

BCA Dispatch

Newsletter of the
Boston-Cambridge Alliance for Democracy

July
2007

In the same day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, Unto thy seed have I given this land, from the river of Egypt unto the great river Euphrates...* —Genesis 15:18

*Wadi-el-Arish, 50 miles SW of Gaza city. Though much was and is arid, the territory was larger than the area of Germany today.

The Jewish people did not survive for two millennia in order to pioneer new weaponry, computer security, or anti-missile missiles. We were supposed to be "a light unto the nations". In this we have failed. It turns out that the 2000-year struggle for Jewish survival comes down to a state of settlements, run by an amoral clique of corrupt lawbreakers who are deaf both to their citizens and to their enemies. A state lacking justice cannot survive. More and more Israelis are coming to understand this as they ask their children where they expect to live in 25 years. Children who are honest admit, to their parents' shock, that they do not know.

—Avraham Burg, former speaker of Israel's parliament.*

*Quoted by Alice Rothchild in *Broken Promises, Broken Dreams*. 2007.

CHAPTER NEWS

This issue of the *Dispatch* features **Israel-Palestine-USA** relations and policy, as a broken key to American power and democracy. Perhaps the right question is "Who is America?" — geopoliticians? rich people with corporate shares? see-no-evil folks who want their comfort and SUVs? folks deprived of college biology? And which views are sustainable?

BCA is adjourned until Fall, when our meeting will be announced in the *Dispatch* and by email, or call 617-266-8687.

Our June meeting, billed as "Cities Networking for Power", was well-attended and lively. Read Joanna Herlihy's report **How Cities Fight Global Warming** on Page 11. Also, in BCA's continuing effort for **democratic trade systems**, read your editor's testimony to the Massachusetts legislature on Page 7.

Impeach Now

Or Face the End of Constitutional Democracy

by Paul Craig Roberts, CounterPunch, 16 July 2007

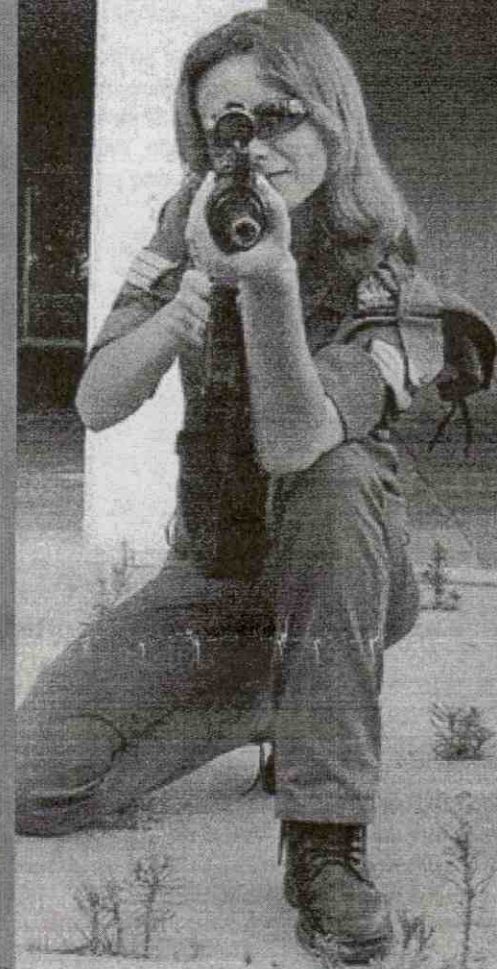
Unless Congress immediately impeaches Bush and Cheney, a year from now the US could be a dictatorial police state at war with Iran.

Bush has put in place all the necessary measures for dictatorship in the form of "executive orders" that are triggered whenever Bush declares a national emergency. Recent statements by Homeland Security Chief Michael Chertoff, former Republican senator Rick Santorum and others suggest that Americans might expect a series of staged, or false flag, "terrorist" events in the near future.

Many attentive people believe that the reason the Bush administration will not bow to expert (Continued on Page 10 >>)

U.S.-ISRAEL

PALESTINE



Israeli soldier aims automatic weapon. Posted on a right-wing American web site with the title *Nice Jewish Girls with Assault Rifles*. The blogger put these words in her mouth: "Here's lookin' at you, you insecure, woman-hating piece of Islamofascist trash."

Undoing Our Tangled Web

Israel & USA—The Time for Divorce

by Chris Hedges, TruthDig.com, 2 July 2007

Israel, without the United States, would probably not exist. The country came perilously close to extinction during the October 1973 war when Egypt, trained and backed by the Soviet Union, crossed the Suez and the Syrians poured in over the Golan Heights. Huge American military transport planes came to the rescue. They began landing every half-hour to refit the battered Israeli army, which had lost most of its heavy armor. By the time the war was over, the United States had given Israel \$2.2 billion in emergency military aid.

The intervention, which enraged the Arab world, triggered the OPEC oil embargo that for a time wreaked havoc on Western economies. This was perhaps the most dramatic example of the sustained life-support system the United States has provided to the Jewish state.

Israel was born at midnight May 14, 1948. The U.S. recognized the new state 11 minutes later. The two countries have been locked in a deadly embrace ever since.

Washington, at the beginning of the relationship, was able to be a moderating influence. An incensed President Eisenhower demanded and got Israel's withdrawal after the Israelis occupied Gaza in 1956. During the Six-Day War in 1967, Israeli warplanes bombed the USS Liberty. The ship, (Continued on next page >>)

Grating Encounter with Young Bully Systemic Harassment by Israeli Soldiers

Two testimonies from Alice Rothchild's *Broken Promises, Broken Dreams: Stories of Jewish & Palestinian Trauma and Resilience*. Pluto Press, 2007.

Seema Jilani is a lively and engaging medical student from Baylor College of Medicine in Houston. Though born in Louisiana, because of her father's work with international corporations such as Halliburton, she has lived all over the world. Her parents are originally from Pakistan and she has felt varying levels of attachment and adherence to her Islamic faith as she has evolved into adulthood. She was interested in exploring the Israeli/Palestinian conflict with a group of Jewish medical activists. While in Jerusalem, she went to pray with a medical student, S.T. (she declined to be named), at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third holiest site for Muslims. On returning, she tearfully recounted her experience (6 March 2005):

First, to get into the mosque, we had to pass a checkpoint and they [Israeli police] didn't believe that I was Muslim, and they made me show my passport and then I had to do *wudu*, the cleansing ritual that you should do before you enter the mosque or before you pray. The Israeli soldiers watched me walk in, with my headscarf. They didn't say anything, and as I walked out from the cleansing ritual, I didn't even realize I am so used to walking into my mosque so freely, they stopped us and they shouted at us and they said, "No, no, wait, stop." When they stopped me they said "Why are you here? Give me your passport."

I was made to recite verses from the Koran that they didn't know. They didn't even pronounce it right when they asked me to recite it. I was very surprised and then, in the middle of the verse, they said "Stop it. I don't want to hear it any more." Then I said no, I won't stop it. I have to continue and have to finish it because you don't just stop a prayer in the middle. He wouldn't give me my passport until I said the Koran verses and then as I said them with each intonation he would shake the passport and they were laughing, when I did it. With each verse that I said, he would shake the passport right in my face about two millimeters from my nose. When I said "Amen," he said "Here, now you can have your passport."

We were so taken aback, [S.T.] just said that they're assholes and she wasn't shocked so I assume this has happened before. I've always been the type of person that's been non-confrontational with soldiers and I don't take too many risks, but at this time I've never felt so strongly that I really would like to finish. You can't turn me on and off like I am a puppet. This was only about control. You ask me to say the prayer, now let me finish it. You can't turn me off and then wave my passport in my face as I am saying the holiest verses of my religion. I'm not even that religious, but it should mean something, you know?

I really felt like, not even hitting him; I just wanted to spit in his face. Then the amazing thing is, you walk into Aqsa and it's the most beautiful mosque I have ever set foot in. It's the most beautiful building. It's more beautiful than Mecca or Medina by far, which I found astonishing because I thought I would never feel that. I've never felt so much happiness and so much sadness in one second.

—Seema Jilani

Alice Rothchild's Words in Brief

- ◆ The Israeli lobby is actually politically far to the right of the majority of US Jews as well as Israelis... US Jews need to ask, do we as a subgroup within US society want to be in an alliance with mostly WASP neoconservatives, Christian fundamentalists, and right-wing Jewish ideologues?

- ◆ Marketing and image-making have replaced honest discussion involving the serious issues facing a vibrant but complicated Israeli society and its own security concerns.

- ◆ More Israelis are leaving the country to live in the Diaspora [outside Israel] than are arriving... I fear that [many] Jews in the Diaspora support that which is most extraordinary about Israeli accomplishments and at the same time act as complicit enablers for that which is most pathologic.

- ◆ At home, after the invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq, the US government is facing growing criticism both from its citizenry and beyond its borders. In order to repair its broken relationships with the rest of the world, the US will undoubtedly have to reassess its unwavering support for Israeli policies that are seen by the world as destabilizing and instigating Arab hostility.

I worry that if we as Jews do not tolerate criticism of Israeli policy, then all Jews will be seen as culpable for whatever catastrophes lie ahead. Surely history will teach us that Israel cannot claim a moral dispensation because of past suffering and then behave immorally, that the US government will not always be there offering large amounts of economic and military aid, that misusing the term anti-Semitism to characterize criticism of Israeli behavior ultimately renders the concept meaningless.

Alice Rothchild practices medicine at Harvard Vanguard, Copley branch, Boston, has traveled extensively in Israel and Palestine, and volunteers with Jewish Voice for Peace.

Israelis and Palestinians Never Meet "I was shocked... They Are Like Us!"

Iwent [to the house of my acquaintance, peace activist Judy Blanc, in West Jerusalem] and her guest was lovely, spoke English in a beautiful Oxford accent, and we spoke all evening about the great food and the great restaurants we had eaten in. At some point I said to her, "Rita, where are you from?" She said "Ramallah." I said, "No, no, before Ramallah." She said, "No, I am born and brought up in Ramallah." I said, "No, you couldn't be from Ramallah. You're not Palestinian, are you?" She said "Yes, I am Palestinian." She was Dr. Rita Giacaman [a prominent member of the Palestinian women's movement and now director of the Department of International Community Health at Birzeit University]. Well I was shocked. This was the first time that I had ever had a conversation with a Palestinian. I was 43 years old. I didn't know that Palestinians were like us. It sounds so stupid and so simple but Israelis and Palestinians never meet.

—Gila Svirsky, raised in a Zionist family in NJ, moved from Brandeis University to Israel at age 19.