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After the spy



The present furor over confessed spy Jonathan Jay Pollard may very well present "the most difficult moment" in the history of U.S.-Israeli relations, as that nation's most distinguished elder statesman, Abba Eban, said.

On the other hand, Americans with a longer memory can summon up June 8, 1967. Eban was his country's foreign minister at the time, waging a brilliant battle at the United Nations to justify Israel's preemptive war on its Arab enemies.

On that date, jets and motor torpedo boats operating out of their Tel Aviv base attacked the U.S.S. *Liberty*, killing 34 Americans and wounding another 171. The incident enabled Israel to develop the formula for handling "difficult moments" with the United States.

As when Pollard was arrested 16 months ago, the Israeli government promised a swift investigation and punishment on evidence of wrong perpetrated by its citizens. No such inquiry took place. The killing and maiming of Americans happened in the middle of the Six Days War. The story was lost in this country's general exultation over "underdog" Israel's smashing triumph over the Arab "hordes."

Only under pressure from American friends did a reluctant Israeli government agree to pay limited damages, while refusing to acknowledge any guilt in the unwarranted attack. In exchange, the U.S. government pressured *Liberty* families to drop legal actions that sought to establish official Israeli guilt in the incident.

Here was the prototype established 20 years ago. *Washington Post* Jerusalem correspondent Glenn Frankel described it: "When they get caught — as in the Pollard case — (the Israelis) apologize and promise to make a full disclosure, but instead launch a cover-up, confident that powerful friends in the administration and Congress will back them."

Above all, the formula relies on Americans accepting Israel as a 51st state, an extension of U.S. policy and values in the Middle East. Israel and its American friends work hard at maintaining that illusion.

When offended, they launch ferocious attacks, intended to silence any attempt at objective reporting on the Middle East. Frequently, as the *New York*

Times recently pointed out, these attacks are coordinated by the Israeli embassy.

The resulting "conspiracy of silence," as it has been called, among their officials and media, leaves Americans generally the least informed among the developed nations, when it comes to the Middle East. It helped to create the atmosphere in which Jonathan Jay Pollard could believe he was inflicting no damage on the United States when he looted intelligence files under orders of his Israeli handlers.

Upon his arrest, Pollard talked freely, exuding confidence that the "special relationship" between Israel and the United States would protect him. Instead, Pollard was disowned by Jerusalem, left to face U.S. justice alone.

As in the *Liberty* incident, the Israeli government promised a full-fledged investigation and punishment for those found responsible for what was described as a "rogue" operation. As 20 years ago, no inquiry was held. There has been no attempt at explanation why the sentencing of Jonathan Jay Pollard was delayed more than a year after he made full confession. But considering the past, it is possible to suspect there was hope in Washington and Jerusalem that the delay might cool-off any anger over the affair in the U.S. public, permitting the tried-and-true formula to come into play one more time. In that event, it would have been possible to limit the spy's imprisonment to a brief term, followed by a parole that could be served in Israel where he might receive proper consideration for his service to that foreign nation.

It may have worked out that way except during that same time the Iran weapons deal was in full swing. Had Israel participated in bringing home U.S. hostages held in Lebanon, as it suggested when luring the White House into the weapons deal, then Pollard may have escaped any prison time at all. (Israel's role as instigator is summarized on page III of the Tower commission report.)

When the dealings with Iran turned into fiasco, kicking off a White House scandal, Pollard's status as a victim was confirmed. Although not mentioned by name, the moral arguments for his spying were destroyed when the commission report declared Israel's objectives and interests could be "in conflict" with those of the United States (Tower report, pg. IV-12). *qwr (1987)*

On the same page, the commission held the United States government entirely responsible for its participation in the arms deals.

In the wake of its exculpation, the Jerusalem government proceeded to act as if there were no Iran arms scandal, or Pollard spy case.

Even after Pollard received a life sentence, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir stonewalled, vowing there would be no investigations. In an interview with the *New York Times* published Wednesday, the prime minister insisted: "The state of Israel has no connection with Pollard or his family. (It) did not hire him and did not assign him espionage missions."

The same *Times* story reported an open "Letter to an American Friend" from a prominent Israeli political theorist, which scolded American Jews concerned with the impact of the Pollard case on U.S. opinion, particularly the issue of dual loyalties evoked. In essence, the letter writer advised American Jews move to Israel. "You too have to be emancipated," the letter said.

Only yesterday, when the anger and

frustration within the Jewish American community rose to meet the indignation among many Israelis, including Abba Eban and President Chaim Herzog, did Prime Minister Shamir relent and agree to name a two-man panel in the Pollard case. However, he was unwilling to grant the inquiry any powers; it must rely on the willing cooperation of witnesses. This places the panel in the same category as a parliamentary investigation, already promised by former foreign minister Eban when he made that observation about "the most difficult moment."

No matter the outcome of the investigations, it is to be hoped that Jewish Americans will seize the opportunity to separate themselves and their religion from the domestic politics which govern Israel. They can perform no greater service for the Jewish state.

By enforcing dependency upon themselves, American Jews deny Israel the right to grow up. By refusing to hold that nation's politicians responsible for actions that contradict the best interest of the United States, they weaken this country's future capability to come to the aid of Americans' best friend in the Middle East.

I would, without hesitation, sign a petition calling for Jonathan Jay Pollard's immediate release, once U. S. intelligence has determined the material he stole has become outdated. Forcing him to spend the rest of his life in jail would be cruel punishment in light of the idealism which prompted his crimes.

Not revenge, but realistic relations between this nation and Israel would be the best possible outcome from what has been described as the most damaging spy case in recent U. S. history. Realism would reduce the possibilities for any future Pollards. It would lessen the stain still remaining from the U.S.S. *Liberty* on this nation's honor.