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## CZECHOSLOVAKIA 1938 – ISRAEL TODAY

*Arieh Stav*



The war-mongers [Churchill and his supporters], those who would make war against another country without having counted the cost, ought to either be impeached and shot or hanged... There has never been a Prime Minister in the history of England who has in nine months achieved such agreements as those Mr. Chamberlain has made with Czechoslovakia, Italy, and with Hitler in Munich.

*The Times*, December 15, 1938

## PART ONE

### Czechoslovakia on the Way to Munich – A Short Historical Cruise

*From now on, I have no more territorial demands in Europe.\**

Adolf Hitler

*Our goal is to achieve cooperation with all the nations...in building permanent peace in Europe. This will be peace for our time.\**

Neville Chamberlain

(\*Both statements were made just after the Munich Conference.)

The first Czechoslovak Republic was established in 1918 after hundreds of years of Austrian (i.e., German) domination over the Czechs and Slovaks. The new state arose on the ruins of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and in a certain sense was a miniature heir to the Empire. As its name indicates, Czechoslovakia was made up of two Slavic nationalities, the Czechs and Slovaks, who together constituted 9.5 million out of a total population of 14.5 million people in the Republic. The largest minority, more than three million, were Germans, the 1.7 million remaining were Hungarians, Ruthenian Ukrainians, Poles, and Jews.

The large German minority made up 23% of the whole population. They were a classic example of an irredentist ethnic group, a fifth column that rose up against their country and undermined it from within until it was totally destroyed. Nevertheless, the Germans and the other minorities enjoyed a generous system of national cultural rights and political equality. The Czech leaders, Masaryk and Benes, were alert to the danger from the German minority concentrated in the mountainous Sudetenland fringe of the country. They could not do much about this dangerous situation since the principles of the democratic system required them to bring the Sudeten Germans into the workings of government. As early as 1925, there were two Sudeten Germans in the cabinet and the strength of the German minority rose in direct relationship to the consolidation of Nazism in Germany. Autonomy under the guise of self-determination became one of Hitler's demands, and in 1938, the Sudeten German minority became Berlin's agents in all respects.

The two founders and shapers of the Czechoslovak Republic were Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, called the father of the Czech nation, and Dr. Eduard Benes. Masaryk was the national leader and president starting from the establishment of the Republic in October 1918 until 1935 when he retired at the age of 85. Benes had been the foreign minister under Masaryk from the Republic's first day until December 1935 when he succeeded Masaryk as president. He was president during the great crisis until just after the Munich Conference when he was dismissed on Hitler's orders (October 5, 1938). He later went off to Britain where he set up the Czech government-in-exile.

Masaryk and Benes were among the greatest statesmen of their time. No better evidence for that is Czechoslovakia's situation in the second half of the 1930s. On the eve of the Munich crisis, Czechoslovakia was an exemplary democracy, the only one in Central Europe. It was one of the wealthiest states on the European continent, and stood at the forefront of technology and industry. Its security was guaranteed by a series of international agreements and its army was well armed and trained, and very large in relation to its population. These accomplishments are especially impressive since they stand out in comparison with the

nations surrounding Czechoslovakia: Germany sinking into the age of Nazi barbarism, and semi-fascist regimes treading on economic failure in Romania, Hungary, and Poland.

In March 1935, Hitler proclaimed a military draft in Germany. This crude violation of the Treaty of Versailles was quietly accepted by France and Britain. In March 1936, the Germans violated the demilitarized status of the Rhineland (in fact occupying it). A direct threat was thus created to the French border because Germany thereby regained the springboard it had controlled prior to the First World War, from which it could attack France. This decisive change in the strategic disposition in Europe was accepted with a shrug in Britain. "The Germans are making order in their backyard," the **London Times** wrote. In March 1938 (indeed the Ides of March), the Anschluss with Austria was carried out. This dramatic change in Germany's status did indeed arouse some expressions of dread among the decision-makers in Britain, and especially in France. But the press in both democracies displayed complete understanding for Hitler's claims that what was involved was "a measure aimed at unifying the German nation".

The next stage that had been carefully prepared in Berlin, at least for three years, was the liquidation of Czechoslovakia. The order for the elimination of Czechoslovakia, code named "the Green Plan", was given to the Wehrmacht on June 1, 1935. The date for implementing the plan was set for October 1, 1938.

The fall of Prague would grant Hitler three priceless advantages at one and the same time: 1) the system of European alliances would fall apart; 2) a Central European power would be eliminated, and Germany would obtain the Czechoslovak facilities for manufacturing arms, including the Skoda Works; 3) "The road down the Danube Valley to the Black Sea, the resources of corn and oil... has been opened," as Churchill put it. The last was a basic condition for Hitler's war in view of the British capability to impose a sea blockade on strategic raw material imports to Germany.

In contrast to the defeatism of the two major European powers, Hitler's moves aroused Prague to wide-ranging defense activity. The parliament passed "the Defense of the Republic Law" which granted the president far-reaching powers bordering on a state of emergency. The army was strengthened and reached some 1.5 million men in uniform in 40 divisions. The military industries were expanded and many improvements were made to the fortifications in the Sudetenland, most of which were manned.

Moreover, in 1938 the military balance between Germany and her potential enemies still leaned decisively against Berlin. In view of Germany's clear military inferiority, the attempt to destroy Czechoslovakia by force might bring about the end of Hitler's career and a greater defeat than that of the First World War. For this reason, it was not possible to consider the conquest of Czechoslovakia in the same fashion that later brought about the defeat of Poland in September 1939.

The option that Hitler had was to use the Trojan horse represented by the Sudeten Germans to undermine Czechoslovakia from within. The German tyrant would carry out this stratagem as a masterpiece of diplomacy with the generous help of the two victims next in line: France and Britain. As we noted earlier, the consolidation of Nazism in Germany quickly transformed the Sudeten Germans from a minority seeking equal rights into a fifth column openly declaring its intention to dismantle the Mother State.

In November 1935, long negotiations began between Konrad Henlein, the "Führer" of the Sudeten Germans, and the Prague government over the issue of autonomy for the German minority. Benes who had meanwhile become president of the Republic, appointed his Prime

Minister, the Slovak Milan Hodza to conduct the negotiations with Henlein. The appointment of Hodza the Slovak was a clear signal of “flexibility” in Prague’s positions. Henlein was instructed by Berlin to always demand of Prague more than whatever the Czechs offered. He played his role with exemplary faithfulness. Already at the beginning of 1938, the Sudeten Germans constituted an autonomous entity in all respects. After the Anschluss of Austria in March 1938, the Czechs found themselves surrounded on the south, west and northwest by the Third Reich. Surrender to the Sudeten Germans’ demands gathered momentum although the negotiations had their ups and downs. In the discussions at Karlovy Vary (Karlsbad) in April 1938, Henlein raised a series of demands, among them the right of overt loyalty on the part of the German minority to the Nazi principles of the Third Reich. This cynical demand for violation of the constitution of the state would have wrecked the *raison d’être* of the Republic and even Hodza could not agree to that. The talks foundered.

With the collapse of the Karlovy Vary talks, Hitler complained bitterly about the attack on the rights of his people who were a minority in Czechoslovakia by “the Slavic gang that had not long ago signed an accord with the Communists for the Bolshevization of Western culture”. (In 1935, Czechoslovakia had signed a mutual aid pact with the USSR.)

On September 12, in a speech to the Nazi Party conference at Nuremberg, Hitler attacked Czechoslovakia, and its president in particular, in his notorious gutter style. The Czechs, who were well fortified in their Sudeten Mountains and who relied on their military pact with France, reacted with a series of steps. The most determined of them were the dismissal of Milan Hodza as Prime Minister (September 22) and the setting up of a national unity government headed by General Jan Syrový, the chief inspector of the army and a prominent “hawk” in the perception of his contemporaries. The Czech army expanded the draft of the reserves, and military rule was imposed on the Sudetenland. Henlein and his men fled to Berlin. The feeling in Europe was that war was imminent.

At this critical stage, the two official allies of Czechoslovakia rushed to Hitler’s aid. These were the Prime Ministers of the two great democracies of the continent, France and Britain. Both Neville Chamberlain and Edouard Daladier accused the Prague government of fouling the atmosphere in Europe by ill-treatment of the German minority. In London as well as in Paris, complete understanding was expressed for Hitler’s desire to unify his people under the shelter of the Third Reich, just as he had done not long before with Austria. The European press consistently described the Czechs’ abuse of the German minority, and Benes was presented as an obstacle to peace and a warmonger. It was explained to the Czechs, both in speeches in the French and British parliaments, and in the press, that handing over the Sudetenland to Germany would bring them only good, since in that way they would be rid of a large, militant minority that endangered the Slavic character of their state. The Czechs claimed that handing over the Sudetenland to Germany would expose their country’s defense system to Hitler’s armies. In response to that argument, they were told that in the age of peace there was no value to territorial assets, and in any case the two major powers were ready to guarantee Czechoslovakia’s integrity in its new borders.

However, the international pressure campaign did not work. The Czechs were not convinced. On the contrary, sure of their military strength and of their system of pacts with France and the USSR, the Prague government made thorough preparations to repel a German attack if it came. Hence, it was decided in London and Paris, in light of Prague’s stubbornness, to take the initiative themselves in cooperation with Hitler.

### **Don't Be Vague – Ask for Prague!**

(The above title is a “joke” that circulated in London on the eve of the Munich Conference. It accurately reflected Prime Minister Chamberlain’s defeatism and toadying to Hitler.)

On September 15th, Chamberlain flew to the *Führer*’s private residence at Berchtesgaden in the Obersalzburger Mountains in an attempt to placate him at Czechoslovakia’s expense. The issue on the agenda was not handing the Sudetenland over to Germany. There was already full agreement on that. All that Chamberlain asked was that delivery of the Sudetenland be carried out with Prague’s agreement in order to prevent the area from being conquered by force by the Wehrmacht. A German attack on Czechoslovakia would oblige France to go to the defense of Prague. A clash between France and Germany would require England to come to the aid of its ally, and that meant a major war in Europe. Chamberlain wanted to avoid that at all cost, and the price was the vivisection and liquidation in fact of a small democracy in Central Europe.

It is superfluous to point out that Hitler knew very well the considerations of the British Prime Minister. Hitler carefully avoided mentioning any threat of war during the whole seven hours of discussion, in which he did most of the talking. Finally, Chamberlain took it upon himself to convince Daladier of the justice of the *Führer*’s arguments, and together with him, they would break Benes’ stubbornness.

Chamberlain’s return to London (September 16) was concomitant with the return of Lord Runciman from Prague. Runciman headed a commission that carried his name, which was supposed to present to the Prime Minister recommendations on the Sudeten issue. Runciman and the commission he headed were a creation of the Prime Minister and it is no wonder that its conclusions fit in with the appeasement policy. Runciman’s support for the German minority was total and sweeping. The commission recommended unambiguously that the Sudetenland be transferred to the Third Reich as soon as possible without any need for a plebiscite. (It should be pointed out that even Hitler and Henlein had not gone so far in their demands on August 3, when the Runciman commission arrived in Prague.)

The author of the report accused Czechoslovakia (“The territory now called Czechoslovakia...” in Runciman’s words) of warmongering and recommended outlawing those elements and parties “that encourage an antagonistic policy towards its neighbors”. Hence, the Czechoslovak government must “change its foreign relations in order to give guarantees to its neighbors that in no circumstances will it attack them or join in an attack on them as is required by the agreements that she has with other states.” (This was a clear hint to France and the Soviet Union.)<sup>1</sup>

While he was still holding the commission’s documents, Chamberlain summoned Daladier to coordinate their positions in order to steamroll Czechoslovakia. Within two days, the “Anglo-French Plan” was drawn up and presented to the Czech government on the nineteenth of the month. The Plan was in the main a sweeping acceptance of the German dictates, that is, the demand (formulated as an ultimatum) to transfer the Sudetenland to the German Reich in exchange for guarantees of Czechoslovakia’s integrity in the territory remaining within Prague’s sovereignty. These guarantees were to take the place of her present treaty with France.

As expected, Benes’ reply to the Anglo-French paper was negative. Prague’s refusal to commit national suicide was met in London and Paris by an outburst of anger and insulted

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<sup>1</sup> The Runciman Report, see British White Paper, Cmd. 5847, No. 1.

feelings. In the middle of the night, Benes received an ultimatum from Chamberlain. He accused Czechoslovakia of bringing about war in Europe by refusing the Anglo-French Plan. Therefore, if he did not immediately reverse his refusal, the two powers would eliminate their readiness to guarantee Czechoslovakia's integrity. In this manner, Prague would bring disaster upon itself, since (it was indicated in the telegram) Hitler's intentions in this matter were well known.

The Anglo-French ultimatum placed Benes in an intolerable dilemma. Not only had his allies abandoned him and cause Czechoslovakia to face German power alone, but Poland and Hungary might also stand with Hitler and demand that Prague return the territory she had annexed from them in 1918. The only way out in the president's opinion was the pact with the USSR. Indeed, the Russians, for their own reasons, were ready to activate their alliance with the Czechs immediately. Litvinov, the Commissar for Foreign Affairs, sent a letter to Benes on this matter. However, the Russian proposal was rejected due to Prime Minister Milan Hodza's opposition. He expressed the fears of the Slovaks toward Russia. Eduard Benes, worn out, sick (after a heart attack) and fearing a civil war, surrendered on September 21 to the Anglo-French pressure and announced to both powers that his government was ready to accept their plan.

Benes' surrender was accompanied by an unprecedented outburst of anger and mass demonstrations in Prague. There were demands that he be tried for treason. The Hodza government was forced to resign and, as was noted earlier, a new Prime Minister was appointed, General Syrovky. The latter symbolized Czechoslovakia's readiness to fight for its principles.

Chamberlain was pleased and showered praises on Benes whose "country had made heavy sacrifices for peace". He then asked for a meeting with Hitler as soon as possible in order to give him the good news personally that his conditions for vivisectioning Czechoslovakia had been accepted. Hitler summoned the British Prime Minister to come to him on September 22 at Bad Godesberg, on the east bank of the Rhine. Chamberlain gave Hitler the details of the Anglo-French Plan, he indicated the fact that in the main the plan was a copy of the *Führer's* own demands, and he stressed his own part in breaking Prague's resistance. However, to the Prime Minister's great astonishment, Hitler's response was: "I am very sorry, but I am no longer interested in this." (In German, as usual, the sentence is more musical: *Es tut mir furchtbar leid, aber das geht mir nicht mehr*). The Prime Minister was astounded. However, after he "slept on it", in his words, he asked the *Führer* for (and received) the German demands in writing. Hitler's memorandum was formulated in the style of an ultimatum. The demands made were each one in itself and all of them together, a crude violation of the Berchtesgaden agreement of only a week before. In the main, the component of humiliation of the Czechs and their allies was emphasized. Thus, for example, it was demanded that the Czechs begin evacuating the Sudetenland on the morning of September 26 and must finish the evacuation by September 28 in the evening. That is, in less than three days, the state had to evacuate hundreds of thousands of citizens and hand over a military and economic infrastructure stretching over 35,000 sq. km. In order to make the Czech effort "easier", the diktat demanded that:

The Sudeten-German area be evacuated without causing damage to the military, economic, and transportation infrastructure...all the commercial and transportation infrastructure, especially railroad cars with their contents... Food, commodities, cattle, raw materials, etc. are not to be evacuated...

Hitler's ultimatum was rejected by both London and Paris, however, this was only out of tactical considerations. The Czechs, it is needless to point out, rejected it outright: "The Bad Godesberg conditions are absolutely unacceptable under any conditions," Jan Syrový, the Czechoslovak Prime Minister, wrote.

Jan Masaryk, Czechoslovakia's ambassador in London, formulated the document in response to the ultimatum. (He was the son of Thomas Masaryk). An excerpt from his statement is particularly instructive:

It is a *de facto ultimatum* of the sort usually presented to a vanquished nation and not a proposition to a sovereign state which has shown the greatest possible readiness to make sacrifices for the appeasement of Europe... The proposals go far beyond what we agreed to in the so-called Anglo-French Plan. They deprive us of every safeguard for our national existence. We are to yield up large proportions of carefully prepared defenses and to admit the German armies deep into our country before we have been able to organize it on the new basis or any preparations for its defense. Our national and economic independence would automatically disappear with the acceptance of Herr Hitler's plan. The whole process of moving the population is to be reduced to panic flight on the part of those who will not accept the German Nazi regime. They have to leave their homes without even the right to take their personal belongings... Against these new and cruel demands, my Government feels bound to make their utmost resistance, and we shall do so, God helping. The nation of St. Wenceslas, Jan Hus, and Thomas Masaryk will not be a nation of slaves.

Masaryk concluded his response:

We rely on the two great Western democracies, whose desire we have decided to honor despite their being in opposition to our opinion, to stand with us in our difficult hour.<sup>2</sup>

As we mentioned above, the rejection of the Nazi diktat by France and Britain was nothing but a trick. Both powers knew very well that they would have to back up in practice the decision to reject the German conditions, namely, to face the possibility of war against Germany as required by the Franco-Czechoslovak agreement and the Anglo-French agreement. Britain and France had no intention of doing that.

Hence, on September 25, Chamberlain summoned the French Prime Minister and his foreign minister to London. The transparent aim was to accept Hitler's diktat through eliminating the French commitment to Prague. This would be done in order to release the British from their commitment to Paris. Needless to say, the French did not need too much convincing. Georges Bonnet, the French foreign minister, quoted the minutes of Chamberlain's talk with Daladier:

"If Germany then invades Czechoslovakia what will you do?" Chamberlain asked Daladier.

"In that case, France will come to the assistance of the Czechs," was the answer.

"But with what will you fight?" Chamberlain asked, "Can you put the requisite numbers of troops into the field? Are your mechanized forces equal to those of the Germans? Is your air force capable of opposing the Luftwaffe? How will you meet the rain of bombs which will fall on Paris' train stations and air fields? Do not forget that the Czechs will be overwhelmed in a few days at most, and that then you will have to face Germany alone."

Daladier was cringing uncomfortably under this rain of questions, because he knew that the answer to all of them was negative...

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<sup>2</sup> British White Paper, Cmd. 5847, No. 7.

“Do you then suggest that France should remain aloof if Germany attacks Czechoslovakia?” he asked the British Prime Minister. Chamberlain retorted: “It is not for the British government to express an opinion as to what France should do. That is a matter for the Government of France.”<sup>3</sup>

The next day, September 26, Hitler spoke to the nation in the Sportpalast in Berlin. Together with his slanders about “this Benes” who was responsible for “the war that is about to break out”, the *Führer* declared openly that if “the Czechs do not evacuate the Sudetenland by October 1, the German army will liberate them by force that very day... Now the choice is in the hands of this Benes...”

This time Hitler did not need to coordinate positions with Chamberlain, since the latter for his part sent a telegram to Benes the very next day after the speech, in these words:

If by tomorrow (September 28) at 14:00 the government of Czechoslovakia does not accept the German conditions, the armies of Germany will receive an order to cross the border. This means that no power or powers will be able to save your country from the fate anticipated for it, and the results of the world war will be what they may.<sup>4</sup>

It seems that Chamberlain feared that the telegram was not formulated aggressively enough, since a few hours later another telegram was sent to Prague in which Prague’s refusal to commit suicide was defined as: “An aggressive provocation towards the German Reich that will free Britain and France from their commitment to Czechoslovakia.” Therefore, “Whatever the results of the anticipated conflict may be, Czechoslovakia will not return to its previous borders.” Two hours later, a copy of the telegram was sent to Berlin. Indeed, one must admit that in view of such a depth of British hypocrisy and fraud, even Hitler begins to look like a man of truth.

Since the Prague government did not hurry to answer his two telegrams, Chamberlain appealed to the nation in his hysterical speech of September 27 in which he said, *inter alia*:

How horrible, fantastic, incredible it is that we should be digging trenches and trying on gas masks here because of a quarrel in a far away country between people of whom we know nothing.

His remarks made in a panicky, weary voice drenched Europe with a feeling that war was about to break out the next day.

However, the unbelievable happened. While he was speaking the next day in the Commons, summing up in a broken, tired voice his *Via Dolorosa* of diplomatic torments, Chamberlain received “a personal letter” from Hitler in which the latter withdrew substantially, both in style and in content, from the Bad Godesberg ultimatum, and even more so from his denunciatory speech in the Sportpalast. The letter was politely formulated. It complimented Chamberlain, stressed the *Führer*’s devotion to peace and his revulsion from the horrors of war. In particular, it proposed an orderly transfer of the Sudetenland after a plebiscite (!) without the use of the army and with international supervision. He proposed concluding this the next day at a peace conference in Munich.

When the Prime Minister read the main points of Hitler’s letter before the assembly, an orgy of joy broke out that the mother of parliaments had never known since its founding.

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<sup>3</sup> Georges Bonnet, *Defense de la Paix*, Geneva, 1946, I, pp. 268-269.

<sup>4</sup> J.W. Bennett, *Munich, Prologue to Tragedy*, NY, 1964, p. 152.



As we know, historians are divided in their interpretations of the surprising letter from Hitler. One may see it as a Machiavellian move by a skillful practitioner of diplomacy who recognized the structural weaknesses of democratic states. For that reason, precisely at the decisive point on the verge of actual war, he proposed a way out of the tangle. This was because he knew that the next day the thankful democrats would hand him on a silver platter what they refused to grant him today. However, another factor should not be overlooked, namely, the military balance and the fear that he might have gone too far in his gamble. This combination of factors is what motivated Hitler in this classic fraud which undoubtedly was the climax of the procession of his diplomatic victories, a fraud that exposed at one and the same time the despot's cunning and the astounding defeatism of the democrats.

The fear that he might have gone too far was apparently based on the harsh picture presented to him over and over by the high command of the Wehrmacht.

### **A Fleeting Moment of Historical Benevolence**

As we have seen, developments unraveled one after the other and quickly got out of the *Führer's* control. The main events were: general mobilization of the Czech army; the manning of the Maginot Line and the French army's preparations to mobilize 80 divisions; the rejection of the Bad Godesberg accord in the British parliament and the French National Assembly; the placing of the British navy on alert; the readiness of the Czechs to fight whatever might come; the mobilization in Germany and the movements of the Wehrmacht's armies to both the Czechoslovak borders and to the Siegfried Line (then in the process of construction) facing France.

The feeling on that terrible day of September 28, engraved in the European memory as "Black Wednesday", was one of inevitable war. A third of the population of Paris had fled the city, an evacuation of the civilian population was taking place in the big cities of Britain, and heavy gloom and the fear of another defeat loomed over the cities of Germany.

The series of the *Führer's* gambles serving his overt intention to eliminate Czechoslovakia, had reached an intolerable threshold from the army's point of view. The Wehrmacht high command knew well that in view of the severe gap in the military balance between Germany and the joint forces of Czechoslovakia, France, and Britain, Hitler's adventure had to end in military disaster. The commander in chief, General Ludwig Beck, wrote a series of memoranda, the first one on May 5. The substance of these memoranda was that a German attack on Czechoslovakia would start a general war in Europe due to the commitment of France and Britain to Czechoslovakia. In this war, Beck wrote, Germany would have no chance and the destruction caused to the country would be even greater than that caused by the First World War. (Beck's forecast was accurate, albeit after a delay of several years.) Since he had not succeeded in convincing the *Führer*, Beck handed in his resignation and retired from the army. His successor in the post of chief of the General Staff, Franz Halder, quickly reached the same conclusion and joined the group of conspirators that was planning to arrest Hitler and bring him to court on the charge of treason against the fatherland. The commander of the western front, General Wilhelm Adam, was ready to risk a face to face confrontation with Hitler on the grounds that the western front and the Siegfried Line fortifications, under his command and still under construction, would collapse in the face of the tremendous superiority of the French army that he estimated at a ratio of 7:1 in favor of the French.

Fieldmarshal Wilhelm Keitel himself, the supreme commander of the army and a slavishly devoted lackey of Hitler, admitted Germany's inability to break through the Sudetenland defenses. Fieldmarshal von Manstein believed the same.<sup>5</sup>

However, in order to take such a radical step, the opposition in Germany, which included a series of outstanding personalities both within and outside the army, needed help from outside Germany. This meant a resolute stance by France and Britain against Hitler, which would have been interpreted by the German public, and rightly so, as a threat of general war in a state of decisive German military inferiority. It should be recalled that every German aged 30 and over at that time had experienced the horrors of defeat in the previous war and its results. The understanding that Hitler's adventure would bring another disaster down upon Germany, and perhaps even worse than the previous one, would have given the conspirators a firm basis of public support.

The conspirators presented the entire body of information, including the exact date of the expected German attack on Czechoslovakia, to Chamberlain (through Winston Churchill and senior officials in the foreign ministry). They promised that at the very same time that a warning by a senior British personality was broadcast against an attack on Czechoslovakia, the conspirators would act to arrest Hitler and liquidate the Nazi regime.<sup>6</sup> However their failure was total. With supreme historical irony, not only did Chamberlain and Halifax, with Henderson's encouragement, do nothing in this matter, but the revelations that had reached them deepened their dread of Hitler and intensified their readiness to placate him by cutting up Czechoslovakia.

The Munich Conference was the culminating triumph for a process that had begun five years earlier when the Nazis came to power. It was a ceremony of humiliation for the democracies in which Hitler won the whole pot, Czechoslovakia lost its independence, and Britain and France lost their honor. It was a ritual which put on display the structural defeatism of the democracies and the groundless illusion that a dictator could be placated by concessions.

A somewhat grotesque feature was the absence of Czechoslovakia from the discussions. Hitler had made this a condition, and it was accepted without question by Chamberlain and Daladier. The two Czech representatives were indeed summoned at the last moment in a gesture of good will on the *Führer's* part, but they were not allowed to sit in the discussion room and were told to wait in the corridor. The sentence decreeing the extirpation of their country was handed to them by the allies only at the end of the conference.

The agreement itself went far beyond the Anglo-French Plan and it was a kind of compromise between the Bad Godesberg diktat and the British and French proposals formulated two days before the conference. The Sudetenland would be annexed to Germany, the Nazi occupation would begin on October 1, that is, the day after the conference and would last for seven days. Britain and France would guarantee the new borders of Czechoslovakia, but only after a territorial arrangement for the Hungarian and Polish minorities, that is, removing additional territories from the Czechoslovak state. Prague was required to deliver everything undamaged to the Germans: France and Britain had guaranteed that.

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<sup>5</sup> Both of them said this while on trial at Nuremberg.

<sup>6</sup> On the conspiracy of the German generals, see, *inter alia*: William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, NY, 1964, pp. 372-380; Ian Colvin, *The Chamberlain Cabinet*, London, 1971, p. 143; J.W. Bennett, *op cit.*, p. 161.

Hitler had achieved everything. His army had conquered Czechoslovakia without the need to fire a single shot. France had lost her most important strategic asset in Central Europe and had been shown to be a harmless scarecrow against German power. The military defeat, the demoralization and the moral rot reached full expression under the Vichy regime. Britain lost her only ally on the continent, Poland was isolated and moved towards her own liquidation in September 1939, the USSR had been neutralized for a decisive period of time of nearly three years, and Hitler acquired the huge arsenals of Czechoslovakia as well as an important extension of another year to pursue a process of accelerated rearmament.

The discussion in the British parliament on the Munich agreement, which was called “Peace in our time”, took place in an unprecedented mood of exaltation. The speech of Victor Raikes, a Conservative deputy, earned thunderous applause when he enthusiastically said about the Prime Minister: “Our leader will go down in history as the greatest European statesman of this or any other time.” Everyone sang the praises of Czechoslovakia in general and its president in particular: “The Czechs have kept the peace of Europe...their sacrifice is what saved us from war.” Everyone spoke about the “moral commitment” of Britain to the Czechs. The crowns placed on Benes’ head bore an especially macabre character since in the very course of the discussions in the British parliament, on October 5, Benes had been removed from his presidency. In this orgy of emotional debauchery, hypocrisy, and confusion, it was Churchill who saved the honor of his country. He said:

We are in the presence of a disaster of the first magnitude which has befallen Great Britain and France... The system of alliances in Central Europe upon which France has relied for her safety has been swept away... The road down the Danube Valley to the Black Sea, the resources of corn and oil, the road which leads as far as Turkey, has been opened.<sup>7</sup>

Churchill earned crocks of contempt and slander for his remarks. The scorn for him continued for months after Munich. Even in the middle of December, after the formal elimination of the First Republic of Czechoslovakia and in view of Hitler’s open preparations for war, the *London Times* proposed bringing Churchill and his supporters to trial, standing them before a firing squad and/or hanging them.

The war-mongers [Churchill and his supporters], those who would make war against another country without having counted the cost, ought to either be impeached and shot or hanged... There has never been a Prime Minister in the history of England who has in nine months achieved such agreements as those Mr. Chamberlain has made with Czechoslovakia, Italy, and with Hitler in Munich. [*The Times*, December 15, 1938]

In historical perspective, the remarks of Chamberlain himself – a grotesque distortion of reality – take on the appearance of the theater of the absurd:

Ever since I assumed my present office my main purpose has been to work for the pacification of Europe, for the removal of those suspicions and those anxieties which have so long poisoned the air... The question of Czechoslovakia is the latest and perhaps the most dangerous [obstacle to peace]. Now that we have got past it [through the Munich Conference], I feel that it may be possible to make further progress along the road to sanity... I believe that good will exists, and readiness on both sides... Our goal is to achieve the cooperation of all the nations...in building permanent peace in Europe.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> House of Commons Debates, October 5, 1938, coll. 366, 367-368; quoted in Bennet, op cit., p. 187.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., coll. 48, October 3, 1938; quoted in part in Bennett, p. 188.

The Prime Minister won an overwhelming majority of the vote, 366 for the Munich pact, 144 against. The discussion in the French parliament on October 4 was very brief. Little was said, a sense of gloom pervaded the air. To the credit of the French, let it be said that they at least avoided the sad spectacle of self-deception that the British parliament had displayed. Even the defeatists of Bonnet's ilk (and Bonnet had chosen not to take part in the discussion) realized that France had in fact dug its own grave by its betrayal of the Czechs. In contrast to Chamberlain, Daladier had no illusions about the results to be expected from the clauses of the Munich pact which he defined with fitting cynicism as: "*des propositions précises et d'application immédiate et pratique...*" [precise statements to be immediately applied in practice...] The Communists under Moscow's orders indeed attacked the government, but in the vote, Daladier won a majority even more overwhelming than that of Chamberlain, 543 for, 75 against.<sup>9</sup>

Hardly six days passed from the day the pact was signed until the territorial clauses in it were violated. The international commission that was supposed to draw the exact boundaries of what remained of Czechoslovakia convened in Berlin. The Germans delivered an ultimatum, the French and the British immediately gave in, the Italian delegate hesitated, the Czechs opposed, the proposal [ultimatum] was accepted, and the Czechoslovak Republic was reduced to a sawed-off stump. Czechoslovakia had lost a quarter of its territory, all of its strategic assets including "the best line of fortifications in Europe", in the words of the French commander in chief, General Gamelin, and her "war potential" as it was defined by the Germans. Eight-hundred thousand Czechs became exiles in their own country, hostages of Germany in the Sudetenland. Czechoslovakia had lost a considerable part of its strategic raw materials: 73% of its coal and lignite deposits, 70% of its iron and steel works, 80% of its textile manufacturing plants, 75% of its railroad tracks, 86% of its chemical and glass industry, 40% of its wood manufacturing and 70% of its electricity production.<sup>10</sup>

Within a week, one of the richest and strongest states in Europe had become an emasculated economic entity, without an army, without the capacity of self-defense, betrayed by its allies, subject to the mercy of a notorious criminal. This was "Peace with honor" as Chamberlain defined it.

The second republic that arose on the ruins of Czechoslovakia, headed by Emil Hacha, held out for 105 days until March 14, 1939. On that date, the Wehrmacht conquered the rump of Czechoslovakia without firing a shot. In the afternoon of March 15, 1939, Hitler came through the gates of Hradcany Castle, the palace of the kings of Bohemia. He went up to Eduard Benes' work room, sat down, and wrote on the table of the president of the Republic the following sentence: "Czecho-Slovakia has ceased to exist."

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<sup>9</sup> For Daladier's speech in full, see *Le Temps*, October 5, 1938.

<sup>10</sup> According to the German statistics, see Hubert Ripka, *Munich: Before and After*, London, 1939, p. 492.

## PART TWO

### The Dialectic of Historical Comparison

*Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.*

George Santayana

*The past interests me as much as the snows of yesteryear.*

*There is no greater mistake than learning from history.*

*We have nothing to learn from it.*

Shimon Peres

Historical analogy between two nations distinct from each other in many variables is extremely complex even under the best of circumstances. A comparison between Czechoslovakia at the end of the 1930s and Israel at the end of the 1990s, inevitably must encounter two major obstacles in addition to those that usually plague historical comparisons. One is the lack of historical perspective concerning the Jewish state, the other is the Jewish anomaly which requires criteria that diverge considerably from what is conventional among ordinary nations.

Nevertheless, despite the many differences in the conditions and nature of the two periods in question, a basis exists for comparison between the two. The fundamental objective conditions for national destruction are chillingly similar. Israel, as will be demonstrated below, is repeating all the errors that Czechoslovakia made and is adding original touches of her own. Hence, Karl Marx's epigram nicely fits the Israeli situation: "History repeats itself, the first time as tragedy, the second as farce."

Israel's economic wellbeing imbues its citizens with an illusion of security and prosperity that conceals from most of the public the fact that their state is on a track toward national suicide. Only a radical, unexpected step (such as a major war) might check Israel's reckless rush amok to its bitter demise. Even a discussion of these matters is rather macabre in character. This in turn creates defense mechanisms that thwart rational and thorough consideration of the situation. What remains is cognitive dissonance that basically means the more mistakes you make, the more you dig in behind them.

Israel's behavior is clear testimony to a structural failure which thwarts the principle of the learning process: Deducing lessons and applying them. For this reason, Santayana's well-known aphorism, "Those who do not remember the past are condemned to relive it," more than being a cry of alarm, is a kind of lugubrious summary after-the-fact of the history of peoples who strenuously refuse to learn the lessons of history.

Let it be said to the credit of the Czechs that they at least had no one to learn from. Their tragedy was a kind of historical precedent. Indeed the defeatism of politicians and the treachery of allies have been part of the world order since the dawn of written history. But we must admit that the Czech case should be considered classic, since it combined all the ingredients that, together, brought about the greatest disaster in human history, the Second World War, which caused nearly 50 million dead, more than all the wars in the history of the human race combined.

No nation lost more in the war than the Jewish people. Between six and seven million, more than two thirds of all the Jews in Europe, were massacred in an orgy of lust for industrial murder for its own sake. Thus it might have been expected that the Jews, more than any other nation, would learn the lessons of history and would engrave them with an iron stylus in their hearts and minds. But Israel, under the Orwellian guise of “the peace process”, persists in running amok like someone bewitched into the death trap of the 1967 borders. This is because Israel is the expression of the Jewish anomaly which is comprised at one and the same time of anti-Semitism and self-hatred, a deadly hybrid which contributes to creating a mechanism of self-destruction, a phenomenon that has no counterpart among other nations.

The principles of comparison relate to that stage in which the state loses its purpose for physical and spiritual existence, its *raison d'être*. In this situation, it is hard to judge what came first, the loss of defensible borders which transforms the struggle against the enemy into a heroic but hopeless struggle, or the heedless shedding of defensible borders because of spiritual demoralization that strikes at the nation's survival instinct.

The comparison below will be made on four planes: 1) Balance of Power, 2) An Irridentist Minority, 3) Alliances as a Power Multiplier and 4) Military Balance.

## **Balance of Power**

### **Secure Boundaries**

Hans Morgenthau devotes the foreword to his well-known book, *Politics Among Nations*, to indicating the permanent factors upon which a state's power rests. The permanent ingredient of decisive importance for a nation's power is, in Morgenthau's concept, the nature of the nation's boundaries which derive from the size and strategic depth of its territory, the structure of the territory and the capacity to defend it by natural obstacles. Hence, defensible boundaries are a condition for the survival of a nation in a hostile environment. Needless to say, this basic proposition of Morgenthau is a fundamental assumption that unites all historians and military thinkers from Thucydides to Liddell Hart. Czechoslovakia and Israel are two examples in the modern age of small states facing an enemy superior to them in every component of the balance of forces: military power, territory, and population. In this situation, not only do defensible boundaries become a crucial power multiplier but they are a condition for the very existence of the state. It was Shimon Peres, an outstanding pupil of Morgenthau, who wrote, after analyzing the problem of Israel's narrow waist in the center of the country, that: “Without defensible boundaries, the state will be destroyed in war.”<sup>11</sup> And it was Abba Eban who defined Israel's frontiers of June 4, 1967 as “Auschwitz borders” (in an interview with *Der Spiegel*, June 1968).

### **Czechoslovakia**

From the point of view of secure boundaries, Czechoslovakia's situation was uncomfortable. The most outstanding component was the lack of proportion between the state's width and its length: 200 km. against 760 km., that is, a ratio of about 3.8:1. This meant that Czechoslovakia had particularly long borders which made a defensive disposition difficult and expensive. Czechoslovakia was and is a continental state without an outlet to the sea, and except for

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<sup>11</sup> Shimon Peres, “Infrastructure for Peace and Security”, *Kaet Mahar*, Jerusalem: Keter, 1978, Hebrew, pp. 215-262.

Romania, it was surrounded on every side by hostile states, to some degree or another. The common denominator of all of them (Germany, Poland, and Hungary) was their territorial demands on the state of Czechs and Slovaks. For example, Bohemia and Moravia, the two regions that make up the Czech lands (the Czech Republic today), were like an enclave in the German Reich, while most of Slovakia's territory – that had been torn away from Hungary after the First World War – bordered on Hungary, and was the constant object of Magyar *revanchisme*. Czechoslovakia had no common border with its military allies, France and the USSR. This geographic flaw had decisive importance in the critical days on the eve of the Munich Conference.

Czechoslovakia's territorial strategic asset was the ridge of mountains called the Sudetenland which separated her from the main source of threat, Germany. The Sudetenland was well fortified, a "Little Maginot Line". However, thanks to its location between mountain ridges, its defensive capacity was immeasurably superior to that of the French Maginot Line. The loss of the Sudetenland and its fortifications meant loss of defensible boundaries which was tantamount to the elimination of Czechoslovakia. That is precisely what happened on March 15, 1939.

Unfortunately for the Czechs, most of the population of the Sudetenland was made up of ethnic Germans, a large irredentist minority that drew its strength from its ethnic affiliation to the declared enemy of the Czechoslovak Republic.

## Israel

Israel's geographic situation does not need to be detailed. It is enough to say that the Judea-Samaria mountain ridge in the center of the country, and the Golan Heights in the north of the state, are territorial strategic assets without which Israel would be left without defensible boundaries. Although Israel has an advantage over Czechoslovakia in having a seacoast, Israel's situation is much graver for at least two reasons:

1. The distances from the Sudeten Mountains to the main concentrations of population in Czechoslovakia were at least tens of kilometers. For example, the shortest distance between Prague and the new border after giving up the Sudetenland was 80 km. A not inconsiderable distance in view of the fire power, the range, and the accuracy of weapons of the 1930s.
2. The central portion of Israel, Greater Tel Aviv, encompasses 70% of the entire Jewish population of the state, as well as a similar percentage of its industry output. These are within zero range of the green line to which – or close to which – Israel will be forced to withdraw in the final stage of the "peace process". The performance capacities of conventional weapons in the year 2000 is far superior to that of weapons of the 1930s. Again, it was Shimon Peres who clearly stated what might be expected to occur if and when Israel withdrew to the outskirts of Kfar Saba and Rosh Ha' Ayin:

The lack of minimal territorial space would place it [Israel] in a situation of absolute non-deterrence... and would create among the Arabs an irrepressible lust to attack it [Israel] from all sides and to destroy the Jewish state.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> An interview with Haggai Eshed, *Davar*, June 27, 1975.

Arab strategy would also aspire in the future to exploit the weak point in Israeli strategy – the deployment of the reserve army during the course of the war itself – and to prevent this deployment by a surprise attack, or an offensive with a short warning time for Israel.<sup>13</sup>

## **An Irredentist Minority**

### **Czechoslovakia: Sudeten Germans**

The Sudeten Germans were the central pretext for dismantling Czechoslovakia. They possessed all the structural components of an irredentist minority that created the critical mass needed for the final destruction of Czechoslovakia. Hence, they are the classic example of an Fifth Column. The main components of this situation are as follows:

1. A minority that belongs ethnically to a neighboring power that is an enemy of its state. The Sudeten Germans were of one flesh with the largest, most violent, most powerful nation in Europe – Germany.
2. An economically powerful minority. The 3.5 million Germans possessed nearly 50% of the whole Czechoslovak economy, and mainly in raw materials. (See above, the list of economic losses after giving up the Sudetenland to Germany.)
3. A minority that inhabits border areas of the state in physical proximity to the enemy. Not only did the Sudetenland lie along the border with Germany (and Austria before the Anschluss), but these areas were the only fortified defensible borders that Czechoslovakia had facing the German enemy.
4. A large minority of 23% of the total population taking advantage of the individual liberties and right of association which were granted to it by virtue of the democratic system, in order to destroy the democratic state from within. Indeed, the Sudeten Germans, a minority identified with Nazi totalitarianism, have been the most obvious example in modern history that demonstrates the structural weakness of a democracy with a large, hostile minority within its borders. Such a minority constitutes the basis of self-destruction.

The consolidation of the Nazi Party in Germany was accompanied by considerable enthusiasm among the Sudeten Germans. A branch of the Nazi Party in Bohemia sent eight delegates to the Prague parliament as early as 1929. The rise of Hitler to power in early 1933 gave great momentum to the German Nazis in Czechoslovakia. In a short while, they had won the political backing of a major power in Europe, with generous financing for their activities. And the Prague government could no longer outlaw them. The first stage was the establishment of a Nazi party headed by Konrad Henlein that was formed in October 1933 as the national front of the Sudeten Germans (SDP = Sudetendeutschepartei). The party grew rapidly as the time approached for the general elections of May 1935. Ironically, the SDP emerged from the elections as the largest party in Czechoslovakia. This was because of the divisions that splintered the Czechoslovak electorate as well as the successful muster of all the Germans behind the Nazi banner. Aware of his great power and Hitler's aggressive backing, Henlein began negotiations with the Czechoslovak government with the surprising demand: Prague must turn its back on the League of Nations and Western democracies and orient itself towards Berlin as a basic premise of policy. Needless to say, this groundless demand would have resulted in the collapse of the Republic's *raison d'etre*, and was rejected by Prague. Yet

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<sup>13</sup> Peres, op cit.



this demand represented a major intensification of the irredentist character of the German minority.

Benes' treatment of the Sudeten Germans, with all its ups and downs, was in the main feeble and irresolute. Of course this observation is made from hindsight, and it ought to be pointed out that the Czechs were working under an unbearably heavy steamroller of German-British pressures. Nevertheless, we must not avoid identifying the fundamental structural flaw in the negotiations that the Prague government conducted with the Sudeten Germans. The very recognition of the autonomous status of the German minority as a party to negotiations while they were citizens of the state, was a clear signal of surrender, and surrender as usual invited pressures. This was why, even if it is difficult to describe a more repulsive combination of hypocrisy and political foolishness than that of Britain on the eve of the Munich Conference, the British pressure was in direct proportion to Prague's readiness to surrender. In the end, matters reached the point of British intervention in Czech politics through a delegation that London sent "to mediate" between the Sudeten Germans and the Prague government. The outlook of the mission's head, Lord Runciman ("compared to him even Chamberlain was an extremist warmonger," as the London *Evening Standard* wrote of him), and his sympathy with the "bitter fate" of the Sudeten Germans, were notorious. The very consent of the Prague government to Runciman's role as an "honest broker" (the common expression then as now) was an outstanding act of political folly and one of the last nails in Prague's coffin. As anticipated, the mission's visit was accompanied by constant media coverage in Europe that presented "the Slavic abuse of the oppressed German minority". Runciman's report which unequivocally recommended the vivisection of Czechoslovakia (see above) was therefore a document custom-tailored according to Hitler's *diktat* and a fig leaf for Chamberlain at Munich.

It was Milan Hodza, the Slovak Prime Minister, who worked tirelessly to satisfy the Sudeten German demands as early as 1935 when it was painfully obvious that Konrad Henlein's party was an offshoot of the Nazi party. The principle in the negotiations that Henlein conducted with Hodza was to always demand more than what was offered. In this way, the Sudeten Germans won full de facto autonomy. The excision of the Sudetenland from the mother country was accepted among Czechoslovakia's allies as something that was taken for granted.

The Sudeten Germans had absolute cultural autonomy. As early as the beginning of the 1930s, that is, quite a while before the 1938 crisis, 96% of their children were being educated in German-language schools (417,000 out of 433,000). They had their own radio station as well as 12% of the time on the Czech and Slovak stations, and three universities (two of them technical institutes). All of the libraries in the Sudetenland zone were purely German. They had 63 daily newspapers and 143 weeklies. Most of them supported Nazism, preached separation from the mother state and, at least starting from 1935, a considerable part of them were a propaganda arm of Goebbels.<sup>14</sup>

The Sudeten Germans earned a fine reward for their part in the destruction of the Czech Republic. Indeed, starting from March 1939, the Czech lands (separated from Slovakia) became a German protectorate under the rule of Konstantin von Neurath, but in practice affairs were managed by the leaders of the Sudeten Germans, Ernst Kundt and Karl Hermann Frank.

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<sup>14</sup> For data on the scope of Sudeten German autonomy, see Jurgen Serke, *Bohemische Dorfer*, 1987, pp. 2-13.

### The Arabs of the Land of Israel (“Palestinian” Arabs)

A striking parallel between the Sudeten Germans and the Arabs in the Land of Israel is: just as the Germans lorded it over Czechs for hundreds of years (in the Austrian Empire), Arab society traditionally oppressed Jews living in Moslem regimes who were kept in the inferior *dhimmi* status decreed by Islam for non-Muslims.<sup>15</sup> Yet, just as European diplomats and “humanitarians” justified Sudeten German irredentism in 1938, so international self-styled humanitarians advocate Palestinian Arab claims against Israel today. Indeed, just as Lord Runciman complained in his report about Czech “colonists” in the Sudetenland,<sup>16</sup> so the serried ranks of the press, diplomatic and humanitarian corps today complain about Jewish settlers in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza.

Israel’s Arab citizens too have attracted the solicitude of the diplomats. On the Sabbath, December 14, 1996, Israeli Arabs held a convention in Nazareth. It was organized by “The Higher Follow-Up Commission for Affairs of the Arab Population”, a subversive, clearly illegal body that has become institutionalized over the years and is now a kind of roof organization for the Israeli Arabs. The main decision made – unanimously and to stormy applause – affirmed that the conference “was aimed at achieving our national and everyday rights in a *democratic state of all its citizens*”. That is, the destruction in fact of Israel as a Jewish state.

The guests of the conference included foreign consuls, the minister of justice of South Africa, as well as the representative of the UN agency to prevent discrimination against minorities. Shulamit Aloni headed a large delegation of the Israeli Left.

The conference called for establishing a “Palestinian state” with Jerusalem as its capital; it called for cooperation among “all the democratic forces in the Peace Camp”; it sharply condemned the incumbent Prime Minister, Benyamin Netanyahu, for his policies, and expressed its resolute opposition to Judaizing the Galilee. A tone of overt threat towards “the fascist right-wing government which works hand in hand with black clerical forces”, passed through the remarks of all the speakers. (Stalinist terminology is still routine among these speakers, many of whom are old Communists.) The speakers were careful not to mention the forbidden phrase “the State of Israel”. The accepted terms were “homeland” (Palestinian Arab) and “the country” (of the Palestinian Arabs), or in a pejorative context: “Israel”.

The conference and its decisions were mentioned on the inner pages of the press as an afterthought. Not one member of the Knesset of the “right wing” (sic!) coalition bothered to point out from the podium of the Knesset that this conference was a clear instance of sedition and treason that embodied a palpable threat to Israel’s national existence.

Israeli Arabs constitute nearly 20% of the population of the state. Together with the Arabs of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, they number fully 46% of the whole population of the Land of Israel west of the Jordan. These facts alone are enough to demonstrate that the huge Arab

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<sup>15</sup> This facilitated a predatory, exploitative attitude toward Jews (and Christians) which led Muslim officials and local Arab notables to exact and extort all sorts of irregular taxes, levies, fines, and bribes. In Jerusalem, they did this both before and after the Crusades. See Moshe Gil, “The authorities and the local population”, in Prawer & Ben-Shammai, eds., *The History of Jerusalem*, Jerusalem: Ben Zvi, 1996, pp. 103-111, inc. footnotes; and Jacob Barnai, “The Jerusalem Jewish community, Ottoman authorities, and Arab population in the second half of the eighteenth century”, *Jewish Political Studies Review*, Fall 1994.

<sup>16</sup> See Bennett, op cit., p. 449-455, Appendix D, Runciman Report.

population is an irredentist group that makes Israel today far more vulnerable to an internal threat to its survival than was Czechoslovakia in 1938.

1. Like the Sudeten Germans, the Arabs of the Land of Israel are of one flesh with the larger Arab nation, 50 times larger in population and 500 times larger (!) in territory than the Jewish entity. Similar to Germany's attitude toward Czechoslovakia, the Arab world is united in its will to destroy Israel.
2. We have already noted that the mountains of Judea and Samaria, and to a considerable extent, the Gaza Strip as well, are strategic territorial assets for Israel. These areas are overwhelmingly inhabited by Arabs.
3. Israeli democracy is a powerful tool in the hands of Arab irredentists, both Arab citizens of the State and the PLO, each in its own way. The PLO is committed by its Covenant to destroy the Jewish state which it aims to dispossess in the entire Land of Israel west of the Jordan, and the Israeli Arabs support this goal wholeheartedly. The Arab parties in the Knesset avowedly identify with the PLO and their role is to strive to destroy Israel's national existence from within, precisely as the Sudeten German irredentists did to Czechoslovakia. In both cases, the parties involved enjoyed parliamentary representation while being a self-avowed tool of the enemies of the State.
4. From one point of view alone Israel's situation is better off than that of Czechoslovakia. Israel's economic and techno-scientific superiority (a mighty power multiplier on the eve of the year 2000) compared to the Arab irredentists is overwhelming. (Israel's GDP is nearly \$100 billion, some 16 times larger than the \$6 billion GDP of the Arab entity in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza.

However, the Israeli situation is immeasurably more grave than the Czechoslovak situation in terms of political circumstances. No sword of Damocles hung over the Czechoslovaks in the form of a "Palestinian state". The principle of self-determination which gave "moral" legitimacy to the Sudeten-German demands was aimed at annexing the Sudetenland to the German Reich. The Palestinian Arab issue is totally different. The PLO was set up by Nasser in 1964 with the purpose of fulfilling three functions:

1. To nullify the legitimacy of Jewish existence anywhere in the Land of Israel through inventing a "Palestinian people" that never existed in history. This in turn was to create a pretext for Arab irredentist claims to the whole country which are supported both by the Arabs of Judea, Samaria, and Gaza, and by Israeli Arab citizens;
2. To destroy the fabric of Israel's life through indiscriminate, maximally murderous terrorism. These two purposes are unequivocally explicit in the PLO's Covenant;
3. To transform the future "Palestinian state" into a staging area for Arab armies to mount their attack to destroy Israel. This goal too is openly and avowedly expressed in the PLO's Plan of Stages adopted by the PLO's Council in June 1974 in Cairo and ratified by the Arab League at its conference in Rabat that same year. Once again, it was Shimon Peres who best defined the danger to Israel from the establishment of a Palestinian Arab state...

The Arabs are fostering a separate Palestinian nationalism and the myth of "a restoration of the rights of the Palestinian people" in the territory of the State of Israel and in its stead. They are doing this not in order to solve the refugee problem but in order to destroy Israeli nationalism and in order to create anew a Jewish problem of a scope many times greater. The Palestinian

national demand is aimed at abolishing the existence of the State of Israel and not at living alongside Israel in peace.<sup>17</sup>

In time of war, the frontiers of the Palestinian state will provide an excellent starting line for mobile forces to break through directly into the infrastructure vital to Israel's existence, to disrupt immediately the freedom of movement of the Israeli airforce over Israel's skies, and to drain the blood of the population by bombardment from artillery massed next to the border.<sup>18</sup>

On September 13, 1993, Israel signed an accord with an organization dedicated constitutionally to annihilating Israel. By so doing, it abandoned the spiritual and physical purpose for its existence and signed its own death sentence. The fact that Shimon Peres was the driving force in this event belongs to the domain of psycho-pathology to be discussed briefly at the end of this article.

## Alliances as a Power Multiplier

### Czechoslovakia

Eduard Benes, who acquired the status of a senior European statesman by virtue of his work in the League of Nations, did a great deal to strengthen the alliances in Europe with the aim of preventing future war. Czechoslovakia indeed signed a series of treaties and formed alliances with key states including a non-aggression pact with Weimar Germany.

Three treaties of special importance guaranteed the security of Czechoslovakia. They were a three-party pact (the Little Entente) between Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia. The agreement was meant to defend the three states from Magyar *revanchism*, because, before the First World War, large parts of the three states in the alliance spread over areas of Greater Hungary (within the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy). The 1921 three-party pact managed to withstand a series of tests until it collapsed with the destruction of Czechoslovakia at Munich in September 1939.

Yet the most important pact – for Czechoslovakia and all of Europe – was the Franco-Czechoslovak Treaty of Mutual Assistance that was signed at Locarno on October 16, 1925. The pact stated that: “In the event of a unilateral attack on France or on Czechoslovakia, France or, reciprocally, Czechoslovakia...will immediately come to the aid and assistance of the other.” This alliance between a major European power and a powerful democracy in Central Europe was a crucial axis for maintaining European security, and all the other pacts and alliances revolved around it. Such were the Anglo-French pact that required Britain to go to the defense of France; the Franco-Soviet pact; the Franco-Polish pact; the Soviet-Czechoslovak alliance, as well as the triple alliance mentioned above (the Little Entente).

The French appraised this well. After the *anschluss* of Austria in March 1938 and the increase in German power as a consequence, a shock wave went through Europe that more intensely consolidated Czechoslovakia's status as the cornerstone of the European security order. Indeed, on March 14, 1938, Leon Blum, the French Prime Minister, saw fit to declare firmly that “France is committed to the alliance between her and Czechoslovakia and will keep its commitment in full.” One of the first declarations of Daladier, who took over from Blum, was (June 12): “The accord with Czechoslovakia is sacred and we must honor it in full.” Blum and Daladier knew what they were saying, since they should have mobilized the French army

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<sup>17</sup> Peres, op cit.

<sup>18</sup> Shimon Peres, *Jerusalem Post*, April 24, 1975.

immediately in light of the escalation of German military might. But the solid backing of 40 Czechoslovak divisions, well trained and armed with the best equipment, freed France from the financial burden involved in a comprehensive mobilization of reserves at a time when France was undergoing a severe economic crisis.

In fact, the system of alliances that we have described (“pactomania” as some cynics called it at the time) collapsed at the critical moment of the trial of Munich, but when the Czechoslovaks originally signed the accord with France, they gained a power multiplier of the first order. This was, from the vantage point of Masaryk and Benes, an especially wise diplomatic move, since it was based on a common national interest in face of the German danger.



*Evening Standard, 18.7.38: What's Czechoslovakia to me, anyway?*

*The accord between France and Czechoslovakia was then, as said above, the cornerstone of the collective security system of Europe as a whole. Violation of this pact would necessarily have a domino effect on all the other accords and would expose a crumbling Europe to German power, which is what did indeed happen.*

We emphasize once more that, from France's point of view, the agreement with Prague had decisive importance. “The Little Maginot Line”, as the fortifications in the Sudetenland were called, was modeled on the original Maginot Line and constituted a firm foundation for France's strategic planning. Even according to the most cautious estimates of the French general staff, the Czech army could withstand the Wehrmacht for a period between six weeks and two months. That would be enough time for the French army to prepare and launch a massive attack on the Rhineland in order to make the Germans taste the permanent nightmare of Germany's geo-strategic predicament, that being a war on two fronts. On the basis of the agreement with Czechoslovakia, Paris reached three cooperation accords, with Britain, the USSR, and Poland, all of which were supposed to go into effect at same time as the Franco-Czechoslovak agreement.

But all the many advantages deriving from this system of alliances would be shorn away and would quickly become stumbling blocks if the main pillar of the whole complex system – the Franco-Czechoslovak Alliance – were to collapse.

## Israel

There is no room for comparison between the Israeli situation and that of Czechoslovakia as a keystone in a regional security arrangement. In the area of agreements and alliances, Israel's predicament was accurately described by the Biblical verse as "a people that dwells alone". Israel is classed (together with South Korea and Taiwan) in the very exclusive club of "pariah states", although there is no basis for comparing the potential strategic threat against Israel with the threat that looms over her two sisters in this "club". An outstanding illustration of this state of affairs is the fundamental deception regarding the meaning of the series of strategic cooperation agreements that Israel has with the United States. On this, see below.

Israel's existence does correspond to the national interest of some states or group of states, as did Czechoslovakia's existence. However, none of these nations are major powers and Israel has no treaty with any of them similar to the Franco-Czechoslovak Alliance or the NATO Pact.<sup>19</sup> Cooperation with Israel is at most a transient affair, the product of temporary circumstances, such as the link with France up to the time of Algerian independence, or with the United States until the disintegration of the USSR.

We noted that Israel's strategic position gained recognition (as hesitant as it may have been) from France before 1967. This was expressed once only, during the Sinai Operation of 1956, when Israel, benefiting from the disorderly death throes of Anglo-French imperialism, struck at Egypt and eliminated the threat of war for another ten years. At the end of May 1967, Israel tasted the bitterness of American betrayal on the issue of the maritime blockade of the Gulf of Eilat. May 1967 for Israel was like September 1938 for Czechoslovakia. Like its predecessor on the eve of the Munich Conference, Israel was abandoned by the international community led by the USA. Indeed, the Jewish state was thrown onto the trash dump of history. Only Israel's readiness to fight a preventive war, the brilliant plan of the air force to destroy the enemy's planes on the ground, the heroism of soldiers on the battlefield and the talent of their commanders, saved Israel from extinction.

After the Six Day War Israel enjoyed the status of a regional power. It stood as a forward strong point blocking the path of Soviet imperialism to the oil wells of the Middle East. That was why, for the first time in its history, Israel's existence corresponded to the geo-strategic interests of the United States. However, even America's new policy retained many reservations towards Israel. Proof of this were the five memoranda and agreements for strategic cooperation between Israel and the USA that were signed between 1975 and 1987. In every accord, the basic principle underlying a military cooperation agreement was missing. The standard clause that appears in every serious mutual defense pact, such as the agreement between Czechoslovakia and France (see above), and in the opening clause of the North Atlantic (NATO) Pact states: "An armed attack on one of them...will be considered an attack

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<sup>19</sup> Israel's existence seems to benefit Cyprus, Greece, Turkey, and other non-Arab or non-Muslim states in the Middle East or its periphery, such as Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Ethiopia, etc. (not to mention non-Arab or non-Muslim peoples like Lebanese Christians, Kurds, Copts, Black Sudanese). But not one of them has made a formal treaty of alliance with Israel. The Europeans are seemingly unperturbed over the buildup of Arab military power, since they themselves participate in strengthening the Arabs.

on all of them.” Not only does that decisive clause *not* appear in any of the Israel-US accords, but the text of the Israel-US agreements actually stresses the opposite. An example of this is the Memorandum of Understanding for Strategic Cooperation of November 30, 1981. The very first article reads as follows:

- \* United States-Israel strategic cooperation, as set forth in this memorandum, is designed against the threat to the peace and security of the region caused by the Soviet Union or by Soviet-controlled forces from outside the region introduced into the region...
- \* [The memorandum is intended] to provide each other with military assistance for operations of their forces in the area that may be required to cope with this threat.
- \* The strategic cooperation between the parties is not directed against any state or group of states within the region. It is intended solely for defensive purposes against the above-mentioned threat.

Thus, if the global interest of the United States is harmed in the Middle East, Israel is committed to spill the blood of its sons. However, in case the Arabs go to a war against the Jewish state, the USA is exempt from extending aid to her, even in a situation of existential risk.

Even this provision became obsolete when the USSR crumbled. Israel was then transformed from a “strategic asset” into a “political liability”. As befits a liability, the Americans forced the Madrid Conference on Israel in which the principles were determined for bringing the Jewish state back to the 1967 frontiers. Logically, in consideration of “the peace process”, the Americans should have guaranteed Israel’s safety (since Israel was about to lose its capability of self-defense) by a series of military cooperation agreements. However, needless to say, the absolute opposite is occurring and the administration in Washington has not signed any accord guaranteeing the survival of Israel in boundaries that are not defensible.

## **Military Balance**

### **Czechoslovakia**

In September 1938, the German army had 45 to 48 divisions. Facing this army were the 40 fully mobilized divisions of the Czechoslovak army behind the fortifications of the Sudetenland, and another 23 French divisions deployed facing the German border (15 of them manning the Maginot Line). These forces planned to attack five days after the start of hostilities.<sup>20</sup>

The French army’s mobilization potential was estimated at 85 divisions. The power of the British Empire should be added to this decisive superiority in the military balance.

Thus, when analyzing the potential strategic threat against Czechoslovakia, one ought to deal with the military balance between the two sides within three concentric circles: 1) the military balance between Germany and Czechoslovakia + 23 French divisions; 2) the balance between Germany versus France and Czechoslovakia under full mobilization; 3) the military balance of power between Germany versus the combined forces of Czechoslovakia, France and Britain. In any event, Germany must be seen as standing alone because in August-September of 1938 the Axis Alliance had not yet taken shape.

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<sup>20</sup> See, A.J.P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War*, London, 1965, p. 224.

Likewise, one must bear in mind that the well-oiled war machine of the Wehrmacht, the *Blitzkrieg* doctrine, and its application on the battlefield, as they are known to us today, were mainly formed after the conquest of Poland at the end of 1939. In 1938, the Wehrmacht was still an army in the stages of consolidation, not ready for a general war, and in a position of overwhelming inferiority against the potential enemy. Most significantly, it was an army whose general staff was on the brink of mutiny because it saw Hitler as a dangerous adventurer who might bring another national catastrophe on Germany greater than that of the previous war.

- a. The strength of the Czechoslovak army at full mobilization was 40 divisions, about 1.5 million men. The army was well-trained, full of fighting spirit, equipped with the best weapons of the time, and its morale is attested to by the fact that in mobilization exercises, about 90% or more of the reserve troops reported for duty.

The Wehrmacht allocated the major bulk of the army, 35 divisions, to the task of conquering the fortifications of the Sudetenland (see above). This move required that it abandon the other borders, particularly the border with France. However, even under these conditions, the German high command did not believe that it was capable of conquering the Sudetenland fortifications (see above). Yet, after the line of forts was handed over to the Germans, it became clear that even this evaluation was a gross underestimate. Hitler himself was astonished and confessed that his army should have had no chance to conquer the Sudeten fortifications.<sup>21</sup>

Opposing the 23 French divisions deployed for offensive action against industrial areas of southwest Germany five days after the outbreak of hostilities,<sup>22</sup> the Germans could mobilize 8 divisions at most, only five of them mechanized. Besides, while the Maginot Line had been ready for years, the German Siegfried Line (called the Western Wall) was in preliminary stages of development, and had no chance to withstand a French attack as long as Germany's armed forces were overwhelmingly inferior.<sup>23</sup>

- b. As we know, Germany's Achilles heel was its limited access to strategic raw materials, especially oil. Hence, a naval blockade on the Reich might have been a kind of death blow in a modern war on a European scale. Germany's inferiority in this domain when faced with the joint strength of France and Britain was overwhelming.

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<sup>21</sup> Bennett, op cit., p. 333.

<sup>22</sup> The report of the French commander-in-chief, General Gamelin, to the Prime Minister. See, Ian Colvin, *The Chamberlain Cabinet*, London, 1971, p. 163.

<sup>23</sup> See above, the assessment of General Wilhelm Adam, commander of the front.



## The Ratios of Naval Forces – 1938

Battleships	Aircraft Carriers	Cruisers	Destroyers	Submarines
<b>France and Britain</b>				
27	12	97	254	163
<b>Germany</b>				
7	2	15	22	129
<b>Ratios</b>				
1:3.8	1:6	1:6.5	1:11.5	1:1.26

Source: Robert Goralski, *World War II Almanac*, New York, 1981

With an absurd ratio of 1:7 in surface ships and with an inferior force of submarines, Germany had no chance in a war. And this conclusion does not even take into account the probability that the might of the United States would intervene in the war.

The subject of the German air force should be added to the above picture. The Luftwaffe is usually presented as possessing overwhelming superiority. Yet, in this area too the imagination has overpowered reality. As early as January 1937, the German high command made an assessment that only in the Fall of 1938 would the Luftwaffe achieve numerical equality with the Royal Air Force: 1750 first-line planes on each side. When we add the air forces of France and Czechoslovakia, Germany would be clearly inferior, both in quantity and quality.<sup>24</sup>

The obvious conclusion is that if Benes had rejected Hitler's ultimatum and Czechoslovakia had fought a defensive war, the military balance on the ground would have been sufficient. That is, the joint strength of 40 Czech divisions and the 23 French divisions could have faced the troops of the Wehrmacht. The mighty potential strategic threat of the second and third rings would have played its part, and if Hitler had succeeded in forcing his general staff to make war, Germany would have paid the price of frightful destruction.

This was exactly as the top German army commanders had foreseen. Their assessment was proven correct, but only after five years of war and the tragic loss of 50 million lives.<sup>25</sup>

All these facts and many more (such as the 270 Soviet divisions linked through military alliance to Czechoslovakia, the power of Poland and Belgium, both linked to France by defense alliances) were well known to all those involved in these affairs, starting from the Wehrmacht high command, through Chamberlain and Daladier, and up to the general staff of the Czechoslovak army and the president of the Republic, Eduard Benes.

<sup>24</sup> The Spitfire was as good as the Messerschmidt 109. The German Fokke Wolf 190 indeed tilted the balance in favor of the Luftwaffe for some time, but it appeared in the skies only toward the end of 1941.

<sup>25</sup> Even the memorandum of Sir Thomas Inskip, the Minister for Coordination of Defense, of 1937, which deliberately exaggerated Germany's strength – in order to increase the defense budget, denied any possibility of German victory in view of the military balance. For details, see Colvin, *op cit.*, Chap. 2, pp. 23-24.

## Israel

In any comparison between Israel and Czechoslovakia, Israel's inferiority is striking. The gross asymmetry in the military balance between Israel and her enemies is totally incomparable to the Czechoslovak situation. Against a ratio of 1:1.4 in favor of the Czechoslovak forces and the 23 French divisions, Israel's armed forces in the Six Day War were at a severe disadvantage with a troop ratio of 1:3 in favor of the Arabs. Since then, the military balance has worsened by 100% at least. Israel totally lacks a power multiplier in the form of an ally on the border of one of the enemy states.<sup>26</sup> Hence, unlike Czechoslovakia which could concentrate all its forces on the German border, (which to be sure surrounded Czechoslovakia's western end on three sides,) Israel must defend all its borders simultaneously.

Until the breakup of the Soviet Union, Israel possessed qualitative superiority in Western weaponry over the quantitative superiority in Soviet weapons in the hands of its enemies. This gap has been closed over the past decade, and today there is no weapons system acquired by Israel that the Arabs cannot purchase and in immeasurably greater quantity. A clear example is the buildup in Egyptian military power based primarily on Western weapons, mainly American.<sup>27</sup>

## An Army Based on Reserves

In order to overcome the structural inferiority in manpower, the Israeli army is mainly based on reserve troops which make up not only the bulk of the combat forces, but nearly 70% of the overall manpower in the army under full mobilization. This reserve system is a clear economic necessity, since the reserve forces make up 25% of the total labor force in Israel (450,000 out of a labor force of 1.8 million). A much larger percentage of Israel citizens of military age who serve in the reserves occupies jobs on the managerial level. Without these personnel the economy would collapse in a few weeks.

The size of the IDF is estimated at 610,000 troops under full mobilization.<sup>28</sup> That is, nearly 14% of the total Jewish population of the state. This number is double and more, relative to the size of the population, to the percentage of the population mobilized by all the nations in World War II, and it is proportionately equivalent to an army of 36 million soldiers mobilized by the USA!<sup>29</sup>

This datum comprises a basic premise of any evaluation of the balance of military forces between Israel and her enemies. Meanwhile, the size of the Arab armies is always estimated on the basis of the regular forces alone. In this situation, a two-stage strategic doctrine was developed intended to cope with the problem of Israel's inferiority in military manpower.

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<sup>26</sup> Despite Turkey's obvious common interest with Israel to curb Syria, it is unthinkable that Turkey would sign a formal military pact with Israel.

<sup>27</sup> See Shawn Pine, "Egypt's True Defense Expenditures – 2.7 or 14 Billion Dollars?", ACPR Policy Paper No. 6, 1997.

<sup>28</sup> As estimated by the Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University for the year 1993-1994. The data of other research centers, such as IISS or SIPRI indicate similar numbers.

<sup>29</sup> It is equivalent to the army of 9.5 million soldiers that Germany had mobilized at the peak of its mobilization in 1944, out of a population of 70,000,000.

Phase 1: A holding defense phase in which the regular army confronts the enemy despite its overwhelming inferiority in numbers. According to this conception, the time required to mobilize the reserves, during which the standing army must hold its defensive positions, is 48 to 72 hours.

Phase 2: The attack phase in which the whole army attacks, including the reserves, and brings the battle to enemy territory.

In short, the Israeli army's doctrine is contingent on two basic conditions:

1. Mobilization of reserves in a short period of time; and,
2. Total mobilization of reserves. If one of these two conditions does not materialize, Israel's very existence is threatened.

This is not the place to analyze the validity of the above doctrine in detail. However, let it be clearly stated that in taking into consideration a variety of factors operating in the late 1990s, the IDF's strategic doctrine is at best wishful thinking, lacking a firm basis in reality. This is due to the malfunction of the reserves system. It is well known that in order to mobilize a platoon, you have to send call up orders to a company. The head of the army's manpower branch himself admitted to the Knesset Foreign and Defense Affairs Committee (November 21, 1996) that in fact only a third of the IDF's reserve troops report for duty. A simple calculation shows that the real strength of the IDF is half of what is presented in various accounts. Even if we assume that during a war the rate of reporting for duty will be higher (and this assumption might also prove to be wishful thinking), the question may be asked as to what is the military value of a reserve soldier who has not served for years in his unit and kindly condescends to rally to the colors when hostilities break out. This is why, if Israel returns to the 1949 frontiers, it will survive only if it initiates a preventive war. However, in view of the dominant atmosphere of defeatism now pervading the Jewish state, along with the heavy political price that Israel will have to pay, a unilateral initiative on Israel's part cannot even be imagined. It matters little whether we are considering a preventive strike only, or, a fortiori, a general preventive war like the Six Day War.

If all that is not enough, let us consider this: a factor has been added at the end of the century that did not exist in the late 1930s, namely the factor of weapons of mass destruction and the means to launch them. The effectiveness of these weapons, as their name implies, is in direct proportion to the degree of concentration of the population in the places at which they are aimed. Israel's vulnerability on this point is glaring. Compared to the 30 or 35 "civilian targets" in Arab states, according to the evaluation by Shai Feldman,<sup>30</sup> Israel has only one single location where its population is heavily concentrated, and that is the Dan Region (metropolitan Tel Aviv) where 70% of the total Jewish population of the State of Israel is concentrated. A lethal strike at this population center would be tantamount to destroying the Jewish state.

There is no need to elaborate on the matter. It is enough to point to four facts: a) Syria, Libya, and Egypt now have stocks of weapons of mass destruction that are among the largest in the world; b) as of the year 2000 (according to CIA estimates) the Arab states will have about 2000 ballistic missiles; c) some of these will be armed with weapons of mass destruction; d) the Tel Aviv metropolitan area will be in range of most of them.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>30</sup> See his book, *Nuclear Deterrence for Israel*, Tel Aviv: HaKibbutz HaMeuhad, 1984.

<sup>31</sup> At this stage, Israel will not yet have a suitable response for shooting down ground-to-ground missiles. Israel's active defense system, focused on the Arrow missile, will still be five years from

## Defense Expenditures and Preparations for War

The purpose of defense expenditures generally is to provide a suitable response to a potential strategic threat. When the threshold of potential threat rises, the state must make a parallel increase in defense expenditures. If the threat declines, a corresponding cut can be made in defense expenditures.

### Czechoslovakia

In view of the escalation in the German danger, the Czechs maintained an extraordinary level of arms build up, in contrast to the two other democracies on the continent, France and Britain. While the defense budgets of France and Britain gradually dropped after the end of the 1920s, and declined in 1938 to a low of 1.75% of GNP – 350 million pounds in Britain out of a GNP of 20 billion pounds – Czechoslovakia's military expenditures in that period were on the order of 15% of its GNP. We remarked earlier that in both relative and absolute numbers this was one of the highest levels of military expenditure in Europe and in the entire world. Czechoslovakia's defense expenditures were estimated in 1938 at more than 500 million pounds sterling, that is, five times higher than those of Britain per capita, and nearly 50% higher than those of Britain in absolute numbers! Compared to France, the data are even more impressive. The military expenditures of a small state in Central Europe almost equaled the combined defense budgets of these two major European powers! It is no wonder then that the French commander-in-chief, General Gamelin, saw Czechoslovakia as a strategic asset without which France would be endangering its very existence.

Czechoslovakia's military industrial complex, including first and foremost the Skoda Works at Pilsen that produced a vast variety of war materiel, was in 1938, second only to that of Germany, but greater than that of France and equivalent to Britain's entire production of weapons.

### Israel

In view of the potential threat on one hand and the lack of a power multiplier in the form of military cooperation agreements on the other, Israeli reliance on military power is absolute and the percentage of GDP devoted to military expenditure, even in "times of peace", that is, during cease fires between wars, is like that which ordinary states spend in time of war.

In the case of Israel, in addition to a desire for self-reliance, a constant fear of embargo is at work. Like Czechoslovakia, Israel has developed military manufacturing to a level that is unprecedented among democracies of similar size. Israel produces a broad variety of weapons including a main battle tank, missile boats, guided missiles, and detection and control systems that will be the hub of combat on the battlefield of the future. In several of these fields, such as intercepting ground-to-ground missiles, Israel is at the forefront of world technology and appears to be ahead, even of the United States.

However, in the course of the last decade, a far-reaching erosion began in Israel's defense expenditures in contrast to the rapid escalation in the potential strategic threat. The level of threat, calculated by weighing the quantitative and qualitative value of the arms buildup of the Arab armies, first and foremost of Egypt, shows a 100% rise in the level of threat.

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operational capability. (See Reuven Pedatzur, "The BPI as an Alternative", *Ballistic Missiles: The Threat and the Response*, Arieh Stav, ed., London: Brassey's (UK) Ltd., 1999.

Not only have Israel's defense expenditures not grown over the past decade to any degree corresponding to the arms build up of the Arab nations, but in terms of US dollars, there has been a 19% erosion (in 1990 prices) from 7.3 billion in 1985 to 5.9 billion in 1997. In the same period of time, Israel's per capita GDP doubled. Hence, defense expenditures compared with the GDP have declined by 50% from 17.4% in 1985 to 8.5% in 1997.<sup>32</sup>

Thus, we are witnessing a sharp decline in the Israeli response to the potential threat. This situation clearly differs from Czechoslovakia's level of preparedness and resembles more the Anglo-French defeatism as detailed above. Nevertheless, we must mention again that there is no room for comparison between the level of threat against Israel and the threat against the two European powers at the end of the 1930s.

Israel is, therefore, not ready for the next war. Next to the potential threat that has doubled in the past decade, "the peace process" is affecting Israel negatively, to deny her a decisive power multiplier in the form of strategic assets. Adding insult to injury, Israel has doubled its GDP since 1986, and had it kept up a real level of defense expenditures, it would have been able to allocate the amount of \$17 billion to defense in 1997.

### **Petrified Military Thinking**

The moral strength of a society under siege radiates directly to the morale of the army, which in turn makes up an extremely important power multiplier on the battlefield. Here lies the chief difference between the two components of the historical comparison between Czechoslovakia and Israel. While the IDF as a whole and the reserve forces in particular (see above) have been in a continuous process of demoralization for years, the Czechoslovak army was at the height of its military and moral strength on the eve of the Munich Conference. To this extent the Israeli army differs qualitatively from the resolute readiness for battle that characterized the Czech public and its army. Hence, the comparison with the Czech army is obviously invalid and the self-evident comparison is with the French and British armies.

The Anglo-French response to the German threat was, as we have seen, to constantly inflict greater and greater cut backs on their defense budgets, reduce the size of their military forces, limit the level of military training, and no less grave, develop a petrified mold of military thinking. One of the many examples of this phenomenon was the military doctrine about armored warfare which quickly became the central element in the Wehrmacht's *Blitzkrieg*. It was a young French officer named Charles de Gaulle who composed a doctrine of armored warfare in 1934. In the defeatist and nihilistic atmosphere of his country, his book, *Vers l'arme de metier*, did not gain attention. However, in Germany the book became obligatory reading in military schools. The result was Heinz Guderian's *Blitzkrieg* which was based on the breakthrough capacity of the *Panzerdivision*, a perfect copy of "the movement of the armored division" that de Gaulle had developed in his book. The series of harsh defeats that the Allies suffered at the beginning of the war did not derive from quantitative or qualitative inferiority of weapons, but from the fossilized and rigid nature of their military doctrine.

The very same process has overtaken the IDF which is in an ongoing process of demoralization in all areas, including military thinking. The gravest expression of this is the absence of any treatment of the critical issue now on Israel's strategic agenda: a return to the 1967 frontiers. In fact, the Israeli army hardly has any military doctrine dealing with the

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<sup>32</sup> For details, see: "Why Israel's Defense Expenditures Should Be Raised and Linked to the GDP", Ariel Center for Policy Research, Policy Paper No. 2, 1997.

battlefield of the future. The intellectual wasteland among the senior officers corps is depressing. A random glance at the general staff library shows that all the publications of the present prime-minister, formerly Lieutenant General, Ehud Barak, who has somehow acquired the reputation of being an “intellectual”, amount to two short, thin articles (!) of marginal importance, and even these were published in 1985 and 1989. Lieutenant General Amnon Shahak, now a minister in Barak’s government, and also a former commander-in-chief of Israel’s armed forces, did not publish even one article in his life thus far. The same goes for Major General Yitzhak Mordechai, who, after leaving military service, became a minister in both the Netanyahu and Barak governments. In contrast, the publications of the senior officer corps in Syria and Egypt, which appear in German and American journals, are on a professional level, broad in outlook, and display historical knowledge. In short, they arouse envy. The one and only journal of the IDF is the veteran *Ma’arakhot*. Once a distinguished military journal, it has deteriorated over the years, and does not even deal with a response to the critical strategic issues facing Israel.<sup>33</sup>

The Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies at Tel Aviv University is the largest and most prestigious of its kind in Israel. The crowning glory of its work is the annual “Middle East Military Balance” that summarizes once a year the strategic developments in the Middle East.

The “Balance” has not discussed, even once, the strategic issue of withdrawal to the 1967 frontiers. The BESA Center for Strategic Studies at Bar Ilan University has published 38 “Security and Policy Studies” over the past 12 years of its existence. Needless to say, not one of these publications has discussed the issue of withdrawal to the 1967 frontiers. And so forth and so on.

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<sup>33</sup> In response to a question from the undersigned on this matter, the chief editor of *Ma’arakhot*, Lieutenant Colonel Dr. Rahel Rozhansky, answered: “There is no political tendency here. It is simply that no articles on this subject have been received...”

## PART THREE

### The Nature of the Enemy

Elsewhere I have discussed in detail the similarity in values and the link between Nazism and Islam.<sup>34</sup> Here I will limit myself to main categories only.

War, which in Nazism is at one and the same time a means and a goal, a supreme test of individual self-fulfillment and the destiny of the nation, is identical in the main to the *jihad* ethos in Islam. In his *Mein Kampf*, Hitler often spoke of “struggle, which is the essence of life”. The expression that he was fond of, “War is the basis of existence,” is not essentially different from the statement in the Muslim *Hadith*: “*Jihad* is the peak of faith.” Indeed, *jihad* as an ethos and the German *kampf* as an interpretation of social Darwinism, lack a common cultural origin, but the idea of radical imperialism which draws its strength from eschatological destiny, is identical in both cases. If the *kampf-jihad* ethos is basically one,<sup>35</sup> the principles associated with each of them are also alike. One may point to this list of striking parallels:

- a. Between Germany’s conquests, especially the *drang nach Osten*, and the *Dar al-Harb* (House of War) that Islam must extirpate by *jihad*;
- b. Between *Lebensraum* (living space) and *Dar al-Islam* (House of Islam);
- c. Between the subjugation of conquered peoples by the Nazis and the Muslim principle of the *dhimmi*;
- d. Between *Weltanschauung*, the total world outlook of Nazism, and the absolutist thought of Islam;
- e. Between the *Reich* that will spread over the whole world when the day comes, when “the master race of mankind will rule with the favor of the Almighty,” in Hitler’s words, and the select Islamic *Umma Muhammadiyya* (Nation of Muhammad) that is to spread its “protection” over the whole earth;<sup>36</sup>
- f. Between the *Führerprinzip* that gives the tyrant absolute rule over the lives of his subjects and the principle of obedience, *ta’ah*, that obliges the Muslim to obey the ruler blindly;
- g. And finally, between the anti-Semitic pathology of Nazism and the hatred of Jews prevalent throughout the Muslim world.

However, from Israel’s point of view, what distinguishes them is greater than what is identical. Fascist totalitarianism in its radical, Nazi expression, when all is said and done, even if it was of one flesh with Western civilization was a deviation from the mainstream of the West’s flow toward democracy. Only time will tell whether the outburst of Nazism in the 1930s was a one-time aberration, or if the *Furor Teutonicus* is a recurrent phenomenon. As of now, as well as in the foreseeable future, another outburst of blood thirst of the sort that

<sup>34</sup> Arieh Stav, *Peace – An Arab Caricature*, Tel Aviv: 1996; in Hebrew, pp. 91-102.

<sup>35</sup> In fact, a Muslim theologian, Muhammad Inayat Allah Khan, reported that Hitler “discussed Islamic *Jihad* with me in details... I found him very congenial,” in Berlin, 1926. See, J.M.S. Baljon, *Modern Muslim Koran Interpretation*. Leiden: Brill, 1961, pp. 11-12.

<sup>36</sup> The principle of Arab unity within the framework of the *umma* specifically underlies the constitutions of Syria, Iraq, Kuwait, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Algeria, and Yemen, as well as the PLO Covenant.

flooded Europe twice in a historical blink of an eye between 1914 and 1945 is not to be imagined. Germany was subdued and is now a normal democracy for all intents and purposes. Hence, the Czechs can remain calm. As a matter of fact, real estate in the Sudetenland has been purchased by Germans from across the border at an increasing rate (including the Skoda Works in Pilzen), but conquest of this kind is preferable of course to Heydrich's *Protektorat*.

Needless to say, Islam is a completely different story. Islam is not a passing historical aberration, but a proud civilization, powerful and possessing a following of a billion people spread over three continents; and it is a religion, an ethos, a juridical system and a way of life all in one.

From the dawn of Muslim history, the *jihad* basically had one purpose: military operations aimed at expanding the sphere of the Islamic domain. Islam was bound by the universal obligation to take control of the entire world by peaceful means if possible, by war if necessary... *Jihad* is an obligation for all Muslims... In fact, the obligation of *jihad* remains in force as long as Islamic rule has not spread throughout the entire world, that is, until the end of the world, or until the resurrection. The immediate conclusion is that a state of peace with non-Muslims can only be a *temporary* matter, which is defined as a cease-fire, but without any obligation on the part of the Muslims not to violate such an agreement, if it is to the advantage of Islam.<sup>37</sup>

A corollary to the injunction of *jihad* and its manifestation in politics is the sacred principle of applying *waqf* [collective holy ownership of property by the Muslim community – tr.] to conquered territory. Territory under *waqf* forms the *Dar al-Islam* (House of Islam) which spreads over territories under unchallenged Muslim ascendancy. In contrast, the rest of the world that has not yet been conquered is appropriately termed *Dar al-Harb* (House of War).

Fourteen million square kilometers, an area twice the size of Europe, stretching between the Atlantic Ocean and the Persian Gulf, is the Arab part of *Dar al-Islam* where Islam has unchallenged ascendancy in 23 states. Within this vast area that touches on two oceans and three seas, there is only one non-Muslim sovereign entity, the Jewish state. As if this were not enough of an offense against the *jihad* ethos, not only have the Arabs not been able until now to uproot Israel, but they have been defeated in all of their attempts to destroy the Zionist entity on the battlefield. This insult is too searing and harsh to bear for a culture that worships war as an ethos and violence as a principle.

Hence, Israel is an anomaly that refutes the *jihad* principle, because even though it is located in the heart of *Dar al-Islam*, it is at the very same time an extreme expression of *Dar al-Harb*. Hence, the conventional Arab labels for the Jewish state, such as “cancer in the body of the Arab nation” (Sadat) or “dagger in the heart of the Arabs” (Mubarak), may grate the Israeli ear but they are apt and accurate from the Arab point of view.

Therefore, it is not Israel's borders that encourage Arab hostility – a manifestly groundless claim since Israel holds only about 1/500 part of the area of the Arab *Dar al-Islam*, but Israel's very existence. Bassam Abu-Sharif, a PLO spokesman, stated the matter clearly: “The struggle against the Zionist enemy is not a matter of borders, rather it has to do with the very existence of the Zionist entity.”

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<sup>37</sup> Raphael Israeli, “The Lord of Agreement and the Lord of Holy War”, *Nativ*, July 4, 1994, (Hebrew).



This is why the Czechoslovak episode was temporary in character and vanished with the passing of Nazism, but the Israeli issue is permanently pending. This situation will not change as long as the Islamic ethos does not change.

### **A Few Words in Defense of Chamberlain**

Defeatism, as indicated above, is a structural flaw in democracies that face an ideological struggle against a dictatorship. There is no more disastrous example of this than that embodied in the personality of Chamberlain. Nevertheless, those who habitually draw a comparison between Chamberlain and Israeli leaders since Camp David (and more intensely since Oslo) must remember a series of arguments that fundamentally refute such a comparison. First of all, we should not forget that no one in Britain, including Winston Churchill and his supporters, feared that the fate of their country was at stake. The rise of Germany as a continental superpower sharply contradicted the British doctrine adopted as early as the Congress of Vienna in 1815 after the bitter lesson of the Napoleonic Wars.

There are grounds to argue that the British Prime Minister deluded himself that the Munich pact would give his country two years of respite for hastened rearmament. Consequently, when Chamberlain handed over Czechoslovakia, “a faraway country” of which “we know nothing”, as he claimed with a great measure of truth, there was at least some justification for his act of treachery. Hitler was an Anglophile, and cooperation between Berlin and London was meant, among other things, to serve as a barrier against the danger of Bolshevization of Europe. As every reader of *Mein Kampf* knew, this was one of the keystones of Hitler’s geo-strategic conception.

That is why any comparison between the potential threat to Britain at the end of the 1930s with the present threat against Israel, is clearly unfounded. It follows that any comparison between Chamberlain and any Israeli Prime Minister since Menahem Begin is a grave insult to the memory of the British statesman.

### **...and in Defense of Benes**

An attempt to focus the historical watershed on one isolated event should properly lead us to Hradcany Castle on September 27, 1938, the eve of the Munich Conference. The government of national unity headed by General Syrový, in office for four days, together with the general staff, forced on Dr. Eduard Benes, president of the Republic, a stormy meeting in which they warned of the results to be expected from his defeatist policy. They categorically demanded a fight at any price “be the results as they may.”

As described above, the army’s demand to fight did not only derive from exalted patriotic feelings. It was the fruit of a thorough, objective examination of the balance of forces. Furthermore, readiness to fight was the purpose for the existence of the national unity government headed by Syrový, which had replaced Hodza’s defeatist government on the 23rd of the month. Hence, Syrový was now the faithful representative of national consensus. He faced an isolated president who lacked public backing, and who served at most as a tool in the hands of Chamberlain and Daladier who were about to sacrifice Czechoslovakia to the Nazi Moloch at Munich two days later.

But Benes still succeeded in placing his historic authority on the scales, and overcame the Prime Minister and the army. He was to describe the meeting in later years and explain his motives:

Their words upset me. I hesitated, but after further consideration, I answered them decisively and firmly: It is good that you came, and you did right when you spoke as a Czechoslovak soldier should speak... It is an honor to the Czechoslovak army. You are right; our people want what you demand... However, my situation is different from yours. I am not only the supreme commander of the army, but also the president and representative of the whole nation. As president, I must see the domestic and international situation, all the factors that are now at work, and all the results that our steps might bring about.<sup>38</sup>

It would not be difficult to reject Benes' considerations with the argument that by his deed he had sealed the fate of the Czechoslovak nation. There is no doubt that the defeatism of his government, its readiness to surrender to the Franco-British dictate, were what brought about the constant escalation in Hitler's demands. Benes' allies abandoned him and their hypocrisy cannot be forgiven, but it was his country that would be the first to pay the price of Franco-British treachery. Therefore, it was first of all Eduard Benes' national duty, more than that of the British and French Prime Ministers, to resolutely draw red lines, to exploit the superior balance of forces, and to go to war as long as it was possible, on the absolutely reasonable assumption that Germany's defeat was assured.

The end of September 1938 for Czechoslovakia was to a great extent the end of May 1967 for Israel. Egypt and Syria had openly declared a war of extermination against Israel, Jordan joined the Arab coalition under Egyptian command, and France betrayed an ally in keeping with her time-honored, sacred habit. Washington was wriggling out of a written agreement on account of which Israel had been expelled a decade earlier from Sinai, the world community was holding a funeral for the Jewish state, the government was hesitant, the Prime Minister hemmed and hawed, and the commander-in-chief (Yitzhak Rabin) collapsed. Nevertheless, when the Israel Army commanders threw their insignia of rank on Levi Eshkol's table one after the other, the IDF initiated a preventive war, and the rest is told in the books of Israel's history.

However, one may consider Benes' words of September 27 from another vantage point. It is an indisputable fact that compared to other states under Nazi occupation, Czechoslovakia got off almost unharmed. The episode of the Lidice massacre, after the attempt on Heydrich's life, was the exception that proves the rule. Prague, with all the beauties of its architecture, remained as it was, and it is sufficient to compare its fate with that of Warsaw, Stalingrad, and Rotterdam. Sixty thousand Czechs died in the war, a marginal number compared to the losses suffered by the other occupied countries. The crumbling of the Czechoslovak army, after the Munich pact, prevented it from suffering the fate of the armies that stood up against the Nazis. For that reason, the number of victims in the army (6,000) was statistically insignificant.

After the war, it was indeed Czechoslovakia's bad luck to become part of the Communist bloc. But the national fabric of the state had not been destroyed and its borders were almost unchanged. To the contrary, the thorough expulsion of the 3,000,000 Sudeten Germans in 1946 brought about a more intense ethnic consolidation. The separation from Slovakia in 1993 was carried out by mutual agreement. The Czech Republic today is a nation at peace living in security, with no strategic threat to menace its tranquility.

With ghastly historical irony, Benes' surrender to Franco-British defeatism did in fact bring the horrors of the Second World War upon the continent. But others paid the price, most of all the Jews of Europe. At this historical juncture, the history of Czechoslovakia separates from the history of the Jewish state. This is because the means for historical comparison no longer

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<sup>38</sup> See Eduard Benes, *Mnichovske dny*, Prague, 1968, pp. 340-42.

apply. Czechoslovakia is just another European nation whose fate summoned her to stand at a historical crossroads. In contrast, Israel's fate cannot be examined, and even less can it be understood, without scrutinizing the Jewish anomaly upon which accepted standards for judging relations between states collapse like a house of cards.

### **The Jewish Anomaly**

It was Golda Meir who understood and internalized the kernel of the Israeli dilemma:

I have never doubted for an instant that the true aim of the Arab states has always been, and still is, the total destruction of the State of Israel or that even if we had gone back far beyond the 1967 lines to some miniature enclave, they would not still have tried to eradicate it and us... It is our duty to realize the truth; it is our duty to make it clear to all men of good will who tend to ignore it. We need to realize this truth in all its gravity, so that we may continue to mobilize from ourselves and from the Jewish people all the resources necessary to overcome our enemies.<sup>39</sup>

Every word of the above-quoted statement is still valid today; even more than before. The Orwellian slogan "peace process" is no more than a device to have Israel retreat to the 1967 frontiers as an interim stage on the way to reducing Israel to the Partition Plan lines as a preparation for her final destruction.

The sacrifice of Czechoslovakia to the Nazi Moloch was an evil act of political shortsightedness, but no more than that. The sacrifice of Israel by the Christian West to the Arab Moloch corresponds to the Judeo-phobia that is a Christian principle. It is *the* sacrament. Hence, from an overall historical perspective, the Christian West's readiness to see the Jewish state in ruins in the Land of Israel is a direct continuation of Christianity's collaboration in the murder of the Jews during the Nazi epoch.

Nevertheless, anti-Semitism is only one facet of Israel's history. The other facet, which is the kernel of the Jewish tragedy, is Jewry's readiness to collaborate with the hangmen up to the point of internalizing Judeo-phobia, and transforming self-hatred into a powerful tool for destroying the nation's instinct for survival. This phenomenon has no counterpart in history, even less so in the Czechoslovakia of the late 1930s. Jean Amery defined this accurately: If for 2,000 years they tell you that you have a crooked nose, then you have a crooked nose. The Exile broke the back of the Jew at the crucial point of national existence. The critical mass required for the existence of the nation withered and in its place arose peculiar mutations, the most lethal one of them being Jewish radicalism in its cosmopolitan guise, which basically consisted of destroying the national fabric on the altar of messianic utopianism tragically embodied by Shimon Peres. The Israeli Left is the offspring of the Jewish radicals, loyalists of the *Internationale*, loyal to the verses: "The old world to its foundations we shall destroy / Today [we are] nothing, tomorrow everything." Now as then, they come to destroy. And at the same time they are the destroyers of the Jewish people's instinct of self-preservation. They are the begetters of the "Palestinian state", which is to be the funeral for the dream of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel.

The Sudeten Germans identified with Nazism were a Fifth Column, an enemy. And that is how every Czech saw them, every Czech from the man in the street to the president of the Republic. Yet, the Sudeten Germans never presented a political program that contained even a hint of their desire to destroy Czechoslovakia, and when they dared to raise the demand to

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<sup>39</sup> Golda Meir, *My Life*, London: Futura, 1976, pp. 364- 365.

change Prague's diplomatic orientation, they were outlawed and their leaders were expelled to Berlin.

We reiterate that the PLO is a terrorist organization whose entire purpose is the destruction of the Jewish state, and it is openly and avowedly committed to this through its covenant/constitution, through its symbol which is the map of the Land of Israel west of the Jordan, and through its political program which is "The Plan of Stages". According to this plan, the role of the "Palestinian state" is to serve as a springboard for the Arab nations in their war against Israel. This was the situation before the Oslo agreements, and it remains the situation after the agreements. The PLO has not changed its covenant by so much as one single letter. Nor has it changed the "The Plan of Stages" or its symbol. Needless to say, Israel's leaders never consider demanding that the PLO make such changes. Arafat presents the Oslo agreements on the "Palestinian Authority's" television station as a sophisticated stratagem of tactical deception toward the strategic goal, which was and remains the destruction of Israel. Therefore, he calls day and night, in open proclamation, for *jihad* against the Jewish state. But when the tape cassettes of the PLO chief's incitement were brought before Peres, he claimed that they were fakes. It was Arafat himself who contradicted Peres and admitted that the cassettes were genuine... After the withdrawal from Hebron in January 1997, Arafat said, while conducting the rhythmic screaming of an incited mob ("In spirit and blood we will liberate you, O *Filastin*"), that "The liberation of Hebron paves the way to the liberation of *al-Quds*" [Jerusalem in Arabic, from the Hebrew *ha-Qodesh*]. Netanyahu responded to this open declaration of war with great satisfaction. He defined the pronouncement as "moderate remarks", and even saw fit to add: "Arafat is speaking peace."

In the two-year period following Oslo, the Palestinian Arab terrorist organizations murdered 160 Israelis, half of them children and teenagers, with the vociferous encouragement of Arafat. Statistically, this represents a 745% increase in the number of victims of terrorism over the yearly average of such victims in the years before Oslo.<sup>40</sup> That is, not only did the agreements not bring peace, but they caused death and destruction, in short -war. After all, 160 Israeli victims are equivalent to 6,400 American victims. The number of fatalities in the attack on Pearl Harbor was less than 2,400, but this number was enough to bring about a declaration of war on Japan. That is how the United States operates. In Israel, the victims of Arab murder are called "victims of peace" (Yitzhak Rabin), while Arafat himself wins the status of an Israeli "culture hero". For example, a group of IDF officers, headed by Maj. Gen. (res.) Shlomo Lahat, visited Arafat in Gaza and went away "captivated by the charm of the Palestinian leader".

It is true that Hitler too charmed many in his time. Gertrude Stein, an American Jewish poetess living in Paris, called for the Nobel Peace Prize to be given to Hitler.<sup>41</sup> (Let it be said

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<sup>40</sup> The data represent fatalities of civilians as well as soldiers. They do not include victims on the Lebanon border or abroad. The drastic escalation in attacks on the Lebanon border since the beginning of the "peace process" and the mass slaughter on July 18, 1994 in Buenos Aires, when 102 human beings were killed, bring the number of Jewish victims of terrorism to 331! The number of fatalities in all the terrorist attacks – soldiers, civilians, and those killed abroad – in all the years of Israel's existence from April 1949 to September 13, 1993, is 1,029 persons. Hence, the two years of the "peace process" produced 32% of all the victims of terrorism against Israel in 43 years. Source: the Historical Department of the IDF, as published in "Arab and Islamic Terrorism", Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense Publishing House, August 1994. The data from April 1994 until September 1995 are through the courtesy of the IDF Spokesman.

<sup>41</sup> John Toland, *Hitler: The Pictorial Documentary of His Life*, New York, 1978, p. 95.

that not all 200 were Jews.) Leon Blum wrote in *Le Populaire* (the organ of the Socialist Party) that every man and woman in France would pay his or her just tribute of gratitude to Chamberlain and Daladier for their accomplishment at Munich<sup>42</sup> (Blum, a Jew, wrote this remark in December 1938, that is, **after** *Kristallnacht*). Charles Lindbergh gushed with enthusiasm for Hermann Goering and the Luftwaffe, while George Bernard Shaw rejected the criticism brought against the *Führer*. The European Right sang songs of praise to “the great architect of the New Germany”, and even the massacre of the “Night of Long Knives” was seen as a necessary step that had brought Germany back to the path of law and order.

Adolf Hitler won the status of the greatest war criminal only from the historical perspective of Treblinka and Auschwitz. Yet at the end of the 1930s, the chancellor of Germany was still the leader of the country of *Dichter und Denker*, of poets and philosophers. Not Eichmann or Kaltenbrunner, nor Himmler nor Hess, was the representative of the German spirit at that time. Rather Goethe and Schiller, Kant and Hegel, Bach and Beethoven stood for German culture in the world’s mind.

But Arafat? The chieftain of a terrorist gang serves as the leader of the PLO, an organization outlawed in Israeli law where it is defined as “criminal and terrorist”. Mihai Pacepa, an official of the Romanian Securitate, recounts in his book of memoirs (*Red Horizons*) how, after he was forced to shake hands with Arafat, he scrubbed his hands with soap and hot water to get rid of the feeling of nausea that had overcome him. This was a Romanian security official. Compare him with Israel’s leaders who hug the hangman of their people and constantly shower him with compliments.

This was how Arafat became the playboy of the Israeli public. Members of the Knesset make pilgrimage to him; “peace” movements of various sorts lobby his secretaries for an interview with him. A photo with Arafat is considered an enviable asset; Israel’s authors tell his praises; Jewish court journalists sing him paeans; Peres and Netanyahu embrace him and warmly shake his hand while proclaiming the stalwart friendship between them. Shimon Peres, intending to add force to his yearning for a “Palestinian state”, has been calling Arafat “Mr. President” for some time.

Likewise, among the elites and the grass roots, we see this happening.

An overwhelming majority of 75% among the Israeli public accepts or supports the establishment of a “Palestinian state”, a majority of 65% support withdrawal from part of the Golan Heights. The national consensus over Jerusalem, that only yesterday was seen as a place to fight for and do or die, has also unraveled. A quickly increasing minority supports a return to the 1967 lines. Not even three months had passed after the change in government in June 1996, and Netanyahu was shaking Arafat’s hand. Netanyahu, the complete opportunist, attuned to the public mood, knew what he was doing. Eighty-two percent of the Jewish public in Israel supported the handshake.<sup>43</sup> The withdrawal from Hebron and the handing over of the City of the Patriarchs – the ancient symbol of Jewish possession of the Land of Israel – to the Arabs meant openly declaring a future concession on Jerusalem. Moreover, for the first time in the history of Israel, Jews have set up with their own hands a Jewish ghetto surrounded by a wall, in their own homeland. But a clear majority of 72% (an average of newspaper surveys) among the Jewish public supported this radical step by Netanyahu’s government. When Netanyahu was asked about the surprising turnabout of 180 degrees in his political-diplomatic

<sup>42</sup> Blum’s position is reported in Alfred Cobban, *A History of Modern France III*, Baltimore: Penguin, 1965, p. 171.

<sup>43</sup> A poll in *Yediot Aharonot*, September 8, 1996.

outlook, he responded cynically: “The ideological concepts we grew up believing are not all within reach anymore.”<sup>44</sup>

Thus Netanyahu has become the mouthpiece (unwittingly?) of a large constituency that is preparing for itself the “instruments of exile”. Consider Art Historian, Professor Nurit Gertz who states that “the true past, and therefore the true future as well, belongs in this country to the Arab and not to the Jew.”<sup>45</sup> Or MK Naomi Hazan, for whom “Jerusalem is the most important Palestinian city.”<sup>46</sup> Or Assaf Hefetz, Chief Inspector of the Police, after issuing an order to drive Jews off of the Temple Mount on Tisha b’Av: “The Temple Mount is not worth fighting for.”<sup>47</sup> Or MK Anat Ma’or who went to a PLO demonstration in Jericho and wrapped herself in a PLO flag. Or that same Yossi Beilin who saw Judea and Samaria, the cradle of the Hebrew nation, as follows: “The Bank [i.e., West Bank] is a curse and a superfluous burden... it is an abscess that has to be removed.”<sup>48</sup> Or MK Yael Dayan who declared, while on a Knesset visit to Germany (May 22, 1995): “The Palestinians are our victims and we have an obligation to them just as you Germans have an obligation toward the Jews who were your victims.” Or Gad Ya’aqobi, who declared while he was Israeli ambassador to the UN: “There is no Jewish Land; there is only Jewish people.”<sup>49</sup> Or Yitzhak Rabin, according to whom the Land of Israel was “real estate”, and the Bible was “an ancient land ownership register...”

So forth and so on. What wonder is it then that Yeshayahu Leibovitz, after calling members of the kibbutzim “Gestapo soldiers”, and after calling his country – in an unoriginal, rather unphilosophical parroting of the Soviets and other Communists – “a Judeo-Nazi state”, reached the conclusion that “Hitler was an exemplary moral personality.”<sup>50</sup>

This grotesque display has no counterpart in the history of the nations of the world. It occasions very somber thoughts to the effect that perhaps the Jews are worthy of Hegel’s sarcastic remark: “The Jewish tragedy does not arouse fear and pity in me, but contempt.”<sup>51</sup>

This is why the Arab and Western slogan, “territory for peace”, is a copy literally and in content of Hitler’s slogan at the “peace negotiations” that he conducted with nations that he wanted to erase from the face of the earth. This principle is actually being put into effect in the relationship between the State of Israel and those who want to destroy her, and even more intensely. This is because the one and only thing that Israel cannot give is territory, just as the one and only thing that the Arabs are incapable of giving is peace.

Under the special conditions of the Middle East, where “either you dine or you are part of the menu,” and where “the number of signed agreements is exactly identical to the number of signed agreements that have been violated,” – as Shimon Peres said at one of the moments of grace when he returned for a fleeting second to the reality of our region, – Israel will survive only if it can radiate a combination of power and menace sufficient to root out of her enemies’

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<sup>44</sup> Interview in *Jerusalem Post*, January 24, 1997.

<sup>45</sup> *Yediot Aharonot*, February 4, 1994.

<sup>46</sup> During her visit to Orient House (PLO headquarters in Jerusalem) on November 15, 1994.

<sup>47</sup> In an interview with Channel 2 of Israel Television, August 26, 1995.

<sup>48</sup> *Ma’ariv*, October 10, 1994.

<sup>49</sup> In a conversation after a lecture at the Harvard Club, January 23, 1995.

<sup>50</sup> In a symposium at Tel Aviv University, March 10, 1993.

<sup>51</sup> GWF Hegel, *Der Geist des Christentums und sein Schicksal*, vol. I, Berlin, Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971.

hearts the will to destroy her. Or, at least to put off their schemes until the end of days. This is not especially joy-inspiring news against the background of the messianic enthusiasm of “peace in our time”, yet it is fitting to bear in mind that the history of the Jewish people never presented a choice between bad and good, but between bad and less bad. The State of Israel does not escape from this rule, and for that reason, the choice facing her is to live by the sword or not to live at all.

We are the generation of settlement in the land, and without a helmet and the mouth of a cannon, we cannot plant a tree or build a house... Let us not be deterred from seeing the rancor that consumes and fills the lives of hundreds of thousands of Arabs who live around us. Let us not turn our eyes away lest our hands grow weak. This is the decree for our generation. The vital choice for us – is to be ready and armed, strong and stubborn, or the sword will fall from our fist and our lives will be cut off.<sup>52</sup>

Despite the rhetorical phrasing, these words have not lost their validity. The truth embodied in each one of them a generation ago fits well into the reality of our lives today, with the sole exception that “hundreds of thousands of Arabs” have become millions. Because if, God forbid, “the sword will fall from our fist...our lives will be cut off.”

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<sup>52</sup> Moshe Dayan, in a eulogy at the grave of Ro'i Rotberg in Nahal Oz, May 1, 1956.

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