

Israel and The New Left

Noam Chomsky

1971

Who speaks for the New Left? The best we can say is that although each leftist claims to speak for himself only, there are those who are, in the view of outsiders, considered New Left spokesmen. One of these is Noam Chomsky, who denies that the New Left is anti-Israel. There is no movement doctrine on Israel, he writes, but there is a lot of confusion, a lot of unhappiness, and some, though rather limited, debate. There is a great deal of sympathy for the socialist elements within the Jewish and Arab national movements, and this is combined with a genuine fear that national movements can do enormous harm if they subordinate the struggle for social reconstruction to national aims. The New Left includes Zionist critics, says Chomsky, but this does not imply that they are self hating Jews.

Chomsky believes that American hardliners would like nothing better than to be able to identify the New Left as totally pro-Arab and anti-Israel — in favor of sweeping the Jews into the sea and supporting or applauding Russian-backed genocide in the Middle East. This would be a marvelous way to discredit the rising challenge to American militarism. And at this point, unfortunately, he sees Western Zionism as lending a helping hand.

When I accepted the invitation to speak on the topic “Israel and the New Left,” I made it clear that I cannot speak as an expert on the Middle East or the New Left; and that I of course do not appear as a “spokesman” for the New Left, whatever this misfit mean. In fact as anyone who has the slightest familiarity with the New Left would understand at once, it is quite impossible to identify a definite New Left doctrine on this, as on most other matters. The New Left is a highly decentralized, very loose grouping of mostly young people who share certain points of view, but on most matters are quite divided in their opinions. Someone who speaks of the “New Left position” on the Middle East at once betrays his ignorance of the character and activities of the New Left.

My only qualifications to speak on this subject are a good deal of sympathy with much that has been done by the so-called “New Left” and some degree of involvement in its activities, and a deep concern with the problems of Palestine and Israel that goes back to early childhood, but that I have hesitated to express or discuss in any public manner, for reasons to which I will return.

I would like to discuss four topics:

1. New Left attitudes toward Israel.
2. The reactions among many Western intellectuals and political commentators to what they claim to be the New Left attitudes towards Israel.
3. What the likely evolution of this problem — and a severe problem it is — may be in the next few years.
4. What a group such as this might do that would be constructive, in terms of certain values that I suspect many of us more or less share.

I would like to begin by saying that I think that the topic of this symposium is somewhat misconceived. There is, I will suggest, very little to say about attitudes of the New Left to Israel. However, there is a great deal to say about how these attitudes have been depicted and, in my opinion, grossly distorted. This question is one that deserves serious thought and analysis. I believe that in part the reasons for this distortion have more to do with domestic American problems than with the Israel-Arab crisis itself. I will also mention a few examples of irresponsible journalism, the reasons for which I will not attempt to analyze, though I think this matter too deserves attention. I will try to justify and elaborate these conclusions as I proceed.

Consider the first topic. New Left attitudes towards Israel. I will limit myself in this discussion to the student movement, omitting reference to the Black Liberation movement, whose attitudes towards the Middle East must be interpreted in terms of domestic American problems and developments. I

will merely say, in this connection, that the widely-voiced claims regarding the alleged anti-Semitism of the Panthers and other groups seem to me severely distorted and misleading, and the thinly-veiled suggestion that they advocate something like genocide or that they can be compared in this respect to Nazis is so ignorant as to deserve no further comment.

There is no New Left doctrine on the Middle East. Rather, there is confusion, unhappiness, some — though limited — debate, and a great deal of sympathy, often at a rather intuitive and barely articulated level, for socialist elements within the Jewish and Arab national movements, combined with a general fear that national movements can do enormous harm if they subordinate the struggle for social reconstruction to purely national aims.

In preparing this discussion, I looked through several New Left anthologies and discovered practically nothing on the Middle East. In most of them, there is no reference at all. One recent anthology, intended primarily as an internal movement document, does contain several comments on the Middle East, specifically about the Kibbutz movement.¹ One comment is in an article of mine, which notes that “an example of major importance [for radicals] is provided by the Palestinian (later Israeli) Kibbutzim.” an example that was largely overlooked and undervalued by the ‘radical centralizers’ of the old left. In addition, there are several pages of highly favorable comment on the kibbutz as a model for activists by Rick Margolies, who is concerned with community organizing and the development of urban cooperatives. Margolies singles out Martin Buber’s *Paths in Utopia* as must reading — and indeed, this is a book that ranks high on New Left reading lists.

As a side comment, I might add that there are Zionist critics of the New Left, some even who call themselves socialists, who, if they were to be consistent in the style of their argument, would be forced to consider Buber an anti-Zionist or even an anti-Semite, or perhaps afflicted with “Jewish self-hatred. I return to such criticism in a moment.

I also checked the pamphlet collection put out by the New England Free Press, a major New Left literature center. In a listing of some 200 pamphlets on various topics, there are two on the Middle East. One is by members of the Israeli Socialist Organization (the Matzpen group), which is anti-Zionist and also opposed to all of the Arab states as well as to the position of Al Fatah. A second pamphlet, by Larry Elochman, is highly critical of Zionism and Israeli policy. The author raises the complicated question of how Israel, as a state, can act so as to bring about the eventual federation which I regard as the best, if not the only possibility for long-term peace.” After discussing various possibilities, he concludes:

It may well be that the price of the continued existence of a state that was born unnaturally is extreme patience in the face of threats and provocations, and great political skill in the face of hostility. It is an historic sorrow that such difficult efforts should be required of the Jews, of all people. It was with great emotion and deep feelings (which I shared) that the survivors of the European horror viewed the birth of Israel only three years later. But only such patience and skill can possibly lead to the survival of a Jewish community in Southwest Asia.

The Africa Research Group has written quite critically of Israeli support for counterinsurgency in Africa. I recall also one series of articles in SDS A c a I *‘ft Notes*, published shortly before the demise of SDS. It was violently anti-Israel and so extreme that it passed virtually unnoticed, at least among the New Left groups that I had any personal contact with.

To my knowledge, there has been only one issue of a New Left journal that was devoted to an exploration of the problems of the Middle East, namely, the symposium that appeared in *Iteration* in November, 1969. There were four contributors: Gebran Majdalany, Amos Kenan, Paul Jacobs, and myself. Majdalany is a left-wing Beirut intellectual associated with Al Fatah. Kenan is a leftist Israeli journalist, critical of Israeli policy in certain respects and a courageous defender of Arab rights; he is strongly pro-Israel, by any reasonable standards. Jacobs is a radical American writer whose views are

¹ Priscilla Long, ed., *The New Left* (Boston: Porter Sargent, 1969).

rather similar to Kenan's. Thus he concludes by stating that if there is to be peace, Israel must make clear that the "occupation of the territories acquired in June, 1967, will end at that point in the future when the threat of their state being wiped out has ceased to be a daily problem" and "must make public serious proposals for dealing with the rights of the Palestinian Arabs," while the Palestinians "must, minimally, renounce the concept of eliminating the State of Israel." My article discusses possibilities for Arab-Jewish cooperation and suggests that there might "be room for fruitful discussion and perhaps eventual cooperative effort between the Arab and Israeli left"; specifically, "the goal of a democratic socialist community with equal rights for all citizens [a position articulated on the Arab left] and the goal of 'a federative framework with the Kingdom of Jordan and the Palestinian people, based on cooperation in the fields of security and economics' [the formulation of the Israeli writer Haim Darin-Drabkin] do not, on the face of it, appear to be incompatible." Obviously, however, there are many problems and obstacles to be overcome and, equally obviously, "Israel cannot hope to achieve peace on its terms by force," whereas the Palestinians must come to accept the fact that "there is no possibility that the Jewish population of Israel will give up its cultural autonomy, or freely leave or abandon a high degree of self-government."²

I would urge the reader who is interested in the actual content of these articles to disregard comments that have appeared in the Israeli and American-Zionist press as well as the reports that have been circulated orally, and turn to the originals. The reports that I have read and heard are quite amazing in their distortion and misrepresentation.

After the Six-Day War a number of articles appeared in various journals by people who are associated, in some fashion, with the New Left. I. F. Stone wrote in the *New York Review* (3 August 1967), speaking from the point of view of someone "closely bound emotionally with the birth of Israel." In words that recall those of the Israeli writer Amos Oz, he speaks of the conflict as a "tragedy," "a struggle of right against right." He expresses great faith in Israeli "zeal and intelligence and accepts, without question, the right of existence of Israel, while' giving no word of support to the Palestinian Arab movements. "Jewry [he writes] can no more turn its back on Israel than Israel on Jewry. The ideal solution would allow the Jews to make their contributions as citizens in the diverse societies and nations which are their homes while Israel finds acceptance as a Jewish state in a nascent Arab civilization." I again urge the reader who may be interested to turn to the original, since Stone's views too have been subjected to the most incredible distortion.³ I will return to some examples presently.

In the Arden House discussions I heard several references to *Ramparts* as an example of a New Left journal that had taken a militant and uncompromising anti-Israel and pro-Arab position. Since this did not accord with my recollections, I decided to check for myself — and I urge the interested reader to do likewise.

The July 1967 issue of *Ramparts* was devoted largely to the Israeli-Arab Crisis. An editorial comment observed:

While there can be no doubt as to the basic legitimacy of the State of Israel, it is tragic that this small nation, which was to be a haven from war's violence, should now be forced to rely for its existence on preemptive military power.

If there is any analogy between the Middle East and Vietnam, the editorial continued, it is

between the Israelis and the Viet Cong — two fiercely independent nationalist groups, totally convinced of the rightness of their causes and therefore willing to fight brilliantly and effectively for them...

As it is unreasonable to deny the absolute right of the State of Israel to exist and use international waterways, it is equally unprincipled to maintain that all Arab claims are irrational and that they have no legitimate grievances in the Holy Land.

² My essay appears in full in H. Mason, ed., *Reflections on the Middle East Crisis* (The Hague: Mouton, 1969).

³ It is readily available in Walter Laqueur, ed., *The Israel-Arab Reader* (New York: Bantam, 1969).

The editorial denied that “the clash is between Arab socialism and Israel as a tool of American imperialism” (a simplistic view held, according to this editorial, by many in the American left).

There were three contributions to the symposium. In the first, Paul Jacobs presented a general pro-Israel position, combined with, a warning that military force alone will not bring peace. Michael Walzer and Martin Peretz then presented a justification of Israeli policy against critics of the right and the left. Finally, I. F. Stone spoke of the necessity to search for reconciliation and urged that “some kind of confederation” should not be beyond the range of ingenuity, with “a predominantly Jewish state, but one linked fraternally with one or two Arab states, one Palestinian, one Jordanian.” He also urged that funds from the world Jewish community be diverted to resettlement of refugees, to right the wrong of Palestinian homelessness. “This alone,” he wrote, “can make Israel secure.” He also argued that in the long run this would be cheaper, as well as far more humane, than an approach through military strength. His article was, as always, pro-Israel and, in this case, highly critical of Nasser (who, he said, ran a police state), though Stone then regarded Nasser as probably the best hope for Egypt.

In September, 1967, Robert Scheer reported from Cairo, arguing that after the Israeli victory, major responsibility for peace rested with Israel, which had an obligation (of an unspecified nature) to the refugees. Israel, he urged, should “initiate a settlement through a third party which will try to return the occupied lands, while at the same time guaranteeing the peace of her borders.” He believed that Israel should not try to bring down Nasser, since the alternative was likely to be a far more militaristic Egypt ruled by the Moslem Brotherhood.

In the November issue, Scheer presented a descriptive historical account which, as I read it, expressed no particular political position or sympathies. With respect to the Six-Day War, he held that “Nasser entered the trap of Arab nationalist rhetoric” and that his “irrational Israel policy” cost him dearly.

Robert Scheer had an article in the January 1968 issue, extending his earlier remarks. Here he concentrated on the problem of oil. He formulated the “central thesis” of his two essays of November and January as follows: “The great powers cannot be expected to be concerned, on any consistent basis, with the interests and needs of the Arabs and Jews who live in the Mideast.” He wrote:

The Arab denial of legitimate Jewish nationhood as the basis of Israel is the subject of deserved ridicule. But that the mainstream of Zionism has, in like fashion, denied the existence of a legitimate Arab quest for nationhood is not commonly admitted... The Arab nation and the Jewish nation are both legitimate concepts which can survive together only if they exist as part of the same social revolution to meet the needs of the people of the Mideast. But, as competing nationalisms of the old model, neither is viable, and the histrionics of a Ben-Gurion or a Nasser cannot alter that fact.

Maurice Zeitlin continued the discussion in the same issue, with an article on the postwar Israeli left. His position was very sympathetic to Israel, which he described as “an egalitarian and democratic society.”

I found no other articles in *Ramparts* dealing with the Arab-Israeli conflict.

There are, in addition, various radical Jewish groups, in part student-based, in part initiated by well-known New Left activists such as Arthur Waskow. Invariably, to my knowledge, these groups accept the existence of the State of Israel as a predominantly Jewish state without question, though they are generally critical of one or another aspect of Israeli policy.

Herbert Marcuse expressed his views on the problem in an article that appeared in the *New Outlook* (July/August 1968). He begins by speaking of his “personal, though not only personal feelings of solidarity and identification with Israel.” He declares his sympathy with the goal of creating for the Jews “a place ... where they will not need to fear persecution and oppression,” and expresses his pleasure that Jean-Paul Sartre “has said that under all circumstances a new war of annihilation against Israel must be prevented... The state [of Israel] is here and an understanding with its inimical neighbors must be found; that is the only solution.” He urges that “we all must do what we can to help the representatives

of Israel and the Arab states finally to sit clown together and discuss their own problems ... and to try to solve them,” and he urges as well that Israel and the Arab states “form a united front against the attacks of the imperialist powers.” He also suggests that the “leftist trends” among the Arabs and Israelis are not too far apart, and that perhaps this means that there is “a basis for a direct understanding between these two forces.”

Probably a more careful search would unearth other items. I doubt that it would change the conclusion that I have already formulated and that I now repeat-

There is no New Left doctrine on the Middle East. Bather, there is confusion, unhappiness, some — though limited debate, and a great deal of sympathy ... for the socialist elements within the Jewish and Arab national movements, combined with a general fear that national movements can do enormous harm if they subordinate the struggle for social reconstruction to purely national aims.

Some segments of the New Left support views rather like those of the Israeli group SIAH (Smol Yisreeli Hadash. Israeli New Left) and the related Movement for Peace and Security; others — in particular, the Trotskyite groups — are close to Matzpen; still others support Al Fatah and other Palestinian groups. Most remain silent, unhappy with the situation, but unable to see any hopeful way out.

The introduction to the November 1969 issue of *Liberation*, already mentioned, gives some insight into what I think are rather general attitudes. The editor writes:

The peace movement and the American left have generally adopted a stance of pained indifference to the conflict in the Middle East. The apparent hopelessness of finding a just resolution is almost overwhelming. Moreover, many of us, without necessarily supporting the Arab or Palestinian position, have recoiled from the pro-Israeli chauvinism of the American Jewish community. The strenuous efforts by Zionist fund-raisers to picture Israel as a “free-world bastion” exploits and reinforces cold war idiocies. Tire celebration of the “lighting Jew” further alienates those of us who are not thrilled by Prussian efficiency.

These remarks, in my opinion, are also accurate, in pointing out that, to the extent that there is anti-Israel feeling in the New Left, it is in part in reaction to the behavior of the American Jewish community — to its extolling of the martial and chauvinistic elements in Israeli society, which are by no means dominant there, but which tend to occupy the center of attention in the United States. In fact, American Zionism has always been predominantly on the right, in the spectrum of world Zionism. Little has changed in that respect

The mixture of confusion and concern that is typical of New Left attitudes towards the Middle East crisis is by no means surprising, considering the composition, character, and ideals of the loosely organized, disparate groups that are identified with the New Left. What I do find surprising, however, is the way in which these facts are presented by others. For example, in the Arden House discussion. Nathan Glazer repeatedly referred to the “overwhelming and unbendable tendency [of the New Left] to support the Arabs and to oppose Israel.” This phrase appeared in his talk and was reiterated several times in his discussion.⁴ This characterization applies to some elements in the New Left. It is, however, beyond dispute that it is false as a general characterization. For example, it does not apply to those groups whose position is rather like that of SIAH or to the groups that identify more or less with

⁴ I quote from the tape transcript supplied to me by Mordecai S. Chertoff, which accords with my notes. Professor Glazer’s paper, in the form in which it appears in this volume, is not available to me. I hope that he has modified his formulation in the light of the Arden House discussion.

Matzpen.⁵ It does not, of course, apply to those — the great majority, in my opinion — who have taken no stand. It is not true of the authors and journals that I mentioned in this review.

These facts are important, and I want to stress them. The repeated Haims that one reads in the press that, in Professor Glazer's words, "the New Left has an overwhelming and unbendable tendency to support the Arabs and to oppose Israel" are demonstrably false. Whatever one's attitude may be towards the Israeli-Arab conflict or towards the New Left, there is little point in proceeding on the basis of easily refutable claims. In particular, it is simply irrational to "prove" that the New Left is pro-Arab and anti-Israel by citing a list of pro-Fatah statements, exactly as it would be irrational to "prove" that the New Left is pro-Zionist by citing only Stone, Marcuse, Waskow, articles that have appeared in *Ramparts*, and so on.

Let me now turn to the second and, I think, more interesting point: the response to what is imagined to be the New Left doctrine on Israel. I cannot survey the full range of reactions, but I will mention a few examples which are, I believe, representative of important, if not dominant, tendencies.

On the day before the Arden House meeting I received in the mail the February 1970 issue of the *New Middle East*. It contains a letter by T. R. Fyvel on the New Left and Israel. He writes:

My impression from conversations last year was that quite a few Jewish Americans of the Jewish New Left thought roughly like this: "I profoundly oppose President Johnson for pursuing an unjust war in Vietnam. President Johnson is Israel's leading supporter. Aligned with such support, Israel cannot be right."

I cannot, of course, deny that Mr. Fyvel heard such an argument. I can only say that in my own experience with the New Left, which is fairly extensive, I have never heard anything remotely resembling it. Of course, such an argument would be totally irrational. For example, pursuing such reasoning, these alleged New Leftists should support the Israeli occupation of Jerusalem, since President Johnson expressed his opposition to it — and they should support the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia, since it was also denounced by President Johnson. If there are people who actually present such arguments, their views can safely be dismissed on grounds of irrationality.

I am inclined to suspect that Fyvel's impression is based on a serious misunderstanding. My suspicions are aroused still further when I read on in his letter, as he criticizes American Jewish academics. Why, he asks, "have they not produced working groups, formulated programmes, turned out studies in binationalism designed to help solve this Middle East conflict?"

The question strikes me as perhaps disingenuous. Those who even raise such questions are likely to be denounced by T. R. Fyvel, among others, as people who "say without any nuances that Arabs are good. Arabs are right — and Israel is wrong and must be liquidated." (I live in the likelihood of such a response, it is not surprising that many are discouraged from formulating programs that do not support the more nationalist and hawkish elements of Israeli opinion. The response that I quoted, incidentally, is from T. R. Fyvel himself.⁶ It is his characterization of my position, which can only be based on the one article that I wrote on the Middle East, namely, the essay in *Liberation* cited earlier.

But Fyvel is on target when he relates the Middle East to Vietnam. I believe that for the New Left itself, these matters are quite separate; but for critics of the New Left, the issues are related in a significant way, which does not have much to do with the Middle East, though it has a great deal to do with the United States.

⁵ I repeat that the position of Matzpen cannot be described by any rational observer as illustrating an unbendable tendency to support the Arabs. It is necessary to emphasize this fact because of the great distortions of their position that commonly appear. One may or may not agree with their position, but there is little point in fabrication and falsehood.

⁶ T. R. Fyvel, "Problems of an Israeli Intellectual," *New Middle East* (January 1970). In a later issue (March 1970), Mr. Fyvel acknowledges that this characterization was quite false, as I pointed out in a letter in the February issue, and attributes it to carelessness in editing a tape.

To explain, let me turn to a second example of the response to what is claimed to be the New Left position on Israel: a recent series of columns by Joseph Alsop.⁷ I will not waste the reader's time discussing in detail the "facts" he reports, in his characteristically imaginative fashion. What is of considerable interest, however, is the way that Alsop tries to exploit the eery strong and quite natural support that exists for Israel in an effort to discredit the growing domestic opposition to American militarism. His line of argument is quite simple Those who attack "America's will and America's power" — I am cited as the prime, though extreme, example — are virtually inviting the Russians to move in and launch an attack on Israel. It is only American force and the American martial spirit that are warding off a genocidal Russian assault on Israel. To round out this fanciful thesis, it would be useful if opponents of the Vietnam war — more generally, opponents of American militarism — could also be depicted as believing that Israel "must be liquidated," to use Fyvel's phrase. Without saving it in so many words, Alsop tries to convey the impression that this is true in my case. He even invents a meeting between me and an unofficial emissary of the Israeli government to enliven this image.⁸ Alsop then turns to that other notorious anti-Semite, I. F. Stone, who, he claims, "hurled the first stone at Israel from the New Left, in a slimy article on the Six-Day War that was closely comparable to his book on the Korean war." The reference is to the article in the *New York Review* that I have already cited. Note, incidentally, the last phrase. Not even Alsop's fevered imagination could conjure up a comparison between Stone's article on the Six-Day War and his book on the Korean War. The point, of course, is not to attempt a rational argument, but rather to plant a useful association: slimy attack on Israel; skepticism about the Korean War; assault on America's national will and power. With a skillful exploitation of the natural sympathy for Israel and a few well-chosen innuendos and misrepresentations, Alsop can finally end by warning Senator Jassits to stop "whacking away at our own national defense,"

Alsop is merely a spokesman for the military, and it would therefore be tempting to dismiss all of this as a rather clumsy Pentagon propaganda effort. But that, I believe, would be a mistake. The cold war consensus is eroding, and the effects of this on American society may be profound. The cold war has provided effective ideological support for American intervention overseas and for the growing system of military state capitalism at home. It is almost certain that there will be powerful resistance to the challenge to the prevailing American ideology, with its conservative cast and demonization of the "Sino-Soviet military bloc that has caused the forces of freedom such pain from Vietnam to the Dominican Republic. For such purposes, the Middle East crisis is most convenient. Apologists for American intervention abroad and militarized state capitalism at home would like nothing better than to be able to identify the New Left as in fact or of sweeping the Jews into the sea and applauding Russian-backed genocide (or, at the very least, as entirely unconcerned with the fate of the people of Israel, if that is the best that propagandists can achieve). What a marvelous way to discredit the rising challenge to American militarism and to support the idea that America must be the gendarme of the world, the judge and executioner for world society. We will, I suspect, hear a good deal more of this in coming years.

At this point, I am sorry to say, Western Zionism sometimes lends a helping hand. A supporter of the peace forces in Israel or the Israeli left will, accordingly, be critical of certain aspects of Israeli government policy. The reaction, in American Zionist circles, is likely to be that such a man has no concern for the welfare or security of the Jews of Israel. If he goes as far as Fyvel suggests and actually discusses binationalism as a long-range goal, thus challenging the concept of a Jewish state as a desirable end, then he can confidently expect to be denounced as virtually in favor of Auschwitz — and if he happens

⁷ *Boston Globe* (12–13 February 1970).

⁸ I can only guess what private fancy may have led Alsop to claim that "some time ago, the Israelis sent an unofficial emissary to Professor Noam Chomsky, to try to explain to him that the defense of the United States was not absolutely disconnected from the defense of Israel." Conceivably, he is referring to an interview with the Israeli journalist Shabtai Tevet in my office at MIT. I do not recall discussing with him the defense of the United States," although when I drove him to a Cambridge restaurant afterwards, we did discuss the cold war and disagreed in our interpretation of it. I find it hard to believe that Mr. Tevet was an unofficial emissary of the Israeli government. If this is not Alsop's source, then one must attribute his comment to pure invention, instead of the grotesque misrepresentation that is his usual style.

to be Jewish, as a “traitor to his people.” There are many reasons for such hysterical reactions, and I do not intend to explore them or speculate about them. However, the effect is to play right into the hands of the Alsops. It is easy enough to begin by accusing the left, or the peace movement, of tolerance for genocide in Israel and then to proceed, using Alsopian techniques of free association, to discredit the opposition to American aggression in Vietnam, domestic militarism, and the ideology that supports it.

I mentioned earlier that I have personally been reluctant to write or speak about the Middle East, though I have been asked to for a long time — in particular, by a number of Israeli doves who point out that the absence of American support for their position is used as a weapon against them in Israel. The reason for his reluctance is simple. It has always been quite predictable that if anyone associated with the peace movement of the American left were to be critical of Israeli government policy, this would be used as a means to bolster American militarism, in the manner that I have just indicated.

These considerations explain in part why there has been such great interest and exaggerated concern over New Left doctrine on Israel and the Arabs. When a prowar enthusiast such as William Griffith writes articles critical of Israel in the *Reader's Digest*, no one cares. But if I. F. Stone were to write similar things in the *New York Review*, with less than 1 percent of the *Digest's* circulation, you can be certain that the bruised cold warriors would seize upon it happily and leap into the fray.

Let me now turn to a third example of reactions to alleged New Left attitudes with regard to the Middle East. In *Encounter* (December 1969), Seymour Martin Lipset has an article on the left, Jews, and Israel, called “The Socialism of Fools.” He begins by quoting a statement he claims to have heard from Martin Luther King, equating criticism of Zionism with anti-Semitism. Instead of pointing out the absurdity of such a statement, he appears to accept it. Then follows a long discussion of left-wing anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism. Finally, Lipset turns to the New Left. He writes: “The most important political event affecting Israel in Western politics in recent years has been the rise of the New Left.”

This statement seems to me a bit of an exaggeration, but compared to what follows, it is remarkable for its sobriety. Lipset then goes on to claim that “the New Left, particularly since June 1967, has identified Israel with the American Establishment.” Citing no evidence to support this alleged fact, Lipset moves on at once to an explanation for it. In particular, he is interested in explaining the alleged attitudes of Jews on the left. Many of them, he says, “exhibit familiar forms of Jewish self-hatred, of so-called Jewish anti-Semitism, of the sort which were widespread within the left before the Nazi holocaust and the creation of the State of Israel.” He goes on to assert that “self-hatred is becoming a major problem for the American Jewish community.”

Lipset seems to feel that arguments or evidence to support these judgments would be quite superfluous. In any event, he offers none — literally, none whatsoever.

This kind of amateur psychoanalysis is quite fashionable and of course is particularly useful as a way of avoiding issues and side-stepping arguments. Perhaps I am lacking in perceptiveness, but I detect no signs of Jewish self-hatred on the part of the many radical Jewish students I know. But there is no question that if they can be dismissed in this manner, then there is no need to try to deal with the difficult questions they raise about war, imperialism, and problems of industrial society.

Next, Lipset states that the New Left is unaware of the kibbutz. Again, this is news to me. As I have already mentioned, Buber's *Paths in Utopia* is widely read and often discussed, and the kibbutz has been an explicit model for New Left activists. In fact, it is Lipset's generation of socialists who were contemptuous of the kibbutz and of libertarian socialism in general.

Finally Lipset turns again to the familiar duo, I. F. Stone and Noam Chomsky, the “older left-wing critics of Israel [who] cannot be accused of ignorance concerning the Israeli socialist movement or its radical institutions”:

Chomsky, in fact, was a long time member of Hashomer Hatzair, the left-wing Zionist youth movement, which prided itself on its Marxism-Leninism and its loyalty to communist ideals.

In fact, I was never a member of Hashomer Hatzair, precisely because I was opposed to the Bolshevik doctrines that it accepted and, in the American movement, to its dominant Stalinist tendencies.

Lipset then goes on to assert that Stone and I have

a commitment which currently involves defining the Al Fatah terrorists as “left-wing guerrillas” and Israel as “a collaborator with imperialism.” if not worse. One doubts whether even the most sophisticated presentation of Israel’s case could ever regain their support.

Notice, incidentally, the quotation marks around the phrases “left-wing guerrillas” and “a collaborator with imperialism.” the implication being, presumably, that these were taken from some of our writings.

All of this is complete fabrication. The alleged quotations do not exist, nor have I ever expressed anything that could even be misinterpreted by a careless reader as expressing the “commitment” that Lipset attributes to me. As to Al Fatah, I have never identified it as a left wing movement, which would be nonsensical, though I have pointed out that it contains left-wing elements, as of course it does. In the article that appeared in *Reflections on the Middle East Crisis* (see footnote 2. page 202). I referred to Gerard Chaliand’s observation that Al Fatah appears to be analogous to the early Kuomintang — a broad coalition of many political tendencies — and that it may be supplanted by more revolutionary groups, as in China, if it fails. I find it difficult to believe that I. F. Stone has ever written anything remotely resembling what Lipset attributes to him (without reference), though it is easy enough to find explicit refutations of such views, as in the articles of his that I cited earlier — to my knowledge, his only recent articles on Israel.

The interesting question is: why the irresponsible allegations, the falsification, and the unsubstantiated — indeed, unargued — accusations of “Jewish self-hatred?” Whatever the answer may be. I merely note two consequences. First, Lipset’s irresponsibility contributes to the Alsopian effort to rebuild the cold war consensus and buttress American militarism. Second, it harms the efforts to support the Israeli left or the Israeli peace movement or to try to facilitate contacts, which might be useful, between Arabs and Israelis who are sometimes not too far removed from one another in their formulation of the basic issues and expression of hope for the future.

In a letter published in *Encounter* I pointed out a number of the falsifications just noted, and Lipset duly revised his article, in an interesting way (see p. HU of this volume). He states, in the revision, that Stone and I “now write harshly about Israel” and adds:

But Stone, Chomsky, and Cohn-Bendit are today committed supporters of the international revolutionary left. And that left currently defines the Al Fatah terrorists as “left-wing guerrillas,” and Israel as “a collaborator with imperialism,” if not worse. One doubts whether even the most sophisticated presentation of Israel’s case could ever regain their support.

In his revision, Lipset again gives no reference or citation to support his claims. The falsifications that appeared in the original article might have simply been the result of carelessness. Flic revisions introduced in response to my letter however, cannot be explained in this way. Knowing that he cannot support his original claims by actual documentary evidence, Lipset attempts instead to insinuate the same conclusions indirectly. Thus if Stone and I are committed supporters of the international revolutionary left which defines Al Fatah as “left-wing guerrillas” and Israel as “a collaborator with imperialism,” if not worse, then it will be concluded by Upset’s readers that Stone and I accept these positions of the movement to which he claims we are committed. The avoidance of citation and reference is, no doubt, intended to overcome the difficulty that Stone and I have taken quite a different stand, as Lipset knows very well.

Before turning to other matters, I would like to make an observation about Upset’s discussion of “the anti-Semitism, ‘the socialism of fools,’ occasionally voiced by groups such as the Black Panthers, SNCC ... and other black militant organizations...” To illustrate anti-Semitism on the part of SNCC he cites a quotation in a SNCC newsletter which asks readers whether they know

that the famous European Jews, the Rothschilds, who have long controlled the wealth of many European nations, were involved in the original conspiracy with the British to create“

the “State of Israel” and are still among Israel’s chief supporters? *That the Rothschilds also control much of Africa’s mineral wealth?*

To illustrate Black Panther anti-Semitism, he cites an attack on Zionism, as well as a definitely anti-Semitic poem that he found in the June 1967 issue of the paper of the Black Panther party of Northern California.

The quotation from the SNCC newsletter, whatever one may think of it, is hardly an illustration of anti-Semitism. Similarly, anti-Zionist statements of the Panthers or anyone else are not, in themselves, expressions of anti-Semitism. There is no doubt that an assiduous search would reveal anti-Semitic statements by black militants, just as there is no doubt that the black movements have always welcomed support by Jews and other whites. There is also no doubt that by applying the same technique, one could “prove” that Israel is a racist state bent on genocide. Suppose, for example, that someone were to document this claim by quoting remarks that appear in *Machanaim* (April 1969) by Shraga Gafni, who cites biblical authorization for driving the “Canaanite peoples” from the land of Israel and who explains that “not every enemy deserves peace.” Specifically:

As to the Arabs — the element that now resides in the land but is foreign in its essence to the land and its promise — their sentence must be that of all previous foreign elements. Our wars with them have been inevitable, just as in the days of the conquest of our possessions in antiquity, our wars with the people who ruled our land for their own benefit were inevitable... In the case of enemies who, in the nature of their being, have only one single goal, to destroy you, there is no remedy but for them to be destroyed. This was the judgment of Amalek.⁹

For details of the judgment of Amalek, see 1 Samuel, chapter 15. Suppose, then, that someone were to cite such statements in a discussion of Jewish anti-Arabism, as illustrating the commitment to a war of extermination “occasionally voiced” by the Israelis. Some might interpret this as rather cynical and even deceitful. What is true in one case is no less true in the other.

Let me add several words of clarification. I have not suggested, nor would I, that it is unfair to criticize the New Left. On the contrary, rational criticism is to be welcomed. Nor am I suggesting that, say, my remarks on the Middle East are beyond criticism. Again, serious criticism is to be welcomed.¹⁰ What I think is quite interesting, however, is the irrationality and fabrication that has been so characteristic of the response to the New Left. It is this fact that requires explanation, and I suspect that the basic explanation is the one I suggested.

Notice that many of those responsible for these hopelessly distorted and irrational attacks on the New Left will, of course, express their opposition to the war in Vietnam. This expression of opposition in itself is quite meaningless. By now, opposition to the war is widespread in every sector of American society. Unfortunately, this opposition is, for the most part, entirely unprincipled. It is based on the cost to the United States, the failure of American policy, the “tragic mistakes” that occurred through failure to comprehend the realities of Southeast Asia or the limitations of American power. People who are opposed to the war on such grounds may very well support the principle of extending American power, the principle of forceful intervention in the internal affairs of other nations (where we can get away with it), and the rebuilding of the cold war consensus or some functional equivalent. My impression is that those who invent these fables about the New Left and Israel are, predominantly, people who have not dissociated themselves from such policies in any meaningful way or who actively support them — whatever their attitude may be to the catastrophe in Vietnam.

⁹ This is the journal of the Israeli Army rabbinate. The Israeli scientist who sent me this article comments that “Shraga Gafni” is probably the literary pseudonym of Rabbi Shlomo Goren, the chief rabbi of Tel Aviv and the chief rabbi of the Israeli Army. The same correspondent accused me, with some justification, of hypocrisy for my unwillingness to criticize the Israeli Establishment in the same terms that I use in discussion of the Kennedy intellectuals and others.

¹⁰ For examples, see Shmuel B’ari, “Let’s Not Make Bi-Nationalism an Escape,” *New Outlook* (December 1969); Shlomo Avineri in “The Crisis in the Middle East: An Exchange,” *Columbia Forum* (Spring 1970).

To conclude this discussion of reactions to the imagined position of the New Left, I would like to mention the response within Israel. I do not read the Israeli press or Israeli journals regularly, and my information is extremely limited. I can, therefore, make only the most tentative observations, based on what I have seen. I will limit these comments to the reporting of my own contributions to this conference.¹¹

In the *Ha-Aretz* weekend edition, in early June,¹² Refael Rothstein has an article entitled “Ha-Dibbuk shel Ha-Smol Ile-Iladash be-Artzot Ila Brit” (“The Dybbuk of the New Left in the United States”), Rothstein was present at the Arden House Conference and wrote a largely accurate, factual report in *Ha-Aretz*: immediately afterward.¹³ His article in the weekend edition contains a number of errors and, more important, descends to a level of personal insult that, regrettably, I have observed before in *Ha-Aretz*.

Wording to Rothstein, I am “the man who astonishes Zionists with his articles and speeches that are full of sharp criticism of the politics of security of Israel...” In fact, prior to the Arden House Conference I had given exactly one talk on the subject in a series of open lectures sponsored by the Arab Students Club (the other two speakers, so far, have been the Zionist rabbi of the Hillel Foundation and Simba Flapan of Givat Haviva) and written one article, in essence, the text of that talk. Next, Rothstein observes that at the Arden House Conference, I was the “Dybbuk” to be exorcised, the new reincarnation of “Jewish self-hatred.” How can one account for this strange phenomenon of Jewish self-hatred (the existence of which is axiomatic and therefore requires neither argument nor evidence)? Rothstein quotes a young Israeli girl who offers what he apparently regards as a satisfactory explanation: she has perceived that the “real problem of American Jewish males is that “they lack security in their manhood.” “I am certain,” she says, “that thee lack manliness — all of these Chomskys, supporters of Fatah.”

Reading this ingenious explanation of why we “support Fatah” — an allegation which, needless to say, also requires no evidence — I am reminded of a remark by Rothstein’s colleague Shabtai Tevet, who commented, with reference to my opinions:

The custom with drunkards is to deprive them of rights, so that they will not harm people.
But what can one do to a man with academic credentials whose mind has been impaired.¹⁴

Next Rothstein reports a discussion we had about the Panthers, in which I expressed my opinion that their position on the Middle East relates more to domestic issues than to Middle Eastern realities. Fie writers

I could only recall to mind those young Jews, intelligent and good-looking, who resided in Germany in the thirties. They too interpreted the speeches of the Nazis as “mere rhetoric.”
I only hope that my meditations are baseless, an expression of what is called among our young Jews and free men “Jewish paranoia.”

In this conversation Rothstein asked whether anyone among the Arabs is prepared to recognize Jewish national rights in Palestine. As he correctly reports, I mentioned the Democratic Front of Hawatmeh,

¹¹ As is evident these remarks were added after the Arden House Conference.

¹² My copy of this article is unfortunately undated.

¹³ In this article (19 February 1970), Rothstein quotes Professor Rotenstreich as claiming that I and other “New Leftists” distort the historical record. He cites one example: that it is a mistake to depict Martin Buber as opposed to the idea of a Jewish state or as an anti-Zionist. For the record, I have never so much as mentioned Martin Buber in anything I have written on this subject, and my only reference to Buber in the Arden House Conference, prior to Professor Rotenstreich’s remarks, is the one given above.

¹⁴ This appears at the end of a column that must be read in its entirety for its style and intellectual level to be appreciated fully. In *Ha-Aretz*, in November, 1969. Tevet wrote an article purportedly based on an interview with me. In a letter that was apparently published (I have seen no copy). I pointed out a long list of falsehoods and misrepresentations. The quotation just given is from Tevet’s answer (10 December 1969).

which has been widely reported to have put forth such a program.¹⁵ He adds: “This declaration was presented, apparently, shortly after the ‘Front’ acknowledged the terrorist attack on the cafeteria of the Hebrew University.” I do not know whether this assertion is true. Let us assume that it is. With similar logic, one might discount all statements of the Israeli government, noting that they occur after such incidents as the virtual destruction of the city of Suez by bombardment or the attack on the metal works at Ahn Za’bal, where dozens of Arab workers were killed.

Rothstein then asserts, correctly, that I believe that the Jews will not and should not relinquish their national rights. Then follow some sarcastic remarks about the “third world” which have no bearing, on our discussion at all and are just as well left unmentioned.

At this point, Rothstein moves to fabrication of a sort that is by now familiar. He claims that I “define Fatah as ‘left-wing guerrilla lighters.’” As a matter of fact, in a lengthy interview I explained to Rothstein over and over again that Al Fatah cannot be regarded as a left-wing organization and that I was persuaded by Thailand’s characterization of it as somewhat like the early Kuomintang, a broad national front including many tendencies. I was quite insistent about this point, and I am sure that Rothstein understood it. In fact, in his factual report of the conference cited earlier he quotes me more accurately as emphasizing the internal splits within the Palestinian movements, which are far from monolithic (and surely include a wide range of political tendencies from left to right): in particular, as is well known, this is true of Al Fatah. I can only assume, then, that the distortion in the article in the *Ha-Aretz* weekend edition was conscious. For the fantasies Rothstein wishes to spin, it is necessary that the Dybbuk of the New Left regard Al Fatah as left-wing guerrillas. Ergo, it is a fact, whatever the real facts may be.

Continuing, Rothstein writes that “one of the contributions of Professor Chomsky to peace in the Middle East is the financing of a lecture series here [in the United States] by Aryeh Bober, a spokesman of ‘Matzpen.’” and he goes on to talk about the other well-known anti-Zionists on the American left who financed this trip. This is complete invention. I haven’t the slightest idea how Bober’s trip was financed; it is a certainty that neither I nor any group that I am involved in financed it. Bober did receive an invitation from a group of Americans of which I am a member. The group intends to invite many speakers who represent something other than the official positions of Middle Eastern governments and Palestinian organizations, in an effort to broaden the scope of discussion here. My relation to this committee, which has not a cent to its name and no defined political position, is that I wrote a letter inviting people who might be interested in such an enterprise to join, making clear that it is not my group, that I am not its leader or organizer, and that the group would take no position in support of the specific policies of the people invited.

Perhaps this is enough to convey the tone and accuracy of Rothstein’s report. I might add a personal comment. During the past few years I have taken rather unpopular positions on a number of subjects, and reports of my activities and statements, as well as interviews with me, have appeared frequently in the American and foreign press. Much of the press comment has, naturally, been quite hostile. However, there is nothing in my personal experience that surpasses the reporting in *Ha-Aretz* in distortion or petty and childish insults. Shabtai Hevel’s article’s, in particular, set something of a journalistic record in these respects. I was surprised, since I had regarded *Ha Aretz* as a newspaper that met international standards and avoided gutter journalism. I do not know whether what I have seen is in any sense representative. It is the people of Israel, of course, who will suffer from this irresponsible journalism. Presumably, they believe much of what they read in the Israeli press. Given the critical situation in which Israel finds itself, it is extremely important that Israelis have an accurate and clear understanding of what is happening in the world. If they believe that the American New Left consists of perverts and self-hating Jews who have lost their senses, and that the Black Panthers — who are barely able to maintain their existence in the face of harsh judicial repression, not to speak of police assassination, as

¹⁵ See, for example, Gérard Chaliand, *La résistance Palestinienne* (Paris: Seuil, 1970). According to the “usually well-informed paper” *Al-Sayyad* of Beirut, the Democratic Front advocates a “binational Palestinian state,” *New Middle East* (April 1970) review of the Arab press.

in the case of bred Hampton and Maik Clark are a threat to the Jews that can be compared with the Nazis in the thirties, then they will be living in a world of fantasy and nightmare that has little relation to reality, and their response to events is likely to be irrational and ultimately suicidal.

The only other discussion I have seen of the Arden House Conference is in an article by Yaacov Sharett called "An Israeli View of Noam Chomsky." in the *Jewish frontier* (May 1970). Sharett begins by explaining that "one could build a whole structure rebutting Chomsky and the Al Fatah propagandists," but instead of bothering with this, he will restrict himself to (explaining the attitudes he claims I share with the propagandists of Al Fatah.¹⁶ According to Sharett, I argue "that the idea of the kibbutz as a solution to universal social evils ... was the mainspring of Zionism." He goes on to imply that I "justify Arab terror, and espouse the worse-the-better theory," and writes: "The expectation, indeed, the sinister hope of an Arab revolt on the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, resulting in terrible bloodbaths, is to be detected in Chomsky's pronouncements." This vision, he explains, is very satisfying to the "American New Left non-Jewish Jew" because it "fulfills deep-rooted urges to sadism, masochism, cannibalism (of both father and mother), and fratricide."

Next, Sharett claims that "Noam Chomsky still dares to equate Israeli response to terror and attack with the Nazi Holocaust," and he claims that I hold to "the nonsensical idea that Palestinian Intuitionism is popular with the Arabs." He then proceeds with his explanation of this "adolescent daydreaming":

There is still a very important factor missing; one essential for making Professor Chomsky's outlook understood. Shattered youthful dreams of joining the idealistic kibbutz way of life, which would ultimately redeem humanity; disillusionment with the narrow, nationalistic Jewish state in view of the stresses and price involved; criticism of Israel's inevitable commitment to the Western world, to old-fashioned democracy, to "square" American Jewry, to Jewish tradition with all its contradictions with modern life; the easy and simplistic equating of the Jews returning to their homeland with the Crusader invasions and with Western modern colonialism; the false equation of Arab enmity to Israel with all which is just and "progressive" in today's world; the "Vietnamization" of the Arab-Jewish conflict and the transformation of Zionism into Nazism; the ease with which a clever Jewish philologist can swallow Arab propaganda — are all these enough to explain Noam Chomsky's attitude towards Israel?

One can see, reading this list and the comments quoted before, that Sharett was quite wise to state in the beginning of his article that he was not going to bother with citing ([notations from my writing or with any other reference to fact. I would suggest that the reader who is interested try to find some source, in my writings, for Sharett's assertions and allegations. His other interpretations are as fanciful as his formulation of the invented views that he attributes to me.

However, Sharett is not interested in documenting what he takes to be my views but rather in explaining them. He thinks he has found the key in my remark, which for once he has actually succeeded in recording correctly, that, in my opinion, for Israel to lose a battle just once means annihilation. The

¹⁶ To be precise, he mentions one actual statement of mine ("the only quotation I shall permit myself to select from Chomsky's writings"), namely, that "the concept of a Jewish state is not so deeply rooted in the history of the Jewish settlement of Palestine as one might be led to believe, *judging by the temperament that has prevailed in recent years.*" (Sharett omits the italicized words.) I go on to quote the conclusion of the careful Esco Foundation study that from 1921 to 1939 "the position of the Zionist leadership ... was strongly tinged with binationalism, and I point out that 'the first official formulation of the demand for a Jewish state was in 1942.'" These remarks are quite unexceptionable, so far as I can see. Sharett's only comment is this: "Herzl's *Der Judenstadt* was conveniently overlooked or perhaps it was not included in the Hashomer Hatzair educational literature." Herzl's *Der Judenstadt* was not overlooked, but was rather irrelevant. It was not an official formulation of the Zionist movement, and its existence relates in no way to the misconceptions that result from the temperament that has prevailed in recent years.

Notice that as he states, this is the only reference Sharett makes to any actual quotations (or other facts, for that matter). AH the rest is allegation, without reference.

light dawns. Perhaps the reason for my attitude' is that the "mild Noam, the hero of verbal battles, is perhaps just scared."

Here Sharett has at last succeeded in touching the real world of fact. I do think that Israel is following a policy that may, ultimately, prove suicidal, and annihilation of Israel — which, in fact, can only lose once — is a prospect that gives me no pleasure. It also gives me no pleasure to see that an Israeli writer such as Yaakov Sharett is incapable of distinguishing courage from bravado. Surely any rational person will be concerned with the possibility that the present policies may be suicidal in the long run. will attempt to analyze this possibility in a serious way. and il. indeed, there exist alternatives — as is at least arguable — will be interested in exploring them.

What is most interesting about Sharett's comments is that they are based on total ignorance. He knows nothing about my personal background and has apparently made no attempt to find out what I have actually written about Israel. Therefore it is not at all surprising that most of the statements that he makes are demonstrably false; they are, after all, merely stabs in the dark. It is for this reason, of course, that he avoids documentation and cites no references to support his allegations — they simply do not exist. Like Lipset, he skips over the small problem of producing evidence and proceeds at once to offering explanations for what he imagines to be the case-, I will not speculate on what may motivate this curious behavior. These rather silly forays succeed only in discrediting their authors and, perhaps unfortunately, in deluding those who may be so naive as to have some trust in what such authors write. Again, it is worth mentioning that if this is any sample of the kind of analysis or "information" that is being presented to Israelis, then the situation may be rather serious, for they cannot afford to live in such a dream world.

Let me now turn to the third topic: the question of what the future may hold, insofar as relations of the New Left to Israel are concerned. In the fall of 1969, Gedda Meir wrote a letter to President Nixon expressing her support for his efforts in Vietnam. In the correspondence columns of *Ha-Aretz*. Professor Y. Bar-Hillel, who has been active in the Israeli peace movement, wrote a brief letter in which he said that if Israeli policy continues along these lines, Israel's only friends will be Joseph Alsop and the John Birch Society. Of course, he was consciously overstating the point, but there is a point that he was overstating. Space does not permit elaboration here, but Israel is, in fact, being impelled, step by step, into the extremely unfortunate position of dependence on the United States,¹⁷ combined with harshness in its domestic policies. These tendencies, if they continue, may ultimately lead to the situation that Lipset, Fyvel, and others incorrectly claim to exist today and that Alsop looks forward to with such eagerness: estrangement between Israel and the international left, including left-wing groups in the United States.

The matter of Vietnam may be indicative, in this regard. In a thoughtful article on the New Left and Israel. Yochanan Peres quotes a young American:

... Some of us are almost nomads, we like to travel. Everywhere we arrive we find young people with whom we have a common language. The very least is that everyone condemns Vietnam. Only in Israel do we find an "understanding" for the imperialist intervention and indifference to the suffering of the Vietnamese.¹⁸

I do not know whether this is an accurate' perception. Peres seems to believe that it is; at least, he makes no comment to suggest otherwise, he warns of the danger that Israel might lose touch "with advanced Western society and culture." Again, I am in no position to judge whether this danger is real. There is no doubt in my mind, however, that those who do have an "understanding" for the vicious

¹⁷ A weak reed at best. Recall that from 1960 to 1965, "United States aid expenditures [to Egypt] amounted to a sum of about \$970 million, double those of the Soviet Union and the Eastern Bloc," and that while President Johnson was "entertaining Levi Eshkol 'at the ranch' in June of 1961, Egyptian officers were being trained in Chemical Warfare at Fort McClellan ...," Warren Young, "American Interests in the UAR," *New Outlook* (January 1970), pp. 26-39.

¹⁸ Yochanan Peres, "The New Left and Israel," *New Outlook* (February 1970), pp. 18-27.

American attack on the peasants of Indochina and who are indifferent to their suffering will, in the long run, be unable to maintain contact with whatever is decent in Western society.

These possibilities are more than disturbing. Even if they are still remote, they are sad, tragic — and avoidable.

Let me finally turn briefly to the fourth topic I mentioned: the question of what might be done in the United States to prevent the realization of the fears of some, the hopes of others, with regard to hostility between Israel and the New Left. First and most important, it is necessary to stop equating criticism of Israeli government policy with anti-Semitism, to put an end to the silly talk about Jewish self-hatred (or else, to provide some evidence to substantiate what have, so far, been simply wild charges), and to pay some attention to what people are actually saying and thinking. Irresponsible and malicious commentary of the sort I have reviewed will have the effect of presenting American youth with only two alternatives: either support Israeli policy totally or support the Palestinians. If the only way to relate to Israel, without enduring insults and falsification, is by supporting the settlement of Hebron, the bombardment of the city of Suez, the imprisonment of Arabs on political charges, and so on, then it is predictable that many young people will choose to reject Israel entirely and without qualification, will choose to develop the “unbendable tendency to oppose Israel and support the Arabs” that some critics claim to perceive right now and may, by their efforts, bring to realization.

It is important to tolerate and, in fact, to encourage contacts with and support for the Israeli left and the peace forces within Israel, groups that include sharp critics of government policy.

It is of critical importance that debate and discussion and exploration of the issues be undertaken in the United States, far beyond anything that exists today. And it would be quite helpful if this can be free of the exaggeration, distortion, insult, and sheer hysteria that has, unfortunately, characterized much of the response to such efforts.

Personally, I think that Israel has suffered, and will continue to suffer, from efforts in the United States to stifle discussion, slander critics, and exploit Israel’s problems cynically in order to bolster American militarism, as well as from the general tendency in the United States to support automatically the more chauvinistic and militaristic elements in Israeli society. We should, at the very least, be able to duplicate here the range of discussion and debate that exists in Israel itself. In Israel, the “peace list” (Reshimat Shalom) group was known as “the Professors’ party.” In the United States, the American Professors for Peace in the Middle East recently published an ad that, to me at least, suggests the rhetoric of the Greater Israel movement. I couldn’t sign such a statement and lace my Israeli friends.

This, I think, is an unfortunate situation, and in the long run it will also prove harmful to Israeli society, and even to its independence and security.

NOAM Chomsky is *Professor of Modern Language and Linguistics, Massachusetts Institute of Technology*.

The Library of Unconventional Lives

Noam Chomsky
Israel and The New Left
1971

Chapter 10 of *The New Left and the Jews*, edited by Mordecai S. Chertoff.
<www.archive.org/details/the-new-left-and-the-jews>
Pitman (New York)

thelul.org