

Kalmanowich affair shows KGB-Israeli mafia link

by Thierry Lalevée and Joseph Brewda

On Dec. 23, 1987, Israeli businessman Shabtai Kalmanowich was arrested by Israeli authorities on charges of being “a spy for the Soviet Union.” Since his emigration from Lithuania in 1971, Kalmanowich had become a leading figure in the Israeli political and business establishment, directing a far-flung diamond, gold, gambling, prostitution, and arms-trafficking empire, based in Africa, West Germany, and New York City. When Israeli authorities announced Kalmanowich’s arrest on Jan. 10, however, they failed to mention the fact that millionaire Kalmanowich was also an officer in the Israeli foreign intelligence service, the Mossad.

Kalmanowich was something of the late CIA director Bill Casey’s ideal intelligence officer: He made a fortune as he carried out espionage.

Kalmanowich is certainly not the first Soviet Jewish emigré caught as a spy; there have been four or five over recent years. Analyzing this phenomenon, a former head of Israeli military intelligence reported on Israeli television that there are two kinds of spies among the emigrés: those who are blackmailed because their families have remained behind, and those who are ideologically committed to Soviet communism. Kalmanowich belonged to the second category.

The KGB and the Sharon mafia

Despite such self-justifying accounts, the Kalmanowich case is not an example of simple hostile penetration of one agency by another. Rather, the case highlights the fact that *a powerful faction of the Israeli intelligence establishment is aligned with the Soviet KGB.*

The type of cynical arrangement illustrated by shared KGB-Mossad asset Kalmanowich, exemplifies the core of Israeli policy toward Moscow, and, in a far different sense, toward Washington.

Following his emigration to Israel in 1971, Kalmanowich

immediately became an activist in a variety of Israeli Labour Party organizations promoting Soviet Jewish emigration to Israel. Kalmanowich used these organizations, which operated under the sanction of Armand Hammer and former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, to forward an unknown number of Soviet moles to such places as Israel, Los Angeles, and Brooklyn. After establishing a lucrative diamond business front, Kalmanowich shifted into financing and promoting the Likud bloc in Israel, beginning in the mid-1970s, and became the Knesset secretary to Israeli mobster Samuel Flatto-Sharon. A well known funder of kooky Israeli expansionist groups like the Gush Emunim and other elements of the Israeli “new right,” Flatto-Sharon has been a fugitive from French justice for financial crimes for the past 25 years, escaping extradition only by winning—i.e., buying—a seat in the Knesset.

During the same period, Kalmanowich emerged as a Mossad agent. He arranged a 1978 three-way spy swap between Israel, the United States, and the U.S.S.R., with the cooperation of the famous East German Stasi operative, Wolfgang Vogel.

During the same year that he arranged these spy exchanges, Kalmanowich integrated his diamond and gold empire into Mossad, and Soviet, intelligence operations, becoming the Israeli commercial representative to the South African “homeland” of Bophuthatswana, just outside Pretoria. This homeland is, for all intents and purposes, a gigantic whorehouse, gambling casino, and smuggling depot, under the control of “Sun International,” directed by South African mobster Sol Kirzner and the Israeli mafia. Yet, this criminal empire, integrated into prostitution and drug networks based out of such places as Cannes, France; Frankfurt, West Germany; and Brooklyn, New York, is primarily a cover for Israeli and Soviet intelligence operations.

The case of Liat

Just how such mafia operations serve as a front for espionage is indicated by one of Kalmanowich's firms, Liat. Liat runs casinos in Bophuthatswana, exacts its cut of the Republic of South Africa gold trade, traffics in arms throughout Africa, and is otherwise building small airports throughout the continent for purposes any criminal investigator would understand.

Far from representing merely the dregs of Israeli society, Liat's directors and employees include: David Tamari, the former deputy director of Israeli military intelligence; Yoram Aridur, the former secretary general of the Likud bloc and former finance minister; Ya'acov Meridor, the Likud architect of the Mossad's arms-trafficking policy; and literally dozens of "retired" Shin Beth, Mossad, and Israeli military intelligence employees.

In short, Kalmanowich's integration of criminal, business, and intelligence operations is no aberration, but a common method of Soviet and Israeli agencies. Lifelong Soviet "Trust" operative Armand Hammer is only among the more famous Soviet operatives who parlayed covertly funded Soviet business fronts into a vehicle for infiltrating Western intelligence services.

A typical, and disturbing example of Liat's operations, is Kalmanowich's oversight of the 1985 Sierra Leone coup which brought Joseph Momoh to power. Following the coup, Kalmanowich took over the country's diamond and gold export industry, and, more important, reorganized Sierra Leone intelligence. Some indication of the nature of Liat's caper is shown by the fact that Momoh's inauguration ceremonies saw not only Kalmanowich and Gen. Moshe Dayan's widow representing Israel, but also Nabih Berri, leader of the Lebanese Shi'ite Amal militia, representing Lebanon.

According to some Middle East sources, Kalmanowich's coup was intended to facilitate the creation of a "Southern Shi'ite Lebanese Republic," as part of a Syrian-Iranian-Israeli scheme to dismember Lebanon. Reportedly, Israel's Lebanese hand, Uri Lubroni, has held several meetings with Lebanese Shi'ite leaders to put this plan into effect. Whether or not these reports are accurate, Sierra Leone's wealthy Lebanese Shi'ite community leaders, like Jamil Said Mohammed, continue to fund Amal, with the apparent cooperation of the Mossad.

Freetown, Sierra Leone otherwise remains the Iranian intelligence station for West Africa. Immediately after coming to power, Joseph Momoh, who only weeks earlier had toured Israel as a guest of Kalmanowich, called for an improvement in Sierra Leone-Iranian ties. The recent tour of a Soviet Communist Party Central Committee delegation to Freetown also highlights the results of Kalmanowich's schemes.

In 1986, during the height of the now famous U.S.-Israeli scheme to arm the Iranians and the Contras, the French coast guard captured the British ship *Silver Sea*, full of weapons, and 13 mercenaries, and bound for Sierra Leone. While French

authorities first assumed they had uncovered a British intelligence plot to overthrow Israeli puppet Momoh, subsequent investigation revealed that the arms were actually bound for the Nicaraguan Contras, with Sierra Leone the transshipment point.

U.S. capers

Another side of Kalmanowich's operations has come to light: his curious relations with the National Bank of North Carolina. In early 1987, it was discovered that he had laundered \$2 million in fraudulent Merrill Lynch securities through the bank. The fraud is subject to ongoing litigation. Questions of a falling out among thieves aside, U.S. intelligence sources report that the Mossad had used NCNB as its primary means of laundering funds into the 1982 campaign war chest of North Carolina's Sen. Jesse Helms, then facing a tough electoral race. Following receipt of these funds, Baptist preacher Helms made a dramatic conversion to militant Zionism, and became the closest of friends with Ariel Sharon.

According to these intelligence reports, Kalmanowich laundered these funds through the Brooklyn-based Russian-Jewish mafia he controls. Among these Kalmanowich mafiosi is Avigdor Eskin, who emigrated to Israel after publishing the Russian translation of Meyer Kahane's *Never Again!* in the Soviet Union! Like Kalmanowich, Eskin became an aide to a Likud Knesset member, and a Gush Emunim crazy who advocated blowing up the Al Aksa Mosque on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem to spark a holy war. Still later, he became an unpaid aide to Helms.

Among the curious facts brought out by the Kalmanowich arrest is the identity of his U.S. lawyer, one Nathan Lewin. Lewin is also the attorney for Col. Aviem Sella, the Israeli officer indicted by the U.S. Attorney's office in Washington to oversee the espionage activities of Jonathan Pollard, the former U.S. naval intelligence employee now serving a life term in a U.S. federal prison. Lewin's relationship to Sella, a Sharon tool, became an embarrassment when it was later revealed that he also represented U.S. Attorney General Edwin Meese, and that Pollard's information was also finding its way to Moscow.

Thus, the Kalmanowich case is not the first time that the Sharon networks have been caught in alliance with the KGB, as the Pollards' arrest indicates. In March 1986, *EIR* published a special report: "Ariel Sharon and the Israeli Mafia: Moscow's Secret Weapon," which detailed exactly how the arrangement functions. Following publication of that special report, U.S. government spokesmen began to leak an analysis of the Pollard case reflecting *EIR's* impact. In December of 1987, these sources, speaking through leaks in two UPI wires written by Richard Sale, specified their concern over the Sharon connection to the KGB, and its relation to organizations promoting Soviet Jewish emigration.

It is expected that these recent leaks also signal the near-term arrest of many more Soviet-Israeli spies like Shabtai Kalmanowich.