

A Wrench in the Israeli Works

My “Relationship” with Tom Campbell

By **Alison Weir**, Executive Director of If Americans Knew, March 5, 2010

It's interesting to find myself a small factor in the California race for the Republican nomination for the U.S. Senate. But before I get to that, it's necessary to take a look at the campaigns themselves, and the system in which they're running.

An outside observer might be forgiven for being confused about which nation these candidates are seeking to serve. Rather than competing over who is the most loyal Californian and patriotic American, these would-be Senators seem often to be competing over who is the most supportive of a foreign regime.

Odder still, the regime being fervently endorsed has a record of taking actions that are deeply contrary to principles most Americans hold dear, and on top of that, has a track record of undertaking activities that are extremely damaging to the US, including:

- Spying on our government and industry and stealing American technology;
- Passing on American secrets to others, including to nations perceived as our most dangerous political and economic competitors;
- Killing American servicemen and citizens; even while receiving more US tax money than any other nation on earth; and
- Ignoring demands and pleas by virtually every U.S. president over the past few decades to end diverse illegal actions that have caused incalculable tragedy, destabilized the region and world, demonstrated ruthless cruelty against entire victim populations, and created escalating enmity toward the United States, whose lobby-promulgated assistance (at least \$7 million per day) enables its actions.

Normally, one would expect candidates to denounce such a nation; at minimum, one would expect them to distance themselves from it. But not this one. This one is Israel,

which, despite being one of the world's smallest nations, can claim the most powerful and pervasive foreign lobby in the United States.

Even while the United States, and particularly California, is facing a financial crisis, no candidate dares, in all the cuts being proposed in American programs, to reduce the enormous aid we give annually to Israel. Furthermore, this money is given at the beginning of each year, which means, since we are operating at a deficit, that our government pays interest on money we no longer have, while Israel makes interest on it.

Such power, which is exerted within virtually every major institution in the US, and yet is invisible to a great many people, was not built overnight.

It largely began in the early 1900s with its precursor, political Zionism, an international movement to create a Jewish state in what was then known as Palestine. Begun in Europe, this movement managed

fairly early on to enlist such eminent Americans as future Supreme Court Justices Louis Brandeis and Felix Frankfurter.

Brandeis, who officially resigned his leadership of the Provisional Executive for General Zionist Affairs in 1916 when his close friend Woodrow Wilson named him a Supreme Court Justice, in reality continued his work for the Zionist movement, directing activities from his Supreme Court chambers. In 1918 he was listed as “honorary president” of the Zionist Organization of America.

The Zionist lobby grew over the coming decades, tragically bolstered by Hitler's rise to power. As various authors have documented, the lobby made full use of this situation, sabotaging refugee efforts that would have created safe havens for Europe's Jews, which would have interfered with Zionists' claims that only a Jewish state in Palestine could fill such a need.

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David Ben Gurion, who later became Israel's first prime minister, infamously stated: "If I knew that it was possible to save all the [Jewish] children of Germany by transporting them to England, and only half by transferring them to the Land of Israel, I would choose the latter..."

By 1943 the lobby had begun to accrue the kind of power we see today. Its major arm, the American Zionist Emergency Council (AZEC), under the direction of Abba Hillel Silver, possessed a budget of half a million dollars – this in the days when a nickel bought a loaf of bread.

Wooing Christians and Candidates

Drawing on its massive financial resources, AZEC then embarked on what one of its leaders called "a political and public relations offensive to capture the support of Congressmen, clergy, editors, professors, business and labor."

Others were targeted, also: "Union members, wives and parents of servicemen, Jewish war veterans," as detailed by a top authority on the history of US-Israel relations, Donald Neff. AZEC provided form letters for recruits to send and disseminated schedules of anti-Zionist lecture tours so the events could be picketed or otherwise opposed.

Zionist action groups were organized at the grassroots level, with more than 400 local committees under 76 state and regional branches. Books, articles and academic studies were funded by AZEC. University professors and presidents were targeted.

The lobby especially enlisted Christian support. Silver's headquarters ordered: "In every community an American Christian Palestine Committee must be immediately organized."

Secret Zionist funds were used to revive an elite Protestant group, the American Palestine Committee. Another group, the Christian Council on Palestine, was formed among clergymen, growing to 3,000 members by the end of World War II. An internal Zionist memo stated that the aim of both groups was to "crystallize the sympathy of Christian America for our cause."

Activists were told to go after elected representatives, who, in a democratic republic, hold the levers of governmental power. In the words of AZEC leadership: "The first task is to make direct contact with your local Congressman or Senator."

While some recent authors maintain that Israel lobby activities are within permissible American norms, this is overly generous. In reality, there is considerable evidence that the lobby has consistently violated US laws. In other cases it has merely violated the spirit.

The Justice Department has periodically tried to enforce US laws requiring lobbyists for a foreign government to register as foreign agents, but these attempts to reign in the Israel lobby have been consistently quashed by higher-ups, a situa-

tion most recently documented by author Grant Smith.

In the early 1960s Senator William Fulbright discovered in his Congressional hearings on lobbies that pro-Israel groups were lobbying for American aid to Israel and then Israel was illegally funneling a portion of the received money back to U.S. groups, which would then use it in lobbying for still more aid to Israel, in an ever-growing, illicit cycle.

After decades of such concentrated activities, the Israel lobby became far more powerful than those who originally tried to oppose it: the State Department, the Pentagon, the oil lobby, a number of Jewish groups and individuals, diverse mainstream Christian organizations, etc.

In 1989 Fulbright wrote: "AIPAC [the American Israel Public Affairs Committee] and its allied organizations have effective working control of the electoral process. They can elect or defeat nearly any congressman or senator that they wish, with their money and coordinated organizations."

Media coverage, as I have written elsewhere, is deeply Israel-centric; it rarely reports on the lobby. Fulbright is one example, as Neff writes of his death in 1995:

"Anyone doubting his claims about the influence of Israel's lobby had only to read the obituaries written about Fulbright following his death... [In] The lengthy obituaries...no mention was made in either The New York Times or The Washington Post about his views toward the Middle East. It was as though his critical positions on Israel had been sucked into a black hole, totally forgotten. Yet here was an issue on which Fulbright had provided a major voice, and which directly contributed to the end of his political career. Clearly the Middle East constituted an important part of his life. Indeed, his career and his loss of office could not be understood without mention of it.

Today there are dozens, at least, of political action groups for Israel, most hidden under deceptive names such as Northern Californians for Good Government. They raise massive amounts of money for candidates who pass the Israel test, and massive amounts of money for the opponents of those who don't.

The degree to which the Israel lobby has succeeded in dominating American politics is encapsulated in an apocryphal story about Menachem Begin, a member of a notorious Zionist terrorist gang in pre-Israel Palestine who went on to be elected Prime Minister of Israel. When an American supporter is said to have suggested that Israel become the 51st state, Begin is described as evincing shock: "What?! Then we would only have two senators!"

California Campaigning, Israel, and me

Which brings me to my sudden and unexpected appearance in a major Senatorial campaign. As today's

California Republicans compete over who is Israel's best friend, I am a small wrench in the works that one candidate has just thrown at another.

The frontrunner in the race is Tom Campbell, formerly a five-term Congressman, Stanford law dean, dean of UC Berkeley's prestigious Haas School of Business, and Director of Finance for the State of California. Highly intelligent, Campbell is described as a moderate Republican, the kind of candidate who often appeals to voters from both parties.

My contact with Campbell dates to spring 2001. I had just returned from traveling as a freelance reporter throughout Gaza and the West Bank. I had seen and photographed destroyed homes, devastated neighborhoods, razed agricultural lands, children who had been shot by invading Israeli forces (all before a single Palestinian rocket had been fired).

Upon my return I had been invited by a student group at UC Berkeley to give a talk about my trip, the first speech I've ever given in my life. I spoke and showed my photos for close to an hour and a half in a packed lecture hall.

Afterwards, numerous attendees came up to speak with me; some had been crying. The regional director for the Council for American Islamic Relations asked me if I would be willing to give my talk at a public event scheduled a month later in the San Jose area. I said yes.

Diverse governmental officials, media people, and others attended this event. There were two other speakers: former Illinois Republican Congressman Paul Findley and Tom Campbell.

During his speech, Campbell described a telling incident during his Congressional career. The lobby had pushed Congress to give additional money to Israel on top of its uniquely immense annual allotment. Campbell proposed that this extra money be used instead to avert the de-funding of a program that worked to prevent blindness in Africa.

Campbell said that many of his fellow Representatives privately told him they thought this was a wonderful plan, complimented him on his courage in proposing it, and said they didn't dare vote for it. In the end, just 12 others cast affirmative votes. (Israel may wish to thank the lobby and 88 American Senators for its increased wealth; an untold number of blind people may have less reason for gratitude.)

When it was my turn to speak, I described what I had seen in the Palestinian Territories, showed my photographs, and read a sort of letter I had written to the American people. To my surprise, I received a standing ovation from, it appeared to me, everyone in the room. One of the first on his feet was Tom Campbell. Afterwards, a friend asked him if he would write an endorsement of my presentation, which he graciously did. Later, when I founded If Americans Knew and we created a website, we placed his comment in the "About Us" section.

Now, nine years later, this endorsement is being used to attack Campbell.

Articles discussing it have appeared on numerous blogs and websites, including those of Commentary and National Interest; a Sacramento radio host and the Weekly Standard have interviewed me about my "relationship with Tom Campbell." Some fanatically pro-Israel bloggers seem exceedingly focused on it, and on me.

The reality is that I haven't seen or spoken with Tom Campbell since the 2001 event.

In the years since, I've been saddened but not surprised, given the reality and power of the pro-Israel machine in our society and media, to see him backpedaling on what seemed to be genuine efforts toward practical and principled positions. While he has not denied his endorsement of my talk, he responds to queries, "I never stated agreement with any statement made by Alison Weir."

Like virtually anyone who wishes to attain major office, Campbell emphasizes his bonafides on Israel, stating:

- He has never voted against military aid to Israel;
- He would support an Israeli military attack on Iran (even though it is Israel that possesses nuclear weapons, refuses to sign the non-proliferation pact, is in violation of a multitude of UN resolutions, and regularly attacks its neighbors);
- He supports recognizing Jerusalem as the Israeli capital and moving the US embassy there; even though Jerusalem was to have been a shared city for the Muslims, Christians, and Jews who long inhabited it and for whom it is sacred, and even though a large portion of Jerusalem is, according to international law, Palestinian land illegally annexed by Israel. All previous US presidents have refused to do this.
- He is even more pro-Israel than Democratic Senator Barbara Boxer, which, if it is true, is a notable accomplishment.

In his comment on my talk, Campbell wrote: "Ms. Weir...is intelligent, careful, and critical. American policy makers would benefit greatly from hearing her first-hand observations and attempting to answer the questions she poses."

Should Mr. Campbell succeed in becoming an American policy maker, I would be happy to share with him my expanded first-hand observations. Over the past nine years I have taken additional, extensive and intense trips to the region, discovering a continuation, and in some cases an escalation, of the violence, cruelty, and intolerable tragedy I had witnessed previously.

In the meantime, and until more Americans across the political spectrum wake up and make their desires known, the Israel lobby and its dedicated bloggers may ease their collective mind. Indications are that both parties are, once again, sewn up.