

Israeli Accountability Begins Now

Spying for the Israeli government has turned into a “get-out-of-jail-free card.”

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Recently returning to the U.S. on a flight from Venice, too-bored-to-read syndrome drove me to watch a movie. I chose “Bohemian Rhapsody,” which recently won an Academy Award for lead actor Rami Malek, who truly did turn in a memorable performance in a film that was otherwise plodding and predictable. As the credits were rolling, I noticed that the movie’s executive producer was none other than Arnon Milchan, an Israeli media billionaire who has spent most of his career in Hollywood. My immediate thought was, “Why is this scumbag still making movies in Hollywood? Why isn’t he in jail?”

Milchan earned my opprobrium the easy way, by spying for Israel to the detriment of the country that has made him rich and relatively famous, which is the United States of America. The Milchan tale is just one part of the successful effort by Israel to obtain the technology and raw materials for its secret nuclear arsenal. Preventing nuclear proliferation was a major objective of the U.S. government when in the early 1960s President John F. Kennedy learned from a CIA report that Tel Aviv was developing a nuclear weapon. He told the Israelis to terminate their program or risk losing American political and economic support but was killed before any steps were taken to end the project.

Israel always features prominently in the annual FBI report called “Foreign Economic Collection and Industrial Espionage.” The 2005 report stated that,

“Israel has an active program to gather proprietary information within the United States. These collection activities are primarily directed at obtaining information on military systems and advanced computing applications that can be used in Israel’s sizable armaments industry.”

The Mossad frequently uses so-called sayanim in its espionage, which means diaspora Jews that it recruits on the basis of a shared religion or concern for the security of Israel. The threat coming from Israeli embassy operatives inside the United States is such that the Department of Defense once warned that Jewish Americans would likely be the targets of intelligence approaches.

Israel accelerated its nuclear program after the death of Kennedy. By 1965, it had obtained the raw material for a bomb consisting of U.S. government-owned highly enriched weapons-grade uranium obtained from a company in Pennsylvania called NUMEC, which was founded in 1956 and owned by Zalman Mordecai Shapiro, head of the Pittsburgh chapter of the Zionist Organization of America. NUMEC was a supplier of enriched uranium for government projects but it was also from the start a front for the Israeli nuclear program, with its chief funder David Lowenthal, a leading Zionist, traveling to Israel at least once a month where he would meet with an old friend, Meir Amit, who headed Israeli intelligence. NUMEC covered

the shipment of enriched uranium to Israel by claiming the metal was “lost,” losses that totaled nearly 600 pounds, enough to produce dozens of weapons. Such was the importance of the operation that in 1968 NUMEC even received a private incognito visit from spymaster Rafi Eitan.

Also, there was physical evidence relating to the diversion of the uranium. Refined uranium has a technical signature that permits identification of its source. Traces of uranium from NUMEC were identified by Department of Energy inspectors in Israel in 1978. The Central Intelligence Agency has also looked into the diversion of enriched uranium from the NUMEC plant and has concluded that it was part of a broader program to obtain the technology and raw materials for a nuclear device for Israel.

With the uranium in hand, the stealing of the advanced technology needed to make a nuclear weapon is where Milchan comes into the story. Milchan was born in Israel but moved to the United States and eventually wound up as the founder-owner of a major movie production company, New Regency Films. In a Nov. 25, 2013 interview on Israeli television Milchan admitted that he had spent his many years in Hollywood as an agent for Israeli intelligence, helping obtain embargoed technologies and materials that enabled Israel to develop a nuclear weapon. He worked for Israel’s Bureau of Science and Liaison Acquisition division of Mossad, referred to as the LAKAM spy agency.

Milchan, a long-time resident of the United States who clearly still has significant business interests in this country as evidenced by “Bohemian Rhapsody,” explained in his interview, “I did it for my country, and I’m proud of it.” He also said that “other big Hollywood names were connected to [his] covert affairs.” Among other successes, he obtained through his company Heli Trading 800 krytons, the sophisticated triggers for nuclear weapons. The devices were acquired from the California top-secret defense contractor MILCO International. Milchan personally recruited MILCO’s president Richard Kelly Smyth as an agent before turning him over to another Heli Trading employee Benjamin Netanyahu for handling. Smyth was eventually arrested in 1985 and cooperated in his interrogation by the FBI before being sentenced to prison, which means that the federal government knew all about both Milchan and Netanyahu at that time but did not even seek to interview them and ultimately did nothing about them.

I would like to think that the next time Milchan arrives at Los Angeles International Airport on business he will be met by federal marshals and FBI agents before being whisked off to some nice, quiet place for a chat. But don’t bet on it. Milchan is possibly no longer traveling regularly to the U.S., though he retains a residence in California, and his “confession” suggests that he believes himself to be bulletproof. He has also recently been involved in a bit of controversy in Israel itself, where the police have recommended that he be charged with bribery connected with the ongoing investigation of corruption by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Milchan, it seems, spent one million shekels (\$250,000) on luxury items that he gave to Bibi as a reported *quid pro quo* to exempt his substantial income from taxes when he returned to Israel to live in 2013.

In an interesting additional element to that story, the police investigation determined that in 2014 Netanyahu approached then-Secretary of State John Kerry to intervene and arrange for a long-term American visa for Milchan, who was at the time dealing with difficulties relating to his U.S. status, possibly due to the 2013 admission that he had been spying. In any event, the visa was granted and Milchan continued to make more movies, and money, in Los

Angeles.

The tragedy is that spying for Israel appears to be regarded as something like a victimless crime, but in the case of Milchan it was dead serious, involving as it did nuclear proliferation on behalf of a nation that might generously be described as aggressively paranoid. And note that Netanyahu, the very “statesman” who received 29 standing ovations from Congress, was also involved in the major Mossad operation to steal from the United States. In fact, even though the Israelis continue to rob America blind, it is extremely difficult to be punished for doing so.

Prosecutions for Israeli spying are so few because the Department of Justice is unwilling to pursue them, according to a retired FBI agent who claimed that hundreds of potential prosecutions were rejected for political reasons. The actual convictions involve crimes so egregious that they cannot be ignored or covered up, like conversations overheard at lunch, as when Pentagon analyst Larry Franklin provided intelligence on Iran to American Israel Public Affairs Committee staffers Keith Weissman and Steve Rosen, as well as to officials in the Israeli embassy. Franklin went briefly to jail and was recently reported to be waiting tables in West Virginia.

U.S. Navy analyst Jonathan Pollard, America’s most damaging spy of all time, stole enough top-secret codeword material to fill a room before he was arrested and convicted. He obtained Israeli citizenship while in prison and is now free on parole, living in New York City. Apart from that, *nada!*

Time to change all that. Milchan and others are not friends of the United States but quite the contrary, and deserve to be treated like any other spy. The American people should demand that the government begin to recognize that fact and act accordingly. Telling Hollywood that it is not good PR to keep allowing Israeli spy Milchan to make millions is a possibility, but sanctioning him to put him out of business would be an even better place to start.

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