

WHO IS THE REAL RAFI EITAN?

BY AVRAHAM WEISSMAN

When Rafi Eitan died at the age of 92 on March 23, the obituaries about him told about his role in the founding of the Mossad and the capture of Adolf Eichmann, and described him as a hero of Israeli intelligence – the ultimate spymaster.

What was glossed over was his role in the story of Jonathan Pollard. Hamodia has been covering the Pollard saga since it first began thirty-three years ago. This exclusive investigative report, based on declassified CIA documents, court records and previously unpublished conversations the Pollards had with Hamodia more than a decade ago, as well as interviews Eitan gave to media outlets over the years, reveals a very different Rafi Eitan.

PARIS, FRANCE.

NOVEMBER, 1984.

The air of the safehouse was thick with cigarette smoke. Among those in the room were Rafael Eitan, who served as both the head of Lakam – which was an intelligence agency under the auspices of the Israeli Defense Ministry – and advisor on counterterrorism to then-Prime Minister Yitzchak Shamir; Joseph Yagur, the Counselor for Scientific Affairs at the Israeli Consulate in New York; and a young civilian American naval intelligence analyst named Jonathan Pollard.

A few months earlier, Pollard, deeply concerned about the fact that information vital to Israel's security was being deliberately withheld by certain elements within the U.S. national security establishment, had begun sharing with Israel classified material concerning military developments in several Arab countries. Now he was meeting, for the first time, Eitan, in his capacity as the head of the intelligence agency Pollard was working for.

Cognizant of what Pollard's motives were, Eitan presented at that meeting a formal briefing to Pollard on the Middle East situation, which described how Israel could be quickly overrun by a Syrian attack. He emphasized that Israel faced a "technological Pearl Harbor" and badly needed access to the material Pollard could provide.

According to a declassified CIA report, Eitan then shocked Pollard by asking for "dirt" America had on Israeli political figures, as well as information that would be politically useful to his patron, then-cabinet minister Ariel Sharon, and other political figures.

The others in the room, standing behind Eitan, silently implored Pollard to refuse. Yagur, for his part, "violently" shook his head no, and later

privately told Pollard that procuring such information would be grounds for immediate termination of the operation.

Pollard made it clear to Eitan that he had no intention to provide any such material. His sole motivation was Israel's security needs, and aiding Eitan's political cravings was not on his agenda.

Then Eitan made another startling request. He wanted Pollard to obtain the names of Americans spying on Israel, as well any information that would identify Israeli officials who were providing information to the United States.

This time, some of those behind Eitan shook their heads in the affirmative, urging Pollard to agree.

But the young agent would have no part in compromising others, whether they were American or Israeli, and flatly turned Eitan down.

"If you don't share with us who they are, one of these Americans will end up killing you," Eitan warned him.

"So be it," Pollard defiantly declared.

(In contrast, Joseph Yagur, who at this meeting was named as Pollard's new handler, emphasized that Pollard should seek military and scientific intelligence on Arab states, Pakistan, and the Soviet Union in regard to its role as the military patron of the Arabs.)

During the seventeen months in which Pollard handed over material to Israel, he repeatedly voiced concern to his handlers about what would happen to him if he were to be caught.

The orders were straightforward: In case something goes wrong, Pollard was to stall the investigators as long as possible to give time for the Israelis on the team to get out of the country. They instructed Pollard that, if questioned, he should claim that he was passing information to Pakistan, thus diverting attention from Israel. Most importantly, Eitan pledged that Pollard himself would be exfiltrated and taken to Israel.