

## Bronfman traded 'whiskey for Holocaust' to Reds

by Mark Burdman and Rainer Apel

In its March-April 1990 edition, the West German magazine *Semit*, self-described as "the independent Jewish magazine," published a blistering exposé of World Jewish Congress President Edgar Bronfman's dealings with the former East German communist regime of Erich Honecker. The article, authored by Jacob Dachauer, documents how Bronfman, who is also a top fundraiser for the Anti-Defamation League (although that is not mentioned by *Semit*) utilized his WJC post to make deals with East Germany on behalf of his Seagram's liquor empire.

The article is entitled "A whiskey for the Holocaust," and is accompanied by a photograph of Bronfman receiving the state medal of East Germany from former East German leader Erich Honecker. The caption is: "Great Star of the People's Friendship: Peace, Happiness, Egg Nog." (In its original German, the caption has a connotation, "Don't worry, shut up and have a drink." That, plus the title, would convey the idea, "Don't worry about the Holocaust, have a drink.")

Prior to the *Semit* piece, only *EIR* had exposed Bronfman's double-dealings with the East German communists.

The article refers primarily to the autumn 1988 period, when relations between Bronfman's WJC crowd and the East German communist regime became particularly intimate. The reader should note that at the time of the November 1988 events described, West Germany was being destabilized, in the famous "Jenninger Affair," when West German parliament president Philipp Jenninger was forced to resign, because of phony allegations that his speech was sympathetic to Nazism. The same Bronfman who was embracing Honecker was instrumental in orchestrating the international campaign that forced Jenninger to step down.

The reader should also be aware that the article was evidently composed around mid-February 1990, at a time when there was an East German transitional government containing

some communists. That explains some of the contemporary references found in the text.

The article begins by noting that the year 1988, with the approach of the 50th anniversary of the Kristallnacht pogroms, marked a "Jewish watershed" for the East German state, and that this involved "a great number of well-orchestrated public events, encounters with Jews, both on the domestic and international scene." What follows are excerpts from the remainder of the article by Dachauer.

### 'Making the Honecker-Mielke regime kosher'

"The purpose was twofold. One, the absolution of the East German state and party leadership by Jewish functionaries. The real aim, however, was on the level of foreign policy and economics. It was a big success when Bronfman shook hands with Honecker. In terms of media treatment, the performance of some Jewish 'Potemkin villages' in the salons of the state council of East Germany was a full success. President of the World Jewish Congress Edgar Miles Bronfman, after meeting Honecker shortly, meeting three female members of the [East German communist party youth group] FDJ for five minutes, and referencing inside information supplied from Dr. Peter Kirchner, chairman of the Jewish Community of East Berlin—after doing all this, he declared that East Germany has resolved its part of the German past. [According to Bronfman] the youth [of East Germany] is well-acquainted with Jewish affairs. Racism is a word not known between Rostock and Erfurt. In other words, in his view, there is no reason to object to a U.S. trip by Erich Honecker, nor the granting of the intensely pursued Most Favored Nation status in U.S. trade with East Germany.

"The official side of the Bronfman trip to Honecker is not what went on in reality; there's only an AP release pointing

to the real talks. As a matter of fact, in the private delegation of Bronfman, there were two delegations. One was of the World Jewish Congress, which did the TV aspect of shaking hands with Honecker and de-stigmatizing the East Germans. The second delegation, led by the general manager of Seagram's—the biggest hard-drinks multinational in the world—was conducting intense talks, signing several contracts of a double-digit-million-dollar value with then (and still in office under the government of Modrow) assistant minister of foreign trade, Christian Meyer. (The actual foreign minister and former NSDAP [Nazi Party] member, Gerhard Beil, was likely not attending for reasons of higher piety.) It's just by accident that the main shareholder and chairman of the board of Seagram's is none other than Bronfman.

"Sigmund Rotstein, president of the Association of Jewish Communities in East Germany, made a fiery speech Nov. 8, 1988, at the Chamber of People's Deputies before a prominent domestic and international audience, praising the 'Wall-State' in the baroque style of Saxonian court jesters, proclaiming East Germany to be the best and most democratic state of all times, and the true home of all Jews. Then came Dr. Peter Kirchner, chairman of the Jewish community of East Berlin, having a record since 1971 of painting things in rosy-red colors in a more decent way. The chairman of the Jewish community of West Berlin, Heinz Galinski, who personally, since early 1988, also heads of the Central Council of the Jews in Germany, has earned not a few merits in making the Honecker-Mielke regime kosher. From September 1988 on, he was begging for the generous offer of a meeting with Honecker, which he didn't get on the spot, but only on a side track, after an intense interrogation by East German Assistant Minister of Church Affairs Klaus Gysi [father of current East German communist boss Gregor Gysi—ed.], who instantly recognized the ambitious Galinski's usefulness for the purpose of mollifying the foreign policy troubles of East Germany at that time, smoothing out the past, in the struggle for export markets.

"Both functionaries, Galinski and Honecker, were not particularly enthusiastic about each other, but apparently now applied the old Yiddish saying, 'If you need a thief, you cut him down from the gallows.' Galinski and Honecker met many times. 'It was truly a historic moment, which you can tell from the length of the discussion. I personally liked this discussion very much, and there is a rapprochement' (Galinski to *Neues Deutschland*).

"All three—Rotstein, Kirchner, and Galinski—received the East German medal 'Great Star of the People's Friendship' from the hands of Erich Honecker on Nov. 8, 1988. In April 1989, when Galinski was celebrating his 40th anniversary as chairman of the Jewish community of West Berlin, Honecker sent his assistant minister Loeffler to sing a song of praise to Galinski. No mentioning any more of the juvenile sins, the splitting of the then-still-united Jewish community

of Berlin in 1953. . . .

"The European representative of Bronfman in Brussels, Maram Stern, met twice in the past weeks with the intimate of [Politburo member and Central Committee member, in charge of international relations, particularly with Jewish organizations] Hermann Axen and still-operating East German Foreign Minister Oskar Fischer and Vice-Premier [Lothar] De Maiziere. Stern encouraged both to produce an official East German government declaration on the East German share in the guilt for the Nazi crimes. Stern defused worries about the ensuing compensation costs, and said that if his boss Bronfman could keep and expand his privileged position as monopolist in East German-U.S. trade—an agreement signed between Bronfman and Honecker's people—he would talk to Shamir to modify material claims from the side of Israel and the Jewish Claims Conference for Germany in an appropriate way. And, because of its difficult foreign policy situation, Israel is dependent on an unbroken support from the side of a well-meaning Jewish lobby in the United States, the chances for this triangular agreement are not bad.

"There is a certain liberal-minded, economically independent and internationally known personality who has an important say in the decisions of the Jewish Lobby in the United States. His name: Edgar Miles Bronfman."

### **Outcry from Tel Aviv**

In an undoubtedly related development, *Outcry*, the publication of the Tel Aviv-based World Jewish Student Movement, is circulating a pamphlet attacking Edgar Bronfman and quoting from, among other sources, *EIR*'s serialized exposé last year of Bronfman's machinations (see *EIR*, Vol. 16, Nos. 34-37).

A lead article in the pamphlet is entitled, "Does Judaism Need a Pope?" with the subtitle answer, "Like a hole in the head," and is accompanied by a mock-up photo of Edgar Bronfman as a kind of "Jewish pope," wearing a crown. The article, by Zvi Arens, is a blistering attack on Bronfman for using his position as head of the World Jewish Congress for illicit personal gain; for undermining the organization which was built by Nahum Goldmann; for sabotaging the legitimate interests of Soviet Jews, as part of his deals with the Soviet and U.S. governments; and for feeding into the growth of anti-Semitism.

Arens writes that the original World Jewish Congress of Nahum Goldmann was a good organization, created with lofty motives. But now the leadership is a "publicity-hungry" group that seldom reflects the real opinion of Jews. "Under the presidency of Edgar Miles Bronfman, it has become a Mecca for private economic deals and politically and socially irresponsible activities." Arens asks whether Jews can afford such a World Jewish Congress: "We as young Jews must abhor the misuse of power for the purpose of private business deals, as well as for motives of personal vengeance. . . . We refuse to become subservient to a secular Pope."