Intelligence Failure or Paralysis?

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There was no shortage of intelligence, nor was there a lack of intelligence alerts about the Yom Kippur War. The reasons for the famous mechdal *(Israel's lack of preparedness for the war) should be judged in the context of the 1973 conditions and not according to "what if..." questions. The reasons are, first, the unhealthy mixture of the military top echelon with the political leadership, which prevented the chief of staff from carrying out the appropriate military preparations on October 6, 1973. The second reason for the* mechdal *was a successful disinformation operation conducted by the Russians and their Arab allies. The third and main reason was the Israeli fear of "losing" the Americans—an outcome, the Israelis anticipated, of the struggle for the freedom of Soviet Jewry. For the Israeli public the war was a surprise; not for the political leadership.*

Was it a mistake, or paralysis? And if the latter, what were the causes? It seems that the great shock of the outbreak of the Yom Kippur War, at about two in the afternoon on October 6, 1973, has framed our basic understanding of the subject. It came as a surprise, but who was to blame if not Military Intelligence and its chief, Major General Eli Zeira? Nearly forty years have elapsed since the fateful moment when the Yom Kippur War broke out. It is now fitting to reexamine some of the "conventional wisdom," which over the years many have accepted uncritically.

For the other more important figures in the elite circle of decision-makers this paradigm provided a simple solution. Indeed they were surprised. "We didn't believe Sadat was capable of surprising us," Chief of Staff David Elazar ("Dado") told the Agranat Commission.

But the historical evidence that has gradually emerged over the years suggests a much more complex story behind that particular October surprise. The Israeli leadership in 1973 had no lack of intelligence information. Nor were there problems of internal communication within the elite circle of decision-makers, although they did cause a loss of precious time under extreme pressure, a decisive cause of the fiasco.

Another way of sidestepping the main issue takes the form of the narrative that developed over the years, namely, that the Israeli leadership, mainly Prime Minister Golda Meir, did not seize the opportunity to make peace with Sadat's Egypt. One important achievement of Zaki Shalom and Boaz Wentick's book, *The Yom Kippur War: The War That Could Have Been Avoided*,[1] is to shatter this myth once and for all. The authors repeatedly make clear that the initiatives of Secretary of State William Rogers and UN envoy Gunnar Jarring—those two mythological figures in the memory of the 1960s and 1970s generation—were based on the formula of "territories for nonbelligerency," but not including a formal peace agreement. That is, they were in sharp opposition to the Meir government's policy from the Six Day War to the Yom Kippur War, whereby, in return for withdrawal from territories conquered in 1967, Israel would receive a peace treaty achieved through direct negotiations.

In some ways this small book is almost a political history of the pre-Yom Kippur War years. It reminds us that a full history of that war has yet to be written. Two professional researchers who participated in the investigations of the war, back in 1973 and 1974, told this writer about the void in the war's historiography. One of them said there is still material that, once exposed, will change how the Israeli public views the war. The other said simply that *the* book about the Yom Kippur War has yet to be written, without endorsing the stance that new revelations will alter our perspective.

The author of the present article, while carrying out research for a book on the Yom Kippur War, uncovered and rediscovered new historical information, particularly in the correspondence of ambassador Simcha Dinitz with Prime Minister Golda Meir, which was effectively the main channel of communication between Washington and Jerusalem.[2] The findings of this research provide an understanding of the different layers of Israeli-American relations during the early 1970s and of the Soviet involvement in the region. The purpose of this project is to establish the context of the 1973 intelligence alarms and to describe the significant political and strategic factors that weighed heavily on the Israeli decision-makers as they approached the moment of truth on October 6. Not the least important was the cumulative effect of a successful Soviet-Arab disinformation effort.

"THE GOVERNMENT WILL CHOOSE TO RISK A WAR"

The problem for the current generation of Israelis is that it feeds on lessons of 1973 which have been distorted and even misrepresented. As noted, the most fashionable narrative today highlights the "lost peace" of the early 1970s. This narrative evades a major issue that always accompanies decision-makers in the interface between the military and the political leadership. Once the political leaders decide

upon a policy, it becomes the duty of the military, intelligence agencies, and foreign policy and defense experts to implement it, to formulate the right military response, even if that policy fails and other possible results materialize.

It is clear that, within the context of the Meir government's policy of not relinquishing an inch without a full peace treaty reached through direct negotiations, the foreign policy and defense establishment failed to provide the right solutions. It was the lack of a clear separation between the political leadership that sets the policy and the military echelon, which must make preparations for a scenario of political collapse and transition to war, that brought the Israeli leadership into a chaotic situation.

Yitzhak Rabin noted on many occasions that, during most of the crises in Israeli history, Israeli intelligence was wrong. Years before the Yom Kippur War, Shimon Peres once said that "the intelligence is very problematic, and it is inadequate for decision-making." He added that "the politicians' judgment is poor. They do not judge intelligence properly."[3]

Even in 1971, there were fears that Egypt would go to war. When a ceasefire ended the War of Attrition a year earlier, Egypt felt successful and emboldened. As Shalom and Wentick write: "It is our judgment that in a long-term view, strategically and psychologically, Cairo's achievements in that campaign were greater than those of Jerusalem."[4] And in our judgment they are correct. Rabin, too, when analyzing the integrated military and political campaign in 1969 and 1970, concluded that the Egyptians together with the Soviets had greater achievements, and the price paid for Israel's failure was Rogers' initiative.

To prevent a regression into war, Rabin, then ambassador to the United States, presented a plan for an interim settlement to the Americans. Israel would withdraw from the Suez Canal to the Gidi and Mitla passes in Sinai, both about eighteen miles east of the canal; Egypt would retain a small presence on its east bank and—the great prize—the waterway would reopen. Israel's top decision-makers were divided. Defense Minister Moshe Dayan was in favor, while Prime Minister Golda Meir fiercely opposed it. "It's possible that our unequivocal rejection of the Rogers Plan will bring about a new war in the Middle East with a possible Soviet intervention," Rabin told Henry Kissinger, then U.S. national security adviser, in November 1971. "If the alternative is to submit to the Rogers Plan, it seems to me that the government of Israel will choose to risk a war."[5]

In late 1971 and early 1972, Israel received intelligence reports that the Soviets were encouraging Egypt to go to war against Israel. In July 1972, however, Sadat took an extravagant step and expelled the Soviet advisers from his country. This gave Israel the misleading impression of a growing distance between Egypt and the Soviet Union; the truth was more complex. According to Shalom and Wentick, the tens of thousands of Soviet advisers and their families were very costly for Egypt. Sadat did not want the advisers involved in his army, not least because they

made difficulties for him in preparing it for war in the manner that he and his chief of staff, Saad el-Shazly, envisioned it. Israeli leadership mistakenly considered that, without close strategic cooperation between the superpower and its client, the risk of Egypt going to war was too great.

Clearly, a major shift occurred in the Israeli leaders' view of Egypt. To understand it, one need only consider the difference between Meir's words on December 31, 1971, at the ceremony in which Elazar took over from Haim Bar-Lev as chief of staff, and her words a year later at the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee of the Knesset. On the first occasion the emotional Meir told Elazar: "You assume the position of chief of staff at a time when the Soviet involvement in backing Egypt is far-reaching, to an unprecedented measure."[6] In February 1973, however, she said:

> It seems to me from various sources that we can conclude most certainly that the Russians are not encouraging the Egyptians to go to war…they tell the Egyptians: it's your business, you decide. But they also explain to them that in war people shoot and the results could be not very pleasant.… The thing that we do not want most is for peace to be reached through negotiations between the Americans and Egypt, meaning that the Americans would offer the Egyptians a settlement and they would accept. Then it would be the opposite situation to 1956. In 1956 the Americans played not a minor role [in erasing Israel's gains and the withdrawal from Sinai]. But the Soviets took all the credit.[7]

No wonder Meir spoke with such hardly disguised optimism. Despite the terrible tragedy that had occurred four days earlier when Israeli planes downed a Libyan passenger plane, a secret channel between Israel and the Soviet Union had been opened. But it was the Libyan airline affair that could be seen as the beginning of a gathering storm between Israel and the United States.

KISSINGER'S WARNING AGAINST A PREEMPTIVE STRIKE

On February 21, a Libyan passenger plane passed through the Egyptian air-defense lines and flew in the direction of Israel's secret installations in Sinai, and the air force brought it down. Then, in April, an Israeli operation against top terrorist commanders in the heart of Beirut rattled the Middle East, and in August, Israel forced a plane en route from Beirut to Baghdad to land in a military airfield, mistakenly believing terrorist leader George Habash was on board. All those events incurred an Israeli moral-political debt to the United States, which time and again had to pull its chestnuts out of the fire.

The Libyan airline incident took place on the eve of an important and greatly anticipated visit of Golda Meir to Washington. Rabin, then concluding his term as ambassador, viewed this incident as a severe blow to Israeli-U.S. relations, which the Americans exploited in order to improve their ties with Egypt while Israel paid the price. The talks between Kissinger and Egyptian national security adviser Hafiz Ismail were underway, and were perceived as driving an Egyptian wedge between Israel and the United States.

These talks took place against the background of the U.S.-Soviet détente, which came in the wake of President Richard Nixon's dramatic rapprochement with China, the crown jewel of Kissinger's global architecture. There was, however, one major threat to the new Kissinger-Nixon design for superpower relations, namely, American Jewry's struggle on behalf of Soviet Jewry. In their meeting with Meir on March 1, 1973, Nixon and Kissinger demanded that Meir block the legislative initiatives in Congress regarding Soviet Jewry. Nixon warned Meir: "From a much broader perspective it is your interest that we should succeed in reaching an agreement with the Russians, which in the long run will have very important implications. You can certainly win against all the Arabs—but not against the Russians. It is our job to take care of the Russians and you should help us." As Rabin remarked, "This hint did not need any interpretation."[8]

The combination of the détente and the expulsion of the Soviet advisers seemed to strengthen Meir's assessment that the Soviets were now exerting a moderating influence and the chances of war had diminished. But if the Soviets were supposedly fostering moderation, the Americans were muzzling Israel and trying to force it further into dependency. Shortly after, in November 1972, one of the most important early-warning alarms of Egypt's bellicose intent was delivered. Nevertheless, Kissinger warned Israel via Rabin: "I hope that Israel has no intentions to initiate a preventive war against Egypt. It's most important that Israel not break the ceasefire, even when it has intelligence reports about Egyptian intent to renew the war."[9] As Rabin noted, that was exactly how Israel behaved in October 1973.

The fact that the November 1972 war alarm, sounded by the Mossad's key agent Ashraf Marwan, failed to materialize strengthened the feeling in Israel that, generally, Sadat's options for war had diminished. Thus, at the start of 1973, a period of deception began. The top Israeli decision-makers saw new opportunities for peace. They viewed the Kissinger-Ismail channel as negotiations with Egypt by proxy. What they did not want was to provide an assurance of a complete withdrawal and then go to the negotiating table; Israel would then be maneuvered into accepting something less than a peace settlement.

It appears retrospectively that a secret channel of top-level negotiations between Israel and the Soviet Union had also opened, on the latter's initiative. Israeli intelligence stuck to its guns with the *conceptzia*—the guiding assumption that the Egyptians needed to meet certain military and strategic conditions before

being able to initiate a war. The question that arises is which *conceptzia* was more significant—the political-strategic one or the intelligence-military one?

Yaakov Hazan, a leader of the left-wing Mapam Party and Member of Knesset, articulated what was understood by the political *conceptzia*. He was close to Golda Meir and no doubt expressed her assessment at the time. He told the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that "the objective chances for peace are greater now."[10]

A SECRET CHANNEL WITH THE "DUBIM"

Just after his arrival in Washington in mid-March, the new Israeli ambassador Simcha Dinitz met with Kissinger to report on the secret Israeli-Soviet channel that had opened. It came as a surprise, since the Soviets had broken relations with Israel after 1967, and those who monitored the Soviet Union and its influence in the region did not know about the channel. The Soviets surmised that a U.S.-Egyptian political move was imminent and sought to return to political involvement via Israel. More likely, however, knowing about Sadat's imminent war plans, they mostly wanted to get a firsthand sense of Israel's attitude and plans, proffering disinformation and deception. Without a doubt, they learned about the constraints which Kissinger had placed on Israel's maneuverability.

Mordechai Gazit, director-general of the Prime Minister's Office, headed a small Israeli delegation that met with the Soviets in Vienna. Gazit reported:

> A first meeting took place with [diplomatic troubleshooter Yevgeny] Primakov. Primakov again stressed that he represents the top level with the "bears" [*dubim*, in Hebrew.] Said that they are interested in a political solution and are ready to play an active role in this regard. Said that nothing will emerge in the region against the Soviet Union's will…. As far as they are concerned the goal of the contact with us is an explicit clarification of positions regarding how to solve the conflict.… The Soviets said that unless the Israelis clarified their positions, "it will be understood that Israel…is interested in freezing the situation."[11]

This was the third such meeting during the past fifteen months. Israel gave Kissinger every bit of information about its moves, mainly because the promise of about a hundred F-4 fighter planes was at stake. Dinitz showed Kissinger entire stenograms. Meanwhile, Gazit was impressed by the Soviets' ardor for the contacts with Israel, reporting that

> they implored us to respond to their approach…. It was clear that their superiors regard it extremely important that Israel agree to such negotiations,

> which means a mandate from Israel to the Soviet Union to play a role in settling the conflict. [They argued] that we delude ourselves if we continue to think that progress could be achieved only by way of the Americans.

The Soviets also said that, if their superiors were to hear that a political process was possible only through the United States, "it would greatly anger them."[12] As Dinitz noted, this was a threat.

Primakov and his comrades told the Israelis not to exaggerate the importance of the advisers' expulsion in July 1972. The Soviets still had a strong position in Egypt, with friends and weapons. This was their way of insinuating to the Israelis that the Arab military option, backed by the Soviets, was still credible.

Primakov's words and those of his men were perceived in Israel as reflecting the Soviets' insecure and uncomfortable position in the Middle East as well as the success of the coordinated U.S.-Israeli policy. In reality, Israel had lost political options for greater flexibility and grown fearful of alienating the United States. One may observe how this affected the decision-making process as the crisis approached.

Nevertheless, there was a sense that the various channels, especially the U.S.-Egyptian one, were pregnant with intense political activity that could lead to peace negotiations. The sticking point was that the Egyptians refused to commit themselves to a full peace treaty and demanded a full Israeli withdrawal to the 1967 lines in advance. On this point Shalom and Wentick's book is clear: at no time between 1967 and 1973 did the Egyptians agree to a full peace with Israel. If they could get the Sinai back for less than a peace treaty, they would forgo a war. In light of Israel's just demands, they constantly planned for a war that would serve Sadat in much the same way that the 1967 war was originally planned to serve his predecessor, Nasser. For the Arabs, the Roman adage, *Si vis pacem, para bellum*, was stood on its head. Instead of, "If you want peace, prepare for war," their modus operandi was: "If you want war, prepare for peace initiatives." Their overriding goal and perceived need was neither to reconquer Sinai nor to initiate a peace process, but to destroy Israel's image of military invincibility.[13] For Shazly, more specifically, this meant invalidating Israel's security doctrine.

GENERAL ELAZAR: A MIXTURE OF POLITICAL CONSIDERATIONS

At this stage Israel and the United States started receiving new intelligence warnings about the possible outbreak of war or, at least, "the possibility of renewal of hostilities." The report by Marwan, who was situated at the top of the Egyptian leadership, pointed to a date in mid-May, the next month. As evident in a cable sent from the Prime Minister's Office to Dinitz at the Washington embassy on April 13, 1973, Israel attributed strong influence over the Egyptian leadership, if

not control, to Kissinger. "In light of the fact that Kissinger talked with you about the possibility of the outbreak of fire from the Egyptian side, and because we also have information about such a development…ask him if they have intelligence about intentions to open fire and tell him that maybe he should say something about it to the Egyptians, as he sees fit."

Gazit, who signed this cable, added: "We too have intelligence about Egyptian preparations to open fire in the near future…there is a process of transferring fighter planes from Arab countries to Egypt."

Meanwhile, Kissinger pressured Israel to respond immediately to questions posed by Ismail. Meir, however, preferred to wait until Kissinger's next encounter with Ismail in May.

This marked the beginning of the period known in the annals of the Yom Kippur War as the "blue-white alert." Whereas Israel saw its political front as the most vulnerable and its military front as the least, Egypt was perceived as most vulnerable militarily and weak or even paralyzed on the political front. Presumably, this is where Kissinger wanted Egypt. As Shalom and Wentick analyze it, Kissinger wanted Sadat to have no option but to tilt to the American side. But, as some saw it in Israel, among them Rabin, the Ismail-Kissinger channel was also an Egyptian wedge stuck between the United States and Israel.

The Israeli leaders were oblivious to the fact that Egypt had forged some sort of political unity with the radical state to its west, Libya, led by the young colonel Muammar Gaddafi. Egypt had to maneuver between two radical Arab regimes, Syria and Libya, a radical terrorist organization on the rise, the PLO, and the new oil power of Saudi Arabia and its satellite oil fiefdoms. Sadat's point man with Gaddafi was none other than Marwan, the Mossad agent whom some IDF generals suspected of being a double agent. Nevertheless, Marwan's weight was enormous compared to other intelligence sources.

After the Libyan plane incident, Israel received information that Gaddafi was pressuring Egypt and Syria to launch a military action against Israel. Now, in mid-April, the Israeli leaders obtained access to Gaddafi's thoughts, and his position was, that because of the unfavorable balance of power, Egypt was not yet ready to go to war. "We don't believe Gaddafi is pressuring Sadat to go to war in the immediate future," Dinitz was advised from Jerusalem. Nor did Israel detect any signs that the Soviet Union was pushing Sadat toward war.

Despite the accumulation of fighter squadrons in Egypt on the western bank of the Suez Canal, during the spring of 1973 there were no new developments in the military sphere. Two major airfields were being renovated at the time, a project lasting months. "And it's only logical that you don't go to war when those airfields are out of commission," said Major General (ret.) Eli Zeira.[14]

A key meeting at Meir's office on April 18 revealed the differences between the top leaders concerning the military forecast. Zeira explained his assessment that

no war was about to break out. His estimates were passed on to the Americans. But the chief of staff, defense minister, and Mossad chief drew opposite conclusions from the same facts.

General Elazar's words expose the source of the October blunder at its inception. "There is internal logic in favor of war," he said. "The mere number of [peaceful] years gains a different quality.... It should be judged that indeed they have an intention to fight." Yet, immediately after that sentence, Elazar exchanged his military role for that of a political leader and said: "If we are exposed as too ready, then with the first threat...they have already achieved their first goal, which is to give momentum to political actions and maybe cause the Americans to be more flexible."[15] Here Elazar, the top officer of the IDF, is revealed as mixing political intuition with professional military considerations. This was the source of the paralysis that, on the military level, meant "sit and do nothing" and led to the collapse of the Sinai defenses in October.

Had the political and military challenges together been leading to a single coherent and conclusive picture, then one could get away with such a mix. But in 1973 these challenges fostered conflicting messages, with all the implications for the leaders' ability to make their decisions. The liberty which the chief of staff took in political matters damaged his ability to assess the military situation accurately and spilled over to underlings, among them the head of Military Intelligence. "All in all," reasoned Zeira, "it seems that Egypt's main goal today is to create the feeling of being on the brink of war mainly to influence the atmosphere in the Nixon-Brezhnev discussions about the Middle East—to create the image of a country in despair on the brink of hostilities... capable of receiving aid from other Arab countries and opting for warlike activity."[16]

ISRAEL AT RISK OF LOSING THE PRESIDENT?

The blue-white alert gradually subsided, and some leaders seem to have concluded that it was a false alarm. In the succeeding months, however, new factors gained more attention. On the eve of the outbreak of the crisis on Yom Kippur, Israel's leaders clearly were much more worried about the Americans than about the Arabs. Their thoughts were programmed by the paradigm: "the Arabs are incapable." On this fertile ground, the seeds of the *conceptzia* could sprout. This *conceptzia*, which Marwan fed to Israeli intelligence, stipulated specifically that Egypt would go to war only together with Syria, and before launching an offensive would need about five fighter squadrons of Mig-23s or Sukhoi-20s that could reach Israel proper and back, plus Scud missiles to deter Israel from hitting Egypt's hinterland, a lesson learned from the War of Attrition.

In addition, the American factor had a paralyzing effect. Not only did Kissinger

constantly warn Israel not to be the first to open fire—the "de Gaulle complex" as the Agranat Commission called it—but a major crisis was brewing during the months preceding the war. Dayan testified to the commission (February 1974) that between May and October, "the energy [oil] issue came up very intensely with regard to America, and Kissinger...warned us again and again about it. And I got the impression—an impression that I still have—that he was telling us the truth." Judge Moshe Landau asked Dayan: "This conversation with Kissinger you told us about, was it already after May?" Dayan replied: "Yes. But this kind of hard talk, those ... depressing conversations—I had with him before in the U.S. when I met him, and it wasn't just with me.... He would get everybody out and stay in the room with the Israelis alone and start to explain [the content here is erased in the stenogram]. And we would really come out of the room deeply depressed."

Dinitz reported the signs of an imminent crisis with the Americans. Kissinger told him that "[Nixon] is totally sunk in Watergate .... And beside this, the entire bureaucracy is boiling over at us with regard to the airplane [from Beirut to Baghdad which was forced to land in Israel]. And they want to use it to 'teach us a lesson' and get some profits with the Arabs and especially the oil producers."[17]

The crisis over the Jackson-Vanik Amendment was about to erupt, and it had been reported that Nixon viewed American Jewry's struggle to free the Soviet Jews as a personal threat and sabotage of the fruitful détente policy.[18] Starting in early September the mood became increasingly intense. Kissinger told Dinitz that there was a growing American inclination "to do something" at all costs.[19] He warned of an imminent shift of American policy away from Israel, with threats of Israel losing the president.

As Kissinger warned Golda Meir through Dinitz, the closest and most trusted person to her: "Both of us have to find a way to split the Arabs and do something that will break the existing consensus in the U.S., among the oil companies, the Arabists, and in fact everybody except the Jews. Namely, a consensus that the U.S. must change its policy." The Secretary of State pressured Israel to give him "a platform" in the form of some sort of political initiative. On September 15, Dinitz wrote, "Kissinger wants us to take heed that if passing the Jackson-Vanik Amendment causes any damage to U.S foreign policy, there is no telling what the president will do."

About two weeks before the war, Dinitz reported that the tension surrounding the Jackson-Vanik Amendment had reached a new height, with Nixon's advisers warning of an inevitable clash between Nixon and American Jewry.[20]

At the start of October, a day after a major intelligence message was intercepted by the Israeli intelligence regarding an imminent war, Kissinger again met with Dinitz. This was already the beginning of the countdown to war, and this time Kissinger wanted to make sure that his threats about a rift with the U.S. president would penetrate the Israeli decision-makers' consciousness. "Kissinger kept going

at the subject [of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment]. It no longer matters who are the forces active at this moment, if they really succeed in sabotaging the president's policy toward the Soviet Union, the blame will be placed on us, Nixon will put the blame on Israel and the Jews."[21]

It is worth noting Kissinger's real feelings about the Soviet Jews, which in 2010 were widely reported after transcripts of his conversations, were published. "The emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union is not an objective of American foreign policy," he told Nixon privately, just after the March 1, 1973, meeting with Meir. "And if they put Jews into gas chambers in the Soviet Union, it is not an American concern. Maybe a humanitarian concern." Those words may also reflect his own lack of concern about Israel, which he and Nixon saw as an obstacle at this juncture. In his subtle way Kissinger managed to convey this message to the Israeli top leadership, as Dayan (see above) testified to the Agranat Commission.

A FLAT-FOOTED ATTEMPT TO AVERT WAR

Three months earlier, in mid-June, an important visit to Israel by a Soviet emissary took place. The famous journalist and KGB agent, Victor Lewis, a specialist in disinformation operations, met with top officials at the Prime Minister's Office, among them Gazit, who reported that Lewis had said "Soviet military experts are completely disillusioned...they recognize the absolute Israeli military superiority which will last for many years. And they warn against any Arab military adventure which would amount to committing suicide."

Combined with the earlier discussions with Primakov—who was also a disinformation specialist and editor of a book on the subject—it seemed that the Israeli decision-makers fell into a trap of deception. During the last phase before the outbreak of the war, they were led to believe that Sadat's ally, Gaddafi, thought Egypt was not ready yet for war. They saw an active international political arena, with the Soviets making overtures to Israel in the feigned belief that the Arabs had no real military option. Moreover, Israel's political leaders, who were also leaders of the governing Labor alignment, were immersed in the domestic fray with elections due at the end of October.

As the tension mounted in late September and early October, it was the American, particularly the Kissinger factor, that weighed most heavily on these leaders. In the months leading up to the war, Kissinger's campaign against the Israeli decision-making elite had four features: (1) under all conditions, a preemptive first strike was forbidden; (2) a major shift in the U.S. Middle East policy was inevitable in the near future; (3) the Israeli leaders were sabotaging the core principle of U.S. foreign policy, détente, and; (4) the Jackson-Vanik Amendment would cause Israel to lose the American president. In fact, "losing" Nixon was imminent.

Against this backdrop, an accumulation of intelligence alerts pointed to a two-front attack. For nearly two weeks before the war, all the top decision-makers, political as well as military, received information regarding these intelligence alerts.

Clearly, then, the military situation combined with the famous "low probability" assessment was only one component of a set of conflicting considerations. Years of experience enabled Israeli leaders like Dayan, Meir, Yisrael Galili, Yigal Allon, Mossad chief Zvi Zamir, and Elazar to evaluate the information independently, as they had in April. This time, they were trapped in a charade of disinformation and internal contradictions, while above them all flew the flag of "They [the Arabs] wouldn't dare." The end result was paralysis.

The uncertainty about the mobilization of reserves was further compounded when the IDF decided not to make any move in the Suez Canal vicinity until the last moment before the outbreak of hostilities. That decision reflected Elazar's assumption that any initiative by Israel would trigger hellish political pressures. Kissinger caused Israel to believe that, if the IDF were to take the smallest step in the direction of the front, Israel would be blamed as the aggressor, and the result would be a political disaster.

The chief of staff, and the rest of the General Staff with him, had taken the liberty to meddle in high politics. This, naturally, clashed with Elazar's foremost duty to prepare for the possible failure of diplomacy, but the climate of political tension paralyzed him and the entire IDF leadership. As for the political leadership, on October 5, a day before the war broke out, they took the initiative to bring the United States, meaning Kissinger, to the rescue. They wanted to send an alarming message about the extreme danger of imminent war. In the event, the special dispatch which they actually sent, while beginning with a description of the great military concentrations on both the Egyptian and Syrian fronts and the high alert in both of these armies, went on to assure the Americans by saying that "if [the Arabs] fear an offensive operation on Israel's part, there is no basis for this fear. We wish to promise you [i.e., Kissinger] personally that Israel has no intention of a military offensive...." The effect on the Americans, instead of alarm, was one of complete reassurance.

Dayan, Meir, Galili, and Allon, together with Elazar, Zeira, and General Shmuel Gonen ("Gorodish"), chief of Southern Command, were aware of the gathering storm. Each, nonetheless, found the right argument to do nothing. On the morning of October 6, there was no preemptive air strike, no early reserve mobilization, no advance of the armored brigades toward their positions on the canal. This pattern, it should be noted, repeated itself during the first year of the Second Intifada and has some bearing on Israel's current policy *vis-à-vis* the Iranian threat.

Two figures could have tipped the equilibrium of misguided stasis at the top: Meir and Zeira. During the last forty-eight hours before the war, Golda Meir did not provide decisive leadership. Apart from being worried, she believed that the group of security experts around her, led by Dayan and Elazar, knew what they were

doing. Had he searched his soul and changed his mind about his "low probability" assessment, Zeira, for his part, could have jolted the security leadership into a war alert. And finally, concern about being in step with the Americans outweighed the facts on the ground, which were happening right under these leaders' noses.

NOTES

1. Zaki Shalom and Boaz Wentick, *The Yom Kippur War: The War That Could Have Been Avoided* (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2012).
2. The author has consulted the Dinitz file, *Chomer Dinitz*, at the Israel State Archive. The file is comprised of two boxes. The first is: Aleph/4996/1, 93.08.06 containing correspondence dating from ca. March 20, 1973, to September 30, 1973. The second, 4996/2, 93.08.06, contains materials from October 1, 1973, to the end of the Yom Kippur War. When the author refers to a specific piece of the Dinitz correspondence by date, the reader can know its source.
3. Quoted in Michael Brecher, *The Foreign Policy System of Israel* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 344.
4. Shalom and Wentick, *Yom Kippur War*, 113.
5. Yitzhak Rabin with Dov Goldstein, *Pinkas Sherut* (Tel-Aviv: Sifriat Ma'ariv, 1979), II, 360.
6. Hanokh Bartov, *Dado*: *48 Years and 20 More Days* (Tel Aviv: Maariv Book Guild, 1981), Part 1, 199 (2003 edition).
7. Defense and Foreign Affairs Committee, protocol, February 25, 1973, State Archive, sec. 60—8163/3.
8. Rabin, *Pinkas Sherut*, 393.
9. Ibid., 380.
10. Defense and Foreign Affairs Committee, protocol, March 13, 1973, State Archive, sec. 60—8163/3.
11. Dinitz file, March 24, 1973.
12. Ibid., March 29, 1973.
13. Arkady N. Shevchenko, *Breaking with Moscow* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 254.
14. Interview with the author, September 2011.
15. Bartov, *Dado*, 259.
16. Eli Zeira, partial Agranat report, 70.
17. Dinitz file, August 14, 1973.
18. Ibid., April 20, 1973.
19. Shalev's report, ibid., September 10, 1973.
20. Dinitz to Prime Minister's Office, September 24, 1973.
21. Dinitz file, October 1, 1973.

AMNON LORD is a journalist with *Makor Rishon* and *Maariv*, living in Jerusalem. He is the author of four books; the last one, *A Murder among Friends: A Story of Political Warfare* (Danny Books, 2010) is a political biography of left-wing eminence Uri Avneri. Lord is currently writing a book on the Yom Kippur War.

personal approval or disapproval of such Israeli figures as Sharon, Israel Tal, and Mordechai Gur, as well as his views on defense issues. The most relevant example concerns the late Gen. Tal, an expert in tank warfare who led the development of the Merkava tank. Eilam not only offers criticisms of numerous development issues such as the Suez roller bridge and antitank systems, but also of Tal's professional behavior. Regarding antitank systems, Eilam remarks: "Tal enjoyed complete sovereignty over all things related to Israel's ground forces, and all we could was to clench our teeth and remain silent" (105).

Overall, Eilam's book provides a personally and emotionally charged portrayal of the Israeli high-tech military industry. Drawing on decades of firsthand experience in influential positions, Eilam's account clearly supplies a vital piece of the puzzle on Israeli technological development, and his book is essential for those interested in the subject. He concludes with a policy recommendation: Israeli decision-makers should not rely on the global export market but should instead prioritize the "development of technologies exclusively for Israel."

NOTES

1. http://www.inss.org.il/experts.php?cat=0&incat=&staff_id=10.
2. http://www.jpost.com/Defense/Article.aspx?id=282906.

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A PERFECT ANTIDOTE FOR IGNORANCE

A Legacy of Catholic-Jewish Dialogue: The Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Lectures, Thomas A. Baima, Ed., Liturgy Training Publications, 2012, xxvi + 212 pp.

Reviewed by JOSEPH S. SPOERL

Except for its preface and afterword, this book consists of the texts of lectures in a ten-year series initiated by the Roman Catholic archbishop of Chicago, Joseph Cardinal Bernardin (1928–1996, archbishop of Chicago 1982–1996). In 1995, after years of joint projects between Catholic and Jewish leaders in Chicago, and two years after Vatican recognition of Israel, Cardinal Bernardin traveled to Israel and the Palestinian territories with a delegation of Catholics and Jews from the Chicago area. During this visit, Cardinal Bernardin delivered an address in the