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Menachem Begin reportedly aimed to sabotage the Israeli-German reparations agreement. (Archive)

Last update - 14:49 13/06/2006

Book links Begin to 1952 plot to kill then-German Chancellor Adenauer

By Amiram Barkat, Haaretz Correspondent

Former prime minister Menachem Begin played a central role in a failed attempt to assassinate then-West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, with the objective of sabotaging the reparations agreement in the works with Israel, according to the journal of Eliezer Sudit, one of the men who carried out the attempted hit.

Sudit's journal, which was published in a limited number of copies only, came into the possession of the Israel correspondent for the German daily, the Frankfurter Allgemeine.

Excerpts from the diary passed on to Haaretz reveal that Begin knew of the plans to assassinate Adenauer, and even initiated meetings to promote the operation. Among other things, Sudit writes that he heard Begin had offered to sell his gold watch to pay for the hit after the operation ran into financial difficulties.

Begin's personal secretary, Yehiel Kadishai, and Herzl Makov, the director of the Menachem Begin Heritage Center, told Haaretz on Monday night that they knew nothing of Begin's involvement in the affair.

On March 27, 1952, a German sapper was killed by an explosive device that had been hidden in an item of mail addressed to Adenauer. At the same time, two letter bombs were sent to the meeting place of the Israeli and German delegations by a group calling themselves the Jewish Partisans Organization.

A few weeks later, five Israelis were arrested in France on suspicion of involvement in the assassination attempt. One of the men arrested was Sudit, a former member of the Irgun, a prestate underground led by Begin. Sudit allegedly prepared the explosive device and hid it in the package sent to Adenauer.

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Sudit decided to publicize the affair some 40 years later, in his journal, Be'shlihut Ha'matzpun (On a Mission of Conscience). According to Sudit, he met secretly with Begin and suggested "an operation that would shake the world and prove that not all Israelis are prepared to accept money as atonement for blood."

Sudit writes that Begin was very unhappy with the reparations agreement in the works, noting that the former prime minister "was ready for any reaction that would come as long as the reparations agreement was avoided."

Sudit says that Begin subsequently introduced him to then-Herut MKs Yohanan Bader and Haim Landau, and also Abba Shertzer, who headed the Irgun's intelligence service. It was Shertzer who told Sudit of Begin's readiness to sell his gold watch to finance the trip to France.

According to the journal, Begin and Sudit met once more before the latter left to carry out his mission.

The Frankfurter Allgemeine announced Monday that it would be publishing extracts from the journal in the near future. The newspaper's Israel correspondent, Joerg Bremer, told Haaretz that he had tried to interview Sudit a number of times, but had been turned down with the excuse that the man was not willing to speak to Germans.

16:07 Seven Shfaram residents arrested for lynch of Jewish terrorist

16:50 Bush makes surprise trip to Iraq to see troops, government

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