

## *The Mossad Spy*

*It's not what you've done it's who you are . . . the transgender spy*

Olivia Frank

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**Robin Ramsay**



**T**his is what £50,000 in notes looks like. They were left in the boot of Olivia Frank's car – by someone apparently from MI5 – in the hope that the moolah would persuade her not to publish this book. The offer was declined: the money has been stashed, not spent, and the book is now available. This photograph

was taken by Andrew Rosthorn, a regular contributor to these columns, who has been working with Olivia.

This is a big book, 491 pages of it, and it roughly breaks down into four sections. The first is an account of Olivia's experience of being transgender decades before it had achieved today's prominence. From the age of three, though born male, Olivia knew she was a girl/woman. This made life very complex and frequently unpleasant until her father, a Jewish officer in the Rifle Brigade at the Second Battle of El Alamein, had a word with someone who was smart enough to see what others hadn't: Olivia's life spent concealing the fact that she felt she was a woman might have given her the deception skills to be an intelligence officer. At 18 she joined the Israel Defence Force (IDF) *as a woman*, in preparation for entering Mossad.

There are vivid accounts of military engagements and a couple of her operations penetrating anti-Israel terrorist groups. Of particular note is a portrait of the legendary British Mossad officer David Kimche, who befriended Olivia after her IDF boyfriend – the first man to love her as a woman – was killed. On this account, Kimche was a liberal Israeli, who detested Ariel Sharon and the militaristic Israeli right-wing then on the rise.

The second section of the book takes place after Olivia leaves Mossad, returns to the UK and civilian life. And everything turns to shit. In 1986 Mossad was caught in the UK using forged British passports and running an operation here which involved explosives.<sup>1</sup> London's Mossad head was expelled and a couple of MI5 officers came to see Olivia and said, 'Tell us about Mossad or we'll ruin your life.' She declined to tell them and so they arrested her and her father and held them in police cells on fabricated charges.<sup>2</sup> Upon her father's release on bail, aware that MI5 were trying to frame Olivia, he ended his life in a vain attempt to end her persecution. The shock resulted in her mother's death shortly afterwards. Olivia spent two years in prison, including a spell in the notorious Risley Remand Centre. This section of the book is a difficult read – not for nothing was Risley known as Grisly Risley. But she survived (just), was let out of prison and slowly began rebuilding her life. She began a new career as an accountant and met the second love of her life, Jim.

The third section of this extraordinary tale begins in 1993 when she was

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<sup>1</sup> See <<https://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3867006,00.html>>. In 2010 Mossad was caught at it again, this time cloning passports of visitors to Israel. See <<https://tinyurl.com/y3cffmcq>> or <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/clone-wars-mossads-london-chief-expelled-over-forged-passports-1926147.html>>.

<sup>2</sup> There have been reports of MI5 using this kind of tactic to try and recruit Muslims in the UK. See <<https://tinyurl.com/y2cv7rvr>> or <<https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/mi5-still-using-threats-to-recruit-muslim-spies-1857750.html>>.

recruited into an illegal joint MI5/MI6 operation against Asil Nadir. A Turkish-Cypriot businessman, Nadir had built up a large business empire, Polly Peck International, in the UK before being charged with fraud. He fled the UK and in 1993 was in the Turkish part of Cyprus which was beyond the reach of formal international law.<sup>3</sup> The MI5/6 plan was this: they would frame and imprison Nadir's banker, Elizabeth Forsyth, and plant Olivia on her in prison to become her confidante. The ultimate aim of all this? Somehow to persuade Nadir to return to the UK, where he could be locked-up and properly silenced. To get into the prison system Olivia would have to commit a crime. The implicit stick being wielded was 'You know what we can do.' The explicit carrot was an offer to pay for Olivia's gender reassignment surgery, as well as deleting her criminal record and paying her a lot of money. Olivia felt she had no choice but is honest enough to note that 'it gave me a thrill to be working as a spy again'. (p. 193)

Olivia and her partner, Jim, were given new identities, issued with new National Insurance numbers and passports, duly committed thefts and were convicted. She was placed in prison alongside Elizabeth Forsyth and befriended her. When she left prison another strand of the story developed.

The investigative television series *The Cook Report* had done a programme suggesting that Nadir might not be guilty despite what the media and the British state were saying. Olivia was tasked by MI5/6 to take part in a plot to discredit the Cook Report, by offering them (false) apparently inside information on Nadir. The idea was that Cook would broadcast Olivia's version and she would then expose it as a fake. At this point it gets complicated, involving MI5, MI6, the Fraud Squad and the Serious Fraud Office, as well as the tv journalists. There follow 150 pages of endless meetings and calls and toing and froing; lots of spy-tech; attempts by the journalists to film MI5/6; and a trip to visit Asil Nadir with the tv people. It is unclear who knows what in these manoeuvres; but ultimately the Cook Report journalists were not conned, told her they knew she was playing a role, and there the operation ended. By this time she had decided that Nadir wasn't guilty and was asking herself 'Why are MI5 and 6 so interested in destroying him?' And so begins the fourth section of the book.

A friend of Elizabeth Forsyth read the Gerald James book *In The Public Interest*,<sup>4</sup> about the destruction of James' company, Astra, in the arms-to-Iraq

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<sup>3</sup> A quick sketch of Nadir is at <[https://everipedia.org/wiki/lang\\_en/Asil\\_Nadir/](https://everipedia.org/wiki/lang_en/Asil_Nadir/)>.

<sup>4</sup> Reviewed in these columns at <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/online/issue31/lob31-10.htm>>. For lots of detail see <[https://wikispooks.com/wiki/Gerald\\_James](https://wikispooks.com/wiki/Gerald_James)>.

scandal. Astra had been Astra Fireworks until James bought it and built it up into a large arms company.<sup>5</sup> Forsyth met James who told her that one of Nadir's subsidiaries was involved in the Iraqi arms deals. This was news to Forsyth and investigation showed that, unknown to Nadir and his company's management, the subsidiary had been used as a paper cover for arms exports. But it explained why the British spooks were so keen to destroy Nadir: they were trying to keep the lid on the Iraq arms dealing story. Researching this on the Internet, Olivia came across a heavily redacted report on Project Babylon: the Iraqi Supergun, on the CIA website. Since the content was largely about the Middle East, she suspected that Mossad might have a copy of the original, and she contacted them. They supplied her with the original, unredacted report<sup>6</sup> and the whole arms-to-Iraq scandal – at any rate a version of it – was laid out before her. A detailed retelling of that story of apparent British state murders and conspiracy is done by Olivia, using that Mossad-CIA report as the basis.

Asil Nadir returned to Britain to face the charges against him, apparently believing he could show that they were false. Alas he and his lawyers underestimated the ruthlessness of the British state which issued 36 public interest immunity certificates, suppressing evidence and witnesses, thus destroying Nadir's defence.<sup>7</sup> He was sentenced to ten years, served four and was released into the custody of the Turkish state which freed him immediately.

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<sup>5</sup> Nick Must points out that in the Michael Caine film *The Ipcress File* (but not in the Len Deighton book on which it was based) one of the front companies being run by (the eventually exposed traitor) Major Dalby is 'Astra Fireworks'. As Harry Palmer arrives to meet Dalby for the first time, there is a shot of the nameplates outside the building and one of them is for 'Astra Fireworks Limited'. The fireworks business is a cover for the storage of ammunition and explosives because Palmer and Dalby walk through a door marked 'Astra Fireworks' into a well stocked armoury. Since Astra had been a fireworks manufacturer since the 1940s, this is just a very striking coincidence.

<sup>6</sup> See 'The Story of Project Babylon, British Spooks, Illegal Arms Deals, Murder And A Judicial State Conspiracy' at <<https://tinyurl.com/y44aqo9s>> or <<https://truepublica.org.uk/contributor-news/story-project-babylon-british-spooks-illegal-arms-deals-murder-judicial-state-conspiracy/>> and <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster66/lob66-asil-nadir-conspiracy.pdf>>.

The report used to be on-line but is apparently no longer available. A version was released by the CIA in 2018 to Muckrock (see <<https://tinyurl.com/yyg52l2q>> or <<https://www.muckrock.com/foi/united-states-of-america-10/project-babylon-the-iraquisupergun-66437/>>) but that report, though with the same title, is not the document received by Olivia. See appendix.

<sup>7</sup> For the details of this see Martin Tancock, 'Secret Justice: Public Interest Immunity Certificates (PIICs) and their use in the Asil Nadir trials' at <<https://tinyurl.com/y6q87hub>> or <<https://www.lobster-magazine.co.uk/free/lobster66/lob66-secret-justice-asil-nadir.pdf>>.

And that, more or less is that. This is not without flaws: no index, not enough editing; far too much reported speech (she can recall conversations decades later?). Nonetheless it is the story of an extraordinary life and a striking account of what it was like to be transgender two generations ago. But most of all it is a stunning indictment of the lawless, literally murderous, unaccountable British secret state in the Thatcher years. Olivia's experience shows that MI5 committed arson, falsely imprisoned people, manipulated the National Insurance system, the passport office, the prison service, the criminal justice system, the judiciary and the police. The STASI could hardly have asked for more.<sup>8</sup> All that was done trying to keep the lid on the story of how a still largely unidentified alliance of arms companies, the military, bits of the MoD and the intelligence services murdered a trail of people and wrecked several British companies.

## Appendix

Nick Must commented:

A search for 'Project Babylon' via the CIA library reading room

<<https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/>> produces at least three different versions of the 'Supergun Report'.

These are:

i) <[https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC\\_0000266049.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0000266049.pdf)> which would seem, ostensibly, to be the same document released to Muckrock, but has some small redactions that are not in the 'Muckrock version'.

ii) <[https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC\\_0001469609.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0001469609.pdf)> which has some pages from version (i) but is significantly different in many ways; and

iii) <[https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC\\_0001245842.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/DOC_0001245842.pdf)> which seems to be an entirely different report.

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<sup>8</sup> In his essay on the use of PIIs in the Nadir case, Martin Tancock – see note 6 – commented: ' . . . with the rise of Thatcher and the great show trials of the early nineties related to the clandestine Anglo-American arming of Iraq – Euromac, Ordtec, Matrix Churchill, Elizabeth Forsyth, Asil Nadir – the iron fist of political control has been worthy of anything that has come out of Eastern Europe.'

