

SEGREGATE

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

D. ARTN NSD, (b)(6) and (b)(7)(C)

Memorandum

TO : James L. Weldon, Jr.
Chief, Registration Section

DATE: Sept. 17, 1970

149-1570

FROM NSD
NSD

SUBJECT: The Pledge, by Leonard Slater

The purpose of this memorandum is to present for your use a review of the following book:

Slater, Leonard. The Pledge. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970.

Mr. Slater listed his sources for the information contained in his book on pages 329 through 337 of The Pledge. These sources, excluding six newspapers, a dozen books, and two magazines, were individuals whom Mr. Slater interviewed to obtain the information needed. The pages mentioned above are divided into a chapter by chapter listing of the persons interviewed for information used in those chapters. Mr. Slater used footnotes throughout his book for extraneous material, i.e. name changes of characters in the book and names of persons attending meetings mentioned in the text of the book.

My report of The Pledge consists of two parts attached to this memorandum:

The first part presents a synopsis of the subject matter of the book; the names of major characters in the book are included in this synopsis.

The second part lists twelve individuals who are included both in The Pledge and in registration materials filed by the Jewish Agency--American Section, Inc. for the years 1943 through 1948.

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The purpose of Leonard Slater's book, The Pledge, is to chronicle names, places, events, and dates important to the acquisition of arms, arms machinery, small essential war goods, material support, and financial support for the defense of the Palestinian mandate and the eventual state of Israel. The Pledge is written in chronological order but does not always follow this order because of the autonomy various groups enjoyed in performing their assigned tasks. It became evident that three major tasks were performed in the United States under the direction of Palestinian Jews; each of these tasks was co-ordinated only at the highest level of administration.

I. The first task was directed by David Ben Gurion. Prior to his 1945 visit to the United States, Ben Gurion sent Reuven Zaslani as his special emissary to the myriad of American Zionist organizations; Zaslani's task was to determine for Ben Gurion whether those organizations would be willing to aid the Jews in Palestine in areas other than financial support. Zaslani reported to Ben Gurion that at the mere hint of arms or defense aid to Palestine, the American Zionist organizations had let Zaslani know they wanted no part of the task.

After receiving the above news from Zaslani, Ben Gurion arranged to visit the United States and organize the necessary financial aid to the Jews in Palestine. The purpose of this aid was to organize support for the Jewish community in Palestine in order to enable them to control the situation over the Palestinian Arabs. The group organized by Ben Gurion was hand picked by Rudolf G. Sonneborn of New York City and consisted of eighteen men from throughout the United States; eventually taking the name the Sonneborn Institute, this group met weekly to discuss fund raising methods as well as disbursement of those funds. These meetings were held outside the framework of organized Jewish philanthropy and the Zionist movements. One of the group's achievements was the purchase of the ship, President Warfield, which became the illegal ship, the Exodus.

The major purpose of the Institute, however was to provide the financial backing for other projects of and purchases by the Palestinian Jews. Several years after the Institute was organized, Sonneborn wrote that

the people in the Institute were in effect asked to form themselves into an American arm of the underground Haganah.

II. In September of 1945, Ben Gurion sent Haim Slavin to the United States to purchase the equipment necessary to produce arms in Palestine; at that time, Slavin was an engineer as well as Haganah's specialist in secret arms production. Slavin was to buy the necessary machinery at war surplus sales being held all over the United States that year and the next, 1946. To assist him, Slavin hired an American engineer, Philip Alper; another Palestinian, Elie Schalit, was sent to the United States to assist Slavin in getting the machinery out of the United States without the required State Department licenses. The story involving the arms machinery eventually meshed with the story of other donations to and purchases for Palestine, but initially Slavin and all the workers he employed were unknown to either the Sonneborn Institute or the other organizations set up on behalf of the Palestinian Jews.

The author's account of the purchase of arms machinery and explosives, and their shipment to Palestine involved writing of many illegal actions; on most occasions the author told what specific laws were being violated and how law enforcement officials were to be thwarted should they become suspicious and attempt to stop any of the actions. One particular incident involving transporting machine gun parts across the Canadian border was investigated by the FBI; it was feared that the FBI's investigation would uncover several other organizations involved in the funding of the defense of Palestine by the Jews. Therefore, Dostrovsky (who became the United States administrator of the arms machinery purchases when Slavin returned to Palestine in late 1946) and a member of the Jewish Agency for Palestine discussed their fears with economist Robert Nathan. Nathan later met with J. Edgar Hoover and gave the following account of that meeting:

"I talked very frankly," Nathan recalls. The RCMP (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) had asked the FBI to cooperate in tracking down the sources and personnel involved and maybe prosecuting. I told Hoover, "This is not straight up and above-board. Some prominent people and some important organizations could be hurt."

Hoover wanted to know whether any of the weapons were to be used in the United States. "No," Nathan assured him. Were any of them to be used against the United States? "Absolutely not," Nathan replied.

"Hoover made no promise," Nathan recalls, "but the indication was that he would cooperate. He was sympathetic." (The above 20 lines were quoted directly from Page 76.)

Later accounts of FBI investigations of the Palestinian activities in the United States did not indicate that Hoover stopped further FBI investigations after his meeting with Mr. Nathan.

The task of assembling an arms machinery factory in Palestine was undertaken by Slavin who still kept in close contact with Alper and Schalit in the United States. The purchasing and shipping of the necessary equipment continued throughout the early months of 1948 while the British were preparing to leave Palestine.

III. The third phase of supplying Jewish needs through activities in the United States was initially under the direction of Jacob Dostrovsky. According to the author, Dostrovsky was in fact the chief of staff of the underground Haganah. Assigned to work at the Jewish Agency, Dostrovsky's initial task for Ben Gurion was to obtain ships to transport illegal immigrants to Palestine; his financing was provided by the

Sonneborn Institute. Another task assigned him was the development of a secret radio network for use in Palestine.

When Slavin returned to Palestine, Dostrovsky became Alper's and Schalit's contact regarding arms machinery purchases; the arms machinery task however was still under Slavin's orders which came from Palestine.

In Spring of 1947, Dostrovsky was replaced by Shlomo Rabinovich whose cover employment was with Palestine Exhibits, an organization which showed the material progress in Palestine. In addition to obtaining ships to ferry illegal immigrants to Palestine, Rabinovich also recruited experienced military men to train Palestinian Jews; another related task involved the organization of an intelligence school under an American, Nahum Bernstein, a former OSS agent. This school, conducted at the National Council for Young Israel in New York City, trained young Jewish boys to become "shoo-shoo" boys (Hebrew slang for secret agent).

Rabinovich's tasks, in late 1947, evolved more and more into providing arms and other war materials for use after the British left Palestine and Israeli independence was declared. In this regard, Rabinovich began collecting small arms from donors throughout the United States; small arms, however, were not to be sufficient for defense of the Jewish state. David Ben Gurion sent Yehuda Arazi (alias Albert Miller) to the United States to purchase aircraft, artillery, tanks, and other heavy equipment Israel would need to defend her independence after the British withdrawal. Arazi initiated those purchases in the United States but was considerably more successful in his endeavor when he posed as a Nicaraguan diplomat and purchased most of the necessary heavy arms and heavy equipment for Israel in Europe (especially Czechoslovakia). Arazi's task in the United States was even more complicated by the United States' embargo on all arms to the Middle East which became effective on December 5, 1947.

Rabinovich's stay in the United States concluded with Mrs. Golda Myerson's visit to the United States during which time (2½ months) she raised \$50 million for the Jewish cause. Rabinovich was replaced by Teddy Kollek.

Kollek's job was to co-ordinate the variety of activities being conducted throughout the United States. The emphasis after the partition vote of 1947 shifted from fund raising to seeking donations of all non-embargoed items; the major organization founded to handle those items was Materials for Palestine, Inc. (MFP). Although MFP did not directly deal with any embargoed items, they did ensure that prospective donors of embargoed items were introduced to other individuals; embargoed items, called "black goods", were under the supervision of Zvi Brenner. A considerable portion of The Pledge dealt with the problems involving the purchased United States airplanes; those segments of the book concluded that of the American planes readied for service to Israel, only a very few were actually put into use (that use primarily being as cargo carriers). The planes used in the fighting of the 1948 war were purchased from Czechoslovakia with funds raised and borrowed in the United States.

Another organization set up after Kollek's arrival was Land and Labor for Israel, Inc. (L and L). A major aid to this group's effectiveness was their access to the chaplaincy records of World War II. Co-ordinated by Major Wellesley Aron, L and L eventually recruited 1,500 men and women from the United States and Canada. The author carefully notes that the key words in the United States Neutrality statute are "hire" and "retain"; L and L according to the author carefully avoided any overt hiring or retaining in its recruiting in the United States. L and L was also responsible for recruiting 500 men from the United States and Canada for the Israeli Air Force.

The concluding chapters of Slater's book tell how the materials donated and purchased in the United States were utilized during the 1948 war. The final chapter states where each of the major participants of the book are now.

NAME OF INDIVIDUAL	SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES DESCRIBED IN <u>THE PLEDGE</u> BY LEONARD SLATER	POSITION OR ACTIVITIES REPORTED ON F.A.R.A. REGISTRATION MATERIALS
Dr. Chaim Weizman	President of the Jewish Agency for Palestine.	President of the Jewish Agency for Palestine. (initial reg. statement filed 9/14/43 on behalf of the Jewish Agency)
Reuven Zaslani	Preceded Ben Gurion to the U.S. to solicit help for Jewish defense needs from American Zionist organizations. PRESENT: Died in 1959.	"Assistant in the political depart- ment. Spent several months in the U.S. in connection with the San Francisco Conference and sub- sequently in Washington. He is no longer in the U.S." (supple- mental statement dated 9/30/45)
Mrs. Fanny Barnett	Secretary to Reuven Zaslani during his visit to the U.S. in 1945; secretary to Dostrovsky, also handled some financial matters for Dostrovsky. PRESENT: With husband, retired to Puerto Rico; suffers from incurable bone disease.	Secretary to Meyer Weisgal, the Secretary of the American Office of the Jewish Agency for Palestine. (initial reg. statement filed 9/14/43)
David Ben Gurion	Came to the U.S. in 1945 to organize financial support for Palestinian defense needs; later directed from Tel Aviv all the U.S. activities of the Palestinian Jews. PRESENT: Celebrated 83rd birthday in October, 1969.	"Chairman of the Executive of the Jewish Agency for Palestine; direct political affairs of the Jewish Agency to the end that a Jewish National Homeland shall be firmly established in Palestine." (SHORT FORM filed 11/1/46)

Eliezer Kaplan

One of three Palestinian
Jews at organizational meeting
of the Sonneborn Institute,
July 1, 1945.

"Treasurer of the Jewish Agency
for Palestine, Administrator of
the Department of Colonization
and Director of the Economic
Department." (SHORT FORM filed
6/13/47)

Jacob Dostrovsky
(Hebrew name:
Yaacov Dori)

Arrived in U.S. to persuade
Americans to send military
supplies (through donations
and purchases) to Palestinian
Jews; became co-ordinator for
arms machinery purchases; was
chief of staff of Haganah.
PRESENT: President of Israel
Institute of Technology--the
Technion--in Haifa.

"On a mission in behalf of the
Jewish Agency for Palestine to
purchase machinery and building
material." (SHORT FORM filed
7/30/46)

Yehuda Arazi
(alias Albert Miller)

Sent by Ben Gurion to the U.S.
to purchase heavy arms and equip-
ment in the United States; more
successful in European purchases.
("walked with a limp." page 130)
PRESENT: Died in 1959)

SHORT FORM REGISTRATION FILED FOR
TOVIYA ARAZI on 7/12/46:
"A member of the staff of the
Political Department of the Jewish
Agency in Jerusalem. Temporarily
attached to the Washington office
of the Jewish Agency in the capa-
city of research worker on Middle
Eastern affairs. Sent to the
United States by the Jewish Agency
to undergo an operation on my leg.
I was wounded while on a mission
as liaison officer of the Jewish
Agency to Allied Forces in the
Middle East."

Theodore Kollek	Sent to the U.S. to coordinate all the activities of the Palestinian Jews in the U.S.; organized Materials for Palestine, Inc. and Land and Labor for Israel, Inc. Present: Mayor of Jerusalem.	"To serve on the staff of the American Section of the Jewish Agency for Palestine as liaison officer with the working Metropolitan press." (SHORT FORM filed 12/17/47)
Mrs. Golda Myerson (later Meir)	Visited the U.S. in 1947 and raised \$50 million in 2 1/2 months. PRESENT: Prime Minister of Israel.	Member of the Executive, Jewish Agency for Palestine, Tel Aviv. (supplemental statements dated 12/46, 9/47, 12/47, and 6/48)
Moshe Shertok	As the Agency's representative at the United Nations, he received the tacit approval of the Soviet Union for Haganah to purchase arms in Eastern Europe.	"Member of the Executive, Jewish Agency for Palestine. Chairman of its political department and director of its American office." (SHORT FORM filed 1/21/47)
Major Aubrey Solomon Eban (later Abba)	Spoke to a 10/25/47 meeting of the Sonneborn Institute on Jewish defense needs. PRESENT: Foreign Minister of Israel.	"Representing Jewish Agency for Palestine at the U.N. General Assembly." (SHORT FORM filed 10/27/47)
Gideon Ruffer	Spoke to a 10/25/47 meeting of the Sonneborn Institute on the military situation of the Arabs.	"On behalf of the Jewish Agency in connection with U.N. Assembly." (SHORT FORM filed 10/23/47)