

**FROM**



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by *MARK A. BRUZONSKY*

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**WHY SO MUCH MORE AID TO ISRAEL?**

or

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**SPEAKING ANOTHER TRUTH TO ANOTHER POWER**

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When Israel invaded Lebanon at a cost huge in lives and dollars and with the sad result that Israel's northern border is far less secure today than it was in 1982, the U.S. tried to appear non-involved and certainly non-approving.

Yet American Marines were soon to find themselves attempting to "keep the peace" while more and more appearing as Israel's ally propping up the Christian Phalange government. At one point Washington even found itself reduced to pleading with Jerusalem to delay withdrawal of Israeli forces from positions protecting the Marines near Beirut's airport.

In result, hundreds of Americans were killed; the U.S. forced to withdraw in humiliation; Lebanon left to politically burn and now in the process of becoming another Moslem, possibly Islamic, state.

Before Israel's invasion Americans were still welcome in Lebanon; now most are gone, the few remaining fearful. Before Israel's invasion there had been a well-kept cease-fire on Israel's northern border for nearly a year; now there is more tension than ever and bomb shelters in Israel are being refurbished. Before Israel's invasion Israel's army was unified, most thought, in the cause of aggressive defense; today the Army is confused, demoralized, embittered.

And yet, since the summer of 1982 Israel has been rewarded by the Reagan Administration with the first ever strategic cooperation agreement, the first ever free trade zone, a Voice of America transmitter, participation in Star Wars, and congratulations that after 3 years Israeli troops are finally leaving Lebanon though threatening a "scorched earth policy" if anybody disturbs Israel's tranquility again.

Having created so much additional bitterness, misery and hatred, it should come as no surprise to see continuing, possibly escalating, conflict. Yet America now has its feet firmly planted in the Israeli mud, endangering itself as Israel's financier, arms merchant and guardian when Israel in fact needs a wise counselor cautioning restraint and reconsideration.

No novelist would have imagined such a scenario as all this; nor would it have been imagined that the Arab world would be so divided against itself and so impotent to even protest in a meaningful way

beyond occasional rhetorical challenges.

Now, on top of all this, and at a time of continuing budget slashing at home, the Reagan Administration is about to reward Israel further for her militarism, her refusal to honor the Palestinian autonomy provisions of the Camp David Agreement, and the continuing annexation of Arab territories in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, and Jerusalem.

Not only will Israel receive an unprecedented \$3 billion in military assistance and economic aid for 1986 -- all now in grants whereas before significant amounts were in the form of loans. On top the United States is about to reward Israel further with a two-year emergency aid package totalling another \$1.5 billion.

How can this be? How can American policy be so near-sighted? How can Israel get so much while acting so badly? How can the U.S. continually risk its own interests by cattering to those of some Israelis? The answers are mostly to be found in American politics.

Having created a lobby of unprecedented strength, a lobby that can twist the fate of any Congressman or Senator who opposes its will, Israel is in the drivers seat here even while badly divided at home. What happened to President Reagan on his way to Bitburg Cemetery for a historic reconciliation is but an example of the power andchutzpah (a yiddish word roughly translated as "guts") of today's Jewish lobby. Even Presidents who have done so much for Israel are not immune to the wrath of the Jewish lobby.

Those who doubt this power or its persistent abuse should consult a new book being published this month by former 22-year Illinois Congressman Paul Findley, THEY DARE TO SPEAK OUT: PEOPLE AND INSTITUTIONS CONFRONT ISRAEL'S LOBBY. Based upon meticulous research, Findley documents time after time the influence and tactics of the now far-flung Jewish lobby on warping American politics in pursuit of Israeli interests.

Findley, Percy, Fulbright, McCloskey, Stevenson -- these are all among a short list of names of those politicians who at times attempted to stand up to the American Jewish lobby in the name of American interests, peace, justice, and fairness toward the Palestinians.

The result, ever larger amounts of Jewish funds and Jewish activism successfully opposed each of their reelections. With Charles Percy defeat last November, at the very time he, like Fulbright before him, was Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the intimidation quotient of the Jewish lobby became awesome.

The much longer list of politicians in bed with the lobby needs little recitation. Suffice it to say that a Senator as thoughtful on most other foreign policy matters as Christopher Dodd, went far out of his way to say what was expected of him at the lobby's recent annual conference here in Washington. And everyone remembers Gary Hart's prostitution in front of American Jewish groups during the

Last Presidential campaign -- so much so that a controversy broke out among American Jews themselves whether they were too visibly pushy in forcing candidates to promise too much to Israel!

Another example. Just a few days ago Senator Bob Packwood, Chairman of the important Senate Finance Committee, sent Israel shekels in a plea for American dollars.

"Like Israel," Packwood wrote, "I'm in a 'tough fight' and need committed [i.e. Jewish] friends to come to my aid." Why the shekel? "First, it serves as a constant reminder that the security of our nation depends on the survival and future of our democratic ally in the Middle East. Second, because each time I see it, I am reminded that Israel today faces an economic crisis of catastrophic proportions..."

There is a yiddish expression for this too -- "Oyy Veh" (roughly translated as "Oh, my God!")

The power of today's Jewish lobby, spearheaded by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) under the leadership of Executive Director Tom Dine, is such that even former Presidents dare not indicate opposition in public.

At last year's conference on the Middle East at the Carter Center in Atlanta, Jimmy Carter was asked why he had such a difficult time pursuing the Middle East policies he and Secretary Vance came into office promoting. In his rambling, confused answer -- for it is untrue that Jimmy Carter ever really understood the core Arab-Israeli issues -- he never dared to mention that the Jewish lobby and its influence on Congress (he did mention Congress) was the primary reason.

These contemporary American political realities need little further analysis -- they speak loudly and tragically for themselves. And the basic question about this predicament should no longer be avoided simply because the same lobby threatens "anti-semitic" or "self-hating" accusations against anyone who questions this situation.

In a nutshell, what are the costs and dangers when one special interest/ethnic group has such a stranglehold on issues crucial to American foreign policy considerations?

American pluralism is predicated upon the free exchange of ideas and beliefs. That many American Jews wish to put forward their views on matters of special concern to them is admirable; though their style and tactics are coming under increasing question and scrutiny.

That the Jewish lobby works tirelessly to deprive others of this same right is the contradiction, evident but largely unspoken. Findley's book, in fact, is the first time that the issues have been so clearly raised and explained -- and it deserves widespread attention -- even though the lobby has already begun a campaign to seriously limit the book's circulation.

Moreover, there is also the unspoken reality that today's Jewish lobby -- really a conglomeration of interlocking organizations spearheaded and coordinated by AIPAC -- is very controversial within the American Jewish community. There are major Jewish personalities, for instance, who refuse to be associated with today's AIPAC. One of the most senior American Jewish leaders once told me, "what AIPAC is doing is of great harm to both Israel and American Jews and that's why I don't contribute or participate anymore."

Actually, far less than half of American Jews belong to any of the dozens of organizations that together make up the Jewish lobby; a fact the lobby attempts to keep quiet. Many of these uninvolved American Jews are not simply apathetic, they are simply opposed and unrepresented.

There is, however, another very major problem in all this; and there should be no doubt it will indeed come back to haunt the United States in the future, possibly in a similar way to how American attitudes toward Iran in the '50s and '60s finally backlashed against us in the '70s.

Whereas decisions about America's relationship with Israel are largely matters of domestic American politics, the results greatly affect American foreign relations. The price America is paying for its excessive and unprecedented one-sidedness in the Middle East is growing alienation throughout the region, a precipitant decline in American credibility, and the nurturing of embryonic anti-American sentiments sure to grow as prospects for the the long-sought Arab-Israeli peace further dim.

I vividly recall drinks at Cairo's old Shepard Hotel with a young, middle-class, American-educated, three-piece-suit Egyptian businessman who in terms of lifestyle and Westernized attitudes would be firmly pro-American. Indeed, that's how things seemed for some time, until we had become trusted friends and an opportunity to talk politics. He raised his beer glass and quietly asked, "Do you realize how much American policies are creating hatred for your country here?" This in the aftermath of Camp David, Israel's invasion of Lebanon, and the intervention of American Marines on Israel's behalf.

"The lobby" no longer makes a secret of its ambitions to forge an American-Israeli marriage and weaken American-Arab links. Just last month, at the annual AIPAC Policy Conference, Tom Dine boldly stated the goal.

"Our objective" Dine said "is nothing short of a full-fledged political, economic, and military alliance between the U.S. and Israel."

That the U.S. during the years of the Reagan Presidency has already allowed itself to be pulled far down the road toward this goal casts a significant pale over the future of American relations with the Arab world.

America is now taking on itself the historic burden of being seen not as peace-maker between Arabs and Jews, but as promoter of the misguided Israeli complex of dominance and repression; not as cautious supporter of the right of the Jews to their own self-determination, but as imperial power using Israel as a military surrogate and regional strongman, and in the process collaborating in preventing Palestinian self-determination.

This is a burden former Presidents have studiously avoided. It may cost future Presidents very dearly.

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