

Some in Israel are pleased about the crackdown against the ADL

by Jeffrey Steinberg and Paul Goldstein

On Jan. 8, 1993, when *EIR* released the book *The Ugly Truth About the ADL*, there were already clear signs that the once-monolithic Zionist lobby inside the United States was beginning to crumble. When the *San Francisco Chronicle* revealed one week later that police had raided the offices of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (ADL) in both the Bay Area and Los Angeles, and were probing a massive ADL espionage ring implicating League officials in the passing of classified government documents to Israel and South Africa, it became even more evident that something dramatic was unraveling inside "The Lobby."

Manifestations that serious policy differences within the Zionist lobby leadership in the United States had erupted, began to appear in the summer of 1992 with the defection of a well-placed employee of the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC). Greg Slabodkin, who is now living in Israel, quit AIPAC's "opposition research" staff and publicly described a string of horror stories about AIPAC and ADL spying and physical intimidation of Arab-American and Jewish-American activists opposed to the Likud government's hard-line stance on the Middle East peace talks and the issue of a Palestinian state. Writing in the July 1992 issue of the *Washington Report on the Middle East*, Slabodkin charged that "today, such national Jewish organizations as the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith (ADL) and the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) are using [McCarthyite] tactics to stifle open debate of U.S. policy in the Middle East." He charged that "the pro-Israel lobby" has redefined anti-Semitism to include "any criticism of Israel or its actions."

In May, as the probe of the ADL spying operation was gaining steam on the West Coast, Slabodkin appeared, giving an interview to *Village Voice* writer Robert Friedman, the author of a highly critical biography of the late Rabbi Meir Kahane of the Jewish Defense League. Slabodkin named ADL fact-finder Yehudit Barsky as a conduit for Israeli police data into files at ADL headquarters. According to Slabodkin, Barsky received Israeli police dossiers from embassy officials on Palestinian human rights activists who were beginning to receive favorable coverage in the American press.

Rabin delivers a warning

Last autumn, shortly after his election to become prime minister of Israel, Labor Party leader Yitzhak Rabin came to Washington to meet behind closed doors with the national leadership of AIPAC. According to reports from several participants, Rabin tore into the AIPAC executives for their rabidly pro-Likud policies. He demanded a thorough housecleaning, or else, he threatened, he would order a full-scale public break with AIPAC by his Labor government. Shortly after the session, AIPAC Executive Director Thomas Dine, an architect of the hard-right turn, was promoted to a low-visibility post.

On Nov. 3, 1992, AIPAC President David Steiner was forced to resign his post after an audiotape became public in which he boasted to a prospective contributor about AIPAC's clout with Bill Clinton, and his personal role in secretly obtaining billions of dollars in additional aid for Israel from Bush administration Secretary of State James Baker III. New York businessman Harry Katz provided the tape of his phone conversation with Steiner to a variety of news outlets. On the tape, Steiner boasted, "We have a dozen people in [Mr. Clinton's] headquarters and they are going to get big jobs" with the new administration.

Five days later, the *New York Times* published a story on the AIPAC flap, describing the fallout from the Steiner-Katz incident. The newspaper noted that it came on the heels of a string of other disclosures that have "rocked AIPAC," including the recent "tongue-lashing" it got from Israeli Prime Minister Rabin. "AIPAC officials insist that they have patched up relations with Mr. Rabin, who will be addressing their annual dinner. Nevertheless, even some AIPAC insiders acknowledge that the Steiner affair did not come out of the blue. Too often, they say, AIPAC has attracted at both the professional and volunteer levels people more interested in wielding power and going to the White House than in dealing with some of the less glamorous particulars of Israeli or American Jewish affairs." The *New York Times* article referred to this as "the arrogance of power that seemed to infect AIPAC as it grew in leaps and bounds."

Before the end of November, Steiner had been replaced

as AIPAC president by Steve Grossman, a millionaire liberal Democrat with close ties to President-elect Clinton and former Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis. Grossman told reporters at the time of his appointment that his views on the Middle East were more "dovish" than his predecessor and that he would be working closely with Prime Minister Rabin in efforts to revive the peace process.

ADL hit next

As the new leadership team, more inclined toward a Labor Party orientation concerning Middle East peace matters, moved into command at AIPAC, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith began to feel some of the same heat from within the Zionist lobby circles.

On Dec. 20, 1992, columnist Richard Cohen, long a friend of the ADL, penned a stinging attack on the League in his regular Sunday column in the *Washington Post Magazine*. Cohen chided the ADL for spreading anti-Semitism: "The Anti-Defamation League, having commissioned the Boston polling firm of Marttila and Kiley to determine the level of anti-Semitism in America, came up with a most gratifying finding. There is less anti-Semitism than there used to be but more than enough to keep the Anti-Defamation League in business. As a Jew, I can say that last part with tongue in cheek and with a certain amount of impunity. You had better keep your mouth shut. The last sentence is predicated on the assumption that you, the reader, are not Jewish. As I read some of the statements [in the poll], it struck me that I would not always have given the 'right' answers, and that a non-Jew might have answered them 'right' by lying. Maybe we are, at last, becoming a nation of unbiased people. On the other hand, maybe we're just becoming a nation of liars."

Cohen, who one year earlier had been a guest speaker at an ADL international conference on the spread of anti-Semitism in Montreal, was delivering an important message from the more liberal wing of the Zionist lobby that the AIPAC-ADL bully tactics and right-wing politics would have to go.

Cohen's unexpected blast was followed by another heavy blow to the ADL's prestige. *Los Angeles Times* Washington, D.C. bureau chief Jack Nelson, a respected journalist who had covered the civil rights struggles in the South in the 1960s, published a book lambasting the ADL for running a private dirty tricks program in cahoots with the FBI and directed against the civil rights movement. The Nelson book, *Terror in the Night*, was published in late December. It catalogued the role of the ADL's New Orleans office director Adolph Botnick in conduiting \$70,000 to two top Ku Klux Klan terrorists in Mississippi. Nelson described Botnick as a rabid anti-communist who used the ADL's clout in the Jewish community in the Deep South to harass civil rights activists and even instigate violence against Jewish community leaders in order to whip up support for the ADL's role

as a "Jewish defense agency."

On Jan. 15, 1993, the *San Francisco Chronicle* broke the ADL spy scandal. Indictments against top ADL officials are pending.

Israeli political moves

The pillorying of AIPAC and ADL inside the United States and the growing internal criticism of their strong-arm methods from inside the Zionist lobby itself has had an echo inside Israel. While the news media inside Israel have blacked out the ADL spy story to a very great extent, the weakening of the U.S. supporters of hard-line policies has enabled Prime Minister Rabin and his fragile Labor coalition government to stay in power and launch a serious effort at reaching some kind of peaceful coexistence with Israel's Arab neighbors.

During the past month, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres has attempted to revive his mid-1980s appeal for a Middle East "Marshall Plan," now amplified by proposals for a Turkey-to-Morocco rail line aimed at integrating the eastern Mediterranean region economically. In a June 7 interview with Reuters, Peres reported that a peace treaty with Jordan is all but finalized, and that Israel hopes to complete bilateral agreements with Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt. While the settlement of the Palestine issue is a thornier matter, there are now persistent reports from the official Israeli press of a possible unilateral Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, making a land-for-peace deal a real possibility for the first time.

Sources in both Israel and the United States say that the short-term moves on the part of the Rabin government to regain some momentum in the regional peace process are a reflection of the temporary problems at ADL and AIPAC. As long as the American Jewish circles aligned with the Likud hard-liners are under attack, the prospects of momentum on the peace process are at least improved.

A recent issue of the *Washington Jewish Week* reflected this situation. The June 3 *Washington Jewish Week* carried a strong editorial defense of the ADL, drawing extensively from the League's press releases. The same issue featured a full-page advertisement by a previously unknown group called "Pro-Israel," blasting the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations for giving membership status to Americans For Peace Now, a group supporting a land-for-peace settlement which is linked to a faction in the Rabin government. The ad also contained a harsh attack against President Clinton for his own proclivities toward favoring the Peace Now viewpoint, and for appointing several members of Americans For Peace Now to top posts in his administration.

If the *Washington Jewish Week* editorial and advertisement reflect a decision on the part of the hard-liners inside Israel and the Zionist lobby inside the United States to go into a more aggressive posture, fireworks can be expected.