



Walter Eytan

First director general of the Israeli foreign ministry who founded the entity's school for training diplomats even before it had come into existence, Walter Eytan, died in Jerusalem, 23 May

2001. Born on 26 July 1910, in Munich, raised and educated in London, he worked as an analyst at the British monitoring centre at Bletchley Park (1940-45), went to Palestine in 1946 and changed his name from **Walter Ettinghausen** to Walter Eytan.

While at the foreign ministry, Eytan headed the Israeli delegation to the Armistice Talks at Rhodes and signed the Israeli-Egyptian Armistice Agreement on 24 February 1949. Egypt handed over to Israel the 'Faluja Pocket' where an Egyptian brigade commanded by Colonel (later President) **Nasir** (d.1970) had been under siege. After the withdrawal of the Egyptian forces, the Israelis launched 'a whispering propaganda' to frighten the civilian population that the army was going to launch a revenge attack which 'the civilian authorities will be powerless to prevent'.

The Arab-cleansing operation of Al-Faluja had been approved by Prime Minister **David Ben-Gurion** (d.1973), but his officials feigned outrage denying that had intended any such thing. Walter Eytan lied to the US ambassador **James McDonald**. The Israelis had repeatedly broadcast announcements telling the inhabitants of Al-Faluja to stay at home, but they apparently ignored their advice. 'As if they smelled a rat,' observed the American ambassador, but Walter Eytan replied, the Arabs were a 'primitive' and 'rumour-ridden' people.

Seemingly induced by the UN's Palestine Conciliation Committee, on 12 May 1949, Israel signed a joint protocol with Arabs on the framework for a comprehensive peace, thereby accepting for the first time the principle of repatriation of the Arab refugees and the internationalisation of Jerusalem. But Israel had meant no such thing. Israeli historian Han Pappé explains why, quoting Eytan (*The Making of the Arab-Israeli conflict, 1947-1951*): 'My main purpose was to begin to undermine the protocol of 12 May [1949], which we had signed only under duress of our struggle for admission to the UN. Refusal to sign would ... have immediately been reported to the

Secretary-General and the various governments' and Israel would not have gained the membership of the world body.' Eytan was the head of the Israeli delegation which had agreed to the protocol.

Israel owes its existence to the skills of diplomats like Walter Eytan. Like **Yehud Barak**, Eytan believed in resolving the Jerusalem issue by giving Palestinians 'unfettered', sovereignty over Haram al-Sharif - 'unfettered' sovereignty being confined to the overground area of the 'Temple Mount'!

After ending his term at the foreign ministry, Eytan served as ambassador to France (1960-70) during an interesting period in Israeli-French relations. When he arrived in Paris, **Charles de Gaulle** (d.1970) was an enthusiastic friend of Israel, then the relationship soured.

Charles de Gaulle was 'attracted by the grandeur of an enterprise which consisted in re-establishing an autonomous Jewish national home'. He also wanted Israel to exercise great caution in dealing with the Arabs. They 'were her neighbours, and would always remain so. It was at their expense and their lands that Israel had set herself up as a sovereign state. In doing so, she had wounded them in their religion and their pride'.

So when Ben-Gurion told him he planned 'to settle four or five million Jews in Israel' and that he intended to extend Israeli 'frontiers at the earliest opportunity, I urged him not to do so', wrote de Gaulle in his *Memoirs of Hope* (Paris, 1970). 'France,' he said, 'will help you to survive in the future' but she will not 'provide you with the means of conquering new territory.'

With this advice, de Gaulle put a stop to irregular dealings between Tel Aviv and Paris, including the cooperation to build a plutonium plant in Beersheba. The Israelis had offended de Gaulle when, in December 1968, they raided and destroyed 13 civilian aircraft at Beirut airport and de Gaulle banned all arms sales to Israel.

However, the Israelis also claim to have saved de Gaulle's life in 1961. They said that 'because of the large Jewish community there' they had kept in close contact with the French army in Algiers; and when a committee of army officers set up the Secret Army Organisation (OAS) in 1961 to oppose de Gaulle's plan to give Algeria independence, the Israelis admitted, they had locked 'themselves into the organisation'. Like the OAS, they too were keen on Algeria remaining under French rule.

According to the Israelis: 'In March

1961, a prominent Israeli was invited to the home of an OAS colonel in Paris' and told they were planning a coup. The plan included 'the assassination of de Gaulle' and they wanted the help of Israel. 'If an Israeli Arab could be brought to France to do the job, then blame would be attached to FLN (Front de Liberation Nationale). The effect in France would be dramatic, he said. Not only de Gaulle who was "selling out" Algeria, be disposed off, but the French people in their anger would reject any compromise solution with the Algerian Arabs.'

The 'prominent Israeli' did not take this talk seriously but mentioned it casually to Walter Eytan who immediately informed **Golda Meir** (d.1978); it was decided that de Gaulle had to be told. Ben Gurion was reportedly furious why Walter Eytan had not already warned de Gaulle. Why? A good question.

Walter Eytan was criticised for the worsening relations with France. However, de Gaulle did not last much longer. He survived the student revolt of May 1968, but lost the referendum a year later on 27 April 1969. He had not only annoyed Israelis but also offended his own Jews by saying at a press conference on 27 November 1967 that they were 'an elite people, self-confident and dominating'.

Walter Eytan returned to Israel and served as chief adviser to Foreign Minister **Abba Eban** (1970-72) and thereafter as the head of the Israel Broadcasting Authority (1972-78).

M H Faruqi

German Ugryumov

Head of Russian Chechen Operation, German Ugryumov, died on 31 May 2001. He is reported to have suffered a heart attack. Ugryumov was deputy director of the Federal Security Service (FSB). In the past four months he was the effective head of military operations in Chechnya, and since the day he was appointed to run the operational headquarters in Chechnya, he had not left the republic.

Ugryumov was awarded the Star of Hero Of Russia for organising the infiltration of secret agents into Chechnya and recruiting **Akhmad Kadyrov**, the present head of pro-Moscow civil administration in Chechnya, to collaborate with the federals. He was also expected to become director of the FSB.