Part #1 p. 1

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 farthur 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 weakker 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 ~~way~~ one not to have presisted in a state of war with Israel. They other 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, ~~nee~~ none with any subject ifidicated. 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 redder why Israel decidad to develop the bomb. Nor what the international attitude toward it is, as reflected at the UN. Nor why the enormous expenditure was investted in developing tne bomb at the cost of so many urgent needs that could not be met and at the cost of fantsatic indebtedness.

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

and 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 in his statement the issue - which still would not have been binding on the PLO. His actual 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 has taken and from what I recall from reviews and commentaries 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 Iraq was aiming at the bomb and that in this much of the world had to have 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 Iraqi 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 CBW 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 and 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.

Hersh

Hersh and The Samson Option- 2 /p.1

The further 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 that 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 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, beginning in 1933, to resettle endangered Jews in Africa. While correctly pointing out this impringed on the rights of those living on the land to be bought for this purpose, Hersh does not note how it parallels an early 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 hosilte to Zionism all of his life." Can it be that Straus was motivated to want Esrael 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 Jews as saying years later that "every fucking Jews 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 Israeli 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) quotation to this point. (More are more likely on 175)

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 privide nuclear protection an Israel's resulting quest for its own nuclear portection. Or against vastly larger enemy forces, or CBW

If 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 Hersh included the right or wrong part of the quote unless he feared 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 dishonety 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 bing 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 Auschewitz 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 as 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 flightd- there were 30+.

This is the Hersh of My Lai? Or is it a Heine-like Jew, a Jew-hating Jew or one with some special ax 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, on 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 abd USSR jointly and publicly declare the territorital 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 crematoria 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 commit ment" 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 guarantees on paper and how Israel could interpret that and why the US didn't.

Yet without comment and without any notes this is part of Hersh's argument for ~~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 impliment it? Hersh has no observation on whether or not this could or should have made those Israelis determined to develop their bomb willing or unwilling to give the promise any real meaning 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 extfenity 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 consludes 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 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 indicated 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 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 deterent 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 estruction. 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 Korean were stocking Syria with missiles of longer range than the Scuds. ~~Long after~~ (in a) 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 12/14. 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~~ 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." (Page 166-8)

On the ~~previous page~~ (167) 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 ~~saying~~ justifying 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, or whether what Egypt did was an act of war.

Without comment or explanation, he reports that the US "embargoed all army 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 adher 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 incinderated by Hitler and as of that era has what came after the war, "the outgunned members of the Haganah, the Jewish underground, began the inevitable guerrilla war against British troops."(195) This is more reprehensible because in the priod 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 Haganah.

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 performace of the surprised and unmobilized Israeli forced. I then remembered that he handled the ~~Kuwait~~ 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 dispite. He does make passing reference one ~~time~~ point 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 if 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 ~~xxx~~ 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 killedby 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 Optinion is no longer the only nuclear option available to Israel."

In sort, only after completing a very anti-Israel book for which he was certain to get considerable international attentinn 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 to a large degree their total absence where they appear to be most necessary. This morning, my reading including his last two chapters, an his Epilggue 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 for these chapters see they take up less than a page, I came to believe that even it he had a massive research staff it does not seem possible for him to have located and read all the sources he does site, many in the text, not notes. and his brief (page 329)acknowledgements do not refer to any such 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 unusual 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 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 intelligency-agency help the signs of which permeate the book.

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