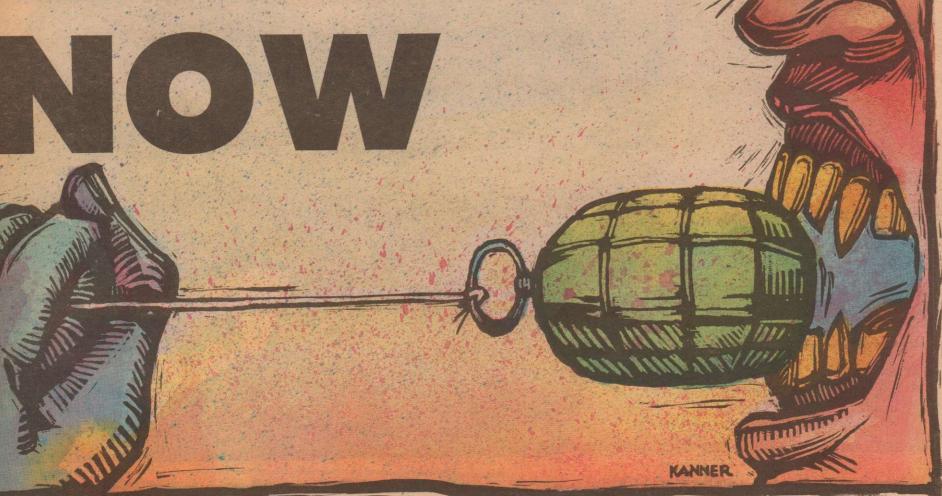
PULLOUT: SHOPPING IN TINSELTOWN

Movies, Music, Art, Theater, Airwaves

December 19-25, 1986 Vol. 9 No. 4

SPECIALISSUE

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L.A. WEEKLY

FEATURES

L.A. Weekly Special Issue: The Middle East Now

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Behind the Iran Scandal

Israel's Klansmen by Celeste Fremon

by Ricardo Ventura

by Eric Mankin and Michel Bogopolsky

Because of the holiday, next week's issue, number 5, will be available on Wed., Dec. 24, a day earlier than usual. Issue 6 (dated Jan. 2) will be available on Wed., Dec. 31 — so that Weekly staffers can spend National Hangover Day in sober contemplation.

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"The Middle East." At this point in our history, the very words seem to connote something almost beyond understanding, full of frustration and even despair: Lebanon is in perpetual chaos; the Israeli-Palestinian dispute is irremediable; Iran and Iraq are engaged in a kind of ritual suicide nurtured on dictatorship and fanaticism.

If all the above were true, there would be no reason to look any further. But the truth is more complex than that, and a lot closer to home — two good reasons for the Weekly to put out an issue like the one you are holding.

Here are some alternate premises:

• If Lebanon is in chaos, it has not always been so. There are reasons why the streets of Beirut have been a war zone for nearly 11 years.

• The Israeli-Palestinian dispute is profound and intractable, but it is neither beyond healing, nor (the most important point of

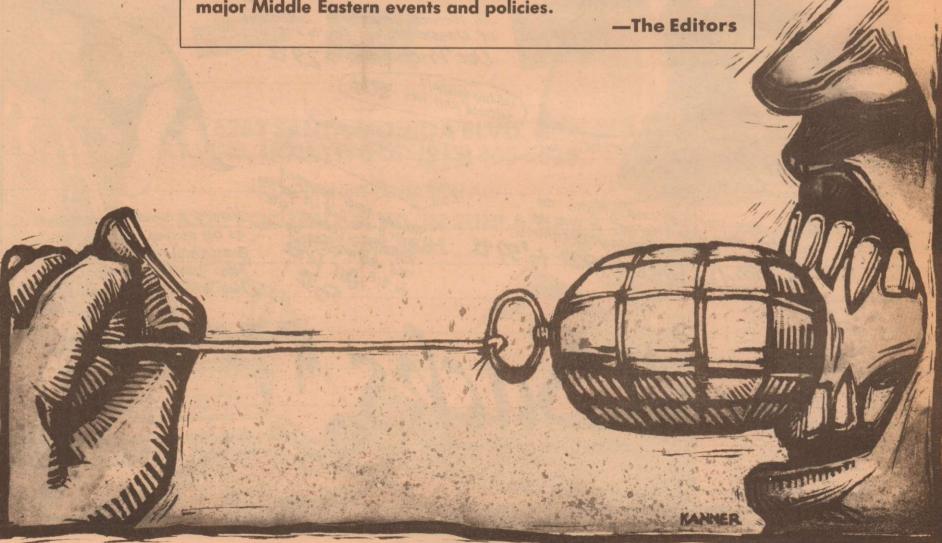
all) is it beyond our power to influence.

• The case of the Iran-Iraq war is a perfect example of this allimportant (for us) point. We (Americans/taxpayers/voters) are deeply enmeshed in the history, past and future, of the Middle East. If this was ever in doubt, the revelations of the last few weeks should have put those doubts to rest.

What is this week's issue not? It is not a definitive statement of the problem, much less of the solution. (If such a statement exists, it remains a well-kept secret.) And it is not a blow-by-blow account of 40 (or 10, or 80) years of provocation and counterprovocation. Such accounts are already available, in several

competing versions.

We have tried, as far as possible, to avoid a litany of horrors and misdeeds. What we have tried to do is provide a mixture of viewpoints not generally heard in the American press, reflections by human beings caught up in one of the great maelstroms of our time, and thus provide representative analyses of some of the major Middle Eastern events and policies.



Background to Bloodletting

How Broken Promises Set Up a Generation of War

By George Irani

It was evident from the beginning that if we won the war these promises would be dead paper, and had I been an honest adviser of the Arabs I would have advised them to go home and not risk their lives fighting for such stuff...

T. E. Lawrence ("Lawrence of Arabia")

Seven Pillars of Wisdom

t the mouth of Lebanon's Nahr il Kalb, the Dog River, just north of Beirut, there is a cliff engraved with what may be the most historically significant graffiti in the world — the names of great generals who have marched through the area at the head of conquering armies, beginning at the time of Alexander the Great and continuing on up to the passage of the French after World War I. Why this particular outcropping was chosen is long forgotten; what is left is a mute but eloquent testimony to the seemingly endless historical cycle that began before the invention of writing and shows no signs of

The conflict that has pitted Arabs and

Israelis against each other for more than four decades is a history of frustrated nationalisms, freighted with a legacy of subjection. Since the beginning of recorded history, the Middle East has been prey to external intervention. An almost unbroken string of conquests and dominations has clashed over and over again with the natural desire of the indigenous peoples of the area for independence and freedom.

The Ottoman Empire, which ruled over the area for several centuries leading up to World War I, periodically resorted to brutal repression in order to maintain control in the face of resistance and a growing nationalist awareness. Jamal Pasha, called "Jamal the Butcher" by the Arabs, reputedly enjoyed watching his rebellious Arab subjects twitch at the end of a rope. The Druze say Jamal died, struck down by God, after he ordered a man hanged three times to kill him.

The [British] Cabinet raised the Arabs to fight for us by definite promises of self-government afterwards.

-T.E. Lawrence Seven Pillars of Wisdom

His Majesty's Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.

—The Balfour Declaration November, 1917 For in Palestine, we do not even propose to go through the form of consulting the wishes of the present inhabitants of the country.

> —Lord Balfour, speaking on British policy in Palestine, 1919

In the years following the First World War the Ottoman Empire crumbled, and Turkish hegemony in the Arab lands was replaced by British and French control over most of the area. Encouraged in their hopes of independence by such historic figures as Lawrence of Arabia and the great Western statesmen of the time (who needed the Arabs for their own purposes), Arab armies helped the British push the Turks out of the Arab Middle East. People everywhere in the region looked forward to the dawn of a new era, but the new colonial powers had already secretly carved up the entire area between themselves. France took Lebanon and Syria, while Britain kept Palestine, Transjordan and Iraq.

Thus, in Palestine, the groundwork was being laid for tragedy, as Britain attempted to guarantee its own interests while promising everything to everybody.

To the growing Jewish population (13 percent in 1918, 33 percent by 1947) Britain promised a "national home" in continued on next page

Camp David Revisited

Peace Process? What Peace Process?

By Mark A. Bruzonsky

tephen Green, writing in *The Nation* last September, said correctly that "in 1986, Israel need not worry about an invasion. The situation is more serious than that. The potential exists, or soon will exist, for a missile exchange that could reduce many Middle Eastern cities to smoking rubble in a matter of hours, and in the process draw the United States and the Soviet Union into the conflict."

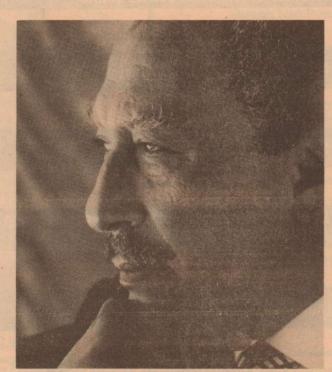
What is the United States doing about this? Not much. Until Reagan took office, few international dilemmas had so continuously occupied U.S. diplomacy as the Arab-Israeli conflict. After the 1956 war, President Eisenhower demanded that Israel withdraw from the Sinai, threatening a cut-off of aid and an end to the tax-

exempt status of Israeli bonds. After the Six Day War in 1967, there was U.N. Resolution 242, calling for Israeli withdrawal and negotiated treaties. In '69 it was the Rogers Plan, in '73 the Geneva Conference, in '75 the U.S. "Reassessment," in '77 the Joint U.S.-Soviet Statement, in '78 the Camp David Accords, and in 1980 the Egytian-Israeli treaty, signed on the White House lawn.

By contrast, in the Reagan years Israel has lashed out at three Arab capitals, actually invading one (Beirut) in 1982. Israeli arms and advisers have greatly escalated their operations in Africa and Latin American in coordination with Washington's policies, allowing Israel to pursue a sustained effort at enforcing acceptance of the American-Israeli diktat.

Almost 10 years ago, I sat alone with Anwar Sadat as he made up his mind about how to change an ominous future. A few days later, he emerged onto the tarmac in Israel. Many who were there at the time, including myself, had an almost religious experience in believing that men of courage and vision could somehow triumph over the forces of hatred and destruction.

But Sadat's vision took root in the politics of neither Israel nor the U.S. His unprecedented gambit was followed by more than a year of wrangling and discord that led to Camp David, and then by another year of bickering before the White House ceremony with Jimmy Carter standing between them, literally bringing the hands of Sadat and Begin together in an



Anwar Sadat: Left in the lurch by the Americans and the Israelis?

Yet the much-discussed "linkage" between the "separate peace" and the Palestinian issue never came about, even though President Carter had given his personal promise at Camp David to keep Sadat from leaving the conference, assuring him that he would "make things right" in his second term.

What has followed can hardly be called peace. Israel first annexed East Jerusalem,

then the Golan Heights, all the while continuing to build new settlements on the West Bank (despite language in the Camp David accord calling for "withdrawal of the Israeli civil and military administration" to allow the Palestinians to begin to exercise "full autonomy" in the area). In June 1980, just days after a Begin-Sadat meeting, Israel attacked the nuclear reactor continued on page 14

Irani continued from previous page

Palestine. The notorious Balfour Declaration of 1918, in which this idea was first publicly enshrined, was a masterpiece of evasion and ambiguity. At the same time, the British continued to assure the Arab Palestinian community (still the overwhelming majority of the population) that control would eventually revert to them.

An infiltration [of Jews] is bound to end badly. It continues until the inevitable moment when the native population feels itself threatened and forces the Government to stop a further influx of Jews. Immigration is . . . futile unless we have the sovereign right to continue such immigration.

-Theodore Herzl The Jewish State, 1896

We feel that the Arabs and Jews are cousins in race, having suffered similar oppressions at the hands of powers stronger than themselves... We Arabs...look with the deepest sympathy upon the Zionist movement... We will wish the Jews a most hearty welcome home.

-Feisal Ibn Hussein, Sharif of Mecca, in a letter to Felix Frankfurter, 1919

We oppose the pretensions of the Zionists to create a Jewish commonwealth in the southern part of Syria, known as Palestine, and oppose Zionist migration to any part of our country; for we do not acknowledge their title, but consider them a grave peril to our people from the national, economical and political points of view. Our Jewish compatriots [in the Arab state] shall enjoy our common rights and assume our common responsibilities.

-Memorandum of the General Syrian Congress on the status of Arab lands, 1919

It is in this context that one should place the trauma provoked by the 1948 war and the creation of the state of Israel, which covered most of the territory of Palestine.

Overwhelmingly, Israel and Zionism were perceived by the Arab world as yet another attempt to subjugate the Arabs and the Islamic world under Western influence. [Editor's note: In 1947, the Palestinian Arab community and delegates from the Arab countries denied the authority of the U.N. to divide Palestine and create a new country peopled overwhelmingly by new immigrants to the area. By 1980, the situation in the Arab world had changed considerably: Egypt had signed a peace treaty with Israel, and most of the rest of the Arab countries were publicly committed to the idea of a U.N. conference and a peace accord linking guarantees for Israel with Palestinian self-determination.]

The Arabs' suspicions, it must be said, were abetted by the willingness of the Zionist leadership to ally itself openly with colonial policies against the interests of the indigenous people. Leaders such as Theodore Herzl and Chaim Weizmann based their policies upon persuasion and cooperation with the colonial presence of the day, whether Ottoman or European.

By 1947 the British had given up on Palestine, and had informed the fledgling United Nations that they intended to leave altogether. In the political chaos that followed, the U.N. responded with a resolution calling for the division of Palestine into two states, one Jewish and one Arab.

Another consequence of our unwillingness to accept as real what we do not like is that when reality catches up with us, it is always too late.

—Cecil Hourani Towards a Middle East Dialogue

If Rabbi Kaplan really wanted to know what happened, we old Jewish settlers in Palestine who witnessed the fight could tell him how and in what manner we Jews forced the Arabs to leave cities and villages.

-Nathan Chofshi Jewish Newsletter, 1959

The 1948 war, which led to the creation of Israel, turned the U.N. partition plan into dead paper. When Arab armies attacked to prevent a Jewish takeover of Palestine, they found an enemy far more prepared than they had expected. That, coupled with persistent disunity among the Palestinians and massive incompetence on the part of Arab leaders, produced a quick Israeli victory. At the end of hostilities, the new Israeli state was in possession of considerably more land than the U.N. plan had allotted. The Israelis immediately set about consolidating their hold within the new lines, and the Palestinians, leaderless and without effective support among the Arabs, began their own exile. (Although some Palestinians remained within the borders of Israel - approximately 17 percent of the population today - many hundreds of thousands fled or were evicted, and became refugees. By Israeli admission, something like 435 Palestinian villages within the "Green Line" were bulldozed into rubble during the first years of Israeli administration.)

Since then, for more than 40 years, Arabs and Israelis have unleashed on each other the wrath of frustrated nationalism. In many ways, the conflict between Israel and its neighbors has become a symbol of the struggle for self-determination in many developing countries. In 1956, for example, Nasser of Egypt moved against Western colonial interests and took over the Suez Canal. Britain and France responded by invading the canal zone, and Israel joined in the operation, taking over

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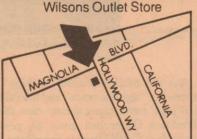
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the Sinai Peninsula. (Israel was soon forced, under U.S. pressure, to return the Sinai.) In the perception of the Third World, Israel quickly became allied with Western neo-colonialism.

The late '60s were a watershed period in the conflict. The establishment and growth of the Palestine Liberation Organization gave the Palestinian cause a voice and a new prominence. The 1967 War, which Israel won so brilliantly, was also the beginning of a new era for Israeli society. Israel began a process of occupation and rule over an alien population that has continued for nearly 20 years.

The effects of this on Israeli society have

been — according to Israelis themselves — profound and far-reaching. The political and social rise of the right in Israel, as exemplified by the election of Menahem Begin in 1977 and the rapid growth of ultranationalist groups and extreme religious sects in the years since, traces its origins to 1967 and the situation in the Occupied Territories.

The Arabs do not agree to our venture. If we want to continue our work in Eretz Israel against their desires, there is no alternative but that lives should be lost. It is our destiny to be in continual war with the Arabs.

—Arthur Ruppin, quoted by Moshe Dayan, 1968 Long live the struggle of the Palestinian Arab people for the liberation of their usurped land!

-Resolution of the Syrian Ba'ath Party (Syria's ruling party), 1969

At the same time, since at least 1964—and the establishment of the PLO—the predicament of the Palestinians has reverberated in the theater of Arab politics. Generally speaking, Arab leaders and governments have paid lip service to the Palestinian cause while avoiding any real commitment, or, alternatively, while using the Palestinians for their own purposes. In 1982 not a single Arab country came to the aid of the Palestinians when Israel moved

against them in Lebanon.

In addition, open conflict with other forces in the Arab world has occurred again and again. The infamous Palestinian group Black September, for example, gets its name not from some historic confrontation with Israel, but from the 1970-71 war with the army of Jordan's King Hussein, which cost the Palestinians thousands of casualties. An ironic footnote came during that war when some Palestinian fighters even fled to Israeli-controlled territory to escape the fury of King Hussein's army. Syrian and Palestinian forces have fought repeatedly in Lebanon, while Palestinians in Syria itself have been tightly controlled for many years. After the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Syria exploited the chaos within the Palestinian forces by attempting to topple PLO chief Yasir Arafat.

From the Palestinian point of view, Sadat's visit to Jerusalem, the Camp David Accords of 1979 and the Egyptian-Israeli peace treaty were a betrayal and a major blow to Palestinian hopes. The peace treaty ended any effective Egyptian pressure on Israel regarding the question of the Occupied Territories and freed Israel to carry out the 1982 invasion of Lebanon. The sparks of the Egyptian-Israeli peace accords also helped reignite the civil war in Lebanon, transforming Beirut from a capital city into a hellish quagmire. Lebanon became the soft underbelly of Arab and Middle Eastern politics. All the important players in the Arab-Israeli and East-West power game are battling it out in the political shambles of what used to be the Lebanese state.

Every faction in Lebanon plays a devil's game of brinksmanship. Militias are raised and supported by outside forces; foreign armies enter, take sides, change sides, depart, return; alliances change by the week, the month and the hour. The contradictions of the region have become the determining factors of daily life for most of the population.

Today Lebanon remains on the brink of collapse, and anything resembling a renewal is almost impossible to envision without a regional peace, or at the very least, a Syrian-Israeli entente.

Visible cooperation with Israel will enhance America's ability to deter Soviet and Soviet-allied aggression in the Eastern Mediterranean.

-AIPAC (American Israel Public Affairs Committee document supplied privately to U.S. politicians, 1986

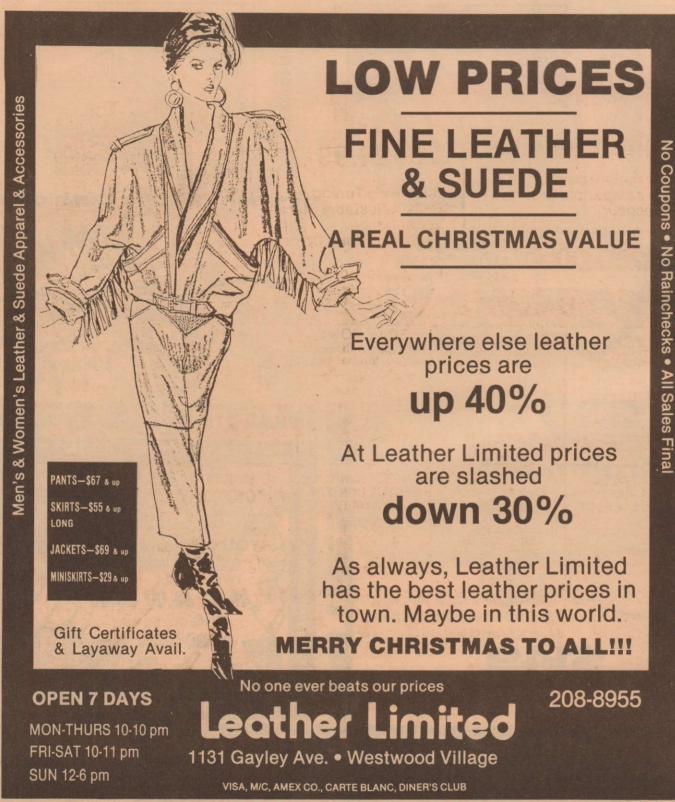
The horrors of Lebanon could yet repeat themselves elsewhere in the Middle East. The region remains full of wars, conflicts, contradictions — some internal, some imported. Iran presents a major challenge on two levels: on one hand a religious, Islamic challenge; and on the other, a political bid for hegemony that could constitute a major threat to the Arab world — and to the Israelis, as they themselves have belatedly realized.

At the beginning of the 20th century the Balkans were the powder keg of Europe; at the end of the century the Middle East is on a hair trigger, ready to detonate in a nuclear world. The region has the greatest stocks of high-tech weaponry outside Europe and the superpowers, and no place else is the question more starkly put: Guns or butter? The logic of confrontation or the logic of survival?

George Irani is a member of the faculty at USC, a specialist in Lebanese political affairs and author of the recent book The Papacy and the Middle East: the Role of the Holy See in the Arab-Israeli Conflict.







Bruzonsky continued from page 9

in Baghdad, greatly embarrassing Sadat. A month later, Israeli war planes attacked Beirut, killing 300. By the year's end, an isolated and discredited Anwar Sadat had been assassasinated by his own military, and Egypt hardly mourned him as three former American presidents escorted his coffin through the heavily secured streets of Cairo.

Less than two years later, as the United States looked approvingly on, Israel invaded Lebanon. The summerlong seige of Beirut that followed left a deep scar in the Arab world, and created such tension in Egypt that President Mubarak faced rebellion within his own government for refusing to do more than withdraw his ambassador from Tel Aviv.

The promises of a comprehensive peace as enunciated by Jimmy Garter were disowned by the Reagan administration ... No longer was finding a homeland for the Palestinian a part of U.S. policy, not even publicly.

More generally, the promises of a comprehensive peace as enunciated by Jimmy Carter were disowned by the Reagan administration. No longer was Israeli settlement in the occupied territories condemned, as it had been before. No longer was finding a homeland for the Palestinian a part of U.S. policy, not even publicly. "Even-handedness" had ceased to be credible, even as a slogan.

Rather, the new American administration quickly moved toward a "strategic alliance" with Israel, consulting on the occupation of Lebanon, even opening a new era in U.S. Middle East policy when American naval guns opened fire on Lebanese villages in the hills above Beirut. It was the first — but not the last — use of American military might against Arab targets, and brought about a wave of retaliation that has still not subsided, though the immediate effects were apparent enough when car bombs destroyed both the American Embassy and the U.S. Marine compound.

The bombings of Baghdad, Tunis and Tripoli, the invasion of Lebanon, the aborted deployment of American Marines, the opening phases of a still-looming major war with Syria, the spreading of American covert operations throughout the region—all of this has more than ever before cast America in the role of villain. No wonder Americans feel unsafe; they have been targeted by the Arab world in an expression of outrage against their nation's policies.

No further marginal fixes are likely to change this course. No more cheap American rhetoric, usually contradicted by its actions, is likely to be considered credible.

Mark Bruzonsky was, from 1977 to 1983, Washington associate of the World Jewish Congress and covered Sadat's visit to Israel and the peace process negotiations for several publications. He is also co-editor of the forthcoming book Security in the Middle East.