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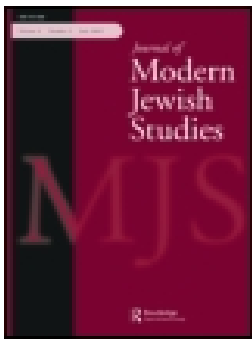
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The diplomacy of spectacle: Abie Nathan and the limits of Israeli peace activism, 1966–1993

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the effects the peace-making efforts of Israeli aviator, restaurateur and peace activist Abie Nathan to promote peace in the Middle East between the 1960s and 1990s had on the Israeli public. Among other initiatives, Nathan flew illegally from Israel to Egypt to start diplomatic negotiations in 1966 and established the offshore radio station “Voice of Peace” (1973–93) which broadcast in English from international waters in the Eastern Mediterranean. His globe-trotting peace activism and humanitarian efforts turned him into an international figure of fascination in Israel and abroad. Departing from treatments that dismiss Nathan’s political relevance, this article uses the concept of “nation branding” to argue that Nathan’s choices as an activist both defined and defied the limits of Israeli peace activism: on the one hand, Nathan’s activism of spectacle helped Israelis imagine themselves as a peace-pursuing people, without actually mobilizing them to political action. On the other hand, Nathan repeatedly tried to push his compatriots to recognize the legitimate claims of the Palestinian people, putting him at odds with Israeli authorities.



KEYWORDS

Peace activism; Israeli politics; Abie Nathan; Israeli-Arab relations; popular diplomacy

“The motives and aspirations of Abie Nathan are not important. This was a world demonstration of the desire for peace in Israel.” – David Ben Gurion, March 4, 1966.¹

“We were the Fig Leaf of Israeli Democracy ...” – Shulamit Aloni, 1992.²

Abie Nathan first emerged onto the international scene by dying. On February 28th 1966 Associated Press reported that Israeli restaurateur Abie Nathan, who attempted to fly an old, two-man, Stearman aircraft across the Egyptian border in order to spark peace negotiations with Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser, crashed and died somewhere in the Northern Sinai peninsula. Hundreds of Israelis gathered at “California”, Nathan’s burger joint located at the

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heart of the fashionable Dizengoff Street in Tel Aviv, mourning the early demise of the daring playboy. Nathan suspected that things might turn out this way, spending the night before his journey writing his will.³ Even though he had announced his intentions months in advance, chalking the days off a small blackboard in “California”, few took him seriously. Nathan had no permission to fly between the two belligerent countries and owned neither a valid flight license nor a plane. What he did have is debts: as mourners gathered in “California”, one concerned caller lamented: “Abie owes me 150 pounds, who will pay me back now?”⁴

Prior to February 1966 Abie Nathan’s name was only familiar to particularly avid readers of Tel Aviv gossip columns. By dying tragically, however, Nathan graduated to the columns of international correspondents. He did so initially as a cautionary tale: warning naïve idealists that diplomacy should be left to state officials. But it quickly became apparent that early rumours of Nathan’s death were greatly exaggerated. Sipping champagne in the presidential suite at the Tel Aviv Hilton on 1 March 1966, Nathan, safely back from Egypt, shared details of his journey there and back again with dozens of Israeli and foreign journalists who then disseminated his story to readers across the world from El-Paso to Mumbai.⁵ Abie Nathan, the spectacular peacenik, had emerged as an international figure of fascination.

Nathan would carry out peace-promoting efforts in the three decades that followed, continuing into the 1990s. Through hunger strikes, petitions, peace marches, and other methods of nonviolent action, Nathan – working mostly alone – tried, ambitiously, to push the Israeli public and its politicians to appreciate the necessity of making compromises in order to achieve peace. A media-savvy activist, Nathan captured the attention of the national and international press by undertaking a range of daring, unapproved initiatives over land, air, and sea.⁶ In 1973 he established an offshore radio station, *The Voice of Peace*, broadcasting from international waters to listeners in the Eastern Mediterranean. The station became immensely popular mostly due to its broadcasting of English language pop songs. In 1988, at the height of the first Intifada (Palestinian uprising), Nathan flew to Tunisia to meet with Yasser Arafat, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization, an act for which he was imprisoned upon his return to Israel. In 1993 Nathan interpreted the progress of the Oslo process as the fruition of his life’s work and sank the *Voice of Peace*, only to see the peace process collapse and the peace movement thoroughly delegitimized by the time of his death.

It is difficult to pigeonhole Nathan’s career into existing interpretations of Israeli peace activism. In her authoritative study of the Israeli peace movement, Tamar Hermann uses the concept of “social movement organization” (SMO) as the main analytical category. Hermann keeps her lens on organizations that were formed by a circle of different people – however small a circle (and Israeli left circles were often very small).⁷ Nathan, unmentioned in Hermann’s study, represents a unique case: one man, working mostly alone, who came to personify peace-activism for many in Israel and abroad. Few around the world

knew the names of the smaller Israeli peace groups, but the Abie Nathan brand was known far and wide.

Nathan defies our common understanding of Israeli peace activism also in that he cannot be easily slotted into either the camp of Zionist peace activists or that of non-Zionists. While most Zionist peace groups have usually been Ashkenazi, educated, intellectual sabras, keen to clarify their allegiance to the “nation’s collective core values”, Nathan, a dark-skinned immigrant born in Iran and raised in India, with no higher education, tested the comfort zones of the Israeli consensus.⁸ Like some non-Zionist groups, Nathan explicitly spoke of Israel’s oppression of the Palestinian people as early as the late 1960s – a time when the Israeli government still refused to acknowledge the existence of the Palestinian people.⁹ Like non-Zionist groups Nathan also openly reached out to international allies in the effort of changing the world’s opinion regarding Israel. But he also valued the embrace of the Israeli public, and pursued, simultaneously, strategies that would lend him legitimacy in the Israeli political mainstream – even between acts of defiance considered so offensive they repeatedly landed him in prison.¹⁰ Writing Nathan into the history of the Israeli peace movement allows us to examine aspects of Israeli peace activism that remain undetected if we stick to movements alone. This treatment shifts the analytical focus away from the categories of Zionist/non-Zionist movements, instead paying attention to the role the idiosyncratic and flamboyant peace activist Abie Nathan played in shaping Israelis’ understanding of what peace activism actually was.

The article relies on previously unexamined archival sources from the Israel State Archives, from Abie Nathan’s personal papers in Givat Haviva, and from the Israeli and international press, to argue that Nathan’s use of the diplomacy of spectacle had a contradictory, sometimes tragic, effect. While Nathan aimed to draw others to follow his example and push the Israeli leadership to seek diplomatic compromise with Israel’s neighbouring states and with the Palestinians, Israelis often cast Nathan as an idealist and impractical dreamer. This public reaction to Nathan was partially a result of state effort to portray Nathan as a colourful attention-seeking eccentric.

This effort was broadly successful. Leading voices of the Zionist left tend to dismiss Nathan’s historical significance. Historian and politician Mordechai Bar-On defined Nathan as one “unable to organise or sustain a movement”, stating that he “had little influence, but he has endeared himself to many by his courage and flair for the outrageous”.¹¹ Sociologist Baruch Kimmerling defined Nathan in even more negative terms as “outstanding for both his good intentions and the shallowness of his thought”.¹² Tzaly Reshef, one of the founders of *Peace Now*, defined Nathan as “a kind of Don Quixote, more naïve and less political.”¹³ From the vantage point of 2021, there is a degree of *chutzpah* to accusations of political ineffectiveness when coming from the Israeli left. The contempt dripping from these voices on the Israeli left

towards the man who attracted unparalleled and sustained attention as Israel's paradigmatic peace activist invites further scrutiny.

What function did Nathan play in Israeli public life? In the one article dedicated to the Voice of Peace station, scholar Oren Soffer argued that the station expressed the Israeli "aspiration for a 'normal,' peaceful life."¹⁴ Such a statement remains opaque, and invites an interrogation of the complicated dynamics between culture and politics, and between Nathan and the Israeli public. In her work on the concept of "nation branding", historian Jessica Gienow-Hecht directs our attention to the way state and non-state actors can turn the image of the state into "a brand product, making its claim to legitimacy by means of imagery, ideas, and sound".¹⁵ This article treats the flamboyant Nathan as a significant political actor within nation branding efforts in Israel. It argues that by providing a model of well-wishing peacefulness that did not disturb Israelis' wish "for a 'normal' peaceful life", Nathan's activism – against his wishes – helped Israelis feel at peace with a reality of non-peace.

To be clear – there is little reason to think Nathan, a restaurateur with a talent for publicity, would have ever managed to single-handedly vitalize a peace movement that was already working in difficult conditions. What is intriguing, however, is that Nathan did come to play a dramatically outsized role in Israeli public life and on the international scene. Both Nathan and state officials together cast Nathan as the personification of the Israeli wish for peace. Casting Nathan in this role made Israelis feel themselves as part of a vague broad peace camp, vicariously being "pro-peace", admiring the right man, without actually having to express sharp political views or take personal risks in order to change Israel's political trajectory.¹⁶ The "Abie Nathan" brand undercut Nathan's actual political purposes.

This article sheds light on the efforts of Israeli bureaucracy to take the sting out of Nathan's act of subversion: using Nathan to brand Israel as a peace-seeking nation – meanwhile silencing his uncomfortable critique. David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, commented after Nathan's first flight to Egypt in 1966 that "the motives and aspirations of Abie Nathan are not important. This was a world demonstration of the desire for peace in Israel."¹⁷ Performances of desire, of course, did not shape policy. Looking back on her decades-long political career, Shulamit Aloni, the leader of Meretz (the main parliamentary party for the Zionist left), stated in 1992: "we tried to raise a moral voice... de facto we did nothing. The government continued to control the territories, to deny human rights, to destroy and to kill, and we were part of this because we did not declare a rebellion... we were the fig leaf of Israeli democracy."¹⁸ Nathan's path diverged from that of the mainstream Zionist left because he undertook acts of non-violent subversion. Nathan repeatedly broke Israeli law and suffered imprisonment. And yet, Israelis cast Nathan as their own radical peacenik: through Nathan Israelis could participate vicariously in peace-making, without actually having to express political views or clash with state authorities.

Many Israelis admired Nathan, but few followed his example. It was imminently possible to listen to John Lennon's "Give Peace a Chance" booming from the Voice of Peace while reading in passing about settlement expansion on the West Bank. Most Israelis recognized Nathan's peace messaging as an invitation to partake in a whiff of cosmopolitan counterculture. Gossiping about Nathan, reading about Nathan, listening to Nathan's broadcasts, and finally commemorating Nathan – all became ways for Israelis to vicariously fashion themselves as belonging to an amorphous well-intending peace camp, even without personally engaging in any direct political action. There lay the defining irony of Nathan's diplomacy of spectacle.

"Tomorrow morning – I fly"

Nathan was not a born political icon. Born to a Jewish Yemenite family in Abadan, Iran, in 1927, Nathan moved to Bombay where he joined the Royal Air Force in 1944 and earned his wings by 1945. In 1947 Nathan joined the Zionist ranks in Palestine, carrying out aerial bombing operations aimed at destroying Palestinian villages.¹⁹ In 1950 Nathan started flying for Israel's national airline, El-Al, kept an apartment in London, and supported a leisurely cosmopolitan lifestyle. In the late 1950s Nathan quit El-Al, and established "California", where Tel Avivi bohemians ate, drank, and lounged. To reporters, a proud Nathan boasted that he was the first in the Israeli restaurant scene to sell burgers and ravioli.²⁰

Nathan liked the attention. His connections in artistic circles, his commercial sense, his panache for publicity, and his social skills, all made him good copy in the local press. They also gave him the misleading impression he might succeed in electoral politics. Nathan's campaign for the November 1965 general elections to the Israeli parliament (Knesset) aimed to leverage his background as an airplane pilot to catapult his one-man party into the house of legislators. The inter-generational fissures growing in the ruling Mapai party might have convinced him he had a shot at securing a seat. His promise was that he would "personally act to promote peace between Israel and its neighbours' by flying to Egypt to talk with Nasser and 'break the ice'".²¹ For publicity purposes, Nathan rented a two-seater Stearman plane and parked it near his Tel Aviv restaurant, where he gathered the signatures of passers-by on a petition signalling their wish for peace (see [Figure 1](#)). He insisted that win or lose, he would fly to Egypt to present the petition. Only 2135 Israelis voted for Nathan, leaving him well below the required 12,000 votes threshold to make it into the Knesset.

The elections fanfare died down and Nathan went back to the till in "California". Still Nathan insisted to his friend, journalist Zvi Elgat, that he intended to go ahead with his flight to Egypt. At 7:30 on the morning of February 28, 1966 Elgat drove Nathan to a small civilian airport near the coastal town of Herzlyia. Along the way the two picked up a cameraman. Nathan scheduled a routine test



Figure 1. Abie Nathan Campaigning in Tel Aviv, 1965. The National Library of Israel, Dan Hadani's Archive, Photographer Dan Hadani, IPPA-01256-000-24.

flight for that morning. Asking to move the plane to the runway to get a better angle for the cameraman (a request that caused no suspicion considering Nathan's reputation for vanity), Nathan then climbed into the front seat, ignited the engines, and lifted. Before air control knew what was happening Nathan was a dot in the sky heading south.

Egyptian officials at Port Said airport quickly learned from Associated Press reports that a small white airplane with the word "peace" painted on its side in Hebrew, English, and Arabic was about to arrive. Immediately as he landed, Nathan, brandishing a copy of the Old Testament in his hands, stated, in English, that he carried a message of peace and wished to speak to President Nasser. The Egyptians prepared to send Nathan back immediately, but Nathan discretely sabotaged his own airplane so he could stay overnight in Egyptian territory while the airport technicians worked on the repairs. Nathan played poker with his hosts, ate the beef stew on offer, and enjoyed a brief trip to downtown Port Said where his hosts bought him pyjamas, but refused his request to visit a nightclub. The following day, having secured a toy model of the pyramids from his Egyptian hosts, Nathan started on the short flight back to Israel.²²

Nathan's safe return inconvenienced state authorities. A dead Nathan would have furnished a coherent story: a well-wishing yet tragically irresponsible individual underestimated the barbarism of the Egyptian enemy and died as a result. Alive, Nathan undercut the official narrative that defined Egypt as hostile territory. Landing at the small S'de Dov airfield near Tel Aviv, Nathan was received with jubilation by hundreds of Israelis. Two police officers

made their way through the joyous crowd and arrested him for illegally leaving Israel without a travel permit. Released on bail shortly after, Nathan was received with a hero's welcome at "California". From there Nathan relocated to the recently constructed Tel Aviv Hilton, where the new management had the good sense to identify his emergence as an instant folk hero, putting the presidential suite at his disposal.²³ By the time he woke up the next day newspaper readers from El-Paso to Mumbai were already up to speed on the Israeli restaurateur's daring adventure.²⁴

Ushering Don Quixote back to his restaurant

Israeli authorities have had extensive experience managing the perceptions of domestic peace activists. Proto-peace activism (as Hermann defines it) emerged well before Israel's independence, as early as 1925, with the formation of *Brit Shalom* (Covenant of Peace) in Jerusalem.²⁵ Zionist authorities successfully depicted the group as defeatist and aloof – a stigma they would attach to many peace groups that would follow. Peace activists learned that in order to contend with such negative portrayal they would need to broadcast their own messages. Uri Avinery, the German-born Israeli peace-activist, publicist, and Knesset member, focused most of his energies on counter-messaging through the magazine he bought – "HaOlam HaZe" (This World) – challenging the government line on its pages between the 1950s and 1980s.²⁶

Nathan's activism presented state officials with a unique predicament because of his turn to the international arena.²⁷ Furthermore, his panache for daring and spectacular politics, threatened to turn peace-activism into a popular cause. Embarrassed by the booming popularity of Nathan's illegal, provocative, and uncoordinated act, as well as by the irrefutable fact that he survived a trip to the fierce Egyptian enemy unscathed and with a toy pyramid to boot, anonymous sources at the Foreign Ministry stated curtly that Abie Nathan's flight "was a testament to the Israeli wish for peace".²⁸

In truth, the exact timing of Nathan's trip is likely to have exacerbated already existing tensions within the Israeli leadership. As historian Elie Podeh shows, in the weeks before Nathan's flight the head of the Mossad, Meir Amit, tried to undertake secret talks with the Egyptian leadership.²⁹ To Amit's frustration, however, Prime Minister Levi Eshkol's advisers regarded an Egyptian invitation to Amit as a trap, fearing Amit would not be able to return safely. The Egyptians, insulted at the mistrust, cancelled the meeting. In Amit's recollection the episode could have been "an important pillar in building peace", and a "chance missed" by the Israelis.³⁰ Unbeknown to Nathan at the time, his unauthorized yet successful flight to Egypt just weeks after these events is likely to have irked the Israeli leadership, proving to the Israeli public, to the international community, and to dissenting voices

within the state's highest decision-making circle, that an Israeli could, and did, travel safely to Egypt and back.

Immediately after Nathan's return *The New York Times* provided the narrative of Nathan's trip to Egypt in detail, and printed the main principles of the petition he carried with him to Egypt:

The voice of peace is growing stronger both in the Israel [*Sic!*] and among our neighbours. But words are not enough; initiative – even if only the initiative of a single individual – is required to get action. This is why I have decided to take this initiative ... to suggest a face-to-face meeting with Israel representatives.³¹

Nathan's focus on initiative, published in the pages of the most important American newspaper, implied Israeli officials were not doing enough to break through deadlocks and promote peace.

Veering between the public excitement of Nathan's flight and the grumblings of disapproval from official circles, the Israeli press initially adopted an ambivalent line. The daily *Ma'ariv* quoted a childhood acquaintance of Nathan who framed his flight as nothing more than a dare: "I know Abie Nathan already from childhood ... he is very impulsive when he says something, and later he can't retract what he said and feels forced – even against his own will – to stand behind his words."³² The competing *Yediot Aharonot* praised Nathan's boldness, while asserting that most Israelis cannot bring themselves to fully embrace Nathan since even if the "average Israeli" secretly "adored Don Quixote" it was still easier to identify "with Sancho Panza – materialistic, hesitant, careful."³³ State officials initially embraced that narrative: casting Nathan as an impractical, if romantic, Don Quixote. Israel's Attorney General decided not to press charges against Nathan, explaining that he thought Nathan "genuinely believed that his action would help bring peace between Israel and the Arab world".³⁴ Such statements worked to signal Israelis appreciate peace as a worthy goal, while suggesting this was a one-off spectacle that had run its course. The Sancho Panzas of state bureaucracy were ushering Don Quixote back to his grill.

"Widely regarded as a stunt"

But Nathan did not follow that script. Just eight days after Nathan's return from Port Said, the Israeli foreign ministry alerted Israeli diplomats around the world that the aviator was en-route to Rome – this time as a passenger on a commercial flight. In a memo disseminated to consulates throughout Europe, the ministry instructed the consuls to treat Nathan kindly as "a figure that became famous for well-intended operation" but to avoid any activity that could be interpreted as officially sanctioning or assisting his operation.³⁵ Recognizing Nathan as a loose cannon, the report warned Nathan might "unwittingly be serving Arab propaganda", instructing Israeli diplomats to "reject him entirely".³⁶

When landing in Rome Nathan was already one of the most widely-recognized and adored Israelis in the world. *The Daily News* counted “today’s greatest emissaries for peace” including “Pope Paul, U Thant, Abie Nathan.”³⁷ *The Guardian* found Nathan’s feat noteworthy because it was “so reassuringly remote from the conventional run of political” acts.³⁸ Experienced diplomats, however, largely refused to take Nathan seriously. Ralph Bunche, the illustrious UN diplomat who won the Nobel Prize for negotiating the Israeli-Arab truce at the end of the 1948 War, was sceptical of Nathan’s efforts. When Nathan tried to get his endorsement before his first flight to Egypt, Bunche replied “I do not consider the plan to be feasible or wise for many reasons which I need not go into here [...] however good your motivation, a plan such as this is bound to be widely regarded as a stunt.”³⁹

Bunche was right: Nathan’s flight to Egypt was widely regarded as a stunt. But it was an effective stunt that won him unprecedented attention. Immediately upon landing in Rome Nathan stated that he would like an audience with Pope Paul VI to continue his “good-will mission.”⁴⁰ *The New York Times* confirmed that the Pope accepted Nathan and told him “we have heard of your exploit in the newspapers. You are a man of peace.”⁴¹ In France, Jean-Paul Sartre and François Mauriac held highly publicized meetings with Nathan, as did Bertrand Russell. Sartre told the press that Nathan’s activism “created the atmosphere that would allow summoning Arabs and Jews around a table”.⁴² Emerging from relative obscurity just a month before, by March 1966 Nathan found himself shoulder to shoulder with Nobel prize winners who sang his praise. Having obtained the endorsements of European religious, cultural, and intellectual figures, in late March 1966 Nathan moved on to the country that mattered most to Israeli policymakers: the United States of America.

On the evening of March 25th, 1966, Nathan stood with Fanny Lou Hamer, Nobel Prize laureate Linus Pauling, and Dutch peace activist A. J. Muste in Central Park, New York City, featuring as a speaker at an anti-Vietnam War rally.⁴³ To the press Nathan said “if we and the Arabs ever got together, why couldn’t a way be found to clear up the war in Vietnam, and so many other frictions elsewhere?”⁴⁴ Such optimistic, yet vague, statements, represented Nathan’s initial efforts to position himself as a figure of hope, rather than biting dissent.

And yet, Nathan’s activism made Israeli diplomats look bad. Journalist Bill Frank of the *Delaware Morning News* defined Nathan “the simple minded peacenik”, insisting that Nathan tried to “do what the high-ranking diplomats with all their international diplomatic jargon have been unable to accomplish in all these years ...”⁴⁵ The Israeli consulate in San Francisco reported back to Jerusalem that Nathan’s activism made Israelis appear like “peaceful and resourceful” people.⁴⁶ The problem was, he made the Israeli state look hapless and lacking initiative by comparison. The Israeli consul in New York telegraphed

Jerusalem with discernible satisfaction that even though there was a lot of interest in Nathan, once the consulate explained that entertaining Nathan would grant public sanction to a “partisan act over which there are as well-known very serious doubts” in Israeli officialdom, most Jewish organizations promised not to engage him.⁴⁷ Importantly, the consul added, the organizations “promised not to tell [Nathan] that we advised not to use him.”⁴⁸ Israeli officials wanted to keep their campaign to suffocate Nathan’s activism secret.

The Jewish American boycott of Nathan largely worked. *New York Times* correspondent Bob Considine developed a friendship with Nathan and echoed the Israeli restaurateur’s disappointment that UN Secretary General U-Thant refused to meet with him.⁴⁹ In an article titled “He’s One Man Peace Organization in Wilderness of Doubt” Considine reported that Nathan “works alone,” from a room in a 7th Avenue hotel.⁵⁰ Nathan, Considine reported, hoped to meet the President or the Vice President (but settled for Senator Robert Kennedy), and was disappointed that “no Jewish (or Arab) organization has given him a tumble or a helping hand.”⁵¹

There were notable exceptions. Herb Brin, a Los Angeles publicist who ran the Jewish newspaper *Heritage*, wrote an editorial titled “Shekels for Peace”. Based on the initiative of Ralph Alpert, a butcher from Arcadia, California, who sent in “a wrinkled dollar bill earned at his Monrovia delicatessen”, Brin suggested, “all members of the Jewish community in America send a dollar (shekel)” for the purpose of “helping to assist refugees resulting from Israel’s War of Liberation.”⁵² David Zucker, the West Coast regional president of the Student Zionist Organization spoke of the need to express “the interest and concern of the American Jewish community for their Arab brethren.”⁵³ *Heritage* told its readers that in his activism Nathan “placed a mirror upon our own responsibilities. Will we assume them?”⁵⁴

Brin flew Nathan from New York to Los Angeles to meet Arab and Israeli students at UCLA. Posters carrying the slogan “Shalom means Salaam” covered the campus. Israeli writer Dan Almagor, present at the event, admitted to his readers that he anticipated Nathan would buckle under the pressure.⁵⁵ Instead, Almagor reported, a relaxed and fluent Nathan laid out a program for political action in which both official diplomats and untrained citizens played their respective crucial roles: “peace belongs to us and we have to take active part,” Nathan claimed, because politicians, for reasons of diplomacy, “cannot speak. So it’s up to us to raise hell; to make a certain atmosphere; to give them a chance to get together.”⁵⁶ Nathan also stood out among Israeli activists by being a native English speaker, allowing him to eloquently communicate with foreigners. Praise from the Berkeley Barb further cemented Nathan’s credentials among student circles.⁵⁷ Unsatisfied with campus sympathies, Nathan sought access. Asked if the Israeli government provided him with any assistance, Nathan calmly lamented that “had they helped me this trip would have been far more successful.”⁵⁸

Heads of state shunned Nathan. In London, Nathan failed to meet Prime Minister Harold Wilson. In Moscow, he failed to meet Soviet Premier Alexei Kosygin. Members of Intourist, the Soviet state travel agency, invited Nathan to visit an art exhibition but warned him several times “not to deal with politics”.⁵⁹ From Moscow Nathan travelled to Belgrade, where President Tito of Yugoslavia refused to grant him an audience. Visiting New Delhi in the country where he grew up, Nathan hoped to meet Indira Gandhi, but was again rebuffed.⁶⁰

Meeting Matitiahu Sharon, an old acquaintance who worked for the Israeli consulate in London, Nathan protested that the state was “trying to fail him.”⁶¹ Sharon’s report to the ministry of foreign affairs concluded with satisfaction:

More than usual, his [Nathan’s] mood swings every few moments from unbridled arrogance to discernible depression. He spoke with enthusiasm and naive snobbery about his “dazzling success” on television, but at the same time he began confessing to me that he accomplishes nothing, cannot meet the VIPs, and that he lacks advisors who could guide him. I sense in some moments that he begins to understand his “successes” are purely superficial, he rushes after immediate outstanding achievements and lacks the patience - and the spiritual tools - to plan sustained continuous action. I also think he begins to understand, even if he would not admit it to himself, that he actually has nothing to offer.⁶²

Nathan was stuck. The breaking of the 1967 War sharpened his differences with the Israeli government, landing him in prison for the first time.

During the long and tense waiting period before the war Nathan prepared to fly again to Port Said, telling international reporters “I don’t think professionals have the monopoly to try and bring peace”.⁶³ Just as Nathan prepared to lift off, war broke, leaving Nathan grounded in Cyprus. Within six days of fighting Israel won that war resoundingly, quadrupling the territory under its direct control in the process. Nathan flew to Port Said in July, but at a time when Israeli kids exchanged play cards with colourful images of Israeli fighter-planes, interest in the peace-pilot plummeted.⁶⁴ As Israeli families went on jubilant victory laps in the West Bank and the Golan Heights, Nathan brought 40,000 ice cream cones to Palestinian refugees in newly occupied Gaza.⁶⁵

Israeli authorities, in peak confidence following the victory, persecuted Nathan for his unapproved flight to Port Said in July 1967. He was put on trial, found guilty, and handed a fine with a suspended sentence. Nathan refused to pay the fine, donating the money to an Israeli hospital instead. In response, he was imprisoned for two months. Nathan bought an ad in the newspaper *Ma’ariv*, arguing that he only flew to prove to the world that even following its 1967 conquests “Israel fought to make peace.”⁶⁶ Nathan appealed to the readership through colourful stories of his time in prison, elaborating on prison slang, culinary habits, and comradeship.

Shortly after his release Nathan once again turned to the international arena, publishing in the English language a “Draft Proposal for Peace in the Middle East” in the independent publication of progressive American journalist I.F.

Stone. In clear defiance of Israel's official line that disregarded the very existence of a Palestinian people and attempted to depict its occupation of the West Bank and Gaza as enlightened, Nathan insisted that "an agreed settlement between Israel and the Arab states is barred as long as the question of the Palestinians remains unsolved."⁶⁷ Nathan's solution was to establish the "Federation of Jerusalem": a federation of "three separate independent sovereign states – Israel, Palestine, and Jordan."⁶⁸ The proposal gave Palestinians full sovereign control over the West Bank and the Gaza strip, and stipulated Israel would pay one billion dollars as compensation for Palestinian refugees.⁶⁹ Nathan bought an ad in the Hebrew press to lay out the principles of his proposal, challenging the Israeli government to withdraw 500 meters in the Sinai as a show of good-will to the Arab world, and asking "Do we really want peace?"⁷⁰ Such messages surely irked Israeli policymakers, who were trying to convince the Americans of their peaceful intentions without actually having to give up the newly occupied territories.⁷¹

The Voice of Peace

Realizing that his views are not likely to move the Israeli government, Nathan turned to the cultural sphere. In 1969 Nathan bought an old Dutch ship and sailed it to New York to be fitted with a transmitter. In May 1973 he began broadcasting from "The Voice of Peace", a radio broadcasting ship transmitting English-language content off the shores of Israel and Egypt (see [Figure 2](#)). "The Voice of Peace" broadcast throughout the eastern Mediterranean in English, Arabic, Hebrew, and French. British Disk Jockeys lived for weeks on end on the vessel, setting the 24-hour Anglophonic light-pop musical tone for the station. Nathan's messages, peppered throughout the programming, spoke about the need for peace among the peoples of the region.

Nathan strove to use the station as a vehicle through which to slowly create a public that would be more amenable to peace messaging. The strategy earned the station a prominent place on Israel's mass media map for two decades. Unlike Israel's other stations, the Voice of Peace did not receive state funding. But its reliance on advertising provided it with sufficient funds for operation. This economic model, as well as Nathan's determination to appeal to a broad base of the Israeli public, shaped a blander political message.

With the station Nathan anchored his voice as soundtrack for the routines of hundreds of thousands of Israelis.⁷² The station's popularity relied on foregrounding easy listening, English-language music, 24 hours a day. Graham Day, a senior DJ on the ship, summed up the limited role politics took in the station, stating:

we know Abie is campaigning for peace. We don't know fully what he does in Israel and all the other countries in this area, because obviously we're away from the shore [...] all we can really do on this ship is to give Abie a good family and a good team to



Figure 2. The Voice of Peace Ship, 1978. The National Library of Israel, Dan Hadani's Archive, Photographer Danny Gotfried, IPPA-11077-000-30.

present a really good program of music on the air, so the people that listen will want to keep listening to The Voice of Peace.⁷³

Politics was kept in the background. Every day at sunset Nathan's voice announced that broadcasting would stop for thirty seconds to commemorate those who died "of violence in our region, and in the whole world."⁷⁴ Such amorphous messaging came with Nathan's pleasant, calm, monologues recommending that listeners should "avoid loud and aggressive persons" and "enjoy your achievements as well as your plans."⁷⁵ The station enjoyed broad appeal: among other fan mail, Nathan's correspondence included cards from children of a Cairo kindergarten.

Nathan's growing attention to humanitarian crises in more distant shores helped brand the station as an expression of Israeli goodwill. In a 1977 letter to Prime Minister Menachem Begin Nathan successfully pleaded with Begin to allow Vietnamese refugees into Israel, identifying it as "our duty to be "or l'goyim" [light for the gentiles] in this humanitarian matter and provide example to the nations of the world."⁷⁶ Israeli citizens wrote to Nathan expressing their willingness to adopt Vietnamese refugees.⁷⁷ Using the platform of The Voice of Peace Nathan gathered funds to fly to Ethiopia, Guatemala, Colombia, Ruanda, and Turkey on various aid missions.⁷⁸ These campaigns helped Nathan position himself as a champion of human rights. Indeed, it was partially Israel's unwillingness and inability to work with human rights organizations that drove up the demand for what Nathan provided: helping listeners consider themselves as vicariously supportive of these benevolent abstract values – without having to

take any stand on Israel's military control of the Palestinians.⁷⁹ If Nathan's thoughts on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict risked alienating right-wing Israelis, in 1979 he had no trouble creating consensus across the political spectrum to endorse his call for Israeli humanitarian assistance to the crisis in Cambodia.⁸⁰

When it came to the Israeli-Arab conflict, Nathan met the clear limits of comfort of the Israeli left: In June 1978 Nathan successfully mobilized 60,000 Israelis to gather for an evening of song and protest in front of Tel Aviv City Hall, urging the government of Menachem Begin to approach its negotiations with Egypt more seriously.⁸¹ But Nathan's very willingness to acknowledge the existence of a Palestinian people, and his insistence to continue criticizing Israeli policies of settlement expansion located him well outside the Israeli consensus. When Nathan embarked on a 45-day hunger strike that same year against settlement expansion in the West Bank, the Knesset gathered for a special discussion, resolving not to stop settlement expansion – but to urge a frail Nathan to stop his hunger strike.⁸²

“Not as a political matter”

While the Voice of Peace reported and supported Nathan's actions, the station also branded peace activism as something Israelis could do with ease, with joy, and without getting into trouble. In August 1980 the Voice of Peace (together with a number of banks and youth movements) co-sponsored a 24-hour “peace-happening”: an event where thousands of Israeli youth gathered at a Tel Aviv park to “listen to songs, dance, and talk around the campfire about thoughts and wishes, about the good and the bad in life, thus arriving at the topic of peace not as a political matter, but as a necessity of life, seeing as everybody wants to make it to old age.”⁸³ While the Voice of Peace provided a unique platform for civilian and humanitarian discourse in Israel, it also helped Israelis across the political spectrum see peace as a-political – avoiding the friction that would have necessitated head-on collision with the state's continued military occupation of millions of Palestinians.

Nathan often kept close relations with right wing Israeli leaders. When Nathan got married in 1986 in a highly-publicized party at the Tel Aviv Hilton, those in attendance included left-wing political figures Shulamit Aloni and Yossi Sarid, but also hard-right politician Ariel Sharon, forced out of the Defense Ministry following the 1982 Sabra and Shatila massacre.⁸⁴ When Knesset members of both the Likud and the Labor party proposed to endorse a law legitimizing the Voice of Peace, one columnist found that this “firm national unity” was established around Nathan “not because of Abie Nathan's political views” but because Nathan “expressed the longing for national unity even on the sentimental level. He became a symbol of fighting for affairs that are seen as right and just.”⁸⁵ The few politicians on the hard right who opposed the messaging of the Voice of Peace found station's amorphous messaging suspect. Knesset Member Geula Cohen of the Tehyia party

thought the station tried “to catch this wave of the peace fashion, of liberalism.”⁸⁶ Cohen asserted “the name of the station is *The Voice of Peace*. Who could be against it? After all it is so charming to be for it. Who would lift their hand against it?”⁸⁷

Israelis were largely charmed. Most enjoyed thinking about Nathan as their ambassador of goodwill: a 1978 pop song sang by famed soloist Gali Atari praised the “strange man” who “broadcasts dreams to the world”, stating in the repeated chorus “I want you to know, there’s a partner to your dreams”.⁸⁸ The station helped Nathan gain sustained exposure and popularity in ways his former acts of dissent could not. A charity football competition *The Voice of Peace* held in August 1979 at Tel Aviv University headlined some of the biggest names in Israeli entertainment including pop singer Zvika Pik, comedian Sefi Rivlin, actor Yehuda Barkan, and Nathan himself (positioned as the striker of course).⁸⁹ During the run up to the 1988 general election, Yitzhak Shamir, the Likud party candidate and veteran of the revisionist paramilitary organization Lehi, and Shimon Peres, the Labor party candidate, agreed to a radio debate hosted by *The Voice of Peace*.⁹⁰ Nathan successfully branded the *Voice of Peace* as a central stage on which figures across the political spectrum would want to perform.

The Voice of Peace offered Israelis something many of them valued: a narrative that suggests that by virtue of tuning in they were a peace-loving people, whatever their politics. The station’s fan mail includes grateful notes from kibbutz youth associated with the Zionist left, a Jewish settler living in occupied Sinai, and a squad of soldiers.⁹¹ The station’s uniting message of peace – usually sidelining extensive commentary on Israel’s treatment of the Palestinian population under its control – met a receptive Israeli public. It was a Palestinian initiative that brought Nathan to change course.

“I tried”

The first Palestinian Intifada (uprising), which broke out in December 1987 shook Nathan into action that would soon find him, for the first time since 1968, behind bars. While Nathan had previously met with Palestinian leaders, he had refused before the late 1980s to meet with representatives of the PLO, since they refused to acknowledge Israel’s existence. During 1988, however, the PLO began to change its line on that. For Nathan, this was a call to action. In September 1988 Nathan travelled to meet with Arafat in Tunisia, thus breaking the 1986 Israeli law forbidding meetings with Palestinian leaders.⁹² Nathan was prosecuted, and on October 1989 he was sentenced to six months in prison. The criminalization of Nathan’s rogue diplomacy, dormant for decades, made headlines in the international press.⁹³

Released after 122 days in prison, Nathan soon embarked again on March 1990 to meet with Arafat. Nathan travelled to the U.S. as the keynote speaker



Figure 3. Demonstration for Abie Nathan, 1992, The National Library of Israel, from Dan Hadani's Archive, Photographer Oleg Gaspar, IPPA-21428-000-42. The signs state "Yes for Peace, Not for the Terror Law". The sticker on the sign reads "Free Abie Nathan for Peace."

at the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee at Crystal City, Virginia. His words, printed by the *Washington Post*, promised the admiring audience that "the whole world is talking to each other now, and it can't be long" before Israel agrees to talk with the PLO as well.⁹⁴ Nathan was prosecuted yet again for his second meeting with Arafat, and sent to spend 18 further months in prison.⁹⁵ Knesset members from the moderate right to the Zionist left visited Nathan, and weekly demonstrations were held outside his prison (see Figure 3). Curt Goering of Amnesty international praised Nathan's dedication to "break down the walls which divide people and working for peace."⁹⁶ Nathan was assured that his sentence would be shortened if he expressed regret. Initially defiant, six months into his term Nathan relented, and promised to respect Israeli law. Upon receiving this assurance Israeli President Haim Herzog cut a year off Nathan's sentence.⁹⁷

Shortly after Nathan was released from prison for meeting Arafat, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin shook hands with Arafat as the two signed an initial understanding as part of the Oslo Accords. Nathan took the Oslo treaty as a signal that the Voice of Peace ship, rickety and crumbling, had done its job. On sunset of October 1st, 1993, he sank it into the abyss. To the *Washington Post* he complained that he had failed to get the political credit his activism deserved: "I've given most of my life to this, and it had an effect, even though not one single politician stood up to recognize my efforts."⁹⁸ Speaking to German documentary filmmakers in 1994 Nathan detailed what he saw as his role in history: "Usually politicians feel that making peace is strictly the monopoly of politicians, and that there's no role for the individual. And throughout history it is the individual that spoke out and created a climate that enabled

politicians to change their minds and change their policies.”⁹⁹ Nathan made the case that his efforts created the social climate in Israel that enabled politicians to change their minds, and pursue the path of peace.

With hindsight, after the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin by Yigal Amir, a right-wing assailant, in November 1995, the rise of the political right in Israel, and the collapse of the Oslo process (problematic as it was), Nathan realized that the change he wanted to spark was swiftly aborted.¹⁰⁰ An ageing Nathan witnessed the second Intifada, and the growth of the belief among the Israeli public that there was no Palestinian partner.¹⁰¹ He died impoverished and alone in a retirement home in 2008. One Hebrew word is etched on his tombstone: “I tried.”

Conclusion

In a 2011 ceremony the beach-side city of Herzliya named a street after Abie Nathan. Mayor Yael German, affiliated with the Zionist left party Meretz, defined Nathan as “our Don Quixote, in the best sense: a wonderful dreamer with a romantic vision about peace and brotherhood”.¹⁰² German credited Nathan with preparing the Israeli public to accept peace with Egypt, and more broadly, to lead a humanitarian awakening. To the small and aged crowd gathered before her German recalled how as a teenager, she sent a letter, one among many, with Nathan’s ship, “packed with letters from Israelis to Egyptians.” German also recalled how “we packed clothes for refugees in Ethiopia and Biafra, and listened intently every evening to the Voice of Peace”. German’s tribute sidestepped Nathan’s efforts to push for peace with the Palestinian people, which put him in prison twice. German only briefly mentioned that Nathan’s vision was “partially fulfilled”.¹⁰³ Such a commemorative practice continued the path Israeli officials adopted with regard to Nathan during his life: embracing him into a narrative of Israeli benevolence, while shunning his protests against Israel’s continued oppression of the Palestinian people.

The Israeli mainstream was relatively comfortable with Nathan the peace pilot flying to Egypt, the goodwill humanitarian encouraging Israelis to adopt Vietnamese refugees, or Nathan the DJ, with the soothing tunes from the Voice of Peace – partially because these provided the public with a moral salve, a counterweight to disturbing reports from the occupied territories. Nathan, who was not above vanity or ambition, veered between challenging Israelis’ political comfort zones, and enjoying the embrace of the Israeli establishment when he could get it.

And yet, from his 1967 Federation of Jerusalem plan, through repeated hunger strikes, and in his response to the Intifada Nathan tried to impress on his compatriots the legitimacy of Palestinians’ protests against Israeli rule, and of their ambitions for self-determination, even at the certainty of imprisonment. Since the collapse of the Oslo process most Israeli leaders worked to again

dismantle and suppress Israeli engagement with the Palestinian question, in an attempt to render it irrelevant.¹⁰⁴ Prime Minister Ehud Barak's declaration in 2000 that there was "no [Palestinian] partner", epitomized that effort to once again push the Palestinian question out of mind.¹⁰⁵ In that sense, Nathan's own definition of his legacy, marked by his epitaph "I tried" etched on his grave, represents neither satisfaction with his limited achievements, nor acceptance of the finality of his bitter failure. It simply urges others to try too.

Notes

1. "Ben-Gurion Defends Flyer's Peace Trip" *New York Times*, March 4, 1966.
2. Shulamit Aloni, 1992, as quoted in Kaminer, *Politics of Protest*, 192.
3. Zvi Elgat, "From the Moment I woke Abie Up and he said 'I fly!' to the moment he soared to the sky" *Ma'ariv*, March 1, 1966.
4. Shraga Har-Gil, "They Cheered in 'California' for the airplane that was on its way" *Ma'ariv* March 1, 1966 [Hebrew].
5. "Israeli Pilot Flies for Peace" *El-Paso Herald-Post*, February 28, 1966; "One-Man Peace Mission", *The Times of India*, March 1, 1966.
6. Nathan's heightened mobility and his determination and ability to move outside of the state's control rendered him a particular challenge to the political order. Of the state's efforts to sedentarize its subjects, see: Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 1–2.
7. Hermann, *The Israeli Peace Movement*, 71.
8. Ibid, quotation from 91.
9. The Israeli political elite in the 1960s and 1970s refused to even acknowledge the existence of a Palestinian people. The views of Golda Meir (Prime Minister 1969–73) are representative of that broader view: Shlaim, *Iron Wall*, 310–1.
10. Ibid, 65–73. For more on the distinctions between Zionist and non-Zionist left, see: Joel Beinin, "The Israeli Peace Movement", *Middle East Report*, No. 205, Oct. - Dec., 1997, 45–6; 45.
11. Bar-On, *In Pursuit of Peace*, 203.
12. Kimmerling, *Marginal at the Centre*, 167.
13. Friedler (director), "The Voice of Peace".
14. Soffer, "'the Noble Pirate'," 159–74; 159.
15. Gienow-Hecht, "Nation Branding", 232–44; 242.
16. While many activists on the Israeli right were ready and able to break the law, risk friction with authorities, and create facts on the ground in the hope of achieving their political goals, the Israeli left was for the most part obedient and reluctant to clash with state authorities. Nathan was the exception. On activism on the right, see: Pedhazur, *The Triumph of Israel's Radical Right*; Eldar and Zertal, *Lords of the Land*.
17. "Ben-Gurion Defends Flyer's Peace Trip" *New York Times*.
18. Kaminer, 192.
19. See: Tal, "Life Story of Abie Nathan." <http://www.abie-nathan.com/pages-heb/biography.html>, accessed July 29, 2020.
20. Alan Lupo and Caryl Rivers, "The Man Who Introduced Ravioli to Israel is Now Ready to Pacify the Middle East" *The Evening Sun*, October 25, 1965.
21. See: "Abie Nathan for Knesset: Why I Run" *Ma'ariv*, September 3, 1965; Lupo and Rivers, "The Man Who Introduced Ravioli to Israel" [Hebrew].

22. “The Dreamer who Wanted to Bring Peace” *Yediot Aharonot*, March 1, 1966 [Hebrew].
23. Uri Porat and Shlomo Nakdimon, “Abie: This is Just the Beginning” *Yediot Aharonot* March 2, 1966 [Hebrew].
24. “Israeli Pilot Flies for Peace” *El-Paso Herald-Post*, February 28, 1966; “One-Man Peace Mission”, *The Times of India*, March 1, 1966.
25. Hermann, 74–6.
26. Of Avnery’s career see: Jonathan Steele, “Uri Avnery Obituary” *The Guardian*, August 21, 2018: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/aug/21/uri-avnery-obituary>, accessed on July 30, 2020.
27. The Israeli government pressured the Israeli Black Panther movement to avoid an American tour in order to keep the “dirty laundry” at home. See: Oz Frankel, “What’s in a name? The Black Panthers in Israel” *The Sixties: A Journal of History, Politics and Culture*, 1:1, 9–26; 17.
28. “The Dreamer who Wanted to Bring Peace” *Yediot Aharonot*, March 1, 1966 [Hebrew].
29. Podeh, “Demonizing the Other,” 72–99.
30. As cited in Elie Podeh, *Chances for Peace*, 81.
31. James Ferron, “Gesture Stirs Israelis” *New York Times*, March 2, 1966.
32. Shraga Har-Gil, “In ‘California’ they Cheered for the Returning Plane” *Ma’ariv*, March 1, 1966 [Hebrew].
33. “The Dreamer who Wanted to Bring Peace” *Yediot Aharonot*, March 1, 1966 [Hebrew].
34. *The Morning Call* (Allentown Pennsylvania), March 29, 1966.
35. From Israeli Foreign Ministry to London, Paris, Rome etc., No. 344, March 9, 1966, Folder 111.1, Israeli-Arab Relations - Abie Nathan, from 1.1.66 - Volume A, Record Group 130/ Ministry of Foreign Affairs/3835/ 1, Israel State Archive (from hereon ISA), Jerusalem, Israel [Hebrew].
36. *Ibid.*
37. “Mideast: Flight of Abie Nathan, Peace Dove”, *The Daily News*, March 6, 1966.
38. “Shalom and Sallam on the Fuselage” *The Guardian*, March 2, 1966.
39. Bunche’s reply was sent from Michael Comay of the Israeli consulate in New York to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Jerusalem, March 1966, no. 10, Folder 111.1, Israeli-Arab Relations - Abie Nathan, from 1.1.66 - Volume A, RG 130/ MFA/ 3835/1, ISA.
40. “Israeli Peace Pilot Trying to See Pontiff”, *The Journal Times* (Racine, Wisconsin), March 14, 1966.
41. “Pope Pledges Aid to ‘Peace’ Pilot’s Efforts in Mideast”, *New York Times*, March 17, 1966.
42. Uri Dan, “Sartre to Abie Nathan: ‘You’re Creating the Atmosphere that would allow summoning Arabs and Jews around a table’”, *Ma’ariv*, March 20, 1966 [Hebrew].
43. “Thousands Walk in War Protests in Cities Around the Country” *The Evening Sun*, 26 March, 1966.
44. *Ibid.*
45. Bill Frank, “The Simple Minded Peacenik” *The Morning News*, March 14, 1966.
46. Gideon Sagi to Dan Patir, “Abie Nathan”, March 7, 1966, document number 88, “Israel-Arab Relations – Abie Natan”, RG 130/ MFA/ 3835/1, ISA [Hebrew].
47. General Consul New York to A. Lurie, March 29, 1966, “Israel-Arab Relations – Abie Natan”, RG 130/ MFA/3835/1, ISA [Hebrew].
48. *Ibid.*
49. “He’s One Man Peace Organisation in a Wilderness of Doubt, Suspicion” *Ford Lauderdale News*, March 31, 1966.

50. Ibid.
51. Ibid.
52. Herb Brin, “‘Shekels for Peace’ is Proposed” *Heritage*, April 7, 1966, “Israel-Arab Relations – Abie Nathan”, RG 130/ MFA/ 3835/1, ISA.
53. “Students Join Effort - The ‘Peace Project’” *Heritage*, April 14, 1966, “Israel-Arab Relations – Abie Nathan”, RG 130/ MFA/ 3835/1, ISA.
54. “Will Hadassah Assume ‘Shekels’ Role?” *Heritage*, “Israel-Arab Relations – Abie Nathan”, RG 130/ MFA/ 3835/1, ISA.
55. Dan Almagor, “Abie Nathan Landed in California (The Real One!)” *Ma’ariv*, April 4, 1966 [Hebrew].
56. “Abie Nathan speaking at UCLA 3/31/1966” YouTube Video.
57. *The Berkeley Barb*, Volume 5, Issue 5 (103), August 4–10, 1967.
58. Dan Almagor, “Abie Nathan Landed in California (The Real One!)”
59. Israeli Embassy in Moscow to Jerusalem, “Abie Nathan in Moscow”, May 3, 1966, “Israel-Arab Relations – Abie Nathan”, RG 130/ MFA/3835/1, ISA [Hebrew].
60. “Israeli Peace Seeker Asks Aid of Indira” *The Montgomery Advertiser*, October 30, 1966.
61. Matitiahu Sharon to MBR, “Abie Nathan’s visit in London” April 13, 1966, document number 163 “Israel-Arab Relations – Abie Nathan”, RG 130/ MFA/ 3835/1, ISA [Hebrew].
62. Matitiahu Sharon to MBR, “Abie Nathan’s visit in London” [Hebrew].
63. “Abie Nathan Will Make New Effort” *The Morning Call* (Allentown Pennsylvania), June 4, 1967.
64. Gavrieli-Nuri, “Saying “War”, Thinking “Victory”—The Mythmaking Surrounding Israel’s 1967 Victory,” 95–114.
65. “Wrong Role” *The Times* (Munster, Indiana), June 27, 1967.
66. Abie Nathan, “Why Imprisonment?” *Ma’ariv*, September 19, 1968 [Hebrew].
67. Abe H. Nathan, “A Draft Proposal for Peace in the Middle East” printed by Shalom Peace Foundation. This version was a reprint of the proposal printed in *Le Monde* in October 1974, which was itself a revision of the original publication in *I.F. Stone Weekly* in June 1967, Abie Nathan Private Papers, Givat Haviva, Yad Ya’ari Archives, Israel (from hereon ANPP). Of Israel’s efforts to claim the occupation was enlightened, see: Segev, 1967, 454–81.
68. Ibid.
69. Ibid. Of Israel’s consistent policy to deny Palestinian sovereignty see: Anziska, *Preventing Palestine*.
70. Abie Nathan, “Peace Proposal for the Israeli Government”, April 23, 1968, ANPP [Hebrew].
71. Raz, “The Generous Peace Offer”. It should be pointed out that there was very little pressure from the American leadership at that time: Quandt, *Peace Process*, 45.
72. Arik Einstein, Israel’s most popular singer, recorded a song in 1976 titled “Od Yie” (There Would Be), which praised Nathan: “Here’s Abie Nathan on the Ship – He Sails, He Sails Into the Darkness; Ya Habibi Abie, Good Luck to You! Deep in the Heart there’s one big prayer that peace would still come upon us” [Hebrew].
73. This statement was made in a 1983 interview to Israeli television. See: “Kol Ha Shalom – Abie Nathan” YouTube video.
74. Ibid.
75. “Voice of Peace – Kol Ha Shalom” YouTube video.
76. Abie Nathan to Prime Minister Menachem Begin, Telegram, undated, ANPP [Hebrew].
77. For adoption requests, see: Ilana and Yaakov Shahar to Abie Nathan, September 1 1979, Abie Nathan Archive; Shapir Linda to Abie Nathan, undated, ANPP [Hebrew].

78. Eyal Levi, "Abie's Friends Go Back to the Person who Crossed Continents to Save Lives" *Ma'ariv*, August 25, 2018, <http://www.maariv.co.il/news/israel/Article-658120>, accessed on July 6, 2020 [Hebrew].
79. Loeffler, *Rooted Cosmopolitans*, 276–88.
80. Abie Nathan to Knesset Members, October 10, 1979, Uri Porat – Communications Advisor, G 9143/4, ISA [Hebrew].
81. Arnold Lewis, "The Peace Ritual", 699.
82. See: "Abie Nathan Stopped his Hunger in Respect of the Knesset", *Ha'aretz*, June 28, 1978. On a different hunger-strike in 1982, a woman who decided to remain anonymous wrote the government that she was joining Abie Nathan's hunger-strike. See: "A Statement" January 4, 1982, ANPP [Hebrew].
83. Danke Harnish, "Peace Romantics at the Yarkon Park" *Davar*, August 28, 1980.
84. Irit Rotem, "Mambush: We Won't Agree for Abie who belongs to all of us to be Used by Clarita for her Private Needs" *Ma'ariv*, October 30, 1986.
85. Hagai Eshed, "Begin Vs Abie" *Davar*, February 12, 1982; Of the proposed legislation see: the fifty sixth session of the tenth Knesset, 9 February, 1982.
86. Geula Cohen, *ibid.*
87. *Ibid.*
88. Gali Atari, "Ei Sham", 1978. Lyrics by Dudu Topaz.
89. "Operation Give a Smile by *Voice of Peace*", Abie Nathan Private Papers, ANPP.
90. "Shamir and Peres to hold a Public Debate on *Kol Ha Shalom*" *Ma'ariv*, August 30, 1988.
91. See: Sdot Yam to Nathan, undated; Avi Nabak to Prime Minister, "Petition for the Peace Ship – Abie Nathan"; Letter, February 19, 1982, ANPP.
92. See: Dan Arkin, "Stormy Reception for Nathan in the Airport" *Ma'ariv*, September 16, 1988. Already in 1986 four members of the Israeli Socialist Movement ("Shasi") travelled to Romania to meet with Arafat. They were prosecuted by the state. See: Reuven Kaminer, "The State Cannot".
93. See: Stephen Franklin, "Israeli Activist Starts Prison Term" *Chicago Tribune*, October 11, 1989; Ian Black, "Broadcaster is Imprisoned for Meeting Arafat" *the Guardian*, October 4, 1989.
94. Mary Mcgregor, "A Hopeful Note on the Middle East" *Washington Post*, March 27, 1990.
95. Clyde Haberman, "Israel Jails Abie Nathan for New Arafat Contact" *New York Times*, October 7, 1991.
96. Curt Goering, "Amnesty International Today".
97. "Abie Nathan's Jail Term Cut Sharply by Israeli President" *New York Times*, March 30, 1992.
98. David Hoffman, "Mideast 'Voice of Peace' Signs Off After 20 Years" *Washington Post*, September 27, 1993.
99. Nathan made the comment in Izzy Abrahami's documentary *Israel - The Changing of the Minds*.
100. On flaws of the Oslo process, see: Anziska, 282–7. Radical Israeli peace activists recognized the core weaknesses of the Oslo process already at the time. See: Hermann, 136.
101. For a detailed analysis of Barak's statement see: Baruch Kimmerling, review of Ehud Barak.
102. "A Ceremony for the naming of a street after Abie Nathan" YouTube Video.
103. *Ibid.*
104. Ian Lustick, *Paradigm Lost*, 63; Shafir, *Half Century of Occupation*, 176.
105. Hermann, 187.

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