

My Conversation With Humphrey

By John Law

I chatted with Humphrey the other day for the first time since December 1985! I was rather surprised to see him walk into my office, because I had treated him so rudely and unfairly during our last meeting. Sure, he's got an abrasive personality. And, yes, he certainly is uninformed on public issues.

We had talked at that time about the Middle East. Most people don't know much about the topic—and why should they? They have their own lives to live and their own jobs to work at. I was determined to make it up to him if I could.

A. Hello, Humph! This is a wonderful surprise.

Q. Ya tole me you were gonna explain how American policy fits into all this Middle East stuff. Ya had the nerve to tell me that the U.S. of A. has some responsibility for the bad things that're going on out there! Boy, that's some joke!

A. Er, Humph, to explain what I meant by that, I'm going to have to give you some background on what our relations have been with the Middle East, by going back a few years.

John Law is an author, editor and journalist who has spent most of his time since 1948 covering the Middle East.



Q. For crying out loud, spit it out!

A. Sure, Humph, I'm sorry to have kept you in suspense. First, do you remember my telling you that many Arabs tend to be bitter and often very hostile towards the U.S. for what they regard as our wrong attitudes and policies?

Q. Yeah.

A. Well, it wasn't always that way. There were times when almost all Arabs truly admired the United States. For what it's worth, Morocco, an Arab country, was the first sovereign state in the world to recognize the U.S. back in 1789. Ahead of France, ahead of everybody. Then, in

the mid-19th century, when most of the Arab world was part of Turkey's Ottoman Empire, many American missionaries went there to teach. Among them were Protestant missionaries who went to Beirut, and did a lot to revive Arab interest in their own rich language and literature. The missionaries established a college, now known as the American University of Beirut, which is famous as the alma mater of thousands of Arabs who later became prime ministers, educators, doctors, lawyers, engineers, scientists, economists and business leaders in countries throughout the region. Until rela-

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All correspondence should be addressed to:
Room 241, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115.
(212) 870-2053; FAX: (212) 870-2050

About This Issue

Last time Humphrey visited John Law in the pages of *The Link* was back in December 1985. That issue proved popular, particularly with teachers.

True to his word, the inquisitive Humphrey has shown up again on John Law's literary doorstep. This time, at the prompting of one teacher, we have prepared a map of the Middle East area under discussion. (See page 4.) Our hope is that the visual aids, along with the verbal engagement, will help old Humph— and the old Humph in all of us—to better understand the complexities of America's role in the Middle East.

Another effort to clarify our role in the Middle East is by Sis Levin, wife of American Jerry Levin, the AP correspondent kidnapped in 1984. Her new book, *Beirut Diary*, is reviewed on page 14 by author and columnist Grace Halsell.

Recent book selections, available from AMEU at discount prices, appear on pages 15-16. Readers wish-

ing background information on some of the events covered in John Law's article are encouraged to read the following listed books, written by: Stephen Green on U.S.-Israeli relations; Donald Neff on the Arab-Israeli wars; and Edward Tivnan on the Israeli lobby in the United States.

We also bring to the attention of our readers the following items:

□ A 12-minute VHS videocassette, *We Are Here: A.N.E.R.A. West Bank and Gaza Projects (1989)*, is available free from American Near East Refugee Aid, 1522 K Street N.W., Ste. 202, Washington, DC 20005.

□ *The Transformation*, by Rabbi I. Domb on the subject of Zionism vs. Judaism, is available for \$16.50 from Friends of Jerusalem (American Naturei Karta), Box 1030, New York, NY 10009.

And, now, heecccceers Humphrey.

John F. Mahoney,
Executive Director

tively recent times, it was rare to find a harsh word for the United States among these people.

Q. Boy, you sure can run on! So what changed their minds?

A. By the end of World War I, the U.S. was more popular than ever. It had helped win a war that liberated the Arabs from the Ottomans. Just after the war, President Wilson enunciated his famous "fourteen points," which included a call for the right of peoples to self-determination. This fitted in well with what Arab nationalists wanted for themselves, and they hoped America could help them get it.

Q. So we didn't, and the Arabs got mad at the United States, huh? Boy, they hadda nerve, after we gottem liberated.

A. Not exactly. It was mostly the

British, along with Arab armies, who drove out the Turks, and it was the British that the Arabs got mad at, because they had reneged on the promise that the Arabs would get their freedom after the war.

Britain had made a secret deal with France—called the Sykes-Picot Agreement—to divide up the Arab world into British and French spheres of influence after the war was over. And that's what happened. The League of Nations handed out so-called "mandates" (think of them as colonies, Humph) to France in Lebanon and Syria, and to Britain in Iraq, in Palestine, and in what later became known as Jordan.

Q. How come we didn't get any mandates?

A. Because we didn't join the League, Humph. And remember, I

told you that President Wilson was calling for self-determination.

Wilson dispatched a pair of prestigious Americans (Henry Churchill King, President of Oberlin College, and business tycoon Charles R. Crane), to the Middle East to find out what the people there thought about mandates. Ironically they reported back that the people preferred independence, as promised, but that if they were going to have a mandate imposed on them, they would like the U.S. to be the mandatory power. Perhaps people in the Middle East might have thought differently if they had known that Wilson had approved Britain's Balfour Declaration, calling for a Jewish homeland in Palestine. He only supported it in private, however, resisting pressures from influential American Zionists to make a public statement.

Q. Aha! So all that talk about the power of the big, bad Israeli lobby is just baloney!

A. Whoa! I'm talking about the 1920's now. You can't compare those times with today. Political Zionism was still a minority movement among American Jews, even though it had a few powerful spokesmen like Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis. Through the early years of the century, Jews had arrived from Eastern Europe wanting to assimilate into America. As you know, there was no Israel then. Jews who knew about Herzl's idea for a Jewish state tended to be skeptical, even afraid, that its very existence might cause them to be discriminated against in their new country. Most of them seemed to be more comfortable with the "next year in Jerusalem" idea in its spiritual context rather than as a literal course of action.

This was also true in England. In fact, the only cabinet officer to vote *against* the Balfour Declaration was the cabinet's only Jew, Lord Edwin Montagu. In explaining his vote—just a sec, while I get this book off the shelf. Ah, here it is. Montagu said, "there is not a Jewish nation," only a Jewish religion, and added: "It is no more true to say that a Jewish Englishman and a Jewish Moor are of the same nation than it is to say that a

Christian Englishman and a Christian Frenchman are of the same nation."

During World War I, Zionist leaders were politically active everywhere, including in Berlin, but as the war drew to a close, London had become the focal point for their activity.

Q. Why not Noo Yawk?

A. By 1917 or 1918 it began to look pretty certain that the Allies would win the war, and that Britain would control Palestine once it was over. This is what happened, of course, making London, not Washington or Noo, ah, New York, the key player as far as the Zionists were concerned. During the period prior to World War II, however, the Zionists became very disillusioned with the British, who at first had been quite supportive of the growing immigration of Jews. As it became increasingly evident that the Zionist leadership was aiming through immigration to turn all of Palestine into a "Jewish homeland," with a minority of Arabs under their rule, the British became convinced that such an outcome would mean perpetual war.

In 1939, on the eve of the Second World War, the British announced it was "not part of their policy that Palestine should become a Jewish state," and that their ultimate objective was the establishment of an independent Palestine in which the two peoples, Arabs and Jews, would "share authority" on an equal basis. Also, a limit would be set upon Jewish immigration, after which no more immigrants would be admitted "unless the Arabs of Palestine are prepared to acquiesce in it." This was totally unacceptable for the Zionist leadership, and by World War II the Zionist leaders began looking towards the U.S. as their next focus of support.

Q. Why?

A. A good question, Humph. You always zero right in on the key point. First, the Zionist leaders saw that they could no longer count on Britain to give them the kind of Palestine they were looking for. The Zionist leaders thought the very large and influential American Jewish community could potentially get the U.S. Government to adopt this policy. They also as-

sured the U.S. would get into the war at some point. If it did, there was a good chance that the U.S. would come out of it with the most power and that Britain would be the junior partner. This would allow us to put pressure on Britain over the issue of Palestine.

Soon after World War II started, people like Chaim Weizmann, who became the first president of Israel, and David Ben-Gurion, its first prime minister, began making visits to the States—laying the groundwork. By May 1942, a few months after we had entered the war, they successfully arranged a conference at the Hotel Biltmore in New York City, attended by 600 American Jews and 76 visiting Zionists, including Weizmann and Ben-Gurion. The conference approved a set of principles that became known as the "Biltmore Program." Can you figure out why they named it the Bilt —

Q. Wow, cut it out!

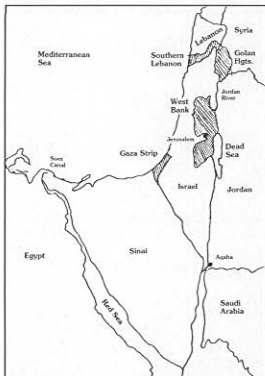
A. Sorry, Humph, just a joke. The Biltmore Program rejected the British limitation on Jewish immigration, and called for the establishment of Palestine as a Jewish state. This went beyond the Balfour Declaration, which recommended a National Jewish Home *in* Palestine, but did not suggest that *all* of Palestine should become the Jewish National Home. Big difference, right?

A few months later, the World Zionist Organization endorsed the Biltmore Program, and their lobbyists went to work. Only a year later they had Congress on the verge of passing a resolution calling on the Administration to tell Britain to allow unlimited Jewish immigration into Palestine, so that the Jewish people could, and I quote from the resolution, "reconstitute Palestine as a free and democratic Jewish commonwealth." The Palestinians, who still formed over two-thirds of the population, therefore would not be allotted any space for a homeland of their own.

Now comes something very significant. Are you still listening, Humph?

Q. Waddya take me for?

A. Sorry, Humph. This Congressional resolution had been proposed while the war was still going on, and



Lands currently under Israeli occupation: West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, Golan Heights [all occupied in 1967], and Southern Lebanon [occupied in 1982].

Army Chief of Staff General George Marshall consulted the U.S. military attaches in the Middle East about what they thought would be its effect. They answered to a man that, as worded: it was manifestly unfair to the Arabs; the Arabs would react with rage; and the ensuing violence would damage U.S. strategic interests. On the basis of their reports, Marshall got Congress to shelve the resolution, and did it without any interference from President Roosevelt.

Q. So? Big deal!

A. That's it, Humphrey, you got it! At the time, it didn't seem like a big deal. On the other hand, this turned out to be one of the last occasions when the White House allowed a consensus of the government's experts to prevail over the politicians on any issue connected with Zionism, or, later, with Israel. For most of the last 45 years, the informed guidance of the people on the ground—the defense attaches, the intelligence analysts, the ambassadors and other diplomats—has tended to be disregarded, or overruled, when it clashed with domestic political considerations, even on occasions when a policy action would damage U.S. strategic interests. The White House has taken over, basing its decisions primarily on such criteria as: Would this recommended pol-

icy annoy Israel, and/or its American supporters? If it did, would this cost us crucial votes in the next elections? Would it also make trouble for Congressmen?

Usually, policy recommendations from the experts never got to the White House in the first place, because the secretary of state was a Presidential appointee who surrounded himself with his own politically-oriented advisors. On rare occasions, when a secretary of state has turned recommendations of his expert staff into institutional decisions, he has been stopped in his tracks.

Q. What a crock!

A. I don't hate politicians, friend. But the point is, if you ask any Congressman who is ready to give an honest answer, he'll tell you there's no other international issue where domestic considerations are as overwhelming as on the issue of Israel, and its conflict with the Arabs.

Q. Yeah, yeah, so gimme some examples!

A. Let's start with the takeover of the Presidency by Truman when Roosevelt died. Only a few days after Truman took office, his secretary of state, Edward Stettinius, a Roosevelt appointee, warned him that Zionists leaders —

Q. Why ya always saying "Zion-

ist?" I never hear anyone callin em that these days.

A. That's what we called them then, because it was the only way we had of describing those Jews who wanted to turn Palestine into a Jewish homeland. There was no Israel yet, so we couldn't call them Israelis.

Anyhow, Stettinius warned Truman that Zionist leaders would probably try to get his support for unlimited Jewish immigration into Palestine and for the establishment of a Jewish state there. However, the Middle East was a tinderbox at the moment, and he urged Truman to avoid any such commitment, because it would have repercussions both in Britain and among the Arabs that could damage American interests.

Q. What the heck was the problem with letting the Jews in?

A. From the Arab viewpoint, unlimited or even large Jewish immigration would be regarded as still another assault in the drive to take over their homeland, and they would fight it. There were other, bigger countries that the Jews could find refuge in. From the British viewpoint, resistance by the Arabs to such immigration would spark off a conflict that the British forces on the ground could not cope with. The British, remember, had been our principal ally during World War II, and took it for granted that we would treat their problems with understanding.

In July 1945, only a couple of months after Stettinius's warning not to rock the boat on the immigration question, Truman wrote a letter to Britain's prime minister urging him to permit mass immigration of Jews. Later, in 1946, just before the Congressional and state elections, he once again overruled a panel of his own top foreign policy advisors—including not only Stettinius's successor, Secretary of State James Byrnes, but also the secretaries of defense and treasury. This was on the advice of his postmaster-general, Robert Hannegan.

Q. What in creation did the postmaster know about —

A. Hannegan didn't know anything about the Middle East, Humphrey, but he knew a lot about

domestic politics. He said if the President did not issue another strong statement on Jewish immigration, the New York State Democratic candidates for U.S. senator and governor might lose. So Truman issued the statement. Shortly afterwards, Secretary Byrnes turned in his resignation.

Q. Fer gosh sakes, maybe Truman really believed his policy was best for Palestine.

A. Truman had hardly been out of the States since World War I. He also thought that he had higher priorities. On one occasion, during this period, Truman received a group of top American diplomats serving in the Middle East. When they told him that the situation there was deteriorating dangerously, largely because the legitimate interests of the Arabs were not being considered, Truman responded: "I'm sorry, gentlemen, but I have to answer to hundreds of thousands who are anxious for the success of Zionism; I do not have hundreds of thousands of Arabs among my constituents."

Q. Boy, that's pretty gross. Wheredja get all this stuff from?

A. It's all in official records, or in reports by eyewitnesses, published in books and articles, Humph. If I had to recommend one book to consult for this period up to 1948, it would be an anthology put together by Harvard Professor Walid Khalidi, called *From Haven to Conquest*.

Anyhow, Truman was unwilling to go along with his own experts, and that made the British throw in the towel in Palestine. The way they saw it, the U.S. and others in the U.N. were trying to force down Britain's throat a policy that would result in more and more British soldiers getting killed. So they set May 15, 1948, as the day that their last soldier would leave Palestine, whatever happened.

From then on until May 15, Truman continued to overrule his advisors. Sometimes he would even phone his ambassador, Warren Austin, at the U.N. to countermand a decision that Austin or the State Department had made.

Q. Ya gotta be pullin my leg.

A. Nope. This kind of thing happened, and sometimes it was because

a top Zionist leader managed to get in to see Truman and persuade him to change his mind on something at the last minute. Chaim Weizmann did this after the news of U.N. approval of the partition of Palestine sparked off so much violence there that the State Department decided partition should be dropped. Weizmann heard about this decision before Truman did, and went to Truman to get partition back on track. Truman did—after his U.N. ambassador had already announced the U.S. was abandoning it!

Q. So waddappened next?

A. More of the same. As far as the Arab-Israeli conflict is concerned, our government went on for most of the next four decades with its ears cocked to the domestic political winds. This was always given much more importance than devising a Middle East policy that sought a fair deal for both sides, rather than allowing Israel to impose its own preferred solution through military dominance.

Q. Okay, gimme some examples, and hurry up about it, I ain't got all day!

A. Well, let's continue chronologically. During the first few years after the creation of Israel, our wartime alliance with the Soviets turned quickly into cold war. Soon the Administration thought of the Middle East primarily as a strategic region that the Soviets must at all costs be kept out of. At the same time, we tended to think of it as a British sphere of influence, where the U.S. shouldn't get too involved. Even though the British had evacuated Palestine, they still had soldiers guarding the Suez Canal, political and military control over the Arab Gulf countries, plenty of clout in Iraq and Jordan, and military bases scattered through the region.

Washington generally felt that the 1949 armistice lines were for all practical purposes the permanent borders of Israel, and it was now just a matter of waiting for the neighboring Arab countries to agree to sign permanent peace treaties.

Q. What about da Palestinians?

A. At that time, Humph, the Palestinians were considered "refugees," not players in any peace negotiations.

The U.S. wanted to see the Arab neighbors of Israel make the peace. The most important of these was Egypt, at that time, under the sway of Gamal Abdou Nasser.

Q. Boy, how'd they expect to get peace wid Israel from that maniac?

A. During most of the time I'm talking about, Nasser was definitely not hawkish on the Israel issue. He focused mainly on getting the British to leave the Suez Canal Zone, and on internal problems. In the summer of 1954, I had a four-hour interview with Nasser, and he hardly dwelt at all on the subject of Israel. Something that he did talk about extensively, though, was his relationship with the United States. While trying to remain neutral between the two superpowers when it came to formal alliances, he did not like either Communism or the "imperialist" Soviets, and was anxious to build up friendly ties with us, because he regarded us as a people with an anti-colonialist tradition. In return, the Eisenhower Administration wanted to be friends with Nasser, and was building up an increasingly close relationship.

In January 1955, a private U.S. envoy met with Nasser in Cairo, then went to Israel and told its prime minister that Nasser believed in co-existence with Israel and favored the opening of peace negotiations. At about the same time, the U.S. proposed to Israel a security pact that would require Israel not to extend its borders by force, in return for a commitment by the U.S. to aid Israel if attacked. But this turned out to be the kiss of death for Nasser.

Q. Wuddappened?

A. The whole U.S.-Israel-Egypt scenario was too much for Israel's strong man David Ben-Gurion. It was coming dangerously close to putting Israel into a strait-jacket, preventing it from reaching out for more Palestinian territory. He definitely did not want a pact with the U.S. that would bind Israel to its current borders. Nor did he want to develop a peaceful, negotiating relationship with Egypt. This would deprive him of grabbing more of Palestine on the grounds that Egypt was a dangerous threat to Israel.

Ben-Gurion felt he had to stop this trend. In February 1955, he launched an unprovoked, brutal attack in the early morning hours on an Egyptian military barracks in Gaza, killing about 40 soldiers as they slept. This prompted a new, hard stance by Nasser against Israel that lasted the rest of his life.

Q. How could just one more raid make Nasser change, for goshsakes?

A. It wasn't just "one more raid," Humph. This was more than just a little sniping at the frontier. Nasser was no dummy. The raid had been unprovoked by any incursion from his side, and he sensed the reasons why Ben-Gurion did it. The raid meant that Israel didn't really want peace, because it wanted more territory. A number of books, memoirs and diaries of Israeli leaders of that time clearly show that Ben-Gurion, Moshe Dayan, and other leaders were not satisfied with their military gains of the 1948-49 war, but intended to take over all of Palestine eventually. The diary of Moshe Sharet, foreign minister and prime minister during that period, is particularly revealing.

Q. How come our guys didn't figure all dat out?

A. Our own leaders, Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, weren't as close to the issue as Nasser was. There were some Americans out in the field who suspected that the Israelis were accepting half the loaf of Palestine with the mental reservation that they would get the rest of the loaf later. But, as usual, the experts out in the field got short shrift.

Q. What experts?

A. The government's Arabists.

Q. Arabists!

A. I know the word "Arabist" is misunderstood. An "Arabist" is not someone in the State Department whose job it is to be pro-Arab. This is the term used for a diplomat who has decided to make the Middle East a specialty and has studied the area's most widely-spoken language. Arabists tend to be posted more often in Arab than in other Middle East countries, because there are a lot more Arab than non-Arab countries in the region. Many also have tours in Israel. In any case, it's part of their job to be

familiar with Israel's history and the Israelis' point of view in their conflict with the Arabs.

Q. Okay, Arabist, Shmarabist, so what did Nasser do after the Gaza raid?

A. With his new conviction that Israel was not satisfied with its current borders, Nasser became hyper over the need for Egypt to be able to defend itself. He knew his armed forces were no match for the Israelis. Nasser had tried but failed to get arms from the U.S., which kept insisting that a permanent U.S. military mission to Egypt would have to be part of any deal. To Nasser, a military mission was a step back into being a colony, and he couldn't accept it. After all, he was still trying to get the British out of the Suez Canal Zone! As for buying the arms, he didn't have enough money in his treasury. He couldn't get any weapons from the British and French either. So, having long resisted Soviet attempts to sell him weapons on a barter basis, he decided it was time to look into these offers. The Soviets were delighted. By October 1955, it was a done deal.

Q. Holy cow!

A. Here was another case of the policy leaders overruling the expert observers on the scene. The U.S. ambassador in Cairo had sent cable after cable to Washington saying that Nasser was not "turning Communist," but was truly convinced that the danger from Israel was too great for him to allow his country to remain militarily impotent. The ambassador strongly urged that the U.S. help Nasser out by providing him with arms on acceptable terms, so that Nasser would not have to turn to the Soviets. But Eisenhower and Dulles, without telling the ambassador, decided to stall—believing that Nasser was bluffing.

A. So wuddappened?

Q. Well, the deal was done, but the Administration tried to change Nasser's mind anyway, by sending a top State Department official to Cairo to deliver a strong letter of protest that sounded to Nasser like an ultimatum. Nasser was furious, feeling that he was being treated like a lackey.

Q. Then wuddappened?

A. After its show of bad temper, the Administration spent the next few months trying to recoup its relationship with Nasser. Just two months after Nasser's arms deal, it joined with the World Bank and Britain in an offer to finance the building of the Aswan Dam on the Nile, a gigantic economic project at the head of Nasser's list of priorities. This was a project that the Soviets had already offered to finance, but Nasser had turned them down.

We then got mad at Nasser all over again when he recognized Communist China in May of 1956. Like most of the world's leaders, Nasser figured that recognizing the government of a country didn't mean it was a good government. Besides, the Soviets had just proposed putting an arms embargo on the Middle East, and Nasser wanted to have China as another option for arms if necessary. To Washington, though, Nasser appeared to be "cozying up to the Communists," and had to be taught a lesson.

The American ambassador in Cairo sensed that something was in the air, and warned the Administration repeatedly that if we changed our minds over the Aswan Dam, Nasser would let the Soviets build it. The President and Secretary of State thought they knew better, of course, and on July 19, 1956, the Administration did what many experts on the Middle East thought was unthinkable: it publicly reneged, in a particularly humiliating way, on its commitment to finance the dam.

The ambassador had been right. Within a week, Nasser had not only given the Soviets the Aswan Dam contract, but had nationalized the Suez Canal Company, taken over its offices on the canal, and said he would use the canal revenues to finance the building of the dam.

Q. What'd the British and French do? They owned mosta the canal, dint they?

A. They owned most of the shares in the canal company, but they planned a revenge that went far beyond just a financial one. Both countries were already mad at Nasser: the British, because of what they thought

was his anti-British meddling throughout the Middle East, and the French, because of what they thought was Nasser's support for the Algerians in their war of independence against the French. So they secretly planned an attack on the canal zone, which British troops had vacated a month earlier under an agreement with Egypt that ended 74 years of occupation. Although nobody knew it at the time, the two countries also got Israel to join their planned attack on Egypt.

Q. How'd they manage that?

A. Manage it? The Israelis could hardly believe their luck! Thanks to Britain and France, the Israelis were being given a chance to take over some Arab territory that they planned to keep for good, if they could.

Anyhow, Eisenhower did not know about the Israeli connection, but he sensed that Britain and France might do something drastic, so he spent the summer carrying out some delaying maneuvers to stall them off just in case. [Nasser's takeover of the canal company was perfectly legal under international law (even the British Government acknowledged this), especially since he kept the canal open to shipping.]

While Eisenhower worried about Britain possibly attacking Egypt, it didn't occur to him that his closest ally would attack another country without informing the U.S. first. But he was dead wrong. On October 29, what became known to the Egyptians as the "tripartite aggression" began. Israel launched a surprise attack on Egypt, capturing the Gaza Strip and moving towards the Suez Canal. Then came the deliberately phony part of the operation: Britain and France issued an "ultimatum" to both the Israeli and Egyptian forces, ordering them to "withdraw" to within 10 miles of the Suez Canal. For the Egyptians, this meant retreating from their own canal, further into Egypt. For the advancing Israeli troops, 30 miles from the canal at the time of the ultimatum, it meant they could continue advancing until they were 10 miles from the canal.

Nasser refused to withdraw from

his own territory and two days later British warplanes bombed the Suez Canal and Egyptian cities. Nasser then blocked the canal by sinking ships in it—thus foiling Britain and France's pretext that the whole operation was to prevent the interruption of shipping through the canal. Syria blew up the pipelines that brought oil to the Mediterranean for shipment to Europe.

The invasion took place only a week before our country's Presidential election day. Eisenhower, seeking a second term of office, was under a lot of pressure from members of his party not to do anything that would lose the Jewish vote. Eisenhower, however, thought Israel's attack was nothing more than an unjustified grab for more territory, and told his aides that he didn't care whether the elections were coming up or not—he wouldn't let the Israelis get away with it. Eisenhower was even more concerned about the actions of the British and the French. In his view, what they were doing was simply a reversion to 19th-century colonialism. So he addressed the United Nations, labelled all three countries "aggressors," and introduced a U.S. resolution calling for a ceasefire and the introduction of U.N. troops to enforce it. Egypt and the Israelis, who by this time had most of Sinai and all of Gaza in their hands, accepted the ceasefire. But Prime Minister Ben-Gurion vowed publicly that Sinai and Gaza belonged to Israel and would never be returned.

Q. I know wuddappened with the elections. Eisenhower got re-elected. Ya noticed that the Israeli lobby wasn't as strong as ya keep saying it is?

A. Actually, Humph, this was a very special case. Public sympathy for Israel among Jews and non-Jews was outweighed by even greater public antagonism to the idea of the British and French trying to re-establish their empires. There was a strong streak of anti-colonialism among Americans in those days, and polls showed that the country was solidly behind Eisenhower in his attempts to get the British and French to withdraw. If it had been only an Israeli

invasion that he had become involved with, I'm not so sure that things would have turned out the same. But full credit has to be given to Ike, because he criticized all three countries equally strongly. With Israel, he had to keep up the fight long after the Presidential elections. The British and French evacuated Egypt quite promptly, but Israel dragged its feet for six months before it evacuated Gaza, and did so only because Eisenhower threatened to cut off all U.S. aid to Israel, public and private. The Israelis did manage to extract a guarantee that the U.S. would seek guarantees that U.N. soldiers would be posted at Sharm al Sheikh, on the straits of Tiran, to ensure that Israeli ships would be allowed to go back and forth. Nasser, on the grounds that the straits ran through Egyptian territory, had been carrying on King Farouk's practice of not allowing Israeli ships to pass through. So this was one gain that the Israelis made from their invasion.

By the way, Nasser, far from being toppled by the Suez invasion, ended up a super-hero not only in Egypt but throughout the Arab world and much of the so-called "developing" world. He had defied the powerful Western countries of Great Britain and France by taking over their canal and getting away with it. We came out pretty well also in the eyes of the Arabs, for having taken Nasser's side. It didn't take us long to dissipate the credit we got for this, though. During the weeks after the end of invasion, with his economy in shambles, Nasser asked the U.S. to provide Egypt with much needed food, fuel and medicines, but Eisenhower turned him down. Forcing the Israelis to abandon their ill-gotten gains was one thing, but helping Nasser was something else.

Q. Wuddabout the Soviets?

A. Well, one result of the Anglo-French-Israeli war on Egypt was that the U.S. came close to a nuclear confrontation with the Soviets. When the three countries invaded, the Soviet Union got angry, too, hinting that it might use missiles against Britain and France, and suggesting that it would send tens of thousands of Soviet "volunteers" to the Middle East to

fight them. Even though the Soviets were taking the same side as the U.S., the very idea of the Soviets lining themselves up against American allies scared the pants off the Administration, which put American military forces on a state of alert. Nothing came of the Soviet threats, but they helped consolidate the idea in the minds of ordinary Arabs that the Soviet Union was truly on their side.

Q. So woddappened next, but keep it short, okay?

A. For most of the next decade, until the Johnson Administration, the Arab-Israeli conflict was practically a dead issue for U. S. policymakers. During Eisenhower's second term, the focus was once again on the Soviet threat. The President developed what came to be called the "Eisenhower Doctrine," whereby the U.S. would accede to a request for help from any country "threatened by international Communism." After a coup toppled the pro-Western monarchy of Iraq, in 1958, the U.S. convinced both the president of Lebanon and the king of Jordan that they should ask for help to thwart "international Communism" in their countries. As a result, the U.S. sent marines to Lebanon and the British, in a coordinated move, sent troops to Jordan.

In the meantime Nasser (who did not like Communism, who had put many Communists in jail and banned the Communist party even though Egypt was receiving aid from the Soviet Union), was increasingly regarded as a dangerous troublemaker by the U.S. Administration. This was because he was spreading his message of Arab nationalism—not Communism—into many of the countries, like Lebanon, Jordan, Yemen, Saudi Arabia and the Arab Gulf sheikhdoms, where the U.S. hoped to build stable bastions of defense against possible Soviet military intrusion. And that takes care of the Eisenhower Administration. See, Humphrey? I covered four years in about two minutes.

Q. Big deal! The way I see it, ya went on much too long!

A. After Ike, came John Kennedy. As a U.S. senator, Kennedy was praised in the Arab world for a 1957

speech calling for Algerian independence from the French. Actually, the Algerian war for independence had little if anything to do with the chronic Arab-Israeli conflict. Kennedy made his recommendation on the grounds that the time for European colonialism in the third world was over. Then, very little happened of great consequence during his shortened term that involved the Arab-Israeli issue.

Americans, in the early sixties, virtually forgot that there was still an unsolved Arab-Israeli conflict. Among the more informed there was a sense—as in the period before the Suez war—that the status quo would go on permanently, for all practical purposes. I still remember what happened when my magazine editor, a pretty savvy guy, asked me one day in 1962 to write an article on what I thought were the underlying currents running in the Middle East. The most important, I wrote, were the facts that the Arab-Israeli issue had not been resolved and the danger of another nasty war was a reality. And I described why and how. When the editor saw the article, he responded not surprisingly that: "Nobody thinks there's going to be another Arab-Israeli war! That's a phony story!"

It took another five years, but we had another war, all right?

Q. Yeah, in six days?

A. It was quite a war just the same. There's a lot of documentary evidence that Nasser did not plan to attack Israel (some of Israel's most informed leaders of that period have acknowledged this since), and that the Israelis deliberately lured him into a trap that gave them a pretext for carrying out a "pre-emptive strike." I'm not going to explain the ABC's of what happened in that war all over again, but once more the Administration allowed domestic political considerations to weigh in more heavily than the U.S. national interest.

This was quite predictable because Lyndon Johnson was President. He had already demonstrated his Israel-first tendencies during the Suez crisis, when as Senate majority leader he kept urging Eisenhower not to put pressure on Israel to evacuate Gaza.

As President, he appointed some solid professionals to head his foreign policy department—State, Defense, CIA—but the people he listened to on Middle East policy were the friends and advisors he surrounded himself with. Virtually all these people, while not foreign policy experts, were staunch advocates for Israel: people like Eugene Rostow, a political appointee in the State Department, Supreme Court Justice Abe Fortas, banker Abraham Feinberg, speechwriter Ben Wattenberg, Sen. Jacob Javits, and businessman and fundraiser Arthur Krim and his wife Mathilde, who once worked for the Israeli terrorist group Irgun! All of them could have the President's ear almost any time they wanted.

Q. Yeah, well ya got my ear.

A. I just wanted to back up what I told you with some concrete examples, Humph.

Q. Okay, okay!

A. Anyhow, in the mid-1960's Johnson brought our relationship with Israel into a new dimension by becoming the first President to sell major offensive weapons systems to Israel, even though the Israelis were already known to possess a decisive military superiority over the Arabs. The Soviets, already a big factor in the Middle East by the time of the Suez war, responded by shipping more arms to the Middle East.

Many government experts on the Middle East warned Johnson not to provoke Nasser unnecessarily if we wanted to avert a major crisis in the Middle East, but it seemed to make no difference. The President's intimates kept encouraging him to do whatever he could to help Israel and/or hurt Nasser, and they didn't understand or didn't care that much about the dangers of another Middle East war, which they were certain Israel would win. They also knew that Nasser-baiting was not unpopular either in Congress or among the American public, who had been brain-washed for years by skimpy, often distorted media coverage of the Middle East.

There was also another reason for Johnson's policy of indulging Israel. He was bogged down in Vietnam, and Jewish voters, who were re-

garded as mostly "liberal" in those days, were protesting our involvement there. Johnson was convinced by his advisors that the only way to avoid losing the Jewish vote was to go all-out in his support for Israel.

During the spring of 1967, as tensions rose between Egypt and Israel, the Administration got some informed, rational advice from its experts on the scene. One of them, U.S. Ambassador to Egypt, Luke Battle, warned that although Nasser was raising tensions, he did not want war. Another, one of the most experienced State Department Middle East specialists, Charles Yost, was on a Presidential mission to the Middle East just before the hostilities broke out. To "limit the damage" of the crisis, said Yost, Israel should compromise—and he suggested ways in which that might be done.

None of this advice was taken seriously. Instead Johnson warned each side not to start a war. He told Egypt: "We will be against whoever fires the first shot." Egypt had every right to assume from this statement that if Israel attacked, the U.S. would provide Egypt with support. Johnson also repeatedly told Israel not to be the first to shoot. At first, Israel's leaders were quite disturbed by this warning, because they knew in their hearts that Nasser would not attack.

As the weeks went by, however, they began to catch conflicting signals when they visited Washington. Although opposition to a supposedly "pre-emptive" attack was still official U.S. policy, one top American official told Foreign Minister Abba Eban that the U.S. would not protest too much if Israel carried one out. When the Israeli ambassador to Washington flew to Israel on June 3, two days before the war, he was able to confirm to the cabinet that the U.S. would not oppose an Israeli first strike.

Once again, this official change of tone was not too surprising in view of Johnson's past record and the increasing amount of time he was spending with his pro-Israeli official advisors and close friends. In the week leading up to the outbreak of the war, businessman and fund-raiser Arthur Krim didn't go a day without visiting

the President in his private quarters in the White House, or talking with him on the telephone, urging the President to go easy on Israel. On June 5, the day the war started, Mathilde Krim had spent the night in a guest bedroom of the White House. Before going to his office the President had dropped in there, while she was still in bed, to let her know the war had started!

Q. Hey, watcha talkin about?

A. I thought that would wake you up from your doze, Humph. It did happen, according to Mrs. Krim, who told reporter and author Donald Neff about it many years later. By the way, would you believe that later in the afternoon her husband Arthur sent a memo to Johnson saying that some U.S. arms shipments, packed and ready to go to Israel, were being held up, and could Johnson get them released. Johnson did! Right away!

Q. Aw, cut that out! Some non-official friend couldn't —

A. He did, Humph, apparently in full confidence that he knew whose side Johnson was on. Neff, who wrote a very good book about the 1967 War, found this information in an official White House memorandum he dug up.

Q. Cheez, dontcha ever dig up nuthin yourself?

A. Well, I was kind of busy at that time in the Middle East, covering the war on the ground, just as I was during the Suez war and the war that came after this one, in 1973. I'm grateful to Don for having unearthed things that were happening a long way from where I was.

Anyhow, the war was on. Israel took over all the rest of Palestine (the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and Gaza), as well as Sinai, after which it broke a ceasefire to grab the Golan Heights. In the process, it got us into another nuclear confrontation, when the Soviet Union's strong man Kosygin told Johnson over the hot-line that if we didn't make the Israelis adhere to the ceasefire within the next few hours, there would be a "grave catastrophe." The Soviet Union would take "necessary action," including the use of "military force." Fortunately for Israel and the rest of

us, the Israelis had already taken over the Golan Heights by this time, so they were now in a position to cease fire, and did.

But it was already far too late for Israel to undo what it had done to an electronics eavesdropping ship, the U.S.S. Liberty, which was deliberately attacked by Israeli planes and torpedo boats. Thirty-four American sailors were killed and nearly 200 wounded—because Israel did not want the ship to listen in on secret Israeli planning regarding their upcoming invasion of the Golan Heights. The Israelis, who ordered the raid, had planned to sink the Liberty without a trace. This would have left no eyewitnesses. Since they couldn't quite manage it before help came, they resorted to the excuse that they had mistaken the Liberty for an Egyptian ship (despite its oversized American flag waving under a blue sky in a stiff breeze). The American survivors, who had watched Israeli planes reconnoiter them carefully before the attack, knew better and said so, but the Administration decided to accept the Israeli story and cover up.

Q. Hey, how come I nevva heard of it?

A. The facts, as attested to by officers and men on board, are widely known today, Humph, but they are so embarrassing to Israel—which likes to be considered the U.S.'s "loyal ally"—that its supporters do everything they can think of, and pretty successfully, to stifle discussion of it in the media.

Q. So wuddappened after the war?

A. A lot of things. This war was a watershed. First, it was the war that changed everything in our relationship with Israel. For one thing, after the Six Day War there was no more American emphasis on the need for immediate Israeli withdrawal. Not only was Johnson more partisan than Eisenhower, but the American public—ignorant of the history of the Arab-Israeli conflict—was euphorically happy over what the brave little David had done to the nasty Goliath in only six days. Most of the world, however, was clamoring for a United

Nations resolution that would call on the Israelis to go right back home. But the U.S. managed to arrange for a resolution that had no urgency in it.

Q. Wuddabout resolution two, er—

A. 242. Well, that's the resolution I'm talking about. It put no deadline on withdrawal, and the U.S. had succeeded in watering it down enough so that the Israelis would have to give back only as much territory as they wanted to. The U.S. also got the Arab countries to back it by misleading them as to Israel's intentions.

The loophole for Israel that the U.S. created was the absence of the word "the" in the phrase calling for Israeli withdrawal from "territories occupied during the recent conflict." Even though the resolution also mentioned the "inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war," Israeli governments have ever since pointed to the absence of the word "the" as meaning that the resolution did not require Israel to withdraw from *all* the territories.

At the time the draft resolution was being debated, the U.S. passed a message to the Arab leaders that Israel was interpreting the resolution to mean that it required Israel to withdraw from all the territories, except for "minor reciprocal border rectifications" (for example, adjusting a part of a frontier line to prevent it from splitting a small village in two). This message had clearly been a deception to enlist Arab support for the resolution, because no one really expected Israel to be that accommodating.

For quite a while, going from Johnson right to the Nixon Administration, the U.S.'s public position on the Arab-Israeli conflict was that the Israelis should withdraw from all but an "insubstantial" portion of occupied territory, and this was the basis of the so-called "Rogers Plan," of December 1969, propounded by Nixon's Secretary of State William Rogers. As revealed later by Henry Kissinger, at the time Nixon's national security advisor, the Rogers Plan was also a deliberate deception, although Rogers himself did not realize it. Nixon and Kissinger had no intention of trying to push the Rogers

Plan forward. According to Kissinger's memoirs, unknown to Rogers, the real policy on the Middle East was being carried out by Kissinger through "back channels"—channels that did not go through the State Department. Thus, in the first years of the 1970's, whenever the top American diplomat in Egypt would go to the Foreign Ministry to make a point about U.S.-Egypt relations, a CIA agent, acting as the "channel," might at the same time be on his way to President Sadat's office to tell him, or a Presidential aide, something quite different.

Q. I dunno if I can believe ya.

A. Uh, go on ahead—with your next question, Humph!

Q. Yeah, well, ya said the 1967 War changed lotsa things in relation to Israel. What exactly?

A. Hmm. The most important thing was that Israel got some territory it badly wanted—particularly the West Bank and Gaza. And because there has been no meaningful pressure from us to withdraw, it has been able to hold on for the past 23 years—while still claiming that it accepts U.N. Resolution 242!

Another thing: Because Israel was so successful in the war, the Johnson Administration, and just about all the administrations following, began to regard Israel as a "strategic asset" to the United States, one able to help protect the area against a Soviet attack on the Middle East, especially on the Gulf's oil fields. It's always been a little hard for me and a lot of other people to imagine the Israelis as any sort of deterrent to a Soviet attack. The countries Israel would be trying to "protect" regard the Israelis as their worst enemy, and would fight them rather than welcome them. In any case, because of this perception, among others, the U.S. began beefing up its military and economic aid to unheard of levels.

Another change was the emergence of the Palestinians as a political and guerrilla force. This altered everything in the Middle East equation, including U.S.-Arab relations. Basically, up to the time of the war, the Palestinians, even though they carried out some minor guerrilla activ-

ity, were depending on the Arab governments to get their land back for them. But when Egypt, Syria and Jordan lost the Six Day War so decisively, the Palestinians went into a state of shock, and decided then and there that if they didn't fight for their rights, no one else could or would. So the PLO, which had been run for all practical purposes by the Arab League, elected a guerrilla leader, Yasser Arafat, as its chairman. No need to tell you, Humph, about how much Arafat's PLO has impinged on U.S. policies ever since, one way or another. But let me tell you what led to the next war, in October 1973—the one we call the Yom Kippur War here in the States. I can tell you in one word. Nothing!

Q. Huh?

A. That's right, *nothing*. From about 1970 through the next three years, we did nothing to try to solve the Arab-Israeli conflict, because we thought the Israelis were planning to stay in the occupied territories. Sadat's angry speeches saying he would go to war if Israel did not withdraw from the Sinai were viewed as a transparent bluff. The guerrilla and terrorist operations by Palestinian forces were regarded as simple criminal acts, never as operations against enemies who, in the belief of Palestinians, had themselves been perpetrators of terrorist acts against Palestinians. In any case, the U.S. considered these Palestinian acts as "containable" pinpricks.

The U.S. decided the best policy was a do-nothing policy, while hoping the whole issue of occupied territory would just go away. It led to the next war, however, because Sadat did not want to be either ignored or thought of as a patsy. He decided to attack across the Suez Canal and consolidate a bridgehead for two principal reasons. First, he wanted to show the Israelis that they couldn't remain in occupation of his country without cost, and he wanted to show the United States that there was still a big problem in the Middle East that it had better start paying attention to.

Q. By the way, I think it was a dirty trick that Sadat and the Syrians decided to attack on that, you know,

Jewish holiday.

A. Yom Kippur. Well, it was also during the month of Ramadan, one of the holiest periods in the Muslim calendar. Anyway, this kind of thing always goes on in wars. Don't you remember when you were a kid, reading about George Washington crossing the Delaware on Christmas Eve to attack the Hessians, because he knew they would be carousing?

Q. So now I bet yer gonna tell me this war made the U.S. of A. even more unpopular with the Arabs.

A. Dead on! This was a war in which Sadat was not trying to threaten Israel's existence, but was only trying to get back at least some of the territory that Israel had taken from Egypt during the Six Day War. The same goes for his ally, Syria, which wanted to get the Golan Heights back. But when Egyptian troops attacked across the canal and established a beachhead on what was Egyptian territory, we reacted as though Sadat was aiming to "drive the Jews into the sea."

As soon as it became apparent that the Egyptians were holding their ground and that the Israelis were running dangerously low on equipment and ammunition, President Nixon launched an unprecedented, massive airlift of military goods directly to the Sinai battlefield. This allowed the Israelis to recoup, just in time, and they eventually managed to get some of their own troops onto the western side of the canal. Nixon backed up the military help with a public announcement, while the war was still on, of a loan to Israel of 2.2 billion dollars. Yes, I guess you could say the Arabs were unhappy with the United States.

Another thing about the war, Humph, was that once again we got into a confrontation with the Soviet Union. When the U.N. called for a ceasefire on October 22, and both the Israelis and Egyptians accepted, the Israelis had not yet managed to carry out a desired encirclement of Egyptian forces still holding a beachhead on the eastern side of canal. So the next day the Israelis broke the ceasefire and made their move. This time, the Soviet Union was angrier

than it had been in 1956 or in 1967. It announced that if the Israelis did not stop their military action, it would send in Soviet troops to stop them. This resulted in the U.S. ordering a number of ships and aircraft to head towards the east Mediterranean, and also in its putting all military forces, worldwide, on nuclear "red" alert, for the first time ever. The Israelis stopped shooting, and that particular crisis petered out.

Q. Did the 1973 War change anything?

A. Well, this was one war that Israel clearly didn't win, but it gave the Israelis enough leverage so that they were able to accelerate the pace towards their long-term goals. They couldn't have done it, of course, without the help of the United States.

Q. So tell me, what were the goals?

A. One goal was to hold on to Gaza and the West Bank for good—even if it meant having to give up Sinai. A second was to exclude the PLO—or, for that matter, any other Palestinian leadership group that the Israelis couldn't choose themselves—from any role in a Middle East settlement.

Q. So wuddappened?

A. After the war, Henry Kissinger, who held both jobs of secretary of state and national security advisor, seemed to have made up his mind on two things. Firstly, he didn't want the Soviets to get involved in peacemaking, even on issues where their position was not too far from the American one. He just didn't want the Soviets to get any of the credit. And secondly, he did not believe in putting too much pressure on Israel to make concessions, because in his view, such pressures could cause the "psychological collapse" of Israel, and lead it into extreme intransigency.

Kissinger then began a process known as "step-by-step diplomacy," or "shuttle" diplomacy, as he traveled back and forth between Middle East capitals. The idea was to get Israel to move back at least a *little* bit, but it played the situation for what it was worth by trying to wring every possible favor it could from the U.S. before it would move an inch. Hence the lengthy shuttling. Finally, in 1974,

Kissinger got Israel to evacuate its troops from the western side of the canal—but only in return for ten written concessions including a promise that the U.S. would respond to Israel's defense needs on a "continuing and long-term basis." A couple of months later, Israel made a partial withdrawal on Syria's Golan Heights, thanks in part to a U.S. decision to give Israel the equivalent of a billion and a half dollars. In terms of population, that would be like someone giving the United States 35 billion dollars. Not bad!

Next, Kissinger thought he would try for a second Israeli disengagement from their positions in Sinai. By the time he got going on this, Ford had taken over from Nixon.

Q. So did Ford tell Kissinger to get tougher with Israel?

A. You've got to be kidding, Humph. Ford had spent a career as Congressman, and he knew better than most how Congress felt about "getting tough" with Israel. I think he was surprised, though, at just how tough Israel could be. When Kissinger started talking with Israel about a second disengagement on Sinai, the Israelis wouldn't give him the time of day. Some foreign policy professionals urged Ford to use leverage on Israel through the aid program, and he bought the idea for a while—announcing a "reassessment" of American policy towards Israel. So, surprise, surprise! Seventy-six senators sent a letter to the President—this was in May 1975—condemning the reassessment and urging him to be "responsive to Israel's economic and military needs."

An agreement, in September 1975, committed the U.S. to be "fully responsive"—to Israel's economic and military requirements. We guaranteed that we would fill all of Israel's oil needs, if necessary, for the next five years; maintain Israel's defensive strength by regularly providing high-technology equipment; transport military supplies to Israel during any emergency; provide American support to Israel in the event of any threats by the Soviet Union; and refrain from engaging in any step-by-step mediation between Israel and

Jordan. We also committed ourselves not to "recognize or negotiate with" the PLO until it recognized Israel's right to exist and accepted U.N. Resolution 242. This American commitment critically affected the history of the next dozen years, because it was already becoming increasingly evident to American experts, as well as most of the world, that the PLO represented the Palestinian people and was the organization Israel would have to deal with if it really wanted a peace settlement.

Q. Yeah, but along came Carter, who brought peace.

A. Whoa, too fast, Humph. Actually, Carter may well have had a better understanding of the roots of the Arab-Israeli conflict than any of our Presidents, and started out quite courageously by saying publicly that the Palestinians had the right to a homeland. We didn't hear much about a "homeland" after the first few weeks of his term. What we did hear and saw was a President who, within 48 hours after a U.S. vote in the Security Council reversed it upon discovering how unpopular it was to the Israeli lobby. Carter also fired U.N. Ambassador Andrew Young for meeting with a PLO representative—even though the 1975 commitment by Kissinger said only that the U.S. should neither "recognize" nor "negotiate with" the PLO. It didn't say the U.S. couldn't talk to it. Ironically, at the time Carter fired his ambassador, the U.S. had already been talking with the PLO in Beirut, where at that time the PLO was the main organization providing security for American diplomats.

Q. Hey, who're you trying to kid! I don't believe—

A. You could check it out, Humph. It's no secret anymore. Anyhow, Carter will always be remembered as the man who was responsible for getting Egypt and Israel to sign a peace treaty at Camp David. That's why you were under the impression that Carter "brought peace," as you put it.

Q. Waddyaya mean, impression! He did—ya just said so yourself, for Pete's sake.

A. He brought peace between Egypt and Israel, you mean. That's

important, and he has to be given a lot of credit for it. Trouble is, though, he made a big boo-boo while doing it and thereby added greatly to the difficulties of solving the overall Arab-Israeli conflict, which depends mainly on a solution of the Palestinian problem.

Q. What boo-boo ya talkin about?

A. Carter didn't insist on making a linkage between the Israel-Egypt agreement and a solution of the Israeli-Palestinian and the Israeli-Syrian problems. By not making one, he gave Menahem Begin, the Israeli prime minister who was at Camp David with Sadat and Carter, a golden opportunity. In return for giving back the Sinai, on which Israel had no biblical claims, Begin now was in a position to lock in for good the territories that he really wanted to keep—the West Bank and Gaza. This was because Israel would no longer have to worry about Egypt, the Arab world's leading military power, going to war to try to stop him.

Q. Why didn't Carter make the linkage?

A. Well, for one thing, linkage would not have been an easy thing to convince Begin to agree to, in the best of circumstances. In any case, Carter did not seem to realize the full importance of trying to get linkage. He had become very familiar with Egypt's problems, but his knowledge of the Palestinian issue was rather fuzzy.

After conferring with Begin and Sadat nearly two weeks, it would have been disastrous if no agreement had come out of it. As the conference went on, it became more important to Carter to end up with a flawed agreement rather than none at all. So that's what he did—not really realizing, I don't think, just how flawed it was. Sure, it was a good thing to convince Israel to withdraw its forces from Egypt, but the price was very, very high. A lot of trouble has beset the Middle East as a result of the Camp David treaty.

Q. Such as?

A. In 1982, only weeks after the actual withdrawal of Israeli troops from Sinai, Israel invaded Lebanon—starting a major war with full confidence that it had nothing to worry

about from Egypt on the southern front. Many thousands of Lebanese, Palestinians and Israelis were killed, hundreds of thousands were made homeless, and nothing of value was accomplished either for the benefit of Israel or any other country.

It was a disaster for us, too. Remember, Humph? We had sent in marines supposedly to act as neutral peacekeepers, but it wasn't long before we were using them and our warships off the Lebanese coast to support one of the sides in the conflict. As a result, about 300 American servicemen lost their lives, 63 people got blown up in the American Embassy, and more than a dozen American civilians have been taken hostage in Lebanon over the years, as a direct result of the enemies we made during that war.

Q. Why dint Carter keep us out of that mess?

A. This was the Reagan Administration by this time, Humphrey. Reagan took over from Carter, in January 1981, and began making his own mistakes. It's true that Carter had created the situation which tempted Israel to invade Lebanon, but it was the Reagan Administration that made the war a certainty, by making it clear to Begin that it would not try to stop it. Then, once the war was well under way, the Administration naively bought the Israeli line that their war would create a better Lebanon.

Q. So what other mistakes did Reagan make?

A. After about six months in office, he saddled us with George Shultz as Secretary of State.

Q. Saddled?

A. Well, at first, many people thought Shultz might be well qualified to understand what kind of policy was needed in the Middle East, because he had worked for a big contracting company with business in the area and had made frequent visits, particularly to Saudi Arabia, to negotiate contracts. But when you think about it, it doesn't make much sense to assume that because someone has made a few trips to the region on business, he necessarily has anything more than a superficial understand-

ing of a complex issue like the Arab-Israeli conflict. Shultz's lack of expertise on the Middle East, his misplaced confidence in the value of his own judgments about that region, and his holding of grudges acted as a pernicious influence on U.S. Middle East policy throughout the Reagan term of office.

A good example was Shultz's role, during the spring of 1983, in mediating an agreement for Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon. After Israeli and Lebanese negotiators, with some American help, had hit some snags while working out a final agreement, Shultz decided to do some shuttle diplomacy, Kissinger style, to break the logjam. But he forgot one little thing: he didn't think it was necessary, before the signing of the agreement, to take into account the views of Lebanon's neighbor Syria, which had tens of thousands of troops in Lebanon under the auspices of the Arab League and believed it had the right to at least be consulted. For some reason, Shultz did not think Syria would object to the contents of the agreement.

According to the agreement, Lebanon had accepted clauses that would give Israel, Syria's enemy, enormous influence in Lebanon. For example, Israel would be allowed to keep a physical military presence in the south, to establish a close, de facto partnership with Lebanon in military and intelligence matters, and to have a veto on the kinds of weapons the Lebanese armed forces could deploy on their own territory. All these arrangements and others would represent a potential threat, of course, to Syria.

When Syria's President Hafez Assad heard about the details of this agreement—after it was signed—he hit the ceiling, and pledged that he would get the Lebanese to revoke it (which they later did). Then, when it became public knowledge that Shultz had not been keeping Syria informed, on what was happening, he became a laughing-stock in many diplomatic, political and journalistic circles.

I don't think that Shultz's antipathy to the Arabs resulted from any calculated plan to score political

points with Jewish voters. It's just after his Lebanon fiasco, he couldn't seem to be bothered to learn more about the issues. Shultz had no knowledge of, much less any understanding, of what had been done to the Palestinians, and of what motivated them to act as they did. He focused entirely on getting the two sides to sit down together to argue it out—knowing that the Israelis, with their troops in control of the disputed territory, held all the cards. In effect, his policy was: "May the strongest man win."

Q. Hey, but there was sumpin called the Reagan Plan, right?

A. When the Reagan Plan was announced in September 1982, it was greeted with a great deal of attention, but it never got anywhere. The main surprise, for the cynics, was that it called for withdrawal by Israel of its military forces from the West Bank and Gaza. The main criticism, from the realists, was that the plan said nothing about turning the territories into an independent Palestinian homeland. Instead, it called for local autonomy for Palestinians under Jordanian sovereignty.

The reason it became of only trivial importance, Humph, is that the Administration did not try, at any time, to use any meaningful persuasion to get the Israelis to withdraw.

A little more than two years later, though, Arafat and King Hussein came up with an ingenious plan that could have satisfied the Administration's conditions for a Middle East solution, if only the Administration had had the will and a little imagination. On February 11, 1985, the two leaders signed an agreement proposing to enter direct negotiations with Israel for an independent state in the West Bank and Gaza that would immediately enter a federation with Jordan. The catch was, that for a few minutes after the signing of the agreement with Israel, a sovereign Palestinian state would exist in the territories. This would allow Arafat to save face, by saying that the Palestinians had achieved their goal, but had then voluntarily decided to go into a federation. Before making this deal with Israel, though, he wanted to get a

public commitment from Shultz that the U.S. recognized the right of Palestinians to have self-determination, just as it recognized the same right for the Israelis. He wasn't even asking for the Israelis to do it—just to hear the U.S. say it would be fine. But Shultz said no. End to ingenious idea.

Q. Yeah, but ya forgot that the Reagan Administration opened up a dialogue widda PLO.

A. That was nearly four years later, Humph, and it was almost forced to do it. Remember that Kissinger commitment—no dealings with the PLO until it publicly recognized Israel and accepted U.N. Resolution 242? Well, in December 1988, Arafat did both. But not before the Administration had pushed Arafat to say it umpteen different ways until he got the wording exactly to its satisfaction.

Q. Anyhow, that allowed the Bush Administration to get started with a plus—

A. Yes, but it didn't amount to much of a plus when you consider the ways Israel had been bolstered during the Reagan years. During the 1980's Israel was given a special status by the U.S. that no other country has ever received. For example, it was not only given double the amount of previous aid, but for the first time all of this aid was provided as a gift. Rather than a loan, it was given in a lump sum, up front, instead of in installments.

Israel was also given free-zone status, allowing it to export its goods to the U.S., free of duty. Military equipment was also given on a grant basis, for the first time. On top of all this, the U.S. signed a "strategic cooperation agreement" with Israel, which gave it financial, technological and intelligence assistance, and provided for joint maneuvers and stockpiling of certain kinds of U.S. supplies in Israel. To top it all off, Israel was also officially declared a "major non-NATO ally," which meant it could bid for U.S. defense contracts and get the latest military technology to build its own defense industry. It even became the largest foreign participant in the Star Wars program!

By the way, Humph, all of this extra money and enhanced status was

given to Israel during a decade when Israel suckered us into the Lebanon war, used American cluster and phosphorus bombs there in violation of written agreements, broke its promise to us not to enter West Beirut, harassed our marines there, secretly sent arms to Iran even after Khomeini had kept all our diplomats hostage, kept pushing Reagan to trade arms to Khomeini for American hostages in Lebanon, paid a spy in the Pentagon, Jonathan Pollard, to pass along top secret information, used a business front to illegally export from the U.S. to Israel nuclear trigger devices known as krytonns, gave—

Q. Enough, already! Ya made your point. So how's George Bush doing?

A. Bush. Hmmm. Things looked pretty good when he started, but—

Q. Cheez, I shoulda known ya were gonna say "but."

A. Sorry, Humph, don't blame me—I'm just the messenger. Do you remember how Baker started, Humph? The first time he really focused on the Middle East, in public, was at the AIPAC conference back in May 1989. Baker actually criticized Israeli attitudes. He even went so far as to say that Israel should abandon the notion of having a "Greater Israel," refrain from either annexing or carrying out settlement activities in the West Bank and Gaza, and "reach out to the Palestinians as neighbors who have political rights."

If Baker means what he says about the unacceptability of a "Greater Israel," he must remain involved. Recently his official spokesman warned publicly that if Israeli-Arab cooperation did not speed up, Baker would, as she put it, "turn to other places in the world clamoring for attention."

Unless this Administration does something meaningful to make a fair settlement possible, there'll be another big explosion in this area, and we'll be sorry. And then it'll be too late to remember what Santayana said: "Those who cannot remember the past, are condemned to repeat it."

Book Views

Beirut Diary

By Sis Levin

Dotners Grove, IL.: InterVarsity Press, 1989, 239 pages, \$16.95.

Reviewed by Grace Halsell

Why are Americans kidnapped? Should Americans investigate the causes?

Sis Levin, the wife of an American who was kidnapped in Lebanon, has a lot to say about why we should examine the cause of the kidnapping of Americans.

"Secretary of State Shultz was quoted as saying it didn't matter what the causes were. But it did, and it still does," writes Sis Levin in *Beirut Diary*, easily one of the best books to come out of the tragedy of Lebanon.

Levin, a conservative Southern Christian married to a liberal Yankee Jew, followed her husband to Lebanon after he became Cable News Network's Beirut bureau chief. He was kidnapped on March 7, 1984.

Throughout a long ordeal of dealing with U.S. officials, Levin writes that "The State Department's only advice was to keep silence. I, and other (hostage family members) under a pledge to the State Department, abetted that silence, trusting that the State Department was doing everything they could. Was that not participating in a lie? Couldn't we be trusted with the truth?"

After months of being told to keep silent about her husband (the U.S. Government was busy selling weapons to Khomeini and siphoning profits to the contras in Central America), she decided to work to free Jerry herself.

"The U.S. Government's idea of quiet diplomacy was neither diplomatic nor effective," she writes. On her own initiative, she "went public" and met with the Rev. Jesse Jackson (who had been instrumental in securing the release of American pilot Lt. Robert Goodman).

She traveled to Syria, talked about peace, reconciliation and her concern

for the children of war. She met with Syria's Foreign Minister Farouk Al Sharaa, Lebanon's Shiite army leader Nabih Berri, American peace activist Landrum Bolling and many more.

In her chronology of events, Sis Levin shows there were no American hostages taken until 1982, when Israel invaded Lebanon.

She speaks for justice for the Palestinians, and deals with the pertinent issues, the causes that lead to terrorism.

On February 14, 1985, Levin escaped (or was allowed to escape), and Syrian soldiers found him on a Bekaa Valley highway running through Baalbeck. Instead of learning hate while he was held prisoner, Levin experienced "an inward journey" of faith.

In a press conference, Levin said that during almost one year of isolation and silence, "I had time to think and reflect (in a way I had never done before) on some of the deeper levels of my existence and life...It has deepened and given me a growing religious faith that no other experience in my life was able to motivate."

Of his journey toward faith, he said that "If that was God's reason for putting me in solitary confinement, I thank him."

Both Jerry and Sis Levin have engaged themselves in busy writing and speaking schedules, always dealing with the pertinent issues and asking their audiences to consider root causes of why Americans have been kidnapped in the Middle East.

"What is the U.S. policy in the Middle East?" they ask. "What is our position on the Israeli-Palestinian problem?" They point out, in their capacity of teachers to a wide range of Americans, that U.S. support of Israeli oppression of Palestinians is "the basis of much of the Arab hostility toward America."

Washington, D.C.-based writer Grace Halsell is the author of twelve books, including *Journey to Jerusalem and Prophecy and Politics*.

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