could put it like that.” Then, after a long pause, he added, “But we won’t let it happen.” Though he did not say so, he meant, “We have an independent nuclear deterrent and nobody is going to make Israel do what it does not want to do.”

So is there really need to call in the psychologists to explain Dayan’s behaviour, including and especially his truth-telling in conversation with Rami Tal for publication after his death? I think not. If the Syrians “were not a threat to us”, why did he order the IDF to attack them and grab a chunk of their territory—i.e. if not for the sole purpose of advancing Zionism’s Greater Israel project? There was a part of the Dayan I knew that wanted to say out loud: “I created Greater Israel. I delivered to the maximum extent possible on the promise our founding fathers made.” But there was also a part of Zionism’s warlord that knew it would not be a good idea to say so—in case the Greater Israel of his creation turned out to be, as it has, a ghastly mistake.

Dayan was never entirely comfortable in the presence of non-Jews and gave me the impression that he was sometimes uncomfortable with himself. I think he went to his grave wondering whether he had done the right or wrong thing for the best interests of Jews everywhere. On that basis the main difference between Moshe Dayan and Golda Meir defines itself. In the privacy of her own conscience (as I indicated in Volume One, Chapter One) she had the courage at the end of her days to consider at least the possibility that Zionism might have done the wrong thing. Dayan, at times the most charming and most engaging war criminal I ever met, did not have that kind of courage. It was moral courage and his passion for Zionism robbed him of it.

It was Eshkol who provided the most vivid Great Lie about the 1967 war: “The very existence of the State of Israel hung upon a thread, but Arab leaders’ hopes of annihilating Israel have been confounded.”

As it happened, the most vivid expression of Zionism’s Great Lie about the 1967 war was given voice by Prime Minister Eshkol himself. In

the Knesset on 12 June he asserted that the war had been started by “the Arab invasion of Israeli territory.” He then said: “*The very existence of the State of Israel hung upon a thread, but Arab leaders’ hopes of annihilating Israel have been confounded.*”

A week earlier, in the first moments of the war, Foreign Minister Eban had launched the lie with an equally remarkable and astonishing statement. In the course of his assertion to reporters (including me) that Israel was acting in self-defence, he said: “Never in history has there been a more righteous use of armed force.”³⁷ *In retrospect, it could and should be said that never in history has a country’s foreign minister talked such nonsense.* Thereafter Israel’s ambassadors around the world spoke from Eban’s script.

We know that our leaders tell lies in war (and peace), and that disinformation is sometimes necessary if right is to triumph over wrong. But why, really, did Israel’s leaders lie, and lie so completely, in 1967?

Prime Minister Eshkol lied after the war because he had no choice. He could not say, “I lost control of events of my side to those who were determined to take more Arab land.”

Why, really, was it so important that Israel not be branded as the aggressor when it was?

The logic that drove the lie so far as Dayan was concerned can be summarised as follows: the bigger the lie, and the greater the authority with which it was told, the smaller the chance of Israel being branded where it mattered most—in the Security Council—as the aggressor.

Why, really, was it so important that Israel not be branded as the aggressor when it was?

Aggressors are not allowed to keep the territory they take by force. They have to withdraw from it unconditionally. That is the requirement of international law and also a fundamental principle which the UN is committed to uphold; a principle that was upheld and a requirement that was enforced by the America of President Eisenhower when Israel invaded Egypt in collusion with Britain and France in 1956.

But when a state is attacked, is the victim of aggression, and then goes to war in self-defence and ends up occupying some or even all of the

aggressor's territory, it is a generally accepted view that the occupier has the right, in negotiations, to attach conditions to its withdrawal.

The point?

If in 1967 Israel had been branded as the aggressor, as it should have been, the Johnson administration would have had the choice of:

- taking the lead in demanding that Israel withdraw unconditionally, *which would have required the Johnson administration to confront the domestic forces supporting Zionism*; or
- admitting that the U.S. had taken sides and was irrevocably committed to Zionism right or wrong—whatever the consequences for America's own longer term best interests. *In this case the world would have known, before 1967 had run its course, that the U.S. could not be an honest and therefore an effective broker of peace in the Middle East.*

In the process of taking sides with Zionism's child, the Johnson administration not only gave Israel's hawks the green light for war with Egypt, and not only used its diplomatic clout first to delay a Security Council demand for a ceasefire and then to block calls for an unconditional Israeli withdrawal. The Johnson administration actually assisted the IDF's war machine by providing aerial reconnaissance in the form of some very special U.S. aircraft, the American pilots to fly them and the necessary technical support on the ground.

The Johnson administration not only provided diplomatic support, but actually assisted the IDF's war machine by providing it with advanced aerial reconnaissance.

So far as I am aware the only published account of U.S. participation in the war on Israel's side is in Stephen Green's book. He stated that his principal source for the story was somebody who claimed to have been involved in the still Top Secret mission from start to finish. Though he had to protect the identity of his deep-throat and therefore did not name him, Green said he had "verified the story circumstantially" by checking "Air Force unit histories, commanders' names, technical details and so forth." He also noted that while he was seeking to confirm the story

through contacts with other individuals who might have participated in the operation and senior officials in the Pentagon, White House and State Department, Air Force intelligence contacted several members of the units involved “reminding them of their obligations to maintain silence on any previous intelligence missions in which they had been involved.”³⁸ (The main reason for Green’s satisfaction that the story was true was, he said, that “certain of the details provided by the source would have been very difficult to learn other than by participation in such a mission in Israel.”)

Assuming Green’s clinically detailed account to be correct—an assumption I make without reservation and not least because of the confirmation in principle I obtained from very high-level Israeli and American sources of my own—the American military contribution to the IDF’s war effort was spearheaded by planes and pilots of the 38th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron of the 26th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, U.S. Air Force. The 38th was based in Ramstein, West Germany. Its participating planes (four) were flown from there to the U.S. air base at Moron in Spain where they were joined, before flying to Israel on 4 June, by supporting elements from the 17th Tactical Reconnaissance Squadron of the 66th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing based at Upper Heyford near Oxford in England. At an Israeli air base in the Negev, the 38th’s planes were painted over with a white Star of David on a blue background and new tail numbers corresponding to actual inventory numbers in the Israeli Air Force.

The 38th’s planes were RF-4Cs. They were modified versions of the F-4 Phantom jet fighter. In June 1967 the RF-4C was state-of-the-art military reconnaissance and had been operational for only three years. It utilised cameras of various focal lengths and forward and side-looking radar (SLR) to provide both low and high altitude reconnaissance. Using radar and infrared sensors, which provided a thermal map of the area under reconnaissance, the RF-4C could operate by day or—this was the main reason for U.S. involvement—by night.

Without air cover because their own planes had been destroyed in the first two hours or so of the IDF’s aerial blitzkrieg, the Egyptians had to move their ground forces by night to avoid as much as possible the

unopposed attacks of Israeli planes. The Israeli Air Force did not then have the necessary night-time aerial reconnaissance or strike capability. So the main task of the RF-4Cs was to track and photograph the movements of Egypt's ground forces through the night so that, by dawn the following morning, IDF ground and air forces would know precisely where the enemy was and in what strength, and were positioned to attack without delay. The Sinai campaign of June 1967 was the most one-sided fight in the history of modern warfare. The Egyptians really had no more of a chance than turkeys awaiting the annual Christmas slaughter.

The Sinai campaign of June 1967 was the most one-sided fight in the history of modern warfare.

This American military assistance was provided to guarantee that the IDF achieved its objectives on the Egyptian front in the shortest possible time—before the U.S. came under irresistible pressure to stop blocking a Security Council resolution demanding a cease-fire and, initially, an unconditional Israeli withdrawal. The pre-war calculation of those in Washington's war-loop was that the U.S. would not be able to delay things in the Security Council for probably more than three days. (In retrospect it is not difficult to understand why, before the war, the leaders of America's intelligence community, CIA director Helms in particular, were so confident in their assurances to President Johnson that the IDF would achieve complete victory on the Egyptian front in three or four days. They had correctly assessed the effectiveness of the contribution the RF-4Cs were to make).

Initially the RF-4Cs were assigned to assist the IDF on only the Egyptian front. But their mission was extended when Israel went to war with Syria. *The need then from Washington's perspective was to help the IDF get that campaign done and dusted before the Soviet Union went over the brink and intervened.*

Without American operational assistance it is at least possible that the IDF would have needed more time to destroy the Egyptian army in Sinai, and that in the extra time the U.S. might have come under irresistible international pressure to support a Security Council demand for a ceasefire earlier than it did. In this event the creation of Greater Israel—control of all

of the West Bank and the grabbing of the Golan Heights—might not have happened.

For serious seekers of the truth, the record as set down for the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library Oral History Project is a goldmine, especially if the researcher is really focused. Some years after the 1967 war, the previously quoted Harry McPherson made the following contribution to that Oral History. He was reflecting on the nature of the “service” advisers give American Presidents.

... you tend to view everything in terms of whether it hurts your Administration, your President and that sort of thing; or helps. *You look at almost nothing from the point of view of whether it's true or not.* It's only the sort of PR sense; what effect it will have on public support or lack of support for your Administration. And that's a terrible way to get. It makes you very efficient. You become very quick. And you become good at offering advice on what your principal should do instantly. *But you may miss the boat badly, because you haven't really understood and taken in what the concern of the country is.*³⁹

For “concern of the country” read America’s own longer term and best real interests.

It was the case that the Middle East did not get enough of President Johnson’s quality time because he became increasingly distracted by the prospect of defeat for America in Vietnam; and that and other policy priorities, including his noble fight for the civil rights of black Americans, laid him open to manipulation by the supporters of Zionism right or wrong in his administration.

An example of how Zionism’s power brokers never missed an opportunity to manipulate Johnson was signposted by McPherson’s recall of a particular comment the President made in an unguarded moment: “*Damn it, they want me to protect Israel, but they don't want me to do anything in Vietnam!*”⁴⁰

“They” were both the government of Israel and the Jewish Americans who were in the vanguard of the growing anti-Vietnam war movement. The background context revealed by declassified documents

makes it clear that Johnson was really pissed off (he undoubtedly would have put it like that in private) by the refusal of Israel's government to support his "free world effort" in Vietnam, and by the opposition to that war of many Jewish Americans. (Except on the matter of Israel and the Palestinians, many Jewish Americans were and are, like many Jews everywhere, liberal, even left leaning, against injustice and for human rights).

Through 1965 and the early months of 1966, at President Johnson's request, the State Department made strenuous efforts to get Israel to support the American war effort in Vietnam. The support required by the U.S. was the establishment of diplomatic relations between Israel and the Thieu regime in Saigon and the sending of Israeli rural health teams. In February 1966, when Israel was still saying "no" to American requests, Secretary of State Rusk instructed the American Ambassador in Tel Aviv to give the following message to Israeli Foreign Minister Eban. "Israel would rightly be the first to be frightened if the U.S. were to 'cut and run' in Vietnam. You should note that the U.S. is being most helpful to Israel currently, and that reciprocal gestures would be well received in Washington."⁴¹

In April 1966 U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Raymond Hare was sent to Israel to plead with Prime Minister Eshkol. Hare told him that the Vietnam problem was "now the touchstone of American foreign policy", and that the U.S. government considered closer relations between Israel and the Thieu government to be "important."⁴² Eshkol still said "no". He stuck to the line that Israel's relations with Asian and African developing nations would suffer if Israel supported America's war in Vietnam.⁴³

So it was that President Johnson became increasingly irritated by Israel's refusal and that of many Jewish Americans to support and be seen to be supporting his Vietnam War policy. (Hence his comment as quoted by McPherson.)

And that gave Zionism's powerbrokers an opening to do some manipulating. They chose their moment well. On 7 June, the third day of the war, David Brody, Director of the Anti-Defamation League, was

instructed to call at the White House to speak with two of President Johnson's staffers, Larry Levinson and Ben Wattenberg. The Jewish community of America, Brody said, was concerned that the administration should not force Israel to "lose the peace" after it had won the war, as had been the case with Eisenhower after the Suez war.⁴⁴ The reality was that Zionism's power brokers were concerned that President Johnson might not yet be fixed in his determination to prevent Israel being required to withdraw unconditionally from occupied Arab territories. Brody went on to suggest that in future public statements on the war, the President ought to stress the "peace, justice and equity theme", and should specifically not mention "territorial integrity" (as he had done in his pre-war statements).⁴⁵ Levinson and Wattenberg then wrote a memorandum to the President quoting Brody's advice and saying that it was good. "It could lead", the memorandum stated, "to a great domestic political bonus—and not only from Jews. Generally speaking, it would seem that the Middle East crisis can turn round a lot of anti-Vietnam, anti-Johnson feeling, particularly if you use it as an opportunity to your advantage."⁴⁶ *Translated that meant the Zionist lobby in all of its manifestations would do its best to see that Jewish American opposition to the war in Vietnam was stifled—if President Johnson stuck to his guns and did not require Israel to withdraw without conditions as Eisenhower had done.*

On its own the Levinson and Wattenberg memorandum probably did not have a major influence on President Johnson's thinking, but it was part of a well-executed campaign, inside and outside the White House, to manipulate him by taking advantage of his preoccupation with the war in Vietnam.

It is true and tragic that President Johnson knowingly took sides with Israel out of fear of offending Zionism and risking the loss, for himself and his party, of Jewish votes, Jewish campaign funds and influence. And that required him to "miss the boat badly" by effectively putting Zionism's interests before America's interests in the Middle East.

The man who had seen it all coming and tried to stop it happening before it was too late was the first U.S. Secretary of Defence, James

Forrestal. As we have also seen, President Eisenhower shared Forrestal's concerns, and for his two terms in office did insist that America's interests should have priority over Zionism's interests. It is reasonable to speculate that a second-term President Kennedy would have followed Eisenhower's lead. *The problem by the time Lyndon Johnson became the leader of the so-called Free World can be simply stated—there was nobody with real influence on U.S. policy who was prepared to argue seriously for putting America's own best interests first.*

By the time Lyndon Johnson became the leader of the so-called Free World, there was nobody with real influence on U.S. policy who was prepared to argue seriously for putting America's own best interests first.

Secretary of State Dean Rusk and others knew that support for Zionism right or wrong was bound to have catastrophic consequences for America, eventually.

But they also knew they could not buck their pork-barrel system.

Since this book was first published more information has come to light—much but not all of it from *Liberty* survivors—about who knew what when the spy ship was attacked.

It includes the fact that U.S. intelligence agencies had taped intercepts of Israeli pilots telling ground control that their target was an American ship and asking if they were still required to attack it. The answer was, “*Yes, follow orders.*” Ray McGovern, who spent 27 years with the CIA under seven presidents and briefed some of them every morning, has confirmed that the NSA destroyed many tapes which proved the Israelis were lying when they said it was an “unfortunate accident”, and a “case of mistaken identity”.

In this book I'll leave the last word on why the *Liberty* was attacked to a former Israeli officer in conversation with *Liberty* survivor Don Pageler.

Pageler's task after the Israeli attack was to collect and try to re-assemble the bodies of those blown to pieces by Israeli bombs and torpedoes. Don's own account, which he e-mailed to me, included this:

The torpedo hit were I worked in the research spaces (commonly called the spook shack). I had top secret crypto security clearance, and when we reached Malta after the attack and put the ship in dry-dock, I was one of the first to go down to the torpedoed spaces to clean-up. Within the first 15 to 20 minutes, I picked up a piece of equipment. Under it was an arm. Although it had been soaked in salt water for a week, I knew whose arm it was. Phil Tiedke was a body builder and I could tell by the muscle structure it was his. It was like having an out of body experience. One of the men said, 'You have to find the rest of the pieces of his body and make sure they all get in the same body bag.' Another said, 'They're all blown apart, just put it in a bag and get on with it.' Of the two days I spent down there cleaning up that is all I remember. .. When I arrived in Norfolk I was debriefed. I was told: 'You have the highest security clearance anyone can get in this country. Never speak about this to anyone including your family.'

Don decided to speak out because of his health. The post-traumatic stress caused by keeping the truth bottled up inside him had become a life-threatening phenomenon. He put it this way:

In 1985 I began to lose my vision. I could no longer see the centre strip in the road while driving. An optometrist examined my eyes and said I had a physical problem, not an eye problem. He referred me to a doctor who came in looking as white as a sheet after running his tests. He told me I should have died a long time ago. One of my major organs should have popped. My blood pressure was 240/145. He said it had been that way for a long time according to the damage to my eyes. Luckily I was having strokes in the retina of my eyes, instead of my heart or brain, where they could have killed me. I worked with Greg Jarvis who was on the Challenger shuttle when it blew up. After that I started having nightmares. Late in that year, balling like a baby, I drove off the San Diego Freeway on my way home to Orange County from work at Hughes Aircraft Co. in El Segundo. I cried for 10 minutes before I realized I was thinking about the *Liberty*. My doctor put me on heavy

blood pressure medication for a year and a half. During that time my marriage of 20 years was dissolved.

In February of 1987, I found out about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) while watching a Simon & Simon episode. I finally called the VA hospital in Long Beach. They said they did not do the necessary treatment at their facility. The closest Vet Center to me was 5 blocks north of Disneyland. Within a month of being able to talk about the *Liberty* both blood pressure numbers dropped 30 points. In the late 1990s I came down with Type II diabetes. While my doctor says stress is not the cause, he believes stress has contributed greatly to the severity of the disease.

I attended group therapy from April 1987 to March 1990. During that time I had to confront many issues. One night a Marine from Vietnam looked at me and said, 'You guys got screwed as bad if not worse than anyone I knew in Vietnam. You have every right to be as angry as you can be. But what are you going to do about your anger?'

It took me over 4 years to answer that question. I would never write Congress. I'm not stupid. I have a college degree. I knew they would not do anything about it. Finally I realized that the only way I was going to get rid of my anger was by giving it to Congress. I wrote a three-page letter with 30 pages of documentation, including my medical charts, to every California and Kansas Congressman and Senator. They all passed the buck back to my local Congressman, Dana Rohrabacher. He asked me to come in and see him. He looked at me and said: 'I have read everything you have written and all the material you sent me. There is no way I believe this was a mistake on the part of the Israeli's. *But I have to tell you, Congress will not touch this until after there is peace in the Middle East.*' That will not be in my life time. But I succeeded in getting rid of my anger (at least to a great degree). This man who fancies himself a supporter of Veterans had to face me and say, 'You're right and we don't have the courage to do anything about it.'

Don still shakes when he is stressed, but he has learned to live with the fact that his memory won't allow him to recall everything that happened during the Israeli attack and the gathering up of the body parts after it. "This memory failure is only the body's way of protecting you from pain," he says.

And so to Don's recall of his meeting with a former IDF officer.

I believe it was the fall of 2003 or 2004. My wife Eva and I (he had married again) were staying at a Best Western hotel in Taos, New Mexico. While we were walking down the hall, my wife noticed a man looking at my *Liberty* T-shirt. She said to him, "Are you interested in that shirt?" I heard her and turned to look at him. He had a sheepish look on his face and said, "I have to tell you, I was an officer in the Israeli Army in 1967 when you were attacked." I was so impressed that he had the courage to say anything to my face that we asked him and his wife to meet us in the bar for a drink. I showed him my note book of the slide show I had created—51 pages, 11 word charts and 100-plus photos. When I finished he looked at me and said: "I never could understand why the U.S. government spent so much time covering this up. When the Six Day War day war was over, Moshe Dayan briefed the entire officer cadre in the Israeli forces. When he came to the *Liberty* he made no bones about it. He said, '*We tried to take out the Liberty because we did not want them to find out what our plans were.*'"

The lesson of the cold-blooded attack on the *Liberty* was that there is nothing the Zionist state might not do, to its friends as well as its enemies, in order to get its own way.

GOODBYE TO THE SECURITY COUNCIL'S INTEGRITY

The first post-war decision taken by Israel's deeply divided government of national unity was one which, if it could not be reversed by the organised international community as represented by the UN, would most likely guarantee that there could never be a just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

That decision, on 18 June, confirming Dayan's Wailing Wall promise, was to annex Arab East Jerusalem—the Old City and the surrounding areas. Nine days later Israeli law and administration was extended to Greater Jerusalem. It was a grand and mighty Zionist “Get stuffed” gesture, not only to Arabs and Muslims everywhere but to the governments of the organised international community including the Johnson administration.

Before Israel went to war on 5 June 1967, the UN's position on the status and future of Jerusalem was as set down in Resolution 303 of the General Assembly, dated 9 December 1949. Its purpose was to “restate” the General Assembly's “intention”, which had been expressed for the first time in the partition plan resolution, that “Jerusalem should be placed under a permanent international regime” and that “the City of Jerusalem shall be established as a *corpus separatum* under a special international regime and shall be administered by the United Nations.” The commonsense view was that neither the Israelis nor the Arabs should have exclusive control of the Holy City because control by one or the other would most likely guarantee that a political solution to the Arab–Israeli conflict remained beyond the reach of diplomacy.

After Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem, the question waiting for an answer was: How would the UN, and the Security Council in particular, respond to this Zionist challenge to its authority? At stake was nothing less

than the integrity of the world body as the upholder, and if necessary the enforcer, of respect for international law and accepted norms of civilised behaviour by member states as enshrined in the UN's charter.

The Johnson Administration's first public response was summed up by the headline over a front-page story in *The Jerusalem Post*—U.S. DENIES ISRAEL CLAIM TO JERUSALEM. The report from Washington quoted State Department spokesman McCloskey as saying that the “hasty” action taken by Israel “cannot be regarded as determining the future of the holy places or the status of Jerusalem in relation to them... The U.S. has never recognised unilateral action by any of the states in the area as governing the international status of Jerusalem.”¹

Did that mean the U.S. was going to support UN efforts to oblige Israel (the aggressor) to rescind the annexation measures it had taken and withdraw from East Jerusalem? No. Not when UN push came to Zionist shove.

The story of America's retreat and surrender to Zionism on the matter of Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem can be told with reference to three Security Council Resolutions—252, 267 and 271—and, before them, two General Assembly resolutions “concerning measures taken by Israel to change the status of Jerusalem.”

On 4 July 1967, in Resolution 2253, the General Assembly declared the measures Israel had taken to change the status of Jerusalem to be “invalid”, and called upon Israel “to rescind all measures already taken and to desist forthwith from taking any action which would alter the status of Jerusalem.” The General Assembly requested the Secretary General to report to it and the Security Council on the implementation of the resolution “not later than one week from its adoption.”

On 14 July, in Resolution 2254, the General Assembly deplored Israel's failure to comply with 2253 and again called on it to do so; and once again the Secretary General was requested to go to work and report back.

Zionism's child continued to ignore the General Assembly's call.

On the 38th floor of UN headquarters in New York there was alarm about the state of things. *If Israel was allowed to get away with defying*

the UN on such a sensitive and politically explosive issue as Jerusalem, what was left of the world body's credibility and integrity would be destroyed—at least so far the Arab and Muslim worlds were concerned. Behind closed doors there was an intensive lobbying effort to involve the Security Council. The assumption was that Israel would not defy it—if it was united and unanimous. The result, on 21 May 1968, was Security Council Resolution 252 “concerning measures taken by Israel to change the status of Jerusalem.”

The preamble to this first Security Council resolution on the subject reaffirmed that “acquisition of territory by military conquest is inadmissible.” *It then deplored Israel's failure to comply with previous General Assembly resolutions and “urgently” called upon Israel to do so.* Some of the members of the Security Council had wanted the resolution to indicate that enforcement action would be considered if Israel continued to defy the will of the organised international community and international law, but 1968 (same old story) was election year in America, and there were limits to how far any Democrat (or Republican) running for any office wanted to go in offending Zionism.

President Johnson had surprised everybody by throwing in the towel, and the race for the White House was between Vice President Humphrey for the Democrats and former Vice President Nixon for the Republicans. (I think Johnson's decision not to run for a second term—I was in Saigon when he made his dramatic announcement—was in part the consequence of all the lies he had been told by his generals and other associate members of the military-industrial complex. They had been telling him that the war in Vietnam was being won and he knew it was being lost—as President Kennedy had said it would be. Though this is pure speculation on my part, I think Johnson had concluded that being President was a mug's game. The people thought you were running the show and blamed you for everything that went wrong, but in reality you were the tool of powerful vested interests which, if you did not do their bidding, could break you as surely as they helped to make you.)

Israel ignored the Security Council's call and got on with the business of changing not only the status of Jerusalem, but its appearance and demography

beyond all recognition.

More than a year later, on 3 July 1969, with President Nixon secure in the White House and not on account of Jewish campaign funds and votes (an exception to the rule one might say), there was another Security Council resolution—267. It was close to being a real reading of the riot act to Israel. It put Israel on notice that, in the event of its continuing refusal to comply with UN resolutions with regard to Jerusalem, the Security Council would meet again “without delay to consider what further action should be taken in this matter.” The clear implication was that the Security Council was intending, if necessary, to take enforcement action against Israel if it ignored Resolution 267.

Israel ignored it.

Two months later the Security Council followed up with Resolution 271. It condemned Israel’s failure to comply and reiterated its previous decision to consider what further steps it should take. The only next step it could take was enforcement action, sanctions of one kind or another against Israel. But it was not to be. Along with Columbia, Finland and Paraguay, the U.S. did not vote for Resolution 271. It abstained. An abstention is obviously less than a veto, but this particular abstention had the effect of sabotaging the Security Council’s wish to oblige Israel to comply. Without a U.S. “Yes” vote, there was no prospect of Security Council enforcement action against Israel (with regard to Jerusalem or any other matter).

On the matter of Jerusalem, Zionism and its child were free to act without regard for international law.

So, what was happening behind the scenes in Washington?

There was a struggle for power to determine which of two men—William P. Rogers or Dr. Henry Kissinger—would have most influence on President Nixon’s foreign policy.

Rogers was Secretary of State and, in theory, the man who should have had most influence. He was a traditionalist in the sense that, like all of his predecessors, he believed the State Department’s reason for being was to advise the President on what was best for the protection and advancement of America’s interests abroad—in the long as well as the short term. Rogers

had accepted Nixon's invitation to be Secretary of State because he knew that Eisenhower's former vice president believed that the U.S. should be more even-handed in the Middle East.

There is a view that deep down Nixon was an anti-Semite. Was he, really? If behind closed doors and even on tape there were occasions when he did give expression to anti-Jewish sentiments, I think it was probably more a reflection of his fear and loathing of Zionism's lobby-power in general and, in particular, his knowledge that Jewish money and Jewish votes, as organised by the Zionist lobby, were chiefly responsible for Kennedy's victory and his defeat. In other words, I think Nixon, most probably, was a political anti-Semite only. If so that would not have made him unique. With the arguable exception of Johnson, I think a part of all American presidents has been politically anti-Jew because of the power of the Zionist lobby in the United States. I mean its success in getting foreign policy decisions favourable to Israel right or wrong and which, objectively, were not in the best interests of the United States itself. I am suggesting that, with the arguable exception of Johnson, each and every American president has resented:

(a) having to do Zionism's bidding more often than not: and

(b) having to invest a grotesquely disproportionate amount of time, energy and political capital in order, on rare occasions, to challenge the Zionist lobby and its stooges in Congress.

Though he will never say so on-the-record, nobody knows the truth of that observation better than President Carter.

Kissinger was then the rising Jewish American superstar and celebrity of his generation, and he was not alone in believing that he was the cleverest American of his time. A friend of mine with an insider's view of the man once said the following of Kissinger: "He really does believe that if his fellow Americans were not so stupid, they would change the constitution to allow him to run for White House." The top job was off-limits to Kissinger because he was an immigrant, not a native American. He was born in Furth in Germany in 1923 and fled with his family to America to escape Nazi persecution.

Prior to Nixon's election victory, Kissinger was a full professor of government at Harvard where, from 1959 to 1969, he was also the director of the university's Defense Studies Program. From 1955 to 1968—spanning the administrations of Presidents Eisenhower, Kennedy and Johnson—he was also a consultant on security matters to various U.S. agencies.

When Kissinger accepted the invitation to join the Nixon administration it was as assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. But he was destined to become Secretary of State when Rogers resigned in 1973 because *he was fed up with what he regarded as Kissinger's sabotaging of his attempt to steer a responsive Nixon on an even-handed course in the Middle East*. Rogers had had enough of Israel's intransigence. President Nixon was with Rogers in spirit but for many reasons he needed Kissinger more than he needed Rogers. (Nixon probably owed his presidency to consultant Kissinger's role in wrecking outgoing President Johnson's Vietnam peace initiative. Johnson had persuaded North Vietnam, the enemy, to attend peace talks in Paris. Through emissaries, presidential candidate Nixon told South Vietnam, the friend and ally, not to attend the talks because, when he became president, he would not sell South Vietnam down the river as Johnson was intending to do. If Johnson's initiative had not been sabotaged, Humphrey for the Democrats and not Nixon for the Republicans might have become president. The Nixon–Kissinger wrecking strategy prolonged the war by four years, in the course of which another 20,000 Americans were killed and over 100,000 were wounded, not to mention four more years of devastation for Vietnam—North and South—and Cambodia).

It was because of Kissinger's influence on Nixon that the U.S. did not vote for Security Council Resolution 271, and effectively surrendered to Zionism on the matter of Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem.

Kissinger gave Nixon two reasons for not confronting Israel over Jerusalem. It would create in the Jewish state an atmosphere that would not be conducive to peace making; and in America it would be counter-productive—i.e. would provoke the wrath of the Zionist lobby. (As we shall

see, Kissinger was not remotely interested in a comprehensive Middle East peace except on Israel's terms).

While Israel was successfully defying the UN over Jerusalem, Zionism was asserting, and generally speaking the Western world was believing, that Arab leaders had learned nothing from their humiliating defeat, were not interested in peace and remained committed to the destruction of the Jewish state. That, in fact, was the opposite of the truth about the attitudes and positions of the two Arab leaders who mattered most at the time—President Nasser and King Hussein.

As a result of the 1967 war—Zionism's armed heroes were occupying an area more than three times greater than pre-war Israel and the land grab had created more Palestinian refugees—*Nasser and Hussein were reinforced in their belief that they had no choice but to seek an accommodation with Israel.* Their problem was that they could not speak in public about the Arab realism they represented because the angry and humiliated Arab masses were more opposed than ever to the idea of accepting and legitimizing the alien and expansionist Zionist entity in their midst.

In the view of the governments of the Western (mainly Gentile) world, the Arab cause and that of peace would have been better served if Nasser and Hussein had said in public, "It's time for us all to face the reality of Israel's existence and make peace with it." But there was, actually, no point in them saying so in public. Why not? In the worst-case scenario they would have been overthrown or assassinated, or both. In the best-case scenario popular opposition to the idea of making peace with Israel would have restricted their room for manoeuvre when the international diplomatic effort to end the Arab-Israeli conflict once and for all was underway.

So Nasser and Hussein, with the Jordanian monarch taking the diplomatic lead at the request of a seriously unwell Egyptian President, did the only thing they could do. They committed themselves to work for peace by stealth—i.e. by not being explicit in public about their intentions, at least until they could hold out to their peoples the promise of real peace and the benefits it would bring. But to have even a chance of succeeding they needed the assistance of the international community.

What assistance?

A post-war UN Security Council resolution that would provide the framework for a just and lasting peace by setting out the obligations of the warring parties.

Nasser, Hussein and all Arab leaders assumed, took it as read, that the necessary resolution—it was to be number 242—would be drawn up, worded, in accordance with the requirements of international law and the principles enshrined in the UN's charter. Because any resolution would have to endorse “the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war”, it followed, Arab leaders assumed, that the Security Council would want Israel to make its contribution to peace by withdrawing unconditionally from all the territories it had occupied in the 1967 war.

As it happened, the wording of Security Resolution 242 was the product of months of diplomatic wrangling behind closed doors, and when the final text of it was approved, passed and made public on 22 November, it was, as we shall see, bad news for all who were seriously interested in working for a just and lasting peace.

After the war Nasser was a much changed man. The outsider who knew him best and talked intimately with him from time to time was Nutting. He wrote: “Gone was much of the self-assurance of bygone years, gone too any pretensions to be the leader of the Arab renaissance. As he confided to me with a wan smile, with no army and no air force to defend his own country, he could scarcely aspire to the leadership of any other.”²

And Nasser's health was deteriorating. The sleepless nights, the stress and strain of events past and anxieties about the future, had taken their toll. He had lost more than 30 pounds in less than a month. He also had a form of diabetes and it was causing increasing complications including diabetic neuritis and heart trouble. His limbs were affected and he began to drag a leg as he walked. The time was coming when his doctors would insist that a mobile oxygen unit should follow him at a discreet distance whenever he travelled or undertook an engagement involving physical or mental strain. (On reflection I have no doubts that he was serious when he resigned).

Nasser's worsening health was one of two reasons why he asked Hussein to take the diplomatic lead for both of them in Washington and at

the UN in New York. The other was that the King had something Nasser lacked—friends in America. They, Nasser hoped, could be mobilised by His Majesty to prevent the Zionists and their supporters determining the Johnson administration's approach to peace-making in general, and the text of the Security Council resolution under discussion in particular. (Neither Nasser nor Hussein were aware that Walt Rostow, making the running for Israel's hawks, had won the war for President Johnson's ear before the fighting stopped).

In conversation in Cairo prior to the King's departure for America, Nasser told Hussein that he was not to worry about getting Sinai back because that was Egypt's responsibility. As quoted by Nutting, Nasser said to Hussein: "*I got you into this mess, so forget about my losses and go and kiss Lyndon Johnson's hand and ask him to give you back the West Bank.*"³

More than a decade later King Hussein confirmed to me in private conversation that was "more or less" what Nasser had said to him. More or less meant that it was, no doubt, how Nasser would have expressed himself to Nutting. What Nasser actually said to Hussein was more refined. "His starting position was the same as mine", the King told me, "Our problems with Israel had to be resolved by peaceful means. He emphasised that and his very deep feeling that he was personally responsible for the loss of the West Bank. Which was why he said that getting the West Bank back and resolving the issue of the Palestinian people were our priorities."⁴ As recalled by Hussein, Nasser's injunction to him was: "*Go and speak of those priorities and the need for a comprehensive peace and do anything you can short of signing a separate peace.*"

Hussein told me he assured Nasser that he was not considering a separate peace because he knew it would be a disaster for the Arab cause. "I said I would be going to America for the purpose, as we had agreed, of spelling out the need for a comprehensive peace. I knew that anything less would allow the Israelis to play their games to keep us divided: and that could only lead to more conflict."⁵

But in Israel a decision had already been taken, in secret, that meant King Hussein had no chance of getting back very much, if any, of the West

Bank, even if he had been prepared to make a separate peace, and no matter what the Security Council might want Israel to do for peace.

On 19 June, the day after it decided to annex East Jerusalem, the cabinet of Israel's deeply divided government of national unity had debated and agreed, unanimously, proposals for the conclusion of peace agreements with Egypt and Syria. These proposals were such a closely guarded secret that, for example, Chief of Staff Rabin was not told about them. As Shlaim noted, Rabin only learned about them from the Americans after he had taken off his uniform and was settled in Washington as Israel's Ambassador to the United States of America!

Why the secrecy?

Let us first look briefly at what the proposals were.

For peace with Egypt, Israel was prepared, according to the cabinet decision of 19 June, to return Sinai but not the Gaza Strip (that was to remain part of Greater Israel), and this on condition that Egypt guaranteed:

1. freedom of navigation for Israeli vessels in the Straits of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba;

2. freedom of navigation for Israeli vessels through the Suez Canal;

3. over-flight rights in the Straits of Tiran and the Gulf of Aqaba;
and

4. the demilitarisation of the Sinai Peninsula.

For peace with Syria, Israel was prepared to return the Golan Heights on condition that Syria guaranteed:

1. that they would be demilitarised; and

2. that there would be absolutely no interference with the flow of water from the sources of the Jordan to Israel.

So again the question—why the secrecy?

The answer is in three parts.

One: If the government of Israel had gone public with proposals for peace with only Egypt and Syria, it would have been signalling to the outside world that it had no intention of giving back all or much of the West Bank, thus making peace with Jordan and a comprehensive peace non-starters. Israel's cabinet ministers would have been saying, in effect, "We don't give a damn about what the Security Council may ask of us.

Those are our conditions for peace with Egypt and Syria, and they and the international community can take it or leave it.” Put another way, such an approach would have been to invite the charge—before the international diplomatic effort to broker an end to the conflict once and for all was seriously underway—that Israel was (or was going to be) the obstacle to a comprehensive peace.

Two: If it had been made public, the idea of giving back the Golan Heights, even for real peace, would have provoked a measure of popular and possibly violent protest in Israel, perhaps enough protest to destroy the government of national unity and divide the military leadership.

Three: For many around the Israeli cabinet table on 19 June, the proposals for peace with Egypt and Syria were *more an exercise in window-dressing than an expression of serious intent*. Shlaim observed that the ministers who made the decisions “soon had second thoughts.” But there was much more to it. The purpose of the moment was to come up with proposals that would enable Foreign Minister Eban to assure the Johnson administration that, by and large, the secret deal Israel’s hawks had made with Washington before the war would be honoured—i.e. that Israel was going to use the new Arab territories it occupied as bargaining chips and therefore would be withdrawing from them all in return for peace. Eban’s job in Washington and at the UN was to prevent the inclusion in any Security Council framework resolution of a requirement for Israel to withdraw unconditionally. As we have seen, the Johnson administration, before the war, had secretly assured Israel’s hawks that the U.S. would not press for an unconditional Israeli withdrawal. But... Around the Israeli cabinet table on 19 June there was a fear that, when the crunch came, President Johnson might change his mind—because Israel had broken its word on the scope of the war (not to mention the attack on the *Liberty*).

Even if the proposals for peace with Egypt had been serious and Israel had pushed for their implementation, Nasser could not have accepted them. As long as he lived he was never going to agree to a separate peace. With wisdom on his side, he was always going to insist that a political solution to the Arab–Israeli conflict had to be a comprehensive one if it was to endure. He also understood better than any other Arab leader that a

comprehensive peace required not just the return of all Arab territory occupied by Israel in June 1967, including East Jerusalem, but a solution to the Palestinian refugee problem.

Serious or not, Israel's proposals of 19 June had nothing to say about that.

In retrospect it is impossible to exaggerate the significance of the Israeli cabinet's decision of 19 June with regard to the West Bank. It was not a decision to keep all or even some of it. It was a decision not to decide what to do about the West Bank! No decision was possible because the cabinet of the government of so-called national unity was split three ways on the matter. Some favoured returning all the West Bank minus East Jerusalem to Jordan in exchange for peace. Some favoured retaining parts of it but not the heavily populated towns and cities, and those who favoured this option were deeply divided about which parts to keep. And some insisted (their leader in cabinet was, of course, Menachem Begin) that Israel should keep it all.

It was this inability of Israel's leaders to decide what to do on the basis of what was legally and morally right, and also in the best longer term interests of Israelis and Jews everywhere, that made the full-blooded colonisation of the West Bank inevitable—more by default so far as the doves were concerned, but in accordance with Zionism's mad dream and therefore by design so far as the hawks were concerned.

The first indication that Zionism and its child were going to get their way in the Security Council (through the good offices of the Johnson administration) was its decision not to adopt a resolution requiring Israel to withdraw from the newly Occupied Territories without conditions. It was submitted by Yugoslavia on the personal order of President Tito.

That of itself was significant, especially in terms of UN politics, because of the respect Tito commanded on quite a large chunk of the world stage. He was an authentic World War I hero and in World War II he led the Yugoslav partisans against the Nazi invaders. He became the effective head of the Communist Yugoslav state in 1943 and its first elected president in 1953. (But his place in the history of the world beyond the Balkans was secured when, in 1948, he became the first Communist

national leader to successfully defy the Soviet Union. Though Yugoslavia was formally a part of the Soviet bloc or empire, Tito had insisted, at great risk to himself, that Yugoslavia would be independent of both the Soviet and Western camps, and had established ties with the non-aligned nations in Africa, Asia and Latin America).

When Yugoslavia submitted its resolution calling for Israel to withdraw unconditionally, Tito was regarded by the nations of the non-aligned world as one of the true champions of their cause. So when the Security Council at America's insistence said "No" to Tito, it was effectively saying "No" to the non-aligned world (containing most of humanity).

In terms of the Security Council's credibility with the non-aligned world, that was not the smartest thing to do, given the fact that unconditional withdrawal by any aggressor—in this case Israel—was required by international law and the principles and values the UN was supposed to uphold and enforce if necessary. As interpreted by many in the non-aligned world, the Security Council, at America's insistence, was effectively saying: "You've asked us to choose between supporting what is right and Zionism. We support Zionism."

That also reflected thinking in the Arab world. For its two leading would-be peacemakers, Nasser and Hussein, the Security Council's refusal to adopt a resolution requiring an unconditional Israeli withdrawal was a crushing blow—as crushing in diplomatic terms as military defeat.

Nasser then agreed to Hussein's suggestion that Egypt should call for the convening of an Arab summit. *Both knew they could not seriously explore the prospects for an accommodation with Israel without at least a degree of pan-Arab cover.* Agreement was eventually reached on Khartoum in Sudan as the venue for what was obviously going to be a most difficult Arab summit. The date set for it was 31 August.

Nasser was not looking forward to the summit. His message to it had to be that the Arabs did not have a military option, and that there was only one way they could even hope to recover the lands lost in the June war. The way was diplomacy and all that implied—eventual recognition of, and peace with, an Israel inside more or less its borders as they were on the eve of the June war. Making that case was obviously going to be all the more

difficult in the face of the emerging evidence that the Zionists had the power, exercised on their behalf by the U.S., to call the shots in the Security Council.

Only the Syrians stayed away from the Khartoum summit. They boycotted the gathering because, they said, its real purpose was to organise a sell-out to Israel. In reality there were two reasons for the absence of Syria's leaders.

The first was pure and shameless opportunism on their part. They knew that Nasser's plea for the Arabs to take the path of diplomacy was going to be denounced at the summit; and they had calculated that staying away would leave them well placed to pick up the pieces—i.e. when Nasser's line was discredited—by pretending that Syria would be the rock on which continuing military confrontation with Israel could be built.

The second reason for Syria's absence was that its leaders were frightened of being confronted face-to-face with the charge that, to save their own skins, they had betrayed the Arab cause by making a secret deal with Israel in the countdown to the war. (Nasser was by now aware of Syria's secret understanding with the IDF).

If Nasser had not been subjected to abuse and ridicule at the Khartoum summit, he might well have pulled his punches and not been as forthright as he actually was in confronting those who rejected diplomacy and all it implied. The verbal attack on him was led by his erstwhile puppet — the PLO's Shukhairy, with Algeria and Iraq making the most noise in their endorsements of his anti-Nasser tirade.

For Shukhairy personally there was a lot at stake. He was well on his way to losing credibility with his Palestinian people. They were beginning to regard Fatah as their only hope. And it was portraying Shukhairy as a joke, a man who had spent too much time posturing in Moscow and Peking and too little time on organising an effective resistance movement. Shukhairy's main purpose in attacking Nasser was therefore to put on a show in the hope of rehabilitating himself with his fellow Palestinians. His main charge was that Egypt should not have stopped fighting. His main demand was that the Arab states should commit themselves to liberating Palestine by war and should continue the struggle until victory, whatever

the cost. Any Arab leader who contemplated compromise with Israel should be dubbed a traitor. (It could have been said that Shukhairiy was as deluded as any gut-Zionist, the difference being that the bombastic leader of the puppet PLO was about to become history and Zionism's madmen were set to become the makers of the future.)

In response Nasser threw caution to the wind and launched a blistering counter-attack against his critics, Shukhairiy in particular, and their "absent friends" (in Damascus). He said for the record that nobody could dispute that Egypt would have to bear the brunt of any offensive against Israel. That being so there was, he emphasised, a simple truth to be faced. Egypt was not in a position to undertake such a task. To the surprise of some of his listeners he let slip the fact that the Russians had refused to supply him with offensive weapons. (He meant ground-launched missiles capable of hitting Israeli cities.) *So there was, Nasser said, only one conclusion to be drawn by all Arabs who had not taken complete leave of their senses. The recovery of Arab territories lost in the recent fighting would have to be accomplished by diplomacy—by political pressures exerted on Israel through the UN and by the great powers individually.* Talk of the Arabs using more forceful methods was bravado of the most stupid kind or hypocrisy. Those of his listeners who knew the whole truth about what had happened in the war were aware that when Nasser used the term "hypocrites" it was Syria's absent leaders he had in mind.

It was then King Hussein's turn to demonstrate whether or not he had the balls, when the crunch came, to support Nasser's line and, by so doing, risk making enemies of some previous Arab friends. When your own grip on power was as shaky as Hussein's then was, you had to be careful about who you offended. (The Algerians had won the respect of the Arab masses everywhere for their epic struggle to eject the French imperialists, and so far as the Arab masses were concerned, oil-rich Iraq's revolutionary credentials were now quite impressive, too. In 1957 Iraq's status as a British puppet or client state had been ended when the monarchy was overthrown.) As it happened in Khartoum, Hussein did have the courage to support Nasser's line, and he attacked the rejectors of reality. Years later he told me he had felt "very sorry for Nasser" and was sickened by the vicious

way in which some of those who had previously looked to Egypt's president for leadership of the whole Arab world had turned on him.

To give himself and Hussein the best chance of getting what they needed from the Khartoum summit—a resolution clearing the way for diplomacy—Nasser had taken the pre-summit precaution of signalling his intention to mend fences with Saudi Arabia's King Feisal. Initially Feisal's intention had been to stay away because of Nasser's continuing support with troops for the Soviet-backed Arab revolutionary forces in Yemen and the British-occupied South Arabian Federation, with Aden the strategic jewel in its crown. Nasser caused Feisal to be informed that he was intending to withdraw his troops from that arena. After the June war with Israel, Nasser had concluded that he needed the political and financial support of the “reactionary” Arab leaders far more than he needed the emotional and rhetorical support of those Arab “revolutionary” regimes who were not prepared to face the reality of Israel's existence.

While Nasser and Hussein were slogging it out with the rejectors of reality at Khartoum, Feisal had listened in a manner that suggested he was above it all and might be unwilling to take sides out of fear of provoking Arab divisions that would never be healed. But when Nasser and Hussein had made their case, Feisal was ready to play his necessary part in seeing to it that they got the mandate they needed. With his support a draft resolution was prepared. It included the following statement:

The Arab Heads of State have agreed to unite their political efforts at the international and diplomatic level to eliminate the effects of the aggression and to ensure the withdrawal of the aggressive Israeli forces from the Arab lands which have been occupied since the aggression of June 5.⁶

True to Arab style and culture it was windy wording and less than explicit, but the implicit message was clear and obvious. It did not need interpreting by diplomats who specialised in reading the Arab mind. *The Arab leaders (those who mattered most) were resolved to work for a solution to the Arab–Israeli conflict by diplomatic means.*

If the Khartoum summit had ended then—i.e. with the draft resolution of the leaders who mattered most approved, Zionism would not have been able to create a new myth—that in Khartoum the Arab leaders, all of them, rejected the idea of negotiations and peace with Israel because they remained committed to its destruction.

So how was it that the Zionists were able to create such a myth and persuade most Jews everywhere (and many Gentiles, too) that it was the truth? The short answer is that they could not have succeeded without the assistance of Shukhairy. He was the buffoon who had earlier threatened to “drive the Jews into the sea”. Though it was empty, stupid rhetoric, it was the greatest propaganda gift ever given to Zionism.

When the draft resolution of the Arab leaders who mattered most was presented for approval by all attending the Khartoum summit, Shukhairy raised hell. He said the resolution on its own amounted to “an Arab surrender”. With the support of Algeria, Iraq and absent Syria, he insisted on an addendum to the resolution. It said:

This will be done within the framework of the main principles by which the Arab states abide, namely no peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, no negotiations with it, and insistence on the rights of the Palestinian people in their own country.⁷

For the sake of unanimity after an unsuccessful effort to persuade Algeria and Iraq to withdraw their support for Shukhairy’s addendum, in the hope that if they did it could be tossed aside, Nasser, Hussein, Feisal and other realists—i.e. the Arab leaders who mattered most—*accepted the addendum but they made it clear that they still regarded themselves as being free to seek a settlement by diplomatic means*. Their interpretation of the main resolution plus the addendum was, they said, that while there would be no direct negotiations with Israel, there could be negotiations through a third party, namely the UN. By this time it was well understood by all the parties to the conflict that the Security Council framework resolution, when it came, would call for the Secretary General to appoint a mediator to shuttle to and fro between the Arabs and the Israelis.

The point that really needs to be understood is this. *If Nasser, Hussein and the other realists had not accepted Shukhairy's addendum in order to give the Khartoum summit at least the appearance of unity to the Arab world, it would have been extremely difficult and probably impossible for any Arab leader to take the diplomatic route.* The appearance of unity— i.e. as opposed to the summit ending in open and bitter division—provided the cover to do so.

It could be argued that the Khartoum green light had to be seen through the fog of Arab division, but it was there for the seeing. The truth is that those who were setting Greater Israel's agenda did not want it to be seen. And to obscure it they seized upon Shukhairy's rejectionist addendum and promoted it as the statement that represented the true position of all Arab leaders.

Thus it was that Israel's version of what had transpired at an Arab summit—Israel dubbed it “the summit of the three Arab No's”—passed unchallenged into Western history. *In reality the assertion that the Shukhairy addendum represented the position and intentions of all Arab leaders was another big, fat propaganda lie.*

But it was good politics from Greater Israel's point of view. It enabled the Zionist lobby in America to pile on the pressure to guarantee that the Security Council's framework resolution 242 would be worded, at the Johnson administration's insistence, (in line with Walt Rostow's advice to the President on 7 April), to give the Israelis the scope to interpret it as they wished.

Now we come to the biggest and most important IF in the whole story of the Arab–Israeli conflict.

IF enough of Israel's leaders had been interested in peace on anything but their own Greater Israel terms—terms which by definition were unacceptable to the Arabs, they could and would have seen the Khartoum summit for what it really was—the green light for Nasser and Hussein to take the lead, cautiously, in working for an accommodation with the Jewish state. The course of history would then have been changed for the better and in the best interests of all concerned.

By the end of October, as the tortuous discussions on the text of the framework resolution were reaching their climax in the Security Council, the government of Israel was so confident about their outcome—i.e. knew what the text of the resolution was going to be—that it took another decision in secret. As Shlaim put it, this decision “amounted to an official cancellation of the decision of 19 June.”⁸ That was the one which had authorised Foreign Minister Eban to tell the Johnson administration that in exchange for peace with Egypt and Syria, and provided its conditions were accepted, Israel would be willing to withdraw to the international (pre-war) borders with Egypt and Syria. By the end of October the government of Israel knew that the forthcoming Security Council framework resolution would give Israel the scope to go back on that apparent commitment. So it was, at the end of October, that the government of Israel took the decision, in secret, to cancel the principle of seeking peace with Egypt and Syria on the basis of a withdrawal to the international borders with those two states.

From here on Israel was going to insist that it had to keep at least some of Egypt and Syria (and some or all of the West Bank) for “security reasons”—i.e. because, Israel’s leaders would assert, the Jewish state still faced the danger of annihilation, because, as the Khartoum summit had allegedly proved, no Arab leaders wanted peace. Crudely stated, Israel’s leaders had calculated that so long as they could get away with telling their propaganda lie about the Arab threat, they could do whatever they liked, either with America’s blessing or without.

We must now look at why Security Council Resolution 242 was bound to be a disaster for all who were seriously committed to working for a just and lasting peace.

The entire substance of resolution 242 was expressed in fewer than 300 words. The following, dated 22 November 1967, is the complete text (with no emphasis added by me for the moment).

The Security Council,

Expressing its continuing concern with the grave situation in the Middle East,

Emphasising the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every State

in the area can live in security,

Emphasising further that all Member States in their acceptance of the Charter of the United Nations have undertaken a commitment to act in accordance with Article 2 of the Charter,

1. Affirms that the fulfilment of Charter principles requires the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East which should include the application of both the following principles:

(i) Withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict;

(ii) Termination of all claims or states of belligerency and respect for and acknowledgement of the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of every State in the area and their right to live in peace within secure and recognised boundaries free from threats or acts of force;

2. Affirms further the necessity

(a) For guaranteeing freedom of navigation through international waterways in the area;

(b) For achieving a just settlement of the refugee problem;

(c) For guaranteeing the territorial inviolability and political independence of every State in the area, through measures including the establishment of demilitarised zones;

Requests the Secretary General to designate a Special Representative to proceed to the Middle East to establish and maintain contacts with the States concerned in order to promote agreement and assist efforts to achieve a peaceful and accepted settlement in accordance with the provisions and principles of this resolution;

Requests the Secretary General to report to the Security Council on the progress of the efforts of the Special Representative as soon as possible.

The first thing that has to be said about 242 is that it was *a substitute for the Security Council resolution that never was and ought to have been*—i.e. the one for which Yugoslavia among others had submitted the draft proposal. Israel was the aggressor on Monday 5 June 1967, and the Security Council—if it was going to act in accordance with its own

awesome responsibilities and obligations—*ought to have demanded that Israel withdraw unconditionally from the Arab territories acquired by war, thus making Israel's unconditional withdrawal the prerequisite for the beginning of the international diplomatic effort to bring about a just and lasting peace.*

Because of the Johnson administration's refusal to allow Israel to be branded as the aggressor, *the Security Council was horribly compromised and, with regard to the framing of 242, could not act in accordance with its responsibilities and obligations.*

But the refusal to demand that Israel should withdraw without conditions was, so to speak, only one side of what the Arabs regarded as a counterfeit coin. On the other Israel was being allowed to assert that its withdrawal was conditional upon the Arabs fulfilling their obligations as in points 1. (ii) and 2. (a) and (c). *In other words, Israel's withdrawal was conditional on the Arabs recognising and legitimising the Jewish state.*

The implications were as described by Cattan, who backed his own judgment with quotations from the published works of other distinguished jurists including a number of eminent Americans.

*Israel was being "enabled under the pressure of the occupation of Arab territories" to "reap benefits from its aggression."² That, Cattan went on, "would constitute a clear violation of international law and of the [UN] Charter. The occupation of Arab territories by Israel in 1967 was an international wrong and a violation of the Charter. To allow Israel to maintain her occupation until she exerts a price for her withdrawal is an aggravation of the wrong." Then, quoting John Lawrence Hargrove in the *Kansas Law Review*, Cattan said it had been observed that "by making Israel's obligation to relinquish militarily occupied territory conditional upon Arab agreement to a comprehensive settlement, *the United Nations... gave its endorsement to the achievement of a settlement by Israeli force.*"¹⁰*

The bottom line was that any condition attached to an aggressor's withdrawal is contrary to international law. President Eisenhower had had the wisdom and courage to acknowledge that when he required the Israelis to withdraw unconditionally in 1956/57. After that he said that if a nation which attacked and occupied foreign territory was allowed to impose conditions on its withdrawal, "this would be tantamount to turning back

the clock of international order.”¹¹ *At the insistence of the Johnson administration under pressure from Zionism, that’s what the Security Council was required to do—turn back the clock of international order.* (Thirty-five years later, when they were preparing to attack Iraq, President Bush and Prime Minister Blair were posturing about upholding the authority of the UN. They were trying to shut the stable door long after the horse of integrity had bolted or, to be more accurate, had been evicted.)

But the apparent legitimizing of Israel’s violation of international law was not the only reason why resolution 242 was a disaster for all who were seriously committed to working for a just and lasting peace (particularly the UN’s own staffers). There were other fatal deficiencies in the resolution.

The question without an answer in 242 was—*which Israel* were the Arab states required to recognise and legitimize?

- The Israel of the 1949 Armistice Agreements, in other words Israel as it was on the eve of the 1967 war (and probably with mutually agreed border modifications here and there); or
- a greater Israel in permanent occupation of all of Jerusalem, and chunks, if not all, of the West Bank and pieces of Egypt and Syria?

That question was without an answer in the final text of resolution 242 for one very simple reason. *Through the Johnson administration the Zionists had succeeded in getting the definitive article ‘the’ dropped from the text.* As a consequence, the first of the resolution’s two principles as set down in 1. (i) require Israel’s armed forces to withdraw “from territories (not the territories) occupied in the recent conflict.”

If 242 had stated that Israel’s withdrawal from “the territories” was required, the meaning would have been that, in exchange for recognition and legitimacy, Israel was required to withdraw from all the territories it occupied in the 1967 war. But that was not on so far as the gut-Zionists were concerned. *They wanted the freedom to be the ones, and the only ones, who would determine (on a take it or leave it basis backed by brute force) the extent of any Israeli withdrawals. Resolution 242 in its final form gave them that freedom.* (It was after the Israeli cabinet learned that the offending

definitive article was to be dropped from the final text of the resolution—probably Walt Rostow was the informer—that it took the secret decision to cancel its previous secret decision to seek peace with Egypt and Syria on the basis of withdrawals to the international borders.)

In retrospect there is a case for saying that if 242 had defined Israel's obligations as withdrawal from “the”—meaning all—territories it occupied in the 1967 war, the immediate prospects for the beginning of a real and serious peace process would have been fair to good on the Arab side.

The other fatal flaw in Resolution 242 was its assumption that a just and lasting peace could be contrived without the Security Council acknowledging, and requiring Israel to acknowledge, the problem at the heart of the conflict—the wrongs done to the Palestinians and the need to address this problem by recognising the Palestinian right to self-determination.

The proof that the Palestinians' outrage at the wrongs done to them and their demand for justice were at the heart of the conflict was contained in the objective history of it (as opposed to Zionist mythology) for the period from 1949 to 1967. *In those 18 years, as we have seen, almost all acts of violence against Israel had been the work not of the neighbouring Arab states, but of Palestinians determined to regain their homeland and their rights to self-determination.* For almost all of those 18 years the regimes in Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon had done everything they could, often by the most brutal means, to prevent Palestinian attacks on Israel.

In that light it ought to have been obvious to all the members of the Security Council that even if the Arab states could be obliged to recognise Israel and make peace with it, the conflict would not be ended. It ought to have been obvious that “a just and lasting peace” required the righting of the wrongs done to the Palestinians—at least to the maximum extent possible given the irreversible fact of Israel's existence.

Because the Palestinian demand for justice was the ticking time-bomb at the heart of the conflict, it was amazing, to say the very least, that Resolution 242 did not even mention the Palestinians by name. As we saw above, the only reference was to achieving a just settlement of “the refugee problem”. There was a reason for that. *Mention of the Palestinians by name*

would have implied that they were a people with rights—i.e. rights far greater than what might be called the begging bowl rights normally associated with “refugees”.

What, really, explains the Security Council’s failure to come to grips in Resolution 242 with the issue at the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict?

Cattan offered the opinion that it was the consequence of “either ignorance of, or indifference to, the real issues involved.”

I discount ignorance at the policy making level of the real issues, and I think the indifference needs to be explained.

In my analysis, which takes account of what happened in the years after the unveiling of Resolution 242, I think the truth is this. When the Security Council was agonising over the text of the framework resolution, the three major Western powers, the U.S., Britain and France, were united on one thing—the view that the Palestine file was not to be re-opened because, if it was, they would have to confront Zionism. And that they were never going to do.

In November 1967 the three major Western powers (and actually the Soviet Union, too) were still hoping that re-emerging Palestinian nationalism could be snuffed out by a combination of compensation for the refugees and Israeli-and-Arab brute force.

In summary I think it can be said that Security Council Resolution 242 was a disaster for all who were seriously committed to working for a just and lasting peace because, effectively, it put Zionism in the diplomatic driving seat. By allowing Israel to determine the extent of its withdrawals from occupied Arab territories, Resolution 242 effectively gave Israel’s leaders a veto over any peace process. Effectively Nasser and Hussein and other Arab leaders who were ready in principle to make peace with Israel, on terms they could sell to their people, were screwed before they started, by Security Council Resolution 242. It was, effectively, another surrender to Zionism. But this one was surrender by the whole of the organised international community.

That being so one might ask why Nasser and Hussein accepted Resolution 242, actually quite some time before Israel said it did. The answer is in two parts.

The first is that they had absolutely no choice. Without a military option they had to throw themselves at the mercy of the Security Council in the hope that, at some point, the major Western powers, the U.S. especially, would conclude that it was not in their own best interests to allow an intransigent Israel, a greater Israel, to go on alienating the Arab and Muslim masses.

The second was that Egypt and Jordan were given an assurance that if they accepted Resolution 242, President Johnson would guarantee its implementation subject only to minor frontier rectifications and an agreement on a new status for Jerusalem. That assurance was given to King Hussein and Egypt's Foreign Minister Mahmoud Riad by America's Ambassador to the UN, Arthur Goldberg, in the course of a debate at the UN when the American was being cross-examined by the two Arabs. Whether or not Johnson himself authorised such an assurance to be given in his name is unknown. All that can be said for certain, at the time of writing, 43 years and 13 American Presidents later, is that the Arabs are still waiting for Resolution 242, the spirit as well as the letter of it, to be implemented.

To inject life into the land-for-peace resolution, UN Secretary General U Thant lost no time in appointing a Special Representative to act as the linkman in the hoped-for negotiations between Egypt and Israel and Jordan and Israel. The man chosen to assist the parties to reach a peaceful settlement in accordance with the principles and provisions of 242 was the Swedish Ambassador in Moscow, Dr. Gunnar Jarring.

If one listened to those Egyptians and Jordanians who engaged with him, one could have been reasonably optimistic about the chances of his success. Egypt's Foreign Minister Riad went out of his way on visits to Western Europe to stress that his country accepted the realities of the situation in the Middle East, including the reality of Israel's existence. Both Riad and King Hussein never tired of saying that they supported the Jarring mission and wanted it to succeed. But it was doomed from the beginning. Why?

The Israelis were not prepared to do business through a UN man, no matter that he was the Secretary General's Special Representative,

authorised to act on behalf of the Security Council to implement 242. Israel demanded direct negotiations with Egypt and Jordan. If the Arabs were prepared to have face-to-face talks, that would demonstrate, Israel said, that they were maybe serious about wanting peace. If the Arabs refused direct negotiations, that would be the proof, Israel asserted, that they were not serious. Jarring (and Rogers) knew that the Israelis were playing Ben-Gurion's old game—*knowingly demanding the impossible of Arab leaders*.

The truth of the time can be summarised as follows:

Nasser and Hussein would have authorised direct negotiations with Israel if it had been politically possible for them to do so. It was not possible because of the anti-Israel mood of their own people and, more critically, what had happened at the Khartoum summit to restrict their room for manoeuvre in the open. But Nasser and Hussein were ready, willing and able to negotiate seriously through Jarring. The Israelis and Americans who needed to know that did know.

So far as Israel's gut-Zionists were concerned, *the insistence on direct negotiations was a ploy—a delaying tactic to win time for consolidating Israel's hold on the Occupied Territories, the West Bank especially, by creating facts on the ground*. These facts, intended by the political, religious and military Right in Israel to be irreversible, were illegal Jewish settlements and their supporting infrastructure.

Question: Was there anything that could have been done to prevent Resolution 242 becoming a license for Israel to defy international law and create the conditions that would make a just and lasting peace impossible and an apocalyptic endgame rather more than less likely?

The answer is yes.

As it relates to the circumstances of the Arab–Israeli conflict in general and Israel's 1967 war in particular, international law (with common sense on its side) forbids the building of settlements by the occupiers in territories acquired in a war of aggression. The law on the subject is what it is because settlements assist the process of making occupation permanent, by making withdrawal politically difficult to impossible—i.e. the

settlements (the colonisation) become the obstacle to peace. The law is designed to prevent this happening.

To illustrate the predictable consequences of allowing Israel to go ahead with illegal settlements, full-blooded colonisation of the West Bank in particular, I offer this insight.

When in 1980 I was in the process of becoming the linkman in a secret, exploratory dialogue between Peres and Arafat (Begin was then Israel's prime minister), Peres made a most remarkable statement about his fears. It came during our first one-to-one private conversation in his office at the Labour party's headquarters.

The following is what Peres said to me: "*I fear it is already too late* [for peace]. Every day that passes sees new bricks on new settlements. Begin knows exactly what he's doing [i.e. by expanding his settlement programme on the West Bank as fast as possible]. He's creating the conditions for a Jewish civil war. He knows that no Jewish prime minister is going down in history as the one who gave the order to the Jewish army to shoot Jewish people." (Peres meant "to shoot Jewish settlers in the numbers needed to overcome opposition on the ground to withdrawal from the West Bank.") After a pause, Peres said, "I'm not." Meaning that if he became prime minister after the election then a year to 18 months away, he would not give such an order. [12](#)

That Peres quotation was in my mind when, on 13 September 1993, I watched history being made by the Rabin–Arafat handshake on the lawn of the White House. In retrospect it can be said that if there had been no illegal Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories when Rabin and Arafat shook hands, there might have been no stopping the peace process—because Israel could have withdrawn without the risk of provoking a Jewish civil war. In such a scenario a Palestinian mini-state might well have been in place, at peace with Israel, and with Jerusalem the shared capital of both states, within a year or two if not sooner.

The real point? It would not have been "too late" if, in November 1967, the Security Council had inserted into the text of Resolution 242 a statement to this effect... *That Israel should not seek to settle or colonise the Occupied Territories, and that if it did the Security Council would enforce*

international law and take whatever action was necessary to stop the illegal developments.

Question: Why did the text of Resolution 242 not contain such a declaration?

Those responsible for framing Resolution 242 were very much aware that Israel's hawks were going to proceed with their colonial venture come what may—in determined defiance of international law and no matter what the organised international community said or wanted. So some if not all of those responsible for framing 242 were resigned to the fact that, because of the history of the Jews and the Nazi holocaust, Israel was not and never would or could be a normal state. As a consequence, there was no point in seeking to oblige it to behave like a normal state—i.e. in accordance with international law and its obligations as a member of the UN. *Like it or not, and whatever it might mean for the fate of mankind, the world was going to have to live with the fact that there were two sets of rules—one for Israel and one for all other nations.* Because of the way Israel was created, without legitimacy in international law, the UN system now had a double standard built into it, and because the political will to confront Zionism did not exist, there was nothing anybody could do to change that reality.

Some years ago a very, very senior UN official said to me, “Zionism has corrupted everything it touched, including this organisation in its infancy.” I knew, really knew, that he was reflecting the deeply held but private conviction of all the top international civil servants who were responsible for trying to make the world body work in accordance with the ideals and principles enshrined in its Charter and international law. (I will not name the man because he would not have made the comment to me if he had imagined that I would ever quote him by name, at least while he lived. He would not be embarrassed by public association with his truth: but he would not want, and would not deserve, all the hassle of being falsely labelled by Zionism's character assassins as an anti-Semite).

Contentious though it is to say so in public, I think the corruption charge is supported by the facts. In 1947 the Zionists and their allies in the U.S. Congress subverted the General Assembly of the UN to get a rigged

and bare minimum majority for the partition plan (subsequently vitiated). In 1967 the Security Council was effectively subverted by the Johnson administration's Zionist-driven refusal to hold Israel accountable to international law and its obligations as a member of the UN.

And thus it was, at least so far as the Arab and Muslim worlds were concerned, that the UN said goodbye to its integrity.

WHEN PEACE WAS THERE FOR THE TAKING

Two days after the ending of the war in which the IDF had crushed the military forces of the Arab states, Fatah's leaders (Central Committee members and other top officials) assembled in Damascus for the organisation's first congress. Abu Jihad recalled: "We were in despair. Many of us could not discuss what had happened without weeping. I myself was crying. Because of the way in which the Arab armies had been broken, some of our colleagues were saying that everything was finished. Some were talking about giving up the struggle and making new lives outside the Arab world."¹

Before the congress opened, a number of Fatah's Central Committee members went to lunch in the Abu Kamal restaurant. As they entered, they saw George Habash seated at a table next to the one they had reserved for themselves. Habash, the son of a Greek Orthodox grain merchant and a pure Marxist (more truly a communist in the real meaning of the term than any of the Soviet Union's leaders), was the intellectual giant on the left of Palestinian politics; and in due course would demand, and command, world attention as the leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), the organisation which, on the *Arab* side, pioneered the hi-jacking and blowing-up of international airliners. (I emphasised on the Arab side because, as we have seen, the Zionists were the first to resort to air piracy, just as they were the first to play the terror card). Habash would also emerge as the leading heavyweight critic of Arafat's policy of compromise with Israel.

Until that June day of 1967, Habash and Arafat had not met. Khalad Hassan recalled: "When we began to speak with Habash, he cried. He said, 'Everything is lost.'"²

Habash really did believe that to be the case. To this point he had been utterly opposed to independent military action of any kind by the Palestinians. The idea that the Palestinians alone could take on the Israelis was too silly for words. For that reason Habash had looked to Nasser as the leader who, given time and support, would change and unite the Arab world to make war with the Zionist state possible and winnable. So for Habash there was only one conclusion to be drawn in the immediate aftermath of Nasser's humiliating defeat. Everything was lost. There was no point in the Palestinians entertaining even hope for justice.



In retrospect it can be said (and this, dear reader, is very important) that Habash would have been right—everything would have been finished for the Palestinians—if there had not been a man called Yasser Arafat to lead them.

Khalad Hassan recalled: “Arafat’s response to Habash was the following. ‘George, you’re wrong. This is not the end. It’s the beginning. We

are going to resume our military actions.”³

To me years later Arafat said:

I could not afford to weep with the others. I considered that we had a duty to the Arab nation as well as the Palestinian nation. It was not the Arab people who had failed, it was the Arab regimes. In my opinion we had to demonstrate that it was possible to deal with Israel's arrogance of power. *I knew that if we did not act quickly the whole Arab nation, Arabs everywhere, would be infected by the psychology of defeat... which was, of course, exactly what the Israelis wanted.*⁴

For Arafat and Abu Jihad, acting quickly meant seizing the opportunity of the moment to instigate a popular war of liberation. There were now nearly one million Palestinians under Israeli occupation on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. The conditions were right, or so Arafat and Abu Jihad assumed, for applying Mao Zedong's thoughts about revolutionary armed struggle. The Palestinians under occupation would be the revolutionary sea in which the Palestinian guerrillas would swim. The oppressed Palestinian masses would give shelter and aid to the guerrillas in the short term and, in the long term, they would rise up against the Israelis. That was the theory. Its main attraction for Arafat and Abu Jihad was that Fatah would no longer require Syria's permission to conduct military operations from its soil. All that would be needed from Syria was a location or two in Damascus where weapons could be stored for smuggling into the Occupied Territories.

In Damascus on 23 June, Fatah's Central Committee approved a plan for the resumption of military activities at the end of August. The vote was only unanimous because those who opposed military action resigned. Arafat moved to the occupied West Bank in the middle of August, knowing that he could not sleep more than two nights in the same place if he was to survive. He fixed 28 August as the date for the resumption of military activities—*resistance to occupation from Fatah's point of view and terrorism in Zionist eyes*. But, on 27 August the Syrians issued a stop order with an ultimatum.

Abu Jihad recalled: “Directly I sent a letter to Arafat asking him to postpone the start of our offensive. I told him the Syrians were putting obstacles in our way. Unfortunately it was too late to stop some of the actions planned for 28 August, and our people did make some explosions in Gaza and one or two other places. But after that Arafat succeeded in stopping the action.” Abu Jihad added: “You must appreciate that we could not use telephones or telegrams because the Israelis were intercepting all electronic communications. We had to communicate by messengers with letters.”⁵

What was the problem in Damascus? The regime there was terrified that Dayan would hold it accountable and use Fatah’s activities as the pretext for bombing Damascus and destroying what was left of Syria’s armed forces. The Syrian ultimatum as presented to Abu Jihad had been explicit. If Fatah insisted on going ahead with operations against Israel, the Syrian army would confront Fatah and destroy it.

Abu Jihad then confronted Syrian Defence Minister Assad, and this time the Palestinian did not grovel as he had done when pleading for Arafat’s life. “I said it was my Palestinian people who were under Israeli occupation, and that the whole world recognised that people under occupation had the right to resist. I also said that since our operations would be launched from inside the Occupied Territories, no blame could be attached to Syria.”⁶

In fact Abu Jihad knew he had the Syrian leadership over a barrel. The Khartoum summit was about to take place. With Syria boycotting it in order to pose as the only frontline Arab state willing to continue the confrontation with Israel, both men knew that if Syria stuck to its “No” to Fatah, and if that became public, Syria’s leaders would be exposed for what they really were—hypocrites without equals in the Arab world.

Assad finally said, “Okay. You are right. You continue with your activities in the Occupied Territories and I will speak to those who are putting obstacles in your way.”⁷ (Given that Assad was only one more coup away from total power and already calling the shots behind the scenes, that meant he would talk to himself!) But...

Arafat's campaign to light a fire of popular resistance in the Occupied Territories was a complete failure.

By December it was all over. Most of Fatah's cells and networks in the Occupied Territories had been uncovered and destroyed by Israel's security services. Hundreds of Fatah commandos had been killed. More than 1,000 had been captured. And Arafat's own luck had just about run out. He was nearly captured by the Israelis on several occasions and he would have been caught if Abu Jihad had not sent a snatch-squad to pull him out. Most depressing of all from Fatah's point of view was that a majority of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation were glad to see the back of those who had claimed to be their liberators.

Why did Arafat fail to generate enough popular support to keep him and Fatah in business on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip? There are several important answers to that question but for reasons of space in this book I can give only one, the main one. *A majority of the Palestinians living under Israeli occupation simply did not believe, not then, that there was anything to be gained from armed struggle.* The West Bankers in particular were of the opinion that there had to be a political and negotiated settlement with Israel—a settlement which would lead to the Arabs recognising Israel in more or less its pre-1967 borders in return for an Israeli withdrawal to those borders and, most important, the establishment of some kind of Palestinian entity on the West Bank and in Gaza. There was not a single Palestinian who contemplated such a prospect with any enthusiasm because it meant they would be abandoning forever their hopes of returning to their land and their homes in pre-67 Israel. But they knew they did not have a choice. If the Arab armies could be so easily smashed by the Israelis, the Palestinians alone had no chance of advancing their cause by military means.

As it happened this realism was reinforced by the efficient and ruthless way in which the Israelis set about destroying Fatah's networks while, at the same time, deterring those living under occupation from supporting Arafat and his fighters. A glance at the tactics employed by Israel's military and other security services to isolate and smash Fatah is enough to make the point.

There were curfews, cordons and house-to-house searches; restrictions on travel and movement; long prison sentences for Fatah activists and sympathisers; detention without trial; deportations; neighbourhood or collective punishments, including the closure of schools, shops and offices, and the blowing up of houses belonging to those who gave, or were suspected of giving, shelter to Fatah activists. In December 1969 Dayan claimed that a total of 516 houses had been destroyed. Two months earlier a special report in *The Times* of London put the number of houses already destroyed at 7,000.

In addition there was Israel's use of what some would have called "Gestapo" methods. Fatah prisoners were taken to their villages and home-town areas. There, with their faces covered by hoods with eye-slits, they were made to identify their friends and associates who were members of Fatah. Those who were reluctant to do so were threatened with death or harm to their families, their womenfolk in particular.

The truth is that by the end of 1967, peace was there for the taking by Israel. If it had been prepared to withdraw from all of the Arab territory occupied in the Six Day War (subject only to mutually agreed border modifications here and there, and a mutually acceptable arrangement for sharing Jerusalem) Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon would have been content to make peace with Israel; and Syria, even if it had to pretend that it was not content, would have had no choice but to join the peace party.

But what about the issue at the heart of the conflict—the need for at least a measure of justice for the Palestinians? That, too, could have been resolved because King Hussein would have accepted Nasser's advice to make the returned West Bank available to the Palestinians for a state of their own (with the Gaza Strip added by Nasser) in a confederation with Jordan. More to the point, and as proved by their lack of support for armed struggle, the vast majority of the Palestinians living under Israeli occupation would have welcomed such an outcome.

When years later King Hussein told me that was what would have happened if Israel had been sane enough to seize the moment, I suggested that an intention by him to give away a chunk of his Hashemite kingdom might well have been opposed by at least some of his fiercely anti-

Palestinian bedouin generals. He said: “You are right, sir, to say that not all my generals would have been pleased... but on our side reality would have prevailed.” ⁸

All that would have been needed then to guarantee a just and durable peace was compensation for those Palestinians—the refugees scattered throughout the Arab world and beyond—who had been dispossessed of their land, their homes and their rights in 1948, and for whom there would have been no permanent place in a Palestinian mini-state because of its lack of space to accommodate them all. One has to assume that if all the other ingredients for a just and lasting peace had been available, the governments of the major Western powers, through the institution of the UN or not, and with or without a financial contribution from Zionism and its child, would have provided the compensation.

In that event—if Israel’s leaders had opted for peace rather than consolidating the Greater Israel of Zionism’s mad dream, Fatah would have become a purely political movement, and would have thrown its energies into the process of making the Palestinian mini-state a democracy—the like of which the Arab world has yet to see. In time, in partnership with Israel, the Palestinian mini-state (in a confederation with Jordan) could have become the engine that pulled the whole region into a stable and prosperous and democratic future. As entrepreneurs, as managers and even as bankers, the best of the Palestinians is as good as the best of Israeli and other Jews. Together in peace and partnership Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs could have had an influence for good on the region out of all proportion to their numbers.

That really could have happened.

Perhaps the greatest of all the many ironies which punctuate the story of the struggle for Palestine is that it was, actually, Israel’s policy of living by the sword that guaranteed the regeneration of militant Palestinian nationalism.

KARAMEH— A MOMENT OF DESTINY

When Arafat withdrew to Damascus after failing to generate support for armed struggle in the Occupied Territories, the first thing he learned was that Fatah was not going to be allowed to operate against Israel from Syrian soil. It followed that if the idea of resistance to Israeli occupation was to be kept alive, Fatah would have to operate from either Jordan (what was left of it, the East Bank) or Lebanon. There were two reasons why Fatah's leadership decided that Lebanon should be used only as a launch pad of last resort and, preferably, not at all.

Lebanon's status as a non-combatant was accepted throughout the Arab world. Since 1948 the Lebanese had devoted their money and energies to developing their country. As a consequence Lebanon had become the Switzerland of the Middle East; and on the surface this beautiful land was close to being paradise on earth. It was the playground for wealthy but frustrated Arabs from everywhere, and many Europeans, too. (Beirut in those days was my favourite city on Earth). So Lebanon had no defence force to speak of. If Fatah launched attacks on Israel from Lebanon, the Lebanese would be utterly defenceless against Israel's inevitable reprisal attacks. And that would mean, in time, that the Lebanese, Christians and Muslims, would turn against the Palestinians—the 1948 refugees in their midst as well as those who were using Lebanon as the base for their struggle. That was not a situation Arafat and his Fatah colleagues wanted to provoke. As Khalad Hassan put it to me, “*We knew Lebanon could not take it.*”¹¹

Lebanon was on course for a civil war. Why? The short answer is that its Muslims were breeding faster than its Christians. The population balance was changing and the day was coming when the Muslims would replace the Christians as the majority community. If the Christian minority

did not then agree to share power more fairly with the Muslims, civil war would be inevitable, and international politics being what they are (mainly concerned with the pursuit of interests, not with what is legally and morally right or wrong), you didn't need to be a prophet to predict that the big powers, America-and-Israel especially, would interfere in the Lebanon to try to prevent the Muslims having their fair share of the power.

Simply stated, *Fatah's leaders saw Lebanon's catastrophe coming*. They were completely aware that if they used Lebanon as a launch pad, they would be blamed for whatever happened, including Lebanon's home-grown civil war. Fatah's leaders also feared that if their liberation movement did become entangled in Lebanon, America-and-Israel and the Syrians would make common cause by using civil war there as the cover for an attempt to destroy the organisations and institutions of authentic Palestinian nationalism by force. (They anticipated Kissinger's game plan). Khalad Hassan summed up: "It was so clear to us all that we Palestinians had everything to lose and nothing to gain from adding to the deep-rooted problems which we knew were threatening Lebanon's very existence. We were also convinced that Israel would take advantage of any trouble in Lebanon to grab more Arab land."²

Fatah's conclusion? If even the idea of armed struggle was to be kept alive, they would have to use what was left of Jordan as the launch pad for hit-and-run attacks. To minimise the risk of a serious confrontation with Hussein's forces, Fatah's leaders decided, in the middle of January 1968, that their commandos would not attempt to operate from fixed bases. Their units were to be small and mobile. Abu Jihad said: "Our plan was to use a cave here, a house there and so on."³ At the time Arafat had not more than 400 fighters (or fedayeen as they were called then) at his disposal. The border area of southern Lebanon was to be used only when Fatah was being squeezed in Jordan by Hussein's forces and the IDF.

King Hussein's position at the start of 1968 was unambiguous. In private he had assured the Israelis that he would take "firm and forceful" steps to deal with the fedayeen. In public he declared that Jordan would regard the dispatch of Palestinian sabotage groups from its soil as an "unparalleled crime." *Now more than ever King Hussein was Israel's*

policeman. He hated the role and was, he told me subsequently, “sickened” by Israel’s arrogance of power, but because of it he had no choice. Naïvely he was still clinging to the hope that the U.S. would oblige Israel to withdraw from the Occupied Territories in exchange for peace.

Fatah’s first problem was access to Jordan. Khalad Hassan told me: “We made our infiltration disguised as Iraqi soldiers. We entered in Iraqi vehicles. We wore Iraqi uniforms. And we carried Iraqi identity papers. Once inside we became Fatah again, but we kept our Iraqi uniforms and identity papers ready to wear and to use if we were in danger of being captured!”⁴

Hussein’s “unparalleled crime” statement was almost a declaration of war and it did mark the beginning of a Jordanian offensive against Fatah units wherever they could be found.

But Arafat and Abu Jihad were not unduly alarmed by this latest turn of the screw. They knew they had two things going for them. The first was that Jordan’s armed forces were in no shape for a serious confrontation. It would be some time before they were re-organised and re-equipped following the beating they had taken in the Six-Day War. The second was that Arafat and Abu Jihad knew they could count on sympathisers within Jordan’s armed forces for certain kinds of help—the turning of blind eyes and tip-offs about forthcoming Jordanian operations.

The explanation for this sympathy was related to the fact that more than half of Hussein’s subjects were Palestinians and therefore well represented numerically in Jordan’s armed forces. But it must also be said that most Palestinians who had become Jordanian citizens after Britain imposed the alien Hashemites on them were Jordanians first—i.e. not pro-Arafat and his liberation struggle to the extent of being anti-Hussein. With the exception of the few who, over time, deserted to join Fatah, they were 100 per cent loyal to King Hussein. To the extent that most of them had any sympathy with Arafat and his struggle, it was because of the contempt with which they were treated by the fiercely anti-Palestinian Bedouin commanders of Jordan’s armed forces. They looked upon the Jordanian Palestinians in their ranks as traitors or potential traitors and, as a

consequence, denied them the promotion they deserved and generally treated them as second class citizens.

In February and early March of 1968 there were a number of clashes between Fatah units and the Jordanian army and border police. Hussein was doing his absolute best to avoid giving the IDF the pretext for a massive reprisal attack, but really he did not have a snowball's chance in hell of preventing every Fatah operation.

On 18 March, several Israeli children were wounded when their bus hit a Fatah mine. A doctor travelling with them was killed. According to the Israeli scorecard, it was the 37th act of sabotage and murder carried out by Palestinian terrorists based in Jordan. In all six Israelis had been killed and 44 wounded (i.e. in the nine months since the ceasefire agreements which ended the Six-Days War).

With a great deal of fanfare Israeli troops and armour were assembled in Jericho and on the road from Jerusalem. It was obvious that the Israelis were mobilising and showing their hand so openly to send Hussein a message: "We mean business. We intend to smash the fedayeen. And if your forces get in our way, we'll smash them, too."

The imminent Israeli offensive was to be directed at just one target—the Palestinian refugee camp at Karameh. Why? Karameh means *dignity* and Arafat had established his headquarters there, with the intention of making a stand against the apparently invincible Israeli army. He was well aware that it could be his last as well as his first stand.

Arafat had broken the first rule of guerrilla warfare: he had made Karameh his fixed base and was intending to stand and fight.

Arafat had changed his strategy and, in fact, had broken the first rule of guerrilla warfare. It is that guerrilla forces keep moving, do not dig in. Arafat had made Karameh his fixed base and was intending to stand and fight. Israel's intelligence community knew that; and the opportunity to destroy Arafat, and all he represented, was irresistible. Prior to the attack, Dayan told reporters that the fighting, when it started, would be *all over in a matter of hours and he promised to parade captured terrorist leaders in Jerusalem.*

Minus only Khalad Hassan, those who were to become the top five leaders of Fatah and the PLO it subsequently took over and transformed were in Karameh. The other two with Arafat and Abu Jihad were Salah Khalaf (nomme de guerre Abu Iyad) who would become the member of the PLO's executive responsible for security and counter-intelligence, and Farouk Kaddoumi (nomme de guerre Abu Lutuf) who would become the PLO's official foreign minister.

The story of why Arafat changed his mind and made Karameh his fixed base can be simply told.

The previous November a number of children from this refugee camp had been killed by Israeli mortar and fragmentation bombs in what Western military attaches who visited the scene described as a reprisal attack which, they reported, had hit its intended target with scientific accuracy. The mortars had fallen in the main street and had hit the police post, the ration centre and the girls' school. This long-range Israeli attack had started just as the girls were leaving their school building. In their grief and anger the residents of the Karameh refugee camp concluded that Jordan's armed forces had neither the ability nor the will to protect them, and they asked the fedayeen to come and defend them. Arafat visited the camp and by all accounts, not just his own, he was moved to tears by the spirit of resistance he found there.

While the Israelis were mobilising and making the final preparations for their attack on Karameh, Arafat and Abu Iyad went to talk with the commander of the Iraqi forces in Jordan. (They were there in token strength to reinforce Hussein's defences until such time as his own army was reorganised and re-equipped.)

Arafat said: "The Iraqi commander told us it was obvious that the Israelis were preparing a big invasion force and that Karameh was their main target. We said we knew that. Then he advised us to follow the rules of guerrilla warfare and withdraw to the mountains. He said: 'You cannot face them. It is impossible. Withdraw and let their ploy be in vain.' And he offered to help us make our withdrawal."² The Jordanians gave Arafat the same advice.

Arafat: “After the Arab defeat there must be some group to give an example to the Arab nation . . . some group who can prove that there are people in our Arab nation who are ready to fight and die.”

Arafat thanked the Iraqi commander for his advice and then said to him: “*After the Arab defeat there must be some group to give an example to the Arab nation. There must be some group who can prove that there are people in our Arab nation who are ready to fight and die. So I am sorry. We will not withdraw. We will fight and die.*”⁶

On the evening of 20 March, Arafat addressed his fighters. “We were 297 persons to be exact”, he told me. “Many were young boys. Really some of them were children still.”⁷

One of the child fighters asked if they could defeat the Israelis. To me, years later, Arafat said, “I tried to laugh but really I wanted to cry.” His reply to the child was: “No, my brave one, we cannot defeat them. We are less than 300 and they will be many thousands who are equipped with the latest American tanks and other weapons. *We cannot defeat them but we can teach them a lesson.*”⁸

Shortly before midnight, Abu Jihad left Karamah for Damascus. He told me he went at Arafat’s request for only one reason—to collect some anti-tank weapons and RPGs (rocket propelled grenades) to supplement their existing Karamah stockpile. But that, I think, was not the whole story. Arafat told me he had not expected that any of them would be alive after the battle of Karamah. I think he really did believe that, and my guess is that he begged Abu Jihad to absent himself—to survive to take over the military leadership of Fatah.

At five o’clock on the morning of 21 March, while Abu Jihad was asleep in Damascus, the Israelis struck. They crossed the River Jordan at various points along a 50-mile front. The main force headed straight for Karamah, head-on. Israeli helicopters had previously landed paratroops at Karamah’s backdoor and they were advancing from the rear. Israel’s battle plan was now clear. Karamah was to be totally surrounded. Fatah’s end was near. For once Arafat and the Israelis were thinking the same thing.

I asked Arafat if some sixth sense had told him that a moment of destiny was approaching. He seemed to be amazed by my question—I

suppose because it indicated that this Englishman was capable of empathising with what his emotions of the moment must have been. He replied, “That is exactly what I was feeling. *I knew we were facing a moment of destiny.*”⁹

Arafat had given a lot of thought to his own battle plan. The Israelis were not to be engaged until they were inside the camp. The key to it all was hitting Israel’s armour. If Fatah could take out some of their tanks, the Israelis would have a psychological problem or two. Arafat had a theory, which time would prove to be more right than wrong, that on a man-for-man basis the Israelis were no better than any other well-motivated fighters once they were denied, or could not take advantage of, their superior military hardware—their tanks and fighter planes especially.

One of the first Israeli paratroopers to set foot in Karameh later described it as looking like a ghost town. “On loudspeakers we called on the inhabitants to come out with raised hands to the square in front of the mosque, but we seemed to be talking to the walls.”¹⁰

And then it happened.

Said Arafat: “Our fighters, our children, they came up from their secret places and threw themselves at the Israeli tanks. Some climbed onto the tanks and put grenades inside them. Others had sticks of dynamite strapped to their bodies.”¹¹

The impact of what happened next was to change the course of history. Israelis leapt from the tanks which had been hit and ran for cover and their lives.

That was, of course, only the beginning of the battle of Karameh. The Israelis recovered from their shock and slowly began to make their overwhelming superiority of numbers and firepower count.

Then, at about eleven o’clock, when a third of Arafat’s fighters were dead, the Jordanians joined the battle.

Under the cover of Jordanian artillery fire, Arafat and his fighters withdrew to new positions around a temporary field H.Q. which Abu Jihad had established on his return from Damascus via Amman. On hand were

fresh supplies of ammunition as well as water, food and blankets and reinforcements.

Abu Jihad said: “We started to receive our surviving fighters from Karamah at about two o’clock in the afternoon. When Arafat arrived with Abu Iyad and Abu Lutuf we made plans to continue the fighting. We sent small groups to hit the Israelis behind their lines.”¹²

Late in the day Dayan decided to cut Israel’s losses and withdraw. Their casualties were 28 killed and 90 wounded. The other evidence that the IDF had been given a bloody nose was the 18 tanks the Israelis abandoned on the battlefield. According to Arafat and Abu Jihad, Fatah’s losses were 93 killed and “many” wounded. Um Jihad told me they were afraid at the time to announce the number of their dead. Jordan’s losses were put at 128 killed and wounded.

There can be no doubting that Arafat, his leadership colleagues and all of their fighters in Karamah would have been killed or captured if the Jordanians had not intervened. Most Palestinians believed, and do still like to believe, that the Jordanian involvement was completely spontaneous and came about because Jordanian officers with a grandstand view of the battle let their hearts rule their heads when they saw what was happening. According to this belief, which I think Abu Jihad wanted me to accept, the Jordanians were motivated by their admiration for Arafat and his fighters, and their own sense of shame that the Palestinians were fighting alone. My guess is that Abu Jihad talked the Jordanians into laying down an artillery barrage to give Arafat and his men the opportunity to withdraw, and that the battle simply developed a new momentum of its own when the Jordanians provided covering fire.

But such a conclusion in no way diminishes Fatah’s triumph. In the context of the whole story of the Palestinian struggle, no battle was more important than the one that took place at Karamah. If Arafat had been defeated there, the Palestinian cause would have been a lost one. Forever.

Instead the fedayeen became the heroes of the Arab world. Overnight Palestinians everywhere hailed Fatah’s “victory” at Karamah as the “*resurrection of the Palestinian people.*” And Arabs everywhere were deeply impressed. They were also relieved and thankful. Karamah did not

take away the burden of shame and humiliation that all Arabs had carried since 1948, and to which a great weight had been added in 1967; but Karamah did make the burden lighter and easier to bear.

No battle was more important than that at Karamah. If Arafat had been defeated there, the Palestinian cause would have been lost forever.

So Arafat and Fatah were set to make a comeback (and take over and transform the PLO with Nasser's blessing). And it was Israel's military and political hawks who had made that possible.

In summary it can be said that the IDF's attack on Karamah:

- symbolised Israel's arrogance of power;
- signalled Israel's intention to go on living by the sword: and
- *illustrated in the most dramatic way possible how counterproductive living by the sword was, is and always will be.*

Though Arafat himself did not know it at the time, he was on his way to becoming what gut-Zionism did not want and most feared—a Palestinian leader who could deliver the necessary compromise from his side for peace.

THE REGENERATION OF PALESTINIAN NATIONALISM

It was, in fact, President Nasser who put Arafat (and his senior Fatah leadership colleagues) on the road to reality—*the need for the Palestine liberation movement to develop a political programme*, in order for it to become, with Egypt and Jordan in the lead, a party to negotiations for an accommodation with Israel in accordance with the letter and the spirit of the land-for-peace principles of Resolution 242.

This was Nasser's message to Arafat when the two men had their historic meeting in November 1967. It was a meeting that nearly did not happen because of the opposition of Nasser's top security people, some of whom were taking the line they did on instructions from their Western intelligence advisers.

For several months after the 1967 war Nasser had continued to reject requests for him to receive Arafat. Egypt's president still believed the nonsense his security people were telling him—that Arafat was the leader of the Muslim Brotherhood and had vowed to assassinate him.

The guests for the scheduled November meeting were Arafat plus three of his most senior Fatah leadership colleagues—Abu Iyad, Abu Lutuf and Abu Hol (Fatah's head of intelligence).

Arafat arrived direct from the occupied West Bank still wearing his pistol. Nasser's security people demanded that he part with it for the duration of the talks. When Arafat refused to surrender his weapon, Nasser was consulted about what should happen next. He was advised that under no circumstances should he agree to receive an armed Arafat. Nasser then said that Arafat was his guest and that he should be allowed to keep his gun.

Minutes later, Nasser's first words to Arafat were about the pistol. He said: "My intelligence people are telling me that you insist on bringing

your gun because you intend to kill me. At this very moment that is what they are saying!”¹

As described to me by the man himself, Arafat, very slowly, unbuckled his gun belt. Then, with both hands, he offered Nasser the belt and the pistol. “Mr. President”, he said, “your intelligence people are wrong. I offer you my freedom-fighter’s gun.”²

For the first time Nasser smiled. “No”, he replied, “You keep it. You need it and more.”³

Nasser was wise enough to know that he had got to handle Arafat with great care. He understood that Arafat would reject any interference in his organisation’s affairs and any encroachment on the independence of Palestinian decision-making. That understanding determined the line Nasser took. It was that if Fatah’s leaders wanted to be taken seriously by the international community, they had to come up with a political programme that would define the objective of their struggle. Nasser told his Palestinian guests that he had hoped to negotiate Israel back to the partition plan borders, but that, he said, was no longer possible because of American and Soviet support for Israel’s existence inside its pre-1967 borders. So? The most the Palestinians could expect was the opportunity to exercise their right to self-determination on territory from which Israel withdrew in exchange for peace, by definition the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. *Nasser’s real meaning was that Fatah would be going nowhere unless it produced a political programme rooted in that reality.*

Nasser’s proposed political program required the unthinkable: legitimizing Israel and saying goodbye to more than 70 per cent of their land.

Arafat’s initial response was to say that he and his colleagues did not look upon themselves as leaders in the normal sense of the term. They regarded themselves as only the engine of the regeneration of authentic Palestinian nationalism and the builders of the democratic institutions which would allow the Palestinian people as a whole to determine the final objective of their struggle.

That was Arafat's way of saying something very important and which was never to be understood by more than a small number of Jews anywhere and none of America's pork-barrel politicians. In principle the compromise required of the Palestinians—legitimizing Israel and saying goodbye to more than 70 per cent of their land—was unthinkable. In principle the Palestinian people would reject such an unjust proposition out of hand. (Imagine, for example, how Americans would react if they were occupied by a militarily superior power and were then told that the occupation would end only when they legitimised the occupation and agreed to let the occupier keep more than 70 per cent of their land!) In their roundabout way Arafat and his colleagues were making two fundamental points to Nasser.

The first was that any Palestinian leadership which took the initiative by going public with a political programme that defined the extent of unthinkable compromise with Israel would be accused of selling out, and would not be credible with the Palestinian masses. (It was true, as Arafat was in the process of learning—this discussion with Nasser was taking place before Karameh—that the occupied West Bankers were already disillusioned and desperate enough to contemplate unthinkable compromise with Israel, but they did not constitute the bulk of the Palestinian people).

The second was that in all the circumstances as they were, the best that Arafat and his leadership colleagues could do—assuming they themselves accepted the need for unthinkable compromise—was to argue the case for it in discussion and debate behind closed doors. In other words, there could be no publicly declared policy for unthinkable compromise with Israel *unless and until Arafat and his senior leadership colleagues had sold the need for it to the Palestinian decision-making institutions, the highest of them being the PNC (Palestinian parliament-in-exile).*

Arafat was effectively saying to Nasser: "Because of the anger and hurt of your own people, you can't come clean and speak frankly in public about the need for an accommodation with Israel. You can only work for it by stealth. I am in the same position, and I expect you, Mr. President, to understand that."

Arafat's plea for Nasser's understanding of his difficulties was well received. So well received, in fact, that Nasser gave his Palestinian guests a promise. If they and their leadership colleagues came up with a political programme, and if Israel, in exchange for peace, withdrew from the territories it had occupied in the June war, *he would seek to persuade King Hussein to let the Palestinians have the returned West Bank, for them to exercise their right to self-determination in a state of their own which would also include the Gaza Strip.*

Nasser had realised that if Arafat was to have even a remote chance of persuading his people that nothing could be achieved by fighting and that facing reality meant unthinkable compromise with Israel, the arguments Arafat would need to employ behind closed doors would carry conviction only if they were the product of his own learning experience. Nasser had not only sensed that Yasser Arafat was most likely to be the Palestinians' man of destiny; by the end of their first meeting as equals Nasser had discovered Arafat's real secret: *It was that he could sell more or less anything to his people—provided he really believed in what he was selling.*

In Nasser's overall reading of the situation the main problem for Arafat was most likely to stem from the fact that there were some in the Palestine liberation movement, the leftists, who would argue that they did not have to face the reality Nasser had spelled out because they could look to the Soviet Union for support to counter America's support for Israel. So even before the meeting ended Nasser was thinking about what more he could do to complete Arafat's education by exposing him to the facts of international political life while leaving him free to draw his own conclusions. As we shall see in a moment, the audacious plan Nasser came up with was a rare example of Arab *chutzpah*.

Nasser was furious with his security chiefs for having prevented his meeting with Arafat for a decade. In fact Nasser was so furious and now so suspicious of some of his intelligence people—he presumed them to be doing the CIA's bidding—that he took steps to guarantee they would never again succeed in denying Arafat access to him. Nasser told Arafat before they parted that if ever again he found official channels blocked, he was to bypass them and approach him through Heikal. He was now Nasser's most

trusted confidant and the man who had persuaded the Egyptian president to ignore what his security people were saying about Arafat because it was a pack of lies.

Why, really, was Nasser so furious with his intelligence chiefs? There are no clues in the record but not a lot of imagination is required to work it out.

Though the relationship between Nasser and Arafat did not come into full bloom until after Karamah—i.e. when Nasser needed to be associated with the glory of Fatah's triumph, the chemistry between the two men was very special. Arafat came to look upon Nasser as a "father" and Nasser realised, instinctively, in the course of their November 1967 meeting, that Arafat was a realist. If the two men had been allowed to meet in the late 1950s or even the early 1960s, it is entirely reasonable to assume that they would have developed the same kind of warm and trusting relationship as they did after the Six Day War. In that event Nasser would have been able to tell Arafat the truth in private—that despite the Soviet military hardware Egypt and Syria had, the Arabs were no match for the Israeli war machine, and that the Arabs were bound to be the losers in any confrontation with it. In that event Arafat and Abu Jihad would not have proceeded with their disastrous policy of pushing the Arab states to a confrontation in the mistaken belief that they would win it. In other words, *if Nasser and Arafat had been allowed to meet in the late 1950s or the early 1960s, it is likely that Israel would not have been given a pretext for the war its hawks wanted as the cover for the creation of Greater Israel.*

Many years after the events I asked Arafat, Abu Jihad, the Hassan brothers and Abu Iyad if they thought my explanation of Nasser's fury was correct. In separate conversations they all said "Yes". They obviously had a vested interest in saying so because such an explanation has the effect, in retrospect, of clearing them of the charge of naivety and stupidity for the policy of pushing the frontline Arab states to war. Khalad Hassan put it this way:

In that decade when Nasser's door was closed to us, nobody worked harder than I did to try to open it. If we assume that Nasser would have

told us the truth about the balance of military power—and we can make that assumption—we would not have played as you put it into Israel's hands. We were to some extent naïve in those days, and we did still have much to learn about the full extent of the great conspiracy to prevent us Palestinians having a say in our own future, but we were not completely stupid... If we had known that the Zionist state was already the military superpower of the region, we would not have indirectly assisted it to take more of our land and inflict another great humiliation upon all Arabs and Muslims everywhere.

Because Nasser had convinced them to stop dreaming and face reality, and also because of their need for his political support, Fatah's leaders applied themselves with speed to the task of formulating a political programme.

It was delivered in Paris on New Year's Day 1968, in the form of an official statement outlining the organisation's ideas for the setting up of a *Democratic State of Palestine*. As defined by Fatah's leadership, it was to be *a secular state in which Jews and Palestinian Arabs would live as equals without discrimination. Arabic and Hebrew would be the official languages of the non-sectarian State, and a Jew could be elected president.*

Fatah called for a secular non sectarian state where Jews and Palestinian Arabs would live as equals, with Arabic and Hebrew the official languages, and where a Jew could be elected president.

Arafat himself put it to me this way: "What we in Fatah were telling the world, even in those days, was so clear, so obvious. *We were saying 'no' to the Jewish State, but we were saying 'yes' to Jewish people in Palestine.* To them, we were saying, 'You are welcome to live in our land—but on one condition—you must be prepared to live among us as friends and as equals, not as dominators.' I myself have always said that there is one and only one guarantee for the safety and the security of Jewish people in Palestine, and that is the friendship of the Arabs among whom they live. It is so clear, so obvious."⁴

Because it was a formula for de-Zionizing and dismantling the Jewish State by political means, Israelis—leaders and people—were never

going to accept it. They dismissed Fatah's idea as an invitation for Israelis to commit suicide. It was not that, far from it. In retrospect one can only wonder at how different the course of events might have been if enough Israelis, early in 1968, had been willing to give Fatah's leaders some credit for effectively renouncing Shukairy's stupid threat to "drive the Jews into the sea".

Zionism should not have been allowed thereafter to get away with defining the objective of authentic Palestinian nationalism as the destruction of Israel's Jews.

The minimum that can be said in retrospect, objectively, is that Zionism should not have been allowed thereafter to get away with defining the objective of authentic Palestinian nationalism as the destruction of Israel's Jews. Zionism did get away with it because Western governments did not want to recognise that Arafat and his leadership colleagues had taken a small but significant step on the road to reality; and that was due in part to the Western media's lack of interest in the politics of what was happening. No violence, no story!

After Karamah, Nasser was scheduled to visit Moscow. He decided to take Arafat with him. But the Egyptian President could not seek the permission of his Soviet hosts because they were bound to say they had no interest in meeting Arafat. So Nasser arranged for Arafat to travel under the name of Mushin Amin on an Egyptian passport, as an official member of the Egyptian delegation. Only when they were safely in Moscow would Nasser spring his little surprise on his Soviet hosts. Arafat had no objection to the scheme. He was delighted with the opportunity to start a relationship with Soviet leaders.

The visit did not live up to Arafat's hopes. But it more than fulfilled Nasser's expectations. He had known exactly what the Russians would tell Arafat. They would say, for openers, that the Soviet Union was committed to the existence of the State of Israel inside its borders as they were on the eve of the Six-Day War, and that they had not the slightest intention of supporting or even encouraging Palestinian militarism.

And that, as Arafat himself confirmed to me, was exactly what he was told in Moscow. But not by Soviet leaders. Chairman Brezhnev, Foreign Minister Kosygin and President Podgorny refused to receive him. As Arafat said to me: “They were not interested in opening a dialogue with me. They were dealing with the situation through Nasser on the basis of 242.”⁵

As it happened, the Soviet Union’s official (and real) position and attitude was conveyed to Arafat through conversations he had with members of the Kremlin’s Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee. Arafat said: “I insisted that 242 didn’t give us Palestinians anything, but they were all the time stressing their support for a negotiated and peaceful settlement on the basis of 242.”⁶

Three weeks later Khalad Hassan and Abu Jihad went to Moscow for follow-up talks with the Kremlin’s Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee. They discovered that Arafat’s account of the Soviet Union’s position was correct in all respects. At a point Khalad Hassan said to his Soviet hosts: “Please let me summarise what I think you are telling us. *You are saying there is no way you are going to be drawn into a confrontation with the Americans for the sake of us Palestinians.*” In telling that story to me, Khalad said: “The Russians were very frank. They replied to the effect that I was understanding them perfectly. I must add that we came to respect Soviet leaders for the frank way in which they always dealt with us. And we were completely honest with them. They once told me they would rather deal with Fatah’s rightists who said they were not communists than with the ‘adventurist leftists’ of our liberation movement.”⁷

Thanks to Nasser, the education of Fatah’s top leaders was complete. They were now fully aware of the facts of international political life. Committed to Israel right or wrong, the U.S. (for which read Kissinger in particular) was opposed to the regeneration of authentic Palestinian nationalism. And the Soviet Union, out of fear of confrontation with the U.S. in the Middle East, was not even going to think about supporting the Palestinians unless and until they were prepared to recognise Israel inside more or less its borders as they were on the eve of the 1967 war.

Though they were very far from being able to say so in public, most of Fatah's leaders knew in their heads if not their hearts that Nasser was right. To have even the smallest chance of getting some justice for their dispossessed people, and despite the fact that they had right backed by international law on their side, they had no choice. *They had to face the reality of Israel's existence.*

Nasser rewarded Fatah's private and in-principle conversion to reality by dumping Shukairy and sanctioning Fatah's takeover of the PLO. With Fatah at its helm and Arafat the Chairman of it, this PLO was set to become the vehicle, answerable to the PNC, for preparing the ground for the unthinkable compromise with Israel.

Because of Karameh's morale-boosting impact on Palestinians (and all Arabs) everywhere, King Hussein had had no choice but to accept the presence of Arafat's PLO in Jordan as a regrettable fact of life. But that was only the first of a number of positive developments from the Palestinian perspective.

Within two days of the battle of Karameh cars and trucks had started to arrive at Fatah's new headquarters in Salt. They brought presents of blankets, food and clothes from Palestinian communities across the Arab world. From these spontaneous expressions of support for the Palestine liberation movement that a whole range of ancillary services was developed as the Palestinian diaspora became involved in the struggle.

There was a development explosion as Palestinian schools, Palestinian clinics, Palestinian hospitals and Palestinian orphanages were established. And there was a revival of Palestinian culture. The regeneration of the Palestinians as a people with an identity of their own was underway. *And that was thanks to Israel's arrogance of power and the foresight of Arafat and Abu Jihad in turning that to their advantage.*

Within two days of the battle of Karameh, the regeneration of the Palestinians as a people with an identity of their own was underway.

The Fatah-dominated PLO (despite its name it was not one organisation but a consortium of rival factions) was recognised by Palestinians everywhere as the standard-bearer and champion of their cause.

So far as Palestinians everywhere were concerned, the PLO with Arafat its Chairman, had the legitimacy its puppet predecessor had lacked.

But by September of 1970 Arafat's PLO was fighting for its existence and Jordan was being torn apart by civil war.

Why, really, did it happen, and why so fast?

“THE UNITED STATES ONLY BACKS THE WINNING HORSE”

According to the first and still existing draft of Western history, which was shaped mainly by reporters and commentators who accepted Israel’s assertions without challenge, Arafat was emboldened by his success at Karameh to build up his forces in Jordan for the purpose of overthrowing Hussein. According to this version of events, Arafat provoked the civil war with the aim of toppling Hussein and declaring Jordan to be the first liberated part of Palestine, and the base from which the struggle to annihilate the Jewish state would be continued.

That was (and still is) what Zionism wanted the world to believe. But as we shall now see, this version of history is mainly myth. I say mainly myth because there was one faction of the authentic PLO—Habash’s PFLP—that *was* committed to provoking a confrontation in Jordan for the purpose of overthrowing Hussein.

And the PFLP (the PLO’s “adventurist leftists” in Kremlin terminology) was about to play into Israel’s hands and make Arafat’s task of selling the idea of unthinkable compromise with Israel—already something close to mission impossible—an even more daunting and dangerous challenge.

As the regeneration of the Palestinians as a people with an identity of their own was taking place, the PLO in Jordan became, effectively, a state within a state. This created an unstable situation with trouble written all over it, especially if Israel remained unwilling to comply with Resolution 242.

In April 1969 King Hussein went to Washington to confirm to President Nixon that he and President Nasser were more than ready to make peace with Israel. But, Hussein added, they could do nothing in public until Israel was committed to withdrawal to the borders of 4 June 1967, in accordance with both the letter and the spirit of Resolution 242.

*Immediately after Hussein left, Nixon said in private: “We’ve got to help the King. We cannot let American Jews make policy.”*¹

On Nixon’s instruction, which had the full support of, among others, Defence Secretary Melvin Laird and CIA Director Helms, Secretary of State Rogers went to work on a plan for the implementation of 242. But its publication on 9 December was proof that Kissinger was winning his battle to have more influence on Nixon than Rogers. What came to be called the first Rogers Plan required only Egypt to make peace with Israel without further delay in exchange for its withdrawal from Sinai. Beyond that there was only a call for negotiations between Israel and Jordan to bring about an eventual Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank in exchange for peace, and to settle the future of Jerusalem and the “Palestinian refugee problem.”

Israel rejected the Rogers Plan. Hussein was devastated by its refusal to require Israel to withdraw without further delay from the West Bank. Nasser did his best to keep the American diplomatic momentum going. He informed Washington that while he welcomed America’s engagement and was sincere about wanting peace with Israel, he could not and would not make a separate peace. *What was needed, Nasser said, was an American plan for a comprehensive peace—total peace for total withdrawal.*

Kissinger was totally opposed to such a solution. He wanted only a separate peace between Egypt and Israel. His calculation was quite simple. With Egypt out of the military equation, the other Arab states would never be able to make war and, if they wanted peace, it would have to be on Israel’s terms. Kissinger was well aware that Israel’s gut-Zionists had no intention, ever, of withdrawing from much if any of the West Bank.

Nasser wanted total peace for total withdrawal. Kissinger wanted a separate peace with Egypt to force the other Arab states to make peace on Israel’s terms.

As the team leader of those in the Nixon administration who were committed to putting America’s (not Zionism’s) best longer term interests in the region first, Rogers responded positively to Nasser’s appeal. He caused Nasser to be informed that he would return to the drawing board

and come up with a revised and improved plan. (His determination to get Israel to comply with resolution 242 was eventually to cost him his job. In the official version of events he resigned and Kissinger took his place as Secretary of State. If Rogers' decision to resign was purely his own, it was because he was fed up with Kissinger's sabotaging of his efforts to get President Nixon committed to a plan for a comprehensive Middle East peace. But it might have been that Kissinger said to Nixon, in effect, "You must choose—Rogers or me." Kissinger would not have put it so explicitly. He would have advised Nixon that America's relationship with Israel might be damaged if Rogers remained as Secretary of State).

After rejecting the first Rogers Plan, Israel went to war with Arafat's PLO in Jordan.

The public face of this war effort was use of Israel's air force as flying artillery to bomb PLO camps, actual and presumed. Though it was still a puny factor in the overall military equation, the PLO was growing in military strength, at least in terms of numbers. The battle of Karameh had inspired upwards of 25,000 embittered Palestinian refugees across the Arab world to travel to Jordan to join the struggle. The majority of them gave their allegiance to Fatah. And the number of fedayeen operations against Greater Israel rose significantly.

While the IDF was hitting PLO bases and training camps from the air, *Israel's intelligence agencies were sending letter and parcel bombs to PLO leaders.* The first parcel bomb was addressed to Abu Jihad. It was delivered to him in Salt via Iraqi military intelligence which the Israelis had penetrated. The first of a number of attempts to assassinate Arafat followed.

The decision to kill him was taken in 1969 after the first public confirmation that he was Fatah's leader and the new Chairman of the PLO. Initially Israel's intelligence chiefs thought that assassinating Arafat would be easy. Why? The flood of volunteers who offered their services to Fatah after Karameh had included a fair number of Israeli agents, the best of them being North African Jews whose Arabic speech and physical features gave them perfect cover. By 1969 the Israelis had a number of agents including some Palestinians around Arafat. Their problem was that they never knew (nobody knew) when Arafat was going to move from A to B. Abu Iyad said:

“The Israelis thought they had solved this problem when they got one of their agents to fix a bugging or homing device to Arafat’s Volvo car. The idea, obviously, was that Israel fighter planes would lock on to its signal. Rockets would be fired and bang—no more Arafat.”² I asked Arafat how the device was discovered. He laughed and said: “The first time an Israeli plane followed me I thought it was bad luck or coincidence. Maybe. Then I realised they had some means of knowing my movements. Remember I am an engineer. I knew what to look for and I found the device.”³

Israel’s policy now—opposed in private by Rogers but supported covertly by Kissinger—was not merely to hit the PLO directly and to cause Hussein to prevent the fedayeen crossing into Greater Israel from Jordan. *Israel’s main intention now was to force Hussein to confront and destroy the PLO.* The IDF’s message to Hussein was effectively this: “If you don’t move against the PLO and crush it, we will; and by the time we’ve finished there’ll be nothing left of what remains of your kingdom.”

To ram home this message the Israelis also attacked some of Jordan’s vital installations. Israeli commandos, for example, sabotaged the East Ghor canal, a \$15-million dollar showpiece of American aid to Jordan and its farmers. After it was repaired the Israelis blew it up again, leaving fruits and vegetables rotting on 500 square miles of Jordan’s best agricultural land. This act, like others in the past and many, many more in the years to come, was Israeli state terrorism pure and simple.

If the Israelis had been saying to Hussein “If you move against the PLO and destroy it, we’ll give you back the West Bank”, he might have had an incentive to do their bidding. But that was not what the Israelis were saying. Their actual message was, in effect, “We insist that you crush the PLO and, by the way, we’re not intending to withdraw from much if any of the West Bank.” It can be said that Israel’s policy for dealing with Hussein was one of mind-blowing arrogance.

Israel’s gut-Zionists justified their actions by the simple device of asserting that all forms of Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation were terrorism; and that Arafat’s PLO (now actually the authentic voice of resurrected Palestinian nationalism) was nothing but one vast terrorist organisation. *Unable any longer to deny the existence of the Palestinians,*

Zionism's child had turned, as Harkabi put it, to "criminalising" their principal institutions, for the purpose of discrediting their cause. The fact that international law gives occupied peoples the right to resist occupation by all means including violence was not for consideration in the traumatised Zionist mind. When the Israelis and Kissinger demanded an end to Palestinian "terrorism" as the prerequisite for any consideration of their grievances, they were requiring the Palestinians to give up their right to struggle without any guarantee of something in return.

No longer able to deny the existence of the Palestinians, the Israelis turned to criminalising their principal institutions to discredit their cause.

It was Israel's unrelenting military pressure on Jordan, plus its refusal to implement Resolution 242, that sharpened the PLO's internal divisions over policy and brought them into the open.

On the one side, the majority side, there was Fatah whose top leaders had decided, for better or for worse, that they had to work with the regimes of the existing Arab order, those in Egypt and Jordan especially, even though these two regimes were totally committed to making peace with Israel on the basis of Resolution 242, a resolution that, without Nasser's promise, offered the Palestinians nothing in the way of self-determination.

On the other side, the minority side, there was the PFLP. Though it had a relatively small number of fedayeen or guerrillas it could call its own, the PFLP was the vehicle of the intellectual, leftist elite of the Palestine liberation movement. Its basic problem in terms of its appeal to the masses was that most Palestinians, like most Arabs everywhere, were not leftward leaning. Habash (whom I got to know quite well) was the brains of the outfit and its political leader, but on operational matters Dr. Wadi Haddad, the organisation's terror chief, called the shots.

When the Israelis and Kissinger demanded an end to Palestinian "terrorism" as the prerequisite for any consideration of their grievances, they were requiring the Palestinians to give up their right to struggle without guarantee of something in return.

The PFLP had come to the conclusion that the Palestinians had nothing to gain and everything to lose from working with the regimes of the existing Arab Order. Habash and his leadership colleagues could and did say: “Look at what’s happening here in Jordan. His Majesty is ready to make peace with Israel but the Zionist state is not interested if the price of peace is giving him back the West Bank.” It followed, the PFLP said, that the only way to liberate Palestine was by overthrowing the existing Arab Order. The revolution had to start in Jordan with the overthrow of the alien Hashemite monarchy which, the PFLP maintained, was nothing but a Western and mainly American puppet regime.

To the extent that Jordan’s army and the king himself were dependent on American largesse, the PFLP was more right than wrong. Hussein’s Hashemite generals were not only fiercely anti-Palestinian in their genes, they were also—how shall I put it?—more than content to do the bidding of their American paymasters. But King Hussein himself was not so content (as we shall see in a moment).

In the early spring of 1970 the PFLP was calling openly for Hussein’s overthrow and embarked on a course of provoking a showdown with the Jordanian army. The fighters of the rival PLO factions did not wear labels identifying them as Fatah or PFLP (or others), so any Palestinian group with guns became a fair target for the Jordanian army. By June Fatah’s fighters found themselves being sucked into an escalating confrontation not of their making. Jordan’s generals wanted and expected an order from Hussein to crush the PLO. The order did not come because Hussein and Arafat were working as one to defuse the crisis. *The notion that Arafat and Hussein were on opposite sides in the countdown to catastrophe was pure propaganda, promoted separately and successfully by Zionism and Hussein’s generals.*

It is true that Arafat had to talk down a potential rebellion by some of Fatah’s junior officers, but talk it down he did. And that was possible because Fatah was in one important respect what Khalad Hassan had vowed it would be—a democratic organisation. A significant number of Fatah’s junior officers shared the PFLP’s analysis and had wanted their leadership to go for all-out confrontation to overthrow Hussein. But Arafat was smart

enough to invite them to make their case behind closed doors. They did. He listened. And then he put his case. If they were to liberate even a part of Palestine, he told them, they had got to work with the Arab regimes, with Jordan and Egypt especially, not against them. Arafat won the argument. There was no dissenting voice. It was evidence of the truth about Arafat that Nasser had perceived in their first meeting as equals. There was magic in Arafat's personality behind closed doors—i.e. when he did not have to play to public galleries. When he put the magic to use he could sell his people more or less anything, provided he believed in what he was selling.

Then, confident that he had the support of all of his Fatah forces, Arafat negotiated an agreement with Hussein. Both men hoped it would bring the clashes to an end. In the event it failed to do so because Habash's opposition prevented the PLO's Central Committee from endorsing the agreement to make it binding on all PLO factions. Arafat was so angry that he denounced his PFLP colleague in public. "Our masses can no longer tolerate an extremist demagogue!" he thundered.⁴ He did not name the PFLP leader but all Palestinians knew that Habash was the "extremist demagogue" the Chairman of the PLO had in mind.

Arafat and Hussein then lost control of events. As it happened, the PFLP was not the only vested interest seeking to provoke conflict between the PLO and the Jordanian army. There were other agent provocateurs in the field—Hashemite Jordanians and Israelis.

I was in and out of Jordan and Israel at the time on assignments for Panorama, and I had some idea of what was really going on as it was happening. Hussein subsequently told me he had been aware from late 1968 that Israel had agents on the ground in Amman and no doubt elsewhere in Jordan, masquerading as Palestinian guerrillas and provoking shooting incidents to push the Jordanian army to confrontation with the PLO. This was the unseen face of Israel's war against the PLO.

Hussein: From late 1968 Israel had agents on the ground in Jordan masquerading as Palestinian guerrillas and provoking shooting incidents to push the Jordanian army to confront the PLO.

After Hussein and Arafat signed their agreement to end the fighting, a new fedayeen organisation, the Victory Battalions, began to make a name for itself. Its specialities were hijacking cars—usually those belonging to high government officials and senior army officers; kidnapping army officers; and generally harassing the families of those in the military and political establishments. It soon became obvious that whoever was directing the Victory Battalions had inside information about the movements of senior military personnel. As Arafat and Abu Iyad suspected from the beginning, and as Hussein was to discover for himself, this so-called fedayeen organisation was a creature of Jordan's Hashemite generals. Its activities were their contributions to the cause of discrediting Arafat's PLO and forcing Hussein to give the order for it to be crushed.

A reported attempt on King Hussein's life caused outrage in the Western world. Naturally the PLO was blamed. Shots were fired at his car — but not by a Palestinian. His Majesty was not in it and his generals presented the incident to him as evidence that the PLO was trying to assassinate him.

Long after the events I had lengthy conversations about them with Hussein and Arafat. Hussein told me that he was sometimes infuriated by Arafat's refusal to use Fatah's superior force to curb and if necessary crush his own extremists (the PFLP and its gunmen in particular), but... When the king compared his own situation with Arafat's, he had to have some sympathy for the PLO Chairman. Why so? As Hussein put it to me, he had a country and all the institutions of the state were at his command—in theory. But still he could not control his extremists (his generals). So how much more difficult was it for Arafat, the king asked, without a country or even a solid base? It was a rhetorical question with its own implicit answer. Arafat was in an impossible position.

I asked Arafat why he had refused to use Fatah's superior force to bring to heel the PFLP and other minority PLO elements which were hell-bent on provoking a confrontation with the Jordanian army. His answer was in two parts.

The first was his fear that if he used force to suppress his political opponents, he would provoke a Palestinian civil war which Jordanian and

Israeli agents (and probably Syrians, too) would use as the cover to assassinate the entire PLO leadership, while claiming that the Palestinians were killing each other. Arafat said to me: “You have not to forget what happened in the 1930s... when the first Palestinian nationalist movement was divided and the rival factions started to fight with each other... and British intelligence agents used that as their cover to assassinate many of our leaders.” Arafat added with passion, “I could not let that happen again.”⁵

The second part of Arafat’s answer was related to the fact that he understood, better than anybody else, that if he was to succeed in getting his people to accept the need for unthinkable compromise with Israel, he could only do it through debate and discussion behind closed doors. By reasoned argument. It followed, or so Arafat believed (with wisdom on his side in my view), that if he resorted to force to solve the PLO’s internal problems, he would be perceived by his people, not to mention most of his leadership colleagues, as just another Arab dictator. As a final thought on the subject Arafat said to me: “*Peace based on imposing compromise on the Palestinians by the gun will not last. That was so clear to me from the beginning of what you call my journey into reality.*”

In July 1970 the tensions between Fatah and the PFLP were exacerbated by Nasser and Hussein’s acceptance of the revised and improved Rogers Plan for implementing Resolution 242. Nasser had been given advance notice of its contents by the State Department. The Nixon administration, Nasser was informed, understood and accepted that he could not make a separate peace with Israel, and the second Rogers Plan was therefore focused on the need for Israel to withdraw from the West Bank as well as Sinai for peace with Egypt and Jordan.

Hopeful that at last the U.S. was going to require Israel to be serious about peace, Nasser advised Arafat of his intentions. He said (as quoted to me by Arafat and Khalad Hassan): “*I am going to accept the Rogers Plan. The PLO is free to reject it—that is your right. But whatever you decide, do not criticise me!*”⁶ Nasser meant that he did not want the PLO and its supporters to say or do anything that would cause Arabs anywhere to question his integrity and prestige. Nothing should be done or said to undermine his negotiating strength.

Arafat told me he “begged” all of his PLO leadership colleagues not to embarrass Nasser even if their formal collective decision was to be rejection of the Rogers Plan. When Nasser announced his acceptance of it, the PFLP’s supporters and others of the PLO’s “adventurist leftists” took to the streets of Amman with slogans and banners condemning Nasser as a “traitor” and an “agent of American imperialism.” The demonstration was led by a donkey with a picture of Nasser on its face.

Arafat said to me: “It was very rude. Very offensive. Very stupid.”⁷ Because of his commitment to work with Nasser even though he had accepted the Rogers Plan which offered the Palestinians nothing, it was also by implication an anti-Arafat demonstration. Arafat added: “If my political opponents were trying to make trouble for me with Nasser, they succeeded.”

Nasser was furious and the next time Arafat went to Cairo, Egypt’s president demonstrated how much he had been hurt by refusing to meet the PLO Chairman. But they needed each other and the broken fence was quickly mended.

Israel *said* it accepted the second Rogers Plan, but it had no intention of implementing its West Bank element. In the light of everything that was to happen, it is more than reasonable to imagine that Kissinger advised the Israelis to say they accepted the second Rogers Plan in order to avoid a possible confrontation with President Nixon while Rogers remained his Secretary of State. (Nixon had already done Israel a big favour. He had signed a secret agreement with Prime Minister Golda Meir that committed the U.S. for all time never to press Israel to admit that it had nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and never to require Israel to be open to international inspection.)

It is also reasonable to imagine that Kissinger advised the Israelis to keep cool because he was doing some arm-twisting of his own—to force King Hussein to give the order for his army to move against the PLO and crush it.

Each year King Hussein received funding from the U.S. government to pay the expenses of his court and the salaries of his army. The money was paid twice a year—in January and July. In July 1970

Hussein received no money at all. The normal payment for the second six months of that year was delayed. In early August Hussein received payment for only one month. Immediately he spoke to the American Ambassador on the telephone. He had just one question. “Why do you pay only one month?”⁸ According to what the king himself subsequently told me, the American replied with just one sentence. “*Your Majesty should know the United States only backs the winning horse.*”⁹

Hussein was very, very angry, but he said nothing and put the telephone down. When he was recalling the events in conversation with me a decade later, there was still something of the anger of the moment in his voice. He realised that the Americans (for which read Kissinger and associates, not Rogers) were telling him they regarded what was happening in Jordan as a race between two horses—himself and Arafat. What the Americans were actually saying to him was, in effect: “If you are not prepared to move against Arafat and the PLO, we Americans don’t need you and we won’t pay you. In other words, Your Majesty, if you don’t do what we want, we’ll put one of your generals in your place.”

Kissinger’s message to Hussein: Move against Arafat and the PLO or we’ll put one of your generals in your place.

The king’s first emotional response to the American message was to think about abdicating. He was not going to do Zionism’s dirty work. He did, in fact, decide to abdicate. But Nasser persuaded him to change his mind. One of the arguments Nasser used was that if Hussein went and his place was taken by one of his generals, perhaps his uncle, the army would go on a killing spree and Palestinian blood would not stop flowing until there was none left to flow.

In early August, and perhaps to appease rather than confront his generals, Hussein ordered the redeployment of his forces. Tanks and other armoured vehicles were to be switched from the border with Israel to locations around Amman and some other cities. Fatah’s field officers who were monitoring the redeployment were alarmed and requested a meeting with Arafat. Their leader was Abu Daoud, the commander of all Palestinian militias in Jordan. He said: “We told Arafat we thought it was necessary for

us to take action to prevent the tanks from reaching Amman and the cities. We said the Jordanians would not be able to mount an offensive against us if we could confine their armour to the border areas.”¹⁰

According to Abu Daoud and confirmed to me by the man himself, Arafat replied: “These are Arab tanks. We cannot attack them. We will defend ourselves if the time comes but the way to liberation is not by fighting our Arab brothers.”¹¹ There were no circumstances in which Arafat was going to initiate offensive action against Hussein’s army.

According to Hani Hassan (Khalad’s younger brother) who was on his way to becoming Arafat’s most trusted confidant and chief adviser for many years, Arafat was aware that the time was coming, probably, when Hussein’s generals would turn on him and his PLO, but he did not believe they would be able to crush him and it. Why?

Arafat was confident that Iraqi forces stationed in Jordan would intervene, not to take sides but to halt the fighting. Arafat had, in fact, made a quick trip to Baghdad and secured a promise from the regime there that its forces would intervene if the Jordanian army moved against the PLO. *But even as Arafat was congratulating himself on putting that insurance policy in place, Iraq was being taken out of the equation.*

From their agent or agents inside Iraqi military intelligence, the Israelis got word of what Arafat had been promised, and alerted Kissinger’s people. Subsequently (and as I revealed in my book about Arafat and his struggle), Iraq’s Defence Minister arrived at the Mufrak air base carrying two large but light and obviously empty suitcases. His visit was unscheduled and completely secret. Officially the visit did not take place. When the minister returned to Baghdad, the two suitcases he was carrying were not so light. They were stuffed with American dollars!

Hani Hassan added a footnote: “*I think the way the Iraqis deceived Arafat completed his education about Arab politics.*”¹²

When Arafat told Fatah’s commanders there were no circumstances in which he would order offensive action against the Jordanian army, he had just returned from a visit to Cairo. Nasser had warned him that further provocations to Hussein’s army had to be prevented at all costs. To me

Arafat said: “When I returned to Amman I told everybody what Nasser had said. And once more I begged the leftists to stop their provocations. I said to them very frankly that they were creating a disaster for our people. But once more they refused me... and you know what happened.”¹³

My Israeli friend and mentor, former DMI Herzog, was fond of saying, not always in private, that in one particular respect Israel was very fortunate. Whenever it was “misbehaving” (for which read defying the expressed will of the international community and attacking an Arab neighbour at will), Israel could count on the Palestinians doing something outrageous that made headlines around the world and took the heat off Israel. That was precisely what happened on 6 September.

On that day PLFP terrorists hijacked four international airliners. One, a Pan-Am jumbo jet, was blown up at Beirut airport after its passengers had disembarked. Two others—one belonging to TWA, the other to Swiss Air—were eventually forced to land at Dawson’s Field, a strip of desert in Jordan, where more PFLP terrorists were waiting. The fourth hijacked airliner was an El-Al plane. The attempt to get it to Dawson’s Field was foiled by Israeli security agents on board. (They really are the best in the business). They killed one of the terrorists and captured another. Her name was Leila Khaled. The El-Al plane landed safely in London. Israel demanded Leila Khaled’s extradition. The PFLP demanded her release and, to back its demand, hijacked a British airliner, a BOAC VC-10. It too, was forced to land at Dawson’s Field. By now a total of three very expensive planes and about 600 hostages were in the PFLP’s hands.

I think I was the only Western correspondent to have a lengthy conversation with Habash at the time. I had the impression that though he was defending the monster hijack, he had not sanctioned it and had been presented with a *fait accompli* by Wadi Haddad. (When eventually Haddad died in Eastern Europe after being poisoned by a foreign intelligence agent in Algiers, Habash was not overtaken with grief. In his oration at Haddad’s funeral in Damascus, Habash was critical of his old comrade. And that confirmed to Fatah’s leaders what they had long suspected—that Haddad had forced the PFLP to extremes which Habash had known would be harmful to the Palestinian cause but which he had been powerless to stop).

In September 1970 Haddad was driven by two things. The first was his need to respond to what he regarded as a challenge that had been thrown down to him by Israeli military intelligence. In December 1968 two PFLP gunmen had opened fire on an El-Al airliner at Athens airport. Israel had responded by sending Special Forces to Beirut airport. They blew up 13 Arab airliners, a reprisal which even the U.S. condemned as “an act of arrogance and disproportionate.” In that context Haddad was saying to the Israelis, “Anything you can do, I can do better.” (To that extent Haddad was on an ego trip).

In 1968 two PFLP gunmen opened fire on an El-Al airliner at Athens airport. Israel blew up 13 Arab airliners at Beirut airport in reprisal.

Haddad’s second purpose was to capture the imagination of the Palestinian masses. As I have noted, the PFLP was a minority group within the PLO. Haddad was hoping that the monster hijack would make the PFLP a hero in the eyes of the fedayeen and that, as a consequence, many of Fatah’s fighters would switch their allegiance to it. (In that sense it was terrorism for internal public relations purposes).

Unless he was completely mad, Haddad must have known that the monster hijack would be the last straw for Hussein’s generals. So probably he had a third purpose—to provoke civil war.

None were more aware than Arafat and his Fatah leadership colleagues that the outrageous action of a handful of Palestinian extremists (Fatah’s opponents) would greatly assist Zionism to convince the Western world that the entire PLO was nothing but one vast terrorist organisation.

Arafat’s first priority was to secure the release of the hostages at Dawson’s Field. He pledged to co-operate fully with the International Red Cross and demanded a meeting of the Central Committee of the Palestine Resistance (CCPR). This was the only committee on which all the Palestinian militias and armed groups were represented, including those which were not members of the PLO. The crisis was so big that Arafat decided he would not even try to get a unanimous decision. He said he wanted and would accept a majority vote on the release of the hostages. Haddad had succeeded in capturing the imagination of many in the

Palestine liberation movement and there was a great deal of admiration for the hijackers, even in Fatah's rank and file. So, as ever, Arafat was swimming against the tide of popular and emotional opinion. *But when he let it be known that he would resign the Chairmanship of the PLO if he did not get the majority support he wanted, he got it.*

The PFLP hijackers and their associates responded by releasing all but 60 of the hostages and blowing up the three airliners before taking their leave of Dawson's Field and the world's media, with the 60 remaining hostages as their shield and guarantee of safety.

Still King Hussein refused to give the order for an all-out offensive against the PLO. He knew that Arafat and his mainstream PLO was not his enemy, and that the issue was not what Zionism and its American and other Western friends were asserting it to be—who ruled Jordan, Hussein or Arafat?

As he considered his options, Hussein was worried about the fate of the remaining hostages (they were eventually released unharmed). He was even more troubled by the prospect of the Syrians intervening on the side of the PLO. But most of all he was paralysed by the knowledge that his elite Bedouin forces were thirsting for Palestinian blood. The idea of doing Zionism's dirty work made him feel physically sick. He did not want to go down in history as (his words to me subsequently) "The butcher of Amman."

The only question waiting for an answer was—when would Hussein's generals, under intense pressure from Kissinger through his "back channels", make their move? (The main reason for Kissinger's preference for back channels was the CIA's opposition to many of his strategies. The back channels enabled Kissinger to act without consulting or informing the CIA, to behave, one might say, like a Dayan or a Sharon. In late 2009, I had a conversation with a very senior former CIA officer. He told me that Kissinger was "hated from the top to the bottom of the CIA.")

On 15 September the generals presented the king with an ultimatum. In the original version of the story as told to me by a Western diplomat who was in constant touch with him, a deputation from the High Command of Jordan's armed forces went to Hussein and said: "Your

Majesty, if you don't now give us the order to crush the fedyaeen, we'll lock you in the toilet and get on with the job without your permission."

A decade later I asked Hussein if that was really what had happened. In a flat, quiet voice, and with just a hint of a painful smile on his face, he said: "*It was not the toilet in which they were going to confine me, but apart from that your understanding of what was said to me is correct.*"¹⁴

On the 17th day of what came to be called Black September, Hussein's generals launched their offensive, vowing to succeed where the Israelis had failed.

Abu Iyad was quickly captured. He recalled: "They told me Arafat was dead. Unfortunately I believed them and they obliged me to make a broadcast announcing his death and calling on my people to stop fighting."¹⁵

At the time the Jordanian military did believe that Arafat was dead. They had located the house in which he had taken refuge, surrounded it on all sides, demolished it with tank fire and raked the ruins with machineguns. But Arafat had slipped away minutes before the assault. Jordanian Special Forces were then given their priority assignment. It was to find and kill Arafat. He was not to be taken alive.

Nasser convened an emergency Arab summit in Cairo. It called for an immediate ceasefire. Hussein responded positively and declared a truce. But what he said and wanted no longer mattered. His generals had taken over in all but name. There was to be no truce until Arafat had been found and killed. (Generally speaking, if you kill one leader there is always another to take his place. But not in the story of the struggle for Palestine. There was an emphasis on the need to kill Arafat because those who most wanted him dead had grasped his real historical significance. He was not a leader who could have been invented if he had not been born. He was, and it was obvious that he was, something special—truly the Palestinians' man of destiny. In every aspect of his being he was the living symbol of resurrected Palestinian nationalism. Kill him and, probably, you could kill it. And Western leaders, pork-barrel Americans in particular, would not then have to live with fear of one day having to confront Zionism, in order to oblige it to grant the Palestinians a minimum amount of justice).

Nasser responded by sending Sudan's President Numeiri to Amman on behalf of the Arab summit. His job was to make the truce work and guarantee Arafat's safety. Nasser wanted both Arafat and Hussein in Cairo.

Numeiri arrived and the Jordanians shelled the hotel in which he was staying. That was a most effective way of telling him to go to hell.

Nasser called Hussein and told him that he would order Egyptian forces to impose a ceasefire if the king could not control his generals. In the meantime, Nasser added, the Arab leaders assembled in Cairo had authorised him to send another representative to Amman in the expectation that he would succeed where the shell-shocked President Numeiri had failed. The man chosen to take on Hussein's generals was Kuwait's Defence Minister, Sheikh Saa'd Abdullah Assalim (soon to be Kuwait's Crown Prince). No writer of fiction would have had the imagination to invent what happened next.

Khalad Hassan recalled: "When Sheikh Saa'd arrived in Amman, Jordanian Special Forces followed him everywhere. They knew he was bound to lead them to Arafat because his prime task was to arrange the Chairman's safe passage to Cairo. When Arafat was located, the Jordanians were going to kill him. Sheikh Saa'd knew that. During the course of his meeting with Arafat, Sheikh Saa'd stripped down to his underwear and gave Arafat his top robes. Arafat then travelled to Amman airport disguised as Sheikh Saa'd, in a Jordanian armoured personnel carrier!"¹⁶

On 27 September the first phase of the civil war in Jordan came to an end when Arafat and Hussein shook hands in Cairo. Nasser did not believe that the truce he had forced Jordan's generals to accept would solve any problems. But he and Hussein were hoping that it would buy them time to try to make something of the second Rogers Plan. Both realised that everything would depend on whether Rogers or Kissinger won the struggle for power in Washington. If Rogers won it was possible that President Nixon would put pressure on Israel to implement Resolution 242 and withdraw from the West Bank as well as Sinai. If Kissinger won—no chance. Israel's colonisation of the West Bank would proceed.

The following day Nasser had a massive heart attack and died.

Khalad Hassan recalled: “We were in the Algerian Embassy in Damascus when the news of Nasser’s death came through. In words I cannot tell you how empty and lonely we felt. Arafat and all of us cried and cried and cried. It was finally Arafat who spoke for us all when he said, ‘We have lost everything.’”¹⁷

Arafat meant, and all of his leadership colleagues knew what he meant, that the Palestine liberation movement had lost its only protector.

This new, terrifying sense of vulnerability was one of two reasons why Arafat and his Fatah leadership colleagues worked so hard to make the truce with Jordan’s army stick—to avoid giving Hussein’s generals, under constant and mounting pressure from Kissinger and his associates, the pretext to go for the kill with a second phase offensive against the PLO.

Behind Fatah and PLO closed doors Khalad Hassan was not only Arafat’s most severe critic—i.e. when he believed Arafat was wrong; he was also the man who said aloud on occasions, “What are we doing with this man as our leader!” My point in passing is that nobody was more capable than Khalad Hassan of making a more informed and more objective judgement of Arafat. Given that, I think Khalad Hassan’s judgment of Arafat in the immediate aftermath of Black September is very interesting and offers a rare insight into the real nature of the real man and what was actually happening at the time.

Long after the events Khalad Hassan said to me:

In the period after Nasser’s death I was proud that we had such a man as our leader. In their hearts if not their minds the majority in our liberation movement were bitter and wanted revenge. Up to 3,000 of our people had been killed—many of them civilians—and many more were wounded. So our people were talking openly about the need for revenge. But not Arafat. At all of our meetings he spoke only of the need for reconciliation with Hussein’s regime. This Arafat was not a politician. Politicians only say what the people want to hear. This Arafat was a statesman. He was giving the lead in one direction when the majority wanted to go in another. And he was very honest with the leftists. To them he said: ‘You refused my ideas. Here are the results. You are

responsible for what happened.’ And he warned them that our movement would be ‘committing suicide’ if they provoked another confrontation with the Jordanian army.¹⁸

On 13 July 1971, Jordan’s generals launched the second phase of their offensive against the PLO and they were going, this time with Hussein’s reluctant blessing, for the kill. The offensive was directed, apparently with great enthusiasm, by Jordan’s Prime Minister and Defence Minister of the day, Wasfi Tal (a name to remember).

In Syria, Assad had come to power in a bloodless coup, and he assisted the Jordanians by closing his border to fedayeen reinforcements.

One indication of what happened on the battlefield is the fact that more than 100 of Arafat’s fighters surrendered to Israeli forces rather than be taken alive by Hussein’s men.

In six days it was all over. On 19 July, Wasfi Tal announced that there were no more fedayeen bases in Jordan. What was left of the PLO had been driven out of the Hashemite kingdom. Hussein’s generals had finished what they started in September the previous year.

Why, really, did it happen?

It is true that the PFLP and the PLO’s other adventurist leftists continued to provoke the Jordanian army despite Arafat’s best efforts short of using restraining force to stop them: but that was not the main reason for the Jordanian attempt at a final solution to the PLO problem. The key to understanding was given to me by Hani Hassan, and subsequently confirmed to me by King Hussein himself.

Hani Hassan said: “One month after Nasser’s death, Hussein summoned all the PLO leaders to meet with him. He made a very dramatic statement to us: There is no more reason for us to be fighting. *The Americans have promised me I can have the West Bank back.*”¹⁹ The Americans to whom Hussein was referring were Secretary of State Rogers and his senior officials.

There were two implications in what Hussein said. One was that the Nixon administration as influenced by Rogers was going to put pressure on Israel to withdraw. The other was that after Israel’s withdrawal from the West Bank, Hussein would open negotiations with the PLO for the

Palestinians to have it (with the Gaza Strip) as a state of their own in a confederation with Jordan.

Hani continued: “We were completely stunned and there was a great silence. Even Arafat did not speak. Finally it was me who broke the silence on our side. I said, ‘Your Majesty, you are right. IF you get the West Bank back you will be our hero and we will salute you... in the meantime we will wait to see what happens.’”

What did happen?

Short answer—*Kissinger pulled the rug from under Rogers’ feet*. There was to be no pressure on Israel to withdraw from the West Bank. In Kissinger’s analysis there was no need for it. Kissinger had taken his measure of Egypt’s new president, Anwar Sadat, and had come to certain conclusions about how to handle him. Sadat was, Kissinger told himself and his associates, a vain man (Kissinger called him a “clown” in private), and therefore an Egyptian president who could be dominated—i.e. by Kissinger, if he was prepared to flatter him enough. *Kissinger had decided that, when he replaced Rogers as Secretary of State, he would be prepared to play whatever games were necessary with Sadat, in order to dominate him and, by persuasion of various kinds, get him to make a separate peace with Israel*. That being so, there was no need for the Rogers Plan which, if it was to be implemented, would require President Nixon to confront Israel over its refusal to withdraw from the West Bank. So kill the Rogers Plan.

Kissinger viewed Sadat as an, Egyptian president who could be dominated. That being so, there was no need for the Rogers Plan requiring Israel to withdraw from the West Bank.

Hussein was aware of what was happening behind Washington’s closed doors and by the summer of 1971 he was in complete despair.

Hani continued: “In effect Hussein said to himself the following. ‘Because the American objective as determined by Kissinger is a separate peace between Egypt and Israel, it is now every Arab leader for himself. That being so I might as well take the necessary action to secure what is left of my country. There is no more any point in fighting with my own

generals to avoid a final showdown with the PLO.’ And in that frame of mind the King said to Wasfi Tal and his generals, ‘Okay, do it!’”

Hani gave me that explanation in 1983 and I knew it was based on much more than his own assumptions about Hussein’s thinking. I knew that in his role as Arafat’s chief adviser and trouble-shooter, Hani had enjoyed, and did still enjoy, a very special relationship with King Hussein. Brother Khalad had been responsible for developing and maintaining the mainstream PLO’s relationship with the Gulf States and with Saudi Arabia in particular. Hani had been responsible above all for maintaining the link with Hussein. The two men liked each other and in their private conversations Hani was never less than frank about what Arafat could and could not deliver, and Hussein was never less than completely honest about his own problems. There was probably no other man who had a better understanding than Hani Hassan of the real reason why Hussein did what he did in July of 1971. But...

In due course, and without naming Hani as my source of understanding, I put his explanation to Hussein as though it was my own speculation, and I asked him if it was correct. His Majesty replied to the effect that the way I had put it was “brutal” but yes, it was a fair enough summary of his thinking in 1971. But it was not, he said, the whole story. Bad though the situation was then, “it would not have been necessary for the PLO to be expelled from Jordan if our American friends had been prepared to oblige Israel to withdraw from the Occupied Territories in accordance with 242.”²⁰

I was well on my way to understanding why every Arab leader who mattered regarded Kissinger as the biggest obstacle to a comprehensive peace.

When the PLO was expelled from Jordan it had no choice but to take refuge in Lebanon. Its stay there would have been short, and the prospects for peace in the Middle East would have been advanced not retarded if... If King Feisal, Chairman Arafat, Khalad Hassan, and perhaps King Hussein, had had their way; *and* if Wasfi Tal had not been assassinated.

WASFI TAL'S ASSASSINATION: PURPOSE AND CONSEQUENCES

Wasfi Tal was murdered on 28 November (four months after the PLO's expulsion from Jordan which he had directed). He was gunned down as he was entering the Sheraton Hotel in Cairo for a meeting of the Arab League's Joint Defence Council. In the first and still existing draft of Western history, his assassination was a revenge killing by Palestinian terrorists. It was not.

When he was eliminated, Wasfi Tal was 20 minutes away from signing for Jordan, with Khalad Hassan for the PLO, an historic agreement brokered by King Feisal.

It was an agreement which would have seen the return of the PLO to Jordan as a political movement, having renounced armed struggle and authorised King Hussein to negotiate for it within the framework of Resolution 242—on the understanding that Jordan would cede the West Bank to the Palestinians for a state of their own after the Israelis had withdrawn.

Wasfi Tal was 20 minutes away from signing an historic agreement brokered by King Feisal: the return of the PLO to Jordan as a political movement prepared to negotiate.

In exchange for the mandate to negotiate on its behalf, Hussein was going to recognise the PLO as "the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people." This recognition was, in fact, contained in Article 3 of the agreement Wasfi Tal was about to sign when he was assassinated.

The true story of the birth and death of that Feisal-brokered agreement to put Arafat's PLO back in business but committed to continue its struggle by politics and diplomacy must now be told.

After the PLO's expulsion from Jordan its first priority was survival.

There were two reasons why Arafat and his Fatah and mainstream PLO leadership colleagues had worked so hard to try to prevent a second and disastrous confrontation with Hussein's army, which was bound to end

with the PLO's expulsion from Jordan. The first was that with Nasser's death they had lost their protector. The second was their understanding of the reasons (addressed in Chapter Five of this volume) why Lebanon would be a death-trap for their organisation and not a safe-haven. This understanding included the assumption that the U.S. would give Israel the green light, covertly, to do what it could to prevent Lebanon's Christians losing their controlling grip on power.

Thus when Arafat and his mainstream leadership colleagues reviewed the situation, they could see only disaster ahead for Lebanon itself and catastrophe for the Palestinian cause if the PLO became entrenched there. *They came to the conclusion that they had to return to Jordan if they were to have any influence on events and be in a position to represent the case for at least a measure of justice for their people.*

Adding urgency to the debate Arafat and his senior leadership colleagues were locked into was their knowledge that many in the rank and file of their liberation movement, including now many of their own Fatah commandos, were so angry and in such despair that they wanted to play the terror card—to remind the world that the Palestinians did exist, had a just cause and were not intending to let the governments of the major powers wash their hands of it. Embittered junior Fatah officers had by now formed their own terrorist group—the Black September Organisation (BSO).

It was Khalad Hassan who correctly estimated the price King Hussein would require the mainstream PLO to pay for a “return ticket” to Jordan—abandonment of armed struggle. *Arafat was ready to pay that price.* He was still not prepared to impose Fatah's will on the liberation movement's adventurist leftists by force, but he was now reconciled to splitting the PLO if necessary. IF King Hussein was willing and able to give the PLO the space in which to continue the struggle by political means, the Fatah realists would return to Amman and the adventurist leftists (the PFLP and other minority factions including Jabril's PLF) could go to hell, which probably meant Syria. (When years later I asked Arafat if he had trusted Hussein, he paused only briefly for reflection and said, “Yes, but not some of those around him.”)

On their own account Arafat and his leadership colleagues did not have even the possibility of opening a new dialogue with Jordan. They needed a mediator. Who could it be? There was only one Arab leader with sufficient clout.

While preparations for the Arab League Joint Defence Council meeting in Cairo were taking place, a train was travelling from Alexandria to the Egyptian capital. In a special compartment, four men were talking. They were Saudi Arabia's King Feisal, Chairman Arafat, Khalad Hassan and President Sadat.

Khalad recalled:

We told Feisal that if he did not help us to secure a political base in Jordan, we would lose control to the leftists and radicals in our movement—including those in Fatah who were wanting to play the terror card. *We were pleading with Feisal to give us the opportunity to direct the anger and bitterness on our side away from violence and into support for positive political action.* We didn't need to tell Feisal that if we lost control there would be an escalation of violence which would give the Israelis the opportunity to cause havoc in the Lebanon and elsewhere, and lead in time to the collapse and defeat of Arab and Muslim moderation everywhere. Feisal knew what was at stake. He also knew and said that Kissinger was a fool, and that it was his opposition to a comprehensive peace which was pushing the region and the world to disaster by cutting the ground from under the feet of those Arab leaders, including those of us in Fatah, who were trying to lead in a positive and political way.¹

On that train journey Feisal agreed to push as his own the idea that Jordan should open official negotiations to allow a political PLO to return to Jordan, on the terms Arafat and Khalad Hassan had outlined to him and any additional ones Hussein might reasonably add. (The Saudi monarch was on his way to becoming the PLO's protector, which was why he, too, would be marked for assassination).

The Jordanians said "No!" to negotiations and seemed determined to stick to that position. With the opening of the Joint Defence Council meeting only a day or two away, Feisal was getting more and more angry.

He was aware that Jordan was saying “No” to the return of the PLO because of pressure from the U.S. (for which read Kissinger and his associates).

Khalad Hassan continued:

When his patience was exhausted, Feisal sent Hussein a very tough letter asking him to reconsider the matter and say ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ by a certain time. Don’t ask me what Feisal was planning to do if Hussein’s answer was not the one he wanted. I really have no idea. It was a matter between the two kings. All I can tell you is that Jordan was subjected to enormous pressure by Saudi Arabia.²

When Wasfi Tal arrived in Cairo for the Joint Defence Council meeting, he was subjected to further pressure by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait especially.

He then decided to make himself fully responsible for Jordan’s decision about the PLO. (Subsequent events suggest to me that Saudi Arabia and Kuwait guaranteed to more than make good any loss of American support funding that Jordan might suffer as a consequence of not doing what it was told to do by Kissinger.) *Wasfi Tal then opened secret talks with Khalad Hassan.*

By the late evening of 27 November they had their agreement. It was to be typed overnight and the two of them were to sign it, witnessed by all of the assembled Arab ministers and other dignitaries, the following day.

On the assumption that Arafat and his mainstream leadership colleagues proved themselves to be politically effective, the hope of most of those who were aware of the agreement was that, when implemented, it would cause Israel to come under great pressure to withdraw from the West Bank, because it would be clear that the Palestine problem was very close to a solution within the limits of what was possible given Israel’s overwhelming military superiority.

I asked Khalad Hassan if he had been convinced that Wasfi Tal could succeed in making the agreement work. His answer was very revealing and most astonishing in its implication. He said:

First you must know that Wasfi was a very tough, very ruthless but very honest man. Second you must know that he was the strong man in Jordan at the time. He had reorganised Jordan's armed forces. That is for background. Now I will tell you what he said to me in our last secret talk on the night before he was killed. These were, in fact, almost his last words to me. He said: '*Supposing the King does not accept this agreement...*

Will you support me in anything I may do? I said, 'Yes, anything.'³

I took that to mean that if King Hussein rejected the agreement because he did not want to risk a confrontation with Kissinger, Wasfi Tal, having reorganised Jordan's armed forces, was intending to oblige His Majesty to go into exile. Put another way, Wasfi Tal was not going to let Israel's protector in Washington make Jordanian policy.

I asked Khalad Hassan if there was any other way to interpret Wasfi Tal's words. "No", he replied, "there is not. And that was my understanding of them at the time."⁴

If King Hussein were to reject the agreement because he did not want a confrontation with Kissinger, Wasfi Tal intended to remove him.

In the story that made headlines around the world, Wasfi Tal was assassinated by three Palestinian terrorists who were waiting for him in the foyer of the Sheraton Hotel—i.e. they fired out of the hotel as he was approaching them. Three Palestinians were arrested by Egyptian security agents, and both the BSO and the PFLP claimed the credit for the assassination. One or all of the three of the Palestinians may even have fired some shots. But Wasfi Tal was killed from behind by shots fired by one of his own Jordanian bodyguards. The witnesses included two Arab foreign ministers: and the truth they knew but dared not speak was subsequently told to Wasfi Tal's widow by King Hussein himself.

There was circumstantial evidence to implicate President Sadat himself in the conspiracy. He was being pushed by Kissinger to make a separate peace with Israel. Sadat was not intending to go it alone but he realised he would have no chance of persuading the U.S. to put pressure on Israel to withdraw from the West Bank if the PLO returned to Jordan and became an important factor in the political equation. In other words, Sadat

had a vested interest in Khalad Hassan's agreement with Wasfi Tal not being completed and implemented. It was Sadat himself who gave the instruction that Wasfi Tal was not to be given Egyptian security cover. When he was asked why at the time, his story was to the effect that Wasfi Tal was hated by many in Egypt, that he (Sadat) feared there would be an assassination attempt, and that he did not want to take the responsibility for Wasfi Tal's life. On those grounds, Sadat told the Jordanians, they should be completely responsible for protecting their own man.

Khalad Hassan said to me: "It was true that Wasfi was not well liked by many in Egypt. But the rest of Sadat's story was a fabrication. If he had really been worried about an attempt on Wasfi's life—I mean one that he did not know about in advance—it was his responsibility as president to give an order doubling and trebling the number of Egyptian security agents assigned to protect him."⁵

I said to Khalad Hassan: "So what is the conclusion—that certain persons unknown in Jordan conspired with President Sadat and others in Egypt to kill Wasfi Tal, in order to prevent his agreement with you being completed and implemented?"

"Yes", he replied.

"And what about the involvement of certain persons unknown in America?" I asked.

To that Khalad Hassan replied: "On such a serious matter I don't think it is right for me to speculate about things I cannot prove. There are conclusions to be drawn but I prefer to keep them to myself."

Who had the most to gain from killing the prospect of the mainstream PLO returning to Jordan to play its part in the politics of peacemaking?

The question I asked myself was this. *Who had most to gain from killing the prospect of the mainstream PLO returning to Jordan to play its part in the politics of peacemaking?*

There is only one answer that makes sense to me in the context of everything that was happening and would happen—Israel's protector in Washington. The last thing Kissinger wanted was a political PLO. If it abandoned armed struggle and became a credible political force, it would

have to be dealt with by political means, whether it spoke for itself or was represented at any conference table by Jordan. That would require the U.S. to put real pressure on Israel to withdraw from the West Bank in accordance with Resolution 242 or be seen as a willing accomplice to Israel's illegal settlement activities and, with Greater Israel, the main obstacle to a comprehensive peace on any terms that most Arabs and other Muslims could accept.

The sad truth is that the existence of a PLO which was prepared to press the Palestinian claim for justice by politics and compromise with Israel was not convenient for any of the major powers—because Zionism's child was committed to living by the sword, and because the big powers were unwilling, for which read too frightened, to confront Zionism for the sake of requiring Israel to do what was necessary for peace in accordance with UN resolutions and international law.

Zionism's grip on the pork-barrel politics of America is one reason why U.S. *presidents* are unwilling to confront Israel's arrogance of power and intransigence, even when they have the will to do so. But there is another reason.

An Israel that plays the Nazi Holocaust card to intimidate, silence and sometimes destroy its critics, and an Israel armed with nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction is untouchable. What, really, does that mean?

In the debate about whether or not there was good cause for war with Iraq in 2003, one of the main arguments of the advocates for war was that if Saddam Hussein was allowed to acquire nuclear weapons, he and his Iraq would become “untouchable”. That argument was deployed, for example, by William Shawcross in a BBC Radio Five debate. He meant that if Saddam Hussein was allowed to acquire nuclear weapons, no power on earth, not even imperial America, would dare to confront him because, if he was confronted—i.e. for the sake of requiring him to do what he did not want to do—he would use his nuclear weapons.

Israel, on the other hand, was not stopped from acquiring nuclear weapons (and other weapons of mass destruction) and became “untouchable. This meant that if ever the U.S. or the organised

international community were to say to Israel, “We insist that you withdraw from the Occupied Territories in accordance with Resolution 242, and if you refuse we will take enforcement action to oblige you to comply”, Israel’s gut-Zionist leaders would respond by saying, in effect, “Don’t even think of pushing us further than we are prepared to go because, if you do, we are capable of causing mayhem in the region and far beyond.”

In 1971 Kissinger was no less determined than Israel’s gut-Zionists to prevent the emergence of a political PLO, and to have the re-opened Palestine file closed for ever. He was disappointed that the PLO had not been destroyed in Jordan; but with both Wasfi Tal and his agreement with Khalad Hassan dead, Kissinger’s hope was that the PLO could be destroyed by the Israelis (with assistance as required from Syria’s President Assad) in the place where it was now confined—Lebanon.

The climax to Israel’s efforts to destroy the PLO in Lebanon came in the summer of 1982 when, with the Reagan administration’s green light, Defence Minister Sharon sent the IDF (and went himself) all the way to Beirut, to liquidate the PLO’s entire leadership and smash its military and political infrastructure.

In the intervening decade—between the PLO’s expulsion from Jordan in 1971 and its expulsion from Lebanon in 1982—there were a number of major developments, some of which must now be touched upon in summary.

Prevented from directing Palestinian anger and bitterness away from violence and into positive political action in partnership with Jordan, Arafat and Khalad Hassan and their mainstream PLO leadership colleagues lost control of events to those in the rank and file of their liberation movement who favoured the terror option, including a growing number of Fatah’s own supporters—the Black Septemberists for whom use of the terror weapon was a new experience.

Prevented from taking political action in partnership with Jordan, the mainstream PLO leadership lost control over those who felt that now only the terror card could make the Palestinians’ voice heard in the world.

One of Fatah's junior officers who helped to bring the BSO into being from the grassroots up was a young man whose *nomme de guerre* was Ben Bella. (At the time I talked with him, he was Abu Iyad's most trusted aide). Ben Bella told me their anger and despair was inflamed by the knowledge that after the PLO's expulsion from Jordan, many Arab regimes were celebrating the end of the organisation. He said, "*We came to the conclusion that it was only by playing the terror card that we could make our voice heard in the world.*"⁶ (Such a conclusion was entirely logical from a Palestinian prospective given the mainstream media's approach to reporting the conflict in those days. It was not interested in the Palestinian claim for justice, but it fed, vulture-like, off Palestinian terrorism. In my opinion the Western media's indifference to the legitimacy of the Palestinian struggle helped greatly to make terrorism inevitable.)

I asked Ben Bella about Arafat's attitude to the Black Septemberists. He said:

At the time Arafat could not afford to speak against us in public because he knew what we were doing had the support of the majority in the rank and file of our movement. Our way was the popular way. But in our private meetings he took every opportunity to tell us we were wrong. I remember one occasion when he said to some of us, '*You are crazy to take our fight to Europe.*' I was very angry and I said: 'Abu Amar, maybe you are right, maybe we are crazy—but tell me this... Is it also not crazy for us to sit here in Lebanon, just waiting to be hit every day by Israeli fighter planes, and knowing that we will lose some ten or more of our fighters every day without advancing our cause... Is that not crazy, too?' And, of course, he had no answer to that.⁷

Though they denied it for some years (until I engaged them in lengthy conversations for my book on Arafat), all of Fatah's leaders had prior knowledge of, and, with the exception of Khalad Hassan, effectively sanctioned, one Black September terror operation—the one that was witnessed by the world at the Munich Olympic Games in September 1972.

After shooting dead one Israeli athlete, BSO (Fatah) terrorists took nine others hostage. *The prime purpose of the operation was to draw*

worldwide attention to the Palestinian cause. It was use of the terror weapon for public relations purposes. The demand of the five terrorists—the release of 200 PLO prisoners in Israel for the lives of the hostages—was a negotiating position. An embarrassed West German Chancellor, Willy Brandt, favoured a nonviolent end to the affair. He wanted to exchange the lives of the Israeli hostages for the lives of the Black September terrorists. So did Fatah's leadership. Abu Iyad, the Fatah and PLO executive with hands-on responsibility for the operation, made an agreement with President Sadat to have the hostages and the terrorists flown to Cairo and for all, hostages and terrorists, to be freed unharmed there. In that event BSO would have failed to get the release of the 200 prisoners in Israel, but it would have been able to claim a victory in the sense that its action had resulted in worldwide publicity for the cause.

In Israel, Prime Minister Golda Meir also favoured the nonviolent solution. Her greatest concern was that not one Israeli life be lost. At an emergency cabinet meeting in her official residence, Defence Minister Dayan opposed her. He took the line that they must be prepared to sacrifice the lives of their athletes in order to demonstrate that Israel would never give in to terrorism. He wanted a shoot-out in Germany. The terrorists had to be captured or killed at whatever cost; and he threatened to resign if he did not get his way. Reluctantly, to avoid a government crisis, Golda gave him the license he was demanding.

Israel then went through the motions of agreeing to Sadat's proposal for a nonviolent solution, and the terrorists and their hostages were transferred in two helicopters to Furstenfeldbruck military airport where a Boeing 727 was waiting with lights out to fly them all to Cairo. Apparently, when one of the terrorists went to inspect the darkened and empty plane (there was no crew on board, it was going nowhere), the floodlights were turned on and five West German marksmen, supported by police and special forces armed with submachine guns, took aim. And then it all went badly wrong. When the shooting started one of the terrorists threw a grenade into one of the helicopters. When it was all over the five terrorists and the nine Israeli hostages were dead. Dayan had had his way. (It was a great public relations coup for the Zionist state. As embedded in Western

public recall long after the horrific event, and still today, Palestinian terrorists had set out to slaughter Israeli Olympic athletes. As the brief summary above indicates, that was Zionist propaganda nonsense, which the mainstream Western media still peddles to this day).

In associating themselves with the Munich operation Fatah's leaders had been trying to perform an act of crisis management. Because support for the terror option was pretty much universal in the rank and file of the liberation movement, they had taken the view that in order to beat their own terrorists, they had first of all to be seen to be joining them. Though he personally opposed the Munich operation, Khalad Hassan put it this way:

We had to associate ourselves with what was happening in order to give ourselves the credibility to take control of the situation and then turn off what you call the terror tap. And it is for this act of crisis management that Arafat, myself and others in the leadership who were against the use of the terror weapon are called terrorists.⁸

Fatah's leaders did eventually succeed in closing down the BSO, but there was nothing they could do to prevent the PFLP and foreign mercenaries it recruited from continuing to play the terror card. Thus it was, through the 1970s, that Israel had no trouble at all in convincing the Western world that the PLO was one vast terrorist organisation and that Yasser Arafat was the terror master. That was not true but it seemed to be so to those whose only source of information was the news on television, radio and in the newspapers.

Objectively speaking it can be said that the real godfather of Fatah's Black September terrorist organisation was gut-Zionism's arrogance of power and whoever it was in Washington who sanctioned Wasfi Tal's assassination.

Then came the Arab war for peace.



Levi Eshkol

Prime Minister who did not want to take Israel to war in 1967



President Lyndon B. Johnson

Gave Israel's hawks the green light for its 1967 war



President Richard M. Nixon

Was intending to press Israel to be serious about peace



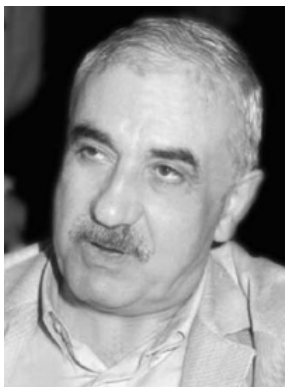
Khalad Al Hassan

Political brains of the mainstream PLO: for compromise with Israel



Khalil Wazir (Abu Jihad)

Founder – with Arafat – of Fatah



George Habash

Palestinian leader opposed to compromise with Israel



King Hussein of Jordan

Wanted peace with Israel but got war



Dean Rusk

Top US official who wanted to contain Zionism



Walt Rostow

Kept Johnson on the pro-Zionist path



William P. Rogers

Secretary of State whose even-handed policy was thwarted at every turn



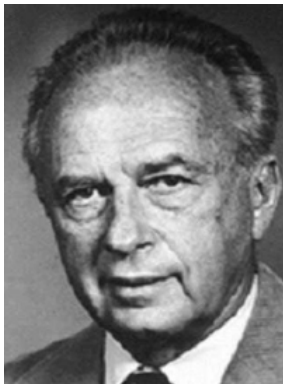
Henry Kissinger

Israel's protector in Washington (succeeded Rogers)



Ezer Weizman

*Author's source for *The Blood Oath* story*



Yitzhak Rabin

Assassinated by a Zionist fanatic for engaging with Arafat for peace



President Jimmy Carter

Prevented by Zionism from advancing the peace process



President Anwar Sadat

Out of despair and naivety gave Israel too much for too little



President Bill Clinton

Too late with his push for peace



Ehud Barak

Good General, inept Prime Minister



Benjamin Netanyahu

Zionism's master of the Politics of Fear (and Sharon's rival)



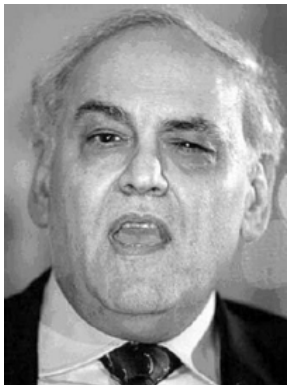
Ariel Sharon

Proponent of Greater Israel, most of it, forever



President George W. Bush

Couldn't say "no" to Sharon



Richard Perle

Zionism's "Prince of Darkness" in the US and neo-con associate



Paul Wolfowitz

Zionist, neo-con, and, with Perle, a principal architect of war on Iraq



President Barack Obama

“Yes, we can” to become “No, we can’t”?



Rahm Emanuel

Zionism’s main minder in the White House

THE YOM KIPPUR WAR AND “NUCLEAR BLACKMAIL”

In Zionism’s version of events the war of October (Yom Kippur) 1973 was another Arab attempt to annihilate the Jewish state. It was no such thing, and the two men who were most aware that it was not before the fighting started were its two main architects—Egypt’s President Sadat and his good friend Henry (Kissinger) who replaced Rogers as President Nixon’s Secretary of State on the eve of the war.

For Sadat it was to be a short and limited war for peace. He was intending only that Egyptian forces would cross the Suez Canal, eject the Israelis from its East bank in occupied Sinai and stop—still in Israeli-occupied Egyptian territory—to *give himself the appearance of victory that was necessary for him to be able to negotiate with Israel*. (The Syrians for their part were hoping to drive Israel’s occupying forces off the Golan Heights before Kissinger blew the whistle).

For Kissinger it was to be the opportunity to push Israel into negotiations for a separate peace with Egypt. Kissinger welcomed the chance to teach his intransigent Israeli friends a little lesson and it was as much his war as Sadat’s.

But it went badly wrong for both of them.

By early 1973 Kissinger was having nightmares (similar to the ones Forrestal had had) about the Arabs using their oil weapon.

He was aware that at the Khartoum summit after the ’67 war Iraq had called for the oil weapon to be used. He also knew what would happen if the Arabs did put their act together and tell President Nixon with one voice that they were prepared to stop the flow of oil if the U.S. did not do whatever was necessary to oblige Israel to withdraw from the Occupied Territories in accordance with Resolution 242. In reality the Arabs would not have had to turn off the oil taps. Not actually. It was only necessary for them to convince Nixon that they were united in their determination to play their oil card—the Arab equivalent in blackmail terms of Zionist-

organised Jewish votes and Jewish campaign funds. In other words, a credible threat to use the oil weapon would have been sufficient to cause Nixon (or any other American president) to confront Zionism and its child.

In April of that year King Feisal had sent his Oil Minister, Sheikh Yamani to Washington. Yamani's brief was to tell Kissinger that Feisal would not increase oil production as required by the West if the U.S. did not take steps to bring about an Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories. That caused alarm bells to ring in Kissinger's head. He advised Yamani not to breathe a word about what Feisal had said to anybody else. Kissinger's line was that it would not do the Arabs any good if they were seen to be making threats. Yamani knew that was a cover for Kissinger's fears that if what Feisal had said became a matter for open debate, *it would cause the general public to think about the price the U.S. and other Western countries might have to pay for America's continuing refusal to oblige Israel to be serious about peace.*

As Kissinger probably assumed, there was more to Feisal's private message than was apparent in what Yamani had been instructed to say. Feisal was signalling that a day was coming when he *would* use the oil weapon if the U.S. did not oblige Israel to be serious about peace. The Saudi monarch had, in fact, taken that decision in principle. In his own mind it was a question of when, not if, assuming only that he could unite his divided Arab brothers for long enough to enable them to act as one. Part of the Western game plan was, of course, to keep the Arabs divided, to prevent the unity necessary for using the oil weapon.

An underlying truth about the politics of the Arab-Israeli conflict can be summarised as follows. The Zionists were always prepared to play their ace cards, the two most valuable of them being the Nazi holocaust experience and, in America especially, Zionist-organized Jewish votes and campaign funds. The Arabs, with the exception of King Feisal, were too incompetent or not ruthless enough to play their only ace, the oil weapon. There can be no doubt that if the boot had been on the other foot—if the Zionists had been the Arabs, they would have used the oil weapon (or at least the credible threat of it) in the immediate aftermath of the 1967 war if

not sooner. That's not merely speculation on my part. Over the years a number of Israel's leaders told me so.

By the time he received Feisal's messages—the stated one and the implicit one—Kissinger's room for manoeuvre had been reduced to the ground he occupied in Washington because his Israeli friends had not responded positively to his overtures. He was not intending, ever, to put pressure on them to withdraw from the West Bank, but he did believe they would be serving Israel's best interests, as well as his own and those of the West in general, if they demonstrated some flexibility on the subject of withdrawal from Sinai, to make it possible for him to get Sadat into negotiations with the Jewish state.

A year or so previously Kissinger had indicated to Sadat that if he got rid of his Soviet military advisers—threw them out—he would persuade his Israeli friends to be serious about negotiations with Egypt. Sadat assumed that Kissinger, America's Jewish Mr. Fix It, could deliver what he promised. So, in July 1972, the Egyptian president had expelled his Soviet military advisers, effectively saying to Kissinger, "I've done my bit, now you do yours."

Kissinger then discovered that his ability to influence his Israeli friends was not what he had assumed it to be. As I revealed in Chapter One (Volume One), Prime Minister Golda Meir did not trust Kissinger as far as she could see him. He may or may not have worked that out for himself, but he did come to the correct conclusion that Greater Israel's leaders were more than content with the situation of no peace and no war. They could live with that forever. They thought. In their deluded minds it was their best option if they could not have peace on their own terms. So the Israelis told Kissinger they would not play his game. If Sadat really wanted peace, it was up to him to make the first move and he could start by recognising Israel.

Even Kissinger then became fed up with Israel's intransigence. (Nixon was by now very critical of Israel in private.)

For the frontline Arab states, Egypt especially, a situation of no war and no peace was not politically or economically sustainable. With a fast-

growing population Egypt had huge problems. Nothing was more necessary and urgent for Sadat than peace, to free up resources for development.

Though he was in a state of complete despair when he took it, Sadat's decision to force the pace of diplomacy by resorting to a limited "war for peace" was entirely rational. He could not even think about negotiating with Israel from a position of weakness—while his status was that of the leader of a twice defeated and doubly humiliated nation. To have even the prospect of popular support for taking on the Israelis by diplomacy, he had to be perceived by his people as a hero. In short, *he needed a military victory, no matter how small actually, to enhance his prestige.*

Kissinger was wise enough to understand that Sadat could not go for peace without alienating his own people until he was more secure in their affections; and that was why he, Kissinger, warmed to the idea for a limited and little war in the autumn of 1973.

The evidence of my off-the-record research conversations indicates that a desperate Sadat, after Kissinger had failed to persuade Israel to make a move for peace, did, in fact, consider the idea of a total war of destiny with the Jewish state.

A source with intimate access to King Feisal told me that Sadat put a proposition to the Saudi monarch. The essence of it was that Sadat would lead the frontline Arab states into total war with Israel if Feisal would do everything necessary to make sure that it could be sustained—by guaranteeing that Egypt would not run short of money, food and fuel; by securing an agreement for the participation of armed forces from the whole Muslim world as required; and by using the oil weapon. According to my source, Sadat asked Feisal if he was prepared "to be serious"; and Feisal's first words were, "Brother Sadat, are *you* serious?" When Sadat said he really was, Feisal said he was prepared to do what Sadat had asked of him.

Sadat's final decision was influenced by King Hussein. He said that he would not think, even for a split-second, of going to war with Israel for any purpose.

The implication of what subsequently happened is that Sadat's intended short, sharp and limited war for peace was as much Kissinger's

idea as his own. Hence my description of Kissinger as the architect with Sadat of the 1973 war.

Kissinger knew the Egyptian army would not have too many problems crossing the Suez Canal and pushing the Israelis back a few miles. I was also aware of that and the reason why. I had toured Israel's frontline positions and on my return to Jerusalem I had said to Golda, "Prime Minister, I've just discovered one of your state secrets." She said, "Which one?" I replied, "Your forces are so thin on the ground that Sadat can take the canal any time he wants it." For a moment she froze in genuine horror. Finally she chuckled and said, "I regret to say you're right, but for God's sake don't tell the Egyptians."¹

In his book, *Autumn of Fury: The Assassination of Sadat*, Heikal told how the Egyptian President was receiving secret messages from Kissinger via a number of channels, including the CIA. *The messages were to the effect that the Americans would welcome some military action by Sadat because the Israelis were "showing signs of increasing obstinacy."* Heikal's account included this revealing sentence: "As late as 23 September, when David Rockefeller met Sadat at Bourg El-Arab, he passed on the same message—a little heating up would be in order."² The date itself was significant. It was the day after Kissinger was sworn in as Secretary of State, and 14 days before Egypt and Syria launched their surprise attack.

Kissinger was subsequently to claim in his book, *Years of Upheaval*, that he was as surprised as Israel by the Arab attack.

The moment of truth about Sadat and his real war aims came on the second day (7 October 1973) of the conflict. Among those present in the Egyptian War Room was one of the PLO's senior military advisers. He was there as an invited observer representing Arafat. He gave me the following account which, in two paragraphs, contains enough insight for a whole book:

By the beginning of the second day of the war the Egyptian crossing of the Suez Canal had been completed. Egyptian forces had, in fact, established a firm line five miles inside what was previously Israeli-occupied territory. I said to myself: 'This is really it. In two or three days

we're going to Tel Aviv! Sadat is actually going to achieve what Nasser said was impossible!' Really, for a short time, that's what I was telling myself. Then I began to see that nothing was happening. The Egyptian army was at standstill. Very slowly I walked around the War Room, and one by one I looked into the faces of the Egyptians who were directing the war. I knew them all as former colleagues. Finally I asked the question which they knew had been passing through my mind. 'What's happening?' I said. 'Why have you stopped? Why are you not continuing the advance when the gate to Tel Aviv is open?' They were very embarrassed. Poor chaps. I was angry in my own quiet way, but really I felt very sorry for them. At first nobody answered me. They looked at the ground. They looked at the ceiling. Everywhere but at me. So I asked again, 'Why?' Then I got the answer. 'No orders. We are not advancing because we have no orders. There is no plan and there will be no advance.'

In that moment I knew what had happened. We all knew. As far as Sadat was concerned the war was over. *He had made a deal with the Americans in order to turn himself into an instant hero, and he was waiting for Kissinger to oblige the Israelis to negotiate.* It was a moment of profound significance... not only for us Palestinians but for the whole Arab world. For the first time in my life I was ashamed to be an Arab. I left the War Room and cried my heart out.³

On the same day, thousands of miles away in Washington, Secretary of State Kissinger was confident enough to assure his Special Action Group (WSAG) colleagues that Egyptian forces would not advance beyond the line they were establishing five miles into what was previously Israeli-occupied Sinai. The WSAG was a crisis management committee chaired by Kissinger and included, among others, the Deputy Secretaries of State and Defense, the Director of the CIA and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. In his book Kissinger noted that some of his WSAG colleagues were worried that Sadat would continue the advance. Kissinger told them that in his judgement Sadat would just sit there, on the other side of the canal, and not make any further advances.⁴

Given that the whole world (as well as Israel's government and people) was under the mistaken impression that Egyptian and Syrian forces were going for the kill, and that Israel really was fighting for its life this time, it is inconceivable that Kissinger would have been foolish enough to put his reputation on the line with such a prediction if he had not had advance information about the limits of Sadat's war aims.

Also in his book, Kissinger admitted that he expected a very short war. And that is the clue to his actual thinking and real strategy had been when, effectively, he conspired with Sadat... The Egyptians would fight their way over the canal. Sadat would become a hero throughout the Arab world overnight. The humiliation of all previous Arab defeats would be washed away. Sadat would at last be free to negotiate as a winner. The Israelis? Well, they would be shocked. But within a day or two they would be knocking the hell out of the Egyptians and the Syrians. Then, when Kissinger decided that honours were even, he would require the Israelis to accept a Security Council demand for a ceasefire. Then the negotiations for a phased Israeli withdrawal from Sinai would begin, with Kissinger in the driving seat. And America's newly-appointed Secretary of State would bring about what he most wanted—a separate peace between Egypt and Israel. With Egypt out of the military equation there could never be another war, and the other Arabs, if they wanted peace, would have to make it on Israel's terms. This would include, if Israel insisted, its occupation of at least some of the West Bank forever.

According to Seymour Hersh, Kissinger told Secretary of Defence James R. Schlesinger that his intention was “*to let Israel come out ahead, but bleed.*”⁵

In Kissinger's view a comprehensive peace in accordance with Resolution 242 was out of the question because, however circumscribed, it would still require Nixon (or any future American president) to confront Zionism and its child. But with Egypt's armed forces neutralised by a separate peace, Kissinger believed the region would be manageable even if the other frontline Arab states did not want peace on Israel's terms.

But there was, Kissinger knew, a problem to be solved. Regional stability on his and Israel's terms required the liquidation of Arafat's PLO

and all it represented. (This was a task to which Kissinger would devote a considerable amount of his oversight time.)

Unfortunately for this most Machiavellian Secretary of State and Sadat the Yom Kippur war did not go according to plan. Their plan.

Kissinger was in for a surprise because, as it happened, the IDF was unprepared for an immediate response to Arab military action.

Defence Minister Dayan had been guilty of a monumental dereliction of duty. He hated paperwork and had not dealt adequately with the routine administrative work of his ministry or caused others to do it. Maintenance work had not been done and not enough tanks, for example, were in a “go now” condition. That was one of two reasons why Israel’s war machine was unprepared for immediate action. The other was a consequence of gut-Zionism’s arrogance of power. Despite what Israel said in public to the contrary, Dayan (and others) simply did not believe that the Arabs would dare to initiate war with Israel. *In Dayan’s mind the IDF did not have to be so ready to fight unless it was going to provoke the Arabs!*

In terms of the fundamentals Dayan was, of course, right. Sadat was not intending to attack Israel proper (Israel inside its pre ’67 borders) or even to take back by war more than a small slice of Israeli-occupied Sinai. The Syrians were intent on no more, actually, than trying to drive the Israelis off the Golan Heights.

The first consequence of the IDF’s inability to respond immediately was that Kissinger’s timetable went out of the window. He had counted on the IDF hitting back to give him the scope to intervene with a Security Council demand for a ceasefire by the end of the third day of the fighting or thereabouts. But it was to take the Israelis that long to put their act together and get their war machine rolling. *And then Prime Minister Golda Meir lost control of her generals.*

They and others had realised that Israel had, in effect, been set-up by Kissinger in collusion with Sadat. Their assumption was that Kissinger had caused vital U.S. intelligence information to be withheld from them, information which would have confirmed Sadat’s intention to attack. So some if not all of Israel’s generals were determined to teach Kissinger as well as the Arabs a lesson.

The general who caused Golda the most problems was Sharon. On 16 October, one of Sharon's special task forces crossed the canal in the central sector and began to operate behind Egyptian lines. As it soon became clear, Sharon's target was the Egyptian Third Army. He was intending to trap and annihilate it. The prospect of that happening caused panic in Washington and Moscow.

For Kissinger the destruction of the Egyptian Third Army would have wrecked everything. Though he had lost control of events, he could still use the war to his advantage, to get negotiations going—if Sadat emerged from the war with something left of his early October reputation as a winner. (By the end of the second day of the war Sadat was being hailed throughout the Arab and wider Muslim world as a conquering hero.) But if the Egyptian Third Army was destroyed, a totally humiliated Sadat would be unable even to think about negotiations with Israel. All of Kissinger's efforts would have been for nothing and, more to the point, he would have been an American Secretary of State with no viable policy for the Middle East—i.e. given that he was not prepared to have Israel pressed to be serious about peace in accordance with the letter and the spirit of Resolution 242.

The Soviets had their problems, too. What little credibility they still enjoyed in the region would be destroyed if they allowed the trapped Egyptian Third Army to be decimated and Sadat to be humiliated.

Kissinger sent messages to Golda begging her to restrain Sharon. She tried and failed. Sharon continued with the preparations for his offensive. On 20 October, Kissinger was so desperate that he went to Moscow. Then, on 25 October, it was announced that American forces around the world had been placed on Red (Nuclear) Alert.

Golda then received appeals from Kissinger and Nixon telling her that she had to bring Sharon under control in order to prevent World War III and a nuclear holocaust.

What happened next was told to me by Golda herself during our last conversation before her death. She said:

Still in my slippers, I climbed into a helicopter. I flew to Egypt—imagine that, Golda Meir in Egypt—and there I confronted Sharon. I stood in front of him and I said: ‘I am your Prime Minister, and I order you not to move against the Third Army.’⁶

And that, more or less, is how the Yom Kippur war ended. The trapped Egyptian Third Army was saved, and with it Sadat’s face.

Kissinger was left with enough, just about, to work with. A ceasefire agreement was signed and over the course of months, by means of his much-publicised shuttle diplomacy, Kissinger persuaded Egypt and Israel, and then Syria and Israel, to sign what were called Disengagement Agreements. Sadat got a little of Sinai back, enough to persuade him to have a little faith in the idea of America as an honest broker and to allow himself to be locked into a Kissinger-driven peace process.

I am still uncertain about whether or not we were actually on the brink of World War III and a nuclear holocaust. It is not impossible that Kissinger and the Soviets put on a warning show to that effect to frighten Golda into confronting Sharon.

During our last conversation before her death I asked Golda if she had believed that the threat of Soviet intervention and a superpower confrontation was real. She said that at the time she had believed it to be real. “Do you still think so?” I asked. The length of her pause for thought suggested it was not a question she had previously considered. Eventually she said, “I’m not sure.”⁷

What’s not in doubt is that Dayan got the approval of Golda’s “kitchen cabinet” to bring Israel to a state of readiness for a nuclear strike of its own.

Others including Hersh have shed some light on this. My own insight came during the course of a public speaking tour I made across America in 1986. I had responded to an invitation to address a gathering of troubled and influential Jewish Americans in the quite large home of one of them. They were anxious to question me about the central theme of my book on Arafat and his struggle—whether he really was ready, willing and able to make peace on terms which any rational government and people in Israel would accept with relief. Over drinks and snacks my hostess told me

that one of their number, an Israeli who was making a new life in America, wanted to talk with me in private. He was approaching middle age, handsome and without a trace of the self-righteousness that is the hallmark of Zionism. He was a former IDF officer who had been at the heart of events during the Yom Kippur war. We talked.

He told me what happened when Dayan, apparently, panicked. Two missiles were armed with nuclear warheads and targeted; and the targets were Damascus and Cairo. I said, "I believe you." He replied: "You ought to. I was with those who received Dayan's order and did the targeting." I recalled what Golda had said to me about Israel's willingness in a doomsday situation to take the region down with it. The man who had decided that Israel was not a place in which to bring up his children said: "One day they'll do it."

But there was more to Dayan's strategy than was obvious to all but his most intimate associates at the time.

As Kissinger knew, President Nixon was determined not to supply Israel with more weapons unless and until it was serious about peace. That, really, was why Kissinger, without consulting Nixon, initially rejected Israel's request for an emergency airlift and was, as Golda put it (as I described in Chapter One of Volume One), making the Israelis sweat. In reality, and as Hersh put it, Dayan, by ordering the arming and targeting of two missiles, was resorting to "*nuclear blackmail*". For what purpose? To force Nixon to supply the weapons and equipment Israel was asking for without delay and not to think about pressing Israel on account of any Arab demands. Effectively Dayan's implied threat to Nixon was something like: "If you don't give us what we want, and if in order to appease the Arabs you press us to do anything which we think will compromise our security—we'll nuke them."

Question: Was there ever a moment, actually, when Dayan really believed that Israel was in danger of being overwhelmed and might have to go nuclear; or was the arming and targeting of the two missiles never more than nuclear blackmail pure and simple—to bring an American president to heel? I don't know the answer.

What happened after that war on the Palestinian side and at the UN in New York would have opened the door to a comprehensive peace, within a matter of a few years at the most, *IF* Zionism had been capable of addressing the Palestinian claim for a minimum of justice with something other than bullets and bombs.

ZIONISM LOSES THE PROPAGANDA WAR AND THE FIRST GOODBYE TO RABIN

In February 1974, four months after the ending of the Yom Kippur War in which Israel had again demonstrated that it was the military superpower of the region, the Central Council of the PLO issued what was described as a “Working Paper.” It called for Arab and international recognition of the right of the Palestinians “*to establish a national authority on any lands that can be wrested from Zionist occupation.*”¹ The implication was profound. The phrase “national authority” was the agreed PLO code for mini-state.

It was a signal to Israel and the world that Arafat and a majority of his leadership colleagues were committed to working not merely for a political settlement, but one which would require the Palestinians to accept the loss for all time of more than 70 per cent of their original homeland in exchange for a mini-state of their own on the West Bank and in Gaza. Though in code, Arafat and his mainstream leadership colleagues were saying, “*We accept the need for unthinkable compromise with Israel in the shape of a two-state solution.*”

In 1980, when he had performed the miracle of his leadership by persuading the PNC to accept his mini-state policy (as I explained in the Prologue), Arafat told me why he had seized the moment six years earlier to begin the task of making his people face the reality of their situation.

He said:

After the 1973 war we realised, of course, that once Sadat was committed to the negotiating process, the Arab states, all of them, would make peace with Israel as soon as the Israelis were willing to withdraw from the Occupied Territories. That is the first point. *The second is that we also knew that the Arab states would make peace without us if we did not express our demands in a realistic way...* If we did not produce a political programme which the Arab regimes could support.

So the situation was very critical for the PLO. I can say it was a matter of survival. Why? What would have been the peace the Arab states would have made without the PLO if Israel had been wise enough to withdraw? The peace of 242. And what does 242 offer the Palestinians? Some compensation for the refugees and perhaps, I say only perhaps, the return of some few refugees to their homes in Palestine. But what else? Nothing. The chance for us Palestinians to be a nation again, even on some small part of our homeland, would have passed. Finished. No more a Palestinian people. End of story.²

Arafat was equally candid on the subject of why it was, in February of 1974 (and actually for six more years) that he and his leadership colleagues had to speak in public in the coded language of their “Working Paper”.

He said:

Our tragedy at the time was that the world refused to understand there were two aspects to the question of what was possible. First there was the question of what it was possible for the Palestinians to achieve in practical terms—given that the two superpowers were committed to Israel’s existence, and the fact that Israel was the military superpower of the region. But there was also the question of what it was possible for the Palestinian leadership to persuade its people to accept. *When a people is claiming the return of 100 percent of its land, it’s not so easy for leadership to say, ‘No, you can take only 22 per cent.’*³

Arafat: “When a people is claiming the return of 100 percent of its land, it’s not so easy for the leadership to say, ‘No, you can take only 22 per cent.’”

After a pause Arafat added:

You say to me, and you are right, that our public position on the compromise we were prepared to make was ambiguous for many years while we were educating our people about the need for compromise. But I must also tell you that our real position was always known to the

governments of the world, including the governments of Israel? How? *From 1974, even from the end of 1973, certain of our people were officially authorised to maintain secret contacts with important people in the West and with Israelis. Their responsibility was to say in secret what we could not say in public at the time...* You know who these people were. You can talk with them.

I did and the story of the PLO's secret diplomacy begs an intriguing and troubling question about what really was happening in the years when Arafat, in the thick of Lebanon's civil war and under attack by the IDF, was risking his credibility as leader, and his life, to persuade the PNC to endorse his policy of politics and unthinkable compromise with Israel, on the basis of the two-state formula.

Most of those charged with the responsibility of telling foreign governments in secret what Arafat and his mainstream leadership colleagues could not say in public were the men assigned to represent the PLO in the major capitals of the world. From 1974 their presence was a public one—as representatives, not yet accredited ambassadors. Only their main mission was secret.

The most important of them was the man in London, the much respected Said Hammami. *His job was to open and maintain a channel of communication to the government of Israel led by Yitzhak Rabin in his first spell as prime minister after he succeeded Golda Meir.* The secret work of these PLO emissaries was directed by Khalad Hassan in his capacity as Chairman of the PNC's Foreign Relations Committee.

In 1980 few of Arafat's secret emissaries were available for conversation with me because 20 or more of them, including Hammami, had been assassinated. On the face of it their executioners were hit-men working for the Abu Nidal group. Abu Nidal was a former Fatah officer who had turned against Arafat and vowed to assassinate him and all others advocating compromise with Israel and, in particular, those who had contacts with the Israelis. Nidal's group was based in Baghdad and enjoyed the protection of Iraqi embassies abroad. But the Israeli's, through their penetration of Iraqi military intelligence, had an agent deep inside the Abu Nidal group. *It may well have been Nidal's rejectionist Palestinians who pulled*

the trigger on most occasions—though probably not in Hammami’s case, but Israel’s agent on the inside played a major role in target selection, determining which of the PLO’s messengers of peace were to be killed and in what order. That and much more was established, too late, by Fatah’s investigations.

An intriguing and troubling question is this. If Nixon had not resigned on 9 August 1974 to avoid being impeached for his cover-up of the Watergate break-in, *would he have gone on to be the American President who confronted Zionism—to the extent of requiring Israel to withdraw from the Occupied Territories for peace in accordance with Resolution 242?*

I think there is compelling, hard evidence to indicate that the answer is very probably yes, but readers can judge for themselves from the following.

There is first of all the significance of what Golda said to me when she was recalling what Kissinger said to her during the early days of the Yom Kippur War—after she had prevailed upon Nixon, with Dayan’s nuclear blackmail assistance, to get an emergency airlift of equipment to Israel going. As I noted in Chapter One of Volume One (it bears repeating), Kissinger said to her: *“Now this airlift is underway, you must use it to take everything possible from Nixon—every tank, every plane, every bomb—because the day may come when he will no longer be willing to supply you in the manner to which you have become accustomed. The pressures from the Arabs are such that he can no longer resist them.”*

The first great oil price-rise explosion—a doubling of the cost of a barrel of oil—had happened and the Arabs had announced a five per cent monthly reduction in their supplies to the U.S. and to every other country which was supporting Israel.

It was in response to King Feisal’s pressure that, in April 1974, President Nixon authorised the Deputy Director of the CIA, General Vernon Walters, to go to the Middle East for a top secret rendezvous with two PLO leaders. Nixon did not inform Secretary of State Kissinger about the mission. (At the time there were some in the CIA, Walters was apparently one of them, who believed that support for Israel right or wrong would be disastrous for America’s interests in the region. They also objected

to Kissinger's use of back channels to circumvent the CIA. It wasn't only Israel's leaders who did not trust Kissinger.)

President Nixon was, in fact, the first Western leader to be briefed about the full and true significance of the PLO's "Working Paper". It really did mean, King Feisal told him, that Arafat's PLO was committed to, and behind its own closed doors was working for, compromise with Israel on the basis of the two-state formula. Nixon was inclined to accept Feisal's evaluation of the mainstream PLO's position, but he wanted Walters to take his own measure of two of Arafat's senior leadership colleagues and report back to him, directly, one-to-one, not through The System.

The PLO's two for the meeting with Walters were Khalad Hassan and, for political balance, a prominent Fatah leftist, Majed Abu Sharar. At the time Abu Sharar was responsible for Fatah's information department. (In 1981 he was killed when a bomb exploded under his bed in a Rome hotel room. It was assumed that Mossad agents were responsible. To Mossad every PLO activist was a terrorist).

When they met with Walters the two PLO leaders did not know he was the CIA. They had been told by King Feisal only that he was President Nixon's personal and private envoy.

Khalad Hassan recalled: "Our main business was to brief him fully and in detail about the reality of our commitment to peace with Israel. We were also very honest about our internal problems. We said we were leaders who were leading from the front, but that we had many obstacles to overcome before we could expect to convince our people of the need to make peace with those who would still be occupying more than 70 percent of our homeland when the peace was made."⁴

Walters had arrived for the meeting conditioned by his agency's propaganda to the effect that the PLO was a communist outfit. He soon realised that was nonsense. One of the many questions he wanted answered was about the PLO and Jordan. Had Kissinger and Israel been right or wrong when they asserted that the PLO had attempted to overthrow King Hussein, to make Jordan the first liberated part of Palestine and the base from which it had intended to continue armed struggle against Israel? The two Palestinians explained why that was "bullshit", and why the

mainstream PLO accepted that it could not even hope to deliver something concrete for its people if it did not work with Hussein and Jordan.

How did this most secret of meetings end? Khalad Hassan recalled: “General Walters said three things. The first was that he was impressed by what we had said. The second was that he believed President Nixon would be impressed. But it was his third point which made us feel so happy because it convinced us that he was totally sincere and serious. He said: *‘If what you say is so, and if I am right to be impressed, then we Americans have lost a lot of time.’*”⁵

Walters said they would meet again as soon as possible after he had briefed Nixon.

What happened next?

Khalad Hassan said: “The first message I got from General Walters said there would be a delay of one month before he could tell us when we would meet again. The second message said there would be no more talks and that the dialogue was over. Finished. *I was informed in the clearest way and, if I may say so, with regret on Walters’ part, that he had been forced by Kissinger to cut the contact.*”⁶

Nixon was still determined to put pressure on Israel. In July, with the Watergate storm clouds gathering, he went to the Middle East. He visited Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Israel and Jordan. From Kissinger’s own account of Nixon’s visit to Israel, and also from Israeli newspaper reports, it is clear that the President was very frank, even blunt and tough, with the country’s leaders.

On 17 June, right across its front page, *The Jerusalem Post* carried a headline which said, NIXON URGES “STATESMANSHIP FOR PEACE”. At a state banquet Nixon had called upon Israel’s leaders to choose the “right way” of statesmanship and to recognise that “continuous war is not a solution for Israel’s survival.” The alternative, which he had described as “adhering to the status quo and resisting initiatives” was “politically easier”, but initiatives, he had said, “might lead to negotiation.” Sounding like a statesman himself, he had added, “Peace takes courage just as war does.”

In *Years of Upheaval* Kissinger said Nixon was even more emphatic in his private conversations with Israel's leaders. According to Kissinger, *Nixon told them that continuous war was not only a wrong policy, it was also "not right."* And Kissinger quoted Nixon as saying the following: *"Some might say in this country and many of our very good friends in the Jewish community of the United States are saying it now, let's go back to the old days. Just give us the arms and we can lick all of our enemies and all of the rest. I don't think that's a policy. I don't think that is viable for the future... time will run out."*⁷

On his return to Washington, Nixon sent a personal, handwritten letter to Feisal. It contained two promises. Khalad Hassan told me what they were. "Feisal showed me the letter because of one particular sentence in it which was for us. I will tell you precisely what it said, and remember this is Nixon writing to Feisal personally: '*Your Majesty, trust me that I will realise justice for the Palestinians.*'"⁸

According to Khalad Hassan the other promise was that Nixon would take all necessary steps to oblige the Israelis to withdraw from the Occupied Territories in accordance with the letter and spirit of Resolution 242. There was, however, one qualification. Nixon told Feisal that he could not guarantee a quick solution to the problem of Jerusalem.

The following is what then happened.

On the evening of 6 August, Nixon telephoned Kissinger. According to Kissinger's own account of the conversation, Nixon said he had just received an Israeli request for long-term military assistance and that he was not only intending to turn it down but, with immediate effect, *was going to cut off all military supplies to Israel until it agreed to a comprehensive peace.* Nixon then asked Kissinger to prepare the papers which would order the cut-off. Kissinger quoted Nixon as saying that he regretted he had not taken such action earlier and was sure that his successor would thank him.

On 6 August, Nixon advised Kissinger that he intended to cut off all military supplies to Israel until it agreed to a comprehensive peace. Three days later, to avoid being impeached, Nixon resigned.

On 9 August, to avoid being impeached, Nixon resigned.

I think research is needed to establish whether or not there was, as some Arab leaders believed, a link between Nixon's resignation and his promise to Feisal. A key question would be—*Was the Watergate affair dragged out and used to break Nixon?* (On my visits to America over the months before Nixon resigned, several of its best reporters said to me in private conversations that they believed the Watergate affair could have been “managed away” from impeachment if powerful vested interests were not using it to get rid of Nixon).

The next big blow to the hopes of those on the Arab side, Arafat especially, who were working for a comprehensive peace on terms which any rational government and people in Israel would have accepted with relief, was the surprise resignation, on 9 April 1977, and with an election campaign underway, of Yitzhak Rabin as Israel's prime minister. It was followed by the coming to power of the most dangerously deluded of all of gut-Zionism's leaders, Menachem Begin. (One could say in retrospect that while Arafat was seeking to bring out the best in the Palestinians, Begin was determined to bring out the worst in Israelis, and that both succeeded).

Rabin had succeeded Golda Meir as leader of the Labour Party and prime minister of its ruling coalition three years earlier. In December 1976 he had tossed what *The Jerusalem Post* described as a “bombshell” onto the Israeli political scene. It was the expulsion from his coalition government of the National Religious Party (NRP), which had three portfolios in the cabinet and was in the vanguard of those demanding maximum effort for the expansion of illegal Jewish settlements and full-scale colonisation of the West Bank. Rabin was in the process of preparing to respond positively to events in America, by clearing his decks to go to the electorate for a new mandate with what *The Jerusalem Post* described as “a somewhat more dovish policy on future borders.” Even then, in late 1976 and early 1977, Rabin was preparing to demonstrate that he, too, could be something of a realist and was not a Greater Israel adventurist.

Jimmy Carter had won the 1976 race for the White House and was president-elect. It was not too much of a secret that he wanted to be the president who implemented resolution 242. When he entered the White

House he declared that 1977 was “the brightest hope for peace I can recall.” His optimism was real and rooted in two things.

The first was his knowledge that the PLO’s mainstream leadership was committed to compromise with Israel.

The second was Carter’s hope, and actually his belief, that he had in Prime Minister Rabin a pragmatic and flexible Israeli partner for peacemaking. But Carter also knew that, if he was to be successful in pushing Israel to peace on terms the Arabs including Arafat’s PLO could accept, it was essential that Rabin remained in power. Why? The Zionist lobby in America was a gut-Zionist phenomenon, committed to Israel’s retention of the West Bank. *The truth was, Carter knew it, that his chances of taking on and beating the lobby would be close to zero without the cooperation of a pragmatic Israeli prime minister.*

Rabin’s main determination at the time was not to have a confrontation with President Carter and his Secretary of State, the admirable Cyrus Vance. That meant the Israel of which Rabin was prime minister would have to be serious about peace. Rabin was fully aware that Carter and Vance had junked Kissinger’s step-by-step policy and were going for a comprehensive peace.

When Vance and Rabin had their first exploratory conversation, Zionism and its child had lost their propaganda war to have the world believe the PLO was nothing but a terrorist organisation which represented nothing but a determination to annihilate the Jewish state.

We must now look at how that war was lost because Zionism’s defeat on the propaganda front was the opening Carter needed, together with the PLO’s in-principle commitment to the two-state solution, for proceeding with an even-handed policy for the Middle East.

In October 1974 an Arab summit in Rabat recognised the PLO as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people.

Kissinger (then as Secretary of State to caretaker President Ford) had used his influence with a number of Arab foreign ministers to try to prevent the summit taking such a step. He had feared that the Arab world’s legitimization of the PLO would lead to its legitimization by the whole of the organised international community.

Less than a month later, on 13 November, in one of the tightest internal American security operations ever, Arafat was helicoptered into UN headquarters in New York to open a General Assembly debate on The Question of Palestine. He was being honoured, treated and protected as a Head of State. As he was preparing to enter the Assembly debating chamber, the nearest thing we have to a world parliament, Israeli Ambassador Tekoah was preparing to leave it. When Arafat entered the chamber, the representatives of the nations of the world rose to their feet, almost as one, to give him a standing ovation. (In part it was probably revenge applause, triggered in many by memories of Zionism's successful subversion of the General Assembly in 1947 to get the rigged partition vote). And 101 minutes later the assembled diplomats gave Arafat another standing ovation as he was leaving the chamber. Only the Americans—probably on Kissinger's instructions—remained seated, before and after his address.

On 23 November, the General Assembly approved resolution 3236 recognising the rights of the Palestinian people to “self-determination, national independence and sovereignty”, and by resolution 3237 gave the PLO Observer Status at the United Nations.

Given that Arafat still had much to do to sell to his own people the need for unthinkable compromise with Israel, he could not then use in public the phrase “two-state solution” to indicate what he and his mainstream leadership colleagues were prepared to settle for. So he had to confine himself, in line with the “Working Paper” commitment, to stating the PLO's wish to establish a “national authority” on land from which the Israelis could be persuaded to withdraw. But to those who listened to Arafat's speech or studied the text of it with an open mind, the implication was clear. Arafat's PLO would settle for a mini-state on the West Bank and in Gaza and, in exchange for it, would recognise and legitimise a Jewish state inside more or less its borders as they were on 4 June 1967.

A week later, the General Assembly approved resolution 3236. It recognised the rights of the Palestinian people to “self-determination, national independence and sovereignty”. On the same day, 23 November,

the General Assembly also approved resolution 3237. It granted the PLO Observer Status at the UN.

What Kissinger feared would happen, had happened. *The PLO and its cause had been legitimized by the organised international community.*

Israel's formal, knee-jerk response to Arafat's speech was predictable. When he returned to the General Assembly debating chamber after Arafat's departure, Israeli Ambassador Tekoah condemned the Arab states as being "in the vanguard of a fanatical assault on the Jewish people." He also condemned the UN for inviting Arafat to address the world body. The PLO was nothing but a "murder organisation" and the UN had "capitulated" to it. Israel, its ambassador said, "will not permit the establishment of PLO authority in any part of Palestine." He added: "Israel will not permit the PLO to be forced on the Palestinian Arabs."² Even as Tekoah was speaking the Palestinians on the West Bank and in Gaza, those who had previously lost faith in the liberation movement, were going wild with delight and were re-committing themselves to the PLO in general and to Arafat in particular.

Gut-Zionism's stated reason for rejecting even the idea of a Palestinian mini-state on the West Bank and Gaza was that it would pose a threat to Israel's security and even its existence. To anybody who thought seriously about it, that was complete nonsense. Why?

If such a state had been created, possibly in a confederation with Jordan, any Palestinian violation of the peace with Israel would have provoked massive Israeli retaliation and, if necessary, the IDF would have invaded and smashed the Palestinian state and closed the re-opened Palestine file forever. And it would have done so with the understanding and even the support of the international community. Is it really likely that the leadership of any Palestinian state would have allowed such a threat to its existence to develop? Of course not. Initially there may well have been one or two or even a few random attacks on Israel mounted by Palestinian rejecters of compromise and peace with Israel; but secure within recognised borders and with the institutions of government at its disposal, the Palestinian leadership would have used force and other methods to contain and, if necessary, eliminate the lunatics within. As Arafat himself put it to

me: *“Having got our little state, we would not have been stupid enough to give Israel the pretext to come and take it away from us!”*

The truth? Israel’s assertion that a Palestinian mini-state would pose an unmanageable threat to its security was fantasy; pure propaganda designed to serve the purpose of sustaining Greater Israel.

Kissinger was furious. In association with the Zionist lobby he had moved as much of heaven and earth as he could to prevent the General Assembly inviting Arafat to address it. And that had involved Israel’s protector in Washington in a titanic struggle for influence with King Feisal. The Saudi monarch won this showdown because of his own determination and the diplomatic skills of his support team—another Saudi and two Algerians. The other Saudi was Omar Saqqaf; the King’s foreign minister and most trusted counsellor and friend. (Saqqaf was also Khalad Hassan’s mentor and soul mate). The two Algerians were President Bouedienne, who had won the admiration of all but the rich industrialised nations of the world with his call for the creation of a New World Economic Order; and Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who was the sitting president of the General Assembly.

Kissinger was left to content himself with the hope that Arafat and his PLO would be liquidated in Lebanon. And he had plans for that.

Arafat’s triumph at the UN, plus international recognition of the justice of his cause, gave him the energy to match the courage he needed, and had, to complete the task of selling unthinkable compromise to his people, and first of all to the doubters among his leadership colleagues.

It can also be said that King Feisal had well and truly replaced Nasser as the PLO’s protector. But, four months later, on 25 March 1975, Feisal was assassinated. (In my book on Arafat and his struggle I explained at length how Feisal’s killer was set-up and programmed, very probably, by Mossad agents in America, led by an attractive lady who paid the killer’s gambling debts, encouraged his drug habits and slept with him.) The following month saw the start of the first phase of civil war in Lebanon, apparently triggered by a Christian ambush on a busload of Palestinians in Beirut. But the story behind that news was chilling.

According to Kissinger's account of the first phase of the civil war, what happened was very simple. The PLO tried to take over Lebanon and President Assad of Syria wisely intervened to stop that happening. (Kissinger was aware of a secret agreement made in 1973 by representatives of Lebanon's Christian hardliners, Israel and Syria. Under the terms of the agreement the Israelis were committed to allowing the Syrians to move into Lebanon to protect their own interests, but on condition they did not enter Christian areas and did not seriously threaten the status quo—Christian control of the machinery of government even when the Muslims were in the majority).

A rather different and honest account was the one given to me by Hani Hassan, who was better placed than anybody but Lebanon's President Suleimann Franjieh to know what was really happening in Lebanon and why. He said the following:

The civil war began as a consequence of the first moves in Kissinger's counter-attack after our political victories at Rabat and the UN. *Kissinger's people asked President Franjieh to 'do a Jordan' in Lebanon—to crush the PLO.* I must tell you I have the records of all the dates, times and places of the meetings between the Americans and Franjieh and his people. I also know everything of what was said. It was my business to know. You should not forget that I had the confidence of Franjieh because he knew that Arafat was playing the role of mediator in the developing Lebanese crisis, and that I was negotiating for Arafat with all the Lebanese parties. [Hani was also related to Franjieh by marriage].

Kissinger's people asked Franjieh to finish off the PLO. At first Franjieh said 'No' and he was very angry. He said to the Americans: 'Look, first of all we Lebanese people are civilized and that is not the way we behave. Second, even if I wanted to do what you ask, I cannot. Our army is small, weak and divided on sectarian lines. I do not have the power.'

The American reply was astonishing. The man who was representing Kissinger said to Franjieh: '*You must put to one side this question of being civilized, it's not relevant.*' As Franjieh knew, the American was really

saying, ‘Cut out this crap about being civilized!’ Then the American said: ‘You say you can’t do it. Okay, we accept you have a point there... but remember that’s also what Hussein told us when we asked him to do the job in Jordan. We helped him and we can help you.’ What the Americans mainly meant was that Israel would arm and support the Christians.

After his ‘No’ to the Americans, Franjeh came under strong pressure from the hardliners in his own Maronite community—from the Phalange Party of Pierre Gemayel in particular. So in time Franjeh said ‘Yes’ to the Americans, not completely, but he agreed to co-operate. *So began the co-operation between the Christian militias and the Israelis. And so began the civil war.*¹⁰

So far as Kissinger and Israel’s gut-Zionists were concerned, civil war in Lebanon was strategically about keeping the Christians in power, *but it was also to be the cover for liquidating Arafat’s PLO, finishing in Lebanon the dirty work that had been started in Jordan.* From Zionism’s perspective (and also that of Syria’s President Assad) the political gains the PLO had made in Rabat and at the UN could not be allowed to stand.

As the tragedy of civil war was unfolding, PLO and other Arab leaders believed that Lebanon would not have been turned into one vast killing field if King Feisal had lived. The belief was that he would have used his clout and prestige to bring the fighting to a quick end by diplomacy backed with loads of money. With the exception of Omar Saqqaf, few if any men had a better and more intimate understanding of how Feisal’s mind worked than Khalad Hassan. I asked him what he thought Feisal would have said to Lebanon’s warring factions around a conference table. Khalad replied: “That’s an easy question. In his own way he would have said, ‘Can’t you idiots see that you’re playing into Zionism’s hands?’”

When Vance met with Rabin for their first exploratory conversation in February 1977, the new Secretary of State began by spelling out how different his approach was going to be to Kissinger’s. *He told Israel’s prime minister that unless some means could be found to approach the explosive Palestinian problem “rationally” (a swipe at Kissinger’s irrational approach?)*

*there could be “no negotiation, no peace and, in the long run, no security for Israel or stability in the Middle East.”*¹¹

What “means” did Vance and his President have in mind? Well, how about a small, independent Palestinian state on the West Bank and Gaza, Vance said. Rabin’s first response was to say that would never be acceptable to Israel because the PLO would use it as the base from which to continue its struggle to destroy the Jewish state. Vance did not indicate in his memoirs how he had responded but I can imagine him saying something like: “We both know that’s what you Israelis and your very influential friends in my country say for propaganda purposes. But let us, please, be frank with each other and not talk such nonsense in private.” As quoted by Vance, Rabin’s fallback position was an insistence that the PLO would never settle for such a small state.

Throughout the first three years of his first term as prime minister, Rabin had been receiving messages about the PLO’s commitment to compromise with Israel on the basis of the two-state solution.

The truth is that when Rabin made that assertion, he was aware that the opposite might very well be the case. Throughout the first three years of his first term as prime minister he had been receiving messages about the PLO’s commitment to compromise with Israel on the basis of the two-state solution.

The messages were from Said Hammami in London and the messenger was Uri Avnery, a former member of the Israeli Knesset, the editor of a weekly magazine and (still to this day) Israel’s most celebrated dove. The Palestinian and the Israeli had met at the end of 1973 after *The Times* had published two of Hammami’s articles. In one he had called for mutual recognition between the PLO and Israel.

In their ignorance, most commentators (including me at the time) assumed that Hammami was a lone voice in the wilderness of the Palestinian diaspora, and that when he wrote and spoke about the need for unthinkable compromise with Israel he was setting a pace he wanted a reluctant PLO leadership to follow. That was not at all the case. As I noted earlier, Hammami was Arafat’s ambassador in London and, working to

Khalad Hassan's instructions, was among those charged with the responsibility to say what Arafat and his leadership colleagues could not yet say in public. And Hammami had the additional responsibility of finding a way to inform the government of Israel that the PLO was seriously committed to compromise and peace, but needed time to prepare the ground on its side before it could go public with such a policy.

Avnery subsequently confirmed that he did pass on all of Hammami's messages and to Prime Minister Rabin personally on a number of occasions.

Khalad Hassan said to me: "If Rabin had responded positively to the signals we were sending through Hammami, we could have had peace in a very few years. What were we hoping for from Israel? I'll tell you. In 1974 we were hoping the Israelis would say the following or something like it. 'We hear you and we are interested. We don't necessarily believe what we're hearing, and we are not convinced you can deliver the unthinkable compromise you are talking about. But we are encouraged. Let's keep in touch and, who knows, we might one day find ourselves talking about an accommodation with you.'"¹²

While Kissinger was Secretary of State, Rabin could not have responded positively to the PLO's messages even if he had wanted to. But with President Carter and Secretary of State Vance wanting to bring the PLO into the peace process, it could have been a very different story.

A speculative but nonetheless valid question provoked by study of events in retrospect is this: If Rabin had not resigned a month before the election of May 1977, and if he had won a second term in office—i.e. denied Begin a first term, would Israel under his leadership have worked with the Carter administration to bring about a comprehensive peace that would have included the creation of a Palestinian mini-state on the West Bank and in Gaza in a confederation with Jordan?

In my analysis, which gives due weight to the fact that it was Rabin, 15 years later, who grasped Arafat's hand, there is a respectable case for a "yes probably" answer. That begs a very intriguing question about the motives of those who engineered Rabin's surprise resignation.

The case against Rabin rested on the narrowest interpretation of a legal technicality. He and his wife Leah had not acted in accordance with a Treasury regulation forbidding Israeli citizens to keep foreign currency accounts abroad. (Rabin was later to write that the regulation was presumably instituted “to prevent people from spiriting ‘black’ money out of the country in order to evade taxes”.) It ought not to have been a resigning matter, but somebody was determined that it would be.

That somebody was Shimon Peres, no doubt with Dayan’s blessing and perhaps at Dayan’s insistence. Peres was then defence minister in Rabin’s government. (The breakaway Rafi faction of Ben-Gurion, Dayan and Peres had merged with the old ruling Mapai Party in 1968 to form the Israeli Labour Party. There were always going to be tensions because Mapai, most notably as led by Sharett and then Eshkol, did not share gut-Zionism’s vision of a Greater Israel; which was, of course, why Ben-Gurion, Dayan and Peres—Peres somewhat reluctantly—had taken their leave of it. By the time of the 1977 election the old Mapai core of the Labour Party was ready in principle to think about trading some land for peace.)

Prime Minister Rabin was never less than completely aware that Peres was after his job. When Golda Meir resigned in April 1974 the Labour (old Mapai) establishment had wanted Rabin to succeed her. Golda subsequently told me that she did not rate Peres as a leader. Rabin had let his name go forward for a Central Committee contest with Peres and won it. Rabin was subsequently to write: “Before the vote Peres had approached me with talk of a ‘fair fight’ and ‘loyalty’ to the winner, but after he lost I saw little evidence of the loyalty to which he was pledged.” ¹³

Then...

In February 1977, with the approach of the election, when Rabin was beginning his constructive dialogue with Carter and Vance and was also aware that Arafat PLO’s was signalling that it wanted to make peace with Israel, Peres challenged Rabin to another Central Committee contest for the leadership. Rabin was to write: “Instead of engendering unity on the eve of the battle, he tore the party into two opposing camps.”¹⁴ Rabin won again, narrowly; and because he was a simple soldier and not a devious politician, he believed that was the end of the matter. The Peres-Dayan

challenge was over, and he, reconfirmed as leader, would take the party into political war with Begin's (Greater Israel) Likud Party and its allies. It seems not to have crossed Rabin's mind that his opponents within would stop at nothing to prevent him from remaining in office as prime minister.

As Israel's Ambassador in Washington for five years Rabin naturally had a personal bank account there. It was a joint one with Leah but all the withdrawals were made on her signature because, as her husband said, she was the "family finance minister". When the Rabins returned to Israel on 11 March 1973 at the end of his tenure as ambassador, they did not close down their joint account in Washington which then contained less than \$20,000 (of the Rabins' own money). They presumably thought that since they would be frequent visitors to the U.S. in the future, it was useful to keep the account open. Four years later, when Rabin had been prime minister for three years, somebody leaked the existence of the still-open bank account in Washington to an Israeli newspaper, to make the point that the prime minister had acted and was continuing to act contrary to a Treasury regulation. By this time Leah had drawn down the money in the account to \$2,000. In the scale of things it was no big deal and not a smoking gun of any kind. But because there was an offence against a Treasury regulation, and because Rabin's coalition government had been rocked by two real financial scandals, something had to be done when the matter became public, or so some of Rabin's leadership colleagues insisted. They wanted him to be seen to be punished in some way. The widespread assumption was that the finance minister or the attorney general or some such would formally and publicly tell the Rabins they had acted illegally and were to be fined. End of story. Problem solved. But somebody insisted on setting up a committee to examine the matter. The upshot was a decision to draw a distinction between Rabin and his wife. The prime minister was to be ordered to pay a token fine but Leah was to stand trial before a District Court.

In his memoirs published two years later, Rabin wrote: "To this day I cannot understand the legal justification for drawing the distinction"—i.e. because it was a joint account.¹⁵ That suggests Rabin the politician was too naïve for his own good. There was no legal justification for drawing the

distinction. So why was it made? Those who were using the affair to bring about his resignation knew they would be pushing their luck too far with public opinion if they insisted on the prime minister going to trial over such a trivial matter. But they also assumed, correctly, that he would stand by his woman and resign if she was required to face trial.

And that's how Rabin's resignation was engineered.

The timing of the leak that gave some of Rabin's colleagues the scope to make their mischief was not unrelated to the fact that he had just returned—48 hours previously—from Washington and a policy review with the Carter administration. *Some in his own Labour Party who did not want him to lead them into the election then only five weeks away feared that, in a second term as prime minister, Rabin would be flexible enough to go for peace in accordance with President Carter's vision and wishes.* Which would mean dismantling Greater Israel and recognising in some shape or form the Palestinian right to self-determination.

It has to be said that Rabin was not then in favour of the creation of a Palestinian mini-state on the West Bank and Gaza. But, we do know what his real position was, even then. Because of his Arafat-like pragmatism, and the pressure from President Carter, and his determination not to confront the new regime in Washington, *he did favour an Israeli withdrawal from a substantial portion of the West Bank*—the heavily populated areas, and the creation of a new “Jordanian–Palestinian state.” In his memoirs, published more than a decade before he was in a position to put his Arafat-like courage to use for peace, he outlined the option he favoured. He wrote the following:

... within the original borders of mandatory Palestine (which include Israel, the West Bank, Gaza and what is now called the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan), there should be two states: Israel, basically a Jewish state [though not all Jews will live there and not only Jews will comprise its population] and, to the east of it, a Jordanian–Palestinian state that would include considerable portions of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip [mainly the densely populated areas]. The Jordanian–Palestinian state will allow for the expression of the unique identity of the

Palestinians in whatever form they chose to exercise their right to self-determination.¹⁶

In the countdown to the most critical election in Israel's short and turbulent history, Rabin's real crime could be summarised as follows. *He had personally come to terms, or was in the process of coming to terms, with the fact that Palestinians did have a right to self-determination.*

Simply by acknowledging that he was, some feared, undermining the foundations of the whole Zionist enterprise. If, as Zionism had maintained, the Palestinians did not exist as a people with a unique identity of their own, how could they have rights of any kind? But, rather more to the point, if they did exist and had rights, what did that say about the legitimacy of the Jewish state? The man most concerned by the notion that Rabin might open Zionism's Pandora's Box was Dayan; and that, as we shall see, was why he spearheaded the effort to prevent President Carter endorsing the proposition that the Palestinians had a right to self-determination. On reflection, even as I write, I think Dayan was the mastermind of the plot to replace Rabin, and that Peres played his necessary part for reasons of his own.

Rabin was explicit in his memoirs about the dissent around his cabinet table on the subject of how far and how fast the West Bank should be colonised. He also named the minister who was giving him most trouble—his rival for the premiership, Defence Minister Peres. Rabin wrote:

When the Cabinet adopted a policy that excluded the establishment of new settlements in the heavily populated area of Samaria on the West Bank [in the belief that Jewish settlement there was not justified by security considerations and would only serve as a provocation to the Arab population] Peres raised the banner of “settlement everywhere”. In his characteristic rhetorical flourish, he proclaimed that “the hills of Samaria are no less lofty than the hills of Golan” as though politics was some kind of mountaineering contest. Public statements of this kind naturally encouraged the Gush Emunim movement [of religious bigots committed to settling and keeping every square inch of the West Bank] to challenge the government to a show of strength, though it is difficult to fathom

why a cabinet minister would be interested in encouraging defiance of his own government's policy.¹⁷

Still today it is “difficult to fathom” why Peres was playing the “settlement everywhere” card in 1977. The most obvious implication is that he was then a true believer in gut-Zionism's Greater Israel project. But there is another possible explanation.

Peres had done some serious thinking and realised that an election victory for Begin and his Likud Party would be a disaster for Israel and ultimately Jews everywhere. In this scenario Peres had come to the conclusion that his party would definitely lose the election with Rabin as leader, but might win it with himself as leader. So perhaps he was playing to the Greater Israel gallery in the hope of enabling the Labour coalition as led by him to hold on to enough votes to prevent Begin winning the election.

In retrospect, and in part because of what Peres subsequently said to me in private about his understanding of Begin's strategy for wrecking any prospect of an Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank, I am inclined to the view that... Though Peres was apparently disloyal to Prime Minister Rabin, and though he desperately wanted Rabin's job and engineered his resignation, his prime purpose was to stop Begin getting his hands on the levers of power. (It is worth noting that when Begin won the election and was cobbling together his first coalition government, Peres and Dayan went their separate political ways. Peres stayed with defeated Labour Party as its leader in opposition, and Dayan crossed the floor to become foreign minister in Begin's Likud-dominated government—Dayan's natural home.)

Be that as it may... What Israel most needed for the critical election campaign of 1977 was a united government with the wisdom and the courage to tell the nation the truth about the real nature of the choice to be made—maintaining and consolidating Greater Israel with no peace, or trading land for peace in accordance with Resolution 242.

The tragedy was that the government before and after Rabin's resignation did not dare to put the real choice to the people because it assumed they would make the wrong choice and put Begin into power. Question: Was that assumption correct?

In those days I knew Israel and its people quite well, and I remain convinced that they could and would have handled the truth about real options if it had been put to them in the right way. IF they had been told that Egypt, Jordan and Lebanon were ready to make peace with Israel inside more or less its pre-1967 borders, and IF they had been told there was reason to believe that Arafat's PLO might well be serious about compromise with Israel and peace on the basis of the two-state solution—what then? I think an easy majority of the people of Israel would have rejected Begin's Greater Israel option—at least to the point of giving a government led by Rabin or Peres a mandate to explore the prospects for peace.

The conclusion invited, I believe, is this:

The people of Israel did *not* fail the test of reality. *They were not invited by the most rational of their leaders to take the test at the right time—* i.e. before gut-Zionism's madmen got their hands on the levers of power.

**“WASHINGTON—
‘WORST FEARS
COMING TRUE’”**

On 20 May 1977, when it became clear that Begin and his Likud Party were going to form Israel’s next coalition government, the headline over a front page story in *The Jerusalem Post* read: WASHINGTON—“WORST FEARS COMING TRUE”. The quotation, attributed to a “U.S. source” (probably a State Department official), was an accurate reflection of the despair Secretary of State Vance and President Carter shared.

Both men understood that they had no chance of overcoming the inevitable opposition from a Begin-led Israel and the Zionist lobby in America to their plan for a comprehensive Middle East peace and, first of all, the construction of a framework for negotiations. That was why Carter instructed Vance to work with the Soviet Union on the production of a joint U.S.–Soviet declaration of principles on which a comprehensive peace was to be based. *Carter allowed himself to believe, or perhaps only to hope, that Zionism’s stooges in Congress, the Senate especially, would not dare to try to block a joint superpower initiative.*

Thus it was, on 1 October, that the joint U.S.–Soviet declaration was published. It was American and Soviet diplomacy at its best on paper. It was an outline plan for a comprehensive settlement of the Arab–Israeli conflict which not only contained all the necessary ingredients for peace. It presented them in a way that was calculated to prevent a knee-jerk rejection by any of the parties. The PLO was not mentioned by name—this was to make it easier for the Israelis to accept the declaration as a discussion document. And there was no reference to Resolution 242—to make it easier for Arafat’s PLO to give its seal of approval.

In addition to real peace, Israel was being offered a joint superpower guarantee of its existence.

Essentially the joint U.S.–Soviet declaration required the Arab states and the Palestinians to make peace with Israel, and therefore to formally recognise and legitimize the Jewish state at the end of the negotiating process. This would be in return for an Israeli withdrawal “from territories occupied in the 1967 conflict.” In addition to real peace Israel was being offered a joint superpower guarantee of its existence. *The Israelis were required to recognise “the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.”*¹ The obvious implication was that after an Israeli withdrawal, a Palestinian mini-state would be created on the West Bank and in Gaza.

The idea was that “the representatives of all the parties involved in the conflict, including the Palestinians” would assemble in Geneva to talk their way to a settlement of the conflict based on the principles set down in the joint U.S.–Soviet declaration.

What happened?

The Arab states and the PLO welcomed and accepted the joint U.S.–Soviet declaration as a basis for negotiations leading to peace with Israel. Because the PLO had not been mentioned by name, and because there was no specific commitment to the establishment of a Palestinian mini-state, a minority of Palestinian leaders (not the mainstream) were unhappy and made their usual rejectionist noises, but Arafat had no trouble in getting his mainstream (and majority) leadership colleagues to accept the declaration as the basis for negotiations with Israel.

I asked Arafat if he had truly believed that the Americans and the Soviets had between them opened the door to peace. He said: “Yes, yes, yes. I was very happy, very excited. It was an historic moment. For the first time the two superpowers were committed to doing something for us Palestinians. Truly I believed there would be peace with some justice for my people. I was more optimistic than at any moment in my life.”²

But it was not to be.

Israel rejected the U.S.–Soviet declaration. Prime Minister Begin sent Foreign Minister Dayan to Washington to bully and blackmail President Carter into tearing it up and substituting for it a joint U.S.–Israel declaration, the terms of which Dayan more or less dictated to Carter and Vance. (Dayan had long been of the view that Israel’s task was not to explore the prospects of

peace but to create settlement facts on the ground. Before the Yom Kippur war he had boasted: “There is no more Palestine. Finished!”³

The U.S.–Israel declaration was, in effect, the list of Israel’s conditions for its attendance at the Geneva conference. The Palestinian problem was back to being a “problem of refugees”—i.e. the Palestinians had no right to self-determination; 242 was back on the agenda, which meant that the PLO could not involve itself; and Israel would “discuss”, not negotiate about, the West Bank. Dayan also announced that Israel would walk out of any Geneva conference if the question of a Palestinian state was brought up.

Why, really, did President Carter surrender to Dayan and his new political master?

There was speculation that Carter was told he could forget about being re-elected for a second term if he required Israel to make unacceptable moves for peace. But those close to Carter to whom I talked over the years said the threat to withdraw Jewish campaign funds and votes would not have been sufficient on this occasion to cause Carter to back down. He was less than 10 months into his first term and he had, they said, factored the traditional Zionist blackmail threat into his own equation, and had concluded that the peace he was confident he could deliver, with Soviet assistance, would win him the support of most Jewish Americans, enabling him to put the Zionist lobby out of business.

The truth? Dayan told Carter that if he pushed Israel too far, Begin would let the IDF off the leash in the region and that it would, among other things, invade Lebanon, with two objectives—liquidating the PLO and taking and keeping Lebanese territory south of the Litani River. Carter knew that such a demonstration of Israel’s arrogance of power would destabilise the region and might put a comprehensive peace beyond reach for all time. So during the course of his October 1977 meeting with Dayan, Carter decided that it would not be a good idea to call Begin’s bluff—because he knew it was not a bluff. (Subsequently, as he confirmed in a BBC interview in 2003, Carter did at some point tell Begin that he would cut off funds to Israel if it invaded Lebanon).

Dayan told Carter that if he pushed Israel too far, Israel would invade Lebanon to liquidate the PLO, and seize and keep Lebanese territory south of the Litani River.

Simply stated, *President Carter backed away from confrontation with Begin's Israel because he was frightened of what the Zionist bull might do in the Arab china shop.* (Carter's own account of the difficulty of doing business with Begin's Israel is detailed and reasonably frank).⁴

Soon after he had consigned the joint U.S.–Soviet declaration to the dustbin of history, Carter wrote a sad note to Sadat urging the Egyptian President *not to overestimate the ability of an American President to bring pressure to bear on Israel.* In its own way that was a dramatic admission of what all Arabs (and actually all diplomats of all nations) had always known—that it really was Zionism which called the policy shots in pork-barrel America on matters to do with the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The stage was now set for Sadat's desperate and single-handed peace initiative with Israel and the breakdown, never to be repaired, of his relationship with Arafat and the PLO.

Up to this moment Arafat's relationship with Sadat had been good on both the political and personal levels. (The PLO Chairman was the favourite “uncle” of one of Sadat's children). But the friendship turned sour, became poisoned, when Sadat launched his own dramatic initiative for peace with Israel. It was not, however, Sadat's decision to put Israel to the test of negotiations that was responsible for the breakdown in their personal relationship. The cause of that—and some very serious political trouble for Arafat—was the way Sadat went about it.

At the time Arafat (actually a conciliator by nature) was acting as mediator in a dispute and simmering crisis between Egypt and Libya. In Tripoli on 9 November he received what he described as “an urgent message” from Sadat. It was a summons to attend the Egyptian Parliament to hear an important statement the president was intending to make. Sadat's speech was a call for an all-out effort to get the Geneva peace talks with Israel started. As Arafat was listening and nodding his approval, Sadat dropped his bombshell: “*I am prepared to go to the ends of the earth for peace, even to the Knesset itself!*”

As soon as Sadat sat down, Arafat stormed out of the chamber. He was actually running for his car when he was grabbed by Vice-President Mubarak. Arafat shook him off, shouting, “*Don’t you realise what Sadat has done to me!*”⁵ He meant that Sadat had made it look as though he (Arafat) had had advance knowledge of Sadat’s intention to go to Israel and was plotting behind the back of all of his PLO leadership colleagues. The implication was that, in collusion with a desperate Egyptian president, in association with a desperate American president, Arafat was going to agree to peace with Israel on terms that would fall far short of agreed minimum PLO demands. When he screamed at Mubarak, Arafat was also meaning something like: “If my colleagues jump to the wrong conclusions, and if I can’t persuade them that they are wrong, they’ll shoot me.” (Abu Iyad himself was ready to do so).

Mubarak was persistent and Arafat compromised, as he usually did. The vice-president’s house was on the way to the airport. Would Arafat not agree to stop off there for 30 minutes or so? Arafat agreed. He stayed for 30 minutes to the second before flying to Damascus for an emergency meeting of the PLO’s Central Committee. He really did believe that his life as well as his credibility and position was on the line. Khalad Hassan told me they were.

In fact Arafat was not opposed in principle to the idea that Sadat should go to Jerusalem and directly challenge the Israelis to be serious about peace. But he did believe that Sadat should have gone about it another way. How?

Arafat said to me: “In my opinion he should have called a meeting of Arab heads of state to discuss the whole strategy with them. It should have been done in consultation. If Sadat had gone about it so, the whole situation would have been completely changed... That is what I would have done in his place.”⁶

With some astonishment I said to Arafat: “Are you telling me that if Sadat had asked the other Arab leaders for a mandate to go to Israel he would have been given it?”

Arafat replied: “I think so, yes, but for the purpose of a test case. And much would have depended on how Sadat presented his ideas to the

Arab heads of state and me. If I had been Sadat, I would have said to my Arab colleagues the following: ‘Give me the chance. I will go and be prepared to sacrifice myself. If I succeed the success is for all of us. If I fail the failure will be for me only.’ If Sadat had done that he would have been a hero—win or lose. And it would have been a different story, with very different results.”⁷

When Sadat made his historic, three-day visit to Jerusalem in November 1977 to meet with Israel’s leaders and address Israel’s parliament and people, it was not his intention to make a separate peace with the Jewish state. But that was what he ended up with—the separate peace treaty was signed at the White House on 26 March 1979—because that was all Begin’s Israel wanted. And even that was opposed by some in Begin’s camp including two of his associates who were to become prime ministers—Shamir and Sharon.

When President Carter took over the management of the peace process Sadat started by going to Jerusalem, he was hoping that, with Sadat’s assistance, he could get Israel committed to an agreement on autonomy for the Palestinians of the occupied West Bank and Gaza, an autonomy which would lead in due course to full self-determination and the creation of a Palestinian mini-state.

The summary truth about the protracted negotiations which ended with the separate peace is that Sadat lacked both the skill and the balls (the *chutzpah* one might say) to play the winning hand he had actually dealt himself by taking the initiative to go to Israel and, by so doing, proving to the world that he was serious about peace.

There was, in fact, very early evidence that Sadat was not going to be a match for Begin and his negotiators. Before the Egyptian president made his speech to the Israeli parliament, *Dayan advised him that it would not be a good idea to mention the PLO if he seriously wanted negotiations with Israel*. Sadat’s original speech did contain a reference to the PLO as the only legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. In the speech Sadat delivered there was no reference to the PLO. As Arafat put it to me, surely with right on his side, Sadat ought to have told Dayan that if he was not allowed to mention the PLO, he would not make the speech and would

return to Cairo to tell his people and the world that Israel was not serious about peace.

Throughout the protracted negotiations—the most dramatic of which took place at Camp David with President Carter working desperately to prevent them ending in failure because of Israeli intransigence—Saudi Arabia's King Fahd (Feisal's successor) came under great pressure from Western leaders to make life easier for Sadat, by using his influence to stop the PLO's verbal attacks on the Egyptian president. The line Western leaders took with Fahd was to the effect that it was surely in his own interests to silence the PLO's criticism. In other words, the PLO was a problem for King Fahd, too. According to what Fahd told Khalad Hassan and Arafat and they then told me, the Saudi monarch had a standard reply to Western leaders: *“My problem is not Arafat and his PLO. My problem is not even the Americans and the Israelis. My problem is that I can't stop Sadat saying ‘Yes’ to everything the Israelis demand of him!”*⁸

The judgment of Arafat and his leadership colleagues, and all other Arab leaders to whom I talked, was that instead of signing the Camp David Accords which paved the way for the separate peace, *Sadat should have walked away from the negotiating process, to leave President Carter with the choice of really pressing Begin to be serious about a comprehensive peace with a minimum of justice for the Palestinians, or, letting Sadat walk and admitting by default, in public, that no American president could risk a confrontation with Zionism and its child.* This assumed that Carter, faced with that choice, and to prevent the prospect of peace being destroyed perhaps forever, would have chosen to take on Begin's Israel and the Zionist lobby. Sadat was naïve in many respects but not that naïve. From the moment Carter had put him on private notice that he should not overestimate the ability of any American president to bring pressure to bear on Israel, Sadat knew that at the end of the negotiating day he would have to settle for whatever an arrogant and aggressive Israel was prepared to give, on more or less its own terms. *The problem for Sadat was that those terms required him, effectively, to betray the Palestinian cause.*

It was the Palestinians and the Lebanese who had to pay the immediate price of Sadat's separate peace with Israel.

Within one month of the signing of the separate peace treaty with Egypt, Israel began a blitz on Lebanon.

Within one month of the signing of the separate peace treaty, and with Egypt's armed forces neutralised by it (as Kissinger had wanted), *Israel began a blitz on Lebanon*. Some 50,000 Palestinian refugees fled northwards as their camps were bombed and strafed by Israeli jet fighters, and sometimes pounded by long-range artillery; 175,000 Lebanese fled from the south and became refugees in their own land; and thousands, Palestinians and Lebanese, were killed. In Beirut (where Arafat was headquartered) Western diplomats openly admitted they were shocked and sickened by the scale of the Israeli attacks and the apparent indifference of their governments.

The IDF blitz lasted for five months. President Carter stopped a full-scale invasion of Lebanon by threatening to cut off economic assistance to Israel. Begin decided that the destruction of the PLO could wait until Carter was out of office.

Arafat said to me: "You do realise what was happening... This was the beginning of Begin's Final Solution of the Palestinian problem by military means. What happened—in the summer of 1982—when Sharon came all the way to Beirut to finish us started here, one month after Sadat signed his separate peace. What was the Israeli strategy when they started their final offensive in April 1979? What was the purpose of these murderous and indiscriminate attacks on our mainly unarmed Palestinian and Lebanese civilians? I will tell you. Their purpose was not simply to terrorise and to kill. It was to turn the people of Lebanon, Christians and Muslims, against my Palestinian people. With every bomb they dropped, and with every shell they fired, the Israelis were saying to the Lebanese: 'We wouldn't have to be doing this to you, and we wouldn't have to be destroying your beautiful country, if the Palestinians (terrorists all) were not among you. *You should blame the Palestinians. Really you should hate the Palestinians.*' In such a way Begin, Sharon and others were preparing the ground for their invasion, the Zionist Final Solution to the Palestinian problem."²

It was between Act I (in 1979) and Act II (in 1982) of the IDF's attempt to liquidate the PLO in Lebanon that Arafat launched a major peace initiative of his own.

Because President Carter was prevented from making responding to Arafat's peace initiative, I found myself drawn into the secret diplomacy of peacemaking, as the linkman between Arafat and Peres.

And it was because President Carter was prevented from making use of it, to get a comprehensive peace process going, that I found myself drawn into the secret diplomacy of peacemaking, as the linkman in an exploratory dialogue between Arafat and Peres.

THE BLOOD OATH

By 1979 Arafat had secured the agreement of 296 of the PNC's 300 delegates to let him proceed with his policy of politics and compromise with Israel—peace based on the two-state solution. By persuading all but four of the members of the Palestinian parliament-in-exile of the need to face the reality of Israel's existence, he had done everything possible on his side to prepare the ground for peace—I mean everything possible without a matching positive response, in principle at least, from Israel.

By 1979 Arafat had secured the agreement of 296 of the PNC's 300 delegates to let him proceed with his policy of politics and compromise with Israel—peace based on the two-state solution.

At the end of his account of his six years of struggle behind closed doors to sell the need for unthinkable compromise with Israel, Arafat said to me, with a big smile on his face: “We have turned our people around. No more this silly talk about driving the Jews into the sea. Today my people are prepared to live with the Jews as neighbours in a mini-state of their own. It is a miracle! How far we have travelled in six years.”¹

Arafat the miracle worker was now at the peak of his power. But from here on his credibility with his own people, including some of his mainstream leadership colleagues would depend on him being able to demonstrate that politics and compromise would get results.

The opportunity for Arafat to launch a peace initiative of his own existed because the Carter administration had tried and failed to find non-PLO Palestinians to serve as the representatives of their people in a Jordanian–Palestinian delegation for the Geneva peace talks.

Carter and Vance had not given up their quest for a comprehensive peace and they understood completely that there could be no peace process without the involvement of the Palestinians. The problem was the insistence of Begin's Israel, endorsed by the Zionist lobby in America, that it would never talk to the PLO or be a party to negotiations in which any Arab

delegation included members of the PLO. Against that background Vance had sent a very senior State Department official, Jim Lenard, to the West Bank. His mission was to find non-PLO Palestinians to negotiate for their people in a Jordanian–Palestinian delegation. Lenard returned to Washington with the news that there were no such Palestinians. Only the PLO could negotiate for the Palestinians under occupation and the refugees scattered across the Arab world. So what, in sum, was the situation? *Carter and Vance were unable to get a comprehensive peace process going because of Israel's veto (thanks to Kissinger) on PLO participation.*

It was then that Arafat took an initiative to break the deadlock by, he hoped, giving President Carter what he needed to override Israel's veto on PLO participation in negotiations. (Kissinger had set things up so that no American president could do business with the PLO unless it accepted Resolution 242 which, as we have seen, gave the Palestinians nothing in the way of self-determination but required them to recognise and legitimize Israel's existence). *Arafat sent a message in writing to the UN stating that the PLO would accept Resolution 242 as the basis for negotiations if the text of the resolution could be stretched to include four or five vague words which recognised the Palestinian right to self-determination.*

This Arafat offer, together with the text of a speech he would make accepting resolution 242, was put into the UN system by Kuwait's Ambassador, Abdullah Bishara. He presented it to Britain's Ambassador, Ivor Richard, in his capacity as that month's president of the Security Council. Richard subsequently said to me: *"In my opinion this Arafat offer was potentially the biggest breakthrough in the situation since 1948. Its importance was impossible to exaggerate."* Richard passed Arafat's written offer to his U.S. counterpart, the black American Andy Young, who passed it directly to Secretary of State Vance and President Carter. (Young was Carter's soul mate and best friend around the cabinet table). These three Americans shared Richard's assessment of the incredible significance of Arafat's offer; and Carter moved immediately to make use of it, daring to hope that it would enable him to get a comprehensive peace going with the PLO a party to negotiations.

Security Council president Ivor Richard: “This Arafat offer was potentially the biggest breakthrough since 1948.”

Carter was quickly informed that it was not possible to amend the text of an existing UN resolution. There would have to be a new one. So he sent an envoy to the Middle East to try to secure agreement for a new resolution that would incorporate 242 as it stood and add the words Arafat needed. *Prime Minister Begin went ballistic with rage.* A new resolution to accommodate the needs of the Chairman of the PLO was out of the question. Totally unacceptable. (In Begin’s sick mind there really was no difference between Yasser Arafat and Adolf Hitler). But Begin, the most successful terrorist leader of modern times, was not going to let the matter rest there. With Kissinger’s assistance Zionism had drawn a red line which no American president was ever to cross. By seeking to engage the PLO in the negotiating process Carter had crossed that line. He had to be punished—for his own crime and as a warning to his successors.

For his punishment Carter was required to fire Andy Young. The justification for this outrageous Zionist demand was that Young had broken the Kissinger rule of no contact with the PLO. Young had had a 15-minute meeting with Zahedi Terzi, the PLO’s representative with Observer Status at the UN. The meeting had taken place in Bishara’s home. The Israelis knew from a copy of Young’s report of the meeting in their possession that politics had not been discussed. Young had met with Terzi and Bishara for the sole purpose of discussing the postponement of a UN debate to win time for Carter while his envoy tried to interest Israel in a new resolution. But the fact that the meeting took place was a big enough stick for the Zionist lobby, at Begin’s insistence, to beat Carter with. The Zionists knew that Young’s resignation would hurt the president. It did. Carter wept as he read Young’s letter of resignation.

And that was the end of President Carter’s effort to get a comprehensive peace process underway by involving the PLO as a party to negotiations.

Carter was reconciled to the fact that by provoking Zionism’s wrath he had seriously damaged his prospects of being re-elected for a second term. While he was working to bring the PLO into the negotiating process,

the man most likely to emerge as the Republican frontrunner for the next race to the White House was already playing for the Jewish vote.

That man was the former “B” movie actor and former governor of California, Ronald Reagan. In an article for the *Washington Post*, Reagan described Israel as America’s only strategic asset in the Middle East. He wrote (or somebody wrote for him): “Israel has the democratic will, national cohesion, technological capacity and military fibre to stand forth as America’s trusted ally.”² Reagan’s main argument was that standing by Israel —by definition Greater Israel and Greater Israel right or wrong—was essential if the U.S. was to thwart “Moscow’s designs on territories and resources vital to our security and our national well-being”. *That was simplistic to the point of nonsense, but it was the stuff of American politics.* In his report on Reagan’s article for *The Jerusalem Post*, Wolf Blitzer wrote: “Political observers interpreted Reagan’s apparent decision to appeal to Israeli supporters here as evidence that he would indeed enter the presidential race in the coming weeks and that he felt that Jewish votes could be drawn away from the Democratic Party.”³

The notion of Israel as the only US strategic asset in the Middle East permitted a cover-up of the fact that Zionism was more the maker of American policy in the region than any U.S. president.

The notion of Israel as the only strategic asset in the Middle East did have real merit for America’s most zealous and most ignorant Cold War warriors and hawks of various other kinds, but there was more to it than was apparent. If you presented Israel as such, you could cover up the fact that Zionism and its child were more the makers of American policy for the region than any U.S. president. You could say in effect: “We support Israel right or wrong because it’s in America’s interest to do so, not because we’re unwilling or unable to confront Zionism.” *In other words, projecting Israel as America’s only strategic asset in the region when, actually, the U.S. had far greater need of Arab oil and trade than anything Israel could offer, was making a foreign policy virtue out of domestic political necessity.*

Behind closed doors at UN headquarters in New York the organisation’s own crisis managers and thoughtful resident diplomats came

to the only conclusion possible. Institutional diplomacy was incapable of advancing the peace process because, in pork-barrel America, no president could take the heat of confronting Zionism and its child. If President Carter could not challenge the Zionists and their stooges in Congress and win, nobody could. It followed that peace on terms the Palestinians could accept would have a chance only if there was a will for it in Israel.

It was then put to me that what was needed was an unofficial, informal and secret diplomatic effort for the purpose of constructing a bridge of understanding between Arafat and rational Israeli leaders. If they could be assisted to understand that the Chairman of the PLO really was committed to compromise and peace with Israel on the basis of the two-state solution, they might take what President Nixon had described as “the right way” and, if they did, that would or ought to guarantee a peace process that could not be sabotaged by the Zionist lobby in America.

With the encouragement of those who had briefed me on how President Carter had been prevented from making use of Arafat’s offer, I decided to try my hand at bridge building. The essential proposition was this. Israel was a year to 18 months away from its next election. The hope and expectation of all who had been working for peace was that Peres would win that election and deny Begin a second term as prime minister. My role, if I could persuade first Peres and then Arafat to co-operate with me, was to act as the linkman in an exploratory dialogue between them. The hope being that we could prepare the ground for a public breakthrough when Peres became prime minister (sometime in 1981).⁴

Because I was only a working journalist and a documentary producer, I did not have resources of my own to fund a private peace initiative. I needed a benefactor. I decided to approach the man I believed to be Britain’s most enlightened Jewish leader, Marcus (later Lord) Sieff, the chairman of Marks and Spencer. I had never met him but I did know two things about him. The first was that on the eve of the 1967 war he had raised £50 million for Israel in less than 20 minutes on the telephone to his wealthy Jewish friends—“our Jewish Mafia” as he himself described them to me with a chuckle. The second was that he had cut off funds to Israel as a personal protest against Begin’s colonial policy. Marcus knew of my

existence through my appearances on television and he was also aware that I had enjoyed good relations with a number of Israel's leaders, Golda Meir especially. (He was to tell me that when he cut off funds to Israel, Begin pleaded with him to turn the tap back on. "I promise I won't use any of your money to fund settlements," Begin said. Marcus replied: "Prime Minister, I don't believe you. Your promises are worthless.")

In our first conversation I said to Marcus: "If I can prove to you that Arafat is serious about peace on terms which a rational government and people in Israel would accept with relief, will you raise the necessary funds for me to shuttle to and fro Peres and Arafat?"

Marcus gave me a long hard look with just the hint of a smile and then said, "IF you can prove that, yes."

With Ivor Richard's assistance I did prove it. And Marcus did fund me. When he gave me his decision he said he had covered his own back by seeking the approval of Victor (Lord) Rothschild. Marcus also said that I could count on him to do some arm-twisting with our Israeli friends if necessary.

Peres welcomed my initiative with what seemed to be genuine enthusiasm. (Possibly because Marcus had said to him, without me knowing, that it was worth a try). It was during our first one-to-one conversation that Peres made the remarks I quoted earlier about his fear that it was already "too late" because of Begin's settlement policy.

When I had the green light from Peres, my task of getting to Arafat for a first private meeting without having to explain myself to his minders was made easy by two men. In New York, Ambassador Bishara gave me a letter of introduction to Khalad Hassan in Kuwait. Bishara said he could guarantee nothing more. If Khalad wanted to send me on to Arafat he would. Khalad was in favour of my initiative without reservation but it was, he said, a decision only Arafat himself could take, and that he would make no recommendation to his leader either way. I asked why. He replied: "If Arafat gets into a dialogue with Peres, even through you initially, and if word of it leaks before he has something concrete to show for it, he will be assassinated."

I subsequently learned from the man himself that it would have been Abu Iyad who would have shot Arafat. Abu Iyad was then the one man in Fatah's top leadership who had not been persuaded that they could get their mini-state by politics alone. At the time he still believed the PLO should back politics with terror. Some years later I said to Abu Iyad, "Would you really have ordered Arafat's execution if you had known that he was willing in early 1980 to engage with Peres?" Abu Iyad replied: "I would not have ordered anybody else to do it. I would have shot him with my own gun." (When later I repeated Abu Iyad's statement to Arafat, he said: "He was telling you the truth. I knew it at the time.")

Khalad Hassan sent me on to Beirut with a bodyguard to guarantee that I got to Arafat without having to explain myself to his minders, and a letter asking the Chairman to give me private time. (Apart from that I was, so to speak, cold calling. I had engaged with Arafat only once previously in an interview with him for Panorama during the countdown to the first phase of the civil war in Jordan.)

My first after-midnight conversation with Arafat lasted for nearly three hours. I had decided that my best chance of winning his trust was by being completely honest. I told him that as a reporter I had covered the conflict mainly from Israel's side and that my friends in Israel had included Golda Meir, Moshe Dayan and a former Director of Military Intelligence. I also told him that Marcus Sieff and his associates were funding the initiative, and that Victor Rothschild had given it his blessing. It was this second piece of information that hooked the Chairman of the PLO. He said: "*If those Jews want this to succeed, it is serious and I will take it seriously.*"

I told Arafat that Marcus Sieff and his associates were funding the initiative and that Victor Rothschild had given its blessing. Arafat said, "If those Jews want this to succeed, it is serious and I will take it seriously."

At one point I said to Arafat: "When I have conveyed the substance of our talk to my Israeli friends, they will ask three questions. The first will be 'is he serious?' Their starting point will be that you are not, and that you're only saying you want peace because you have no military option.

Their second question will be, ‘Can he deliver?’ Their third question will be ‘Why, really, is he willing to make such a compromise?’ It is this last question that I am not yet in a position to answer. I think much could depend on what your answer is.”

Arafat leaned back in his chair. He raised a hand to his shoulder and then let it fall slowly down his body. It came to rest on the pistol in his holster. “I will tell you,” he said. His voice was quiet and flat and he was clearly struggling to keep his emotions under control. “*This military uniform disgusts me. I want the killing to stop. In my eyes I try to smile. In my heart I am crying.*”

When I left Arafat I told myself that he was either the greatest actor in the world and had fooled me, or, the man who was most serious about and most committed to peace with Israel. In the following weeks I sought the opinion of others who had had private conversations with Arafat. They included the man I (and many others) respected and admired as the greatest newspaper proprietor and editor-in-chief of his generation—*The Observer’s* David Astor. David said to me: “For God’s sake don’t quote me while I live because my friends will think I’ve lost my marbles... When I left Arafat after a long private conversation, I was convinced that I had been talking to a Palestinian leader in the mould of Mahatma Ghandi.” I took comfort in the knowledge that my own opinion of Arafat—that he would be a peacemaker if only the Israelis would respond positively to him—was shared by others (including Urquhart at the UN) who had no axe to grind, were well known for their impartiality and had sufficient information on which to make an objective judgment.

To cut a long story short...There came a time when sufficient bridge-building progress had been made for me to ask Arafat if he was prepared to meet with Peres. Without hesitation Arafat said “Yes”. He had only one condition. The meeting should not take place anywhere on Arab soil. I suggested my home in the English countryside as a possible venue. Arafat said words to the effect that it really didn’t matter where. All I had to do was tell him when and he would be there.

I returned to Israel via Cyprus elated. For the purpose of our secret initiative Peres was being advised by two former DMI’s—my friend and

mentor Chaim Herzog and Sholmo Gazit. On arrival back in Israel I telephoned Herzog with my news. "He is prepared to meet," I said. "I must talk with our friend here as soon as possible."

I met with Peres the next day. The bad news was that much though he wanted to meet secretly with Arafat, he was not willing to do so. He feared that if he did and there was a leak, he would be destroyed politically and his Labour party would be smashed at the polls. The good news was that Peres still wanted the meeting to go ahead but with an Israeli of stature representing him. Who could it be? Peres asked for time to think about it and a few days later he gave me a name, that of Aharon Yariv, another former DMI. My first response was one of concern and I said to Peres: "I'm not sure I can sell that. Arafat knows as well as you do that Yariv approved and probably directed a number of attempts to assassinate him." Peres said, "Arafat's response will tell us if he's really serious about wanting to do business." I asked Peres if he had approached Yariv. No, he said, that was my job. I was to brief Yariv and then ask him if he was prepared to meet with Arafat at the request of Peres and on his behalf. If Yariv said "Yes" in principle, I was to tell him that he should talk with Peres and that we would take it from there.

The idea of cold calling on Yariv did not bother me too much because I had had conversations with him in his time as DMI during Golda's premiership, and he knew that I had enjoyed a special relationship with her. Yariv was, of course, among those who knew everything there was to know about how President Carter had wanted to change U.S. policy—to have Arafat's PLO recognised as a party to negotiations. For more than an hour I explained to Yariv everything I knew about how Arafat had risked his credibility and his life to persuade all but four of the PNC's delegates of the need for an unthinkable and historic compromise with Israel. At the end of our conversation Yariv said that, subject to a follow-up talk he would have with Peres, he was prepared to meet with Arafat.

With Yariv signed up so to speak, I returned to Beirut to try to persuade Arafat to accept him as the substitute for Peres. I thought there was no more than a 50-50 chance that he would but, as ever, Arafat was pragmatism personified. He said he would meet with Yariv if I assured him

that Yariv would be speaking for Peres, meaning that any commitment Yariv made would be honoured by Peres when he became prime minister. I said that was truly my understanding. (Like most other people, including most Israelis, Arafat was assuming that Peres would win the election and deny Begin a second term).

When I returned to Israel with Arafat's agreement, Herzog was nearly as excited as I was. He said, "We're cooking with gas." The next step was for me to brief Yariv and discuss with him a venue and date for his meeting with Arafat.

Yariv listened to my report and then said: "I'm sorry. I can't do it. I can't meet with Arafat."

My first response was silence. I was stunned and lost for words. And then I exploded. "This is not a fucking game!" I said, my voice shaking with an Arafat-like and Begin-like anger. "This is for real. What's going on?"

Yariv's explanation was curious to say the least. "I didn't think you would persuade Arafat to meet with me."

"Even if that much is true", I said, "it wouldn't explain your change of mind."

Yariv was not going to tell me why his "Yes" had become a "No". But Herzog did the following day. He talked with Yariv and discovered that while I was in Beirut, Yariv had reconsidered his position and come to the conclusion that if he met with Arafat and news of the meeting leaked, Begin would crucify him.

So when I returned to Israel, Yariv was hoping I would say that Arafat had refused to accept him as a substitute for Peres, in which case he, Yariv, would not have to be the one to say "No".

Yariv had reconsidered his position and come to the conclusion that if he met with Arafat and news of the meeting leaked, Begin would crucify him.

Herzog (former DMI) told me to have some sympathy for Yariv (former DMI) because, short of actually nailing him to a cross, there was nothing Begin would not do to destroy him. There was at least the

possibility that Begin would accuse Yariv of being a traitor and put him on trial for his life.

As luck would have it Marcus Sieff was in Tel Aviv. I had been reporting to him in London (as well as keeping King Hussein and President Sadat informed). I suggested the time had come for some arm-twisting assistance. As things were, I said, I would have to tell Arafat that my Israeli friends were incapable of taking even the smallest step for peace. “Leave it with me”, Marcus said.

The outcome of conversations in which I did not participate was an idea, close to fantastic, to provide Yariv with cover. Yariv’s real position was, apparently, that he would meet with Arafat provided a way could be found to protect him in the event of the meeting taking place and word of it becoming public. There were only two men in Israel who could authorise Yariv to meet with Arafat “the terrorist leader”. One was Prime Minister Begin. The other was Defence Minister Ezer Weizman. If Weizman would assist our little conspiracy for peace, he could say if necessary, if the excrement hit the fan, that he had authorised Yariv to meet with Arafat for normal intelligence gathering purposes. It was *chutzpah-plus*.

I was fascinated by the idea of my friend Ezer plotting for peace behind his prime minister’s back. I was also aware of the reasons why he just might do what was required of him. He loathed Begin and everything he represented. He had agreed to serve in his coalition government partly for reasons of ego but mainly because he thought he could have some restraining influence—not so much on the mad men around him in cabinet but on those in the highest command levels of the IDF.

“Okay”, I said. “Who’s going to approach Ezer?”

“You are,” Herzog said for Peres. “You know him, he’ll see you.”

Ezer gave me an appointment for 1330 hours at the Ministry of Defence in Tel Aviv. At the reception desk I was told that he was out and had left a message asking for me to be shown into his outer office and to make myself comfortable until his late arrival. I was left alone and if I had been able to read Hebrew I might have been tempted to cast an eye over the files piled high, some open, on three large desks. The whole place had an unusually empty feel about it and my gut instincts told me that something

was going on somewhere else. I made allowances for the fact that it was lunchtime and that many who worked in the building were taking a normal break. Some would be relaxing on the beach or swimming. Others would be strolling the Dizzengorf. But still the place—the institutional heart of Israel’s war machine—was unusually quiet.

Nearly half an hour later I heard the sound of heavy, weary footsteps coming up the stone stairs. When Ezer filled the frame of the doorway to the outer office of his inner sanctum it was obvious that he was not his usual energetic, breezy self. He had the look of a haunted man. He managed a smile and said “Shalom.” Then, without another word, he put an arm around my shoulder and walked me into his office. He closed the door, nodded me to a seat on the other side of his ministerial desk and flopped into his own chair. He pushed it back and plonked his feet on the desk. He was looking straight at me but through me, to something only visible in his imagination.

I let the silence run and then, eventually, I said: “Ezer, you’ve obviously got a major problem on your mind. Shall I make an appointment for another day?”

Eventually he spoke. On reflection I am sure he told me what he did only because I was there. He needed to tell somebody and it happened by chance to be me.

Weizman: “They signed a blood oath which commits them to fight to the death to prevent any government of Israel withdrawing from the West Bank.”

He said, slowly and with quiet emphasis:

“This lunchtime Sharon convened a secret meeting of some of our generals and other top military and security people. They signed a blood oath which commits them to fight to the death to prevent any government of Israel withdrawing from the West Bank.” Pause. “I know that’s what happened at the meeting because I’ve checked it out, and that’s why I am late.”

In the event of a government decision to withdraw, Ezer said, Sharon was pledged to set up headquarters on the West Bank, and those in

Israel's armed forces who were loyal to him would make common cause with the armed settlers who wanted to fight.

I told Ezer what Peres had said to me weeks previously—that Begin was creating the conditions for a Jewish civil war, knowing, as Peres had put it, that no Israeli prime minister would trigger it by agreeing to withdraw from the West Bank.

Ezer nodded and then asked me a question. Did I think Sharon would act in accordance with the blood oath he and others had signed?

I said: "What I think is of no consequence. I'm a visiting *goy*. You're Israel's defence minister, what do you think?"

Ezer replied: "*Of course, he would. He's mad enough to nuke the entire fucking Arab world!*"

(The man so described was to become the next occupant of the office in which we were talking and, eventually, Israel's prime minister, then to be described by President Bush as "a man of peace.")

When Ezer asked me for my news I briefed him on why I was there and the favour that was required of him to give peace a chance. He was intrigued by what I told him and obviously with us in spirit, but he was not willing to give Yariv the cover requested. He said, "I've got more than enough problems of my own with our fucking prime minister." As an afterthought he added, "If I were to do what you ask, he would have me hanged as a traitor."

Before we parted I begged Ezer to take some time to reconsider his decision. He said he would and he gave me his home telephone number. I was to call him in a week or so.

When I called him from my home in England he said he was up to his ears "cutting off arms and legs." He meant, as he went on to explain, that he was in the process of cutting the IDF's budget to free up more resources for Begin's accelerated West Bank settlement programme. "I can't take much more of this madness", Ezer said, "and I am intending to resign." And yes, he had reconsidered the proposition I put him, but the answer, regretfully, was still no.

Ezer resigned on 5 May 1980. On his way out of the prime minister's office after submitting his formal letter of resignation, he pulled

down a peace poster from the wall and tore it up. “No one here wants peace!” he thundered.

At the time Begin was too frightened of Sharon to appoint him defence minister in Weizman’s place, and he acted as his own defence minister for the remainder of his first term in office. Begin frightened? Yes, of the prospect of a Sharon-led military coup.

It was to be some time before I was assisted to understand what had motivated Sharon to convene the secret meeting at which the blood oath was signed.

Sharon and his supporters were of the view that, under pressure from President Carter, Begin had given too much away in the Camp David negotiations with Sadat. Begin had accepted the principle of autonomy for the Palestinians of the occupied West Bank and Gaza.

When he returned to Israel from Camp David he assured his leadership colleagues that he had no intention of honouring the commitment he had signed beyond, perhaps, letting the Palestinians have the authority to sweep their own streets and collect their own garbage. They would never be allowed to have control of land and water resources.

When he returned to Israel from Camp David, Begin assured his leadership colleagues that he had no intention of honouring the commitment he had signed.

But that had not been enough assurance for those who had done most on the battlefield to create Greater Israel. They feared that because the principle of limited autonomy for the Palestinians had been conceded, Israel would come under mounting international pressure to withdraw to more or less the pre-1967 borders, to make way for full Palestinian self-government. Hence the blood oath.

Weizman’s resignation added greatly to Begin’s paranoia. He had previously been shaken by Dayan’s resignation as foreign minister. That had happened on 21 October 1979, seven months after the signing at the White House of the separate Israel–Egypt peace treaty. Nobody was more determined than Dayan to have the PLO excluded from any negotiations but, because of President Carter’s commitment to something of value for

the Palestinians, Dayan realised that Israel had to be seen to be going through the motions of negotiating a limited autonomy deal with some Palestinians—non-PLO Palestinians and handpicked Israeli stooges to be sure, but some Palestinians. The real reason for Dayan's resignation was his view that Begin was offering too little in the way of limited autonomy to attract even Palestinian stooges, if they could be found. On that basis Dayan had concluded that Begin's policy would make it more not less likely that there would be pressure on Israel to accept Arafat's PLO as a party to negotiations—especially if Carter won a second term in office.

For the first six months after Dayan's resignation, Begin, by then mentally unstable some said, had served as his own foreign minister. I could imagine him thinking that he was running out of people he could trust to represent his own totally uncompromising position. Then, in March 1980, while I was engaging with Arafat and Peres, he appointed Yitzhak Shamir to the crucial post of foreign minister. The only thing they really had in common (apart from their Polish origins) was their shared experience of leading the Zionist terror campaign that had driven the British and most Palestinians out of Palestine. Shamir had voted against the peace treaty with Egypt. In terms of Israel's image abroad (I mean representing it), Begin could not have made a more unsuitable appointment. Shamir was, to say the least, an unattractive little man, and he spoke hardly a word of English. When he did so, it tended to be in pig-like grunts. In Western Europe it was also not helpful to Israel's cause that Shamir was known in the corridors of power as the man who had targeted Count Bernadotte (and probably Saïd Hammami) for assassination.

When Ezer gave a final "No" to providing cover for Yariv, Peres to his credit did not abandon the search for somebody of stature to represent him at a meeting with Arafat. We considered two other people but neither were willing to take the risk. In despair I had a discussion with Shlomo Gazit about what, if anything, could be done to get Peres and Arafat into dialogue. (It was during this conversation that Gazit said to me, "The trouble with us Israelis is that we've become the victims of our own propaganda.") This great and good man, the very best and the brightest of all of Israeli's Directors of Military intelligence, said we should not lose

hope because there was still a way to get Peres and Arafat into dialogue, but it would have to wait until Peres was prime minister.

The essence of Gazit's idea—the simple ones are always the best—was this. Soon after Peres became prime minister I would do two negotiated interviews—the first with Arafat, the second with Peres. We would have them published on consecutive Sundays in, say, *The Observer*, with syndication worldwide. In the first, and by prior agreement with Peres, Arafat would say certain things for a guaranteed response from Peres in his apparently spontaneous follow-up interview. In that Prime Minister Peres would say, by prior agreement with Arafat, that he intended to leave no stone unturned in the search for peace, that he had been interested by what Arafat had said in his interview, and that he was prepared to authorise formal contacts with the Chairman of the PLO in order to take a view on whether or not he was serious about doing political business with Israel.

My assumption at the time was that if such a scenario could be played out, Gazit himself would have the first authorised meeting with Arafat and, if his report was favourable, Prime Minister Peres would then take the plunge.

So our hopes of kick-starting a comprehensive peace process—of succeeding where President Carter had failed or, to be fair, had not been allowed to succeed—were not dead. We just had to be patient and wait for some months for Peres to win the election...

Three months before the election on 30 June 1981, Peres seemed certain of victory. His Labour Party and its allies (The Alignment) had a 25 per cent lead over Begin's Likud in the opinion polls. But when the votes were counted and translated into Knesset seats, Begin's Likud had one more than Peres' Alignment—48 to 47. Neither could form a government without the support of minority parties and factions, but because Begin was the leader of the largest party (if only by one seat and with the number of votes cast for the Alignment and Likud roughly equal), Israel's President Navon finally had no choice but to invite Begin to have the first go at cobbling together a coalition government, the minimum majority needed for control of the Knesset being 61 seats. It was not a foregone conclusion that Begin would succeed. Though he could not say so, President Navon, a

Labour dove, was among those who hoped he would fail, leaving the way clear for Peres to form the next government.

On 5 August, after weeks of political horse-trading that makes a mockery of democracy in Israel, Begin succeeded and presented his new coalition government to the Knesset. As Shlaim noted, it was numerically a weak government with a wafer-thin majority—just the one seat voting advantage in the 120-member Knesset. “But what it lacked in numerical strength, it more than made up for in political cohesion and ideological fervour.”⁵

It was an historical moment. Despite the fact that the voters had been more or less evenly divided (one half of them potential doves, the other half hawks), *this was the first time in Israel’s history that an entire coalition government had been drawn exclusively from the right-wing of the political spectrum.*

Why, against all expectations, had the election pendulum swung Begin’s way?

On 7 June, three weeks before the people of Israel went to the polls, the Israeli Air Force attacked and apparently destroyed Iraq’s nuclear reactor at Osirak. Though it was condemned by governments around the world, including the Reagan administration in Washington, “Operation Babylon” was enormously popular in Israel. Begin was to say: “On no account shall we permit an enemy to develop weapons of mass destruction against the people of Israel.”⁶ This was the expression of Israel’s intention to preserve its nuclear weapons monopoly in perpetuity, and it became known as the Begin Doctrine.

Three weeks before the election, the Israeli Air Force attacked and destroyed Iraq’s nuclear reactor at Osirik. The election pendulum swung Begin’s way against all expectations.

That Israel would now renew and strengthen its commitment to keeping most of the occupied West Bank (and also the Golan Heights) was guaranteed by Sharon’s success in persuading Begin to agree, against his own gut instincts, to appoint him defence minister. It may well have been that Begin had no choice. He might have owed his opportunity to serve a

second term as prime minister to the arm-twisting that Sharon did on his behalf, to deliver him a coalition government with a majority of one.

What happened next is the story of how Defence Minister Sharon imposed his Jabotinsky-like iron will on Begin's second-term government and became in all but name the military dictator of Greater Israel for a while, for the purpose, with a green light from inside the Reagan administration, of solving the Palestinian problem his way.

As we shall now see, Defence Minister Sharon's concept of what had to be done was very different—much more imaginative and comprehensive—than that of Prime Minister Begin.

**“TELL ARAFAT
I’VE ONLY GOT MY
ATOM BOMB LEFT!”**

Begin’s own attempt to solve the problem of the PLO by military means was brutal but unsuccessful.

The overture to it was Israel’s first land invasion and occupation of southern Lebanon in March 1978. Three months later Israeli forces withdrew in reluctant response to UN Resolution 425. Thereafter a new UN force, UNIFIL, was established in Lebanon to monitor and hopefully maintain the ceasefire between the PLO and the IDF. Then, on 16 July 1981, when Begin was officially given the task of forming a new government and was still acting as defence minister, he celebrated by ordering the biggest ever Israeli air-strikes on the PLO in Lebanon to date. The following day, directed by the IDF’s rabidly anti-Palestinian chief of staff, General Rafael Eytan, Israeli planes bombed the heart of Beirut. At least 134 Palestinians and Lebanese were killed.

In response, and knowing that his credibility with his own people would suffer a damaging and perhaps fatal blow if he continued to hold his fire, Arafat gave the order for the PLO to shoot, and rockets rained down on Israel’s northern settlements. For the best part of two years, co-operating with UNIFIL, the PLO leader had done the maximum possible to prevent his fighters giving the IDF the pretext to strike. Arafat now declared, “*Begin, like Hitler, is going for the Final Solution.*”

As the UN’s crisis managers knew, Arafat was more right than wrong. With Begin’s approval, and no President Carter to put the brakes on Israel, Eytan was going for the kill, not intending to stop until the PLO was finished. Eytan’s plan was to reduce to rubble those parts of Beirut in which the PLO was known to be, and then to follow-up with a swift land invasion in concert with the Christian militias. *The general aim was to kill Palestinians wherever they could be found.*

Ten days later the fighting was halted when Arafat agreed to a ceasefire after overcoming enormous problems in persuading many of his field commanders to accept his orders. It was widely assumed that Begin and Eytan had agreed to halt their action only because of pressure from the Reagan administration. At a point a reluctant Reagan administration did apply some pressure to stop the Israelis but the pressure would not have been applied if the UN's chief trouble-shooter, Brian Urquhart, had not prevailed upon the Reagan administration's special envoy in the region, Philip Habib, to tell his masters in Washington to do the right thing. More to the point, there would not have been a ceasefire, (and the Israelis would have been allowed by the Reagan administration to finish the job of destroying the PLO) if Urquhart had not been personally responsible for bringing it into being.

He started by obtaining Arafat's agreement. At three o'clock the following morning Urquhart was telephoned by Habib. He said the Israelis had three demands that had to be met before they would accept a ceasefire. Urquhart's graphic account to me of what happened next—it provides rare insight into why negotiating with Israel can drive all but the most determined mediators to despair—was the following:

“I said to Phil, ‘Forget it. If you want the fighting stopped, I’ll stop it. I have Arafat’s agreement. But I am not going to put in any fine print and spend the next ten years arguing about it with our Israeli friends.’ *Basically what the Israelis wanted to do was to extend the ceasefire to Jordan and God knows where else. They were asking Arafat to guarantee that no Palestinian would ever fire another shot from anywhere, and that no Palestinian terrorist would ever cross into Israel from anywhere. Arafat could not guarantee that and the Israelis knew it.* Phil said the Israelis were insisting on their demands. I said: ‘Look, I can guarantee Arafat will stop the shooting in Lebanon and he means it. But if you’re trying to include the entire Palestine liberation struggle—forget it. I’m not going to do it and I don’t think that’s what we should be talking about now. *I mean, after all, who the hell invaded southern Lebanon? The Israelis. Who started this shooting match we’re trying to end? The Israelis. For Christ’s sake, do you*

want to stop the fighting or don't you? The Israelis dropped their demands and they finally agreed to a simple ceasefire covering Lebanon. And they didn't like it one little bit.”¹

But there was another reason why Begin finally agreed to a simple ceasefire in Lebanon. Incoming Defence Minister Sharon wanted it. He actually insisted on it. Why?

When the ceasefire came into effect, Begin was still days away from presenting his new coalition government to the Knesset. As the incoming defence minister, Sharon wanted to start with a clean sheet of his own. He believed that destroying the PLO in Lebanon would not of itself solve the Palestinian problem. What Sharon had in mind was a comprehensive plan to solve it once and for all, but he needed time to make the necessary preparations, and that's why he had wanted the ceasefire. There were three elements to Sharon's master plan.

The first (in Lebanon) was the complete destruction of the PLO's military and political infrastructure and the liquidation of Arafat and as many top PLO leaders as possible. (Sharon knew that almost all of them were in Beirut).

The second was the creation of a Palestinian puppet leadership in waiting on the West Bank. (In November Sharon charged the civilian administrator of the Occupied Territories, Menachem Milson, with the task of creating that leadership).

The third was the de-stabilisation of Jordan and the overthrow of King Hussein, followed by the installation in Amman of a regime headed by Sharon's Palestinian puppets transported from the West Bank.

If his plan worked Sharon was intending to say to the Palestinians that the Israelis were going to stay on the West Bank for ever; that Greater Israel (now minus Sinai but with the Golan Heights formally and illegally annexed to Israel on 14 December 1981) was an irreversible fact of history; but that the Jewish state recognised that the Palestinians must have a homeland of their own, and there it was: Jordan—take it and welcome.

In effect, Sharon was intending to put the flesh on the bones of Zionism's version of the two-state solution to the Palestine problem.

I subsequently asked King Hussein if he had been aware of Sharon's intentions to get rid of him at the time—i.e. before Sharon implemented the first phase of his grand strategy by invading Lebanon on 6 June 1982. The King's answer introduced me to one of the greatest conspiracies which are part and parcel of the unexpurgated, true story of the struggle for Palestine *and Zionism's success in effectively setting the agenda for all the major powers of the world and, in the post-Nasser and post-Feisal era, for the Arab regimes.*

Hussein told me that he and all of his brother Arab leaders had been aware of Sharon's master plan. His Majesty went on to say that after trying and failing to prevent its implementation by presenting a peace plan of their own—the Fahd or Fez Plan—they (his brother Arab leaders) had bowed to American pressure to let Sharon have his way because, if he succeeded, there would be a neat and tidy solution to the Palestine problem. It required Arafat's PLO and the Hashemite regime in Jordan to be the sacrificial lambs on the altar of political expediency, but so far as the other most interested parties were concerned, that was a small price to pay for an end to the conflict which, if it continued, and because of Zionism's effective veto on any peace process, could take the region and the world to catastrophe.

At the end of January 1982, all the defence ministers of the Gulf States assembled for a secret meeting. There were no aides and advisers present. The main purpose of the meeting was to agree on a message to be sent to Washington. *It was that the Arabs would make no military moves and would not resort to oil or other sanctions against the U.S. when Sharon invaded Lebanon to destroy the PLO.*

Arafat added the following to my understanding of the great conspiracy. "After that secret meeting—of course we knew it had taken place—I met with a very important Arab leader. I will not tell you which one, but I will tell you what he said to me. He looked into my eyes and said this, exactly this: "*We know there is going to be an attempt to liquidate you. You will ask for help and it will not come. Be careful.*"² Khalad Hassan subsequently told me that the Arab leader who had "the decency to be troubled by his conscience" was the Ruler of Oman, Sultan Qaboos.

The defence ministers of the Gulf States agreed to make no military moves or resort to oil or other sanctions against the U.S. when Sharon invaded Lebanon to destroy the PLO.

After he learned that his Arab brothers were not intending to help him—they were not even willing to supply him with anti-tank weapons to slow down the expected Israeli advance, Arafat had a meeting with Urquhart. In the course of it he asked the UN's chief trouble-shooter to give a message to Israel's leaders. Arafat said: *"Please tell these stupid people in Jerusalem they will be sorry when I'm gone. I am the only one who can deliver the compromise to make peace."*³

Recalling that conversation, Urquhart said to me: *"It was tragic. Arafat was speaking nothing less than the truth. He was the only Palestinian leader who could talk about peace with Israel and not be killed the next day for saying so."*⁴ (Sadat was assassinated on 6 October 1981, six months after he signed his separate peace with Israel, which was also his death warrant. He was mourned and eulogised by Western leaders and the Western media, but not by his own or Arab masses anywhere.)

Two weeks before the Gulf defence ministers sent their secret message to Washington, Sharon had made a secret visit to Beirut. His purpose was to brief his Christian allies on what was expected of them when the invasion started. He took the commanders of the Israeli-backed Christian militias on a tour of vital points he wanted them to seize in Muslim West Beirut when the war began.

By the time the Reagan administration received the confirmation that the Arab regimes were not going to lift a finger when Israel went to war in Lebanon, Sharon was about ready to go. The only thing stopping him was the ceasefire Arafat had accepted the previous July and was enforcing.

Throughout April and May, monitored by UNIFIL reporting to Urquhart, the Israelis brazenly broke the ceasefire on a number of occasions by bombing PLO positions in southern Lebanon. Their objective was quite simply to provoke Arafat into returning the fire, to give Sharon the excuse he needed to go. *Urquhart was in constant touch with Arafat saying, "For God's sake, don't respond!" Arafat's reply was always the same. "I gave you my word and I'll keep it."*

Just once, on 9 May, the PLO did return the fire and some rockets fell on Israel's northern settlements. Abu Daoud said: "At this moment Arafat was in great danger. Some of our field commanders had returned the fire without an order from him. If Arafat had had his own way we still would not have fired a single shot. But Arafat knew that if he gave an immediate order to stop the firing, he probably would have been overthrown there and then. Really, I am not exaggerating. So what did he do? He said to the field commanders: 'Okay, you will fire some few rockets, but you will stop when I give the order!'"² Arafat confirmed Abu Daoud's account. He told me it was correct in all respects.

Behind the scenes Urquhart was telling Begin that he should restrain Sharon because the world was not completely stupid and fully realised that Israel was provoking Arafat. Sharon was apparently made to understand that he had overplayed his hand and that the PLO's return of fire on 9 May could not be a pretext for invasion.

It came, the pretext, in two phases, the first on the night of Thursday, 3 June. Three Palestinian students in London were activated by an order from Abu Nidal's organisation in Iraq. Not trained terrorists or men of violence by choice, they had committed themselves to carrying out an assignment if requested in return for the payment of their tuition fees and living expenses. Their assignment was to assassinate Israel's Ambassador to Britain, Shlomo Argov. He was shot in the neck as he was leaving the Dorchester Hotel where he had been attending a banquet with 84 other ambassadors; and he remained close to death for some time after a two-hour brain operation at the National Hospital for Nervous Diseases.

When Arafat failed to respond to Sharon's provocations, an assassination attempt on Israel's Ambassador to Britain by PLO enemy Abu Nidal served as the Israeli pretext for invading Lebanon and attacking the PLO.

My detailed research gave me no reason to doubt the conclusions of Arafat's subsequent investigation. *The three students were activated by an order from Abu Nidal's group in Baghdad, but the target, Ambassador Argov,*

was selected by the Israeli agent inside it: for the purpose of setting in motion the events which would give Begin's government the pretext needed for the invasion of Lebanon. (In fact Arafat and his senior Fatah leadership colleagues were far from alone in believing that the attempt on Argov's life was not an authentic Abu Nidal operation. That was also the view of many in Western Europe's counter-intelligence services. In due course close friends of recovered Ambassador Argov would hint that he himself was inclined to the view that Mossad had had a hand in it.)

When Begin assembled his cabinet at 9.30 the following morning to discuss Israel's reprisal attack, some of those present drew attention to the fact that Abu Nidal's organisation was "an exception among the Palestinian terror groups" and the enemy of Arafat's PLO. The unstated but clear implication was that a reprisal attack on the PLO might not be seen by even some of Israel's friends in the outside world as an appropriate or right response. Begin brushed aside the idea of discussion. "They're all PLO!", he snapped.⁶ As it happened, Defence Minister Sharon was not present. He was on a secret visit to Rumania. But as Ze've Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari observed in *Israel's Lebanon War*, "his spirit permeated the room."⁷

Within minutes of hearing about the attempt on Argov's life, Begin and Eytan had made up their minds to attack the PLO, and Sharon came racing back from Romania. As far as Begin was concerned the purpose of the cabinet meeting was to rubber stamp the decision already taken. There was only one question for serious discussion. They were going to tell the world that the air strike they were about to launch on Beirut was a reprisal for the attempt to murder Argov and not the start of an Israeli invasion of Lebanon, but... Could they be sure, really sure, that this time the PLO would be provoked into shooting back, to enable Israel to claim that Arafat had broken the ceasefire of 26 July 1981, and give Israel the pretext for invasion? (On 20 May, when Sharon had discussions in Washington with the Reagan administration, Secretary of State Alexander Haig had stressed that there would have to be an unquestionable breach of the ceasefire by the PLO if Israel and the U.S. were to have a chance of persuading world opinion that an invasion of Lebanon was even remotely justified.)

The man who assured Begin that an air strike was absolutely guaranteed on this occasion to provoke the PLO to react with force was Yehoshua Saquy, the Director of Military Intelligence. He had been tracking Arafat's movements and knew that the PLO Chairman was in Saudi Arabia. Saquy also knew from a conversation he and Begin had had with Urquhart that Arafat, whatever the Israeli provocation, was doing his absolute best in impossible circumstances to maintain the ceasefire. But far away in Saudi Arabia what real influence could Arafat have on his commanders? None.

Within minutes of being woken on the morning of Friday 4 June with the news of the attempt on Argov's life, Arafat was at the wheel of his car and calling to his bodyguards, "Quickly, quickly." Nobody drove as fast or as dangerously as Arafat. He had only one thing on his mind—to get to Beirut before the Israelis carried out the inevitable reprisal attack. (He didn't fly in and out of Beirut because he believed the Israelis would hi-jack or shoot down his plane). From Saudi Arabia he could issue all the orders he liked for restraint, but unless he was in Beirut to impose his will by the sheer force of his personality (including his terrible temper) there was no guarantee that all of his field commanders would obey them.

He had more than 500 miles to go in a desperate race against Israel's reprisal clock. He lost it. Before he got to Beirut, Israeli aircraft were bombing and strafing PLO facilities there; and some of his commanders were hitting back at Israel in the only way they could—rockets were raining down on Israel's northern settlements. Begin could now tell the world that Arafat's PLO had broken the ceasefire and that Israel was intending to exercise its "right of self-defence".

A quick glance at the balance of forces for what Sharon (and Begin and Eytan) intended to be a war of destiny tells its own story.

Israel committed 90,000 men, 1,300 tanks, the same number of armoured personnel carriers, 1,200 troop and supply trucks, and, as required, helicopters and warplanes from a total strength of 634 combat aircraft. Israel also threw its navy into the attack. In addition Israel was fighting with the latest (mainly American) military technology—some of it so new that the Americans had not had the opportunity to evaluate it under

real battlefield conditions. (The American MIC was always happy for Israel to test new weapons and technology). Israel's allies in Lebanon, the Christian militias, were killing machines in their own right.

The fighting strength of the PLO, including the Lebanese Muslims who fought with it, was not more than 15,000, men and boys, with no air force, no mobile armour and no navy. And little modern or sophisticated weaponry of any kind. (Knowing that it was only a matter of time before the Israelis invaded, Arafat had sent an emissary to Moscow to try to purchase a few missiles capable of striking targets deep inside Israel. In theory they were to be his insurance policy of last resort. He was hoping that the threat to use them would be sufficient to deter the Israelis from entering Beirut. The Soviets declined even to consider the request).

At the start of their invasion of Lebanon the Israelis quickly destroyed the entire Syrian air defence system including 92 Syrian warplanes though they knew Assad had no intention to take aggressive action.

At the start of their invasion of Lebanon the Israelis quickly destroyed the entire Syrian air defence system including 92 Syrian warplanes. The Israelis knew that Assad had no intention of taking any aggressive action. The short, sharp campaign against Syria was merely to guarantee, absolutely, in all and any circumstances, complete Israeli freedom of the sky. That done Sharon could concentrate on destroying the PLO.

For 67 days of the 86-day war, after the Israelis had raced northwards in true blitzkrieg style, Arafat and all the inhabitants of Muslim West Beirut were under pulverising siege. *Because of television the Western world had its first real opportunity to study the ugly, Nazi-like face of gut-Zionism, a side which previously only the Palestinians had seen in close-up.* Generally speaking the peoples of the Western world were shocked and sickened and horrified by what they saw. Their governments said they were equally shocked, but they did nothing. They knew it was all going according to plan.

Many Jews everywhere and some Israelis were also shocked, sickened and horrified by what was being done in their name. Some found

the courage to write anguished letters highly critical of Israel to newspapers, a few of which were actually published. For so doing these Jewish critics of Israel's aggression were savaged in print and over the airwaves by their gut-Zionist co-religionists.

One of the few who dared to break the silence of America's political establishment was George Ball, Under Secretary of State, 1961 to 1966, and U.S. Permanent Representative to the U.N. in 1968. On 15 July he opened a statement to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee with these words: "*The burden of my comments this morning is that our country urgently needs to recast its relations with Israel.*"⁸

Repeatedly in the last quarter of a century, Ball said, the Israeli government had taken matters into its own hands in the Middle East, "secretly launching military adventures without regard to their effect on America's plans or concerns." He ticked off some of the instances he had in mind—the invasions of 1956 and 1967, the bombing raid on an Iraqi nuclear reactor, the savage bombing of residential areas of Beirut a month later and, as he was speaking, the invasion of Lebanon. He went on: "Such a protracted sequence of events has established a pattern so routine as to be taken for granted. First, Israel embarks on a military adventure at a carefully chosen time when America's attention is focused elsewhere. Second, our government responds, if at all, by mild threats both sides know will never be carried out. Third, when the Israeli government reacts with anger, we appease it by providing more planes, guns, tanks and economic help."

It had been 25 years, Ball said, since a president had had the political fortitude to use America's influence to make Israel back down from such aggressive adventures—as Eisenhower had done after the Suez war. One price the U.S. paid for this lack of courage was that "*the U.N. had been rendered impotent in fulfilling its peacekeeping functions in the region, even when we strongly backed its actions there.*" Ball then cited Security Council Resolution 242 and noted that America had "stood mute" while Israel established its capital city in captured Jerusalem, annexed the Golan Heights and settled 40 per cent of the West Bank of Jordan. "*In U.S. foreign relations since 1967, Israel seems to be the exception to every rule, every principle America stands for.*"

Ball then turned his attention to current U.S. policy for the Middle East which, he said, was based on a “patently false premise”. He went on:

Our first step in shaping a Middle East policy that will advance and protect our indispensable national interests is to acknowledge that Israel is no longer a weak, beleaguered state menaced by powerful enemies on all sides. Yet we have never seriously tried to adjust our policies to this change of circumstances.

Why not? Ball’s answer was that all too often when Americans discussed possible resolutions to the problems of the Middle East, someone would seek to terminate the discussion by saying “Israel will never agree to that!”

Ball concluded: “*It is a habit we should break. United States policy has marched to an Israeli drum for too long.*”

Stephen Green, in his comment on Ball’s remarks, said that if there was one fault in them, it was that Israel had never in fact been “a weak, beleaguered state”. As the foregoing pages document, my own take on the matter is not quite that. Beleaguered it may have been (because of its refusal to make peace on terms most Arabs could just about accept), but weak? Never.

Critical to Sharon’s plan for liquidating Arafat and his senior leadership colleagues was a network of 70 Palestinian traitor agents. They had been recruited, trained and equipped with miniature radio transmitters no bigger than a cigarette packet. The 70 agents were selected from 1,200 potential collaborators whose names were in the files of Israel’s various intelligence agencies when Sharon got down to planning his Final Solution in August 1981. Their function was to report the whereabouts of the PLO’s top leaders—Arafat, Abu Jihad, Abu Iyad and George Habash were the priorities. The information provided was translated into co-ordinates for attacks on the individuals by Sharon’s warplanes. Arafat described it as “sniping by jet fighter.”

Critical to Sharon’s plan for liquidating Arafat and his senior leadership colleagues was a network of 70 Palestinian traitor agents.

I asked Arafat and his colleagues how they discovered the Israeli network. “By accident”, Abu Iyad told me. “It happened exactly this way. At the end of June, perhaps 27 June, one of our Palestinian girls came to me. She was very frightened but she was very much in control of herself at the moment. She said, ‘Abu Iyad, my family is dead.’ I said, ‘I’m sorry.’ She said, ‘I want to tell you why they are dead.’ And then she took the small transmitter from her handbag. ‘You know what this is,’ she said. I nodded. She said: ‘I killed my family with this. I am an Israeli agent. I reported Abu Amar’s position... the bombs came... and my family is dead.’”⁹

As a result of that confession, 27 Israeli agents were identified and arrested by Abu Iyad’s security people in 48 hours or so. Many of the others were subsequently identified because the first confession gave Abu Iyad the key to the whole operation. He said: “The Israelis changed the code words once and sometimes twice a day. The agents on the ground only knew one half of the code. So each day, sometimes twice a day, they had to go to Israeli–Christian checkpoints on the line dividing Beirut to get the other half. So naturally we had our people watching and, well, the rest you can guess.”¹⁰

Without consulting Arafat, Abu Iyad gave instructions for the first 27 traitor agents to be taken away and shot. The others were executed one by one as they were uncovered and confessed.

Arafat had a number of very narrow escapes, the bombs falling within minutes and sometimes less of him moving from one location to another. But there were two occasions when he really did believe the end had come.

On 3 July, the Israelis imposed a blockade on the Muslim half of Beirut. They cut off water and electricity and prevented other forms of fuel, food and medical supplies going in. After that Sharon’s strategy for finishing the PLO was obvious to everybody. The blockade, or so Sharon thought, would force most of the 500,000 Lebanese to flee.

When they were gone only the Palestinians would be left. With his planes and tanks Sharon would then reduce West Beirut to rubble. Nobody would remain alive. But the majority of Beirut’s Muslims refused to be bombed, starved and terrorised into leaving their homes and their city.

Sharon subsequently showed his rage by ordering Israel's air force to make some truly terrifying attacks on West Beirut. (It was Shock and Awe twenty-one years before the Bush regime in Washington came up with the phrase to describe the air attacks the U.S. and Britain made on Baghdad for the purpose of getting rid of Saddam Hussein.)

Two weeks after the imposition of the Israeli blockade a delegation of leaders and notables representing the whole Muslim community called on Arafat. He told me: "They came to plead with me to give up the fighting because, they said, the PLO's position was hopeless and there was no point in causing more casualties and further destruction of the city. They said to me: 'Why are you going on? The Arab regimes are not going to help you. The governments of the world are not going to help you. Has anybody promised you anything? No. If you had evidence that some help was coming, we would continue to support your struggle. But nothing is coming. There are no miracles... So, please, Abu Amar, we ask you to give up fighting now.'

"I said to them: 'My dear friends, if that is what you really want I am ready now, this moment, to give the order to stop the fighting. You have the right to ask me to stop and I will respect your wishes. But first, please, listen to what I have to say.' And then I spoke to them about the lessons of Arab history. It was a long talk and I made many points. In the end I said we owed it to future generations to stand and die if necessary. I said that if we gave up our struggle now, the spirit of Arab resistance to Zionism would be crushed forever. *And I finally spoke of the sickness in our existing Arab world. I said the sickness existed because each new generation had been betrayed by its fathers. And I asked them a question. I said: 'Are we going to be just like all the generations and betray our children, or are we going to be the first generation to set an example of how to be steadfast?'*" When I finished they came close to me and their tears were flowing. They said: 'Abu Amar, we are ashamed of what we said. You must fight on and we will die with you.'"

The second occasion when Arafat thought the end had come was on a day early in August when Israeli tanks had completed their encirclement of West Beirut and seemed to be closing in for the kill.

Arafat said: “Although I didn’t tell my colleagues at the time, I was completely upside down. I couldn’t understand how the Israelis had completed their encirclement in just six hours. So I went and prayed for 30 minutes. When I finished my prayers, I said to my colleagues, ‘I feel the winds of paradise are blowing...’ According to our religion and our traditions I was saying two things. First that I was ready to fight and die as a martyr and so to enter paradise. Second that I expected to die. Then I issued my final battle order—‘The Winds of Paradise Are Blowing’. The change in the morale of our fighters was unbelievable. I can’t tell you how things changed. If the Israelis were coming to kill us, we were ready for them.”

Despite his readiness to die fighting, Arafat was still daring to hope that if he could hold out for long enough, outraged world opinion would oblige even President Reagan, no matter how reluctantly, to put a brake on Israel’s war machine.

At about this time Prime Minister Begin sent a letter to President Reagan. As quoted by Schiff and Yari he wrote: “In a war whose purpose is to annihilate the leader of the terrorists in West Beirut, I feel as though I have sent an army to Berlin to wipe out Hitler in the bunker.”¹¹

On this occasion there was method in Begin’s madness. *His letter to Reagan was in support of a concerted Zionist lobby campaign to sabotage the efforts of those who were advising the president that he had to intervene to stop the Israelis entering Muslim West Beirut to finish off Arafat and his PLO.* Among those who were telling Reagan that he must act were his own special representatives in the region, Habib, and Robert Dillon, America’s Ambassador to Lebanon.

The extent to which Ambassador Dillon had already become a target of Zionism’s hatred, probably second only to Arafat, was indicated by Schiff and Yari. They wrote that he was “an envoy so tactless in his remarks to the Israelis, on every possible occasion, that to a man they began to regard him as an incorrigible anti-Semite—*especially when he spoke bluntly about ‘breaking’ the Jewish lobby in the United States so that the president could have a free hand in dealing with Israel.*”¹²

Dillon must have been pleasantly surprised when President Reagan agreed to send a letter to Begin demanding that Israeli forces keep out of West Beirut. *Begin's reply included the observation that "Jews do not kneel but to God."*¹³

President Reagan agreed to send a letter to Begin demanding that Israeli forces keep out of West Beirut. Begin's reply included the observation that "Jews do not kneel but to God."

That was Begin's way of inspiring the Zionist lobby in America to keep the heat on Reagan, as well as putting the president himself on notice that Israel's leaders (unlike most of their Arab counterparts one might say) did not take orders from Washington. In principle Begin was still at one with Sharon in wanting to prevent Reagan endorsing a plan that Habib, his assistant Morris Drapper, Dillon and Urquhart were working on. It was a plan to evacuate Arafat and his fighters, with a multi-national force to protect them during their departure.

Sharon had vowed that the PLO would not be evacuated while he remained Israel's defence minister; but he was beginning to sense that Begin was losing his nerve for the confrontation with the Reagan administration that might be necessary if Arafat and his PLO were to be destroyed, in days if not hours.

After as good as telling the president to get stuffed, Begin had, in fact, issued orders to halt any further advance into West Beirut. Sharon was not immediately too concerned on that account because he could defy the order by nibbling—having the IDF creep forward a few metres here and a few metres there, still reducing the size of the killing field but not obviously enough to give Habib cause to complain to Begin that his defence minister was defying him and President Reagan. But when it became apparent that the Reagan administration was likely to support the evacuation plan, Sharon demanded Arafat's surrender. He summoned Habib to give him a message for the PLO leader.

By this time Habib, Brooklyn-born and Jewish, had had more than enough of Sharon. It was to Habib, in December 1981, for passing on to the Reagan administration, that Sharon gave the first of his signals that he

was intending to invade Lebanon. When they met in Israel on 5 December, Sharon said to Habib: “If the terrorists continue to violate the ceasefire, we will have no choice but to wipe them out completely in Lebanon, destroy the PLO’s infrastructure there... We will eradicate the PLO in Lebanon”¹⁴ Habib, appalled, replied: “*General Sharon, this is the twentieth century and times have changed. You can’t go round invading countries just like that—spreading destruction and killing civilians.*” Like Dayan, Sharon was not remotely interested in the views of outsiders, even Jewish outsiders. And at a point he said to Habib: “I must emphasise again, that is my personal opinion, but it is the way to destroy the centre of international terrorism.”

When the American arrived, Sharon smashed the top of his desk with his huge fist and screamed: “*Who are these Palestinians? They are not like Arabs... they don’t run from the fight... I’ve thrown everything I’ve got at them and they are still there! Tell Arafat I’ve only got my atom bomb left!*”¹⁵

That was, of course, Sharon’s way of telling Arafat that if he did not now surrender, the Israelis would go in for the kill using all the conventional weapons at their disposal.

Habib conveyed Sharon’s message to Sa’eb Salam. This former Lebanese prime minister—elegant, charming, courteous to a fault but passionate—was Habib’s link with Arafat. He told me he listened with patience as Habib painted a picture of Sharon’s ugly mood and then delivered the message which was supposed to expedite Arafat’s surrender. When it was Salam’s time to speak he said: “*I have no need to consult with Arafat. I can give you his answer now. Truly this Sharon does not understand the Palestinians. They have decided to die and, if they must die, how they die is of no consequence to them... So tell this stupid Sharon to drop his atom bomb! That’s Arafat’s answer.*”¹⁶

Salam then made the short journey to Arafat to report the substance of his conversation with Habib. When he got to the punch line, “So tell this stupid Sharon to drop his atom bomb”, Arafat said nothing. He just smiled.

The more it became apparent that Begin and almost all of his other cabinet colleagues were edging towards acceptance of the evacuation plan,

the more Sharon escalated his aerial bombardment of West Beirut. As before, the attacks were directed at the Palestinian inhabited suburbs and refugee camps.

By late in the evening of 11 August, Habib had negotiated a draft agreement for the PLO's evacuation. The Americans had arranged for Arafat himself and his mainstream Fatah leadership colleagues to be given refuge in Tunisia, far from the Palestine of their mini-state compromise. Eight other Arab states had agreed to take a share of the PLO's fighters. Arafat had given his in-principle acceptance of the agreement and so, after that, had Begin and his cabinet including Defence Minister Sharon. But...

The following morning Sharon showed his real hand. He ordered the Israeli Air Force to mount its fiercest attack on West Beirut to date. Black Thursday as it came to be known started with a massive artillery barrage at dawn. It was followed by 11 hours of non-stop, saturation bombing from the air. More than 300 people in West Beirut were killed on that one day alone.

The morning after a draft agreement had been negotiated for the PLO's evacuation and approved by Arafat, the Israeli Air Force began 11 hours of non-stop saturation bombing on West Beirut, killing more than 300.

Schiff and Yari were to write: "*What made Black Thursday so terrifying was the sense of brute force run wild, given the sharp contrast between the progress in negotiations (to evacuate the PLO) and the savage attack on the city.*"¹⁷

As it was happening even President Reagan was persuaded to view the Israeli action as brutal and wholly unjustified. He telephoned Begin to tell him so, and to demand an immediate ceasefire. For over an hour Begin was not available to take the call because, it was said, he was asleep in his Knesset office. If Begin did take a nap, he might well have had a nightmare triggered by fear of a confrontation with Sharon at an upcoming meeting of the cabinet. It had been called at Sharon's request. He was intending to challenge Begin, to prevent the prime minister securing a cabinet majority for an order to prohibit Israel's ground forces entering Muslim West Beirut; an advance that was necessary if Sharon was to achieve the first of his three

master-plan objectives—the total elimination of the PLO. At a minimum Arafat and his leadership colleagues were not going to leave Beirut alive if Sharon got what he wanted from his cabinet colleagues. (It was to be the first time he bothered to consult most of them about anything).

But Sharon the “bulldozer” didn’t get what he wanted. Instead he found himself in angry confrontation with Begin and almost all of his cabinet colleagues. At one point in the shouting match Begin growled, “I want it to be clear who is running this meeting.”¹⁸

With his cup of rage overflowing, Sharon insisted that “any decision not to advance is a bad one”. He accused Begin of “caving in to the Americans”.¹⁹ That was too much for the prime minister. He replied: “Do you know what pressure I’ve been subjected to, and I haven’t even bent. Three times I said *nyet* to the Americans!”²⁰

At the end of the meeting the decision to halt Israel’s offensive was taken and to reinforce it, Defence Minister Sharon was stripped of his authority to activate the air force. A decision, as Stiff and Yari put it, “quite unprecedented in the history of the state, and an unmistakable declaration of no confidence in Sharon, even if it did come late in the game.”²¹

That evening Arafat announced his acceptance of Habib’s revised evacuation plan. And on Saturday 21 August, Arafat and the first contingent of PLO evacuees sailed away, bound for Tunis on a Greek ship; but only after Arafat (and the Greeks) had been assured that the Pentagon had left nothing to chance.

Three of the Sixth Fleet’s ships—an aircraft carrier and two destroyers—were at anchor outside Beirut harbour. When the Greek vessel was ready to leave, the two American destroyers entered the port to escort it out. Their captains were under orders to break out of the harbour by force if necessary, and if the IDF opened fire to return the fire. *After the attack on the Liberty, nobody with executive authority in the Pentagon was going to trust the Israelis to keep their word.*

Arafat and Abu Jihad told me they had information which convinced them that Sharon was intending to attack and sink the Greek

ship as it made its way out of the harbour. I think the Pentagon had the same information.

And so it was that the PLO's presence in Lebanon came to an end. The Palestine liberation movement was defeated but not crushed.

When the crunch came what, really, was the difference between Begin and Sharon? Begin was wise enough to understand that the invasion of Lebanon was a global public relations disaster for Zionism. Sharon was either unaware of that fact or not bothered by it.

Zionism's new propaganda line was to the effect that Arafat, in far away Tunis, was an irrelevance who should be ignored by the international community.

The question waiting for an answer was—how would the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories respond to what had happened?

The Zionist assumption was that they would now be ready to accept crumbs from Zionism's table.

**ZIONISM AS THE
RECRUITING SERGEANT
FOR VIOLENT ISLAMIC
FUNDAMENTALISM
(PALESTINIAN STYLE)**

December 1987 saw the start of the first intifada or Palestinian uprising in the occupied West Bank and Gaza. As it gathered momentum it captured and held the Western media's attention, *demonstrating once again that it was only when Palestinians resorted to violence, in this case stone-throwing, that their cry for a measure of justice was heard.*

As part of its global propaganda effort to have the world believe that Arafat in faraway Tunis was an irrelevance, Zionism asserted that the uprising in the Occupied Territories had nothing to do with Arafat and his PLO, and that he was merely jumping onto the intifada bandwagon—to give his “discredited” organisation the appearance of life after death. (Two years earlier Israeli jets had gone all the way to Tunis to destroy Arafat's headquarters and blow him to pieces! By chance, apparently, Arafat was not at his desk when the bombs fell. The Israelis then were desperate to kill him because Reagan's new Secretary of State, George Shultz, had been trying, Vance-like, to involve the PLO in the peace process; and Britain's Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, was about to make history by inviting two senior PLO executives to London for official talks. For their own propaganda purposes Israeli and other gut-Zionists proclaimed that Arafat was irrelevant but their actions demonstrated that they knew he was not.)

The explosion of Palestinian anger which became the first uprising against Israeli occupation was spontaneous, but Arafat and his leadership colleagues had anticipated it and made plans to sustain it.

Even as he was sailing away from Beirut for Tunis in August of 1982, Arafat was thinking about how to play the “internal (Occupied

Territories) card”, to prevent the PLO being cancelled as a factor in the Middle East peace equation.

The following year he ordered a “General Exercise” in and around Nablus. “General Exercise” was the code for a confrontation between the PLO’s supporters and the occupying Israeli army. *It was Arafat’s way of testing the feelings and mood of Palestinians throughout the Occupied Territories.* The response was exactly what Arafat and Abu Jihad had predicted it would be. The confrontation in Nablus took place, but there was no support for the idea that it should be sustained and extended. A popular uprising was still the stuff of dreams.

The PLO discovered that the silent majority of their people in the Occupied Territories had given their hearts if not their minds to the Islamic fundamentalists.

Arafat, Abu Jihad and Hani Hassan then conducted a detailed investigation of why the “General Exercise” had failed to inspire even a token demonstration of widespread support for the PLO. “We came to a very dramatic conclusion”, Hani told me. *“We discovered that the silent majority of our people in the Occupied Territories had given their hearts if not their minds to the Islamic fundamentalists.”* ¹

What explained this enormous shift of popular opinion, a change of heart which suggested, among other things, that Arafat’s moderate PLO was in danger of becoming an irrelevance in the Occupied Territories?

Short answer—despair.

There was first of all, and obviously, the despair born of 20 years of occupation and often-brutal Israeli repression. But in the wake of Israel’s invasion of Lebanon and its siege of Beirut there were, as Hani Hassan put it, “two new factors of despair.”

The first was the realisation that Arafat’s policy of politics and compromise with Israel was getting the Palestinians nowhere.

The second, a bitter lesson for a new generation of Palestinians, was that they were on their own when the crunch came. The proof was the way the Arab regimes had sat on their backsides and watched for weeks as Sharon tried to finish the PLO in Beirut.

Against that backdrop it was inevitable that more and more Palestinians in the Occupied Territories would begin to see Islamic fundamentalism as the only force capable of changing the status quo. But what surprised and shocked Arafat and his leadership colleagues was the number of Palestinians who had moved or who were moving in the direction of the fundamentalists. Hani said: “*We discovered that not less than 60 percent of our young people in the Occupied Territories were thinking that Islamic fundamentalism had more to offer than the PLO.*”²

The violent Islamic fundamentalism (Palestinian style) that Arafat and his leadership colleagues saw coming *as the inevitable product of continuing Israeli occupation and the new wave of Palestinian resistance* would be institutionalised in 1988, when Hamas was founded in Gaza by Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, a paralysed, wheelchair-bound religious teacher. In Arabic Hamas means zeal. It is also an acronym for the Islamic Resistance Movement.

For Arafat the consequences of Islamic fundamentalists making the running in the Occupied Territories were terrifying. (As they ought to have been to rational Israelis). First there was the obvious danger that the PLO would become an irrelevance for a majority of Palestinians. But that was not the worst-case scenario. If there was a popular uprising, and if the Islamic fundamentalists could claim most of the credit for it, Arafat—even if the PLO did retain some credibility—might not be able to deliver the compromise that he had struggled for six years to sell to his people.

So what at the beginning of 1984 were Arafat and his leadership colleagues to do?

They knew they could not force the pace in the Occupied Territories and that a popular uprising would have to be spontaneous, generated from within; but they set about planning and putting into place the support networks and mechanisms that would sustain the explosion of despair— prevent Israeli’s military and other security services putting it down with speed—when it happened.

Soon after it started on 9 December 1987 the day-to-day management, direction and co-ordination of the first intifada was, in fact, taken over, as planned, by Abu Jihad, then Arafat’s deputy and most likely

successor as well as commander of the PLO's scattered and mission-less military forces.

But Arafat's personal contribution to sustaining the uprising was significant. He had what he described to me as his "secret weapon". From a British company (Racal-Tacticom in Reading) he had purchased some state-of-the-art, space-age radio equipment—a transmitter and scores of mini-receivers—which enabled him to plug into the Arab communications satellite (AbSat) and talk directly to Palestinian demonstrators on street corners when they were confronting the Israeli army.

Hani Hassan spoke about the impact of Arafat's spiritual presence on the front lines in the Occupied Territories with great excitement. "You can't imagine", he told me. "The confrontations were very tough. Even when they were not being killed or seriously wounded (for throwing stones at Israel's mighty warriors) our people were taking a lot of punishment. So naturally there were times when their morale was low. And that's when Arafat lifted their spirits. Somebody would produce a receiver to link the demonstrators to him in Tunis. The one who spoke directly with him was overcome with emotion and enthusiasm. He would proudly tell the others, 'I've just talked to Abu Amar. He says we must continue.'"³

It was, however, Abu Jihad's oversight management and control, from the bedroom of his modest, whitewashed villa in Sidi Bou Said, a suburb to the north-east of Tunis, that prevented the Israelis from putting down the first intifada as quickly as they had assumed they could by collective punishments, arrests, torture and killing. *That was why, on 15 April 1988, Israeli Special Forces went all the way to Tunis to assassinate Abu Jihad in his bedroom.*

Though it was enclosed by a wall eight feet high, the villa occupied an exposed corner position at a road junction inside what many local people described as the "Forbidden Zone" because of its security status. The Tunisian president's palace and the American Ambassador's residence were almost within shouting distance of Abu Jihad's villa. When he was looking for a family home he had been directed to the location by Tunisian officials. They told him there was no other place where his security could be guaranteed. When the Israelis came ashore they were dressed as Tunisian

security forces. They knew it was going to be an easy kill—because Israeli agents had done a thorough reconnaissance job. They had discovered that Abu Jihad refused to surround himself with bodyguards of his own, in order to live as normal a life as possible with his childhood sweetheart and their children.

From Israel's point of view Abu Jihad's murder had the desired effect. Arafat was the man who inspired the Palestinian struggle, but Abu Jihad was the man who made it happen. Arafat was the man most respected by most Palestinians as the symbol of regenerated Palestinian nationalism, but Abu Jihad was the man the fighters and their families (the resisters of Israeli occupation) most admired. On an emotional as well as an organisational level, his murder was a huge setback for the resistance movement in the Occupied Territories.

When the first intifada started Israelis had a choice of two options. One was to continue living by the sword. The other was to say to themselves something like: "If we are not to find ourselves in a nightmare situation of our own making, we had better negotiate our way out of occupation." There were rational Israelis who did say such things. But gut-Zionism prevailed. It was congenitally incapable of responding to the Palestinian cry for even a minimum of justice with anything but the iron fist. Greater Israel was to be strengthened and consolidated, not dismantled, even at the price of there being no peace, ever.

It was then that some of those who had done most to make a reality of Zionism's mad dream did a most foolish thing. *In the hope of weakening support for Arafat's PLO in the Occupied Territories, they encouraged the growth of Hamas.* The extent to which Israel assisted the development of Islamic fundamentalism (Palestinian style) is still a well kept secret.

In retrospect it can be said that if Israel had been willing to accept Arafat's PLO as a negotiating partner in the mid to late 1980s, Hamas in particular, and Islamic fundamentalism in general, could not and would not have emerged as an unmanageable threat to anybody in the context of the struggle for Palestine. *In that context the real recruiting sergeant of Islamic fundamentalism (Palestinian style) for resistance was Zionism's arrogance of power and insufferable self-righteousness.*

In global terms it can also be said that the best recruiting sergeant for Islamic fundamentalism, peaceful and violent, was pork-barrel America's support for Zionism right or wrong; and, allied to that, American support for mainly corrupt and repressive Arab regimes which were and are perceived by their masses as puppets of Zionism's American protector.

The anti-Americanism that Forrestal was the first to see coming had arrived. That America would one day be required to pay a terrible price for its failure to contain Zionism was inevitable.

ARAFAT'S OSLO INITIATIVE AND RABIN'S ASSASSINATION

The truth about how flexible a pragmatic and desperate Arafat was now prepared to be in order to get a peace process with Israel going, in order to give hope to his people that his policy of politics and compromise would get results, was self-evident in his first proposal to Rabin. This was made months after Rabin was returned to power for a second spell as prime minister following Israel's election on 23 June 1992.

In Arafat's analysis, which he discussed with Egypt's president Mubarak, Rabin's defeat of the Likud's Shamir (Begin's successor as prime minister) represented, almost certainly, the very last chance for peace.

Why last chance? Israel's colonisation of the West Bank was so advanced and still advancing that unless a deal could be done with Rabin, there would be nothing to negotiate about.

Nobody, Jew or Arab, could have monitored Israel's 1992 election with more attention to the campaign rhetoric, nuances and all, than the Chairman of the PLO. In the closing days of the campaign he went to Amman to witness for himself, live on Israeli television, the great debate of the two main protagonists—Shamir and Rabin.

Arafat knew (as all informed observers knew) that Shamir had gone into the election campaign absolutely committed to wrecking the so-called Madrid peace process then underway.

- To get the Arab states to join his coalition for ejecting Iraq from Kuwait in the Gulf War of January and February 1991, President Bush the First had promised that, when the war was over, he would launch a peace process which, allowing a year for negotiations, would end with the necessary agreements for Israel's withdrawal from the Occupied Territories and some arrangement for Palestinian autonomy.

- When that peace process was launched in Madrid at the end of October 1991 but with the discussions thereafter taking place in Washington, *President Bush and his Secretary of State, James Baker, were intending to push Israel to be serious about exchanging land for peace.* But, as ever, Zionist lobby influence, exercised this time on behalf of Prime Minister Shamir, and to the dismay of Peres, was enough to prevent progress being made on matters of real substance. Shamir's strategy, which he cheerfully admitted after he lost the election, was to drag out the Madrid process and the autonomy negotiations for ten years if necessary, to complete the colonisation of the West Bank and create a situation in which, on the matter of autonomy for the Palestinians, there was nothing much to negotiate about. A "big Israel", Shamir said, was needed to settle Soviet Jews. Shlaim wrote that history would remember Shamir as a man who "*systematically subverted every initiative to resolve the conflict between Israel and the Arabs during his tenure as prime minister.*"¹

It was less Rabin's victory and more the circumstances of it which gave Arafat reason to convince himself that Israel under new management would be serious about peace on terms he could accept. In a last-ditch attempt to prevent Rabin securing enough votes to win, Shamir had played the PLO "terrorist" card. Arafat had witnessed him doing it and recalled: "With all of Israel listening and watching, Prime Minister Shamir accused Rabin, to his face, of deceiving the people. Shamir said, for all of Israel to hear, that Rabin was already talking to Arafat and the PLO, and that Rabin was not telling the truth when he denied it. Shamir's clear and obvious message to the people of Israel was that Rabin, if he became prime minister, would deal with the PLO. Shamir's strategy was to frighten the people. Rabin was asking to be elected on a political programme for peace and Shamir was trying to finish Rabin by these scare tactics."²

So? "When the people of Israel still voted to make Rabin the prime minister I was impressed," Arafat said. "And I knew we had the chance to move forward."³

As it happened the early signs did not appear to justify Arafat's optimism. When Rabin became prime minister the second time around his

own starting position on the matter of doing business with Arafat and his PLO was the same as Shamir's and that of Begin before him—"Never!" Unlike his Likud predecessors, Rabin was committed in principle to significant withdrawals from the Occupied Territories and autonomy negotiations with the Palestinians, but not with Arafat and his PLO. Of the heavyweights in Israel's new government only Foreign Minister Peres had, it seemed, crossed that Rubicon in his mind.

The private Peres position now was that genuine autonomy for the Palestinians would require the phased handover of much if not all of the West Bank and Gaza to Palestinian rule, and that Arafat's PLO was the only possible negotiating partner. But Peres knew that most Israelis were not yet ready to accept this. He had started out with the hope that Arafat might accept "Gaza first" for starters, but when more than a decade earlier he had asked me to run that past Arafat, I returned to tell him: "Forget it. Arafat must have more than that for a first step."

What of the bitter rivalry between Peres and Rabin? They still did not like each other, but as Peres would subsequently reveal in *Battling for Peace*, he told Rabin that so far as he was concerned their relationship would be determined by only one yardstick—"the peace process". If progress was satisfactory, Peres would be the most loyal of Rabin's ministers. But if the peace process was allowed to grind to a halt, Peres would "raise the banner of rebellion."⁴

So why and how was it that Rabin had his mind changed on the matter of doing business with Arafat and his PLO?

The first step in the process (and actually the great drama) that led to Rabin's historic handshake with Arafat on the lawn of President Clinton's White House on 13 September 1993 was not the Rabin government's decision, at the end of the previous year, to repeal the Likud law which proscribed any contact between Israeli citizens and the PLO. In the Knesset Rabin emphasised that lifting the ban did not mean that his government was entering into negotiations with the PLO. That was the truth. The ban was lifted because Rabin did not want his government—the most dovish in Israel's history—to have the problem of arresting, prosecuting and jailing

the small but growing number of Israelis who were talking to Arafat and his PLO!

Rabin lifted the Likud ban on contact between Israelis and Palestinians to avoid having to arrest the small but growing number of Israelis who were talking to Arafat and his PLO.

It was, in fact, Arafat, with the assistance of President Mubarak, who made the first move. And the intriguing question arising is this is: Did Rabin find himself doing business with the PLO of his own free will, or, was he pulled into doing it by Arafat, with Peres pushing from behind?

Prior to a meeting with President Mubarak in Ismalia on 14 April 1993, Prime Minister Rabin signalled that he was prepared to take delivery — at the meeting, from Mubarak’s hand—of a map from Arafat. On his first visit to the only Arab state at peace with Israel, Rabin did not want to offend his host by saying “No” to the handover of the map.

In Arafat’s words it was “a map of the Occupied Territories on which I had marked, in my own hand, the boundaries of the Jericho area of the West Bank I wanted, in addition to Gaza, for the establishment of a Palestinian Authority”.⁵

The significance was impossible to exaggerate.

Arafat was effectively saying to Rabin: “*I am prepared to recognise and legitimise Israel, and to make peace with it, on the basis of an Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and only a very small amount of the West Bank, on the understanding that, in time, the peace process we set in motion will lead to Israel’s complete withdrawal from the West Bank.*”

That the Chairman of the PLO was prepared to be so flexible was dramatic proof of how much he really did believe that Rabin (pushed by Peres) was the last chance for the Palestinians to get something concrete from his policy of politics and compromise.

When Rabin took delivery of Arafat’s map, he was unaware of the existence of the Oslo Channel which Arafat was using for dialogue with Israelis. It had been in existence for three months. (The Oslo Channel or facility for secret talks had been provided by Norway’s Foreign Minister,

Johan Joergen Holst, and was hosted with great diplomatic skill and loving care by a political scientist, Terge Rod Larsen, and his wife, Mona Juul.)

Arafat had decided to put all of his negotiating eggs into the Oslo basket after concluding that even with Shamir gone, the Madrid process would not deliver the Palestinians anything of substance because of the Zionist lobby's grip on U.S. policy.

Up to this point the talking in the Oslo Channel had been done for Arafat by the PLO's treasurer, Abu Ala, and two Israeli academics—Dr. Yair Hirschfeld and his younger colleague Dr. Ron Pundak. The two Israelis had no official status but they were being encouraged by, and were reporting to, Yossi Beilin. He had been an adviser to Peres and was now the foreign minister's deputy. Beilin's young, fresh mind had not been warped by Zionist propaganda.

The Beilin-Peres assessment of the significance of Arafat's map and what it implied was sufficient to inspire Peres to send Uri Savir, the director-general of the foreign ministry, to Oslo to talk with the PLO. Peres then informed Rabin of what he had done and promised to keep him fully briefed. But Arafat, in part because Peres had not had the courage to meet with him secretly more than a decade earlier during my informal shuttle diplomacy, was still not convinced that he could take official Israel seriously. To me Arafat said: "I insisted that I had to have something to prove beyond a doubt that Rabin himself was aware and involved. It was not enough for me to know that the Israeli Foreign Ministry and even Mr. Peres himself was involved. I had to have proof that Rabin himself was involved. Eventually Rabin proved this by sending his own legal adviser, Yoel Singer, to join Savir in Oslo. When he arrived I was convinced."⁶

And that was the beginning of real negotiations, secret but official, between Israel and the PLO.

Amazing! Fantastic! Yes. But there was a very early warning sign that even well-intentioned Israeli leaders might not be able to deliver what was necessary for peace from their side—because of the facts which the governments of the international community, successive American governments especially, had allowed Israel to create on the ground after the

1967 war. (These facts, the illegal Jewish settlements, were what had caused Peres to tell me a decade earlier that he feared it was already “too late”).

The first warning that even well-intentioned Israeli leaders might not be able to deliver enough for peace on terms which even the most pragmatic Palestinian leadership could accept was Rabin’s rejection, outright, of Arafat’s demand for an Israeli commitment to withdraw from the Jericho area of the West Bank as well as Gaza as a first step.

After this rejection Peres was instructed by Rabin to tell Savir in Oslo to inform Abu Ala that it was ‘Gaza First’ or nothing. Rabin knew he could get away with that without provoking a gut-Zionist uprising because many Israelis, including even some of Likud’s former government ministers, wanted to get rid of Gaza. Not to give Arafat a helping hand, not for peace, but because Gaza was a hell-hole and a liability for Israel—as prime ministers Sharret and Eshkol had always said it would be.

Peres knew that Arafat could not accept only Gaza for starters but, for the moment, Peres was not anxious to be seen as anything but the most loyal of Rabin’s ministers.

In Oslo Abu Ala told Savir that he had no need to consult with Arafat for an answer. There was no way, he said, that any Palestinian leader or collective leadership could play the Palestinians’ only negotiating card—giving Israel the recognition and the legitimacy it craved—for so little in return. Abu Ala then told Savir that if by chance Arafat was desperate enough to accept the one crumb Rabin was offering, he would resign, pull out of the secret talks. Peres then told Rabin that he would resign if they could not give Arafat some commitment to at least a token withdrawal from the West Bank.

Rabin then agreed that they could discuss the extent of a possible Israeli withdrawal from the Jericho area. And that’s when things started to go badly wrong.

On the map Mubarak had given to Rabin, Arafat was asking for a first-phase Israeli withdrawal from about 320 square kilometres of the Jericho area. It was Arafat himself who put that figure into its overall and proper land-for-peace perspective. He said to me:

When the Province of Jericho was under Jordanian administration before the 1967 war, it was an area of 386 square kilometres. Under Israeli occupation the Province of Jericho was extended to an area of 712 square kilometres. So with the map I was telling Rabin that for the initial phase I was prepared to accept an Israeli withdrawal from something less than the Province of Jericho as it was under Jordanian administration, and something less than half of what it is under the administration of the Israel occupation... An Israeli withdrawal from the 320 square kilometres I needed represented a withdrawal from *only 5.8 per cent of all the occupied West Bank*. And when Gaza was included, that represented a withdrawal from only 6.8 percent of all the Palestinian land occupied by Israel in the 1967 war, and which we were claiming for our state at the end of the negotiating process.⁷ [I remind myself and readers as necessary that under the two state solution of the PLO's historic compromise, the Palestinians were renouncing their claim to more than 77 per cent of the land that was theirs].

A commitment to a first-phase Israeli withdrawal from only 5.8 per cent of the West Bank was too much for Rabin to handle and he said 'No!'

The secret negotiations in Oslo were then on the point of breakdown and complete collapse.

Arafat the peacemaker was now, truly, the loneliest man in the world. The deadlock in the Oslo Channel required him to make the most critical decision of his life to date—to pull out of the secret negotiations and say “goodbye” to what he really believed was the last chance for the Palestinians to achieve something concrete by politics and compromise, or to accept Israel's proposal for keeping the negotiations going.

The Israeli proposal was that they should put to one side the “sticking point” issues to allow the PLO and Israel to conclude an initial “an historic Declaration of Principles”, in order to prepare the way for an exchange of mutual recognition letters, to be signed by Chairman Arafat for the PLO and Prime Minister Rabin for Israel. In the Declaration of Principles Israel was to be committed only to a first phase withdrawal from “the Jericho area” (plus Gaza), with the extent of the withdrawal to be the

subject of further negotiations after the PLO and Israel had recognised each other and the Declaration of Principles was in force.

If Arafat had consulted all of his mainstream leadership colleagues before the Declaration of Principles was initialled, they would not have allowed him to proceed. They would not have accepted the defect in the agreement—a defect which was pregnant with danger for the Palestinian cause. (We'll come to grips with the defect shortly).

If Arafat had consulted all of his mainstream leadership colleagues before the Declaration of Principles was initialled, they would not have allowed him to proceed. He was going it more or less alone.

Arafat was not consulting all of his leadership colleagues because he knew they would stop him in his tracks. He was going it more or less alone in the Oslo Channel with the intention, Israeli-like, of presenting his leadership colleagues with *fait accompli* and daring them to reject it and him.

Arafat signed his letter to Rabin recognising Israel on the evening of Thursday 9 September. It was a letter generous in spirit as well as substance. It confirmed the PLO's commitment to recognise Israel's right to live in peace and security, to accept UN Resolution 242, to renounce the use of terrorism and other acts of violence, and to change those parts of the Palestine National Charter (which Arafat had inherited from Shukairy's puppet PLO) that were inconsistent with these commitments. Rabin signed his letter to Arafat recognising the PLO the following day. It was a terse, one-sentence reply with a mean-spirited flourish. The letter as prepared for signature on plain paper had ended "Sincerely, Yitzhak Rabin, Prime Minister of Israel." *Rabin took his pen and crossed out the word "Sincerely". He didn't bother to have the letter re-typed.*

I asked Arafat if he had been offended by Rabin's gesture. He replied: "No, not at all. This little gesture did not offend me because Rabin was not my friend." I said, "But you would have been offended if he was." Arafat replied: "Definitely, but he was not my friend. So what he did was logical. As you know I am a very pragmatic man."⁸

The stage was then set by President Clinton. Rabin and Arafat were to appear on it, in the presence of 3,000 VIP witnesses including Henry Kissinger, to sign the Declaration of Principles on Palestinian self-government (only previously initialled) as prepared by the Clinton administration. *Clinton was hoping that a Rabin–Arafat handshake would capture the imagination of a watching world and create a mighty momentum for a sustainable peace process, one that not even Israel’s rejectionists and the Zionist lobby in America could stop.*

The first problem was that Rabin did not want to be a part of the Clinton show on the White House lawn. The idea of shaking Arafat’s hand might well have made him want to throw-up, but there was much more to it.

Four days before he signed his letter recognising the PLO and confirming his government’s intention to negotiate with it, the secret Israel–PLO Declaration of Principles as initialled was made public. Some 50,000 Israelis, mainly settlers from the Occupied Territories, had responded by laying siege to the Prime Minister’s office in Jerusalem. They accused Rabin of being a “traitor” as well as a “liar”.

That demonstration, accompanied by protests from many of Israel’s generals because, they said, they had not been consulted, caused Rabin to look into the abyss that Peres had spoken to me about—the prospect of a Jewish civil war.

The demonstration of some 50,000 Israelis, mainly settlers from the Occupied Territories, accompanied by protests from many of Israel’s generals, caused Rabin to look into the abyss that Peres had spoken of—the prospect of a Jewish civil war.

My retrospective view is that Rabin was a very frightened man. Frightened of what? The prospect of Israel’s security being undermined by violent gut-Zionist opposition to the withdrawals from the West Bank that would be necessary to give Arafat what the Declaration of Principles promised him, over time if it was implemented. And of course Rabin was aware of the blood oath Sharon and those loyal to him in the IDF and

Israel's intelligence services had signed, and the possible danger it represented for him personally.

I think that at least a part of Rabin was hoping that something would happen to cause Arafat to go back on the commitments he had given and call the whole thing off.

In any event Rabin decided that he would not go to Washington for the signing ceremony. The presence of Foreign Minister Peres would be sufficient. At the last minute it was President Clinton, by charm not threat, who persuaded Rabin to change his mind. But still the ceremony to stop and change the world was to come within 30 minutes of not happening.

Arafat was the first to arrive in Washington and was installed by his host, the Clinton administration, in the Presidential Suite of the Westin ANA Hotel. There he was given his first sight of the text of the Declaration of Principles as prepared by the Americans. Arafat was astonished. And very angry. *Despite the fact that the PLO's recognition of Israel and Israel's recognition of it was now a fait accompli, the document contained no reference to the PLO!* In the two places where any normal, rational human being would have expected to see such a reference there were only the words "Palestinian team". Thus the opening of the document as prepared by the Americans was as follows: "The Government of Israel and the Palestinian team..." And the document was to be signed by the representative of the "Palestinian team".

Despite the fact that the PLO's recognition of Israel and Israel's recognition of it was now a fait accompli, the Declaration of Principles prepared by the Americans contained no reference to the PLO!

Somebody was playing a game. What game and for what purpose?

Zionism's strategic thinkers were irrevocably committed to having the world, the U.S. especially, go on accepting their assertion that the PLO was nothing but a terrorist organisation. So long as Zionism could make that charge stick, Israel would be free of American pressure—the only pressure that really counted—to use whatever institutional violence was necessary to destroy the PLO and thus authentic Palestinian nationalism. Unless that mission was accomplished, there was no way to prevent the

creation of a Palestinian mini-state and the dismantling of Greater Israel to make the space for it.

In my analysis it was the Zionist lobby in America which insisted on the PLO not being mentioned in the American-prepared text of the Declaration of Principles. *The lobby was hoping that Arafat—at odds by now with the majority of his leadership colleagues—would be furious enough to storm out of Washington, leaving President Clinton without a ceremony and Zionism free to blame the “terrorist leader” for wrecking the new and improved prospects for peace. After which Zionism could say to the world, and America especially, “Surely nobody can now expect Israel to do business with the PLO.” It very nearly happened—just like that.*

Arafat insisted that “PLO” replace the words “Palestinian team” in the text of the American-prepared document. Clinton’s officials said they would discuss the problem with Rabin when he arrived.

On arrival Rabin was subjected to enormous behind-the-scenes pressure from Zionism-in-America. Having recognised the PLO by his own hand, Israel’s prime minister was now being required to say “No” to it being named in the Declaration of Principles as prepared by the Americans (from the version initialled as a result of the Oslo process and with the PLO named!) *The pressure was evidently irresistible and Rabin vetoed any change in the text of the document for signing on the White House lawn.*

Through the night of 12/13 September, Arafat agonised about what to do. He slept for only two hours. At five o’clock in the morning (the ceremony was scheduled to begin at 11.00 a.m.) he called Ahmed Tibi, his adviser on Israeli affairs. “I told him I was not prepared to authorise the signing if Rabin continued to refuse to have the PLO mentioned”, Arafat recalled to me.⁹

That was Tibi’s instruction to get on to Peres to see if he could persuade Rabin to change his mind. Peres tried and the word came back. “No!” Rabin would not budge.

Arafat then made his decision. “I said OK. In this case we will not sign and we will return to Tunis.” It was not an empty gesture. He gave instructions for his delegation and his plane to be ready to leave. Did he

inform the Clinton administration of his imminent departure? “Yes”, Arafat told me, “I informed the administration officially.”¹⁰

The Chairman of the PLO knew he was about to do what Zionism wanted him to do. That was why he had agonised the night away.

Tibi relayed Arafat’s decision to Peres and continued to urge him to work on Rabin.

At 10:00. Peres called Tibi to join him. At 10.26—34 minutes before the ceremony was scheduled to start and when most if not all of the 3,000 VIPs were in their places—Peres told Tibi that he was ready to authorise “PLO team”.

Tibi called Arafat to ask if that was good enough. Arafat said, “Yes... but are you really sure they are serious?” Tibi said he was. Arafat then said “I send you three kisses, two for yourself and one for the man (Peres) next to you.”¹¹

Then, nearly 30 minutes late because of the time needed to amend the documents for signing (to restore them, nearly, to their original Oslo state) the ceremony went ahead. The watching world applauded—with the exception, no doubt, of Zionism’s hard men everywhere—when Rabin took Arafat’s outstretched hand. Some of all faiths and none cried tears of joy.

When he made his speech—“Enough is enough”—Rabin was obviously high on emotion. *It seemed to some at the time (including me) that Israel might have, at last, a leader with the courage to match that which Arafat had demonstrated (unknown to the Western world) to get the vast majority of his people to this point—the point at which they were prepared to let him deliver the unthinkable compromise needed from their side for peace with Israel.*

What happened when Arafat came face to face with Kissinger on the White House lawn? “I saluted him”, Arafat told me, “and we shook hands. But we only shook hands. No words.” I asked if the man who had put so much effort into having the PLO cancelled as a factor in the Middle East peace equation had smiled. “No”, said Arafat. “He was not in a good mood.”¹²

Why did Rabin change his mind about the PLO being named in the formal documents for signature?

The most plausible explanation is that Peres said he would have to resign if the PLO was not mentioned by name and Arafat departed.

Israel has a track record second to none in finding ways to get out of commitments, but on this occasion, as the man responsible for Israel's management of the Oslo business, Peres would have been without a shred of honour if he had been a party to the exorcism of "the PLO". I think Peres did not have a choice whether he himself liked it or not. (In the light of my previous private conversations with him, I speculate that he might even have said something like the following to Rabin: "Can't you see that the Zionist lobby here in America is our real enemy, not Arafat and his PLO?")

This was the one moment in time when Rabin could not afford to let his foreign minister go. A Peres resignation at this particular moment, in the undimmed headlights of global media attention, would have provoked a great debate—which Zionism would not have been able to shut down—focused on an explosive question: Was Rabin really serious about making peace on terms which Arafat and the vast majority of Palestinians could accept, and, even if he was, would he be allowed to deliver, over time, in phases, the necessary land for peace?

And then it all went badly wrong. Gut-Zionism got another chance to solve the Palestine problem its way—with applications of brute force, frequently amounting to state terrorism.

In Zionist mythology Arafat "the terrorist leader" was to blame for the breakdown and collapse of the Oslo peace process and all the violence that followed. After the historic handshake on the White House lawn, Israeli opponents of the land-for-peace deal, and their supporters everywhere, asserted that any act of Palestinian violence—whether Arafat had any possibility or not of preventing it—was a breach of faith on his part which entitled Israel to tear up its agreement with him and abandon the whole peace process. There was nothing in what had been signed and witnessed by the watching world to support that assertion.

The honest answer to the question of why it all went so badly wrong is in two parts.

The first is that Rabin was assassinated by a Zionist fanatic.

The second is that the Oslo agreement contained a defect which gave those Israelis who wanted it a free hand to screw Arafat. He was fully aware of the defect and the real question is this: *Why did he make an agreement with Israel containing a defect which he knew would give Israel the scope to screw him if it did not negotiate in good faith?*

To answer that question we must first know what the defect was and how and why it came to be built into the Oslo agreement.

As we have seen, the breakdown and collapse of the secret Oslo negotiations in their infancy was prevented only by Arafat agreeing to the Israeli proposal that they put the “sticking point” issues to one side for later negotiations. The extent of the first-phase Israeli withdrawal from the Jericho area (in addition to Gaza) was a sticking point. But there was a much bigger and much more critical one. To grasp its real significance we must go to and fro Madrid and Oslo, so to speak, and, while we travel, catch a glimpse of why it was that Arafat gave up on the Madrid process and decided to put all of his negotiating eggs into the Oslo basket.

Shamir’s Israel had not wanted there to be a Madrid peace process. Shamir’s Israel really was not interested in peace on terms the pragmatic Arafat could accept. *It was only when President Bush the First said the U.S. would block funds to Israel if it did not come to the negotiating table that Shamir said, “Okay, we’ll come”. But he then laid down conditions for Israel’s willingness to negotiate:*

1. Any agreement on autonomy for the Palestinians, and thus any Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and the West Bank, had to be negotiated in two stages. There had to be an interim agreement, in effect minimum Israel withdrawal for minimum Palestinian autonomy or self-government; and a second-stage or final agreement, maximum Israel withdrawal for maximum Palestinian self-government.
2. There had to be a five-year transition period between the interim and final agreements. Israel claimed that a five-year transition period was necessary for Israelis and Palestinians to learn to work together and build trust.

3. This is critical to understanding what went wrong: The transition period had to begin *without a prior agreement about the extent of land from which Israel would withdraw at the end of the second-stage and final negotiations.*

Because it had no choice if it wanted to be involved in the Madrid process—because the Bush administration accepted Shamir’s conditions, the PLO accepted the principle of the two-stage approach to peace-making with a transition period of five years between an interim and final agreement. This was made clear by the Palestinian representatives at the start of the Washington negotiations of the Madrid process. (Israel’s policy at the time was still “No” to doing business with the PLO, so to deny Shamir’s Israel the pretext for walking out of the Washington negotiations and sabotaging them, Arafat, at the request of the U.S., had agreed that his negotiators would appear and perform only as “the Palestinian representatives”, not as official PLO negotiators. This led the PLO’s wonderfully articulate ambassador in London, Afif Safieh, to characterise the PLO’s position, correctly, as being “unreasonably reasonable”). But...

In practice as opposed to principle, the PLO said it would only accept a five-year transition period *with* a prior agreement on the extent of land Israel would withdraw from at the end of the negotiating process. In other words, the PLO was not going to play the game entirely in accordance with Shamir’s rules and conditions. Why not?

The PLO understood perfectly well what Shamir’s game-plan was—to agree, if the Bush administration really pushed him, to a token Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories (the implementation of an interim agreement), and then to use the five years of the transition period to continue stuffing the Occupied Territories with illegal settlements, to create a situation at the end of the five-year transition period which, because of the extent then of Israel’s colonisation, would make it impossible for any Israeli government to consider further withdrawals on the scale necessary to allow the Palestinians to have a viable state of their own. Shamir’s strategy was Begin’s strategy.

In that light, Arafat and all of his PLO leadership colleagues were completely aware that they would be making a fatal mistake if they relied on

Shamir's Israel to negotiate in good faith. It followed that if they were to invest their good faith in a two-stage negotiating process over five years, they had to have a guarantee that it would end with an Israeli withdrawal in accordance with the letter and the spirit of Resolution 242. The only possible guarantee was a prior agreement which committed Israel, unambiguously and irrevocably, to matching its words with deeds.

Insistence on a prior agreement with Israel about the extent of Israel's final withdrawal at the end of the two-stage, five-year negotiating process was therefore PLO policy.

It was when Shamir's Israel said it was not prepared to give a prior commitment to complete withdrawal for total peace that Arafat concluded, with good reason, that the Madrid process was going nowhere for the Palestinians. And he did not change his mind about the usefulness of this Washington-managed peace process when Shamir was defeated by Rabin in Israel's election of June 1992. *By this time Arafat had convinced himself that he had no choice but, Sadat-like, to put Israel to the test of direct negotiations.* This, he believed, was the only way to kick-start and then sustain a peace process that could not be sabotaged by the Zionist lobby in America. And it was to try to get a real peace process going that he put all of his negotiating eggs into the Oslo basket. But then, to prevent the secret negotiations in Oslo from collapsing and without consulting his leadership colleagues, *Arafat junked PLO policy and accepted Israel's procedures*—negotiations in two stages over five years *without* a prior agreement on the amount of land Israel would actually withdraw from at the end of the five-year negotiating process for a final settlement.

Arafat junked PLO policy and accepted Israel's procedures— negotiations in two stages over five years without a final agreement on the amount of land Israel would eventually withdraw from.

Shortly after he had done so, I telephoned Khalad Hassan at his family home-in-exile in Kuwait. By this time I knew better than probably anybody but the two men themselves that Arafat could not have succeeded in selling unthinkable compromise with Israel to his people, and probably would not have survived politically while he was doing the selling, without

Khalad Hassan's support. Arafat, because he could move the mountains of humiliation and anger on his own side, was the miracle worker. But it was Khalad Hassan who had done most to guarantee that Arafat could deliver the compromise if put to the test of good faith negotiations by Israel.

Khalad was quietly very angry and disillusioned. *"Our leader has made a fatal mistake. I understand why he did what he did. I even feel sorry for him. But it is a fatal mistake."*¹³ As an aside in verbal parenthesis Khalad then said; "Israel needed the PLO's recognition for its existence to be legitimized in international law. The PLO did not need Israel's recognition to make it legitimate."

The fatal mistake? "By dropping our insistence on a prior agreement committing Israel to total withdrawal for total peace at the end of the five-year negotiating process, Arafat has put the future of our cause into Israel's hands. *Israel is now free, apparently with our consent, to determine how much of our land it will keep and how much it will return to us. Arafat is now committed to a negotiating process without any guarantee that it will end with the creation a viable Palestinian state. The defect in the Oslo agreement invites Israel to screw us. And it will.*"

I said to Khalad: "Arafat's hope, obviously, is that Rabin will negotiate in good faith, thus making the need for a guarantee that Israel will match its words with deeds unnecessary. Do you dismiss completely the notion that Rabin will negotiate in good faith?"

Khalad replied: "Habibi (dear) are you really so naïve... I am perfectly prepared to assume that Rabin is an honourable man who will seek to negotiate in good faith, but that is not the point..."

"Don't you understand," Khalad said. "If the time comes when it's clear that Rabin is serious about making peace on terms we can accept, they'll kill him."

I had the impression that the Palestinian leader who had done most to assist Arafat to prepare the ground for compromise with Israel was struggling to hold back tears of despair.

"Don't you understand", he said, "If the time comes when it's clear that Rabin is serious about making peace on terms we can accept, they'll kill him."

That Arafat had put the future of the Palestinian cause into Israel's hands was as good as confirmed by the man himself on his first ever visit to Britain in December 1993, a month after the Oslo agreement was signed and witnessed on the White House lawn. So far as the British government was concerned, like most governments everywhere, Arafat was now a statesman and was welcome.

On the day before his arrival Israel should have started to withdraw from Gaza and the Jericho area.

It was not happening because Rabin's first offer was a withdrawal from just 27 square kilometres of the Jericho area. That was ludicrously less than Arafat had asked for, needed and could accept. It was also the first indication that either Rabin was not very serious, or, more likely, was not being allowed by his generals (including Chief of Staff Ehud Barak) to be serious.

Arafat was asked by a television reporter if he was worried by the lack of progress in the negotiations to begin the implementation of his agreement with Rabin. On camera Arafat struggled to control his emotions and suppress his frustration and exasperation. Then he said:

“Look, I am not holding the cards. I am not negotiating from a position of strength. Israel is the occupying power. It holds all the cards.”

Why did Arafat make what Khalad Hassan described as the fatal mistake? The short answer is that this most pragmatic of all Palestinian leaders believed that he and his people had *no choice but to invest hope in the idea that Israel, if it did not do so willingly, would be required by the major powers to negotiate in good faith.*

Was it really a matter of no choice? Arafat thought so for two reasons.

The first was that the PLO had no military option. (As we have seen, Arafat had never regarded armed struggle as more than the means of bringing about the regeneration of Palestinian nationalism. Rather like Begin he had said, “We fight, so we exist.” To any of his supporters who advocated a renewed resort to terrorism, Arafat would have said in 1993, as he told me: “You're out of your mind. You'll only make enemies when we need friends. If you resort to terrorism, I'll do my best to stop you.” By this

time the PLO was, in fact, passing to Western and Eastern intelligence agencies everything it had on Palestinian and other known Arab terrorists. Abu Iyad was assassinated in Tunis for passing on what he knew about those who enjoyed Iraq's and Syria's protection. His killer was, most likely, an Iraqi or Syrian agent.)

The second was that the Arab regimes which mattered most were too subservient to America and were never going to press it to require Israel to be really serious about exchanging land for peace. They were also not willing to exert pressure of their own. President Mubarak could have said to Rabin, for example, "If you don't give Arafat the minimum help he needs and must have, I'll have to reconsider Egypt's relationship with Israel." (That is what the Israelis would have said in Mubarak's place.)

Arafat was not naïve. He was fully aware of the defect in the Oslo agreement, and that because of it he was setting himself and his people up to be screwed if Israel did not negotiate in good faith. His own last words to me on the subject were these: "What I agreed in the Oslo process could have led to an acceptable amount of justice for my Palestinian people and peace for all if Rabin had not been assassinated, and if the governments of the big powers had assisted both of us to make the Oslo Agreement work."

After Arafat's death it became fashionable for Palestinian intellectuals to rubbish the Oslo process. My own view, I've thought about it a lot and deeply, is that Arafat was right when he said *it could have been made to work* if the major powers, America especially, had been prepared to require Israel to be serious about peace in the shape of a viable two-state solution, preferably with Jerusalem an undivided, open city and the capital of both states. Yes, there was a defect in the Oslo Accords which gave Israel's leaders the freedom to carry on wrecking the prospects for peace, but the major powers, America especially, could have denied Israel's leaders this freedom.

If Rabin had been allowed to live, it's not impossible that he would have tried his best to deliver on Israel's commitments to the Palestinians.

The second stage negotiations to bring about maximum Israeli withdrawal and maximum Palestinian self-government were supposed to be completed by 1998. When the going became very rough on his own side,

Rabin said, “Dates are not sacred.” He meant something like, “Because of the opposition I’ve got to overcome to implement the commitments my government made, we won’t make it by the 1998 deadline, but we’ll get there.” Arafat the pragmatist had by now come to look upon his Israeli peace partner as a friend and understood what he was saying.

In his speech to the peace rally in Tel Aviv on 4 November 1995 at which he was gunned down, Rabin said: “*I believe there is now a chance for peace, a great chance which must be seized.*”¹⁴ (By this time the Palestinian Authority, a sort of provisional government headed by President Arafat, was administering the territory from which Israel had already withdrawn—about 65 per cent of the Gaza Strip and less than 40 per cent of the West Bank). In the moments before he was shot, Rabin was looking ahead six months to the scheduled beginning of the second-stage negotiations. In principle the two-state solution (and peace) made possible by Arafat’s policy of politics and compromise was in sight.

Rabin’s opponents had created such an atmosphere of hysteria and hatred that their deluded supporters believed that killing the prime minister was a sacred national duty.

Rabin’s assassination was not simply the consequence of one Zionist fanatic pulling the trigger three times. Those Israeli leaders who had opposed the Rabin government’s policy of doing business with Arafat and his PLO had created such an atmosphere of hysteria and hatred that their deluded supporters believed that killing the prime minister was a sacred national duty.

The assassin—the man who actually fired the three shots—was Yigal Amir, a 25 year-old messianic Zionist who was a law student at Bar-Ilan University, a hot-bed of right-wing and religious extremism. Like that of many of his generation on the messianic fringe, Amir’s core belief was that Israel’s victory in the 1967 war was a sign of Divine Favour. The background as sketched by Shlaim was this:

The Six-Days War had a profound effect on the religious camp in Israel and gave rise to ‘religious Zionism’” The conquest of the West Bank,

which as Judea and Samaria had formed part of the biblical Jewish kingdom, convinced many Orthodox rabbis and teachers that they were living in a messianic era and that salvation was at hand. The war represented the ‘Divine Hand’ at work and was ‘the beginning of the redemption.’ Almost immediately these rabbis began to sanctify the land of their ancestors and to make it an object of religious passion. They made the sanctity of the land a central tenet of religious Zionism. From this it followed that anyone who was prepared to give away parts of this sacred land was perceived as a traitor and enemy of the Jewish people. In this sense, Rabin’s murder was a religious murder, carried out with Orthodox rabbinical sanction.¹⁵

There was also an asserted security aspect to Amir’s core belief which was shared by all in what Shlaim described as the “religious-nationalist” camp. The Palestinians were aliens in the land promised by God to his chosen people. When the Palestinians talked peace they were not to be trusted. They wanted the territories “liberated” by Israel in 1967 for only one purpose—to wage their war of annihilation against the State of Israel and the Jewish people. In the 1992 election Amir had voted for a racist-nationalist party, Moledet, which advocated the deportation of the Palestinians from the biblical and now restored Land of Israel.

At his trial Amir cheerfully confessed that he had murdered Rabin in order to kill the Arafat-initiated Oslo peace process. He described the Palestinians, all of them, as incorrigible terrorists, and he held Rabin personally responsible for the killing of Jews by them. Rabin, he declared, had Jewish blood on his hands. To the commission of inquiry Amir said, “When I shot Rabin, I felt as if I was shooting a terrorist.”¹⁶

Shlaim quoted Israeli author Ze’ev Chafetz as saying that Rabin’s assassin “was trained by his rabbis and, as far as I am concerned, he pulled the trigger for them.”¹⁷

Now to a contentious and unanswerable but important question. *Was Rabin’s murder the consequence of a conspiracy involving at least some in Israel’s intelligence community and some of the IDF’s generals?*

There are more than a few Israelis who believe the answer is “Yes”. The circumstantial case is quite strong and the key to it is a dreadful event that occurred on 25 February 1994, some 20 months before Rabin was assassinated.

On that day Dr. Baruch Goldstein, an American-born settler and a member of the racist, American-funded Kach organisation, opened fire with an IDF-issued Galil assault rifle on Palestinian and other Muslim worshippers in the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron. Goldstein killed 29 of them before being overpowered and beaten to death by the survivors. As Shlaim noted, a preliminary commission of inquiry set up by the Rabin government revealed monumental incompetence and a systematic failure on the part of the Israeli security services to enforce the law against armed Jewish settlers. Subsequently—this is a fact—Israeli agents were instructed to infiltrate Jewish extremist groups, to get intelligence on when and where they might strike. According to the most plausible conspiracy theory, Israel’s intelligence services, and therefore at least some of the IDF’s generals in receipt of their information *knew there was going to be an attempt on Rabin’s life, could have stopped it and did not stop it...* In the light of Ezer Weizman’s revelation to me about the blood oath, I find the conspiracy theory to be quite compelling.

Israel’s intelligence services knew there was going to be an attempt on Rabin’s life. They could have stopped it and did not.

In any event I think it is also right to conclude that Rabin never really had a chance of succeeding—because of the strength and influence of the deluded and violent gut-Zionist forces ranged against him. The coming together of gut-Zionism’s uncompromising nationalists (the original Iron Fist or Greater Israel lot) and the so-called religious Zionists was too much for any Israeli prime minister to take on and defeat. I speculate that Rabin always knew this in his gut, and that was why, really, he was so reluctant initially to do business with Arafat—because he feared he would not be allowed to honour any agreement he made with him. He might also have feared that doing business with Arafat would cost him his own life.

In the months before the assassination, the man on the public stage who did most to whip up and mobilise Israeli fear and hatred of Arafat and the PLO, and by implication hatred of Rabin, was Binyamin Netanyahu. Backed by very wealthy Americans, Netanyahu had succeeded Shamir as leader of the Likud. The handsome, smooth-talking and voraciously ambitious Netanyahu had signalled his intentions in the Knesset when it approved by a majority of one the Rabin government's agreement with Arafat. *Netanyahu said he totally rejected the agreement and would "cancel" it when the Likud returned to power.*

But it was at Peres that Netanyahu aimed his most poisoned arrow on that day. Netanyahu compared the agreement with Arafat to Neville Chamberlain's appeasement of Hitler. He said to Peres: "You are even worse than Chamberlain. He imperilled the safety of another people, but you are doing it to your own people." And Rabin, Netanyahu added, had caused "national humiliation by accepting the dictates of the terrorist Arafat". One of the Likud leader's associates, Rafael Eytan, said the government had signed an agreement "with the greatest murderer of Jews since Hitler."

On any stage anywhere in the world Netanyahu was by far the best player of Zionism's ace, the holocaust card played to intimidate and silence Jews as well as non-Jews who dare to criticise Zionism's monster child.

Rabin's grief-stricken widow, Leah, was convinced that Netanyahu's incitement of the religious and other gut-Zionist fanatics who were opposed to withdrawal from the Occupied Territories was responsible for her husband's assassination. In fact, Leah was so convinced that she refused to be embraced by Netanyahu, or even to take his offered hand when he called at her home after the funeral to offer his condolences. But she did take Arafat's hand and was comforted by him.

Arafat had wanted to attend Rabin's funeral but was told to stay away for security reasons. (It's reasonable to assume that somebody said to him, "They'll kill you, too.") But nothing was going to stop President Arafat from calling on Leah at home to pay his respects and to offer his condolences. He said to her: "I have lost a friend. This is a great loss to the cause of peace and to me personally. I am shocked and horrified by this tragic event."¹⁸

Leah was subsequently to say that she had been moved by the sincerity and warmth that Arafat had exuded during his visit. And she offered this most revealing insight into what she really thought. “*Sometimes I feel we can find a common language with Arabs more easily than we can with the Jewish extremists. It seems that we live in different worlds.*”¹⁹ Leah was explaining that Arafat’s handshake had symbolized for her the hope for peace, and that she had refused to take Netanyahu’s hand because it symbolised no such hope.

The different world in which Netanyahu and his kind live was described by Shlaim as “a fool’s paradise”; a description Shlaim believed to be appropriate, as I do, because Netanyahu insisted that Israel could keep all or virtually all of the West Bank including East Jerusalem (not to mention the Golan Heights) *and* have security and peace.

Unfortunately it was Netanyahu who became Israel’s man of destiny after the election of 29 May 1996. And Prime Minister Netanyahu set about delivering what he had promised—the cancellation (repudiation is a more appropriate term) of Arafat’s agreement with Rabin.

NETANYAHU—THE AMERICAN-SPONSORED FOOL IN HIS PARADISE

Given what some in the Likud establishment thought of him, it is unlikely that Netanyahu would have become its leader without the money and political support of American Zionism. And he would not have beaten Peres to become prime minister without the assistance of Hamas suicide bombers, assistance triggered by a decision taken by Peres as caretaker prime minister in the run-up to the election on 29 May 1996. As we shall now see, *the decision Peres took to improve his own image in the eyes of the hawks in Israel's security services sabotaged Arafat's attempt to isolate and contain the men of violence on his side.*

The very first Hamas suicide bombing took place on 14 September 1993—the day after the Arafat–Rabin handshake, which was supposed to signal the start of the process to implement the Declaration of Principles, to turn words into deeds. The Hamas message on this occasion was addressed primarily to Arafat, not Israel; and he knew it was several messages in one.

Translated, the whole message—which is critical to understanding how, really, the Oslo peace process was destroyed—was effectively the following: “We in Hamas are opposed to your policy of politics and compromise and we will do our best by our own means to wreck it. We also do not believe that your policy will deliver even the mini-state you are prepared to settle for—because the Zionists are not serious. However... If we are wrong and you are right—if the Zionists deliver on the promises they made to you in the Oslo agreement, we will not continue with our campaign of violence.”

Effectively, Hamas was also saying to Arafat: “We are not stupid. We know that if the Zionists do deliver and deliver on time, in accordance with their promises in principle, you will enjoy greater popular support than ever—because the vast majority of our people are prepared, we know, to settle for your mini-state compromise. In this event we would not

command anything like the necessary popular support to continue in our military way, and you would be able to isolate and destroy us.”

The real point? *With the very first suicide bombing, Hamas was putting Arafat on notice that if he was unable to demonstrate that his policy was working, the time for talking and compromise with Israel would be over, whether Arafat liked it or not.*

The above will, I hope, assist all of my readers to understand why Rabin’s initial, insulting offer of an Israeli withdrawal from only 27 square kilometres of the Jericho was such a problem for Arafat. It undoubtedly helped Rabin to protect his own back and win him more space for manoeuvre with his rejectionists. But it was taken as proof by the leaders of Hamas that they were right—Israel was not serious. And that had the effect of exposing Arafat’s back and giving him less room for manoeuvre with his rejectionists.

After the first Hamas suicide bombing Arafat knew better than anybody else that the efforts he would have to make to prevent an eruption and escalation of Palestinian violence would be undermined, perhaps completely, by Israeli procrastination and delay in implementing the Oslo agreement.

The honest record of events shows that for the seven years from 1994 to the end of 2001, Arafat went to the outer limits of what it was possible for him or any Palestinian leadership to do in the way of isolating and containing the threat posed—to him and his policy of politics and compromise as well as Israelis—by the suicide bombers. On at least two occasions in those seven years Arafat’s crackdowns on Hamas pushed the occupied and oppressed Palestinians to the point of civil war. This was, of course, what those Israelis and Zionists everywhere who were opposed to any land-for-peace deal wanted—a Palestinian civil war.

But not even Arafat could have anticipated the event that triggered the first wave of Hamas suicide bombings. It was the massacre, on 25 February 1994, by Baruch Goldstein of the 29 Palestinian and other Muslim worshippers at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron. Hamas vowed revenge—was that really surprising?—and in what can be called its first campaign, 50 Israelis were killed and 340 were wounded. Arafat

responded with a crackdown on Hamas and it was successful. The Palestinian Preventive Security Service (PSS) of the Palestinian Authority identified Yahya Ayyash, known as “The Engineer”, as the mastermind of most if not all of the Hamas attacks. Arafat had Ayyash isolated and confined in hiding in Gaza. *That done Arafat informed Shabak, the Israeli General Security Service, and guaranteed that Ayyash would not organise any more attacks on Israel.*

It was subsequently the decision taken by Peres as caretaker prime minister that triggered the second wave of Hamas suicide bombings: and cut a large chunk of ground from under Arafat’s feet. Shabak had located Ayyash in his Gaza confinement and wanted to assassinate him. And not really for security reasons. The head of Shabak was about to be replaced for failing to protect Rabin and, as Shlaim put it, “he badly wanted to be remembered for one last spectacular success.”¹ Peres gave permission for the “engineer” to be terminated and, on 5 January 1996, he was blown to pieces by means of a booby-trapped cellular telephone. Peres took the decision, it was said, in the belief that it would boost the morale of the nation. He had also calculated that his decision would earn him some brownie points from Israel’s security services.

Shlaim described that Peres decision as “*the greatest mistake*” of his political career.² was. Why? The wave of Hamas suicide bombings it provoked lost Peres the election. In three pre-election bombing days, four suicide bombers killed 59 Israelis and injured many more. That caused Israel to lurch to the lunatic right. *By approving the request to assassinate “The Engineer”, Peres effectively put Netanyahu into power.*

What might be called the Americanizing of Binyamin Netanyahu was due to the fact that his father Benzion, who had been an adviser to Jabotinsky, had exiled himself and his family to the U.S. after he failed to get tenure at the Hebrew University in Israel. That was in 1962 when Binyamin was 11. He didn’t return to residence in Israel until he had completed his high school education in America. Service with an elite IDF unit saw him rise to the rank of captain. In 1982, at the tender age of 33, he was appointed Israel’s deputy ambassador to Washington. Two years later he was Israel’s permanent representative to the UN. While he was at the

UN one of its most senior officials said to me: “That’s the most ambitious and dangerous man I’ve ever met. He’s determined at all costs to become Israel’s prime minister. *God help us all, the poor bloody Palestinians especially, if he does.*”

When the time came for Netanyahu to declare himself as a runner in the race to succeed Shamir as leader of the Likud, one of his rivals was Benny Begin, the son of Menachem Begin. Benny described Netanyahu as a “man of tricks and gimmicks”, a person who “lacked political gravitas.”³ Shlaim wrote that other members of the Likud also regarded Netanyahu as an intellectual lightweight, “shallow and superficial” and “little more than a purveyor of sound bites for American television.”⁴ The fact that he was such a smooth-talking and plausible operator on television, well-able to make good appear to be evil and evil to be good, was undoubtedly one of the reasons why he secured the backing of some of America’s most wealthy Zionists.

Nobody, not even Netanyahu, gets money and political support for nothing. In return for both he was expected, when he became prime minister, to assist with the implementation of American Zionism’s agenda, which, broadly speaking, was also the agenda of America’s “neoconservatives” (lunatic right in political terms) and Christian fundamentalists (lunatic right in religious terms).

Because it has the prime responsibility for seeing to it that U.S. presidents do not cross the red lines drawn for them, Zionism in America is, generally speaking, much more strategic in its thinking than Zionism in Israel.

When he became Israel’s prime minister, Netanyahu was fully aware of what American Zionism’s agenda was. It had been summarised in a policy paper written for him and which had a most explicit title, A CLEANBREAK: A NEW STRATEGY FOR SECURING THE REALM.

It urged Netanyahu as prime minister to have no second thoughts about making a clean break with the Rabin policy of negotiating with the PLO and trading land for peace. Israel’s claim to all the land it occupied was “legitimate and noble”, the American Zionists’ policy paper said. “*Only the unconditional acceptance by Arabs of our rights is a solid basis for the future.*” After the clean break Israel would be free to shape its “strategic

environment”. What would that involve? Among other things, “*re-establishing the principle of pre-emption (pre-emptive strikes)... focus on removing Saddam Hussein from power in Iraq... weakening, containing and even rolling back Syria, Hizbollah and Iran.*”⁵

The American Zionists’ policy paper said: “Only the unconditional acceptance by Arabs of our rights is a solid basis for the future.”

The changed nature of relations with the Palestinians would see Israel “*specifically reserving the right of hot pursuit anywhere... as well as attempting to promote alternatives to Arafat’s leadership.*”

Essentially the policy paper was a blueprint for the Zionist state to impose its will on the region by whatever force was necessary.

It was the work of a Study Group which was a part of the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies, an Israel-based think tank with an affiliated office in Washington D.C and connections with the neoconservative movement across America.

The Study Group’s leader was Richard Perle, a former Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Policy in a Reagan administration and regarded by some as America’s “Prince of Darkness”. The final report included ideas from James Colbert, Charles Fairbanks Jr, Douglas Feith, Robert Loewenberg, David Wurmser, Meyray Wurmser and, to Perle’s delight, Deputy Secretary of Defense Paul (“The road to peace in the Middle East goes through Baghdad”) Wolfowitz.

Perle and Wolfowitz had more in common than their gut-Zionism and unconditional support for Israel right or wrong. Perle was the chairman of the Pentagon’s semi-official and somewhat mysterious Defense Policy Board. (I think this Board existed, at least in part, to enable Zionism to have direct and, when necessary, pre-emptive influence on Defence Secretaries or rather their policies. The last thing American Zionists wanted was another Forrestal—a Defense Secretary who tried to put America’s real interests before those of Zionism).

It was never much of a secret that, with the support and assistance of Vice President Dick Cheney (the real Dr. Strangelove in my opinion), Perle and Wolfowitz were the prime pushers for war with Iraq. In their view

at the time Saddam Hussein had to be knocked off his perch because he and his regime represented the only foreseeable potential Arab challenge to Greater Israel's continuing military domination of the region. Am I implying that the invasion of Iraq in 2003 was more Zionism's war than America's war? Yes.

I do not mean to imply that Netanyahu was merely a "yes" man for American Zionism and would have had a different agenda if he had not needed American Zionism's support. His own anti-Palestinian mindset was a matter of record, most notably in his book *A Place Among the Nations; Israel and the World*. It was to Zionism what Hitler's *Mein Kampf* was to his cause. The timing of the publication of Netanyahu's book (described by Shlaim as a 'major' work) was as important as its several purposes.

One main purpose was to reinforce in the minds of Jews everywhere that just as in the past they had been persecuted by all around them, so they would be in the future, forever and ever. The world was incurably anti-Semitic and implacably hostile to the Jewish state. The implication was that one day the Jews of the world would need Israel (Greater Israel) as their refuge of last resort, so those who thought about criticising its policies—in particular the policy of keeping forever the West Bank—had better keep quiet. If they did not, they would be assisting their enemies to undermine the security of the Jewish refuge of last resort.

The comfort for the Jewish people, Netanyahu maintained, was in knowing that they had the "right" to the whole Land of (biblical) Israel. It was not the Jews who had usurped the land from the Arabs; it was the Arabs who had usurped it from the Jews.

Netanyahu's vision of Israel's relationship with the Arab world was one of permanent conflict, a never-ending struggle between the forces of light and the forces of darkness. "Violence", Netanyahu wrote, "is ubiquitous in the political life of all Arab countries... International terrorism is the quintessential Middle East export and its techniques are those of the Arab regimes and organisations that invented it."⁶ (As we have seen, Begin and Shamir were actually the "inventors" of terrorism in its Arab-Israeli context).

But it was for the Palestinians and Arafat and his PLO in particular that Netanyahu reserved most of his poison. *His book was a full, fierce, frontal assault on the notion that the Palestinian problem constituted the core of the Arab–Israeli conflict.* According to Netanyahu’s rewrite of history, the Palestinian problem was not a genuine problem. It was an artificially manufactured one. The primary cause of tension in the Middle East was “inter-Arab rivalry”. (In reality, outside the fool’s paradise in which Netanyahu lives, inter-Arab rivalry was the reason why the Arab states could not put their act together to assist the Palestinians to achieve even a measure of justice.)

And the main point? Actually there were two.

First, the Palestinians had no right to self-determination.

Second, the idea of compromise with the PLO was completely out of the question because its goal was the destruction of the State of Israel, a goal, Netanyahu asserted, that defined the PLO’s very essence.

And it was this essence that distinguished the PLO from the Arab states, even the most radical ones. The Arab states would clearly like to see Israel disappear, but their national life was not dependent on Israel’s destruction. The PLO’s reason for being was Israel’s destruction, and that was why there could never be negotiations with it.

To see Netanyahu’s book as simply the work of one charismatic and thoroughly disingenuous Zionist leader who was desperate to get his hands on the levers of power in Israel is, I think, to miss the point about its real significance with regard to both the content and the timing of its publication.

It was published in 1993—i.e. when a reluctant Rabin was being pulled by an enthusiastic Arafat and pushed by Peres into the Oslo peace process.

At the time Netanyahu’s best friends in Washington—Zionism’s strategic thinkers who were embedded in the principal institutions of U.S. decision-making—were at panic stations because they sensed that the day was fast approaching when the major powers, including and most importantly the U.S., might require Israel to withdraw from the Occupied

Territories in return for peace. Why? Because they, the major powers, could no longer plausibly deny five aspects of reality.

1. Arafat had succeeded against impossible odds in bringing about the regeneration of Palestinian nationalism.
2. Arafat had persuaded the majority of his people to accept in principle the need for unthinkable compromise with Israel.
3. Arafat and his PLO were committed to continuing their struggle for a minimum of justice by political and diplomatic means only. By negotiation.
4. Arafat was in a position to deliver the compromise necessary from his side for peace—if put to the test of good faith negotiations by Israel.
5. An Israel at peace with its Arab neighbours inside more or less its borders they were on the eve of the 1967 war would not be in any danger.

All this the governments of the major powers knew; and Zionism's strategic thinkers and planners knew they knew.

Zionism's problem at the time Netanyahu was writing his book can be simply stated. Arafat the terrorist it could handle, with bullets and bombs. Arafat the peacemaker it could not handle because negotiating with him would require Israel's withdrawal from the Occupied Territories.

Zionism needed to have Arafat rebranded as a terrorist.

What was therefore needed from Zionism's perspective was a bold propaganda offensive to convince the governments and peoples of the Western world that they were misguided to see Arafat and his PLO as anything but a bunch of terrorists. Put another way, *Zionism's need was to have Arafat re-branded as a terrorist*. Netanyahu's book was the opening shot in a new propaganda war.

In the context outlined above, *Rabin's decision in principle to deal with Arafat and his PLO was, potentially, the Mother and Father of all setbacks for Zionism's Greater Israel project*. That was why, in Washington on 12 September 1993, Rabin came under enormous pressure from Zionism-in-

America *not* to agree to have the PLO named in the Declaration of Principles as prepared by Americans for signature on the House Lawn. Zionism-in-America wanted Rabin to do its bidding, to cause Arafat to walk out of the Oslo peace process before it got going for real. It wasn't only Rabin's assassin who saw him as a traitor. What Peres had described to me as the "Likud lobby" in America did too.

When Netanyahu took office as Israel's prime minister there was not a lot he could do immediately to reverse the territorial and political gains the Palestinians had made to this point, as a result of Arafat's policy of politics and compromise and good faith negotiations with Israel. So Netanyahu's policy was to undermine Arafat's agreement with Rabin's Israel and to freeze it. There were to be no second stage negotiations for a final settlement. No maximum Israeli withdrawal. The only thing not frozen was Israel's illegal settlement activity. The full-scale colonisation of the West Bank was to continue. (Could there have been a more potent symbol of Israel's bad faith?)

There were to be no second stage negotiations for a final settlement. No maximum Israeli withdrawal. The only thing not frozen was Israel's illegal settlement activity.

*"If Peres (as the real architect of the Oslo accords on the Israeli side) was a dreamer, Binyamin Netanyahu was the destroyer of dreams."*⁷ That was Shlaim's verdict and there is no better summary description than his of the destructive process.

From his first day in office Netanyahu worked, surreptitiously but systematically, to undermine the Oslo accords. With the exception of the limited pullback from Hebron, he suspended all the further redeployments to which Israel was committed under the terms of the accord. By building more Jewish settlements on the West Bank and more Jewish housing on Arab land in East Jerusalem, he violated the spirit of these accords. *Under his leadership the confiscation of Arab lands proceeded apace, and the right-wing settlers were given free rein to harm, harass and heap humiliations on the long-suffering population of the occupied territories.*

As for the Palestinian Authority, it was treated by the prime minister not as a partner on the road to peace but as a defective instrument of Israeli security. Co-operation in combating terrorism had been an important, though undeclared, element in the Oslo process. Netanyahu endangered this co-operation by pressing the Palestinian Authority to crack down harder and harder on the Islamic militants even as Israel reneged in its part of the bargain. The entire Oslo process began to unravel under the heavy-handed pressure applied by the Likud government.⁸ [Emphasis added].

At the end of his three years as prime minister—disastrous for Israel, the Palestinians and the whole world—Netanyahu had two achievements to his name.

One was his creation of an environment in which it would become, was bound to become, increasingly difficult for Arafat to isolate, and then put out of business, those Palestinians who rejected his policy of politics and compromise; and had turned to extreme violence, terrorism pure and simple, in the form, mainly, of suicide bombings. These were initially the speciality of the supporters of Hamas, (the Islamic resistance movement Israel had encouraged at its birth in order to reduce popular support in the Occupied Territories for Arafat and Fatah).

Not to forget, as Arafat put it, that Hamas was well established by the time Netanyahu came to power. He was not the agent provocateur of its first and second wave suicide bombing campaigns. He was merely the beneficiary of them. *But it was Netanyahu's anti-Oslo policy which made it inevitable that Arafat and his policy of politics and compromise would be discredited in the eyes of a growing number of Palestinians, and that in growing numbers they would come to see Hamas as more relevant to their struggle than Arafat and his Palestinian Authority.*

Netanyahu's anti-Oslo policy made it inevitable that Arafat and his policy of politics and compromise would be discredited in the eyes of a growing number of Palestinians.

Netanyahu's second achievement was strengthening and leveraging the power of the Zionist lobby in America. He did it, with Karl Rove's

assistance, by building on what Begin had started—engaging American Christian fundamentalism in active common cause with Zionism. The lobbying power of these deluded and diabolical forces combined is beyond awesome—more than enough it seemed, then and still today, to prevent any American president requiring Israel to be serious about peace.

Karl Rove was Bush Senior’s pollster and political campaign manager, and became Bush Junior’s chief political adviser—i.e. the man who decided what Bush had to say and to whom in order to get elected. According to Lou Dubose, Rove’s biographer, Bush Junior and Rove came to a very important decision after Bush’s born-again conversion from alcoholism to Christianity. “*To govern on behalf of the corporate right, they would have to appease the Christian right.*”² Rove managed Bush’s wooing of America’s Christian fundamentalists. And it was Rove who built the bridge to enable Netanyahu and Zionism to make bigger and better common cause with America’s Christian fundamentalists.¹⁰

This alliance for common cause was possible because America’s Christian fundamentalists share the view of those Jews in Israel who became religious Zionists as a consequence of the 1967 war—that Israel’s occupation and settlement of the West Bank was a sign of Divine Favour. Professor Walid Khaladi, a Palestinian who was respected and admired in many lands for the quality of his scholarship, put it this way: To America’s Christian fundamentalists “Israel’s victory and the surge in the Jewish settlement of Palestinian Occupied Territories were the working of God’s design, the augurs of the Rapture and Tribulations, of Armageddon and the Apocalypse, of the End of Days and the approach of the Second Coming of Christ.”¹¹ For Christian fundamentalists it followed that any attempt to halt the building of more (illegal) Jewish settlements or, worse still, to withdraw from any part of the occupied West Bank, is against God’s will and purpose.

It was a remarkable deal. Zionism needed American Christian fundamentalism for its lobbying power, to guarantee that no American president could ever require Zionism’s child to do what it did not want to

do. American's Christian fundamentalists needed Zionism to guarantee that the world ended in the way the Bible said it would.

In May 1999, Zionism's strategic thinkers and planners in America and their Christian fundamentalist allies had a terrible shock. Their horse and its jockey, Likud and Netanyahu, fell in the Israeli election race. The horse was not injured badly enough to be put out of its misery by injection, shooting or whatever; but it was in a bad way. It seemed that a substantial majority of Israelis really were hoping that it would never run again; and that the prospects for resurrecting the Oslo peace process really were good. Rabin, it seemed, may not have died for nothing. And Arafat, it seemed, may not have put his life and his credibility with his own people on the line for nothing.

As Shlaim noted before it all started to go badly wrong, again, and worse than ever, the Israeli electorate had "passed a severe judgement on Netanyahu"; and given his successor, Ehud Barak for Labour and its coalition partners, a clear mandate "*to follow in the footsteps of his slain mentor down the potholed path to peace.*"¹²

Barak won by a landslide. It was the biggest political upheaval in Israel since that of 1977 when Likud first came to power under the leadership of Menachem Begin. Shlaim wrote: "Not surprisingly, the result of the 1999 election was compared to a political earthquake. But it was more than an earthquake. It was the sunrise after three dark and terrible years during which Israel had been led by the unreconstructed proponents of the iron wall."¹³ Inspired and cheered on, I add, by "The Prince of Darkness" and his associates in America.

Unfortunately it turned out to be sundown, with the darkest and most terrible days still to come—for Israelis but even more so for the occupied and oppressed Palestinians.

BARAK AND CLINTON BLOW IT; ARAFAT GETS THE BLAME

As we have seen, a greater Israel was created on the back of a Great Lie. In its original form it was that Egypt had started the 1967 war by attacking Israel. Some 35 years later, this Greater Israel (then minus Sinai, given back in exchange for the disastrous separate peace with Sadat's Egypt) was sustained by the telling of a second Great Lie. It was that in July 2000, at a Camp David Summit convened by President Clinton, Arafat rejected an offer from Barak that would have given the Palestinians 95 per cent of everything Arafat had been saying he wanted.

The second Great Lie: that at Camp David, Arafat rejected an offer from Barak that would have given the Palestinians 95 percent of everything Arafat had been saying he wanted.

This alleged Arafat rejection was presented and promoted by Zionism as the proof that Arafat had been conning the world—that he had never been serious about compromise with Israel, that he was still hell-bent on Israel's destruction and, having tried and failed to advance his diabolical cause by political means, was committed more seriously than ever to waging war against the Jewish state by terrorism. So it was obvious, Zionism asserted, that so long as Arafat was in charge, "*Israel has no partner for peace on the Palestinian side.*"

The words quoted and emphasised above are those of Israel's Ambassador to the UK in a BBC Radio Five programme in January 2003, but they were in the essential script from which all Israeli ambassadors and other official spokesmen everywhere were required to speak.

As we shall see, *the truth is that it was not Arafat who was conning the world. It was, as ever, Zionism and its child.* Unfortunately, and subsequently confirmed by Robert Malley, President Clinton's hands-on special adviser for the Camp David summit and the follow-up Taba talks, it was "*convenient for Clinton (and, I add, Barak) to have Arafat to blame.*"¹

The second Great Lie was to become the cover for the Zionist state as led by Prime Minister Sharon to try to rob the Palestinians of everything they had—the gains they had made by politics in terms of liberating some of Palestine, their will to insist on Israel honouring Rabin's agreement with Arafat, their leadership and even their dignity.

To get at the truth we must look at the events which propelled an apparently enthusiastic Barak and a really reluctant Arafat to Camp David in the first summer of the new millennium.

At the time of Rabin's handshake with Arafat, Barak, Israel's most decorated soldier, was the IDF's chief of staff, and strongly of the view that Rabin had given Arafat too much and was going too fast for Israeli public opinion.

By the time he became prime minister Barak had had a taste of politics. He had served as foreign minister in the government Peres led after Rabin's assassination. But as events were to prove, Barak was, to say the least, an inept politician, and not nearly as clever as he thought he was. He was neither a dove nor a hawk. He was a bit of both depending on the circumstances of the moment. And that was a large part of the problem—his problem, Israel's problem, Clinton's problem, Arafat's problem and Syria's problem.

As prime minister, Barak's priority was not doing what had to be done if Rabin's agreement with Arafat was to be honoured, even though the five transitional years that were supposed to end with a final settlement and maximum Israeli withdrawal had passed. Barak explained why in an interview with *Ha'aretz* on 18 June 1999.

The Palestinians are the source of legitimacy for the continuation of the conflict, but they are the weakest of our adversaries. As a military threat they are ludicrous.

In some ways that was a refreshingly honest statement, but Barak was too dumb a politician to understand what he had actually said by obvious implication—that Israel did not need to be too serious about making peace on the terms Arafat had signed up for because the Palestinians were no threat to Israel. Though he was too much of a political

novice to see it, *Barak, effectively, was throwing down a challenge to Hamas, to prove that it was not “ludicrous” as a threat!*

Barak's priority was honouring his main election pledge to Israel's voters. That was to extract the IDF from the Vietnam-type situation in which it was bogged down in southern Lebanon, the increasingly costly legacy of Sharon's invasion to destroy Arafat and his PLO.

After the PLO's departure from Lebanon, the IDF's continuing presence in the south of the country had been resisted, with mounting success, by Hizbollah, the Islamic guerrilla force backed by Iran and Syria. Naturally Hizbollah's fighters were described as “terrorists” by all who spoke for Zionism. They were not. They were resistance fighters who were simply exercising their right to resort to armed struggle to end an occupation of a part of their country that had started with an Israeli war of aggression. As the years passed they had shown themselves to be capable of inflicting more casualties on the IDF than Israeli public opinion was prepared to tolerate. (If Israel had not invaded Lebanon in the first place it is most unlikely that Hizbollah would have flourished in any part of it).

Barak had promised to extract the IDF from southern Lebanon by July 2000. To do that he needed an agreement with Syria and that was why, on taking office as prime minister, he gave priority to negotiations with Syria, effectively down-grading negotiations with Arafat and his Palestinian Authority.

At the time, Jordan had been formally at peace with Israel for nearly five years. The moment Arafat extended his hand to Rabin, King Hussein was free to make peace without being accused of betraying the Palestinians as Sadat had done. The formal Israel–Jordan peace treaty was signed on 26 October 1994. It meant that of the frontline Arab states only Syria and Lebanon were not at peace with Israel. But neither were going to attack. Lebanon could not and Syria's dictator was too frightened of the consequences of war even to think about it as an option for pressing Israel to withdraw from the Golan Heights. *In reality there was no frontline Arab regime or state threat to Israel's security.*

Barak needed a deal with Syria because of its influence in Lebanon —on account of the Syrian military presence (as secretly agreed with Israel

years previously). Lebanon had no armed forces of its own to speak of and therefore could not give Barak the guarantee he needed—that when the IDF withdrew from southern Lebanon, Hizbollah would not be permitted to resume attacks on Israel’s northern settlements. Correction. The government in Beirut could have given the guarantee, but it would have lacked substance without Syria’s approval and Syria’s commitment to deliver on it if necessary—i.e. by calling off or shutting down Hizbollah in the event of it wanting to fight on. Barak needed a Syrian guarantee in order to assure Israelis that the IDF’s withdrawal from southern Lebanon would not pose a security threat to Israel’s northern settlements. He needed to be able to say something like: “I’ve got Syria’s guarantee, and in the event of it being unwilling or unable to deliver, we’ll knock the hell out of that country to make it do what we want.”

Hizbollah ’ s fighters were resistance fighters, exercising their right to resort to armed struggle to end an occupation of a part of their country.

In the real regional politics of the time, control of Hizbollah to some degree was one of only two possible bargaining chips in the otherwise empty hands of Syria’s leadership for deal-making with Israel. The other was the presence in Damascus of the anti-Arafat and really inconsequential PLO factions (the “adventurist leftists”) who rejected compromise with Israel. Their strictly controlled presence in Damascus, churning out anti-Israel and anti-Arafat propaganda, enabled Syria still to pose as the only true champion of the Palestine liberation movement. For some years past Assad had been saying to Israel, in effect, “If you deal with me on terms I can accept, I’ll call off Hizbollah in Lebanon and screw the Palestinian rejectionist groups I am sheltering.”

So Barak’s first priority was peace with Syria. The response he got to his diplomatic probe was encouraging. And in December (1999) a little bit of history was made. Israel’s prime minister had a meeting in Washington with Farouk al-Shara, Syria’s foreign minister. The Syrian refused to shake the Israeli’s hand but it was still a very significant moment—the first ever formal, high-level, face-to-face, Syrian–Israeli encounter. It led to exploratory talks which were to last for months.

While they were going on, Arafat and his leadership colleagues feared that if by chance Syria and therefore Lebanon did make peace with Israel, thus bringing the Arab–Israeli conflict as between states to a formal end, the Palestinians would pay the price for it. Arafat suspected that in the event of regime peace, President Assad would dump his Palestinian stooges and dispose of them (which would have been good news for Arafat); and (the bad news for Arafat) would join with Egypt and Jordan, no doubt with America saying “thank you, thank you”, to insist that Arafat and his Palestinian Authority accept whatever Israel was prepared to give, even if it fell far short of what had been promised by the Oslo agreement.

Barak could have had everything he wanted from Syria if he had been willing to commit to Israel’s withdrawal from the Golan Heights. He did not give the commitment because he knew it would plunge Israel into crisis and, perhaps, guarantee Likud’s return to power. Withdrawal from the Golan Heights would have required Barak’s government, among other things, to declare null and void Israel’s annexation of that chunk of Syria. *So Barak turned away from peace with Syria and Lebanon.*

Barak could have had everything he wanted from Syria if he had been willing to void Israel’s annexation of the Golan Heights.

Without the Syrian guarantee and against the advice of his generals, Barak then decided to honour his election promise by unilaterally withdrawing the IDF from southern Lebanon. His decision was implemented swiftly and efficiently in May 2000. Why did Israel’s generals advise against a unilateral withdrawal?

It was not because they feared that Hizbollah would launch attacks on pre1967 Israel. The generals knew that Hizbollah would have little or no interest in provoking more massive and devastating Israeli reprisal attacks on Lebanon. With the Israeli occupation of the south of their country ended, the predictable priority of all Lebanese would be development and a return to prosperity. The real fear of Israel’s generals was the message a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon would send to the Palestinians. What message? *That if they could mount and sustain a campaign of violence, they could do a Hizbollah—make the cost of occupation too high for Israeli*

public opinion to bear and force the IDF to withdraw from the West Bank and Gaza.

The essential background truth to the point being made here is this. Those responsible for Israel's security had always known what their counterparts in all so-called democracies know about the soft underbelly of public opinion. Despite what politicians always say to the contrary, there are limits to how much suffering and disruption the voters will tolerate when subjected to a sustained terrorist campaign. In other words, those most responsible for Israel's security had always known that if ever the Palestinians were able to mount and sustain a terror campaign, two things were most likely to happen. There would be an exodus of Jews from Israel to the security of other lands. And many of those who stayed would insist on their government doing a deal with the terrorists, to get the violence and disruption called off.

The extent to which the best and the brightest minds in Israel's security establishment were fully aware of what the Palestinians could achieve by terrorism—i.e. if they were ruthless and efficient enough—was brought home to me in a private conversation with former DMI Shlomo Gazit in 1980. Though he won't thank me for my indiscretion, he said, "If we'd have been the Palestinians, we would have had our mini state a long time ago." *He meant that they would have mounted a ruthless and sustained terror campaign to break the will of the people of Israel, and thus that of their government, to resist the demands of the Palestinians for some justice.*

But there was even more to it (the unspeakable fear of Israel's rational generals). A forced withdrawal to more or less the borders of 4 June 1967 would probably take place in the context of a Jewish civil war— as a consequence of the most fanatical and bigoted settlers, and those in the army who supported them, resisting withdrawal "to the death" in accordance with the oath Sharon and others had signed with their blood. In such circumstances there could be a very real threat to Israel's security and perhaps even its existence—a threat brought about by Zionism's arrogance of power and refusal after refusal to make peace on terms the overwhelming majority of Arabs including the Palestinians could accept, but nonetheless a real threat. In the minds of Israel's rational generals there was therefore only

one conclusion to be drawn in the wake of the IDF's unilateral withdrawal from southern Lebanon. If Israel, still in occupation of (still most of) the West Bank and Gaza, was not to find itself at some point in a situation which the IDF could not handle, *Prime Minister Barak should not waste any more time in trying to close the deal Arafat had made with Rabin. Or something like it.*

To give himself more room for manoeuvre with Arafat and the Palestinian Authority while he gave priority to getting a deal with Syria, Barak had met with Arafat at Sharm el-Sheikh on 4 September 1999. The outcome was an agreement which put in place a new time-table for implementing the second and final phase of the Oslo peace process—the “final status” negotiations for maximum Israeli withdrawal for maximum Palestinian self-government. There was to be a “framework agreement” by February 2000 and a fully-fledged peace treaty by 13 September.

February 2000 came and went without any sign of a framework agreement.

By this time a very angry Arafat knew that without some progress to prove to his people that he had not made the mistake of all their lives by putting his trust in Israel's good faith, he would be unable to prevent an explosion of Palestinian frustration and despair. An explosion which Arafat knew would play right into the hands of those Israelis and their American supporters who were committed to destroying the Oslo peace process. *The point—it cannot be emphasised enough—is that Arafat was still absolutely determined to do whatever was humanly possible and then some, in all and any circumstances, to keep the simmering volcano of Palestinian frustration and despair from erupting.*

To shore-up popular support on his own side for his policy of politics and compromise, and also to put pressure on Barak, Arafat threatened to do what the Zionists had done in 1948. If agreement for the full implementation of his deal with Rabin could not be reached, he would make a unilateral declaration of independence. Arafat had no illusions about how the U.S. would respond if he had to make good his threat. The U.S. would not do what it did in 1948 and recognise the unilaterally declared state, but there was a chance that many other governments would

because, generally speaking, the world minus America was becoming fed up with Israel's procrastination and self-righteousness.

In any event a unilateral declaration of the coming into being of an independent Palestinian state would have been an embarrassment for all the major powers because it would have forced the most pertinent question of all to the top of the international political agenda: Was Israel actually intending to keep its promises or not? Nobody in politics really wanted that question to be asked because, if the answer was "No", the next question had to be: What the hell can anybody do about it? And the answer to that question, everybody in politics knew, was "Nothing"—because America, the only power with real influence on Israel, was not going to confront Zionism.

It was to avert the crisis that a unilateral declaration of Palestinian independence would provoke for himself and others that Barak prevailed upon President Clinton to convene a trilateral summit at Camp David.

Then it was Arafat's turn to do a Rabin, so to speak. He didn't want to go to America. Why not?

As all leaders and diplomats everywhere know, summit meetings require a lot of detailed preparation if a successful outcome is to be guaranteed. When it became clear that Clinton and Barak were not interested in detailed preparations, Arafat smelled the proverbial rat and said that he would not go to Camp David. So far as he was concerned, and he meant it, there would be no trilateral summit without the necessary preparations.

The truth is that both Clinton and Barak had reasons of their own for a quick-fix—an approach to resolving matters which Arafat, by far the wisest of the three of them at the time, knew would not be in the best interests of any of them.

Clinton was in the twilight of his second and last term as president and was now most concerned about his place in history. He did not want his most talked about achievement to be the oral sex he had enjoyed with Monica Lewinsky in the Oval Office. If in the months left to him he could solve the Palestine problem, the stain on his character as well as Monica's dress would be washed away.

Barak was in a most uncomfortable position between the rock of gut-Zionism's anti-Oslo stance, and the hard place of the insistence of his rational generals that, to prevent a possible security nightmare at some point in the future, he make a serious effort to complete the deal with Arafat—on Israel's terms, of course. So Barak, under pressure, was not going to Camp David to negotiate. *His only purpose was to give Arafat an ultimatum, effectively, "This is the best final settlement I am prepared to offer, take it or leave it."* And Barak was confident that, with President Clinton's assistance, he could get away with it. Arafat would buckle rather than be blamed for the summit's failure.

Arafat's gut instincts were telling him that he was being set up to take the blame if the summit failed. So why did he allow himself to be persuaded by President Clinton to go to Camp David? Arafat decided that he could not afford to offend an American president who, back in the hopeful days of 1993, had invested the prestige of his office and his personal good faith in the Arafat-initiated peace process. *Prior to his departure for America, Arafat also elicited from Clinton a promise—that in the event of the summit failing, he, Clinton, would not blame Arafat and the Palestinians.*

Barak's only purpose in going to Camp David was to give Arafat an ultimatum—take it, or leave it and be blamed for the summit's failure.

So what actually happened at Camp David and the follow-up Taba talks?

The truth, subsequently confirmed by Malley, who co-authored *Camp David: The Tragedy of Errors*, is rather different from what Barak and Zionism asserted with Clinton's endorsement.² I imagine that Malley spoke out and wrote because he was not prepared, as his master the President was, to be a party to one of the most grotesque and damaging propaganda lies in all of human history.

The truth only begins with this quite important background fact. When Barak announced that he was going to the Camp David summit, his coalition government fell apart. Three parties quit what some Israelis were

already beginning to regard as Barak's sinking ship of a government, robbing the prime minister of his parliamentary majority.

Reality check. *Without a parliamentary majority, Barak went to Camp David in no position to guarantee that he could deliver whatever he offered and promised there!* At this stage the notion that Arafat should make a final agreement with an Israeli prime minister who might not be able to deliver was, to use a favourite Barak word, ludicrous.

For Barak to have any credibility as prime minister when he returned from Camp David, and even the prospect of commanding enough popular support to prevent the Likud's return to power after the next election, he had to be able to say something very like: "I've done it. I've got agreement on a final settlement with Arafat. We, Israelis and Palestinians, can now have peace! So vote for me."

By definition a credible and real offer to Arafat for his consideration, and then for his acceptance or rejection, would have been put into writing. *The truth is that Arafat received no offer in writing, so there was nothing formally for him to accept or reject.*

One of the most remarkable things about the summit was that throughout its 14 days Barak refused to meet with Arafat for a one-on-one private conversation. Some Palestinians and some Israelis said that was because of Barak's personal antipathy towards Arafat. That might have been a tiny part of it. But the real reason, as I indicated above, was that Barak did not go to Camp David to negotiate. He was not there to expose himself to a one-to-one grilling by Arafat.

Arafat received no offer in writing, so there was nothing formally to accept or reject. Through the 14 days of the summit, Barak refused to meet with Arafat for a one-on-one private conversation.

Barak put forward his Camp David proposals with the aid of maps. What, actually, was available to the Palestinians as Israel's maximum contribution to a final settlement—IF Barak won Israel's next election, and assuming he could deliver?

It was not 95 per cent of everything Arafat was prepared to settle for. In terms of Israel's withdrawal from occupied territory (which was only

one of two major issues to be resolved—the other being “the refugee problem”) it was 85 per cent but... The percentage figure of the land from which Barak was proposing to withdraw did not tell anything like the whole land part of the true story. There were to be territorial swaps to allow Israel to annex occupied West Bank land which contained 80 percent of the illegal Jewish settlements and their inhabitants. (Since the signing of the Declaration of Principles the number of Jewish settlers on the occupied West Bank had continued to grow. At the time of the Camp David summit there were more than 400,000, including about 175,000 in annexed and expanded Arab East Jerusalem). *By such a device, and with the agreement of the U.S. president of the moment, much of what was illegal in international law was to be made legal.* (That’s chutzpah.) It is also the case that many illegal settlements were built on the aquifers of water. So the plan was for Palestinians to be robbed for all time of their most precious water sources.

Months after he lost Israel’s next election Barak wrote a piece for the *New York Times* in which he explicitly stated that Israel should keep 15 per cent of the West Bank, plus a security zone in the Jordan Valley. Barak was confirming that, even if he had won the election, Israel’s withdrawal would have been from less than 85 per cent of the West Bank. (My own view is that he would not have been allowed by the forces of gut-Zionism to deliver on any deal he made with Arafat).

In Zionism’s version Barak made an unthinkable “concession” over occupied Arab East Jerusalem, to allow the Palestinian state to have its capital there. Barak’s actual “concession” was a proposal for Israel to return one in every three neighbourhoods in occupied East Jerusalem, leaving Israel with sovereignty over almost half of the Old City. The implications for Arafat and his advisers, and all Muslims everywhere, were mind-blowing. *Barak was re-asserting the Jewish state’s control of the Muslim holy places.*

There was, in fact, even less to this “concession” than was obvious to anybody who did not study Barak’s maps. Barak’s purpose was to do the minimum he thought necessary to satisfy Arafat’s political demand and need for a little bit of East Jerusalem as the capital of the Palestinian state-to-be. But, as Khalidi noted: “the areas allotted to the Palestinians (in

Barak's grand scheme for a final settlement) did not constitute together a contiguous link between the Ramallah–Nablus area in the north and the Bethlehem–Hebron area in the south, thus vitiating the ostensibly conceded role of parts of East Jerusalem as the Palestinian capital.”³

It is true that Barak's land proposals did provide for a very significant amount of Palestinian autonomy but... Not in a form that could be described objectively as complete self-government, and not within what could truly be described as an independent Palestinian state. *The Palestinian entity of Barak's Camp David proposals would have been in the form of several dislocated, disconnected Bantustans; and the Palestinian Authority or government would have had no control of the frontiers of the Bantustans nor of the airspace over them.* Arafat and the Palestinians could have called what they had a state, but in reality it would have been something very much less (minus adequate water resources and with the Jewish state controlling the Muslim holy shrines).

Barak sought control of the Muslim holy places in the West Bank, and offered a Palestinian entity in the form of several dislocated, disconnected Bantustans whose borders and airspace would not be controlled by the Palestinian Authority.

And what of the Palestinian refugee problem? What was Barak proposing at Camp David in the way of a solution to it?

Arafat had obviously got to deliver something of value for his two constituencies: the “insiders”—those under Israeli occupation since 1967; and the “outsiders”—those made homeless and stateless by Zionism's ethnic cleansing of 1947/48. So what Barak had to offer at Camp David as a contribution to solving the refugee problem was naturally of great interest to Arafat and his advisers. As we have seen, the position according to UN resolutions and international law was that the Palestinian refugees had the right of return to their homeland or, if they chose, compensation.

At Camp David, Barak categorically refused to acknowledge that Israel had any historical, moral or legal responsibility for the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem. (He was effectively re-running the silly, and by now almost universally discredited, Zionist propaganda line that the

Palestinians had fled voluntarily, in answer to the calls of their absent leaders, in order for the incoming Arab armies to have clear fields of fire while they set about slaughtering the Jews and driving those not killed into the sea). *And Barak categorically rejected the notion that the Palestinians had a right of return.* He was effectively saying: “You can tear up those UN resolutions. Israel will never be bound by them and the only law we recognise is Zionist law.”

Barak categorically refused to acknowledge that Israel had any historical , moral or legal responsibility for the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem.

If, for the sake of illustration, one says that Israel’s withdrawal from the territories occupied in 1967 was one half of the solution to the Palestine problem, and that a satisfactory solution to the refugee problem was the other half, one could go on to say that, at Camp David, Barak offered closer to *35 per cent* of “everything” Arafat wanted and needed for a final settlement and a formal peace treaty with Israel.

Effectively an arrogant and self-righteous Barak was saying to Arafat, “If you reject what I am proposing, you’ll get nothing more and actually less than I am offering because Likud will win the next election.”

As it happened the discussions did not end at Camp David—because President Clinton insisted that the Israelis and the Palestinians should work on trying to close the gap between what Barak had proposed and what Arafat could accept.

Without saying so Clinton seemed to be acknowledging two things. The first was that some of Barak’s proposals were outrageous and offensive and would never be acceptable to Arafat or any Palestinian or Muslims anywhere. The second was that Barak’s strategy of negotiating by ultimatum was stupid. Israel’s prime minister of the moment had been a brilliant and heroic soldier, but he was incapable of doing the political business in an effective way. Particularly with Arafat. If you put a gun to his head and said, “Do what I say or I’ll blow your brains out”, Arafat would reply, “Okay, pull the trigger.”

President Clinton was also informed enough to know, as President Carter had known, that there *was* a solution to the refugee problem. It was a solution which Israel in a right (I mean sane!) mind could accept without fear (I mean without genuine fear) of upsetting the demographic balance by creating a situation in which Arabs outnumbered Jews in Israel. And it was a solution which Arafat could accept, reluctantly but “definitely” as he said to me in private.

From as far back as 1979 when Arafat secured the PNC’s mandate for his policy of politics and compromise with Israel, all mainstream PLO leaders were reconciled to the fact that few if any refugees, themselves included, would ever be allowed to return to the Israel they were prepared to recognise (Israel inside more or less its pre-1967 borders). Though they were reluctant to say so publicly in advance of final status negotiations, out of fear of being accused by their masses of betraying the cause, the mainstream Palestinian leadership was also reconciled to the fact that their mini-state would not be able to accommodate more than a relatively small number of the refugees, and that, as a consequence, the vast majority of them would have to settle for compensation, to enable them to have a diaspora life worth having in countries of their choice.

The pain of adjustment to this reality was explained to me in 1980 in the following way by Khalad Hassan:

My home is in Haifa. For centuries my family there was responsible for the Cave of Saint George, which was holy to the people of the three religions—Christians, Jews and Muslims. On Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays our house was the gathering place for the highly educated people of the three religions who came in their hundreds to discuss religious and political matters... How do you imagine I will feel looking out from a small Palestinian state to the home I can see but never return to? In my heart I will be crying while I work on suppressing and eliminating my anger... What choice do I have? None. Because Israel is the military superpower of the region and because the U.S. supports it right or wrong.

The main point? Because of the extent to which Arafat and his mainstream leadership colleagues had come to terms with the reality and implications of Israel's existence, *the good faith contribution required of Israel for a solution to the Palestinian refugee problem was very modest and very manageable*. Put another way, the gap that had to be closed on this issue in discussions following the Camp David summit was small. (This meant that Barak's extreme position at Camp David—total rejection—was extremely foolish.)

As directed by President Clinton at Camp David, the Israelis and the Palestinians did go to work on what could be done to close all of the gaps. In September the Palestinian leadership and the Israeli moderates around Barak had a powerful extra incentive to go to the outer limits of what was possible for an agreement because... *Because Sharon had provoked the second Palestinian uprising in the hope that it would guarantee his election as prime minister*. (Of which, more in the next chapter).

In December there were Israeli–Palestinian meetings in Washington. President Clinton adjudicated and just before Christmas he implored them to go back one more time to the drawing board, to make one final and supreme effort to get an agreement in early January (2001). But they were now in the most desperate race against time.

President Clinton was about three weeks from leaving office (to be replaced by George W. Bush after an election which, in Florida at least, was rigged, and with a management support team which included some of American Zionism's biggest hitters).

And Israel's own next election was approaching very fast.

Israel's proposals for the January Taba talks with the Palestinians were an improvement on what Barak had offered at Camp David. The professional diplomats in Israel's Foreign Ministry and other experienced political negotiators had effectively said to Barak, "If you want to be serious about concluding a final agreement with Arafat, even an agreement on our terms, there's a right as well as a wrong way to go about it."

On advice Barak was now prepared for Israel to accept the return of some Palestinian refugees—a maximum of 100,000 out of several millions, in instalments of 1,000 to 5,000. As Afif Safieh was subsequently to

observe, “We would have needed the entire Third Millennium to bring back a significant number of refugees.” But it was an important if token gesture to reality on Israel’s part—the breaking of another Zionist taboo. On Jerusalem the offer was shared control of the Muslim holy places.

It was over these holy places that the Taba talks broke down. They ended, a week before Israel’s election, with a joint Palestinian– Israel statement (i.e. issued by the actual negotiators for both parties). It announced that progress had been made and expressed the hope that the talks would be resumed after the Israeli elections.

The reality was that Israel’s negotiators, even with their hearts as well as their minds in the right place, could not continue without fresh instructions from the new Israeli prime minister when he took office—either Barak returned to power and pro-peace (perhaps), or Sharon, who was anti-peace on any terms the Palestinians could accept..

In his last days in office, and taking his cue from the joint statement of the Israeli and Palestinian negotiators at Taba, President Clinton could have made a very positive and encouraging statement. He could have said that as a result of his personal efforts, a final agreement for an Israel–Palestine peace was in sight and needed perhaps only a few more weeks of good faith negotiations to close the remaining gaps between the two sides, assuming both sides really wanted peace. And he could have called for incoming President George W. Bush to continue to put the White House heat on both parties. Instead, outgoing President Clinton chose to say, in effect, that it was all over and that Arafat was to blame for the failure of the negotiations. *What he actually said was that Barak had moved much more than Arafat, and that Arafat had not moved enough.* The truth was that Arafat could not move beyond the unthinkable compromise of his mini-state formula. It was Barak who had not moved enough.

Even if Arafat had gotten everything else he wanted and needed, or even if he had been prepared to accept less than a complete Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories, he could not have accepted a deal which left Israel with some control of the Muslim holy places in Jerusalem. Those who thought or think otherwise do not live in the real

world. Israel cannot have, ever, control of the Muslim holy places in Jerusalem and peace.

The problem of Jerusalem is easy to define. Because of what can be called the interlocking nature of its holy places most sacred to Jews and Muslims, it is impossible to separate control of them.

As many readers will know, the place most sacred to Jews is that part of the Western Wall of the Old City that came to be called the Wailing Wall. It is all that remains of the Second Temple destroyed by the Romans in AD 70. (Religious Jews lament the destruction of the Temple and pray for its restoration. The term Wailing Wall was coined by European travellers who witnessed the mournful vigils of pious Jews before the relic of the sacred Temple.) The rabbinic belief is that the divine Presence never departs from the Western Wall. It is the place of prayer and pilgrimage most sacred to Jews. But the Western Wall also forms part of a larger wall that surrounds the Muslim Dome of the Rock and the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

It was because of the impossibility of separating control of what is most sacred to Jews and Muslims that, in 1947, those responsible for framing the UN partition plan insisted that Jerusalem should not be part of either the proposed Jewish or Arab state, and should be, had to be, an international city administered by the UN—if Jerusalem was not to become a source of conflict without end.

Zionism subsequently justified Dayan's taking of the Old City in the 1967 war on the grounds that after the Jews were expelled from their Quarter of it by King Abdullah's forces, they and all Jews were denied access to their most sacred place. What that justification totally ignored was that Jews would not have been expelled from the Old City, and thereafter no Jews would have been denied access, if Zionism had accepted the UN plan to internationalise Jerusalem. It was only because Ben-Gurion tried and failed to grab all of it, in defiance of the will of the organised international community, that Jerusalem was divided. As we have seen, King Abdullah would not have moved on Jerusalem, to protect the Muslim sacred places, if Ben-Gurion had not been so greedy, so self-righteous and so contemptuous of the UN, international law and Muslim rights.

One can only speculate about why it was convenient for Clinton to blame Arafat. He was obviously not pleased, to say the least, that he had been denied the place he wanted in history as the president who solved the Palestine problem. But why blame Arafat when, if anybody was to be blamed, it was, objectively speaking, Israel—for its refusal to go all the way in doing what was necessary for peace. The truth, or so it seems to me, is that in pork-barrel America blaming Zionism for anything was strictly forbidden. So blame Arafat.

Barak's reason for blaming Arafat speaks for itself—he lost the election. It was then convenient for him to say, “I would have won it if Arafat had not rejected my generous offer.” The tragedy is that Barak might well have won if he had gone to the Camp David summit in a different state of mind. How so?

As we have seen, Barak went to Camp David with an ultimatum. Effectively it was: “This is my best and final offer. Take it or leave it.” And his arrogant bluff was called. The real point is this: If Barak had put on the table at Camp David in July 2000 the “concessions” his own professional negotiating people advised him to make for the Taba talks in January 2001, there *might* have been enough time before Israel's next election to close all of the gaps between what Barak's Israel could offer and Arafat could accept. The idea, for example, of joint Israeli–Palestinian control of both the Jewish and Muslim holy places of Jerusalem would have been a possibility so far as the Palestinians were concerned, but it could only happen in the context of Israel agreeing to all of Jerusalem becoming an open city and the capital of two states.

It wasn't Arafat who blew it, it was Barak and Clinton. Barak because of his abrasive style, his identity crisis—not knowing whether he was a hawk or a dove—and, most of all, the fact that he was an inept politician. And Clinton because, in his haste to beat his own deadline with destiny, he rejected Arafat's plea for the summit to be properly prepared.

If Clinton had said to Barak something like, “I like your idea for a summit but I agree with Arafat that we must all give the necessary time to preparing for its success, let's hope we do it in a few months”, the story might have had a very different ending.

We might have had peace in President Clinton's time—perhaps only the last hours or even the last minutes of it, but peace in his time. And ours.

Or perhaps not.

A RESURRECTION, A CRUCIFIXION AND A ROAD MAP TO NOWHERE

For Israel with Sharon as prime minister, it was back to living by the sword with a vengeance, while some Christian fundamentalist leaders in America, allies in common cause with Zionism, openly proclaimed Islam to be “evil”.

The key to understanding what happened after Sharon got full control of the levers of power in Israel is this. Of itself the blaming of Arafat by Barak and Clinton was not deeply damaging to the man and his cause. *It was the propaganda use Sharon and Zionism made of Barak and Clinton's blaming of the Palestinian leader that did the damage.*

Sharon was always intending to do much more than destroy the Oslo peace process and roll back the territorial and political gains the Palestinians had achieved from it. His mission, truly Zionist in thought and deed, was to break the will of the Palestinians to continue resisting Israel's occupation and force them to settle for crumbs from Zionism's table or flee to Jordan or wherever. Or, if they continued to resist, to be killed. *The key to everything for Prime Minister Sharon—if he was not to be allowed by the U.S. to kill Arafat (a recipient with Rabin and Peres of a Nobel Peace Prize)—was regime change in Palestine, having Arafat replaced by a compliant Palestinian leader.*

Blaming Arafat for the Camp David failure enabled Zionism to assert that so long as Arafat remained Palestine's man of destiny, Israel had nobody to negotiate with. “No partner for peace.”

That was the possibility opened up by Barak and Clinton's blaming of Arafat because it enabled Zionism to assert (while Israel got on with building more new settlements in the Occupied Territories and expanding existing ones) that so long as Arafat remained Palestine's man of destiny, Israel had nobody to negotiate with. “No partner for peace”.

Zionism's Second Great Lie was widely accepted as truth where it mattered most, in pork-barrel America, for two main reasons. George W. Bush came into office determined to avoid grasping the nettle of Middle East peacemaking, not least because his father had been stung by it. Having Arafat to blame was convenient, and most Americans had been conditioned to see things Zionism's way.

Then came 9/11 (2001), which enabled Zionism's strategic thinkers in America, in association with others representing different vested interests, to get President Bush to adopt their agenda—war for regime change in Iraq.

The man in the White House was told that Iraq (an identifiable and easy target to hit) was implicated in the 9/11 attack. As most people in the world beyond America know today, and many suspected at the time, that wasn't true. But it didn't matter. Those who wanted war with Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein—actually they had wanted war for that purpose from the moment in 1991 when President Bush the First refused to extend the coalition offensive to drive Saddam Hussein's forces out of Kuwait—now had the pretext they needed.

In retrospect it can be seen that for Arafat and everything he represented (actually and truly, not what Zionism asserted he represented) the attack on the most prestigious symbols of American economic and military power was a disaster in the same league as the Balfour Declaration and the Arab defeats of 1948 and 1967. How so?

When in response to 9/11 President Bush declared war on global terrorism, the way was open for Sharon to hitch his war wagon to Bush's; and then to assert that in Israel and the bits and pieces of Palestine which had then been liberated by Arafat's policy of politics and compromise, *he, Sharon, was fighting the same war as Bush was pledged to wage all over the world.* Even legitimate Palestinian resistance to occupation was terrorism.

In this light, Arafat was not to be regarded as the leader of a people with legitimate grievances struggling to end 34 years of Israeli occupation and brutal repression. Arafat was to be regarded as the Palestinian Bin Laden, and Sharon should be allowed to deal with him and his people in the way that Bush was intending to deal with all the other terrorists in the

world. *Even Zionism could not have gotten away with such a grotesque misrepresentation of Arafat and what he really represented if it was not widely believed in America that Barak had been prevented from making peace by the rejectionism of Arafat the “unreconstructable terrorist”.*

It was not, however, only the blaming of Arafat for the failure of the Camp David summit that enabled Zionism to prepare the stage for his political crucifixion.

In Zionism’s version of history, which was accepted without question by the mainstream Western media (and also much of the state-controlled Arab media), Arafat, a decade earlier, had made “the mistake of his life” by, it was asserted, taking sides with Saddam Hussein when he invaded Kuwait and, after that, when the coalition forces were preparing for war to eject Iraqi forces from Kuwait.

The story (Zionism’s assertion) that Arafat took sides with Saddam Hussein was given apparent credibility by two images. One was television footage of Arafat in Baghdad being received by Iraq’s tyrant-in-chief with Arafat embracing him in the customary Arab manner. The other was television footage of Palestinians in the Occupied Territories demonstrating their support for Saddam Hussein. They were emotionally for him because they perceived him to be, unlike any other Arab leader, standing up to America. In the last updated edition of my biography of Arafat, published in 1994, I revealed in some detail what Arafat’s real position was. The following, based on interviews with King Hussein and Arafat as well as conversations with others who lived the drama, is the essence of what actually happened.

The Iraq–Iran war, which Saddam Hussein was encouraged by Britain, America and others to fight, ended on 20 August 1988. (At about the halfway point in the eight years of that carnage, I was in the British Foreign Office for a private chat with the then Head of the Middle East Department. For openers I asked why the Iraq–Iran war was being allowed to drag on. He replied: “Alan, are you really so naïve? While they go on fighting, we all make money from selling them weapons. When they’ve had enough of war, we will all make more money helping them rebuild their

devastated countries.” It was said with a smile and the man was, perhaps, exaggerating to make a point, but that’s what he said.)

“Alan, are you really so naive? While they go on fighting, we all make money from selling them weapons. When they’ve had enough of war, we will all make more money helping them rebuild their devastated countries.”

Saddam Hussein was in need of financial assistance from his Gulf Arab brothers to repair his country and get the economy going again. The trouble was that he owed them some US\$30 billion, which they had loaned to Iraq to sustain its war effort. With some justification Saddam said he had fought the war to protect them all from the influence of the mad mullahs of Iran. But his Gulf Arab brothers were very wary. Iraq was now the most heavily armed and powerful military force in the Gulf. His brother leaders feared that if they assisted him to consolidate his position, they might one day become the victims of his ambitions. So they dragged their feet. Then, to put pressure on them, Saddam heated up his long-running border dispute with Kuwait.

The focus of the dispute was the Rumaila oilfield to the West of Kuwait City. The oilfield stretched across disputed border territory between Kuwait and Iraq and Saddam claimed that Kuwait had been pumping more than its fair share of oil from this field through slant drilling, and had effectively robbed and cheated Iraq. Saddam also claimed that while he had been fighting Iran to protect all their interests, Kuwait had developed farms and settlements beyond its legitimate border with Iraq. Saddam was also furious because Kuwait was selling oil for less than the agreed OPEC price and this, he insisted, was reducing the revenue cash-starved Iraq could generate from its own oil exports.

When and because Saddam started to apply pressure by deploying troops along Iraq’s border with Kuwait, Saudi Arabia’s King Fahd took the lead in secret negotiations to stop events getting out of control. Fahd secured, *or thought he had secured*, an agreement with Kuwait that was acceptable to Saddam. Under the terms of this agreement, both Saudi Arabia and Kuwait were to make substantial payments to Iraq. The

agreement was to be signed at a Gulf Arab summit in Jeddah on 31 July 1990. Saddam told King Fahd that Iraq would not attend the summit unless he was assured, by Fahd, that Kuwait would pay what it had promised. The Saudi monarch then gave Iraq's leader the assurance he needed. King Fahd would not have given it if he had not believed absolutely that Kuwait would honour its word to him.

On 25 July, a week before the scheduled Gulf Arab summit, alarm bells were ringing in Arafat's head. The main reason why he had survived to date was, in addition to his nose for danger, his intelligence on what was happening in the Arab world at regime level. He was desperate to do whatever he could to prevent the dispute between Iraq and Kuwait being turned into war. The alarm bells in his head had been set off by a report he had received about a conversation between Saddam and America's Ambassador to Iraq, April Glaspie. On 25 July she had a last meeting with Iraq's leader before going on a long-awaited holiday. The message Saddam had extracted from the conversation—with every justification on the basis of a transcript of it—was that the U.S. regarded the quarrel between Iraq and Kuwait as a little local difficulty and that the U.S. could live with whatever Saddam decided to do. (This at a time when he was massing troops on Iraq's border with Kuwait). In short, and as Arafat knew, Saddam thought he had been given an American green light to teach an arrogant Kuwait a little lesson if necessary. *Arafat suspected that the Americans, some Americans, were laying a trap for Saddam and that he might not be smart enough to see that he was being set up.*

Arafat flew to Baghdad and, as he put it, "I advised Saddam not to invade Kuwait even if he was provoked." Before he met with Saddam on this occasion Arafat was aware that he had assured Egypt's president Mubarak that he would not invade Kuwait. But Arafat left his meeting with Iraq's leader convinced that he would invade if Kuwait did not deliver on its promise at the Jeddah summit.

Smelling a conspiracy, Arafat then went to Kuwait to meet with its leaders. He told me: "I spoke with them very frankly. I said they had got to solve the financial issues with Saddam at the Jeddah summit as agreed with King Fahd. I begged them. But they were not interested in listening to what

I had to say. They said they had been informed that Saddam was bluffing. I said to them: 'Look. Nobody knows this situation better than me. Be careful.' And again I begged them. But they did not want to listen."

Nor did Kuwait's rulers want to listen to King Hussein when he made a similar appeal to them on the day before the Jeddah summit. One of the members of Kuwait's ruling family let slip to Hussein the reason for its complete lack of concern about what was happening. According to what Hussein himself told me, the Kuwaiti said: "*We are not going to respond to Iraq's threats... If they don't like it, let them occupy our territory... We are going to bring in the Americans.*" (The words were not emphasised, they just slipped out, quietly, and it was immediately obvious to Hussein that the Kuwaiti was embarrassed by his indiscretion. The emphasis is mine). Hussein was deeply shocked. His private feeling was that if Kuwait's rulers were conspiring with the Americans, they had taken leave of their senses and were betraying the Arab cause to protect their personal power and privileges.

The summit in Jeddah was a disaster. From the moment of its opening it was clear to all the participants *that Kuwait was there for only one reason—to humiliate Saddam Hussein*. It did this by offering a derisory amount of money. The small amount was the biggest possible insult. Saddam Hussein was represented by Izzat Ibrahim, Iraq's vice president. He walked out in disgust and two days later Saddam gave the order for the invasion of Kuwait.

In collaboration with King Hussein, Arafat had tried to stop it happening but was not allowed to succeed. (There is one thing above all others that no Arab leader can tolerate—a loss of face. Back in 1967 it was Nasser's refusal to suffer a loss of face that caused him to deploy troops in the Sinai, and this, as we have seen, was the gesture that placed him in the trap Israel's gut-Zionist leaders set for him. The main difference was that the trap set for Saddam Hussein was prepared not by Israel but by American interests with some assistance from Kuwait.)

As Iraq's invasion of Kuwait was taking place, Arab foreign ministers assembled in Cairo for an emergency summit. Its declared purpose was to find—and find quickly—an Arab diplomatic solution to an

Arab problem, in order to avert Western military intervention. Working separately and in their own ways, King Hussein and Arafat threw themselves into finding a formula that would enable Saddam Hussein to withdraw from Kuwait. To me Arafat commented, “We Arabs and me personally were not without experience in mediating Arab problems.”

It was King Hussein who secured Saddam’s agreement to begin withdrawing on Sunday 5 August and to attend a mini-summit in Saudi Arabia. Arafat told me: “Saddam declared on Iraqi television that he would withdraw and he did, in fact, make a token withdrawal even while the Cairo summit was going on.” But Saddam had two conditions. The first was that Kuwait would deliver on its previous promise about the money, though King Hussein thought he might be flexible on the amount. The second condition, and the most important as far as Saddam was concerned, was that the Arab Summit in Cairo would not condemn him. In effect Saddam said to King Hussein and through him his Arab brothers: “I am willing to get myself and all of us out of this mess by withdrawing, but I can only do so without losing face if the summit does not condemn me.”

As it happened, just one telephone call to President Mubarak from an American, it might have been President Bush (senior) himself, was enough to guarantee that the summit would condemn Saddam Hussein. When it did, King Hussein said, “*Oh my God, now the conspiracy is complete.*”

Arafat refused to give up. He flew again to Baghdad with a very important message from King Fahd for Saddam. What happened next? Arafat said: “From Baghdad I went to the Arab summit with a very important initiative—to form an Arab committee to keep the mediation process going. But this was not allowed to happen.” Why not? *Because enough people with power and influence in Washington and London (and Tel Aviv and Jerusalem) wanted the crisis resolved by war, not diplomacy.*

As the U.S. and Britain went about imposing their will on the United Nations Security Council and building their great coalition to eject Iraqi forces from Kuwait, Zionism’s big hitters in Washington were hoping the military action would be extended to Iraq and beyond—to topple not only Saddam Hussein, but also Arafat and King Hussein (the two men who

had actually done most to try to defuse the crisis before it became a catastrophe). Both were condemned and vilified by most Western politicians, the Western media and by most Arab regimes. King Hussein, and even more so Arafat, were presented as being pro-Saddam and therefore, by definition, anti-the West and anti-the noble cause it claimed it was preparing to fight for. It was a grotesque misrepresentation of their actual positions.

It is true that Arafat refused to condemn Saddam Hussein and join the American-led coalition for war to eject his forces from Kuwait. If he had done so he would have alienated himself from his own masses and that, in turn, would have affected his ability to deliver compromise if ever the time came. *But the assertion that Arafat took sides with Saddam Hussein was completely without foundation.* It was propaganda of the kind that punctuates the Judeo-Christian version of the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

When I reviewed the whole episode with Arafat, I said to him, “On reflection, don’t you think you were stupid to give those who wanted to discredit you the ammunition to do so by allowing yourself to be filmed in a brotherly embrace with Saddam Hussein?”

The first part of Arafat’s reply was the following. “There was so much hypocrisy. Do you know why I went to Baghdad when it was clear that the problem was going to be resolved by fighting? *It was mainly because your governments were asking me, begging me, to use my influence with Saddam, to persuade him to release the hostages.*” (Fearing an attack on Iraq’s vital installations, Saddam Hussein had taken and positioned hostages around them.) On two occasions, Arafat added, Gorbachev had asked him to accompany his personal representative to Baghdad, to continue the pleading for the release of the hostages.

On the subject of his embrace with Saddam Hussein, Arafat said: “It is not only Saddam Hussein I embrace in greeting. I embrace everybody. It is my habit and it is an Arab habit and tradition. The whole world knows that.” Arafat clearly had, as I did and do, the greatest possible contempt for those who misrepresented his gesture and sought to make political and propaganda capital out of his unfailing courtesy. In the circumstances of the

time—i.e. when he was working to free Western hostages—not embracing Saddam Hussein in traditional Arab greeting would have amounted to a deliberate and calculated insult. It would have been counterproductive, to say the least. As I write I find myself wondering what Arafat’s detractors would have had him say to Saddam Hussein. “Please, Mr. President, have the cameras taken away. I can’t afford to be seen extending a normal courtesy to you while I am here to ask you to be reasonable.”

It is true that in its efforts after 9/11 to rebrand Arafat as a terrorist equal in the evilness of his intent to Bin Laden, Zionism was assisted by the Palestinian violence, especially the unbridled terrorism of the suicide bombers that came with the second uprising or intifada which started in late September 2000. But it was Sharon himself, personally, who provoked this eruption of Palestinian violence. (We will see how in a moment).

Sharon instigated Palestinian violence not simply to improve his prospects for becoming prime minister so that he could repudiate the agreement Rabin had made with Arafat and any further agreement Barak might make if the Camp David follow-up talks went anywhere. *Sharon’s first priority was preventing Netanyahu making a late comeback to challenge him for the leadership of Likud and to secure a second turn as prime minister if Likud won the election.*

In September of 2000, while Barak’s advisers were working on ways to improve his Camp David proposals, the struggle for Likud power between Sharon and Netanyahu was the dramatic side-show of Israeli politics. Prime Minister Barak thought he was clever enough to exploit Likud’s divisions for his own ends. But he wasn’t. Sharon proved himself to be smarter—I mean more ruthless and cunning—than all of them.

Sharon’s resurrection from the graveyard of Israel’s partly democratic and partly authoritarian politics was so remarkable that his most zealous supporters could have been forgiven for thinking that he was the Messiah, built like a bulldozer, for whom they were waiting.

The U.S. guaranteed that no harm would come to the Palestinians left unprotected in the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps. Their slaughter was carried out over four days.

In February 1983 Defence Minister Sharon had been disgraced by the report and recommendations of the Kahan Commission. Headed by Israel's Chief Justice Yitzhak Kahan, the Commission found Sharon to have "personal responsibility" for the massacre of many hundreds of Palestinians, men, women and children in the Beirut refugee camps of Sabra and Shatilla. The actual slaughter was carried out over four days of hell on earth in September 1982 by the most anti-Palestinian and most bloodthirsty of the Lebanese Christian militias which were Israel's allies, and with whom Israel was intending to run Christian Lebanon. The massacre happened within sight and sound of IDF watchtowers and command posts. (For Arafat it was another betrayal and one that nearly cost him his leadership. Before the PLO's evacuation from Beirut he had extracted a promise from the Americans. In return for him dropping his insistence on some armed PLO units remaining to protect the unarmed refugees in Sabra and Shatilla, the U.S. guaranteed that no harm would come to them. The U.S. Secretary of State at the time was George Shultz. In a BBC TV programme transmitted on 13 November 2004, reference was made to Sharon sending the Christian militias into Sabra and Shatilla to do killing. This was followed by comment from Shultz on camera. He said, "We felt we had been betrayed." In context the obvious implication was that he meant, "*We felt we had been betrayed by Israel.*")

The Kahan Commission's report said:

We have found... that the minister of defence bears personal responsibility. (The meaning was that he knew there would be a massacre and that he could and should have prevented it). In our opinion, it is fitting that the minister of defence draw the appropriate personal conclusions regarding the failings revealed in the manner in which he discharged the duties of his office, and, if necessary, that the prime minister consider exercising his authority under the law according to which the prime minister may, after informing the cabinet of intention to do so, remove a minister from office.¹

Sharon refused to draw the appropriate conclusions and resign and Prime Minister Begin could not summon up the will to fire him. The

eventual outcome was a fudge. Sharon stepped down as minister of defence but stayed in the cabinet without a portfolio. Begin's admirers in Israel and abroad were to say that his decision to set up the Kahan Commission was proof of what a wonderfully moral and democratic gentleman he was. Really? The truth was that Begin fiercely resisted the setting up of a commission of inquiry because he feared what it would reveal about Israel as ruled by him, even if the investigators pulled their punches. *It was only after 400,000 Israelis assembled in Tel Aviv to demonstrate under the Peace Now banner and demand an independent inquiry into the Sabra and Shatilla massacres that Begin ended his resistance.* (In my diary at the time I wrote a note about the demonstration: "Perhaps there is hope.")

It was only after 400,000 Israelis assembled in Tel Aviv to demonstrate under the Peace Now banner that Begin agreed to an independent inquiry into the Sabra and Shatilla massacres.

Because of the Kahan Commission's findings almost all Israelis believed that Sharon was finished for good. He would huff and puff from the sidelines but never again call the shots. Summing him up his Israeli biographer, Uzi Benziman would subsequently write: "*Sharon was exposed as deceitful, crafty, uncouth and paranoid. Only a few people had been aware of his sick personality.*"² This was the same Sharon described by President Bush as "a man of peace." My own view is that he ought to go down in history as the Butcher of Palestine. (In a different world he would have been tried for war crimes.)

Almost certainly Sharon would have been finished, buried in the wreckage of his murderous and disastrous Lebanon adventure, if Netanyahu had not gotten into a spot of domestic bother. After his defeat by Barak in the 1999 election, Netanyahu was obliged to stand down as Likud's leader in opposition while the Attorney General investigated corruption charges that had been levelled against him. Sharon then took over as Likud's leader. It is reasonable to suppose that it was Sharon or his supporters who dished the dirt on Netanyahu. Then...

In September 2000—midway between the Camp David summit and the follow-up talks at Taba, and with Israel's next election approaching,

the Attorney General's investigation cleared Netanyahu of any malpractice because of insufficient evidence. Every Israeli commentator assumed that Netanyahu would make his comeback—regain the leadership of Likud and lead it into the next election. Then...

Prime Minister Barak made a fatal miscalculation.

He wanted Sharon to remain as Likud's leader because he believed that a party led by the man so discredited by the Kahan Commission was unelectable. Israelis would not be mad enough to vote Sharon into office as prime minister. Or so Barak thought. Netanyahu on the other hand, Barak also thought, was a very different proposition. This smooth operator might win for Likud.

So how to give Sharon a helping hand to retain the leadership of Likud?

The key to Sharon's strategy—first for seeing off Netanyahu, then for winning the election—was provoking Palestinian violence. How to do that?

Sharon announced his intention of visiting what is known to Islam as al Haram al Sharif—The Noble Holy Place. It is difficult to describe both the complexity of the place and its significance, but I'll do my best.

If you stand at the foot of the Wailing Wall and let your eye travel up it—a distance of about 60 feet or 20 metres from bottom to top, and if you then imagine yourself looking over the top of it, you'll see the raised compound on which is built both the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque—Jerusalem's most sacred places for the Muslims of the world. But buried underground are said to be the ruins of the destroyed First and Second Jewish Temples of biblical Israel. The underground of the al Haram al Sharif compound is therefore sacred to religious Jews—so sacred that Jews are forbidden to set foot on the surface of it. Intended or not, this injunction had served the purpose of putting the Muslim sacred places of al Haram al Sharif off-limits to Jews and therefore averting the danger of a clash of civilisations in miniature, so to speak.

Sharon's declared purpose in setting foot on al Haram al Sharif—in brazen defiance of both Muslim and Jewish religious sensitivities—was to demonstrate that no place in undivided Jerusalem, "the eternal capital" of

Greater Israel, was off-limits to Zionism. His real purpose was to provoke Palestinian violence.

The security services of the Palestinian Authority had not been able to prevent all acts of Palestinian violence in response to Israel's failure to implement Arafat's agreement with Rabin. (Netanyahu's undisguised anti-Oslo policy in his first term as prime minister was effectively matched by Barak's own lack of priority for the Oslo process plus his resort to disproportionate and counter-productive military responses to Palestinian violence.) But to this point Arafat had succeeded in preventing Palestinian violence from escalating beyond his ability to contain it. *Without a significant Israeli provocation there would not have been—at least while there remained a glimmer of hope for political progress—a second Palestinian intifada and a renewed suicide bombing campaign.*

When Sharon announced his intention to go to al Haram al Sharif, Arafat begged Barak to stop him; and Arafat and other Arab leaders begged President Clinton to use his almost magical power of persuasion to prevent the visit taking place. It could have only one consequence, they said—an explosion of Palestinian rage which they might not be able to contain.

Prime Minister Barak could have done one of two positive things or both. He could have prevented Sharon from entering al Haram al Sharif by putting a very tight security cordon around it. Alternatively, or in addition, he could have made a public statement, warning that Sharon's visit would have grave security consequences and condemning the Likud leader for his irresponsibility.

Unfortunately Barak believed that it was in his own interest to let Sharon have a moment of glory—to enable him to consolidate his hold on Likud and defeat Netanyahu's comeback challenge.

So Sharon made his visit, accompanied by a posse of armed guards and cheered on by hundreds of his supporters. Their attitude was "Get stuffed Palestinians and get stuffed Muslims everywhere." It was a political demonstration of gut-Zionism's arrogance of power at its most shocking and awesome worst.

The wrong Messiah of Ahad Ha-am's nightmare had finally arrived. He had yet to win the election but he had come. The consequence was

exactly what Palestinian and other Arab leaders had feared it would be—an explosion of Palestinian rage which triggered or rather became the second, spontaneous Palestinian uprising. It was to be dubbed by Palestinians and Muslims everywhere as the Aqsa intifada, on account of the fact that it was near the al-Aqsa Mosque that Sharon took Arafat's bung out of the simmering volcano of Palestinian frustration and anger. (Sharon was condemned by the Kahan Commission for knowing that when he sent the killing machines of the Christian militias into the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps there would be a massacre. In September 2000 Sharon knew that his visit to al Haram al Sharif would provoke Palestinian violence.)

Given that Barak was Israel's prime minister of the time, I think there is a powerful case for saying that he was even more irresponsible than Sharon for allowing the visit to go ahead.

Sharon himself asserted that Arafat had used his visit to al Haram al Sharif as the pretext he had long sought to unleash a new wave of terrorism against the Jewish state. In reality the very last thing Arafat wanted and needed was an explosion of Palestinian violence of any kind, let alone a new and escalating campaign of suicide bombings—because he knew better than any other Palestinian, better than any other Arab, that violence would play right into the hands of those in Israel and America who were irrevocably opposed to peace on any terms he could accept on behalf of his people.

Together with Clinton and Barak's blaming of Arafat for their failure to advance the Oslo peace process, the Palestinian violence Sharon wanted and provoked was most likely to guarantee two things.

The first was that Israel would once again lurch to the lunatic right and that Sharon would be its next prime minister.

The second was that Prime Minister Sharon would resort to state terrorism to crush the second Palestinian uprising, and that when he did he would set in motion an escalating cycle of violence, which Arafat on his side would not be able to contain and halt unless he could demonstrate, prove, that progress on implementing his agreement with Rabin really was possible. Arafat needed to be able to say to would-be suicide bombers: "Don't do it. My political way represents hope for something better for all of us." The problem for Arafat was the essence of Zionism. It is not giving

hope to the Palestinians. Sharon was a true Zionist. Rabin had to die because he was not.

In reality Arafat was Sharon's enemy not because he was a terrorist, but because he was the giver of hope to his people. That was why, in partly-liberated Palestine, Arafat now had to be destroyed—politically crucified if not killed.

In reality Arafat was Sharon's enemy not because he was a terrorist but because he was the giver of hope to his people.

The moment when it became impossible for Arafat to control even some of his own Fatah loyalists can be more or less identified.

Until late in January 2002, nearly a year into Prime Minister Sharon's in-Palestine onslaught against the Palestinians, the suicide bombing campaign had been exclusively the work of Hamas and Islamic Jihad—the opponents on the Palestinian side of Arafat's policy of politics and compromise. But in that January some Fatah loyalists also decided that their leader was wrong and that Hamas and Islamic Jihad were right. And they formed their own organisation—the Aqsa Brigades—to hit back at Sharon's Israel with suicide bombings and other forms of attack. Because they were members of Fatah, Israel was able to claim that the Aqsa Brigades were “affiliated” to it, the implication being that they were acting with Arafat's approval. That was not true but it was enough for Israel to present the development as the final proof that Arafat himself was backing and masterminding the terrorist campaign. This assertion had the appearance of credibility for Israel's unquestioning supporters everywhere, but it did not stand the test of honest examination.

Like that of Hamas and Islamic Jihad, the birth of the Aqsa Brigades was the consequence of Israeli policy (and American support for it). And here's why.

It was, in fact, Prime Minister Barak who initiated Israel's policy of targeting the Palestinian Authority's security apparatus—its facilities including barracks, offices and jails, its leaders and other personnel and their car parks and checkpoints. The first thing Prime Minister Sharon did was to expand and escalate this policy and take it to new extremes.

If it was not so tragic the situation would have been hysterically funny. *On the one hand Sharon was saying to the world, “The Palestinian Authority must do more to stop terrorism.” On the other hand, with tank shells and missiles from helicopter gunships, he was taking out the Palestinian apparatus and personnel for combating terrorism!* The world should have said to Sharon: “You really are mad! We insist that you put an end to this insanity!” Instead the world (I mean its governments) sighed and said to itself: “That’s Sharon’s way and there’s nothing we can do about it.”

On the one hand Sharon was saying to the world, “The Palestinian Authority must do more to stop terrorism.” On the other hand, with tank shells and missiles from helicopter gunships, he was taking out the Palestinian apparatus and personnel for combating terrorism.

Then, when he had made it virtually impossible for the security services of the Palestinian Authority to have any real prospect of containing and halting the violence on their own side, Sharon said, “We must now do the job ourselves.” (What he had in mind was Operation Defensive Shield.)

What actually happened in late January 2002 to bring the Aqsa Brigades into being and action was a repeat of Fatah’s history. In 1971, after Palestinians were slaughtered in Jordan and the PLO had been expelled from there and had taken refuge in Lebanon, and had then been denied by Wasfi Tal’s assassination the opportunity to return to Jordan as an entirely political movement, the will for terrorism came from Fatah’s grassroots—from a new generation of embittered Fatah supporters who saw no point in sitting in Lebanon being bombed and killed by the Israelis, with nothing to show for their sacrifice and without hitting back, somehow. In January 2002, when it was clear to them that their leader did not have an Israeli partner for his policy of politics and compromise, another new generation of embittered Fatah supporters saw no point in sitting in patches of liberated Palestine and just taking everything the IDF could throw at them without hitting back.

The truth is that by the end of 2001 the Palestinians were in such despair that Arafat could not have stopped some of the most embittered of his own Fatah supporters from going in the direction sign-posted by Hamas and

Islamic Jihad. Arafat's argument that Palestinian-initiated violence of any kind would only retard not advance the prospects for a political settlement no longer had meaning for them—because it was obvious to them that Sharon was not interested in a political solution on any terms the Palestinians could accept.

For a despairing Arafat the Aqsa Brigades and their activities were a nightmare come true—partly because they were evidence of how seriously his ability to control even some of his own loyalists had been compromised by Israel's repudiation of his peace process. And partly because he knew they were a propaganda gift for Sharon in particular and Zionism in general.

Starting on 29 March 2002, the Israelis launched Operation Defensive Shield.

It gave the IDF license to invade Palestinian towns and cities from which it had previously withdrawn—the patches of Palestine that had been liberated by Arafat's policy of politics and compromise in accordance with his agreement with Rabin.

The stated purpose of these Israeli incursions was to destroy the “infrastructure of the Palestinian terror network” which Arafat was allegedly running. *The defeat of terrorism by military means was to be achieved by confiscating weapons, mass arrests, blowing-up or tanking-down houses, curfews and, of course, Sharon's favourite tactic—targeted assassinations.* These mini-invasions were also designed to humiliate the Palestinians and generally to make life hell for them. One of Sharon's hopes was that at least some Palestinians would conclude that any further resistance to Israeli domination was pointless, and that they should abandon their homeland for at least a chance of a better life elsewhere.

There came a moment—actually it went on for days—when it seemed that Sharon was going to do in partly liberated Palestine what he had tried and failed to do when he invaded Lebanon all the way to Beirut. Kill Arafat. When Israeli tanks smashed their way into Arafat's presidential compound in Ramallah and started to demolish the building around him, it seemed to even the most seasoned and cool correspondents on the spot that the Palestinian leader's end had come. This time there was to be no

escape for the greatest survivor of modern times and perhaps all of human history.

Sharon *was* intending to kill Arafat if he did not surrender and accept deportation to some far distant outpost of the Arab world. He was only stopped from doing so by President Bush, probably on advice from the lone voice of reason in the Bush high command—Secretary of State Colin Powell. (His advice would have been that failure to prevent Sharon killing Arafat would add greatly to the strength of popular and growing anti-American sentiment throughout the Arab and Muslim worlds, and make it more difficult for Arab and other Muslim leaders to defy the wishes of their masses by not seriously opposing America's coming war with Iraq.)

But Sharon had a price for his restraint. He wanted Bush to commit himself to regime change in Palestine. To be more precise, he wanted the president to declare that Arafat had become an irrelevance and that the U.S. would not do business with him.

Previously Bush had called publicly for Israel to end its invasions of the liberated Palestinian enclaves and withdraw from them. Sharon simply ignored the call.

Bush pledged to devote time and energy to bring about peace based on his roadmap— provided that the Palestinians would find themselves, as Sharon had demanded, a new leader.

President Bush ought to have said to Sharon something like the following. “It’s not for you or any Israeli to decide who represents the Palestinians.” What did he actually say?

In June, and with great fanfare, President Bush announced that he had “a vision” of two states—an Israel and a Palestinian state existing side by side in peace. He was the first American President to let the forbidden words “Palestinian state” pass through his lips, apparently without choking on them. He went on to say that he would produce a “road map” to assist Israeli and Palestinian negotiators to find their way to a two-state solution and peace. And he pledged that he would himself devote time and energy to the task of bringing about peace on that basis. It was an amazing and historic commitment but... *President Bush had a condition. Before the road*

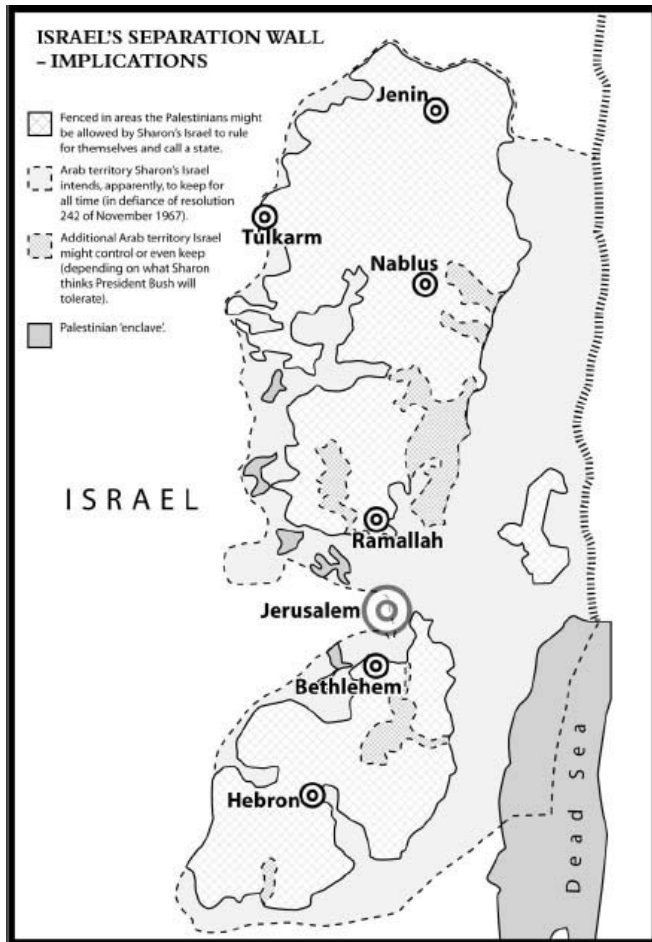
map was unveiled, the Palestinians had to find themselves a new leader, one who would be prepared to fight and defeat terrorism.

So there it was. Arafat, the living symbol of authentic Palestinian nationalism and, actually, the man who had done more than any other, Arab or Jew, to make real peace possible, was not acceptable to Zionism and therefore, by definition, not acceptable to America. Neither Prime Minister Sharon nor President Bush would do business with him.

Arafat and all of his people were, of course, completely aware of what had really happened. Sharon had succeeded in his effort to get President Bush to endorse Zionism's preposterous assertion that the two inextricably linked and absolutely inseparable issues—Israeli occupation and Palestinian violence—could and should be separated.

If reason were your guide, there was only one conclusion to be drawn from events and their real history (as opposed to Zionist mythology). *Israel's 35 year-old occupation and the repression needed to sustain it, plus Israel's repudiation of the Oslo peace process and continuing, illegal Jewish settlement activities, were the prime causes of Palestinian violence.*

That being so there was in reality no prospect of Arafat being able to prevent Palestinian violence unless and until Israel was irrevocably committed to negotiate, on a good faith basis, an end to its occupation. Only the actual ending of occupation could bring Palestinian violence to a complete end. But while negotiations for a final settlement were taking place, it was absolutely essential for Arafat—if he was to have a chance of containing Palestinian violence—to have proof that Israel was serious about peace on the terms he had agreed with Rabin's Israel. Sharon could not give Arafat that proof because he had no intention of making peace on terms Arafat could accept.



The West Bank: projection of the probable outline of Sharon's two-state solution.

By separating the issue of Palestinian violence from Israel's occupation, Sharon and Bush were requiring Arafat to do the impossible. Bush might have been too lacking in understanding (I really mean too stupid) to understand this, but Sharon most certainly did.

This, I think, is the most appropriate place for me to explain why Zionism was disingenuous in the extreme when it asserted that Arafat's failure to stop the terrorism on his side was the proof that he was an "unreconstructable terrorist" committed to the annihilation of the Jewish state. To really understand completely why Arafat could not halt the terror on his side without something concrete to give his policy of politics and compromise renewed credibility in the eyes of his people, *it is necessary only to know how terrorism can be defeated*. It is not complicated. I can explain it in a very few words—147 to be precise—and I would expect an averagely intelligent child to grasp their meaning.

As all real experts on what is called counter-terrorism know (I don't mean the propaganda army of so-called experts Zionism engages to defend the indefensible in newspaper columns and over the TV and radio airwaves)... Terrorists cannot operate, not for long, without the cover and the practical, emotional and moral support of the community of which they are a part. When that community perceives itself to be the victim of a massive injustice, and if that injustice is not addressed by political means, the community will cover, condone and even applaud the activities of those of its own who resort to terror as the only means of drawing attention to the injustice, to cause it to be addressed. It follows that the way to defeat terrorism—the only successful and actually proven way—*is by addressing the genuine and legitimate grievances of the host community*. The community will then withdraw its cover and support for its terrorists; and if they continue to try to operate, the community will oppose them by exposing them—reporting them to the authorities if reasoning fails.

Those are my 147 words of basic explanation. There are many case studies to support it. In Northern Ireland, for example, the British Army did not defeat provisional IRA terrorism. The terrorists called off their campaign when they had no choice—*because the Catholic host community would not cover and support them any longer. And that happened only because the British government summoned up the will to risk the wrath of militant*

Protestantism by insisting that the legitimate grievances of the Catholics of Northern Ireland be addressed.

It followed that if Palestinian terrorism was to be defeated, Israel had to address the grievances of its host community. That meant Israel withdrawing from more or less all the territory it occupied in 1967, with a special arrangement for Jerusalem to be an open, undivided city and the capital of two states.

The notion that Arafat could defeat terrorism and prevent all other acts of Palestinian violence while Israel remained committed to occupation and brutally suppressed even legitimate Palestinian resistance to it was plain silly; a fantasy which existed only in the Zionist mind and the minds of those who, for whatever reason, supported Zionism right or wrong.

The truth is that even in impossible circumstances Arafat *did* make attempts to get Hamas and Islamic Jihad, as well as the Aqsa Brigades, to call off their suicide bombing campaign. Arafat did not need to be told that if he could stop the attacks on Israeli civilians inside Israel proper - the Israel of the pre-1967 borders, there were some Israelis, those who loathed the settlers and wanted them out of the Occupied Territories to make way for a Palestinian state, who would give him credit for that. *But each time Arafat got to within touching distance of an internal agreement to stop the violence on his side, and sometimes when he actually had an agreement, Sharon ordered the assassination of an Islamic leader invariably killing innocent Palestinians in the process.* Sharon always knew exactly and precisely what he was doing—sabotaging Arafat's efforts to stop the violence on his side.

Absolutely nothing was more important for Sharon than making his false charge against Arafat stick. He knew he had succeeded when the Bush administration demanded regime change in Palestine.

By the end of April 2003, regime change in Palestine had been accomplished. Effectively Israel's prisoner in the remains of his battered Ramallah headquarters, Arafat had handed his day-to-day decision-making powers to Mahmoud Abbas.

By the end of April 2003, regime change in Palestine had been accomplished to some extent. President (of the Palestinian Authority)

Arafat, effectively Israel's prisoner in the remains of his battered Ramallah headquarters, had bowed to U.S. and other international pressure. He had handed his day-to-day decision-making powers to Mahmoud Abbas, *nomme de guerre* Abu Mazan, in the newly created post of prime minister. Subject to Arafat's presidential oversight and that of the Palestinian parliament and also the PLO's Central Committee, Abbas, at the head of his own cabinet, was now the principal Palestinian policy-maker and law enforcer.

Then, because Bush's condition had been met (to the extent that Israel and the U.S. did not have to do business with Arafat), the road map was unveiled. It set 2005—after President Bush had been elected for a second term or not—as the date for the completion of the journey the Palestinians and the Israelis were to undertake.

To be of any real use, the road map had to have on it the final destination in the shape of marked out borders for the two states, Israel and Palestine. Unfortunately it was a map without borders. In other words, this latest framework for peace did not say from how much occupied territory Israel should withdraw to make the space for the Palestinian state. *That meant it was still for Israel the aggressor, and Israel alone because it held all of the cards, to determine the amount of occupied land it would return to the Palestinians and how much it would keep for all time.* Once again the Palestinians, in any negotiations, were going to have to rely on Zionism's good faith. And that was an utterly ludicrous proposition so far as the Palestinians were concerned—with the full weight of history on their side.

The road map was actually the work of the Quartet—the U.S., the European Union, Russia and the UN. Most members of the Security Council, and virtually all the members of the General Assembly, would have liked the road map to be unambiguous and explicit about what was required of Israel—withdrawal at the end of the journey to more or less its pre-1967 borders. But the U.S. would not have endorsed such an approach, the road map would not have been published, and there would have been no prospect at all of reviving the peace process.

Despite the road map's defect (essentially the same defect as that which had given Zionism the opportunity to make a nonsense of the Oslo

agreement), Prime Minister Abbas accepted it as the basis for negotiations with Israel the instant it was published. Sharon eventually signalled his acceptance but *only after he had persuaded President Bush to accept his 14 reservations about it. They were designed to be 14 “No’s” if ever negotiations with the Palestinians got going.*

Abbas regarded himself and the Palestinians as having no choice but to test whether or not President Bush was prepared to put real pressure on Sharon’s Israel—to oblige it to be serious about negotiating a full and final peace which would satisfy the irreducible minimum needs and demands of his people for a measure of justice.

The road map outlined the parallel obligations of the parties to get a new peace process started. The Palestinian Authority of Prime Minister Abbas was to crackdown on the Palestinian men of violence, to prevent suicide bombings in particular. Sharon’s Israel was to dismantle some settler outposts which had been put up without the government’s approval and, more to the point, freeze all settlement activity. For Abbas and all Palestinians the test of Bush’s good intentions was a question: *Was he really prepared to insist that Israel freeze all settlement activity?*

Unlike Arafat, Abbas was not completely pessimistic. The grounds for a small degree of optimism were, he thought, in the fact that President Bush had been assisted, principally by Secretary of State Powell and Britain’s Prime Minister Blair, to understand two things. The first was that he had to do something to halt and reverse the rising tide of anti-Americanism because, if he did not, the global war against terrorism would not be winnable. The second was that the something to be done was addressing the Palestine problem. In theory, Abbas told himself, President Bush *had* to press Sharon to be serious about peace on terms which were less than totally unacceptable to the Palestinians.

In theory Abbas was right. President Bush did need to press Sharon in order to best protect America’s own interests; but he could not afford to do so to the point of provoking a domestic backlash that could put at risk his prospects of being re-elected for a second term. The Republican party machine does not need Jewish campaign money to anything like the same extent as the Democratic party machine, and perhaps not at all; *but this*

Republican president and some who would be running with him for re-election (or election) to Congress in 2004 were going to need the votes of the Christian fundamentalists and Jewish American supporters of Israel right or wrong.

The fact that a Republican president was going to need Jewish swing votes every bit as much as his Democrat challenger was the new twist in an otherwise familiar American election story. Prime Minister Sharon understood this better than most, and that was the reason why he felt free to treat Bush as though the Zionist state and not America was the superpower.

When it became clear that President Bush was not going to confront a rejectionist Sharon, *Prime Minister Abbas, on 6 September, resigned* (to be replaced, eventually, by Ahmed Qureia who, as Abu Alla, had been Arafat's chief negotiator in the Oslo channel). Naturally Zionism and the Bush administration blamed Arafat. In the words of Dore Gold, Sharon's chief adviser, and also one of Israel's own Princes of Darkness, Arafat was "entirely to blame for everything" because he had "refused to let Abbas dismantle the network of terror."²

The truth was that Abbas had been no more willing than Arafat to provoke a Palestinian civil war without a guarantee, which the road map did not provide, that Israel was committed, unambiguously and irrevocably, to a peace process that would give the Palestinians a viable mini-state of their own.

Sharon had been insisting, contrary to the letter and the spirit of the road map which required the parties to accept parallel obligations, that Israel could not be expected to play its part in advancing the peace process until the Palestinian Authority had put the men of violence on its side out of business—i.e. guaranteed the security of Israelis.

The absurd nature of the proposition Sharon's Israel was asking the world to accept and endorse can be simply stated. Security (in Israel's view) is the prerequisite for peace. The reality of all conflict is that security is the product or outcome of peace which, if it is to be enduring, must be based on justice. In other words, *you make peace in order to have security*. The notion that Israel could have security guaranteed before peace, before the end of occupation, was always more than absurd.

While he frustrated the implementation of the road map, by rejecting the concept of parallel obligations to make it work, and by resorting again to the assassination of Hamas leaders which had the intended effect of destroying a unilateral truce Arafat had brokered to prevent more suicide bombings, Sharon's main priority was the construction of what was initially called a "security fence", and later a "separation wall": a combination of electrified chain-link fencing and a concrete wall up to six metres high in places which, when it is completed will have cost about half a billion U.S. dollars. The name of the engineer in charge of the construction and driving it madly forward was Colonel Netzach Mashiach. In Hebrew his name means Eternal Messiah. The man in charge of funding for the project was Sharon's rival, Finance Minister Netanyahu, who was determined to be prime minister again.

Sharon frustrated the implementation of the road map by rejecting the concept of parallel obligations, and by resorting again to the assassination of Hamas leaders.

Initially the people of Israel and the world were told that the purpose of the wall was to prevent Palestinian suicide bombers and other men of violence infiltrating or crossing into pre-1967 Israel from the occupied West Bank. If that had been the main purpose of the wall it would have been constructed (on Israel's side) along the old green line—the internationally recognised border as it was on 4 June 1967 between Israel and Jordan—i.e. Jordan including the West Bank and East Jerusalem. But Sharon's wall was not following the old green line. It was taking in, annexing, swathes of occupied Arab land, the land on which the biggest of Greater Israel's illegal settlements have been built. It soon became clear that the real purpose of the separation wall was *to enable Sharon to impose his own version of a two-state solution on the Palestinians.*

Sharon had come to terms with an aspect of reality—that not even he could break the will of the Palestinians and force them to abandon hope for at least a measure of justice. That being so there were, he knew, three options for Israel if it stayed in occupation of all of the West Bank.

OPTION 1 was formally annexing the West Bank and granting all of its citizens equal rights, to enable Israel to go on claiming that it was a democracy. *The problem was that this would bring about the end of the Jewish state by political means because, in due course, the Arab citizens of Greater Israel would outnumber and outvote its Jewish citizens.* (Harkabi had warned Israel's leaders about this demographic time-bomb, but with the exception of Rabin and Peres none of them had been prepared to do anything positive about defusing it.)

OPTION 2 was formally annexing the West Bank but denying Greater Israel's Arab citizens (the majority in-the-making) equal rights. In this scenario Greater Israel would have to treat its Arab citizens even worse than the black majority in South Africa was treated by its apartheid regime. And that would not be acceptable to most Jews of the world and, perhaps, at least half the Jews of Israel. It would also present the organised international community with no choice, at some point, but to declare Greater Israel a pariah state and impose sanctions on it.

OPTION 3 was to resort to another and final round of ethnic cleansing—provoking an all-out confrontation with the Palestinians to give the IDF and the armed settlers the pretext for driving the Palestinians off the West Bank and into Jordan or wherever, in the name of self defence, of course. If the Palestinians refused to flee, there would be a bloodbath. A Zionist holocaust.

Thinking about Israel's three options, if it stayed in occupation of all of the West Bank, led Sharon to conclude that he had no choice but to impose his own two-state solution on the Palestinians. But he was not turning his back on his own Zionist past to anything like the extent his rightwing critics and soul-mates claimed, and many in the mainstream Western media believed. (The Greater Israel zealots to the right of Sharon favoured expelling the Palestinians from the Occupied Territories, a policy openly advocated by some, which had the effect of making Sharon appear to be a moderate!)

In fact the extent of the withdrawal Sharon had in mind to defuse the demographic time-bomb of occupation was never much of a secret from the moment he became prime minister. He was prepared to withdraw

from all of the Gaza Strip and to let the Palestinians have up to 50 per cent or thereabouts of the West Bank. When he spoke of his readiness to make “painful concessions” for peace, that was what he meant.

Sharon believed they would be a price worth paying if the end result was the diffusion of the demographic time-bomb and Israel’s occupation for all time of about half of the West Bank. As the spring of 2004 approached the question waiting for an answer was this: Would President Bush endorse what Sharon was now calling his “unilateral disengagement” plan?

Prime Minister Sharon was scheduled to meet with President Bush in the White House on 14 April. In advance of the meeting the expectation in all the concerned capitals of the world was in two parts. The first was that Bush would welcome Sharon’s proposed withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and probably describe it as a positive step towards implementing the road map. The second was that Bush would not even think of endorsing Sharon’s proposal which would see Israel keeping up to 50 per cent of the West Bank for all time. Why not? *Because saying “Yes” to Sharon on that account would require President Bush to put himself and America on the wrong side of international law on the matter and, into the bargain, reverse 37 years of American policy—a policy which, at least in principle, was wedded to the view, correct in all respects, that Israel’s settlements in the Occupied Territories were illegal and an obstacle to peace.*

So the diplomatic world was shaken to its core when, after the White House meeting and with a beaming Sharon at his side, President Bush indicated that he was saying “Yes” to everything Israel’s prime minister wanted; and had actually demanded (as we shall see in a moment). The biggest of Israel’s illegal West Bank settlements were now described by Bush as “already existing major (Israeli) population centres” and “*new realities on the ground*”; and in the light of them it was “*unrealistic to expect that the outcome of final status negotiations will be a full and complete (Israeli) return to the armistice lines of 1949.*” (In the script written for Bush, the words “return to the armistice lines of 1949” were preferred to “return to the pre-1967 borders” because they would sound more reasonable to listening Americans). The reality was that Sharon’s price for withdrawal from the

Gaza Strip—retention for all time of not less than 50 per cent of the West Bank—was accepted by Bush, and now declared by him to be American policy.

In saying “Yes” to Sharon, Bush reversed 37 years of American policy which viewed Israel’s settlements in the Occupied Territories as illegal and an obstacle to peace.

In effect Bush was doing a Balfour, giving away to Zionism what America did not possess and had no right to give. *He was also rewarding Israeli aggression, illegal Jewish settlement and Israeli state terrorism.*

On 22 March, Sharon had demonstrated that there were no limits beyond which he would not go with his policy of targeted assassinations. On that day he personally ordered the murder, by missiles fired from a helicopter gunship, of Hamas’s founder and spiritual leader, the quadriplegic and wheelchair-bound Sheikh Ahmed Yassin. This act of Israeli state terrorism caused the European Union’s Foreign Affairs Commissioner, Britain’s Chris Patten, to say that “*Israel had dealt with a fire by pouring gasoline on the flames.*”⁴

But the endorsement of Sharon’s insistence on Israel keeping for all time a large chunk of occupied Arab land—the part which controls all the West Bank’s main water resources—was only the first of two political missiles fired by President Bush for Prime Minister Sharon. The second was aimed at the Palestinian right of return. A solution to the Palestinian refugee problem would need to be found, Bush declared, “through the establishment of a Palestinian state.” *Effectively Bush was cancelling the Palestinian right of return not only to the Israel of 4 June 1967, but to the Greater Israel of Sharon’s Plan.*

As we have seen, Zionism’s rejection of the Palestinian right of return is premised on the assertion that, if it happened, Israel would be swamped and destroyed as a Jewish state by sheer numbers. In theory that is the case. In practice it would not happen because, as we have also seen, the mainstream and pragmatic Palestinian leadership long ago accepted in principle that the return could only be to the land of a Palestinian mini-state on all of the West Bank including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.

That meant only a relative few Palestinians, perhaps not more than 100,000, could return, with the rest having to settle for financial compensation. By April 2004, and actually from as far back as the early 1980s, the right of return was only a negotiating card for Palestinian leaders, but now even that had been taken out of their hands by President Bush.

At the time it could have been said that if the new Sharon-Bush policy remained the joint American-Israeli policy, there could never be a viable Palestinian state. There could one day be separated Palestinian Bantustans, one in the Gaza Strip and two or three on the West Bank to the east of Sharon's separation wall and minus East Jerusalem. But these Bantustans could not and would not constitute a viable Palestinian state, as Sharon if not Bush knew full well; nor would the Palestinians in them be free to exercise anything like an acceptable degree of self-determination.

Sharon made it clear that if he did withdraw Israeli settlers and the military from the Gaza Strip, the IDF and Israel's other security agencies would remain in complete control of who entered and who left Gaza by land, sea and air. In reality an Israeli-free Gaza would be more like an open prison than liberated territory. And the half or thereabouts of the West Bank the Palestinians might have as their own would not be very different.

Bush insisted that he had agreed to nothing that would prejudice future talks on a final settlement. But that was naked nonsense.

Most astonishing of all was that Sharon and Bush had taken it upon themselves to determine the future of the Palestinians without even consulting them.

Most astonishing of all was that Sharon and Bush had taken it upon themselves to determine the future of the Palestinians without even consulting them.

At the end of that April day it could have been said that President Bush had not only done a Balfour, he had also done a Truman, surrendered completely to Zionism. But why did he do it?

It will be many years before historians and other researchers have access to the classified documents of the time, so the full truth about what

happened, and why, is not for knowing at the time of writing, but there are clues, and reasonable inferences can be drawn from them.

On 18 April 2004, a background report in *The Observer* by Paul Harris in Washington and Kamal Ahmed in London contained this understated paragraph:

There was a small-scale disturbance in Washington last Monday night (12 April) when the plane meant to carry Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon there was still on an Israeli runway. It was scheduled to take off three hours earlier but, in a remarkable piece of brinkmanship, Sharon told US officials that he was thinking of cancelling his trip.

Sharon had, in fact, been working for months to secure Bush's endorsement of his unilateral disengagement plan. The previous November Sharon had invited White House adviser Elliot Abrams to a meeting in Rome. At that meeting Sharon presented Abrams, an aggressive supporter of Israel right or wrong, with the outline of his disengagement plan. And thereafter the task of Zionism's fixers in and around the Bush administration was to get the president to endorse it.

But by the time Sharon was scheduled to take off from Israel for his White House meeting on 14 April, Bush had not been persuaded to give Israel's prime minister everything he wanted. The president's only public comment to this point was that he wanted to know more about what Sharon was proposing. The obvious implication was that Bush would not take a position on Sharon's proposals until they had talked face-to-face.

I think President Bush the Second was an amiable, intellectual lightweight who did not begin to understand the dynamics of conflict in the Middle East or anywhere else, but was capable of listening. To this point he had been listening most of the time to those in the State Department who were advising him to the effect that he would be mad to endorse Sharon's proposal that Israel should keep for all time a large chunk of the occupied West Bank.

In support of this proposition it could have been said, and probably was, that agreeing to everything Sharon was demanding would not only destroy whatever remaining prospect there was for a political resolution of

the Palestine problem. In the longer term it would also have catastrophic consequences for America's best interests in the region, the wider Muslim world and America's security on the home front. "Mr. President, agreeing to everything Sharon wants will guarantee that we lose the war against international terrorism." Probably nobody put it quite like that, but they could have done.

So... By the time Sharon was scheduled to take off for his White House meeting, the message he received from Zionism's fixers in Washington was something like the following. The best he could expect from his meeting with the president was praise for his "historic and courageous actions", endorsement of his proposal to withdraw from the Gaza Strip as the means of giving the kiss of life to the road map, but only ambiguous words—a fudge—on the matter of Israel's retention of a large chunk of the occupied West Bank. Whatever the actual message Sharon received, it was not good enough for him and he made his threat, effectively, "Tell the president I will not come if he is not prepared to endorse all of my plan." Sharon may have been bluffing, but it was enough to cause Karl Rove, and others whose prime responsibility was getting Bush re-elected, to panic.

Their message to Bush would have been to the effect that he had no hope of being elected for a second term without the support of America's Christian fundamentalists, who were rock-solid in their commitment to an Israel in occupation of all of the West Bank: and because the election was going to be tight, it could even be that Bush might still lose without Jewish American swing votes in three critical states—Florida, Ohio and Pennsylvania. I can imagine Rove saying to Bush something very like: "If Sharon's not bluffing, our Christian friends and their Zionist allies will screw you. If you don't give Sharon everything he wants, you're dead."

According to Harris and Ahmed, it was Secretary of State Powell who telephoned Sharon to assure him that he would get everything he wanted from the president. Why Powell? One implication is that Sharon demanded that Powell be the one to call him in order to guarantee that Powell would not seek to change the president's mind while he, Sharon, was

in the air. Another possible implication is that Rove had Powell make the call to give the impression that everybody was on board.

There was one photograph that said it all. It was on the front page of *The Financial Times* of 15 April under the headline BUSH BACKS ISRAELI PLAN TO KEEP SETTLEMENTS. It was a shot of Sharon and Bush striding along the White House red carpet to announce their agreement to the assembled media pack. The two men were not in line abreast. Prime Minister Sharon was a stride ahead of President Bush. Sharon looked confident and full of purpose. Bush appeared to be dazed and embarrassed. It was a picture that captured a fleeting moment of great truth about who was the leader and who was the follower. (Sharon was alleged to have said to Peres on 3 October 2001, “Don’t worry about American pressure on Israel, we, the Jewish people control America, and Americans know it.” Whether or not Sharon actually said that, he looked as though he believed it to be the case).

More insight, this time in words, was to be provided by James Reynolds, one of the BBC’s resident correspondents in Israel. He was among those who travelled with Sharon and his advisers and minders to Washington. In *From Our Own Correspondent* on 17 April, Reynolds opened his background report by recalling that as a university student he had been asked by one of his tutors to write his own reference for a summer job. Reynolds said he had remembered that as he watched President Bush read out a statement at the end of Sharon’s visit; a statement which told how American policy on Jewish settlements and Palestinian refugees had been “re-arranged”, and how Bush had “lined himself up with Mr. Sharon’s own position.” It was, Reynolds added, “as if Ariel Sharon had written the President’s words himself.” But that, as Reynolds went on to say, was not quite how it happened. The words Bush spoke were not written by Sharon himself, but by “his men.” Reynolds said he knew that because he had done some checking.

When Sharon and Bush announced their agreement to the media pack assembled outside the White House, the words Bush spoke were written by Sharon’s men.

On the plane home Sharon celebrated his White House triumph with champagne. Reynolds observed a steward taking two bottles forward when most of his media colleagues were asleep. And there was another celebration to come.

Almost the first thing Sharon did on his return was to order the assassination of Abdel Aziz Rantissi, the late Sheikh Yassin's successor as Hamas's leader, adding yet more gasoline to the fire of Palestinian and wider Arab and Muslim rage.

Sharon then announced that he no longer felt bound by his promise to President Bush not to harm Arafat. Sharon was signalling his readiness to kill Arafat if doing so would assist him to overcome opposition in his own Likud party to withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

On his return, Sharon ordered the assassination of another Hamas leader, then announced that he no longer felt bound by his promise to President Bush not to harm Arafat.

That opposition turned out to be stronger than Sharon had anticipated when, before going to Washington, he set 2 May as the date for the 193,000 members of his Likud party to vote in a referendum on "Yes" or "No" to Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. Sharon had calculated, gambled, that President Bush's endorsement of his disengagement plan would enable him to twist enough arms to secure a majority. In the event 60 percent of those who voted (about one percent of the Israeli whole) said "No" to withdrawal, and Sharon was humiliated.

So he went to work on modifications to his withdrawal plan and what he had to do to stay in power.

The prime minister's priority was appeasing his Likud opponents of withdrawal. Their main argument, a self-serving one, was that withdrawal from Gaza before the destruction of the Palestinian "terror network" there would be a mistake. Why? Because it would be a victory for Palestinian terrorism. Israel would be seen to be withdrawing under the pressure of Palestinian violence and thus from a position of weakness, and that would send the wrong message to the Palestinians on the occupied West Bank—

i.e. encourage them to believe that if they could mount and sustain a campaign of violence, they, too, could force Israel to withdraw.

How to respond to this argument? Sharon knew of only one way. In the second week of May he ordered the IDF's biggest offensive in the Gaza Strip since Israel's occupation of it in 1967. Operation Rainbow started with missile attacks on the offices of Palestinian factions including Arafat's Fatah. But the main business was in and around the Rafah refugee camp at the southern end of the Strip—i.e. along its Sinai desert border with Egypt. *There, by demolishing homes and shooting some Palestinians and arresting others, the IDF's objective was the liquidation of all forms of resistance to Israeli dictates.*

An IDF spokesman claimed that the homes being demolished were those which hid tunnels the Palestinians had made to facilitate the smuggling of weapons from Egypt. It was okay for illegal Jewish settlers in occupied Palestine to be armed but not the indigenous occupied Palestinians. The bulldozing of the first 100 Palestinian homes or thereabouts over two days brought the total number demolished in Gaza since Sharon became prime minister to about 3,000, making nearly 20,000 Palestinian refugees homeless again, some for the third time in their lives (1947-48, 1967 and 2004). Reflecting what most governments in the world believed but did not dare to say, Amnesty International accused Israel of "war crimes". Secretary of State Powell said the U.S. was opposed to the demolition of "so many" houses.

On 13 May, aware of the IDF's stated intention to demolish a total of 500 homes, a Palestinian human rights group applied to Israel's Supreme Court for an injunction to stop the demolition. A temporary injunction was granted for 48 hours, but was then lifted to allow the IDF to do what Sharon wanted. *To my way of thinking that decision of Israel's Supreme Court was more proof, if more was needed, of Israel's moral bankruptcy. When a Supreme Court gives its blessing to war crimes, there is something very rotten in the state of its jurisdiction.*

In lifting its injunction and allowing IDF demolition of 500 Palestinian homes, the Israeli Supreme Court gave its blessings to war crimes.

In fighting on 18 May, 20 Palestinians including children were killed. It was the greatest number of Palestinians killed by the IDF in a single day for more than two years. While the killing was happening, President Bush was addressing an AIPAC conference and making a naked play for Jewish swing votes. Israel, he declared, with great and apparently real passion and to thunderous applause, had every right to self-defence. The clear implication was that Israel was the victim and could do no wrong. *For President Bush Jewish votes were more valuable than Palestinian lives.* The fact that the Palestinians have a legal right to resist occupation and the demolition of their homes by all means including violence was too inconvenient for Bush to acknowledge. (So far as I am aware, no Western leader has ever acknowledged this Palestinian right implicitly).

The following day saw a peaceful Palestinian protest. A thousand or more marched to demonstrate their solidarity with those under siege and attack by the IDF. Some of the marchers were carrying food and other relief supplies. In almost any other so-called civilised place on Planet Earth authorities wishing to stop or contain a march would have resorted to the use of barricades, water cannons, tear gas and rubber bullets. Not the IDF. *Its way of seeking to deter the marchers was firing missiles from helicopters and tank shells at them.* At least 10 more Palestinians including some children were killed and scores were injured. The BBC's correspondent on the spot, Alan Johnson, spoke of "Palestinian disbelief and anger as word spread that the march had come to a bloody end." He told his listeners that he was witnessing "the grimmest scenes... ambulances racing up and down with the dead and the dying." The wards of the medical centre which passed for Rafah's hospital were "overflowing". He had to report, he added, that the floors of the hospital were "thick with blood".

As the BBC also reported, the world was "increasingly outraged by Israel's actions", and later that day a small miracle happened. For once the U.S. did not block a Security Council resolution condemning Israel. Instead of casting its veto, the U.S. merely abstained. At the time I wondered if Secretary of State Powell had indicated a readiness to resign in order to prevent the U.S. blocking condemnation of Israel on this occasion. After the resolution had been passed, Powell said: "The activities of the IDF in

recent days have worsened the situation and made it more difficult for us to get back into the peace process.”

How did Israel respond? It said “sorry” for the deaths of those killed on the Palestinian protest march and then... The IDF was ordered to expand its ground operations in Rafah in readiness for the demolition of more Palestinian homes. In the following night hours more Palestinians were killed by missile strikes and tank shells. In his first report on the morning after, Johnson said: “Some observers imagined that the bloodshed of Wednesday’s march (not to mention the Security Council condemnation) might lead the Israelis to rein in their operation here. That has not been the case.”

Later the same day ITN’s Channel Four News (by far the best television news programme in the world) presented what anchorman Jon Snow described as “incontrovertible evidence that the Israelis are still demolishing Palestinian homes.” Lindsey Hilsum, the programme’s International Editor, had spent the day in the Brazil section of the Rafah refugee camp. Her report on the aftermath of the destruction IDF armoured bulldozers and tanks had caused there included an interview with a Palestinian who had begged the Israelis to give him time to get his children out of their home before it was demolished. This was followed by a conversation between Hilsum on her mobile telephone and an IDF spokesman, actually a woman.

HILSUM: How many houses did you demolish in Brazil?

IDF: None.

HILSUM: No houses demolished in Brazil?

IDF: Correct.

HILSUM: So how come I’m standing in a pile of rubble in Brazil?

IDF: The buildings must have been damaged by Palestinians using explosives against Israeli soldiers.

Subsequently, as Hilsum reported, the IDF changed its story. The houses demolished in Brazil were those “from which Palestinian gunmen had been firing.” In fact, and as Hilsum also reported, most of the militants the Israelis had wanted to kill or arrest in Rafah had withdrawn from the area before the Israelis came—to survive to resist another day.

The IDF's destruction of an olive grove and then Rafah's small zoo was viewed by the Palestinians (and probably most of the world including many silent Jews) as further chilling evidence of the "pitiless nature of Israeli occupation." Some of the zoo's animals were killed, others escaped. Hilsum asked the IDF why the zoo had been flattened. The first answer was that "some of the animals escaped because they were frightened by gunfire." Hilsum indicated that she did not believe that for two reasons. The day before she had seen armoured bulldozers moving around the perimeter of the zoo. And in the zoo after the events she saw irrefutable evidence of "cages crushed by tanks and armoured bulldozers." The IDF spokesman replied that the area "might have been swept for booby trap devices." Another explanation offered to newspaper reporters was that a tank "may have accidentally reversed into the zoo."

The Palestinians were, of course, the first to understand the symbolic significance of the IDF's destruction of Rafah's zoo. As quoted by *The Guardian* on 22 May, Mohammed Ahmed Juma, the co-owner of the zoo, whose own home was demolished, put it this way:

People are more important than animals but the zoo was the only place in Rafah that children could escape the tense atmosphere. There were slides and games for the children. We had a small swimming pool. I know it's hard to believe, looking at it now, but it was beautiful. *Why should they destroy that? Because they want to destroy everything about us.*

That was Juma's way of expressing a truth about gut-Zionism. It has always hoped, and continues to hope, that it can drive the Palestinians to such despair that many will abandon not only their struggle but their homeland. For good. That, from gut-Zionism's perspective, would be the best possible way of defusing the demographic time-bomb of occupation.

An explanation of why the IDF resorted to missiles and tank shells to deter the marchers was offered by Yael Dayan. She is Moshe's daughter, a voice of reason in Israel and at the time the deputy mayor of Tel Aviv. In a BBC radio interview on the morning after the events, she said: "*We are seeing a total loss of (IDF) control.*" Implicit in that statement was the view, popular in Israel, that the IDF's assault on the marchers was pure revenge, a

reprisal for the deaths of 13 Israeli soldiers who were killed when their two armoured personnel carriers were blown to pieces prior to the IDF's assault on Rafah—incidents and casualties which severely embarrassed Israel's military leadership. My own take on the matter is that the IDF's resort to missiles and tank shells for all purposes including crowd control was not the consequence of a loss of control. *It was policy, to kill Palestinians from long range in order to minimise the number of Israeli military casualties that could be caused by closer engagements.*

Why, really, was minimising the IDF's casualties so important? To get his own party's support for withdrawal from Gaza, Sharon needed to demonstrate that he had smashed what Israelis called the "terror network" there. But if the campaign to do so cost too many IDF lives, an overwhelming majority of Israelis would insist on withdrawal from Gaza even if Sharon could not carry his Likud party with him. In that event Israel could be on its way to civil war.

On account of his particular indictment of the IDF's rampage in Rafah, a gentleman by the name of Tommy Lapid would have been accused by many Jews of being a rabid anti-Semite if he had not been a minister in Sharon's coalition cabinet. Lapid, the only survivor of the Nazi holocaust in government, told a routine cabinet meeting that television images of an old woman picking through rubble for medicine reminded him of his grandmother, who was killed by the Nazis. Then, as reported by *The Guardian* and many other newspapers on 24 May, he said this:

Holocaust survivor Tommy Lapid: "The demolition of houses in Rafah must stop. It is not humane, not Jewish, and it causes us grave damage in the world."

The demolition of houses in Rafah must stop. It is not humane, not Jewish, and it causes us grave damage in the world. At the end of the day they'll kick us out of the United Nations, try those responsible in the international court in The Hague, and no one will speak to us.

Those words were all the more sensational because Tommy Lapid, when he spoke to them, was Israel's justice minister. Perhaps he had been disgusted by the Supreme Court's decision to sanction war crimes.

But it was Meron Benvenisti, a former deputy mayor of Jerusalem and one of the most passionate and eloquent critics of the whole Zionist enterprise, who raised the flag of decency highest and begged all of his fellow Israelis to do some serious thinking about fundamentals. The following is taken from the text of an article he wrote for *Ha'aretz*.

The sights of Rafah are too difficult to bear—trails of refugees alongside carts laden with bedding and the meagre contents of their homes; children dragging suitcases larger than themselves; women, draped in black, kneeling in mourning on piles of rubble.

And in the memories of some of us, whose number is dwindling, arise similar scenes that have been part of our lives, as a sort of refrain that stabs at the heart and gnaws at the conscience, time after time, for over half a century...

Generation after generation, we feed the refugee consciousness, reconstruct the pain of displacement and expose another generation to the powerless rage of the displaced...

Something basic has gone awry. If commanders, the sons of the fighters of 1948, send the grandchildren of the fighters for independence to 'widen the route'—which means the expulsion of the grandchildren of the refugees of 1948—on the pretext of existential threat, then there was something defective in the founding fathers' vision.

If, after half a century, their enterprise still faces existential threat, this can only mean that they condemned it to eternal enmity, and there is no community that can for years on end survive a violent war for its existence.

And if this is merely a pretext [and Operation Rainbow in Rafah was an instinctive reaction that evolved into second nature], we must reflect deeply and sadly on our responsibility for the enterprise that at its start embodied so many exalted ideals.

Meron Benvenisti, former Mayor of Jerusalem: “If, after half a century, their enterprise still faces existential threat, this can only mean that they condemned it to eternal enmity..”

Is there some ‘original sin’ that lies at the foundation of the Zionist enterprise? Those who initiated the Rafah operation, and those executing it, should know that one of the outcomes of their actions will inevitably be the raising of questions about this heresy.

On one level democracy was obviously alive and in quite good health in Israel but, I wondered, for how much longer would it remain so?

The IDF’s Rafah rampage was soon to be followed by more offensives against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, one of the most brutal and bloody of them launched at the end of September 2004, after two Israeli children were killed by crude, homemade Hamas rockets. In response Sharon ordered an IDF assault on the northern end of the Gaza Strip—an incursion of 5 miles and with the Jabalya refugee camp (the largest in the area and a breeding ground for Palestinian despair) as the main target. The assault force included 200 tanks, armoured personnel carriers, helicopter gunships and F-16 jet fighters. When after several days, 70 Palestinians had been killed, more homes demolished, and a kindergarten bulldozed to the ground, the Security Council was asked to consider a resolution calling on Israel to stop “immediately” and withdraws its forces. *Naturally, the U.S. vetoed the resolution and the killing went on.*

Two questions occurred to me.

The first was: Why couldn’t Israelis, enough of them to stop Sharon, understand that his iron fist policy was making more Palestinians, especially a new generation of them, hate Israel with a greater intensity than ever?

The second question was this. Given that American helicopter gunships and jet fighters flown by Americans were killing insurgents and innocents alike in urban areas of Iraq, and given that Israelis flying American helicopter gunships and jet fighters were killing Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, was it really any wonder that more and more Arabs and Muslims everywhere were convinced that President Bush’s “war on terrorism” was the smokescreen for a Judeo-Christian crusade against Islam?

(President Bush had been stupid enough, once, to use the word “crusade” to describe his war!)

Sharon’s stated purpose was to establish a buffer zone, to deny Palestinians the cover they needed for firing rockets into Israel. But there was more to it. Prior to the assault, Sharon himself had spoken openly of the possibility of a “Jewish civil war” if Gaza’s Jewish settlers carried out their threat to resist the implementation of his withdrawal plan by all means. By virtually declaring war on northern Gaza, Sharon was seeking to assure his Israeli public, his Likud opponents of withdrawal especially, that he would not actually give the order to withdraw until he had eliminated all and every possible threat to Israel’s security from within the Strip. He was hoping that such a message would enable him to isolate the settler opponents of withdrawal and make it easier for him to take them on—without provoking political support for them from his Likud rivals and a Jewish civil war.

It was not only the Palestinians (and Arabs and Muslims everywhere) who felt they had been betrayed by President Bush. Though he was not going to say so, even in private, Britain’s Prime Minister Blair had cause to feel that he, too, had been betrayed. The deal he thought he had made was full support for war with Iraq on the understanding that President Bush was committed to requiring Israel as well as the Palestinian Authority to be serious about peace by following the road map. After he met with Bush on 16 April, and because of the President’s agreement with Sharon, Blair was reduced to mouthing naked nonsense of his own. Final status negotiations, he asserted, had not been compromised by the Bush-Sharon agreement, the road map was not dead, and the Palestinians should work with the Quartet to bring about a state of their own. What Blair seemed to be saying to the Palestinians by obvious implication was something very like: “None of us can require Israel to do what it does not want to do, so a state in Gaza and on half the West Bank is the best deal you are ever likely to get.”

The extent to which many former British diplomats were shocked and alarmed by Bush’s surrender to Sharon, and then Blair’s surrender to

Bush, was revealed on 27 April by the publication of an unprecedented letter to the prime minister from 52 of them.

The Independent of that day devoted all of its front page to the text of the letter and the names and designations (last posts) of all who had signed it. Almost without exception they were the best and the brightest of Britain's retired diplomatic establishment, mainly former ambassadors and high commissioners with vast experience of the Middle East in particular and the world in general. They included Sir Marrack Gouling who succeeded Urquhart as the UN's chief trouble-shooter and Sir Crispin Tickell, formerly Britain's ambassador to the UN.

In a separate piece for *The Independent*, Tickell explained: "The reason why we drafted this letter was because of our profound concern about what is taking place in both Iraq and Israel and Palestine. *I have never seen such a level of worry and despair among those who have been involved in the diplomatic world ever before.*"

In a BBC interview on the same day, Gouling admitted that the last straw for those who had signed the letter was Bush's endorsement of Sharon's intention to retain a large chunk of the West Bank and the Jewish settlements on it, and then Blair's refusal to say that he was not at one with Bush on this matter and was, by default, endorsing the Sharon plan in its entirety.

The text of the letter to Prime Minister Blair noted that what the signatories regarded as an "*abandonment of principle*" came at a time "*when, rightly or wrongly, we (the British) are portrayed throughout the Arab and Muslim world as partners in an illegal and brutal occupation of Iraq.*" The main point of the letter was that the need for Britain to use whatever influence it had with the U.S. was now "a matter of the highest urgency." And what if an attempt by Britain to use its influence was considered by President Bush to be "unacceptable or unwelcome"? Then, said the diplomats, "there is no case for supporting policies which are doomed to failure."

Implicitly the letter was a condemnation of the more or less complete Zionisation of American and British policy for the Middle East.

Blair's first response to the diplomats was Zionist-like. He dismissed them as being "one-sided". While professing to be a realist, this British prime minister was, I think, as self-righteous as any Zionist, and well on his way to being as dangerously deluded as any Israeli leader. Rather like Eden at the time of his Suez adventure.

The main hope of those who signed the letter was that it would lead to a "fundamental reassessment" of British policy.

Inspired by their British counterparts, more than 50 former American diplomats signed an open letter to President Bush, urging him to rethink his policy for the Middle East. Probably the only executive in the Bush administration who had any sympathy with it was Secretary of State Powell. If he ever writes an honest book about his time in office, we should have real insight into the impossibility of best protecting America's interests when the neo-Conservatives, the Christian fundamentalists and their Zionist allies were calling the policy shots.

Inspired by the open letter to Blair by their British counterparts, more than 50 former American diplomats signed an open letter to President Bush, urging him to rethink his policy for the Middle East.

We do, perhaps, have some idea of Powell's private thinking including, most likely, his regret that his own previously good reputation was ruined by his willingness to remain in the service of an administration which he knew was pursuing a counter-productive and disastrous policy in the Middle East. In early May, in *GQ Magazine*, Powell's chief of staff had some most undiplomatic things to say about the top Zionist drivers of Bush's policy —Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle. Wolfowitz was described as "utopian comparable to Lenin." And Perle? About him Powell's chief of staff wrote, "*Thank God he is no longer a semi-official member of this administration.*" (Because of a conflict of interests over fees, Perle had resigned as Chairman of the semi-official and secretive Defence Policy Board). I think it is most unlikely that Powell's chief of staff would have dared to go public with such thoughts without his boss's blessing.

The question waiting for an answer was this: Would the Palestinians accept the American-endorsed Sharon plan for their future?

My guess was that Sharon believed they would—out of sheer despair. *Because of Israel's policy of brutal repression including restrictions on the movement of Palestinians in both the liberated patches of Palestine and the Occupied Territories, a staggering 70 percent of Palestinians were unemployed; and malnutrition was as bad as that in sub-Saharan Africa. In the name of security for Israelis, the Palestinians were being reduced to abject poverty.*

There was, however, nothing in the record of past events to suggest that the Palestinians would ever accept anything less in terms of territory than the irreducible minimum they were persuaded by Arafat to accept many years ago. That required Israel, in accordance with the letter and the spirit of Security Council resolution 242, to withdraw, in exchange for a full and final peace, to more or less its borders as they were on the eve of the 1967 war, with Jerusalem an open city and the capital of two states. (As we've seen, that resolution did not mention Palestine or Palestinians. Their identity had been forged in fire of resistance to Israeli occupation and oppression).

Sharon was doing his best to make sure that could never happen. His vision (and today apparently Netanyahu's, too) was not merely of an Israel with the largest amount of land and the smallest number of Arabs on it, but a walled-in, nuclear-armed fortress prepared if necessary to tell the whole world to go to hell.

Gut-Zionism's complete contempt for all opinion but its own was reinforced by its rejection, on 9 July 2004, of a decision by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague, the nearest thing we have to a World Court. At the request of the UN General Assembly, in response to a plea from the Palestinians, the ICJ ruled, by 14 to one, with only the American judge dissenting, that "*The construction of the wall being built by Israel, the occupying power, in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including in and around East Jerusalem*" was "*contrary to international law*" and should be dismantled.

It's important to emphasise that the ICJ was not denying Israel a right to build a wall on its own land—i.e. on Israel's side of the green line which, prior to the 1967 war, was the internationally recognised border between the Zionist state and the West Bank of Jordan including East

Jerusalem. The ICJ was saying only that Israel should not build a wall on occupied land because, apart from being illegal, it was creating “*a fait accompli on the ground*” which was “*tantamount to de facto annexation.*” (Even the Palestinians were not objecting to the construction of the wall on Israel’s side of the old green line. They made that clear when they asked the General Assembly to seek a ruling from the ICJ.)

A spokesman for Prime Minister Sharon said the ICJ’s judgement would be consigned to the “garbage can” of history. Sharon knew that would be the fate of the ICJ’s ruling because it was only an “advisory” opinion. That meant it could not be enforced without an endorsing Security Council resolution, (for which 13 of the ICJ’s panel of 15 judges called). If you were a gambling man down to your last million dollars, you could have bet the lot on the certainty of the U.S. vetoing any resolution to hold Israel to account.

Never one to miss an opportunity to tell Jews that the world hates them, Finance Minister Netanyahu expressed his personal contempt for the ICJ’s verdict by invoking the Nazi holocaust. According to BBC reports, the man who was desperate to be Greater Israel’s prime minister again asserted that there were many “*who aspire to see the slaughter of another six million Jews.*” By obvious implication the many included all who welcomed the ICJ’s judgement. Days later, and because he did not want to be outbid by Netanyahu in the business of frightening Jews everywhere, Sharon told visiting American politicians that the “wildest anti-Semitism” was on the loose in France; and he advised French Jews to take their leave of France and make a new life in the Zionist state. At about the time Sharon made that statement, 50 French Jews were arriving in Israel, bound for a new life on the occupied West Bank.

Israel insisted that the reason for the wall and thus its rejection of the ICJ’s verdict was Palestinian terrorism. This assertion ignored the fact that the reason for Palestinian terrorism was Israel’s continuing occupation, the brutal repression needed to sustain it, plus Zionism’s refusal to negotiate with the Palestinians on a good faith basis.

The U.S. and Britain had not wanted the matter to be referred by the General Assembly to the ICJ because, they said, it would “not be

helpful to the peace process” (i.e. because Israel would be offended). *The truth was that the U.S. and Britain had not wanted to be embarrassed by an ICJ ruling that would expose their lack of will to call and hold Israel to account.*

Objective commentators everywhere described the ICJ ruling as giving the Palestinians “the moral high ground.” Indeed it did, but below it the Israelis had tanks and helicopter gunships, and state-of-the-art surveillance technology, plus U.S. support for their policies right or wrong.

The ICJ’s advisory opinion and Israel’s rejection of it symbolised the might v right essence of the conflict.

In the context above, an observation made by Harkabi seemed to be more relevant than ever. On page 194 of *Israel’s Fateful Hour* he wrote: “*Israel must be particularly careful not to reach a point from which there is no return.*” There was, he added, “*a tragic possibility*” that Israel “*might find itself at the juncture where it must continue on the path laid out by its extremists, because the most favourable options have been closed.*”

Of all the many mistakes American presidents have made in their handling of the Palestine problem, I think the biggest was Bush’s endorsement, while Israel was proceeding down the path laid out by its extremists, of Sharon’s demand for regime change in Palestine. It was the last act in the political crucifixion of Yasser Arafat.

Arafat was kept a prisoner by Sharon in the rubble of his Ramallah compound for nearly three years before dying in a Paris hospital. *Did he die of natural causes or was he murdered?*

After being kept a prisoner by Sharon in the rubble of his Ramallah compound for nearly three years, Arafat lost his struggle for life in the Percy military hospital near Paris on Thursday 11 November 2004.

Did he die of natural causes or was he murdered?

It is a fact that some of Israel’s leaders had been quite open in their desire to see Arafat dead . On 1 February 2002, for example, in an interview with the Israeli newspaper *Ma’ariv*, Sharon said he should have “eliminated” Arafat when he had the opportunity to do so during the invasion of Lebanon in 1982. “Do you regret not killing Arafat then?” he was asked. Sharon replied, “Certainly, yes.” (Shortly after Arafat’s death was

made public, Peres, then Israel's main opposition leader, said in a comment to the BBC: "It is good that the world is rid of him. The sun is shining in the Middle East.")

In my analysis there is at the very least a circumstantial case for believing not only that Arafat was murdered, but that he was the victim of Israel's first successful hit with a *biological weapon*, actually an untraceable toxin which caused a slow deterioration of the PLO leader's health all the way to death. The key to understanding is, I think, what happened in Amman, Jordan's capital, on Thursday 25 September 1997.

On that day, on the order of Prime Minister Netanyahu, Mossad agents tried but failed to kill Khalid Mishal, the Syrian-based director of Hamas's political bureau. The most detailed account of this botched assassination attempt is in *Kill Khalid: The Failed Mossad Assassination of Khalid Mishal and the Rise of Hamas*, a gripping book written by the distinguished Australian journalist, Paul McGeough, and published by The New Press in May 2009.

The would-be Mossad assassins had staged a practise attack on a Tel Aviv street. Two men walking along it appeared to have accidentally bumped into the target, causing him to stumble. As he stumbled, one of the Mossad agents simulated injecting poison into the target's ear. Prime Minister Netanyahu viewed the film of the rehearsal, approved the assassination and gave the order to Mossad Director Danny Yaton, "Kill Khalid".

The real thing on the street in Amman went as planned to the extent that the poison was injected into Mishal's ear. It was a slow acting, synthetic opiate called Fentanyl, which leaves no trace in the blood stream. If everything had gone according to plan, Mishal would have died, quietly, hours away in time and miles away in distance from the place of the attack. The Mossad agents would have made their exit, over the Allenby Bridge on the Jordan River, and been back in Jerusalem for a celebratory lunch.

As it actually happened, the two Mossad agents were chased and caught by Mishal's driver, his bodyguard and some passersby. They were then detained in dark cells under an Amman security complex. The Mossad

support team took refuge in the Israeli embassy, which was quickly surrounded by Jordanian troops.

King Hussein was furious, not least because he thought Mossad was working in harmony with his own intelligence services. In the critical moments that followed, Hussein learned that the Mossad support team in the Israeli embassy included a doctor who had an antidote which would save Mishal's life if it was injected without further delay. (The Israeli doctor, a woman, had the antidote in her medical kit. Her role in the original master plan was to save the life of the Mossad assassins if they were accidentally exposed to the toxin).

A very, very angry Hussein telephoned Netanyahu. He said the Israeli agents would be hanged if Mishal died, and he demanded that the antidote be made available to the Jordanian doctors fighting to keep Mishal alive.

Fully aware that a positive response to the King's demand would guarantee the failure of the Mossad mission and cause him a great deal of embarrassment, Netanyahu hesitated.

Hussein then telephoned the White House. He demanded that President Clinton give Jordan his absolute promise that Israel would be forced to deliver the antidote and, also, that Netanyahu would be forced to accept whatever the King demanded as his price for allowing the Mossad agents to return safely to Israel. (This particular Israeli murder mission provoked private but unprecedented expressions of disgust from the Clinton administration. According to McGeough's account, one senior White House official said of Netanyahu, "We loathe him".)

The antidote was delivered and Mishal's life was saved.

Hussein's price for the release of the Mossad agents from their prison cell in Jordan included the release from prison in Israel of the paraplegic Sheik Yassin, Hamas's spiritual founding father. (As we have seen, this Palestinian leader was assassinated in his wheelchair six and a half years later in a spectacular dawn strike by Israeli helicopter gunships.)

In the seven years between the botched attempt to assassinate Mishal and Arafat's death, scientists developed a number of toxins for Israel's arsenal of biological and chemical weapons. The one that most

probably killed Arafat could be applied in four ways—by spraying on the skin, by spraying the air, by adding it to food and by smearing it on furniture or clothes or anything the target would touch. Many Palestinians think they know which of their leaders with access to the isolated Arafat collaborated with Mossad to administer the untraceable toxin for it. He was widely believed to be a CIA asset. (That didn't make Fatah or the PLO unique. Most if not all Arab governments and military institutions are penetrated by Western agents and Zionism has assets of its own deep inside all of them.)

The announcement that Israel was going to allow the ailing Arafat to be helicoptered out of his Ramallah compound for transport to the Percy military hospital near Paris was made to the world's media by Raanan Gissin, the government's spokesman. Usually he was the personification of venomous Zionist self-righteousness. But on this occasion he was all sweetness and light, smiling and apparently full of goodwill. Until this moment, Israel's stated policy was that if ever Arafat left Israel-Palestine to visit an Arab capital or whatever, he would never be allowed to return. Gissin was asked if Arafat would be allowed to return after treatment in Paris. He replied with words to the effect, "Yes, of course he will. He's the Palestinian President."

I was watching the press conference live on television. As soon as Gissin had spoken, I said to Nicole, my wife: "Gissin is only saying that because he *knows* Arafat won't be returning alive."

There is, of course, no proof that Arafat was murdered, and there probably never will be. (Just as, for example, we'll never know who really killed JFK.) But in the light of Mossad's track record in the assassination business and, in particular, the botched attempt to kill Khalid Mishal, it seems to me, as I said above, that there is at least a circumstantial case for Israeli involvement in Arafat's death, with the assistance of a Palestinian collaborator or two.

It can be said that if Arafat had not been born to lead the struggle, there almost certainly would not have been a regeneration of Palestinian nationalism. From its own perspective Zionism obviously had cause to hate him and want the man and everything he symbolised to be destroyed. But

without Arafat's leadership to prepare the ground for unthinkable compromise with Israel once the regeneration was a *fait accompli*, there would not have been a snowball's chance in hell for peace on terms which any rational government and people in Israel would accept with relief.

Arafat's wisdom was in knowing that peace based on a Palestinian leadership forcing its people to make an unthinkable compromise at the point of a gun could not be a lasting peace. This was why he made it his business to persuade his people of the need to face the reality of Israel's existence. My own view is that Arafat demonstrated a quality of real leadership that, with the probable exception of Rabin, no Israeli has come even close to matching. (It's also my view that if Arafat had not been a Palestinian and had led another struggle against another occupying power, he would have been regarded as a great hero by most Jews of the world and even some Israelis).

As I thought about the prospects for advancing the peace process without Arafat, I recalled his own last words to me. He had told me he thought Abbas was somewhere between third and fourth rate and not a leader. So I asked him why he had not groomed a credible successor after the Israelis assassinated Abu Jihad, the man who would have succeeded him if he had been allowed to live. Arafat replied: "*If the Israelis can't make peace with me, they'll never have peace.*"

As long as he lived, Arafat was, in my view, the man most likely to help Israel save itself from itself—provided that, as part of the deal, he got an acceptable minimum in the way of justice for his people.

If there had been the smallest grain of truth in Zionism's assertion, endorsed by President George "Dubya" Bush, that Arafat was *the* obstacle to peace, his death and a new Palestinian leader, Mahmoud Abbas for starters, would have provided an opportunity for breathing new life into the corpse of the peace process.

As we shall now see, that didn't happen, could not happen, because Zionism was and is inherently incapable of good-faith negotiations with any authentic (non-stooge) Palestinian leader.

Diplomacy was going nowhere because it had nowhere to go.

STATE TERRORISM BECOMES ISRAEL'S NORM

The question waiting for an answer in the immediate aftermath of Arafat's departure to paradise or wherever was this: Would a second-term President Bush turn the heat on Israel and oblige it to be serious about peace on terms virtually all Palestinians and most other Arabs and Muslims everywhere could accept?

In passing it's worth noting that there was a Saudi-inspired Arab peace plan on the table. It had been there since its adoption by an Arab summit in Beirut in 2002, two years before Bush's re-election on 3 November 2004 for a second term. Though it needed negotiations on the subject of the return of the Palestinian refugees, it offered Israel a full and final peace in exchange for an end to its occupation of all Arab land grabbed in 1967.

In theory there was a case for saying that in a second term President Bush *could* apply real pressure on Israel. It took account of the fact that, as any president, he couldn't run for a third term. In theory that meant he could break free from the constraints of American pork-barrel politics because he had no further need for the votes in swing states of two of the constituencies which had guaranteed his re-election victory: a significant number of Jewish Americans, in Florida especially, who, conditioned by the Zionist lobby in its many manifestations, voted Republican instead of Democrat for the first time ever; and born-again or fundamentalist Christians, some or many of whom want the Armageddon scenario to be played out. In other words, a second-term President Bush could afford to offend even those constituencies by using the economic and other levers America has to press Israel to be serious about peace with the Palestinians on the basis of a viable two-state solution.

If America's own best interests were to be taken into account, there was also a case for saying that a second-term "Dubya" Bush, might be open to the arguments about why he *should* use all of America's influence in an attempt to oblige Israel to be serious about peace. The principal argument

for so doing was something like this. *The rising tide of anti-Americanism could not be stemmed, and his war against terrorism could not be won, could even be lost, unless he addressed the root cause of Arab anger and humiliation—Israel’s arrogance of power and the absence of an acceptable amount of justice for the Palestinians.*

In his first post-election statement on the Middle East, made at the request of Britain’s Prime Minister Blair who was at his side, President Bush said he believed that it was perfectly possible for there to be a viable Palestinian state in existence by the end of his second term, but everything was conditional, he went on to say, *on the new Palestinian leadership proving that it was a “worthy negotiating partner”* by fighting terrorism and demonstrating its commitment to democracy. There was no mention of the need for Israel—the aggressor state in 1967 and sometimes a terrorist state thereafter—to prove that it was a worthy negotiating partner by committing itself to ending its occupation in accordance with the requirements of international law and both the letter and spirit of Resolution 242.

Another indication that White House push would be no match for Zionist lobby shove was in the message, implicit, of the public statements Bush and Sharon made after their discussions at the President’s Texas ranch on 11 April 2005.

With the post-Arafat Fatah leadership warning that the peace process was doomed if the U.S. did not stop Israel’s continuing settlement activity on the occupied West Bank, President Bush, in public after the meeting, said he had told Sharon he should “respect” and “stick to” his obligations under the road map - i.e. freeze all settlement activity. In his reply, Sharon indicated that he would not be changing his development strategy and said large settlement blocks on the West Bank would remain *“regardless of the repercussions.”* One implication was that, in private, Bush said to Sharon something like, “If you don’t stop settlement activity, I will have to punish you”; and that Sharon replied something like, “Mr. President I will not bow to pressure of any kind.”

The unchanging nature of the Zionist mindset was displayed with remarkable candour when Ehud Olmert was interviewed at length by

David Jessel for BBC TV's *Hard Talk* programme on 25 April 2003. At the time Olmert was Prime Minister Sharon's deputy.

Jessel commented that a "once-in-a-generation chance for peace" was slipping away which "future generations may curse you all for missing."

Olmert responded:

First of all I believe that future generations will curse us and present generations will curse us if we will not protect them. We are Jews; don't ever forget what happened when Jews could not protect themselves, when they were entirely at the mercy of others who, instead of protecting them, tried to eliminate them. So our first and foremost responsibility is to create the conditions that will protect all Jews, both in Israel and across the world, and we'll do it. We are anxious to create the conditions that will allow us to live in the same kind of peace as you want for yourself. It depends on our neighbours. For years, generations, they were committed to destroy us. Only if we will be strong enough there is a good chance that ultimately they will be ready for a compromise. *We are waiting for this compromise.* We are ready to contribute to this compromise. We are ready to take part in this compromise. We are ready to share the pains of this compromise. But compromise means that both sides give something *and the time has come for the Palestinians and the Arabs to give something.*

Wow!

It was Zionism's alien immigrants (not the settled Jews of Palestine) who robbed the Palestinians of their land and their rights. It was then the Palestinians, after Arafat had required them to face the reality of Israel's existence, who said to the Zionists: "Okay, you can keep 78 percent of our land, and we'll give your state the recognition and legitimacy it craves in exchange for the return to us of only 22 percent of all that is rightfully ours." And it was then one of Zionism's most deluded sons who assassinated an Israeli prime minister to prevent the implementation of the land for peace agreement Arafat had made in with him in good faith. When you add the fact that the latest Arab peace plan was on the table, and that Zionism's most brutal repression of the Palestinians was reducing them to abject

poverty, you had to ask—*What more could the Palestinians give, and, was it not long past the time when Israel should give enough to satisfy their minimum needs for security, justice and a life worth living?*

The notion of Zionism as the protector of Jews in Israel was at best questionable. The Palestinians were not natural enemies of Jews. The enmity of the Palestinians is a Zionist creation, as religious Jews who lived in Palestine before the birth of Zionism (nearly half a century before the Nazi holocaust) feared would be the case.

The notion of the Zionist state as the protector of Jews “across the world” makes no sense unless it is based on the assumption, which it is, that one day the world will turn against Jews again, and that when it does the persecuted Jews of the world will flee to Greater Israel for protection in their refuge of last resort. (In April 2002 Prime Minister Sharon actually said that Israel was in the Occupied Territories “*for the survival of the Jewish people.*”)

In the Prologue to Volume One of this book, I quoted Harkabi’s warning that Israel’s behaviour could become “a factor in the rise of anti-Semitism.” By the time Olmert spoke the words quoted above it had become more than that. Together with the double standards of the governments of the Judeo-Christian world—I mean their refusal to hold the Zionist state accountable to international law and the principles enshrined in the UN Charter—*Israel’s behaviour had become the prime factor.*

On 19 February 2004, Brussels was the venue for what the BBC’s World Service described as an “unprecedented” Anti-Semitism Conference. Hosted by the European Union, Jewish and European leaders assembled to discuss what to do about the rising tide of anti-Semitism in Europe. Zionist speakers described it as the return to Europe of the “virus”, the “cancer” and the “monster.”

No Jewish speaker was more passionate than Britain’s chief rabbi, Dr. Jonathan Sacks. With a pause for emphasis between every word, he said, “We need your help!” He went on: “We need your voice. We need your protests. Jews are a very small people... We cannot fight anti-Semitism on our own.”

The record of Dr. Sacks' statements tells how difficult it is to be a chief rabbi. On his way to the conference he dismissed (as Zionism does) the notion that there was or could be a link between Israel's behaviour and the regeneration of anti-Semitism in Europe. Yet almost two years earlier, in an interview with *The Guardian*, the same chief rabbi said, "Things happen in Israel on a daily basis that make me feel very uncomfortable as a Jew."¹ Inevitably such courage brought the wrath of Zionism upon Dr. Sacks, and by the time he got to the anti-Semitism conference in Brussels he had back-peddled a long way. One could ask: *If the chief rabbi is intimidated and unable to give Jews a moral lead with regard to Israel's behaviour, who can?*

Not every Jewish leader who attended the conference was willing to buy Zionism's line that criticism of its child amounts to anti-Semitism. One who did not and said so was Dr. Hajo Meyer. At 80, and a survivor of Auschwitz, he is on the board of Another Jewish Voice, which is part of a European Jewish alliance for a just peace. In an interview with the BBC World Service on the day of the conference, he explained why he believed the word anti-Semitism did not have the same meaning today as it did in former times "when the Jews had no political power". The situation was very different today, he said, "because the Jews have a very, very strong state, strong in military power and strong in political power." That being so, he went on:

Criticism of Israel should be possible because that state is sometimes behaving as a rogue state in its treatment of the Palestinians. So if you utter criticism of Israel and they (Zionists) come and say the new form of anti-Semitism is criticism of Israel—which should be called anti-Israel or better maybe anti-Zionism—then you are put into the corner of potential murderers, because the word anti-Semitism contains the poison of Auschwitz. And that is a very, very, very dangerous thing, on the one hand for Jews who are frightened by the word, and non-Jews who dare to utter criticism.

It was put to Dr. Meyer by his BBC interviewer that anti-Semites used criticism of Israel as an "excuse" to justify their anti-Semitism. Meyer's response was the following:

No! No! This is topsy-turvy. Every anti-Semite has certainly criticism of Israel, but not everybody who is a good citizen and who utters criticism of Israel is an anti-Semite, many are very, very far from anti-Semitism. Am I an anti-Semite? What a crazy idea! *This is the great excuse to place Israel outside the range of possible criticism at all. They (the Zionists) think they can then allow themselves everything. This is indeed a cause of rising anti-Semitism. It's a vicious, vicious circle.*

Three years later Dr. Meyer wrote a remarkable book titled, *An Ethical Tradition Betrayed: The End of Judaism*.

If he was not on what *Ha'aretz* described as Zionism's official "Shit List" before the conference, I imagine he was after it. A few days before the conference, Israel's newspaper for seriously thoughtful people reported the existence of a website naming over 7,000 Jews worldwide as being "**Self-Hating and Israel Threatening**". Prominent Israelis on the list included Shimon Peres and Lea Tzemel, the anti-Zionist lawyer who defends Palestinians in Israeli military courts. The *Ha'aretz* story found its way into *The Guardian* via Daphna Baram. She wrote that when she found her own name on the list of "kapo Jew traitors", and that of her father, a leftwing columnist, and that of her uncle, an ex-Labour cabinet minister, she felt "an immediate sense of pride"² (My dear friend and ally in common cause, Professor Ilan Pappé, author of *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, was and is at the top of the list. He once said that if I was Jewish, I'd be sharing the top spot with him).

Zionism had no equal in the business of character assassination as the means of silencing critics.

For all of the second half of the 20th century, trading on the Nazi holocaust, Zionism had no equal in the business of character assassination as the means of silencing critics, denouncing critical *goys* as "anti-Semites" and critical Jews as "self-haters". That some Jews, including Israelis, were prepared to mock the character assassins was, I hope, a sign that fear of them is fading.

The mockers included the grumpy but always entertaining British columnist and novelist, Will Self. Writing in the *Evening Standard* on 24

October 2003 he was at his vituperative best. Under the headline HOW DO YOU GAG A JEW? CALL HIM “SELF-HATING”, he said his assertion in a previous article that “what the Israeli government is doing on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip is tantamount to building enormous concentration camps for the Palestinians”, had summoned up predictable accusations of anti-Semitism. To such an accusation, he wrote, it was “never enough to reply, ah, but you see, I’m Jewish myself, because that always elicits a combination punch—you must be a self-hating Jew then.” Self went on to describe Zionism’s concept of the self-hating Jew as “*hideous and reductive*”, and his conclusion was the following:

No, it’s not Jews like me I hate... The Jews I hate are the ones who unleashed the Phalangist militias on the Shatilla refugee camp. *The Jews I hate are the ones who are pursuing a nakedly racist agenda in their ‘bastion of democracy’. Step forward Ariel Sharon, because, yes, I hate you, and, frankly, until the majority of Israelis can find it in their hearts to hate you too, there will be no end to this evil-go-round of persecution.*

Israel’s unilateral withdrawal from the Gaza Strip was completed on 12 September 2005. It involved the removal of about 9,000 settlers including children from 21 settlements. In the final days of the process there were scenes of Israeli soldiers dragging screaming settlers from houses and synagogues. Some of the most zealous settlers who were being evicted wore Star of David badges to associate the action of Sharon’s government with Nazi Germany and the holocaust. But there was much less violence than had been expected.

It was officially called a unilateral “disengagement” but the extent of the actual disengagement was limited by Israel’s decision to retain control of the Strip’s airspace, borders and ports. Israel was thus set to determine who entered and left the Gaza Strip and what goods and services could and could not flow to and from it. This led some to ask whether, after Israel’s withdrawal, the Strip was *still effectively occupied*. There was scope for debate about that but not the fact that the Strip became, and remains today, a vast, open prison. (The jailer at the Strip’s border with Egypt was its president,

Mubarak, who would demonstrate that there were no limits to his despotism at home and his willingness to do Israel's and America's bidding.)

With the assistance of some in the mainstream Western media who ought to have known better, and perhaps did, Israel's unilateral withdrawal was presented as a contribution to moving the peace process forward. It was nothing of the kind. It was the first step in Sharon's game plan to *defuse the demographic time bomb of occupation while consolidating Israel's grip on the West Bank (much if not all of it), and freeze the political process*. This was, in fact, confirmed by Dov Weissglas, Prime Minister Sharon's chief of staff and most senior and trusted policy adviser and Washington fixer. (Very probably he was also the real architect of Sharon's unilateral disengagement plan.)

In an in-depth and remarkably explicit interview with *Ha'aretz* on 8 October 2004, Weissglas described the strategic goal of Sharon's diplomacy as being *to secure the support of the White House and Congress for Israeli measures that would place the peace process and Palestinian statehood in "formaldehyde."* Weissglas explained that the purpose of Sharon's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza, and the dismantling of several isolated settlements in the West Bank, was *to gain US acceptance of Israel's unilateralism*, not to set a precedent for an eventual withdrawal from the West Bank. *The limited withdrawals were intended to provide Israel with the political room to deepen and widen its presence in the West Bank.* (Which is what happened).

Towards the end of the interview, reporter Ari Shavit asked: "So you have carried out the manoeuvre of the century? And all of it with authority and permission?"

Weissglas replied:

When you say 'manoeuvre,' it doesn't sound nice. It sounds like you said one thing and something else came out. But that's the whole point. After all, what have I been shouting for the past year? That I found a device, in cooperation with the management of the world, to ensure that there will be no stopwatch here. That there will be no timetable to implement the settlers' nightmare. I have postponed that nightmare indefinitely. Because what I effectively agreed to with the Americans was that part of the

settlements would not be dealt with at all, and the rest will not be dealt with until the Palestinians turn into Finns. That is the significance of what we did. *The significance is the freezing of the political process. And when you freeze that process you prevent the establishment of a Palestinian state and you prevent a discussion about the refugees, the borders and Jerusalem. Effectively, this whole package that is called the Palestinian state, with all that it entails, has been removed from our agenda indefinitely. And all this with authority and permission. All with a presidential blessing and the ratification of both houses of Congress. What more could have been anticipated? What more could have been given to the settlers?*

Shavit: “I return to my previous question. In return for ceding Gaza, you obtained status quo in Judea and Samaria?”

Weissglas:

You keep insisting on the wrong definition. The right definition is that we created a status quo vis-a-vis the Palestinians. There was a very difficult package of commitments that Israel was expected to accept. That package is called a political process. *It included elements we will never agree to accept and elements we cannot accept at this time. But we succeeded in taking that package and sending it beyond the hills of time. With the proper management we succeeded in removing the issue of the political process from the agenda.* And we educated the world to understand that there is no one to talk to. And we received a no-one-to-talk-to certificate. That certificate says: (1) There is no one to talk to; (2) As long as there is no one to talk to, the geographic status quo remains intact; (3) The certificate will be revoked only when this-and-this happens—when Palestine becomes Finland; (4) See you then, and shalom.

Sharon had had a majority in his Likud-led coalition government for his withdrawal plan but not in his own Likud party, and the actual withdrawal exposed deep rifts inside it. Netanyahu capitalised on the split and aligned himself with Likud’s rejectionist faction, no doubt calculating that he could topple Sharon. But the more Sharon’s popularity declined in the Likud party structure, the more it grew among the Israeli populace at

large. Sharon then let *chutzpah* be his guide. He broke with Likud and formed a new political party, Kadima, which means Forward or Onward.

The expectation was that with Sharon its leader, Kadima would win enough seats in the March 2006 election for him to continue as prime minister. But fate denied him that glory.

On 5 January 2006, the grossly overweight Sharon had a stroke, his second in two weeks, and he was unconscious with a massive brain haemorrhage. At the time of writing he is said to be still alive but comatose.

Sharon's legacy?

That question was answered by an Israeli commentator, Aluf Benn, in a most perceptive analysis in *Ha'aretz* on 13 January 2010. The headline over his piece was, SHARON'S REAL LEGACY—KEEPING THE ARABS OUT OF SIGHT. I am quoting the article in full from *Ha'aretz* online because it contains, in my view, the key to understanding so much of what happened after Olmert became prime minister and, in particular, why Israeli state terrorism became the norm—i.e. when Israel attacked first Lebanon (on 12 July 2006) and then the Gaza Strip (on 27 December 2008).

Let's assume the optimistic forecast by special U.S. envoy George Mitchell comes true and in two years the establishment of an independent Palestine is declared at a ceremony. The event will be broadcast on prime time, but most Israelis will opt to view *Big Brother 6*, *Survivor 7* or whatever the next television hit is. Viewers will behave this way not because they oppose a Palestinian state but because they are indifferent. Palestine-shmalestine simply does not interest them.

Most Israelis today are cut off from the conflict with the Palestinians and do not interact with them. From their point of view, the Palestinians are blurry figures during TV newscasts: Mahmoud Abbas and Ismail Haniyeh speak, women covered from head to toe mourn in a tent, men run with a stretcher after an ambulance, men concealing their faces fire Qassam rockets. *Israelis have no interest in knowing anything further.* Nablus and Ramallah are about 40 minutes by car from Tel Aviv, but in

the eyes of Tel Avivians they are on a different planet. New York, London and Thailand are much closer.

The settlers beyond the separation fence are the only Israelis who see Palestinians, mostly through car windows on the roads they share. The settlers, like the Palestinians, are disconnected from the residents of the Tel Aviv region, Haifa or Be'er Sheva, who hardly ever cross the fence. They have no business in Elon Moreh, Yitzhar or Psagot. The big settlements like Ma'aleh Adumim and Ariel can be reached almost without having to see Palestinians.

The policy of isolation is the real legacy of Ariel Sharon, who built the fence in the West Bank, left the Gaza Strip and pushed the Palestinians out of the Israeli labor force. Sharon did not believe in peace and was not interested in links with the Arabs. All he wanted was to protect the Jews from attacks by their 'bloodthirsty' neighbors. *Keeping them out of sight lets Israelis live as if there were no conflict, with only settlers on the periphery and soldiers on the firing line.*

The 'demographic problem' also is not frightening when it is locked up behind walls and fences.

In the past Israel's economy relied on Palestinian workers, but only older Israelis remember them at restaurants, construction sites and gas stations. Here and there one can still find friendships; waiters at Restaurant 206 in Kiryat Shaul sometimes gather their tips for a Palestinian friend who once waited tables and is now besieged in the Gaza Strip. Stories like this are almost part of folklore. The Israeli economy is geared toward Wall Street, not Shuhada Street. The stock market is hardly affected by routine security issues, and real estate prices are flying high as if this were Hong Kong, not a country under threat on a constant war alert.

The Israel Defense Forces, who sent generations of Israelis to the territories, has minimized the exposure of its soldiers to the Palestinians. Fewer and fewer people do reserve duty, and even fewer in the West Bank. The regular

army has minimized the activities of its units in the territories and transferred much of the policing duties in the West Bank to the Kfir Brigade. *Air force crews, who carry the burden of the fighting in the Gaza Strip, see the Palestinians as silent spots on their screens fed from drone footage.*

Entertainment intensifies the gap in the way Israelis have come to regard their country, and the way it is seen in the world. The local media describes Israel as a Western high-tech superpower, an annex of Manhattan and Hollywood. The foreign media covers the conflict: terrorist attacks and assassinations, settlements and peace talks. *When the Israelis who have never visited a settlement see themselves on CNN they are offended: We are not like that. This is anti-Semitic propaganda.*

Foreigners visiting Israel are amazed to discover the degree to which reality here is disconnected from what they heard at home. They expect a violent apartheid state, and are surprised that the toilets and buses are not separate for Jews and Arabs. They imagine a conservative, buttoned-up society and are shocked by Tel Aviv's nightlife. They walk in the street and realize that in London or Paris they see a lot more Arabs than in most Israeli cities.

Because of the entertainment and indifference, the government doesn't face public pressure to pull out of the territories and establish a Palestinian state, and the opposition to the American peace initiative is being led by the extremists on the right. *Most Israelis simply don't care; they gave up on the territories a long time ago.* If Mitchell succeeds in his mission, they will hear about it and change the channel.

The key to understanding is in Aluf Benn's statements that the IDF has "minimized the exposure of its soldiers to the Palestinians" (and others, I add), and that Air Force crews now carry "the burden of the fighting".

This happened because Israel's political and military leaders realised that the only thing that would shake most Israelis out of their indifference to what was done in their name was the cost in terms of Israeli soldiers killed in action. Too many body bags would cause too many questions to be asked.

(As we have seen, the IDF's withdrawal from southern Lebanon in May 2000 happened because Israeli public opinion was concluding that the cost of maintaining that occupation in terms of Israeli soldiers killed and wounded by Hizbollah fighters was too high.)

Before state terrorism became the norm for Israel's leaders, and indifference to it by most Israelis also became a norm, there was a political earthquake.

At the end of January 2006, Hamas won by a landslide the majority of seats in elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), the parliament of the Palestinian National authority (PNA).

It was the first Palestinian election for a decade and prior to it Fatah had dominated the PLC. Hamas won 74 of the 132 seats. Fatah had 45. When the official result was declared on 29 January, the European Parliament's monitoring team declared the polling to have been "extremely professional, in line with international standards, free, transparent and without violence."

The European Parliament's monitoring team declared the polling that resulted in the Hamas election victory to have been "extremely professional, in line with international standards".

Hamas was thus in a position to form a majority government. It did and on 29 March Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh was sworn in as its prime minister. Fifteen months later, at the height of a Fatah-Hamas conflict, he was dismissed by President Abbas.

That conflict was inevitable essentially because Israel refused to do business with Hamas on the grounds that it was nothing but a terrorist organisation. And the U.S. followed Israel's lead. The outcome of the manifestation of Palestinian democracy, unique in the Arab world, was unacceptable because it didn't produce the results Israel and America wanted.

Israel implemented a series of punitive measures including economic sanctions against the PNA. Thereafter Israeli and U.S. policy was to undermine Hamas while strengthening Abbas and Fatah. The end game was to have been a Fatah attack on the Gaza Strip to drive Hamas from

power. The U.S., Egypt and Israel armed and trained Fatah for that purpose.

In April 2008, *Vanity Fair* published an in-depth article by David Rose with the headline *The Gaza Bombshell*. In the introduction to Rose's investigation, his editor put it this way:

After failing to anticipate Hamas's victory over Fatah in the 2006 Palestinian election, the White House cooked up yet another scandalously covert and self-defeating Middle East debacle: part Iran-contra, part Bay of Pigs. With confidential documents, corroborated by outraged former and current U.S. officials, the author reveals how President Bush, Condoleezza Rice, and Deputy National-Security Adviser Elliott Abrams backed an armed force under Fatah strongman Muhammad Dahlan, touching off a bloody civil war in Gaza and leaving Hamas stronger than ever. [Dahlan, I add, was widely believed to both a CIA and an MI6 asset; and there were and are many Palestinians who believe that he was the Fatah leader who assisted Mossad to send Arafat to paradise or wherever].

It all went badly wrong for the coup plotters because Hamas's leaders—intellectually much brighter than their discredited, post-Arafat Fatah leadership counterparts—saw the coup coming and, on 12 June, they launched a pre-emptive attack. Its purpose, achieved, was to cleanse the Gaza Strip of Fatah forces stationed there as part and parcel of the PNA's security and law enforcement apparatus. The fighting was brutal and bloody. Human Rights Watch accused both sides of violations of international humanitarian law, in some cases amounting to war crimes.

On 14 June, Abbas dismissed Prime Minister Haniyeh and dissolved his government. The following day Hamas completed its takeover of the Gaza Strip and was fully in control. The consequence of this short, sharp Palestinian civil war was the creation of two Palestinian authorities, a Fatah-led PNA (constitutionally illegitimate, many Palestinians said) on the Occupied West Bank and the Hamas government of the Gaza Strip.

On 18 June, the U.S, the E.U. and Israel declared their support for the new West Bank Palestinian administration without Hamas. The U.S.

and the E.U. then normalized relations with it and resumed direct aid (which was suspended after Hamas's election victory). Israel announced it would return tax revenue of about \$800 million (withheld after Hamas's election victory) to the new administration.

The question of what to do about Hamas—how to destroy it—was for the future.

Between Hamas's election victory and its showdown with Fatah in the Gaza Strip, Israel tried and failed to destroy Hizbollah in Lebanon.

Early on 12 July, a local Hizbollah unit attacked an IDF patrol on the Israel-Lebanon border, on Israel's side of it according to Israeli accounts. In the fighting three Israeli soldiers were killed and two were captured. As a diversionary tactic Hizbollah had fired a few Katyusha rockets into Northern Israel, slightly injuring five Israelis who, according to *Ha'aretz*, were most in need of "treatment for shock". (The IDF itself acknowledged that this rocket fire was nothing more than a Hizbollah diversionary tactic).

Israel's immediate response was to send a tank into Lebanon in pursuit of the Hizbollah fighters. The tank ran over a landmine which exploded killing four of the tank's crew. Another soldier died in further clashes when his unit tried to retrieve the bodies.

Israel then launched bombing raids deep into and across Lebanon and the war, which was to last 34 days, was on.

As Israel's air, sea and land bombardment of Lebanon unfolded, a great deal of nonsense was written and spoken by pundits and policymakers throughout the mainly Gentile Judeo-Christian world about why it was happening. The main thrust of the nonsense was that *Hizbollah started the war and that Israel was merely defending itself*.

The truth about the Hizbollah action that triggered what became a war, and was, in my view, a naked demonstration of Israeli state terrorism, can be summarised as follows.

Hizbollah's purpose in taking IDF hostages was to have them as bargaining chips to secure the return of Lebanese prisoners Israel had refused to release in a previous prisoner exchange. As former President Carter implied in an article for *The Washington Post* on 1 August, it was not

unreasonable for Hizbollah to assume that an exchange would be possible because “the assumption was based on a number of such trades in the past.”

But on 12 July 2006 the government of Israel was not interested in trades. It did not give a single moment to diplomacy or negotiations of any kind. It did not even consider a local retaliation to make a point. Israel rushed to war. As Defence Minister Amir Peretz put it, Israel was skipping the stage of threats and going straight to the action.

The truth about the particular Hizbollah operation to secure some bargaining chips was that it gave Israel’s political and military leaders *the pretext they wanted for a major offensive on Lebanon*.

A more general truth about Hizbollah’s position was as stated in an article by Jonathan Cook published by CommonDreams.org on 25 July.

In contrast to the image of Hizbollah frothing at the mouth to destroy Israel, its leader Hassan Nasrallah held off from serious retaliation. For the first day and a half, he limited his strikes to the northern borders areas, which have faced Hezbollah attacks in the past and are well protected.

He waited till late on June 13 before turning his guns on Haifa, even though we now know he could have targeted Israel’s third largest city from the outset. A small volley of rockets directed at Haifa caused no injuries and looked more like a warning than an escalation.

It was another three days—days of constant Israeli bombardment of Lebanon, destroying the country and killing and injuring countless civilians—before Nasrallah hit Haifa again, including a shell that killed eight workers in a railway depot.

No one should have been surprised. Nasrallah was doing exactly what he had threatened to do *if Israel refused to negotiate and chose the path of war instead*. Although the international media quoted his ominous televised message that ‘Haifa is just the beginning,’ Nasrallah in fact made his threat *conditional on Israel’s continuing strikes against Lebanon*. In the same speech he warned: *‘As long as the enemy pursues its aggression without*

limits and red lines, we will pursue the confrontation without limits and red lines.' Well, Israel did, and so now has Nasrallah.

Is the implication that Hizbollah would not have rained rockets on Northern Israel if it had not gone for the war option? Yes.

The assertion that Hizbollah's stockpile of rockets posed an existential threat to Israel was the usual Zionist propaganda nonsense, but it was right to ask why, really, Hizbollah had put so much effort, with Iranian and Syrian assistance, into stocking-piling weapons and bunkering down?

The honest answer is that Hizbollah strengthened itself militarily for the same reason as Egypt did when President Nasser, with great reluctance after America had refused to supply him, accepted weapons from the Soviet Union. As we have seen, Nasser did not upgrade Egypt's military capabilities to make war on Israel. He wanted to be able to demonstrate to Israel that attacking Egypt to impose Zionism's will on it and the region *was not a cost-free option*.

It was the fear Israel's political leaders had of exposing their ground forces to combat with Hizbollah's fighters that led to the strategic folly of over-reliance on air power. If Israel had launched a major ground offensive with air support, it could have cleansed Lebanon south of the River Litani of Hizbollah and its rockets. The problem was that the fighting, much of it bunker-by-bunker and hand-to-hand, would have cost the lives of too many Israeli soldiers, more than Israeli public opinion would have tolerated, or so Israel's political leaders feared.

Unwilling to take that risk, Israel's political leaders, led by Prime Minister Olmert, allowed themselves to believe that if they bombed Lebanon enough, caused enough destruction and death, *the Lebanese would turn against Hizbollah*. Israel's political leaders assumed that would create the circumstances in which the Lebanese government and its army would confront and destroy Hizbollah. In this scenario the institutions of the Lebanese state, and the Christian militias which had collaborated with Israel in Sharon's effort to destroy Arafat and his PLO, would do the most dangerous part of the dirty work for Israel.

Israel's political leaders couldn't have been more wrong. As Alexander Cockburn put it in an article for *Counterpunch* on 21 July, "Every

time they kill another Lebanese family, they multiply hatred of Israel and support for Hizbollah.” About 1,200 Lebanese were killed in this demonstration of Israel state terrorism, more than three-quarters of them civilians. Of the 158 Israelis who were killed, 41 were civilians.

Israel’s generals must have known they couldn’t destroy Hizbollah and all of its rockets and bunkers from the air, so why, really, did they endorse the strategic folly of over-reliance of air power? No doubt they shared the political assessment that if they bombed Lebanon enough, they could create the circumstances in which the Lebanese government and its army would confront Hizbollah.

But there was another reason. *They believed they should and could restore the deterrent power of the IDF.* They understood that it had been seriously damaged by Hizbollah’s success in not only confronting the IDF following Sharon’s invasion of Lebanon in 1982, but eventually forcing it to withdraw, effectively defeated and humiliated. I think it is more than reasonable to presume that during the following six years, Israel’s generals were itching to make war on Lebanon again to repair that damage—to restore the IDF’s deterrent power. Put another way, *it was time, Israel’s generals believed, to give the Arabs—all Arabs, not just Hizbollah—another lesson in who the real master of the region was.*

The only thing the war proved (not that more proof was needed) was that *Israel’s policy of seeking to solve a political problem by military means is nothing but counter-productive.* Though Hizbollah’s military capability was temporarily diminished, it became the new hero for the Arab and other Muslim masses. With time it emerged better armed than ever and better positioned to have a say in determining Lebanon’s future.

That reality, plus Nasrallah’s statement as reported by *Ha’aretz* on 16 January 2010 that Israel had “lost its power to intimidate”, probably meant that it would be only a matter of time before Israel tried again to destroy Hizbollah. (On 22 January, as reported by *Ha’aretz*, Israel’s minister without portfolio, Yossi Peled said: “We can’t sleep easy. We’re in for another round in the north but I don’t know when.” Netanyahu distanced himself from that statement by saying that Israel was not looking for another war with Lebanon).

Like Arafat when he was on the occupied West Bank in the immediate aftermath of the 1967 war, Nasrallah does not sleep two nights under the same roof because he assumes—no doubt correctly—that he is at the very top of Mossad’s list of targets for assassination.

Israel’s wars on Lebanon were public relations disasters for Zionism— but nothing compared to the anti-Israel sentiment generated by its resort to 22 days of state terrorism against Gaza.

Israel’s first war on Lebanon in 1982 was a public relations disaster for Zionism because it opened the eyes of a watching world, including many Jews and even some Israelis, to the true nature of the monster the Zionist state had become—a monster that previously only the Arabs and the Palestinians especially had seen in close-up. Israel’s second war on Lebanon was an even bigger public relations disaster for Zionism. *But the self-inflicted damage done to Israel’s image in both those wars was nothing compared to the anti-Israel sentiment generated in many if not most nations of the world by Israel’s resort to state terrorism on 27 December 2008. On that day Israel went to war against the Palestinians, not just Hamas, in the Gaza Strip.*

Though there was more to it, Israel was collectively punishing the entire population of the Strip for supporting Hamas—a war crime as defined by Article 33 of the 1949 Geneva Conventions. For each and all of the 22 days of Israel’s Operation Cast Lead, President-elect Barack Obama looked on in silence.

The mainstream Western media, like President Bush, was content to peddle Zionism’s propaganda lie (it still does) that Israel went to war to end rocket attacks and that it had *no other way to do so, no choice*. The truth, as ever, was something else.

From June 2008 until 4 November, Hamas maintained a cease-fire. On that day, the day Americans voted to put Obama into the White House, Hamas did fire some rockets into Israel but... They were a *response* to a ground incursion by Israeli Special Forces and an air strike which killed at least six Palestinians. In other words, *it was the Israelis, not Hamas, who broke the cease-fire*. The name of the Israeli game thereafter was to provoke

Hamas into firing more rockets to provide Israel with the *pretext*, at a moment of its choosing, for a war it had long planned, in detail for months, and in principle from the moment in June 2007 when democratically-elected Hamas moved to pre-empt the CIA-and-Israeli-backed Fatah coup against it.

The real purpose of the all-out war on the Gaza Strip was to put Hamas out of business militarily and politically. When that was achieved, Israel's leaders told themselves, *they would have a much better chance of bullying and bribing President Abbas and his Fatah-dominated, quisling PNA into accepting crumbs from Zionism's table*—the crumbs being an Israeli withdrawal from only parts of the West Bank to provide the Palestinians with two or three Bantustans which they could call a state if they wished.

The *modus operandi* of Israel's war machine was succinctly captured in a retrospective report by the BBC's Middle East correspondent, Paul Wood, broadcast on 23 March:

At the time, Israeli officials said the aim of Operation Cast Lead was to restore the principle of deterrence in southern Israel. As it is understood in this part of the world, that means *bludgeoning your enemies into submission, causing enough pain that they will hesitate to come back for more*. Israel now had a new military doctrine: 'go nuts' once and your enemies will fear to strike again.

As Israeli commentator Ofer Shelah put it: 'In the face of enemies who have opted for a strategy of attrition and attacking from a distance, *Israel will present itself as a crazy country*, the kind that will respond with a massive and unfettered assault, with no proportion to the amount of casualties it has endured.'

As in Israel's second war on Lebanon, the main operational burden for the war on the Gaza Strip was assigned to the Israeli Air Force, again to reduce to the absolute minimum the number of Israeli casualties in ground fighting.

White phosphorus (the white clouds of the television coverage) burns in contact with oxygen and causes deep burns when it touches

human skin, sometimes reaching to the bone. Though Israel initially denied it, there was irrefutable evidence that the IDF used white phosphorus for more than a screen for its troops. Safe smoke shells were available but white phosphorus was fired repeatedly over densely populated areas. As a result, civilians needlessly suffered and died.

White phosphorus is not illegal itself and can be used to provide a smokescreen on the battlefield or as an incendiary weapon against a military target, but its use is regulated by international law. *It must be used in a way that distinguishes between combatants and civilians and cannot be used to target civilians.* Israel's warlords did not make that distinction.

Four different human rights organizations published reports on Israel's "war crimes". They were: Amnesty International; Human Rights Watch; the American National Lawyers Guild; and Physicians for Human Rights-Israel and the Palestinian Medical Relief Society (PMRS).

According to the Palestinian Center for Human Rights-Gaza, the following were the statistics of death and destruction on the Palestinian side:

- 1,147 Palestinians killed—926 civilians (313 children and 116 women), 255 civilian police officers and 236 combatants (just 16.7 percent of the total).
- 2,400 homes destroyed.
- 28 public facilities destroyed including several municipality and government buildings, fishing harbours and the Palestinian Legislative Council under construction when the war started.
- 21 private businesses destroyed including hotels, cafeterias and wedding halls.
- 30 mosques completely destroyed, 15 partially.
- 10 charitable societies, 5 media organizations and the offices of 2 health organizations destroyed.
- 121 commercial workshops destroyed, 200 damaged.
- 5 concrete factories and 1 juice factory destroyed.

- 60 police stations destroyed.
- 29 education institutions completely or partially destroyed.

The number of Israelis killed, 13, included 3 civilians. (In the three years between Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza and the start of Operation Cast Lead, 28 Israelis were killed by rockets and mortars and bullets fired from the Gaza Strip; and many of the residents of Sderot, the main Israeli border and target town, were traumatized).

Ilan Pappé was in Israel at the time and his thoughts in an article for the Electronic Intifada on 2 January 2009 included the following:

The state, through its media and with the help of its academia, broadcast one unanimous voice—even louder than the one heard during the criminal attack against Lebanon in the summer of 2006. *Israel is engulfed once more with righteous fury that translates into destructive policies in the Gaza Strip.* This appalling self-justification for the inhumanity and impunity is not just annoying, it is a subject worth dwelling on, if one wants to understand the international immunity for the massacre that rages on in Gaza.

It is based first and foremost on sheer lies transmitted with a newspeak reminiscent of darker days in 1930s Europe. Every half an hour a news bulletin on the radio and television describes the victims of Gaza as terrorists and Israel's massive killings of them as an act of self-defence. Israel presents itself to its own people as the righteous victim that defends itself against a great evil. The academic world is recruited to explain how demonic and monstrous the Palestinian struggle is if it is led by Hamas. These are the same scholars who demonized the late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat in an earlier era and delegitimized his Fatah movement during the second Palestinian intifada.

But the lies and distorted representations are not the worst part of it. *It is the direct attack on the last vestiges of humanity and dignity of the Palestinian people that is most enraging...* One hopes more and more people in Israel will begin to see the real nature of the crimes committed

in their name, and that their fury will be directed against those who trapped them and the Palestinians in this unnecessary cycle of bloodshed and violence.

More and more people in Israel did *not* begin to see the crimes committed in their name, but more and more people in many other nations, including those of Western Europe and even North America, *did*.

On 3 April, 2009, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHCR) established an international independent Fact Finding Mission with the mandate “to investigate all violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law that might have been committed at any time in the context of the military operations that were conducted in Gaza during the period from 27 December 2008 and 18 January 2009.”

The Mission was headed by South African Judge Richard Goldstone, who is Jewish, a trustee of Hebrew University and, according to his daughter Nicole, “a Zionist” who “loves Israel.” (She was quoted by *The Jerusalem Post* on 17 September as saying that to Israel’s Army Radio. Speaking from Toronto where she lives, she also said she had many conversations with her father after he was asked to head the UN Mission. She went on: “I know better than anyone else that he thought however hard it was to accept it, he was doing the best thing for everyone, including Israel. He is honest, tells things how he sees them and wants to uncover the truth.”)

For the job to be done, Goldstone’s experience was second to none.

In the latter years of Apartheid in South Africa, he served as chairperson of the South African Standing Commission of Inquiry Regarding Public Violence and Intimidation, later known as the Goldstone Commission. It played a critical role in uncovering and publicizing allegations of grave wrongdoing by the South African security forces and *bringing home to white South Africans the extensive violence that was being done in their name*.

In August 1994, Goldstone was the first chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, which was established by a UN Security Council Resolution. Later the same year he became the chief prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunal for

Rwanda. In those roles he had to design prosecutorial strategies for both groundbreaking tribunals. He was guided by the work of the prosecutors at the Nuremberg (Nazi War Crimes) Tribunal of 1945/46.

In 1997 he was a member of the International Panel of the Commission of Enquiry into the Activities of Nazism in Argentina. It was established to identify Nazi war criminals who had emigrated to Argentina with the assets of their victims.

The three other mission members were: Professor Christine Chinkin, Professor of International Law at the London School of Economics and Political Science; Ms. Hina Jilani, Advocate of the Supreme Court of Pakistan and former Special Representative of the Secretary General on Human Rights Defenders and, also, a member of the International Commission of Inquiry on Darfur (2004); and Colonel Desmond Travers, a former officer in the Irish Armed Forces and member of the Board of Directors of the Institute for International Criminal Investigations.

What became known as the Goldstone Report was formally delivered to UNHCR and made public on 29 September 2009 (but all of the involved and most interested parties were provided with advance copies on 15 September). *It was a damning indictment of Israel's conduct of the war.*

In three paragraphs of its 574 pages it questioned and rejected Israel's claim that its prime motive for the war on the Gaza Strip was stopping the rocket fire.

The Gaza military operations were, according to the Israeli Government, thoroughly and extensively planned. While the Israeli Government has sought to portray its operations as essentially a response to rocket attacks in the exercise of its right to self defence, *the Mission considers the plan to have been directed, at least in part, at a different target: the people of Gaza as a whole.*

In this respect, the operations were in furtherance of an overall policy aimed at punishing the Gaza population for its resilience and for its apparent support for Hamas, *and possibly with the intent of forcing a*

change in such support. The Mission considers this position to be firmly based in fact, bearing in mind what it saw and heard on the ground, what it read in the accounts of soldiers who served in the campaign, and what it heard and read from current and former military officers and political leaders whom the Mission considers to be representative of the thinking that informed the policy and strategy of the military operations.

The operations were carefully planned in all their phases. Legal opinions and advice were given throughout the planning stages and at certain operational levels during the campaign. There were almost no mistakes made according to the Government of Israel. It is in these circumstances that the Mission concludes that what occurred in just over three weeks at the end of 2008 and the beginning of 2009 was *a deliberately disproportionate attack designed to punish, humiliate and terrorize a civilian population, radically diminish its local economic capacity both to work and to provide for itself, and to force upon it an ever increasing sense of dependency and vulnerability.*

The Goldstone Report: The Israeli assault on Gaza was “a deliberately disproportionate attack designed to punish, humiliate and terrorize a civilian population”.

The report’s main conclusion was that Israel had “*committed actions amounting to war crimes, possibly crimes against humanity*” by using disproportionate force, deliberately targeting civilians, using Palestinians as human shields and destroying civilian infrastructure during its Gaza offensive.

It also found there was evidence that Palestinian militant groups including Hamas had committed war crimes, and possibly crimes against humanity, in their repeated rocket and mortar attacks on southern Israel. (Given that the report was bound to be rubbished by Israel, which refused to co-operate with the investigation, it was understandable in my view that the mission members, and the Jewish Goldstone in particular, went the extra mile and then some, to be seen to be even-handed. But there was, in my view, a problem with this even-handedness. It could be misrepresented

to give the quite false impression that both sides were equally powerful and equally guilty—depending on how it was reported).

The report demanded that unless the parties to the Gaza war investigated the allegations of war crimes within six months, *the cases should be referred to the International Criminal Court in The Hague.*

Predictably the report was dismissed by Israel and its unquestioning supporters everywhere on the grounds that it was full of errors and prejudiced against Israel. As quoted by *Ha'aretz* on 16 September, Netanyahu, in office again as prime minister after the February 2009 election, said to cabinet colleagues. “*The Goldstone Report is a kangaroo court against Israel, whose consequences harm the struggle of democratic countries against terror.*”

The rest of Israel’s political and military leaders took their cue from that. Almost without exception they asserted that the Goldstone Report “harmed the principle of self-defence” and “legitimized terror”.

Goldstone himself was vilified, verbally crucified, by supporters of Israel right or wrong.

As reported by *The Jewish Daily* in America on 23 September, Israeli Finance Minister Yuval Steinitz denounced Goldstone as an “anti-Semite”. Steinitz said, “Just as a non-Jew can be anti-Semitic, a Jew can also be anti-Semitic and discriminate against our people and despise and hate our people.”

The Zionist lobby’s stooges in Congress were, of course, ready and very willing to play their part in denouncing the Goldstone Report. New York Democrat Garry Ackerman, for example, chair of the House Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, fumed that the report’s authors lived in a “self-righteous fantasyland.”

AIPAC asserted that the report was not only “deeply flawed”—that was the Obama administration’s line (no doubt taken from Zionism’s script)—but “rigged”.

Judge Goldstone was asked about accusations that he was anti-Israel. As reported by *The New York Times* on 15 September, he replied, “*It is grossly wrong to label a mission or to label a report critical of Israel as being anti-Israel.*”

When he presented the document to UNHCR in Geneva on 29 September, Judge Goldstone explained why he and his three colleagues had taken on the job:

Since the release of the advance version of the report two weeks ago, we have witnessed many attestations of support, but also a barrage of criticism towards our findings as well as public attacks against the Members of the Mission.

We will not address these attacks as we believe that the answers to those who have criticised us are in the findings of the report.

I have, however, to strongly reject one major accusation levelled against the Mission; the one that portrays our efforts as being politically motivated.

Let me repeat before this Council what I have already stated on many occasions:

We accepted this Mission *because we believe deeply in the rule of law, humanitarian law, human rights, and the principle that in armed conflict civilians should to the greatest extent possible be protected from harm.*

We accepted with the conviction that pursuing justice is essential and that *no state or armed group should be above the law.* Failing to pursue justice for serious violations during any conflict will have a deeply corrosive effect on international justice.

We accepted out of a deep concern for the hundreds of civilians who needlessly died and those who suffered injury and dislocation of their lives.

We accepted *because we believe that the perpetrators of serious violations must be held to account.*

About the investigation itself and its findings, he said this:

The Mission decided that in order to understand the effect of the Israeli military operations on the infrastructure and economy of Gaza, and especially its food supplies, it was necessary to have regard to the effects of the blockade that Israel has imposed on the Gaza Strip for some years and has been tightened since Hamas became the controlling authority of Gaza.

The Mission found that the attack on the only remaining flour producing factory, the destruction of a large part of the Gaza egg production, the bulldozing of huge tracts of agricultural land, and the bombing of some two hundred industrial facilities, *could not on any basis be justified on military grounds. Those attacks had nothing whatever to do with the firing of rockets and mortars at Israel.*

The Mission looked closely and sets out in the Report statements made by Israeli political and military leaders in which they stated in clear terms that they would hit at the ‘Hamas infrastructure’.

If ‘infrastructure’ were to be understood in that way and become a justifiable military objective, it would *completely subvert the whole purpose of International Humanitarian Law built up over the last 100 years and more. It would make civilians and civilian buildings justifiable targets.*

These attacks amounted to reprisals and collective punishment and constitute war crimes.

The Government of Israel has a duty to protect its citizens. That in no way justifies a policy of collective punishment of a people under effective occupation, destroying their means to live a dignified life and the trauma caused by the kind of military intervention the Israeli Government called Operation Cast Lead. This contributes to a situation where young people grow up in a culture of hatred and violence, with little hope for change in the future.

Let me come to some of the recommendations.

The Mission debated long and hard on whether this was a case, like Darfur, where the Security Council should consider referring the situation both in Israel and Gaza to the International Criminal Court.

The Mission is highly critical of the pusillanimous efforts by Israel to investigate alleged violations of international law and the complete failure by the Gaza authorities to do so in respect of the armed groups. That notwithstanding the Mission came to the conclusion that both Israel and the Gaza Authorities have the ability to conduct open and transparent investigations and launch appropriate prosecutions if they decide to do so.

We therefore recommended that the Security Council should require Israel to report to it within six months, on the investigations and prosecutions it is carrying out with regard to the violations referred to in this Report and any others that may come to its attention.

The Mission recommends further that the Security Council should set up a body of independent experts to report to it on the progress of the Israeli investigations and prosecutions. The committee of experts should similarly report on investigations and prosecutions undertaken by the relevant authorities in Gaza with regard to crimes committed by the Palestinian armed groups.

In both cases, if within the six month period there are no good faith investigations conforming to international standards, the Security Council should refer the situation or situations to the ICC Prosecutor.

The Mission was concerned at the use made by the Israeli army of certain munitions and especially white phosphorous, flechettes and certain heavy metals such as tungsten. Their use is not presently banned by international law. The Mission has recommended that the General Assembly should promote an urgent discussion on the future legality of the use of these munitions.

As appears from the Report the manner in which those munitions were used in Gaza caused unacceptable and unnecessary human suffering as well as environmental damage—not only in Gaza but probably also in southern Israel. The situations arising from the latter should be monitored by the United Nations.

Since the issue of the advance copy of the Report it has been rejected in vehement terms by the Government of Israel. The call for transparent investigations has been rejected. The Government of Israel wishes to restrict its investigations to secret inquiries by the Military investigating itself. That would clearly not satisfy the legitimate expectations of the many victims of the Israeli military operations.

A word about accountability. It has been my experience in many regions of the world, including my own country, South Africa, that *peace and reconciliation depend, to a great extent, upon public acknowledgement of what victims suffer. That applies no less in the Middle East. It is a prerequisite to the beginning of the healing and meaningful peace process...*

People of the region should not be demonized. Rather their common humanity should be emphasized.

It is for this reason that the Mission came to the conclusion that it is accountability above all that is called for in the aftermath of the regrettable violence that has caused so much misery for so many.

The Mission calls upon the HRC to accept the Report and adopt its recommendations.

Mr. President, Now is the time for action.

A culture of impunity in the region has existed for too long.

The lack of accountability for war crimes and possible crimes against humanity has reached a crisis point; the ongoing lack of justice is undermining any hope for a successful peace process and reinforcing an

environment that fosters violence. Time and again, experience has taught us that overlooking justice only leads to increased conflict and violence.

In conclusion, may I say that the Mission hopes that the substance of this report will be used to strengthen initiatives for peace in the region. The mission is convinced that the international community *must confront the realities highlighted in this report and that by doing so find a meaningful basis for the pursuit of peace and security for all the people of the region.* Only in that way will the human dignity and security of these people be realised.

By appointing this Fact Finding Mission, the Human Rights Council raised expectations for action and for justice: *we call on the Council and on the international community as a whole to take up our recommendations so those expectations will not have been raised in vain.*

Were expectations raised in vain? At the time of writing it looks as though the answer is going to be “Yes”.

The headline in *The Jewish Daily* over the report from which I quoted above was QUICK BURIAL FOR GOLDSTONE’S REPORT ON GAZA.

The first paragraph of the story under it by Nathan Guttman was: *“Israeli and American diplomats came to United Nations not to praise the Goldstone Report, but to bury it.* And unlike Mark Anthony in his eulogy for Julius Caesar, they meant it.”

In the second paragraph of his story, Guttman wrote, “As a result of their efforts, it appears all but certain that the report accusing Israel and the Palestinian faction Hamas of war crimes and possible crimes against humanity *will not reach any binding international forums.*” He went on say it had become clear *“that in the arm-wrestling contest between international human rights organizations and the established Israel-American diplomatic bond, the latter wins easily.”*

That could be translated to mean something very like this. *Whatever President Obama may wish to do, the Zionist lobby and its stooges in Congress will see to it that he doesn’t push Israel further than it’s willing to be pushed.”*

On 4 November, the General Assembly endorsed a non-binding resolution calling for independent investigations to be conducted by Israel and Hamas of war crimes described in the Goldstone Report. The resolution was passed with an overwhelming majority—114 votes in favour, 18 against, and 44 abstentions. Obama’s America cast one of the “No” votes, and the UK, France and Spain were among those who abstained. Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman said the vote showed that Israel had a “moral majority”. In Lieberman’s mad logic, the 114 countries which voted for the resolution and the 44 which abstained were, it seemed by implication, immoral!

Even before that American No” vote was cast, President Obama was assured of Zionism’s gratitude. On 14 October, a statement from the Zionist Organisation of America (ZOA) quoted its National President, Morton A. Klein, saying, “We applaud the principled and moral position adopted by the Obama Administration” (for its initial dismissal of the “deeply flawed” Goldstone Report). He went on: *“As ZOA has argued in depth, the Goldstone Report represents a perversion of international legal norms and whitewash of a genocidal terrorist movement, Hamas. We strongly support and thank the Obama Administration for its opposition to the use of this Report to malign Israel.”*

That was Zionism at its self-righteous best, seeing white as black and day as night.

At the time of writing there seems to be no reason for believing that the Zionist state of Israel will be called and held to account for its crimes, and every reason to believe that it will be allowed by the major powers to remain above the law, with catastrophic consequences for all—not only the Arabs and Jews of the region but all of us, everywhere.

In the light of the whole story as it has unfolded in the three volumes of this book, the question I do my best to address in the Epilogue is the obvious one: Is peace possible?

EPILOGUE

IS PEACE POSSIBLE?

A longer version of the headline question would be: As it relates to peacemaking in the Middle East, has President Obama's "Yes, we can" become "No, we can't"?

Judged by the results of his first year in the White House, the answer is yes it has, meaning a presidential "No I can't".

At the end of May 2009, in order to kick-start a peace process, Obama demanded that Israel stop all settlement activity on the occupied West Bank including Arab East Jerusalem.

There was a particular reason why he moved so quickly. He knew something that all American presidents know about when serious initiatives for peace in the Middle East can and cannot be taken. (I know what that something is because one of them told me a few months after events had denied him a second term in office). Any American president has only two windows of opportunity to break or try to break the Zionist lobby's stranglehold on Congress on matters to do with Israel/Palestine.

The first window is during the first nine months of his first term because after that the soliciting of funds for the mid-term elections begins. (Presidents don't have to worry on their own account about funds for the mid-term elections, but with their approach no president can do or say anything that would cost his party seats in Congress. In Obama's case that is going to be an extremely critical consideration because of the Democrats' loss of the Massachusetts Senate seat, on 19 January 2010, to a Republican who had demonstrated his ability to read from Zionism's script during the campaigning).

The second window of opportunity is the last year of his second term if he has one. In that year, because he can't run for a third term, no president has a personal need for election campaign funds or organised votes.

Somewhat to my surprise, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton was, initially, very forceful in her echo of Obama's demand for a complete halt to

all Israeli settlement activity. In remarks carried by the mainstream media everywhere, she said the President had been “very clear” when he told Prime Minister Netanyahu that he wanted a stop to “all” settlements, and there were to be no exceptions, “not even natural growth exceptions”. She added, “We think it is in the best interest of the effort that we are engaged in *that settlement expansion cease.*”

By late September it was game over. With the assistance of the Zionist lobby and its stooges in Congress, rejectionist Netanyahu had won.

One of Zionism’s many stooges in Congress was Howard Berman, a Democrat from California and the chairman of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee. As reported by *Ha’aretz* on 11 September 2009, he had had a closed meeting with Jewish leaders in Los Angeles on 14 August. He told them that Obama’s demand for a complete stop to all construction in the settlements was “a mistake”, but not to worry because Israel and the U.S. were close to reaching an agreement that will “be face-saving for everyone.”

What did that mean? With the first window of opportunity for Obama closing, *he dropped his demand for a stop to all settlement activity and was prepared to accept whatever crumbs Netanyahu threw his way.* The crumb offered was a freeze on the West Bank excluding Arab East Jerusalem for 10 months. But even that was a deception quickly exposed. On 1 January 2010, the headline over a *Ha’aretz* story was CONSTRUCTION IN WEST BANK BOOMS DESPITE DECLARED FREEZE. At the same time various Israeli government ministers were making it clear that when the so-called freeze ended, it would be full-speed ahead with construction.

East Jerusalem? Netanyahu was explicit. There was never a question of a halt to construction there. It was and is proceeding rapidly and Palestinian residents were and are being evicted from their homes on what often seems to be a daily basis. (On 18 January 2010, Panorama, the BBC flagship program I once served, transmitted a remarkably honest documentary on what was happening in Arab East Jerusalem. The next evening, no doubt in anticipation of the need to appease rabid supporters of Israel right or wrong, the BBC’s Newsnight program transmitted a report

which trivialized the destruction delivered to the Gaza Strip by the IDF and gave the impression that Israel was the sinned against party).

Uri Avnery, the grandfather of the Israeli peace movement, was spot on in a piece he wrote for *Tikkun* on 23 September. “There’s no point in denying it. In the first round of the match between Barack Obama and Binyamin Netanyahu, Obama was beaten... In the words of the ancient proverb, a journey of a thousand miles starts with a single step. Netanyahu has tripped Obama on his first step. The President of the United States has stumbled.” And Netanyahu had won in a big way. “Not only did he survive, not only has he shown that he is no ‘sucker’ (a word he uses all the time), he has proven to his people—and to the public at large—that there is nothing to fear: *Obama is nothing but a paper tiger*. The settlements can go on expanding without hindrance. Any negotiations that start, if they start at all, can go on until the coming of the Messiah. Nothing will come out of them.”

One thing puzzled Avnery. “*It is difficult to understand how Obama got himself into such an embarrassing situation.*”

On the way to his own answer to the implied question, Avnery wondered why Obama had insisted on the settlement freeze if he was unable to stand his ground and impose it on Netanyahu. “Before entering into such a campaign, a statesman must weigh up the array of forces. What power is at my disposal? What forces are confronting me? How determined is the other side? What means am I ready to employ? How far am I prepared to go in using my power? Obama has a host of able advisors, headed by Rahm Emanuel, whose Israeli origins and name were supposed to give him special insights. George Mitchell, a hard-nosed and experienced diplomat, was supposed to provide sober assessments. How did they all fail?”

Avnery concluded that Obama’s defeat was the outcome of “a faulty assessment of the situation” because his advisers “were wrong about the forces involved.”

My speculation is different. Obama’s advisers, chief of staff Rahm Emanuel especially, who some people believe is Zionism’s main minder in the White House, could not possibly have been wrong about the forces

involved. They knew better than anybody else the strength of the forces against the President's push for peace on his own terms—the Zionist lobby in all of its manifestations and their stooges in Congress and the mainstream media. *The question is, did Obama's advisers, Rahm especially, tell him what they knew the odds against him were or did they not tell him—because they wanted him to learn the hard way, and then to accept, that he was, like any president, a prisoner of the Zionist lobby?*

It's not impossible that Obama made his policy decision in his own mind *before* Israel's February election in the hope, if not the assumption, that it would produce a Kadima-led government and not one led by, or even including, Netanyahu. If that was the case, Rahm could have said to Obama, after it was clear that Netanyahu would be Israel's next prime minister, something very like the following. "Mr. President, *don't even think about demanding a complete stop to all settlement activity now. Netanyahu will tell you to get stuffed and he, not you, would have the majority in Congress if push came to shove.*" If Rahm did say something very like that, it's also not impossible that Obama's response was something very like, "I hear you but let's still give it a try."

Former Secretary of State James Baker III was refreshingly frank about what had happened. In an interview with the *National Journal* on 20 February 2010, he was asked if he faulted Obama for initially insisting on a freeze on Israeli settlements. He replied:

I don't fault President Obama for making settlements an issue, *but I do fault him for caving in.* You can't take a position that is consistent with U.S. policy going back many years, and the minute you get push-back you soften your position. *When you are dealing with foreign leaders, they can smell that kind of weakness a thousand miles away.* Both Democratic and Republican administrations have long endorsed the U.S. policy that settlements are an obstacle to peace. If 'land for peace' is the path to a resolution, then settlements clearly create facts on the ground that foreclose the possibility of negotiations.

With the backing of his president, Bush Senior, Baker was the only senior US official to have used economic leverage to bring Israel to heel.

(When Israeli Prime Minister Shamir was refusing to participate in the 1991 Madrid Conference, the U.S. of Baker and Bush senior said that if he didn't, Israel would not get the \$10 billion it wanted to help with the settlement of Jewish émigrés from the Soviet Union and elsewhere. There are some who believe that getting tough with the Zionist state and its lobby cost Bush senior a second term in the White House).

In his interview with the *National Journal*. Baker also said this:

I would also stress that United States taxpayers are giving Israel roughly \$3 billion each year, which amounts to something like \$1,000 for every Israeli citizen, at a time when our own economy is in bad shape and a lot of Americans would appreciate that kind of helping hand from their own government. Given that fact, it is not unreasonable to ask the Israeli leadership to respect U.S. policy on settlements.

He added:

Israel will have to negotiate a peace with the Palestinians or become an apartheid type of nation.

Israel will have to negotiate a peace with the Palestinians or become an apartheid type of nation.

In my analysis Obama meant well but was too inexperienced for the job and somewhat naive. What I really mean is that until he took possession of the White House, he didn't have a deep enough understanding from his own experience of how effectively the Zionist lobby and its stooges in Congress can tie a president's hands and block his policy initiatives. So he was bound to be humiliated and to have to learn that on matters to do with Israel/Palestine he was not the master.

Whatever the truth, Obama's failed attempt to kick-start a real peace process proved for all the world to see—and almost the whole world *did* see it—that not even an apparently well motivated president can succeed on this front as things are in America.

So what has got to change in America if there is to be peace in the Middle East, and the countdown to catastrophe for us all is to be stopped?

The question is all the more important because, as it now seems to a growing number of seriously well informed people of all faiths and none (the relative few, including me), there will only be peace if it is *imposed*.

Among those who think so is Henry Siegman, a former national director of the American Jewish Congress and today the director of the Council on Foreign Relations' U.S./Middle East Project. In a comment piece for the *Financial Times* on 23 February 2010, he wrote this:

The Middle East peace process and its quest for a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict that got under way nearly 20 years ago with the Oslo accords has undergone two fundamental transformations. It is now on the brink of a third.

The first was the crossing of a threshold by Israel's settlement project in the West Bank; there is no longer any prospect of its removal by this or any future Israeli government, which was the precise goal of the settlements' relentless expansion all along. The previous prime minister, Ehud Olmert, who declared that a peace accord requires Israel to withdraw 'from most, if not all' of the occupied territories, 'including East Jerusalem,' was unable even to remove any of the 20 hilltop outposts Israel had solemnly promised to dismantle.

A two-state solution could therefore come about only if Israel were compelled to withdraw to the pre-1967 border by an outside power whose wishes an Israeli government could not defy—the US. The assumption has always been that at the point where Israel's colonial ambitions collide with critical US national interests, an American president would draw on the massive credit the US has accumulated with Israel to insist it dismantle its illegal settlements, which successive US administrations held to be the main obstacle to a peace accord.

The second transformation resulted from the shattering of that assumption when President Barack Obama—who took a more forceful stand against Israel's settlements than any of his predecessors, and did so at a time when the damage this unending conflict was causing American

interests could not have been more obvious—backed off ignominiously in the face of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s rejection of his demand. This left prospects for a two-state accord dead in the water.

Political reality number one to be faced is that Zionism’s in-Israel leaders are not interested in peace on terms virtually all Palestinians and most other Arabs and Muslims everywhere could accept. (Netanyahu decided to pay lip-service to the creation of a Palestinian state but not one the Palestinians could ever accept. And like all of his leadership colleagues and associates, Netanyahu doesn’t want to know that, in reality, Hamas is prepared to live with an Israel inside its pre-1967 borders, as is Hizbollah; and that Iran actually is prepared to accept whatever the Palestinians accept).

Political reality number two to be faced is that only an American president has the leverage required to cause—or try to cause—the Zionist state to be serious about peace on the basis of an acceptable amount of justice for the Palestinians. (The leaders and governments of other major powers also have leverage, but they won’t think of using it unless America takes the lead).

Political reality number three to be faced is that no American president is going to use the leverage he has unless and until he is *pushed* to do so by informed public opinion. As I dared to suggest in my Dear America Introduction to Volume One of this book, the problem in America is that most Americans are *too uninformed and misinformed to do the pushing*.

In other words, for peace to have a real chance, a constituency of understanding has got to be created in America *to empower the president (whoever he/she is) to break the Zionist lobby’s stranglehold on Congress on matters to do with Israel/Palestine*.

Put another way, in order to use the leverage he has to require Israel to be serious about peace, *an American president needs enough members of Congress to be more frightened of offending their voters than they are of offending the Zionist lobby*.

An American president needs enough members of Congress to be more frightened of offending their voters than they are of offending the Zionist lobby.

Readers of Volume One of this book will be aware that I do *not* blame the Zionist lobby for behaving the way it does because it's only playing by the rules of the game. I blame the pork-barrel nature of politics in America which puts what passes for democracy up for sale to the highest bidders. (On 21 January, by a vote of 5 to 4, the Supreme Court gave the pork-barrel system a huge boost when it ruled that corporations could spend as much as they wanted to sway voters in federal elections. As reported by the *LA Times* the following day, President Obama—I almost began to feel sorry for him—called the ruling “a major victory for Big Oil, Wall Street banks, health insurance companies and the other powerful interests that marshal their power every day in Washington to drown out the voices of everyday Americans.”)

So, I say, what really has to change in America if there is to be a real chance for peace in the Middle East is *the practise of politics*. Simply stated, the name of the game ought to be making democracy work. And that ought not to be a mission impossible if Gallup's poll published on 6 October 2009 was a true reflection of reality. According to it, Congress's approval rating was down to 21%.

In his first State of the Union address on 27 January 2010, President Obama said, directly to members of both Houses of Congress, “*We face a deficit of trust—deep and corrosive doubts about how Washington works that have been growing for years.*” I took that to mean he is well aware of the need for the way politics is practiced in America to be changed.

It is my hope that this book will assist the process of creating the constituency of understanding needed to enable Americans to make their democracy work for justice and peace in the Middle East, even though the Supreme Court's ruling will make that hard task even harder.

In my analysis it cannot, however, be taken for granted that real American-led pressure on Israel to be serious about peace would work. It could be counter-productive. (I emphasise that I'm saying *could* be counter-productive, not necessarily would be).

I am a supporter in principle of the case and the need for the Zionist state of Israel to be boycotted and sanctioned as Apartheid South Africa was, eventually. But...

The danger is that even the credible threat of a real boycott and sanctions could play into the hands of those Israeli leaders—Netanyahu has long been their standard bearer—who have brainwashed Israelis, most if not quite all, into believing that the world hates Jews, always has and always will, and that Israeli Jews have no choice but to tell the world to go to hell. In this context I think it could and should be said that Zionism succeeded, probably beyond its own best expectations, in transforming the obscenity of the Nazi holocaust from a lesson against racism and fascism and all the evils associated with them into an ideology that seeks to justify anything and everything the Zionist state does. War crimes and all.

Zionism succeeded in transforming the Nazi holocaust from a lesson against racism and fascism into an ideology that seeks to justify anything and everything the Zionist state does.

In Prime Minister Netanyahu's case the mania was inherited from his father. That was my conclusion after reading an article by a most remarkable Israeli, Avigail Abarnel. She says that her experience of service with the IDF—she finished as a staff sergeant—turned into her a pacifist. Today she runs her own practise in Fully Human Psychotherapy and Counselling. On 17 January 2010, an article of hers was posted on *Intifada, Voice of Palestine*. Its headline was ISRAEL'S GROWING INSANITY. Here's how she opened the piece:

I wrote this on 9th February 2009, the day before Israel's election, after seeing an interview with Benjamin Netanyahu's father on Israeli TV. Described as 'sharp as a razor' at the ripe old age of 99, he gave a rare interview to Amit Segel of Israel's Channel 2 to support his son's election campaign.

At a point in the interview Professor Ben-Zion Netanyahu said: 'Today we are facing plain and simple, a danger of annihilation. This is not only the ongoing existential danger to Israel, but a real danger of complete

annihilation. People think that the Shoah (Holocaust) is over but it's not. It is continuing all the time.' (My translation from the Hebrew).

The views of Netanyahu Senior do not represent a lunatic fringe, but the Israeli mainstream. When I was growing up in Israel, things were much the same. I and everyone I knew believed in earnest that we were always at risk of annihilation. Fear of annihilation is at the heart of Jewish, not just Israeli culture, and it pre-dates the Holocaust. But the climate in Israel today is far more extreme than it was in my time, as Israel on the whole moves further and further to an irrational fanatic position.

When a person's perception of reality is completely out of touch with reality itself, we begin to get an uneasy feeling that something might be wrong with his or her mind.

A week earlier *Ha'aretz* had published a wonderfully shocking and awesome piece by Gideon Levy, the conscience of Israeli journalism. The headline over it was ONLY PSYCHIATRISTS CAN EXPLAIN ISRAEL'S BEHAVIOUR. (Any non-Jewish sub-editor who dared to come up with such a headline would have been verbally crucified as the most rabid anti-Semite). Levy's piece included this:

The psychiatric specialists might be so kind as to try to explain how a country with leaders committed to a two-state solution continues to direct huge budgets toward building more settlements in territories it intends to vacate in the future. What explanation could there be, if not from the psychiatric realm, for a 10-month halt to residential construction in the settlements, to be immediately followed by more construction?

Levy is firmly on the record with his view that Israel's leaders are not interested in, and therefore not committed to, a viable two-state solution. So in reality he knows that assistance from the psychiatric realm to explain Israel's behaviour is not necessary. In suggesting that it was or might be, I think he was poking fun at Israel's leaders to make a point—that they are, as they always have been, disingenuous.

Despite what is happening in Israel at the time of writing, it surely must be possible that a credible threat of a real boycott and sanctions could force many if not all Israeli Jews to come to terms with actual reality, and to acknowledge the wrong done to the Palestinians in the name of Zionism and the need for the wrong to be righted. (In my view Nakba Denial—denial of Zionism’s ethnic cleansing of Palestine—is as obscene and as evil as Holocaust Denial).

Not all Israelis have allowed themselves to be brainwashed by Zionist propaganda. The relative few who have not are assisted to cling onto their sanity by *Ha’aretz* which, on a daily basis, gives space to voices of reason. On 26 January 2010 its own editorial voice of reason was headlined SAVE THE PEACE, and here is what it said:

The diplomatic stalemate and the provocations by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s government in East Jerusalem harm not only the chance for peace in the future *but also past fruits of peace*. Fifteen years after the peace treaty between Israel and Jordan was signed, the two countries are now deep in a crisis the government is doing nothing to resolve.

As Barak Ravid reported yesterday in *Ha’aretz*, there is almost a complete lack of communication between Netanyahu and King Abdullah II. The situation is no better on the lower echelons: the Jordanians are boycotting Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman and hold few meetings with senior Israeli officials. Joint economic projects between the two countries are also on hold. Ties, if they exist at all, are only related to sensitive security issues and water.

Jordan is more concerned than ever about increased Israeli pressure on the Palestinians in the West Bank, which could undermine internal stability in the Hashemite Kingdom. King Abdullah is therefore worried about the absence of talks between Israel and the Palestinians, as well as Israeli activities aimed at increasing the number of Jews living in East Jerusalem—where Jordan was promised special status at Islamic holy sites according to the peace agreement.

The Jordanians do not trust Netanyahu, and hold his conduct during his first term as prime minister against him, when he ordered the assassination of senior Hamas official Khaled Meshal on their soil.

As opposed to Turkey, whose prime minister openly attacked Israel, Jordan prefers to handle the crisis discretely and has made do with diplomatic protests. But quiet on the media front does not mean the seriousness of the situation may be dismissed or ignored.

Israel has always considered strong ties with Jordan as having supreme strategic importance. *Sacrificing these ties for the sake of the Netanyahu government's harmful actions in East Jerusalem demonstrates a severe deficiency in the management of foreign and security policy.*

The prime minister must realize the diplomatic price Israel is paying for his attempts to placate the right, stop provocations like the “planting of the university center in Ariel” of which he so proudly spoke yesterday, and place rehabilitating relations with Jordan at a higher priority level.

His bureau's comment—that Netanyahu would be happy to meet with the king “whenever the need arises”—*shows dangerous indifference in light of the erosion of Israel's status in the region, and gratuitous arrogance toward a country whose friendship is essential.*”

It is also possible that real pressure on Israel, whatever its form or forms, could result in the walled-in, nuclear-armed fortress the Zionist state has become pulling up the drawbridge and defying the whole world. It would then have to be said that it was too late for peace and that Israel had become a monster beyond control.

As I noted in Chapter Two of Volume One, and Avigail Abarnel as quoted above confirms in her own way, Zionism is a *philosophy of doom*.

In the view of Zionism's founding fathers, it was only in a state of their own that Jews would be free from persecution. That was what could be called the first of three pillars of the philosophy of doom.

The second pillar, cemented into place after the Nazi holocaust and the creation of the modern state of Israel, was the assumption that the

world would one day turn against the Jews again, making it essential for the state to be big enough and secure enough to be a refuge of last resort for all the Jews of the world. (As I noted in Volume Two, it was Abba Eban who said “Israel could never be a normal state because its memories are not normal—with six million wiped out, centuries of persecution.”)

The third pillar was the state’s possession of nuclear weapons. As we have seen, the perceived need for them had little if anything to do with deterring Arab attacks. *Israel has an independent nuclear strike capability because Ben-Gurion and Dayan and others were determined that the state of the Jews would never become a sacrificial lamb on the altar of international political expediency as, for example, the Palestinians were required to be.* Simply stated, Ben-Gurion and Dayan and others believed that a day could come (Dayan told me “would” come) when the major powers decided that support for Israel right or wrong was no longer in their best interests and, in a worst case scenario, would demand that Israel made concessions to the Arabs which, in the view of Israel’s leaders, would or could put its survival at risk. In other words, Israel possesses nuclear weapons to enable its leaders to say to any power on Earth, including the power of the Presidency of the United States of America, “If you push us too far in order to protect your own interests at our expense, we’ll go nuclear and create mayhem in the region”.

Israel possesses nuclear weapons, not to deter Arab attacks , but to enable its leaders to say to any power on Earth, “If you push us too far... we’ll create mayhem in the region.”

If made to prevent an American President pushing Israel further than it was prepared to be pushed, a threat to use nuclear weapons might be a Zionist bluff, but it would be a bluff nobody would want to call.

In my view the consequences of a nuclear-armed Israel remaining above and beyond the law and free to go on imposing its will on the region and the whole of the Western world (and actually the whole world) are predictable.

They would only begin with Zionism completing the ethnic cleansing of Palestine by “transferring” Israeli Arabs out of the existing

Jewish state and, when that had been accomplished, creating a pretext to drive the Palestinians off the occupied West Bank and into Jordan or wherever; and letting those who remained in the Gaza Strip rot to death if they didn't flee to Egypt or wherever.

That would set in motion, no doubt over some years, an upheaval in the Arab world which would see the overthrow of the regimes of the existing impotent, corrupt and repressive Arab Order, regimes which are correctly perceived by their masses to be stooges of America-and-Zionism. What would replace them? Regimes which would reflect the will of their masses. What then? The popular will is for an end to the humiliation all Arabs and Muslims everywhere have suffered as a result of Israel's arrogance of power and America's support for it. At some point, the new Arab Order, in association with the gathering forces of Islamic fundamentalism, commits to a war of destiny. By sheer weight of numbers, Israel is overwhelmed and, as Prime Minister Golda Meir indicated me (as quoted in the Prologue), goes down firing its nuclear missiles, taking the region with it.

Is that, really, how the story of the struggle for Palestine will or even could end?

In my view it *could* end like that, but I also think much will depend on the Jews of the world, American Jews especially, and whether or not they chose at this late hour to respond to Harkabi's call for them to exert themselves to convince Israel to change its thinking and its ways.

What, I wonder, would happen if the Jews of the world spoke with one voice and said to Israel something very like the following: "Enough is enough. *It's time for all Jews to acknowledge that a terrible wrong was done to the Arabs of Palestine in the name of Zionism*"?

Unless Zionism's conditioning of most (Jewish) Israeli minds is already irreversible, such a statement, together with an insistence that the wrong had to be righted, would surely provoke some serious re-thinking by very many if not all Israelis. In which case the prospects for justice and peace could be much improved.

But at the time of writing that's wishful thinking on my part. At the time of writing a truth is that most Jews of the world are silent on the

matter of the Zionist state's crimes. It's true that in recent years the number of Jews of the world who have found the courage to speak out has increased. But they are still very few. What, really, explains the silence of the many?

An answer is implicit in Alfred M. Lilienthal's writing:

The trauma sparked vicariously by Nazi genocide caused Jews to be so totally blinded that they readily forsook their heritage of tolerance¹

This, Lilienthal added, was a "painful reversal", and he quoted Toynbee's expression of it.

In 1948 the Jews knew from personal experience what they were doing and it was their supreme tragedy that the lessons learned by them from their encounter with Nazi German Gentiles should have been not to eschew but to imitate some of the evil deeds the Nazis had committed against the Jews. *On the Day of Judgement the gravest crime standing to the German National Socialist account might not be that they had exterminated a majority of Western Jews, but that they had caused the surviving remnant of Jewry to stumble.*²

That, in my opinion, is a part of the whole and very complex answer to the question of why most Jews are silent.

Another part of it is what I described in the Prologue as the Jewish predicament. One half of it, I explained (I think it bears repeating), is the fear that there could be, one day, another great turning against the Jews. The other half of it is the suppressed awareness that the Zionist state was becoming, as Harkabi warned, "a factor in the rise of anti-Semitism". I went on to explain that when you put the two halves of the predicament together, you had a logic, unspeakable by almost all Jews in public, that went something like this: "We Jews of the world know we ought to be speaking out and exerting our influence to cause Israel to change its policies, but we dare not. Why not? Because there might come a day when we will need Israel as our refuge of last resort. For that reason we cannot

even think of saying or doing anything that might give comfort to Israel's enemies and put our ultimate insurance policy at risk.”

One consequence of this way of thinking is that *very many Jews simply don't want to know the truth of history* as it relates to the making and sustaining of the conflict. That may strike some of my readers as a very presumptuous statement for me to make because I am a *goy*. How can I possibly know for sure that at least some if not many Jews don't want to know truth of history? It's a fair question and here's my answer.

After my dear wife, my best friend in the world, for more than 40 years, is my Jewish accountant. I'll call him M. He is very orthodox in the practise of his religion and strictly kosher, but not a zealot. He lives in London and over the years he has travelled with me on a number of foreign assignments. Shortly before Golda Meir died, and as a way of saying thanks to M for his friendship, I invited him to travel with me and sit in on my last conversation with her. I imagined she would not object and she didn't. Our conversation lasted nearly five hours. When it ended, I asked Mother Israel if I could take a photograph of her and M. In the tiny back garden of her small home in Tel Aviv, M put his arm around her shoulder (she didn't object to that either) and I took several pictures. It was, as I knew it would be, one of the proudest moments in M's life. One of the pictures was given pride of place in M's home, and he subsequently told me that younger visitors would look at the photograph, point at the old lady, and ask, “Who's that, your grandmother?”

Over time and privately M came to loathe what Israel had become but *he won't read my book*. He doesn't want to know the truth of history. Shortly before the publication of the original Volume One, I said to him the following. “Like most Jews everywhere, you believe Israel went to war in 1967 either because the Arabs attacked first or were about to attack. What if I can prove to you, using only Israeli sources, that what you believe is Zionist propaganda nonsense and that it was a war of Israeli aggression?” After a long pause, M replied, “*If what I believe about that war is not true, everything crumbles.*”

I also know from what Jewish friends in many countries have told me that discussion about support for Israel right or wrong can and does tear

Jewish families apart.

Discussion about support for Israel right or wrong can and does tear Jewish families apart.

On 1 February 2005, the *Jordan Times* published an article by Cecilie Surasky on why Jews must speak out. She was and still is the communications director of Jewish Voices for Peace (JVP) in America. Under the headline SPEAKING OUT ABOUT ISRAEL TO SAVE THE JEWISH SOUL, here is what she wrote:

Remaining silent is no longer an option. We can no longer let our trauma, our deep fear of anti-Jewish hatred implanted in us through generations of persecution, make us remain quiet at the expense of truth.

Our continued silence perpetuates the fiction that all Jews are of one mind when it comes to Israel—that we think it can do no wrong; that we believe the Israeli government is innocent of war crimes; that we believe US military support for Israel’s illegal occupation is a sign of our special relationship, and not a cynical use of Jewish suffering to provide moral cover for strategic interests in an oil-rich region.

Our silence puts us in more danger, not less. Through it, we give our consent not only to the obliteration of the Palestinian people, but to the end of our own people. If not our bodies, then certainly our spirit.

Jews like us know in our hearts that every time a Palestinian mother stands sobbing in the road, clutching her children and watching her home being demolished by an Israeli army bulldozer, another brick is dislodged from the edifice of 5,000 years of Jewish values, ethics and justice.

We see one of the world’s greatest armies cry self defense as it uses tanks, bulldozers and missiles against a poverty stricken civilian population, and *we cry inside for the callous manipulation of Jewish fear for the sake of expansionism.*

The truth is that if we don't come out about Israel now— speaking openly and clearly about our heartache and outrage, about the injustice we see, the unspeakable wrongness of Israel's pursuit of land over peace— then in the future there will not be a Jewish tradition left to defend. It will have become an empty shell, and all of the infinite good works done every day by Jews throughout time and place will be rendered meaningless by the actions of a state that claims to be a light to the Jewish people, but has become so accustomed to co-creating death and chaos that it can barely claim now to care for its own citizens.

“All of the infinite good works done every day by Jews throughout time and place will be rendered meaningless by the actions of a state that claims to be a light to the Jewish people...”

How did we become so fearful about calling injustice what it is? Worse, how did, with few notable exceptions, our appointed and de facto leaders become so scared? So lacking the moral courage we desperately need now?

Cecilie Surasky's answer was in the form of examples to illustrate how Jews were and are intimidated into staying silent—not criticizing Israel's behavior—by fear and, often, actual threats of Zionist retribution. (All Jews who are outspoken in their criticism of the Zionist state are targeted for character assassination, and, when Zionism insists, Jewish academics can and do get removed from their posts at universities. On the subject of Zionism and its crimes, freedom of speech is a war that still has to be fought and won in the Western world and North America especially). Surasky went on:

This phenomenon is all the more puzzling because many would say that questioning and dissent is encoded in Jewish DNA. From Emma Goldman and Saul Alinsky to Betty Freidan, Larry Kramer and refuseniks like Yoni Ben-Artzi, we find a long list of remarkable outspoken Jews whose willingness to stand up for what is right and to question the status quo made history, but also made them enemies. They stand as our heroes not only because of what they achieved, but because

of what they faced in order to make all of us better as human beings and citizens of the world.

The atmosphere of intimidation in the American Jewish world has had a corrosive effect not just on our families and communities, but on the very tradition which binds us together. We are famous for speaking our minds when we perceive that an injustice is taking place. That is not true when the perpetrator is Israel. Suddenly, we allow our fears of being ostracized from our communities and families to silence us. And as a result, history will show that much of the mainstream Jewish leadership has failed us, and failed us profoundly. Perhaps we will have failed ourselves.

“History will show that much of the mainstream Jewish leadership has failed us, and has failed us profoundly.”

But courage does not mean being fearless, it means acting in the face of fear. And Jews like me have to ask: If we no longer stand up for moral courage and call injustice when we see it, regardless of who commits it, then what do we stand for?

In the Prologue I quoted Dr. David Goldberg, the prominent liberal London rabbi as saying in October 2001, *“It may be time for Judaism and Zionism to go their separate ways.”*

This, I thought at the time, would be the way for the Jews of the world to best protect themselves from the upsurge of classical anti-Semitism that was being provoked then, and even more so today, by the Zionist state’s criminal behaviour. But at first I couldn’t see how the separation—Jews of the world distancing themselves from what was being done in their name by Zionism in Israel/Palestine—could possibly improve the prospects for peace.

And then I did see it, thanks to an article published in the *Financial Times* on 7 December 2009 by Tony Judt, a professor of history at New York University and director of the Remarque Institute. (British-born of a Jewish mother whose parents emigrated from Russia and a Belgian father who was descended from a line of Lithuanian rabbis, Judt started out as an

enthusiastic Zionist. He helped to promote the migration of British Jews to Israel, and during the 1967 war he worked as a driver and translator for the IDF. But after that war, his belief in the Zionist enterprise began to unravel. “I went with the idealistic fantasy of creating a socialist, communitarian country through work, but I started to see that this view was *remarkably unconscious of the people who had been kicked out of the country and were suffering in refugee camps to make this fantasy possible.*”) In his article for the *FT*, Judt wrote this:

If the Jews of Europe and North America took their distance from Israel (as many have begun to do), the assertion that Israel was ‘their’ state would take on an absurd air. Over time, even Washington might come to see the futility of attaching American foreign policy to the delusions of one small Middle Eastern state. *This, I believe, is the best thing that could possibly happen to Israel itself. It would be obliged to acknowledge its limits. It would have to make other friends, preferably among its neighbours.*

An Israel that was obliged by the Jews of the world to acknowledge its limits might also be an Israel that was prepared to listen to the wise words of one of its own—Avraham Burg. Between 1999 and 2003 he was the speaker of Israel’s parliament, the Knesset. By the end of his term in that office he was a leading advocate of the idea that Israel and a viable Palestinian state could coexist in peace. In August 2003 he wrote a most remarkable essay which was published in its original Hebrew by *Yediot Aharonot* and subsequently by newspapers in Europe and America.³

His lead point was that Israel had to “*shed its illusions*” and choose between “*racist oppression and democracy.*” The Jewish people, he wrote, “did not survive for two millennia in order to pioneer new weaponry, computer security programmes or anti-missile missiles. *We were supposed to be a light unto nations. In this we have failed.*”

And the following is what Burg had to say about Israel’s need to change course and the choices:

Here is what the prime minister should say to his people: the time for illusions is over. The time for decisions has arrived. We love the entire

land of our forefathers and in some other time we would have wanted to live here alone. But that will not happen. The Arabs, too, have dreams and needs.

Between the Jordan and the Mediterranean there is no longer a clear Jewish majority. And so, fellow citizens, it is not possible to keep the whole thing without paying a price. *We cannot keep a Palestinian majority under an Israeli boot and at the same time think ourselves the only democracy in the Middle East.* There cannot be democracy without equal rights for all who live here, Arab as well as Jew. We cannot keep the territories and preserve a Jewish majority in the world's only Jewish state—not by means that are humane and moral and Jewish.

Do you want the greater land of Israel? No problem. Abandon democracy. Let's institute an efficient system of racial separation here, with prison camps and detention villages.

Do you want a Jewish majority? No problem. Either put the Arabs on railway cars, buses, camels and donkeys and expel them *en masse*—or separate ourselves from them absolutely, without tricks and gimmicks. There is no middle path. We must remove all the settlements—all of them—and draw an internationally recognised border between the Jewish national home and the Palestinian national home. The Jewish law of return will apply only within our national home, and their right of return will apply only within the borders of the Palestinian state.

Do you want democracy? No problem. Either abandon the greater land of Israel, to the last settlement and outpost, or give full citizenship and voting rights to everyone, including Arabs. The result, of course, will be that those who did not want a Palestinian state alongside us will have one in our midst, via the ballot box.

The prime minister should present the choices forthrightly: Jewish racism or democracy. *Settlements or hope for both peoples.* False visions of barbed

wire and suicide bombers or a recognised international border between two states and a shared capital in Jerusalem.

If today (in 2010) it's not too late because of the facts Zionism has been allowed to create on the ground in defiance of international law, the choice for Israeli Jews is the same as Burg presented it as being in 2003 - expelling the Arabs *en masse*, completing the ethnic cleansing of Palestine, or a complete withdrawal from all of the West Bank (as well as ending the blockade of the Gaza Strip). For a comprehensive and lasting peace Israel would also have to withdraw from the Syrian Golan Heights.

If Israeli Jews make the wrong choice, stopping the countdown to catastrophe for us all will most likely be a mission impossible.

But because of the hatred their arrogance of power and insufferable self-righteousness is provoking to new, high levels, *time is running out for Israeli Jews to make the right choice.*

In my view the real danger for Israel is that a day will come when it does have a government which is ready to make peace on terms Arafat persuaded his people to be ready to accept more than 30 years ago, but... When this day comes it will be too late on the Palestinian side, *because the vast majority of Palestinians are no longer interested in compromise with Zionism's child.* In that event they will look upon the departed Arafat still with affection, but as the leader who proved they had nothing (or not nearly enough) to gain from politics and compromise with Israel.

This book, it could be said, is the story of the rise of the Zionist state of Israel and the evolution of American support for it right or wrong, and, in response to that, the rise of violent Islamic fundamentalism and anti-Americanism. I do not believe the latter can be defeated by war, but I do believe it could be assisted to die of natural causes if right is allowed to triumph over Zionist might.

I opened Volume One of this book with a direct appeal from me to American readers for understanding. I'll end this volume with two red flag alerts.

The first was raised by one of America's top military men on 16 March in the wake of a very public confrontation between the Obama administration and the Netanyahu government. It was triggered by Israel's

announcement, while Vice-President Joe (“I’m a Zionist”) Biden was in Israel, of an intention to go ahead with the construction of 1,600 more Jewish housing units in occupied Arab East Jerusalem. According to some accounts, a furious Obama instructed Biden to condemn the announcement and he did. But that didn’t change anything. Before, in and after his address to AIPAC’s annual policy conference in Washington DC., Netanyahu made it clear in various statements that nothing and nobody would stop Israel from building anywhere in Jerusalem. As with Biden’s arrival in Israel, Netanyahu’s arrival at the White House was preceded by the announcement of the go-ahead for more illegal Jewish construction in occupied Arab East Jerusalem. There could not have been a more pointed “Up Yours, Mr. President!” Israeli gesture. (Though Obama signaled his displeasure at having to meet with Netanyahu by insisting on no photographs or other imagery of togetherness, I thought it was a mistake for the President to receive him).

As Paul Rogers noted in an article for OpenDemocracy published on 18 March—*America and Israel: a historic choice*—the confrontation over more construction in East Jerusalem overshadowed “a deeper and even more potent aspect of the quarrel—the military one, and in particular the urgent concern of some United States military figures that Israeli policy towards the Palestinians is damaging America’s security interests across the region, and hampering its efforts to prosecute the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.” The urgent concern was rooted in many exchanges that had taken place between senior commanders in the United States Central Command (Centcom, the military headquarters responsible for US security interests in 20 countries across the greater Middle East and Arab governments in the region).

On 16 March, Centcom’s head, General David H. Petraeus, (seen by some as a potential Republican candidate for the next White House race), appeared before the Senate Armed Services Committee with a prepared testimony. As quoted by Rogers (and others) the Petraeus testimony included this: “The enduring hostilities between Israel and some of its neighbours present distinct challenges to our ability to advance our interests. Arab anger over the Palestinian question limits the strength and

depth of US partnerships with governments and peoples in the Middle East and weakens the legitimacy of moderate regimes in the Arab world.”

Petraeus also briefed Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, and apparently told him, among other things, that Washington’s “impotence” in the face of Israel’s ongoing colonisation of the occupied West Bank was the greatest cause of Arab anger.

Under the sub-headline *The trigger of change*, Rogers concluded his article as follows:

...the very arm of the United States federal government which has the closest links with Israel—namely, the military—is now suggesting that Israel is the source of some of its own key problems in the middle east.

The significance is heightened by the fact that the criticism comes not from retired generals, not remote from the strategic frontline; but from the very US military command that has been fighting the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan for most of the decade... This elite forms a core element of the US “military-industrial complex” which in five decades of close cooperation with Israel has furnished its ally with sophisticated weapons-systems, undertaken many joint exercises, provided huge amounts of aid; and in turn depended on Israel for crucial assistance in its war in Iraq.

The prospect, even it remains only that, of Israel losing the support of such a vital constituency is one to chill Israeli leaders as they ponder their country’s overall relationship with the United States. The argument about yet another construction project in East Jerusalem will pass; its underlying trigger has the potential to shake the Middle East for years to come.

Could it be that the stage is being set for a titanic struggle in which President Obama, after the mid-term elections, will have to choose between doing what the Zionist lobby and its stooges in Congress want and what America’s top military men know to be necessary if America’s own interests are to be best protected? If they could speak from their graves, I imagine the two most senior executives who advised President Truman not to support Zionism’s colonial enterprise—Defense Secretary Forrestal and Secretary of

State Marshall—would say “Let’s hope so and that this time reason will prevail.”

My own red flag warning is this.

If, Dear Americans, you continue to allow your government to support Israel right *or wrong*, you’ll not only be betraying your own most cherished values and ideals, you’ll be inviting more and more people of the world, not just 1.4 billion Muslims, *to see you as complicit in the Zionist state’s crimes*. And that could make protecting America’s own best interests a mission impossible.

Now is the time to act, to make your democracy work for justice and peace, in order to stop the countdown to catastrophe for us all.

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER ONE: *America Takes Sides, War with Nasser Act II; and the Creation of Greater Israel*

[1](#) *Le Monde*, 3 June 1972, article by Israeli intellectual Ammon Kapeliouk.

[2](#) Ibid.

[3](#) Stephen Green, *Taking Sides: America's Secret Relations with a Militant Israel 1948-1967* (London and Boston, Faber and Faber, 1984), p. 186.

[4](#) Seymour Hersh, *The Samson Option, Israel, America and the Bomb* (New York, Random House, 1991), pp. 134-35.

[5](#) Ibid.

[6](#) Ibid. p. 136.

[7](#) Ibid. p. 139.

[8](#) Ibid. p. 151.

[9](#) Alan Hart, op. cit., pp. 167-68.

[10](#) Ibid. pp. 152-53.

[11](#) Ibid. pp. 167.

[12](#) Ibid. p. 175.

[13](#) Ibid. p. 186.

[14](#) Ibid. p. 187.

[15](#) Ibid. p. 186.

[16](#) Ibid., p. 190.

[17](#) Ibid., p. 194.

[18](#) Ibid., p. 173.

[19](#) Ibid., p. 212.

[20](#) Ibid., p. 36.

[21](#) Ibid., pp. 214-15.

- [22](#) Ibid., pp. 214-15.
- [23](#) Ibid., pp. 214-15.
- [24](#) Ibid., pp. 214-15.
- [25](#) Ehud Yari, *Strike Terror: The Story of Fatah* (New York, Sabra Books, 1970), p. 97.
- [26](#) Avi Shlaim, *The Iron Wall, Israel and the Arabs* (Penguin Books, 2001), p. 234. (Interview with Rabin).
- [27](#) Ibid. (Interview with Miriam Eshkol).
- [28](#) Alfred M. Lilienthal, *The Zionist Connection II: What Price Peace?* (North American, 1982), p. 551.
- [29](#) Rami Tal, “Moshe Dayan: Soul Searching,” *Yediot Aharonot*, 27 April 1997.
- [30](#) Avi Shlaim, op. cit., pp. 236-37; and Alfred M. Lilienthal, op. cit., p. 552. 432.
- [31](#) Avi Shlaim, op. cit., pp. 236-37; and Alfred M. Lilienthal, op. cit., p. 552.
- [32](#) Anthony Nutting, *Nasser* (London, Constable, 1972), pp. 397-98.
- [33](#) Ibid., pp. 397-98.
- [34](#) Alan Hart, op. cit., p. 223.
- [35](#) Author’s note: Khalad Hassan did, in fact, give me this information during my research conversations with him for the first edition of *Arafat, Terrorist or Peacemaker?* published in 1984; but on the understanding that I would not name him as the provider until either he or President Assad was dead. Subsequently and separately, Arafat, Abu Jihad and Aby Iyad confirmed to me the essence of what Khalad Hassan had revealed. They said that Assad’s collusion with Israel was well known to all Arab leaders but that it was “too dangerous” (as well as too embarrassing) for them to speak out. Subsequently, in private conversations during my unofficial shuttle diplomacy, King Hussein and President Sadat were among other Arab leaders who told me they were aware of the collusion in the countdown to the 1967 war.

- [36](#) As above
- [37](#) Nutting, op. cit., p. 401.
- [38](#) Avi Shlaim, op. cit., p. 238.
- [39](#) Avi Shlaim, op. cit., p. 238.
- [40](#) “Secret” memorandum for the President from Secretary of State Dean Rusk, 26 May 1967, NSF Country File – Israel, Container 142, Volume 12, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.
- [41](#) Lyndon Baines Johnson Library Oral History Project, interview number 1 with Richard Helms, recorded 4 April 1969.
- [42](#) Ibid., interview number 1 with Harry McPherson, recorded 5 December 1968.
- [43](#) Ibid., interview number 3 with Nicholas Katzenbach, recorded 11 December 1968
- [44](#) “Secret” memorandum for the President from Secretary of State Dean Rusk, 26 May 1967, NSF Country File – Israel, Container 142, Volume 12, Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.
- [45](#) Ibid.
- [46](#) Ibid.
- [47](#) Lyndon Johnson, *The Vantage Point* (New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 293. as quoted by Stephen Green op.cit.
- [48](#) Avi Shlaim, op. cit., p. 240.
- [49](#) Meir Amit, “The Road to the Six Days: The Six-Day War in Retrospect”, *Maarachot*, number 325, June-July 1992. 433
- [50](#) Note in National Security File, NSC History of the Middle East Crisis, 12 May-19 June 1967, Volume 7, Appendix 1.
- [51](#) Translation by the Foreign Broadcasting Information Service, a U.S. agency in Washington, quoted by Lilienthal, p. 553.
- [52](#) Lilienthal op.cit citing Mohammed Heikal, *The Cairo Documents* (New York, Doubleday, 1973), p. 245.

[53](#) *Hussein of Jordan: My War With Israel, as told to and with additional material by Vick Vance and Pierre Laver* (London, Peter Owen, 1969), p. 39

[54](#) Ibid., p. 49.

[55](#) Ibid., pp. 44-45.

[56](#) Ibid., pp. 44-45.

[57](#) Ibid., pp. 44-45.

[58](#) Ibid., pp. 44-45.

[59](#) Ibid., pp. 44-45.

[60](#) Ibid., pp. 46.

[61](#) Ibid., pp. 46.

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- [8](#) Ibid. p. 13.
- [9](#) Ibid. p. 12.
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