



Ambassadors' Roundtable

24 June 2009
Foreign and Commonwealth Office
London, UK



Anglo-Israel Association
PO Box 47819
London NW11 7WD

Tel +44 (0) 20 8458 1284
Fax +44 (0) 20 8458 3484

info@angloisraelassociation.com
www.angloisraelassociation.com

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Ambassadors' Roundtable

Locarno Suite, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London

24 June 2009

08:30	Registration and Coffee
09:00	Welcome and Introduction Chairman of the Anglo-Israel Association, Sir Andrew Burns
09:10	Scene-setting Addresses Ambassador of Israel to the Court of St James's, HE Ron Prozor Her Britannic Majesty's Ambassador to the State of Israel, HE Tom Phillips
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09:50	Session I – Israel-UK: The First 60 Years Chair: Sir Malcolm Rifkind Professor Shlomo Avineri and Professor Sir Martin Gilbert
10:50	Coffee Break
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11:20	Session II – Politics, Security and Contemporary Reality Chair: Sir Malcolm Rifkind Simon McDonald and Yoav Biran
12:30	Lunch Break
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13:30	Session III – Perceptions and Misperceptions Chair: Sir Malcolm Rifkind Sir Andrew Burns , Zvi Shtauber and panellists
15:30	Tea Break
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15:45	Session IV – Building on Strengths and establishing links Chair: Sir Malcolm Rifkind Moshe Raviv , Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles , Mark Elliott and panellists
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17:05	Session V – Conclusions Chair: Sir Malcolm Rifkind
18:00	Close – Drinks Reception to follow

The Anglo-Israel Association would like to thank...

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Foreword by **Sir Martin Gilbert** Britain and Israel: The Diplomatic Reality

For sixty-one years since 1948, Britain has been in diplomatic relations with a country and a people whom it ruled under a League of Nations Mandate for more than a quarter of a century. During the early years of the Mandate, Britain was the guardian and facilitator of the building up of what were known as the Jewish National Institutions, with a view to a Jewish majority and Jewish statehood. During the final years of the Mandate, Britain and the Jews of Palestine were locked in a harsh conflict, exacerbated by violence on both sides.

These two aspects of the Mandate resonate today in equal measure. When Gordon Brown addressed the Knesset in July last year, the Speaker of the Knesset spoke with some bitterness about the period of conflict. Other speakers, including the present Israeli Prime Minister, spoke with enthusiasm about the Balfour Declaration as the essential prelude to Jewish statehood.

Since 1948, British policy towards Israel has been predominantly but not exclusively that of support. Clement Attlee's government was reluctant even to recognize the new State, but Winston Churchill's government refused to activate the Anglo-Jordanian Treaty against Israel. Anthony Eden's government worked closely with Israel during the



Suez crisis of 1956, and Harold Wilson's government supported Israel in 1967. Edward Heath's government put obstacles in Israel's way during the war of 1973. Margaret Thatcher's government imposed an arms embargo after the Israeli attack on the Iraqi nuclear reactor. John Major's government ended that embargo.

When John Major visited Israel in 1995 he acted as a conduit for Israeli-Palestinian talks, as did Tony Blair after 1997. Blair has continued this work under the aegis of the Quartet. Gordon Brown's visit to Jerusalem and Bethlehem in July 2008 continued and enhanced this work of bridge building,

both in the political and the economic sphere.

Looking back over the past sixty-one years, it is clear that the positive has prevailed over the negative in the British-Israel relationship; that both sides have not hesitated to express their inner feelings, whether of support or criticism; and that the instinct is strong and sound in both British and Israeli official circles for good relations, joint ventures, mutual understanding, and a meaningful search for a way forward both in the Britain-Israel sphere of cooperation and development, and in the Israel-Palestinian negotiating agenda.

Martin Gilbert
June 2009

The Reflections of the Ambassadors on even-numbered pages 6 to 22 are based on interviews and editing by Katy Ostro. Katy read Law at St John's College, Oxford, and qualified as a solicitor at Slaughter & May. Having completed a Master's in Human Resources Management, for which she was awarded a professional prize, she has worked and specialised in HR and Knowledge Management.

His Excellency Ambassador Ron Prozor

Ambassador of the State of Israel to the Court of St James's



His Excellency Ron Prozor has been the Ambassador of Israel to the Court of St James's since November 2007. With over two decades of experience at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr Prozor has carved out an international reputation as one of Israel's most distinguished diplomats.

Prior to his mission to London, between 2004 and 2007 Mr Prozor served as the Director General of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, overseeing the work of the Foreign Ministry during the disengagement from Gaza in 2005.

His previous overseas service has included roles in Washington, London and Bonn. Mr Prozor was instrumental in establishing diplomatic relations "behind the Iron Curtain" following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. He was also a member of Israel's delegation to the Wye River Summit talks in 1998. Mr Prozor served in Washington between 1998 and 2002 as the Minister-Counsellor for Political Affairs at the Israeli Embassy throughout the Camp David peace talks.

As an officer in the Artillery Division of the IDF, Mr Prozor attained the rank of Major and is a graduate of the IDF Battalion Commanders. He also holds a Masters degree in Political Science from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, graduating with distinction.

Since arriving as the Ambassador to the UK, Mr Prozor has earned plaudits as an articulate and forthright opponent of what he has termed "a campaign of delegitimisation, demonisation and double standards," to which Israel is subjected.

He is married to Hadas with whom he has three children, Lior, Tomer and Oren.

His Excellency Ambassador Tom Phillips CMG

Her Britannic Majesty's Ambassador to the State of Israel



His Excellency Tom Phillips has served as British Ambassador to Israel since August 2006. This is Ambassador Phillips' second tour of duty in Israel: he served as consul general and deputy head of mission in Tel Aviv in 1990-1993.

Ambassador Phillips arrived in Israel after serving for four years as the Director responsible for Afghanistan and South Asia at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. This job involved frequent travel to the region, particularly to Afghanistan.

Before joining the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, he worked as a journalist and in the Department of Health and Social Security. His career in the Foreign Office began in 1983, as a desk officer in the Energy, Science and Space Department. From 1985 to 1988, he was first secretary at the British High Commission in Harare, before returning to London to serve as deputy head of the Personnel Policy Department at the Foreign Office.

Following his first posting to Tel Aviv in 1993, Ambassador Phillips served as Counsellor (External) at the British Embassy in Washington, where he was able to stay closely in touch with events in the Middle East. Returning to London in 1997, he headed the Foreign Office's Eastern Adriatic Department through the period of the Kosovo crisis. In 2000, he was briefly on secondment to the pharmaceutical company SmithKline Beecham (now Glaxo SmithKline), working in London and Nairobi. From 2000-2002, he served as High Commissioner to Kampala.

Ambassador Phillips was born in Portsmouth, England. He studied literature at Exeter University and Oxford. He and his wife Anne have two sons.

Reflections of **HE Sir Patrick Moberly KCMG**

Her Britannic Majesty's Ambassador to the State of Israel

1981-1984

When I arrived as Ambassador to Israel, I had the advantage of already knowing my way around reasonably well. My first posting to Israel had been as Commercial Counsellor in the Embassy three years after the 1967 war. Being in Israel during this period gave me a clear sense of the Israelis' pre-occupation with their country's security. Living amongst Israelis in Savyon also enabled me to make many good friends and to travel extensively around the country from the northernmost point down to Sharm el Sheikh.

When the Yom Kippur war broke out I, like everyone else, was at home and was surprised to hear car engines being started and aircraft flying overhead on such a holy day. Tel Aviv was unusually quiet and tense during the succeeding days, and there hung in the air an ill-feeling over the British government's decision to suspend the supply of all military equipment to the parties in the conflict. This included deliveries of spare parts for Israel's British-made Centurion tanks. I recall coming out of my house to offer help to a neighbour trying to start his car, only to be told 'the only way you can help is by getting your government to honour their commitments!'

During this first posting to Israel I was witness to two remarkable women sitting together at the British Embassy, deep in conversation: Golda Meir and Margaret Thatcher. At that time Mrs Thatcher was still a Cabinet minister, visiting Israel for a British exhibition, but it is interesting in retrospect to realise that these two women, each of whom in turn dominated their own national scene, did meet on this one occasion.

Early in my time as Ambassador, the British Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington, was invited to visit Israel, which is also a big event for the Ambassador. Knowing some of the difficulties that had arisen previously from opposing points of view, I was slightly apprehensive about how the official talks would go. During the visit, I believe that Lord Carrington's readiness to listen and the moderate way he expressed the British position, coupled with his sense of humour, helped to create a warm and friendly atmosphere – an effect which, alas, lasted all too briefly because the Falklands crisis was about to hit London. Within days of returning from Israel, Lord Carrington resigned.

Any Ambassador should get out and meet as many people as he can: businessmen, editors, academics, members of the Knesset and so forth. I attended numerous functions, often having to give short speeches (good but not short enough,

was my wife's usual comment afterwards). However, a speech at the very first reception we gave at the Embassy had a rather unexpected effect. It was the day of the wedding of Prince Charles and Lady Diana, and the head of Israeli TV told me that some of the wedding coverage would be shown on Israeli television later that evening. I mentioned this in my welcoming speech, with the result that the reception came to an early end as everyone rushed home to watch the royal wedding. This interest in the British monarchy was no doubt part of the heritage of the Mandate and influenced Israel's other links with Britain, including numbers of Israelis who had made aliyah from Britain.

Despite steady increases in trade in both directions, I would not describe my time in office as an easy period for Anglo-Israeli relations. An important part of my job was to represent the views of the British government, which were often at variance with those of the Israeli government. The Israeli response was invariably polite but firm. They did not really appreciate being lectured by us on two particular issues, the first being Israel's incursion into Lebanon after repeated PLO provocations. Britain urged Israel to withdraw, as I made clear to the Foreign Ministry on instructions (Personally I could understand why Israel felt so provoked to enter Lebanon, but to my mind it was in any case a mistake to stay for such a long time). This was the time of the Falklands War, and the British government argued that it was equally wrong for both Argentina to occupy the Falklands by force and for Israel to invade Lebanon. Not that this argument made any difference. The incidents of Sabra and Shatila also caused shockwaves, but I remember being surprised to hear Prime Minister Begin tell a visiting British minister that he was a regular listener to the BBC World Service and that he had first heard about the tragic events at those camps from their broadcast.

The second cause of disagreement was over Israel's settlement policy, then as now a highly controversial issue. The British government took the view that not only were settlements on the West Bank illegal in international law, but that the Israeli government were thereby storing up trouble for the future. We made disappointingly little headway with our arguments calling for a change of policy.

However, diplomatic tensions apart, I was always met with great warmth. We are still in touch with Israeli friends we made in those days. Israel is an ever-changing society and I admired the Israelis' constant liveliness, their energy and determination. It is these warm-hearted people that make Israel the country it is.



HE Sir Patrick Moberly KCMG

Sir Patrick began his career as a diplomat in 1951. He served in Iraq, Czechoslovakia, Senegal and Canada before returning to the Foreign Office in London to perform the duties of Assistant Under-Secretary.

After his appointment as Her Majesty's Ambassador to Israel, from 1981 to 1984, he continued as Ambassador to South Africa.

Sir Patrick was appointed Knight Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George in 1986.

Reflections of HE Mark Elliott

Her Britannic Majesty's Ambassador to the State of Israel

1988-1992

It was the people that made Israel so exciting. I never realised, until I came to the country, how much I could enjoy an argument. In Israel almost every conversation was an argument, and in private one could say nearly anything, provided the case was well argued, without giving offence. I remember one conversation with a hardliner at a dinner party, which lasted for 45 minutes without any point of concurrence, but at the end we both shook hands and agreed how much we had enjoyed ourselves.

When I arrived in Israel, I had never served in the Middle East, and so I had few preconceptions. My previous position had been in Northern Ireland which meant that I had had some experience of violent internecine differences, but when I came to Israel the nature of the conflict was so different that my Northern Ireland stint did not prove to be much of a guide.

My experience as Ambassador was punctuated by the Iraq war. Paradoxically, it was a time when everyone seemed relaxed in a curious way. There was a warm atmosphere as all the internal tensions were subordinated to the external threat. Even before the war I felt that relations between our two countries were pretty good, but there was a new dimension to this during the war, as we were there sharing their experience. We certainly, along with the Americans, gave stern messages to the Israeli government not to intervene, but relations remained cordial, and to some extent this carried on after the war.

An interesting question that is often asked is: how much can an Ambassador influence his own government's policy? I saw my role throughout my time as reporting on and analysing the Israeli point of view and having my judgement trusted. To an extent I had to be the more persuasive, as I was just one Ambassadorial voice with a perspective often very different from that of the many British Ambassadors from the Arab countries. It worked on the whole, as the UK's position remained balanced and was based on an understanding of the real threat that faced Israel. I think there was an instinctive readiness to hear this in London; for example when Prime Minister Shamir met Mrs Thatcher in London, the mood between them was better than many had expected. Of course there was much going on bilaterally outside politics. Commercial and cultural links were strong, and there were good exchanges of information in a variety

of fields. All this helped the atmosphere. All this helped to foster an atmosphere that led us to feel that the Israeli Government was more willing to talk to us, and indeed to moderate interlocutors on the Palestinian side. The fact that the Madrid Peace Conference happened at all was testament to this.

In our relations with Israel, we always tried to avoid giving offence, even whilst saying what we believed to be necessary. For my part, I certainly found that it was far more effective to give a forthright opinion in private. Any public British government statement, however balanced – pointing out good things in Israeli policy and criticising elements of Arab policy – would tend to be noticed in Israel only for the criticisms of Israeli policy. I had personal experience of this even within Israel, and recall one occasion in particular, when addressing a group of Rotary Clubs and alluding in a tone of mild criticism to recent events in Gaza which the world had condemned. The atmosphere in the room grew suddenly cold.

Perhaps the most important task for an Ambassador is to be personally approachable and easy-going, to show visible enjoyment of what his host country has to offer, and to keep all channels of communication open. My wife and I saw our major contribution as being friendly, willing to participate, and ready to open our home to others. But I do recognise that there is also a case for sometimes having an activist Ambassador, who can be creative about identifying potential openings for progress and drive initiatives forward proactively. Even if, increasingly, it is the direct communication between the politicians of respective governments that drives policy, Ambassadors can still play a part in floating ideas.

There were so many things we enjoyed about Israel. The music was of course outstanding. Walking in all parts of the country, archaeological sites, wild flowers – in many ways it was a paradise. For two years running we observed the spring bird migration in the Negev, with thousands of storks and raptors of all kinds passing over each day and a multitude of smaller species. We took pleasure in showing off our patch to visiting officials from the Foreign Office, many of whom were familiar only with the other parts of the Middle East, and were suitably impressed by Israel's achievements in making the desert bloom. Israel is not a place one can ever forget, and there is nowhere quite like it.



HE Mark Elliott

- 1963 Foreign Office, London
- 1965 – 1969 Embassy of the United Kingdom, Tokyo, Japan
- 1970 – 1973 Foreign and Commonwealth Office, London
- 1973 – 1974 Private Secretary to the Permanent Under-Secretary, FCO, London
- 1975 – 1977 United Kingdom High Commission, Nicosia, Cyprus
- 1977 – 1981 Embassy of the United Kingdom, Tokyo, Japan
- 1981 – 1985 Head of Far Eastern Department, FCO, London
- 1985 – 1988 Under-Secretary, Northern Ireland Office, Belfast
- 1988 – 1992 HM Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the State of Israel
- 1992 – 1994 Deputy Under-Secretary, FCO, London
- 1994 – 1998 HM Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the Kingdom of Norway

Reflections of Ambassador Yoav Biran

Ambassador of Israel to the Court of St James's
1988-1993

I would like to preface my reflections by saying that I feel a very special bond with the United Kingdom. Not only have I spent 11 out of 42 years as a career diplomat in this country (1977-1983 as Minister and 1988-1993 as Ambassador) but I met my wife in England and, as I once told Prince Charles at a reception at Buckingham Palace, I don't just try to promote Israeli-British co-operation, I practice it! I have a love of many things British – the culture, the history, the special qualities of the people and the football! So when I speak of issues or difficulties, I do so as a person with a deep affection and sympathy towards the United Kingdom.

The attempted assassination of Ambassador Argov in 1982 was a moment that will live with me for ever. It was a shock, an ordeal, but also a challenge to prove to the terrorists that they might inflict tragedy but they could not stop the Israeli Embassy in London from continuing its mission. I found myself as acting Ambassador, trying to comfort and help the bereft family and visiting the unconscious Ambassador every day, in the hope that a familiar voice might bring him out of his coma. Despite these very difficult times, and the war in Lebanon that ensued, I did my utmost to ensure that the Embassy continued to function as if Ambassador Argov was still in situ.

I was always conscious of the long history between our countries, of chapters both beautiful and less so, that shaped a context that was interesting, complex and highly sensitive. Perhaps a sign of this was how often the mild-mannered British became remarkably Mediterranean when Israel was discussed! During my term, I was always aware of the centrality of the 'Camel Corps', the Arabists at the heart of the Foreign Office, who managed to wield great influence. These officials were all well versed in all things Arab, and to an extent their careers and futures were all tied up in the Arab world. However, although experts about the Arab world, they had far less knowledge of Israel and consequently could not be objective about the conflict in the Middle East.

As I look back, if I made any modest contribution, it was to point out to the Foreign Office and the political leadership that this unbalanced approach was also contrary to British interests. Britain wanted to be influential in the Middle East, but their one-sided policies were in reality damaging their goal. Israel did not give British policies the attention they perhaps deserved. Because of this unbalanced approach, and this lack of influence in Israel, Britain's importance in the Arab world was also affected. I embarked upon a slow process of talking to politicians, officials, the Foreign Office and making public

speeches, and I believe that British foreign policy perception did shift towards a position of greater balance.

To my mind, perhaps the most difficult phenomenon I faced was the double-standard used towards Israel. I expect the State of Israel, as a democracy, to be judged by stringent and high criteria, but too often I found that Israel was being judged by different standards to those applied to the United Kingdom. For example, if I mentioned any Northern Ireland difficulties I was always informed that they were an 'internal issue', yet this did not prevent the Foreign Office from showing a very strong interest in the Arab citizens of Israel. I never liked this approach of 'what was ours cannot be touched' but where Israel is concerned we British have the right to get involved, and I tried wherever I could to expose it.

What can be expected of an Ambassador is an interesting question. There is a common but erroneous perception that a good Ambassador means good relations, and likewise, a bad one equals bad relations. Yet relations between countries are determined by national interests, not by personal performances. That is not to say an Ambassador does not have an important role, for when national interests are in conformity there is the scope to strengthen the bond, and when they are in collision, to limit the potential damage. In difficult situations, my advice is to try to emphasise the positive: the values and interests held in common. Clearly the negative cannot be ignored, but the challenge is to work quietly to narrow the gap.

When I faced a crisis, I always found the best approach was to speak to people in language reflecting their culture, and in England this meant taking an academic and detached tone. On one occasion when I was interviewed and allowed myself to get rattled and give a sharp response to an insidious question, I knew it was counter-productive. Sometimes I found that hearts and minds could be touched by something unexpected. During one crisis, in the midst of the war in Lebanon, the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra was playing in London. I bought 100 tickets and invited, along with friends of Israel, some important guests who definitely did not fall into that category! Everyone was invited to a reception during the interval and as I was walking towards it, I overheard a cabinet member say to his wife 'people who play music so superbly cannot simply go around killing people'.

I was once told as a young diplomat in Ethiopia by an Ethiopian gentleman that I would do well, because as he said 'I can see you like us!' Perhaps that is the secret, and I would like to hope this explains why I always felt so warmly welcomed in the United Kingdom.



Ambassador Yoav Biran

- 1963 – 1965 Middle East and African Departments, MFA, Jerusalem
- 1965 – 1967 Second Secretary, Embassy of Israel, Ethiopia
- 1967 – 1970 First Secretary, Embassy of Israel, Uganda
- 1970 – 1972 Principal Assistant to Assistant Director-General, World Jewry and Information, MFA, Jerusalem
- 1972 – 1974 Deputy Director, Cabinet of the Director-General, MFA, Jerusalem
- 1973 Member of Israel Delegation to the Geneva Peace Conference
- 1975 – 1977 Director, International Department, Centre for Research and Policy Planning, MFA, Jerusalem
- 1977 – 1982 Minister Plenipotentiary, Embassy of Israel, London
- 1982 – 1983 Acting Charge D'Affairs, Embassy of Israel, London
- 1984 – 1987 Deputy Director-General, Administration, MFA, Jerusalem
- 1987 – 1988 Deputy Director-General, North America and Disarmament Affairs, MFA, Jerusalem
- 1988 – 1993 Ambassador of Israel to the Court of St. James's
- 1993 Deputy Director-General, Middle East and Coordination of the Peace Process, MFA, Jerusalem
- 1998 – 2002 Senior Deputy-Director General with Special Responsibility for Middle East and the Coordination of the Peace Process, MFA, Jerusalem
- 1999 – 2001 Deputy National Security Advisor for Foreign Policy, Prime Minister's Office, Jerusalem
- 2002 – 2004 Director-General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jerusalem

Reflections of HE Sir Andrew Burns KCMG

Her Britannic Majesty's Ambassador to the State of Israel

1992-1995

I arrived as Ambassador in July, early in the morning after a night flight, to be greeted by Israel's summer heat and my deputy, who rushed me to the Knesset to hear Rabin make his inaugural speech as the newly elected Prime Minister. There I heard him famously declare that peace is not made with your friends but with your enemies. This was a time of mounting optimism. It was a time when there was a sense of opening up after a period of beleaguerment; it was a time that saw the Oslo Peace Process get underway and a Peace Treaty signed with Jordan. To me, being Ambassador to Israel was the most interesting, and indeed exciting, posting of my diplomatic career.

When I arrived in Israel I had little previous exposure to the Middle East. I had a sense perhaps that Israelis could be prickly and defensive people. Instead I found warm and wonderfully open-minded people, enlivened by an idiosyncratic and often chaotic range of behaviour. I remember an early occasion when Margaret Thatcher came to stay with us after her time in office and she was given an honorary doctorate by the Weizmann Institute. The academics all arrived in full regalia, but under their gowns wore shorts, t-shirts and flip-flops! We made a huge number of friends.

As I spent time in Israel, I realised the depth of sensitivity regarding security and how any such threat would provoke an almost visceral reaction. I remember the bombing in Netanya, which brought home their sense of vulnerability. Yet despite this sense of insecurity, Israel was also a country in the midst of rapid development, of an almost Wild West enthusiasm and creativity. I was also continually struck by the friendship and hospitality of Israelis, both in the towns and in the kibbutzim, which was infectious and exciting. All this is in the context of a country whose physical beauty and history confronts you everywhere.

This period of openness and optimism came, to my mind, after a time of cooler relations between Israel and Britain. The invasion of Lebanon in 1982 and the resulting arms embargo had contributed to the sense that peace negotiations were going nowhere. Being in post during a time of changing sentiment enabled me to project Israel to the United Kingdom in a much more positive light, and to convince my government that there was a genuine shift in policy. There were, of course, ups and downs, but as the British government under John Major was a strong (albeit at times concerned) friend to Israel, we tried not to engage in open criticisms, but instead save any feisty dialogue for behind closed doors! You may be sure that Rabin and Peres gave as good as they got!

There were issues that we did disapprove of, such as the continuing occupation of the West Bank, but I found we had to be realistic about these difficulties and about the real predicaments that faced both Arabs and the Israelis.

My approach, which I also encouraged in my staff, was to try to be empathetic with Israelis, and above all to accentuate the positive. That is not to say we ignored the negative (as I believed it important to analyse honestly the pros and cons in our relationship), but rather we built upon the good aspects, which shored up a bond that helped handle the more difficult situations.

Whenever I could, I invited colleagues who had never been to Israel to stay with us. There I introduced them to the lively debate, often over dinner, which so characterises life in Israel. I would take them down to the Negev and up to the Golan Heights, so that they could see the country from an Israeli vantage point. I would show them how the Israeli Arabs really lived in the Galilee. I found this helped create a broader understanding of the complexities of Israel, and as this was an informal invitation from a colleague, my visitors were more relaxed, and open to the realities I showed them.

Of course historical memories die hard and there were memories of the Mandate on both sides. I also encountered resistance sometimes from immigrants to Israel, who brought with them views of the United Kingdom inherited from their mother countries. As I would drive with the British flag on the car, many would wave and smile but there were others who seemed like they were trying to drive us off the road (though this could have been just Israeli driving!). I sometimes had to deal with the Israeli response of 'we are only applying British law'. Yet overall, I found that people were willing to engage with me, and that all doors were open.

There was a deep sadness in my parting from Israel. I was at home on a Saturday night, making my final preparations to leave in a few days time, when the most informed person in the Embassy (my Christian Arab driver) told me of the assassination of Rabin. This was truly shocking for by then we had come to know Rabin and his wife well. We had to deal with the logistical challenges of bringing over both John Major and Prince Charles, and a large British delegation, at very short notice and make sure that all the protocol aspects were handled sensitively. It was a most moving occasion with world leaders attending from all over the globe, but it was also an extraordinary demonstration of international solidarity behind the Oslo Peace Process, perhaps one of the biggest peace demonstrations that the world has ever seen.



HE Sir Andrew Burns KCMG

Andrew Burns, who retired from the British Diplomatic Service in July 2003, was Her Majesty's Ambassador to Israel from 1992 to November 1995. He is now Chairman of the Anglo-Israel Association.

Since 1995 he was successively Deputy Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London, responsible for relations outside Europe, from 1995 to 1997; British Consul-General in Hong Kong and Macau immediately following the transfer of sovereignty of Hong Kong to China from 1997 to 2000; and British High Commissioner (the equivalent of Ambassador) to Canada from 2000 to 2003.

Earlier postings since 1965 included India, Romania and the United States. He was a visiting Fellow at the Centre for International Affairs at Harvard University in 1982-3, ran the British Information Services in the United States from 1983 to 1986 and was press secretary to three Foreign Ministers between 1988 and 1990.

Reflections of Ambassador Moshe Raviv

Ambassador of Israel to the Court of St James's
1993-1997

I was fortunate, as Ambassador to the United Kingdom, to serve at a time of more cordial relations. I arrived a short while after the Oslo agreement was concluded, and the British government recognised the courage of our leaders, as well as the serious risks that the Rabin-Peres government braved, in signing the accords. This warmer atmosphere was reflected in the personal relationship between Yitzhak Rabin and John Major, who was well disposed towards Israel. An important landmark of our relations was the Prime Minister's visit to Israel in March 1995. Following lengthy conversations on the bi-lateral relations and regional issues, Rabin took Major on a helicopter trip to the North. Rabin rolled out maps and explained in great detail the intricate security situation in that area. In a later conversation, Major wondered out loud how it was that in nearly five decades he was only the second British Prime Minister in office to visit Israel. He then added that such a long interval should not be allowed to recur.

John Major had a profound understanding of the Arab Israel conflict. His friendly attitude and the continuous negotiations with the Palestinians engendered an atmosphere that allowed us to work on the important issues in Anglo-Israel relations. The arms embargo was lifted and the Arab boycott weakened. The City of London received a clear signal to do business with Israel. Major and Rabin had established the Business Council that helped promote trade and investment, and the Bi-National Fund for Scientific Research was set up to encourage collaboration in science and technology. Each milestone was the result of hard labour, of many conversations and sustained efforts of persuasion. During this period there was also the added challenge of blocking anti-Israel initiatives in the EU councils on which Britain was helpful.

That is not to say that at times, we did not encounter a tilt in the Foreign Office towards the Arab world, due to Britain's considerable interests there.

Reflecting on these years, one cannot forget two very painful crisis situations: the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin and the terrorist bombing of the London Embassy. On the evening of 4 November 1995, my wife and I went to the theatre to see 'Three Tall Women'. About twenty minutes into the play, one of my Special Branch guards whispered "Sir, your Prime Minister was shot". Within minutes we were on our way to the Embassy. Shortly after our arrival at Palace Green, we heard the shocking news that Rabin was dead. Our sense of outrage intensified when news arrived that the Prime Minister was assassinated by a Jewish gunman. The Embassy was flooded with calls from government officials, the opposition, and leaders of the Jewish community. Tony Blair was one of the first to call. The Foreign Office and

Downing Street informed us that the Prince of Wales and the Prime Minister would travel to the funeral. For Hana and myself, it was a personal loss, in addition to a national sense of sorrow, as I served with Rabin for five years in Washington as Counsellor for Political Affairs when he was Ambassador. We were good friends.

On 26 July 1994, I was in Jerusalem for a conference of ambassadors accredited to EU capitals. Just before 2 pm, I was talking to my secretary in London on the telephone when I heard a blast and the phone went dead. I ran to the situation room of the Foreign Office where we had a special telephone link and contacted the chargé d'affaires at the Embassy, who reported the bombing and said that although there were no fatalities, six members of the staff had been injured. Within hours I was on an El-Al plane to London. The visit to Jerusalem saved my life because the blast was on the wall at the back of my desk. A tall window on that wall was reinforced by a steel plate to make it bullet proof. That plate had been ripped off by the blast and had landed on my chair.

While flying, I asked the pilot to pass on a message, via the El-Al office in London, asking all the staff who were not injured to meet me at 10 pm at the Embassy. I also prepared a statement to the *Times*, condemning the attack, which was published the next morning. We gathered at the Embassy; many windows were smashed and debris was all around. In a sombre mood, we examined the security loopholes, worked on our public reaction to the attack and started to collect the debris. The next morning I visited the injured staff in hospital.

The Palestinian perpetrators of the terror atrocity were apprehended by Scotland Yard and sentenced to lengthy prison terms. The British government fully restored the Embassy but there was profound lasting impact resulting in an increased overall awareness of the need for security for all Jewish organisations in the United Kingdom.

When faced with difficulties, I always found the best approach was to be calm and try to persuade people that their line of thought was simply not productive. As a diplomat, your weapon is the power of language. There are not many other weapons in the diplomatic arsenal, and so it is really a matter of persuasion, creating trust and developing a rapport.

As I look back, there were many enjoyable moments during my time in England, but perhaps the most memorable was the state visit of President Ezer Weizman, for which Israel had waited 47 years. This was surely a reflection of the close bond that had developed between Israel and England during my time as Ambassador.



Ambassador Moshe Raviv

- 1960 – 1963 Attaché, then Second Secretary, Embassy of Israel, London
- 1964 – 1965 Deputy Political Adviser to Foreign Minister Golda Meir, MFA, Jerusalem
- 1966 – 1968 Political Secretary to Foreign Minister Abba Eban, MFA, Jerusalem
- 1968 – 1974 Political Counsellor, Embassy of Israel, Washington DC
- 1974 – 1976 Director, Eastern Europe Department, MFA, Jerusalem
- 1976 – 1978 Director, North American Department, MFA, Jerusalem
- 1978 – 1981 Ambassador of Israel to the Philippines
- 1981 – 1983 Director, Economic Department, MFA, Jerusalem
- 1983 – 1988 Minister and Deputy Chief of Mission, Embassy of Israel, London
- 1988 – 1993 Deputy Director-General, Information and Media, MFA, Jerusalem
- 1993 – 1998 Ambassador of Israel to the Court of St James's

In 1998 Ambassador Raviv retired from the Foreign Ministry to act as a consultant to the Rothschild Foundation and the Kennedy Leigh Charitable Trust.

In May 1998, Ambassador Raviv's book *Israel at Fifty* was published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson in London. It has since been translated and published in Hebrew and Arabic.

Reflections of Ambassador Dror Zeigerman

Ambassador of Israel to the Court of St James's
1998-2001

The term 'baptism by fire' springs to mind as I recall my early days in office as Ambassador. Robin Cook, the then Foreign Secretary, announced a visit to Israel which would include a meeting with the Palestinians (including Arafat) followed by a trip to Har Homa, a suburb of South Jerusalem, to which he later referred as a 'settlement'. I tried to persuade him that this would be a mistake after Netanyahu telephoned me, saying I should inform the Foreign Secretary that if he persisted with this itinerary, he would cancel the planned lunch with him. Despite my discomfiture at having to deliver such a message so early on in my tenure, I did so, but it was to no avail, and the visit took place as scheduled. As expected, his visit caused great controversy in Israel. It was felt that as a guest of the State of Israel, he should not have come expressly to condemn it. I spoke frankly both to him and the media about this, although I knew he did not like my outspoken response. I was warned that Cook would never see me again, but later when he returned, he told me he was ready to forget this episode and start a new page.

From that point on, Robin Cook and I had a good working relationship, and although we sometimes disagreed, we nonetheless respected each other. In 2000, Cook planned another visit - this time to Iran. Under the Khomeini regime, Iran had just sentenced some Jews to harsh prison terms, for no justifiable reason, and I met with Cook to tell him that Israel could not condone this visit. Two hours later he called me on my mobile to say he would postpone the trip, provided I did not inform the media that I had influenced this decision. Indeed, now is the first time I have made this public.

I drew from these experiences the view that an Ambassador can bring about change and exert a meaningful influence, and that sometimes honest talk, as opposed to being diplomatic, has a role. If I learnt any lesson, it was to focus on the political arena, namely the political relationships and political influence, and from there build on the other important relationships, such as in the cultural and economic spheres.

During my tenure, I was fortunate in that our respective Prime Ministers Blair and Netanyahu got on very well. Blair was a strong supporter of Israel, visiting the country in 1998 for five days and then later again for the 50th anniversary celebrations. When Netanyahu visited London for talks with Arafat, to be mediated by Blair and Madeleine Albright, Blair's support was invaluable. The discussions were disintegrating, and I asked a friendly peer if he would organise a very early breakfast meeting at Number 10 Downing Street, so that we could ask the Prime Minister to convince the Clinton Administration

that Israel was not to blame for this breakdown. Not only did Blair agree, he also made the coffee and sandwiches himself as the meeting was so early that his staff was not yet on duty!

I do not remember ever hearing criticisms from Blair about Israel, and even during the difficult period of the second Intifada, he was supportive. I remember how hard it was when the Intifada broke out just over the Jewish New Year and Israel was deluged by criticisms. It was not easy to explain Israel's position, and I participated in very tough debates on the shows 'Breakfast with Frost' and 'Newsnight'. Whatever I said, the media invariably juxtaposed it with heart-wrenching images of Palestinian babies and children, images that drowned out my words.

Having to deal with the media and public opinion was, and indeed still is, a great challenge. For my part, I tried to convince political figures, the government, intellectuals and, of course, the media that whilst they could, of course, disagree with Israel and some of her policies, they should still support her right to exist as a Jewish, democratic state. I could not change deeply held opinions but I think I had some success in convincing the media at least to make the point, when criticising Israel, that it is the only democratic country in the Middle East and that more is always expected of Israel than of her neighbours.

I also had to work hard to influence the Foreign Office, which was not very friendly towards Israel. Indeed, I felt that some of the negative attitude towards Israel in the United Nations and European Community emanated from the Foreign Office. This is not to say that we did not have a good working relationship, however they were not always very helpful, and we at times had to ask politicians and members of government if they could exert some influence.

As I look back, I remember the wonderful Jewish community in London, which was such a support to the Embassy and a help in representing the State of Israel.

I would perhaps have liked a little more freedom of movement during my time in London but the reasons for my high security were brought home to me one evening, at the end of a diplomatic dinner. I was standing by the entrance of a hotel, chatting with the Egyptian Ambassador, when suddenly I was pushed by my Scotland Yard body guards into my car. Somewhat put out, I asked them why they had not let me finish my conversation, to be reminded that it was at this very dinner that Ambassador Argov was shot at, in 1981. That aside, it was impossible to be in London without enjoying it!



Ambassador Dror Zeigerman

As head of the Students Department of the Jewish Agency and World Zionist Organisation from 1977 to 1981, Dror Zeigerman co-operated with student organisations around the world.

In 1981 he was elected to the Knesset as a member of the Likud Party. The following year he led the first delegation to Ethiopia; upon his return to Israel he brought the government's attention to the plight of the threatened Jewish community there. Ambassador Zeigerman was a member of several influential Knesset committees, including the Foreign Affairs and Security Committee and Immigration and Absorption Committee.

Ambassador Zeigerman holds an MA degree in Contemporary Jewish Studies from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem and spent two years in the doctoral programme of George Washington University in Washington, D.C.

After serving as Consul General to Toronto from 1992 to 1995, Ambassador Zeigerman represented international corporations from 1996 to 1997 and, in January 1998, took up his appointment as Israel's Ambassador to the Court of St James's.

Reflections of HE Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles KCMG CVO

Her Britannic Majesty's Ambassador to the State of Israel

2001-2003

Being in Israel exceeded my expectations. I had been to the country before: visiting for pleasure and as Principal Private Secretary to then British Foreign Secretary, the late Robin Cook, and it was at my request that I was posted to Israel as Ambassador.

During my time in tenure we built a strong level of trust between Prime Ministers Tony Blair and Ariel Sharon. By the time that I left in July 2003 there was a genuine quest for peace and Blair, who had a real flair for handling Sharon, had positive talks with him on the subject. Blair genuinely believed that Sharon had the potential to bring about peace and indeed Sharon had made many courageous statements to that effect. Peace negotiations were moving forward and we had managed to defuse the siege of Arafat in Ramallah and the siege of the Church of the Nativity. There was a sense of optimism.

Sadly, the terrorist attacks were a set back. The bombing of the hotel in Netanya in 2002 precipitated Sharon's decision to re-invade the West Bank. This was tragic for all parties. There was some tough talking, but throughout we carried on doing business in a professional manner. Later we felt we made progress in overcoming the Israeli feelings of insecurity, but again there were further attacks in August 2003 after I left, which led to a downwards spiral in the peace process.

For me, one of the hardest challenges was to get the Israelis to understand that their best hope for security lay in dealing with the problem of the settlements and offering a just peace. My belief is that Israel needs strong love and support from its friends, but also tough love. This was perhaps one of the disappointments of the Bush Administration, as they displayed an inconsistent attitude towards Israel. It was a combination of telling Israel to leave the West Bank, without attempting to enforce it, and setting up a Road Map for Peace, whilst at the same time endorsing actions that were clearly counter-productive.

9/11 created shock waves throughout the region and the world. I remember that the first reaction of the Israeli security establishment was that the attack was so sophisticated it had to be state sponsored. This led to a curious oscillation in US policy. When Donald Rumsfeld embarked upon a tour of the Middle East that autumn, he did not visit Israel as he was worried about upsetting Muslim nations. The reaction in Israel was understandably of disappointment, and I believe that the US should have reached out to this country and steadied them at this crucial time. Indeed, Blair, quite rightly,

came out to visit Israel to show his support on the 1st November. Within a short time the Bush Administration had swung the other way, and started to see Al Qaeda as a single continuum on a line of terrorism; introducing the Global War on Terror. It is my view that this was a mistake, as the acts of terror were symptomatic of complex, deep and more dangerous grievances, rather than just a single phenomenon. This stance led to an obsession with removing Arafat, which was really a second order issue and resulted in a downwards spiralling in the condition of the Palestinians. By the same token the war with Iraq was a diversion away from the important issues that really counted in the Middle East.

I always found that the Israelis were easy to talk to. They were people with whom one could have a bloody good argument and still remain friends! Indeed, I did make many close friends from my time there. The Israelis were of course very clever and rational, which meant that they also had a way of rationalising deep fears which were the product of a national psyche. This, of course, is understandable, but a case in point is Iran. Most Israelis see it as its main security threat to survival, albeit that Iran would be most unlikely to attack Israel as it would face elimination! In my personal view, the real threat to Israel comes more from the growing number of Palestinians cooped up on the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

On a personal level, I feel that I was able to reach out to Israelis. I was the first Ambassador to learn Hebrew before my posting, studying it both in London and at an Ulpan in Israel, which meant I was able to deliver speeches and give interviews in their language. I even appeared on the main comedy show *Yatzpan*, being interviewed on set in a London taxi replete with bowler hat! I enjoyed being in Israel, the energy, the enterprise and the culture of the country. Some of my happiest memories were of meeting people all over the land, of staying up North in the Kibbutz Hazorea, and listening to the music of Yehuda Poliker, which still sends shivers down my spine with its yearning for peace.

Israel is the most wonderful country on earth. If it could attain peace with the wider region this would be an invaluable asset in every sense. I believe that one of the tragedies for the region is that many Arabs have happy memories of Jewish populations in their midst, such as in Baghdad and Cairo, and that the separation of these communities has distanced the many good things that were held in common. For Israel to survive, this common destiny between Arabs and Jews must be embraced.



HE Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles KCMG CVO

Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles started work as the Foreign Secretary's Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan on 23 February 2009. He is based at the Foreign Office, but travels extensively.

Sherard served as British Ambassador to Afghanistan from May 2007 until February 2009. He was British Ambassador to Saudi Arabia from 2003 to 2007. Before that he spent 20 months as British Ambassador to Israel (the first Arabic speaker to have been appointed there), and nearly two and a half years as Principal Private Secretary to then British Foreign Secretary, the late Robin Cook.

Sherard was born in London in 1955. He joined the Diplomatic Service immediately after studying Greek, Latin, philosophy and ancient history at Oxford. He was selected for hard language training, and spent nearly two years learning Arabic before his first posting to the British Embassy in Cairo.

Sherard's later overseas postings included political jobs in the British Embassies in Washington and Paris. In between he worked in London as a Foreign Office speechwriter, as Private Secretary to the Permanent Under-Secretary, and on European security after the Cold War. He was Head of the Foreign Office Hong Kong Department for three years leading up to the handover of the Territory in 1997.

Sherard speaks French, Arabic, and some Hebrew. He acquired basic Pashto for his posting to Kabul.

Reflections of Ambassador Zvi Shtauber

Ambassador of the State of Israel to the Court of St James's
2001-2004

Being Ambassador in London was a wonderful period in my life. Indeed perhaps these were some of the best years of my career as a civil servant. Each morning I would wake up with a sense of purpose, a sense that I was making a contribution and at the same time that I was being enriched as an individual.

My tenure was during a tense and difficult time. The second Intifada, with its terrible toll on both sides, generated vehement anti-Israel sentiment, especially after the Jenin episode. Yet despite this current of hostility we managed to prevent the deterioration of relations between Israel and the United Kingdom, which was no mean feat.

There were numerous attempts to introduce boycotts against Israel, the boycott of the department stores and the academic boycott being but two, yet in the end these efforts came to nothing. This was down to a myriad of factors, including the close ties that we always had with the British Government. I also made every effort to combat this anti-Israel feeling, opening up dialogue with politicians, NGOs and in particular, the trade unions. Bizarrely, it was the unions of firemen and nurses who were at the forefront of trying to lead the boycotts! Then there was the press, and whilst I had little success with the *Guardian* or the *Independent*, at least at the BBC they appointed a person with the remit to ensure fairer coverage of their reporting on the Middle East. Another tactic I tried was to disarm critics. At the time I often received anti-Israel letters, and whenever I could I would call up the correspondents and invite them to visit the Embassy, simply to talk. Whether these dialogues changed anyone's mind, I do not know, and in truth I doubt it, but they did allow me to present Israel's case and portray us as less arrogant.

I must confess that I was ill-prepared for the extent of anti-Israel feeling in the United Kingdom, and was surprised by the unholy connection between the Left and Islamic fundamentalists regarding Israel and the United States. I was shocked by the depth of animosity, and by the language used against Israel – language which seemed to go beyond the normal bounds of propriety. Terms were used in relation to Israel that would never have been used for another state. One such example was the way that the BBC continually referred to Sharon as a 'military strongman', evoking the image of a military dictatorship. It was only when eventually I asked them if they could point to the use of that term for any other leader (there being no shortage of leaders seizing power by force to whom the term could have been applied) that they desisted. I was also deeply disturbed by the appalling cover in

2002 on the *New Statesman Magazine*, flagship of the Left, showing a golden Star of David stabbing the Union Flag.

For the past thirty years, broadly speaking, the British Government has maintained a fairly favourable view of Israel, and Anglo-Israel relations have been positive. Bearing in mind the long-standing interests Britain has had in the Arab and Islamic world, this favourable disposition is, in itself, to be remarked upon. It is testament to this good relationship that many difficult incidents in Israel were to a large extent absorbed without rocking any foundations. I was warned that I might encounter some anti-Israel sentiment from the bureaucracy, but this never materialised. Ironically, it was support for Israel, particularly from the politicians, that alerted us to a new, alarming development: a growing divide between the politicians, who were then and still are now more sympathetic to Israel, and the general public. This is a gap that cannot be sustained for long.

The tragic events of 9/11 introduced a greater understanding of the complexities of the Middle East situation, and of course, the problems we were facing. The war on terrorism was now a global phenomenon. Nonetheless there still remained a deep animosity towards Jews and Israel and those who blamed us for all the problems in the Middle East and beyond. In the face of this, the Jewish Community responded with almost unprecedented determination, and it was a highlight of my tenure to witness more than 40,000 supporters of Israel gather in Trafalgar Square in 2002, demonstrating for peace.

I was always surprised by the ignorance that I faced, often from highly educated people, about what was actually happening in Israel and the region. Perhaps, as I reflect, we could have done more to combat this ignorance, especially amongst students, the future intellectuals. I am sure there were, and still are, missed opportunities to present British university students with a positive impression of Israel. When Israeli students come to England, they are older than their counterparts, and for the most part they just want to focus on their studies rather than engage in politics or student life. Looking back, I would also have wanted to invest more time in meeting with the unions, with intellectuals and those in cultural fields, from whom a positive word in a play or a book could have had an untold effect.

Whilst, inevitably, there is more I feel we could do, when I look at the picture as whole, and the anti-Israel forces we face, I think we have good cause to feel pretty satisfied with our relationship with the United Kingdom.



Ambassador Zvi Shtauber

Dr Shtauber was Director of the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS, formerly the Jaffa Center for Strategic Studies) at Tel Aviv University from 2005-2008, following a career in the Israel Defense Forces and other public offices.

He completed a twenty-five year career in the IDF, retiring with the rank of Brigadier-General. His final position in the military was as head of the IDF Strategic Planning Division. Prior to that, he served as the assistant Defence Attaché at the Israeli Embassy, Washington DC.

Upon his retirement from the IDF, Dr Shtauber served as Vice President of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and in July 1999 he became Foreign Policy Advisor to Prime Minister Ehud Barak. In 2001 he was appointed Israeli Ambassador to the Court of St James's, a position he held until mid-2004.

Dr Shtauber was a member of the Israeli delegations to numerous peace talks between Israel and its neighbors, including the talks with Syria at Shepherdstown; with the Palestinians at the Gaza-Jericho Agreement, the Interim Agreement, and the negotiations at Camp David; and with the Jordanians. He has also represented Israel and the IDF in bilateral and multi-lateral negotiations on regional security.

Dr Shtauber has completed the Advanced Management program at Harvard Business School and holds a PhD from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy.

Reflections of Ambassador Zvi Heifetz

Ambassador of the State of Israel to the Court of St James's
2004-2007

As Ambassador, it was my role to represent the State of Israel and foster better relations between our countries. This is, of course, the traditional Ambassadorial remit, but in reality it is not easy for an Ambassador in these modern times to change the relationship between two countries. Yet there are differences we can make, and sometimes these are by looking at other dimensions that might perhaps be overlooked!

As Chanukah approached during my first year as Ambassador, I asked the question why a *chanukiah* was lit in the White House but never at 10 Downing Street. The response was 'because it had never been done before' and I was advised that that it was not likely to change! Yet I asked them to think about it, and from there managed to convince the relevant officials to be open to the idea. That *chanukah*, for the first time in history, a *chanukiah* was lit by a British Prime Minister, Tony Blair, at Number 10. He was so moved by the experience that he wanted it to become a new tradition. In many ways this was a small gesture, and yet it was so significant as a symbol of harmony between the Jewish and British states.

One of the reasons I felt particularly lucky to be Ambassador during this period was because in 2006, Anglo-Jewry celebrated the 350th anniversary of the British Jewish Community. For this we organised a concert by the Israeli Philharmonic Orchestra under Zubin Mehta. Bringing to the UK over 100 musicians was a major logistical feat – and when you think about it, what could have been more beautiful than to bring over such a great orchestra of which we are so proud? The concert and dinner touched over 1,500 people, including many non-Jewish dignitaries, and it did, I believe, make a very strong impact. This was a year when we were able to take the initiative and find ways of connecting people to Israel, other than perhaps through more traditional avenues.

The Middle East is a dynamic region which demands a dynamic Ambassador. Much happened on my watch, and I

found myself waking up to many a new reality. There was the disengagement from Gaza and then, from that high, the second war with Lebanon. Ironically, before the British Government adopted a supportive stance regarding Gaza, they were first suspicious, whereas with the war with Lebanon, it was completely the reverse! In political life, one never knows. I also witnessed the departure of two main characters from the Middle East landscape, Arafat and then Sharon. This was then followed by the resignation of Tony Blair (whom we all admired); all changes that required an ability to adjust to new political realities.

The most important thing for me was the ability to access people and broaden perspectives. After all, it was Rabin who said *'make peace with your enemies and not with your friends'* and that requires being able to talk to people and connect. I was the first Israeli Ambassador to meet with the head of Sinn Féin, Gerry Adams, and by finding a way to have dialogue with him, was able to have some influence on his understanding. The result was a positive statement, given by him, after our meeting. It is this ability to connect with people that for me characterises the personal side of being an Ambassador. It is hard to measure success in this role, but often it was the small things, such as having a nice cup of coffee with someone or remembering a birthday, that created the positive feeling, that could pave the way for that all important 'opening of doors'. When I could create a personal relationship that allowed me to pick up the phone and know there was a chance I could persuade or influence, that was a measure of success.

The role of Ambassador is so personal and each Ambassador inevitably has his own unique style. Each challenge that we face as Ambassadors is different and I do not believe there is a formula that can be rolled out. For me, however, the challenges were all rewarded by just being in the United Kingdom, which was the best place I could think of to be an Ambassador!



Ambassador Zvi Heifetz

Born in Russia, Heifetz moved to Israel at the age of 14. He spent 7 years with Israel Intelligence and completed as a Major in the Israeli Army. He has a Law degree from the Tel Aviv University and is a member of the Israeli Bar.

In 1989, Ambassador Heifetz became a member of one of the first Israeli diplomatic delegations at the Netherlands Embassy in Moscow. In 1997, he was appointed as External Legal Adviser to the Prime Minister's Office (*'Nativ'*) on matters relating to the former Soviet Union.

Ambassador Heifetz is a key contributor to the business community in Israel. He was appointed Vice-Chairman of the Maariv Group in 1999 and Chairman of both the Hed-Arzi Music Production Company and Tower Records (Israel) in 2001.

Since 2003, Ambassador Heifetz has acted as an adviser and spokesman for the Ministry of Defence dealing with the Russian language media.

He was appointed Ambassador of Israel to the Court of St James's in 2004.

Biography of HE Simon McDonald CMG

Her Britannic Majesty's Ambassador to the State of Israel

2003-2006



HE Simon McDonald CMG

Simon McDonald, 48, is the Foreign Policy Adviser to the Prime Minister and Head of the Foreign and Defence Policy Secretariat in the Cabinet Office.

He was the Director of the Iraq Policy Unit at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, having previously been HM Ambassador to Israel from 2003. Prior to that, he was Principal Private Secretary to the Foreign Secretary from 2001 – 2003, and before that, held a number of posts in London and abroad including Washington and Riyadh.

Mr McDonald joined the FCO in 1982.

The Anglo-Israel Association



For sixty years, the Anglo-Israel Association has worked tirelessly to promote good relations between Britain and Israel. We are a non-political charity facilitating informed debate and seeking to enrich the understanding of decision makers and opinion formers in the UK regarding developments in Israel and the Middle East. We have over the years been in close contact with members of both Houses of Parliament, government officials, the clergy, heads of faith communities and non-governmental organisations.

We engage all of these in seminars and briefings appropriate for the provision of professional, balanced and dispassionate analysis, drawing on the expertise of distinguished British and Israeli analysts, academics and non-political commentators. In recent years we have done this with the particularly active assistance of Professor Shai Feldman, Director of the Crown Center for Middle East Studies, Brandeis University, Boston.

The Association mounts a Colloquium every other year for forty experts from the UK and Israel to exchange views on a wide variety of topical issues. These gatherings have played an important role in bringing together prominent British and Israeli academics and leaders in industry, science and the media, many of whom would not otherwise have met or experienced the other country. The next Colloquium in September 2009 will be chaired by Baroness Deech and focus on the family: where and why should the boundaries be drawn between the rights of parents and the rights of the child as represented by the State.

The Association actively promotes Israeli culture and has for several years sponsored the appearance of authors, poets and journalists at the Hay Literary Festival, as well as administering two educational trust funds. These provide scholarships for Israeli students to study in the UK and for British students to study in Israel. In a new venture to boost our long-standing objective of promoting understanding through visits to Israel, we are working with the Centre for New Diplomacy in Israel to arrange well-planned and focused visits for delegations and individuals who are interested in a closer experience of Israel.

The AIA is not an advocacy organisation nor does it seek to act as a spokesman for the Government of Israel. Its concern is to promote friendship and understanding. In this context the AIA has mounted this Ambassadors' Roundtable to address concerns about signs of mounting anti-Israeli sentiment in the UK.

Since the establishment of the AIA in 1949, it has enjoyed broad public and political backing from Jews and non-Jews alike, including the main political parties. The Association was established by Brigadier General Sir Wyndham Deedes, a Christian who thought that it should not be for Jews alone to support the State of Israel. Each year we hold an Annual Dinner attracting over 400 guests and supporters prominent in British society. The funds we raise are vital but insufficient to finance the demands upon the Association which is run very frugally.

More than ever, Israel's challenges and strengths need to be understood in the UK. That is why it is essential that the work of the AIA continues and expands its reach.

