

Simon Wolf's role in the assassination of Abraham Lincoln

by Anton Chaitkin

In the May 14 issue of the Argentine newspaper *Clarín*, Rabbi Morton Rosenthal, director of international affairs of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, alleged that Lyndon LaRouche has "imputed diverse crimes to the United States' Jewish community, among them the murder of President Abraham Lincoln last century."

Responding to the allegation, on May 17 a spokesman for LaRouche said that in fact it is Rosenthal's own B'nai B'rith, and not "the Jewish community," which was implicated in the murder of President Abraham Lincoln.

The B'nai B'rith was founded and developed during the 1840s and 1850s as a project of the slave-owners' and slave-traders' Scottish Rite of Freemasonry. During the 1860s U.S. Civil War, most U.S. Jews were pro-Union and anti-slavery, differing from the leaders of B'nai B'rith, who adhered to the Southern Confederacy. The small faction of apostate Jews was led by Confederate Secretary of State Judah Benjamin, who directed the Confederate secret service.

Simon Wolf (1835-1923), longtime chief of the B'nai B'rith's Washington, D.C. office, was specifically an operative of Confederate General and Scottish Rite Masonic Commander Albert Pike, who founded the Ku Klux Klan after the Civil War. Wolf was arrested early in the war by the U.S. Secret Service as one of the coordinators of Confederate espionage in the national capital. Much later, in 1901, Wolf, who had risen to the presidency of international B'nai B'rith, was a featured speaker at the gala dedication ceremony of the statue of Pike which had just been erected in Washington, where it remains standing today as an insult to all those who believe in the principles for which Lincoln fought and died.

Wolf and John Wilkes Booth

John Wilkes Booth shot President Abraham Lincoln on April 14, 1865, while other assassins simultaneously attacked Secretary of State William Seward. Lincoln died the next day.

The United States National Park Service maintains the Lincoln murder site at Ford's Theater in Washington as a national monument. Park Service historians tell tourists that John Wilkes Booth was not a "regular" agent of the Confeder-

ate Secret Service. Some months before he shot Lincoln, Booth in fact deposited funds in the Montreal bank used by the "regular" operatives of Confederate Secret Service head Judah Benjamin. John Surrat, who confessed to being a "regular" Benjamin agent and to plotting with Booth to abduct Lincoln, admitted to using that Montreal bank for Benjamin's funds. Yet the Park Service says that Booth did not "ordinarily" go to Canada for Benjamin, and that he could not be a "regular" operative, because Booth's name does not appear on the payrolls of the Confederate government!

The Ford's Theater permanent display, however, contains a piece of evidence which flies in the face of the "lone assassin" theory: a decoding sheet, found by police in John Wilkes Booth's trunk, and alongside it, a matching coding device which was found in the office of Judah Benjamin.

At the time when John Wilkes Booth shot President Lincoln, Booth's old acquaintance Benjamin Peixotto was international president of the B'nai B'rith. Only hours before going to Ford's Theater to shoot the President, Booth met with his old friend Simon Wolf for a confidential discussion over some drinks.

Wolf's brief description of this meeting is carried in his memoirs, *Presidents I Have Known*. Wolf's laudatory biography, *Simon Wolf: Private Conscience and Public Image*, published in 1987 by Esther Panitz, explains the case as follows: "Wolf remembered that he had met Booth once again at the Willard Hotel, on the morning of the day Lincoln was shot. There, at the bar, Booth explained that Sen. John P. Hale's daughter had just rejected his marriage proposal. Wolf attributed Lincoln's murder to this personal tragedy in Booth's own life. Wolf himself was not present at Ford's Theater that fateful evening in April, only because his wife Caroline did not care for [the leading lady's] acting talents."

Subsequent official testimony on the assassination proves, at the very least, that Simon Wolf's rationale for the Lincoln murder was incredibly, hysterically false. Thus, just what Booth and his heart-to-heart confessor Wolf did discuss, as Booth prepared his attack, ought to be of deep interest to those seeking to unravel the great tragedy of the 19th century.

B'nai B'rith and the Confederacy

Let us trace backwards from that event. Its official history, *B'nai B'rith: The Story of a Covenant*, by Edward E. Grusd (New York: Appleton, 1966), teases that "B'nai B'rith's relationship to the Civil War presents something of a mystery. . . . The record itself is almost completely silent on the subject of the Order's participation [in the war] as a national agency." Though "virtually all" of the Order's lodges were "in the North" and most American Jews were pro-Union and anti-slavery, this secret society in fact worked for Britain and the British-sponsored Southern Confederacy in the effort to break up the American Union.

British Foreign Minister Lord Palmerston and his masonic manager Giuseppe Mazzini ran an assortment of insurrectionary projects around the world, going by the names "Young Italy," "Young Germany," etc. The birth of "Young America" was first announced in an 1845 public address by Edwin DeLeon, scion of a South Carolina Jewish slave-trading family. In that address, DeLeon promised a "great civil convulsion," with its "source originating in some quarter . . . unsuspected and obscure." DeLeon later became the Southern Confederacy's chief propangandist in Europe, intimate adviser to Confederate President Jefferson Davis, and a notorious spy.

The International Order of B'nai B'rith, part of this Palmerston "Young America" effort, was founded in 1843 in New York City by 12 Jewish Freemasons. By 1850, Ohio had become a second center, and B'nai B'rith's District 2, headquartered in Cincinnati, overlapped with the "Copperhead" pro-slavery, secessionist political machine.

In 1854, the Scottish Rite Freemasons created the pro-slavery secessionist Knights of the Golden Circle in Cincinnati, spreading it from there down the Mississippi Valley to Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, and Texas. The top, ostensibly Jewish, Scottish Rite operative in Cincinnati was Isaac M. Wise, B'nai B'rith's Ohio chief. Wise was busy spreading the B'nai B'rith's District 2 organization southward along precisely the same route to the same southern states, at precisely the same time as the paramilitary Knights were doing so.

In eastern Ohio, B'nai B'rith was run by Benjamin F. Peixotto and his intimate friend Simon Wolf. Peixotto edited the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, a uniquely pro-slavery newspaper in an abolitionist area. (Public outrage eventually shut the newspaper down during the Civil War because it so virulently supported Ohio's Copperhead boss Clement Vallandigham.) Masonic attorney and Democratic Party operative Wolf worked at the 1860 Democratic national convention as an agent of party sponsor August Belmont, the official U.S. representative of the British Rothschild family of bankers.

In Cleveland in the 1850s, Peixotto and Wolf ran a Young Men's Hebrew and Literary Society, which sponsored theatrical performances. The young actor John Wilkes Booth per-

formed in their amateur plays, and became their friend and Wolf's confidant. Wolf reportedly "bore an uncanny resemblance" to Booth, who was two years Wolf's junior.

Peixotto later became B'nai B'rith international president from 1863 to 1867, operating from Belmont's New York. Wolf moved to Washington in 1862, and ran the Order's relations with the U.S. government for the next 60 years.

Wolf's arrest for espionage

Soon after Wolf's arrival in wartime Washington to head the B'nai B'rith capital operations, he was arrested by the U.S. government and jailed as an operative of an enemy organization: the B'nai B'rith. Wolf's authorized biography explains that Chief of Detectives LaFayette Baker "accused Wolf of being an agent for a disloyal organization that aided rebels and assisted blockade runners. What Baker had in mind was the International Order of B'nai B'rith. . . . Wolf was arrested for having secured the release of imprisoned Southern Jewish refugees. He was held at the Carroll Street Prison."

Wolf was soon "declared innocent of any involvement with blockade runners," and was released. The official B'nai B'rith history puts it this way: "The chief of the War Department's Detective Bureau was Col. LaFayette Baker, notorious for his cruelty and ruthlessness. He had a young lawyer, Simon Wolf, arrested solely because he was a member of B'nai B'rith. . . . Wolf was defending several Southern Jews arrested in Washington and charged with being Confederate spies."

Wolf's Scottish Rite Masonic chapter in Washington gave its allegiance to the Albert Pike Supreme Council headquartered in Charleston, South Carolina. This was the very seat of treason, the leadership body for the "fire-eaters" of secession and national suicide since British Commander Augustine Prevost planted the Rite in South Carolina during the Revolutionary War. August Belmont's chum Sam Ward, representative in New York for Britain's Baring Bank, was also a member of the Pike Southern Jurisdiction Supreme Council.

Throughout the war, Wolf was one of a handful of intermediaries between the Confederate capital of Richmond, Virginia, and its backers in the elite New York salons of August Belmont and others. One other prominent go-between was the Gustavus Myers family of Richmond, and their business partners, the Moses Myers family of Norfolk. Gustavus Myers, Judah Benjamin's closest personal friend in Richmond, was a political boss whose grandfather, Moses Michael Hays, co-founded the Scottish Rite of Freemasonry by pulling together a group of millionaire slave-traders. The Moses Myers house, on Norfolk's Freemason Street, was the British consulate for several generations. This Virginia masonic power reached into Maryland, and eventually forced Rabbi David Einhorn, the leader of the anti-slavery Jewish community, out of his Baltimore congregation.