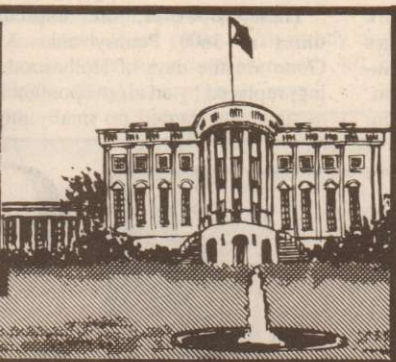


Benazir hires Zionist

From



Mark A. Bruzonsky



Washington to represent Pakistan

political

operator

WHAT may be among Benazir Bhutto's greatest political mistakes since taking office a few months ago has taken place here in Washington rather than in Pakistan itself.

Shortly after becoming prime minister, Benazir Bhutto personally directed that the firm the former Pakistan government had just renewed its contract with in Washington to lobby the American Congress be dismissed. Instead she ordered that a small new firm, one headed by a friend and strongly supported by another close American friend be given the Pakistani portfolio.

Whether Bhutto knew at the time that she was hiring a long-time active Zionist supporter whom many here consider to be part of what can be termed the extended Jewish-Israeli lobby cannot be ascertained. But in a not-for-quotation and extremely guarded discussion about this matter with the Pakistani ambassador here — Ambassador Marker — I got the very clear impression that if she didn't know before she certainly does know now.

The ambassador and his staff — though nervously refusing to say very much about this whole matter — nevertheless give all signs of being quite troubled and embarrassed by the situation.

Others in fact have told me that Ambassador Marker has been very upset about Siegel's appointment but has simply been unable to stop Benazir in view of his own connection to the Zia government and concerns for his own longevity.

The man in question in the centre of this Mark Siegel, a long-time Democratic Party operative who served as President Carter's liaison to the Jewish community when he first took office.

How could such a thing happen? How could an active supporter of Israel, a man closely connected for years with the extended Jewish lobby in Washington, become the highly paid foreign agent of the government of a major Islamic country?

The answer is quite simple actually. In the years Benazir Bhutto spent in the US, she made various friends both at Harvard where she went to school and later in Washington. At Harvard she was befriended by Peter Galbraith. Indeed she mentioned Galbraith some 15 times in her book *Daughter of Destiny* even including personal letters that were exchanged between her and Galbraith.

Today Galbraith is an influential staff member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee working for the very pro-Israeli Senator Clairborne Pell of Connecticut.

And though he denies it there is much evidence to suggest that it was Peter Galbraith who orchestrated the dropping of the pro-Arab lobbying firm, Neill & Co., in favour of Mark Siegel's firm.

Galbraith denies having been the one who planted the idea in Bhutto's head. But when pressed whether or not he discussed this subject with the new prime minister during his frequent visits to Islamabad late last year he refuses to discuss the matter.

Furthermore, it's possible Galbraith's efforts are being coordinated with others who are attempting to penetrate new political circles in conjunction, one way or another, with the Israeli-Jewish lobby here.

There's nothing new, actually, with Jewish persons being employed to work on behalf of various governments — even Arab and Islamic state governments. Indeed, a number of Jewish lawyers have been involved specifically with Pakistani affairs in this country for many years.

The real controversy is not Siegel's religious heritage at all; though he does what he can to try to make it seem this way every time he can.

What makes it so extraordinary that Mark Siegel is working on Capitol Hill for Pakistan is specifically his long-time association with the Zionist and Jewish lobbies — an affiliation he continues to cling to at the same time that he is now representing a major Islamic government.

Indeed, when asked about his political affiliations over the years, Siegel became extremely defensive in a recent phone conversation, insisting that all those who questioned his connection with the Pakistanis were plain and simply anti-Semitic. He refused in fact to discuss either his past or his political outlooks in regard to Israel, dodging all attempts to deal with the political ramifications of his new relationship with the new government of Pakistan.

However, a bit of research reveals some rather startling facts. Though never a high-ranking official of the Jewish lobby, Siegel resigned from the Carter White House in protest over Carter's "anti-Israeli" policies. He did so as part of a coordinated attack on both Zbigniew Brzezinski and Jimmy Carter for their attempts to seek a "Palestinian homeland," "comprehensive peace," and "an international peace conference."

Among the immediate precipitant of Siegel's resignation on March 7, 1978 was the heckling and booing he received a week before when he spoke to young leaders of the United Jewish Appeal. This writer was at that affair and was himself struck by Siegel's emotional reaction.

During that speech Siegel told the more-than-a-thousand young Jewish leaders that he wanted "to take off my White House hat and tell you what I feel as an American, a Jew and a committed Zionist." But even that didn't stop the audience from its vocal attacks on Siegel, surrogate as he was for Jimmy Carter.

The other important precipitant of Siegel's resignation was his opposition to the sale of advanced American

fighter planes and other weapons to Saudi Arabia and Egypt. This, it was said, particularly troubled Siegel who believed, and apparently still believes, that the US should provide major armaments only to Israel.

Siegel didn't leave quietly as most are expected to do in Washington. Instead later in March he published an Op Ed in *The New York Times* harshly challenging the administration he had served in regard to arms sales to Arab states and general attitudes toward Israel.

"And as an American I am dismayed and saddened that my government now wishes to sell the most lethal offensive instruments of the American arsenal to Saudi Arabia, the country whose radio...labelled the recent Palestine Liberation Organisation attack in Israel 'a courageous and noble operation.'"

Many people change, of course. But in Siegel's case the little evidence that exists suggests that he remains today as much a part of the extended Israeli-Jewish lobby as ever. Indeed his basic attitude when questioned about these matters was exactly the accusations of anti-Semitism against the questioner that the Jewish lobby is famous for.

What has happened in this case is but a part of a new and disturbing political phenomenon in Washington that ironically has some friendly Muslim governments hiring persons who are known to be hostile to general Muslim concerns. Remarkably Turkey, for instance, has actually hired former employees of the American Israeli Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) — the primary group that lobbies for Israel and against the Arabs — and paid one of its former executive directors, Morris Amitay, considerable consultant fees.

The theory seems to be that since the Zionist lobby is so strong one should get them on your side if you want to get things from the American Congress.

In a sense it's the Egyptian strategy played out so sadly here for the past few years. The Egyptians have even taken things further, attending major gatherings of various groups associated with the Israel lobby — the only Arabs to do so — in hopes that the next time Egypt is having a tough time getting what it wants from Congress Egypt's new Zionist lobby friends will help.

In 1986 before Benazir returned to Pakistan her new acquaintance, Mark Siegel, bought her a bullet-proof vest. Now Siegel may have got Ms Bhutto into a situation where she is going to need some kind of newfangled political-proof garment.

Advised, apparently, by her Zionist friend, Peter Galbraith, Benazir Bhutto, right, first dropped the pro-Arab lobbying firm appointed by the Zia government, in favour of Mark Siegel's pro-Israel firm. Siegel, a committed Zionist, quit the Carter White House in protest over the decision to sell US arms to Saudi Arabia

