

Arafat's Legacy and The Quest for Peace

Maxim Ghilan, a long-time fighter for peace, is the editor of the newsletter Israel & Palestine Strategic Update, as well as the founder of the International Jewish Peace Union, the first Jewish organization to recognize the Palestine Liberation Organization as a partner in dialogue. He gave this briefing to EIR staff in Leesburg, Virginia, on Nov. 12, 2004. He was introduced by Michele Steinberg. Some of the questions have been abridged.

Steinberg: I'm happy to present an old friend of the LaRouche movement, a freedom fighter for liberty of all people. If you read the interview that Maxim gave to *EIR* last Spring¹, you know that he is a strategic analyst, and that is a very, very important function, especially among peace advocates in Israel.

Maxim moved to Palestine in 1944 from Spain. His father was abducted, by the Franco fascists, and never seen again, and his mother moved the family to Palestine. And his has been a rewarding, but not an easy life, something that we understand and admire. And he's here in the United States—he's been here many, many times; and he's fought for the last three years against the neo-cons in Israel, and here, against the religious extremists of all types. We're happy to have him here at *EIR*.

It's a very tough time. As he said earlier this week in Washington, the loss of President Arafat, of Chairman Arafat, is not only the loss of a great statesman, but, in this case, the loss of a very personal friend. And he's going to be speaking very strongly, throughout the United States and the world, that this death will be honored in a way that leads to peace and justice. I'll let him tell you about that. . . .

The Self-Definition of the Palestinians

Ghilan: Let's make it from the beginning, a dialogue. What is the main concern you would like me to speak about first? Anybody has an idea? President Yasser Arafat?

Okay. We are—I'm almost tempted to say "as usual"—in a moment of great crisis in the Middle East, in fact, a world crisis.

Yasser Arafat, my friend, was really, up to his death, and

1. "Israel's General Staff: 'A Bunch of Dr. Strangeloves,'" *EIR*, June 4, 2004; "To Be Ethical and Still Succeed," June 18, 2004.



Maxim Ghilan: "I'm not a dreamer. I'm a political plumber. I try to unblock ice! That's not a very idealistic job, because you dirty your hands, and also because you deal on both sides with killers."

is, even after his death, the linchpin of the political situation in the Middle East. Apart from the occupation of Iraq, there is no single element or individual that had, and has, so much importance as Yasser Arafat. He is as important as Franklin Delano Roosevelt was during World War II, for instance, for the world, a defining and determining personality that has prevented the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and also the West-Islamic or West-Arab conflict, from degenerating into chaos, and from becoming a wild, barbaric struggle or battle.

Arafat was a great politician, a great statesman, a man who was, above all, the incarnation of the Palestinian will to national independence, true independence. He opposed, in this role, all the Western and Eastern powers that exist or existed, including the now-collapsed Soviet Union, using, wherever he could, his relations with everybody, but always defining things in terms of the need of the Palestinians to grow together, from individual, persecuted refugees, or oppressed people, into, first, a nation-state without a formal framework; and then, into a nation with a conscience of its own, with an attitude toward this of its own.

Arafat founded Fatah on Jan. 1, 1960. Fatah was the na-

tional liberation movement, the main party—it still is—of the PLO, the Palestine Liberation Organization; and he took over the PLO from a stooge of the then-Arab governments, which tried, and succeeded, in controlling the Palestinians from 1947-48, when the big war of Israeli independence occurred, which the Palestinians call "the catastrophe," *Naqba*, until 1960.

From 1948 to 1960, the Palestinians were a confused mass of people, who had no specific definition as a national movement. Arafat changed that by taking over the Palestine Liberation Organization, giving it a goal of national struggle, for independence from the Israelis, but also from the Arab countries.

He did three important things: He pulled together a coalition of all the political movements of the Palestinians, most of which were also armed-struggle movements—from the Marxist-Leninists of the Front for the Liberation of Palestine, then led by Georges Habash; to movements aligned with Arab states: Iraq, Jordan, and Syria, among others—into one big coalition called the Palestine Liberation Organization.

He started a struggle for the creation of a Palestinian state, which at first was defined as all of historical Palestine/Israel: the land between the Arab desert and the Mediterranean Sea.

Now, this dream was accompanied by the idea, that this state should be a democratic, secular state, where all the three monotheistic religions can live together in peace. Arafat and his movement at that stage, in the early '60s, did not define the Israelis or the Jews as a nation or as a people, but as a religious group which had taken over from others.

Later on, in the late 1980s, this goal was changed to the creation of a Palestinian state alongside Israel, along the Green Line, which is the pre-1967 borders of Israel, to make it an independent Palestinian state.

Also in the late '60s, under the pressure of the armed struggle between the parties, which was always to the advantage of the Israelis, Arafat decisively influenced his movement's leadership, and that of the wider PLO—not only Fatah—to adopt a new attitude, which was that they would accept to talk to Jews who are "progressive," meaning Israelis who are not opposed to the Palestinians as such. At that time, you must remember, Golda Meir said, "There are no Palestinians, only Arabs." So the fact of self-definition was psychologically and politically as important as anything else in this struggle.

The Beginning of Israeli-Palestinian Contacts

There had been contacts between Palestinians and Israelis before, especially between the Israeli Communist Party and the Palestinian Communist Party, through a number of channels. But never before had the PLO been willing to recognize the existence of freedom fighters, or real democrats, in Israel, who were either Zionists or non-Zionists, but not Communists nor aligned with an Arab movement.

This changed in the early '70s. I had the privilege of being one of the first two non-Communist Israelis who were received by a PLO representative, Said Hammami in London. I am not, and never have been a Marxist-Leninist.

The other Israeli was the late Shalom Cohen, Secretary General of the Israeli, Oriental Jewish "Black Panthers"—which is a completely different movement from the U.S. group, but which took them as their example, because the Oriental Jews were rather downtrodden by Israeli society at that stage. And, Shalom Cohen was also the co-publisher of Uri Avnery's *Ha'olam Haze* ("This World") weekly.

We were received by Said Hammami, the PLO representative in London, who was asked by Arafat to get in touch with us. As a consequence, after a relatively short time, Said Hammami was assassinated. And so it went on, with any number of Palestinian activists or leaders, who worked with me, or who worked with a number of parallel Israeli peace camp activists or organizations.

There were four channels of contact: One was the Communist Parties, talking to each other, with the support of Moscow.

There was an effort, orchestrated by a dissident Communist leader, Egyptian Jewish leader in fact, Henri Curiel, who found himself opposed very strongly by the Soviet secret services. The Soviets accused him of being a CIA agent—and the CIA accused Henri Curiel of being a Cuban agent. The fact was, that he was an independent man trying to build bridges, supported by only one other Communist Party at that time, that of Palmiro Togliatti in Italy. Togliatti was the founder of most Communist Parties in the Middle East. He founded the PKP, the Palestinian Communist Party during British Mandate times, which was a Jewish-Arab party. He helped found two Communist groups in Egypt, one led by Henri Curiel, and the other by Arturo Schwarz, who was also Jewish. They were tiny, and they came, not out of the population, but out of the bourgeoisie. Both were born of Italian parents. You know Italy had a very strong influence on Egypt and Tripoli, in what is now Libya, before World War II.

Arturo Schwarz, to give you an anecdote, was found guilty by the British, of being an Italian spy—he was in fact, an anti-Fascist. He was sentenced to hang until death. They put him on the gallows, but Arturo Schwarz weighed more than 120 kilos, so the rope broke! It's a true story. And the British have this tradition, from feudal times, that if the rope breaks, you don't hang the man a second time. So, he lived.

Henri Curiel's group was persecuted, thrown in prison. Most of its members were Egyptian Jews, with some British servicemen participating. One of the members, a man who is still alive in France, called Raymond Grinspan, took it all upon himself, and was sentenced to seven years in jail, worked hard labor for seven years with 15 kilos of chains on his feet.

The others, one way or the other, were expelled from Egypt, and arrived in Paris, and founded an international left-



Arafat addresses the United Nations General Assembly on Nov. 13, 1974. As PLO chairman, he defined for the Palestinians a goal of national struggle for independence from the Israelis, but also from the Arab countries.

wing movement to aid peoples of the Third World, called "Solidarity." They were very active in South Africa against the apartheid regime. And among other things, they smuggled Breyten Breytenbach into South Africa, but he was arrested. They were also active in Guatemala and a few other Latin American countries.

In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Henri Curiel worked to create bridges between the Egyptian left-wing party and the Israeli peace camp, which then was far stronger than it is now.

At that time, among the members of Gamal Abdel Nasser's fellow three officers, was a left-winger, Khalid Muhi ad Din, as well as, of course, Anwar Sadat—who was very right-wing; in fact, he was pro-fascist, pro-Mussolini and pro-Hitler before that. Sadat was also a very strong believer in Islam.

You know, the people of the Arab area worked mostly against the Allies in World War II, for the simple reason that "the enemy of my enemy is my friend." The anti-British Jewish underground did not do that, since the main enemy were the Nazis, who were destroying them. But even there, in the early 1940s, there was an effort to found an alliance between the Stern Group and the Nazis against the British, who found out and used it as propaganda against the Jewish



Henri Curiel, the Egyptian Jewish leader and dissident Communist, was one of the first to work to build bridges between Arabs and Israelis.

underground. So, there was always, on both sides, this duality of “our interests,” and “let’s play with the enemy of our enemy.”

Anyway, Henri Curiel had contacts with one of the colonels who made the revolt with Nasser, who was a left-winger, in fact a member of the evolving leftwing party of Egypt: Khalid Muhi ad Din. And he proposed, through the good offices of the Italians, the first Jewish-Arab Middle East conference in Bologna (which was a Communist municipality), which ultimately was held in 1972.

In the preparations for this conference, Curiel went to Muhi ad Din; Muhi ad Din went to Gamal Abdel Nasser, before he died, and told him, “I want to go to that conference.” He had helped organize this, but he didn’t tell that to Nasser. So, Nasser looked at him, and said, “Okay. You can go, and participate. But you are not to talk to an Israeli, even through the intermediary of one third person.” He said, “I promise.”

In these preparations, I was asked among others to go to Italy, to Rome, and meet with the Egyptians, to help prepare the conference. So I went with Henri Curiel’s—I must underscore that I was not in Curiel’s movement; my activities were separate, but I cooperated with them, because they were doing the right thing at the time. I went with Joyce Blau, who was the second in command of Curiel’s group and his secretary, and we sat in the lobby of a hotel.

So, I sat here; next to me sat Joyce Blau; next to her, one of the younger leaders of the Egyptian Communist Party who had just gotten out of 12 years in jail; and then, Khalid Muhi ad Din, the Minister. And he spoke to his man, who then

spoke to Joyce, and she told me what he said—so he kept his promise: no third person! It gives you an idea of the atmosphere at the time!

Then, in 1972, we had that Bologna meeting, and that was the beginning of opening contacts, parallel to those between the Communist parties, because Curiel was very well aware that the Moscow-controlled Communist parties did not represent forces which could go deeply into either the Palestinian or Israeli societies.

So, Curiel—who considered himself a Communist—created alternative, parallel channels to those set up by the Communists, in fact, through three different channels. One was my office in Paris; I published a publication, a monthly, called *Israel & Palestine Political Report*, which now comes out as a newsletter called *Israel & Palestine Strategic Update*. And I had, of course, a number of contacts and activities around this—that was the pretext.

The Struggle for a Sane Israel and Palestine

There was a parallel link, with the Oriental Black Panthers and other movements, which considered themselves to be Arab Jews, downtrodden in Israeli society. But, that didn’t go very far, because the movement of the Israeli Black Panthers was undermined through drugs and through double agents of the secret services. It was a genuine, grassroots popular movement, very violent, very ignorant of politics, manipulated and maneuvered from the beginning to the end. Some of the people ended as criminals; others ended as members of the Knesset of the Labor Party. . . .

And then, you had the non-Communist, Zionist peace camp people, who were led, at that time, by two personalities: One, you certainly have heard of, that is Uri Avnery, editor of the weekly called *Ha’olem Haze*, where I had the privilege also to be, at two opportunities, a senior collaborator. The other was the late Maj. Gen. Matityahu Peled—Mati Peled.



Uri Avnery, an Israeli editor and peace activist, was formerly a commando fighter.

He was *the* military governor of the Israeli occupation of Gaza in the early '50s. And, at one stage, he saw what occupation was doing, left the Army, gave the Army Academy all his books on the Middle East, studied Arabic, and became a peace fighter.

You must understand, that throughout the struggle for a sane Israel beside a sane Palestine, the people who were most effective, who were also the idealists, were people who had fought against the Arabs, and changed their minds, seeing the real situation. I myself was, at a very, very young age, a member of the Stern group. And I changed my mind, seeing Arabs being tortured, when I was in jail under Ben-Gurion—for nationalist reasons.

Mati Peled was a member of the General Staff, at the same rank as [Yitzhak] Rabin was then, and changed his mind. Uri Avnery was a commando fighter, and got his belly ripped open, in the struggle of '48, in jeep battles.

Now, you have the “refuseniks” in Israel; you have the pilots who are refusing to serve in the occupied territories—those are all people who are by no means “natural doves.” They are people who have fought, or were fighting, and they decided that the way this is being conducted leads to an abomination, and not to a free Israeli state.

I publish a Hebrew review, for instance, which is called *Mitan* (“Charge”). And my associate, who is also my Jewish associate in the Koah Yozen, the Jewish-Arab association I’ve created in Israel, is a former officer of the border guards, who was in command of a unit of Bedouins and of Druze fighters, pro-Israeli fighters—and he changed his mind, because he saw what was happening.

The left as such in Israel—the real left, as well as the Zionist left—is ineffective, because it keeps to itself. So, our best hope are people who are from the Zionist establishment, but who realize, for moral or intellectual reasons, that this is not the way to go. And the only way things will change, is if we educate more of these people to be on our side—especially younger people, of course, which I do.

Building Bridges

That’s how it started: Uri Avnery and Mati Peled created something called the Israel Council for Israel-Palestine Peace, and also got in touch with the Palestinian leadership, through Dr. Issam Sartawi, who came to Paris precisely to do work with me, but also with Shalom Cohen and Uri Avnery. The late Dr. Sartawi, who was my friend, was a Palestinian heart surgeon, who had left his studies in Boston, to go and fight in the Karameh battle.

Karameh was the defining point of the Palestinian struggle: It was the first time the Palestinians fought back, in a battle in Jordan, on the Jordan-Israeli border, against Israeli tanks. They didn’t win, but they inflicted casualties, and that became the sign that—whereas all the Arabs had failed in the '48 war—they were willing and able to fight.



Dr. Issam Sartawi, a Palestinian surgeon, became Ghilan's partner in negotiations with numerous Israeli political forces.

So, Issam Sartawi came to Paris, and in the course of events, became my partner in negotiations with a number of Israelis of both the Zionist peace camp, but also of a variety of other movements.

One of the dramatic events was in 1982, before the war in Lebanon for instance, when Moshe Dayan sent an Army officer to me, an emissary, to tell me of the plans of Ariel Sharon, so that I would publicize them in the paper. In particular, these plans included a Sharon plot to blow up the al-Aqsa Mosque. Dayan didn’t want that to occur, because Dayan had another strategic view of things, and he probably saw me as a good channel.

Anyway, I published it, and I defined and described exactly what Ariel Sharon’s plans were in the Middle East. He was the Minister of Defense, right after Menachem Begin. And another of his plans was to take over the oil in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, believe it or not—which, when it was made public, he had the military capability to do it! Of course, when the United States realized what he was intent on doing, they didn’t exactly like it. You know, you don’t take the playthings away from a big child, if you are a small child! So, that was squashed.

But, we did a lot of work. In the course of events, I met the whole Palestinian leadership, in a variety of places. In '77, I went, under the bombs of the civil war, to Beirut, to meet Abu Jihad, the Palestinian military commander, and tried to dissuade him from sending his Fatah fighters to kill civilians in Israel. This was just after an Israeli bus had been attacked by young Fatah members, who had crossed the border, and it was a slaughter—everybody died, including the Palestinians. In my first meeting with Abu Jihad—and it was his first meet-



Abu Mazen (Mahmoud Abbas), one of Ghilan's interlocutors over many decades, became chairman of the PLO after Arafat's death.

ing with an Israeli—he said, “I welcome that you join our struggle!” I said, “Excuse me, sir. But, I’m not here to adhere to your movement. I’m here as an Israeli Jew, to try and establish bridges, because I believe that the way our country is doing things is wrong. But, I’m not here as a Palestinian. I’m here as an Israeli.” And he took it very well.

There were contacts in Vienna, in Geneva, in Paris, and a number of places—in Greece at one stage. And finally, after the Palestinians were thrown out of Lebanon, many times in Tunis, and at the two Palestine National Councils which were held in the late 1980s, in Algeria.

And during those meetings and others, I met the whole Palestinian leadership—Abu Iyad, Abu Jihad, Khalid al-Hasan, Abu al-Hol, and Abu Mazen, with whom I remained in permanent contact for many years, directly and through his people.

Most of these Palestinians who discussed peace with Israelis, are dead. Some of them were killed by the Israelis. Others were killed by a Palestinian agent of nobody-knows-exactly-who: what’s called “Abu Nidal,” the arch-terrorist at that time. Some remained alive, such as Abu Ala [Ahmed Qurei] and Abu Mazen [Mahmoud Abbas], whose stature was somewhat less than that of people like Abu Iyad. Abu Iyad was the equal, intellectually and in military terms, of Arafat himself. But he was killed by an agent of Abu Nidal, who was then executed by the Palestinians, at sea. No Arab country was willing to have the assassin killed on their soil, because they were afraid of Abu Nidal.

Then Issam Sartawi, my friend and co-worker for eight years, was assassinated at a meeting of the Middle East Committee of the Socialist International, where he represented the

Palestinians, in Albufeira in Portugal. I was supposed to be at that meeting. I was in Spain at that time, and Issam told me to come and meet with him at the lobby of that hotel. I had, for some minor reason, to go back to Paris—and that’s why I missed the moment when he was killed, in which probably I would have been killed, too.

That was only one of several times, when I was threatened with death.

Issam was killed. I went to his funeral in Amman. It was very much like a Mafia funeral, in so far as, at the funeral meal, sitting around the room were all the factions of the PLO, *including the Abu Nidal people!* They were there to pay their respects to the man they had assassinated! And I went up to Abu Jihad—later on, he was killed by Syrians—and told him, “Are the negotiations with the Israeli peace camp going to continue or not?” And, he said, “Yes. We have named a new representative to the Socialist International, as a symbol. He is a Palestinian Jew, Ilan Halevy,” a former Israeli Jew—a good acquaintance of mine.

So, these things went on. And we succeeded in bringing the negotiations with the Palestinian leadership, *against* the wishes of part of it—against the wishes of Abu Jihad, for instance, and certainly Abu al-Hol, at the beginning—closer and closer to the center of the Israeli scene. After those contacts, which I organized, there were contacts between the Mapam party, which is today called Meretz/Yahad. And at one point, some people in the Likud, from the grassroots, asked me to contact the Palestinians, but at the last minute, they got cold feet.

Efforts With Weizman, Goldman

At an early opportunity, it was the late ’70s, I think—at a time that Menachem Begin was Prime Minister and Ezer Weizman, who then became President of Israel, was the Minister of Defense. Weizman asked a member of his opposition, Yossi Sarid, who is one of the leaders of Meretz, today, to go and try to establish contact with the Palestinians to see if something could be done.

Sarid was afraid to do it himself; but, with the aid of Chancellor Bruno Kreisky of Austria, whom I also met several times, contact was arranged. Kreisky sent a plane for Sartawi to go to Paris (he was in Vienna), and to meet with a journalist named Ran Edelist, who represented Sarid, towards a possible meeting between Ezer Weizman and Yasser Arafat later on. Under a Likud government, right? Back in the ’70s. Edelist—also an intelligence person, as usual—met at my offices in Paris with Issam Sartawi. But then, news of this broke out in Israel, and the authorities demanded that Edelist return to Israel, otherwise they would expel him and his wife from the kibbutz where they lived. So he had to go back, and nothing came out of that effort.

And there were several other things like that. My point is to show that these negotiations, under Arafat’s impulsion, go back a long, long, long, long way.



Arafat once sought a meeting with Nahum Goldmann, the president of the World Zionist Organization, but it was blocked by then-Prime Minister Rabin.

Then, there was an effort for the late Nahum Goldmann to meet Yasser Arafat. Arafat initiated it. Goldmann agreed, but he was then President of the World Zionist Organization (among other things), and he said he could not do it without the permission of then-Prime Minister Rabin. (That was the first term that Rabin served as Prime Minister.) There was a conference of the World Zionist Organization in Jerusalem. Said Hammami asked me to do something about it. I said I couldn't go to Israel—I was a political exile by then; they told me they would arrest me if I went back, because I had talked to the PLO.

So, I sent instead, my associate at *Israel & Palestine*, a man called Louis Marton, a Hungarian refugee, who fought in the students' movement against the invasion of Budapest by the Soviets, and then was very close to Nahum Goldmann. In fact, he founded *Israel & Palestine*, and found me, and we published it together, later on. So, Marton went to Jerusalem in my name, and talked to Goldmann, and Goldmann said, "I'm going to ask Yitzhak Rabin." He went to Yitzhak Rabin, and Yitzhak Rabin (who didn't like Goldmann) told him, "If you do that, I'll disown you." So, Marton went back; I went back to London, and told Sartawi, "I'm sorry, it doesn't work." And four days, after that, Fatah, after a truce of several months, attacked a hotel on the beach at Tel Aviv, and killed any number of civilians. It was a sign, you know: "You don't want peace, you can get war."

So, that was the atmosphere in which these things happened. In the end, a dialogue was started by the leaders of the Israeli government, [Shimon] Peres and Rabin. And you all know the results, which were a catastrophe in my eyes, the Oslo Agreements, which brought about a further crisis.

Arafat's Legacy

I tell you all of this, because you have been hearing and reading about the military career and the political career of Yasser Arafat. I wanted you to get a feeling of who he was: He was a man who wanted, above all, the liberty of his people. But, he also was a man who was very realistic and wanted peace with Israel, because they had changed over from the idea of one democratic state, to a two-state solution, in the '70s. And then, in the '80s in Geneva, Arafat declared he was from then on against military struggle and he did not want the Palestinians to re-occupy all of the land, but only the territories taken away by Israel in 1967, which means Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem.

So, that was Arafat, as a man. As an individual, he was very ugly, and very likable. I remember once when I was at a conference for the First International Council in Algiers, and they were very much afraid for me, because inside the compound at the Villa des Pins, were the people of Abu Nidal who wanted to go back into the PLO. And if they had known an Israeli Jew was there, it would not have been a *simpatico* thing.

Arafat kept watch like a hawk, on some of his best people, like his directors of Cabinet, Dr. Sami Mussalam and Dr. Ramzi Hourri. Ramzi Hourri, you have seen recently on TV, is the man who always accompanied Arafat, and most recently, during Arafat's illness, you would have seen him on TV—the tall man, dark, curly hair, walking behind the sheikh who visited Arafat. That's Ramzi, a very good friend; a cousin of my best Palestinian friend, who's dead now, who was the second in command to Issam Sartawi, who was the man I worked with on the Palestinian side.

I remember Arafat, after waiting for 11 hours to meet him, with one thing after the other—I went there as a journalist, and I didn't want to be observed any place where Abu Nidal people were. So, he saw me, and took me by the hand, and pulled me through. But, then he talked to somebody, and the gorillas jumped with karate positions and didn't let me through. So, I had to go all the way to the place where he was giving an interview to Algerian TV, and wait for another four hours. And at the end, he took me into his sleeping quarters, took off the *keffiyah*, lay on his bed—he had a very bad back problem all his life; nobody told anybody about it, but he had a brace quite often under the *keffiyah*. And, we talked, and it was about the possibility of what can be done for peace.

And to my sins, I convinced him, at that meeting, among other places, that there were people genuinely interested in peace with the Palestinians on the Israeli side—which is *not* the case, and never was the case. They wanted a tame dominion, a bantustan, which Israel and the United States could control. And most of the people of the Likud want the same thing, except those who want gradually to expel the Palestinians from all of historical Israel-Palestine.

So, he was a great man. He was a man of peace, who knew

how to wage war. He was a diplomat. A very astute politician, who balanced among his own factions, and the movements which were not his, so as to continue the Palestinian struggle for independence.

But, he also had his faults, and I don't want to make a saint of the man. He was unable to conceive that somebody could share with him the unique position he held in the Palestinian camp, and never let a younger generation grow up under him. All the men who worked with him were people of his age, or slightly younger. But, the generation after that—including some *extremely* gifted characters, such as the one who is now a professor at Columbia University, Dr. Rashid Khalidi, and others—were not allowed to rise to a position where they could become the next generation of leaders.

Crisis in the Palestinian Leadership

And that is what has created, now, the present crisis in the Palestinian leadership. Because, what that means is, that you have Arafat. You have the older, and *weakest*, remnants of his PLO leadership: namely Abu Ala and Abu Mazen—and Farouk Khadoumi, who is a not a serious figure, and is isolated in Tunis, because he didn't want to go back to Palestine when Arafat went in 1993. He's nominally still Minister of Foreign Affairs, but not really (the real one is Dr. Nabil Shaath). Then, you have some gifted people, but also weak, like Nabil Shaath, for instance; or people who were followers, not primary leaders, like Abd Razek, who is one of the government people; and Saeb Erkat, the main spokesman and negotiator for the Palestinians.

And under that, you have a one-generation gap, and you have younger people from the interior. Because when Arafat came back, in '93, to the land of Palestine, there was of course, a local leadership. The bourgeoisie, but also people in the camps, who led on a popular level, mostly, but not exclusively, allied with the Popular Front, who then evolved and became part of the leadership of the Hamas and Jihad Islami.

That means, that the leadership under him which is effective, *the* person, most likely to inherit his place, is a man of one of the big families, called Marwan Barghouti, who is in jail for five life sentences; because Israel realized that he is as dangerous as hell, because of his strong leadership. He's a fighter. He fought with arms in his hands, which is one thing. He's from one of the big families; he's Fatah; and he was trusted by Arafat.

So now, the only solution that one can think of to get out of this crisis—if Israel and the United States *want* to get out of this crisis, which is not at all evident—is to let Barghouti out of jail; make him into the Palestinian Mandela, and have a Palestinian state under his direction created beside Israel.

But, they won't do it, because they don't want a Palestinian state beside Israel. They want chaos. At best, they want a Palestinian bantustan.

So, I will stop here, and see what questions you have.

Oslo Accords: 'A Catastrophe'

Q: You mention that you saw the Oslo Accords as a catastrophe. I want to ask you to explain, to develop that a little.

Ghilan: Well, it's very simple: You don't make peace between two very cruelly fighting entities, in five years. You either make it immediately, in five weeks or five months, or you don't make it at all. Because, if you give these people five years—on both sides—the ability to try to pull the blanket to their side of the bed, you end without a blanket, right? Which is precisely what happened.

Rabin and Peres lied by saying that they were not going to continue with the settlements, and increased them, so that at the time of the Oslo Agreement in '93, you had 60,000 settlers; today, you have 230,000. They didn't come from nowhere—they weren't born there.

On the Palestinian side, Arafat promised to have 6,000 policemen, armed policemen, and brought in arms and had 60-70,000 people, which degenerated into a number of opposing and competing militias, occasionally even killing each other.

But the worst of all, was that it encouraged the fanatic Islamic—and not so fanatic Islamic—fringe, of the Palestinian people, to say, "No," to wage a war of terror, even from '93, from the beginning of the Oslo Agreement; which was taken as a pretext by the extreme right and the right in Israel, to refuse the Oslo process. They were talking about Yitzhak Rabin as a Nazi, and carrying pictures of him in an SS uniform; and to call the people who made Oslo, the "Oslo criminals."

So, this degenerated until the day, in November 1995, when one of the most extreme fringe people assassinated Yitzhak Rabin, which brought about elections. And Peres was defeated, among other reasons, because he tried to absolve himself in Israeli eyes by attacking Lebanon, and displacing 412,000 people in southern Lebanon, which caused the Arab parties in the Knesset in Israel not to vote for him, to abstain. So, he lost by a small margin to Benjamin Netanyahu, and the present disaster started.

So, I was against it, because it was not going to work! You can't have five years of negotiations. You cannot tell a people which has one-third or one-half of its families in refugee camps throughout the world, or outside of Palestine, that they will never, ever, be allowed to come back. You know, each of these people outside of Palestine, or outside of Israel, has family members in the camps in Gaza, or near Jerusalem, or even in Jaffa in Israel. So, you are talking to a whole people, telling them, "You know, your cousin whom you were going to marry, cannot come back." It's on a human level! It's not even on a political level.

So, that was basically why I was against Oslo. There were very precious few peace camp people, who shared my view. And of course, then, came what came.



President Clinton with Prime Minister Rabin and Chairman Arafat, after the signing of the Oslo Accords in Washington in 1993. Ghilan opposed the Accords, viewing the five-year timetable as much too long. "If you give these people five years—on both sides—the ability to try to pull the blanket to their side of the bed, you end without a blanket."

Opportunities for Peace?

Q: I saw these headlines on the newspapers this morning, and I would like to have your comment. The first one was, "Recalling a Fighter Who Made Mistakes." And the second, "After Arafat, New Opportunities for Peace."

Ghilan: The opportunities are not for peace, but for chaos. You don't replace a strong unifying leader, with—of all things—a bicephalous head of government, two weak personalities, who are not able to influence their own people, let alone such powers with clout as Israel and the United States. The opportunities are not for peace: The opportunities, at best—and it's not a very good best—are for Israeli domination of the Palestinians for the next 50 years. Which is not going to happen, because, with this Intifada under way, the popular rebellion of the Palestinians will go on, one way or the other. With pauses, going in periods—going down, going up. And the final result of that, is the growth of the extreme religious Islamic organizations, Hamas and Islamic Jihad. Particularly in view of what's happening in Iraq. Because these people don't live far away, right?

So, opportunities in the eyes of America's press and media, are the opportunities for America to put its hand even more strongly on the Palestinians—which they believe will work! And I don't believe will work. Because, never in the history of mankind, has an imperial power been able to continue, repressing forever: Napoleon couldn't; Julius Caesar

couldn't. It hasn't happened! The Nazis couldn't, the French in Indochina and North Africa couldn't: *It does not happen*. It happens for a little while, and then, bloodshed and all the rest.

As for, what was it, a "strong fighter who made mistakes"? Well, he certainly was a fighter. He certainly made mistakes. But, I would say that any of the other leaders we have gone through in the 20th and 21st Century—including such a great man such as [Franklin] Roosevelt; men like Churchill, too—made mistakes. Show me one who didn't make mistakes.

The question is—you know, Harry Truman once was asked by Allen Dulles, or by somebody of his office, why he supported Anastasio Somoza of Nicaragua, I believe. He said, "Listen, sir. This man is a bastard!" Truman smiled and said, "Sure he's a bastard, but he's *our* bastard."

So, what the newspapers are saying—I'm sorry to be so blunt, but I don't think, with this distinguished audience, I should pull any punches. Sure he made mistakes. But, he made the mistakes which are *inconvenient to the United States*, not those which were convenient to the United States, otherwise he would have been praised as a very great leader!

The Problem Starts With the United States

Q: So, by process of elimination, you think the only chance for peace is if the United States were to get Israel to behave, by "main force" you might say? And to impose the process of economic development?



A Palestinian refugee family. To those who oppose the so-called "right of return" of Palestinian refugees, Ghilan states, "You are talking to a whole people, telling them, 'You know, your cousin whom you were going to marry, cannot come back.' It's on a human level!"

Ghilan: I don't understand what the question is. I agree with you, but what's the question?

Q: By process of elimination, then, do you think that the solution must come from the United States?

Ghilan: The solution to the Palestinian problem is one thing. The *problem itself* is the United States. That's where it starts.

If this country, which has become, at least nominally the one great power of the world—not for long, because China is getting to be a bigger power, and so are others. But, just now, it is the strongest force in the world. Now, my opinion is, that an empire, a wise empire, has the obligation to be a king-maker, and not a king-breaker: to take people it wants to control, and put—as Rome did for a while—leadership, or the same leadership they had, which then paid tribute to the central empire. That's the intelligent way to make it. The only empire that did it after Rome, in an intelligent way, was the Ottoman Empire. All the others want to impose their will, "We are the biggest. We are the strongest. We are the three-

ton gorilla, we sit anywhere we want." Right?

That is, of course, self-destructive, not to speak of being destructive of other people. Because you create a backlash, and not just a backlash of one go, but a *permanent* backlash: You create a cultural desire to continue fighting forever against the occupation or oppressive power. So, that's precisely what an empire should not do.

Now, of course, I don't have to explain to you people, of all people, what the Bush regime is. So, in other words, sir, if I understand you rightly, you say that you're sure that economic development should be encouraged by this country so that the Palestinians and the Israelis could work together. Sure, that's true. But, will the U.S. do it? That's the question—I mean, let's look at the essentials: The essentials are, this country and its ally Great Britain, have been now, for 20 years or so, trying to impose their will on the Middle East without success. In fact, I think that the greatest help to the creation of a social liberation movement, disguised as a religious fanatic movement—and I mean the Islamic Jihad people, and bin Laden, and so on—the biggest encouragement to these people has been the Bush regime. Maybe not by intention, but certainly by actual fact. Maybe, yes, by intention, I don't know. But, I don't want to go into that, in fact. You know, the fact is, they have created bin Laden. And bin Laden has helped Bush to get elected, with his statement just before the election. And it's, as usual, innate association of the extremes.

The Israeli Political Fight

Q: I want to know what your view is on how it might be possible to get Marwan Barghout out of jail?

Ghilan: If Bush orders so. Only way. Or, if Sharon succeeds in overcoming his innate hate of the Palestinian leadership and lets him out in order to strengthen his own efforts to remain in power—which is a possibility, but by no means a probability.

Q: As a followup to that, could you give an assessment of the internal political situation in Israel?

Ghilan: Well, the situation is as follows: Israel is, and always was, divided into three camps, politically speaking: a majority of right-wing people, both extreme right-wing and conservative, which, at this stage of history is about 40-45%; a minority of peace-wishing people, not very different from the others, but with a less extreme view, of say, 25-28%; in the middle, you have this camp of people who are undecided, and who have a propensity to go with the strongest personality that leads the Israelis. At the beginning, when Sharon was elected, he was elected by an over 60% majority, but only of 40% of the voters—all the rest just didn't vote. So, he really was voted in, not really by a majority. But, nevertheless, democratically, he was elected Prime Minister in a legal manner.

The present situation is, that due to the continued war against the Palestinians, but also due to the extremely bad



Israeli Deputy Prime Minister Shimon Peres (right) with U.S. Secretary of State Donald Rumsfeld in Washington, Oct. 22, 2001. Peres “is one of Ariel Sharon’s best friends! Always was. He’s a personal friend, when they are together. And he wants Labor to rejoin the coalition.”

economic situation, which hits the people at lower levels, and even at middle-class levels, there is an encrusting of the situation in Israel, and the extreme right is against Sharon. Sharon himself has this attempt to evacuate the settlers of Gaza, leave the military around it, like an armed prison camp; and to occupy, forever, another part of the West Bank, including the city of Ariel, which is 14 kilometers inside the West Bank, away from the Green Line, from the border between Israel and the Palestinian territories.

The Labor Party wants this plan. Shimon Peres is one of Ariel Sharon’s best friends! Always was. He’s a personal friend, when they are together. And he wants Labor to rejoin the coalition. But they have difficulties in doing that, because the Likud’s neo-conservative economic plan is so disliked, so hated by the popular masses, that if Labor did that again, for the umpteenth time, many of its voters would leave it.

Israel’s Disastrous Economic Policy

So, you have a problem: Labor has to say, “Yes, we’ll join Sharon, but only if Sharon changes economic plans”—which he cannot do, because he has promised the United States not to do it. Because Israel is, today—and you must realize that, it is a very important point for your activities in the United

States: What is happening economically in Israel is a pilot project of what they want to do in Britain and the United States. *Precisely* what they want to do. Study the Israeli economy in the last three years, and you’ll understand what they want to do in the economy here.

Q: Can you say more about that?

Ghilan: Well, they have eliminated whatever welfare measures there were, for instance, for single parents. They take away the support for single parents, who often have several children, when they earn more than 2,500 shekels. Now 2,500 shekels, you must calculate yourself—4.5 shekels are \$1. You can pay your rent with that, right? Or, barely. Up to now, they would get a pittance, 2,000 shekels for the children; now they’ve taken that away. So, what it means is, people are on the dole. And that, too, stops after six months.

They’ve thrown out of geriatric institutions, people with Alzheimer’s. But as if that were not enough, they’ve taken away social payments for women to deal with Alzheimer’s patients at home.

So, this is real, rapid euthanasia. Nothing else.

They have cut the salaries more and more. They have given, just like here, income-tax reductions to the upper classes, and very high taxes to the lower classes. And so on and so forth. The differences are, 1 to 100 sometimes.

A family of five in a “development town,” which means a slum, earns about 3,500 shekels a month, five people, living, typically, in a two-room flat. A director of a bank branch in a big city, earns 35,000 shekels a month. Directors of big banks, big corporations, and so on, get benefits of thousands, and hundreds of thousands of shekels and dollars, permanently.

The settlers get their home subsidized. You can get a villa in the occupied territories, in the West Bank or in Gaza (mostly in the West Bank), with mortgages for 20 to 25 years, which you don’t even have to start paying at once. If you want to have a mortgage to buy a flat in a “development town,” you have to put down at least one-third of the money, then you pay interest on the rest of your loan for 20 years, at 14-18% a year—to give you an idea.

Now, one-third of all children in Israel—and I’m talking of Jewish children as well as Arab children, not in the territories, but in the State of Israel—go occasionally hungry, *don’t eat* in a day. Fifty percent to 60% of all Israeli children are below the poverty line.



Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon at the Pentagon in 2001. Sharon's economic and social policies, Ghilan states, are a "pilot project" for what Sharon's circles internationally want to do in Britain and the United States.

That's what they are doing. They are sacrificing what used to be a solidarity policy for Jews—against Arabs, of course—to a policy, of "let the devil take the hindmost."

There are other things, but I think that will give you a picture.

Q: What's going on, politically, with this displaced section of the population? Who do they ally with?

Ghilan: The Likud. With the right.

Q: But, the Likud is the one that implemented their poverty.

Ghilan: Exactly. But, they have been brainwashed in separating totally what is called the "security problem," which is the Israeli-Palestinian war, and the economy. They don't understand that the money which goes to the settlements and the Army—which gets an *immense* amount of money—could go for social services. They don't relate them! They have succeeded—and there, too, it's a pilot project, compared to this country—in dissociating, in the minds of the people, two related problems. Just as they have succeeded, here, in speaking about "family values" and "moral problems," and saying it has nothing to do with the war in Iraq, or in Palestine, or it has

nothing to do with the human rights of people here, including the ethnic minorities. People believe it!

I organized a meeting in Jaffa town, which is a slum-town of Tel Aviv; in Jaffa, you have typically 80,000 Jews, 30,000 Arabs, and about 25,000 illegal foreign workers from Thailand, the Philippines, China, Nigeria, Moldova, you name it. (You must understand, you have half a million foreign workers in Israel, who do all the dirty work, and 350,000 of them are illegal; they just stay there. That's another aspect.) So, in Jaffa you have this problem, and of course, the Jewish and Arab citizens started fighting, already. So, I told them, "What are you fighting around? You should be at the Ministry of Economy, demonstrating against [Finance Minister] Netanyahu! What's the point? And the Russian Jews and the Oriental Jews, the Moroccans, fight each other, instead of marching on the Ministry of Economy. You fight among Jews and Arabs: You have mostly the same simple problems. You've got drugs, and lack of employment, and prostitution, and poverty, and sewers overflowing. Get together and do something!" But, it doesn't happen.

Israel is a society divided in many sectors, and this is okay with the Israeli leadership.

Dreams and Reality

Q: It's clear to me you had a dream, and you've lived your life for that dream. I had the same dream in the early 1970s, when I met the LaRouche movement. And we stood on the street corners of New York, and demanded economic development for the whole region, and that that was the only solution. Today I'm reminded—because I was going to ask also about the Oslo Accords—of Lyndon LaRouche's immediate press message, and I believe it might have been from jail, was, "The shovels must start digging, within days." That was his response to that initiative.

Well, we don't want our dream to die. And I want to know what your idea is, for the flank today, to secure that potential for that region.

Ghilan: Let me clarify one thing: I'm not a dreamer. I'm a political plumber. I try to unblock ice! That's not a very idealistic job, because you dirty your hands, and also because you deal on both sides with killers.

One of Dayan's aides, who brought me that bit of information on Sharon in the early '80s, asked me, "How can you sit with Abu Jihad? He's a killer." So, I said, "Listen—you've never killed anybody?"

That is my job! To deal with killers! And try to make them into men of peace. That *is precisely* part of my job.

And, the second point, Madam: We cannot change reality [just] because we dream something, because we have an idea. We can change something because we believe, if other people do the wrong thing, we have to do the right thing, whatever the cost. And I don't have to tell you people, among others, about that: whatever the cost. And, you have to do things the

right way: If it doesn't change present reality, it will for sure, influence future reality. So, what you do, is not lost. It's not in vain. What I do, is not in vain.

After Oslo, I wrote an article, asking Abu Mazen, and Abu Amar [Yasser Arafat], asking them to forgive me for having deluded them that these were the right people on the other side. But today, again, I've changed my mind, because I believe that what I did for all these 23 and a half years, when I was a political refugee, helped shape the minds of quite a few people, *even if* they say one thing and mean another, like the Israelis and their leadership. But, their lies are going to become the truth, because of the situation evolving.

And without people saying and doing the right thing, for years and years, and seeing themselves slapped in the face, this would maybe not have happened. Things don't happen by themselves; they happen because people say and do the right thing.

So, I think you should take heart in the fact that you would say the right thing, as early as that.

The Israeli 'Peace Camp'

Q: Would you say more about the Israeli left being impotent? And, on the economic front, or their ideas of peace, which of course are related? And, specifically, the [Amram] Mitzna campaign?

Ghilan: Yes, well, that was a sorry thing—.

You see, you have two peace camps, or, if you want, two lefts. One is the Zionist left, which is overwhelmingly bigger than the non-Zionist left, to which I belong. The Zionist left, is people who would like things to be nice in the best of worlds. They would like a Palestinian state; even now, finally, they have become convinced that there should be a Palestinian state. Only—it should be a nice Palestinian state, which accepts Israel, Israel's economic and political domination, and the U.S. to impose what it wants on the Palestinians to be created; where you don't have to fight anybody, and so on. And Israel will live with that state, and be very happy, and you know, and they will say, "Yes, sir," "Yes, Saheeb," or whatever—and that will be that!

They don't *realize* that's what they're saying. But, when you ask them, "Would you let the Palestinians have open borders? Or an economy free of Israeli banks?" (which is not the case, now). They say, "No, of course not. Because that will threaten us." I say, "Look, the only thing that's not going to threaten you, is some kind of economic union under the auspices of a foreign power, that will allow people to have an *interest* in not killing you, *not* be a restraint from doing so. They'll kill you anyway, and you will kill them anyway, you know. It will go on, for as long as people can. And then, in the end, there will be a double-edged Jewish-Arab Shoah [Holocaust]." Which is what I expect to happen if we don't change the situation fast.

So, that's the Zionist peace camp. It does the right thing, quite often, always too late.

Then, you have the non-Zionist peace camp—and I mean everybody: from the Chomskyites, to the anarchists, to the Communists, to liberals with Libertarian views—I mean, I cannot even start to describe how many factions of tiny groups there are!

A year and a half ago, I had the beginning of the beginning of an initiative, to get all these camps pulled together, and try to create, towards the next elections—you have to have six months before the election, to create something—a united movement to get into the 120-men and -women Knesset, *one* delegate, who speaks otherwise. One. It happened once in Israeli history: That was Uri Avnery. But it was under different conditions.

I did not succeed in finding *two* of the 20- or 30-odd groups—to agree on the right person to stand at the head of such a movement. I gave it up as a bad job.

I have come to the conclusion that the non-Zionist peace camp, which has the right solutions of course—which wants a Palestinian state, beside Israel, and a real, free Palestinian state—will not succeed except in two cases: One, after two huge piles of hundreds, and maybe thousands, of corpses are heaped on both sides of the struggle. It's already happening far more than before, but, there are still not enough dead for these people to wake up, for the *people* to wake up, massively. Second, if there is a foreign intervention, which makes a separation—an armed truce separation—between Israelis and Palestinians.

Now, some people tell me, "So why do you want a two-state solution, and not finally one?" A Palestinian asked me this question, here in Washington, a few days ago. "Why not a unitarian, democratic secular state?" I said, "There's been too much blood shed—too much blood; too much hate. It won't happen! What we need is *20 years of respite*. Two states which exist, until something else happens." And this something else, is something which is happening in the world: You cannot deal any more with national problems and national conflicts, in terms of a one-to-one basis. There *are* other forces outside, I'm sorry to say! You can't just think about Jews, and Arabs, and Palestinians! There are other forces which put their spoon into this soup.

So, what are the other forces? The United States, in this case, the European Union, and the Arab world.

Economic and Social Development Are Required

It is quite obvious, that what is needed, and what is evolving, very, very slowly, is, parallel to the European Community, a Levant Common Market. And that confederation should be not only of Jews and Arabs, but also of Persians. . . . And that's what we have to wait for, and to strive for. To keep peace between the two until something bigger appears—

if it appears.

Now, of course, I have a proviso to that, which is, that both the Europeans, but to a much greater degree, the Americans, don't want such a confederation, because what they want is to continue dominating the area. The Europeans, who are closer to the area, would like to take over from the U.S., just as the U.S. took over from Great Britain and France in the Middle East.

But, it's going to happen! Because, once you start a process of economic development, it has its own way of making things go forward further and further. It's exponential. Economic and social development, if you accompany it by something that is not madness, but has some set of morals—and I don't want to dictate *what* set of morals; it can be religious, it can be social, it can be political, it can be psycho-cultural. But, if you have some set of morals, and you start economic and social development, it has a way of creating its own logic and its own development.

For instance, France and Germany were the greatest enemies, but once they got together, Europe afterward got off the ground. It's still a very bad European Community, with no social base for anybody, but it's better than it was in times of the wars.

So, we need time. We need time to salvage what can be still salvaged in the Middle East, and Israel, and Palestine. And we don't have time. And the biggest sin of the Bush Administration is that it doesn't allow for the future. It thinks things must be done now, in very negative terms. But, even if they were positive, you can't do things only by putting a lid on the conflict. It doesn't happen.

So, back to the lady who asked me about the opportunities for peace: Baloney! If you don't have a long-range plan to develop politically and economically, with foreign intervention, those two countries, and to integrate them into a wider system of economics—it's not going to happen! . . .

Nazi Penetration

Q: I was interested to hear that you went to Israel from Spain.

Ghilan: I was a child.

Q: The question I have is, that after World War II, there was a so-called "rat line" which was run by, among others, Allen Dulles, which went not only to South America, but also went into the Middle East, Syria—

Ghilan: And to America!

Q: Yes, and here, too.

Ghilan: There are quite a few sons and daughters of Nazis here.

Q: And from Spain, there was the Otto Skorzeny operation into Egypt. To what extent have you had an experience of running into this Nazi operation in the Middle East? To what extent has that been a factor in terms of the historical fight to establish peace there?

Clearly, in terms of Egypt, even during the period of Nasser, you had Skorzeny; you had people like Hjalmar Schacht, who were quite active in this area.

Ghilan: Well, Skorzeny later was coopted by the Israeli Mossad, as you know. And so, there's an Israeli agent.

You see, the Nazis are the baddies, the hoodlums of yesterday. After they were vanquished and they decayed, their remnants still had an influence, ideologically, in many parts of the world. Physically, in Latin America: Uruguay, Paraguay, and Argentina, being three—Chile, being four good examples. But, they also were considered, because they were baddies, ideal agents for all kinds of people to use them. And they were used! Everybody used the Nazis. The British, the Americans, which took up—intact—the whole intelligence apparatus of Nazi Germany, the Gehlen apparatus, and turned it over into a pro-American and anti-Russian operation.

But, they were the same people, as the people who had been working against America, right? The Israelis exploited the fact, that they had a handle on some of the Nazis, and knew things, and used them against Egypt; Egypt used them against Israel, under Nasser and before that.

These people became, from a major power, a minor instrument. And, of course, it happened also in the Middle East, because the Middle East has been internally fighting forever, right?

But, I would not put too much importance on the cultural, and emotional, and intellectual impact of the Nazis in the Middle East. In South America, yes. I think they were the base of some of the worst dictatorships, and probably helped plan Operation Condor, in which they started killing off people in all the Latin American countries, and so on. But, in the Middle East, it was a very minor point. . . .

The Vanunu Case

Q: I'm really curious as to what the real reason for the re-arrest of Dr. [Mordechai] Vanunu is. He spent 18 years in solitary confinement. He's been living in the church since he got out of jail. What secrets could he be planning to spill on Israel's nuclear capability?

Ghilan: None. He has no secrets any more. I mean, the whole of Israeli and world nuclear evolution has been so big, so many things have happened, that he knows nothing that could harm Israel, except the fact that Israel has a flourishing nuclear armament industry and facilities—which everybody, *but* Israel, says.

But, there is also a question here, of *pure personal hate*. There is a man, who is at the head of the Service Malméd, which is the "service for internal security of Israeli government services or organizations or ministries." And he has been persecuting Vanunu for years, I'm told, and has put him under the worst conditions, hoping to make him crazy in jail, which has not happened, because Vanunu is a very strong



Dr. Mordechai Vanunu was jailed for 18 years for "spilling the beans" on Israel's nuclear weapons capability.

man. And, he has not let them put the limitations on him, the quite arbitrary and anti-democratic limitations, they want to.

You must understand: Vanunu was sentenced to 18 years in jail. In Israel you usually serve two-thirds of your sentence at worst. Not in this case: He sat *18 years* exactly to the day. They said they put conditions on his liberty. In fact, they had *no right* to put any conditions, *because he had served his sentence!* So, he said, "No, I'm not going to accept those conditions. I'm going to talk to the press." And he did. But, that gave to his personal enemies in the secret services, the opportunity of continuing his persecution.

Now, you must remember one little fact: Vanunu is not only hated by the Likud. The man who ordered Vanunu to be kidnapped and brought back to Israel, was Shimon Peres. So, you have a consensus of fools and baddies against this single figure, this single man, Vanunu.

I don't agree with him totally, because I don't think that a small country has less right to have nuclear armaments than a big country. I only think that some people should not be allowed to do so, because they are irresponsible: such as Sharon, or Fidel Castro, for instance. But, I don't think that Cheney should have the right to control nuclear armaments, either, because he's also irresponsible! So, the problem is not one of big countries against small countries.

And Vanunu has just not shut up, and with some friends, has become an international figure challenging the right of people to have nuclear armaments—of states. He wants nobody to have nuclear armaments, but that is unrealistic, to my sorrow.

But, still, his being arrested: I think they are just doing what he expects them to do, and he's going to become a central figure again in the struggle against Israeli nuclear armament. Because, when [International Atomic Energy Association Di-

rector Mohamed] ElBaradei went to Israel, he didn't say a single word about what was happening. This talk about Iran, that *maybe* can produce bombs, but everybody knows that Israel *has* armaments! So, what's the logic, if you want to be logical? There is none.

Anyway, Vanunu is going to become again, a focal point. And if the Israeli Prime Minister has any sense left, he will let him out, and give him his wish, which is to leave Israel. He has converted to Christianity; he doesn't want to be part of Israel any more; he says so openly. He doesn't want even to speak Hebrew (which I am sorry about, because it's a beautiful language); and he wants to get out and go on with his life. These idiots, these hating idiots, want to keep him in the country and go on punishing him. By so doing, they will punish themselves.

Americans Are Abysmally Misinformed

Q: I have three questions. One, was about the circumstances of you having been expelled from Israel.

And my second, which is somewhat tied to that, to the extent that you can say something about—without compromising anything—the discussions you've had since you've been here. The reason I raise this, is because, even among the best allies that we tend to have, politically, for example in the U.S. Congress, even the better people in the United States politically, are completely insane on this question of Israel, Zionism, and so forth. I'm not even talking about Bush! I'm talking about the Democratic Party, the people who otherwise collaborate with us, one opposed to the Iraq War, opposed to the insanity of George Bush: When it comes to this question—I have always found it the most difficult thing, and I'm sure you have the same history, of a family persecuted by the Nazis, to not be able to—

Ghilan: Oh, I have an interest in Auschwitz. My grandfather was there. They found his teeth and his beard. Which the Nazis wrote down in their ledger.

Q: And you're obviously here in the United States at a point which is not an easy point, given what went on last Tuesday. But, even had Kerry won, the problem would still be here. So, I am just curious, in terms of the meetings that you've been having, the effect of those.

Ghilan: Okay, I'll answer the second question first, because it's the more important, of course. I can't, obviously, and I don't wish to, talk about what meetings I had, and have, and will have. . . .

My feeling is that, this country is not crazy about the problem, but it is *abysmally misinformed*, and under-informed. I think your media create slogans, create a way of seeing things, which then are taken up, and people say, "Wait minute, why has that happened?" The answer is, "It's *not* happening!" [laughter]

I know it's funny, but it's also very, very sad: Because, I don't want to see such a huge and interesting civilization as

the United States, become a band of idiots. Which is what this media system here is doing! Everywhere I went, in Connecticut, here, and New York, you have about two TV stations which talk some kind of sense, sometimes, for about 30 seconds. And the rest of the time, you get the same slogans. And once you are almost able to understand what this sound-bite, which happened to be close to truth meant, then come in the soups, and cars, and the rest of the advertising, and you get completely swept away in one of these beautiful cars, which don't exist any more, at a speed which is not allowed any more, and you say, "Well, maybe I'll buy this!" So, that's part of the problem.

The problem is *not* understanding, but to be allowed to know the facts, so you can have your own mind about it. And this is very difficult.

Okay, to the second question, I wasn't expelled from Israel. I went out of my own will. I thought I was going to be staying only one or two years abroad, in France. And after we started working on contacts between Israelis and Palestinians, I was warned, first by the Embassy, and then the secret services phoned my lawyer, for years, that if I continued, if I went back, I would be arrested and be put in jail for 15 years. I was caught in the emergency security regulations—which the British really drafted, and then were re-adopted by the Israeli government in '48, at the beginning of the state.

So, I chose to shrug it off, because I was not going to stop doing things because they tell me what to do. I remember, there was a guy, who came to me, who was then press attaché of the Israeli Embassy in Paris, Avi Primor, and became an ambassador in Beijing; and was in fact, the chief of station of the Mossad for all of Europe. He was an acquaintance; I knew him as a journalist in Israel. And he told me, "Maxim, why don't you work with us, and show us your newspaper before it's published and so on?" I told him, "Avi, I'm not in Israel! Here there's no censorship. I'm in France." And I disregarded him. And then, I heard from a friend in the Israeli Embassy that I was sending them the paper. And one day I said, I was fed up with sending it for free, so I sent them a bill, asking them to pay for it. And the man responsible for the propaganda department goes to his friend, who happened to be a very good of mine, a writer (and he told me this story). He said, "Look! There are these criminals, writing to us in Hebrew!" So, my friend looks at him and says, "What's the matter with you? Maxim has forgotten his Hebrew because he's publishing his paper?"

The moment you are not doing, psychologically, you are not in, you are out of your mind, but to a degree of fantasy. Same thing happens here. American Jewry, or rather its institutions, have been so brainwashed by the Israeli connection, that they really believe that Israel is the safest place in the world for Jews—which one may discuss, to put it mildly! They really believe, that if the Palestinians get a state, anti-Semitism will rise in this country and the Ku Klux

Klan will run across the streets with hatchets in their hands. They believe these things! And you *cannot* convince them [otherwise]. And the few good people, like Rabbi Hertzberg, or Henry Siegman, and others, who are saying something slightly different, or are opposed, are considered to be not "real" American Jewish leaders.

That reminds me of a story of the Nazi time: There was Göring, who was a great opportunist; he was the least ideological of all the Nazi leaders, and he stole a lot of artworks, particularly from Jewish families. Van Goghs, Picassos, whatever. Which was considered by the Nazis, of course, to be degenerate art, and Goebbels, for one, wanted to burn all of these pictures. So Göring, out of cupidity and his love for art, just stole these things. And the way he did it, was he found himself some Jewish brokers, and told them, "If you help me get these pictures, or artworks, I will allow you, after that, to leave Germany with your family. And those who give up their artworks will be allowed to leave to Switzerland."

So, Goebbels got his secret police, the SS, and the SS discovered this, and he rushed into Göring's office and said, "What are you doing! You are working with the Jews! To get the degenerate artworks." Göring smiled, and said, "I will decide who is a Jew!"

I don't think I have to elaborate.

Lebanon and Israel

Q: What do you think the Israelis intend for Lebanon right now?

Ghilan: I think the Israelis and the Bush Administration intend—we had a conversation together today with an American friend of Jeff Steinberg, who concurred with me in the same spirit. The man was very, very, very well-informed.

I think what the Americans and the Israelis are doing, first of all, is trying to destroy Syria, Bashar Assad's Syria, find an opportunity to depose him and name some Somoza-type of general in his stead.

More important, I think what the American administration—not Americans, not you—is trying to do, together with the Israelis, is change the nature of Lebanon. They have taken away [Rafiq] Hariri, who was the President. They will, in the words of this friend of ours, "whitewash him," and bring him back in a couple of years. And under him, they will bring to the Presidency of Lebanon, the putschist Gen. [Michel] Aoun, who is in exile in France, and who is, of course, one of the leaders of the Maronite militias. And who is the contrary of what is happening now, which is a unifying of all sectors of Lebanon, even if it is under the dictatorship of Syrian military troops, which are no better than Israeli military troops. But the fact is, that under this dictatorship, and Saudi economic control and investment in Lebanon, there has been a respite in that country. And this is now going to be broken.

And this, to my sorrow, France is helping, too. Why?

Q: Aoun is a protégé of whom?



Militiamen in Beirut, during the Lebanese civil war, December 1975. Today, Ghilan believes that the Bush Administration and the Israelis want to use Lebanon—and notably exiled Gen. Michel Aoun—as a hand-grenade against Syria.

Ghilan: Of the French. And the Americans don't want to have anything to do with him. But, now, they've changed their mind. Because, first of all, they want to drag in France, into the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan (where they already are, to some extent). Second, they need to defuse the European opposition to the American war against terror hysteria. But, third, and most important, they want to use French influence in Lebanon, which has always been present—the whole country was a colony of France at one stage, and now is still very strong among the Christians, but also among the Sunnis; not among the Shi'ites, who are the poorest of the country and the majority.

So, now they have found a common ground. It is a temporary alliance of two gangsters. Because, what you have, is the French are thinking they will recoup some of their influence in the Middle East, and they don't need Syria for that, because Syria for them is a waste of time. But, Lebanon, yes. And maybe that will open there the way—if Iraq is pacified—to participation in re-exploiting the oil, because the French have

lost heavily with the fall of Saddam Hussein. They were, with Germany, they were one of the major exploiters of Iraqi nationalized oil.

So, what is happening there, is collusion, with the idea that, in the end, they will put in Aoun, which is what the Americans give to the French, together with participation in the oil exploitation, if it ever happens, in Iraq. And, on the other hand, the French are, you know, quieting down, in what is and was, very strong French opposition to Bush's campaign, or crusade for democracy. . . .

[Bringing in Aoun] was impossible as long as France and the U.S. were at loggerheads over Lebanon. But, once this is not the case, then time will tell. Hariri will come back and Aoun will be brought in, and there will be another bloodbath.

Iran, Africa, and a Global Resource Grab

Q: In your interview with *EIR*, you said that Israel should not have nuclear weapons, because the IDF commanders were Dr. Strangeloves—

Ghilan: Some of them.

Q: Yeah. Enough of them, I guess.

Ghilan: A majority, yes. Not all. I mean, there's 40% who are sane people on the General Staff.

Q: But, now you've had, for whatever reason, these statements by ElBaradei and so forth, and the re-election of Bush. What about Iran?

Ghilan: Well, Iran is two wars away. The next war is going to be Syria-Lebanon. Well, the "next" war is ongoing: It's Iraq—and Afghanistan. Which I believe will spread the struggle against Islamic fundamentalism, will spread in the very near future to Africa. I think Africa is the next place. It's already started in Darfur, in Sudan. They've already used the ethnic differences between Arabs and blacks to create more hate and more dissension. Qaddafi has gone into the act, by attacking, verbally and politically, Egypt and Sudan from the west. The Garang people from the south. And whoever attacked in Taba and in Nuweiba, the hotels from the south. Egypt is targetted, and Sudan is targetted, and that's part of the war in Iraq and in Afghanistan, without any doubt.

But that's only the beginning. Because, under the North African coastline, there's a very rich lode of oil. And of course, the Bush Administration's strategic doctrine is to control *all* the oil reserves in the world, directly through armed presence. We have this lode going all the way from Sudan, Tripoli, Tunis, Algeria, but just below them; and then down into Niger and Nigeria. And Nigeria has already started.

Another phenomenon in Africa, is that you have a cultural confrontation, a religious-cultural confrontation, between the invasion which has been going on now for two centuries, of fundamentalist evangelical missionaries, and Muslim missionaries. The Muslims in Africa are identifying more and more with bin Laden. You know, in Africa, as

well as in such places as Singapore, they sell T-shirts with bin Laden on them! He's a very popular hero of the Third World. I'm sorry to say, but it's true.

And, there is going to be a bid, to secure the oil for the West. And I think that Qaddafi has understood that and has pre-empted it by going over to the West before they do it. Which is what he has done. He also has second thoughts, because he thinks that he can become the main influence on the African continent. He is at the base of this idea of an African Parliament. And the United States is going to find one day, that there is an Africa, which they have created, which is against them. But, that's a different subject altogether.

The war against terror, or the war of Third World peoples for some kind of political and economic liberation, which is disguised as a religious crusade, Islamic crusade, is going to spread to Africa very, very soon. It's not happening yet, because there are more urgent problems. And one of the more urgent problems is, as the lady said, Lebanon and Syria.

So, we are going to have an attempt to solve the Afghani and Iraqi problem, or crisis, including problems going into Central Asia and Chechnya and so on, which is part of the game. Then, if that succeeds, there's going to be a war against Syria and a reshuffling of Lebanon. If it doesn't succeed, we may have, first, a spread of violence in Africa.

In any case, Iran—an actual attack against Iran will occur, according to my analysis, in two to four years from now, not before. And it may not occur at all, because they are failing in Iraq! If they're failing in Iraq, they're certainly not going to wage war at once in Iraq and Iran—not because they wouldn't *desire* to do so, but because there are not enough troops for that! And after several nations' troops, several expeditionary mercenary troops, having been killed in Iraq, then people are not sending enough soldiers. So, either you bring back the draft—

Q: They might try it.

Ghilan: They might do it, sure! Sure, you're right. But, if they don't do it, where are they to get another 750,000 soldiers? Not "soldiers"—combat soldiers; marines, commanders. People who are able to wage a war under guerrilla conditions. City warfare.

Their solutions are stupid! They take Fallujah and they destroy it. Okay, you don't conquer a country by destroying its cities. If you wage anti-insurrection warfare, you have to pull them out! And they're not doing that, because they *can't* do it, they *don't know how* to do it, they don't want to do it. They push forward Iraqi troops, who don't want to go, so they don't come back. So the Marines have to get in, and there's another 1,000 disabled American people in veterans hospitals. I'm not talking about the dead; I'm talking about the people who survive.

So, they will have, either to bring back the draft, or contain their greed, and wait till one conflict is ended to start another. Not a very encouraging perspective, I must say.