

DIPLOMAT HAS SPENT 25 YEARS TRYING TO GET SIDES TO NEGOTIATE

BY SIMON YAFFE

ALON Ben-Meir must be the eternal optimist.

The Israeli intelligence officer has spent the past 25 years trying to get the Israelis and the Palestinians to come to an agreement.

It hasn't happened — but Alon is not giving up hope just yet.

He told me from his New York City home: "Firstly, we have to begin a process of reconciliation and then they have to get over the distrust on both sides and the deep sense of insecurity they have for each other. Then they can sit down and begin to negotiate."

Alon has been directly involved in various Track II diplomatic negotiations for a quarter-of-a-century and is an advocate of the Arab Peace Initiative, the proposal for an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict that was endorsed by the Arab League in 2002.

He also operates regularly as a liaison between Israeli, Arab and Turkish officials.

Alon, who serves as a senior fellow at New York University's Centre for Global Affairs, explained: "I made it my business to befriend every Arab ambassador in New York."

"When Benjamin Netanyahu first became Israeli prime minister in 1996, I was asked by Syrian officials whether I could test the water with him.

"I went to meet Netanyahu, but he was very dismissive."

Alon was later told that Syrian president Bashar al-Assad was interested in exploring peace with then-Israel prime minister Ehud Olmert.

Alon, who also regularly briefs at the American State Department for the International Visitors Programme, was born in Baghdad in 1937.

He recalled: "It was a beautiful

Alon refusing to give up on peace

place and the relationship between Jews and Arabs there was nice, with some exceptions, of course."

He moved to Iran with his family, aged seven. And in 1952, the family moved to Israel.

He read journalism at the University of Tel Aviv and gained a PhD in international relations and a master's degree in philosophy from Oxford.

After moving to America, the father-of-six taught at various universities.

He also hosts 'Global Leaders: Conversations with Alon Ben-Meir', a speaking series of debates and conversations with top policymakers from around the world, held each term at New York University.

An advisor to the French Foreign Ministry on its ongoing efforts to reinvigorate the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, Alon provided the French and the European Union with a comprehensive framework for peace that principally differs from any previous approach to peace negotiations.

He explained: "There has to be mitigation over trust and security for the Israelis and Palestinians.

"Both are equally to blame, without question.

"The Israelis have maintained

an occupation on the West Bank for 50 years, while the Palestinians have endorsed terrorism and extremism.

"Netanyahu is not committed to a two-state solution, while Mahmoud Abbas cannot afford to make any concessions."

Could there, perhaps inconceivably, also be any kind of deal between Israel and Syria and Israel and Iran?

Alon said: "Do not forget that Iran had a good relationship with Israel and Jews before the Islamic Revolution in 1979.

"Syria is currently in turmoil and it is going to be years before there is any kind of proper political structure there."

Israeli relations with Turkey were seriously damaged in when the latter played a part in the 2010 Gaza Freedom Flotilla.

"Because the Turks know me well, they asked if I would get an apology from Israel, which I worked on for a number of years," Alon continued.

"I spent six years going backwards and forwards.

"Now, I can envisage a more cordial relationship between Israel and Turkey.

"There is still tremendous trade going on between the two countries."

■ alonben-meir.com



OPTIMIST: Alon Ben-Meir

I&M caterers

Bespoke Catering Services

Tel: 0161 832 2167
Email: info@imkoshercaterers.com
Web: www.imkoshercaterers.com
PLEASE NOTE OUR NEW WEBSITE ADDRESS
Under the Supervision of the Manchester Beth Din



Doctor: 'Chicken soup' diet is not to blame for Ashkenazim bowel problems



RESEARCH: Dr Adam Levine

Dr Levine took his PhD under the supervision of Professor Tony Segal, who is working on characterising the nature of the genetic predisposition to IBD among the Ashkenazi population.

The research is conducted to provide important insight into the mechanism of the disease and to contribute to the ability to predict the risk and severity of disease and permit the development of new and personalised treatments.

By finding genetic risk factors that are more common in patients with IBD than in people without IBD, it will inform experts' understanding of the processes that may occur within the body when the disease occurs.

But is the Ashkenazi diet to blame for IBD?

Dr Levine said: "It would be nice to think it could be down to chicken soup, but that is not true."

■ www.bsg.org.uk

AROUND one per cent of the UK's Ashkenazim suffers from inflammatory bowel disease, writes SIMON YAFFE.

And the disease, which is mainly used to describe Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis, is four times more prevalent among the same group.

Dr Adam Levine, who has researched the prevalence of inflammatory bowel disease among the Jewish population of the UK, said: "The frequency of this disease around the world has also increased."

"We do not entirely understand why it is."

"It could be to do with a lot of things, such as the environment or that IBD is easier to diagnose."

"We cannot fully explain why it is more prevalent among Ashkenazim, but we believe part of the reason is genetic factors."

"There are genetic

risk variants which are particularly common among Jews which makes them more predisposed."

London-raised Dr Levine, a junior doctor at Barnet General Hospital, obtained his doctorate in genetics from University College London for research undertaken investigating inflammatory bowel disease in Ashkenazi families.

He is still an honorary research associate at UCL.

"There is no convincing data to prove that diet is the cause."

"A number of genetic diseases among Jews, such as Tay Sachs, are caused by a single gene."

"Crohn's and colitis, however, are not like that. There is no single gene, but lots of genetic factors which means they are likely to develop."

The team at UCL has recruited Jews with IBD and is currently in the process of analysing data.

Dr Levine is also part of the team at Jewish Digest, a charity run by volunteers for people suffering with Crohn's and ulcerative colitis.

The British Society of Gastroenterology and patient charity CORE will host a public meeting called Exploring the Science of Digestion on Monday (5-7pm), at the Manchester Central Convention Complex.

Core is registered charity 1137029

PROGRAMME:

4.30pm Doors open
5.00pm Start

Welcome:

Dr Phil Smith, Trustee, Core and Professor Chris Hawkey, Chair, Core

IBS (Irritable Bowel Syndrome)

Where is the problem?
Professor Peter Whorwell

Our microbiome

The role of vital gut bacteria in obesity, diet and nutrition
Professor Kevin Whelan

This is my story

Richard Aylett
An inspirational patient perspective

www.corecharity.org.uk

ALL WELCOME!

Tickets are FREE but must be reserved in advance, to book or for more information:

VISIT
manchesterdigestion2017.eventbrite.co.uk

core
FIGHTING DIGESTIVE DISEASES

Core is the only UK charity dedicated to fighting all digestive conditions of the gut, liver and pancreas. We lead the way in funding vital research, providing expert information for people affected and promoting good gut health.



MANCHESTER CENTRAL CONVENTION COMPLEX LTD.
Petersfield, M2 3GX

Call 01484 483123 to book your tickets

www.corecharity.org.uk