

While the U.S. knew from the very start (through U-2 and other reconnaissance programs) that Israel was engaged in a bomb program, American intelligence never successfully penetrated the effort or obtained a detailed picture of how advanced and large it actually was. If this story is to be believed, the handful of U.S. experts who were predisposed to cracking the secrecy and providing the White House with a detailed and accurate assessment of the Israeli effort, was suppressed.

Successive Presidents, to put it kindly, chose to remain deaf, dumb, and blind to the Israeli nuclear program: All White House briefings on the Israeli bomb were strictly verbal. No records were to be kept of American knowledge that Israel had obtained the bomb.

The reason was straightforward. Israel's nuclear program was a clear violation of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, and if the U.S. were to admit publicly to knowing this, it would be obliged to do something about it. The closest any U.S. President came to pressuring Israel to 'fess up to its nuclear arsenal was when John F. Kennedy demanded that U.S. scientists be allowed to inspect the Dimona facility. For several years, American inspection teams did indeed visit the Dimona facility, but only saw a phony control room, specially constructed so that the American inspectors would

think that the nuclear program was nothing more than a power plant/research reactor. As soon as Henry Kissinger came in as Nixon's national security adviser, all pretexts of opposition to the Israeli bomb were dropped and the inspections discontinued. By that point, the Dimona plant had already cranked out a half-dozen nuclear bombs.

According to Hersh, as late as 1981, when an Israeli scientist from Dimona delivered photographs and other documents to Washington similar to the material that Mordechai Vanunu would later bring to London, the U.S. still had no idea how many nuclear warheads and delivery systems Israel had produced. For years, according to Hersh's account, the U.S. was oblivious to the fact that the Dimona compound included a nuclear fuel reprocessing plant for manufacturing Israel's weapons grade uranium.

Given the fact that Hersh relies heavily on U.S. and Israeli government sources for the bulk of his material, it is hard to say whether the picture he paints is accurate. This reviewer, for example, found it hard to believe that at no point did the United States reach a nuclear weapons *modus vivendi* with Israel. With that caution, *The Samson Option* is important reading for anyone struggling to understand the insane world of Middle East weapons proliferation and the scary state of affairs within the American intelligence community.

Books Received

Why America Doesn't Work, by Chuck Colson and Jack Eckerd, Word Publishing, Dallas, 1991, 142 pages, hardbound, \$16.99

Congregation of the Condemned: Voices against the Death Penalty, edited by Shirley Dicks, Prometheus Books, Buffalo, N.Y., 1991, 250 pages, hardbound, \$24.95

Opium and Foreign Policy, The Anglo-American Search for Order in Asia, 1912-1954, by William O. Walker III, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, N.C., 1991, 360 pages, hardbound, \$39.95

The Invention of Argentina, by Nicholas Shumway, University of California Press, Berkeley, Calif., 1991, 325 pages, hardbound, \$34.95

Mostly Morgenthau, A Family History, by Henry Morgenthau III, Ticknor and Fields, New York, 1991, 501 pages, hardbound \$27.50

The 'Diario' of Christopher Columbus's First Voyage to America, 1492-1493, Abstracted by Fray Barto-

lomé de las Casas, translated by Oliver Dunn and James E. Kelley, Jr., University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Okla., 1991, 491 pages, paperbound, \$24.95

Conflict Resolution in Africa, edited by Francis Deng and I. William Zartman, Brookings Institution Press, Washington, D.C., 1991, 418 pages, hardbound, \$39.95; paperbound, \$14.95

Decisions for Defense, Prospects for a New Order, by William W. Kaufman and John D. Steinbruner, Brookings Institution Press, Washington, D.C., 1991, 78 pages, paperbound, \$9.95

Power and Madness, The Logic of Nuclear Coercion, by Edward Rhodes, Columbia University Press, New York, 1991, 269 pages, paperbound, \$16

Biology: Discovering Life, by Joseph R. Levin and Kenneth R. Mill, D.C. Heath, Lexington, Mass., 1991, 898 pages, hardbound, \$41

Sense and Nonsense in Corporate Finance, by Louis Lowenstein, Addison-Wesley, New York, 1991, 263 pages, \$24.95

Inside Out, by Dennis Levine with William Hoffer, G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1991, 431 pages, hardbound, \$22.95