

Ben-Gurion's Spy

The Story of the Political Scandal that Shaped Modern Israel

by Shabtai Teveth

New York: Columbia University Press, 1996. 310 pp. \$25

Reviewed by Amos Perlmutter

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The leading biographer of David Ben-Gurion and one of Israel's outstanding journalists, Teveth has written a four-volume biography on Ben-Gurion and another two on key policy issues (attitudes toward the Palestinians and the Holocaust) of his long political life. Teveth's new book is a remarkable spy story as well as a penetrating political analysis. He writes with great verve and creates a sense of drama and excitement appropriate to this failed spy story.

The book reveals two intelligence fiascos committed by a Ben-Gurion favorite, Colonel Benyamin Givly. The first was a kangaroo court that in 1948 executed Meir Tobiansky, a Haganah leader wrongly suspected of collaborating with the British; Givly was responsible for the execution of Tobiansky. Ben-Gurion then promoted Givly to become head of IDF intelligence despite his doubts about this execution.

In the second case, Givly had a central role in the Lavon Affair of 1953, when the Israeli's (to create friction between the Egyptian government of Gamal Abdel Nasser and the United States) blew up an American library in Cairo to make it seem like an act of Egyptian terrorism. This act of supreme folly compromised the entire Israeli spy network in Egypt, then was covered up. It reemerged in 1961, when a conspirator revealed that Givly had falsified documents to implicate then-Defense Minister Pinhas Lavon.

Ben-Gurion had sponsored the brilliant, aggressive, and chicanerous Lavon, but refused him political exoneration when Lavon was implicated in the Egyptian operation. The Lavon Affair was the beginning of the end of the era of socialist Zionist political supremacy that had begun in 1935. Ironically, while Ben-Gurion masterfully created a modern state, he failed to play politics. It takes a giant to err gigantically.

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Researchers at Israel's Ben Gurion University have created a piece of proof-of-concept code they call "Speake(a)r," designed to demonstrate how determined hackers could find a way to surreptitiously hijack a computer to record audio even when the device's microphones have been entirely removed or disabled. The experimental malware instead repurposes the speakers in earbuds or headphones to use them as microphones, converting the vibrations in air into electromagnetic signals to clearly capture audio from across a room. "People don't think about this privacy vulner Article excerpt. Ben-Gurion's Spy: The Story of the Political Scandal that Shaped Modern Israel, by Shabtai Teveth. New York: Columbia University Press, 1996. xxx + 274 pages. Teveth recounts the initial phase of the Mishap and discusses the question of who gave the order for the bombing that ended with the forced resignation of Lavon, the removal of Givly, and Ben-Gurion's return as minister of defense in Moshe Sharett's cabinet. Teveth continues with Lavon's and Givly's attempts to clear their names, that led to the second phase-"The Lavon Affair." Peer-reviewed publications on Questia are publications containing articles which were subject to evaluation for accuracy and substance by professional peers of the article's author(s). Publication: The Middle East Journal. Ben-Gurion was convinced that Israel needed nuclear weapons to insure its survival , while Kennedy was dead-set against it. This inability to reach an agreement caused obvious problems. And, in Ben-Gurion's eyes, John F. Kennedy was an enemy of the Jewish people and his beloved state of Israel ." He continues, "The 'nuclear option' was not only at the very core of Ben-Gurion's personal world view, but the very foundation of Israel's national security policy." The "Reader from Chicago" who wrote the review of Final Judgment posted here is really off the beam and I suspect he (or she) is deliberately distorting what Piper's book does say in order to try to discourage people from reading it.