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## EDUCATING MR. SARID

In his interview on December 23 with The Jerusalem Post's Ruthie Blum, the assertions of Yossi Sarid, a long-term former left-wing Knesset member from Meretz and once even education minister, may seem authoritative, even instructive to a large segment of the Israeli population, especially among the million and more new immigrants of the last few decades.

Actually, however, his statements consist of a shocking suppression of historic facts and of bald untruth. As Mr. Sarid certainly knows all the facts and is a man of unimpeached sobriety, the collation he offered Ruthie Blum in the interview is no more, and no less, than an attempt to disseminate still further the widespread left-wing fairy tale that as between the Jews and the Arabs, the Jews have always been in the wrong.

He does not confine himself to major issues. He lies at all levels. When Blum asked him his opinion of the oft-quoted remark by former foreign minister Abba Eban about the 'Auschwitz borders' (of Israel before the 1967 War), Sarid breezily dismissed that pregnant description. 'It was' he told her, 'a pretty paraphrase for the purpose of orating before the United Nations, at which he excelled.'

In his demeaning of Abba Eban, every word of Sarid's comment is untrue. Eban never made that statement at the United Nations. It was no part of an oration (at which Eban did in fact excel). It was no part of a public speech at all. It was made in a discussion, soon after the Six Day War of June 1967, with a group of journalists from the serious German journal Der Spiegel, which published it in full. It had represented a summing-up of Israel's precarious strategic situation before the war - with Arabs on the high ground and Israel below, with Israel's narrow 'waist' of about a dozen miles and her back to the Mediterranean - and when an Arab attack on three fronts - with the declared and palpable purpose of destroying her - had become imminent. That, said Abba Eban reminded him 'of Auschwitz.'

Sarid's bland denial of any such threat or danger to Israel in 1967 underpins his breathtaking dismissal of the causes of the Six Day War and his charge that Israel need not have gone to war.

'The Six Day War,' he said, 'was a catastrophe, the greatest mistake of the Zionist endeavour. Let's face it,' he added, 'They closed the Tiran Straits! That did not constitute an existential threat!'

In other words Sarid preaches and manifestly believes that Israel, facing anything less than a threat to her very existence must not retaliate, but remain passive and stone-faced through what every normal, sane nation in the world would recognize at once as an act of war.

BUT THAT is beside the point. Sarid does not tell his interviewer that even before the blockade of the Tiran Straits Egypt's president Abdel Nasser - the organizer and leader of the long-planned Arab aggression on Israel - demanded, as a preliminary measure to ease his venture, that the UN peace-keeping force be ordered to evacuate Sinai. It had been positioned there 11 years earlier after Egypt's previous assault on

Israel, in 1956. The UN secretary-general, U Thant, complied immediately - and the UN force withdrew.

Nasser, indeed, in the tense three weeks before June 5, was so certain of victory that he treated the world at large to a series of boastful threats. 'This,' he said 'is to be a war of annihilation.'

No mention of any of this by Sarid. Nor of the exultant crowds in the city squares of the Arab states, cheering Nasser and celebrating the imminent destruction of the Jewish state. Nasser's boasts were seconded by the commander of the Egyptian forces in Sinai, General Murtagi, who issued an Order of the Day, which was broadcast on Cairo radio.

'The Egyptian forces have taken up positions in accordance with our predetermined plans. The morale of our forces is very high, for this is the day they have so long been waiting for, for this holy war.'

A WAVE of trepidation swept through the Diaspora. Indeed throughout the crisis many young Jews rushed to book places on planes to take them to Israel to help in her defense. In many communities Jews, sensing a threat to Israel's existence, instinctively made for their synagogues and temples, perhaps to pray, perhaps to fulfill a need for togetherness. In Israel itself civilians were digging trenches to impede the evidently imminent invasion.

This time Israel, though outnumbered in men, in arms and in planes, was ready for action. Fortified moreover by Nasser's advance information about his plans, the Israel Air Force pre-empted Nasser's timetable. Early in the morning of June 5 the air force bombed his planes before they could set out. Then the fighting lasted six days; and the victory was complete. The Egyptian forces were routed and Sinai reoccupied; the Golan Heights were captured, thus resuming their place on the historic map as Northern Galilee, while to the east Judea, with Jerusalem's Old City at its heart, Samaria and the Jordan Valley were regained from Jordan.

The Jordanian king Hussein had been urged by prime minister Levi Eshkol not to join Nasser's belligerent coalition. But on May 30 he had signed an agreement with Nasser for 'mutual defence.'

He too was certain of victory. From the 'West Bank' he sent in his forces, believing that in a short while the entire 'Land of Falastin' would be in Arab hands. Jordan, which could have remained outside of the battle, thus lost its hold on its illicit gains in the Arabs' 1948 aggression on Israel.

The whole world was in tumult over the war. Friend and foe alike were stunned by Israel's amazing victory. Professional soldiers worldwide studied its progress and its impact; and the Jews of the Diaspora as well as Israel enjoyed a great moment of grace.

AT THAT point in the interview Sarid descended to the purely ridiculous. Having finished with the Six Day War he was asked by Blum what had happened before 1967. He answered 'nothing, everything was fine.'

Nothing? Nothing but Arab terrorist attacks on the Jewish population throughout British rule. Then more 'nothing' in two wars, the first of which, the War of Independence, fought by an Israel at her birth in 1948, three years after the end of the Holocaust.

Faced then by five well-armed Arab countries, Israel survived in the end - with the help of arms from Russia and France - through the indomitable spirit of the people,

fighter and civilian alike. Israel in that war lost more lives in proportion to its size than were lost by Britain and the US together in the Second World War. And the Arabs' motto for the coming war was proclaimed publicly at the United Nations in November 1947 by a prominent Arab leader, Jamal Husseini: 'We will not tolerate the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine.'

That theme has played throughout the following years, from Husseini to Arafat and his successors in the PLO, Hizbullah, and their sundry offshoots. There are, it is true, two streams among the Arabs: the extremists and the moderates. The extremists, led now by the Iranian President Ahmadinejad, projecting instant death for Israel, and the moderates now led by Abu Mazen (Abbas), the late Yasser Arafat's right-hand man, who dream of a process of 'phases,' each phase bringing closer Israel's ultimate demise.