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## SECRETARY BENSON INVITES JEWISH LEADERS TO DISCUSS LADEJINSKY CASE

WASHINGTON, Jan. 3. (JTA) -- Secretary of Agriculture Ezra Taft Benson today told Jewish organizations that "it was a mistake" on the part of his executive assistant, Milan D. Smith, to show reporters a letter received by the Department from a White Russian emigre impugning the loyalty of American Jews of Russian origin. He invited the leaders of these organizations - the American Jewish Committee, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith and the Jewish War Veterans - to discuss the matter with him personally.

The letter to which Secretary Benson referred was sent to the Department of Agriculture by White Russian emigre George N. Vitt, in connection with the dismissal of Wolf Ladejinsky, agricultural economist, from his \$11,000-a-year post as a "security risk." The White Russian emigre applauded the Department for dismissing the Jewish expert and said that many Russian Jews who settled in the United States had turned out to be the "worst kind of traitors." It was this letter that Mr. Smith gave to newspapermen in explanation of the dismissal of Mr. Ladejinsky, who is Russian-born and who came to this country in 1922.

In his communication to the three Jewish organizations today, Secretary Benson said: "I accept no responsibility for any of the statements or conclusions in the Vitt or any other letter received by the Department in connection with the Ladejinsky matter. It was a mistake to show the letter to reporters and by so doing imply the Department's approval of the contents."

### Benson Regrets Anti-Semitic Implications

In another communication to the same organizations today, Secretary Benson said: "While the Vitt letter was made available to reporters, it was not done as reflecting the views of this Department in any respect, and I regret the creation of that implication. I am also surprised and shocked that anti-Semitic implications have been raised in the press as a result of the letter. This Department has many loyal Jewish people in its employ who are giving honest and conscientious and valuable service to our country."

"I would be among the first to state without hesitancy my long and lasting admiration for the Jewish people. I would be among the first to deplore any attempt to create an anti-Semitic feeling in our country. My executive assistant concurs fully in these views. I would deeply appreciate your making my views known to your membership. I would be happy to discuss this matter with you personally."

Secretary Benson's communications to the Jewish organizations came as a result of protests sent him by these organizations and calling upon him to repudiate the

action of his aide, Mr. Smith, in releasing the anti-Semitic letter by Mr. Vitt in defense of the Department's dismissal of Mr. Ladejinsky.

The anti-Semitic aspects of the affair will be brought to President Eisenhower's attention tomorrow by Joseph F. Barr, national commander of the Jewish War Veterans, who will see the President at the White House in the morning. The matter will also be discussed tomorrow with Secretary of Agriculture Benson who agreed today to meet with Henry E. Schultz, national chairman of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, and Benjamin Epstein, the ADL executive director.

### Suspension of Agricultural Dept. Official Urged

The American Jewish Congress, in a communication to the Secretary of Agriculture, called for the suspension of Mr. Smith, for his "apparent readiness to employ anti-Semitic material in the Ladejinsky case, pending full investigation of all circumstances surrounding the dismissal of the agricultural expert."

In a telegram to President Eisenhower, Adolph Held, chairman of the Jewish Labor Committee, charged that those who released the Vitt letter are "not fit to exercise the duties of their office." He scored the letter as an "echo of the Russian anti-Semites who during the Czarist regime and later under the Soviets engaged in vicious campaigns of pogroms and slanders against the Jews."

Mr. Barr, replying late today to Secretary Benson's communications, said: "It was indeed regrettable that the Vitt letter was released to the press, especially in the light of the obvious references it contained. It is even more regrettable that your executive assistant should have complimented the writer of the letter and given a basis for the view that it had the endorsement of the Department of Agriculture."

The JWV commander said he had seen no denial of Mr. Smith's concurrence with the views expressed in the letter whether it be his own or the Department's. "Men in public service," said Mr. Barr, "cannot afford to harbor deep-seated prejudices based on foundations not in the American tradition."

Mr. Schultz, in his protest to Secretary Benson, said: "We have read with shock, news reports of the handling of the Ladejinsky case by high officials of the Department of Agriculture. We protest and deplore the use by your executive assistant, Milan D. Smith, of an anti-Semitic letter as a release of your Department. The letter contains the scurrilities of a man whose views border on the lunatic fringe."

"The action of Mr. Smith has served to injure a very large group of loyal Americans in all walks of life and has cast doubt on the administration of the security system in the public mind. Whether motivated by malice or lack of understanding, Mr. Smith's action raises serious question as to his competence for holding such high office."

"George Vitt, the author of the now notorious letter, is a one-time supporter of the Russian Czarist regime; who looks upon all who opposed or fled from that tyranny as 'revolutionary.' But Americans have always regarded those forced to flee the despotic Czars as fighters for and seekers after freedom. Great numbers of them, Jews who fled religious persecution, have contributed immeasurably to the welfare of the United States, the country which gave them asylum."

"For a government official like Mr. Smith to throw doubt upon the loyalty and Americanism of this large group, merely on the view of one man who longs for a return of the ancient tyranny of the Czar to replace the current tyranny of the Communists, is an outrageous act that you are duty-bound to repudiate."

The American Committee for Cultural Freedom, an anti-Communist organization of intellectual and cultural leaders, sent a message to Secretary Benson attacking the release of the Vitt leader.

## CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEE REPORTS ON ANTI-SEMITISM IN SOVIET LANDS

WASHINGTON, Jan. 3. (JTA) -- Anti-Semitism in the countries behind the Iron Curtain, including the Soviet Union, continues to exist just as it did, prior to Stalin's death, except that it is now better concealed from the world, says a report issued here today by the House of Representatives Select Committee on Communist Aggression.

The report, which deals with the "treatment of Jews under Communism," states that the accumulated facts "give a clear answer to those who succumbed to wishful thinking and pro-Soviet propaganda, and believed that the persecution of Jews would end after Stalin's death. The persecution of the Jewish minority continues, even if it is less widely advertised and better concealed than in the period just before the dictator's death. On the Jewish front, as in all other respects, the aims of the leaders of world Communism remain unchanged and are pursued as always with methods which combine force with deceit, aggression with deception."

The report emphasizes that "the Communist attitude toward the Jews was not substantially revised after Stalin's death. Only its forms were modified: anti-Semitic drives are now less publicized and better concealed from the free world. But Jewish communal life remains suppressed, the belief in a world-wide Jewish conspiracy continues to be an article of Communist faith, and the persecutions are proceeding as before. In dozens of trials, now conducted secretly, hundreds of Jews, former communal leaders as well as Communists of Jewish parentage, are being tried on the same fake charges of 'Zionist plots.'"

The report says that "the Jewish minority is a special target of Communist persecution because it is suspected of attachment to the religious tenets of Judaism and to the humanitarian values of Jewish culture and history, as well as of ties of cultural and emotional solidarity reaching behind the borders of the Soviet Empire."

### Cites Anti-Jewish Acts; Analyzes Reasons for Moscow's Actions

Emphasizing the contention that there was little change in the status of Soviet Jewry since Stalin's death, the report declares: "Except for the 13 released Moscow doctors, no victims of the anti-Jewish measures were publicly rehabilitated; Zionism remained a criminal offense; hundreds of former Zionist leaders in satellite countries languished in jail; Jewish communal activities were proscribed as before; emigration remained forbidden; the charges levelled against Jewish leaders all over the world in the Slansky trial were not only not retracted, but were repeated again and again; the existence of a worldwide Jewish conspiracy against the Communist regimes remained an article of faith for all Communists."

Reasons for the Soviet actions are attributed by the committee to "Moscow's hope of extending its influence in the Middle East" being "thoroughly disappointed with the emergence of the young Jewish State as a democratic country of the Western type, with a very insignificant pro-Soviet minority."

The report says Israelis who came from Communist lands "were one of the strongest anti-Communist influences in Israel's life." It notes that "the ardent response of Jews from the USSR and satellites to the establishment of Israel, which promised them a possible refuge from their misery, awakened Communist fears of Jewish 'unreliability.'"

The main reason "for this offensive against the Jews," the committee reports, "was the sharpening of the cold war." This caused the Jews to be characterized as a "suspect" minority, connected with "foreign western influences," not only political but also religious, cultural, artistic, and scientific.

A preface to the report notes that the treatment of religious and ethnic minorities "has always been a good index to the character of a political and social system." The report says the Cominform has reduced religious freedom to the right to hold services under strict government supervision and transformed the remaining

"religious" organizations into instruments of Communist policy. "They have introduced a degree of discrimination which, in the case of Jews, approaches complete elimination of Jewish citizens from public life, and they have made violent anti-Semitism an instrument of government policy," the report states.

The report was issued after a study lasting several months. Public hearings were conducted by the committee in New York in September. Among those who testified were spokesmen for major Jewish organizations and such eyewitnesses as Jewish refugees and former community leaders from areas now governed by the Communists. Additional evidence was accumulated in other hearings, conducted in Europe as well as America, in regard to conditions of Jews in Eastern Europe.

Today's report traced the situation of Russian Jewry from the 1917 revolution until the present. It summarized the impact of Communism on Jewish institutions, religion and culture; the Birobidjan experiment was described, as well as the Stalin-Hitler pact and the extension of Soviet rule to the satellite states.

#### U. N. SECURITY COUNCIL MEETS TODAY ON BAT GALIM CASE

UNITED NATIONS, N. Y., Jan. 3. (JTA) -- The release of the crew of the Bat Galim by Egypt will not affect the plans for a meeting of the United Nations Security Council tomorrow, it was learned here today. Furthermore, plans for the meeting will not be altered by Egypt's notification that it is willing to turn the seized Israel freighter over to any agency authorized by Israel to take the ship any place except through the Suez Canal.

According to Israel sources here, Israel needs no agency except its own sailors and is ready to take the ship whenever "its illegal detention is terminated" through the Suez Canal to its original destination, Haifa.

The Council will meet, as scheduled, tomorrow afternoon, with only one point on the agenda: Israel's insistence that Egypt live up to previous United Nations resolutions for freedom of passage through the Suez Canal for shipping from and to all countries. Leslie Knox Munro, of New Zealand, is president of the Security Council this month.

#### TORTURE DRIVES JEWISH DEFENDANT IN EGYPT TO SUICIDE ATTEMPT

LONDON, Jan. 3. (JTA) -- A defense attorney for one of the 12 Jews on trial before Egypt's highest military tribunal on charges of "espionage" in behalf of Israel charged last night that his client, Marcelle Nino, attempted to commit suicide because of the tortures to which she was subjected by the Egyptian authorities, it was reported here today from Cairo.

The dispatch said that the attorney said Miss Nino had attempted to kill herself because "she was tortured, beaten up and forced to talk under pressure." A 13th defendant committed suicide in prison several weeks before,

#### JORDAN GETS BRITISH INSTALLATIONS IN OLD CITY OF JERUSALEM

LONDON, Jan. 3. (JTA) -- The British-Jerusalem Electric Company will turn over its installations serving the Jordan-occupied Old City of Jerusalem to the Arabs, it was reported here today in dispatches from Amman. The company sold its holdings in the new city of Jerusalem to Jews in 1947.

#### BRITISH LABOR PARTY LEADERS ON TWO-WEEK VISIT TO ISRAEL

LONDON, Jan. 3. (JTA) -- Two leaders of the British Labor Party left here last night for a two-week visit to Israel as guests of the Israel Government.

The visitors are Dr. Edith Summerskill, M. P. and chairman of the Labor Party, and James Griffiths, Colonial Secretary in the last Labor Government. No special significance is attached here to their visit, which is one of a series of trips to Israel by British M. P.'s.

### STUDENT ZIONIST ORGANIZATION ESTABLISHED IN UNITED STATES

NEW YORK, Jan. 3. (JTA). -- A permanent Zionist student organization on the college campuses of the United States and Canada has been established, it was announced today by the American Zionist Council, under whose sponsorship the new national group will function. The organization was formed by several hundred students from 60 colleges, who just concluded a convention here.

The purpose of the new organization is "to interpret to the general community, students and faculty, the meaning and promise of Zionism and the State of Israel; to encourage Jewish students in the study of, and participation in, all aspects of affirmative Jewish living; and to aid them to creative self-fulfillment through identification with the ideals and achievements of the Zionist movement including aliyah to Israel."

Other aims of the Student Zionist Organization, as promulgated in resolutions adopted by the delegates, include: the promotion of the Hebrew language, the establishment of projects to benefit Israel's culture and economy, the creation of a program to interpret Israel realistically and to combat Arab propaganda, the encouragement of migration to Israel, and the establishment of a Zionist education program in the student group on the campuses.

### TEACHERS OF HEBREW IN HIGH SCHOOLS HOLD NATIONAL CONFERENCE

NEW YORK, Jan. 3. (JTA). -- A national conference of teachers of Hebrew in public high schools and colleges in eight cities was held here yesterday under the joint auspices of the Hebrew Culture Service Committee for American High Schools and Colleges, the Hebrew Culture Council of the Jewish Education Committee of New York, and the American Association of Teachers of Hebrew in the Public Schools.

The conference was devoted to the problem of coordinating the instruction of Hebrew in the junior and senior high schools. Judah Lapson, chairman of the Hebrew Cultural Service Committee and director of the Hebrew Culture Council, reported that 71 public secondary schools in 12 American cities were now offering Hebrew as a modern language. He also said that 10 New York colleges now offered Hebrew courses. Other reports revealed the progress of Hebrew in the schools over the last 25 years, a period which saw a decline in language study in high schools and colleges.

A citation of honor was presented to Prof. Joseph Pearl, chairman of Classical Languages and Hebrew at Brooklyn College. The presentation was made by Rabbi Abraham M. Heller, founding member of the Hebrew Culture Service Committee, who paid tribute to Prof. Pearl for his pioneering in the establishment of Hebrew at Brooklyn College 17 years ago and his furthering the subject since then. Brooklyn College was the first New York college to introduce Hebrew courses.

### Nation-Wide Hebrew Culture Program to be Launched in U.S.

NEW YORK, Jan. 3. (JTA). -- A nation-wide program to stimulate the development of the Hebrew language and Hebrew culture in the United States will get under way in the near future, Samuel J. Borowsky, chairman of the Board of the Brit Ivrit Olamit, announced today.

The Brit Ivrit Olamit is the international organization representing the Hebrew Federations throughout the world. The activity is being presented in connection with the forthcoming World Hebrew Congress.

**PROMINENT PERSONALITIES EAGER TO BE IDENTIFIED AS JEWS**

NEW YORK, Jan. 3. (JTA) -- The overwhelming majority of outstanding personalities of Jewish origin throughout the world, in all fields of endeavor, are not only willing but eager to be identified publicly as Jews, according to a report by Harry Schneiderman, chairman of the editorial board of the first "Who's Who in World Jewry," which will be published here this month.

In gathering the 11,000 biographies of prominent living Jews from all parts of the world, Mr. Schneiderman said, the editorial board had to sift through thousands upon thousands of names suggested by organizations, scholarly institutions and co-operating committees in the U.S. and overseas. These suggestions were narrowed down to the individuals deemed appropriate for inclusion in the volume because of their achievements in government, science, the arts, business, scholarship, civic welfare, entertainment or other fields, and each individual was contacted for biographical details.

"Except in a few, scattered instances, no individual asked that his name be omitted from our compilation of the world's leading Jews," Mr. Schneiderman declared. "On the contrary, most candidates for inclusion expressed great interest in being listed along with the contemporaries as outstanding Jews of our times."

**EDWIN ROSENBERG NAMED CHAIRMAN OF UNITED HIAS SERVICE COUNCIL**

NEW YORK, Jan. 3. (JTA) -- Designation of Edwin Rosenberg as chairman of the National Council of United HIAS Service, the Jewish international migration agency, was announced today by Ben Touster, president. At the same time, Mr. Touster announced that Daniel G. Ross will act as vice chairman of the National Council, which will have a membership of some 1,500 Jewish leaders of all sizeable communities in the United States.

Mr. Rosenberg served as the first president of United Service for New Americans, in 1946; as a member of the executive committee of the United Jewish Appeal, and the New York State DP Commission. He was chairman of the committee which negotiated the recent consolidation of United Service for New Americans, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society and the migration services of the Joint Distribution Committee into a single unified agency now known as United HIAS Service. Mr. Ross, a New York attorney, has served as a member of the board of directors of HIAS since 1944.

**FINNISH-ISRAEL ASSOCIATION FORMED; INCLUDES SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT**

STOCKHOLM, Jan. 3. (JTA) -- A Finnish-Israel Association was formed in Helsinki yesterday, it was reported here today. The group includes former Finnish Prime Minister Fagerholm and the current Speaker of the Finnish Parliament. Some 150 persons attended the inaugural meeting of the group, which has as its purpose the promotion of cultural and economic ties between the two countries.

**EXCAVATION STARTED FOR ERECTION OF MONUMENT FOR JEWISH MARTYRS**

PARIS, Jan. 3. (JTA) -- Excavation in preparation for the erection of the Tomb of the Unknown Jewish Martyr has already been started on the site of the monument, it was announced here today by the committee for the memorial. The monument, which will include a library and a museum dealing with the Nazi annihilation of European Jewry, will pay honor to the Jews of all countries martyred by the Nazis.

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