

Middle East Report by Robert Dreyfuss

The Israeli connection

The press has taken little notice of organized crime's rise in Israel, and even less of a new book exposing it.

The *Israeli Connection: the Mafia in Israel*. That is the title of the book written by a French journalist for *L'Express* magazine, Jacques Derogy; he is well-known for his sympathies for the Zionist state. In his introduction, Derogy indicates that it is precisely these sympathies that have forced him to write such a book at this time.

Israeli society is "ill, corrupted, degenerated," Derogy claims. "There are only a handful of journalists, judges and policemen who have been fighting that social illness, the mafia. Israel is at a crossroads and new winds have to blow."

If "new winds" don't blow, Derogy warns, Israel will either become a Bahamas-style Sodom-and-Gomorrah refuge for criminals or will in effect self-destruct.

The consequences of the proliferation of crime are already grave, he reports. The addict population of Israel has reached over 100,000—alarming for a country whose population is under four million and which depends on a highly mobilized citizenry for its self-defense—and at least 30 percent of the addicts are in the crucial age range of 16 to 18 years old.

The situation has degenerated in this way, Derogy charges, because top-level Israelis and Zionist supporters of Israel abroad have collaborated with criminal elements.

Israel's first Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, for example, refused to crack down on the drug-running activities of Mordechai Serfati (known as "Mentsh") during the period of Israel's fight for statehood in the 1940s, the book documents.

Also implicated in Derogy's account are former Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan and former Defense Minister Ezer Weizman. Both, he claims, have supported the arms smuggling and related criminal activities of Samuel Flatto-Sharon, the man whom French courts have indicted in absentia for real estate swindling.

Flatto-Sharon escaped extradition by buying his way into the Israeli Knesset (Parliament), but is under new French pressure.

Derogy also exposes certain U.S. Zionist leaders. One such figure is Samuel Rothberg, a top fundraiser for Israel bonds and the United Jewish Appeal and director of the Chicago-based American Distilling Company.

Derogy alleges that Rothberg has maintained links for four decades with top mobster Meyer Lansky and has been involved in smuggling both whisky and drugs.

The Rothberg story echoes the account in the 1979 book *Dope, Inc.* of how the Bronfman liquor-magnate family and associated Zionist interests are linchpins in international drug traffic. That book cre-

ated substantial controversy in the U.S. and Europe, and drew shrill accusations from the B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation League that its authors are "anti-Semitic."

Derogy is bitter about this cheap-shot use of "anti-Semitism." He reports attempts by Israeli officials and Zionist leaders in America last year to quash investigations into a drug-running "Israeli mafia" operating in California, noting bitterly that "anyone in the U.S. who goes after the Israeli mafia is called 'anti-Semitic.'"

Possibly because of such pressure, *The Israeli Connection* has been largely ignored by the press. But one prominent Zionist publication, *Tribune Juive* in France, this week utilized Derogy's findings to warn of the drastic and irreversible consequences if Israel proceeds on its current path. Editor J. Gruenewald, a political ally of Zionist dove Nahum Goldmann, warns in a feature, entitled "Explosion of Violence in Israel," that "political violence is linking itself to criminal violence."

Outlining Derogy's arguments, Gruenewald emphasizes the responsibility of Jews outside Israel—the Diaspora—to intervene and prevent the violent disintegration of Israeli society.

It is quite possible, moreover, that Gruenewald is speaking for a powerful European Zionist faction centered around Rothschild family interests, a faction that is seeking at this point to shift the situation in Israel away from internal collapse and external adventurism.

In this connection, it is also noteworthy that *L'Express* owner Sir James Goldsmith, Derogy's boss, is related to the Rothschilds by marriage.