

Investigative Leads by Jeffrey Steinberg

The Mossad and American Express

The company has provided a full range of financial services, and others, to the Israeli agency.

If reports received by *EIR* are true, moderate Arab diplomatic and intelligence officials may be taking their lives in their hands every time they leave home with their American Express credit cards.

According to a high-level U.S. intelligence source, a classified report circulated among U.S. agencies in 1983 detailed how Israeli intelligence (Mossad) maintained "real time" access to the computer data base of the American Express Company and used that information to develop profiles of Egyptian and Palestinian leaders targeted for assassination by Mossad hit squads.

The report, according to the source, was prepared as part of a Reagan administration reassessment of U.S.-Israeli relations in the wake of Israel's disastrous invasion of Lebanon. Among the other features of the intelligence and evaluation were a series of Pentagon-sponsored fact-finding missions to Lebanon to determine whether Israel had violated the Military Assistance Program by using U.S.-provided weapons for offensive purposes, including precision bombing of Palestinian refugee camps.

According to a Washington source who reviewed the 1983 report, the Mossad has a standing privileged relationship with Amex that includes computer interface through Amex offices in Tel Aviv, Paris, London, and Munich. Through this access, the Mossad has:

- Pinpointed airline reservations, hotel accommodations, rental-car license plates, and favorite restaurants and shops of PLO, Egyptian, Iraqi,

Saudi, and Jordanian officials on Mossad watch lists and, in some cases, hit lists.

- Procured "cover" American Express credit cards and other services for Mossad agents traveling under phony names and forged passports abroad;

- Received logistical backup for special commando operations. In the case of one Israeli commando assault against a PLO compound in Beirut before the full-scale Israeli invasion of Lebanon, through an Amex-linked travel service—according to the source—a fleet of limousines was delivered to a desolate beach-head where Israeli paratroops were dropped in. The commandos drove the cars into the city, carried out the armed attack, and drove the cars to the beach pickup point, leaving the keys in the ignition for later pickup by the rental office. Reportedly, rental cars leased under the false-name Amex agreement have also been used in car-bomb attacks. Amex's reported response? No problem—as long as all destroyed property is paid for in full.

- Conducted financial warfare against alleged enemies of the state of Israel.

A review of recent years' largest purchases of stock in American Express adds credibility to the alleged government report. Up until late 1984, the largest stockholder and chairman of the Amex board was Edmond Safra. A product of the Jewish banking community in the Venetian colony of Aleppo, Syria, Safra's financial empire, now stretching from Geneva to Lower Manhattan to Rio de Janeiro,

has been linked to the Israeli mafia's gold, diamond, and drug-smuggling activities.

Prior to the Safra buy-in, major blocks of Amex stock had been grabbed by Loeb, Rhodes and by Cincinnati crime-linked figure Carl Lindner, an intimate of Max Fisher of Detroit and of the Israeli "Billionaires Club," a collection of dirty-money magnates imposing their financial and political imprimatur on the Israeli state.

All of these transactions were the handiwork of the same New York City lawfirm—Willkie, Farr, and Gallagher—and the same attorney, senior partner Kenneth Bialkin, presently national chairman of the Anti-Defamation League. Bialkin cut his teeth as the attorney for the Sonneborn Institute, the late-1940s Hagannah smuggling ring that was the antecedent to the Mossad. Sonneborn Institute arms-smuggling operations were conducted in conjunction with the Meyer Lansky syndicate.

More recently, the ADL chairman and the Willkie, Farr firm gained notoriety when a federal court in New York (January 1980) ordered them to pay \$35 million to the shareholders of Investors Overseas Service for the firm's role in Robert Vesco's \$70-million looting. Vesco's attorney, Bialkin, was found by the jury to have been the legal wizard behind the Vesco theft and laundering of tens of millions of dollars from the IOS-Fund of Funds pyramid. Among Vesco's associates in that effort was the Geneva-based Dr. Tibor Rosenbaum, formerly the chief of finances for the Mossad.

Following the Bialkin-run, Mossad-linked buy-in to Amex, one final dirty player was inserted into the picture: Henry A. Kissinger was added to the international "advisory" board of American Express at an annual consulting fee of \$75,000.