

Heads begin to roll in ADL's networks

by Jeffrey Steinberg

Thomas Dine, the longtime executive director of the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), was forced to resign on June 28. His departure is the latest shakeup inside a Zionist lobby that has been fractured for the last year over scandals, power struggles, and major policy differences over the Middle East peace process.

Since the beginning of January, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (ADL), the group most closely linked to AIPAC among all of the major American Jewish organizations, has been plagued by a spy scandal implicating League officials in the illegal possession of classified government files, the passing of spy data to the governments of Israel and South Africa, and the conducting of dirty tricks against as many as 950 U.S. activist groups. The ADL is the target of criminal investigations in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, Virginia, and New York, and has been served with one class action civil suit, with a second civil suit by a number of Arab-American groups pending. San Francisco sources expect that criminal indictments will be handed down against a number of ADL officials and employees before the end of the summer.

Among the prime targets is the ADL's national "fact-finding" chief, Irwin Suall, of the League's New York City headquarters. Although he is not believed to be a target of any of the criminal investigations, ADL National Director Abraham Foxman is expected to be forced to resign as part of an ADL-designed "damage control" effort forced by the San Francisco scandal.

AIPAC versus the Rabin government

Underlying both the AIPAC and ADL scandals is a policy rift between the American Zionist leaders and the Labor Party government in Israel over how to deal with the Palestinian crisis.

Dine's resignation was ostensibly precipitated by remarks he made to an Israeli author six years ago, in which he referred to Orthodox Jews as "smelly." Dine's comments, included in a forthcoming book by David Landau, were reported in a recent issue of the Baltimore *Jewish Times*. Dine was quoted as saying: "I don't think mainstream Jews feel very comfortable with the ultra-Orthodox. It's a class thing, I suppose. Their image is—smelly. That's what I'd say now that you've got me thinking about it. Hasids and New York diamond dealers." Dine told Landau that major Jewish fund-

raisers choose not to fly on Israel's national airline El Al because of "those people." He added, "Actually, I prefer Swissair or Lufthansa myself. But I fly El Al to Israel because it's direct. Yes, TWA flies direct, too. But it's low-class like the Orthodox. Yes, that's still the image. Still the poor immigrant image. That's the perception of a lot of people I mix with."

The publication of Dine's comments provided the pretext for a number of AIPAC board members, who have been reeling from nearly a year of harsh criticism from Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin over their hardline pro-Likud policies during the 1980s, to bounce the man most associated with those policies. Last September, during his first trip to the United States since his election, Rabin met with AIPAC officials and lambasted them for their "right-wing" direction.

An even more direct indication of the rift between AIPAC's 1980s leadership and the Israeli government surfaced just after Dine's resignation, when the *Washington Jewish Week*, in its July 1 issue, published an attack by another AIPAC official, Vice President Harvey Friedman, on Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin.

Friedman led a spring 1993 delegation of three U.S. congressmen to Israel for talks with government officials about the future of the Occupied Territories. According to Friedman, Beilin told the visitors that Israel was prepared to return to its 1967 borders in order to reach a peaceful settlement. Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesmen claimed that Beilin's comments were more vague and only reflected a subject that the Israeli government was willing to put on the table.

In response, Friedman told the *Washington Jewish Week*'s Larry Cohler: "This little slime ball can say he didn't say it, but three congressmen will affirm that it's just what he said."

Within a day of the story hitting the newsstands, Friedman was forced to resign from AIPAC, and the group's new president, liberal Democrat Steve Grossman, apologized for Friedman's "outrageous statements."

On July 4, Beilin denounced AIPAC: "The firing of Harvey Friedman came on a much more grave background, the transformation of AIPAC in recent years into a right-wing Jewish organization." Beilin told Israel Radio that most of the official Jewish organizations are now run by extremists whose views on the Middle East peace process and many other issues are at odds with the vast majority of American Jews, who are more "moderate, liberal, pragmatic" than their leaders.

Sources say that top officials of both the Israeli and U.S. administrations agree that the leaders of the ADL and AIPAC are a major impediment to the peace process. According to these sources, further purges and scandals can be expected. Foxman, they say, is considered, along with Dine, to be one of the key figures who steered the official American Zionist lobby into the anti-peace camp associated with Likud figures like Ariel Sharon.