

Hollinger controversy erupts in Israel

by Mark Burdman

Beginning Dec. 3, the majority of journalists at Israel's English-language daily, the *Jerusalem Post*, began a strike action that could have implications for the political situation and the danger of war in the Middle East. The workers were protesting after the *Post* management had dismissed 30 staff members in an attempt to end union representation at the paper.

Who is the *Post* management?

The paper was bought up in June 1989 by the Toronto, Canada-based Hollinger Corp., whose chairman and chief executive is Conrad Black. That holding company is one of the chief operational agencies for the Anglo-American Establishment, including on its board of directors former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, former British foreign minister and NATO Secretary General Peter Lord Carlington, Canadian real estate wheeler-dealer Paul Reichmann of the Olympia and York interests, and Peter Bronfman, cousin of Seagrams-DuPont magnate Edgar Bronfman. According to the *Financial Times* of London Dec. 5, Black is now expected to ask none other than former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher to join the board of directors of either Hollinger or the Hollinger-owned *Daily Telegraph* of London.

With this mob in control, it is not surprising that Hollinger-owned newspapers around the world, such as the *Daily Telegraph* and *Sunday Telegraph* in Britain, have been foremost among those advocating immediate war in the Persian Gulf. In Israel, Black has converted the *Post* into a mouthpiece for the ideas of Housing Minister Ariel Sharon and his accomplices, whereas the *Post* had traditionally been a voice for liberal-moderate forces in Israel in the ambiance of the mainstream of the Israeli Labor Party. To reinforce this tendency, Black recently brought three new individuals onto the *Post*'s board of directors, including Kissinger intimate Lord Weidenfeld, the owner of the Weidenfeld and Nicolson publishing giant; publishing magnate Robert Maxwell (born Jan Ludwig Hoch), whose ties to the erstwhile East bloc communist regimes were so tight that he is widely known as a "Trojan Horse" operative subverting the West; and Richard Perle, former U.S. assistant secretary of defense, who has emerged as among the most vocal of pro-war advocates vis-à-vis the

Gulf. Before these appointments, the only non-Israeli members of the *Post* board were Conrad Black himself and David Radler, president of Hollinger Corp.

Establishment control of Israel

This situation dramatically underscores how both Israelis, and international perceptions of Israel, are manipulated and controlled by a gang of oligarchical cutthroats from outside Israel. Ownership and direction of editorial policy at the *Post* is particularly sensitive, since it is Israel's only high-powered, English-language daily, and therefore presents news and views to a wide international audience.

Beyond the union issue, the more fundamental issue in the current *Post* dispute is disaffection with what Black has done with the paper. On Jan. 2, 1990, most of the paper's leading reporters and editors had walked out in protest against the paper's attitude toward union representation and/or its shift in editorial policy. When Black bought up the *Post*, he made retired Israeli Army Col. Yehuda Levy its publisher and president, even though Levy had never before held a position in journalism. Since the Hollinger takeover, the journalists on the staff of the paper have been drastically cut. With the Hollinger management's determination not to hire back most of the journalists on strike, irrespective of the mediation decision made by Israel's labor court on Dec. 16, the total number of journalists at the *Post* will be 45, down from 140 when Black bought the paper in mid-1989. Forty-five striking journalists will not be rehired, no matter what the court decision.

But what if the fired journalists start launching a political counterattack, and reveal some of the dirt and intrigues they might know about Black and his Hollinger union-busting mob?

Suspicious are rife in Israel that the Hollinger buy-up was a political operation from the first. Black paid much more for the paper than it was worth, and it is presently a money-losing operation. As the London *Independent* commented in a dispatch from Jerusalem Dec. 6, "critics suggest that the motive for Mr. Black's takeover was to silence a source of Israeli liberalism and critical reporting which irritated the right." Privately, the current *Post* management refers to the pre-July 1989 editorial line of the paper as "very extreme left," a characterization which attests more to the pro-Sharon state of mind of the current management.

This state of mind was on display in the *Post*'s lead Dec. 4 editorial, fully echoing Sharon's propaganda, with a blatant threat that Israel would move militarily against Jordan. Entitled "The Jordan connection," it blamed Jordan for harboring the man ostensibly responsible for directing the recent pattern of killings of Israelis, a certain Sheikh As'ad Tamimi, a former Imam at the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, who now heads one of the "Islamic Jihad" organizations. "Israel cannot ignore the fact that an inciter such as Tamimi . . . is operating freely from Amman," the *Post* wrote. "Nor can it

be oblivious to Amman's becoming an even busier capital of terrorism than it had been before Black September in 1970. The groups now operating in Jordan range from Arafat's Fatah and Force-17, through the PLO's 'Democratic Front,' to terrorist organizations sponsored by Syria and Libya. One Palestinian living in Jordan has described the country as completely 'Palestinized.'

"King Hussein has obviously decided to throw in his lot with the PLO-Iraq axis. . . . For now he may feel safe in sheltering the terror organizations. He knows Israel is constrained by its 'low-profile' commitment, and reluctant to take any action which may disturb the delicate balance of the anti-Saddam coalition. But the first duty of a government is to secure the safety of its citizens. Once Israel proves a direct connection between the various terrorist headquarters in Jordan and acts of terrorism in Israel, it is difficult to see how it can avoid taking action against them."

Alert observers noted that the description of Sheikh Tamimi was identical with that appearing in the November 1990 edition of the newsletter circulated by the Anti-Defamation League in the United States.

All in the family

It is revealing in this light, that Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, during his visit to London Dec. 6-7 en route to the U.S., gave one exclusive interview—to Hollinger's *Daily Telegraph*.

Coincidence or not, Conrad Black was at that point in London. He was a featured guest at a most important gathering of 100 British and North American elites, which took place at the exclusive Claridges Hotel Dec. 5, on the occasion of the annual banquet funded by the Atlantic Richfield oil company (ARCO). The featured guests at this event were prospective Hollinger board member Margaret Thatcher, and Ronald Reagan. Among the attendees were *Jerusalem Post* board member Lord Weidenfeld, as well as many British lords, sirs, and Foreign Office officials responsible for shaping British Middle East policy, and close associates of Henry Kissinger. Former ARCO chairman Robert O. Anderson, currently a board member of the Kissinger Associates firm, was also in attendance.

On the next day, the *Daily Telegraph* published a war-mongering editorial on the Gulf, evidently reflecting the discussions at this gathering. It warned that George Bush's offer for dialogue with Iraq threatened to open up a period of "discordant babble," possibly leading to a "seedy and humiliating compromise" with Saddam Hussein. The Gulf crisis, said Conrad Black's mouthpiece, is a "test case for international order." Then: "*Most thoughtful people on both sides of the Atlantic recognize that sanctions will not be effective within an acceptable time-scale, that war is probable, and a compromise which leaves Saddam Hussein with any part of his booty would be a lasting blow to the interests of the whole world*" (emphasis added).

Interview: Jamal Shair

Jordanians think crisis can be solved

Dr. Jamal Shair is a former Jordanian cabinet minister and member of the National Consultative Council. He is the chairman of Jordan's Unionist Democratic Association. The interview was conducted by telephone by Joseph Brewda on Dec. 5.

EIR: What would be the long-term effect on the Arab world, and Muslim world more broadly, if the Anglo-Americans go to war, given the widespread and unfortunately correct perception that such a war would be largely racially motivated?

Shair: It is not easy to foresee exactly, but I think the long-term effect of the war on the Arab world will last for several years—perhaps 20 or 30. The nature and duration will depend on the outcome, and the extent of damage, and the various reactions of different powers, Arabs and others, from the start of the war to the end. The effect on the Muslim world will mostly be on Iran, due to the special historical relation of Persians with the Islamic movement which started soon after the Prophet Mohammed. There will be various reactions of a less political nature in the rest of the Muslim world.

What may continue to happen—until war starts—will not descend to the depths. It will remain within the limits of muscle-twisting and the interests of rulers or leaders. But as soon as the actual battle takes place, it is enough to consider the composition of the forces involved, both political and armed, to see the interaction of feelings and values among all concerned. It has deep roots in our history, and will reveal all factors of race, religions, nationalism, past experiences and bitterness.

Since World War II, the Arabs and their neighbors have been involved perhaps more than others with the world and regional orders—the United Nations, the Arab League, the Islamic Conference, the Non-Aligned Movement—and the dealing with such orders was functioning fairly well despite successive crises. Now that all these have completely collapsed, a war led mainly by the United States, and causing tremendous devastation in the area, with alliances involving states in the area itself, will no doubt lead to prolonged cruel events.

EIR: What do you think the Jordanian public's view is of