

SHIN BET APPEARS TO BE INVOLVED IN A NEW SCANDAL

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, April 16 (JTA) -- The Shin Bet, Israel's internal security service, appears to be implicated in a new scandal involving the possible fabrication of evidence that sent an Israel Defense Force officer to prison for treason six years ago:

Tight censorship spawned rumor and speculation in the media until this week when MK Mordechai Virshubsky of the Shinui Party appealed to the Defense Minister and Minister of Justice to "clear the air." As a result, the cover of secrecy was lifted partially but the information which emerged in the media Thursday was vague and had the effect only of increasing speculation.

Premier Yitzhak Shamir, in his first public comment on the affair, told Israel Radio Thursday that the political echelons were in no way involved or implicated. He said those persons alleged to be connected should be investigated by the courts. "There is no intention to cover anything up," he said.

Involved Persons Identified

The IDF officer convicted of treason, espionage and passing military information to the enemy was identified publicly for the first time. He is former Lt. Azzat Nafsu from the Circassian village of Karf Kamma who was sentenced in 1980 to 18 years in prison and reduced in rank to private.

Also mentioned in the case was Yossi Ginnosar, a former senior Shin Bet operative, one of three who received a Presidential pardon last year in connection with the murder of two captured Arab bus hijackers by Shin Bet agents in 1984. None of the three was ever formally charged or tried, and, according to legal experts, the pardon was an acknowledgement of guilt in the killings and subsequent attempted cover-up.

The connection between Ginnosar and Nafsu is not known. Nafsu, whose case was kept secret until now, maintains his innocence and contends he was convicted by a military court on the basis of manufactured evidence. Last year, a military court of appeals upheld his conviction. But six months ago, the Knesset amended the law to allow soldiers to carry their appeals beyond the military justice system. Nafsu has since appealed to the Supreme Court.

The Shin Bet has been implicated on the basis of published reports that Ginnosar told investigators in the bus hijackers' case that Shin Bet routinely fabricated evidence to protect itself. He was quoted as saying this was "standard procedure." Apparently it was Shin Bet evidence which helped convict Nafsu.

Shin Bet also is reported to have proposed that Nafsu be granted a Presidential pardon and released from prison in order to forestall his appeal to the Supreme Court. Justice Minister Avraham Sharir said Thursday that the appeal should be pressed with full confidence in the legal system and its ability to see that justice is done. The IDF also wants Nafsu's appeal to be heard, though in closed session. The Circassians

are a Moslem minority from the Caucasus who fled the Czarist regime in the late 19th century to settle in territories of the Ottoman empire, including Palestine. Only 1,200 of them live in Israel. They are full citizens, fiercely patriotic and, apart from the Druze who are indigenous to the region, are the only Moslems permitted to serve in the IDF.

WJCONGRESS ACCUSES MEESE OF IMPEDING JUSTICE FOR NAZI WAR CRIMINALS

By Margie Olster

NEW YORK, April 16 (JTA) -- The World Jewish Congress accused Attorney General Edwin Meese of protecting Nazi war criminals and impeding justice for Karl Linas, the Nazi war criminal who came within hours Wednesday of receiving political asylum in Panama and escaping deportation to the Soviet Union to face war crimes charges.

While virtually the entire Jewish community was celebrating Passover, Meese decided to deport Linas to Panama after 16 other countries had rejected asylum bids for the man found guilty in absentia in the Soviet Union of executing men, women and children in a Tartu, Estonia, camp during the Holocaust.

Elan Steinberg, WJC executive director, said WJC officials learned Monday night, during the Seder, of Meese's intentions from government sources. The sources said Panama had agreed on April 10, five days earlier, to grant Linas asylum but Meese did not act on the invitation until the Passover holiday began, Steinberg said. Panama withdrew the offer for asylum Wednesday afternoon.

Not A Coincidence

Had news of Meese's intended action not leaked out, Steinberg said Linas would now be "vacationing" in a free, safe haven in Panama, where he would have disappeared and escaped justice permanently.

"This was not a coincidence. It was an attempt to catch the Jewish community at a time when it could not react," Steinberg said.

"Meese seems to show a greater sensitivity for Nazis than he does for their victims," he said.

The WJC officials immediately contacted representatives of Panama in the U.S. the Ambassador, the UN Ambassador and the Panamanian Consul General in New York. The WJC also informed the Jewish community of Panama of the decision. On Tuesday, Eli Rosenbaum, WJC general counsel, Menachem Rosensaft, chairman of the International Network of Children of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, and Brooklyn District Attorney Elizabeth Holtzman, who authored legislation for the deportation of Nazi war criminals, left New York for Washington to meet the Panamanian officials.

The Panamanian representatives said they were acting out of humanitarian reasons and were not aware of the significance of the case, Steinberg said.

Some 12,000 people died in the Tartu camp where Linas was the camp commander. Witnesses have testified that Linas would round up women.

and children in mass pits and shoot them in the head. "Linnaas has more blood on his hands than any other Nazi war criminal in the United States," Steinberg said. "The Panamanians were fooled and deceived by those attempting to help these war criminals. When they were alerted to the nature of this person, they reversed their decision within a matter of hours."

Early Wednesday the Panamanian Embassy in Washington announced the plans for deportation would be delayed until the case could be further studied. Later in the day, the Consul General in New York issued a second statement saying Linnaas' request for asylum had been denied.

Dissension In The Justice Department

"The Government of the Republic of Panama echoes the preoccupation of important sectors of the Hebrew community and the rest of the world that, as well as our country and our Government, reject and condemn the crimes committed by fascism," the statement said.

With this, Panama became the 17th country to refuse Linnaas asylum. And barring a decision by Meese to deport Linnaas to the scene of his alleged crimes in the Soviet Union, that search will likely continue.

Meese's missing signature on the deportation paperwork is the only thing blocking the execution of a Supreme Court order to deport Linnaas to the Soviet Union. All appeals, except one which is still pending, to reverse the deportation order have been denied.

Meese's decision to deport Linnaas to Panama met with dissension from Justice Department officials who included Neal Sher, head of the Office of Special Investigations which seeks and prosecutes Nazi war criminals in this country, according to press reports Thursday.

Sher and others in the Justice Department have pursued Linnaas' prosecution and deportation for some nine years. He faced nine tribunals before he was stripped of his U.S. citizenship for lying about his past to immigration officials when he entered the country in the 1950s. He was then ordered to be deported to the Soviet Union. Linnaas is currently imprisoned in lower Manhattan in an Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) prison.

Meese's handling of Linnaas' case is not the only war crimes case which has met with scathing criticisms within the Jewish community. Meese has dragged his feet for almost a year now on the Justice Department's recommendation that Austrian President Kurt Waldheim be barred from the U.S. because of his Nazi affiliations during World War II.

Steinberg called Meese's actions a "shocking pattern" of impairing justice for Nazi war criminals. "Nazi war criminals have a great protector in the name of Attorney General Edwin Meese," Steinberg said.

THE SITUATION IN THE WEST BANK

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, April 16 (JTA) -- Curfews, mass arrests and the closure of Arab campuses restored order in the West Bank over the Passover holiday. But tensions continued to run high after a weekend of violence in which Jewish settlers rampaged through Arab villages destroying property and burning fields in retaliation for the fire-bombing of a car last Saturday night which killed an Israeli woman and severely burned her

husband, three children and a young friend riding with them. The victim, Ofra Moses, 35, of Alfe-Menashe, was buried Sunday. Settlers from Alpe-Menashe erected a memorial at the site of the attack, between the Arab town of Kalkilya and Habla village, and established a vigil there. They were visibly hostile to Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin who visited the site Wednesday to try to calm spirits and answer their charges that security forces were not protecting Jewish settlers on the roads.

Curfews were clamped on a refugee camp in the Arab town of Tulkarem Tuesday and on the nearby town of Anabta where Arab youths had stoned Israeli vehicles. Curfews on Kalkilya and Habla were lifted. But Bir Zeit University near Ramallah was ordered closed for four months following a confrontation in which security forces killed one Arab student and wounded two others.

Najah University in Nablus was also closed, as was a nurses school in Ramallah. More than 100 Arabs were arrested in a police dragnet of the territory. Nine were placed in administrative detention for six months which means they can be held without formal charges filed against them.

Among them is Feisal Hussein, 45, head of the Arab Studies Society in East Jerusalem whom the authorities claim is a leading supporter of the Palestine Liberation Organization and responsible for recent unrest in the territory.

Settlers Press Their Political Demands

The settlers are using the latest terrorist attack to press their political demands. Rabin was confronted by a large sign urging the immediate deportation of terrorists released from jail in a prisoner exchange two years ago, expansion of Jewish settlements in the territory and a commission of inquiry to investigate security arrangements there.

"Today, in the area of Judaea and Samaria and Gaza there are more Israeli soldiers than all along the border with Lebanon," he told the settlers. He insisted that security measures were quite adequate. He drew catcalls and angry shouts when he reminded the settlers that living in the territories involved certain risks.

The settlers declared they were living there with the full consent of the government and it was the duty of the State to protect them. Rabin said they were protected and said there were more victims of terrorist attacks in Israel proper than in the administered territories.

Rabin Greeted With Shouts Of Derision

More shouts of derision greeted Rabin's oblique reference to hooliganism by Jewish settlers against Arab civilians and when he insisted that law and order would be maintained by the military authorities. He warned the settlers that weapons they are allowed to carry were for personal protection only.

Settlers complained that talk in the government about an international conference for Middle East peace only encouraged terrorism. Rabin told them, "We are beginning to blame ourselves rather than the PLO."

The focus of tension shifted to East Jerusalem Wednesday when a small group of Jews who call themselves "The Temple Mount Faithful" visited the Temple Mount which is reserved exclusively for Moslem worship. They came under heavy police protection. Local Arabs were incensed and one was arrested after shoving a police officer. He was released later when it was

discovered that the man is mentally disturbed. Police, fearing a disturbance, ordered the Jewish group back behind the gates to the Temple Mount area but later permitted them to re-enter the site individually.

The Temple Mount contains the Dome of the Rock and Al Aksa Mosque, two of the holiest shrines in Islam, and has often been the scene of confrontation between religious Jews and Moslem worshippers. Mayor Teddy Kollek of Jerusalem protested angrily that allowing Jews to enter the area Wednesday was a needless provocation. He was furious with the police for not consulting him beforehand.

LIFE-SIZED STATUE OF WALLEMBERG IS TO BE ERECTED IN BUDAPEST

By Maurice Samuelson

LONDON, April 16 (JTA) -- A life-sized statue of Raoul Wallenberg, the Swedish diplomat, is to be erected in Budapest, the city where he saved up to 100,000 Hungarian Jews from the Nazis and where he was seized by Stalin's agents as a suspected spy.

Following a decision of the Budapest Municipal Council, reported in the Hungarian Communist daily Nepszabadsag, it will be unveiled next month in the capital's fashionable Number Two District on the Buda side of the Danube River. The event will form part of the program of the European Executive meeting of the World Jewish Congress, from May 16-19 in Budapest.

Imre Varga, one of Hungary's leading sculptors and a member of its Communist Party's Central Committee, has produced the youthful likeness of Wallenberg whose fate, more than four decades after his abduction, still arouses worldwide speculation and overcasts relations between the Soviet Union and his native Sweden.

The city already has a small street named after Wallenberg on the opposite bank of the Danube where many Jews were sheltered from the Nazis in Swedish protected buildings. But the new statue will have additional significance.

Four years after the war a monument in Wallenberg's honor was erected in Budapest's Saint Stephen Park by a grateful Jewish community. Standing 18 feet high, it consisted of a naked man wrestling with a snake. Its plinth bore a medallion of Wallenberg's head and a glowing tribute to his actions.

However, the night before its official dedication on April 17, 1949, it was removed, only to turn up later in another part of Hungary, stripped of the references to Wallenberg.

In recent years, the Hungarians have become acutely conscious of the similarities between this episode and Wallenberg's own disappearance.

This in turn will be powerfully symbolized by the new bronze statue of Wallenberg which will stand facing a block of pink Swedish granite on which the sculptor has depicted the original monument to him and the original testimonial to his actions.

Wallenberg, then aged 32, arrived in Budapest in July 1944 on a mission to save as many Jews as possible from being deported by the Nazis to Auschwitz. Together with other diplomatic representatives, such as the Swiss Consul Carl Lutz, he issued protective passports to Hungarian Jews and flew his country's flag on buildings in which the Jews were sheltered. On January 17, 1945, Wallenberg was taken under Soviet "protection" and has never been seen subsequently

outside the Soviet Union. According to a Soviet statement issued in 1957, he died of heart failure in the Lubyanka Prison on July 17, 1947. The Swedes have never believed this and continue to press for his release -- he would now be 74 -- or a more convincing explanation of his fate.

As recently as last July, the Soviet Embassy in Stockholm informed the Swedish government that Wallenberg is dead. It did so following inquiries by Prime Minister Ingvar Carlsson during a visit to Moscow a few months earlier.

LEV AND INNA ELBERT HUNGER STRIKE LEAVES REFUSENIK COUPLE WEAK AND ILL
By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, April 16 (JTA) -- Soviet Jewry activists are concerned with the health of refusenik couple Lev and Inna Elbert, who are on the 43rd day of a hunger strike in Moscow to convince the Soviet authorities to allow them to immigrate to Israel. Because of the length of the fast, which is not their first, Inna is reportedly suffering from liver damage and Lev is extremely weak.

Last week he reportedly had heart stoppage and was advised by a doctor not to attend the Passover seder at Spaso House, the residence of the U.S. Ambassador to Moscow, at which Secretary of State George Shultz was present and to which the Elberts were invited, according to both the National Conference on Soviet Jewry (NCSJ) and the Union of Councils for Soviet Jewry (UCSJ).

Lev spoke Thursday morning with Pamela Cohen, UCSJ president, in Chicago, and Cohen told JTA that he was so weak he could not continue on the phone. However, Elbert has said, "The last weapons we have to use are our own bodies."

Elbert was visited Thursday by a delegation of Congressmen, including Steny Hoyer (D. Md.), who is chairman of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe (Helsinki Commission). The Congressional delegation is in Moscow for talks with Soviet authorities.

Elbert told Cohen that the Congressmen met Wednesday with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, who reportedly told them that "the term of refusal was from five-ten years." Asked how this term could apply to specific cases, Gorbachev is reported to have answered that a resolution of "broader issues" between the U.S. and USSR would lead to the resolution of the Elberts' case.

Prior to Passover, Elbert received a call from Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, and, according to Cohen, he told Peres that he would not end his hunger strike until he had some "factual information" that the Soviets were positively considering their case.

The Elberts appear committed to continuing the hunger strike to the end. In a telegram sent to Israel April 9, Elbert wrote that the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs had informed them in a telephone conversation of the "negative resolution" of their case, "notwithstanding the fact that we have submitted documents indicating that we possess no secrets."

Elbert, 36, is a construction engineer from Kiev. As a private in the Soviet army between 1973-75 he helped construct a swimming pool in an officers' club, and was charged with knowing "state secrets" when they first applied to emigrate in 1976. They have since applied to leave over 12 times.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES A CONFERENCE IN SEARCH OF PARTICIPANTS By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, April 16 (JTA) -- The move for an international conference as a means of bringing about negotiations between Israel and the Arab countries, particularly Jordan, seems to have received a new spurt of life in recent weeks.

But there seems as little chance of it actually coming about as it did when King Hussein of Jordan first proposed it in Washington last year in order to provide him with an "umbrella" for negotiations with Israel.

This would be true even if there was no split in Israel's national unity government between Labor and Likud over the issue. Foreign Minister Shimon Peres was in Europe last week promoting the idea, while Premier Yitzhak Shamir reiterated his firm opposition to such a conference.

This situation could change if the Soviet Union were to restore diplomatic relations with Israel, broken since the 1967 Six-Day War.

Hussein has demanded that the international conference include the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, two of whom, the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China, do not have diplomatic relations with Israel.

The Soviet Factor

Both the Reagan Administration and Israel have rejected Soviet participation until Moscow restores diplomatic ties with Israel. Although China is rarely mentioned in this context, it too would have to open relations with Israel before it could participate in an international conference.

The Soviet Union, which has joined the effort pressing for an international conference, apparently sees it as a way for Moscow to be dealt into the Middle East peace process. The Kremlin has been dropping hints about restoring relations and the increased Jewish emigration from the USSR may also have something to do with this.

Peres returned home encouraged from a meeting in Rome with two Soviet officials and more may be learned when Soviet officials visit Israel this month, ostensibly to inspect Soviet property there.

There was no public sign during Secretary of State George Shultz's meetings in Moscow this week. But when Shultz was asked at a press conference last week whether he would discuss an international conference with the Soviets, he appeared to reject it.

Shultz reiterated his position that the "object is greater stability and, in the end, peaceful relationships between countries in the Middle East."

He said the U.S. believes the way to achieve this objective "is through bilateral, direct negotiations. Now the Jordanians feel, and many others feel, that there may be a role for an international conference in getting us to that point. We have been exploring with the Jordanians and others whether or not such a useful role can be defined and just how that would work."

Shultz, after his meetings with Shamir earlier this year and with Jordanian Prime Minister Zeid Rifai last week, stressed that the U.S.

was willing to explore an international conference as a means of bringing about direct negotiations, but not as a substitute for it. Shultz said direct negotiations were needed to reach an agreement between Israel and a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation and Israel and Syria.

Rifai, in his comments after meeting with Shultz, seemed to be moving away from Jordan's willingness to discuss just the West Bank and Gaza. "We're not talking about peace between Jordan and Israel," he said. "We're talking about a comprehensive settlement of the Arab-Israeli problem."

He explained this included negotiations about the Golan Heights, south Lebanon as well as the Palestinian problem, which he said was "at the core of the Middle East conflict."

Former President Carter, during his recent Mideast visit, also called for an international conference to reach a comprehensive settlement. The Carter Administration was moving to an international conference with the Soviet Union in 1977 when Egyptian President Anwar Sadat made his historic visit to Jerusalem which eventually led to direct negotiations between Israel and Egypt and the Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty.

Carter also said that in his talks with Syrian President Hafez Assad, the Syrian leader expressed a willingness to attend such a conference, a change from his earlier opposition.

When Israeli Ambassador Meir Rosenne was asked about this, he pointed to former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's experience in 1974. As Kissinger relates it in his memoirs, he and Assad had a long talk in which they finally agreed about a proposed Geneva conference, but when Kissinger asked about a preference for dates, Assad replied it didn't matter since Syria would not attend.

There is some suspicion that Assad's change of heart may have more to do with the Soviet desire to be part of the Mideast peace process than any Syrian desire for negotiations.

Issue Of Palestinian Representation

Even if a mode for an international conference could be found, there is still the question of who represents the Palestinians. Israel, and this includes both Labor and Likud, rejects any negotiations with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The U.S. rejects any dealings with the PLO until it accepts UN Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 and recognizes Israel's right to exist. Even Carter accepts this position though he said that since leaving the Presidency he has felt free to meet with members of the PLO.

Jordan and other Arab countries would no doubt press for PLO participation. The Jordanians have been saying for over a year that the PLO is ready to accept the Security Council resolutions, although every time the terrorist organization appears to be on the verge of doing so publicly it pulls back.

Israel insists that Palestinian members of a Jordanian-Palestinian delegation must come from the West Bank and Gaza. Efforts have been made for over a year to come up with some names. Although several have received the approval of Peres such a delegation is still a major stumbling block in the effort to bring about negotiations.