



Jewish Telegraphic Agency

DAILY NEWS BULLETIN

660 FIRST AVENUE

NEW YORK 16, N.Y.

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Vol. XXXIII - 49th year

Tuesday, August 9, 1966

No. 151

CONVENTION OF KIBBUTZIM BACKS GOVERNMENT-PROPOSED ECONOMIC CHANGES

TEL AVIV, Aug. 8. (JTA) -- A resolution strongly endorsing the government's proposed economic policy plans was adopted here last night by the national convention of Kibbutz Hameuhad, the organization of kibbutzim affiliated with Achdut Avodah, one of the partners in the coalition government. The convention, held at Kibbutz Yagur, near Haifa, was attended by 400 delegates representing 57 kibbutzim with a total of 24,000 members throughout Israel.

The government's new economic program, the convention voted, deserves support as "a bold decision" needed to raise the country's creative productivity and, thus, prevent unemployment. The organization supported the government's call for aiding the competitive nature of Israeli products by increasing productivity.

Addressing the convention at an earlier session, Finance Minister Pinhas Sapir warned that the high cost of labor was strangling Israel's export drive and indirectly leading to unemployment. Mr. Sapir said that direct and indirect labor costs accounted for 80 percent of the costs of production. Production costs, he noted, were higher in Israel than in Europe where output per man is 25 percent greater.

Mr. Sapir scored outdated norms as the bases of pay rates in Israel, which, he said, had to be adjusted to modern technology. He castigated the low profitability of enterprises operated by the Government and the Histadrut, Israel's labor federation, asserting that "it is easier for such enterprises to run up deficits because they can be covered out of public funds. Public enterprises just go bankrupt and are turned over to the official receivers."

In another resolution, the convention welcomed the establishment of the alignment between Achdut Avodah and Mapai, but declared that the political improvement is incomplete as long as Mapam fails to join and, thus, "complete labor unity." The convention warned Israel on the problem of emigration from this country, decrying especially the emigration of Israelis with academic degrees.

Eshkol Offers More Concessions to Mapam on Economic Policy

TEL AVIV, Aug. 8. (JTA) -- Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, eager to placate leaders of the Mapam Party to keep them from walking out of the coalition Cabinet and thus splitting the Government, offered Mapam new concessions today in regard to the Government's proposed, three-year economic policy.

After conferring with other economic leaders inside his government, Mr. Eshkol offered to impose a freeze on excess profits for self-employed Israelis as well as on corporations. The new economic policy already calls for freezes on wages and on prices, but Mapam has contended that the wage freeze would hit the workers harder than the well-to-do in Israel.

The amended version offered to Mapam by Mr. Eshkol would freeze dividends and the income of self-employed by imposing a new, 30 percent tax on additional earnings, plus a possible 20 percent surtax. These taxes would be levied on corporate and personal earnings only.

Mr. Eshkol worked out the amended version of his economic program at a conference last night with Finance Minister Pinhas Sapir, Minister of Commerce and Industry Haim Zarfok, and David Horowitz, governor of the Bank of Israel. Tomorrow, the Premier is scheduled to confer with the economic committee of the Mapai-Achdut Avodah alignment. Later, he will discuss the plans also with representatives of two other partners in his coalition, the National Religious Party and the Independent Liberals.

Despite the concessions offered to Mapam, it was understood that the leaders of that party are not yet ready to give their full support to the new economic policy. The Government, however, is proceeding to make plans for implementing the new economic policy, coupled with a program of austerity in Israel. A Cabinet spokesman said today that one of the items in the new program, designed to aid low income earners, would provide that such workers receive 12 pounds (\$4) per month as extra compensation to help them meet higher costs of living.

ISRAEL AND SYRIA EXCHANGE PRISONERS; SYRIA GETS BACK A CONVICTED SPY

TEL AVIV, Aug. 8. (JTA) -- Israel and Syria exchanged prisoners today at the Bnot Yaacov bridge on their border in the north, Israel receiving back four men who had been incarcerated in Syria for periods varying from three years to 12 years. Syria got, in return, six men, one of them a convicted spy.

The four Israelis returned by Syria are Yosef Shamesh, 43, who crossed over into Syria 12 years ago; Yehuda Vaankin, 26, who went into Syria three years ago; Shlomo Yifrach, 32, who entered Syria 11 years ago; and Yitzhak Reznik, who has been imprisoned by Syria when he was caught across its border nine years ago. Israeli authorities said all four men had "suffered terribly" in Syrian jails and declared that three of the men, if not all four, are now mentally unstable as a result of their experiences.

Israel had expected to get a fifth man back from Syria, named Avraham Daskal, who had crossed over the Syrian border 15 years ago. But during the prisoner exchange negotiations, Syrian authorities said that Daskal had died in one of their prisons three years ago. The Syrians refused to turn over Daskal's remains.

The six Syrians returned included Mouhammed Arifa, a convicted spy who was serving a 15-year sentence here. Israel offered a year ago to exchange him for Eli Cohen, the alleged Israeli intelligence man, who was convicted as a spy by a court in Damascus and, later, executed. Syria had refused to exchange Cohen for Arifa. Now they took Arifa; a man who is insane; and four Syrian sailors who were detained aboard a Lebanese boat in April, 1964. Syria at first denied that it was holding any Israeli prisoners, but finally admitted it held the four returned today.

ISRAEL WELCOMES PRESIDENT SHAZAR UPON RETURN FROM TRIP ABRCAD

JERUSALEM, Aug. 8. (JTA) -- After an absence of 52 days during which he toured three countries in South America, then visited the United States, where he was honored by President Johnson, Israel's President Zalman Shazar returned home last night. A 21-gun salute greeted him as his plane touched down at Lydda Airport, where he was welcomed home by Prime Minister Levi Eshkol, Acting President Kadish Luz, who is Speaker of Israel's Parliament, and a full turn-out of the foreign diplomatic corps.

In an airport statement, Mr. Shazar noted particularly his gratification over the reception he got in Washington at the hands of President Johnson. Among those who greeted him at the airport were hassidim who danced and sang. As the presidential entourage reached the western outskirts of Jerusalem, about 1,000 persons cheered Mr. Shazar. Electric lights decorated Mount Zion and a flag-bedecked platform had been set up for the red carpet reception to the returning President.

PRESIDENT OF BUNDESTAG CONSIDERS HIS TALK AT W.J.C. A 'GREAT HONOR'

BONN, Aug. 8. (JTA) -- Dr. Eugen Gerstenmaier, president of the Bundestag, the lower house of the West German parliament, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency correspondent here that he regarded it as a "great honor" to have been able to speak before the World Jewish Congress "as a German."

The West German leader took part in a symposium on "The Germans and the Jews" held last Thursday at the fifth plenary session of the World Jewish Congress meeting in Brussels. Dr. Gerstenmaier said that it was to the credit of Dr. Nahum Goldmann, WJC president, that he sought to "allow German voices to be heard again" despite the opposition voiced by several factions at the WJC parley to German participation in the symposium.

Dr. Gerstenmaier told the JTA that he understood the opposition but added that the decision of the majority of WJC delegates to permit German participation was "more fruitful." When asked if he thought that normalization of relations between Germans and Jews could be achieved in this generation, the Bundestag leader replied: "We can only hope for this but we Germans must also be prepared to wait as this may not come about for a long time."

Dr. Gerstenmaier was also asked to comment on the question of whether there exists today "another Germany" as compared to the Germany of the Nazi era. The question referred directly to a statement made by David Ben-Gurion while Premier of Israel. At that time, when relations with Germany were being heatedly debated in Israel, Mr. Ben-Gurion declared that he believes that the Germany of today is a "new" Germany, not the one that existed during the time of Hitler. The West German statesman stated that Ben-Gurion was right. "This is not a question of believing but of a true fact," he said.

The West German leader was asked if anything could be done to narrow the gap dividing Jews and Germans. "In my opinion," Dr. Gerstenmaier said, "we Germans are condemned to wait until the other side is prepared for a reconciliation. Expressions of heartfelt requests for reconciliation at this time are too early. But if a hand or finger is outstretched we will accept it under honorable conditions."

JEWISH GROUPS TESTIFY AGAINST AMENDMENT TO PERMIT PRAYER IN SCHOOLS

WASHINGTON, Aug. 8. (JTA) --In a dramatic display of unity on a sensitive issue, major American Jewish religious and community relations organizations joined today in a single representation opposing the prayer amendment introduced by Sen. Everett Dirksen to permit prayer in public schools.

Testifying this morning before the Senate subcommittee holding hearings on the measure, spokesmen presented a statement of the constituent organizations of the Synagogue Council of America and the National Community Relations Advisory Council. The statement denounced the Dirksen amendment as "undesirable constitutionally, and fundamentally inimical to religious interests."

It termed the neutrality of government in matters of religion essential to religious freedom. By putting the force of government behind prayer, it asserted, the Dirksen amendment would impair that neutrality and thus change the "climate" assured by the First Amendment to the Constitution, "which has made for the unparalleled growth of religious activity and affiliation in this country. The National Community Relations Advisory Council is composed of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations; Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America; United Synagogue of America; American Jewish Committee; American Jewish Congress; B'nai B'rith -- Anti-Defamation League; Jewish Labor Committee; Jewish War Veterans of the U.S.A.; National Council of Jewish Women; and 79 Jewish community relations councils in local communities across the United States.

In a plural society such as the United States, the joint testimony of the Jewish groups said, "it is not and should not be the business of government to aid religion and, if it does assume that role, then, in the very process and precedent it establishes, it does religion a harm and a disservice that will far outweigh the intended benevolence. For it will have compromised that free and unfettered exercise of religious liberty without which religious faith cannot long retain its integrity."

Four Jewish Spokesmen Appear at Senate Hearing

Four spokesmen appeared as a delegation representing the Jewish organizations. They were Rabbi Seymour J. Cohen, of Chicago, president of the Synagogue Council of America; Milton Goldstein, of St. Louis, vice-chairman of the Commission on Church-State and Interreligious Relationships of the National Community Relations Advisory Council; Rabbi Richard G. Hirsch, of Washington, director of the Religious Action Center of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations; and Rabbi Henry Siegmans, of New York, executive vice-president of the Synagogue Council of America.

Speaking for the delegation, Rabbi Cohen stressed their commitment to a society guided by religious values. "We are thus spiritually attuned and practically oriented to the antithesis of secularism and the secular society," he said. In opposing prayers in public schools, he emphasized, the Jewish organizations were seeking to avert the "trivialization and desecration of genuine worship" to which it would inevitably lead.

"Prayer is the singular expression of a particular faith," he asserted. "It is an act of gross insensitivity to involve in such a deeply sectarian experience children of differing faiths." Yet, the statement of the Jewish organizations declared, this would be the inescapable effect of the introduction of prayers into the public schools, since for children to pray in unison, some particular prayer would have to be chosen.

So-called non-sectarian prayers would be no less objectionable, the Jewish groups said. "Prayer that is not rooted in specific faith and in distinctive religious commitment is a meaningless, empty exercise. There is no greater enemy of religion than a state that promotes non-sectarian religion."

This does not mean the banishment of God and religion from national life or any challenge to its religious foundations, but on the contrary, gives full encouragement to the broadening and deepening of genuine religious commitment, Rabbi Cohen emphasized. The framers of the Bill of Rights, he said, deliberately removed from the government "any competence in the area of religion, because they wisely understood that religious neutrality of the state is the essential condition of religious freedom in a pluralistic society."

The language of the Dirksen amendment, which would permit "voluntary participation" in prayer in public schools, is ambiguous and misleading, the testimony of the Jewish groups warned. Senator Dirksen's own statement accompanying introduction of the proposal shows "clearly," they asserted, that "he intends it to permit joint recitation of prayers by children in the classroom and the presentation of plainly sectarian celebrations of Christmas and other religious holidays."

The Rev. C. Stanley Lowell, associate director of "Protestants and Other Americans United," a group defending separation of church from state, said the proposed amendment "deeply injects the Government into the business of religion."

THREE MARRANO FAMILIES RETURN FROM ISRAEL TO MAJORCA; ONE REMAINS

TEL AVIV, Aug. 8. (JTA) -- Only one of four Marrano families who had come recently from Majorca and settled in the settlement of Ness Ziona, south of Tel Aviv, remained there today, a visit to the settlement established. According to Antonio Consejo, the head of the sole Marrano family in Ness Ziona, the three other families returned to Majorca two weeks ago, disappointed over the many difficulties, especially economic factors, which they faced in Israel.

Mr. Consejo said that his family has now been joined at Ness Ziona by one more family of Spanish extraction, and that both he and the members of the other group are undergoing instruction in Hebrew religion three times a week. He said the male members of both families hope to be circumcised by the High Holy Days, and are determined to stay on in Israel "despite all difficulties."

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OF JEWISH JOURNALISTS HELD IN BRUSSELS

BRUSSELS, Aug. 8. (JTA) -- An international conference of Jewish journalists took place here yesterday parallel with the World Jewish Congress assembly which is being held here. The position of the Jewish press in various countries was discussed by the participants.

Attending the conference were journalists from eight countries, including the United States, England, West Germany and Israel. The opening address was delivered by Philip Slomovitz, editor and publisher of The Jewish News, Detroit, who is a delegate to the WJC assembly. Mr. Slomovitz is also a vice-president of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

1,000 JEWISH YOUNGSTERS FROM SEVEN U.S. CAMPS HOLD MACCABIAH GAMES

BARRYVILLE, N. Y., Aug. 8. (JTA) -- More than 1,000 Jewish boys and girls from seven Zionist youth movement camps today participated in a Maccabiah, an olympiade based on the annual Maccabean games in Israel. The event was held at National Young Judaea Camp Tel Yehudah here. The day-long sports and cultural events program was opened by Consul General of Israel Michael Arnon, who declared that "the display of this athletic event shows that there is determination not only for a healthy spirit but also for a healthy body."

The Maccabiah, sponsored by the American Zionist Youth Council, included such sporting events as soccer, baseball, basketball, field and track events, swimming, volleyball, Israeli games and chess. At night, each of the camps offered cultural performances which included Israeli singing and dancing. Taking part in the events were Camp Betar, Camp Moshava of Bnei Akiva, Camp Ein Harod of Dror-Hechalutz Betzair, Camps Tel Ari and Naaleh of Habonim and Camp Shomriah of Hashomer Hatzair.

650 Jewish Youths Hold Four-Day Scouting Jamboree in Montreal

MONTREAL, Aug. 8. (JTA) -- The third annual Jewish scouting jamboree terminated Sunday after four days of competition at Fitzroy Harbour, Ont. provincial park. Some 650 campers representing 15 Jewish organizational and private camps in Quebec and Ontario participated in scouting, sports and cultural competitions. The program included soccer matches, tug of war, dodgeball and table sports which was offset by a quiz on Jewish history, Zionism and Judaism. Camps also presented Israeli folk dances, plays and participated in inter-camp meetings.

The main emphasis of Jewish youth with varying ideologies participating in common projects was ever present throughout the friendly competitions. The activities of the four-day event were most concentrated, however the spirit and stamina of all the campers remained high at all times. The award for the outstanding camp was presented to Camp Massad by G. Zilberberg, director of the youth and hechalutz department of the Jewish Agency for Israel and Canada. Camp Massad is the only Hebrew-speaking camp in Quebec and is operated by the Canadian Association of Hebrew Language and Culture.

Students Demonstrate in Israel Against German Basketball Team

TEL AVIV, Aug. 8. (JTA) -- About 25 students staged a demonstration here last night against the Heidelberg University basketball team which had come to play Tel Aviv University. The demonstration was held first outside the local basketball stadium, then inside while the game was under way. On the other hand, about 1,000 spectators cheered the members of the German team every time they scored. Tel Aviv U. won the game by a score of 61-53.

'CECNEH,' FAMILIAR FIGURE AMONG AMERICAN ZIONISTS, DIES IN ISRAEL

TEL AVIV, Aug. 8. (JTA) -- Elhanan Mosdoff, the legendary "Choneh" who was known to virtually every Zionist leader in Israel and in the United States as a colorful character, was brought to his final rest today in a cemetery at Kibbutz Kineret, on the shores of Lake Tiberias. He died Saturday at the age of 80 at a Histadrut home for the aged near Tel Aviv. He was buried in a grave in a section where many other prominent Zionist labor leaders are interred, among them Berl Katznelson and Ber Borochov.