

Did the Mossad steal John le Carré's cunning plan?

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In the July 1982 foreword to his 1983 novel *The Little Drummer Girl*,¹ John le Carré² thanked the Israeli 'intelligence fraternity' for their 'advice and co-operation'. The author (whose 25th spy thriller, *Agent Running in the Field*,³ was published by Penguin in October) offered 'sincere thanks' to General Shlomo Gazit⁴ former head of Aman, Israeli military intelligence.

Le Carré acknowledged:

'Other Israelis – in particular, certain past and serving officers of the intelligence fraternity – also deserve my sincere thanks for their advice and cooperation.'⁵

It now appears that the Israeli secret service the Mossad owes more than sincere thanks to John le Carré.

¹ *The Little Drummer Girl*, (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1983).

² Born David John Moore Cornwell, in Poole, Dorset, 19 October 1931, ex-MI5, ex-MI6.

³ *Agent Running in the Field*, (London: Viking, 2019).

⁴ <<https://www.inss.org.il/person/gazitshlomo/>>

⁵ *The Little Drummer Girl*, foreword.

The autobiography of the English-born Mossad field officer Olivia Frank published in May 2019⁶ reveals that soon after trading secrets with the British novelist, the Israelis borrowed the plot of le Carré's new thriller for a 1985 scheme to infiltrate an English woman into a Palestinian bombing team in Germany, at a time when *The Little Drummer Girl* was still selling at airport bookstalls worldwide

The story of a rebellious English actress inserted into the PLO and then smuggled into Germany to wreck a Palestinian bombing campaign was filmed by Hollywood in 1983 and again for television by the BBC in 2018.⁷

Imitating *The Little Drummer Girl*, within months of its publication, by infiltrating a transgender Manchester-born woman into a real PLO splinter group, appears so barefaced and cheeky that Olivia Frank says only the Yiddish word *chutzpa*⁸ fits the Mossad plan that nearly killed her.

The derivative *Drummer Girl* operation only ended after a desperate showdown in a Munich street, with Olivia Frank strapped to two radio-controlled bombs by a German neo-Nazi intent on killing German Jews.

Mrs Frank, now 63 and living in Shropshire, thinks the *Drummer Girl*-derived plan may have originated in the mind of her mentor, the British-born Israeli spymaster David Kimche, known in Israel for secret diplomacy as 'the man with the suitcase'.⁹

The Hollywood version of *The Little Drummer Girl*, with Diane Keaton and Klaus Kinski, was actually showing in German cinemas when Olivia Frank, posing as the wayward daughter of a Manchester businessman, lived under a false identity in a PLO safe house in Munich, probing links

⁶ *The Mossad Spy: It's not what you've done, it's who you are. . . the transgender spy* (Darwen, Lancashire: Red Sea Books, 2019). Available from Amazon at <<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Mossad-Spy-what-youve-transgender/dp/1916096301>>.

It was reviewed in *Lobster 78*
<<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster78/lob78-mossad-spy.pdf>>.

⁷ The American writer of legal thrillers John Grisham said:

'I reread John le Carré's *The Little Drummer Girl* every five years or so, just to remind myself what brilliant suspense sounds like.'

Entertainment Weekly, 28 October 2015

<<https://ew.com/article/2015/10/28/john-grisham-books-my-life/>>

⁸ Coming to us from the ancient Aramaic for a peeled onion, Leo Rosten described *chutzpah* as:

'Gall, brazen nerve, effrontery, incredible "guts"; presumption plus arrogance such as no other word, and no other language, can do justice to.'

Leo Rosten, *The Joys of Yiddish*, (New York: Pocket Books, 1970).

⁹ <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/mar/10/david-kimche-obituary>>

between the Abu Nidal PLO splinter group and German neo-Nazis.

'Dave' Kimche, a deputy director of the world's most-feared secret service, ambassador-at-large of the State of Israel in 1987, had been born in London into an aristocratic family of Swiss Jews. At the age of 19 he had fought in the 1948 Arab-Israeli War and in 1954, with his brother Jon,¹⁰ published a classic Zionist history.¹¹

Olivia Frank had already infiltrated the Abu Nidal organisation in Lebanon in the early 1980s, thereby establishing a re-usable 'legend' as the anarchist daughter of a Jewish family in Manchester.



Olivia Frank, an officer in the Israel Defense Forces, before her training at the Mossad academy.

When the West's second largest espionage agency¹² decided to make an eleventh hour strike against an Abu Nidal bomb-maker who was being supplied with explosives by neo-Nazis, the Mossad sent their transgender English spy back to Hale Barns in Cheshire for a briefing with the owner of a cash-and-carry firm who had agreed to pose as her indulgent father.

¹⁰ Jon Kimche ran a Hampstead bookshop with George Orwell in the thirties, edited *Tribune* for Aneurin Bevan and Stafford Cripps during the Second World War and worked as Middle East editor of *The Observer* for David Astor in the 1960s.

¹¹ *The Secret Roads: the "illegal" migration of a people, 1938 to 1948*, (London: Secker & Warburg, London, 1955)

¹² Chaim Levinson, *Haaretz*, 26 August 2018. <<https://tinyurl.com/y7kok6q4>> or <<https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/.premium.MAGAZINE-more-ops-more-secrets-more-money-mossad-s-supercharged-makeover-1.6410934>>

Olivia Frank, also known as Ruth Mayer, Ruth Alison Peacock and Rebekah Stern, had been raised as a boy by a Jewish family in Manchester but served as a teenage woman soldier in the Israeli army. Years later in England she underwent gender reassignment surgery paid for with cash from the British secret service, MI6.¹³

Her claim, that MI5 paid her to commit an accountancy crime in Manchester so that she could occupy the next prison cell to an aristocratic private banker, was supported in December 2019 by MI5's target. Mrs Elizabeth Forsyth was jailed in 1996, having originally been found guilty of laundering £400,000 for the Polly Peck tycoon and Tory Party donor Asil Nadir. Forsyth served ten months prison time in Holloway and Cookham Women's Prison with Olivia Frank before the Court of Appeal ruled that Mr Justice Tucker had misdirected the jury in Elizabeth Forsyth's Old Bailey trial.



Elizabeth Forsyth
(Picture courtesy Elizabeth Forsyth and the *Cyprus Mail*.)

Elizabeth Forsyth, now 83, lives near Kyrenia in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. A member of the Scottish McAlpine family and a former banker for Hill Samuel, First National Bank of Chicago and Citibank, she told Theo Panayides of the *Cyprus Mail*:

'It was all a great conspiracy. They had no evidence against Asil Nadir, and they wanted me to spill the beans. There's something else you should know: they put a spy into my prison. They spent a

¹³ *The Mossad Spy*, p. 192. See note 6.

lot of time working this out, the authorities.’¹⁴

In the summer of 1985, like ‘Charlie’, the left-wing heroine of Le Carre’s *The Little Drummer Girl*, Olivia Frank travelled into Bavaria. After a few weeks living with terrorists, she came face to face with the elusive Arab bombmaker who was being supplied with explosives by a bearded German extremist she knew only as ‘Konrad’.

Five hours after Olivia Frank had sent a ‘burst’ emergency radio message to the Mossad from a pocket transistor radio, ‘Konrad’ strapped two radio-controlled bombs to her body and ordered her to plant one of the bombs in a block of flats inhabited by German Jews.

‘I closed in on Konrad’s target. It was ten storeys high and, checking lights in the windows, it looked as though most of the residents were home. I had enough stuff on me to bring the house down. I stood across from the flats, took Konrad’s plastic card out of my pocket and waited for a black Mercedes van to pass by.

I was still there wondering what to do when a guy I hadn’t noticed before started whistling. It was the *Hatkivah*, the romantic national anthem of Israel. The whistler spoke to me, “I guess you’ve heard that tune before. It’s over . . . I’m Shaul, from the office.” My final curtain fell as the rain poured down. Shaul implored me to stay calm and shelter in the bright lobby. He told me he was part of a Yarid team. Shaul said Konrad was for me no more.

The black van that I had just seen passing me in the road re-appeared outside the flats and in a rush, two men leaped out. I might have known. It was the skinheads who had eyeballed Konrad’s car. Shaul let them into the lobby and told me to leave the shoulder bag and its lethal payload on the tiled floor. I climbed into the van and took a seat so that Shaul could sit behind me and get to work.

He helped me off with my coat. Wary of booby traps he took his time removing the second bomb from my back. My very diligent and careful new friend finally said, “It’s off. You’re safe.” Shaul led me from the van to a Mercedes saloon drawn up behind us in the street.’¹⁵

Waiting in the Mercedes was Olivia Frank’s soft-spoken mentor, the

¹⁴ <<https://cyprus-mail.com/2019/12/04/an-indefatigable-aristocrat/>>

¹⁵ *The Mossad Spy*, p. 97. See note 6.

man she had known only as 'Moses' when he recruited her in a military hospital for training at the notorious Mossad academy near Herzliya. Kimche – the man with the suitcase – had flown to Munich to rescue his transgender spy.

Whether Kimche, who died in 2010, was one of those who briefed Le Carré in Israel, only Le Carré, aged 88, could now say, 36 years after the event. His *alter ego* David Cornwell was a spy and agent handler for MI5 and MI6 in Germany in the 1950s and 1960s.

After the New York magazine *Tablet*¹⁶ showed in June 2019 that the 'Konrad' who had strapped bombs to Olivia Frank in Munich had been Karl-Heinz Hoffmann, still a notorious and unrepentant Bavarian extremist at the age of 83, Mrs Frank indulged in some further speculation.

'I have been asking myself whether my wonderful mentor David Kimche, a man I once called Moses, who was educated in England and was a historian and journalist in his younger days, could have actually lifted the plan that nearly killed me from a first edition of *The Little Drummer Girl*. I suppose I'll never know. But the similarities are alarming. It was fortunate that those who could so easily have killed me in Munich were perhaps unlikely to have been reading an airport paperback best-seller in 1984 and 1985 or going to the movies.'¹⁷

¹⁶ *Tablet*, 28 June 2019 <<https://tinyurl.com/y5wk7cxd>> or <<https://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-arts-and-culture/287109/mossad-spy-identifies-neo-nazi-konrad>>

¹⁷ Interview with author, November 2019.

