

"We have in this way recruited over eighty Palestinians this past year," ml' boss had bragged. "It's too easy to be legal."

It wasn't, but when I asked if this sort of thing could backfire on us, I got the usual answer you would get in the Mossad to just about any question: "So what?"

Over the next few days, things started to become somewhat of a haze. I was working almost around the clock preparing for ml' planned trip to Sri Lanka. I was to escort a large shipment of mines to the Tamil Tigers and receive payment for them. I was learning my cover story and being questioned on it by ml' section head.

It seemed that the whole building was going berserk. Everybody and his dog were looking for information that could stop Jordan's King Hussein's efforts for a peace initiative. The initiative caught the Mossad off guard; we had understood from sources in the United States that it was a farce. They had said it was dead in the water almost a month ago. But somehow it sprang to life again, and although Yasser Arafat would not recognize Israel, he had agreed to a meeting with Hussein. The word was that it was a ploy by Hussein. All he wanted, they said, was American approval of his request for a two-billion-dollar arms purchase. We had guaranteed the prime minister that this would not happen. The entire Jewish lobby in the United States was mobilized: The man in charge of that was Tsvey Gabay, head of the foreign office Intelligence Section. He was given lists of *sayanim* and pro-Zionist organizations that he could mobilize.

This was not an easy task. The Jordanians could purchase the arms anywhere they wanted. They were not begging for a grant; they wanted to spend money in the United States. They were looking for a cash deal. We knew that if they succeeded, they would have access to an American market that was more than eager to sell them anything. And so this deal never stood a chance.

The American Jewish community was divided into a three-stage action team. First were the individual *sayanim* (if the situation had been reversed and the United States had convinced Americans working in Israel to work secretly on behalf of the United States, they would be treated as spies by the Israeli government). Then there was the large pro-Israeli lobby. It would mobilize the Jewish community in a forceful effort in whatever direction the Mossad pointed the way. And last was B'nai Brith. Members of that organization could be relied on to make friends among non-Jews and tarnish as anti-Semitic whomever they couldn't sway to the Israeli cause. With that sort of one-two-three tactic, there was no way we could strike out.

CHAPTER 5

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Months had passed since the Cyprus fiasco, and the system was in torment over how to deal with me. On the one hand, the Mossad leadership had invested a great deal in bringing me to this point. And I had responded well-meaning. I was a good product of the system's training and modeling process. However, several high-ranking officers had come to regard me as a divisive influence. One I barely knew, a man named Ephraim, made it his personal crusade to expel me from what he called the first family of the state.

He had somehow been made ml' assessor and was not happy with things he had found in ml' file. He said that I was inflammatory and that my political outbursts were a menace to morale. He agreed that I had the makings of a good case officer, but since I leaned to the left, I would be a danger to the system.

The Mossad is a small organization with thirty to forty case officers, each an important member of the field family. Whatever happens to one affects the rest. My situation was well known and was a topic of discussion at almost every gathering where I wasn't present. I learned about it from friends, but I didn't have a so-called horse (a brass member who wanted to advance me as part of his clique) who would speak for me.

By now I knew I was going to get the boot. I stood outside the large wooden doors of the academy, at the edge of the staff parking lot. I stared at the winter sun sinking slowly into the Mediterranean. A slow drizzle had started, and the light was fading fast.

"Victor," came a call from inside the main hall. I turned. It was Dinur, someone I had regarded as a friend. I was sure he still was.

"What?"