

Hersh and The Samson Option- 2

The farther I get into the book the more interested I become in what it reveals about Hersh and his objectives and the accumulating evidence that rather than a reporting job, at which he is superb, it is a political argument disguised as a reporting job.

Of interest because John McCone was CIA head at the time of the JFK assassination and its investigation is <sup>that</sup> the Hersh begin his Chapter 6 with an account of McCone as a partisan and incomplete leaker. (pages 71ff) Hoover caught him doing that with consummate irresponsibility over the <sup>of</sup> fabrications of Gilberto Alvarado Ugarte - over which Ambassador Mann was well on his way to starting World War II when wheeled in.

In discussing the ultra Admiral Lewis Straus, AEC head, and portraying him as blindly pro Israel, he reports that Straus favored raising money, <sup>beginning</sup> in 1932, to resettle endangered Jews in Africa. While correctly pointing out this infringed on the rights of those living on the land to be bought for this purpose, Hersh does not note how it parallels an equally Hitler scheme for ridding Europe of its Jews.

Without recognition of how it can influence his argument that Straus was blinded by his Jewishness, Hersh says on 86 that he "privately was in favor of a nuclear-armed Israel" while saying two pages later that he "remained hostile to Zionism all of his life." Can it be that Straus was motivated to want Israel to have the nuclear weapon because Straus was so Zionist?

Hersh notes on 89 that in the CIA there was fear of the loyalty of Jews so they were excluded from dealing with "Israeli issues inside CIA headquarters" and that for many years no Jews were assigned to Israel. He quotes a high-ranking CIA Jew as saying years later that "every fucking Jew in the CIA was in accounting of legal."

On 96 Hersh says, quoted in full, that JFK was told at a Hyannis gathering, "everybody knows the reputation of your father concerning Jews and Hitler." He has a footnote on that page saying that during the period in which he got his education JFK had "few close Jewish friends," which he says was not atypical for wealthy Irish Catholics, but he has no footnote saying what the "reputation" is that the father got "concerning Jews and Hitler."

On 97 he quotes reporter and JFK friend Charles Bartlett as quoting JFK as saying that Jews had told him that in return for "paying" his "bills" they wanted control over his Middle East policy. Perhaps true, although nothing about it in his spare notes. But if true is it unusual in any way - other than being attributed to Jews?

Hersh quotes Floyd Cutler, an American expert after a trip to Israel's Dimona nuclear operation as saying "They were terrified that they'd be bombed. I was asked by an Israel to raise the question of an American ~~American~~ nuclear umbrella."

If Hersh does not see any connection between the refusal to guarantee Israel against nuclear attack and its decision to achieve its own nuclear protection he is blind. The blindness extending to his index. This is the third such (unindexed) <sup>(There are more, like on 178)</sup> quotation to this point. Hersh talks about Admiral Straus as pro Israel while anti-Zionist and as in favor of a

nuclear-armed Israel" but Hersh never connects the two, the US refusal to provide nuclear protection an Israel's resulting quest for its own nuclear protection. *Or against vastly larger enemy forces, or CBUs*

~~In~~ seeming to argue against providing this nuclear protection Hersh quotes Culler as asking, "Would the United States initiate nuclear war to protect any country in the Middle East, or India, or Pakistan, or Argentina?" He says that Culler said, "we were all in a bind. We have to be careful in assigning blame. It may be a story but there is no right or wrong."

I don't know why <sup>right</sup> Hersh included the ~~not-right~~ or wrong part of the quote unless he fear a strong reaction from omitting it but it applies to him and he does blame in his writing.

Moreover, was the question of initiating a nuclear war to protect any country?

Is not the "shield" concept that the promise to retaliate will discourage another from initiating a nuclear war?

I am not a third of the way through the book and I wonder more and more what impelled Hersh to do this book rather than one on many other subjects available to him. I continue to wonder about his overt bias and his dishonesty in the book. About him.

For example, his lengthy footnote on 88 reporting that out planes regularly overflew and photographed Nazi extermination camps, his plural but he mentioned only Auschwitz by name. It has been photographed at least 30 times. Showing "four large complexes of gas chambers and crematoriums...Bodies were being buried in trenches or burned in large open pits. Some of the photos showed victims being marched to their deaths, while others showed prisoners being processed for slave labor." He does not say that this slave labor was performed at the IG Farben "synthetic oil and rubber complex" only five miles away. He does say that at Auschwitz 12,000 were killed daily. And instead of explaining this disclosure, new to me, he seeks to justify its being ignored by saying that photo-interpreters were not available enough and informed enough to make this out. But there was no such need because before then the death camps and crematoria were well reported by eyewitnesses who were ignored by the allies. With the knowledge that existed these pictures were confirmation of what had been reported and ignored. I think they also refute the claim made to explain away not bombing the railroad track to prevent the influx of more to be exterminated: it is obvious that the slave labor was working at the plants engaged in essential Nazi war production. There was this additional reason for bombing at least the means of getting the slave labor there. Hersh also discloses that bombers flew over at least 30 times. So there was plenty of opportunity to at the same time reduce Nazi war supplies and human fuel for the crematoria. It did not even require special flights- there were this 30+.

This is the Hersh of My Lai? ~~It~~ is it a Heine-like Jew, a Jew-hating Jew or one with some special tax of a different kind to grind? Is it only that he is anti-Israel?



Hersh begins his Chapter 9 by reporting that when Kennedy could not get Be-Gurion to say what he wanted him to say he decided "to help get Ben-Gurion...out of office." The first step was to invite a political rival, Golda Meir, to a long visit at Palm Beach. (Page 117)

Hersh says that JFK "made an extraordinary private commitment to Israel's defense," "We are asking the cooperation of Israel....not unfriendly to Israel; but in order to help more effectively I think it is quite clear that in case of an invasion the United States would come to the support of Israel..." (117-8)

As Hersh fails to note, as a "private commitment" this had no meaning after JFK was out of office and need not have while he was President. Moreover, depending on the capabilities of any invading force(s), coming to Israel's aid after invasion had to be regarded by Israeli's as perhaps being too late. (Compare with 178, where he says what I here say.)

And, of course, Israel was invaded and it got no military forces from the US to help it and the wars demonstrated that help could always be too late.

It is not easy to believe that the US would go to war against the world's petroleum monopoly or would have then.

When Egypt, Syria and Iraq combined in the Arab Federation Ben-Gurion proposed that the US and USSR jointly and publicly declare the territorial integrity of every Middle Eastern state. JFK would not. When Ben-Gurion then wrote him, "my people have a right to exist ... and this existence is in danger" JFK again refused to sign a security pact. This told B-G's party to get rid of him, Hersh says.

In discussing LBJ's closer ties to Jews and stronger feelings and the reason for them - his trip to a crematorium - Hersh says what I do not recall knowing, that Erich Leinsdorf was about to be deported by the US when LBJ prevented that,

Hersh does not evaluate this "extraordinary private commitment" he says JFK gave B-G. He does not note that when Israel was invaded the US did not get militarily involved, as JFK promised, and he has no observation about the US refusal to put any <sup>GUARANTEES</sup> guarantees on paper and how Israel could interpret that and why the US didn't.

~~Yet~~ Yet without comment and without any notes <sup>for</sup> this is part of Hersh's argument ~~in~~ support of Israel not developing the bomb for its own protection.

Is it not obvious that if JFK did not dare put his promise in writing there was little chance of his daring to implement it? Hersh has no observation on whether or not this could or should have made ~~these~~ those Israelis determined to develop their bomb willing or unwilling to give the promise <sup>of</sup> (any real meaning <sup>in performance</sup> for Israel.

Chapter 10 is the title chapter, "The Samson Option." He writes it to give the impression this is how those Israelis who wanted the bomb actually thought and spoke of that ~~extremity~~ but this is not true: "In its place, argued the nuclear advocates, would be the Samson Option. Samson, according to the Bible...cried out, 'Let my soul die with the Philistines.'" (page 137) He concludes this paragraph with a similar suggestion, "For Israel's nuclear

nuclear advocates, the Samson Option became another way of saying, 'Never again'." Here he has a footnote to a Podhoretz Commentary essay in which <sup>Podhoretz</sup> he offers the opinion that if there were a war in which Israel was hopeless/lost it would do as Samson did, not do a Masada of mass suicide. The closest thing to a source in his notes is "For a discussion of the Samson and Masada psychologies see "A Psycho-History of Zionism"...." The number of books in his text and sources is considerable, so I wonder how he had the time for a book with this title, or whether he was attracted to it by its title.

While as I indicted he at no point gives any explanation of why those Israelis who opted the nuclear weapon did so and at no point makes any effort to state what the nuclear interest/situation was in the Muslim world, from time to time a bit creeps in. For example at the beginning of this chapter he quotes a Dayan article published 4/63 or well before Israel had made any real progress on having a nuclear bomb, as "urging ~~the~~ the Israeli arms industry to keep pace with Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's effort to build nuclear weapons." (page 129) He has not yet given his reader any real understanding of Nasser as a person or leader or of his policies. But without that, is it not enough that Nasser sought the bomb for Israel to feel that at least as a deterrent it also needed the bomb? No discussion of this by Hersh. No mention.

On 138 Hersh says that "A major complication in the debate (over whether to develop the bomb by Israel), seemingly, was the Arab and Israeli press which routinely published exaggerated accounts of each side's weapons of mass destruction. In Israel there were alarmist accounts of Chinese support for an Egyptian nuclear bomb. ...." Hersh has no single quotation or citation of any such stories in the Israeli press. But do not the subsequent wars reflect that the Arabs were very well supplied with advanced weaponry, especially planes and tanks? Was not the USSR stocking them all? And he wrote this after he knew that the Scuds had exploded over Israel in the Gulf War and after it was well known that China and other powers like North Korea were stocking Syria with missiles of longer range than the Scuds. Long after Saudi Arabia obtained from the US planes that could enable it to bomb Greece, that much loaded range.

It is not only Nasser about whom Hersh gives his reader not a word to this point, through Chapter 13/14 he has nothing on any of them, the Saddams, whose name is not mentioned in the book once, or Asad, also not mentioned (Correction, there is a single mention of Saddam Hussein on page 317, his epilogue, where he says that on the second day of the war Saddam launched 8 scuds at Israel) Of King Hussein, on 289 he says it was Ariel Sharon's hope to overthrow him and make Jordan a Palestinian state. No mention of Gadhafi under any spelling of which I know. Libya is not mentioned at all, not its tyrant or its CBW arms and plants. None of this and more if I searched, I'm sure, in a book supposedly examining the Israel development and possession of nuclear weapons, and with the title yet of "The Samson Option" so clearly cribbed from what appears to be a work of amateur shrinkery published in 1975 by the prestigious house of Mason J. Charter, in New York!



His chapter 11, "Playing the Game," is on Angleton. It has remarkably few sources and none for some direct quotations. Some of it is new to me and I'd like to know the source! Including of direct quotations. What made me wonder is that much as he knows about Angleton he has no source for his statement that it was Angleton who received the CIA intelligence on Israel. He was head of counterintelligence, not intelligence, and normally intelligence would be routed to that component.

In Chapter 12, "The Ambassador," he has brief mention of the Israeli attack on our spy ship the Liberty. He quotes a cable from our ambassador saying, "Urge strongly that we too avoid publicity. (As Israel had sought to do.) [Liberty's] proximity to scene could feed Arab suspicions of U.S. Isreal collusion . . . (his omission) Israelis obviously shocked by error and tender sincere apologies." (Pages 166-8)

On the <sup>(167)</sup> previous page, he begins this short section saying that the Liberty, a naval intelligence ship, "had been monitoring Middle East communications traffic in international waters off the coast of Israel and had been identified as an American ship before the attack...." In the text Hersh has no explanation of the attack but in a footnote - on Clark Clifford! - it quotes him as not crediting Israel's claim of error. (Neither do I!) But having said that the ship flew an American flag and had been identified as American and then that the "error" explanation is not credible when he says nothing else it is a deliberate attack on Israel. He quotes the Ambassador as saying that Arabs could suspect collusion with Israel but says nothing at all about the ship monitoring Israeli communications when Israel was involved in a war in which he could be wiped out. (It was on the third day of that war.) The Israeli pilots had to assume that their communications were being monitored and that it was by or for their enemies and even had to wonder whether it was a US ship or an Arab ship flying the US flag. The ship had no business being there on such a mission without arranging for the Israelis to know why it was there and persuading it that it was not spying on Israel's communications. Avoiding the incitation against Israel he published would have required but one sentence and the book had plenty of room for that.

Resumed 1/21 I see no point in continuing with long details or comments and I'll make fewer. But I cannot omit his <sup>justifying</sup> saying on 178 for the US not to keep a President's promise: the US "failed to respond to Nasser's closing of the Strait of Tiran and blockade of Elat. Israeli foreign ministry documents showed that Dwight Eisenhower had promised in writing after the Suez debacle in 1956 that the United States would use force, if necessary, to keep the strait open. Israel called on Johnson to keep that commitment after Nasser's blockade and felt betrayed upon learning that the State Department considered Eisenhower's commitment to have expired with Eisenhower left office in early 1961. Only a treaty ratified by the U.S. Senate was binding on subsequent administrations...." Yet as noted earlier, Hersh had the exact opposite position re a JFK promise.

This was, as he says, a month before the Six-Day war -- as he says -- and he does not say that it did or could trigger that war, ~~and~~ or whether what Egypt did was an act of war.

Without comment or explanation, he reports that the US "embargoed all arms deliveries to Israel for 135 days.....while the Soviets continued to resupply their allies, the Arabs.

This had no bearing on any Israeli effort to develop The Bomb? Or belief it had to?

He even lies, and it is a lie, in the very beginning of Chapter 15, to cover the perfidy of Albion. He refers to "the Jewish struggle after World War II against the British mandatory power in Palestine. The British authorities had angered David Ben Gurion and his followers by insisting that they adhere to the strict limitations on Jewish immigration to Palestine that were set in 1939, after three years of Arab revolts." In fact the British refused to permit the number of Jews within those "strict limitations" to enter Palestine. He melds time, treating before and after World War II as one period and in this makes no mention of the fact that those denied permission to emigrate from Europe within the quota were incinerated by Hitler and as of that era has what came after the war, "the outgunned members of the Hagannah, the Jewish underground, began the inevitable guerrilla war against British troops." (195) This is more reprehensible because in the period he omits, of the War as with World War I, Palestinian Jews fought valiantly with the British while most of the Arabs of the area were behind Hitler.

This is not sloppy writing, Hersh is not a sloppy writer. It is a deliberate deception and misrepresentation. Moreover, as he may say later, "the underground" did not consist only of the Hagannah.

Resumed 1/23= In reading his account of the 1973 war in his "Nuclear Blackmail" chapter pages 225 ff I was surprised to note that he avoided giving any meaningful account of the remarkable military performance of the surprised and unmobilized Israeli forces. I then remembered that he handled the ~~Yom Kippur~~ 1967 war the same way. To me this is surprising for a number of reasons, including that it could be an argument that Israel did not need The Bomb. It would have taken only a few sentences to give his readers an idea of the remarkable military performance of the greatly outnumbered and under-equipped Israeli forces so that other than his argument for their not having the bomb the reader could learn more about the actualities of that area and that despite. He does make passing reference one time <sup>point</sup> to Israel crossing the Suez canal but he at no point indicates the number of prisoners they took, the plane, tanks and even armies they destroyed or the casualties. Without the epilogue he added, in paperback format this book has only 315 pages so space was not a consideration. It seems as though in all respects save for making the bomb he intends to deprecate Israel and just about all things Israeli.

His account of the Nixon/Kissinger reaction to the nuclear blackmail by Israel Hersh alleges is new to me and is interesting. He says Israel said it would use the bomb, would have to, if its conventional arms lost in the earliest moments of the 1973 war were not replaced.



Not until the very end does Hersh offer any explanation of or reason for Israel's making the enormous and very dangerous (for it) investment in having its own Bomb. On page 318, next to the last in his Epilogue, he refers to the Gulf War Guarantees meaning "little; no Jews had been killed by poison gas since Treblinka and Auschwitz and Israel, after all, had built its bomb so it would never have to depend on the goodwill of others when the lives of Jews were being threatened."

The very last sentence in this epilogue bears on this: "The Samson Option is no longer the only nuclear option available to Israel."

In sort, <sup>by only</sup> after completing a very anti-Israel book for which he was certain to get considerable international attention does he make even a gesture at putting the entire book in any context. He does not give his reader or reviewers any reason to believe that it was not all 100% madness and irresponsibility until after his mind-poison has had its effect.

Earlier I noted the inadequacy, an understatement, of his notes and citations of sources and <sup>to a</sup> large degree their total absence where they appear to be most necessary. This morning, my reading including his last two chapters, <sup>in</sup> his Epilogue and the Afterword to the Vintage edition, I began to believe and I do believe that his book is really an operation of essentially United States intelligence, with some involvement of some in Israeli intelligence or opposition politics or both.

This would account for the absence of the urgently needed, in most cases, notes on the unnamed and unidentified sources for most of the content of this book.

In this morning's reading, in which I did not bother to check the inadequate notes, and in looking at them now see <sup>that for these chapters</sup> they take up less than a page, I came to believe that even if he had a massive research staff it does not seem possible for him <sup>located and</sup> to have read all the sources he does cite, many in the text, not notes. And his brief (page 329) acknowledgements do not refer to any <sup>such</sup> research help.

Perhaps relevant, perhaps not, his last two chapters are on the Pollard case in the US and Vanunu's leaking of Israeli nuclear information in London, this a very brief chapter. Much of the Pollard material has no direct connection, but I think I'd have included it, too. Among the to me remarkable omissions in his handling of that is any reference to the <sup>unusual</sup> severity of the sentence. This also is consistent with his serving US government interests in his book.

With Hersh there is a precedent. Colby selected him or all reporters to use in getting and getting rid of Angleton and his disclosures he believed necessary for the health of the CIA, for the disclosure of its "family <sup>jewels</sup> jewels," as I recall the phrase. While this may not have happened, I believe it is the history of this book and it does explain the unquestioned omissions of many, possibly most sources and the absence of citing direct quotations of controversial nature to any source.

If this book did not have this origin, it would have been impossible without intelligence-agency help the signs of which permeate the book.

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## The U.N.'s Job in Iraq

**I**RAQ'S interference with the United Nation's weapons inspectors has been a persistent theme in its sparring with the United States and its allies. Earlier this month, the Iraqis threatened U.N. inspectors' flights into the country. But on Tuesday they announced a change of heart, and on Thursday 52 technicians and staff from the U.N.'s Special Commission on Iraq flew in—the same day American planes bombed an Iraqi radar station in the northern no-fly zone.

The special commission's assignment is to strip Iraq of the weapons forbidden it under the U.N. resolution that ended the gulf war nearly two years ago and to set up a monitoring system to ensure that none of those weapons comes creeping back covertly. It has made substantial progress.

Iraq's large and well-equipped nuclear program was dismayingly close to building weapons. Now, after much hide-and-seek with the Iraqis, the commission has dismantled much of it. While no one rules out the possibility that there may be further nuclear materials hidden, the United Nations is fairly confident that Iraq no longer has the capacity to produce them. Nearly all the prohibited material discovered so far has been successfully removed.

To deal with chemical weapons, the special commission has built two facilities, each a sub-

stantial industrial plant. At one, it has destroyed more than 5,000 rockets loaded with nerve gas and has neutralized about two-thirds of the stock of nerve agents. The second plant, the one to incinerate the mustard gas, is now ready to go into full operation, but there's a stock of several hundred tons of the gas to deal with.

Missiles with ranges of more than 150 kilometers are prohibited to Iraq, and the commission has destroyed everything it has found—not only the missiles but the launch vehicles, the guidance systems and the factories to produce them. It's clear that Iraq was also working on biological weapons, and while it had apparently not produced much, the need for a careful watch is obvious.

The commission is now beginning to set up its long-term process of surveillance and verification. To do that it needs, among other things, the full list of companies in other countries that supplied Iraq with the means to make its illicit weapons. Iraq says it wants normal relations with the United States and an end to the embargo on its oil. Before that can even be considered, Iraq is going to have to meet a series of conditions. First among them is full acceptance of the U.N. resolutions and full cooperation with the U.N. special commission that is working with stubborn courage to carry them out.

This editorial from today's Wx Post to me is a powerful argument for Israel requiring The Bomb. Saddam and the UN destroyed 5,000 rockets loaded with nerve gas! And several hundred tons of ~~nerve~~ mustard gas.

Plus what?

And with who knows what Muslims states having what in addition?

John Jerry



# THE SAMSON OPTION

ISRAEL'S NUCLEAR ARSENAL  
AND AMERICAN FOREIGN POLICY

SEYMOUR M. HERSH



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istence of its nuclear reactor and continue its construction at Dimona without any official French government help.

With the friendly summit behind him, Ben-Gurion did nothing to change the status quo at Dimona. Neither did de Gaulle or the French government. The privately owned French construction firms and their employees maintained a vigorous presence at Dimona until 1966 and continued to be well paid under the existing contracts.

## 6

## GOING PUBLIC

By December 1960, John W. Finney had been a reporter for three years in the Washington bureau of the *New York Times*, covering nuclear issues and the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC). Finney, hired away from United Press International by bureau chief James A. Reston, was considered a solid addition to the news staff—but he had yet to bust a big one.

Finney's story came late that month and was, as Finney recalled, "handed to me on a platter."

The messenger was the *Times*'s redoubtable Arthur Krock, then the patriarch of Washington columnists, who approached Finney's desk late one afternoon. Krock was known to young bureau reporters such as Finney for his remoteness and for his daily long lunches with senior government officials at the private Metropolitan Club, a few blocks from the White House.

"Mr. Finney," Krock said, "I think if you call John McCone, he'll have a story for you." John A. McCone, a very wealthy Republican businessman from California, was chairman of the AEC, and Finney had established good rapport with him. Finney immediately understood the situation: "They were looking to plant a story. I was the right person and Krock was the intermediary." Finney made the call and was promptly invited to McCone's office.

"McCone was mad, sputtering mad," Finney recalled. "He started talking and saying, 'They lied to us.'"  
Who?



"The Israelis. They told us it was a textile plant." There was new intelligence, McCone said, revealing that the Israelis had secretly built a nuclear reactor in the Negev with French help: McCone wanted Finney to take the story public. Finney's subsequent article, published December 19 on page one in the *Times*, told the American people what Art Lundahl and Dino Brugioni had been reporting to the White House for more than two years: that Israel, with the aid of the French, was building a nuclear reactor to produce plutonium. "Israel had made no public announcement about the reactor, nor has she privately informed the United States of her plan," Finney wrote, faithfully reflecting what McCone told him. "There is an ill-concealed feeling of annoyance among officials that the United States has been left in the dark by two of its international friends, France and Israel."

Finney's story also noted that McCone had "questioned" Israel about the new information but then added: "Mr. McCone refused to go into details." It was standard operating procedure for official Washington: Finney got the story and McCone was able to duck responsibility for giving it to him. McCone's leak to Finney would be his parting shot as AEC commissioner; a few days later he announced his resignation on *Meet the Press*, the NBC Sunday television interview show. The Finney story was being written that same day. Finney was

\* There is no evidence that the Israeli government ever claimed to Washington that the construction at Dimona was a textile plant. Those American and European diplomats who inquired invariably were informed that Dimona was a research facility (usually for agriculture) or a chemical plant. McCone's comment to Finney became widely accepted as fact, nonetheless, and prompted a whimsical column by Art Buchwald in the *New York Herald Tribune* on January 10, 1960. Buchwald told of an Israeli cab driver who six months earlier had driven an American diplomat to Dimona in search of a suit, at wholesale prices, from the textile plant. The technicians at Dimona decided to let him in and pretend that "nothing was going on." When the diplomat inquired about buying a suit, he was told: "Perhaps you would like something in cobalt blue? Or maybe a nice uranium brown? How about a cosmic gray, double-breasted, with pin-striped particles?" The diplomat was measured for his suit behind a six-foot wall of lead. Another scientist "rushed in with a Geiger counter, a slide rule, and two robot arms. The head of the plant took a pad and said: 'Shimshon, call off the customer's measurements.' Shimshon yelled out: 'Ten, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one, off.'" There were more measurements: "Wait U-235; relatively good check; there is a hexagonal prism in the left shoulder; the right sleeve needs reactor." As the diplomat left, Buchwald wrote, he was told: "Please, kind sir, do not tell your friends about us because we have too much work now, and if we take any more orders the plant will explode."

convinced, as McCone wanted him to be, that the commissioner's anger stemmed from recently acquired knowledge, some new intelligence about the Israelis. "McCone left me with the impression," Finney recalled, "that they'd suddenly appreciated that the Israelis were lying to them."

Finney paid a higher price than he realized for his big story: the Eisenhower administration was using him and the *New York Times* to accomplish what its senior officials were publicly apprehensive about doing themselves—taking on the Israelis over Dimona. McCone, as he did not indicate to Finney, had been briefed regularly on the Israeli nuclear program after replacing Lewis Strauss as AEC commissioner in July 1958; there is no evidence that Strauss, who also received regular briefings on Dimona from Art Lundahl and Dino Brugioni, personally shared his knowledge with McCone. But Lundahl and Brugioni did. McCone, as AEC chairman, was a member of the U.S. Intelligence Advisory Committee, the top-level group at the time, and was, according to Walter N. Elder, a former CIA official who was McCone's long-time aide, "in on the action from the beginning. He sat at the table."

What made McCone (who died in early 1991 after a long, incapacitating illness) join the administration in suddenly reacting to intelligence that had been around for years? Walt Elder, who wrote the still-classified history of McCone's CIA tenure, described McCone as being committed to the concept of nuclear nonproliferation and also aware of the convenient fact that Eisenhower was a month away from ending his eight-year reign in the White House. There could be no better time to act. "He figured, 'I'm through and this is my duty—to let the public know about this,'" said Elder. Another issue, he added, was McCone's frustration at the constant Israeli lying about Dimona: "There was an impetus to do them in."

By December 1960, work at Dimona had progressed to the point where the reactor dome had become visible from nearby roads in the Negev, and thus was more susceptible to being photographed by military attachés. By this time, too, the U-2 program was in disarray: its decline began in May 1960, when



program. In the fall of 1966, Strauss used his influence to get Bergmann a two-month appointment as a visiting fellow at the prestigious Institute for Advanced Studies in Princeton. Strauss, who never graduated from college, had joined the institute's board of trustees during World War II, and he continued to be one of its major contributors and fund-raisers. The institute rarely dealt with chemists—its fellows are physicists and mathematicians—but the rules were bent for Strauss. Bergmann was a bitter man at that point; he had been forced to resign his posts at the defense ministry and as head of the Israeli Atomic Energy Commission after his continued objections to Prime Minister Levi Eshkol's decision—in part because of pressure from President Lyndon B. Johnson—to delay full-scale nuclear weapons production.

"Strauss had nudged me about Bergmann," recalled Carl Kayesen, then the institute's newly appointed director. "He told me he was a very distinguished scientist." It was only after Bergmann arrived, Kayesen added, that he learned who he was and what he did. Bergmann wasn't very busy, and "he would come by and talk to me. It became clear that he and Strauss were close, and also clear that he was working on [the Israeli nuclear] weapons program. He was very relaxed about it." It was also obvious that Bergmann was telling Kayesen all that he had told Strauss. Kayesen, a distinguished political economist who had been deputy assistant to the President for national security affairs, wasn't surprised to learn that Israel was interested in nuclear bombs, but it was a jolt to realize that Strauss—seemingly so ambivalent about his Jewishness and so opposed to any spread of nuclear weapons technology—privately was in favor of a nuclear-armed Israel.

Perhaps because Strauss's political life was so mired in turbulence, the public and the press never had a chance to get more than a glimpse of his private feelings about being Jewish and his guilt about not doing more in the 1950s to save Jews caught up in the Holocaust.

There was really no secret about his Jewishness—Strauss had been a leader since 1938 of Congregation Emanu-El, the largest and most prominent Reform synagogue in New York City. In

1957, Eisenhower had briefly toyed with the idea of naming him secretary of defense, but decided that his Jewishness would cause too many problems with the Arab nations in the Middle East. Yet Strauss's activities on behalf of a Jewish homeland apparently were not known, not even to his close associates in the Atomic Energy Commission. In his memoirs, published in 1965, Strauss wrote bitterly about the Nazi Holocaust and those—including himself—who did not do enough: "The years from 1933 to the outbreak of World War II will ever be a nightmare to me, and the puny efforts I made to alleviate the tragedies were utter failures, save in a few individual cases—pitifully few."

In 1933, Strauss had been asked by the American Jewish Committee to attend an international conference in London on the Jewish plight. There he met Dr. Chaim Weizmann and listened as the conferees agreed that an "astronomical sum" of money from the United States must be raised to help resettle what could be millions of Jews. Strauss, then fervently opposed to a Jewish state in Palestine, was the only delegate to raise his voice in dissent during the conference, a position he came to regret. Six years later, Strauss would spend much time and effort in an unsuccessful attempt to convince the British government to donate a large chunk of colonial Africa for resettlement by European refugees, Jews and non-Jews alike. With the Nazi blitzkrieg only months away, money was no longer an object: Strauss and his American colleagues, who included Bernard Baruch, the financier, were agreed that as much as \$500 million could be raised.\* It was too late; Strauss's strong feelings about that failure—and the failure of world leadership—are explicit in his memoir: "The tidal wave of war swept over the continents and across the ocean and a world in shock closed

\*The goal was to convince the British to cede a tract of land in Kenya, Tanganyika (now Tanzania), or northern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Strauss carried a letter to London from Baruch in the late summer of 1939 noting that the land to be ceded in Africa could be "cleaned up with modern equipment. The world has not always been as clean as it is now. Our own country was full of morasses. Panama and Cuba were cleaned up, and Africa can be cleaned up, too. . . . [I]n this new land there would be a place for tens of millions and they would be the best, the strongest and the most courageous people. . . ." Missing from the Baruch-Strauss proposal is any thought or concern about the Africans who lived in the areas to be ceded. Any such resettlement would have inevitably resulted in internal conflict similar to that raging then—and now—between the Israelis and those Palestinians who were ousted from their homelands by the Zionist movement.



its eyes, figuratively and literally, to the plight of the unfortunate beings who were engulfed.”

Like many Jews, Strauss remained hostile to Zionism all of his life, but he won the confidence of his colleagues in the Israeli Atomic Energy Commission by publicly joining them in prayer in Geneva during the 1955 United Nations Conference on the Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy, at the time the largest international scientific conference ever held. More than fifteen hundred delegates from seventy nations, including Israel, whose delegation was led by Ernst Bergmann, took part. Moshe Sharret, then foreign minister, received a full report—as he noted in a diary entry for September 18, 1955—from a deputy, who characteristically thought it important to tell Sharret that at least three hundred of the delegates were Jewish. Despite that large number, Sharret wrote, when the Jewish community of Geneva arranged for a special Friday-night service, “present only were the Israeli delegation [to the conference] and the head of the U.S. delegation, Admiral Strauss.”

\* Neither Strauss nor the CIA's Dino Brugioni knew it at the time, of course, but reconnaissance aircraft of the Mediterranean Allied Air Force and the Fifteenth U.S. Air Force repeatedly overflew and photographed the Nazi crematoriums at Auschwitz-Birkenau in Poland in the last year of the war, where twelve thousand Jews and Egyptians were being murdered daily by 1944. The death camps were about five miles from an I.G. Farben synthetic oil and rubber complex that was bombed four times in World War II. In 1978, Brugioni and Robert Poitier, a CIA colleague, noticed that the camps were in direct alignment with the reconnaissance path for the Farben complex. Brugioni knew from his own experiences that reconnaissance cameras were always turned on well before the target was reached. Were there aerial photos of the camps buried in Pentagon World War II archives? In a subsequent essay, Brugioni wrote: “We found that the extermination complex had been photographed at least thirty times. Analyzing the photographs, we could see the four large complexes of gas chambers and crematoriums. . . . Bodies were being buried in trenches or burned in large open pits. Some of the photos showed victims being marched to their deaths, while others showed prisoners being processed for slave labour.” The photographs were invaluable as a historical record—the Nazis had forbidden any photography while the camps were in operation—and President Jimmy Carter personally presented a monograph based on them to the President's Commission on the Holocaust. During the war, Brugioni added, there was no historical or social background that would have enabled Air Force photo interpreters, intent on targeting the I.G. Farben plant, to understand what they were seeing: “Anytime a line of people near a building were seen in a picture, it was usually labeled ‘trench hall.’” There were other factors that prevented a close study of the camp photographs at the time, insisted Brugioni, most significantly the intense intelligence needs of the June 1944 D-Day invasion of Europe, which resulted in heavy workloads for all Allied photo interpreters. Allied warplanes also were attempting to break the back of the Luftwaffe in late 1944 by heavy raids on all of the synthetic fuel plants in Germany, Brugioni said, creating yet another demand for photo interpretation and bomb damage assessment.

Strauss, nonetheless, worked hard while in Washington at reining in his intense feelings about being Jewish and about the Holocaust, although many of his former subordinates from the AEC remarked in interviews about his unrelenting hostility to Germans and his reluctance to deal with Germans on any issue. Yet the longtime AEC official Myron Kratzer, who is also Jewish, did not find out until Strauss had left the AEC that the former chairman followed the tradition of fasting during Yom Kippur, the holiest Jewish holiday. Strauss had been asked by Eisenhower after his retirement to head the American delegation to an international meeting in Vienna, and on Yom Kippur, Kratzer recalled, “Strauss did not show up. He simply closed himself in his room on that day.”

Strauss's background and his strong feelings about the Holocaust cannot be disregarded in analyzing why he did not tell anyone—especially John McCone—about Dimona. Fair or not, the issue of “dual loyalty”—exemplified by Strauss's actions—has been a very real concern to the American intelligence community since the creation of Israel in 1948. American Jews, for example, were routinely barred for many years from dealing with Israeli issues inside CIA headquarters; none of the early station chiefs or agents assigned to Israel was Jewish. One Jew who served decades later in a high position in the CIA angrily acknowledged that when he arrived, “every fucking Jew in the CIA was in accounting or legal.” The official wasn't quite right, but even those few Jews who did get to the top, such as Edward W. Proctor, who served as deputy director for intelligence in the mid-1970s, were not given access to all of the sensitive files in connection with Israel. Jews also were excluded from Hebrew language training (at one time called “special Arabic”) in the National Security Agency; such training, of course, is a prerequisite for being assigned to NSA field stations that intercept Israeli communications. There was a flat ban in the Navy communications intelligence agency (known as the Naval Security Group) on the assignment of a Jew to a Middle East issue.

There was—and still is—a widespread belief among American foreign service officers that any diplomatic reporting criti-



cal of Israel would somehow be delivered within days to the Israeli embassy in Washington. In 1963 the Kennedy administration informally agreed with Israel that neither country would spy on or conduct espionage activities against the other. The agreement was sought by American officials, a former Kennedy aide recalled, in an attempt to limit the extent of Israeli penetration of America.

The truth is that Jews and non-Jews alike looked the other way when it came to Israel's nuclear capability. The notion of dual loyalty solely as a Jewish problem is far too narrow; the Jewish survivors who became Israelis, with their incredible travails and sufferings during World War II, had and still have enormous appeal to Americans of all backgrounds. The primary effect of "dual loyalty" has been a form of self-censorship that has kept the United States government from dealing rationally and coherently with the strategic and political issues raised by a nuclear-armed Israel. The issue is not whether rules or laws have been broken, but that very few officials who supported Israel, Jewish or not, have used their position to try to obtain a complete and accurate picture of the Israeli nuclear program. And no one tried to stop it. Those few government bureaucrats in the nonproliferation field who even tried to learn all there was to learn about Dimona were often accused of being "zealots"—and thus not fully trustworthy.

Yet, being Jewish inevitably raised questions, even among the most fair-minded of men. Dino Brugioni briefed Strauss regularly on U-2 nuclear intelligence, but found him inscrutable when it came to information on the Israeli nuclear reactor: "I never knew what he was thinking; never understood him. I'd get the reaction 'That's all right.'" Brugioni had his own reasons for wondering about Strauss. He knew there was evidence inside the CIA suggesting that American and European Jews had been directly involved in the financing and construction of Dimona from the start. "There was a fervor, especially among New York Jews," Brugioni added. "The attitude was 'You had to protect Israel,' and anybody [in the intelligence community] who did not suffered."

In interviews for this book with senior officials of the American nuclear weapons program—men similar to Lewis Strauss,

who spent part or all of their life making bombs—none expressed any doubt about Israel's nuclear ambitions. Most told of close personal friendships with Israeli physicists who were working on the Israeli weapons program. No one with the sophistication and expertise of Lewis Strauss could have had any question about the significance of a secret reactor in the Negev. His widow, Alice, still spy in 1991 at the age of eighty-eight, acknowledged that her husband, who was very closemouthed about his work, "would have approved of Israel trying to defend itself. No question of that." Strauss also had to know that a Jewish nuclear physicist named Raymond Fox had created high-level consternation by emigrating to Israel in 1957 from California, where he had access to weapons design information at the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, the nuclear research facility operated by the University of California for the Atomic Energy Commission. Fox's secrets could be invaluable to the Israelis at Dimona.

Strauss's failure to discuss Dimona with John McCone may have been done in the belief that he had an obligation to ensure that what happened to the Jews of Europe under Hitler could not happen again. Perhaps he thought he was atoning for what he did not do, or could not do, to help the Jews of Europe before World War II. Similar choices were made over the next thirty years by Jews and non-Jews in the American government, who looked the other way when it came to Dimona. Were they guilty of a double standard, as Dino Brugioni and others in the intelligence community suggest? Did Lewis Strauss, who so eagerly assumed the worst when it came to the loyalty of men such as J. Robert Oppenheimer, fail to fulfill the obligations of his office in terms of the known intelligence on Dimona and his obligation to tell his successor about it?

Many American Jews, perhaps understandably, believe the question of "dual loyalty" is an issue that should never be raised in public. They fear that any discussion of Jewish support for Israel at the expense of the United States would feed anti-Semitism: the fear seems to be that non-Jews are convinced that any Jewish support for Israel precludes primary loyalty to the United States. A second issue, in terms of American Jewish



nomination by the Democrats, however, Feinberg was contacted by Governor Abraham Ribicoff of Connecticut, who had been Kennedy's floor manager during the Democratic convention. "I was the only Jew for him," Ribicoff recalled. "And I realized that Jews were for anybody but Jack Kennedy. I told Kennedy I was going to get in touch with Abe Feinberg, who I thought was a key Jew. I arranged a meeting [with Kennedy] in Feinberg's apartment in the Hotel Pierre and we invited all the leading Jews." About twenty prominent businessmen and financiers showed up.\*

It was a rough session. Kennedy had just returned from a brief vacation at the family compound at Hyannis Port, Massachusetts, and it was a prominent Bostonian, Dewey D. Stone, who set the tone with the first question, as recalled by Feinberg: "Jack, everybody knows the reputation of your father concerning Jews and Hitler. And everybody knows that the apple doesn't fall far from the tree." Kennedy's response was to the point: "You know, my mother was part of that tree, too." Ribicoff, who would join Kennedy's cabinet, understood the message: "The sins of the father shouldn't fall on the son." Fortunately for Kennedy, that message was enough for the men at Feinberg's apartment. Kennedy had gone upstairs to a separate room with Ribicoff to await their judgment, Feinberg recalled. The group agreed on an initial contribution of \$500,000 to the presidential campaign, with more to come. "I called him [Kennedy] right away," said Feinberg. "His voice broke. He got emotional" with gratitude.

Kennedy was anything but grateful the next morning in describing the session to Charles L. Bartlett, a newspaper columnist and close friend. He had driven to Bartlett's home in northwest Washington and dragged his friend on a walk, where he recounted a much different version of the meeting the night

\* Kennedy's social friends and colleagues agreed that Kennedy, like many wealthy Irish Catholics of his time, had gone through prep school at Choate and Harvard College with few close Jewish friends. One especially close schoolboy friend, according to Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., the presidential biographer, was Alan J. Lerner, with whom Kennedy traveled widely as a youth. There were few other Jewish childhood friends, as Benjamin C. Bradley, Jr., the longtime editor of the *Washington Post* and close Kennedy friend, acknowledged: "I don't remember a whole lot of Jewish buddies." That changed quickly once Kennedy got into national politics after World War II.

before. "As an American citizen he was outraged," Bartlett recalled, "to have a Zionist group come to him and say: 'We know your campaign is in trouble. We're willing to pay your bills if you'll let us have control of your Middle East policy.'" Kennedy, as a presidential candidate, also resented the crudity with which he'd been approached. "They wanted control," he angrily told Bartlett.

Bartlett further recalled Kennedy promising to himself that "if he ever did get to be President, he was going to do something about it"—a candidate's perennial need for money and resulting vulnerability to the demands of those who contributed. Kennedy, in fact, kept that promise before the end of his first year in office, appointing a bipartisan commission in October to recommend ways to broaden "the financial base of our presidential campaigns." In a statement that was far more heartfelt than the public or the press could perceive, he criticized the current method of financing campaigns as "highly undesirable" and "not healthy" because it made candidates "dependent on large financial contributions of those with special interests." Presidential elections, Kennedy declared, were "the supreme test of the democratic process" in the United States. Kennedy was ahead of his time, however: the campaign financing proposals went nowhere.\*

It is impossible to reconcile the differing accounts of Kennedy's attitude toward the meeting in Feinberg's apartment in the Hotel Pierre. But the fact remains that despite Kennedy's tough words to Bartlett, Abe Feinberg's influence inside the White House was established by the end of Kennedy's first year in office, and the young President did little to diminish it over the next two years. One factor obviously was political: a higher percentage of Jews (81 percent) voted for Kennedy in 1960 than did Roman Catholics (73 percent); it was the Jewish vote that provided Kennedy's narrow plurality of 114,563 votes over

\* The commission, headed by Alexander Heard, then dean of the Graduate School at the University of North Carolina, recommended, among other things, the use of federal tax credits to encourage political contributions by individuals. The goal was to broaden the base of a candidate's financial support and reduce dependence on special-interest groups and the wealthy. In 1961, Kennedy submitted five draft bills to reform presidential campaign financing to Congress; none survived. Kennedy tried again in 1961, submitting two more draft bills to Congress; again neither survived.



## 6. Going Public

John Finney was interviewed in Washington on April 18, 1989. The cited article was "U.S. Hears Israel Moves Toward A-Bomb Potential," *New York Times*, December 19, 1960, page 1. McCone's resignation and TV appearance were also on page 1 that day. "McCone to Resign as AEC Member." The cited Buchwald column (reprinted in part, with his permission) was published January 10, 1961, in the *New York Herald-Tribune*, "The Smashing Tailors of Beersheba." Walter Elder was interviewed in his suburban Virginia home on August 28, 1989, and many times by telephone thereafter. Armand Meyer was interviewed in Rosslyn, Virginia, on June 15, 1990. The cited Herter statement can be found in *The Alliance*, by Richard J. Barnett (Simon & Schuster, New York, 1983), page 179. Phillip Farley was interviewed in Palo Alto, California, on October 30, 1989. Chapman Pincher was interviewed by telephone on March 28, 1991; the cited article is "Israel May Be Making an A-Bomb." *London Daily Express*, December 16, 1960, page 2. Myron Kratzer was interviewed in Washington in June 1989, and by telephone thereafter. The cited Freedom of Information documents are in the author's possession. Christian Herter's testimony to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee can be found in Vol. XIII, Part I, of the published Executive Sessions of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee (Historical Series), made public April 1984.

## 7. Dual Loyalty

The Strauss biography is *No Sacrifice Too Great*, by Richard Frau (University Press of Virginia, Charlottesville, 1984.) There are many accounts of Oppenheimer's travails before the AEC, see *The Oppenheimer Hearing*, by John Major (Batsford, London, 1971). Strauss's test ban testimony was cited in *The Glory and the Dream*, by William Manchester (Little, Brown, Boston, 1973), page 98; Carl Kaysen was interviewed in Cambridge, Massachusetts, on November 11, 1989, and thereafter by telephone. William L. Strauss was interviewed by telephone on April 3, 1991; Alice Strauss was interviewed by telephone on May 6, 1991. Algie Wells was interviewed by telephone on March 29, 1991.

## 8. A Presidential Struggle

Abe Feinberg's role in presidential politics and fund-raising was initially reported in an unpublished dissertation, "Ethnic Linkage and Foreign Policy," by Etta Zablocki, Columbia University, 1983 (available through UMI dissertation information service, Ann Arbor, Mich.). Similar material was published in *The Lobby*, by Edward Tivnan (Simon & Schuster, New York, 1987), and *Tivnan and Israel*, by Michael J. Cohen (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1990). None of the accounts discusses Feinberg's relationship with the Israeli nuclear program. Clark Clifford was interviewed about Feinberg on April 8, 1991. Abraham Ribicoff was interviewed by telephone on November 5, 1990. Ben Bradlee and Arthur Schlesinger discussed President Kennedy on April 9, 1991. Kennedy's comments about campaign financing were made on October 4, 1961, according to Facts on File. A good account of Kennedy's efforts on campaign financing can be found in *Congressional Quarterly's* "Congress and the Nation 1965-1968," Vol. II, "Political Finances," p. 444. Myer Feldman was interviewed in Washington on June 13, 1989, and many times thereafter. Jerome Weisner was interviewed by telephone on

June 27, 1991. Robert Komert was interviewed in Washington on April 3, 1989, and two times thereafter. William Crawford was interviewed in suburban Maryland on May 3, 1990. Israel's diversion of the Norwegian heavy water has been thoroughly researched and reported by Gary Milhollin, director of the Wisconsin Project on Nuclear Arms Control in Washington. Milhollin was the first to expose the issue, and has been more than generous in sharing his files and research. The explanation for the lack of a Sharvit I can be found in "Publicity on Rocket Explained in Israel," *New York Times*, June 10, 1961. Paul Nize was interviewed on October 9, 1990. Robert McNamara's cryptic conversation with the author took place on January 11, 1991. The more logical account of why the Israeli Atomic Energy Commission fell apart in the late 1960s was supplied by Yvval Neeman, minister of energy, in a conversation in Washington on April 15, 1991. Neeman would not discuss any current issues relating to Israel's nuclear capabilities. Floyd Cutler was interviewed on November 30, 1989, in Palo Alto, California, and later by telephone. Phillips Talbot was interviewed briefly by telephone on April 8, 1991.

## 9. Years of Pressure

The declassified memorandum of the Kennedy talk with Golda Meir is available from the JFK Library in Boston and also can be found in *President Kennedy's Policy Toward the Arab States and Israel*, by Mordechai Gazit (Shiloah Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies, Tel Aviv University, 1983), page 108. The Gazit book provides invaluable background on Israeli policy in the Kennedy period. Much detail about Ben-Gurion's attitude and the history of that period, it should be noted again, comes from Michael Bar-Zohar's abridged biography. Daniel Ellsberg was interviewed in Washington on March 20, 1989. The most complete summary of Johnson's early ties to American Jews can be found in "Prologue," by Louis S. Gornolak, unpublished doctoral thesis (University of Texas, 1989), available through UMI dissertation information service.

## 10. The Samson Option

Excellent work on this period has been done by Shlomo Aronson, the Israeli political scientist and advocate of the deterrent value of Israel's nuclear arsenal. Moshe Dayan's *Mazarot* article was summarized April 13, 1963, in the *New York Times*; "Israelis Warned on Arms Lag." Ben-Gurion's letter to the *Times* was published November 20, 1963. Theodore Taylor's paper was entitled "Can Nuclear Weapons Be Developed Without Full Testing?" It was a lecture given on December 11, 1988, at a workshop on Verification of Nuclear and Conventional Arms Reductions, Robin Brook Centre, St. Bartholomew's Medical College, London. The text of the lecture, with additional material, is reproduced in Theodore B. Taylor, "Nuclear Tests and Nuclear Weapons," in Benjamin Frankel, ed., *Opaque Nuclear Proliferation: Methodological and Policy Implications* (Frank Cass, London, 1991), pages 175-90. The cited White House papers are on file at the Lyndon B. Johnson Library in Austin. A number of books are useful on the background of international control of nuclear energy. See *The International Atomic Energy Agency and World Nuclear Order*, by Lawrence Scheinman (Resources for the Future, Washington, D.C., 1987) and *Nuclear Power Issues and Choices*, chaired by Spurgeon M. Kenny, Jr. (Ballinger Publishing Company, Cambridge, Mass., 1977). For a discussion of the Sam-



One former Israeli official recalled that his job was to interpret for the American team. "I was part of the cover-up team. One of the engineers would start talking too much" in front of the Americans, the official said, and he would tell him, in seemingly conversational Hebrew, "'Listen, you mother-fucker, don't answer that question.' The Americans would think I was translating."

The Americans were led by Floyd L. Culler, Jr., a leading expert in the science of nuclear reprocessing who was then deputy director of the Chemical Technology Division at the Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee, where the first uranium for American nuclear weapons had been enriched. At the time, Culler said, he reported to the White House that the reactor he and his colleagues inspected was nothing more than a "standard reactor. All the elements were counted and tagged." Culler, who retired in 1989 as president of the Electrical Power Research Institute in Palo Alto, California, seemed surprised but not shocked upon being informed that his team had been duped by a false control room. "It's possible to make a system appear that it's controlling something when it's not," he explained, adding that simulated control rooms have been widely and effectively used for training purposes in reactor systems worldwide. Culler was far more disturbed to learn that by 1960 the CIA's photo interpretation team had concluded that a site was being excavated at Dimona for a chemical reprocessing plant and had even attempted to measure the amount of dirt being scooped. Such intelligence had not been provided to him, he said, and should have been.

Culler shrugged off the Israeli cheating as inevitable, but not necessary. "It's not possible to make archaeological findings about what was going on just by seeing footprints," he explained. "No one really has that much wisdom." He viewed his inspection as "part of the game of wearing away, of finding ways to not reach the point of taking action" against Israel's nuclear weapons program. He is not at all convinced today, he said, that Israel was wrong to develop its own independent deterrent.

"They were terrified that they'd be bombed," Culler recalled. After the first inspection in 1965, he said, "I was asked by

an Israeli to raise the question" of an American nuclear umbrella upon his return to Washington. Culler wrote his secret report on the inspection during stopovers in Athens and Rome, and dutifully included an account of the Israeli concern. The CIA "got to me as soon as I got off the plane" in Washington, he added, and he was rushed into a debriefing. There was no further talk of nuclear umbrellas on subsequent inspections, and Culler eventually came to ask himself the following rhetorical question: Would the United States initiate nuclear war to protect any country in the Middle East, or India, or Pakistan, or Argentina? "We were all in a bind," Culler said. "We have to be careful in assigning blame. It may be a story, but there is no right or wrong."

The constant bargaining over Dimona was a factor in aborting an ambitious Kennedy administration initiative to resolve the Palestinian refugee issue. Like all American Presidents since 1948, Kennedy came into office with a belief that he could find a way to bring long-term peace to the Middle East. As a House and Senate member, Kennedy had always been a public supporter of Israel, but he had repeatedly expressed understanding of the aspirations of Arab nationalism and sympathy for the plight of the Palestinian refugees. For example, in a February 1958 speech before a Jewish group, he declared that the refugee question "must be resolved through negotiations, resettlement, and outside international assistance. But to recognize the problem is quite different from saying that the problem is insoluble short of the destruction of Israel . . . or must be solved by Israel alone."

State Department Arabists were pleasantly surprised early in 1961 to get word from the White House, according to Armin Meyer, that "just because 90 percent of the Jewish vote had gone for Kennedy, it didn't mean he was in their pocket." Kennedy asked for innovative ideas, and the department suggested that another try be made to resolve the Palestinian refugee problem in the West Bank and Gaza Strip stemming from Israel's victory in the 1948-49 Arab-Israeli War. The United Nations had approved Resolution 194 after the war, directing that

## YEARS OF PRESSURE

John Kennedy, profoundly committed to the principle of nonproliferation, continued throughout 1962 to pressure Ben-Gurion about international inspection and continued to receive the prime minister's bland and irritating assurances that Israel had no intention of becoming an atomic power. The President was far too politically astute not to understand, as he angrily told his friend Charles Bartlett, that the Israeli "sons of bitches lie to me constantly about their nuclear capability." One solution was to help get Ben-Gurion, then embattled in the most serious crisis of his political career, out of office.

A few days after Christmas 1962, Kennedy made what amounted to a direct move against the prime minister's leadership. He invited Foreign Minister Golda Meir, one of Ben-Gurion's leading critics inside the cabinet and the Mapai Party, to his Palm Beach, Florida, home for a seventy-minute private talk. Meir made no secret of the fact that she resented Ben-Gurion for permitting his acolytes, Shimon Peres and Moshe Dayan, to operate behind the back of the foreign ministry; she and other party members who had been born in Eastern Europe, such as Levi Eshkol, the treasury minister, were convinced that Ben-Gurion chose to rely on young men such as Peres and Dayan only because they would be more reluctant to stand up to him.

The declassified memorandum on the Kennedy-Meir meeting contains no specific mention of nuclear weapons (some paragraphs were deleted for national security reasons), but there is little doubt that Kennedy pointedly raised the issue. The memorandum further shows that Kennedy made an extraordinary private commitment to Israel's defense. "We are



asking the cooperation of Israel in the same way that we are cooperating with Israel to help meet its needs," Kennedy told Meir. "Israel doubtless thinks of itself as deeply endangered.

... Our position in these matters may seem to be asking Israel to neglect its interests. The reason we do it is not that we are unfriendly to Israel; but in order to help more effectively. I think it is quite clear that in case of an invasion the United States would come to the support of Israel. We have that capacity and it is growing." It was language no Israeli had ever heard from Dwight Eisenhower.

Moments later, according to the memorandum, Kennedy—anticipating the chronic crisis that would be created by the refugees of the West Bank and Gaza Strip—expressed his regret that the Arab resettlement plan had failed and said his administration would not give up trying to find some solution to the refugee situation. He added that the United States "is really interested in Israel. . . . What we want from Israel arises because our relationship is a two-way street. Israel's security in the long run depends in part on what it does with the Arabs, but also on us."

Kennedy's commitment to Golda Meir, along with his decision to sell the Hawk missiles, amounted to a turning point in American foreign policy toward Israel—one little noted even today. The Kennedy offer might have been enough, if Israel's goal had been to forge a military partnership with the United States. But Israel's needs were far more basic.

John McCone remained agitated about the Israeli bomb and the failure of his agency to determine whether a chemical reprocessing plant was buried underground at Dimona. He also was more outspoken than any other Kennedy insider on the issue: at a 1962 Washington dinner party he publicly reprimanded Charles Lucet, a senior French foreign ministry official, for France's role in the Israeli bomb. Lucet, who had served as deputy ambassador in Washington in the late 1950s (and would become ambassador in 1965), was seated near McCone, who at one point abruptly asked: "So, Mr. Lucet, your country is building a reprocessing plant for the Israelis?" Lucet replied with what was France's public position on the issue: "No, we

are building a reactor." McCone then turned his back on Lucet and did not speak to him for the rest of the evening; it was, given France's high standing with the President and his wife, who were both Francophiles, a pointed rebuff.\*

Kennedy was constantly raising the nuclear issue in his discussions with senior Israelis—and constantly getting boilerplate answers. In early April 1963, Shimon Peres flew to the capital to meet at the White House on the still-pending Hawk sale, and was directly asked by the President about Israeli intentions. An Israeli nuclear bomb, Kennedy said, "would create a very perilous situation. That's why we have been diligent about keeping an eye on your effort in the atomic field. What can you tell me about that?" Peres's answer was a fabrication that would become the official Israeli response for years to come: "I can tell you forthrightly that we will not introduce atomic weapons into the region. We certainly won't be the first to do so. We have no interest in that. On the contrary, our interest is in de-escalating the armament tension, even in total disarmament."

The administration's lack of specific information about Israeli intentions was complicated by the fact, as the President had to know, that many senior members of Congress supported the concept of a nuclear-armed Israel. A few days before his meeting with the President, Peres had discussed nuclear weapons with Senator Stuart Symington, a Kennedy supporter and ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and had been told, as Peres told his biographer: "Don't be a bunch of fools. Don't stop making atomic bombs. And don't listen to the administration. Do whatever you think best."

Israel was doing just that. The physical plant at Dimona continued to mature. The reactor went critical—that is, began a sustained chain reaction—sometime in 1962 with no significant problems, and was capable of being operated at more than seventy megawatts, far greater than the twenty-four megawatts

\* Lucet was offended by McCone's action and, upon his return to Paris, relayed the incident to Bertrand Goldschmidt. "He asked me if we could separate France from responsibility for the [Israeli] bomb," Goldschmidt recalled with a laugh. "I said, 'No. Nor only did we take the girl when she was a virgin, but we made her pregnant.'"



publicly acknowledged by the Ben-Gurion government. Running the plant hotter would create more plutonium by-product to be reprocessed, and a larger nuclear weapons stockpile than any outsider could anticipate. Later that year, the private French construction companies at Dimona, always eager for business, began once again to work on the vital chemical reprocessing plant underground at Dimona—despite de Gaulle's insistence that France would have nothing more to do with the Israeli bomb. The French would build at a furious pace for the next three years, at high pay, finishing the reprocessing plant and the elaborate waste treatment and safety facilities that were essential. French technicians and engineers, who had begun drifting away, were back in force in Beerseba, whose population was growing steadily (it reached seventy thousand by 1970).

Israeli and French scientists continued to cooperate at the French nuclear test site in the Sahara, as the experiments became more weapons-oriented. By late 1961, the French had begun a series of underground tests and were perfecting a series of miniaturized warheads for use in aircraft and, eventually, missiles. There were further tests in the early 1960s of a more advanced Shavit rocket system, with no more public announcements: CIA analysts assumed that the long-range rocket was meant for military use. And in 1963 Israel paid \$100 million to the privately owned Dassault Company of France, then one of the world's most successful missile and aircraft firms, for the joint development and manufacture of twenty-five medium-range Israeli missiles. It was anticipated that the missile, to be known to the American intelligence community as the Jericho I, would be able to deliver a miniaturized nuclear warhead to targets three hundred miles away.

By spring of 1963, Kennedy's relationship with Ben-Gurion remained at an impasse over Dimona, and the correspondence between the two became increasingly sour. None of those letters has been made public.\* Ben-Gurion's responses were being

\* The Kennedy exchanges with Ben-Gurion also have not been released to U.S. government officials with full clearances who have attempted to write classified histories of the period. "The culminate result" of such rigid security, one former American

drafted by Yuval Neeman, a physicist and defense ministry intelligence officer who was directly involved in the nuclear weapons program. "It was not a friendly exchange," Neeman recalled. "Kennedy was writing like a bully. It was brutal."

The President made sure that the Israeli prime minister paid for his defiance. In late April, Egypt, Syria, and Iraq united to form the short-lived Arab Federation; such unity was Ben-Gurion's recurring nightmare. He instinctively turned to Washington, and proposed in a letter to the President that the United States and Soviet Union join forces to publicly declare the territorial integrity and security of every Middle Eastern state. "If you can spare an hour or two for a discussion with me on the situation and possible solutions," Ben-Gurion asked, "I am prepared to fly to Washington at your convenience and without any publicity." Kennedy rejected Ben-Gurion's offer of a state visit and expressed "real reservations," according to Ben-Gurion's biography, about any joint statement on the issue with the Soviets. Five days later, a disappointed Ben-Gurion sent a second note to Kennedy: "Mr. President, my people have the right to exist . . . and this existence is in danger." He requested that the United States sign a security treaty with Israel. Again the answer was no, and it was clear to the Mepai Party that Ben-Gurion's leadership and his intractability about Dimona were serious liabilities in Washington. Golda Meir acknowledged to Ben-Gurion's biographer, "We knew about these approaches. . . . We said nothing, even though we wondered."

A few weeks later, on June 16, 1963, Ben-Gurion abruptly resigned as prime minister and defense minister, ending his fifteen-year reign as Israel's most influential public official.

The many accounts of Ben-Gurion's resignation have accurately described the resurgence of scandal, public distrust, and polarization that marked his last years. The Lavon Affair, stemming from the series of pre-Suez War sabotage activities inside Egypt, had come by the early 1960s to dominate much of the public agenda inside Israel, as new revelations came to light

official lamented, "is a very poorly informed bureaucracy—even if there are people willing to buck the system and ask taboo questions."



with the test ban treaty, whether officially signed or not. The Bundy memorandum remained fixed in Ellsberg's memory: it was dated November 22, 1963, the day of Kennedy's assassination in Dallas, Texas.

Kennedy's successor, Lyndon Johnson, like many Vice Presidents, had been left in the dark on sensitive national security issues by the President and his top aides. "Johnson went berserk upon being briefed in by the Agency," a former high-level American intelligence official recalled. "He didn't know anything about the problem and he cursed Kennedy for cutting him out."

Johnson's ties to Israel were strong long before he became President. Two of his closest advisers, lawyers Abe Fortas (later named to the Supreme Court) and Edwin L. Weisl, Sr., while not particularly religious, felt deeply about the security of Israel. Johnson also had known of Abe Feinberg and his fund-raising skills since the Truman years; Feinberg was among those who had raised money for Johnson's successful 1948 campaign for the Senate.

the United States by the early 1960s for its strategic nuclear delivery vehicles, a status that existed into the early 1960s.) The Kennedy administration continued to antagonize the French on nuclear issues. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara, disgraced at France's nuclear independence and its continued testing in the Sahara, went on a public campaign in 1962 against the *force de frappe*. In a famous spring commencement address at the University of Michigan (in which he announced that the United States was moving away in its targeting from massive retaliation to limited nuclear war), McNamara criticized "weak national nuclear forces" as being "dangerous, expensive, prone to obsolescence, and lacking in credibility as a deterrent." Instead, he insisted, the nations of Europe should buy American arms and rockets to build up their conventional forces and let the United States handle the issue of nuclear deterrence. He had delivered essentially the same message a few weeks earlier in Athens, engaging not only de Gaulle, but America's NATO allies. ". . . [A]ll the allies are angry," British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan wrote in his diary, "with the American proposal that we should buy rockets to the tune of unpeened million dollars, the warheads to be under American control. This is not a European rocket. It's a racket of the American industry. . . . It's rather sad, because the Americans (who are naive and inexperienced) are up against centuries of diplomatic skill and finesse." Continued U.S. opposition to the *force de frappe* was one reason for de Gaulle's 1966 decision to remove France from NATO's military organization and evict NATO headquarters and all allied military facilities from French territory.

Johnson similarly had been excluded from the intense meetings and discussions during the Cuban missile crisis the year before, and it was left to John McCone to tell the Vice President about the issue just hours before it was to be made public. "Johnson was pissed," McCone later told Walt Elders, and "harrumphing and belching," threatened not to support the President on the issue if the Senate leadership did not. McCone assured the Vice President that the Senate was indeed backing the President, and the placated Vice President reversed course.

There was a much deeper link, however, that had nothing to do with campaign funds: Johnson had visited the Nazi concentration camp at Dachau while on a congressional fact-finding trip at the end of World War II. His wife, Lady Bird, told a Texas historian years after Johnson's death that he had returned "just shaken, bursting with overpowering revulsion and incredulous horror at what he had seen. Hearing about it is one thing, being there is another." There are no photographs of the visit, but Johnson's congressional archives contain a full set of U.S. Army photos taken two days after the liberation of the death camp on April 30, 1945.

Johnson's sensitivity to the plight of European Jews had begun even before World War II when, as a young congressman from Texas, he was urged by Jewish supporters in his home district to cut through Washington's red tape and get asylum in America for German refugees running for their lives. Once the refugees got into the country, Johnson had worked hard to keep them in, and his congressional files show that Erich Leinsdorf, the eminent conductor, was among those whose deportation Johnson had prevented. Leinsdorf had made a stunning American debut with New York's Metropolitan Opera in 1938, but was scheduled to be deported late in the year when his six-month visa was up. Deportation to Austria after the Nazi Anschluss in Vienna meant slow death in a concentration camp. Johnson won the respect and the financial backing of the Jewish community in Texas by taking on the Leinsdorf case, and others, and finding a way to circumvent the rules.

President Johnson stayed loyal to his old friends. Five weeks after assuming office, he dedicated a newly constructed Austin synagogue, Agudas Achim, as a favor to James Novy, a longtime Texas political ally and Zionist leader who was chairman of the building committee. He was the first American President to do so, yet only a few newspapers took note of the event. In his introduction, Novy, once the Southwest regional chair-

\* Jews in Europe found it extremely difficult in the 1930s to get visas for the United States, although American immigration quotas went unutilized. Between 1933 and 1938, for example, only 27,000 German Jews were granted entry visas to the United States, far less than the 120,875 permissible under the quotas. More on Johnson's early role in support of Jews can be found in "Prologue: 187's Foreign Affairs Background," an unpublished 1989 University of Texas doctoral thesis by Louis S. Gomolal.

## YEARS OF PRESSURE

John Kennedy, profoundly committed to the principle of nonproliferation, continued throughout 1962 to pressure Ben-Gurion about international inspection and continued to receive the prime minister's bland and irritating assurances that Israel had no intention of becoming an atomic power. The President was far too politically astute not to understand, as he angrily told his friend Charles Bartlett, that the Israeli "sons of bitches lie to me constantly about their nuclear capability." One solution was to help get Ben-Gurion, then embattled in the most serious crisis of his political career, out of office.

A few days after Christmas 1962, Kennedy made what amounted to a direct move against the prime minister's leadership. He invited Foreign Minister Golda Meir, one of Ben-Gurion's leading critics inside the cabinet and the Mapai Party, to his Palm Beach, Florida, home for a seventy-minute private talk. Meir made no secret of the fact that she resented Ben-Gurion for permitting his acolytes, Shimon Peres and Moshe Dayan, to operate behind the back of the foreign ministry; she and other party members who had been born in Eastern Europe, such as Levi Eshkol, the treasury minister, were convinced that Ben-Gurion chose to rely on young men such as Peres and Dayan only because they would be more reluctant to stand up to him.

The declassified memorandum on the Kennedy-Meir meeting contains no specific mention of nuclear weapons (some paragraphs were deleted for national security reasons), but there is little doubt that Kennedy pointedly raised the issue. The memorandum further shows that Kennedy made an extraordinary private commitment to Israel's defense. "We are



sking the cooperation of Israel in the same way that we are cooperating with Israel to help meet its needs," Kennedy told Meir. "Israel doubtless thinks of itself as deeply endangered.

Our position in these matters may seem to be asking Israel to neglect its interests. The reason we do it is not that we are unfriendly to Israel; but in order to help more effectively. I think it is quite clear that in case of an invasion the United States would come to the support of Israel. We have that capacity and it is growing." It was language no Israeli had ever heard from Dwight Eisenhower.

Moments later, according to the memorandum, Kennedy—anticipating the chronic crisis that would be created by the refugees of the West Bank and Gaza Strip—expressed his regret that the Arab resettlement plan had failed and said his administration would not give up trying to find some solution to the refugee situation. He added that the United States "is really interested in Israel. . . . What we want from Israel arises because our relationship is a two-way street. Israel's security in the long run depends in part on what it does with the Arabs, but also on us."

Kennedy's commitment to Golda Meir, along with his decision to sell the Hawk missiles, amounted to a turning point in American foreign policy toward Israel—one little noted even today. The Kennedy offer might have been enough, if Israel's goal had been to forge a military partnership with the United States. But Israel's needs were far more basic.

John McCone remained agitated about the Israeli bomb and the failure of his agency to determine whether a chemical reprocessing plant was buried underground at Dimona. He also was more outspoken than any other Kennedy insider on the issue: at a 1962 Washington dinner party he publicly reprimanded Charles Lucet, a senior French foreign ministry official, for France's role in the Israeli bomb. Lucet, who had served as deputy ambassador in Washington in the late 1950s (and would become ambassador in 1965), was seated near McCone, who at one point abruptly asked: "So, Mr. Lucet, your country is building a reprocessing plant for the Israelis?" Lucet replied with what was France's public position on the issue: "No, we

are building a reactor." McCone then turned his back on Lucet and did not speak to him for the rest of the evening; it was, given France's high standing with the President and his wife, who were both Francophiles, a pointed rebuff.\*

Kennedy was constantly raising the nuclear issue in his discussions with senior Israelis—and constantly getting boilerplate answers. In early April 1963, Shimon Peres flew to the capital to meet at the White House on the still-pending Hawk sale, and was directly asked by the President about Israeli intentions. An Israeli nuclear bomb, Kennedy said, "would create a very perilous situation. That's why we have been diligent about keeping an eye on your effort in the atomic field. What can you tell me about that?" Peres's answer was a fabrication that would become the official Israeli response for years to come: "I can tell you forthrightly that we will not introduce atomic weapons into the region. We certainly won't be the first to do so. We have no interest in that. On the contrary, our interest is in de-escalating the armament tension, even in total disarmament."

The administration's lack of specific information about Israeli intentions was complicated by the fact, as the President had to know, that many senior members of Congress supported the concept of a nuclear-armed Israel. A few days before his meeting with the President, Peres had discussed nuclear weapons with Senator Stuart Symington, a Kennedy supporter and ranking member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, and had been told, as Peres told his biographer: "Don't be a bunch of fools. Don't stop making atomic bombs. And don't listen to the administration. Do whatever you think best."

Israel was doing just that. The physical plant at Dimona continued to mature. The reactor went critical—that is, began a sustained chain reaction—sometime in 1962 with no significant problems, and was capable of being operated at more than seventy megawatts, far greater than the twenty-four megawatts

\* Lucet was offended by McCone's action and, upon his return to Paris, relayed the incident to Bertrand Goldschmidt. "He asked me if we could separate France from responsibility for the [Israeli] bomb," Goldschmidt recalled with a laugh. "I said, 'No. Not only did we take the girl when she was a virgin, but we made her pregnant.'"



man of the Zionist Organization of America, looked at the President and said, "We can't ever thank him enough for all those Jews he got out of Germany during the days of Hitler." Lady Bird Johnson later explained: "Jews have been woven into the warp and woof of all his years."

Lyndon Johnson was quickly consumed by the Vietnam War, and what he saw as the struggle of a small democratic nation against the forces of Communism. But Israel likewise was perceived as a besieged democracy standing up to the Soviet Union and its clients in the Arab world. Johnson's strong emotional ties to Israel and his belief that Soviet arms were altering the balance of power in the Middle East drove him to become the first American President to supply Israel with offensive weapons and the first publicly to commit America to its defense. The American Jewish community eventually would be torn apart by Johnson's continued prosecution of the Vietnam War, with many Jewish leaders insisting that Johnson's steadfast support of Israel entitled him to loyalty on Vietnam, while others continued to oppose the war on principle.

In the early years of his presidency, however, Johnson echoed Kennedy's policy by urging Israel to submit Dimona to International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspection. His support for nonproliferation and his desire to end the Cold War were motivated by his belief that only by a relaxing of international tensions could he achieve his ultimate goal—the extension of the New Deal to all Americans. A nuclear Israel was unacceptable: it could mean a nuclear Egypt, increased Soviet involvement in the Middle East, and perhaps war.

## THE SAMSON OPTION

Levi Eshkol's goal was to find a middle ground between the White House, with its insistence on international inspections, and the pro-nuclear faction of the Mapai Party, led by David Ben-Gurion, who, from retirement, turned his insistence on an Israeli nuclear arsenal into a political Last Hurrah.

The prime minister's dilemma was not whether to go nuclear, but when and at what cost, in terms of the competing need to equip and train the conventional units of the army, navy, and air force.

The debate over the nuclear option had surfaced in the nation's newspapers, in deliberately innocuous language, long before Eshkol took office. In mid-1962, for example, Shimon Peres and former army chief of staff Moshe Dayan, then Ben-Gurion's minister of agriculture, took advantage of the funeral of a prominent Zionist military leader to warn their peers that Israel's existence was linked to the "technological achievements of the 1970s" and investment in "equipment of the future." In April 1963, Dayan wrote an article for *Maoz*, the afternoon newspaper, urging the Israeli arms industry to keep pace with Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser's effort to build nuclear weapons. "In the era of rockets with conventional and unconventional warheads," Dayan wrote, "we must diligently develop those weapons so that we don't lag."

Ben-Gurion was even more explicit in an interview with columnist C. L. Sulzberger of the *New York Times* five months after leaving office. Sulzberger quoted Ben-Gurion's concern about a rocket-armed Egypt and added: "As a result he [Ben-Gurion] hints grimly that in its nearby Dimona reactor Israel itself may



chief of staff, and Yigal Allon, a close Eshkol adviser and former commander of the irregular Palmach forces before the 1948 War of Independence. Less compelling to the military men was the moral argument against the bomb raised by some on the left and in academia: that the Jewish people, victims of the Holocaust, had an obligation to prevent the degeneration of the Arab-Israeli dispute into a war of mass destruction. Those who held that view did not underestimate the danger of a conventional arms race, but believed that, as Simha Flapan, their passionate spokesman, wrote, "the qualitative advantages of Israel—social cohesion and organization, education and technical skills, intelligence and moral incentive—can be brought into play only in a conventional war fought by men."

A major complication in the debate, seemingly, was the Arab and Israeli press, which routinely published exaggerated accounts of each side's weapons of mass destruction. In Israel, there were alarmist accounts of Soviet and Chinese support for an Egyptian nuclear bomb. Egypt, in turn, publicly suggested that it had received a Soviet commitment to come to its aid in case of an Israeli nuclear attack, and President Gamal Nasser warned in an interview that "preventive war" was the "only answer" to a nuclear-armed Israel. It was a period, Simha Flapan later wrote, when both Israel and Egypt "were trapped in a vicious circle of tension and suspicion and were doing everything possible to make them a self-fulfilling prophecy."

The officials at the top in Israel understood the difference between public perceptions and private realities. Before the Midrasha conference, for example, Benjamin Blumberg prepared an analysis estimating that the Arab world would not be able to develop sophisticated nuclear weapons for twenty-five years—until 1990. The paper was important to Eshkol, who, as he told the conference, was considering three postures: a ready-to-go bomb in the basement; the nuclear option, with the weapons parts manufactured but not assembled; and further research. "He said," an Israeli recalled, "'We're not in a hurry. It'll take the Arabs twenty-five years.'" Eshkol's choice was to merely continue research and use that added time to "jump a stage"—to bypass the crude plutonium weapon detonated by the United States at Nagasaki and go directly to

more efficient warhead designs. There was a second compelling argument, along with the issue of money, for temporarily limiting the work at Dimona to research. Israel as yet had no long-range aircraft or missiles in place that were capable of accurately delivering a bomb to targets inside the Soviet Union, which was always Israel's primary nuclear target; no Arab nation would dare wage war against Israel, so the Israeli leadership thought, without Soviet backing.

Levi Eshkol parlayed the Midrasha decision into a strategic asset: he told Washington that he would defer a decision on the nuclear arsenal in return for a commitment to supply offensive arms that would match the quality of arms being supplied to Egypt by the Soviet Union. It was more than good enough for Johnson, who was losing interest with each passing year in waging political war with Israel over the bomb. The President rewarded Eshkol's pledge of a delay by authorizing the sale to Israel in 1966 of forty-eight advanced A-4E Skyhawk tactical fighters, capable of carrying a payload of eight thousand pounds. Johnson's refusal to ask more of the Israelis on the nuclear issue was eased by the strong evidence of renewed Soviet economic and military commitments in the Middle East. Moscow was moving to encourage Arab socialism and unity. For Johnson, this meant that the Cold War was moving to the Arab world, with Israel serving as a surrogate for America.

Eshkol's decision to put a hold on the nuclear issue enraged Ben-Gurion, still smarting over the Mapai Party's handling of the Lavon Affair; Ben-Gurion eventually would publicly compare Eshkol to Neville Chamberlain, the British prime minister who attempted to appease Adolf Hitler before World War II. In June 1965, Ben-Gurion, talking darkly of Eshkol's "endangering the nation's security," dramatically resigned from the Mapai Party and created a new party, known as Rafi (an acronym for the Israel Workers' List). He was joined by a reluctant but loyal Petes, who became Rafi's power broker, and the restless Dayan, who had recently resigned as agricultural minister. Ben-Gurion's hope was that Rafi could capture as many as twenty-five seats in the 120-member Knesset and emerge as a major power broker in Israeli politics.

Dear Jerry,

1/18/93

I've read about a fifth of Hersh's The Samson Option. It is impressive and well-written, predictable for him. It is also dishonest, the reason I write you about it. I do not know whether you've read it and if you have not, whether you'd have the time to read it critically. I did not begin that way but the farther I got into it the more apparent it was to me that he intended a one-sided account of what I presume is true, that Israel has the bomb.

After reading this much of the book I realized that he has been without any explanation of why Israel believed it required the bomb, with a single, passing mention that can be taken that way. This was Ike's failure to respond to Ben-Gurion's request that Israel be included under the US nuclear shield.

Along with the absence of any presentation of Israeli justification of proceeding with the bomb is an absence of any presentation of what, militarily and politically, Israel faced, particularly when it was so much weaker than it now is.

He can be excused, if one stretched, for not have a chapter on this, but I do not excuse it and believe that both fairness and honesty required it. Otherwise the book is polished propaganda, not a full and dependable account.

Before Truman was elected, when I was still doing radio news at what became WGMS, I recall clearly that Egypt was importing all the Nazi scientists it could get for military projects. Of these I am clear in my recollection of missiles.

Iraq's hostility to Israel is well-known, even historic. Did not Israel have to regard itself as a potential target of Iraqi atomic or nuclear bombs?

Until Camp David, as he does not mention, the entire Muslim world was in a state of war with Israel. Those agreements led to ~~Israel~~ Egypt's recognition of the State of Israel. It is the only Muslim country to recognize that state and the only ~~one~~ <sup>one</sup> not to have persisted in a state of war with Israel. They <sup>others</sup> have as their continuing policy wiping the state of Israel out. Now these are things I not only did not read where they belong in such a book, up front, I also checked the index. Under PLO the index has three mentions only, ~~see~~ <sup>none</sup> with any subject indicated. I just thought to check the index for Arafat. Not there!

Now this is not that large a book that a few pages could not have been added in fairness and in honesty if he had intended either.

So we have a book that is critical of Israel for developing the bomb that does not tell the reader why Israel decided to develop the bomb. Nor what the international attitude toward it is, as reflected at the UN. Nor why the enormous expenditure was invested in developing the bomb at the cost of so many urgent needs that could not be met and at the cost of fantastic indebtedness.

There can be legitimate disagreements over what has to be included in such a book



what might not be. My own view is that on such a subject all that within reason can be interpreted as relevant should be included.

One that I believe he should not have overlooked I realize others may regard differently, but it gets to the environment of Israel's belief it needed the bomb.

After all the wars the Arabs lost, when as the simple price for US recognition of the PLO it asked for only a statement that it recognized the right of the State of Israel to live in peace within secure borders, the PLO itself rejected this through its executive council but Arafat, under heavy pressure, pretended to. He did not. He could not have been more overtly evasive and refusing the issue <sup>in</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>acc</sup> <sup>in</sup> <sup>his</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>pretend</sup> the statement- which still would not have been binding on the PLO. His <sup>actual</sup> statement the US administration grabbed and interpreted as recognizing Israel did not. He did not mention the State of Israel. He spoke only of the "people" of Israel. That is deliberately not recognizing the right of the State to live in peace, as the world pretended. And he soon blew that by refusing to condemn a PLO terrorist attack in which it got caught.

To most of the readers these facts, and so many more like them will be unknown and thus from the approach he <sup>has</sup> <sup>taken</sup> and I <sup>recall</sup> <sup>from</sup> <sup>reviews</sup> <sup>and</sup> <sup>commentaries</sup> they will be made to have anti-Israel feelings and attitudes or they will have these attitudes reinforced.

Israel did not take the Iraqi nuclear plant out until 6/81, long, long after it was clear that <sup>they</sup> <sup>was</sup> <sup>aiming</sup> at the bomb and that in this much of the world had to have ~~helped~~ helped it, the world that sits in judgement of Israel on its bomb. Of course also the part of the world that pretended ignorance of what Iraq was up to while helping it do it.

It was not long before the world was deeply indebted to the Israelis for ending the ~~Iraq~~ bomb threat from Iraq. Which gives every indication of persisting in it at all and very considerable costs. Including at this very minute.

What do you think the situation, especially our situation, would have been if Saddam had that bomb to use during the gulf war?

I've mentioned nothing about the other Muslim arms proliferation, all of which Israel has to consider is available for use against it-by states that persist in non-recognition and in a state of war. Nothing about the Muslim CW capabilities, some rather well known. But these dangers to Israel deserve no mention in such a book? The other efforts against it, like trying to ruin Israel economically?

If the state were not Israel and if the Muslims did not monopolize the world's energy supplies I think there would be an entirely different reaction. Witness India and Pakistan, China <sup>and</sup> North Korea. And suspects, like South Africa. And the current situation in which for all practical purposes the Muslim world is silent about Iraq and what Saddam has been and is now doing. Including in challenging the UN and not living up to the agreement to which he did agree to end the gulf war....Hersh did not begin with honest intentions and what he evolved is not honest. It is propaganda.

Harold