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GERSHON AGRON, MAYOR OF JERUSALEM, DIES; ISRAEL GOVERNMENT MOURNS

JERUSALEM, Nov. 1. (JTA) -- Gershon Agron, Mayor of Jerusalem, died here today at the age of 66, from an acute lung infection which followed a cancer operation. He had been admitted to the Hadassah-Hebrew University Hospital early in September.

Elected as Jerusalem mayor in 1955, he was running for re-election in the forthcoming municipal elections on Tuesday. He headed the list of candidates of the Mapai, Israel's Labor Party, of which he was a leading member for many years.

Leaders of the Government, including President and Mrs. Izhak Ben-Zvi as well as Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, expressed profoundest condolences in messages to the widow, Mrs. Ethel Agron.

Born in the Ukraine, he came with his parents to the United States at the age of 7. He studied at Brown University and at the Graetz Academy for Jewish Studies in Philadelphia. In 1918 he joined the Jewish Legion as volunteer and served in Palestine until 1920, when he returned to the United States and became editor of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

In 1924 he went back to Palestine and settled there permanently, first acting there as correspondent of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, and editing the Palestine Bulletin, a daily newspaper in English established by the JTA in Jerusalem. The paper was later acquired by him and a group of investors and was reorganized into the Palestine Post under his direction and editorship. It is now known as The Jerusalem Post.

During the British administration of Palestine, Agronsky, who later shortened his name to Agron, also served as correspondent of the Times of London and of other British newspapers. When Israel was established, he became director of the Israel Government Information services. He visited the United States on several missions since 1949 and also toured the country on behalf of the United Jewish Appeal and the Israel bond campaign.

Premier Ben-Gurion stated, in a message to the widow, "Gershon Agron's untimely death brings grief and shock. A volunteer from the United States, he was a member of the first Jewish Legion in our generation. He was one of our most talented and upright journalists. His passing is a loss to the Jewish public, the State, the City of Jerusalem, Journalism, the Jewish press, the pioneering movement and the Labor Party."

ISRAEL ELECTION CAMPAIGN CLOSES TODAY; THOUSANDS OF RALLIES HELD

TEL AVIV, Nov. 1. (JTA) -- Thousands of mass meetings and rallies were held throughout Israel today and yesterday, as the national election campaign reached a climax prior to Tuesday's balloting for candidates to the fourth Knesset. Under the law, no electioneering will be allowed after tonight.

Two of the biggest rallies, each attracting crowds estimated at well over 20,000 apiece, were held in this city last night, with Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion addressing a Mapai rally, while Menachem Beigin talked to a mass meeting called by Herut. At the same time, a third meeting, attracting a smaller crowd, estimated at several thousand, was held in this city's busiest center, Dizengoff Square, by the General Zionists.

Neither Mr. Ben-Gurion nor Mr. Beigin had anything new to say at their respective rallies, both reiterating their well-known party platforms, attacking the opposition parties. Other sizable meetings were held here, and in other parts of the country, by two of the other contending parties, Mapam and Achdut Avodah. Each drew capacity crowds to their meetings.

Arguments and, at times, fights, disrupted Sabbath services in many of the small synagogues in the Mea Shearim quarter in Jerusalem yesterday, as adherents of the Gerrer Rebbe and followers of Neturei Karta disagreed as to whether Hassidim should participate in Tuesday's Knesset elections.

Neturei Karta followers hold that pious Jews should not participate in the balloting and should boycott all government activity. The followers of the Gerrer Rebbe, insisting that it is the duty of all pious Jews to participate as citizens, came to many of the synagogues in Mea Shearim to call upon religious Jews to vote Tuesday. Many of the Gerrer disciples were heckled and shouted down, and efforts were made in some of the synagogues to oust the "invaders."

AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE CHARGES MOROCCO WITH ANTI-JEWISH ACTION

WASHINGTON, Nov. 1, (JTA) -- Charges that anti-Jewish action in Morocco is growing were voiced here today by Herbert B. Ehrmann, president of the American Jewish Committee, addressing the Committee's executive board meeting at the Shoreham Hotel. He said that two anti-Jewish trends were evident in Morocco today--the elimination of foreign Jewish organizations and mistreatment of Moroccan Jews. He also reported increasing discrimination in Morocco against Jews in employment.

Mr. Ehrmann urged the U. S. Government to support a plan submitted by United Nations Secretary General Dag Hammarskjold to deal with the Arab refugee problem with a view to have them eventually absorbed by Middle East countries. He called on the U. S. "to refuse to countenance the tactic of utilizing the plight of the Arab refugee as a political weapon and a means of political maneuvering." Mr. Ehrmann also scored Egypt for "denying Israel freedom of passage in the Suez Canal."

The American Jewish Committee president criticized the publicity given by Jewish organizations to the hoped-for meeting with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev. Emphasizing that his organization had been against premature publicity, he said that the AJC had been invited by the other Jewish organizations to join with them in the effort to arrange a meeting with the Premier. However, he added, the American Jewish Committee made it a condition that the talks with Khrushchev should be limited to the question of discrimination against Russian Jewry and should emphasize the problem of equality of rights in the fields of religion and culture.

"In line with this approach, we suggested that the delegation should consist of representatives of American Jewish organizations whose main purpose is to protect the rights of Jews and human rights generally and should not include persons who were identified as being primarily interested in promoting Zionist aims," Mr. Ehrmann reported. "The reason for making this condition basic to our cooperation is obvious--Khrushchev's hostile attitude toward Israel and Zionism and his suspicion of representation in behalf of Russian Jewry as efforts to remove Jews from Russia to Israel.

Mr. Ehrmann also reported that President Eisenhower had been approached, at the suggestion of the AJC, about two weeks prior to Mr. Khrushchev's visit to the U. S., by one of the most important public figures in the United States, himself a Jew, with regard to the treatment of Jews in Russia and he was informed by the President that he would bring up the problem of Russian Jewry with Mr. Khrushchev should the opportunity present itself.

"But, all this was done on a strictly confidential basis," the president of the AJC emphasized. "The recently widely publicized statement of the role of a certain national Jewish agency in President Eisenhower's intercession with Mr. Khrushchev is, in our view, harmful to the cause of Russian Jewry because it may give the impression to the Soviet leaders that important American personalities on their own are not concerned with the problem, and that they have to be prodded by Jewish organizations. This impression is unfair to the persons who have discussed the issue with Mr. Khrushchev."

Israel Ambassador Advocates Regional Disarmament in Middle East

Israel Ambassador Avraham Harman, speaking at the AJC meeting, called for consideration of regional disarmament schemes, with appropriate guarantees, to safeguard Middle Eastern peace. He said a regional disarmament based on renunciation of force and signing of non-aggression pacts would remove tensions and promote social and economic development.

"Peace-making is a process and not a one-time act," he stressed. "To keep this process moving there must be a reciprocal will for peace which must reflect itself in both negative and positive action. There must be abstention from actions which increase tension and a positive desire to move forward step by step, from agreement to agreement."

Mr. Harman emphasized that "Israel stands ready at all times to negotiate any agreement on any issue and it would regard non-aggression pacts leading to agreed regional disarmament as a suitable starting-off point for the peace process which is desired. The will to peace can only express itself in direct communication between states," he said.

(In an interview with the New York Times correspondent in Israel this week-end, Premier David Ben-Gurion said that Israel will strive with every means at her disposal for general disarmament throughout the Middle East. "We will be ready at any time for mutual inspection," he declared. "We will ask for disarmament in any form available to us, and we will make it clear to the Egyptians that they can come and see that we have done it.")

Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, in a message to the American Jewish Committee, said that West Germany and its states were waging an "uncompromising" battle against anti-Semitism through the "administration, the courts, press, radio and private associations." The message made public at the committee's executive board meeting, said that "anti-Semitic, anti-democratic phenomena have come to the surface in Germany, but that they should not be over-estimated."

PASSENGERS OF S. S. ISRAEL RE-BOOKED AFTER COLLISION IN N. Y. HARBOR

NEW YORK, Nov. 1. (JTA) -- Gottlieb Hammer, president of the American Israel Shipping Company, the representative of the Zim Israel Navigation Line, today announced that alternative travel has been arranged for all passengers of the Zim passenger liner "Israel" which was in a collision in New York harbor with the American freighter "American Press." Some passengers, Mr. Hammer said, were re-booked and sailed for Italy on the Christoforo Colombo and others departed on El Al planes. Still other passengers, mostly Israelis, were quartered by the line in several New York hotels.

"The S. S. Israel which left her Brooklyn pier Thursday evening for Gibraltar, Piraeus and Haifa with 269 passengers and 146 crew aboard was rammed on the port side by the 'American Press' of the United States lines off Liberty Island at about 8:30 p. m. Thursday," Mr. Hammer said. "The S. S. Israel was under pilotage when the collision occurred. Immediately after the impact Capt. Jacob Por put the ship in shoal waters off the Statue of Liberty in order to safeguard the passengers against any further possible danger. Fortunately, no passenger injuries other than a few minor scratches and bruises were reported. However, one Israel seaman, Chaim Benites of Haifa, was missing.

"The extent of the damage was not immediately determined," Mr. Hammer stated. "A preliminary examination disclosed a 35-foot gash in the port side of the Israel from below the water line to the promenade deck. The ship proceeded under her own power to drydock in Brooklyn and necessary repairs will be made as quickly as possible. Passengers remained calm throughout the whole incident and went to bed at the usual hour Thursday evening. They were informed at breakfast on Friday morning of the cancellation of the voyage and the American-Israeli Shipping Company, Zim's representatives in the United States, made an all-out effort to assist the passengers in effecting alternative travel plans."

A Coast Guard hearing took place last Friday, when Capt. George Vickers, of the "American Press," testified. The hearings will continue tomorrow, when the pilots of both ships will also be heard. Capt. Por, of the S. S. Israel, will also be a witness at a later date.

The S. S. Israel is one of the Zim Lines modern combination passenger-cargo liners built in 1955 and in regular service since then on the New York-Haifa run. Together with her sister ship, the S. S. Zion, they have maintained a fixed schedule of sailings every three weeks from New York harbor. Mr. Hammer expressed confidence that with the exception of the current voyage, which had to be cancelled because of the collision, the schedule will be maintained. This incident will not affect the cruise schedule of the S. S. Jerusalem which will inaugurate the 1959-60 season with a cruise beginning November 11, he emphasized.

TWO-DAY CONFERENCE ON SCIENCE IN ISRAEL AND MIDDLE EAST HELD IN N. Y.

NEW YORK, Nov. 1. (JTA) -- A two-day Conference on Science and Technology in Israel and the Middle East, which considered a wide variety of technical papers dealing with problems common to all Middle East nations, concluded here today with the reading of a message received from Israel Premier David Ben-Gurion in which he said that the people of Israel "are all hopeful that the day will not be long delayed when the experience and knowledge that we are gaining and creating today may be put by us at the disposal of all the peoples of the Middle East."

Delegates attending the two-day Conference, considered a wide variety of technical papers dealing with problems common to all Middle East nations. Speakers at today's sessions included Dr. Carroll V. Newsom, president of New York University, which has instituted a "lend-lease" academic training program in cooperation with Israel's universities, under the aegis of the United States Government; J. W. O'Meara, of the Office of Saline Water of the U. S. Department of Interior; David Rose, president of the American Technion Society, which sponsored the Conference; and Benjamin Cooper, Conference chairman, who presided. Sessions were held at the Statler Hilton Hotel.

In a report reviewing progress in world-wide efforts to convert sea water to fresh water, Mr. O'Meara emphasized that Israel has already "developed all of its natural supplies of fresh water." He warned that "if Israel is to grow and prosper, it must have more water and the only remaining sources are the presently unusable reserves of underground brackish water or the salty waters of the Mediterranean and the Gulf of Akaba. From these naturally polluted sources of supply, Israel must obtain tomorrow's water," he added.

Comparing desalination research projects being conducted in the United States and in Israel, he said: "American studies indicate that the greatest economies can be effected in large-scale plants, while the thinking in Israel favors small plants capable of supplying perhaps three or four families from brackish sources of supply." Mr. O'Meara voiced the opinion that "there are many cash crops that could be profitably harvested even in the Negev, which lacks only water to make it productive."

PRIME MINISTER ADDRESSES CANADIAN JEWISH CONGRESS BICENTENARY DINNER

MONTREAL, Nov. 1. (JTA) -- "The success of inter-ethnic relations is the majestic theme of Canadian history," and those relations must be reaffirmed both through education and through law, Prime Minister John G. Diefenbaker declared here last night at a dinner which was part of the Canadian Jewish Congress celebration of the National Bicentenary of Canadian Jewry.

Every ministry of the Canadian Government was represented at the gala event at which Samuel Bronfman, national president of the Canadian Jewish Congress, declared that the 200,000 Jews in Canada pledge anew their "dedication to the ideals of Canadian concord."

Prime Minister Diefenbaker praised the work of Canadian Jews in fighting for freedom in Canada, declaring they have fought for "freedom for themselves and for other Canadians, in time of war and in time of peace."

"The 200th anniversary of Jewish settlement in Canada," said the Prime Minister, "is an event which belongs not to one minority, but to the Canadian people as a whole. The story of the first Jews in Canada, and of their descendants, is a golden thread in the fabric of freedom in Canada. Rights for Catholics as well as for Jews were secured in Canada before they were secured in Britain."

The shrine recently dedicated at Three Rivers, commemorating the first Jew there, Aaron Hart, is a "national shrine to Canadian freedom," Mr. Diefenbaker asserted.

Touching upon his attitude toward Israel, Mr. Diefenbaker told the audience "I have visited Palestine, and have sat at a seder in Jerusalem. I am witness to the message of freedom some 3,000 years old. I see in the State of Israel the embodiment of that search for freedom which the Jewish people have promised during their entire history. This appreciation of the contribution of the Jews of Canada to freedom has led to warm relations between Israel and Canada. This is based on a similarity of ideals in government, and on cultural and personal links.

"I had the privilege of presenting to the Law Faculty of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem the chair of the founder of our nation, Sir John A. MacDonald. This is a token of our appreciation of the contribution of Canadian Jewry to the development of democracy and to democratic freedom in Canada."

Bronfman Stresses Jewish Patriotism; Harman Lauds Canadian Jewry

Mr. Bronfman paid warm tribute to Mr. Diefenbaker, declaring "no one in Canada has done so much in recent years to advance the concept of Canadian unity as has the Prime Minister. He has shown that Canadian unity is an essential for Canadian progress."

Pledging the rededication of Canadian Jewry to the ideals of Canada and of the British Commonwealth, Mr. Bronfman declared: "Today, we, the 200,000 Jews in Canada, are in all fields of endeavor and are as one with fellow-Canadians of other creeds and origins." It is due to "this ideal of Canadian concord," he stated, "and this agreement upon basic and essential matters, that Canada has achieved the status which it enjoys today."

Avraham Harman, Israel Ambassador to the United States, addressing the Bicentenary convention of the Canadian Jewish Congress, said: "While discharging the full obligations of American or Canadian citizenship, the Jews on this continent also discharge their obligation to their own local communities and to the scattered Jewish people everywhere. They sought and obtained freedom for their brethren in other countries and used their own freedom to help the Jewish people right the wrong of 2,000 years."

Mr. Harman told the delegates that "the mark of Canada is on every creative aspect of Israel life--in the personnel of its cabinet, in its military, in the kibbutzim and in its capital." He warned that there were still "depressed areas" in world Jewish life, communities "where Jews do not have the freedom which Jews in Canada and the United States enjoy, where they cannot commune with Jews in other countries on matters of common concern."

"These communities are dear to us," he declared. "We come from there, we are hewn from the same rock and it sits heavily on our consciences that so many communities were destroyed in the past 20 years and therefore every surviving Jew is the more precious to us."

Asserting that "we have achieved much," he said: "Five years after the heroes of Warsaw went down in tragedy, our nation fought for its liberation against hopeless odds to victory. The military defense of Israel now rests secure on the foundation of the quality of its people, on its democratic institutions, on its growing productive capacity, on its expanding skills even in areas new to Jewish economy, on education and research and on artistic creativity."

Dr. Israel Goldstein, addressing the convention, reported his impressions on the Jewish moods in the countries of Asia and Africa which he visited this year.