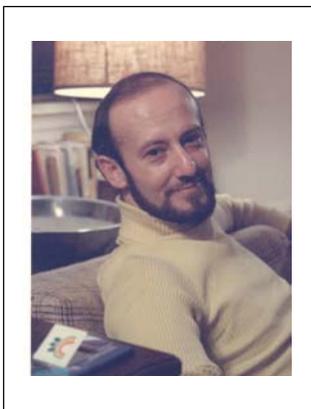


*In the Beginning, there was ...*

# TERROR

By Ronald Bleier



**Ronald Bleier**, a writer and researcher based in New York City, edits the Demographic, Environmental and Security Issues Project website (DESIP).

**M**uch of the history of terrorism in today's Middle East has been thrust down the Orwellian memory hole due to the highly effective campaign over the past 50 years to suppress information prejudicial to Israel.

Blowing up a bus, a train, a ship, a café, or a hotel; assassinating a diplomat or a peace negotiator; killing hostages, sending letter bombs; massacring defenseless villagers — this is terrorism, as we know it. In the modern Middle East it began with the Zionists who founded the Jewish state.<sup>1</sup>

*Continued on page 3*

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## About This Issue

As I write this column on June 11, The New York Times' front-page headline reads: "Bush Rebukes Israel for Attack in Gaza." The report goes on to say that the administration was jolted by what Middle East experts say has been "a familiar pattern of seeming breakthroughs...followed by acts of violence apparently intended to undermine peace efforts."

Terrorism has always been a major player in this conflict. It led to the British quitting their Mandate over Palestine and it caused hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to flee their homes. It can be state-sponsored, as when an occupying army sends in bulldozers to demolish family homes or uses F-16s to bomb civilian population centers; it can be carried out by armed groups or individuals, as when a suicide bomber boards a city bus or enters a crowded market.

Israel claims that every act of Palestinian resistance is terrorism, while the United Nations recognizes the legitimacy of "armed struggle" to attain self-determination. Judging whether the acts of a state or a resistance group are contrary to international conventions is up to tribunals such as the International Court of Justice in The Hague, the U.N. Human Rights Commission, and countries that have signed the Geneva Conventions.

We speak so often of the "cycle" of violence in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, while the fact is that its blood-drenched history is linear: it

had a beginning and, as The Times observed, it has a pattern. That beginning and that pattern are the focus of this issue.

Ronald Bleier knows something of terrorism. He was born on an island off Yugoslavia after his parents fled the Nazis. They arrived in the U.S. in August 1944 along with 1,000 or so mostly Jewish refugees. He attended Yeshiva elementary and high school in Brooklyn, and graduated from Brooklyn College. Following two years with the Peace Corps teaching English in Iran, he taught high school English in New York City for 25 years. Ronald lives not far from our office, and he and I have known each other for years. He has written for many other publications; we now welcome him to ours.

Part of Ronald's documentation for this article is based on Livia Rokach's book "Israel's Sacred Terrorism." AMEU carried this book for several years in the mid-1980s. It was then, and remains, one of the most convincing proofs of Israel's decision to expand its territory by "provocation-and-revenge." Israel would "provoke" an aggressive act, Arabs would respond militarily; Israel would claim unprovoked hostility against Jews; the Israeli public would call for "revenge" and "retaliation," and this would lead to occupying more Arab land. While the book has long been out-of-print, it is available on the internet at [www.chss.montclair.edu/english/furr/essays/rokach.html](http://www.chss.montclair.edu/english/furr/essays/rokach.html). A link to this site is available on the AMEU website under **Resources/Other Sites**.

For our current list of books and videos, including several new entries, please see pages 14-16.

**John F. Mahoney**  
Executive Director

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## **The Original Sin**

Israel's original sin is Zionism, the ideology that a Jewish state should replace the former Palestine. At the root of the problem is Zionism's exclusivist structure whereby only Jews are treated as first-class citizens. In order to create and consolidate a Jewish state in 1948, Zionists expelled 750,000 Palestinians from their homeland and never allowed them or their descendants to return. In addition, Israeli forces destroyed over 400 Palestinian villages and perpetrated about three dozen massacres. In 1967, the Israelis forced another 350,000 Palestinians to flee the West Bank and Gaza as well as 147,000 Syrians from the Golan Heights. Since 1967 Israel has placed the entire Palestinian population of the Territories under military occupation.

The effects of the dispossession of the Palestinians and other Arabs are with us to this day, in the shattered lives of the millions of people directly affected and also as a sign of the West's war against the entire Arab nation and Muslims everywhere. Arguably, the original sin of Zionism and its effects on the peoples of the Middle East were central to the motivation behind the events of 9/11, and the most important consequence of which is the ongoing "war on terrorism" that is smothering our political landscape.

## **Assassinating the Peace Negotiator**

One of the most notorious acts of Israeli terrorism occurred during the 1948 war when Jewish forces, members of the LEHI underground (also known as the Stern Gang) assassinated Swedish Count Folke Bernadotte, a U.N. appointed mediator. Bernadotte was killed on September 17, 1948, a day after he offered his second mediation plan which, among other things, called for repatriation and compensation for the Palestinian refugees.

The assassination of Bernadotte highlighted one of the biggest policy differences at the time between the United States and Israel, namely the fate of the Palestinian refugees. By that time, Jewish/Israeli forces had already forced more than half a million Palestinians from their homes. The resultant international outcry focused attention on the implications for Middle East peace as well as on the suffering of the refugees. Moreover, the fate of hundreds of thousands of Jews who resided in the Arab world, mainly in Iraq, Morocco, Yemen and Egypt, was placed at risk because of Israeli expulsion policy.

The day before the assassination Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Sharett publicly accused Bernadotte of "bias against the state of Israel and in favor of the Arab states."

Stephen Green points to evidence that the Israeli government was itself directly involved in the killing. On the night of the assassination the Czech consulates in Jerusalem and Haifa were busy processing some 30 visas for Stern gang members "who had been rounded up for their involvement in the planning and execution" of the assassination. "Between September 18 and September 29, most if not all of the 30 left Israel on flights for Prague, Czechoslovakia." The "scale, precision, and speed of the evacuation-escape" made the State Department "suspicious that the Stern gang was not involved alone." The U.S. wondered if the "operation might have been planned and prepared in Czechoslovakia, and that a specially trained squad had been flown into Israel from Prague for that purpose."<sup>2</sup> In addition, historian Howard Sachar notes that "Yehoshua Cohen, a friend of Ben Gurion, is widely believed to be the trigger man."<sup>3</sup>

Eight months later, in May 1949, the Israelis revealed to the U.N. that the majority of the Stern Gang members rounded up in the "purge" had been released within two weeks. Those not released were held until a general amnesty was granted on February 14, 1949.<sup>4</sup> No one was ever put on trial for the killing.

The assassination of Bernadotte made international headlines and for a time more attention was paid to the issue of the Palestinian refugees. In the end pressure to repatriate them was never successfully mustered. Arguably, from the point of view of Israeli expulsion policy, the assassination was a success since none of Bernadotte's successors was able to focus sufficient pressure on the Israelis to make any concessions. Had Bernadotte lived, he might have succeeded where others had failed. At the least, his murder was a warning to any who might have tried to follow his activist example.

## **Dynamiting a Public Building**

One of the most notorious examples of Jewish/Zionist terrorism in the post-war period 1945-1948, was the bombing of the King David Hotel on July 22, 1946. The bombing developed out of an atmosphere where the Zionists were enraged when the British Labor party's sweeping victory in the summer of 1945 did nothing to liberalize the previous government's policy on Jewish immigration. British insistence on maintaining their restrictive immigration policy led to the unification of the three major factions of the Jewish fighting forces into a United Resistance. The three forces comprised the Jewish Agency's Haganah led by David Ben Gurion, the LEHI, the Stern Gang led by Nathan Yellin-Mor, and the Irgun led by Menachem Begin, who in his book "The Revolt" bragged that he was

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“Terrorist Number One.” At the end of October 1945, they formally agreed to cooperate on “a military struggle against British rule.”<sup>5</sup>

Their joint attacks, including the Night of the Trains, The Night of the Airfields, the Night of the Bridges and other operations, were so successful that they led finally to forceful British

retaliation. Immediately after the Night of the Bridges, June 17, 1947, British Army searches for terrorists were conducted, arrests were made and Jews were killed and injured in clashes. A much larger British operation that came to be known as “Black Sabbath” began two weeks later. Thousands of Jews were arrested. British troops ransacked the offices of the Jewish Agency in Jerusalem, seized important documents, arrested members of the Jewish Agency Executive, and carried out searches and arrests in many kibbutzim.

As a direct result of the Black Sabbath operation, the Haganah command decided on July 1 to conduct three operations against the British. The Palmach (the elite Haganah strike force) would carry out a raid on a British army camp to recover their weapons. The Irgun would blow up the King David Hotel where the offices of the Mandatory government and the British military command were located. (The LEHI task, blowing up the adjacent David Brothers building, was never carried out.)

Just at this moment came an appeal from Chaim Weizmann, President of the World Zionist Organization, urging that the armed struggle against the British be halted. As a result of his appeal, the supreme political committee decided “to accede to Weizmann’s request.” However, Moshe Sneh, the Haganah liaison with the Irgun and LEHI, strongly opposed the Weizmann request and did not inform Begin of the committee resolution but merely asked him to postpone the action.<sup>6</sup>

The King David Hotel was brought down by means of 50 kilos of explosives, placed beside supporting pillars in the hotel’s “La Regence” restaurant. Timers were placed



**Wanted Poster.** Irgun Z'vai Leumi terrorists: 1. Menachem Begin; 2 Ariel Ben Eliezer; 3. Leib Boyko; 4. Reuben Franca; 5. Marek Kahane

for 30 minutes. After the bombers made their escape, telephone messages were placed to the hotel telephone operator and to the Palestine Post. The French Consulate, adjacent to the hotel was also warned to open its windows to prevent blast damage, which it did.<sup>7</sup> Some 25 minutes later, a terrific explosion destroyed the entire southern

wing of the hotel— all seven stories. The official death toll was 91 dead: 28 Britons, 41 Arabs, 17 Jews, and five others.

## The Sharett Diaries

Moshe Sharett’s résumé included being head of the Jewish Agency’s political department (1933-1948), Israel’s first foreign minister (1948-1956), and its second prime minister (1954-1955). Following his death, his son edited his personal diary which covered the period from October 1953 to November 1957. The diary was published in 1979 in Hebrew only. It may well have received little attention outside of Israel had it not been for Livia Rokach.

Born the daughter of Israel Rokach, the minister of the interior in the government of Israeli prime minister Moshe Sharett, Livia Rokach later moved to Rome, where she identified herself as “an Italian writer of Palestinian origin.” In the early 1980s, she translated excerpts from the Sharett diary and inserted them into a book: “Israel’s Sacred Terrorism: A Study Based on Moshe Sharett’s Personal Diary and Other Documents.” Despite legal threats from the Israeli foreign ministry, the book was published in the United States by the Association of Arab American University Graduates (AAUG). Israel never took legal action fearing that, in the words of Knesset member Uri Avneri, “stopping the dissemination of the booklet would be a mistake of the first order, since this would give it much more publicity.”<sup>8</sup>

In her book Rokach charges that from the earliest days of the state, Israel cynically and with cold calculation used its military power under the banner of security in order to dominate the region. She explains that Israel’s leaders

were unhappy with the 1949 armistice borders even though, as a result of the 1948 war, they increased Israeli territory from the U.N. allotment of 56% of mandate Palestine to 78%. The Israeli government understood that it needed to transform the fledgling state into a regional power in order to conquer the rest of Palestine as well as some of the territory of its Arab neighbors. Rokach concludes from Sharett's

journal that the Israeli political establishment never seriously believed in an Arab threat to the existence of Israel. She writes that Israel deliberately attempted to drive the Arab states into confrontations and wars in order to dominate the Middle East. Such ambitions could not be achieved on the basis of the earlier Jewish moral superiority doctrine and thus "inevitably presupposed the use of large scale, open violence." According to Rokach, "Terrorism and revenge were now to be glorified as the new moral...and even sacred values of Israeli society." Such a transformation of the Israeli population could not be achieved automatically, but required a generation of fear and anxiety on the part of its population and its supporters. They also understood that the:

lives of Jewish victims also had to be sacrificed to create provocations justifying subsequent reprisals... A hammering, daily propaganda, controlled by the censors, was directed to feed the Israeli population with images of the monstrosity of the Enemy.<sup>9</sup>

In late 1953, Israeli prime minister Ben Gurion decided to take a two-year sabbatical during which he would withdraw from government activity. His retirement was "presented as a spiritual exercise" but Rokach contends that it was done for strategic reasons. The "moderate" Sharett was to replace Ben Gurion in order not to alarm the West about Israel's intentions. "In the short range the Israeli design was aimed at slowing down the negotiations

between Arab states pressing to be armed and the West which was reluctant to arm them." The timing of Ben Gurion's sabbatical indicates that already only four years after the war of 1948-49, the security establishment was contemplating a strategy for regional destabilization. Its modus operandi was to be the political military policy known under the false name of "retaliation." The point of the retaliation policy was to provoke conflict and tension in the area, to destabilize the Arab regimes by demonstrating that they could not protect their citizens from Israeli attacks, and to set the stage for general war.<sup>10</sup>

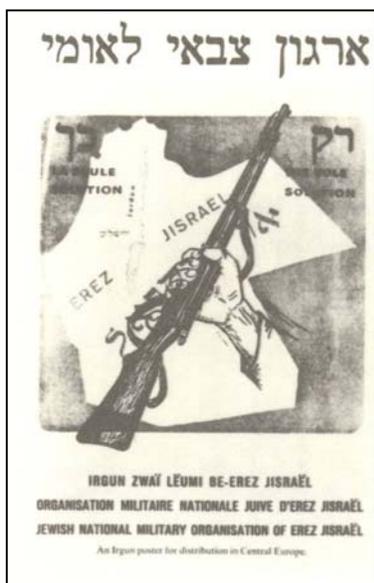
### Massacring Villagers

An instance of Sharett's documentation of Israeli "retaliation" is the notorious Kibya affair. On the night of October 12, 1953, a grenade was thrown into a Jewish settlement east of Tel Aviv, killing a woman and two children. Ben Gurion and others planned a powerful retaliatory blow against a Jordanian village from which it was determined the attack originated. Sharett argued against the raid; on October 14, 1953, he recorded:

I told [Pinchas] Lavon [a staunch supporter of the retaliation policy soon to become the minister of defense] that this [attack] will be a grave error, and recalled, citing various precedents, that it was never proved that reprisal actions serve their declared purpose. Lavon smiled ... and kept to his own idea.... Ben Gurion, he said, didn't share my view.<sup>11</sup>

Two nights later, Ariel Sharon's Unit 101 killed 60 people in the Jordanian border village of Kibya. Sharett heard reports that:

thirty houses have been demolished in one village. This reprisal is unprecedented in its dimensions and in the offensive power used. I walked up and down in my room, helpless and utterly depressed by my feeling of impotence. . . . I was simply horrified by the description in Radio Ramallah's broadcast of the destruction of the Arab village. Tens of houses have been razed to the soil and tens of people killed. I can imagine the storm that will break out tomorrow in the Arab and Western capitals. (15 October 1953)



**Poster of Irgun Zvai Leumi.** Shows territorial aims for "Erez Jisrael," Greater Israel, on both sides of the Jordan, and their intention to seize it through force.



**Bodies of three Palestinian children and a woman massacred in Kibya by Ariel Sharon's Unit 101.**

I must underline that when I opposed the action I didn't even remotely suspect such a bloodbath. I thought that I was opposing one of those actions which have become a routine in the past. Had I even remotely suspected that such a massacre was to be held, I would have raised real hell. (16 October 1953)

### **Bombing a Public Bus**

In addition to the Israeli retaliation policy against the Arabs, Rokach devotes a chapter to a possible Israeli "false flag" or "black propaganda" operations whereby its own Jewish citizens were deliberately sacrificed. In her chapter entitled "Sacred Terrorism" Rokach details an incident from March 1954 in the course of which attackers killed ten passengers on a bus from Eilat to Beersheva at the Ma'aleh Ha'akrabim crossroads. Four passengers survived. To this day the circumstances of the attack are shrouded in mystery. Who were the attackers? Rokach wrote that the Israeli cover story was "too strange" for outsiders to believe, noting:

Colonel Hutcheson, the American chairman of the mixed Jordanian-Israeli Armistice Commission, did not take it seriously. Summing up the Commission's inquiry, Colonel Hutcheson in fact officially announced that "from the testimonies of the survivors it is not proved that all the murderers were Arabs."

The details of the operation were so unclear that even American press reports made mention of the Jordanian version "according to which the Ma'aleh Ha'akrabim massacre was committed by the Israelis." Although in public

and private, Sharett was reluctant to believe the Jordanian version, Rokach speculates that "deep down in his heart" Sharett must have had his "unconfessed doubts."<sup>12</sup>

Although Sharett managed to block the Israeli military from forceful retaliation for the bus massacre, a pretext was soon found to launch a massive attack on the village of Nahalin, near Bethlehem, killing dozens of civilians, and "completely destroying" another Palestinian village in the West Bank. The neighboring Arab countries "were persuaded that the Israeli escalation of self-provoked incidents, terrorism and renewed retaliation meant that Israel was preparing the ground for war. They therefore took strong measures to prevent any infiltration into Israel." Israeli General Moshe Dayan told a journalist friend in May 1954 that, "The situation along the borders is better than it has been for a long time and actually it is quite satisfactory." But quiet borders simply spurred more Israeli incursions and Rokach explains how the military adopted new tactics using small patrols for sabotage and murder in Arab villages, in which Ariel Sharon's infamous Unit 101 played a decisive role.<sup>13</sup>

Today with Ariel Sharon as prime minister, the same dynamic of Israeli use of terror for political gain repeats itself shamelessly. As Rachel Corrie, the American volunteer recently crushed to death in Gaza by an Israeli bulldozer, said in a letter home to her parents: "Sharon's assassination-during-peace negotiations/land grab strategy, is working very well now to create settlements all over [and is] slowly but surely eliminating any meaningful possibility for Palestinian self-determination."<sup>14</sup>

### **Bombing British, U.S., and Egyptian Property**

One of the most historically significant "false flag" schemes documented by Sharett is the infamous Lavon

Affair which is one of the few such operations that the Israeli government was forced to acknowledge. In July 1954, about 10 Egyptian Jews under the command of Israeli agents planted bombs in British and American properties and Egyptian public buildings in Cairo and Alexandria. The spy ring was caught and broken up on July 27, when one of its members was caught after a bomb exploded in his pocket in Alexandria.

There was a trial and two of the accused were condemned to death and executed, while the three Israeli commanders escaped and a fourth committed suicide. A scandal subsequently ensued in Israel that turned on exactly who ordered the operation. In 1954-55, Sharett anticipated the findings of the commission which ultimately established that Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan, Director General of the Ministry of Defense Shimon Peres, and Intelligence Chief Colonel Benjamin Givli were the culprits. Sharett confided to his diary on January 10, 1955:

[People] ask me if I am convinced that "he [Defense Minister Pinchas Lavon] gave the order?" . . . but let us assume that Givli has acted without instructions ... doesn't the moral responsibility lie all the same on Lavon, who has constantly preached for acts of madness and taught the army leadership the diabolic lesson of how to set the Middle East on fire, how to cause friction, cause bloody confrontations, sabotage targets ... [and perform] acts of despair and suicide."

At the time of the bombings negotiations were at their height between Cairo and London for the evacuation of the Canal Zone, and between Cairo and Washington for arms supplies and other aid in connection with a possible U.S.-Egyptian alliance. Stephen Green presents an even more cynical picture of top Israeli officials who initiated the terrorist operation in order to sabotage Prime Minister Sharett's ongoing and quietly successful negotiations with Egyptian President Gamal Nasser.<sup>15</sup>

Today, a standard, even routine method of sacrificing Israelis on the altar of politics is the Israeli tactic of provoking Palestinian attacks by assassinating high profile activists. One such example was so clear that a leading Israeli journalist forecasted the Israeli casualties that would result from an Israeli "targeted assassination." On November 23, 2001, the Israelis assassinated Mahmud Abu Hunud, a top Hamas operative. Two days later, Israeli journalist Alex Fishman, in a front-page article, ex-

plained that before the assassination of Hunud there had existed a "secret" and unacknowledged gentlemen's agreement between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority that "Hamas was to avoid in the near future" suicide bombings in Israel. As Fishman wrote: "Whoever decided upon the liquidation of Abu Hunud knew in advance" that the agreement with Hamas would be "shattered.... The subject was extensively discussed both by Israel's military echelon and its political one..."<sup>16</sup> Just as Fishman had predicted, Hamas soon struck back and less than a week later, on December 1 and 2, suicide bombings in Jerusalem and Haifa killed 25 Israelis. The effect of this cycle of violence was predictably to heighten tensions and to dramatically weaken the constituency in Israel and the U.S. for peace negotiations.

### Raiding a Camp in Gaza

Rokach's "Israel's Sacred Terrorism" provides previously unavailable documentation relating to Israel's preparations for the October 1956 surprise attack by Israel, France and Britain against Egypt. In that operation, the Allies conquered the Suez Canal, Eastern Sinai and the Gaza Strip. The combined invasion occurred at a time when the U.S. sought to stabilize the area. But the Israeli interest was precisely the opposite. It was to exacerbate tensions and make it difficult or impossible for Egypt to gain the weapons it needed to deter Israel from war.

An important incident leading up to the October 1956 war was a massive raid on an Egyptian Army Camp in Gaza, "the bloodiest incident between Egypt and Israel since the 1948 war."<sup>17</sup> The raid took place about a year and a half earlier in a period "of relative tranquility following the enforcement of repressive measures decided on by the Egyptian administration of the Strip." On the night of February 28, 1955, the Israelis sent in 50 paratroopers who wound up killing 39 Egyptians and wounding 30 others. Sharett approved the operation, but was "shocked" by the loss of life, as he wrote on March 1, 1955:

The number (of Egyptian victims) ... changes not only the dimensions of the operation but its very substance; it turns it into an event liable to cause grave political and military complications and dangers.... The army spokesman, on instructions from the Minister of Defense, delivered a false version to the press...Who will believe us?

It is widely acknowledged that the Gaza raid was a decisive turning point in Nasser's relations with Israel. From

then on, the Egyptian president took every opportunity to explain to visiting diplomats that the attack “was a moment of truth” when he “finally perceived the dimensions of the Israeli problem” and he soon decided to turn to the Soviets for arms in order to defend his country.<sup>18</sup>

In the aftermath of the Gaza raid, Sharett instructed his embassies to go on the offensive despite what he knew of the origins of the attack. He hoped to counter the “general impression that while we cry out over our isolation and the dangers to our security, we initiate aggression and reveal ourselves as being bloodthirsty and aspiring to perpetrate mass massacres.”<sup>19</sup>

Sharett was very much concerned about U.S. pressure to reduce tensions in the area. He understood, as seen in his March 12, 1955 entry, that the U.S. interpreted the Gaza raid as “signaling a decision on our part to attack on all fronts. The Americans...are afraid that it will lead to a new conflagration in the Middle East, which will blow up all their plans. Therefore they wish to obtain from us a definite commitment that similar actions will not be repeated.” However, Ben Gurion had recently emerged from retirement to rejoin Sharett’s government as Defense Minister precisely to prevent Israel from committing to discontinuing such reprisals. Indeed, within days of rejoining the government, Ben Gurion proposed that Israel proceed to occupy the Gaza Strip, then controlled by Egypt, this time for good, a proposal that Sharett managed to defeat.

But the Israelis would not agree to a U.S. initiative of a security pact because, as Sharett wrote:

We do not need [Dayan said] a security pact with the U.S.: such a pact will only constitute an obstacle for us. ...The security pact will only handcuff us and deny us the freedom of action which we need in the coming years. Reprisal actions which we couldn't carry out if we were tied to a security pact are our vital lymph ... they make it possible for us to maintain a high level of tension among our population and in the army.<sup>20</sup>

Sharett put the implications of Dayan’s view into his own words in a May 26, 1955 entry:

And above all—let us hope for a new war with the Arab countries, so that we may finally get rid of our troubles and acquire our space. (Such a slip of the tongue: Ben

Gurion himself said that it would be worthwhile to pay an Arab a million pounds to start a war.)

In addition to creating tensions, Israel hoped to isolate the Nasser regime and prevent him from obtaining weapons and other aid from the West. The Israeli sanctions program was so successful that “after years of contacts and negotiations” Egypt received nothing more than a “personal present made to General Neguib in the form of a decorative pistol to wear at ceremonies.”<sup>21</sup>

In the end, an enraged President Eisenhower, who was not informed of tripartite plans to make war on Egypt, forced the Allies to halt the attack and eventually to give up virtually all the territory they had captured. Eisenhower’s actions make clear that he understood that American interests lay in a stable Middle East and an Israel confined to its 1949 borders.<sup>22</sup> Immensely popular as he was, Eisenhower was largely able to shake off the pressures placed by the Jewish lobby on Congress and the Executive. His relative independence was virtually the last such example in American history.

## **Controlling Lebanon**

Zionist leaders’ interest in Lebanon goes back to November 1918 when they indicated to British mandate officials that they wished Israel’s northern border to include the whole of the Litani River, all of which currently runs in Lebanon. Their proposal emphasized the “vital importance of controlling all water resources up to their sources.”<sup>23</sup> At the 1919 Peace Conference, however, the French demanded and won the battle for the present boundaries of Lebanon that included the entire length of the Litani River and the headwaters of the Hasbani and Wazzani Rivers. Never reconciled to this arrangement, the first and subsequent Israeli governments began considering plans to create a puppet state in Lebanon. Sharett’s “Diary” records a February 27, 1954 meeting among Ben Gurion, Sharett, Defense Minister Pinchas Lavon and Dayan where Ben Gurion argued “this is the time...to push Lebanon, that is the Maronites in that country, to proclaim a Christian State.” When Sharett retorted that the Christians in Lebanon were “weak” and in no position to foment a revolution, Ben Gurion roared: “We ought to send envoys and spend money.” When Sharett replied that there was no money, Ben Gurion’s answer was:

The money must be found, if not in the Treasury then at the Jewish Agency! For such a project it is worthwhile throwing away one hundred thousand, half a mil-

lion, a million dollars. When this happens a decisive change will take place in the Middle East, a new era will start.<sup>24</sup>

In another high-level meeting on Lebanon in May 1954, Moshe Dayan provided a guide as to how control of Lebanon would be accomplished. According to Dayan, Israel needed only to find a Lebanese officer, "even just a Major" who would serve as a puppet and with Israel's help "create a Christian regime.... Then the Israeli army will enter Lebanon [and] the territory from the Litani southward will be totally annexed to Israel and everything will be all right."<sup>25</sup>

To fulfill these plans, Israel had to wait nearly 15 years, but, as Prof. Naseer Aruri writes:

Consider what actually happened later, during the 1960s, '70s, '80s: In 1967, Israel's war against three Arab states not only gave Israel possession of eastern Palestine (the West Bank), Gaza, the Sinai and the Syrian Golan Heights, but also enabled Israel to capture the headwaters of the Jordan and Baniyas rivers. In addition, Israel destroyed Jordan's East Ghor Canal and its Khaled Dam on the Yarmuk River, which flows into Israel's Nahariva Pool. In the 1978 "Litani Operation," Israel established firm control over the Wazzani River, which flows into the Jordan, as well as almost the entire length of the Hasbani River. And in the 1982 "Operation Peace for Galilee," the entire length of the Litani River came under Israeli control.<sup>26</sup>

To the first governments in Israel, Lebanon seemed an obvious early target in part for its important water resources and in part because it seemed politically weaker than the other neighboring Arab countries. But Israeli plans for Lebanon had to be postponed until after 1967. Rokach explains that, well into the 60s:

Israel was dependent on France for arms supplies and could not have acted openly against France's wishes. The end of

France's colonial war against Algeria and De Gaulle's growing impatience with Israel's arrogance led to the termination of the French-Israeli special relationship in 1967, and to its substitution by the exclusive U.S.-Israel one.<sup>27</sup>

The Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) cost about 100,000 lives and destroyed a vital secular government and civil society that is still reeling from the onslaught. Christians

were pitted against Lebanese Muslims, and the situation was further complicated by the presence of 350,000 Palestinians and the PLO.<sup>28</sup> Israel's contribution to the war was massive. Israeli attacks on Lebanon began as early as 1968 and continued through 1982 and after. "Before the Lebanese army disintegrated in 1976, it had given a figure of 1.4 Israeli violations of Lebanese territory per day from 1968-74."<sup>29</sup> According to author Rosemary Sayigh, such "attacks continued to escalate and were a major factor in bringing about the Civil War of 1975/6." London Guardian correspondent Irene Beeson reported that "150 or more towns and villages in South Lebanon...have been repeatedly savaged by the Israeli armed forces since 1968." She described the history of the village of Khiyam, bombed from 1968. By the time Israel

invaded ten years later, only 32 of its 30,000 inhabitants remained. "[T]hey were massacred in cold blood" by Lebanese proxy forces that Israel had established in the south.<sup>30</sup>

## Dissolving the Arab States

Israel's strategic plan to dissolve the Arab states by breaking them down into smaller sectarian units was laid out openly in an 1982 essay by Oded Yinon, an Israeli strategist. Oded pointed to the "real civil war" taking place nowadays between the Sunni majority and the ruling Shi'ite Alawi minority in Syria. He emphasized the Sunni-Shi'ite split in Iraq: "Sixty five percent of the population has no say in politics, in which an elite of 20 percent holds the power." He made similar analyses of Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the Gulf principalities, Iran, Turkey, and Sudan and wrote that the entire region "extending from Morocco to India and from Somalia to Turkey...is built like a house of cards, unable to withstand its severe prob-



**Israeli bombing of downtown Beirut, 1982, under the command of Ariel Sharon.**

lems." Oded looked forward to Lebanon's dissolution into five provinces serving as a precedent for the entire Middle East, but he noted that Iraq's dissolution:

is even more important for us than that of Syria... In Iraq, a division into provinces along ethnic/religious line as in Syria during Ottoman times is possible. So three (or more) states will exist around the three major cities: Basra, Baghdad, and Mosul, and Shi'ite areas in the south will separate from the Sunni and Kurdish north.<sup>31</sup>

It's clear that the recent U.S. war against Iraq has advanced a key aim of the most grandiose Israeli dreams for regional hegemony. From the point of view of Israeli goals, the U.S. has begun to implement what Israel Shakh, the late Israeli author and government critic, called "the accurate and detailed plan of the present Zionist regime...for the Middle East. [The plan] is based on the division of the whole area into *small* states, and the dissolution of *all* the existing Arab states. (Emphasis in original.) Shakh also noted "the strong connection with the Neo-Conservative thought in the USA."<sup>32</sup>

The neoconservatives (or neocons), typically Republican zealots close to Israel's Likud party, are getting a great deal of media attention nowadays because they have been installed in key positions in George W. Bush's government and they seem for the most part to be the voice of the administration, intermittently moderated by Secretary of State Colin Powell. Many of today's neocons were liberals:

who drifted to the right when the Democratic Party moved to the anti-war McGovernite left. And concern for Israel loomed large in their change. As political scientist Benjamin Ginsberg puts it: "One major factor that drew them inexorably to the right was their attachment to Israel and their growing frustration during the 1960s with a Democratic party that was becoming increasingly opposed to American military preparedness and increasingly enamored of Third World causes [e.g., Palestinian rights]." In the Reaganite right's hard-line anti-communism, commitment to American military strength, and willingness to intervene politically and militarily in the affairs of other nations...neocons found a political movement that would guarantee Israel's security.<sup>33</sup>

The twin ascendancy of the right-wing regimes of Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin and President Ronald Reagan led to the brutal 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon that claimed an estimated 17,000 to 19,000 Lebanese and Palestinian lives, the great majority of whom were civilians.<sup>34</sup> The pretext for the invasion was the threat to Israeli security by PLO cross-border raids and shelling. But even at the time, observers were quick to point out that the border had been quiet for eleven months due to a cease-fire negotiated by Reagan emissary Philip Habib. Indeed the months of quiet made the Israelis desperate for a pretext to begin the war. If Israeli security was not the reason for the Israeli invasion, how are we to explain it? Once again the documentary evidence reveals that the Israeli campaign against Lebanon was undertaken for political and not security purposes.

In his book on the events surrounding the 1982 invasion of Lebanon, "The Fateful Triangle," Noam Chomsky devotes ten pages to "The Reasons for the Invasion of Lebanon." He begins by noting that one obvious purpose was "to disperse the refugees once again and to destroy the organization that represents Palestinian nationalism..." According to one senior Israeli diplomat, "the PLO are dead people politically." Israeli political analyst Yoel Marcus wrote that Israel went to war to destroy "support for the PLO on the part of the overwhelming majority of the population—and its growing international status."<sup>35</sup> By the late 70s, the PLO was moving away from "armed resistance" and beginning to gain traction as a legitimate political organization representing the Palestinian people.

Chomsky details some of the reasons for the familiar Israeli "panic" whenever they perceive the "threat of a peaceful political settlement" that might be difficult to contain. As a consequence of the July 1981 Israeli bombing campaign, a Saudi Arabian peace plan and subsequent Syrian peace initiatives had emerged. However, the most "ominous" development from the Israeli point of view was that the PLO was scrupulously observing the cease-fire, despite many Israeli provocations. Arafat's success in imposing discipline on the many PLO factions, according to Yehoshua Porath, a leading Israeli scholar, constituted:

a veritable catastrophe in the eyes of the Israeli government" since it indicated that the PLO "might agree in the future to a more far-reaching arrangement," in which case Israel could no longer evade a political settlement on the grounds that the PLO is nothing but "a wild gang of murderers." [The Israeli government hopes that] a stricken PLO, lacking a logistic and

territorial base, will return to its earlier terrorism...and murder many Israelis...<sup>36</sup>

### A Case Study in Divergent Interests

Israel's two-week bombing campaign against Lebanon in July 1981, a prelude to the 1982 war, is an extreme case of Israeli terrorism. The episode is also an instructive example of the divergence between U.S. and Israeli policy goals in Lebanon. The U.S. was interested in a stable Lebanon in order to pacify its Arab allies, and to beat back the Soviet challenge in the region. In direct opposition to American policy objectives, Prime Minister Begin and Defense Minister Sharon were determined to destabilize Lebanon and create a puppet, Christian-led government.

The highly sensitive issue of dual loyalty arises when U.S. and Israeli Middle East policy objectives diverge and when elements in the U.S. prefer Israeli interests over and above U.S. interests. Indeed, in such cases, the term dual loyalty is something of a misnomer in that it tends to suggest a balanced approach while Israel's partisans in the U.S. invariably prefer Israel's interest over and above America's. Author Stephen Green's chapter on the two week 1981 bombing campaign does not directly raise the dual loyalty issue. Nonetheless, he pointedly highlights the role played by The New York Times (and by extension the rest of the major media) that contributed to a conspiracy of silence in favor of Israeli interests.

The Israeli campaign against Lebanon that began in 1968 rose by an order of magnitude with the 1978 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, significantly dubbed, "Operation Litani," involving 25,000 Israeli troops, including two mechanized divisions and an armored brigade. The operation resulted in the deaths of a thousand Palestinians and Lebanese.<sup>37</sup>

In 1979 Israel announced a new "pre-emptive" security policy for Israel: Israel would henceforth strike at will at suspected PLO facilities, and would not wait for PLO raids to occur on Israeli territory. As the violence continued to escalate, Lebanese president Bashir Gemayel, in April 1981, maneuvered the Israelis into a crisis by attacking the Syrians. After the Israeli Air Force predictably came to his aid, the Syrians installed SAM-6 anti-aircraft missiles and SCUD tactical ballistic missiles in the outskirts of Damascus. Author Green explains that the "Israeli fighter bombers already had U.S. supplied electronic countermeasures" which could foil the SAMs "and the Scuds were so inaccurate as to pose no serious threat to Israeli population centers or military installations." This did not deter Prime Minister Menachem Begin from threatening "the destruction of the Soviet missiles," rais-

ing the possibility of war between the major powers.<sup>38</sup>

At this point U.S. policy seemed confused and contradictory. On the one hand, President Reagan sent Special Ambassador Philip Habib to mediate the crisis. On the other hand, Secretary of State Alexander Haig traveled to the region to give the Israelis notice of a "basic change in attitude" which allowed the Israelis greater "flexibility" to continue "with air strikes and ground assaults against Palestinian guerilla bases in Lebanese territory."<sup>39</sup>

The Israelis began to strike Lebanon in earnest on July 10, 1981, just after Menachem Begin was reelected prime minister and Ariel Sharon was named defense minister. According to U.S. Ambassador Robert Dillon, the raids could not have come at a worse time. His confidential state department telegram of July 16 reported more of an outcry against the U.S. than was usually the case when the Israelis hit south Lebanon, perhaps because Ambassador Habib was in Lebanon and Israel, and state department counselor Robert McFarlane was in Tel Aviv.<sup>40</sup>

On July 16, Israel dramatically escalated its attacks, destroying five bridges across South Lebanon, the Ayn al-Hilwah refugee camp near Sidon, and the American owned and managed Medreco oil refinery complex at Zahrani. The New York Times, in its coverage of the July 16 strikes, did not mention the American refinery. The next day Israeli planes carried the destruction to downtown Beirut. Green quotes from Dillon's report:

The damage was massive. The Fakhani-Tariq Al-Jadidah area near the Shatila refugee camp was the hardest hit. A number of buildings were completely leveled and the devastation is reminiscent of World War II. The PLO offices that were the targets of the raids were evidently located on the lower floors of the buildings.<sup>41</sup>

Ambassador Dillon estimated that casualty figures for Beirut alone from April 1 to July 17, 1981 were 438 dead and 2,479 wounded. Once again the American refinery had been struck. Three storage tanks had been hit "and the refinery has been shut down." Israeli planes struck every day afterwards through July 23 with infrastructure targets high on the list including bridges, highways, electrical stations, and water pumping stations. The American Medreco refinery was hit again on the 18<sup>th</sup> and on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and was put out of commission for an estimated two weeks, resulting in shortages of gasoline and oil and power shortages in Beirut and in south Lebanon. "Israel

using U.S. weapons was now waging total war on the land and people of Lebanon." Green observes:

The New York Times did mention the Israeli attacks on the Medreco refinery in its coverage on July 19 and 23. Neither article, however mentioned that the refinery was U.S. owned and operated. Not once in the Times's extensive coverage of the shelling and bombing in Lebanon in July 1981 was the American ownership of the refinery revealed.<sup>42</sup>

Green continues his overview of coverage by the U.S.'s paper of record by pointing out that at a period of "mounting criticism of Israel in Europe and at the U.N.," The Times began covering Israeli civilian deaths in great detail while not mentioning by "name, age or circumstance" one of the hundreds of Lebanese civilian deaths or the thousands wounded. In addition, Green wonders why the Israelis devoted so much firepower to the destruction of Lebanese infrastructure, and what it had to do with PLO attacks on northern Galilee.<sup>43</sup>

Green, in effect, answers his question when he records that at the time of these Israeli raids Ambassador Philip Habib's mission was broadened from attempting to defuse "the Syrian Israeli missile crisis" to "the resolution of the Lebanese civil war and a stable Lebanon." At the same time, he notes that the clear purpose of the Israeli raids was "the destabilization of the government and economy of Lebanon. In this, Israel was working directly against stated U.S. policy."<sup>44</sup>

Why did The New York Times deliberately screen its readers from the knowledge that the Medreco oil refinery that Israel deliberately attacked on five occasions during the July 1981 bombardment was American owned and operated? Was The Times sensitive to the adverse reaction that might be aroused in its readership and advertisers to news unfavorable to Israel? Did the Jewish ownership of The Times and/or its support of Zionism play a role in suppressing unfavorable coverage of Israel? While it may be impossible to resolve such questions, the episode shows the complicity of the media in support of Israel's goals and against the larger interests of U.S. policy and presumably against the interests of most Americans in a stable Lebanon and a peaceful Middle East. Significantly, a year later, as part of the fallout from the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Secretary of State Alexander Haig was forced to resign apparently because he was seen as placing Israel's interest in "fighting terror" ahead of America's interest in reducing hostilities in the Middle East.

## **A Road Map to ?**

The resignation of Alexander Haig in 1982 is evidence that the Reagan administration's irresponsibility in raising no effective objections to Israeli excesses in Lebanon had limits. The U.S. government at that time was sufficiently flexible and rational to pull back when it was necessary and was able to focus on the simple idea that a peaceful Middle East was in American interests. Today, a similar awareness is evidently lacking. The disappearance of the Soviet Union as a counterweight to U.S. interests in the Middle East has allowed the current U.S. regime a free hand to ally itself completely with the Sharon government's repressive and brutal policies.

Prime Minister Sharon has used his political skills to unite the Israeli public behind dramatic restrictions on the ability of the Palestinians to pursue civil life. Despite the current incarnation of the "peace process," inaptly named the "road map," never have the Palestinians been so threatened by Israeli policies. Through a combination of intimidation and effective use of the Israeli lobby in the U.S. and the complete subservience of Congress, Ariel Sharon, for example, has not been called to account for the March 2003 bulldozer murder of Rachel Corrie, a U.S. citizen, who was one of three international peace activists killed or seriously wounded by the Israeli army within a month's time.

Palestinians cannot get to schools, businesses, or pursue normal economic life. They must face checkpoints without end, "targeted assassinations," tanks, sharpshooters, F-16s and Apache helicopters in their population centers. A "security wall" currently being erected in the West Bank is gobbling up thousands of acres of Palestinian olive groves, farms, factories, and is affecting hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in a hundred villages or communities located in between the wall and Israel's 1967 borders or nearby.<sup>45</sup> All this while the world focuses on the "Road Map" which many observers view as little more than a distraction and a public relations ploy.<sup>46</sup>

It seems clear that the Israeli government will continue to do everything it can to prevent the replacement of Palestinian infrastructure destroyed by the IDF in the West Bank during their Spring 2002 campaign. Without reconstruction, without a viable economy, what can the future possibly hold for the Palestinians? An indication of what the Israelis have in store for the Palestinians, is the uninhibited talk of "transfer" even by a member of Sharon's cabinet.<sup>47</sup> As prime minister, Sharon knows better than to espouse such views. However, in 1988, as trade minister

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and member of the inner cabinet during the first intifada, he warned that the Palestinian uprising "would lead inevitably to war with the Arab states and the necessary expulsion of the Arabs from the West Bank, Gaza and the Galilee."<sup>48</sup>

Many observers feared that the war on Iraq might have provided a sufficient screen for the mass expulsion of many of the more than 3.5 million Palestinians living in the occupied territories. But Israel was not attacked and the American advance on Baghdad was so rapid that no opportunity was provided for mass expulsions. Nevertheless, time is on the side of the Israelis and they are masters of creating and making use of opportunities. After they were forced by President Eisenhower to return the Sinai and Gaza in 1956, they waited until the political scene was primed in 1967. Once again time is on their side as the "war on terror" continues and U.S. policy makers continually make threats against Iran and Syria, both high on Israel's enemies list.

Prospects for peace seem slim and growing slimmer. One indicator of the difficulties that lie ahead is National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice's comment in Tel Aviv in mid-May 2003. Ms. Rice said that the "security of Israel is the key to the security of the world." As one close observer of right wing influence on U.S. policy put it, this goes far beyond even the "neocon claim that the security interests of the U.S. and Israel are identical."<sup>49</sup>

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup>For history of Zionist conquest and occupation, see Norman Finkelstein, "Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict," for documentation of specific acts of Zionist terrorism, e.g., letter bombs, kidnapping, bombing cafes, theaters, markets, see Issa Nakhleh's "Encyclopedia of the Palestine Problem," pp. 65-230.

<sup>2</sup>Stephen Green, "Taking Sides: America's Secret Relations with a Militant Israel," pp. 38-40.

<sup>3</sup>Baylis Thomas, "A Concise History of Israel," p. 93, note 39.

<sup>4</sup>Green, "Taking Sides," p. 40.

<sup>5</sup>Written by Prof. Yehuda Lapidot, on the Irgun Website: <http://www.etzel.org/english/index.html>.

<sup>6</sup>Thus, according to Irgun accounts, when the attack took place on July 22, the Haganah had officially withdrawn its approval.

<sup>7</sup>According to the Irgun, from the time of the first call at 12:10 pm, 22 minutes were allowed for the evacuation.

<sup>8</sup>R. Curtiss in The Washington Report on Middle East Affairs: [www.wrmea.com/backissues/031885/850318011.html](http://www.wrmea.com/backissues/031885/850318011.html).

<sup>9</sup>Livia Rokach, "Israel's Sacred Terrorism," pp. 5-6.

<sup>10</sup>Rokach, "Israel's Sacred Terrorism," p. 11.

<sup>11</sup>Rokach, "Israel's Sacred Terrorism," p. 13.

<sup>12</sup>Rokach, "Israel's Sacred Terrorism," p. 13.

<sup>13</sup>Rokach, "Israel's Sacred Terrorism," p. 29.

<sup>14</sup>Rachel Corrie in e-mail to her family, cited in Harper's "This Happens Every Day," June 2003.

<sup>15</sup>Green, "Taking Sides," pp. 94-123.

<sup>16</sup>"A dangerous liquidation," in Yediot Achronot, Nov. 25, 2001.

<sup>17</sup>Donald Neff, "Warriors at Suez: Eisenhower takes America into the Middle East," p. 33.

<sup>18</sup>Ehud Ya'ari, in Rokach, "Israel's Sacred Terrorism," p. 62.

<sup>19</sup>Rokach, "Israel's Sacred Terrorism," pp. 39-40.

<sup>20</sup>Rokach, "Israel's Sacred Terrorism," p. 47.

<sup>21</sup>Rokach, "Israel's Sacred Terrorism," p. 47.

<sup>22</sup>D. Neff, "Warriors at Suez," pp. 365-68 and 371-76.

<sup>23</sup>Nasser Aruri, Preface in "Israel's Sacred Terrorism," p. xiv.

<sup>24</sup>Rokach, "Israel's Sacred Terrorism," p. 22.

<sup>25</sup>Rokach, "Israel's Sacred Terrorism," p. 26.

<sup>26</sup>N. Aruri, Preface in "Israel's Sacred Terrorism," pp. xiv-xv.

<sup>27</sup>Rokach, "Israel's Sacred Terrorism," p. 59, Note 6.

<sup>28</sup>Rosemary Sayigh, in "Too Many Enemies: The Palestinian Experience in Lebanon," writes that 110,000 Palestinians were forced to flee northern Palestine in 1948, and the PLO was forced to relocate to Lebanon from Jordan in 1970-71.

<sup>29</sup>Noam Chomsky, "The Fateful Triangle," 1983 edition, p. 191.

<sup>30</sup>Chomsky, "The Fateful Triangle," p. 191.

<sup>31</sup>Oded Yinon, "A Strategy for Israel in the Nineteen Eighties," published in Hebrew in "Kivunim," Feb. 1982, by the World Zionist Organization, Jerusalem, and in English as "The Zionist Plan for the Middle East," by the Association of Arab-American University Graduates, with Foreword by Israel Shahak. Available at: [www.geocities.com/roundtable\\_texts/zionistplan.html](http://www.geocities.com/roundtable_texts/zionistplan.html).

<sup>32</sup>Shahak, Foreword in "The Zionist Plan."

<sup>33</sup>Stephen Sniegoski, "The War on Iraq: Conceived in Israel," Feb. 2003, at: [www.thornwalker.com/ditch/conc\\_toc.html](http://www.thornwalker.com/ditch/conc_toc.html).

<sup>34</sup>For discussion of the estimates, see Benny Morris, "Righteous Victims," p. 727, fn. 247.

<sup>35</sup>Chomsky, "The Fateful Triangle," pp. 198, 199.

<sup>36</sup>Chomsky, "The Fateful Triangle," p. 200.

<sup>37</sup>Stephen Green, "Living by the Sword: America and Israel in the Middle East 1968-1987," p. 155.

<sup>38</sup>Green, "Living by the Sword," pp. 155, 156.

<sup>39</sup>David Shipler, The New York Times, April 18, 1981, quoted in Green, "Living by the Sword," p. 157.

<sup>40</sup>Confidential State Department telegram, July 16, 1981, cited in Green, "Living by the Sword," p. 158.

<sup>41</sup>Green, "Living by the Sword," p. 161.

<sup>42</sup>Green, "Living by the Sword," p. 162.

<sup>43</sup>Green, "Living by the Sword," p. 163.

<sup>44</sup>Green, "Living by the Sword," p. 164.

<sup>45</sup>Neve Gordon, "Can bad fences make good neighbors," Guardian Weekly, May 29-June 4, 2003.

<sup>46</sup>See Jeffrey Blankfort, "AIPAC Hijacks the Roadmap: How Israel's U.S. Lobby Is Stacking the Deck," May 27, 2003 on the web: <http://www.counterpunch.org/blackfort05272003.html>.

<sup>47</sup>Benny Elon, Israel's tourism minister, in Jordan Times, Feb. 7, 2003: "We must not fear bringing up again the idea of a transfer and of open discussion of the various possibilities that it offers."

<sup>48</sup>Quoted in Ralph Schoenman, "The Hidden History of Zionism," p. 10.

<sup>49</sup>Stephen Sniegoski, e-mail head note to news article in Jewish Press: "Rice: Israel's Security Is Key to World Security," May 18, 2003 ([www.jewishpress.com/news\\_article.asp?article=2380](http://www.jewishpress.com/news_article.asp?article=2380)).

## Correction

In the April-May 2003 issue of *The Link*, we reported that CBS "60 Minutes" commentator Mike Wallace attended the funeral service of Dr. Fayez Sayegh. Mrs. Sayegh has informed us that Mr. Wallace did not attend the service, but he did send a note of condolence in which he said: "Like so many others, I too had infinite admiration for him; he was my early mentor; a man who opened my eyes to some of the realities I'd been unaware of in the Middle East."

In the print issue of *The Link*, pages 14 and 15 list books available from AMEU. Because AMEU's entire current catalog of books is available on this website, the partial listing is not repeated here.

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