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# **ISRAEL'S ROLE IN THE THIRD WORLD**

## ***Exporting West Bank Expertise***

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That Israel ranks among the world's major arms exporters is by now general knowledge. According to CIA estimates, Israel is the fifth exporter of arms in the world, and the largest supplier of arms to Latin America and Sub-Saharan Africa. But Israel's activities in third world countries are in fact far more wide-ranging than just military sales. Israel has become active in all the dimensions of the global counter-insurgency business. Thus, for example, in Guatemala, 'Hit lists used by the death squads have been computerized. Technologically sophisticated murder is coordinated by a Regional Telecommunications Center built and managed by Israeli Army experts.'<sup>1</sup> Israel's multifaceted relations with Guatemala include the following items:

- Since 1976 Israel is the main provider of arms, aircraft and military training to Guatemala
- Training of 800 Guatemalan air force pilots to fly Israeli-supplied Kfir fighter and Arava transport planes
- Israeli-supplied radar systems throughout the country
- Training of the military and G-2 police units in the use of interrogation techniques, modern intelligence methods, psychological warfare, and terror
- An Israeli-sponsored Army Electronics and Transmission School in Guatemala, opened in November 1981
- Assistance on the part of 300 Israeli advisers present in Guatemala in the coup of March 1982 that brought Gen. Rios Montt to power, and their training of officers backing him
- Assistance of Israeli advisers in the design of the Programme of Assistance to Conflict Areas (PAAC), put into effect from August 1982; developed jointly with advisers from South Africa and Taiwan, the programme involves the creation of 'model villages' that combine features of the 'strategic hamlets' implanted in Vietnam and Israeli kibbutzim
- A training camp in Guatemala where Israeli experts train 'contras,' that also serves El Salvador, Honduras, Haiti, Chile, and Bolivia and Argentina (at least before their return to civilian government)

□ The construction of a factory, in the northern province of Alta Verapaz, for the production of 5.56 calibre munition and Uzi machine guns, which is to supply all of Central America.<sup>2</sup>

Israel is in the special position of having recent combat experience as well as current counter-insurgency experience (in the West Bank and Gaza). The lessons of the Middle East, as a testing ground for western military equipment against Soviet-supplied armies, are disseminated through the world via Israel. Especially during the past decade Israel has come to specialize as a strong arm of the *Pax Americana*, and it has been performing this role not simply regionally but on a *global* scale.

Israel's arms industry supplies, in the term of Penny Lernoux, a Who's Who of dictators.<sup>3</sup> In *Latin America and the Caribbean* recipients of Israeli military sales include: Mexico; El Salvador (80 percent of military imports between 1970-80); Honduras; Costa Rica; Nicaragua (until the fall of Somoza); Panama; Haiti; Dominican Republic; Colombia; Venezuela; Ecuador; Peru; Bolivia; Chile; Argentina.<sup>4</sup> Security assistance to El Salvador includes the presence of 100 Israeli advisers, reportedly the use of Israeli pilots to fly Israeli-supplied fighters in combat missions against the guerillas, and the installation of a computer system that monitors the use of water, electricity and telephone, irregularities in which may indicate resistance activity (a computer system that was also supplied to Guatemala and Paraguay).<sup>5</sup>

In *Africa* the list includes: South Africa; Swaziland; Malawi; Zaire; Central African Republic; Kenya; Uganda (at least until 1972); Gabon; Ivory Coast; Liberia; Morocco. Generally the countries mentioned are allies also of the United States; but Israel also supplies arms to Ethiopia, as part of a security relationship that dates back to the time of Haile Selassie.<sup>6</sup> According to a March 1979 CIA report on *Israel: Foreign Intelligence and Security Services* — captured in Tehran in 1979<sup>7</sup> — Israel trained the Liberian Security Service and police, helped establish Ghana's Military Intelligence, and assisted in the re-establishment of Moroccan security services. Relations also exist between Israeli foreign intelligence (Mossad) and services of Kenya and Zaire. Remarkably, in the case of South Africa and Ecuador, Israeli security assistance and arms supplies are paralleled by the export of biblical films, handled by the same people!<sup>8</sup>

In *Asia* Israel maintains the closest relations with Taiwan. Next is Singapore where Israel trains several units of the army. Thailand has been receiving military supplies and training from Israel since the military coup of 1976. Other recipients of military sales are South Korea, the Philippines, and Malaysia. With regard to Indonesia, Chomsky reported<sup>9</sup> that Israel served as a conduit for the United States when Indonesia needed military aircraft for the massacre of the Timorese in the late seventies. The above-mentioned CIA report notes:

The Israelis have operated for some time in East Asia. They have provided intelligence training to the Government of the Republic of China and maintain liaison with it. The Israelis also have relations with the Japanese, Thai, Indonesian, and South Korean services, especially on terrorist matters. The major Mossad regional center in East Asia is Singapore. The Israeli station chief there frequently travels throughout the area and conducts business with neighboring nations. Indonesia as a Moslem nation does not have formal diplomatic ties with Israel. The Mossad-Indonesian relationship, therefore, is very discreet. The Mossad representative in Singapore is accredited to the Indonesian service. There are also Mossad officers in Jakarta under commercial cover. The primary reason for the Indonesian liaison is to gain aid in counterterrorist efforts. The Israelis, on the other hand, are not only engaging in antiterrorist operations but also have an opportunity to collect information and engage in political action in another Moslem power.

A recent addition to the Asian recipients of Israeli security assistance is Sri Lanka; an Israeli Interest Section has been opened in the US Embassy and Israeli advisers are reported to be training Lankan security personnel. In the Near East, Mossad maintains relations with the Turkey National Security Service, as part of a framework of cooperation, the Trident Organization, that also included Iran's Savak and Ethiopia.

Since the early sixties Israel has been a member of the South Atlantic Treaty Organization (SATO), made up of Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay, South Africa, and Taiwan and Israel as the only

non-Atlantic members. The organization was established in secrecy, under US auspices, with Gen. Vernon Walters performing a coordinating role, 'to counter the threat of the Soviet Union in the South Atlantic.'<sup>10</sup> With the demise of military government in Argentina and 'openings' in Brazil, SATO may now be defunct. But cooperation between Israel, South Africa and Taiwan continues, notably in the nuclear field and the joint development of an advanced cruise missile.

Israeli Defence Minister Ariel Sharon (standing at left on command car) inspects Honduran guard of honour in December 1982 (Photo: AfricAsia)



## Israel's Methods

'(The Israelis) taught the Guatemalans how to build an air-base. They set up their intelligence network, tried and tested on the West Bank and Gaza.'

Bob Simon, *CBS News*, 16 Feb 1983

Israel's security activities do not simply consist of cooperation, but establishing and training several military and security services in third world countries; hence one is led to wonder about the nature of their contribution. To understand Israel's methods one must look at Israel's source of expertise in the field of counter-insurgency — the West Bank and Gaza.

In fact, the West Bank and Gaza form part of a series which includes Galilee (1948), Sinai, and Golan Heights. One might add south Lebanon, which some have begun to refer to as the 'North Bank'. Israel's attitude with regard to these areas has been that of the exclusionist colonial settler state, an attitude which calls to mind the approach of European immigrants to American and Carib Indians, and European settlers in South Africa and Australasia. While all of these represent memorable contributions to the annals of repression and ethnocide, Israel has been making its own distinct contribution, beginning with the occupation of Galilee. The key problem that Galilee, and later the West Bank and Gaza, presented to the Zionist is that **they wanted the land but not the people**. It is this *exclusionist* element that differentiates Zionism from the third world nationalisms. The major components of Israeli policy vis à vis the occupied territories concern land, control, and population policy.

As Yigal Allon, commander of the Haganah forces in the Galilee, recalled in his memoirs: 'We saw a need to clean the Inner Galilee and to create a Jewish territorial succession in the entire area of the Upper Galilee.'<sup>11</sup> The massacre of 254 Arab men, women and children in the village of Deir Yassin in April 1948 by the forces of Menachem Begin's Irgun, reinforced by a rumour campaign that further Jewish reinforcements would burn all the villages, is what started the mass flight of Palestinians from their homes. And yet

there remained what in Zionist parlance is known as the 'demographic problem' — of the population of the Northern District 63 percent were Arabs. To control this situation there was the military occupation, which was formalized in 1950 and remained in effect until 1966. The military government was based on the British Defense (Emergency) Regulations of 1945; from 1967 the administration of the Emergency Regulations was transferred from the military to the police, which was expanded by a Department of Special Duties. The regulations included the designation of Arab settlements as 'closed areas,' requiring written permits from the military governor for leaving or entering; provisions for banishment, administrative detention, house or town arrest of individuals; and in short they affected every aspect of Palestinian life, giving total jurisdiction and discretion to the military government. Israeli population policy, a policy of de-Arabisation and Judaization, took from 1953 the form of the 'Project for the Judaization of Galilee.' The sustained expropriation of Arab lands, effacement and destruction of Arab villages and towns, forced emigration of Arabs were components of this policy. But the problem would not go away, and in 1975 a Ministry of Agriculture publication still stated: 'It is necessary to change the existing situation regarding the demographic ratio between the Jewish population and the non-Jewish, by means of implementing a long-term development program.'<sup>12</sup>

New variations on these themes were developed in relation to the occupied areas of the West Bank and Gaza from 1967. Land expropriations in 1975-76 in Western Galilee and the Nazareth region were met in protest by a general strike in March 1976, and after this the settlement thrust took on more purposeful forms. In a secret memorandum to the Prime Minister, the District Commissioner of the Northern District recommended the following:

Expand and deepen Jewish settlements in areas where the contiguity of the Arab population is prominent and where they number considerably more than the Jewish population; examine the possibility of diluting existing Arab population concentrations. 13

The policy of 'conquest through settlement' (rather than through land expropriation and military rule) was elaborated, under the

auspices of the World Zionist Organization, in the proposed plan for 'the development of settlement in Judea and Samaria, 1979-1983':

The disposition of the settlements must be carried out not only *around* the settlements of the minorities, but also *in between them*, this in accordance with the settlement policy adopted in Galilee and in other parts of the country. (*Emphasis in original*)

Hence, as Khalil Nakhleh observes, the 'checkered pattern of settlement,' a pattern followed in Israel since the fifties. This policy can be characterized as environmental planning for domination, informed by racial arithmetic. Also part of this architecture of domination are the *lookouts* (*mitzpim*), tried first in the West Bank and since then in Galilee. In an area already confiscated, the military apparatus may designate a spot that overlooks an Arab concentration as a desirable location for a 'lookout': 'This means that without the need for a large number of settlers (which is beneficial in a state of dwindling 'pioneers') a certain area can be claimed and held by the state. In 1979-1980, Galilee was targeted for 29 such 'lookouts'.<sup>15</sup> With the redirection of development efforts to the West Bank and Gaza, policy regarding Galilee had to revert to military methods.

There are now some 70,000 workers from the occupied territories working inside Israel, at wages considerably lower than Israeli workers, without social benefits, health care, and so on. 'Whatever the margin, if you multiply it by 70,000 it is a big profit for one day.'<sup>16</sup> Superexploitation of labour from the occupied territories forms part of the ladder of exploitation which includes Arabs inside Israel and the country's majority population of Sephardic Jews, who also suffer discrimination and receive substandard wages. The Israeli monopoly of the market in the occupied territories, which constitute a major share of her foreign trade, is another fruit of occupation.

Under Israeli occupation, legislation is an instrument of control, existing legislation and economic measures are manipulated and new laws created to safeguard control. The use of development funds for reward and punishment also forms part of the system of control. To circumvent popularly elected local leadership, a system of 'quislings' has been called into being, utilizing kinship ties and clan structures to create agents of the military government among the

population. In 1979 the 'Village Leagues' were created for this purpose in the West Bank, equipped with their own 'security forces': 'They patrol streets at night; they attack cars and homes of outspoken nationalist Palestinians; and they attack nationalist institutions (as they did recently with Bethlehem University).'17 From 'reprisal actions' to 'collective punishment,' Israel has been demonstrating growing expertise at 'frontier justice.' A 1977 *Sunday Times* investigation concluded that torture by Israeli security services was systematic.<sup>18</sup>

In November 1981 the second Begin government instituted a Civil Administration in the West Bank. Installed in the wake of Begin's campaign rhetoric about *Eretz Israel*, and simultaneously with efforts to uproot all expressions of Palestinian national resistance and to move the maximum number of Jews into settlements across the 'green line,' the Civil Administration was interpreted in the West Bank as a step 'to pave the way for the annexation of the occupied territories and tie them directly to the various Israeli ministries.'<sup>19</sup> Hence it was greeted with a massive boycott and demonstrations, which unleashed an unprecedented wave of repression in the West Bank. 'Demonstrations in the first months of 1982 resulted in more Arab casualties than had fallen in all previous 15 years of occupation.'<sup>20</sup> At the time, settler vigilantes became more actively involved in doing the 'dirty work' of the occupation, displaying greater brutality than the IDF in forcing the Palestinians into submission or departure.

Rabbi Meir Kahane and the Kach party, Gush Emunim and TNT may be dismissed in Israel as a 'lunatic fringe,' by contrast to the rationality and moderation of the Israeli mainstream; yet they echo the same themes that are upheld by the mainstream, and differ only in that they advocate more drastic variations on them. In a poll of September 1981 only 19 percent opposed continued colonization of the West Bank.<sup>20</sup> Kahane, in *They Must Go*, meaning Arabs, is voicing but more loud and shrill the same *demographic problem* that has been the continuous preoccupation of Israeli administrations: 'Should we allow demography, geography and democracy to push Israel closer to the abyss?'<sup>21</sup> Kahane is advocating overtly what at least a part of Israeli power structure has been practising covertly. As recently came out in trial, the bombing attacks on three Arab mayors

in 1980 involved Israeli Army officers in the West Bank military government as well as leading rabbis in the settler movement connected to the Tehiya Party.<sup>22</sup> 'It is quite safe to assume,' according to Adam Keller<sup>23</sup>, 'that until mid 1983 a clear government policy of benevolent non-interference with the terrorists was followed.' Prior to the trial, Prime Minister Shamir warned: 'don't touch our messiahs who are creating historical facts for generations to come.'<sup>24</sup>

An environment where the demographic obsession looms so large, founded on the conception of Israel as a Jewish State, constantly replayed as Likud's favourite melody, an environment where sectarianism is promoted as state religion, is an environment that nourishes extremism. The theme of *race* ('demography') is being replayed so as to avoid dealing with questions of *class*, in particular the slumbering issue of the discrimination of the Sephardim (Oriental Jews). The Sephardim are being used as a pawn in the game, put to sleep with a cult of Jewishness as a substitute for justice, and lured into thinking that they should obtain the justice that the Ashkenazim would not give them at the expense of the Palestinians. Thus they are tempted into the West Bank settlements as it is there that they are offered the better housing that is not available to them in Israel. In opting for the 'strategy of tension' Likud is the more extremist party, but in fact it is following in the footsteps of Labour who led the way through the deliberate creation of a siege mentality in Israeli society. As Moshe Dayan said about the 'reprisal actions' of the fifties: 'They ... help us maintain a high tension among our population and in the army.'<sup>25</sup> The Likud has been reaping the fruits of the 'high tension' sowed by Labour.

After this brief review of Israel's methods in her domestic environment, we may be in a better position to assess Israel's contribution overseas and look at the situation of some of the recipients of Israel's security assistance in light of the Israeli experience.

The struggle in Guatemala is rooted in a familiar problem — they wanted the land but not the people. The land, to grow coffee and cotton, not the people, because they are Indians. The majority Indian population has been experiencing loss of land continually through 450 years. Landless, at least they add to the cheap labour pool. When several years ago groups of Indians migrated to the jungles of the

North, once oil and nickel and other minerals were found they began to be dislocated from there also, and then not even their cheap labour was in demand anymore. Thus, Guatemala had a *demographic problem*. Again we encounter a configuration of policies similar as in Israel, involving land, domination and exploitation, population policy, and terror. The military, as part of the oligarchy, looms large in all these spheres, as a landowner in its own right, through military governments, and through methods of population control which involve terror as a strategy, include the wholesale slaughter of entire villages. Following the presidential elections that established the power of Gen. Lucas García in 1978, terror was unleashed, notably with the massacre of Panzos of May 29. At the time, between 1977 and 1981 (the Carter years), Israel was the sole arms supplier to Guatemala. The presence of Israeli advisers, along with Argentinians, was reported in 1981, at the time of the García government's July offensive.<sup>26</sup> Months later, in Israel, Gen. Benditto García, Lucas' brother, chief of staff of the Guatemalan Army, attributed the government's military success to Israel's assistance. He explained: 'We appreciate Israel; we see the Israeli as the best soldier in the world today, and we look to him as a model and an example to us.'<sup>27</sup> A sturdy compliment, considering that the Guatemala army itself has displayed considerable skill in dealing with Guatemala's 'demographic problem;' — the number of persons, mainly Indians, assassinated or 'disappeared' is estimated at 60,000 over the past fifteen years, and the number of refugees from Guatemala at 150,000 in Mexico alone, not counting the tens of thousands refugees inside Guatemala and in Honduras.<sup>28</sup> Since 1981 the emphasis is on 'civic action' as the means to 'pacify the country'; as a *New York Times* report notes:

Schools and health clinics are built under 'civic action' programs. Unfortunately, large numbers of peasants are often killed to deny the guerillas their support.<sup>29</sup>

A recent development, in conjunction with the 'model villages', is the creation of 'civilian patrols' of villagers coerced into participating in local vigilante groups, a feature that is reminiscent of the West Bank.

Another country with a 'demographic problem' is South Africa. The congruence between apartheid and Zionism has been

conspicuous enough to attract the attention of the UN General Assembly (1975). Both South Africa and Israel have turned questions of land and 'demography' (to abide by the Israeli euphemism) into national obsessions, and devised elaborate systems of repression and discrimination around it. Both view themselves as 'outposts of western civilization,' both are wont to claim biblical justification and enjoy the support of organized religion domestically (though not unanimously), both are national security states with a broad emphasis on counter-insurgency and methods of psychological warfare. The parallels extend to the finer print as well, as with South Africa's pass laws and Israel's special IDs for Arabs (stamped with a 'B') and requirements for travel passes in the occupied territories. South Africa's homeland policy exhibits a similar architecture of domination combined with racial arithmetic as applied by Israel; Transkei, for example, is characterized by 'physical fragmentation of territory, combined with ethnic dispersal.'<sup>30</sup> The extensive military, political and economic cooperation between the two countries has been frequently reported on<sup>31</sup>; of interest at this point are the parallels between their policies vis à vis their surrounding frontline resp. confrontation states.

Reciprocating South African assistance in the October 1973 war (South Africa sent a squadron of Mirages), Israel sent two dozen officers as experts on 'anti-terrorist' tactics to South Africa in 1974. In 1975 Israeli officers took part in drawing up South African plans for invading Angola. The invasion of Angola in 1975 conformed to the strategy of the 'pre-emptive strike' — attacking guerilla forces in their bases across borders — as practised earlier by Rhodesian defence forces in their forays into Zambia and Mozambique.<sup>32</sup> But the South African invasion was not just aimed against SWAPO bases but in fact at Luanda, in order to install UNITA in the center of power; in this objective it failed due to Cuban intervention. South Africa's efforts to make Angola pay a high price for its support of SWAPO and to remove the ANC from neighbouring countries, are similar to Israel's efforts to drive the PLO out of Lebanon. As South Africa sponsors the MNR in Mozambique and, jointly with the CIA, UNITA in Angola, so Israel maintains a presence in Lebanon through the 'Army of South Lebanon' of Major-Gen. Antoine Lahd (the successor of Maj. Haddad); moreover, since 1976, Israel has



been supplying the Falangists with arms. When Israel went into Lebanon in June 1982 it was also with a dual objective, to destroy the institutional bases of the PLO and to push through to Beirut to see, with US backing, to the 'Falangisation' of Lebanon. In the latter objective it failed. Encouraged by Israel's advance into Lebanon, the South Africans have invaded Angola anew and are now holding on to their positions in south Angola, just as Israel is maintaining her positions in south Lebanon. In Lebanon Israel applied the strategy that Gen. Haig, through 1981, was advocating in relation to Central America — 'going to the source.' It was in these terms that Richard Allen, US National Security Adviser, defended Israel's forays into Lebanon: 'Reaching to the source is generally recognized as hot pursuit of a sort, and therefore justified.'<sup>33</sup> Claiming Nicaragua to be the 'source' of the Salvadoran insurgency, the United States, starting December 1981, has been practising the same approach in Central America. Israeli assistance on this front consists of military sales to Honduras and acting as a back-up source of assistance to *contras* in case US aid would be cut off due to Congressional restrictions. In a visit to Honduras former defence minister Sharon offered weapons captured from the PLO free of charge, if transportation costs would be paid. Thus the Middle East, southern Africa, and Central America — today's three major 'regions of instability,' according to the US Joint Chiefs of Staff<sup>34</sup> — are interconnected in, at least, as many ways as Washington — Tel Aviv — Pretoria are.

In 1977 Israeli technicians built an electrified 'wall' at the Namibia-Angola border, to keep SWAPO forces from entering Namibia.<sup>35</sup> A similar system of electronic border surveillance ('valla electronica') has been under construction since 1982 in Costa Rica on the border with Nicaragua.<sup>36</sup> It is precisely this item that brought a delegation of the Democratic Unionist Party of Northern Ireland to Israel in January 1984. They believed a solution for the Irish problem could be found by erecting a £14 million electric fence on the border with Ireland, touch-sensitive, monitored with computers, with permanently manned security posts at every five miles.<sup>37</sup> The DUP is the largest Unionist party in Northern Ireland, led by Rev. Ian Paisley. Apparently, the world's 'demographic problems' may not be quite confined to the so-called 'third world.'

A newcomer to the Israeli sphere of interest is Sri Lanka. The

situation of the Tamils in Sri Lanka has been described as a 'classic minority problem'. Discriminatory practices on the part of the majority Sinhala government, virtually since independence, efforts at colonization in Tamil areas, and outbreaks of anti-Tamil mob violence in 1956, 1958, 1977, and 1983, have gradually transformed the cry for Tamil autonomy to a cry for Tamil Eelam separation. After years of non-violent resistance, it has transformed the Tamil struggle into an armed struggle. During the 'Black July' of 1983, Sinhala massacres of Tamils and destruction of Tamil businesses and property went on with soldiers and policemen standing idly by. Under the guise of combatting 'terrorism' by the Tamil Tigers, the military have moved into the predominantly Tamil areas in the North, assuming broad authorities under the 1979 Prevention of Terrorism Act. Acts of state terrorism in the North, particularly during March and April 1984, have taken on the form of 'collective punishment.'<sup>38</sup> Since early 1984, Israeli security advisers have been called in to train Lankan security personnel. Already, the structural similarities between the Tamils of Sri Lanka and the Palestinians are notable — again, policies centered on land, control, demography, and terror combine in order to consolidate a configuration of Sinhala hegemony. Rightwing Buddhists who view the Sinhalese as chosen guardians of Buddhism, have already prepared the way — 'To some extent the Tamils are cast in the role of the Philistines, 'good' kings being those who, like Dutthagamani, smote the Tamils hip and thigh, and did so, partly at least, with religious motives.'<sup>39</sup> In order to break up areas of contiguous Tamil habitation, inroads into predominantly Tamil areas in the Eastern and Northern provinces have been made by Sinhalese settlers, supported by government and police, and encouraged by rightwing Buddhist clergy, acting like the local equivalent of Gush Emunim. Over the past year this scheme to create 'checkered patterns of settlement' has been supplemented by the establishment of army camps in the north. The Jaffna peninsula is gradually being turned into a Lankan West Bank. Sinhala chauvinism used as an instrument of state power again calls to mind the psychological climate of Israel. On the basis of an analysis of Israeli policies on the West Bank one could almost predict the forms Israel security advice in Sri Lanka is taking.

Situations such-as the above, only a sample out of Israel's

global security operations, suggest other dimensions beyond Israel's role as one of the major arms exporters — Israel as a party or accessory to state-organized terrorism, and holocaust, certainly in the case of Guatemala and South Africa, perhaps in others as well. South African invasions in Angola — planned with Israeli advice — have resulted in cold-blooded massacres, such as the attack on innocent men, women and children in the refugee camp of Cassinga on 4 May 1978. A sinister pattern suggests itself — the export of West Bank expertise. Thus in the shadows cast by Deir Yassin, Kibye, Kafr Kassem, Beirut, Sabra and Chatila, other silhouettes emerge — Cassinga, Panzos, Chiapas. Among the questions that present themselves is, why is Israel doing what it is doing?

## Israel's Strategy

'We will say to the Americans: Don't compete with us in Taiwan; don't compete with us in South Africa; don't compete with us in the Caribbean or in other places where you cannot sell arms directly ... Let us do it. You will sell the ammunition and equipment through an intermediary. Israel will be your intermediary.'

Ya'acov Meridor, *Ha'aretz*, 25 August 1981

Official or semiofficial statements concerning Israel's involvement in third world countries usually say that Israel is interested in furthering its arms sales and technological exports as well as improving its diplomatic ties with third world countries. The arms business helps Israel overcome the diplomatic isolation imposed on it by Arab countries, according to a recent report published by Tel Aviv University's Jaffee Institute for Strategic Studies.<sup>40</sup> Israel's involvement in Honduras/Nicaragua and El Salvador is said to be related to reports of links between the PLO and Central American movements.<sup>41</sup> Sometimes the defense of Jewish communities in some of the importing states is also mentioned as a consideration. Underlying these considerations there is a more involved strategic thinking.

Key elements in understanding Israel's strategy in relation to third world countries are Israel's notion of self-reliance and the relationship between Israel and the United States. Israeli self-reliance dates back to the Zionist idea of self-emancipation of the 1880s, reformulated by Ben Gurion as 'orientation on ourselves,' and since become a part of Israel's national security doctrine, at least according to Dan Horowitz.<sup>42</sup> This has taken shape in, among other things, Israel's arms industry. However, the fact that Israel's military industry has been developed with massive US assistance and participation, financial, technical, and corporate, is a reminder that Israel's 'self-reliance' has flourished under US tutelage. Similarly, Zionist 'self-emancipation' took place largely under British tutelage.

Israel was first identified as a Western camp follower when it took the US lead vis à vis Korea and in withholding recognition from the People's Republic of China; this led to its being excluded from the

Bandung conference of nonaligned nations in 1955. It was the beginning of Israel's isolation among third world countries. Nevertheless, as a 'pioneer' nation, giving pragmatic, 'nonideological' forms of development assistance, Israel retained access to many countries, particularly in Africa. The army plays a central role in Israeli society, institutionally and in its 'integrative' functions, and this trait of the centrality of the military has been a basis of affinity with many Latin American regimes.<sup>43</sup> Israeli army veterans occupy important positions in Israel's foreign aid system in Africa and Latin America.<sup>44</sup> Israel sided with France in the Algerian conflict and provided training to the OAS; a common antagonism to Arab national liberation was the basis of French arms supplies to Israel.

Strategic cooperation between governing circles of the United States and Israel dates back to the time when Israel began to be viewed as a buffer against radical Nasserism. In the sixties, Israel assisted US penetration of African countries. The regimes of Mobutu in Zaire and Bokassa in the Central African Republic are among the fruits of this cooperation. In 1971-72 Israel and Britain cooperated in bringing Idi Amin to power in Uganda.<sup>45</sup>

The first strategic agreement between the US and Israel dates from 1962, with the Kennedy administration, reportedly entitled: 'Strategic cooperation between the United States and Israel in relation to Latin America and counter-insurgency.'<sup>46</sup> One year later the Kennedy administration approved the sale of Hawk anti-aircraft missiles to Israel, and in 1965 the Johnson administration allowed a sale of A4 Skyhawk jet fighters. Still France remained, since 1953, Israel's main arms supplier until, upon the end of the Algerian war, France reviewed its Middle East policies and sold Mirages to Lebanon in 1967, and to Libya in 1969. This prompted the expansion of Israel's arms industry from its small beginnings in the fifties.

Israel's victory in the 1967 war changed the balance of forces in the region, and in a major development the US provided Israel with 50 Phantom fighters in 1968. US-Israeli collaboration during the Jordanian crisis of 1970 strengthened mutual relations. But above all, the onset of the 'Vietnam syndrome' in the US, detente, and the Nixon-Kissinger doctrine of 'sub-imperialism,' inspired the momentous, almost tenfold, increase in US military assistance to Israel in the 1971-73 period. Moreover, 'In November 1971, the US quietly

signed an agreement to provide technical information and assistance that would allow Israel to produce advanced weapons components itself. This had important immediate economic advantages for Israel, allowing it to develop further its military-industrial base and become an important arms manufacturer and exporter in its own right.'<sup>47</sup>

The October war of 1973, followed by the oil embargo initiated by the Saudis, gave another boost to Israeli 'self-reliance' under US sponsorship. On the Israeli side there was an interest 'to prevent a situation that would allow an outside power — namely the United States — to dictate the terms of a future cease-fire by threatening to withhold vital military supplies'; while on the part of the United States, 'one can presume the interest of US strategists in avoiding any need to resupply Israel with weapons and munitions during future active hostilities.'<sup>48</sup>

Thus, the purchase by Israel of entire production lines from the US, the production of weapons produced under US license, and of several major Israeli military products (e.g. Kfir-C2, IAI-202 Arava), date from 1973 and after. A major Israeli military export item such as the Kfir jet fighter — itself a rebuild of Dassault's Mirage V — uses approximately 45 percent US components, including a General Electric engine. The chickens had come home to roost since US *private* investment in the Israeli arms industry, notably on the part of Rockefeller Associates and Control Data Corporations, ranging from 33 percent participation to full ownership, dated already from the sixties.<sup>49</sup> The semblance of Israeli autonomy in arms production helped maintain the pretense of US evenhandedness in the Middle East. It also served to shield the Washington-Riyadh axis from radical Arab criticism at a time when it had become a crucial avenue to keep OPEC in line.

In 1974 with the Nixon-Kissinger administration another US-Israeli agreement concerning strategic cooperation was signed. US military sales to Israel had grown from \$140 million in 1968-70 to \$1.2 billion in 1971-73 and \$4.5 billion in 1974-76.<sup>50</sup> In 1979 a Memorandum of Agreement was concluded, followed by the Memorandum of Understanding signed by defence minister Sharon and secretary of defence Weinberger on 30 November 1981. Reportedly, this included a secret clause regarding a military plan for Latin America, involving 'the participation of Israel in the case of an invasion of Nicaragua or Cuba.'<sup>46</sup>

This was a period of rapid geostrategic changes. In 1979 Iran was 'lost' and Afghanistan invaded. Carter's human rights presidency became a presidency of remilitarization, from El Salvador to its focus on the Indian Ocean (Diego Garcia) and the Persian Gulf. Israel was now the only reliable US ally in the Middle East. With the Reagan administration the United States embarked on an aggressive roll-back policy, justifying a budget shift from social expenditures toward a multibillion military spending spree with a ubiquitous 'Soviet threat.' Foreign policy, formulated by secretary of state Gen. Haig, consisted of 'drawing the line in El Salvador' and 'going to the source,' combatting 'international terrorism' as one of the main expressions of the 'Soviet threat,' while the underlying issue in standing up to the red menace was defined as a 'resource war' over strategic minerals. From Morocco to Pakistan, from Central America to the Caribbean, the empire lashed out. Of Israel Reagan said this in February 1981: 'If there were not Israel with that force, we'd have to supply that with our own, so this isn't just altruism on our part.'<sup>51</sup>

The Reagan administration coincided with the second, more militantly rightwing Begin government. Playing upon the perception of Oriental Jews of the Labour Alignment as pro-American, Ashkenazi, elite, Begin played the anti-American card internally. The Begin government engaged in some high wire politics. On December 13, two weeks after signing the Memorandum of Understanding with the United States, a bill was rushed through the Knesset which effectively annexed the Golan Heights. In the West Bank the Civil Administration had been installed in November, also a step toward annexation. The strategic cooperation agreement was suspended, then abrogated, yet survived de facto. But at the same time, loud enough for American ears to hear, the Begin government began to echo US foreign policy. In late December 1981, defence minister Sharon spoke at the Institute of Strategic Studies in Tel Aviv on Israel's military plans:

A source of growing anxiety for us and the Western world which will certainly develop into the most important challenge for the eighties is the Soviet expansionist strategy directed at the Middle East and Africa. It should be perfectly clear that in the new strategic environment, Israeli security

interests are influenced by developments and events which occur outside the sphere in which Israel has hitherto concentrated its attention... Beyond the first, traditional circle of confrontation which surrounds Israel, Israeli strategic interests demand that we expand into two geographic regions, which constitute a security interest for us: The peripheral Arab states and all those peripheral countries, the status and political-strategic orientation of which may have dangerous effects on Israel's national security.<sup>52</sup>

A strategic reorientation for Israel was outlined also in Oded Yinon's *Strategy for Israel in the Eighties*,<sup>53</sup> published in February 1982. Yinon starts from the premise that Arab states in the region, in view of their internal divisions (along political, religious, ethnic lines) and economic problems, constitute a threat to the state of Israel only in the short run, not in the long run. Israel's strategy in the region should be aimed at the break-up or dismemberment of Arab states, by means of forming alliances with ethnic and political minorities in the region — the strategy followed in Lebanon. The threat to Israel in the long run however is considered to be Soviet influence (specifically, aiming to gain control over the Persian Gulf and southern Africa), in the light of the 'resource war.' In other words, a perspective completely in line with the tenets of US foreign policy.

These were echos of US foreign policy but with a difference: the reorientation of strategy from 'Arab threat' to 'Soviet threat' was combined with an implicit project of regional hegemony and an enlarged definition of Israel's national security interests. After visiting Namibia in 1982 Ariel Sharon defined Israel's strategic concerns to include Africa and much of Asia.<sup>54</sup> In April 1983, statements by Moshe Arens, former ambassador to the US, then defence minister, about a reorganization of the IDF were accompanied by a map showing Israel's 'Arc of Intervention' stretching from Tunisia to Afghanistan.<sup>55</sup>

In 1981 Ya'acov Meridor, Begin's special adviser for economic coordination, told a gathering of Israeli businessmen: 'Israel coveted the job of top Washington proxy in Central America.'<sup>56</sup> Financial assistance to El Salvador, refused by the US

Congress, was supplied instead by Israel (\$21 million in 1981) through the back door, to be repaid out of the \$2.5 billion in US aid annually going to Israel; in a similar predicament in relation to the *contras* operating against Nicaragua, in April 1984, Israel bailed out the CIA with an amount between \$20 to 30 million.<sup>57</sup> A qualitatively different type of assistance from arms sales and training, which were also provided. Israeli advisers in South Africa in 1981 numbered 200. In sum, Israel volunteered to do the 'dirty work' of the New Cold War. What in 1976 had been a cause of concern in Pentagon circles, that Israel could re-export American technology to other nations, circumventing Congressional restrictions, became an *asset* in 1981 with a New Right administration in the White House that was bent on circumventing Congressional restrictions. A long term strategic understanding between American and Israeli circles emerged, or reemerged, from the backrooms of policy implementation into the Oval Office.

Israeli participation on the frontlines of the new cold war however is contingent upon US recognition of Israel's security interests. The way in which Israel's strategic reorientation was formulated by Sharon, in terms of Israel's national security interests, suggests that for Israel to assume an anti-Soviet posture is equivalent to its adopting a 'Greater Israel' strategy. During Spring 1982 US provisions of military equipment to Israel were stepped up. Then the *Pax Hebraica* was established in Lebanon with cluster, phosphorus and concussion bombs, courtesy USA. US foreign policy attempted to isolate the PLO from the Arab world by portraying it as both 'terrorist' and an extension of Soviet military presence. At the same time US acquiescence in the implementation of a 'Greater Israel' strategy brings the US into a diplomatic minefield because it undermines the 'strategic consensus' that US foreign policy tries to construct in the Middle East, which requires that Tel Aviv, Riyadh, Cairo define the Soviet Union rather than each other as the main problem in the region.

Current military planning talks between the US and Israel confirm the shift in orientation in that they 'have been focusing increasingly on how to counter the Soviet Union in the Middle East rather than on "radical" Arab governments ... US officials said the Israelis have agreed to the administration's wish that they

concentrate on anti-Soviet military contingencies, particularly in the eastern Mediterranean,' according to a *New York Times Service* report.<sup>58</sup> This may imply that Israel will assist the US in compensating for any breach in the eastern NATO flank opening up on the part of Greece. The report makes no mention of Middle East questions.

Earlier reports on talks between the US and Israel mentioned that the possibility of a US-Israel defence pact has been considered, according to which the US would come to Israel's aid should it be endangered.<sup>59</sup> This would go beyond any previous agreement of strategic cooperation. In any case, there are indications of improved strategic cooperation between the US and Israel. The purchase in 1983 by the US Navy of Israeli-made drones, small remotely piloted reconnaissance aircraft (RPVs), represents a new development (considering also that ten American companies also manufacture drones).<sup>60</sup> Unprecedented is that Israel will lend the US Navy a dozen Kfir jet fighters to serve as mock enemies in combat training, 'on a no-cost, four-year lease basis.' It would be the first such arrangement by the United States.<sup>61</sup>

The *New York Post* reported on an agreement signed in early 1983 between the CIA and Mossad concerning joint operations in Central America, Africa, Afghanistan, and Lebanon. In Africa, Chad, Sudan, Ethiopia and other unnamed states would be areas of joint intelligence effort to counter Soviet influence. In return, Israel would be receiving more data from the US Electronic Intelligence Network of satellites and listening posts, to have early warning of troop movements in the Middle East (under the CIA directorship of Bill Casey Israel in fact already had direct access to US electronic intelligence). Intelligence experts are quoted as saying the arrangement is 'the most wide-ranging agreement ever established between the CIA and a foreign intelligence service.'<sup>62</sup>

The official reasons given for Israel's role in third world countries are just that — official explanations. Economic reasons do not explain Israel's activities — counterinsurgency advice and training, such an important dimension of Israel's role in many countries, falls outside of the scope of 'arms business.' It is political in nature. Political reasons, breaking through the isolation imposed by

Arab countries, fall short in that the pattern of Israel's relations confirm rather than break through this isolation, since the governments that receive Israeli security assistance are almost invariably of the rightwing western bloc variety (with Ethiopia, the People's Republic of China and Iran as exceptions). Clearly, the most pertinent explanation of Israel's role in the third world is that of Israel as a client serving US imperial interests; yet this is too simplistic if the complexities of the relationship between Israel and the US are not taken into account. Israel's strategy in relation to third world countries must be considered, then, both in the light of the relationship between Israel and the United States *and* the regional dynamics of the Middle East.

Israel's strategy appears to be to maximize its regional gains, in exchange for participation in the US collective security system. On the part of the US this requires recognition of Israel's legitimate security interests. However, what Israel's legitimate security interests consist of is ambiguous and subject to continual renegotiation amidst shifting constellations of forces. It may include part of the West Bank. It might refer to 'Eretz Israel' including the West Bank and Golan Heights. It might include south Lebanon, or it might range 'from the Euphrates to the Nile'. On the other hand, Eretz Israel may be a concept for domestic consumption, a platform for a regional 'strategy of tension'. A 'Greater Israel' need not necessarily carry a strictly territorial meaning, especially in view of the implications of bringing 1.3 million Palestinians into a Jewish State, a dilemma that Labour politicians are well aware of. Presently Likud is more identified with a territorial definition of Israeli objectives and Labour more with a political definition. A 'Greater Israel' may also mean Israel as a 'great power,' on the basis of regional strength.

The mainstay of Israel's aspirations to power is its military industry. According to Professor Aharon Kleiman of the Tel Aviv University Centre for Strategic Studies, 'The arms industry of Israel is based on the interests of a powerful lobby of the heads of the defence and industrial establishment, including the Histadrut (trade union) industry ... They identify their specific interests with the interests of the state. A common military history strengthens their tendency to judge policy according to immediate results; they are

pragmatic and tend to be cynical at what seem to them to be false moral norms.'<sup>40</sup> Amongst them is Shimon Peres, leader of Labour, a driving force in building Israel's arms industry, founder of Israel Aircraft Industry and Tadiran, and an architect of Israel's nuclear capability.

Israel's arms exports represent 40 percent of export revenues (in 1980), and the military industry occupies 14 percent, and according to a more recent estimate, 20 percent of Israel's labour force, i.e. one out of every five workers. Thus formidable economic stakes are also tied up with the military business. For the country with by far the world's highest per capita foreign debt, 4 million people owing \$25 billion abroad, a 400 percent inflation rate and a stagnant GNP, the economic dimension is by no means unimportant.

Israel's military-industrial complex is linked on the one hand to the US military-industrial complex, and on the other to South Africa and Taiwan. Decades of dependence on the US have put Israel now in a position where it has a limited degree of autonomy. Israel has also developed a global network of rightwing connections that might give Israel if not some autonomy then leverage in case of a shift in US foreign policy. Here the alliance with South Africa and Taiwan comes in — both countries with considerable industrial capacity, whose elites are covering themselves against the same contingency for reasons of their own. Israel as part of a league of 'pariah nations,' vanguard of a transnational ultrarightwing pressure group — with a grip on strategically sensitive areas and with nuclear capabilities — is thus one possible scenario. A related scenario is that of Israel as a 'wild card (as in Sharon's idea that Israel should behave as an unpredictable, 'crazy country'). Such a 'pariah league' would be vulnerable notably in terms of oil supplies, foreign trade, technology and finance, although on the other hand South Africa has been known to get by.

With the theme of the 'Soviet threat' coming to the foreground and the 'Arab threat' fading into the background, Israel's strategic planning loses its 'pragmatic' character and even its character of 'national defense,' and becomes strongly ideologized instead. This ideological commitment comes out for instance in the offer of captured PLO weapons to Central American armies free of charge, a gesture that falls outside the purview of military business as

well as national defense. It comes out when Sharon talks about Israel as a middle military power that must play a role in the global conflict between the free capitalist West and the communist world.<sup>46</sup> Israeli military planning has thus entered the twilight zone of superpower ideology. Given the overwhelming and increasing importance of the military in government and industry in Israel and the United States, leading circles in the US and Israel have begun to live off the 'Soviet threat.' In the United States because it is the royal road towards reestablishing US hegemony through leadership of the collective security system. In Israel because only this can justify the sustained militarization of the society in the absence of a military threat coming from the PLO or Arab nations. It is a reorientation of strategy that is the logical sequel to Lebanon, the only way out of a 'Lebanon syndrome.' As in the case of the US, it serves as a justification for activities in third world countries that are repugnant from any other point of view. If the outcomes of all conflicts throughout the world, domestic and regional, are translated into 'loss' or 'gain' from a superpower point of view, then dirty work may pass for noble calling. In such an ideologized comic book version of global relations, simple concerns such as social justice dwindle to insignificance because reality itself is no longer an issue in a perspective that is concerned only with power. Israeli interest in serving as an offshore affiliate of the American New Right is that it diverts attention from the Palestinian question and because under the umbrella of 'collective security' Israel can elaborate its own aspirations to power.

Strategies followed in Central America, the Middle East and southern Africa are so many carbon copies of one another that it is difficult to identify the original. US, Israeli and South African strategies resemble each other so closely in objectives, tactics, and materiel, that they may be considered as constituting one pool of imperialist and counterinsurgency expertise and technology. With Israelis active in southern Africa, Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras and the borders of Nicaragua, South Africans in Israel, Taiwanese in Guatemala and so forth, it's a small world. Part of this *imperial pool* one might call the 'portable West Bank.' If British strategies in Northern Ireland are taken into account, one may include Britain in this pool, as part of the collective security system led by the United States. Hence it includes Western Europe through NATO, Japan and

allied Southeast Asian countries, ANZUS, and the OAS. In other words, Israel's activities in third world countries, on the fringes of the US collective security system, are in fact being undertaken as an intermediary on behalf of the 'Western world.'

Israel's attempts to improve relations with francophone countries in Africa, with Sharon's visits to Zaire, Gabon and the Central African Republic in 1981, reportedly had French backing. 'The French contribution, in line with President Mitterand's traditional friendship with Israel, was to sound out the African heads of state at the eighth Franco-African summit in Paris early in November (1981) on restoring ties with Israel.'<sup>63</sup> In another development in June 1984, in talks between defence ministers Arens for Israel and Heseltine for Britain, Moshe Arens proposed Anglo-Israeli cooperation in future weapons development, in which Israel would offer the technology in return for British financing. The cooperation would be 'along lines similar to that envisaged between Israel and the United States.'<sup>64</sup> The simultaneous assistance to the Sri Lanka government of Israeli security advisers and the British Special Air Service, while with the US 'a small training programme' has also been in operation, suggests the possibility of a trilateral strategic performance.<sup>65</sup> The involvement of the US and Israel on the side of France in Chad, in countering Libyan influence, suggests yet another trilateral strategic orientation.

Apparently Israel is trying to open new doors, to the French sphere of influence, and to the Commonwealth. The financial dimension, in the proposal for joint Anglo-Israeli weapons development, may be of vital importance to Israel. A limitation on Israeli arms supplies is that it cannot guarantee generous credit conditions, so that it can never compete with the great powers. The US has been helpful in this respect in that a clause in the November 1981 Memorandum of Understanding on Strategic Cooperation paved the way, according to a State Department explanation, for 'the possible use by third countries of American Foreign Military Sales credits to purchase Israeli defense items and service.'<sup>63</sup> For third world countries with different metropolitan alignments, however, other arrangements might be preferable (e.g., with British credits for Israeli-produced arms). This would enable Israel to widen its military market and sustain the growth of the exports of its militarized

economy.

These initiatives coming at a time when the 'oil weapon' is no longer operative, and Britain is no longer dependent on foreign oil, suggest another dimension to Israel's foreign policy: not simply clientship of the United States, but rapprochement with the 'great powers.' Thus broadening its political base by contributing to narrow policies, as a *de facto* partner of NATO, firmly ensconced on the ramparts of the Western world.

## Questions

After all this we wonder, 'Why' are we not loved?' and blame 'anti-semitism' or 'Arab money,' instead of asking ourselves what we are doing to the world.

Israel Shahak

You shall not oppress a stranger, for you know the heart of a stranger, for you were strangers in Egypt.

Exodus 23:9

Up to the fifteenth century Jews, in Spain and Portugal, formed a bridge between Islam and Christianity in a creative confluence of cultures. After all Judaism is at the root of both. At the end of the nineteenth century however Theodor Herzl described the 'Jewish state' to be as 'a portion of the rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism.'<sup>66</sup> During the *galut* or exile Jews, an Oriental people by origin, had become a European people, by acculturation. While in the eleventh century nearly 96 percent of world Jewry was Sephardic, by 1930 the trend had completely reversed and 92 percent of world Jewry was Ashkenazic.<sup>67</sup> Thus they returned from the diaspora a different people than when they had left. They returned to the Orient with European ignorance and contempt, with a Crusader outlook, with European traumas.

Zionism was the reaction of Jewish communities to the oppression perpetrated against Jews throughout the centuries of European history, particularly in contemporary Eastern and Central Europe. In this sense, the movement belongs to the somber chapters of European history and in no way to the East.<sup>68</sup>

Third world peoples who had no history or knowledge of a 'Jewish problem,' observed how Israel stood with Europe and the US in the widening North-South rift. An instance of European colonization in the era of decolonization, Israel is in the third world but not of the third world. Located on the fault line between western imperialism



and third world nationalism, Israel behaves as a fifth column of empire.

Erik Hooglund asked 'Why is it wrong for the United States to provide military assistance to countries which violate human rights, but not so for Israel?'<sup>69</sup> It is wrong for Israel also, but in the US and Europe Israel continued and still continues to evoke sympathy and support, a support based not least on cultural affinities and affinity with Zionism as the historical counterpart of antisemitism, as the 'solution' to the Jewish problem. While the Holocaust ranks high in European-American historical consciousness, a central part of their own historical drama, the historical traumas of people 'on the other side of the river' are not as near.

No longer a bridge between Christianity and Islam, Israelis have become the allies of Christianity. In Africa Israel finds political niches on the side of Christian groups resisting Islamic inroads, and certain Asian countries call on Israel as a counterweight against Islamic influence. Zionism also finds itself in league with fundamentalist Christianity — Christian Zionists who share Zionist fundamentalism in terms of their claims to Eretz Israel, and who likewise take the word after the letter and not after the spirit. Under the Likud governments these ties became closer — Rev. Jerry Falwell, founder of the 'Moral Majority,' was presented Israel's Jabotinsky award by Begin. Ties have become closer at a time when fundamentalist Christianity was also being mobilized, in Latin America, Africa and parts of Europe, in the battle for hearts and minds against communism, but in effect as antidote against the spread of liberation theology and the people's church.

In adopting the American foreign policy perspective of a 'resource war,' Israel is adopting an instrumentalist attitude to the world, a Realpolitik perspective according to which only 'resources' matter, disregarding people and social relations. It is precisely this kind of outlook with which the US government has been looking at Israel all along — from the 1949 National Security Council memorandum noting the strategic location of Israel, to secretary of defense Caspar Weinberger who called Israel an '*unsinkable aircraft carrier*' close to strategic Mideast oil fields.<sup>54</sup> An '*unsinkable aircraft carrier*' is a peculiar way to describe a country; it invokes the image of a country that does not exist except as the launching pad of some

project of power. This appears to be the political reality of what Begin insisted on calling the 'Holy land.' This military simile follows US influence like a shadow, witness the terminology of Prime Minister Nakasone in 1982: 'I want the Japanese archipelago to be like an unsinkable aircraft carrier.'<sup>70</sup>

There are no Soviets in Guatemala, and there are no Soviet-supplied arms either for that matter; nor are there Soviets in Sri Lanka. But there are resources in Guatemala, and Sri Lanka may well be understood to be another of those unsinkable aircraft carriers,' strategically located off the Indian subcontinent, and on sea lanes between US bases in the Philippines and Guam, and Diego Garcia. If there are no Soviets in Guatemala, there are Indians, descendants of the Maya culture who have come travelling a long way. Presently they recognize their spiritual debt to Judaism, in that they recognize Christianity and the scriptures as a major inspiration of the Central American revolution. There is one question, however, that bothers them profoundly — How can it be that a people that inspired us so much to take up the fight against injustice, that now we find them arraigned against us as the enemies of our people?

In fact it is not the Jewish people that are assisting Guatemalan juntas in massacring the Indians, but Israeli ruling circles. Israeli ruling circles, who have adopted the cheap imperial world view, are taking sides in a class struggle on a global scale. Israel's global role is paralleled by its domestic class realities, where Sephardim are second class citizens, Arabs third class, and people in the occupied territories count as obstacles only when it comes to creating 'facts on the ground.' If it should occasion surprise that Israel maintains connections with rightwing and ultrarightwing circles throughout the world, it may help to recall that this is in line with the record of the Zionist movement, which cooperated with imperialists, fascists and Nazis alike.<sup>71</sup> Israel's ties with the Somoza family date back to 1947, with Guatemala to 1948, with South Africa to the role of Jewish capitalists in the South African economy before the turn of the century. This is another reason why Israel's role in the world should not be simply reduced to clientship of the USA; Zionism has developed in this direction also by virtue of the logic of its own historical path. Several influences have combined to create this logic.

In the first place, the influence of an upper stratum of Jews, a financial elite who assisted in the expansion of European imperialism; Rothschild for example provided the credit that enabled the British to buy shares in the Suez Canal concession. The political antisemitism of the late nineteenth century was orchestrated in part to divert anticapitalist sentiments into ethnic, anti-Jewish channels. Ostensibly aimed at Jewish finance capitalists, in effect it hit the Jewish working class, the majority of whom were socialists themselves. This was the scheme, to redirect energies away from class struggle, to fan the flames of nationalism, chauvinism, and racism, and destroy the socialist movements, in which Jews played an important part. If antisemitism was one of the orchestrated alternatives to class struggle, zionism took no interest in a social revolution either. A conservative movement, not only did it not have the support of most Jews in Eastern and Central Europe, it was actively opposed by the majority, as a betrayal of the universalist commitments of Jewish people, which found expression in their allegiance to the Bund and other socialist organizations. Zionism operated in the orbit of the imperialist and reactionary powers, in no manner a revolutionary movement but rather a diplomatic effort. While ignored or rejected by the majority of Jews, it found support among the upper stratum of Jews who were part and parcel of the imperialist ambience. The option of settlement in Palestine only began to draw majority support when anti-Jewish measures intensified and the Holocaust machine came into operation, at a time when other countries, including the US, closed their borders to Jewish refugees — Israel, as Isaac Deutscher said, was created as 'an act of despair.'

Since then another dynamic came into operation. Paolo Freire warned that the greatest danger for the oppressed is to become like the oppressor. The Holocaust unveiled a malice of such magnitude, an abyss so wide, that normal psychological and political patterns were broken through. An existential perplexity about the human condition permitted a collective role reversal — from victims to perpetrators. It is in this direction that the record of Israel vis à vis the Palestinian people and in relation to third world countries, points. If Israelis say they 'did not know,' it is true that Israeli media are censored. What may be underlying this process of role reversal is

the logic of fear, and finding protection from fear in conforming with the aggressor. This was the pattern of Zionism, as antisemitism was not resisted but accommodated to. Israel has not broken with the logic of fear. Rather the logic of fear has been converted into the logic of power; the essential mechanism of this process is mimicry, for in a world that continues to be dominated by the same type of forces that leashed the Holocaust, Israel seeks protection in behaving in the same way. The psychological meaning of Zionism is that Jews have chosen to side with the perpetrators rather than the victims. When Begin says 'Never Again!,' it means in effect 'Never Again *us*'; and consequently, it means others — Palestinians, Guatemalan Indians, and so forth.

Israel's connection with third world fascism stems from the same root as Zionism's connection with fascism. It is a consequence of the alliance with imperialism — an alliance that came natural to an upper stratum of Jews but that came to the majority of Jews only at a time when there practically was no other choice. The alternative was social revolution, the road the majority of Jews did follow, at a time when all the fury of Western power structures was unleashed against the forces of socialism, which threatened to overturn their global chessboard. Fascism and Nazism — power unbound — were promoted by Western power structures as gambits against socialism and communism. Third world fascism partakes of the same logic of power — without make-up. It is the face of imperialism as it appears without a mask, nourished and supported by the same type of forces that nourished and supported Hitler.

Revocation of the experience of the Holocaust seems to be fruitless if it is not combined with a commitment to uncover the historical truth of who supported and financed Hitler, and who benefitted, and continues to benefit, from fascism, and with compassion for the victims of holocausts that are being perpetrated now. The Jewish people have become an existentially inward looking people, drawn into a closed circle of fear. That Israel's repression stems from a different historical consciousness than that of its imperial patron, a logic of power informed by fear rather than by arrogance and greed, is small comfort to the victims, to whom the net product is identical.

What an irony of history that the words of the prophets, recited but not resonating in the synagogues of Israel, would be taken to heart in the mountains of Central America. Christian liberation theology has been inspired more than anything by the Jewish experience (Exodus, Exile), but there has been no development of a Judaic liberation theology. Zionism is the substitute for Judaic liberation theology; but it is concerned with the liberation of Jews as Jews, not with the liberation of Jews as humanity. Zionism has ethnicized, nationalized Jewishness. A 'Zionization' of Jewish communities in the galut has taken place, and Israel has become a focal point of Jewish identity.

But in the final analysis the Jewish question poses not the question of Jewishness, but of humanity. The Jewish question poses the question of power, and specifically fascism. The Holocaust remains a riddle of the twentieth century; in the history of Europe Nazism remains a puzzle, even as now fascism rears its head again. It has not been come to terms with either in the sense of a historical examination of who needed and nourished fascism, or in the sense of an existential understanding, translating these findings into political sagesse. The problem of Israel as a ghetto-state, as an extension of the Jewish question, must be laid at the door whence it came from — with the power structures that *created* the Jewish question when it suited them. As long as the Western world is incapable or unwilling to examine and face itself, Israel is likely to continue to adhere to the logic of fear, manifested in the logic of power, moderately or without moderation.

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