

Humphrey Goes To The Middle East

By John Law

Humphrey, a well-meaning but aggressively obtuse and monumentally uninformed fellow who used to drop into my office from time to time to pick my brains on the Middle East, came striding in the other day for the first time in more than a year.

Q. Okay! Now I'm gonna tell ya what the situation is *really* like out there. Ya see—

A. I'm fine, thank you, Humph, and so is my wife. My dog's fine, too, as a matter of fact. I appreciate your asking.

Q. Huh? Anyhow, like I said, I've been out there, and it's just nothing like the way ya always told me it was. I mean, there was this waiter I was talking to in Tel Aviv, and he told me—

A. This is a guy I just can't believe!

Q. Whaddya say?

A. Er, I said, uh, where did you fly besides Tel Aviv?

Q. Fly? Well, I went all over Israel, mostly by car. Ya know, Jerusalem, then all along the coast, up into, um, Galley Lee, into the desert and to that place in the south, Eli something—

A. Elath?

Q. Yeah. Just about everywhere. You name it.



A. I think I'll have to. Did you go to any of the Arab countries while you were over there?

Q. Gee, I didn't really have that kind of time. It was a two-week trip to Israel, with some other tourists, see. But we saw lots of Arabs. We went into the West Bank, and Gaza, and the Golan Heights—and we had really good Israeli guides who gave us a lot of history and let us in on a lot of inside stuff.

A. Hmmm. So what conclusions did you draw after all that research, Humph? How did I steer you wrong?

Q. Boy, in just about everything. I mean, all that stuff about how the Israelis have been beating up on the Arabs for all these years, when everyone over there knows—people

who *live* there, for goshsakes—that it's the hundreds of millions of Arabs who've been making it impossible for the little country of Israel to have peace. Peace is really all the Israelis want. I heard 'em talk about this all the time.

A. Humphrey, that's all very moving, and I have no doubt that if you also asked Americans, Russians, Chinese, Bolivians, Australians and—yes, Arabs—they would all tell you that all they really want is peace.

Q. Sure, but some people ya can believe, and others—

A. I think that when people say they want peace, they generally mean it. The thing is, they always want peace *and* something else. When they find they can't get the "something else" without fighting, they often just go

About This Issue

The Link welcomes to its pages John Law and his acquaintance, Humphrey, a strikingly different personality.

The first time Humphrey found his way into John Law's office was in 1982. Their feisty "conversations" over the next two years became a popular feature of the *Washington Report on Middle East Affairs*—a publication created by John and published by the American Educational Trust.

For more than a year Humphrey has been incommunicado. Now it turns out that he has just returned from the Middle East, of all places.

Elsewhere, as we go to press, another Humphrey is heading haplessly up the Sacramento River in California. Spectators along the river sport T-shirts which read: "Turn Humphrey Around," yet all efforts to reorientate the real live humpback whale have proved frustrating.

John Law understands the importance of his own efforts. For most of his professional life, including 21 years, from 1953-1974, when he served as chief Middle East correspondent for *U.S. News and World Report*, John has been reaching out to properly orient the Humphrey in all of us.

Our book selection, *Arafat: Terrorist or Peacemaker?* by Alan Hart, is reviewed on page 15 by former U.S. Congressman Pete McCloskey.

The next issue of the *The Link* will focus on the U.S.-Israeli-South African connection.

John F. Mahoney,
Executive Director

ahead—hoping that peace will return soon. For example, there are peace-loving people who try to overcome injustice, and end up going to war to do it. That's not the best way, of course. People should redress grievances another way, if they have an alternative. Sometimes they think they don't have one, so they go to war. That's what we did in 1776, when we had our revolution.

Q. So now yer gonna tell me that the Arabs are just like us—that they started a war for justice! Boy, that's really rich!

A. No, right now I'm going to tell you something else: the Arabs didn't start the war. The Israelis did.

Q. What? Hey, man, that's crazy—when did the Israelis start a war?

A. A very long time ago—but if we have to pick a date, how about 1905? That's when the Zionists—who didn't become Israelis until later, of course—held a congress in Basle, Switzerland, and decided to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine. This amounted

to a declaration of war against the Palestinian people.

Q. Come off it! That was just a piece of paper, and—

A. You're right. The actual fighting didn't start right away. But it did turn out that the Zionists weren't bluffing. Jewish settlers had already begun drifting into Palestine during the nineteenth century, and at the time of the Basle Congress formed five percent of the population and owned one percent of the land. Later, more and more Jews from Europe began going there, and after the British got control of Palestine at the end of World War I and supported the Zionist drive for a homeland in that country, they began arriving in much greater numbers. By 1920 they formed just under ten percent of the population, and owned two percent of the land.

Q. So what? That wasn't very much, and—

A. That's true. But the trend was clear and to Palestinians it looked like the thin edge of the wedge. They

weren't all that happy about being forced to share their country with uninvited strangers from Europe, and began to resist.

Q. So if the war didn't really start in 1905, when did it start?

A. Okay, so let's make it 1920. That's the year of the first sizeable demonstration of Palestinian resistance, when more than half a dozen Jews were killed during fighting at a Zionist settlement in a place called Tel Hai. So I guess you could say that the Palestinian-Zionist war has been going on in one form or another ever since.

Q. But for heaven's sake, Palestine belonged to the Jews, didn't it? I mean, they got kicked out 2,000 years ago, and—

A. Are you a fundamentalist, Humph?

Q. Whaddya think I am, some kind of a terrorist nut?

A. This guy is a dunce!

Q. What was that? I wish ya wouldn't mumble!

A. Uh, I said: Try, just for once—uh, not to get so excited. It can't be good for your blood pressure.

Look, you believe the Bible is a holy book that acts as a spiritual guide, don't you? That is, you don't think it was meant to be some sort of real estate guide for the 20th century—

Q. No, but—

A. Good. Now listen carefully. We're talking about people, and human suffering, and human rights. Yes, the Jews did have to leave Palestine 2,000 years ago. But those aren't the Jews of today! Those Jews are long gone from this world, and it is their great-great-great-great-etcetera-grandchildren, who were born in Europe and other countries around the world, who began swarming into Palestine during our era. These Jews were not really "returning," because they never lived there. And they had no right to move in on another country whose people not only were born there but whose ancestors were there before the original Jews and, for that matter, had never left.

Q. Now wait a minute—ya can't give me that stuff. I've learned a lot since we last met. I mean, the Jews were there first, long before those Muslims invaded and took over Palestine—

A. Whoa! The native population of Palestine, the Palestinians, are not the descendants of just the Arab Muslims, who conquered the country in the seventh century. The Palestinians of today are what you could call the cumulative stock of all the races that have ever lived in Palestine, and that includes not just the Arabs but the Canaanites, who had been living there for thousands of years before the Jews arrived. In fact, the Bible calls Palestine the land of Canaan. But I guess you'd just momentarily forgotten this, hadn't you, Humph.

Q. Well, uh, yeah, sure. But I still don't see what was wrong with the Jews coming in and settling in a place that was so barren and had so few people in it. Say, what're ya holding your head for?

A. Was I? Sorry—just a slight twinge of pain in my neck.

This is one of the oldest Zionist myths, Humph. It obviously suited the early Zionists to propagate this idea, because it made what they were planning to do seem harmless. But even in 1920, Palestine had a substantial population considering its small size—about like Maryland—57 people per square mile, which was a lot more than the 35 people per square mile that the United States had at that time. Of course, the U.S. had a lot of very sparsely populated areas, especially out West. But so did Palestine, with its large Negev desert. Most of the inhabitants were clustered into the more arable areas, and into the port cities.

Q. Hey, how come ya remember those figures? Ya could be just making 'em up out of yer head—

A. I'll pretend I didn't hear that. These are basic statistics needed for an understanding of what happened in Palestine, and when you've been immersed in this subject for 40 years, as I have, you remember the important ones. On the other hand, as the great sage Casey Stengel used to say, "You could look it up."

Q. Okay, but ya gotta admit that all those Arabs didn't do much with the land, until the Jews came in—

A. Oh, yes—the "barren" land you were talking about. This is an integral part of the myth. It's just amazing how widely this myth has been believed,

when you think of the overwhelming documentary evidence showing how productive Palestinian farmers were—in periods going back long before any Jewish immigrants had arrived. Many centuries ago, geographers were writing about Palestine's olive oil, citrus fruits, apples, grapes and sugar cane, and in the 19th century foreign consuls wrote voluminous reports noting the extent of Palestine's agriculture and the skill of its farmers. A few years ago, Professor Buhairi of the American University of Beirut went to London and read through the British Foreign Office's records of the annual trade reports from British consuls in Jerusalem during that period, and got his findings published in the *Journal of Palestine Studies*. You could look that up, too. These reports show that there was not only an impressive amount of agricultural production but that there was a flourishing export trade. For example, you can find statistical tables detailing exports from the port of Jaffa of a whole range of products—including, of course, the already famous "Jaffa oranges" that the Israelis have tried to identify as an "Israeli" product in recent years. The tables show the exports going all over the world, mostly to—

Q. Statistics! Boy, is that stuff boring.

A. Sure, why bother with all that junk when you can get all you need from an Israeli guide?

Q. Ah, c'mon. I'm telling ya, these guys were really sharp. Anyhow, what about this war ya said the Zionists started when they began moving into Palestine—I mean, if the Palestinians outnumbered 'em so much, why couldn't they just kick 'em out?

A. You're forgetting that the Palestinians were not their own masters at that time. The Jewish immigrants who arrived were coming in under the protective umbrella of the British, who were one of the superpowers in those days and who controlled Palestine under a mandate from the League of Nations. The British had promised the Zionists in the famous "Balfour Declaration"—one of your guides must have told you all about that, no?—that they could have a national home there.

Q. So why didn't the Brits just give

it to 'em?

A. For one thing, the British weren't exactly sure just what they themselves meant by a Jewish homeland. The official vision, at first—however much it may sound like pie in the sky—was that Palestine would be a place where Jews and Palestinians would live in harmony together with a growing number of Jewish immigrants bringing in ideas, technology and capital—things that would be welcomed by the Arabs. Palestine might even be allowed to have a Jewish majority, as immigration went its course. But one thing the British were sure of was that they did *not* mean there should be a sovereign Jewish state which did not have the consent of the Palestinians.

The Zionist leaders, who were based in London, went along officially with the vague concept of Jews immigrating to Palestine to live in a "home" that would be essentially cultural and religious and would bring benefit to both Arabs and Jews. But the Jews on the ground made no bones about what *their* objective was, and it was quite different. They wanted to have their own sovereign state—one which would be essentially for Jews, and controlled by Jews. And they wanted this whether the Palestinians liked it or not. The Palestinians knew that this was the real Jewish goal, and as time went on, so did the British administrators.

Q. So how did everyone know?

A. The Zionists in Palestine made no secret of it—in fact, they were confrontational and provocative about it. They were somewhat like the Jewish settlers in the West Bank today, who don't give a hang about the pronouncements from the Israeli government over efforts for a "territorial compromise" with the Arabs on the West Bank. The settlers just go ahead calling the area by its biblical names of Judea and Samaria, digging in, spreading out when they can, and bashing any Palestinians who say they don't have a right to be there.

Q. So what'd those early settlers do?

A. From the very beginning, they began "creating facts," Humph—a favorite expression of the Israelis for such activities in the West Bank. Only in those days I think the Zionist leaders were calling them *faits accomplis*. What

they did was to found agricultural settlements for the immigrant Jews wherever they could, and not necessarily in the places which were best for farming. In fact, suitability for farming often was secondary to strategic location. You see, the Jewish National Fund, which had acquired about 90 percent of all the land that had been bought by Jews, had a master plan for settlement that included placing Jews in areas where no Jews had lived for centuries, if ever—for example, in Beersheba, and in parts of the Negev desert. The idea was that when the time came to make the push to have their sovereign state—and they were planning in terms of having it in *all* of Palestine—they would have a good argument for including those areas, too, because, after all, there were Jews there! Doesn't that sound familiar?

Q. Um. But who says they planned this, er, fetta con peas thing—

A. The *faits accomplis* idea? Oh, that's on the record. The former chairman of the Jewish National Fund during that period, Abraham Granott, wrote it all in a book a few years ago. Hop down to your library if you want more details.

Q. Mebbe I will. So what did the Jewish immigrants do that was so provocative?

A. Well, just arriving in such numbers, and competing for jobs and land with the Palestinians was a good start. But the way they went about it rubbed salt in the wounds. You see, according to the rules set up by the Jewish National Fund, Jewish settlements leased from the fund—which meant practically all of them—were permitted to hire Jewish labor only. So you had settlements being set up right next to Palestinian villages with unemployed agricultural workers in them, who were kept from working at the settlement. It was made clear to the Arabs that the Zionist version of a "home" was one of strict exclusivity.

Religion became a provocation, too. For centuries, Jews had lived and worked peaceably beside Arab Muslims and Arab Christians in Palestine. But when the militant Jews began arriving in droves, determined to carve out a state, they included religious zealots as well

as secular Zionists. The zealots increasingly made an issue of religious turf, in places where a *modus vivendi*—since you know French I guess you know Latin, too, Humph—where a *modus vivendi* had been in effect for centuries. The zealots stirred things up, and this led to violent eruptions—

Q. Wait, are ya trying to tell me that the Palestinians had nothing to do with the violence?

A. Nossir. There were atrocities committed on both sides. But it was the Jewish immigrants who were the interlopers, not the Palestinians.

Q. So what were the Brits doing all this time?

A. First they were just trying to keep the Jews and Palestinians from attacking each other, and then they got caught up in the fighting themselves. But it was an educational experience. Eventually they learned that there was no way the Palestinians could accept either being a minority within a Jewish state or having a large portion of Palestine handed over to the Jews for a state of their own.

Q. How'd they learn that?

A. They learned it the hard way. Didn't we agree that the battle for Palestine began in 1920? Well, it started small, but it kept growing, particularly as the number of Jewish immigrants kept going up. It began to look to Palestinians as though the British would allow the immigrants to keep coming until they formed a majority—and they knew what that would mean, even if the British didn't seem to. In the mid-30s the Palestinians boiled over and carried out a guerrilla war against the British that lasted until the beginning of World War II.

Q. But did the Brits take this, like, guerrilla war, seriously? I mean—

A. They certainly did. They took it so seriously that they backed off officially from the idea that there could ever be a single state with Jews in the majority. So they then proposed partition of Palestine with two different states—an Arab and a Jewish one. But this just made the Palestinians boil up even more, so the British backed down from this, too. Finally, in 1939, they announced in what they called a "white paper" that their new objective was to create an independent Palestine state

within ten years, in which power would be shared in accordance with population—and that severe limits would be put on Jewish immigration that would leave the Palestinians with a two-to-one majority.

Q. Why did they back down in the face of the Palestinians? Weren't the Palestinians putting up a Mickey Mouse kind of so-called resistance?

A. Humph, you really have a pert way of putting things, don't you? If I were a Palestinian, I'd probably be punching you in the snout, right now.

Q. Aw, for heaven's—

A. Don't worry, I'm neither Palestinian, Jewish nor British, so you can say what you want.

Look, I don't think any kind of fight where people are killing each other has anything "Mickey Mouse"-ish about it at all. But in any case, the British were faced with a situation where it became very clear to them that Palestinians were willing to die, in large numbers, to gain their freedom and independence. During the three years starting in 1936—the period the British referred to as the "Arab revolt"—the Palestinians lost more than 5,000 dead and had about 20,000 wounded. Since there were only about one million Palestinians altogether at that time, that would mean—let's see, 5,000 times 240—that would be the same as about one million, two hundred thousand Americans being killed right now. That's 20 times more than the number of soldiers that were killed in Vietnam over ten years.

Q. Okay! So it wasn't Mickey-Mouse-ish. Anyhow, whenna we gonna start talking about Israel? Who needs all this history?

A. You do, butter brain—

Q. There ya go again—speak up, for goshsakes.

A. I said, too true, what a pain, er, history can be. But sometimes you need it, to really understand what happened next.

Q. So what did happen next?

A. Well, World War II pretty much put Palestine on hold as far as the British were concerned, since they had to concentrate their energies on beating Hitler. In the view of Zionists, though, Britain's 1939 "white paper" had turned Britain into the enemy—in Palestine,

at any rate. It was during the war that they decided to work on getting the United States to become the sponsor of their cause, and were enormously successful—particularly after the news came out about the holocaust. When the war was over, Britain was still convinced that allowing the Jews to reach a majority in Palestine would mean eternal bloodshed there. So they imposed their quotas on Jewish immigration into Palestine. But the Jews, with American encouragement—even connivance—kept pouring in, quotas or no quotas—

Q. As they darned well oughta have, considering what happened to 'em in Europe.

A. That's one way of looking at it. But another is that if the Jewish survivors of the German death camps wanted to get out and restart their lives somewhere else—and that is exactly what you would expect them to want to do, with the best of reasons in the world—there were a lot of other countries that could have and should have taken them in, countries with a lot more room than Palestine had, and without the same powder-keg environment. The United States, for example. But the U.S., believe it or not, allowed only 5,000 displaced persons into the country, most of them non-Jews, during the first year after the war, and did not relax the severe restrictions of our immigration laws until two years after that. In the meantime, President Truman was roundly condemning the British for not letting enough Jews into Palestine—despite British warnings that this would lead to explosions of violence.

Q. Did it?

A. I'll say! And a good part of it was terrorism directed against the British themselves, by the Jews. They kidnapped British officers, hanged British sergeants, blew up British billets, and sent letter-bombs to soldiers' relatives in London.

Q. So what did the British do?

A. They fought back, of course, but they also decided that it was a hopeless situation in which they were damned if they did, and damned if they didn't. When they tried to be fair to the Jews in the 30's, the Palestinians attacked them. When they tried to be fair to the

Palestinians in the 40's, the Jews attacked them. This last was a particularly bitter pill, since the British had just finished carrying out a key role—to say the very least—in defeating the greatest enemy the Jews ever had, Adolph Hitler. And their best ally, the United States, was now dumping on them, too. So in early 1947 Britain announced it was abandoning the mandate and turning the whole matter of Palestine over to the U.N., and it told both the U.S. and the U.N., in effect: "If you think you can do it better, go ahead." The U.N. then appointed a multinational commission to come up with some ideas, and the commission decided that the best solution was to partition Palestine into an Arab state and a Jewish state. The U.N. then agreed to the partition plan, in November, 1947.

Q. Yeah, that was the one that the Palestinians turned down! The dopes! They coulda had their own state, and they blew it!

A. Hold on, Humph. If you're going to understand anything at all about what's been happening for the past 35 years or so, you've got to try to understand this: The Palestinians were not prepared to accept the principle that the United Nations could decide, without getting their consent or even asking them, that part of their country should be given away to a minority group composed mainly of European immigrants who had entered the country, also without the consent of the Palestinians, only recently. Is that too complicated for you?

Q. No, but—

A. Let me finish, because this next point is very important: The U.N. was not telling the Palestinians that they should turn over 35 percent of their country to the 35 percent of the population that was Jewish (who owned only seven percent of the land, by the way). Nossiree. They were telling the Palestinians that they should turn over 55 percent of their country to them. Furthermore, they were ordering them to give up the best parts—the most fertile agricultural lands; the maritime plain, where the two major, and predominantly Arab port cities of Haifa and Jaffa were; as well as virtually all of the lands containing Palestine's light

industries.

To arrange for the Jews to have the most, and the best, land, the U.N. had to include a very large number of Palestinians—nearly half of the whole Palestinian population—in the Jewish-controlled state, thereby depriving them of their nationality as well as their land. This indignity was not inflicted on Jews, virtually all of whom were included in the Jewish state.

So just think a little about this, Humph—if you had been a Palestinian then, would you have been willing to lie down and let the U.N. and the Jewish community in Palestine walk all over you that way?

Q. (silence)

A. Well?

Q. No.

A. Now you're talking—

Q. But if they'd been *smart*, for pete's sake, they woulda done it anyway, because they'd sure be a lot better off than they are today.

A. Right on! The Palestinians weren't smart at all. All they were was proud, and confident that they were in the right, and that they should not give in. No, that's *not* smart. Just honest. And gutsy. It was the Zionists who were smart. They knew that by accepting the U.N. partition plan, which was scheduled to come into effect when Britain finally withdrew from its mandate on May 15, 1948, they would be getting more than half the loaf. And that by continuing to play it smart—by saying "thank you very much, that will do just fine," while all the time trying to figure out how they could get another slice—they would eventually get the whole loaf.

Q. Jeepers, I can't buy that. So what was the first extra slice?

A. They got the first extra slice even before the partition plan came into effect—in other words, even before there was an Israel. Have you ever heard of Plan Dalet, Humph?

Q. Plan Doll what?

A. Dalet. That's the letter "D" in Hebrew. This was a secret plan drawn up by the Jewish army, the Haganah, and it went into operation in April, 1948. Its main objectives were to not only secure, *before* May 15, all the territory that was to be awarded to the Jewish state, but also capture as much

of the territory of the designated Arab state as possible, for supposed “security” reasons. By May 15, they had already added a lot more on—including Western Galilee, where they went around destroying Arab villages—to what had been awarded to them by the U.N.

Q. How’d ya know about this plan Dolly—

A. A colonel in the Haganah, by the name of Netanel Lorch, spilled it all in a book a few years ago. By the way, Humph, this period before May 15 was also full of activity by the Jewish terrorist underground groups, such as Menachem Begin’s Irgun Zvai Leumi. It was during this period that Irgun carried out that famous massacre at the village of Deir Yassin, where 254 men, women and children were killed, many of them in horrible ways.

That and other acts of the same kind caused hundreds of thousands of Palestinian civilians to flee from Palestine in panic and terror during this period and later. Hundreds of thousands who were not ready to leave were given not-so-gentle pushes across the border by Jewish troops.

Q. Uh-uh—

A. I know, you’re going to tell me that the Arab states sent out radio appeals for them to leave—so as to make it easier for the Arab armies to move in and kill Jews—

Q. Yeah, that’s what one of our—

A. —guides told you. Well, that’s another old chestnut. It’s the official Israeli line, because no Israeli government wants to have it on the official record that they chased the Palestinians out because it suited the new state of Israel to have as few Arabs to contend with as possible—even though everyone knows it is true even today that Israel would prefer to have fewer Arabs. Polls make this clear, although only Rabbi Kahane and company are willing to stand up and say they should be driven out if necessary. But that’s what was done to the Arabs back in 1948.

As far as those supposed Arab broadcasts are concerned, there has never been any concrete evidence put forward by the Israeli government that proves any were ever made. On the other hand, Irish journalist and broad-

caster Erskine B. Childers spent a long time painstakingly going through all the records for 1948 of the BBC, which had monitored all Middle Eastern radio broadcasts throughout that year. He found not a single appeal to evacuate made by any Arab radio station, inside or outside Palestine. All these BBC records are available for your perusal at the British Museum, if you ever get to London, Humph.

Q. Cheez, if I got there d’ya think I’d spend my time in some museum? I mean, museums—

A. Yeah, I know—museums are boring.

Listen, Humph, all of this argument about whether the Palestinians got driven out or left voluntarily is so irrelevant anyway—because the main point is that the Israelis took over their homes and other property and then would never allow any of them *back*. Does it make any sense that even if people had run away during a dangerous war—even if it were not true that they had been driven out—that this would mean it was okay not to allow them to come back again? Yet this has been the case now for 37 years—with each refugee Palestinian neither being permitted to come back nor even being given compensation if he or she decides not to.

Q. So tell me what happened after May 15. I think I know—all those huge Arab armies came pouring into Israel to beat up on the new state, and got their butts knocked off. But I’d like to hear your version.

A. Wouldn’t you prefer to hear the *correct* version? A lot of these things aren’t just matters of opinion, you know. It’s a question of knowing the facts, or not knowing them—

Q. Quit it—ya sound just like a crummy teacher I had in high school, always preaching about facts, facts—

A. It sure hurts when the facts get in the way of a good myth, doesn’t it, Humph. Anyhow, my compliments for not having used the phrase “driving the Jews into the sea.”

One fact you should learn about what happened after May 15 is that those “huge Arab armies” you talked about were nowhere to be seen in Palestine. The troops from the Arab countries were actually both out-

numbered and outgunned by the Israelis—

Q. You’re nuts—

A. Another happy myth destroyed, eh? Sorry, Humph. But the facts are that practically all such reports came from Israelis and supporters who wanted to build up the David-versus-Goliath image to add sympathy for Israel in world opinion, and also to try to justify Israel’s going after more Arab territory as a buffer against being “driven into the sea.” They were helped in making this myth appear credible by the fact that the surrounding Arab countries really were much bigger than Israel and really did have much larger standing armies. But most of those troops stood at home, and never got to Palestine. For one thing, the distances some of them had to go were considerable; there was no unified command—

Q. Get to the point, will ya? So how do ya figure that the Israelis outnumbered the Arabs—

A. Well, I didn’t figure it—American military experts did. Officers from U.S. Army Intelligence, in a special briefing given to the U.S. Chief of Staff a couple of months after May 15, said that Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Jordan and Lebanon had brought a total of no more than 20,000 troops into Palestine or up to its borders. They estimated there were about 13,000 Palestinian guerrillas operating inside Palestine, making a total of 33,000 Arab fighters altogether. But they put the number of Jewish troops at 40,000 regulars and 50,000 militia—which works out to nearly three times the number of Arab forces. Maybe we should’ve been talking about the “huge Israeli armies,” no? By the way, the officers also believed the Israelis had the advantage in strength, training, combat experience, and reserves of arms and ammunition.

Q. I still say you’re crazy. How could ya know what U.S. Army Intelligence told the U.S. Chief of Staff in what musta been a secret briefing?

A. Oh, you can find this in the U.S. Archives, Humph. You’re right—it *was* secret, but it’s now been declassified. Stephen Green, when he was writing a book on the region not long ago, got

hold of the report through the Freedom of Information Act.

Q. Anyway, the Israelis whipped 'em, and according to you, got another slice of Palestine, right?

A. Call it a couple more. They didn't get all they wanted, but by the time the armistices were signed in 1949, they had control of 78 percent of Palestine—nearly half again as much as the 55 percent they were awarded by the U.N. They now had everything except East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza—all of which they had tried but failed to get before international pressures for an armistice had become too strong. At the time of the armistice Jordanian troops, along with Palestinians, were still in control of East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and Egyptian troops were holding Gaza.

Q. Did the Israelis call these borders final?

A. They never actually said they did in so many words, but they kept implying it.

Q. How?

A. Well, for the next nearly 20 years, Israeli spokesmen kept saying that all they asked of the Arabs was recognition of Israel's right to exist, and for the Arabs to sit down and sign a peace treaty. The implication was very clear that they were asking the Arabs to sign a peace treaty in which the Arabs would accept Israel's borders of that time. It would hardly have made much sense for the Israelis to be suggesting that the Arabs sit down with them so that they could be asked by Israel to hand over more land. And neither I nor any of the other Western correspondents I knew who heard Israeli spokesmen make this pitch during all those years ever thought they were suggesting this.

Q. But wouldn't those borders have been a good deal for the Arabs? Why didn't they take it?

A. It might sound like a good deal if we look at it with today's knowledge of how things turned out.

But at the time, the Arab governments still believed, as did the Palestinians, that it was wrong to have a Jewish state—that Palestine should be one country, where Jews, Christians and Muslims could live together. To these governments, the existence of Israel

as a Jewish state was a theft of Arab land, pure and simple.

Q. For goshsakes, people have to learn to *compromise*—

A. Sure, but you also have to learn what a compromise *is*. The Israelis weren't offering any kind of a compromise. The only thing they were offering was not to take over any more Palestinian land. Big deal. Supposing, Humph, an armed stranger broke into your house, kicked you out of the living and dining rooms, and then told you he would allow you and your family to keep inhabiting the bedrooms as long as you signed a piece of paper recognizing that the living and dining rooms belonged to him. The reason it rightfully belonged to him, he tells you, was that his great-great-grandfather had once had a house in that very same spot. If you signed that piece of paper, would you feel that this was a reasonable thing to do—that you were making a compromise?

Q. Cheez, ya sure know how to get people all confused—

A. De-confuse yourself, my friend, because although true, all I just told you is irrelevant to the situation that actually existed during those 20 years after the 1948 war. You see, there is no way the Arabs would have got any such deal like the one the Israelis seemed to be proposing. All that talk by Israeli leaders implying they would settle for recognition of their current borders was just poppycock.

Q. Pop—

A. Why don't you just call me John, Humph. I know I'm quite a bit older than you, but—

Q. Aw, cut out the dumb jokes, will ya? Besides, I'm 46—

A. As I said, son, the Israeli talk about wanting the Arabs to sit down and sign a peace treaty was strictly PR, to show the world how peace-minded they were and how intransigent were the Arabs. The Israelis were perfectly aware of how the Arabs felt, and were positive they would never accept the offer. If they had thought the Arabs might, they never would have made it—and in any event probably had a contingency plan to slither out of the commitment if their bluff had been called.

For the truth is, the leaders of Israel

did *not* consider their current borders to be their final ones, and were determined to find and exploit opportunities to take over the rest of Palestine eventually.

Q. How can ya say that? I told ya before, I can't buy that garbage—

A. Was it your waiter or one of your guides who told you this was garbage? The truth is, there are a number of ways that this can be documented. Perhaps the best is to read the diaries of Moshe Sharett, a former Israeli prime minister and foreign minister during part of the period we're talking about. I guess I can't blame you for not having done this, though. The only edition is in Hebrew—now virtually impossible to obtain in any case, after Israeli authorities realized how terribly incriminating it was to Israel—while an English-language book of excerpts from the diaries by the late Israeli journalist Livia Rokach has not had very wide circulation—

Q. Boy, ya sound more like my boring high school teacher every minute—

A. Okay, I'll get to the point. What Sharett wrote in his diaries makes it clear that the people who were running Israel in the years after the '48-'49 fighting thought about little else other than of finding ways to create pretexts that would allow them to take over more Arab territory. Provoking incidents with the Arabs was their main weapon, with which they tried to create situations that would either give them the excuse to carry out a preemptive strike or, better yet, lure the Arabs into starting a war—since the Israelis were confident they could win.

Q. That's easy for *you* ta say, because ya know I'll never be able to read those diaries—

A. Wrong again, Humph. I think that what's in these diaries is so vitally important that I always keep a copy of the Rokach book on my desk, and I'm going to read you excerpts right now. Hold on a moment.

Q. (*silence*)

A. Let's see, here's a very revealing one written when he was foreign minister. I quote:

I have been meditating on the long chain of false incidents and hostilities we have invented, and on the many clashes we have pro-

voked which cost us so much blood, and on the violations of the law by our men—all of which brought grave disasters and determined the whole course of events and contributed to the security crisis.

Q. Hey! That sounds as though he didn't like it—

A. He didn't. But as foreign minister he had very little power to do anything about it. David Ben-Gurion, as hawkish as they come, was prime minister, and the chiefs of the armed forces and intelligence services did pretty much what they wanted.

Q. Does he mention what some of these, like, false incidents were?

A. He sure does! Here's one that occurred on December 11, 1954, when the military said five Israeli soldiers had been abducted from Israeli territory and taken to Syria. But Sharett wrote this in his diary:

Our soldiers have not been kidnapped in Israeli territory by Syrian invaders as the army spokesman announced . . . They penetrated into Syria and not accidentally but in order to take care of a wire tapping installation that was connected to a Syrian telephone line.

Q. So what happened then?

A. The Israelis carried out a "retaliation." Now you'd better hold your hat, Humph. Say, how come you don't have yours on? You usually do—

Q. Aw, take a walk—

A. Get this. What happened was that the Israelis carried out the *hijacking* of a Syrian airliner over Syria. It was probably the first-ever international act of air piracy—at any rate, the U.S. thought so.

Q. Ya gotta be kidding—

A. Nope. The official Israeli version, put out by the military, was that the plane had violated Israeli air space. But Sharett knew it had been hijacked by Israeli war planes shortly after its takeoff from Damascus. The plane was then forced to land at Israel's Lydda Airport, where the passengers and crew were interrogated for two days. It would have been longer—but the international commotion over the incident forced Israel to let the people go. A couple of weeks later, Sharett told his diary that he wrote the minister

of defense a letter saying—Wait a second, here it is:

It must be clear to you that we had no justification whatsoever to seize the plane, and that once forced down we should have immediately released it and not held the passengers under interrogation for 48 hours. I have no reason to doubt the truth of the factual affirmation of the U.S. State Department that our action was without precedent in the history of international practice.

Q. So ye'r saying they were trying to provoke the Syrians into a fight?

A. Sure. Didn't I tell you the Israelis were always trying to create pretexts to capture Arab territory? Let me read you a couple of things Sharett recorded concerning top-level thinking about Syria. Once, Chief of Staff Moshe Dayan told the cabinet:

If, due to internal problems in Syria, Iraq invades that country . . . we should advance militarily into Syria and realize a series of "faits accomplis."

A while later, after some of Syria's troops revolted against the regime, it was Defense Minister Pinhas Lavon who seemed to be licking his lips:

After lunch, Lavon took me aside and started trying to persuade me: "This is to move forward and occupy the Syrian border positions beyond the Demilitarized Zone. Syria is disintegrating . . . This is a historical opportunity, we shouldn't miss it."

You're looking a little sick, Humph. Want an aspirin?

Q. Anything like that about Jordan?

A. Of course! After Sharett heard an Israeli colonel lecture to a group of U.S. Zionist leaders, he wrote that these conclusions were "clear":

One, that the Army considers the present border with Jordan absolutely unacceptable. Two, that the Army is planning war in order to occupy the rest of Western Eretz Israel.

Q. Uh, how about Lebanon?

A. Yup. According to Sharett, Ben-Gurion frequently said it was important to create a Christian state in

Lebanon, by force if necessary. So did Dayan, who as early as May, 1955, said this to senior officials of the defense and foreign affairs committees:

According to him [Dayan] the only thing that's necessary is to find an officer, even just a Major. We should either win his heart or buy him with money, to make him agree to declare himself the savior of the Maronite population. Then the Israeli army will enter Lebanon, will occupy the necessary territory, and will create a Christian regime which will ally itself with Israel. The territory from the Litani (river) southward will be totally annexed to Israel and everything will be all right.

As you know, Humph, this is what Sharon tried to do more than 25 years later, and by 1978 the Israelis even had come up with a Major Haddad to be the puppet.

Q. How about Ee-ee-ee—

A. Egypt? Gosh, Humph, you shouldn't have swallowed that aspirin so fast. Sure—ideas to set up Egypt so that it would enter and then lose a war were bandied around all the time, particularly by Ben-Gurion and Dayan. But the comments I found the most interesting were made during a visit Sharett made to the President of Israel at that time, Itzhak Ben Zvi, in October, 1953:

Ben Zvi (asked if) we have a chance to conquer the Sinai and (said) how wonderful it would be if the Egyptians started an offensive which we could defeat and follow with an invasion of that desert. He was very disappointed when I told him that the Egyptians show no tendency to make this occupation task easy for us by an international provocation on their side.

Just three years later, Nasser did make an international provocation and the Israelis took advantage of it to conquer the Sinai. His provocation was actually against Britain and France, when he nationalized the Suez Canal Company which they owned and operated. But the Israelis saw a chance to exploit this crisis to grab territory and, perhaps, even topple Nasser. So they went into cahoots with the British

and the French, who wanted to get rid of Nasser, too, and who thought the Israelis could be useful. The three countries then drew up a war plan—keeping their collusion secret even from the United States—that gave each of them a role in an elaborate scenario for invading Egypt. In just a few days after the invasion began, Israel had captured not only Sinai but also Gaza.

Q. Yeah, but they got out, didn't they? That showed they never intended to hold onto those places.

A. Like heck, they didn't. I'm disappointed after all I've told you that you could still believe that kind of a fairy tale—especially since in this case the Israelis even declared openly that they planned to hold on.

Q. So why did they leave, then?

A. I guess you've forgotten that this was the time the U.S. stood up to the Israelis, Humph. The way I figure it, you must have been about 17 years old when the Suez war took place. Didn't your high school have a current events class, for heaven's sake? Anyhow, from the beginning of the war, President Eisenhower accused Israel, in public, of being an aggressor and called on Israel for a complete and immediate withdrawal. But the Israelis defied the President and said they would never leave either Gaza or the western shore of the Gulf of Aqaba in Sinai, which overlooks the straits used by ships going to and from the Israeli port of Elath. So Eisenhower finally stopped just talking tough and began acting tough. After warning the Israelis that the U.S. would invoke economic sanctions, cutting off all U.S. aid, the Israelis caved in and withdrew. They did get one thing out of their invasion, though—a private commitment from the U.S. that it would not let Egypt interfere with Israeli shipping through the straits.

Q. What I don't get is why, uh, Shah Rhett, who ya say was a dove, woulda approved the invasion of Sinai and Gaza in the first place—

A. Oh, by that time Sharett wasn't prime minister anymore—Ben-Gurion, the hawk, was back in. But as I tried to explain to you before, it wouldn't have mattered much. The hawks were so strong in the Israeli establishment that they always managed to finesse

Sharett, who was virtually powerless to stop them from doing what they wanted.

The thing the hawks wanted to do most of all was to make sure that relations between Israel and Egypt remained tense—so that nothing would inhibit an Israeli attack on Egypt when the time was ripe. So they had been very upset the year before the Suez war when they discovered that Sharett was involved in a U.S. attempt to bring Egypt and Israel into a "peace process"—although this phrase was not used in those days.

According to Sharett's diaries, a private U.S. envoy met with Nasser in Cairo—I think it was in January, 1955—then went to Israel and told Sharett that Nasser believed in coexistence with Israel and was favorable to the idea of opening peace negotiations. At about the same time, the U.S. made a proposal to Sharett calling for a U.S.-Israel security pact—by which Israel would make a commitment not to extend its borders by force, and the U.S. would commit itself to come to Israel's aid if attacked.

Q. Hey, that sounds pretty good!—

A. It did to Sharett, too—but when the powerful hawks heard about it, they came close to panic. Sharett tells us—yup, here it is—what Moshe Dayan said about the security pact idea:

We do not need 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 a freedom of action, and this is what 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 . . .

Q. Okay, but he's just talking about reprisal actions—he doesn't say anything about taking over land and holding onto it—

A. Yeah? Well, that's not what Sharett thought. Listen to these next comments of his:

The conclusions from Dayan's words are clear: This State . . . must calculate its steps narrow-mindedly and live on its sword. It must see the sword as the main, if not the only, instrument with which to keep

its morale high and to retain its moral tension. Toward this end it may, no—it *must*—invent dangers, and to do this it must adopt the method of provocation-and-revenge . . . And above all,

Be sure to listen to this next part, Humph—

Q. I *am* listening, for pete's sake—

A.

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 worth while to pay an Arab a million pounds to start a war.)

Q. Holy smoke, that kinda talk was pretty gross. But still, Nasser, Sharett said, was anxious to make peace, and—

A. That was the thing that panicked the hawks the most, Humph. How could they ever find a pretext to provoke a war with Egypt if relations between the two countries were sweetness and light? To do something about this, the Big Chief himself—David Ben-Gurion, who had been out in the desert on a sort of sabbatical for a year or so—got himself back into the government again as Defense Minister, and then went to work. He decided the easiest thing to exploit was the situation in Gaza, which had been controlled by Egypt since the 1948-49 war. Gaza had been relatively quiet for months, with only a few minor border incidents. So, he organized and then executed an unprovoked, very large and rather brutal surprise attack on an Egyptian army camp in Gaza during the wee hours of the morning of February 27, 1955—during which a lot of soldiers and civilians at the base were caught in their beds by Israeli troops who raked the buildings with automatic fire and lobbed grenades through bedroom windows. Altogether, 39 Egyptians were killed and 30 or so others wounded, if I remember correctly. The thing is, no one there was expecting anything like this, since there had been no attack remotely resembling it in magnitude since the armistice had been signed six years earlier.

Q. So what happened after that?

A. All that happened was the changing of the history of the Middle East, that's all. Nasser was humiliated and angered by the raid—particularly since he had been up in Gaza only a few days earlier, assuring the soldiers that the demarcation line with Israel would continue to be quiet, as it generally had been. Most people in our country who remember Nasser think he was an anti-Israeli fanatic from the year one. But this was not the case—he had, in fact, truly believed that a peace agreement with Israel was feasible. Overnight, though, after the Gaza raid, he became convinced that this was no longer possible. I can confirm this turn-about myself, since I interviewed Nasser at length both before the raid and afterwards. Disillusioned, he reacted by making it his primary goal to find a way for Egypt to beef up its armed forces, and ended up by making a deal with the Soviets. The arms deal, in turn, set off a whole chain of events that led to U.S. withdrawal of the aid it had promised for Nasser's Aswan Dam, the nationalization of the canal, and Israel's seizure of Sinai and Gaza.

Another byproduct of the raid was that Nasser for the first time began helping Palestinians in Gaza to form their own guerrilla units—the so-called *fedayeen*. Raids by these units into Israel, although they were no more than occasional pinpricks, eventually gave the Israelis just the pretext they wanted to enter the Suez war.

Q. Okay, now tell me what happened after Eisenhower told the bums to get out—

A. Did I hear it right? You said bums?

Q. Well, yeah, I gotta admit some of those things those guys like Ben Goo and Love-in did were pretty sick. Whaddya take me for—some sorta dumbbell? But I'm sure glad the Israeli top bananas today don't go in for that stuff—

A. Just for a moment, Humph, I really had thought—oh, well, I can dream, can't I?

Anyhow, after the Israelis got out of Sinai and Gaza they just bided their time until they got another chance to get the rest of the loaf of Palestine. It took ten years, but they never gave

up waiting and scheming.

As you remember, Humph—you were getting on for 30 by then!—they finally got their chance in 1967, when Nasser, who really did not want war with Israel then anymore than he did in 1956, gave them the perfect pretext to go for the big brass ring.

Q. How'd he do that?

A. He did that by allowing the world to get the strong impression that he was on the verge of attacking poor little Israel.

Q. But he wasn't?

A. Not on your life. He never had any intention of attacking Israel. Nasser had achieved what he thought was an important diplomatic victory—one that raised his prestige to new levels throughout the Arab world. What he didn't seem to understand was that to the rest of the world he was creating an impression of belligerence that would allow Israel to justify anything it might do—and he was very naive in not believing that if the war that he did not want was imposed on him, that he could stave off defeat.

Q. So how'd he get himself into that mess?

A. It was a set-up—a trap that he walked into. The Israelis put the first elements of the trap into place in April, 1967, when they began getting very, very tough with Syria.

Q. Syria? But what's that gotta do with—

A. Just let me tell you the story my way, Humph. It actually was on April seventh—I'll always remember that date because I was in the area then, as I was throughout the crisis leading up to and during the Six-Day War. That was the day that the Israelis shot down six Syrian fighter planes over Damascus—an unprecedented event—in the wake of a minor Syrian-Israeli incident in the demilitarized zone between the two countries. Then, in May, there were a couple of border infiltrations by guerrillas from Syria, in which there was no loss of life but which led Israel's prime minister to announce publicly that Israel might have to teach Syria a "sharper lesson than that of April seventh." On the very same day, a senior Israeli intelligence official, during a briefing to a group of Western correspondents

in Jerusalem, warned that Israel might take military measures designed to overthrow the Syrian regime.

Q. I still don't see what the heck this has gotta do with Nasser—

A. Here's what: As a result of those provocations by Israel, the Syrians became very resentful of Nasser, because they had a mutual defense pact with him and, the way they saw it, he wasn't lifting a finger to help them out. One of the reasons Nasser didn't was that ever since the Suez war, a force of United Nations peacekeepers, called UNEF, had been stationed in the Sinai in between the Egyptian and Israeli troops. This was no conciliation to the Syrians, though, and their media began taunting Nasser: accusing him of talking big while "hiding behind" the UNEF soldiers. Being called chicken was much more than Nasser, who wanted to be looked up to as the leader of the Arab world, could take. And his reaction was electrifying—

Q. So what poor slob did he decide to execute, heh, heh—

A. Humph, I like you better when you make your bloopers, than when you make your jokes, so—

Q. I never made a blue purse in my life, honest—

A. Yetch. Never mind. What Nasser did was to order UNEF out of Egypt. And to the shock and surprise of most of the world, which mistakenly thought that Nasser did not have the legal right to do what he did, UNEF actually did pack up and leave. The Israelis protested vehemently, believing—or pretending to—that this left them exposed to extermination by the vast Egyptian hordes. But Nasser felt good about it, because he was able to demonstrate to the Syrians and to any other doubting Arabs that he was not trying to hide behind anybody's skirt. And it also gave him what he thought was a big diplomatic victory.

Q. Yeah, ya said that before. But what was the big victory?

A. Well, it came from the fact that some of those UNEF units, ever since 1957, had been stationed at a base overlooking the Straits of Tiran, to make sure Israeli ships were allowed to go in and out of the Gulf of Aqaba—which the Egyptians, who thought the straits were in Egyptian territory—had

not allowed them to do before the Suez war. The opening of those straits was the only reward that the Israelis had managed to retain as a result of their capture of Sinai. With UNEF gone, the Egyptians were once again in control of the straits, and Nasser did not take long to announce that Israeli ships would be denied access. This was considered not only by Nasser but by most Arabs as a great victory—because it erased an earlier win by the Israelis. Most of the rest of the world was shocked, though, and Israel had one more ready-made excuse to hit the Egyptian gnat with its sledge hammer.

Q. Yeah, but I don't blame the Israelis for being sore—ya can't expect a country to accept being landlocked.

A. Funny you should say that, because that's just what Mr. Average-American seemed to think in 1967, and the Israelis were making so much fuss that it sounded as though their most vital artery had been cut. The fact is, though, that Israel hardly ever made use of Elath, its port on the Gulf of Aqaba. In fact, no Israeli flagship had used the straits in about two years. Virtually all of Israel's imports came through its flourishing ports on the Mediterranean—places like Haifa and Ashdod. Yet somehow or other, people seemed to forget about these ports, and the perception of the world was that Israel was being strangled.

So, because of this international perception as well as the one Israel successfully propagated about the Egyptian hordes in the Sinai, Israel had maneuvered Nasser into moving so close to the brink that all he needed was a shove or two to get him right up to the edge. But Nasser was feeling so heady with his victory that he moved the rest of the way all by himself. He transferred more troops into Sinai, called for total mobilization of his reserves, and began making bellicose statements that only just stopped short of threatening to attack but sounded as if he would welcome war, if it came—while the Israelis were telling U.S. officials in almost hysterical tones that they expected Nasser to invade at any moment.

Q. And ya don't think the guy was planning to?

A. Not for a minute. Haven't I

already explained to you it was a set-up? Right up to H-Hour, Nasser's troops in Sinai, despite all the Israeli hullabaloo, were in defensive positions. According to both U.N. on-the-ground surveys and U.S. satellite observations—all of this has been openly published since—not only were Egyptian troops in Sinai in *defensive* positions, but Israeli troops were deployed in an *offensive* order of battle. This is in addition to the fact that practically all military experts were in agreement that Israel's armed forces were vastly more powerful. Besides, all this time Nasser had a large chunk of his army—50,000 troops or so—bogged down in a five-year-old war in Yemen that he had just about given up. If he were planning on a war, why wouldn't he at least have waited until he got his troops back? And if all of that isn't enough for you, you might want to believe Abba Eban, the Israeli elder statesman who was in the thick of this whole crisis, and who acknowledged in his autobiography that he didn't think Nasser wanted war.

Q. Okay, so the Israelis attacked and caught the Arabs by surprise, right? Ya don't hafta tell me about the war—I remember it. The Egyptians got clobbered, and the Jordanians made the dumb mistake of entering into the war—when they coulda stayed put, like the Israelis wanted 'em to, and then they wouldn'ta lost the West Bank and East Jerusalem—

A. Stop! I'm sure your guides and your waiter friend in Israel repeated this litany to you every day before breakfast, along with grace—

Q. Hey, I never told ya I had breakfast with any dame called—

A. Forget it. Look, Humph, that old story about "if-only-Jordan-had-stayed-out-of-the-war" is a big crock! To begin with, King Hussein had a mutual defense treaty with Nasser, and was obliged by its terms to go to Egypt's aid when Egypt was attacked. And if he had not, his name would have been mud in the Arab world.

But what really makes this Israeli line such a crock is that it insults common sense. The Israelis—even though they kept telling the world, as I told you earlier, that everything would be okay if the Arabs only sat down with them

and signed a peace treaty—the Israelis always knew deep inside that they would never consider their state complete until they had all of the holy city of Jerusalem inside it. All those voices in the synagogue chanting "Next year in Jerusalem!" and "If I abandon thee, oh Jerusalem, let my right hand lose its cunning," and so forth, were not viewed by Zionists as academic. And look at what Dayan said when he got to the Wailing Wall in East Jerusalem, during the third day of the war: "We've now united the divided capital of Israel, the holiest of our holy places, never to leave it again," or words close to that. And then remember how even the most dovish Israelis today will tell you that East Jerusalem is the one place that they will never, never, never give up—no matter what. Do they sound like people whose leaders in 1967 would have been trying hard to make Hussein *not* do something that would give Israel the perfect excuse to take over Jerusalem?

Q. Yeah, but for crying out loud, that's just a lotta stupid guess work. Boy you sure know howta give a guy a snow job—

A. If common sense doesn't impress you, Humph, then let me try this on for size:

Israeli Air Force General Ezer Weizman, who at the time of the war was the chief of operations of Israel's armed forces, wrote later in a book—just let me get it off the shelf here, I think I have the page tabbed, here it is—he wrote about the time, just a couple of days before the war, when two army generals at Central Command Headquarters expressed their eagerness to start the war by saying to him: "This is the great opportunity to do something terrific to the Jordanians! We mustn't miss it!" I asked (one of the generals): "What do you think is the best break-through route in Sinai?" He replied, "The solution to reopening the straits is . . . to liberate Jerusalem and the West Bank." "

And how about this evidence, from an expert on the war, Robert Moskin—what do you know, here's his book on the shelf right next to Weizman's!—who was made privy to a conversation that the prime minister of Israel at that time, Levi Eshkol, had with his

wife on the evening before the war started. Eshkol was pacing the floor, talking about the casualties that would soon take place, and how unavoidable they were. At one point, he said to his wife: "You know, tomorrow there will be widows and orphans, and it's my responsibility." He paused and then added: "We will have to take it back." He wife asked: "What do you have to take back?" And the prime minister answered: "We have to take back Jerusalem."

Q. (mumbling)

A. Now who's mumbling?

Q. — always hafta be right, don'tcha—

A. No, Humph, I don't *have* to be. Can I help it if I know more about these things than you do? I ought to, since I've been involved with them so long. Here, take another aspirin. In fact, you can keep the bottle.

So, Humphrey, at the end of the war, Israel finally had control of all of Palestine—the last 22 percent of the loaf. In addition to those last slices—that is, East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza—it also had the Golan Heights and the Sinai peninsula. Not bad, for only six days work.

Since 1967, nothing much has changed with regard to the Palestinian territories they took, except that there has been much death and suffering there, and the chances that the inhabitants will ever be free of Israeli rule look increasingly doubtful. The same goes for the Golan Heights. Israel finally gave back Sinai in 1982, nearly nine years after Sadat had tried in vain to get it back by force of arms—but the price paid for Sinai by the Palestinians was extremely high. That same year, Israel broke an 11-month ceasefire with the PLO and invaded Lebanon, converting countless thousands more Palestinians to the belief that taking the diplomatic route with Israel doesn't pay off. The repercussions from this are still going on.

I could tell you lots more details, Humph. This whole period in the Middle East since 1967 has been complicated and turbulent, with a lot of ancillary factors—such as the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, for example—which we could talk about some other time. But as far as the Arab-

Israeli conflict is concerned, these past 18 years have been essentially a period of consolidation by Israel of its successful territorial takeover of all of the former mandate of Palestine, along with the use of its military might and political clout to deny the Palestinians an independent state of their own.

So instead of going into a detailed chronology, I'd be glad to answer any questions you might have, Humph. I'm sure you still have a number of myths tucked away in that curious brain of yours—

Q. Whaddya mean, what's so strange about my brain? Boy, ya really gotta nerve—

A. Well, er, I meant that you've got a brain that is bursting with curiosity about the world, Humph.

Q. Oh, yeah. Okay, but from now on please leave my brain outa this—

A. It usually is.

Q. Huh? Well, anyhow, I gotta question. Sounds ta me like when ya were talking about Sinai a moment ago, ya were sorta dumping on Camp David. I mean, wasn't that the greatest—

A. —thing since sliced bread? I know that's what most Americans seem to think, but I'm sorry to say I don't. Egypt came out of it all right, by getting the Sinai back, and if I were an Egyptian, and thinking only of nationalistic Egyptian concerns, I would probably feel good about it, too. But Camp David turned out to be a disaster for the Palestinians, and the prospects for peace in the Middle East. This is because it did not link the return of Sinai to the granting of self-determination to the Palestinians, by making one dependent upon the other. Instead, Egypt made a separate peace.

What Camp David added up to was this: It gave Menachem Begin, then the leader of Israel, the opportunity to return the territory that was the least important to him—Sinai, a desert over which he had never made any biblical claim—in return for the chance to nail down the territories he really *did* want, the West Bank and Gaza. With Egypt having removed itself from the Middle East military equation by having signed a peace treaty, Begin knew he could go ahead nailing things down without worrying about any problems from his southern flank. So he did.

Right after Camp David he made it crystal clear that the most the residents could expect would be a kind of limited autonomy that would allow them to handle services like garbage collection but would not give them any rights over the land. To back up his message, he began stepping up the pace of confiscation of Palestinian land on the West Bank, and of the establishment of Jewish settlements there, as well as cracking down hard on any signs of Palestinian nationalist sentiment—by doing things like firing legally elected mayors, and shutting down colleges. All of this, in turn, led to even more Palestinian resistance, and you had teenagers throwing stones at Israeli police and Jewish settlers, and sometimes getting shot and killed for doing it.

It's sad, Humph, how people in the States have been horrified, quite rightly, about black teenagers getting jailed for long terms and even killed for throwing stones at armed police in South Africa—you keep reading criticism of how awfully disproportionate the punishment is to the offense—yet somehow we hardly ever hear these comments when frustrated Palestinian kids get killed for resisting oppression in the same way.

Anyhow, the conditions have grown steadily worse as time has gone on—with the Israeli authorities getting tougher and tougher (they're now throwing teenagers into jail for indefinite terms even without charges) and with some of the Palestinians building up such a hate over what is being done to them that they're going out and killing Israelis, not just throwing stones at them. Before Camp David, the killing of an Israeli by Palestinians living in the West Bank was almost unheard of.

Q. Ya keep mentioning that biblical-claim stuff—but what about Israel's security, for crying out loud. Just about all my sources over there—

A. Sources!

Q. Yeah, ya know, my—

A. Please don't tell me. Go on.

Q. All of 'em told me about how narrow Israel used to be before they got holda the West Bank. Cripes, in one place it was less 'an ten miles wide. They say they gotta have the West Bank

to get some, ya know, "depth" to keep outa artillery range—

A. Humph, I guess I can't blame you or your—er, sources, for believing that line. President Reagan used almost those same words once at a press conference. But in this day and age, it just doesn't wash. Not when we have missiles that can travel for hundreds of miles, and planes that can cover a hundred miles in just a few minutes. Do you realize that even if Israel had all of the West Bank, that narrow point you're talking about—they call it the "waist"—would still be less than 40 miles wide? How much extra protection would this give? For all practical purposes, none.

The only way for Israel to achieve security is to offer a peace agreement that is fair to Israel and acceptable to its Arab neighbors. Borders that are "secure" don't need depth. Nobody believes that Canada's borders—even with its vastly greater depth than ten miles—would be defensible against the U.S. But that doesn't mean that Canada needs to take over Buffalo to ensure its security. The basic reason Canada's borders are secure is that the U.S. has no reason or intention to try to change them.

Give me your next myth, Humph.

Q. Aw, get lost. Hey, I notice ya haven't been talking about the PLO much. How come?

A. Well, we've spent most of the time talking about the years up to 1967, because as I've told you already it's very, very important to know that background if you're going to understand what's happening today. And up to 1967, the PLO didn't figure prominently in the picture, though it had been created three years earlier as an instrument of the Arab League. From the time of the armistice in 1949, it was the Arab states who had taken upon themselves the responsibility of representing the Palestinians in the struggle to get their land back—and for most of that time the Palestinians let them take the lead because they were so much stronger, and theoretically more capable of doing it. The turning point, though, came in 1967, when Nasser made a hash of it and ended up by letting Israel capture the rest of Palestine. The Palestinians

at that point decided that they would have to get Palestine back themselves, or no one else would do it for them. So shortly after the 1967 war, their principal guerrilla leader, Yasser Arafat, was elected by the Palestinians to be chairman of the PLO to replace the Arab League appointee who had done little but talk big and do nothing ever since the PLO was founded. With Arafat it was a whole new ball game—

Q. Yeah, Arafat began his campaign of terrorism—

A. Listen, Humph, after the debacle of 1967 the Palestinians did become frustrated, angry and militant—for the reasons I've just told you—and they did carry out organized acts of terror, which I am not suggesting that people should condone. But I would like to point out to you that aside from the fact that they looked like amateurs compared to the groups put together and led by Begin and Shamir—who when they were fighting to establish a Jewish state blew up hotels, killed people with letter-bombs, massacred villagers, and assassinated the United Nations mediator for Palestine, Sweden's Count Folke Bernadotte—aside from all this, the PLO's acts of terror and intimidation have produced far, far fewer victims than those committed by the state of Israel. I could run down a long list—including a number of things I witnessed myself—but we might have to stay here a few more hours. One of the reasons for the difference in numbers is that much of Israel's terrorism involved bombing innocent people from the air—using its air force as the Great Intimidator. Years before the 1978 and 1982 invasions of Lebanon, which were themselves exercises in terrifying overkill, Israel regularly bombed Palestinian refugee camps in southern Lebanon, often killing scores of men, women and children at a time. The Israelis once dropped bombs on some crowded apartment buildings inhabited mostly by Palestinians in Beirut and killed more than 300 people with just one raid. They also bombed Palestinian villages in the Jordan valley, not long after the 1967 war.

In Egypt, during the so-called "war of attrition" in the late 1960's, which from the Egyptian side involved lit-

tle more than occasional sniping at uniformed Israeli soldiers dug into the eastern bank of the Suez Canal, Israel used overkill to get the Egyptians to stop. This included blasting the Egyptian canal-side cities of Ismailia and Suez into ruins, and making "deep-penetration" bombings into the Nile Delta, where they once bombed an elementary school and another time a factory. Israel said both these targets were "mistaken" for army camps, but I went to the factory right after the raid—in time to see more than 90 Egyptian workmen piled up like cordwood—and it didn't look to me anything like an army camp. But it certainly made the Egyptians think more than twice about taking pot-shots at Israeli soldiers along the canal.

Q. (silence)

A. Sorry, Humph. Okay, let's get back to the PLO. For seven years after the 1967 war, the PLO pursued a policy based on the idea that the only thing Israel understood was force, and that if it was not used against them, there was no way they would get even a part of Palestine back. But it didn't work, right? Israel was far too strong. So in 1974, the Palestinian National Council, the body of Palestinians who elect the PLO leaders, decided to take stock. And, after doing so, it made a momentous decision. Do you know what it was, Humph?

Q. Nope.

A. Of course you don't. But don't feel bad—because hardly *anybody* knows! What the Council did was to vote to abandon its 25-year-old policy of insistence on having a unified secular state in Palestine where Jews, Muslims and Christians could live together on an equal footing, and make the decision to settle for a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza that would exist alongside of, but not in place of, Israel. It also decided to try to achieve this goal through diplomacy, not force. This means that the PLO accepted as long as eleven years ago the existence of Israel behind its pre-1967 borders—but most Americans don't think they've accepted it yet, and most of the rest think they only got around to doing it this year.

Q. Why the heck is that?

A. Well, it's not because the PLO

didn't try to spread the word around. I lived in Beirut then, and not only Arafat but top PLO leaders like Zuhair Mohsen, who headed the military command, were telling this to any reporters willing to listen, including me. One thing they stressed was that they were not planning to use a Palestinian state as a springboard from which to attack and take over the rest of Israel, and would be willing to submit to international guarantees. They said they would never abandon their ideal—that the best thing would be to have one state for all the people of Palestine—but that their hope would be that over the years they would eventually be able to persuade the Israelis through diplomacy that this was the better idea. I don't think they were naive enough to believe this would ever happen, but it was a way of agreeing to divide Palestine in two without seeming to be abandoning principle. A face-saver, you might say. In any case, this was a compromise offer of historic proportions—although the Palestinians preferred to call it a “voluntary relinquishment of rights,” not a compromise.

Q. Ya still haven't told me why nobody heard about this policy—

A. Because from the word go, the Israelis pooh-poohed it, treated it like a non-event, and stepped up their efforts to paint the PLO as an extremist group that couldn't be believed—blaming it for terrorist acts that had been committed by groups that the PLO had disowned; referring routinely to all PLO as “terrorists,” and discrediting its moderate leaders. The Israelis are good at this sort of thing, and it worked. When it comes to the Middle East, the media allows itself to get brainwashed quite easily.

Q. But why the heck would the Israelis wanta throw cold water on it?

A. There's nothing that looks worse to the Israelis than having world public opinion think the PLO is actually trying to be reasonable. If the world gets that idea, it might start asking Israel why it's so unreasonable for the Palestinians to have their own state, just as the Israelis have, and why the Israelis don't give up part of Palestine, if that would bring peace. By the way, Shamir made a Freudian slip to a newspaper

a while ago, saying that he wasn't afraid of the “radicalization” of the PLO—it was Arafat's “tactics” of diplomacy which were sometimes more dangerous for Israel. I don't have the clip here to show you, but I could get it for you.

One more thing: The PLO made another momentous decision last February 11, when it agreed in writing with Jordan that after the two of them succeeded in negotiating with Israel for an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, that state would agree immediately to “federate” with Jordan. This agreement to “federate,” after perhaps as little as five minutes of independence, would also be a face-saver, of course. But what it amounts to is that eleven years after agreeing to abandon its claim to all of Palestine—a non-event—the PLO has now agreed even to abandon its goal of an independent state in part of the territory of Palestine! Yet this is treated as a non-event, too. Hardly any newspaper or television reports referring to the February 11 agreement ever bring out this point. Most just say that Hussein and Arafat agreed on February 11 to “direct negotiations” with Israel. But when you come right down to it, Humph, I guess maybe it is a non-event, because I don't think Israel under any government will ever relinquish enough land—if it relinquishes

any at all—to be acceptable to either Arafat or Hussein.

Q. Say, ya haven't told me much about American policies on this whole thing, have ya—

A. No, I haven't, because to tell you how the U.S. bears responsibility for this sorry state of affairs would require us to have another conversation just as long as this one. Frankly, I've got to get home now. You must have plans, too, haven't you?

Q. Yeah, I gotta go to my travel agent and plan out another trip, 'cause I think those guys over there steered me wrong on one or two things, I gotta admit it—

A. Well, I've got to admit that to hear you say that makes me feel that our conversation was very worth while. What are you planning to tell those so-and-sos—

Q. Oh, I don't know if I'll want to listen to those guys anymore. I figure if I can get booked into a new hotel they might have some guides who are a lot sharper. Next time, I'll also probably stay about three or four weeks, instead a two, so's I can really get expert on all this stuff—

A. This guy is an absolute dolt!

Q. Whazzat?

A. Uh, I said I think I'm getting an acute cold. Would you mind passing back that aspirin bottle? I think I need it more than you do.

Book Views

Arafat: Terrorist or Peacemaker?

By Alan Hart

Sidgwick and Jackson, American Edition, 1985, 501 pp., \$19.95.

By Paul N. McCloskey, Jr.

Alan Hart's *Arafat, Terrorist or Peacemaker* is written by an Israeli sympathizer. Mr. Hart, confidant of Golda

Meir and close friend of two former Israeli Ministers of Defense, is no apologist for the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The stated purpose of his biography of Arafat is to assist Israel and World Jewry to take one more small step away from the fears engendered by centuries of anti-Semitism and the living memory of Hitler's holocaust. It is those fears which have made it so difficult

to achieve a rational approach to peace in the Mideast.

The author's primary thrust is that modern Israeli fears of the Arafat-led PLO are self-induced and exaggerated. Quoting Israeli Major General Shlomo Gazit:

The trouble with us Israelis is that we have become the victims of our own propoganda.

The Arafat portrayed by Hart, from both personal observation and dozens of interviews with Arafat's harshest critics as well as close associates, is not that of a second Adolph Hitler dedicated to extermination of the Jews. The Arafat seen by Hart is a leader of constant self-doubt, torn by the conflicts within the Arab world, constantly seeking to decide between military action and diplomatic negotiation, a man of courage tempered by warmth and sensitivity, twice tortured while a prisoner (not by the Israelis, but by the Syrians and Lebanese) whose greatest failing in the eyes of other Palestinian leaders has been an unpredictable propensity to forego collective decision-making and to rush into personal initiatives for peace whenever he sees an opportunity to do so.

Arafat as early as 1974 sought to convince his Palestinian colleagues that the price of a Palestinian homeland was recognition of the reality of Israel's existence. Had an Israeli leader in the late 1970's accepted a Palestinian state on the West Bank and in Gaza in return for recognition of Israel, the long-elusive peace process might at least have gone forward.

The tragedy was, however, that Begin came to power in Israel as Arafat rose to true leadership status in the PLO. To Begin, a Palestinian homeland on the West Bank (Judea and Samaria from his standpoint) was unthinkable; the West Bank was part of the historic birthright of the Jews, regardless of what the United Nations might have intended or acted to create.

Begin's rise to power meant there could be no political compromise on the territory taken in the 1967 War, despite U.N. Resolution 242's mandate to the contrary. From Begin's standpoint even the East Bank of the

Jordan was part of the "Eretz Israel" of his mentor, the radical Zionist, Vladimir Jabotinsky, whom David Ben-Gurion called "the Jewish Hitler."

The greatest threat to Israel's goal of West Bank and Gaza annexation then was not Palestinian military power, but acceptance of Palestinian political legitimacy. Hence, under Begin, the official description put forward of Arafat was that of a terrorist, leading a "syndicate of murderers."

Unfortunately, the murder of the Jewish Olympic team members in Munich, attacks on school children, and the recent killing of Leon Klinghoffer have been ample ammunition to buttress the contention that "all Palestinians are terrorists and Arafat is the chief terrorist."

The author's viewpoint, however, may be ascertained in several quotes:

Objectively speaking, both men (Begin and Shamir) were more authentic, more ruthless and more successful terrorist leaders than any Palestinian.

Many official Jewish leaders wanted Begin dead because he was too extreme. In Arafat's case, a few of his former colleagues wanted him dead because he was too moderate.

The story of Arafat's life and perhaps the PLO's greatest problem today is illustrated by an incident, when, as a 19-year-old student fighting as a volunteer in the first Arab-Israeli conflict of 1948, Arafat and his Palestinian colleagues-in-arms welcomed the arrival of the Egyptian army to ostensibly "help." To the Palestinians' consternation, they were told to *surrender* their arms "at the order of the Arab League." To this day, the Palestinians clearly can never be sure as to whether the Arab states are their best supporters or their greatest enemies. Certainly Arafat's thinking since 1948 has been seared with the unreliability if not possible treachery of Arab nation pronouncements of undying support for the Palestinian cause.

Arafat was recognized as a natural leader from his earliest days. Despite a small physique (5'4") and an unprepossessing personal appearance, he distinguished himself as a fighter in the 1948 War and was elected Presi-

dent of the Union of Palestinian Students in 1952, receiving as many votes as the eight other candidates put together.

Although he had the opportunity for great wealth as a contractor and construction engineer in the 1950's, Arafat was inexorably attracted to leadership in the widely-dispersed Palestinian communities outside Israel. Forbearing safety and financial security, he chose to devote most of his time to secretly organizing young Palestinians, threatened with punishment and death by both Israeli and Arab authorities. For 20 years, from 1963 to 1983, Arafat was part of a "collective leadership" of the PLO, ever at odds with itself in constantly-recurring debate between military effort and political negotiation. Arafat, at the outset, was both a leader and an advocate of stronger military effort, and in the early days of Fatah, the great effort was to provoke the imagination of the Arab masses . . . "to create a new atmosphere in which no Arab leader would dare to ignore the subject of liberating Palestine in his public speeches."

The differences between Palestinian leaders from the beginning were as enormous as the perceived humiliation they had suffered in being ousted from their country. There were many decisions which divided and brought the best of men despair, provoking bitter hatred among the losers.

These internal conflicts, coupled with the assassination of moderate leaders Issim Sartuwi, Fahd Al-Qaswasmeh, and now Alexander Odeh — all voices, like Arafat's, for recognition of Israel in return for a Palestinian homeland — demonstrate the frustration which has so often led to a choice of violence over negotiation on both sides.

Whatever may be the choices of U.S. and Israeli decision-makers in the future, the chances for the long-desired peace with justice in the Mideast can only be enhanced by an understanding of where Arafat and the PLO are coming from, an understanding richly enhanced by Alan Hart's work.

Paul N. (Pete) McCloskey, Jr., a former Republican Congressman from California, now practices law in Palo Alto, CA.

New Selection

Alan Hart, *Arafat: Terrorist or Peacemaker?*, London: Sidgwick and Jackson, American Edition, 1985, 501 pp., \$19.95. Written last year and updated this summer by a journalist familiar with both Palestinian and Israeli leadership, this biography permits Arafat and senior PLO colleagues to give their side of a modern Middle Eastern history in which they were participants on center stage and behind-the-scenes mediators in regional and international conflicts. After considering the evidence, the author challenges many popular notions and concludes that "no leader has done more than Arafat to

prepare the ground for a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict." Our price, \$12.00. See review, page 15.

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Notice

We note with sadness the death of Margaret Pennar.

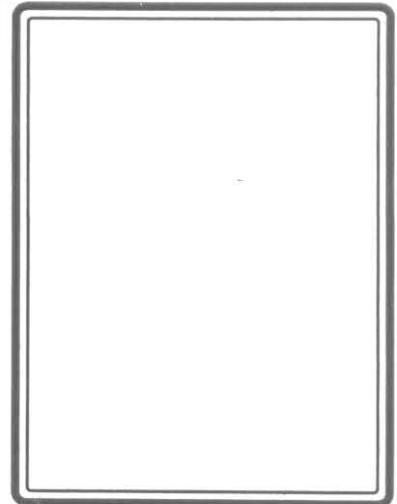
For 12 years Margaret wrote and narrated the "Arab Press Review," a news digest distributed by the Broadcasting Foundation of America. In 1983, she organized the Arab Film Series in New York City and, most recently, served as adviser for the New Arab Cinema program at Hunter College. In addition, Margaret gave generously of her efforts to aid causes and organizations involved in promoting understanding of the Arab world.

A permanent endowment to promote appreciation of Arab culture has been established in Mrs. Pennar's memory at Columbia University. Donations may be mailed to the: *Margaret Abdul-Ahad Pennar Fellowship Fund, Columbia University, Development Office, Box 400, Central Mail Room, New York, NY 10027.*

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