

POSTSCRIPT

# 'It Is Over, But Yet It Is Not Complete'

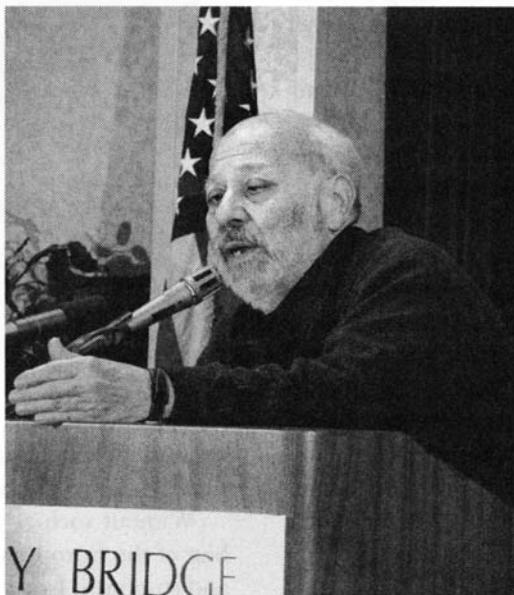
by Michele Steinberg

On May 6, 2005, a quiet tribute to Maxim Ghilan appeared in the pages of the *Daily Star* of Lebanon, in a commentary by Professor Abdul Aziz Said and Nathan C. Funk, which stated that the "Road Map" was dead, and that new steps needed to be taken to restore the hope of a permanent peace. In the article, the authors' fifth proposal was, that "Arab leaders can make a statement affirming people-to-people contact in the cause of peace in conjunction with their announcement of an initiative honoring the late Israeli peacemaker Maxim Ghilan, namely, the founding of a 'Brotherhood and Sisterhood of the Middle East Movement,' to expand and deepen commitment to principles of regional peace, justice and coexistence."

This small note, encapsulating a great idea, was a tribute to Maxim Ghilan's life, especially his last two visits to the United States, November-December 2004 and February-March 2005, where he lectured, debated, and held dozens of private meetings with policy makers and military and intelligence professionals, providing for them a most unique look into the struggle for sovereign nation-states in Southwest Asia.

Ghilan was not a mere peace activist. Within the peace camp in Israel, he uniquely played the role of strategic analyst, especially through the pages of *Israel & Palestine* magazine, which he published for more than 30 years. He passionately and uncompromisingly believed in *equal* rights for Palestinians and Jews in Israel. He identified himself as part of the "anti-Zionist" peace camp in Israel.

Because of his bold moves in the early 1970's to establish relations with the Palestinian leadership, including his friend, Yasser Arafat—at a time when it was totally



Maxim Ghilan addresses a meeting of the LaRouche Youth Movement, November 2004.

illegal to do so—Ghilan suffered exile. When he returned to Israel after the Oslo Accords—which he opposed because he believed that any treaty with a five-year delay and no concrete measures for economic improvements, would fail—he found himself impoverished, often having to choose whether to spend his money on food and medical expenses, or for political work.

It is in the spirit of that last hectic, month-long winter visit to the U.S., when I was privileged to work closely with him, that this postscript is written: For his friends and associates, who, I hope, will work to fulfill his dream. Ghilan demanded it of those who sympathized with

him, prophetically naming his last published poem, "It is over, but yet it is not complete."

## A Hopeful Goodbye

Maxim Ghilan left the United States for the last time on March 4, 2005, his forgotten wool cap still in my closet, expecting his return this fall, when he would continue work on projects he juggled during that hectic winter month.

There was much work to be done. We spent the last week frantically working on his website, [www.maximghilan.com](http://www.maximghilan.com), in Hebrew and English; on plans to republish, with a new introduction, the 1973 classic, his *How Israel Lost Its Soul*, once a Pelican (Penguin) paperback bestseller; on the much-needed funding for the next edition of the Hebrew magazine *Mitan*; on the half-completed next issue of *Israel & Palestine Strategic Update*; and, on mapping out the quest to find a publisher for his new book, *Against—A Memoir*.

In that short visit, Maxim Ghilan shook the Washing-

ton elite, both in public speeches and private meetings. At a forum sponsored by a private group, the Committee for the Republic, he confronted not only the fanatics of the Yesha settlers' movement, but also an Israeli liberal reporter, whom he publicly chastised for never mentioning, during her presentation on the "human costs" of terrorism, the tens of thousands of Palestinian civilians, especially children, who have been injured and killed by Israeli armed forces as "collateral damage."

He also delivered a speech commemorating his old friend, Dr. Hisham Shirabi, at a memorial held at the Palestine Center in Washington.

But he had the greatest impact in the dozens of private meetings in New York City and Washington, held in a race against space and time. Ghilan shared his knowledge of the Israeli and the Palestinian leadership, garnered through the direct battle to establish a peace dialogue for more than 30 years, with American strategic thinkers. He represented a channel of collaboration between the United States and Israel that could make a unique contribution to the fight to defeat the plans of the Bush-Cheney-Sharon bloc to impose perpetual war on the region, and the world. He knew that his role in the resistance against the warmongers of the U.S. and Israel was crucial.

Maxim's mission was not oriented to the short term, but to the future for all mankind. He agreed with his friend, Lyndon LaRouche, that ideas are the most powerful force in shaping history.

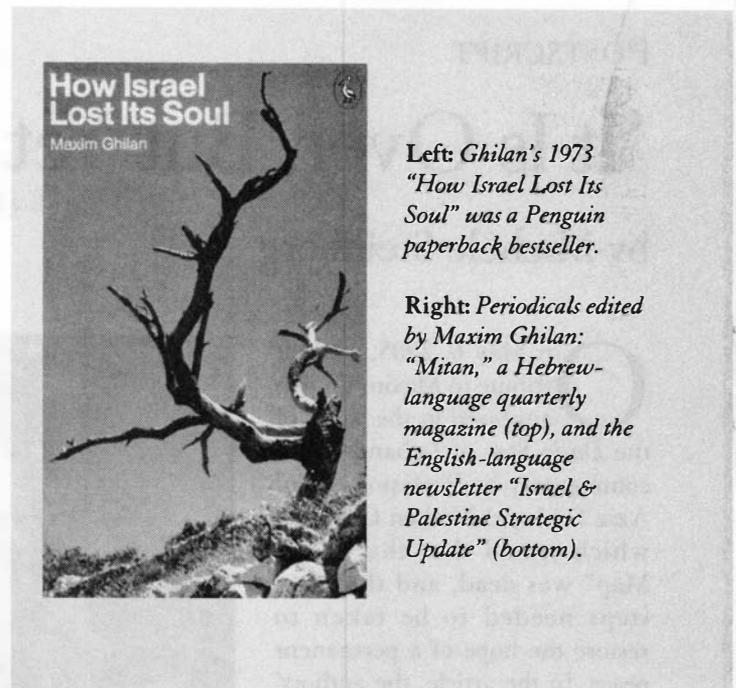
Concretely, his immediate passion was to establish Koah Yozem ("Initiatives Start-up"), the Israeli affiliate of the International Jewish Peace Union, on a firm footing. Koah Yozem is an Arab-Israeli organization based in the poor areas of Jaffa, which would provide a forum of dialogue and education for young Jews and Arabs living in Israel.

As he described it in a December 2004 letter seeking funding for Koah Yozem:

Our Israeli work is considered by us to be essential, since the Israeli Jewish sector is now the only element that may sway the situation one way or the other. An urgent need exists for true universal ethics to be taught, for Jewish-Arab-Christian solidarity, for a feeling of justice, for repairing the moral and practical degradation of Israeli society. As for myself, I see in such work almost a mission.

Ghilan was uncompromising on the principles of civil rights. He would not participate in, or support an organization that was not open to *all* religions, races, nationalities, and which did not give equal rights to women.

And, he was certain that unless he, personally, turned around the axioms of Israeli society, which he saw as steadily descending into a xenophobic war-state that



**Left:** Ghilan's 1973 "How Israel Lost Its Soul" was a Penguin paperback bestseller.

**Right:** Periodicals edited by Maxim Ghilan: "Mitan," a Hebrew-language quarterly magazine (top), and the English-language newsletter "Israel & Palestine Strategic Update" (bottom).

squeezed education into a narrow trough, devoid of the richness of the ethics, literature, and beauty of other cultures, Israel would become fascist.

Without such a renaissance in education, in which the best of the European traditions of Jewry would be revived and sustained, Israel would be lost. He shared the idea of a commitment to universal culture with his friend, the late Nahum Goldmann, founder of the World Jewish Congress, and past president of the World Zionist Organization. Goldmann had been the benefactor of Ghilan's project of more than three decades, *Israel & Palestine* magazine.

Ghilan was a "warrior/philosopher," who believed that the best fighters for peace were those who had faced war and killing, as he himself had done in the fight for the creation of State of Israel; that through that experience, the warriors knew that peace was the only answer. He could run down the list of examples of warriors-turned-peacemakers, including fellow peace fighter Uri Avnery, who had been severely wounded while in the Israeli Army.

Ghilan saw many of his collaborators, both Israeli and Palestinian, felled by assassinations. Had he been in Portugal in 1983, when his counterpart in the secret Israeli-Palestinian backchannel talks, Dr. Issam Sartawi, was assassinated, he too would likely have been killed.

He brought to light many "secrets" that Americans do not know about the Israeli-Palestinian struggle. For example, Israelis are not permitted to travel to the Occupied Territories without special permission. Therefore, only a small handful of Israeli journalists are able to wit-



ness and report what the occupation has done to the Palestinian population. He openly talked about the growing poverty and economic injustice inside Israeli society, and horrible conditions of the children-without-a-country, who live off garbage dumps because their parents are guest workers whose working papers have expired. Ghilan was honest about those things that the Israeli government, and leading Israeli “community” organizations in the U.S., want to cover up.

Ghilan’s legacy is his courage. We did not agree on many things, but he was never afraid to discuss—and look deeply into an issue. Perhaps it was with Ghilan, and those like him, in mind, that Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin toasted to the future with the words, “History belongs to those with the courage to change their axioms.”

Maxim did not publish the autobiographical *Against—A Memoir* before his untimely death on April 2, 2005, nor did he finish writing it. It is an “unfinished symphony,” as was his life. But we are proud to publish the following of Ghilan’s chapter outlines about his extraordinary, beautiful life, as well as a chronology in his own words.

### From the Outline of *Against—A Memoir*

#### CHAPTER III. ON OUR WAY TO PALESTINE: FROM MILLIONAIRE KID TO PAUPER IN A SLUM (1944-1946)

The Nazi threat in Spain / The American Joint Canada options for refugee children / My sister and

myself refuse further family separations / Only way out: Palestine / The trip to Cadiz / The good ship Nyassa / Illegal immigrants travel as potato-sacks / A German submarine follows us / What’s worth more: killing 900 Jews or keeping in the Portuguese’s graces? / Arriving at Atlith / Quarantine: my mother realizes she’s lost her husband for good and collapses / Living in a slum / The internal flood / Stranger in a strange land: a pampered kid among sewer-rats / A Bar Mitzvah at the age of 15 / How I did not become an Orthodox rabbi / 1945: World War II V-Day in Tel Aviv / My 53 trades / My mother becomes paralyzed / A turning point: British curfew at the slums / Glimmerings of Israeli nationalism: a trip throughout the country / 1946: one day in Jerusalem.

#### CHAPTER IV. THE MAKINGS OF IDEALISM; CONFUSED IN THE WAR OF INDEPENDENCE, I BECOME A TERRORIST (1947-1950)

In need of an education / The making of an autodidact / Studying by oil-lamp light / Drafted to the civil guard at age 16—sticks and maces / Stand-off with Arab villagers in an orange grove / The burning of Shekhunat Ezra / Sworn into the Haganah on a Bible and a gun / Frontlines: guarding Tel Aviv’s borders / Almost shot by my own side / Marching through conquered Jaffa town / At the seashore: the sinking of SS Altalena by the Haganah / I leave the Haganah for the Stern group, in protest / Underground at age 17 / The assassination of Count Folke Bernadotte seen from the rank-and-file / Fighting for the freedom of two jailed leaders / Yalin Mor—from jail to the first Knesset / Member of the slum’s Fighter Party leadership at 19 / My first “personal” terrorist organization / Gekhalim (“Embers”) our underground paper.

#### From a Private Memorandum: ‘Highlights—Maxim Ghilan’

- 1931 Born in Lille, France.
- 1935 Family emigrated to Spain.
- 1939 Father sentenced to death by Franco forces. Disappeared, considered dead.
- 1944 Rest of family emigrated to Palestine.
- 1946 Joined the Haganah militias.

- 1947 Fought in war of independence.
- 1948 Joined Stern Group.
- 1953/54 Jailed as underground nationalist leader. In jail, witnessed torture of Arab inmates by guards and started changing his views.
- 1959 Became convinced of rights of both Arabs and Jews in Israel/Palestine. Created first non-Communist Jewish-Arab circle in Israel. Member of the Jewish-Arab committee to abolish military regime for Arab villages in Israel.
- 1960's Journalist, editor, translator, poet, etc. Worked with Uri Avneri at his weekly as rewrite editor and deputy editor.
- 1966 Broke censorship revealing relations between Israeli secret services and the assassination of Third World leader Mehdi Ben-Barka. Jailed. Released after international campaign in his favor with participation of Bertrand Russell, Jean-Paul Sartre, the New York Times, etc.
- 1967 With other Israeli and Arab journalists, stopped mass-killings of Arab male refugees returning to the Jerusalem area after Six Days War.
- 1969 Moved "temporarily" to Europe, before becoming political exile.
- 1971 Started publication of *I&P (Israel & Palestine)*, a magazine which is still coming out (February 2005).
- 1972 Initiated contacts with the PLO and became one of first Israelis to participate in secret talks.  
After PLO representative in London, Said Hamami, was assassinated by Iraqi agents, because of his contacts with Ghilan and others, linked up with Dr. Issam Sartawi and continued this work. As a result had to become political exile—an exile that lasted 23 years (returned in 1993).
- 1973 Published *How Israel Lost Its Soul*, historical analysis, Pelican (Penguin) Books, London.
- 1977 Started publication of *Report on the Palestinians Under Israeli Rule*, at first under United Nations Human Rights sponsorship, afterwards under that of Nahum Goldmann.
- 1980's-1990's Co-founded the International Coordinating Committee of NGOs dealing with the Question of Palestine and sponsored by the United Nations. Member of this ICCP for eight years, of the European one (ECCP) for three years. Conducted international campaign among Jews for the gradual and controlled return of the Palestinian refugees to both Palestine and Israel.
- 1993 Allowed to return to Israel after human rights

pressure exerted on Israeli government.

Created the Committee To Open Borders to help forced immigrants, a committee of Israeli writers and artists with the participation of then-Culture Minister Shulamit Alony.

- 1993-Present Shares his time between Israel/Palestine and abroad. Educational work with young Jewish Israelis. Continues publishing *I&P*. Published fifth collection of Hebrew poetry, *Mapping*. Published sixth poetry collection (2002), *In a Crumbling House*.
- 1996 Founded *Mitan* ("Charge"), a Hebrew quarterly magazine of ideas oriented on the principle of an Israeli State for all citizens, Jewish, Arab, Christian or other. Through 2004, edited eight issues of *Mitan*, a cultural-social-political review of all sectors of the non-Zionist Israeli and Jewish camps.
- 1997 Work in favor of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon. Project of "Progressive Wish"—Israeli delegation to Lebanon and Syria cancelled after Shimon Peres launched Operation Grapes of Wrath against Lebanese civilians.
- 1998 Publication of *Florentine Talks*, conversations (Hebrew). Elected member of Israeli Writers National Committee.
- 2000 Tried to set up coalition of peace forces in Israel.
- 2002 Launched information campaign in France. Invited to Southern France's Press Club, interviews by two dailies, one TV station, one radio. Contacts with local personalities. Meetings with political and trade union activists of a variety of parties. Visits and discussion with underprivileged youths in Social Centers (mostly of Arab background), in order to defuse growing polarization between Jews and Arabs in France.  
Published eighth book, *Bevait Koress (In a Crumbling House)*.
- 2003 Revives an Israeli Jewish-Arab association, Koah Yozem ("Initiatives Start-up"), headed by Maxim Ghilan, Dr. Khalil Abu Rabia (Bedouin intellectual leader), and Yossef Granowski (former officer, writer, and public servant), to educate Arabs and Jews in the spirit of non-religious citizenship of all Israelis and inhabitants of the State.  
Meetings with leading non-Jewish and Jewish personalities in Europe and from the United States.
- 2004 Awarded Levi Eshkol Prize for Literary Excellence.