

Will Israel survive the Begin government?

by Mark Burdman

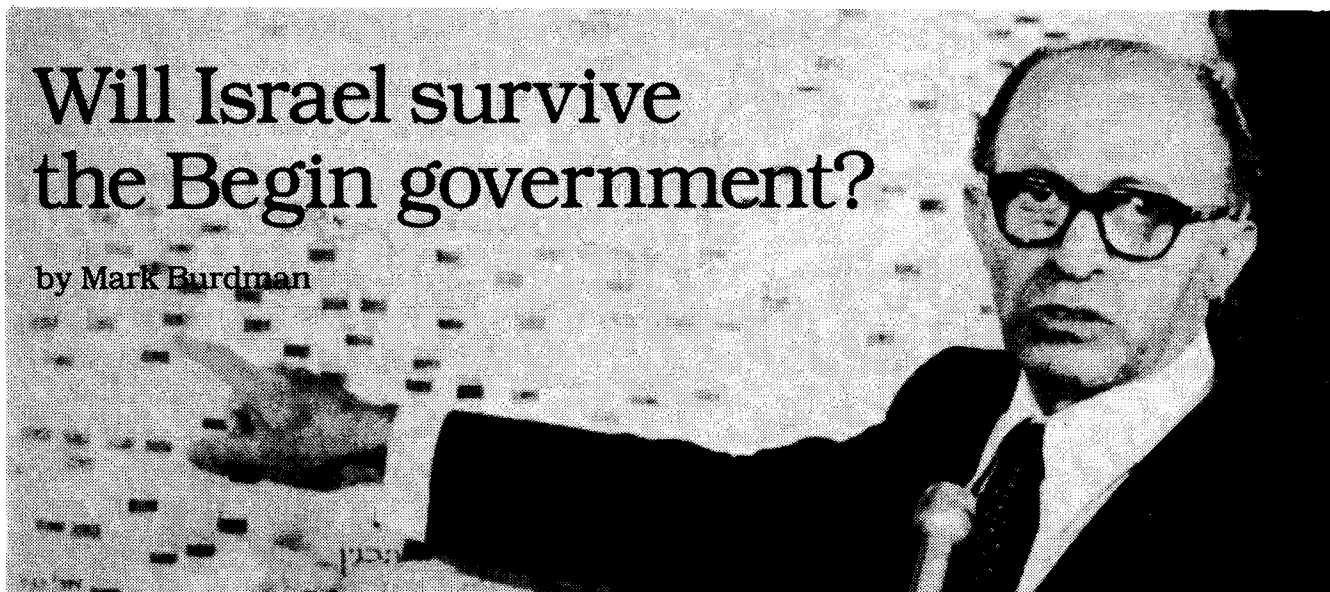


Photo: Il Settimanale

The escalating crisis in the occupied West Bank territory, coupled with the scandals and fanaticism emanating from the government of Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, has brought Israel to the worst danger point in its history.

A leading political analyst at Israel's Hebrew University, Dr. Ehud Sprinzak, warned last week that Israel was entering a period identical in most respects to the French crisis over Algeria from 1959 to 1962. "Once you have such a war in which the main population—in France or in Israel—does not have a consensus, this may destroy the conscience of a nation," Sprinzak stated. "This conflict brought the Fourth Republic down. It may bring down the Israeli republic."

Such a possibility was underscored by statements made last week by Agriculture Minister Ariel Sharon, a supporter and suspected funder of the activities of the Gush Emunim settlers on the West Bank. "The security of Israel is more important than the Constitution," Sharon declared, according to the English-language *Jerusalem Post*.

High-level sources in the Israeli Liberal Party, a component party of the ruling Likud coalition, took Sharon's words seriously enough to obstruct for now Sharon's wish to succeed Ezer Weizman as Israel's Defense Minister, since "from that position, Sharon would gain the capability to carry out a coup d'état." A faction of the Liberals threatened to resign from the government if Begin appointed Sharon to this post.

With opinion polls confirming Begin's unpopularity, the government is now held together only by the venality and opportunism of leading political figures who have the power to bring down the coalition overnight. Exemplary of this problem is Yigal Yadin, deputy premier and

head of the Democratic Movement for Change. In a June 6 interview with the *Jerusalem Post*, Yadin stated: "I understand that people want this government to fall, and therefore they now focus most of their attention and attacks, on us—on me—because they know that we can bring it down [by withdrawing from the ruling coalition]. They think: the hell with Yadin; he could bring the government down. Why doesn't he do it? I understand that. . . . It would be easy enough for us to do that. . . . But, as I always say to my party, we have to think about the morning after the night before."

With Begin free to encourage them, the most wild-eyed extremist elements in Israel have gone on a mobilization. Not only has anti-Arab violence increased on the West Bank, but assassination threats are now being regularly issued against Israeli Jews, including members of Parliament, who advocate discussions with the Palestine Liberation Organization and the creation of a Palestinian state next to Israel.

Of course, many people are aware that Menachem Begin started his political career as an Irgun terrorist. Not so many people are aware of the much broader, "international terrorist" apparatus that is under the direct control of agencies outside Israel, and with which Begin's Irgun background is intimately mixed up. As developments on the West Bank establish, from the point of the resignation of defense minister Ezer Weizman, political developments within Israel have deprived the present government of any character but that of terrorists and assassins who are an adjunct of those foreign agencies. Menachem Begin's government, from all appearances, is an adjunct of the same organization that used the Secret Army Organization (OAS) of France and Algeria as a conduit to run assassination operations against French

President Charles de Gaulle in 1959-62. This organization, known as Permindex, was established by New York mobster lawyer Roy Cohn, by high-level factions in U.S. Army and Air Force intelligence, and by extremist Zionists and ex-Nazis. It has served as a protection and assassination agency in the service of various Italian, Swiss, and "Hapsburg" banking families in control of the international drug flow and much of the political terrorism that has erupted in Europe over the past few years.

A "Permindex angle" on the Begin government can begin to explain why so many scandals are festering around the government, and second, why none of these scandals has yet been allowed to emerge fully into the light of day. It also may explain, beyond the usual "ideological" interpretations of Begin's policies, why the government is acting in such kamikaze fashion. The Begin government, like certain Coptic families in Egypt and the Falangist-connected Maronite families in Lebanon, is acting as an integral part of the network put in place by Europe's "black nobility" to control its banking and crime interests in the vital Middle East region.

Preliminary investigations into the "Permindex angle" involve the following suggestive leads:

- Begin's mentor, Vladimir Jabotinsky, the 1920-1940 head of the extremist "Revisionist" wing of the Zionist movement, was cultivated by banking-related Italian and Swiss interests *before* he led Zionist operations in eastern Europe. Jabotinsky later became a close collaborator of the oligarchical House of Savoy interests in Mussolini's fascist Italy during the 1930s.

- In the 1950s, as the Algeria crisis began to peak, Begin's Herut Party, it has been charged, provided logistical support for the "wetwork" attempts against de Gaulle and his collaborators and for coup attempts against de Gaulle's government. These allegations came up in official French investigations into treasonable actions by Generals Challe, Bidault, et al., and of Hapsburg-connected anthropologist Jacques Soustelle, who has always maintained close ties to the Begin grouping. In the same general line of investigation, one banking source with intimate ties to the Hungarian wing of the "black nobility" reports that Begin had made a secret trip to North Africa during World War II and became acquainted with OAS-related networks at that time.

- Interest in the Begin-OAS connection has been reawakened by reports from France earlier this month that French authorities have decided to indict *in absentia* mobster Samuel Flatto-Sharon, currently a parliament member and Begin supporter in Israel's Knesset. Flatto-Sharon has been officially accused of embezzlement and other swindles relating to illegal real estate transactions,

but his activities are known to extend into drug-trafficking and support for terrorism. He has been named in the *Jerusalem Post*, the Knesset, and elsewhere in Israel as a lynchpin of organized crime. Nevertheless, the Begin government has stubbornly refused to investigate his activities. One explanation for this is that substantial sums of money accompanied Flatto-Sharon when he escaped from France in 1973 and came to Israel; the fund originated mainly from Basel, Switzerland, a primary base for Permindex laundering operations.

- Dirty money is also the source of suspicions surrounding Israel's Energy Minister, Yitzhak Moda'i. Before becoming active in the ruling Likud coalition, Moda'i managed the Israeli branch of Revlon International, a subsidiary of the giant ITT conglomerate often investigated by drug enforcement authorities for laundering drug revenues. A senior vice-president of Revlon International, Jay Bennett, was with the U.S. Air Force and with Schenley Inc. liquor interests during the 1947-55 period when these two entities were sponsoring Roy Cohn and various intelligence operations later incorporated into Permindex when the latter was created in 1959.

Weizman: 'Israel is bitter and depressed'

In his letter of resignation as Defense Minister of Israel, Ezer Weizman made some unusual public accusations which reveal the depth of the crisis in Israel. Excerpts from this letter follow:

"Herewith I submit my resignation as a member of the Israeli Cabinet. . . .

"On the issue of peace with Egypt, I am not reconciled with the government's policy. The path for strengthening and solidifying peace is obviously wide open, but has not been taken. . . . In its years of independence the Israeli nation has known its ups and downs, times of ebb and flow. However, it seems it has never been as bitter and depressed as it has been in the last few years. Its spirit did not collapse because of difficulties and miseries, but because of a leadership sowing gloom. . . . Through true leadership, another spirit could have been ignited and the vast potential we possess could have found its expressions. . . . There, Mr. Prime Minister, you had a rare opportunity. However, you missed it."