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The "Nakba" Debunked

Steven Plaut

The world media are filled with Big Lies about the "Nakba," the supposed "catastrophe" and "ethnic cleansing" of Arabs when Israel was created in 1948.

But now an interesting source has come along to debunk this massive campaign of disinformation.

Consider the following citation (emphasis added): "The Arab armies seemingly entered Palestine (in 1948) to protect the Palestinians from the Zionist tyranny but, instead, they abandoned them, forced them to emigrate and to leave their homeland, imposed upon them a political and ideological blockade and threw them into prisons similar to the ghettos in which the Jews used to live in Eastern Europe, as if we were condemned to change places with them. The Arab States succeeded in scattering the Palestinian people and in destroying their unity."

OK, current events students, name the source for that quote.

The answer is ... (drumroll) ... Abu Mazen (Mahmoud Abbas), the "President" of the Palestinian Authority, in an article he wrote in the Beirut magazine *Falastin el-Thawra*, in March 1976 (cited in the weekly column by Ben Dror Yemini in *Maariv*, May 27, 2011).

And that is not the only useful citation from Abu Mazen. Last week the very same Abu Mazen had an article in the *NY Times*, in which he tells his own personal "Nakba" family story. There he claims that the Jews expelled the Arabs right after the UN's partition resolution of 1947 (which called for creating two new countries, a Jewish and an Arab state, in the area of the British Mandate). Abu Mazen writes that he and his family were expelled (from Safed) to Syria and forced to live there in an old canvas tent.

Well, Ben Dror Yemini does some homework. The UN resolution, first of all, was in November 1947. The battle for Safed took place in May 1948. Second, Abu Mazen's family in Safed was very wealthy, with more than enough ready capital to coast along comfortably for quite some time. But most significantly, Abu Mazen's family went to Jordan, not Syria. Only much later did they move to Damascus. In addition, Safed Arabs fled in large part in 1948 because they were expecting retaliation for the pogroms they themselves had launched against the Jews of the city in 1929.

And just who is the source for claiming that Abu Mazen was lying through his fangs in that *NY Times* piece?

Why, none other than Abu Mazen himself, again! In 2009 he gave an interview to the Palestinian Authority TV channel, telling of his family's wealth and their move to Jordan.

Oh, and the same week, *Haaretz*, that Palestinian newspaper published in Hebrew, quotes one Ismail Fahr a-Din from the Golan Druse village of Majdal Shams as claiming to remember very clearly the Palestinian refugees arriving in that town (back then still under Syrian occupation). Only one itsy bitsy problem though. Turns out the "witness" is 57 years old and so was born six years after Israel's War of Independence.

More generally, I think that any time anyone suggests that we need to empathize with the "Nakba" of the "Palestinians," they should be directed to contemplating East Prussia.

East Prussia, where in many ways World War II began (in Hitler's campaign for Danzig), was emptied out near the end of the war, with hundreds of thousands of Germans fleeing the approaching Red Army and with hundreds of thousands more evicted after the Soviets pushed through East Prussia into Berlin. In all, 1.8 to 2.2 million East Prussians were driven out or fled. That is four times the number of "Palestinian refugees" from 1948-49. Parts of East Prussia were annexed by Russia, the rest being incorporated into Poland.

And what about mourning for their "catastrophe?" No one in the West has ever

believed East Prussians deserve any sympathy or support or compensation for their "plight." They were part of the German monstrosity that had launched the war and they became refugees as a direct result of the crimes and aggressions of the German people, crimes they enthusiastically endorsed and in which they participated. Exactly like the circumstances under which "Palestinian Arabs" became refugees as a result of launching a genocidal war of aggression and then losing.

Think the "Palestinians" deserve compassion? Sure, right after the East Prussians are granted a "Right of Return."

Steven Plaut is professor of business administration at Haifa University.

From the Editor

A Jewish Hero

As the self-professed leaders of the Jewish community leap from one "progressive" bandwagon to the next, from gay marriage to global warming (with Israel relegated to the status of back-burner bore), a new genuine Jewish leader has emerged. His name is Jeffrey Wiesenfeld and we first reported about him last month. We commended him for insisting, as a member of the Board of Trustees of the City University of New York, that David Horowitz of the Freedom Center be protected in his right to speak at Brooklyn College in opposition to "Israel Apartheid Week," when the college administration refused to live up to its responsibility to do so.

Most recently, Wiesenfeld has denounced Obama's "vision" of Israel in what Abba Eban called "the Auschwitz borders," acting as master of ceremonies in the rally on May 20 at the Israeli consulate, at which, to their disgrace, of those 52 organizations making up the Conference of Presidents, only the ZOA participated.

Wiesenfeld has created waves with his effort to deny leftist Israel-bashing playwright Tony Kushner an honorary degree from the City University. In response, Kushner pulled out the McCarthy card. His leftist fans (at the *New York Times* etc.) rallied to his defense. The university president took the unprecedented step of overturning his trustees' decision and agreed to give Kushner the honorary degree.

As Caroline Glick notes, the leaders of major Jewish organizations—almost all of them in New York—are silent. "What their silence shows is that there is no reason to believe that they are up to the challenges of defending the Jewish community in the U.S. on any issue of major or minor significance. Wiesenfeld is after all being demonized for the act of standing up to a maligner of Israel. That's all he did. And they cannot even muster the courage to defend him for that."

Wiesenfeld is undeterred. He told the Jewish Press: "If his [Kushner's] libelous statements against Israel were made by anyone outside the Jewish community, that person would be labeled an anti-Semite....some people argue that politics should be irrelevant when deciding whether to give a famous playwright an honorary degree....But an honorary degree is wholly within the discretion of CUNY's board to grant. It identifies the university with accomplished, generous citizens or public figures. It is also a tool that highlights the university and enhances its image in the educational marketplace. Kushner is an extremist. And no extremist from any quarter is a good face for any university—from the far left or from the far right."

This writer has a suggestion: if CUNY wants to give an honorary degree to a scriptwriter cum playwright, how about David Mamet, a much better writer than Kushner, and someone who understands that the security of

Jews throughout the world is bound up with that of Israel?

A Mormon Hero

Glenn Beck is a man who should be a hero for Jews. He went to Israel in May and broadcast a special episode of his TV show dedicated to Israel. He dares to say the unspeakable truth--that the endlessly parroted "two state solution" poses a mortal danger to Israel. And he does something about it. He has announced that he will hold a "rally to restore courage" to Israel in Jerusalem in August. Victor Sharpe writes: "Here is a man willing to support the embattled and beleaguered Jewish homeland against a relentless and ever-growing tide of falsehoods, deceptions, hatred and bloodlust. He is brave and blessed and stands as a Rock of Ages battered by a swirling maelstrom of ignorance and abuse."

Jews for Self-Destruction

Mark Steyn, America's funniest/finest columnist, was interviewed by radio host Hugh Hewitt, who asked him, given the ferociously negative reaction in Israel to Obama's speech, if he thought overwhelmingly Democratic American Jews were beginning to wake up to the peril of supporting this President.

"Steyn: No, actually. I would say the history of modern Western, liberal Jews is that they vote against their own, not only Israel's best interests, but their own best interests. You see that with the increasing number of selfloathing Jews in Britain, for example, who write to the Guardian on Israel's birthday every year saying how they now regard the foundation of the state of Israel as a grotesque error. You see it north of the border in liberal, Canadian Jewish organizations who obsess about irrelevant, obsolescent phantoms like the last three Nazis living in their mum's basement on the plains of Saskatchewan rather than deal with the new realities. And you see it in the United States where liberal Jews prioritize their liberalism over any kind of meaningful Jewish identity, and they will vote for Obama and the Democrats next year as they do without fail every couple of years."

Jeff Wiesenfeld was referring to the same phenomenon when he told *The Jewish Press*: "It's a tragedy to tell you that we could do without 80 percent of the Jews. It's the good Christians who stand up for Israel and for us. It's a very sad thing for me to say."

Are Reform Jews Reforming?

Last month we mentioned how Indiana Jews, in revolt against the trendy agenda of the Jewish Community Relations Council, created alternative Jewish American Affairs Committee committed to Israel's defense and to promoting traditional Jewish and American values. Jews in the Reform movement are taking a leaf from this same book. In this Outpost, Stella Paul writes of Jews Against Divisive Leadership (JADL) who took out ads in several Jewish newspapers objecting to the choice of Rabbi Richard Jacobs as the new President of the Reform Movement. Excerpts from the ad:

"The Union for Reform Judaism's nominee for President, Rabbi Richard Jacobs, does not represent the pro-Israel policies cherished by Reform Jews.

"He does not represent us."

The ad cites Jacobs' serving on the "Rabbinic cabinet" of anti-Israel J Street and on the board of the New Israel Fund whose "Rabbinical Council" he co-chairs. The New Israel Fund, the ad points out, is in the forefront of the lawfare campaign against Israel and involved in the boycott and divestment movement. Finally the ad cites Jacobs' joining in a Sheikh Jarrah demonstration in Jerusalem. That outfit makes no pretenses; it's opposed to the existence of Israel.

The ad concludes: "We call on the Union for Reform Judaism to reconsider this divisive appointment. Do not drive mainstream Zionist Jews out of the Reform movement."

If you thought Jewish organizations would rally round this sensible petition against identifying the Reform movement with the

most extreme anti-Zionism, you would be wrong. The ADL, which, under Abe Foxman, is almost guaranteed to be on the wrong side of every issue, released a statement criticizing the aspersions cast on the exemplary Rabbi Jacobs.

In his autobiography *Trial and Error* Chaim Weizmann wrote of the prominent Jews who did their utmost to undermine Zionism. Weizmann wrote: If they had been content with withholding their financial support, we on our side, would have been content to forget them. But they discouraged others, by precept as well as example. They went out of their way to influence British public opinion against us. They created in Jewish life a tradition, as it were, of active obstructionism which often came to life at critical moments of world and Jewish history."

Now is such a moment and the tradition is alive, well—and immensely destructive.

Renegotiating the Treaty with Egypt

Across the board, from the Facebook activists of Tahrir Square to the Moslem Brotherhood, Egyptians are calling for "renegotiating" the treaty with Israel.

An Outpost reader sent in a suggestion, if Egypt does indeed demand that negotiations start over. Given that Egypt is devoted to the idea of Palestinian statehood and the right of return of millions of descendants of the Arabs who fled Israel in 1948, how about Israel arguing for making the Sinai the Palestinian state? The Egyptians have done nothing with the Sinai's great empty expanses except for exploiting the tourist enterprises Israel created at its tip. The entire Arab population of Judea and Samaria could be removed there, giving Israel more defensible borders without the burden of a hostile and seditious population. Palestinian Arabs now in other Arab states could be offered the chance to relocate to the Sinai state of Palestine. There is oil in the Sinai (giving the new state more of an economic base

than the putative Palestinian state whose boundaries the PA/Hamas wants the UN to recognize in September). And the new state would enjoy lots of beachfront property to which Palestinian acolytes in Europe could pilgrimage while enjoying sun and sea.

Silly Notions Never Die

In December 1975 Zot Haaretz, the publication of the Land of Israel Movement (the inspiration for Americans for a Safe Israel), wrote of the "Palestinian offensive" of that year beginning with the royal reception of Yasser Arafat in the UN General Assembly. This was a turning point in that from now on the "Palestinian problem" was perceived as the heart of the Arab-Israel conflict and the solution became the establishment of a Palestinian state in Judea, Samaria and Gaza.

According to the *Zot Haaretz* editorial: "Professor Shlomo Avineri says on the radio that a Palestinian state will at the very least improve our image. Professor Yehoshefat Harkavi advises us not to reject the proposals for a Palestinian state out of hand, but to adopt it as a tactical measure. For it will then be clear to the entire world that what the Palestinians really want is Haifa and not just Nablus, Nazareth, not merely Jenin, Jaffa and not merely Hebron—and that will be to our advantage. "

The Zot Haaretz editorial notes that the government is opposed and the Prime Minister explains the dangers. But it warns of "the Trojan Horse active in our midst and the activity of the united Jewish front of leftists, assimilationists and defeatists. If instead of a purposeful program of establishing settlements, our strategy will be a verbal agreement to the principle of a Palestinian state in Western Eretz Yisrael, we will with our own hands bring the most terrible disaster on the state of Israel."

The more things change...

Theater of the Absurd

William Mehlman

If the Netanyahu-Obama swordplay in Washington last week was anything more than another manifestation of the Kabuki theatrics that have marked the ongoing Middle East "peace" drama since most of us can hardly remember when, Israel might be in serious trouble.

Any sober analysis of the five soliloquies delivered by the protagonists--Obama at the State Department and before AIPAC, Netanyahu to the Knesset, AIPAC and a joint session of the U.S. House and Senate--could not but result in two bottom-line conclusions: 1. There may be no exit short of war from the corner into which Netanyahu painted Israel with his 2009 embrace of the "two-state solution" to the Israeli-Palestinian impasse. 2. The reelection of Barak Obama could confront Israel with an existential political threat unprecedented in its six decade history.

To the first point: Setting aside, if one can, the 26 standing ovations he received from a Congress, many of whose members either actively dislike or don't entirely trust President Obama (Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman John Kerry, notably, remained virtually glued to his seat and applauded with studied restraint), how does the prime minister propose to validate his insistence on a Palestinian state "big enough to be viable" without jeopardizing the viability of the Jewish state ("bigger than Delaware and Rhode Island" as he quipped to Vice President Joe Biden, "but that's it"), that he was elected to represent? More explicitly to the point, how



does he back up his promise to be "very

generous" in respect to the size of a sovereign Palestine without essentially returning Israel to its "indefensible" pre-June 1967 borders? Unless he's prepared to assure us that a two or three-mile broadening of the 9-mile central Israeli waistline that characterized those borders will render Ben-Gurion International Airport invulnerable to a \$500 wire-guided missile launched from the shoulder of some 19 year-old Palestinian glory-seeker, he is talking arrant nonsense.

A 12-mile Israeli central waistline being hardly more defensible than a 9-mile one, any attempt to further broaden it in the interest of Israeli strategic viability – assuming the Palestinian Authority would hold still for even the most minimal alteration of the status quo ante – would render Mr. Netanyahu's "generosity" and "painful compromises" laughable in the eyes of an "international community" utterly uninterested in Israel's strategic concerns.

Even under the most generous settlement it could offer Mahmoud Abbas & Co., Israel's strategic perimeter, including a military presence along the Jordan Valley "invasion route," would have to be based on its incorporation of "Area C" of Judea and Samaria, where Israel exercises full military and civil control and where 300,000 Jews, 5 percent of its population, reside in some 120 communities. That's 59 percent of the "West Bank." A demilitarized Palestinian state in the remaining 41 percent, possibly in confederation with Jordan, might be worth discussing, but don't expect the Palestinians to take up that offer anytime soon. As long as they remain adamant about accepting nothing less than an Israeli return to the 1967 armistice lines, a repartition of Jerusalem, the right to park the 3.5 million "refugees" they created on Israel's doorstep, and approbation of their partnership with the genocidally-inclined Gaza branch of the Muslim Brotherhood, the volcanic implications of the prime minister's embrace of the "two-state" paradigm will remain moot.

In the Middle Eastern theater-of-theabsurd, even the heavily hyped Palestinian threat to take their case for statehood to General Assembly in September may turn out to be a sizzle without much steak. The sweaty efforts of the Obama administration to head it off (thereby avoiding the veto the president, looking toward reelection next year, would be compelled to order when the all but certain affirmative General Assembly decision is referred to the Security Council for ratification) was reflected in a Ben Rhodes, media briefing with the administration's point-man on "strategic communications" following Netanyahu's address to Congress. In the less than 30 minute duration of the briefing Rhodes availed himself of no less than three opportunities to hammer away at President Obama's deep disinclination toward a UN decision on Palestinian statehood. He portrayed Obama at one point as firmly convinced that "any kind of unilateral effort to pursue statehood is not going to succeed because ultimately these issues have to be negotiated and agreed upon between Israelis and Palestinians." He added that the president has been very circumspect regarding the General Assembly scenario in the fact that it "won't achieve the ultimate goal, which, of course, is a Palestinian state."

Short of derailing a near certain two-thirds-plus General Assembly majority for Palestinian statehood in September, Rhodes alluded to an effort by the White House, in collusion with British PM David Cameron, to dilute its impact by rallying a "critical minority" of 30-40 democratic states to vote against the measure. As one observer noted "it will take a lot more than the approval of Chad and Venezuela to give Abbas the moral victory he's looking for in New York."

A similar Obama display of dedication to a Middle East script short on tolerance for deviation from its self-serving interests indelibly marked the president's speeches at both the State Department and before the AIPAC assembly. Sophistry at its lowest definable depths was the order of the week. Israel unquestionably had the right to defend itself but only from indefensible borders. Israel can't be expected to negotiate

with a Hamas committed to its liquidation, but is obliged to enter negotiations with a Hamas-partnered entity post-haste. American dedication to a strong democratic Israel is beyond debate, but that doesn't preclude slicing Israel down the hind quarters to insure Palestinian "contiguity."

Did the president really "walk back" at AIPAC his outrageous State Department commitment to Palestinian borders commencing at the 1967 armistice line? Only by the most freewheeling interpretation. First of all, as Jennifer Rubin reported in her Washington Post blog, he essentially denied even having made the original suggestion, insisting that what he said at the State Department was that the parties would negotiate a border "different from the one that existed on June 4, 1967." "No," Rubin asserts, "he said it was U.S. policy that the deal would stem from the 1967 lines." Moreover, the president did not, contrary to some, materially amend his earlier dedication to those lines in his AIPAC speech. He merely remodeled them.

Pointedly absent from that AIPAC address, Rubin avers, was any indication of Obama's readiness to disconnect America's \$500 million dollar a year pipeline to a PA partnered with an organization on the State Department's terrorist list, any reiteration of Israel's need for a military presence at least along the Jordan River or any further negation of Abbas' "right of return" to Israel for the Palestinian refugees. Indeed, the AIPAC speech struck a strong, if unintentional accompanying note to the PA chief's plan to pocket as much of Judea and Samaria as Israel will let him have while considering himself free to continue his war against the Jewish state on other "This President once again," Rubin concluded, "has proved an apt negotiator on behalf of the Palestinians and a thorn in Israel's side."

While predictably finding lavish favor with Obama's "brave" insistence on Israel's return to borders "at or close to the 1967 lines" on the eve of an election year and with "Jewish donors already restive over his approach to Israel," even liberal *New York Times* columnist Roger Cohen conceded that the proposed trade-off of "Israeli security for Palestinian sovereignty" wasn't going

to be any tiptoe through the tulips. "Israeli security," he submitted, "begins with a reconciled Fatah and Hamas committing irrevocably to non-violence, with Palestinian acquiescence to a non-militarized state and to Palestinian acceptance that a two-state solution ends all territorial claims." Mr. Cohen would have better luck trying to pass a camel through the eye of a needle.

Bret Stephens over at the Wall Street Journal was under no such illusions. Portraying Obama as a master of "the concept of chutzpah" in his relations with both Israel and the American Jewish community, the former editor of the Jerusalem Post described the president's AIPAC speech as a "thin tissue of falsehoods, rhetorical legerdemain. telling omissions and selfcontradiction" overlaid with the "perennial bromides about U.S.-Israel friendship." He comes down with both feet on Obama's defense of his proposal that Israel retreat to the pre-June 1967 lines as "nothing particularly new." "Untrue," he "No U.S. president has explicitly declares. endorsed the '67 lines as the basis for negotiating a final border." If one had, he added, why would the University of Michigan's Juan Cole, "not exactly a shill for the Israeli lobby, call it 'a major turning point."

Stephens maintains that Obama must also have known that his Secretary of State back in 2009 described the '67 border as "the Palestinian goal." If, as Stephens contends, it is now "Mr. Obama's goal as well," even as he simultaneously proclaims that "no peace can be imposed," then its meaning needs to be clearly understood. He is proposing that "Israel should cede territory, put itself into a weaker position and then hope for the best." What Mr. Obama has offered, he concludes, "is a formula for war, one that he will pursue in a second term. Assuming, of course, that he gets one."

"I am not coming to Washington to satisfy the president," Benjamin Netanyahu is reported to have told a member of a U.S. Congressional delegation gathered at his Jerusalem office on the eve of Israel's 63rd Independence Day anniversary. 'We will be meeting for a conversation." The "conversation," for all intents and purposes ended before the prime minister's jet got airborne, sandbagged by an adversarial American Chief Executive intent on preemptive intimidation of his guest. All things considered, Netanyahu handled it admirably, showing no signs of intimidation and comporting himself with dignity, seriousness, good humor and grace under fire.

Arguably, the best of his three speeches was the one he delivered to the Knesset in late May--a lion's den's distance from his cheering audience on Capitol Hill-days before he emplaned for Washington. "We can see what is happening in Egypt, in Syria and in Lebanon," he declared, dismissing the "Arab Spring" as a misnomer amidst catcalls from representatives of the braindamaged Israeli far Left and their Arab allies. "Lebanon is now controlled by Hezbollah under the sponsorship of Iran, where only five years ago there was such hope for freedom and progress. What were they yelling in Gaza yesterday? They were shouting that they want to return to Jaffa... What were they crying in Syria yesterday? They were chanting that they want to return to the Galilee...What did the leader of Hamas say yesterday? He said 'we want to see the end of the Zionist agenda,' the very same words used by his patrons in Iran."

Bibi's best moments in Washington came not in either of his two formal speeches but at a White House "media op" with Obama on Friday May 20th, following what was billed as a "bilateral



meeting" with the president in the Oval Office. What might have been a real conversation morphed into a Netanyahu tutorial as Obama chose to sit stone-faced before the cameras, his hand frequently to his mouth, as the prime minister proved he could give as well as he could take.

"Remember that before 1967, Israel was all of nine miles wide, half the width of the Washington Beltway," the prime minister said at one point. "Those are not boundaries of peace.

They are the boundaries of repeated wars, because the attack on Israel is so attractive. So we can't go back to those indefensible lines and we're going to have a long-term military presence along the Jordan."

At another point, referring to Hamas, he asserted that Israel "cannot be asked to negotiate with a government that is backed by the Palestinian version of al-Qaeda." In a third observation, he stated that while the "Palestinian refugee problem has to be resolved...it is not going to be resolved within the Jewish state. It's not going to happen."

It was in his final thrust that Netanyahu's gravitas contrasted most sharply with the president's puzzling demeanor. "It falls on my shoulders as prime minister of Israel," he said, "to work with you to fashion a peace that will ensure Israel's security and will not jeopardize its survival. I take this responsibility with pride but with great humility because as I told you...we don't have a lot of margin for error. And because, Mr. President, history will not give the Jewish people another chance."

To the final point. At the end of the day, there is that "formula for war" Bret Stephens believes is driving President Obama's misguided

Middle East strategy and that he fully expects the president to pursue should he gain a second term, free of further electoral constraints. At present, it would be difficult to construe another four years of an Obama presidency as good news for the Jewish state. Israelis may have as much at stake in the 2012 U.S. elections as the American people. While they can encourage and hope for a change of perspective on the part of Mr. Obama, the chances of that happening appear far less probable at this juncture than the president's reelection. It is still early times. Early enough for a candidate with winning potential to rise from the Republican Party ranks, early enough even for President Obama to realize that the direction in which he's heading has no chance of securing the Israeli-Palestinian to which he's dedicated so much effort.

In the end, Israel may simply have to rest its fortunes on its own formidable material and spiritual resources and the unwavering support of the majority of the American people and their representatives, however next year's electoral contest is decided. All things considered, Israel could do worse.

William Mehlman represents AFSI in Israel.

Brothers at War: Israel and the Tragedy of the Altalena by Jerold S. Auerbach (Quid Pro Books, 2011)

Reviewed by Rael Jean Isaac

At first sight, the subject of this book, the sinking of a ship bringing arms to Israel 63 years ago, seems like a historical curiosity, of interest only to Israeli history buffs. On the contrary. This powerful, pithy (only 150 pages) book is as contemporary and powerful as a punch in the solar plexus. Nothing could better serve to give the lie to the repeated puerile claim of Israel's President Peres that "there is nothing to be learned from history." Indeed Auerbach prefaces his book with a quote from William Faulkner's

Requiem for a Nun. "The past is never dead. It's not even past."

The "past that's not even past" is the threat to Israel's survival from *sinat hinam* or the baseless hatred of Jew for fellow Jew. It is a threat even greater than that posed by Arab enemies, U.S. and European government peaceprocessors and the purveyors of anti-Zionist hatred combined.

The Altalena was a ship bringing nine hundred young fighters (most of them survivors of Nazi camps) and a large arsenal of weapons (most of them supplied by France) to newly-established Israel, attacked by five Arab states and desperate for arms to defend itself. The entire project was the work of the Irgun, the underground organization whose attacks on British forces in Palestine had a major role in Britain's decision to throw in the towel. Ben-Gurion's then provisional government gave orders to destroy the ship and its armaments. Sixteen Irgun members were killed as the ship went down, its munitions ablaze, with Irgun leader Menachem Begin himself narrowly escaping the fire aimed at fleeing survivors. (Most of the passengers had disembarked earlier in the two-day showdown.)

Begin was the hero in this squalid story. As Auerbach writes: "Begin commanded his loyal fighters not to return fire. His insistence upon restraint demonstrated his unyielding determination to prevent civil war from once again dividing the Jewish people and shattering Jewish sovereignty, as it had done nineteen centuries earlier."

Then Jews had battled each other even as Roman legions laid siege to Jerusalem. Josephus's The Wars of the Jews is the only historical source for

this, and as Auerbach points out, for all that it is a tainted one (Josephus was a Jewish military commander who went over to the enemy), is likely to remain so. Later on, the rabbis in the Talmud made *sinat hinam* the explanation for the downfall of Jewish sovereignty. Jews had been vanquished by "the gratuitous hatred of Jews for other Jews."

It was not only Begin who was imbued with the ghosts of two thousand years past. Born in Palestine, Yitzhak Ben Ami was one of the so-called "Bergson Boys" who had come to the United States on the eve of World War II to raise funds for the rescue of European Jews and shatter the silence about the Nazi program of annihilation. Auerbach writes that while the Altalena was still offshore, Ben Ami, who had

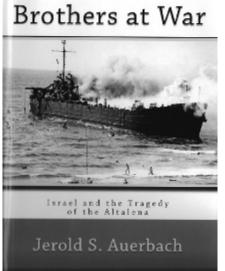
managed to disembark, was on the beach with other Irgun men when Israeli soldiers suddenly raked the area with bullets and mortar shells. As he and a friend took refuge in a sandy foxhole, Ben Ami asked him if he had read Josephus. "Do you remember the description of the final days in the defense of Jerusalem...[when] the Judeans continued to massacre each other...Doesn't this look like the Third destruction of the Temple?" (Little could he have imagined that one day his own son, Jeremy Ben Ami, would head J Street, an organization promoting *sinat hinam*, its annual conferences festivals for hate-Israel activists).

If the hatred that destroyed the Altalena

lacked a cause (in the sense of a justifiable ground for the action against the ship), it was not without background, and this Auerbach recounts. first deep fissure in the Yishuv (as the Jewish community of Palestine was known) grew out of the 1933 murder of Labor leader Chaim Arlosoroff, as he strolled with his wife on a Tel Aviv beach. Arlosoroff had been harshly attacked by the rival Revisionists for making a "transfer agreement" with the Nazi government that brought

Nazi government that brought money and Jews to Palestine, but at the cost of undermining a global anti-Nazi boycott. The Labor movement was convinced at the time (wrongly as subsequent investigations have concluded) that the Revisionists were responsible for his murder.

Hostility was fanned by divergent approaches between Labor and Revisionist factions on how to deal with the violence and terror accompanying the Arab revolt of 1936 and how to react to British betrayal of the Mandate, even as the need for a Jewish refuge from the Nazis became stark. The Haganah (the defense organization of the Labor majority, although oddly enough, founded by Jabotinsky of the rival Revisionist movement) adopted a policy of havlagah," i.e. restraint toward both Arabs and British. The Irgun (which split from the Haganah,



and was associated with the Revisionists) adopted a policy of terror for terror when it came to the Arabs and, in response to British cutting off immigration of Jews, bombed British targets. While the Irgun shifted tactics during the war to cooperate with Great Britain, by 1944, when it was clear the Allies would win, the Irgun, now commanded by Menachem Begin, returned to its policy of resisting British rule.

Auerbach points out that from the standpoint of Ben-Gurion and the Haganah, the Irgun (and its more militant offshoot Lehi) was creating huge damage to Zionist diplomacy, which wanted "controlled" cooperation with the British (on whose goodwill Ben-Gurion was counting in the post-war period.)

In November 1944 Ben-Gurion launched the notorious "Saison," or hunting season, in which Irgun leaders were abducted and incarcerated in caves or kibbutzim, interrogated, in some cases tortured, and turned over to British authorities. The Jewish Agency intelligence service and Haganah became informants for the British



Relaxing on the Altalena

Palestinian police, turning over the names of hundreds of Irgun members. While instructing his men not to retaliate against fellow Jews, no matter what the provocation, Begin issued a bitter indictment: "You incite, inform, betray, abduct, and hand men over, Cain."

At the end of 1945 the Season was replaced briefly by a "United Resistance Movement" (when it became clear that British policy would not change after the war) but this ended with the Irgun bombing of the King David Hotel, seat of the British Mandatory government, and its unforeseen heavy civilian casualties.

(Although the Haganah had participated in the planning, it distanced itself from any responsibility.)

The upshot was that when Ben-Gurion declared Israel's independence in May 1948, a huge reservoir of bitterness and distrust existed between the institutions of the dominant Labor movement and the Irgun, providing the groundwork for the tragedy of the Altalena. Yes, there was unlucky timing, crossed wires, overoptimism (on the part of Irgun leaders) and miscommunication--all of this is painstakingly described by Auerbach in his chronicle of what happened between the ship's sailing and its destruction. But the catastrophe would never have occurred except for the senseless hatred by Ben-Gurion and the Labor left for ideological "dissenters."

Ben-Gurion would insist (as Auerbach notes, without a scintilla of evidence) that the Irgun planned to use the weapons for a military putsch. On the contrary, writes Auerbach, Begin was confident that "the arrival of desperately needed weapons and munitions would be recognized as an exemplary demonstration of patriotism. Here, after all, was a significant Irgun military contribution to the struggle for statehood--anything but an attempt to overthrow the government."

In fact the only genuine disagreement concerned the distribution of arms. Ben-Gurion insisted all the arms should be turned over to him unconditionally. Begin wanted 20% of the arms to go to Irgun forces in Jerusalem. While "what ifs" can never be certainties, it is likely the Altalena's arms would have made it possible to unite the city under Jewish sovereignty in 1948, greatly strengthening Israel's negotiating position in the years ahead.

But Ben-Gurion was determined to consolidate his power and crush his opposition. In this he was wildly successful, for by making much of the public believe that a putsch had been narrowly averted, Ben-Gurion was able to keep the Herut Party (the political party formed by the Irgun leadership) on the margins for twenty years, excluded from government coalitions, its legitimacy in question. Indeed, for years, in

Parliamentary debates, Ben-Gurion refused so much as to use Begin's name, referring to him as "the person sitting on the right hand of Professor Bader" or by similar circumlocutions. Until the 1967 war, when Prime Minister Eshkol asked Begin to join a unity government, his party was forced to conduct its affairs in an iron ring of isolation.

Nonetheless, ugly episode though it was, what was most important was that the Altalena did not serve as prelude to more fratricidal strife. The hostilities of the pre-war period faded and Auerbach notes that the 1967 War and the rescue of hostages at Entebbe forged a spirit of national unity. But alas, that spirit was relatively brief for in the wake of the Yom Kippur War of 1973, there began a new growth of sinat hinam, this time a groundless hatred by secular Israelis directed against religious Jews, especially the religious nationalists who settled outside the ceasefire lines of 1949. Auerbach's subject is the Altalena so he does not go into the same detail on the growth of this new manifestation of sinat hinam. In the wake of the 1973 war. Gush Emunim (Bloc of the Faithful) emerged and embarked on a broadranging settlement effort, especially in Samaria, which had been devoid of Jewish settlements. In



The Altalena In Flames

1975, then Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, speaking to young people at seminary Efal, declared: "There is no more dangerous organization in this country than Gush Emunim." (There were multiple ironies here. Efal was a project of the Hameuchad movement which had been dedicated to settlement throughout the land of Israel. And it was Rabin, as a young officer in the Palmach, who had been in charge of the destruction of the

Altalena.) Less than a year later the famous writer A.B. Yehoshua sent a letter to *Haaretz*: "One should encourage them [the people of Gush Emunim] to settle more and more beyond the Green Line. Thus, when the hoped-for peace comes, and we shall be freed of the territories, we shall also be freed from them."

For secularists, particularly those on the left, the settlers were responsible for the failure to achieve peace. While Auerbach, perhaps wisely, does not engage in psychological speculation, there are probably a variety of reasons why Israelis blamed other Israelis for the persistence of Arab hostility when the Arabs themselves made (and make) no secret of their refusal to accept the legitimacy of a Jewish state in any borders. There are probably a variety of reasons. One may well be that many Israelis are simply unwilling to give up their dream of Israel becoming another Switzerland. Also, if fellow Jews are responsible, Israelis can feel they have control of events. If Arab attitudes are responsible and these cannot be changed, Israelis forfeit their sense that their decisions will shape their future. All they are left with is deterrence, the old slogan of "Ein Breira" (there is no choice) that fortified the state in its first two decades. Many secularists also resented and scorned the religious Judaism that motivated most of the settlers.

The stage is thus set for the possibility of a new and more dangerous war of brothers. Auerbach writes: "If tens of thousands of religious settlers should refuse to leave their homes under an Israeli-Palestinian peace accord, would the government of Israel respond with guns and bullets as it did in 1948?" Auerbach talks of a "peace accord" but given the PA's unity deal with Hamas (and the increased anti-Israel fever unleashed by the so-called "Arab spring") it is more likely that any future Israeli territorial withdrawals would be at best in the shape of "an interim agreement" or more likely, a simple unilateral withdrawal on the model of Gaza (where the Israeli government expelled Jewish communities without even the pretense of undertakings by the other side).

Despite some heated rhetoric, the expulsions from Gaza were achieved without

serious challenge. But would the same restraint be shown if expulsions were repeated on a far greater scale? None of the rosy promises of the political leadership were fulfilled as a result of the retreat from Gaza--instead southern Israel was exposed to constant rocket fire. Moreover, there was now no single figure of the stature of Menachem Begin, whose word was obeyed unquestioningly by his followers in the aftermath of the Altalena.

Auerbach concludes his epilogue to *Brothers* at *War* with a warning:

"Rabbi Abraham Yitzhak haCohen Kook, the chief rabbi of Mandatory Palestine, pondered the tragedy of 1st century Jerusalem. He taught that the Temple, destroyed by *sinat hinam*, could only be rebuilt with *ahavat hinam*, 'groundless love.' But neither his teaching, nor his preferred fusion of religious Orthodoxy and Zionist nationalism,

took hold in the young Zionist state. Instead, Israel was born amid the groundless hatred that was tragically on display during the two-day war of brother (*milchemet achim*) in June 1948. It still confronts the ominous possibility of a recurrence, this time between secular and religious Zionists.

"The Altalena episode, and the killing of Jews by Jews that accompanied it, remains a lingering self-inflicted wound from Israel's heroic struggle for independence. If wisely used as historical memory, the Altalena might serve Israelis as a reminder of the ominous possibility that civil war could destroy Jewish national sovereignty. If not, Altalena memories may finally--and disastrously--be erased by an even more devastating tragedy."

Brothers at War is available from QuidPro Books.com and from Amazon, via Kindle, as well as in soft or hardcover.

Judaism Got Hijacked

Stella Paul

Forget all the caterwauling about radical Muslims hijacking a great religion. The real story of our time is the hijacking of Judaism, the five-thousand-year-old bedrock of the West, by a clique of far-left cranks intent on bringing down the twin towers of Judeo-Christian civilization.

These deadly dangerous malcontents would have you believe that Judaism is whatever Marxist codswallop they all agreed to twitter about today. Not so. Judaism is an eternal and unyielding moral code, enforced by a strict but loving God who demands justice. And at its beating heart lies Israel.

Don't believe the phony act of "more in sorrow than anger" that these "Jewish leaders" put on as they throw Israel to the wolves. The tiny Jewish State is an infuriating hindrance to their dreams of a Universalist utopia, in which they dance around maypoles with adoring throngs of free-range, organic, transgendered Muslims. Israel is the very opposite of Universalist; it's the

specific land that God assigned to His chosen people, as told in the Torah. Unforgivably, embarrassingly, Israel is just so...Jewish.

And so these malicious nutjobs infiltrated the cockpit, grabbed the controls, and are now flying Judaism headlong into disaster. They pay for Jewish students from the University of California to go to Israel and secretly meet with Hamas. Astoundingly, they turned New York's artsy Bard College into an official terrorist training ground, where students can learn how to "safely" insert their bodies into Israel Defense Force operations, thereby helping terrorists get away. They use their considerable talents to pen poisonous books, plays, movies, and articles, besmirching the Jewish State with lies--and then they use the Jewish community's dwindling supply of cash to disseminate the lies. They lobby Congress on behalf of Iran and Palestinians and tirelessly work to undermine Israel's economy through boycotts, divestment, and sanctions.

And, of course, these loyal comrades ruthlessly seek to destroy anyone brave enough to speak the truth or question their navigational system.

But in the back of the plane, the stunned passengers are unbuckling their seatbelts. While the mad progressives in the cockpit chortle in anticipatory triumph, the resistance is forming.

Take, for instance, the recent descent into anti-Israel insanity by the Reform movement, America's largest Jewish denomination. For its new leader, it chose a board member of J Street, yet another Soros front group. J Street, which repeatedly lied about taking money from Soros, gets the rest of its funds from a mysterious lady in Hong Kong named Consolacion Esdicul, who is linked to major gambling interests, and from wealthy Arabs in the Middle East.

Supposedly, Reform Jews will rush to frolic under multicultural rainbows with Rabbi Richard Jacobs and his J Street agenda. What "peace lover" could possibly object to J Street's supporting sanctions against Israel, but opposing sanctions against Iran? Shouldn't we all be happy that J Street endorsed the blood libels of the Goldstone Report and applauds U.N. resolutions condemning Israel? Why should any Jew worry that after the depraved murder of the Fogel family, J Street furiously tried to squash a congressional letter decrying Palestinian incitement?

But an ad hoc group called Jews Against Divisive Leadership does object, loudly and strenuously, with an ad in Jewish papers stating that Jacobs "does not represent the pro-Israel policies cherished by Reform Jews" and will "drive mainstream Zionist Jews out of the Reform movement."

Rest assured, the Reform Stalinists in the cockpit responded with their customary "constructive engagement." A board member wrote a letter to the ad's sponsors, threatening that "your names will not be forgotten [...] and will be remembered when you [...] look for a position on a committee or employment."

"Tony Sopranostein.") Fortunately, the ad's

sponsors refuse to be intimidated, and another ad may soon be on its way.

Now let's turn to New York, where the son of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg (yes, the poison apple does not fall far from the tree) nominated Israel-bashing Jewish playwright Tony Kushner for an honorary degree from the City University of New York. (This is on top of Kushner's Pulitzer Prize for Best Dramatic Metaphor comparing Israel to Nazis.) A brave and principled CUNY Trustee by the name of Jeffrey Wiesenfeld objected to the award, noting that Kushner had accused Israel of "ethnic cleansing." Wiesenfeld prevailed for a moment, but the likelihood of him actually stopping Kushner's award was about as big as Hadassah holding a successful fund drive in Mecca. After an enjoyable few days of wallowing in his martyrdom, Kushner got his award back.

Yet the story may not be over. Distinguished alumni and faculty wrote a letter to CUNY's Board of Trustees defending the much maligned Jeffrey Wiesenfeld, demanding that the Board investigate "the assault on Jews at the City University, disguised as anti-Israelism," and promising that "we will not sit by idly and allow this cancer to grow." Note to investigation committee: start by finding out why the Palestinian flag will fly at CUNY's graduation.

All over the country, the Jewish rank and file is waking up, and raucous rebellion is building. The list of feisty grassroots organizations seems to grow by the day, from Stand With Us to Z Street, Jewish Action Alliance, JCC Watch, Americans for a Safe Israel, Fuel for Truth, the Jewish American Affairs Committee of Indiana, Children of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, Americans for Peace and Tolerance, and many, many more.

The suicidal pretend-Jews who hijacked our great religion may be at the controls, but someone is knocking on the cockpit door. Are you ready? Let's roll.

Stella Paul blogs at stellapundit.blogspot.com. This appeared in the American Thinker on May 17

Perfidy

Ben Hecht

Editor's note: With few exceptions, Jewish organizational leaders have been silent (where they did not praise) Obama's recipe for making Israel indefensible by driving her back to the ceasefire lines of 1949. The ADL on May 19 declared that it "welcomed" Obama's "compelling speech," praised the Administration's "understanding of the nuances involved in bringing about Israeli-Palestinian peace" and announced its "support" for the "President's vision of a negotiated Israeli-Palestinian settlement." Of the 52 members of the President's Conference of Major Jewish Organizations, only two, the Zionist Organization of America and JINSA (the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs) promptly condemned Obama's statements on Israel. Under these circumstances, it is worth remembering the behavior of the Jewish leadership during World War II. Ben Hecht, famous as a playwright and screenwriter, joined the "Bergson Boys" who had come to the United States from Palestine just prior to the war and worked to break the silence and make Americans aware of the ongoing annihilation of European Jewry and to agitate for opening the gates of Palestine to Jews. They mobilized large numbers of political leaders, army officers, professors, editors, writers, actors, religious leaders. Their greatest obstacle in helping the Jews, as the paragraphs below make clear, turned out to be the Jewish establishment.

"The notables on our roster were sufficient seemingly to sweep any cause to victory. That they didn't was due to two factors—our notables were not all of them on our side all the time. They came and went, like volunteer firemen. And the Jewish respectables outnumbered us. However many senators, congressmen, governors, rabbis, priests, college presidents, and puissant dignitaries of every stratum we could muster, the Jewish respectables could come up with five times as many. And not volunteer firemen, but full-time affiliates.

"This difference is due to the fact that protest is always a part-time activity; and respectability is a life-time job. There was also another factor against us. Most of our high-powered cohorts and endorsers were Gentiles. Out of the five thousand Important Names we were able to pipe to our side, hardly a handful were Important Jewish Names.

"Thus our Gentile Captains of a Thousand, after winning in battle, felt it their duty to step aside modestly and permit the Jewish leaders of the land to finish the victory. We could convince our Gentiles of our cause, but we could seldom convince them that nearly all the fine American

Jews whom they admired were the enemies of our cause.

"There was no such confusion among these fine American Jews. They knew on what side they were, and they stayed there, battling away vigorously and ceaselessly on two fronts. One was the front of Silence. Directives for this front came from Ben-Gurion, Weizmann, et al. in Palestine. They were the custodians of the Jewish future. They knew what was going on. American Jewry (like the doomed ones of Europe) translated their cowardly policies of expediency and parochial politics into the noblest of Jewish objectives.

"The second Front of American Jewry's respectables was to convince the world that we who were shouting the news of the slaughter were liars, publicity seekers, race racketeers and, at best, misinformed cases of hysteria. We were, they said, the Wrong People.

"It is an always losing battle, this trying to outshout authority. Those who have been in one are left with the conviction that it is easier to waken the dead than the living. But what a hopeless world it would be without this record of lost battles."

Netanyahu's Trap for Israel

Ruth King

First the good news: Benjamin Netanyahu came across as a seasoned, serious statesman who stood fast against the President's nasty speech calling for a return to the 1967 lines. "It will not happen" Netanyahu said with determination. He then addressed AIPAC and Congress and won a standing ovation from both political sides of the aisle.

So far, so good. Then he made rounds in the media and dazzled all, while President Obama flew to Ireland to reconnect with some remote relatives.

At least the president did not evoke a long lost Jewish connection. That was left to Valerie Jarrett, his very anti-Israel, very senior adviser, who disclosed that her great grandfather was Jewish. It was a Madeleine Albright moment. Unfortunately, it became a Madeleine Albright moment for Netanyahu as well.

Do you remember that under the severest pressure from Albright--or was it as a result of her considerable charm--Netanyahu abandoned Jewish claims to the cradle of our faith, Hebron? He ceded to the demands of Dennis Ross, Bill Clinton and Yasser Arafat and signed what became known as the Wye Plantation agreement.

As the French say: the more things change, the more they remain the same.

This time, at the height of his popularity, at the height of congressional support, at the height of dissatisfaction with the President's anti-Israel tilt (not just from evangelicals and Republicans but such Democratic Party stalwarts as Harry Reid and Steny Hoyer), at the height of the media's admiration, at a time when Americans are skeptical, to say the least, that the Palarabs can make peace--Netanyahu laid a deadly trap for Israel.

Here is what he repeated in one form or another several times:

"I am saying today something that should be said publicly by anyone serious about peace. In any peace agreement that ends the conflict, some settlements will end up beyond Israel's borders. The precise delineation of those borders must be negotiated. We will be very generous on the size of a future Palestinian state. But as President Obama said, the border will be different than the one that existed on June 4, 1967. Israel will not return to the indefensible lines of 1967.

"As for Jerusalem, only a democratic Israel has protected freedom of worship for all faiths in the city. Jerusalem must never again be divided. Jerusalem must remain the united capital of Israel. I know that this is a difficult issue for Palestinians. But I believe with creativity and goodwill a solution can be found."

What was Netanyahu thinking? What "creativity" for Jerusalem can do anything but put into jeopardy Israel's claim to sovereignty? What land swaps will keep Israel safe? Which settlements will be removed? They are all bulwarks against an Arab onslaught from the elevations of Judea and Samaria.

Netanyahu invoked "demilitarization" as the solution for keeping Israel safe. Yet no one has warned more cogently of the emptiness of such nostrums. Here is what Netanyahu himself said in a May 12, 2002 speech to the Likud Central Committee: "[The Palestinian state] will demand all the powers of a state, such as controlling borders, bringing in weapons, control of airspace and the ability to knock down any Israeli plane that enters its area, the ability to sign peace treaties and military alliances with other countries. Once you give them a state, you give them all these things, even if there is an agreement to the contrary, for within a short time they will demand all these things, and they will assume these powers, and the world will stand by and do nothing but it will stop us from trying to stop them...We will thus have created with our own hands a threat to our very existence."

What has changed since 2002? There is a Hamas statelet in Gaza thanks to Israel's most recent venture in territorial withdrawals. The "Arab spring," by making Egypt more likely to spring at Israel's throat, has made the situation

worse still. So why is Netanyahu promoting the Palestinian state he has characterized as "a threat to our very existence?"

Netanyahu did invoke radical Islam and the dangers of a nuclear Iran. He did describe Israel correctly as a democracy and the only safe harbor for Jews in the world.

But then, unforgivably, on the enormously friendly territory of the Hannity show, he again walked into the deadly trap of his own making. He announced how generous Israel would be if Fatah just broke up with Hamas and "recognized Israel as a Jewish state."

What? Is that all it takes? Therein is the trap for Israel. Sadat "recognized" Israel, signed a treaty, flouted it before the ink dried, and it is now being abrogated by the Egyptian populace and the Moslem Brotherhood.

At Oslo, Arafat "recognized" Israel and cemented his "recognition" with the longest spree of terror in Israel's civilian centers.

King Abdullard of Jordan, whose father signed a treaty with Israel now blames Israel for all the world's troubles. And, if you want to see real hatred of Israel, log into his pretty Queenlet's blog.

What will Israel do if those who have never, not once in history, sustained any treaty which they signed among themselves suddenly decide: "Hey fellow terrorists, let's pretend we recognize them and we'll get the concessions we need in order to finish them off once and for all?"

It is a trap. And, equally bad, it is a travesty.

Netanyahu eloquently invoked the Ten Commandments and the Torah-- those gifts from sages that were a model for decent and humane societies--a model too for America's founding fathers. He lovingly described Israel as a freewheeling democracy. He solemnly spoke of the ancient patrimony and legacy of the land of Israel.

And these are the things that he would imperil for "recognition" from savages who hate Israel?

This is what Israel's Prime Minister and *de facto* guardian of Jewish destiny should have said:

"We invite the Arabs who now live in Judea and Samaria to negotiate only those conditions of a civil society which include basic freedoms of speech and assembly so long as they are compatible with Israel's security. The freedoms they will enjoy here are greater than those available to them in any Arab state. But read my lips. Independence will not happen.

"We do not need recognition of our right to exist from anyone, ever again. As I said to President Obama, Israel won't get a second chance. The Arabs have had numerous chances since the Balfour declaration and every concession on our part has brought more demands and more terror. If the only negotiating stance of the Arabs concerns borders, fine. Let's start with the borders of Mandatory Palestine before 1922."