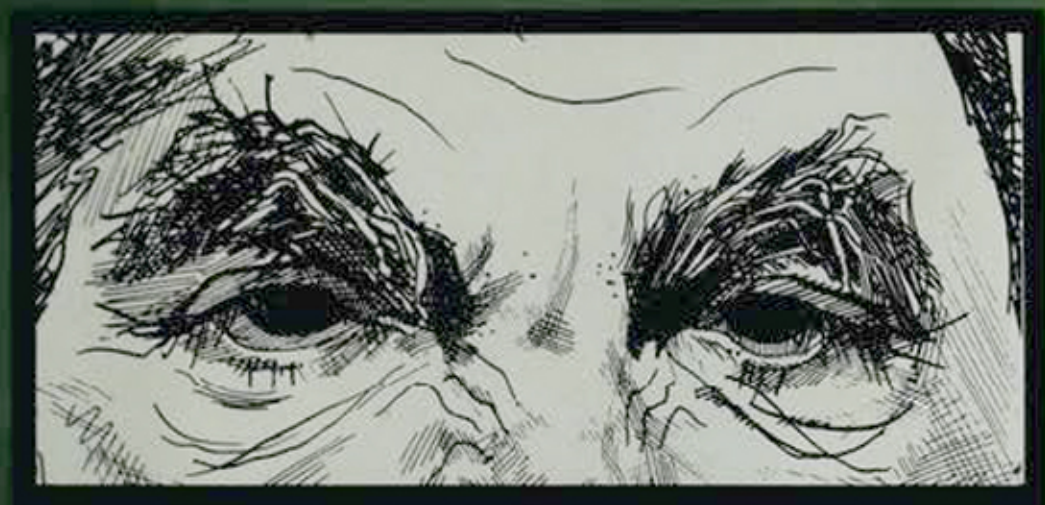


THE FALSE PROPHET



RABBI MEIR KAHANE
FROM FBI INFORMANT
TO KNESSET MEMBER

Robert I. Friedman

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shabby, nondescript building was located on Zion Square, in what was then a seedy section of downtown Jerusalem near the border that divided the Arab and Jewish sides of the city. Kahane's young disciples often leaned over the hotel balcony, taunting prostitutes who plied the alleyways.

The Zion Hotel was an auspicious choice for Kahane's school, as the neighborhood was rich in Revisionist history. In a violent harangue from a hotel balcony overlooking Zion Square, Menachem Begin had exhorted an angry crowd in January 1952 to topple the government for accepting war reparations from Germany. "It will be a fight to the death," Begin shouted. "Today I shall give the command—Blood!" Begin and several thousand followers then stormed the Knesset, pelting it with rocks and bottles and setting fire to cars. Begin's speech and the subsequent riot ignited a wave of right-wing demonstrations and terrorist attacks across the country, including the attempted bombing of the Israeli Foreign Ministry by Herut Party member Dov Shilansky, who today is Speaker of the Knesset.*

Two decades after Begin whipped up right-wing fury from his perch in Zion Square, Kahane was using the Zion Hotel to ready a new generation of young extremists to follow in the footsteps of the Irgun and the Stern Gang. Kahane had the hotel converted into a warren of dormitories, classrooms, and offices. Eldad, who had maintained an office at the Zion Hotel for years, turned it over to Kahane. Students spent up to eight hours a day studying Zionism and religion. One of Kahane's students was Geula Cohen's son, Tzahe Hanegbi, who later became an administrative assistant to Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and now is an ultra-hard-line Likud Knesset member.

A select cadre of Kahane's disciples was taught more than Talmud and Jabotinsky's dictums. In a secret training camp near Jerusalem, they were instructed in terrorist tactics by some of Israel's best-known, pre-state underground fighters. One of the students was Alex Sternberg, a twenty-two-year-old Hungarian-

* One extremist group composed of Orthodox Jews and ex-Stern Gang members bombed Israeli army bases to protest inducting women into the military. At a secret meeting in May 1951, the group's leader, Rabbi Frank, who later became the Grand Rabbi of Jerusalem, authorized a plan to bomb the Knesset on May 14 while it was in session. Fortunately, Israel's internal security service, Shin Bet, thwarted the plot. Two years later, sixteen former Stern Gang members who conspired to overthrow the government were convicted by a military tribunal for a wave of terrorist bombings. But not until 1958, did Shin Bet eradicate the various right-wing extremist groups.