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# Chapter 1

## *King of the Hill*

Washington is a city of acronyms, and today one of the best-known in Congress is AIPAC. The mere mention of it brings a sobet, if not furtive look, to the face of anyone on Capitol Hill who deals with Middle East policy. AIPAC—the American Israel Public Affairs Committee—is now the preeminent power in Washington lobbying.

In 1967, as a fourth-term Congressman just named to the House Foreign Affairs Committee, I had never heard of it. One day, in private conversation in the committee room, I voiced a brief criticism of Israel's military attack on Syria. A senior Republican, William S. Broomfield of Michigan, responded with a smile, "Wait till 'Si' Kenen over at AIPAC hears what you've said." He was referring to I. L. Kenen, the executive director of AIPAC, whose name was just as unfamiliar to me as the organization he headed. I learned later that Broomfield was not joking. AIPAC sometimes finds out what Congressmen say about Middle East policy even in private conversations, and those who criticize Israel do so at their political peril.

AIPAC is only a part of the Israeli lobby, but in terms of direct effect on public policy it is clearly the most important. The organization has deepened and extended its influence in recent years. It is no overstatement to say that AIPAC has effectively gained control of virtually all of Capitol Hill's action on Middle East policy. Almost without exception, House and Senate members do its bidding, because most of them consider AIPAC to be the direct Capitol Hill representative of a political force that can make or break their chances at election time.

Whether based on fact or fancy, the perception is what counts: AIPAC means power—raw, intimidating power. Its promotional literature regularly cites a tribute published in *The New York Times*: "The most powerful, best-run and effective foreign policy interest group in

Washington." A former Congressman, Paul N. "Pete" McCloskey puts it more directly: Congress is "terrorized" by AIPAC. Other Congressmen have not been so candid on the public record, but many House and Senate members privately agree.

AIPAC's preeminence is relatively new. Only a few years ago the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations was regarded as the strongest pro-Israel voice in Washington, speaking as it did for the leadership of the 38 main Jewish groups. The Anti-Defamation League, American Jewish Committee and AIPAC were generally in its shadow. The latter two organizations have about 50,000 members each. The Anti-Defamation League is technically subordinate to B'nai B'rith with its worldwide membership of 500,000, but it raises its own funds and has attained substantial independence. Although prominent in their younger years, Washington representatives Hyman Bookbinder of the American Jewish Committee and Dave Brody of the Anti-Defamation League are now substantially eclipsed by AIPAC.

The Washington presence is only the most visible tip of the lobby. Its effectiveness rests heavily on the foundation built nationally by U.S. Jews, who function through more than 200 national groups. A professional on the AIPAC staff says:

I would say that at most two million Jews are interested politically or in a charity sense. The other four million are not. Of the two million, most will not be involved beyond giving some money.

Actually, those who provide the political activism for all organizations in U.S. Jewry probably do not exceed 250,000. The lobby's most popular newsletter, AIPAC's *Near East Report*, goes to about 60,000 people, a distribution that the organization believes is read by most U.S. citizens who take a responsibility in pro-Israeli political action, whether their primary interest is AIPAC, B'nai B'rith, the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League, the Jewish National Fund, the United Jewish Appeal or any of the other main national groups. The newsletter also goes without charge to news media, Congressmen, key government officials, and other people prominent in foreign policy. AIPAC members get the newsletter as a part of their \$35 annual dues.

In practice, the lobby groups function as an informal extension of the Israeli government. This was illustrated when AIPAC helped draft the official statement defending Israel's 1981 bombing of the Iraqi nuclear reactor, then issued it the same hour as Israel's embassy.

No major Jewish organization ever publicly takes issue with posi-

tions and policies adopted by Israel. Thomas A. Dine, executive director of AIPAC, spoke warmly of President Reagan's peace plan when it was announced in September 1982, but as soon as Israel rejected the plan, Dine fell silent.

This close coordination sometimes inspires intragovernment humor. "At the State Department we used to predict that if Israel's prime minister should announce that the world is flat, within 24 hours Congress would pass a resolution congratulating him on the discovery," recalls Don Bergus, former ambassador to Sudan and a retired career diplomat.

To Jewish organizations, however, lobbying Washington is serious business, and they look increasingly to AIPAC for leadership. Stephen S. Rosenfeld, deputy editor of *The Washington Post* editorial page, rates AIPAC as "clearly the leading Jewish political force in America today."

AIPAC's charter defines its mission as legislative action, but it now also represents the interests of Israel whenever there is a perceived challenge to that country's interests in the news media, the religious community, on U.S. college campuses—anywhere. Because AIPAC's staff members are paid from contributions by American citizens, they need not register under the Foreign Agents Registration Act. In effect, however, they serve the same function as foreign agents.

Over the years the pro-Israel lobby has thoroughly penetrated this nation's governmental system, and the organization that has made the deepest impact is AIPAC, to whom even the president of the United States turns when he has a vexing political problem related to the Arab-Israeli dispute.

#### *The Ascendancy of Thomas A. Dine*

Faced with rising public opposition to the presence of U.S. Marines in Lebanon, President Ronald Reagan in October 1983 sought help from the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. The terrorist bombing which killed more than 200 Marines asleep in their barracks at the Beirut airport was yet to come. Still, four Marines had already died, three by sniper fire, and Congressional concern was rising. Democratic Congressman Sam Stratton of New York, a veteran known for his "hawkish" views, called the Marines "sitting ducks" and predicted heavy casualties. He wanted them out.

Others cited the War Powers Resolution and questioned whether the president had authority to keep forces in a hostile environment such as Beirut for more than 90 days without the express approval of

Congress. Some Congressmen began drawing parallels between the Marine presence in Lebanon and the beginnings of the disastrous U.S. experience in Vietnam.

President Reagan objected, as did his predecessors, to the restrictions imposed by the War Powers legislation. If he accepted its terms, he would have to withdraw the forces within 90 days or get Congress to approve an extension. If he insisted that the law did not apply because the situation was not hostile, events might quickly prove him wrong and, regardless, he would have a rebellious Congress on his hands.

He decided to finesse the problem. He asked Congress for legislation letting him keep the existing force of Marines in Lebanon for 18 months. This would please the "strict constructionists" who felt the chief executive must live with the War Powers Resolution. It would suit his own needs, because he was confident that the orderly removal of the Marines would occur within the 18-month period.

Thanks to extraordinary help from an unlikely quarter, Reagan's plan had relatively clear sailing in the House of Representatives. Speaker Thomas P. "Tip" O'Neill, the most prominent elected Democrat in the nation, gave the legislation his strong support. To O'Neill, it was a question of patriotism, and enough Democrats answered his call to assure passage in the Democrat-controlled body.

But the Senate, although controlled by his fellow Republicans, posed a more difficult problem for the president. A "nose count" showed a close vote and probably even defeat. The president decided he needed help and enlisted the cooperation of Thomas A. Dine, the slender, aggressive, dark-haired young Capitol Hill staff veteran who has headed AIPAC since 1981.

Reagan's appeal to Dine for support on the Marine issue was without precedent. The pending bill contained no money for Israel, and AIPAC and other Israeli lobby groups had kept hands off the Lebanon controversy. Pro-Israeli forces did not want other Americans to blame Israel if the Marines should encounter more trouble. Certainly Israel already bore responsibility enough for U.S. problems in Lebanon. It had discreetly but effectively helped to engineer the original Marine presence in Beirut by agreeing to withdraw its forces from Beirut in favor of a multinational force provided the United States were included. (The multinational force would have been unnecessary had Israel not invaded Lebanon in the first place.) Though AIPAC privately wanted the Marines to stay in Lebanon, under the circumstances its leadership preferred to stay in the background.

The White House call to Dine was exceptional for another reason: Reagan needed help with Senators who were normally his most stalwart supporters. The president was unsure of the votes of twelve Re-

publicans, among them John Warner of Virginia, Dan Quayle of Indiana, William Cohen of Maine and James A. McClure of Idaho. All were generally regarded as "hawkish" on military questions and, except for McClure, strong supporters of Israel. Learning of the presidential plea, one AIPAC staffer said: "If the White House is worried about those votes, the bill is going down."

Despite its reluctance to get involved publicly in the sensitive issue, AIPAC made the calls. Nine of the twelve Senators, including the four mentioned above, voted with the president and helped him win a narrow 54 to 46 victory.

AIPAC's role in the outcome was not noted in most media reports on the dramatic event, but an elated President Reagan called Dine personally to express his thanks. Michael Gale, then handling White House relations with the Jewish community, provided a transcript of the conversation with the suggestion that AIPAC publicize it. AIPAC declined, preferring to maintain its low profile on the issue, so Gale gave the text to Wolf Blitzer of *The Jerusalem Post*, who formerly wrote for AIPAC's *Near East Report*. The *Post* quoted Reagan as saying to Dine, "I just wanted to thank you and all your staff for the great assistance you gave us on the War Powers Act resolution. . . . I know how you mobilized the grassroots organizations to generate support."

"Well, we try to use the telephone," responded Dine. "That's part of our job. And we wanted to do it and will continue to do it. . . . We want to work together, obviously."

Work together they have. The Reagan executive branch established a relationship with AIPAC of unprecedented intimacy. It was not the first time the White House or the State Department had turned to the lobbying group for help. Although these high level approaches are little known even on Capitol Hill, they actually occur every time foreign aid legislation is up for a vote. Whoever controls the White House finds that securing Congressional approval of foreign aid is a challenge and, as the legislation includes economic and military aid to Israel, naturally looks to AIPAC for help. Except for a few humanitarian and church-related organizations, AIPAC serves foreign aid's only domestic constituency.

Without AIPAC, foreign aid legislation would not be approved at the \$7 billion-plus level of 1983 and might have difficulty surviving at all. A candid tribute to the lobby came from John K. Wilhelm, the executive director of the presidential commission that made recommendations in late 1983 on the future direction of foreign aid. Briefing a world hunger board at the State Department in January 1984, Wilhelm, a career veteran in the Agency for International Development, said the

active support of the pro-Israeli lobby was "vital" to Congressional approval of foreign aid. In the early 1960s when aid to Israel was modest—less than \$100 million a year—a foreign-aid bill squeaked through the House of Representatives by a scant five votes. AIPAC was then in its infancy.

AIPAC also crafted the strategy which produced a \$510 million increase in 1983 aid for Israel—an increase which was astonishing because it came just after the indiscriminate bombing of Beirut and the failure of Israeli forces to halt the massacre of Palestinian refugees in the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, events that aroused unprecedented public criticism of Israeli policy.

The administration opposed the increase but was outmaneuvered. By the time Judge William Clark, at the time National Security Adviser to President Reagan, sent an urgent appeal to Republican Senator Mark Hatfield to block the increase, the issue was settled. AIPAC had already locked in support by persuading a majority on the Appropriations Committee that the add-on was a simple question of being for or against Israel. No one wanted to champion the negative side.

AIPAC had already confounded the administration on the House side, where the White House had argued against the increase for budgetary reasons, contending it would be at the expense of other needy countries. This argument was demolished when AIPAC lobbyists presented elaborate data showing how the extra aid to Israel could be accomplished without cutting support for other countries. An AIPAC lobbyist summed up: "The administration lobbyists really didn't do their homework. They didn't have their act together." By 1984 the aid level had risen to over \$2 billion a year—all of it in grants with no repayment—and the approval margin was 112.

In February 1983, Secretary of State George Shultz named a "blue ribbon" panel of prominent citizens to recommend changes in the foreign aid program. Of the 42 on the commission, 27 were Senators or House members with primary responsibility for handling foreign aid legislation. The others had prominence in administering foreign aid in years past.

Only one full-time lobbyist was named to the panel: AIPAC's executive director, Thomas A. Dine. It was the first time to my knowledge that a lobbyist had been selected for such a prestigious government assignment, and Dine's selection was particularly surprising because it put him in a close working relationship with the handful of people who formulate and carry out policy on the very matter AIPAC was set up to influence—aid to Israel.

A more enviable position for a lobbyist could hardly be imagined. Former Senator James Abourezk, head of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, commented:

It would make as much sense to let the president of Lockheed Corporation serve on a Defense Department board which decides what planes our air force will buy.

In November, Dine took an even bigger step up the ladder of Washington prestige and influence. He was invited to the White House for a private meeting with National Security Adviser Robert C. McFarlane, President Reagan's closest advisor on day-to-day policy in the Middle East. On the agenda were two foreign policy topics of great sensitivity: the Lebanese situation and the proposal to help Jordan establish a rapid deployment force. Both of these issues, of course, were of vital interest to Israel. Dine's invitation came just a week after he received the President's jubilant phone call.

In January 1984 *Washingtonian* magazine listed Dine among the most influential people in the nation's capital.

Dine's reputation has even stirred Arab capitals. In mid-March 1984 King Hussein of Jordan publicly blamed AIPAC, in part, for the decline in U.S. influence and leadership for peace in the Middle East. He also criticized the inordinate influence of the Israeli lobby on U.S. presidential candidates. He said the candidates had to "appeal for the favors of AIPAC, Zionism and Israel."

One development which especially provoked the king was that, for ten days beginning in mid-March 1984, Dine personally took part in direct foreign policy negotiations with Undersecretary of State Lawrence S. Eagleburger and National Security Adviser McFarlane. During one session, Eagleburger offered to withdraw a widely publicized proposal to sell anti-aircraft missiles to Jordan if AIPAC would drop its support of legislation requiring the removal of the U.S. embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

By then, King Hussein's sharp criticism of the United States—and AIPAC—had appeared in U.S. newspapers, and Dine knew it had strengthened Congressional opposition to the sale. At the time Eagleburger made his proposition, AIPAC already had 48 Senators committed in opposition and received pledges from six more the next day. Thus AIPAC was able to kill the sale without cutting a deal on other issues.

After he rejected Eagleburger's offer, Dine promised that AIPAC would cease active opposition to a proposal to help Jordan establish a rapid deployment force and would lobby to work out a compromise on the bill to transfer the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem if the administration would take two important steps: first, refuse to sell Stinger anti-aircraft missiles to Saudi Arabia, and, second, issue a public letter announcing that it would engage in no further indirect communications with the Palestine Liberation Organization. Although

the public letter did not appear, the administration backed away from the Stinger sales to both Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

Dine emerged from these negotiations with his prestige greatly enhanced. Richard Murphy, assistant secretary of state for Near East and South Asia affairs, the official charged with the development and administration of United States policies relating to the Middle East, was not invited to the Eagleburger-McFarlane-Dine negotiations, nor was he notified of the administration decision to cancel the proposed sale of Stinger missiles until twelve hours after AIPAC received the information.

*The Washington Post* concluded that the episode "raised questions about the propriety of the administration's making deals on foreign policy issues with a private, special-interest organization." Dine had a ready response: "We think it's better to be strong and criticized, than weak, ignored and not respected."

In part, the unprecedented presidential consideration was a tribute to Dine's combination of ingratiating manner, tough, relentless spirit and sheer dynamism. Under Dine, AIPAC's membership has risen from 11,000 to over 50,000, and its annual budget from \$750,000 to more than \$3,000,000.

Dine's influence is felt in power centers beyond the Oval Office. He receives calls from presidential candidates as well as presidents and reports that former Vice-President Walter Mondale "bounces ideas off us" before he issues statements on Middle East policy.

Most Congressional actions affecting Middle East policy are either approved or initiated by AIPAC.

### *Broadening the Network*

To accomplish these feats for Israel—sometimes cooperating with the president of the United States, sometimes not—AIPAC director Dine utilizes a team of hard-driving, able professionals and keeps them working together smoothly.

He keeps policy lines clear and the troops well-disciplined. AIPAC's role is to support Israel's policies, not to help formulate them, so AIPAC maintains daily telephone communication with the Israeli embassy, and Dine meets personally with embassy officials at least once a week.

Though AIPAC has a staff of only 60—small in comparison to other major U.S. Jewish organizations—it taps the resources of a broad nationwide network of unpaid activists. Annual membership meetings in Washington are a major way to rally the troops. Those attending hear prominent U.S. and Israeli speakers, participate in workshops and seminars, and contribute financially to the cause. The conferences at-

tract top political talent: the Israeli ambassador, senior White House and State Department officials, prominent Senators and House members. Recent conferences featured Senators Paul Laxalt of Nevada, Joseph Biden of Delaware, Robert Kasten of Wisconsin, Christopher Dodd of Connecticut, Robert Packwood of Washington, Robert Dole of Kansas, and Daniel Inouye of Hawaii.

The White House is also well represented at such conferences. Vice-President George Bush recently assured AIPAC delegates that the Reagan administration will keep fighting against anti-Semitism at the United Nations and criticized the three Democratic presidential candidates—Walter Mondale, Gary Hart and Jesse Jackson—for being "soft on anti-Semitism."

More than 1,200 representatives from 41 states attended AIPAC's 1983 national gathering. They heard Congressman Jack Kemp of New York, chairman of the Republican caucus in the House of Representatives, describe himself as "a de facto member of AIPAC." Forty-three House members and sixteen Senators attended the conference banquet.

Art Chotin, deputy executive director of AIPAC, reported to the group that during the previous year ten different statewide workshops on political involvement had given the "pro-Israeli community" the "skills they need to have an impact." Ten more were planned for 1984. Chotin illustrated the national impact of these local events by pointing out that a 1982 workshop in New Mexico had helped elect Democrat Jeffrey Bingaman to the Senate. Bingaman, described by Chotin as "a strong pro-Israeli voice in Washington," was among the 100 "pro-Israeli citizens" attending the 1983 affair.

Tightly scheduled workshops, similar to the national conferences, are conducted annually in each of five regions. The "capitals" are Atlanta, Fort Worth, Hollywood, Des Moines and Chicago, and from each a chairperson coordinates all AIPAC regional activities. To help these outreach programs, AIPAC now has full-time staff located in New York, New Jersey and California.

Chotin told the conference that during the 1982 Congressional elections, 300 candidates "came to visit AIPAC" to explain their positions on "foreign aid, arms sales to Arab nations, and the general nature of U.S.-Arab relations."

Ties with other interest groups are carefully cultivated. Christian outreach was announced as AIPAC's newest national program, and Merrie White, a "born-again Christian," was introduced as the director of relations with the Christian community. According to Chotin, the goal was nothing less than to "bring that community into AIPAC." He noted the presence of 50 Christians representing 35 states as evidence of progress already made toward this end. White helped organize the

annual Religious Roundtable Prayer Breakfast for Israel the following February (see chapter nine). Chris Gersten, AIPAC's political director, came to the position after seven years as special assistant to the president of the International Union of Operating Engineers.

AIPAC's coast-to-coast outreach is enhanced by its speaking program. Its officers, staff members and representatives filled over 900 dates in 1982 alone. Receptions are held in scores of smaller cities. "Parlor briefings" in the homes of Jewish leaders nationally help raise money to supplement revenue from membership dues. Social events on Capitol Hill help spread the word to the thousands of high school and college students who work as interns in the offices of Senators and Congressmen or in committee offices.

Tours of Israel which other Jewish groups arrange help to establish a grassroots base for AIPAC's program. For example, in April 1982, the Young Leadership Mission, an activity of United Jewish Appeal, conducted 1,500 U.S. Jews on one week tours. "The visitors were given a view of the magnificence you will find in any country," observes an AIPAC staff member. He said the tour had profound impact: "It built spirit for the cause, and it raised money. The pitch for funds was the final event. It came right after the folks walked out of the memorial to the Holocaust." The effect was awesome: "The tour directors have it down to a science," he reports. "They know how to hit all the buttons." The United Jewish Appeal and Israel share the proceeds. Larry Kraftowitz, a Washington journalist who attended a similar tour, calls the experience "profound." He adds, "I consider myself more sympathetic to the New Jewish Agenda goals [than current Israeli government policy], but I must say I was impressed."

Tours are not just for Jews. Governors, members of state legislatures, and community leaders, including news media personnel, are also given the opportunity for expense-paid tours of Israel. Trips are also arranged for leaders nationally, especially those on Capitol Hill. While AIPAC does not itself conduct the tours, it facilitates the process. Over half the membership of Congress has traveled to Israel, about half going on what is deemed official business at the expense of the U.S. government. With few exceptions, Jewish organizations or individuals paid the expenses of the rest.

Another group of potentially influential—but often overlooked—Washington functionaries that AIPAC tries to influence is made up of Congressional staffers. AIPAC works with Israeli universities who arrange expense-paid tours for staff members who occupy key positions. These annual trips are called the Hal Rosenthal program, named for a staff aide to former Republican Senator Jacob Javits who was gunned down by a Palestinian terrorist on the first such trip. By 1984 over 50 Congressional staffers had participated.

AIPAC is as successful at keeping lawmakers from visiting Arab countries as it is in presenting only Israel's views. When the National Association of Arab Americans, working through the World Affairs Council of Amman, invited all Congressmen and their spouses to an expense-paid tour of Jordan with a side trip to the West Bank in 1983, a notice in AIPAC's *Near East Report* quickly chilled prospects for participation. It questioned how Amman, without Israeli cooperation, could get the tourists across the Jordan river for events scheduled in the West Bank. It also quoted Don Sundquist, a Republican Congressman from Tennessee, as expressing "fear" that if any of his colleagues accepted the trip they would be "used" by anti-Israeli propagandists. Only three Congressmen made the trip. A 1984 tour was cancelled for lack of acceptances.

AIPAC's outreach program is buttressed by a steady stream of publications. In addition to "Action Alerts" and the weekly *Near East Report*, it issues position papers and monographs designed to answer, or often discredit, critics, and advance Israel's objectives.

The most controversial publication of all is an "enemies list" issued as a "first edition" in the spring of 1983. A handsomely printed 154-page paperback entitled *The Campaign to Discredit Israel*, it provides a "directory of the actors": 21 organizations and 39 individuals AIPAC identified as inimical to Israeli interests.

Included are such distinguished public servants as former Undersecretary of State George W. Ball, retired ambassadors Talcott Seelye, Andrew Killgore, John C. West and James Akins, and former Senator James Abourezk. There are also five Jewish dissenters and several scholars on the list.

Seemingly unaware of the AIPAC project, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith almost simultaneously issued its own "enemies list": *Pro-Arab Propaganda in America: Vehicles and Voices*. It too is identified as a "first edition," and lists 31 organizations and 34 individuals. These books are nothing more than blacklists, reminiscent of the worst tactics of the McCarthy era.

A similar "enemies list" is employed in AIPAC's extensive program at colleges and universities (see chapter seven).

### "They Get the Word Out Fast"

Through "Action Alert" mailings AIPAC keeps more than one thousand Jewish leaders throughout the United States informed on current issues. An "alert" usually demands action to meet a legislative challenge on Capitol Hill, requesting a telephone call, telegram or, if need be, a personal visit to a reluctant Congressman.

The network can have almost instantaneous effect. One day I

whispered to a colleague in the Foreign Affairs Committee I might offer an amendment to a pending bill cutting aid to Israel. Within 30 minutes two other Congressmen came to me with worried looks, reporting they had just had calls from citizens in their home districts who were concerned about my amendment.

Paul Weyrich, who worked as a Senate aide before becoming a political analyst, details the effectiveness of AIPAC:

It's a remarkable system they have. If you vote with them, or make a public statement they like, they get the word out fast through their own publications and through editors around the country who are sympathetic to their cause.

Of course it works in reverse as well. If you say something they don't like, you can be denounced or censured through the same network. That kind of pressure is bound to affect Senators' thinking, especially if they are wavering or need support.

This activism is carried out by an elaborate system of officers, committees and councils which give AIPAC a ready, intimate system for political activity from coast to coast. Its nineteen officers meet once a month to confer with Dine on organization and management. Each of its five vice-presidents can expect eventually to serve a term as president. A large executive committee totaling 132 members is invited to Washington every three months for briefings. A national council lists over 200 names. These subgroups include the leadership of most major U.S. Jewish organizations.

The AIPAC staff is not only highly professional and highly motivated but also thoroughly experienced. Director Dine worked in several Capitol Hill jobs, first on the staff of Democratic Senator Edward Kennedy, later on the Foreign Relations Committee under Democratic Senator Frank Church of Idaho, and finally as staff director on foreign policy for the Senate budget committee.

AIPAC's four lobbyists are Douglas Bloomfield, Ralph Numberger, Esther Kurz and Leslie L. Levy. All but Levy worked in foreign policy for a Senator or Congressman before joining AIPAC. Levy came to AIPAC as a student intern and advanced within the organization.

Bloomfield, once an intern under Democratic Senator Hubert Humphrey of Minnesota, worked for 10 years for Democratic Congressman Ben Rosenthal of New York. Nurnberger worked for several years on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and for Republican Senator James Pearson of Kansas. Kurz worked, in succession, for Democratic Congressman Charles Wilson of Texas, and Republican Senators Jacob Javits of New York and Arlen Specter of Pennsylvania.

The four divide up the membership of the House and Senate. Actually, only a handful of legislators are keys to success, so each of

the four lobbyists needs to watch carefully only about thirty lawmakers. They concentrate on legislators from the twelve states which have a Jewish population of at least three percent: New York, New Jersey, California, Massachusetts, Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, Florida and Connecticut.

The movement from Congressional staff job to AIPAC also occasionally works the other way. A few veterans of AIPAC have moved to government assignments, among them Jonathan Slade, now with Democratic Congressman Larry Smith of Florida, and Marvin Feuerwerker, who was with Democratic Congressman Stephen Solarz of New York before he joined the Policy Planning Staff at the State Department. Both Smith and Solarz are members of the Foreign Affairs Committee, and both are passionate supporters of Israel.

Lobbyists for AIPAC have almost instant access to House and Senate members and feel free to call them at their homes in the evening. Republican Congressman Douglas Bereuter of Nebraska, an exception, will receive no lobbyists, AIPAC or otherwise, but the doors are wide open to AIPAC lobbyists at the offices of almost all other Congressmen. A Congressional aide explained why:

Professionalism is one reason. They know what they are doing, get to the point and leave. They are often a useful source of information. They are reliable and friendly. But most important of all, they are seen by Congressmen as having direct and powerful ties to important constituents.

The result is a remarkable cooperation and rapport between lobbyist and legislator. Encountered in a Capitol corridor one day, an AIPAC lobbyist said, "Tomorrow I will try to see five members of the House. I called this morning and confirmed every appointment, and I have no doubt I will get in promptly." Two days later, even he seemed somewhat awed by AIPAC's clout. He reported, "I made all five. I went right in to see each of them. There was no waiting. Our access is amazing."

This experience contrasts sharply with the experience of most other lobbyists on Capitol Hill. One veteran lobbyist reflected with envy on the access AIPAC enjoys: "If I can actually see two Congressmen or Senators in one long day, it's been a good one."

Despite its denials, AIPAC keeps close records on each House and Senator member. Unlike other lobbies, which keep track only of a few "key" issues voted on the House or Senate floor, AIPAC takes note of other activities, too—votes in committees, co-sponsorship of bills, signing of letters and even whether speeches are made. "That's depth!" exclaims an admiring Capitol Hill staff member.

An illustration of lobby power occurred October 3, 1984, when the

House of Representatives approved a bill to remove all trade restrictions between the United States and Israel; 98.5 percent (416) voted affirmative, despite the strong opposition of the AFL-CIO and the American Farm Bureau Federation. The vote was 416 to 6 on legislation that normally would elicit heavy reaction because of its effect on markets for commodities produced in the United States.

As they voted, few were aware of a Commerce Department study which found that the duty-free imports proposed in the bill would cause "significant adverse effects" on U.S. producers of vegetables. Because the White House wanted the bill passed, notwithstanding its effects on jobs and markets, the study was classified "confidential" and kept under wraps. One Congressman finally pried a copy loose by complaining bitterly—and correctly—to the White House that AIPAC had secured a copy for its own use.

### *"I Cleared It with AIPAC"*

Until his defeat in an upset on November 6, 1984, Congressman Clarence D. "Doc" Long, a 74-year-old Democrat of Maryland, exemplified the strong ties between AIPAC and Capitol Hill. He delivered for Israel as chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee which handles aid to Israel.

The tall, gray-haired, former economics professor at Johns Hopkins University trumpeted his support: "AIPAC made my district their number one interest." AIPAC supported Long for a good reason: He held the gavel when questions about funding Israeli aid come up. The lobby wanted him to keep it. Chairmanships normally are decided by seniority, and next in line after Long is David Obey of Wisconsin, who earned lobby disfavor in 1976 by offering an amendment to cut aid to Israel by \$200 million. "Doc" Long never had any misgivings about aid to Israel and helped his colleagues defeat Obey's amendment, 342 to 32.

Sitting at a table in the House of Representatives restaurant during a late House session in 1982, Long explained,

Long ago I decided that I'd vote for anything AIPAC wants. I didn't want them on my back. My district is too difficult. I don't need the trouble [pro-Israeli lobbyists] can cause. I made up my mind I would get and keep their support.

The conversation turned to one of Obey's questions about the high levels of Israeli aid. Long said, "I can't imagine why Dave would say things like that." A colleague chided: "Maybe he's thinking about our own national interest."

In September 1983, Long led a battle to get U.S. Marines out of

Lebanon. He proposed an amendment which would have cut funding for the operation in 60 days. John Hall, a reporter who knew Long's close ties with the lobby, asked Long, "Are you sure this amendment won't get you in trouble?" Without hesitation, the Congressman replied: "I cleared it with AIPAC." He was not joking. Though this was not the first Congressional proposal to be cleared in advance with the Israeli lobby, it was the first time the clearance had been specifically acknowledged in the public record. The proposal to cut aid to Lebanon provoked a lively debate but, opposed by such leaders as Speaker "Tip" O'Neill and Lee Hamilton of Indiana, chairman of the Subcommittee on Europe and the Middle East, the measure failed, 274-153.

Although heavily supported by pro-Israeli interests—18 pro-Israel political action committees chipped in \$31,250 for Long's 1982 re-election campaign—Long denies a personal linkage:

Nobody has to give me money to make me vote for aid to Israel. I've been doing that for 20 years, most of the time without contributions.

The money and votes Israel's supporters provided to Long's candidacy were insufficient in 1984. Although pro-Israel PACs gave him \$155,000—four times the amount that went to any other House candidate—Long lost by 5,727 votes, less than three percent of those cast. A factor in his defeat was advertising sponsored by people prominent in the National Association of Arab Americans which attacked Long for his uncritical support of Israel's demands. Obey, Long's likely successor as chairman, was the only Democrat on the panel who did not accept money from pro-Israel political action committees.

### *Outreach on an International Scale*

AIPAC not only champions Israel's causes in the U.S., but its international ambitions as well. The lobby recently began an international outreach program, serving Israel's interests by facilitating U.S. aid to other countries. In 1983 it tried to help Zaire, Israel's new African friend. Israel wanted Zaire to get \$20 million in military assistance requested by President Reagan, but AIPAC decided against assigning the lobbying task to its regular staff. Instead, it secured the temporary services of a consultant who button-holed members of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. The amendment failed, but the effort helped to pay Israel's obligation incurred when Zaire extended full diplomatic recognition to Israel the previous year.

Columnists Rowland Evans and Robert Novak viewed the initiative as the first step in an Israeli program "to broker aid favors for other pariahs on the congressional hit list to enhance its influence." They



described this new effort by Israel as "an exercise of domestic political power by a foreign nation that raises troubling questions."

While branching out internationally, AIPAC maintains strong influence in domestic partisan campaigns. It took a major role in the intense 1984 contest for the Senate in North Carolina, which involved an expensive showdown between Jesse Helms, the Republican incumbent, who is proud to be viewed as the apostle of conservatism, and Democratic Governor Jim Hunt, who sees himself as a leader in the progressive politics in the "New South." These adversaries were of one mind, however, in soliciting the pro-Israel vote, and the endeavor led Helms into surprising activity. The contest took on special national importance because Helms, as second-ranking Republican on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, could have chosen to head the committee after the defeat of Senator Charles Percy (see chapter three).

In his program to win pro-Israel support, Helms had to overcome major obstacles. In a 1979 speech, Helms had warned that Israeli West Bank policies were "the block to a comprehensive settlement" of the Arab-Israeli dispute. During Israel's invasion of Lebanon in 1982, Helms made a speech in which he suggested that the United States might ultimately need to "shut down" relations with Israel.

High on Helms's hate list is foreign aid, which he considers to be the "the greatest racket of all time." He proclaims proudly, "I have not voted to send one dime overseas for these programs."

Because aid to Israel is included in the foreign aid he opposed, Hunt charged that Helms had voted against Israel no fewer than 25 times. He also criticized Helms sharply for voting in favor of controversial military sales to Saudi Arabia.

Hunt's campaign team sought to exploit these "mistakes" with a letter to pro-Israel financial prospects mailed in an envelope conspicuously labeled: "Caution: the enclosed information is extremely damaging to the state of Israel." The damage was identified as the prospect that Helms might become an anti-Israel chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee. This form of fundraising brought good results: a Helms staff member said, "We calculate that 60 percent of Hunt's money is from the Jewish community." By mid-August Hunt had received \$130,350 from pro-Israel political action committees, Helms zero.

Helms launched a counterattack designed to mend his relations with backers of Israel. In May he personally introduced a visiting Likud member of the Israeli parliament on the Senate floor and had the text of his guest's foreign policy statement inserted in the *Congressional Record*. He seemed to contradict an earlier statement criticizing Israeli policies in occupied areas when he told the Senate that the

United States, "should never pursue any plan that envisions a separation of the West Bank from Israel."

Helms's skill in playing both sides was demonstrated in his stand on a proposed bill to move the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Although he declined to co-sponsor the bill because of "grave legal questions" and its "uncertain" constitutionality, Helms urged President Reagan to order the removal of the embassy without special legislation.

In a remarkable countermove, Helms's campaign sent a fund appeal to Jewish citizens which expressed anguish that any Jew would consider opposing Helms in light of his "friendship" for Israel.

In the contest, the most expensive non-presidential campaign in history, Helms spent over \$13 million and Hunt over \$8 million. When the polls closed, Helms had eked out a narrow victory.

### *Beyond AIPAC to the PACs*

AIPAC differs from most lobbies, in that it avoids endorsing candidates publicly and does not raise or spend money directly in partisan campaigns. Campaign involvement is left officially to pro-Israel political action committees (PACs). Over 3,000 PACs are registered under federal law, and almost all are directly affiliated with special-interest lobbies. There are 75 PACs which focus on support for Israel, though none lists an affiliation with AIPAC or any other Jewish organization.

Prior to 1979, pro-Israeli financial support to candidates and party organizations came entirely from individuals. Some of these individuals focused heavily on an Ohio Congressional race in 1976, the candidacy of Mary Rose Oakar, who was to become the first person of Syrian ancestry elected to Congress. A popular member of the Cleveland city council, she confronted a field of twelve male Democrats and an avalanche of Jewish money in the primary election race. Pro-Israeli interests selected State Senator Tony Celebreze, regarded as a "comer" in Ohio politics, as the candidate with the best chance to nudge her from the nomination.

During the campaign Dennis Heffernan, a fundraiser for Celebreze, was asked by a surprised and uneasy colleague to explain why more than thirty "Jewish-appearing" names were each recorded as donating \$1,000.

"What's going on here?" he asked, wondering aloud if his friend Celebreze had "caved in" to a special interest. He asked bluntly: "Is Tony selling himself out, or is this money given in a worthy cause?" Heffernan responded, "Well, is Israel a worthy cause?"

Oakar found the focus by pro-Israel forces "upsetting." She ex-

plained, "I hadn't said a word about the Middle East, so it had to be because of my ethnic background. My father served in World War II and my brother in the Army later, but you would think we were less American."

The money helped Celebreze defeat the other eleven men, but Oakar won the nomination. Noting the district was overwhelmingly Democratic, the pro-Israel group sensed a hopeless situation and made no fight against Oakar in the fall or in subsequent elections.

The prominence of "Jewish-appearing" names in the Ohio race may have been a factor in encouraging Jews nationally to organize the first pro-Israel political action committees in 1979. By 1982 they had mushroomed to a total of thirty-one. Pro-Israel PACs contributed more than \$1.8 million dollars to 268 different election campaigns during the 1981-82 Federal Election Commission reporting cycle, putting them in the highest political spending range. By mid-August 1984, the list had increased to 75 PACs, and they had accumulated \$4.25 million for the 1984 federal elections.

None of them carried a name or other information which disclosed its pro-Israeli interest, nor did any list an affiliation with AIPAC or other pro-Israeli or Jewish organization. Each chose to obscure its pro-Israel character by using a bland title, like the "Committee for 18," "Arizona Politically Interested Citizens," "Joint Action Committee for Political Affairs," or the "Government Action Committee." Yet all are totally committed to one thing: Israel.

"No one is trying to hide anything," protests Mark Siegel, director of the pro-Israeli National Bipartisan Political Action Committee and a former White House liaison with the Jewish community. He insists that the bland names were chosen because "There are those in the political process who would use the percentage of Jewish money [in a given race] as a negative." The PAC Siegel heads was formed originally to help in the late Senator Henry Jackson's 1978 presidential bid.

Norman Silverman, who helped to found the Denver-based Committee for 18, is more explicit, saying the name selection became "an emotional issue." Some of the organizers, mainly younger people, wanted Jewish identity plainly set forth in the name. "Others," Silverman noted, "said they didn't want to be a member if we did that."

Whatever their names, pro-Israel PACs enlarge the opportunities for individual supporters of Israel to back candidates. An individual may contribute up to \$5,000 to a political action committee but only \$1,000 to a candidate in each election. PACs, in turn, may contribute \$5,000 to a candidate in each election. Individuals often contribute the \$1,000 limit directly to a candidate and also the \$5,000 limit to a PAC supporting the same candidate. *The Wall Street Journal*, reviewing the

growth of pro-Israel PACs in August 1983 reported that Lawrence and Barbara Weinberg of Beverly Hills, California, gave \$20,000 to the Citizens Organized Political Action Committee, based in Los Angeles, over a period that encompassed both the primary and general elections in 1982 and gave \$2,000 to Democrat Richard J. Durbin, the man who defeated me in 1982. The PAC also contributed \$5,000 to Durbin. That kind of generosity is not ignored by your average politician.

The largest pro-Israel PAC is the National Political Action Committee (NatPAC), headquartered in New York with Marvin Josephson, head of a theatrical and literary talent agency, as chairman. Its Washington-based executive director is Richard Altman, who previously worked as political director of AIPAC. It draws money heavily from the entertainment industry and got off to a fast start in 1982 when Woody Allen signed its first nationwide fund-raising appeal. *The National Journal* rates it as the nation's largest non-labor, non-business political action committee.

In 1982, NatPAC raised \$1.04 million and spent \$547,500 on 109 candidates for Congress. It gave the \$5,000 legal limit to each of 31 Senate candidates. Twenty-eight of these were elected. On the House side, 57 of the 73 candidates it supported won. In the wake of those successes, NatPAC ran a full-page advertisement in *The New York Times* inviting further support and declaring that it was "helping to elect officials in all fifty states who realize that Israel's survival is vital to our own."

A recent fund-raising letter carried an appeal by Republican Senator Robert Packwood of Oregon and Democratic Senator Patrick Moynihan of New York, both ardent supporters of Israel: "If you believe, as we do, that Israel is a great strategic asset to the United States and its most reliable ally in that part of the world, please read this letter." The letter asked for support so NatPAC can "take on the Petrodollar interests."

Five colleagues help Josephson decide which candidates receive funds. They are Barry Dillar, chairman of Paramount Pictures Corporation, George Klein, a New York City developer, James Wolfensohn, a New York investment banker, Martin Peretz, editor of *The New Republic*, and Rita Hauser, a New York lawyer who is prominent in the work of the American Jewish Committee.

Executive director Richard Altman calls NatPAC a "grassroots movement." By late 1983 he had signed up over 20,000 members, with his goal for 1984 goal set at 100,000. NatPAC strives for "ecumenical fund-raising," he says, noting the presence of Methodist Bob Hope among the one hundred prominent Americans listed as charter members.

He is candid: "Money makes the political engine run. To elect a friend, you have to pay for it—and we're not the only ones who know that."

Altman declares that participating in PACs "is quintessentially both American and Jewish, as an expression of our involvement in political life."

Small PACs sometimes focus on candidates far from their locales. Robert B. Golder, a Philadelphia businessman, organized the Delaware Valley Political Action Committee (Del-Val PAC) in 1981, recruited 160 members, and dispensed \$58,000 to 32 widely scattered candidates. Twenty-eight of them won. Golder explains that his goal is to elect pro-Israel Congressmen "in faraway places who don't have Jewish constituencies." For example, his PAC sent \$1,500 to Jeffrey Bingaman, the Democrat elected to the Senate in 1982 from New Mexico. In late 1983 it sent \$5,000 to Tom Corcoran, the unsuccessful challenger of Republican Senator Charles Percy of Illinois. A 12-person executive committee decides where the money is spent.

A San Francisco-based PAC concentrates on contests outside California. Melvin Swig, who is chairman of the Bay Area Citizens Political Action Committee, says: "There are enough people locally who do enough for their constituency. We look for areas that have less Jewish visibility than others, places where there are fewer Jews."

Golder explains the aims of such groups:

We feel we are getting more Jewish people involved. . . . Look how much we can get from the United States government by being politically active. This is the key thing about PACs. We're trying to get those candidates [elected] who will vote 'Yes' on foreign aid.

Golder, Swig and other PAC leaders receive guidance from AIPAC, which keeps them up to date on votes cast and statements made by Senate and House members as well as positions taken on the Middle East by candidates seeking office for the first time.

AIPAC sometimes drops all pretense at staying apart from fund raising. For instance, a pro-Israel political action committee was organized in Virginia in 1983 during a workshop sponsored by AIPAC.

Financial help does not stop at United States borders. Jewish Americans living in Israel are solicited for political action in the United States. Newton Frolich, a former Washington lawyer who moved to Israel eight years ago, is heading a Jerusalem-based political action committee. In June 1984, his committee mailed a solicitation letter to some 11,000 U.S. families living in Israel and expects to approach, in all, the estimated 50,000 U.S. citizens living there, many of whom also claim Israeli citizenship. His organization is called Americans in Israel

Political Action Committee. Through the committee, he explains, Americans in Israel can "keep making their contribution" to the U.S. political process. The contribution comes back, of course, in the form of enormous U.S. grants to Israel—greater than to any other country.

A lobby veteran who is now engaged in fund-raising worries about appearances. AIPAC's former executive director, Morris J. Amitay, feels that smaller local PACs are best and fears that large well-publicized national PACs may create the impression that Jews exercise too much political power. He operates the relatively small Washington Political Action Committee, which dispensed \$89,075 in 158 races during the 1982 campaigns.

Too much or not, Jewish influence in fund raising is widely recognized. In August 1983 the *Wall Street Journal* reported,

Several ranking Congressmen—most of whom wouldn't comment on the record for this story—say they believe the political effect of Jewish PAC money is greater than that of other major lobbies because it is skillfully focused on one foreign policy issue.

Focused it is. The pro-Israel PACs concentrate exclusively on federal elections and focus heavily on Senate races and on House members who occupy key foreign policy assignments.

PAC leader Mark Siegel says the PACs concentrate on the Senate, because it is the "real battleground" on questions of foreign policy. In 1982, they invested \$966,695 in Senate races, with \$355,550 going to key House contests.

Guided by AIPAC, PACs choose their targets with care. When Lynn Adelman, a Jewish state senator in Wisconsin, in 1982 mounted the first primary election challenge that Democrat Clement J. Zablocki had experienced in thirty years, AIPAC recommended against an all-out effort. AIPAC was unhappy with Zablocki's record, but did not consider him a problem; furthermore, it concluded that Adelman could not win. Adelman received only \$9,350 from thirteen pro-Israel political action committees. The contest made national news, because Zablocki was chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, through which all Israeli aid measures must go (see chapter two). Despite AIPAC's low-key recommendation, a letter soliciting funds for Adelman cited two "gains" if Zablocki lost: "Adelman's election not only means a friend of Israel in Congress, but also that the House Foreign Affairs Committee will have a friend of Israel as its new chairman," referring to Dante Fascell of Florida, the Democrat who was next in line to succeed Zablocki. Zablocki was re-elected by a two-to-one margin.

Meanwhile, Fascell, the "other friend" cited in the fund-raising

appeal, was receiving strong support from pro-Israel PACs in his successful campaign for re-election in a Florida district that includes part of Miami. Twenty-two of these PACs provided Fascell with a total of \$43,250, the second highest amount to a House candidate that year. These funds helped him survive a challenge by a former television newsmen.

My successor, Richard Durbin, topped all House candidates, receiving \$103,325 from pro-Israel political action committees. Other House Members receiving in excess of \$10,000 were Sam Gejdenson of Connecticut, \$30,175; Clarence Long of Maryland, \$29,250; Ike Skelton of Missouri, \$20,000; Martin Frost of Texas, \$18,300; Thomas Lantos of California, \$15,500. Most of the big money went to Senate races. Eighteen Senators who were elected in 1982 received over \$10,000 from pro-Israel PACs. Five received more than Congressman Fascell. The top 10 were: George Mitchell, Democrat of Maine, \$77,400; James Sasser, Democrat of Tennessee, \$58,250; David Durenberger, Republican of Minnesota, \$56,000; Robert Byrd, Democrat of West Virginia, \$55,500; Paul Sarbanes, Democrat of Maryland, \$48,500; Chic Hecht, Republican of Nevada, \$46,500; Quentin Burdick, Democrat of North Dakota, \$44,775; Lowell Weicker, Republican of Connecticut, \$42,075; Jeffrey Bingaman, Democrat of New Mexico, \$36,575; Howard Metzenbaum, Democrat of Ohio, \$35,175; Dennis DeConcini, Democrat of Arizona, \$32,000; and Donald Riegle, Democrat of Michigan, \$29,000. Eight others received in excess of \$10,000 each.

In the 1984 elections, by July 1 pro-Israel PACs had distributed \$1.49 million to Senate candidates and \$684,465 to House candidates.

That year, Paul Simon, Democratic challenger to Republican Senator Charles Percy, topped the Senate list with \$147,870. Next in line were Carl Levin, Michigan, \$140,063; James B. Hunt, North Carolina, \$130,350; Rudolph E. Boschowitz, Minnesota, \$95,100; George J. Mitchell, Maine, \$77,400; James Sasser, Tennessee, \$58,250; Albert Gore, Tennessee, \$57,450; Thomas Harkin, Iowa, \$57,250; David Durenberger, Minnesota, \$56,750 and Robert C. Byrd, West Virginia, \$55,500. Mitchell, Sasser, Durenberger and Byrd will not be up for re-election until 1988. All but Boschowitz and Durenberger are Democrats. Sixteen other Senators received over \$30,000.

Of 17 House Members who received \$10,000 or more, 11 were on panels which handle foreign aid. One of them, Lee Hamilton of Indiana, chairman of the Middle East Subcommittee, received all but \$500 of the \$14,500 in pro-Israel PAC money that went to Indiana House contests. The top House recipients: Clarence Long, Maryland, \$97,500; Charles Wilson, Texas, \$21,750; Ben Erdreich, Alabama, \$21,250; Ronald L. Wyden, Oregon, \$18,000; Mark Siljander, Michigan, \$16,800; Dante Fascell, Florida, \$16,750; Robert G. Torricelli,

New Jersey, \$16,500; Harry M. Reid, Nevada, \$15,500; Cardiss Collins, Illinois, \$14,250; Lee Hamilton, Indiana, \$14,000. All but Siljander are Democrats.

Despite the dramatic growth of these PACs—a development that has occurred entirely since 1979—most of the contributions to candidates still come directly from individual pro-Israel activists.

Democratic candidates are especially dependent on contributions from Jewish sources. A non-Jewish strategist told Stephen D. Isaacs, author of *Jews and American Politics*: "You can't hope to go anywhere in national politics, if you're a Democrat, without Jewish money." In 1968, 15 of the 21 persons who loaned \$100,000 or more to presidential candidate Hubert Humphrey were Jewish. According to Isaacs, the Democratic National Committee, whose principal charge is the advancement of Democratic Party prospects for the White House, for years received about 50 percent of its funds from Jewish sources.

After the 1982 election—a year before he was elected chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee after the sudden death of Zablocki—Fascell remarked:

The whole trouble with campaign finances is the hue and cry that you've been bought. If you need the money, are you going to get it from your enemy? No, you're going to get it from your friend.

#### "Our Own Foreign Policy Agenda"

Much of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee's work in 1982 centered on expanding grassroots support, enlarging outreach programs to the college and Christian communities, and helping pro-Israel political action committees sharpen their skills. These efforts were largely aimed at increasing the lobby's influence in the Senate. AIPAC wanted no repetition of its failure to block the 1981 AWACS sale to Saudi Arabia.

One way in which AIPAC increases the number of its Senate friends is illustrated by its interventions in a critical race in Missouri. AIPAC stood by a friend and won. Republican Senator John C. Danforth, an ordained Episcopal minister, was opposed for re-election by a Jewish Democrat, Harriett Woods. In the closely fought contest, the non-Jewish Danforth found that an unblemished record of cooperation brought him AIPAC support even against a Jewish challenger. The help was crucial, as Danforth won by less than one percent of the vote.

AIPAC also weighed in heavily in Maine, helping to pull off the upset victory of Democratic Senator George Mitchell over Republican Congressman David Emery. The *Almanac of American Politics* rated Mitchell "the Democratic Senator universally regarded as having the

least chance for re-election." He had never won an election. Defeated for governor by an independent candidate in 1974, he was appointed to fill the Senate vacancy caused when Senator Edmund Muskie resigned in 1980 to become President Carter's Secretary of State.

Encouraged by AIPAC, 27 pro-Israeli political action committees, all based outside Maine, contributed \$77,400 to Mitchell's campaign. With this help Mitchell, who has Lebanese ancestry, fooled the professionals and won handily. In a post-election phone call to AIPAC director Thomas A. Dine, Mitchell promised: "I will remember you."

In another example, Republican Senator David Durenberger of Minnesota received for his 1982 re-election bid \$57,000 from 20 pro-Israeli political action committees, with \$10,000 of this total coming from the Citizens Organized PAC in California. This PAC contributed \$5,000 during a breakfast meeting four months after he voted against the sale of AWACS planes to Saudi Arabia, and added \$5,000 more by election day. Directors of the PAC include Alan Rothenberg, the law partner of Democratic National Chairman Charles Manatt.

In close races, lobby interests sometimes play it safe by supporting both sides. In the 1980 Senate race in Idaho, for example, pro-Israeli activists contributed to their stalwart friend, Democrat Frank Church, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, but also gave to his challenger, Republican Congressman Steven D. Symms.

One reason for the dual support was the expected vote in the Senate the next year on the AWACS sale to Saudi Arabia—during the campaign both Symms and Church were listed as opposing it. With the race expected to be close, the lobby believed it had a friend in each candidate and helped both.

Symms defeated Church by a razor-thin margin; but the investment in Symms by pro-Israel interests did not pay off. By the time the new Senator faced the AWACS vote he had changed his mind. His vote approving the AWACS sale helped to give AIPAC one of its rare legislative setbacks.

In a post-election review in its newsletter, *Near East Report*, AIPAC concluded that the new Senate in the 98th Congress would be 'marginally more pro-Israel.' As evidence, it noted that two of the five new Senators were Jewish: Frank Lautenberg, Democrat of New Jersey, and Chic Hecht, Republican of Nevada, each "with long records of support for Israel." It could also count as a gain the election of Democrat Jeffrey Bingaman of New Mexico, who defeated Republican Senator Harrison Schmitt. Voting for the AWACS sale to Saudi Arabia and opposing foreign aid had given Schmitt bad marks, and AIPAC gave its support to his challenger, Bingaman, in the campaign.

Because favored candidates need more money than PAC sources

provide, AIPAC also helps by providing lists for direct mail fundraising. The appeal can be hard-hitting. An example is the literature mailed in early 1984 on behalf of Republican Senator Rudy Boschwitz of Minnesota. Fellow Republican Lowell Weicker wrote the introductory letter, citing him as a "friend of Israel in danger." He noted Boschwitz's key position as chairman of the subcommittee "that determines the level of aid our country gives to Israel," and praised his efforts to block military sales to Saudi Arabia. The appeal included tributes by Senator Bob Packwood and Wolf Blitzer, Washington correspondent for *The Jerusalem Post*.

AIPAC has convinced Congress that it represents practically all Jews who vote. Columnist Nat Hentoff reported this assessment in the New York *Village Voice* in June 1983 after a delegation of dissenting rabbis had scoured Capitol Hill trying to convince Congressmen that some Jews oppose Israeli policies. The rabbis reported that several Congressmen said they shared their views but were afraid that act. Hentoff concluded: "The only Jewish constituency that's real to them [Congressmen] is the one that AIPAC and other spokesmen for the Jewish establishment tell them about."

An Ohio Congressman speaks of AIPAC with both awe and concern:

AIPAC is the most influential lobby on Capitol Hill. They are relentless. They know what they're doing. They have the people for financial resources. They've got a lot going for them. Their basic underlying cause is one that most Americans sympathize with.

But what distresses me is the inability of American policy-makers, because of the influence of AIPAC, to distinguish between our national interest and Israel's national interest. When these converge—wonderful! But they don't always converge.

After the 1982 elections, Thomas A. Dine summed up the significance of AIPAC's achievements: "Because of that, American Jews are thus able to form our own foreign policy agenda."

Later, when he reviewed the 1984 election results, Dine credited Jewish money, not votes: "Early money, middle money, late money." He claimed credit for defeating Republican Senators Charles Percy of Illinois and Roger Jepsen of Iowa and Democratic Senator Walter Huddleston of Kentucky, all of whom incurred AIPAC wrath by voting for the sale of AWACS planes to Saudi Arabia.

Dine said these successes "defined Jewish political power for the rest of this century."



## Chapter 6

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### *The Assault on "Assault"*

Although Israel's lobby seems able at will to penetrate our nation's strongest defenses in order to gain the secret information it wishes, when the lobby's objective is keeping such information secret, our defenses suddenly become impenetrable.

After seventeen years, James M. Ennes Jr., a retired officer of the U.S. Navy, is still having difficulty prying loose documents which shed light on the worst peacetime disaster in the history of our Navy. In this quest, he has encountered resistance by the Department of Defense, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the book publishing industry, the news media, and the Israeli Foreign Ministry. The resistance, seemingly coordinated on an international scale, is especially perplexing because Ennes' goal is public awareness of an episode of heroism and tragedy at sea which is without precedent in American history.

As the result of a program of concealment supported by successive governments in both Israel and the United States, hardly anyone remembers the miraculous survival of the USS *Liberty* after a devastating assault by Israeli forces on June 8, 1967, left 34 sailors dead, 171 injured, and the damaged ship adrift with no power, rudder or means of communication.

The sustained courage of Captain William L. McGonagle and his crew in these desperate circumstances earned the *Liberty* a place of honor in the annals of the U.S. Navy. But, despite energetic endeavors, including those of Ennes, McGonagle's officer of the deck that day, the entries remain dim and obscure. Ennes's stirring book-length account of the attack, *Assault on the Liberty*, itself continues to be under heavy assault five years after publication.

The episode and its aftermath were so incredible that Admiral Thomas L. Moorer, who became chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff a

month after the attack, observes, "If it was written as fiction, nobody would believe it."

Certain facts are clear. The attack was no accident. The *Liberty* was assaulted in broad daylight by Israeli forces who knew the ship's identity. The *Liberty*, an intelligence-gathering ship, had no combat capability and carried only light machine guns for defense. A steady breeze made its U.S. flag easily visible. The assault occurred over a period of nearly two hours—first by air, then torpedo boat. The ferocity of the attacks left no doubt: the Israeli forces wanted the ship and its crew destroyed.

The public, however, was kept in the dark. Even before the American public learned of the attack, U.S. government officials began to promote an account satisfactory to Israel. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee worked through Congressmen to keep the story under control. The President of the United States, Lyndon B. Johnson, ordered and led a cover-up so thorough that sixteen years after he left office, the episode was still largely unknown to the public—and the men who suffered and died have gone largely unhonored.

The day of the attack began in routine fashion, with the ship first proceeding slowly in an easterly direction in the eastern Mediterranean, later following the contour of the coastline westerly about fifteen miles off the Sinai Peninsula. On the mainland, Israeli forces were winning smashing victories in the third Arab-Israeli war in nineteen years. Israeli Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin, announcing that the Israelis had taken the entire Sinai and broken the blockade on the Strait of Tiran, declared: "The Egyptians are defeated." On the eastern front the Israelis had overcome Jordanian forces and captured most of the West Bank.

At 6 A.M. an airplane, identified by the *Liberty* crew as an Israeli Noratlas, circled the ship slowly and departed. This procedure was repeated periodically over an eight-hour period. At 9 A.M. a jet appeared at a distance, then left. At 10 A.M., two rocket-armed jets circled the ship three times. They were close enough for their pilots to be observed through binoculars. The planes were unmarked. An hour later the Israeli Noratlas returned, flying not more than 200 feet directly above the *Liberty* and clearly marked with the Star of David. The ship's crew members and the pilot waved at each other. This plane returned every few minutes until 1 P.M. By then, the ship had changed course and was proceeding almost due west.

At 2:00 P.M. all hell broke loose. Three Mirage fighter planes headed straight for the *Liberty*, their rockets taking out the forward machine guns and wrecking the ship's antennae. The Mirages were

joined by Mystère fighters, which dropped napalm on the bridge and deck and repeatedly strafed the ship. The attack continued for over 20 minutes. In all, the ship sustained 821 holes in her sides and decks. Of these, more than 100 were rocket size.

As the aircraft departed, three torpedo boats took over the attack, firing five torpedoes, one of which tore a 40-foot hole in the hull, killing 25 sailors. The ship was in flames, dead in the water, listing precariously, and taking water. The crew was ordered to prepare to abandon ship. As life-rafts were lowered into the water, the torpedo boats moved closer and shot them to pieces. One boat concentrated machine-gun fire on rafts still on deck as crew members there tried to extinguish the napalm fires. Petty Officer Charles Rowley declares, "They didn't want anyone to live."

At 3:15 P.M. the last shot was fired, leaving the vessel a combination morgue and hospital. The ship had no engines, no power, no rudder. Fearing further attack, Captain McGonagle, despite severe leg injuries, stayed at the bridge. An Israeli helicopter, its open bay door showing troops in battle gear and a machine gun mounted in an open doorway, passed close to the deck, then left. Other aircraft came and went during the next hour.

Although U.S. air support never arrived, within fifteen minutes of the first attack and more than an hour before the assault ended, fighter planes from the USS *Saratoga* were in the air ready for a rescue mission under orders "to destroy or drive off any attackers." The carrier was only 30 minutes away, and, with a squadron of fighter planes on deck ready for a routine operation, it was prepared to respond almost instantly.

But the rescue never occurred. Without approval by Washington, the planes could not take aggressive action, even to rescue a U.S. ship confirmed to be under attack. Admiral Donald Engen, then captain of the *America*, the second U.S. carrier in the vicinity, later explained: "President Johnson had very strict control. Even though we knew the *Liberty* was under attack, I couldn't just go and order a rescue." The planes were hardly in the air when the voice of Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara was heard over Sixth Fleet radios: "Tell the Sixth Fleet to get those aircraft back immediately." They were to have no part in destroying or driving off the attackers.

Shortly after 3 P.M., nearly an hour after the *Liberty's* plea was first heard, the White House gave momentary approval to a rescue mission and planes from both carriers were launched. At almost precisely the same instant, the Israeli government informed the U.S. naval attaché in Tel Aviv that its forces had "erroneously attacked a U.S.



ship" after mistaking it for an Egyptian vessel, and offered "abject apologies." With apology in hand, Johnson once again ordered U.S. aircraft back to their carriers.

When the second launch occurred, there were no Israeli forces to "destroy or drive away." Ahead for the *Liberty* and its ravaged crew were 15 hours of lonely struggle to keep the wounded alive and the vessel afloat. Not until dawn of the next day would the *Liberty* see a U.S. plane or ship. The only friendly visit was from a small Soviet warship. Its offer of help was declined, but the Soviets said they would stand by in case need should arise.

The next morning two U.S. destroyers arrived with medical and repair assistance. Soon the wounded were transferred to the carrier hospital by helicopter. The battered ship then proceeded to Malta, where a Navy court of inquiry was to be held. The inquiry itself was destined to be a part of an elaborate program to keep the public from knowing what really had happened.

In fact, the cover-up began almost at the precise moment that the Israeli assault ended. The apology from Israeli officials reached the White House moments after the last gun fired at the *Liberty*. President Johnson accepted and publicized the condolences of Israeli Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, even though information readily available showed the Israeli account to be false. The CIA had learned a day before the attack that the Israelis planned to sink the ship. Congressional comments largely echoed the president's interpretation of the assault, and the nation was caught up in euphoria over Israel's stunning victories over the Arabs. The casualties on the *Liberty* got scant attention. Smith Hempstone, foreign correspondent for the *Washington Star*, wrote from Tel Aviv, "In a week since the Israeli attack on the USS *Liberty* not one single Israeli of the type which this correspondent encounters many times daily—cab drivers, censors, bartenders, soldiers—has bothered to express sorrow for the deaths of these Americans."

The Pentagon staved off reporters' inquiries with the promise of a "comprehensive statement" once the official inquiry, conducted by Admiral Isaac Kidd, was finished. Kidd gave explicit orders to the crew: "Answer no questions. If somehow you are backed into a corner, then you may say that it was an accident and that Israel has apologized. You may say nothing else." Crew members were assured they could talk freely to reporters once the summary of the court of inquiry was made public. This was later modified; they were then ordered not to provide information beyond the precise words of the published summary.

The court was still taking testimony when a charge that the attack had been deliberate appeared in the U.S. press. An Associated Press

story filed from Malta reported that "senior crewmen" on the ship were convinced the Israelis knew the ship was American before they attacked. "We were flying the Stars and Stripes and it's absolutely impossible that they shouldn't know who we were," a crew member said. The Navy disputed the story, saying the U.S. "thoroughly accepted the Israeli apology."

Testimony completed, Admiral Kidd handcuffed himself to a huge box of records and flew to Washington to be examined by the Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral McDonald, as well as by Congressional leaders before the long-awaited summary statement was issued. When finally released, it was far from comprehensive. It made no attempt to fix blame, focusing almost entirely on the actions of the crew.

The censored summary did not reveal that the ship had been under close aerial surveillance by Israel for hours before the attack and that during the preceding 24 hours Israel had repeatedly warned U.S. authorities to move the *Liberty*. It contained nothing to dispute the notion of mistaken identity. The Navy reported erroneously that the attack lasted only 6 minutes instead of 70 minutes and asserted falsely that all firing stopped when the torpedo boats came close enough to identify the U.S. flag. The Navy made no mention of napalm or of life-rafts being shot up. It even suppressed records of the strong breeze which made the ship's U.S. flag plainly visible.

The report did make one painful revelation: Before the attack the Joint Chiefs of Staff had ordered the *Liberty* to move further from the coast, but the message "was misrouted, delayed and not received until after the attack."

Several newspapers criticized the Pentagon's summary. The *New York Times* said it "leaves a good many questions unanswered." The *Washington Star* used the word "cover-up," called the summary an "affront" and demanded a deeper and wider probe. Senator J. William Fulbright, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations committee, after a closed briefing by Secretary of State Dean Rusk, called the episode "very embarrassing." The *Star* concluded: "Whatever the meaning of this, embarrassment is no excuse for disingenuousness."

In early July, the Associated Press quoted Micha Limor, identified as an Israeli reservist who had served on one of the torpedo boats, as saying that Israeli sailors noticed three numbers as they circled the *Liberty* but insisted the numbers meant nothing to them.

Lieutenant James M. Ennes, Jr., a cypher officer recovering in a hospital from shrapnel wounds, was incredulous when he read the Limor story. He had been officer of the deck. He knew the ship's name appeared in large letters on the stern and the hull number on the bow. He knew also that a breeze made the Stars and Stripes easily

visible during the day. He had ordered a new 5-by-8 foot flag displayed early on the day of the attack. By the time the torpedo boats arrived, the original flag had been shot down but an even larger 7-by-13 foot flag was mounted in plain view from a yardarm. He knew that the attackers, whether by air or surface, could not avoid knowing it was a U.S. ship. Above all else, he knew that *Liberty's* intercept operators had heard the Israeli reconnaissance pilots correctly reporting to Israeli headquarters that the ship was American.

Disturbed by the Limor story and the exchange of public messages concerning the assault, Ennes determined to unravel the story. During the four months he was bedridden at Portsmouth, United Kingdom, he collected information from his shipmates. Later, while stationed in Germany, he recorded the recollections of other crew members. Transferred to Washington, D.C., he secured government reports under the Freedom of Information Act and also obtained the full Court of Inquiry report, which was finally, after nine years, declassified in 1976 from being top secret.

The result was Ennes's book, *Assault on the Liberty*, published in 1980, two years after he retired from the Navy. Ennes discovered "shallowness" in the court's questioning, its failure to "follow up on evidence that the attack was planned in advance"—including evidence that radio interceptions from two stations heard an Israeli pilot identify the ship as American. He said the court, ignoring the ship's log, which recorded a steady breeze blowing and confirming testimony from crewmen, concluded erroneously that attackers may not have been able to identify the flag's nationality, because the flag, according to the court, "hung limp at the mast on a windless day."

Concerning Israeli motives for the attack, Ennes wrote that Israeli officials may have decided to destroy the ship because they feared its sensitive listening devices would detect Israeli plans to invade Syria's Golan Heights. (Israel invaded Syria the day after the *Liberty* attack, despite Israel's earlier acceptance of a ceasefire with its Arab foes.)

Ennes learned that crewmen sensed a cover-up even while the court was taking testimony at Malta. He identified George Golden, the *Liberty's* engineering officer and acting commanding officer, as the source of the Associated Press story charging that the attack was deliberate. Golden, who is Jewish, was so outraged at the prohibition against talking with reporters that he ignored it—risking his future career in the Navy to rescue a vestige of his country's honor.

The American embassy at Tel Aviv relayed to Washington the only fully detailed Israeli account of the attack—the Israeli court of inquiry report known as "Israeli Preliminary Inquiry 1/67." The em-

bassy message also contained the recommendation that, at the request of the Israeli government, it not be released to the American people. Ennes believes this is probably because both governments knew the mistaken identity excuse was too transparent to believe.

Another request for secrecy was delivered by hand to Eugene Rostow, undersecretary of state for political affairs. It paralleled the message from the embassy at Tel Aviv imploring the Department of State to keep the Israeli court of inquiry secret because "the circumstances of the attack [if the version outlined in the file is to be believed] strip the Israeli Navy naked." Although Ennes saw that message in an official file in 1977, by 1984 it had vanished from all known official files. Ennes believes Israeli officials decided to make the Israeli Navy the scapegoat in the controversy. With the blame piled on its Navy, the orphan service that has the least clout in Israel's military hierarchy, Israel then asked the U.S. to keep the humiliation quiet. United States officials agreed not to release the text of the Israeli report.

#### *Legal Adviser's Report Becomes Top Secret*

During this same period—the weeks immediately following the assault on the *Liberty*, an assessment of the "Israeli Preliminary Inquiry 1/67" was prepared by Carl F. Salans, legal adviser to the secretary of state. It was prepared for the consideration of Eugene Rostow. The report, kept top secret until 1983 and apparently given only cursory examination by Secretary of State Dean Rusk, examines the credibility of the Israeli study and reveals as has no other single document the real attitude of the U.S. government toward the Israeli attack on the USS *Liberty*. It was a document too explosive to release.

Item by item, Salans demonstrated that the Israeli excuse could not be believed. Preparing the report immediately after the attack, he relied mainly on the limited information in Admiral Isaac Kidd's court of inquiry file. He never heard Ennes, Golden, nor any of the principal witnesses. He found enough there to discredit the Israeli document thoroughly. The items Salans examined were the speed and direction of the *Liberty*, aircraft surveillance, identification by Israeli aircraft, identification by torpedo boats, flag and identification markings, and time sequence of attacks. In each instance, eyewitness testimony or known facts disputed the Israeli claims of innocent error.

For example, the Israeli report contended that the *Liberty* was traveling at a speed of 28 to 30 knots, hence behaving suspiciously. Its actual speed was five knots. Israeli reconnaissance aircraft claimed to have carried out only two overflight missions, at 6:00 and 9:00 A.M.

Aircraft actually overflew the *Liberty* eight times, the first at 5:15 A.M. and the last at 12:45 P.M.

The Israeli report charged that the *Liberty*, after refusing to identify itself, opened fire. Captain McGonagle testified that the only signals by the torpedo boats came from a distance of 2,000 yards when the attack run was already launched and torpedoes on their way. The blinker signals could not be read because of intermittent smoke and flames. Not seeing them, the *Liberty* could not reply. Immediately thereafter it was hit by a torpedo and 25 sailors died instantly.

The Israeli report contended that the *Liberty* did not display a flag or identifying marks. Five crewmen testified that they saw the naval ensign flying the entire morning and until the attack. When the flag was shot away during the air attack, another larger flag was hoisted before the torpedo onslaught began. Hull markings were clear and freshly painted. The Israelis tried to shift responsibility by asserting that the attack originated through reports that the coastal area was being shelled from the sea. Salans said it should be clear to any trained observer that the small guns aboard the *Liberty* were incapable of shore bombardment.

The Salans report was forwarded September 21, 1967, to Under Secretary of State Rostow. This means that high officials of the administration knew the falsity of Israeli claims about the *Liberty* soon after the assault itself.

With a document in hand so thoroughly refuting the Israeli claims, the next logical step obviously would be its presentation to the Israeli government for comment, followed by publication of the findings.

Instead, it was stamped "top secret" and hidden from public view, as well as the attention of other officials of our government and its military services, along with the still-hidden Israeli report. Dean Rusk, secretary of state at the time, says that he has "no current recollection" of seeing the Salans report. He adds, however, that he "was never satisfied with the Israeli purported explanation of the USS *Liberty* affair."

The cover-up of the Salans report and other aspects of the episode soon had agonizing implications for United States security.

If the Navy had been candid about the *Liberty* episode even within its own ranks, the nation might have been spared the subsequent humiliation of an ordeal that began five months later when North Korean forces killed a U.S. sailor and captured the USS *Pueblo* and its entire crew. The agony ended when the crew was released after experiencing a year of captivity under brutal conditions.

*Pueblo* commander Lloyd M. Bucher later concluded that if he

had been armed with facts of the disaster in the Mediterranean, he might have prevented the *Pueblo* episode.

In the late summer of 1967, still ashore but preparing to take command of the ill-fated ship, Bucher learned of the *Liberty*'s misfortune. Headed for hostile waters near North Korea, he believed his mission would profit from the experience and asked for details. Bucher recalls how his request was brushed aside: "I asked my superiors about the disaster and was told it was all just a big mistake, that there was nothing we could learn from it." When he later read the Ennes book, Bucher discovered that the *Liberty* crew had encountered many of the same problems his ship faced just before its capture. Both ships had inadequate means for destroying secret documents and equipment, and, in a crisis, even the ship itself. Both had serious shortcomings in control procedures. Bucher blames "incompetency at the top" and "lack of response to desperate calls for assistance during the attack." He speaks bitterly of the *Pueblo*'s ordeal:

We had a man killed and 14 wounded. Then a year of pretty damned severe brutality which could have been prevented had I been told what happened to the *Liberty*. It's only because that damned incident was covered up as thoroughly as it was.

The cover-up of the attack on the *Liberty* had other, more personal consequences. On recommendation of the Navy Department, William L. McGonagle, captain of the *Liberty*, was approved by President Johnson for the nation's highest award, the Congressional Medal of Honor. According to Ennes, the captain "defied bullets, shrapnel and napalm" during the attack and, despite injuries, stayed on the bridge throughout the night. Under his leadership, the 82 crewmen who had survived death and injury had kept the ship afloat despite a 40-foot hole in the side and managed to bring the crippled vessel to safe harbor.

McGonagle was an authentic hero, but he was not to get the award with the customary style, honor, ceremony and publicity. It would not be presented personally by the president, nor would the event be at the White House. The Navy Department got instructions to arrange the ceremony elsewhere. The president would not take part. It was up to the Navy to find a suitable place. Admiral Thomas L. Moorer, who had become chief of naval operations shortly before the order arrived, was upset. It was the only Congressional Medal in his experience not presented at the White House. He protested to the Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, but the order stood. From the two houses of the legislature for which the medal is named came not a voice of protest.

The admiral would have been even more upset had he known at the time that the White House delayed approving the medal until it was cleared by Israel. Ennes quoted a naval officer as saying: "The government is pretty jumpy about Israel. The State Department even asked the Israeli ambassador if his government had any objection to McGonagle getting the medal. 'Certainly not,' Israel said." The text of the accompanying citation gave no offense: it did not mention Israel.

The secretary of the Navy presented the medal in a small, quiet ceremony at the Navy Yard in Washington. Admiral Moorer said later he was not surprised at the extraordinary arrangements. "They had been trying to hush it up all the way through." Moorer added, "The way they did things I'm surprised they didn't just hand it to him under the 14th Street Bridge."

Even tombstone inscriptions at the Arlington National Cemetery perpetuated the cover-up. As with McGonagle's citation, Israel was not mentioned. For fifteen years the marker over the graves of six *Liberty* crewmen read simply, "died in the Eastern Mediterranean." No mention of the ship, the circumstances, or Israel. Visitors might conclude they died of natural causes. Finally, survivors of the ship banded together into the USS *Liberty* Veterans Association and launched a protest that produced a modest improvement. The cover-up was lifted ever so slightly in 1982 when the cemetery marker was changed to read, "Killed USS *Liberty*." The dedication event at gravesite was as quiet as the McGonagle ceremony years before. The only civilian official of the U.S. government attending, Senator Larry Pressler, promised further investigation of the *Liberty* episode but two years later had done nothing.

The national cover-up even dictated the phrasing of letters of condolence to the survivors of those killed in the assault. In such circumstances, next of kin normally receive a letter from the president setting forth the facts of the tragedy and expressing profound feelings over the hardship, sacrifice and bravery involved in the death. In fact, letters by the hundreds were then being sent to next of kin as the toll in Vietnam mounted.

To senior White House officials, however, death by Israeli fire was different from death at the hands of the Vietcong. A few days after the assault on the *Liberty*, the senior official in charge of President Johnson's liaison with the Jewish community, Harry McPherson, received this message from White House aide James Cross:

Thirty-one [sic] Navy personnel were killed aboard the USS *Liberty* as the result of the accidental [sic] attack by Israeli forces. The attached condolence letters, which have been prepared using basic formats approved for Vietnam war casualties, strike me as inappropriate in this case.

Due to the very sensitive nature of the whole Arab-Israeli situation and the

circumstances under which these people died, I would ask that you review these drafts and provide me with nine or ten different responses which will adequately deal with this special situation.

The "special situation" led McPherson to agree that many of the usual paragraphs of condolence were "inappropriate." He suggested phrases that de-emphasized combat, ignored the Israeli role and even the sacrifice involved.

Responding to the "very sensitive nature" of relations with Israel, the president's staff set aside time-honored traditions in recognizing those killed in combat. McPherson suggested that the letters express the president's gratitude for the "contribution to the cause of peace" made by the victims and state that Johnson had tried to avert the Israeli-Arab war.

While Washington engaged in this strange program of cover-up, *Liberty* crewmen could remember with satisfaction a moment of personal pride, however brief. On the afternoon of June 10, 1967, as the battered ship and its crew prepared to part company with the USS *America* for their journey to Malta and the court of inquiry, carrier Captain Donald Engen ordered a memorial service for those who had died during the assault. Held on the deck of the *America* where more than 2,000 sailors were gathered, the service was an emotional moment. Afterwards, as the ships parted, Engen called for three cheers for the *Liberty* crew. Petty Officer Jeffery Carpenter, weakened from loss of blood, occupied a stretcher on the *Liberty*'s main deck. Crewman Stan White lifted one end of the stretcher so Carpenter could see as well as hear the tribute being paid by the carrier. "Such cheers!" Engen told me. "Boy, you could hear the cheers echo back and forth across the water. It was a very moving thing."

It was the only "moving thing" that would be officially bestowed in tribute to the heroic crew.

### "This Is Pure Murder"

Books have perpetuated myths about the *Liberty*. Yitzhak Rabin, military commander of Israeli forces at the time, declared in his memoirs published in 1979 that the *Liberty* was mistaken for an Egyptian ship: "I must admit I had mixed feelings about the news [that it was actually a U.S. ship]—profound regret at having attacked our friends and a tremendous sense of relief [that the ship was not Soviet]." He wrote that Israel, while compensating victims of the assault, refused to pay for the damage to the ship "since we did not consider ourselves responsible for the train of errors."

Lyndon Johnson's own memoirs, *Vantage Point*, continued the fiction that the ship had been "attacked in error." Although his signa-

ture had appeared on letters of condolence to 34 next of kin, his memoirs reported the death toll at only ten. He cited 100 wounded; the actual count was 171. He added, "This heartbreaking episode grieved the Israelis deeply, as it did us."

Johnson wrote of the message he had sent on the hotline to Moscow in which he assured the Soviets that carrier aircraft were on their way to the scene and that "investigation was the sole purpose of these flights." He did not pretend that protection and rescue of the ship and its crew were among his objectives, nor did he record that the carrier aircraft were never permitted to proceed to the *Liberty* even for "investigation." The commander-in-chief devoted only sixteen lines to one of the worst peacetime naval disasters in history.

Moshe Dayan, identified in a CIA report as the officer who personally ordered the attack, made no mention of the *Liberty* in his lengthy autobiography. According to the CIA document, Dayan had issued the order over the protests of another Israeli general who said, "This is pure murder."

The cover-up also dogged Ennes in the marketing of his book. Despite high praise in reviews, book orders routinely got "lost," wholesale listings disappeared mysteriously, and the Israeli lobby launched a far-flung campaign to discredit the text. The naval base in San Diego returned a supply of books when a chaplain filed a complaint. Military writer George Wilson told Ennes that when the *Washington Post* printed a review, "It seemed that every phone in the building had someone calling to complain about our mention of the book."

The *Atlanta Journal* called Ennes's *Assault on the Liberty* a "disquieting story of Navy bungling, government cover-up and Israeli duplicity that is well worth reading." The *Columbus Dispatch* called it "an inquest of cover-up in the area of international political intrigue." Journalist Seymour Hersh praised it as "an insider's book by an honest participant," and the prestigious Naval Institute at Annapolis called it "probably the most important naval book of the year."

Israel took swift measures to warn U.S. readers to ignore the reviews. The Israeli Foreign Office charged, "Ennes allows his very evident rancor and subjectivity to override objective analysis," and that his "conclusions fly in the face of logic and military facts." These charges, Ennes later said, were "adopted by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith for distribution to Israeli supporters throughout the United States." A caller to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee was told that the book was "a put-up job, all lies and financed by the National Association of Arab Americans." Ennes said the "emotional rhetoric" caused "serious damage to sales and a marked reluctance of media executives to allow discussion of this story."

As the result of radio talk shows and lecture platforms on which Ennes appeared, he heard from people "all over the country" who had been frustrated in efforts to buy his book. Several retail book stores, seeking to order the book from the publisher, Random House, were given false information—they were told the book did not exist, or that it had not been published, or that it was out of print, or that it was withdrawn to avoid a law suit.

Talk show host Ray Taliaferro caused a stir one Sunday night in 1980 when he announced over San Francisco radio station KGO that he would interview Ennes the following Sunday. Over 500 protest letters poured into the station, but the program went on as scheduled. Public response was overwhelming, as listener calls continued to stream in for a full hour after the two-hour show with Ennes had ended. Two phone calls arrived threatening Taliaferro's life—one on a supposedly private line.

At the invitation of Paul Backus, editor of the *Journal of Electronic Defense*, Ennes wrote a guest editorial in 1981 on the implications of the *Liberty* incident, stating that friendly nations sometimes feel compelled to take hostile actions. In the case of the *Liberty*, he added,

Because the friendly nation . . . is the nation of Israel, and because the nation of Israel is widely, passionately and expensively supported in the United States, and perhaps also because a proper inquiry would reveal a humiliating failure of command, control and communications, an adequate investigation . . . has yet to be politically palatable.

Backus was stunned when the owners of the magazine, an organization of military and defense-related executives known as the Association of Old Crows, ordered him not to publish the Ennes editorial. Association spokesman Gus Slayton wrote to Backus that the article was "excellent" but said "it would not be appropriate to publish it now in view of the heightened tension in the Middle East." Backus, a retired Navy officer, resigned: "I want nothing more to do with organizations which would further suppress the information." The Ennes piece was later given prominent play in a rival magazine, *Defense Electronics*, which later found it a popular reprint at \$3 a copy.

As Ennes lectured at universities in the midwest and west in 1981 and 1982, he encountered protests in different form. Although most reaction was highly favorable, hecklers called him a liar and an anti-Semite and protested to administrators against his appearance on campus. Posters announcing his lectures were routinely ripped down. Wording identical with that used by the Israeli Foreign Office and B'nai B'rith in attacks on the book appeared in flyers distributed by local "Jewish Student Unions" as Ennes spoke to college audiences.

Criticism of the Ennes book seemed to be coordinated on a national—even international—scale. After National Public Radio read the full text of the book over its book-reading network, alert local Anti-Defamation League spokesmen demanded and received the opportunity for a 10-minute rebuttal at the end of the series. The rebuttal in Seattle was almost identical with a document attacking the book issued by the Israeli Foreign Office in Jerusalem. Both rebuttals matched verbatim a letter criticizing Ennes that had appeared in the Jacksonville (Florida) *Times-Union*.

Ennes's misfortunes took an ironic turn in June 1982 when ABC's Nightline cancelled the broadcast of a segment it had prepared on the 15-year reunion of the *Liberty* crew. The show was pre-empted by crisis coverage of Israel's invasion of Lebanon, which had begun the day before. In early 1983, Nightline rescheduled the segment, but once again Israel intruded; this time an interview with its new U.S. ambassador, Moshe Arens, took the allotted time. Meanwhile, the edited tape and 15 reels of unedited film had disappeared from the studio library. (Ennes's book may have cost the former captain of the ill-fated *Pueblo* an appearance on ABC's "Good Morning America" television show in 1980. Bucher had been invited to New York for a post-captivity interview. Suddenly the interview was withdrawn. A studio official told Bucher only that he had heard there were problems "upstairs," but then he asked Bucher, "Did you have a book review published recently in the *Washington Post*?" He had indeed, a review which heaped praise on the Ennes book).

Later in 1983, the Jewish War Veterans organization protested when the Veterans of Foreign Wars quoted Ennes to support its call for "proper honors" for those killed on the *Liberty* and again when James R. Currie, national commander of the Veterans of Foreign Wars, referred to the "murderous Israeli attack." Currie excited Jewish wrath even more when he published in the VFW magazine a letter to President Reagan inviting the White House to send a representative to the cemetery to help honor the men who died. There was no reply.

Four years after publication of *Assault on the Liberty*, Ennes is still receiving a steady flow of mail and telephone calls about the episode. Elected by his shipmates as their official historian, he became editor of *The USS Liberty Newsletter*. Meanwhile, not wishing to be fettered to an endless struggle of conscience, he is writing another book on an unrelated subject and trying to leave the *Liberty* matter behind. He finds it cannot be left behind. The book continues to generate a swirl of controversy that will not go away.

Another retired officer, Admiral Thomas L. Moorer, applauds Ennes's activities and still wants an investigation. He scoffs at the mis-

taken identity theory, and says he hopes Congress will investigate and if it does not, he favors reopening the Navy's court of inquiry. He adds, "I would like to see it done, but I doubt seriously that it will be allowed."

Asked why the Johnson administration ordered the cover-up, Moorer is blunt: "The clampdown was not actually for security reasons but for domestic political reasons. I don't think there is any question about it. What other reasons could there have been? President Johnson was worried about the reaction of Jewish voters."

Moorer says the attack was "absolutely deliberate" and adds, "The American people would be goddam mad if they knew what goes on."

# Notes

## CHAPTER ONE: KING OF THE HILL

- 26 A former Congressman: Paul N. McCloskey, address before Conference on "U.S. Economic and Policy Challenges in the Arab World," sponsored by American Arab Affairs Council, Birmingham, Alabama, March 4, 1983.
- 26 A professional: A number of professionals in pro-Israel lobbying groups provided information for this chapter but, fearing an adverse impact on their future careers, preferred to remain anonymous.
- 26 This was illustrated: James G. Abourezk, interview, July 27, 1984.
- 26 No major Jewish: See *New York Times*, September 7, 1982. M. J. Rosenberg, editor of *Near East Report*, stated in an interview on September 5, 1983, that his publication does not publish criticism of Israeli policies lest this be construed as a schism within the pro-Israel Jewish community.
- 27 "At the State": Letter to the author from Don Bergus, July 10, 1984.
- 27 Stephen S. Rosenfeld: *Present Tense*, Spring 1983.
- 28 Certainly Israel: See *Washington Post*, September 27, 1983.
- 28 The White House: Interview with confidential Capitol Hill source.
- 29 Nine of the: *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, October 2, 1983.
- 29 The *Post* quoted: White House Press Release, October 18, 1983.
- 29 A candid tribute: John K. Wilhelm, statement to the Board for International Food and Agricultural Development, January 5, 1984.
- 31 In November: Interview with confidential Capitol Hill source.
- 31 In mid-March: See *New York Times*, March 15, 1984.
- 31 One development which: See *Washington Post*, April 10, 1984; also see *Wall Street Journal*, July 19, 1984.
- 31 At the time: Interview with confidential source.
- 31 After he rejected: The United States had engaged in indirect talks with the PLO during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and earlier during the Carter and Nixon administrations.
- 36 Paul Weyrich, who: *National Journal*, May 13, 1978.
- 38 As they voted: *Congressional Record*, October 3, 1984, page H10961; hearings, Trade Subcommittee, Ways and Means Committee, May 22, 1984.
- 38 Chairmanships: *Mideast Observer*, November 15, 1984.
- 42 Pro-Israel PACs: *Mideast Observer*, November 1, 1983; *Wall Street Journal*, August 3, 1983.
- 43 Also in the highest range were doctors, milk producers, realtors and automobile workers.
- 44 Richard Altman: *Jewish Exponent* (Philadelphia, Penna.), November 11, 1983.
- 47 Golder explains: Stephen D. Isaacs, *Jews and American Politics*.
- 47 A non-Jewish: *Ibid*.
- 47 After the 1982: *Wall Street Journal*, August 3, 1983.
- 49 Columnist Nat Hentoff: *Village Voice*, June 14, 1983.
- 49 After the 1982: Thomas A. Dine, address before Jewish community leaders, Austin Texas, November 1982.
- 49 Later, when he: *Yedi'ot Aharanot* (Jerusalem), November 27, 1984.
- 50 In offering: *Congressional Record*, June 5, 1980; also see *Near East Report*, June 11, 1980.
- 51 "Friend and foe": Paul N. McCloskey, interview, May 10, 1983.
- 51 Representative James Johnson: *Congressional Record*, June 5, 1980.
- 52 This was true: See *New York Times Magazine*, April 18, 1971.
- 52 The wrong decisions: McCloskey, address to the Kenna Club, Santa Clara, Calif., August 13, 1982.
- 52 He charged it: Paul N. McCloskey, *Truth and Untruth, Political Deceit in America*.
- 52 Although the Californian: See McCloskey, *Truth and Untruth, Political Deceit in America*.
- 52 McCloskey agonized over: See *HaKof* (Stanford University), March 1981

## CHAPTER TWO: STILLING THE STILL, SMALL VOICES

CHAPTER FIVE: PENETRATING THE DEFENSES  
AT DEFENSE AND STATE

- 139 "The leaks to": This chapter is based upon interviews with 17 present and former officials from the Department of Defense, the Department of State and the White House. Where considerations of career security permit, these sources have been identified.
- 141 Thomas Pianka, an: Thomas Pianka, interview, November 17, 1983.
- 142 Richard Helms, director: Donald Neff, *Warriors For Jerusalem*.
- 143 Les Janka, a: Les Janka, interview, August 16, 1983.
- 144 Zbigniew Brzezinski, Carter's: Zbigniew Brzezinski, interview, October 31, 1983.
- 146 "Our officers cannot": Israel is the only country where the U.S. permits such limitations.
- 147 On one occasion: Wilbur Crane Eveland, correspondence with the author, January 23, 1984.
- 148 Young recalls: Andrew Young, interview, May 10, 1983.
- 148 This denial: *Newsweek*, September 3, 1979.
- 152 The perpetrator was: *Washington Post*, March 2, 1977.
- 153 A few days: *Washington Post*, February 18, 1977.
- 153 When he read: James G. Abourezk, interview, August 1, 1984.
- 153 Abourezk tried unsuccessfully: Legislation was introduced in 1984 to provide Israel with open U.S. financing for its foreign aid activities. See chapter two.
- 154 The episode caused: Ambassador John C. West, interview, April 18, 1983; also see *New York Times*, April 20, 1980.
- 155 West recalls: *New York Times*, April 20, 1980.
- 155 If so, the: In the wake of the AWACS vote, the United States agreed to boost the level of aid to Israel by \$300 million per year for a period of four years.
- 156 Before leaving his: *Washington Post*, January 24, 1981.
- 156 L. Dean Brown: L. Dean Brown, interview, January 1984.
- 158 Harold Saunders, a: Harold Saunders, interview, May 19, 1983.
- 159 Seelye pinpoints a: Talcott Seelye, interview, May 14, 1983.
- 159 Bryen was publicly: *Defense Week*, July 27, 1981; *Focus*, February 15, 1982; *New Statesman*, May 6, 1983.
- 160 During the controversy: *Washington Post*, April 6, 1978.
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## CHAPTER SIX: THE ASSAULT ON "ASSAULT"

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- 166 Israeli Chief of Staff: *New York Times*, June 8, 1967.
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- 167 Admiral Donald Engen: Adm. Donald Engen, interview, August 29, 1983.
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