

BY

WAY

OF

DECEPTION

THE MAKING AND  
UNMAKING OF A  
MOSSAD  
OFFICER

VICTOR OSTROVSKY  
CLAIRE HOY

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# **By Way of Deception**

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# Authors' Foreword

REVEALING THE FACTS as I know them from my vantage point of four years spent inside the Mossad was by no means an easy task.

Coming from an ardent Zionist background, I had been taught that the state of Israel was incapable of misconduct. That we were the David in the unending struggle against the ever-growing Goliath. That there was no one out there to protect us but ourselves — a feeling reinforced by the Holocaust survivors who lived among us.

We, the new generation of Israelites, the resurrected nation on its own land after more than two thousand years of exile, were entrusted with the fate of the nation as a whole.

The commanders of our army were called champions, not generals. Our leaders were captains at the helm of a great ship.

I was elated when I was chosen and granted the privilege to join what I considered to be the elite team of the Mossad.

But it was the twisted ideals and self-centered pragmatism that I encountered inside the Mossad, coupled with this so-called team's greed, lust, and total lack of respect for human life, that motivated me to tell this story.

It is out of love for Israel as a free and just country that I am laying my life on the line by so doing, facing up to those who took it upon themselves to turn the Zionist dream into the present-day nightmare.

The Mossad, being the intelligence body entrusted with the responsibility of plotting the course for the leaders at the helm of the nation, has betrayed that trust. Plotting on its own behalf, and for petty, self-serving reasons, it has set the nation on a collision course with all-out war.

I can not be silent any longer, nor can I risk the credibility of this book by hiding reality behind false names and obscured identities (though I have used initials for the last names of some active field personnel, to protect their lives).

*lacta alea est*: The die is cast.

VICTOR OSTROVSKY, *July 1990*

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In more than 25 years of journalism, I have learned that you should never say no to anyone who offers you a story, no matter how bizarre the offer sounds. Victor Ostrovsky's story sounded more bizarre than most, in the beginning.

Like most journalists, I've sat through my share of listening to people breathlessly explain why their story has been suppressed through the evil work of the Intergalactic Martian Conspiracy. On the other hand, all journalists have experienced the high of responding to a tip, only to find that the story it leads to is a dandy.

One afternoon in April 1988, I was at my usual spot in the parliamentary press gallery in Ottawa when Victor Ostrovsky phoned to say he had a story to tell me that was international in nature and might interest me. I had recently published a controversial bestseller entitled *Friends in High Places*, on the troubles of the current Canadian prime minister and his government. Victor told me he liked my approach to officialdom; that was why he had decided to offer me his story. He gave no details, but suggested meeting in a nearby coffee shop for 15 minutes so I could hear him out. Three hours later, Victor still had my attention. He did indeed have an interesting story to tell.

My first private concern, inevitably, was how do I know this man is what he says he is? Well, some private inquiries through contacts, coupled with his willingness to name

names and be open himself, made it much easier over time to conclude that he is the genuine article: a former Mossad *katsa*.

Many people will not be happy with what they read in this book. It is a disturbing story, hardly a chronicle of the best that human nature has to offer. Many will see Victor as a traitor to Israel. So be it. But I see him as a man who has a deep conviction that the Mossad is a good organization gone sour; a man whose idealism was shattered by a relentless onslaught of realism; a man who believes the Mossad — or, for that matter, any government organization needs to be publicly accountable for its actions. Even the CIA has to explain itself to an elected body. The Mossad does not.

On September 1, 1951, then prime minister David BenGurion issued a directive that the Mossad be created as an intelligence organization independent of Israel's ministry of foreign affairs. To this day, although everyone knows it exists — politicians at times even boast of its successes the Mossad remains a shadow organization in every respect. You will find no reference to it in Israeli budgets, for example. And the name of its head, while he holds that position, is never made public.

One of the main themes of this book is Victor's belief that the Mossad is out of control, that even the prime minister, although ostensibly in charge, has no real authority over its actions and is often manipulated by it into approving or taking actions that may be in the best interest of those running the Mossad, but not necessarily in the best interests of Israel.

While the nature of the intelligence business, by definition, involves considerable secrecy, certain elements of it are nevertheless open in other democratic countries. In the United States, for instance, the director and deputy directors of the CIA are first nominated by the president, subjected to public hearings by the Senate select committee on intelligence, and finally must be confirmed by a majority in the Senate.

On February 28, 1989, for example, the committee under Chairman David L. Boren met in room SH-216, Hart Senate Office Building, in Washington, to question veteran CIA official,



Richard J. Kerr, on his nomination as deputy director of Central Intelligence. Even before undergoing the public hearings, Kerr had to complete an exhaustive, 45-part questionnaire, airing everything from his biographical, academic, and employment experiences, to his finances, including what land he owned, his salary during the past five years, and the size of his mortgage, along with questions on organizations he belonged to and his general philosophy of life and intelligence.

Opening the hearing, Senator Boren acknowledged that it was a rare occasion for the committee to conduct its business in public. "While some other nations provide for legislative branch oversight of their intelligence activities, the extensive nature of the process in our country is truly unique."

Among other things, the committee conducts quarterly reviews of all presidentially mandated covert-action programs and holds special hearings whenever the president initiates a new covert action.

"While we have no power to veto proposed covert actions," he continued, "presidents have in the past heeded our advice by taking actions either to modify or cancel activities which the committee believed to be ill-conceived or which we believed posed unnecessary risks for the security interests."

In Israel, even the prime minister, although supposedly in charge of intelligence, often doesn't know about covert activities until after they've occurred. As for the public, they rarely know about them at all. And there certainly is no committee scrutiny of Mossad activities and personnel.

The importance of appropriate political guardianship of intelligence was summed up by Sir William Stephenson in the foreword to *A Man Called Intrepid*, in which he said that intelligence is a necessary condition for democracies to avoid disaster and possibly total destruction.

"Among the increasingly intricate arsenals across the world, intelligence is an essential weapon, perhaps the most important," he wrote. "But it is, being secret, the most dangerous. Safeguards to prevent its abuse must be devised, re-

vised, and rigidly applied. But, as in all enterprise, the character and wisdom of those to whom it is entrusted will be decisive. In the integrity of that guardianship lies the hope of free people to endure and prevail."

Another legitimate question about Victor's story is how a relatively minor functionary in the Institute, as the Mossad is called, could possibly know so much about it. That's a fair question. The answer is surprisingly easy.

First of all, as an organization, the Mossad is tiny.

In his book *Games of Intelligence*, Nigel West (pseudonym of British Tory MP Rupert Mason) writes that CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia, which "is actually signposted from the George Washington Parkway, outside Washington, DC," has about 25,000 employees, "the overwhelming majority [of whom] make no effort to conceal the nature of their work."

The entire Mossad has barely 1,200 employees, including secretaries and cleaning staff — all of whom are instructed to tell those who ask that they work for the defense department.

West also writes that "evidence accumulated from Soviet defectors indicated that the KGB's First Chief Directorate employed some 15,000 case officers" around the world, about "3,000 based at its headquarters at Teplyystan, just outside Moscow's ring road, to the southwest of the capital." That was in the 1950s. More recent figures cite the KGB's total total number of employees worldwide at more than 250,000 employees. Even the Cuban DGI intelligence service has some 2,000 trained operatives posted across the world in Cuban diplomatic missions.

The Mossad — believe it or not — has just 30 to 35 case officers, or katsas, operating in the world at any one time. The main reason for this extraordinarily low total, as you will read in this book, is that unlike other countries, Israel can tap the significant and loyal cadre of the worldwide Jewish community outside Israel. This is done through a unique system of sayanim, volunteer Jewish helpers.

Victor kept a diary of his own experiences and of many related by others. He is a rotten speller, but possesses a photographic memory for charts, plans, and other visual data so

crucial to the successful operation of intelligence. And because the Mossad is such a small, tightknit organization, he had access to classified computer files and oral histories, counterparts of which would be unobtainable by a junior player in the CIA or KGB. Even as students, he and his classmates had access to the Mossad main computer, and countless hours were spent in class studying in minute detail, over and over again, dozens of actual Mossad operations — the goal being to teach the new recruits how to approach an operation and how to avoid past mistakes.

In addition, while it may be difficult to quantify, the unique historical cohesiveness of the Jewish community, their conviction that regardless of political differences they must all pull together to protect themselves from their enemies, leads to an openness among themselves that would not be found among employees of, say, the CIA or KGB. In short, among themselves, they feel free to talk in great detail. And they do.

I want to thank Victor, of course, for giving me the chance to bring this remarkable story to light. I also want to thank my wife, Lydia, for her constant support in this project, particularly since the nature of this story continues to impose more pressure than my standard political fare.

In addition, the Parliamentary Library in Ottawa was as helpful as always.

CLAIRE HOY, *July 1990*

# Prologue: Operation Sphinx

**B**UTRUS EBEN HALIM could be forgiven for noticing the woman. After all, she was a sultry blonde, given to wearing tight pants and low-cut blouses, revealing just enough of herself to pique any man's desire for more.

She'd been showing up at his regular bus stop in Villejuif on the southern outskirts of Paris every day for the past week. With just two buses using that stop — one local and one RATP into Paris — and usually only a few other regular passengers standing around, it was impossible to miss her. Although Halim didn't know it, that was the point.

It was August 1978. Her routine, like his, seemed constant. She was there when Halim arrived to catch his bus. Moments later, a light-skinned, blue-eyed, sharply dressed man would race up in a red Ferrari BB512 two-seater, pull in to pick up the blonde, then speed off to heaven knew where.

Halim, an Iraqi, whose wife, Samira, could no longer stand either him or their dreary life in Paris, would spend much of his lonely trip to work thinking about the woman. He certainly had the time. Halim was not inclined to speak to anyone along the way, and Iraqi security had instructed him to take a circular route to work, changing it frequently. His only