

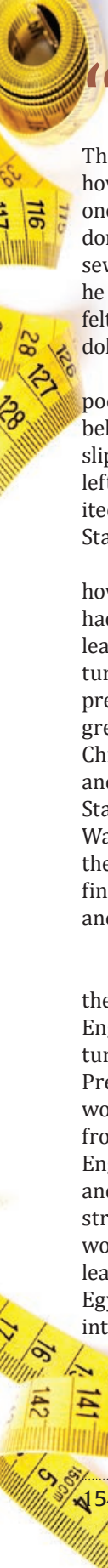
# Tailor (...and Advisor) to Presidents

The Incredible Story of  
Martin Greenfield

Martin Greenfield is a legend in men's clothing. He has hand-tailored suits for Presidents from Eisenhower to Obama, as well as for famous celebrities. But if Martin's suits are famous, his personal story is less well-known. Martin came to America with nothing, started as a floor boy in a Brooklyn suit factory and worked his way up to be one of the most celebrated tailors in the world. Now, in a dramatic interview with **Zman**, Greenfield goes back to the beginning of his life, to his childhood in Czechoslovakia and his time in Auschwitz and Buchenwald, to his start in the American garment industry and career as a master tailor (...and advisor) to Presidents.

Shimon Rosenberg - Turx





**I**f you want to end the Suez Crisis, you'll send [Secretary of State] John Dulles on a two-week vacation."

That was the note President Dwight D. Eisenhower found hidden in his breast pocket one pleasant morning in 1956. He had just donned a brand-new, custom suit, specially sewn by one of America's best tailors. When he looked in the mirror he felt satisfied. He felt more than satisfied. He felt like a million dollars.

Then he put his hand into the breast pocket and felt something that did not belong. It was a small note. He took out the slip of paper and read the message—which left him in shock. Who dared offer unsolicited advice to the President of the United States by smuggling a note into his pocket?!

Even before reading the note, Eisenhower was feeling incensed, as if a friend had betrayed him. His allies in Europe, the leaders of Great Britain and France, had turned their backs on him just as he was preparing for reelection. Eisenhower—the great war hero, the former Commander-in-Chief of Allied Forces during World War II and the incumbent President of the United States—was expecting a landslide victory. War-weary Americans were happy with their warrior-turned-politician who had finally delivered them years of prosperity and peace. Everything was going perfectly...

And then war broke out in the Middle East.

This was no ordinary conflict, even for the Middle East. It teamed the State of Israel, England and France against Egypt. The turmoil began on July 26 when Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser stunned the world by seizing control of the Suez Canal from its French and British owners. Neither England nor France was willing to sit quietly and allow Egypt to wrest control of this strategically important waterway. They worked out a secret agreement with Israeli leaders under which the IDF would attack Egypt, allowing France and England to intervene under the guise of restoring order and driving the upstart Nasser from power.

It was a strange alliance from the beginning. France had remained

neutral in the ongoing conflict between Israel and its Arab neighbors. England had openly favored the Arab side, at least in action if not in open speech. Yet, now the three united to confront the pan-Arab nationalist Nasser and the danger his presidency presented to the world order.

On October 29, Israeli forces invaded the Egyptian-controlled Sinai Peninsula. On November 5, the military forces of England and France joined them in a frontal assault against Egyptian forces. Across the ocean, in Washington, Eisenhower was furious that the two European powers had not even bothered to notify him of their intentions. Clearly their intervention was nothing but a pretext to regain control of the canal.

Eisenhower immediately sent US Secretary of State John Foster Dulles to exert pressure on Britain and France to withdraw. The US was so adamant that the aggression stop, it even threatened to block oil shipments to Europe, a move which threatened to trigger an economic tsunami in Europe.



A damaged Egyptian tank, after the British and French invaded.



Nasser observing the Suez front with Egyptian officers during the 1968 War of Attrition.

A Jewish war survivor and tailor named Martin (Moshe) Greenfield followed the world events from his tailor shop in the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn in New York City. He was very upset by America's involvement. He believed that the United States was best off staying neutral and allowing matters to run their natural course.

Undoubtedly, there were many Jews in Brooklyn that had sage advice to offer the President of the United States. Only one of them, though, found a way to reach him. Greenfield could do so because he was the president's tailor.

Not only that, but he felt a special connection with the president. To him, Dwight D. Eisenhower was the heroic general who saved his life, the commander of the forces who liberated the Buchenwald concentration camp where he and thousands of other Jewish prisoners were interned and living under the unimaginably inhumane Nazi SS. He was certain Eisenhower would appreciate his advice....

## 100-Year History

It was a freezing winter day when we visited the factory of Martin Greenfield Clothiers at 239 Varet Street in east Williamsburg. That building is home to almost 100 years of history. It is the building where the fanciest and most expensive suits in America have been produced. Since 1917, the most important world figures, including presidents and prime ministers, statesmen and millionaires, rising stars and other VIPs have been outfitted by Greenfield and his company's predecessor, GGG.

Heading the operation, Martin Greenfield arrived in America as a teenager with nothing to his name. His entire family had been wiped out by the Nazis. Determinedly, he learned a trade at a world-renowned Brooklyn tailor shop and quickly rose through the ranks. From a simple floor boy he became a tailor, then a supervisor and then an executive... until he bought out the entire business!

"The President's Tailor" is how he became known to many people. "Best Tailor in the World!" was the headline screaming on the



USS America (CV-66), an American aircraft carrier in the Suez Canal.



Secretary of State John Foster Dulles and President Dwight Eisenhower in the Oval Office, August 1956.

front page of one European newspaper. Over the years, Martin Greenfield has been in the headlines of major newspapers more often than most of the people we have interviewed.

His reputation as the world's best tailor is well deserved. He is a one-of-a-kind success story; a living lesson that, if it is so decreed in Heaven, anyone can succeed. Barely 70 years ago, he was a famished, tortured youth who had suffered in Auschwitz and Buchenwald. Who would have dreamed that such a person would one day become a frequent guest at the White House? A man who would become a brand name among generals and wealthy magnates alike?

Martin Greenfield is the consummate master of his art, a man who can transform anyone's image with his magnificent suits. He symbolizes perfectionism, someone who can tell at a single glance what material a suit is made of. ("Cheap Chinese material" was his immediate response when he took a quick look at what I was wearing.)

"In August, I will be 87," he tells us. "If the *Aibishter* will grant me to reach then," he adds humbly. Yet, he is not even considering retirement. He arrives every day at his