

JTA daily news bulletin

Published by Jewish Telegraphic Agency, Inc. 660 First Avenue, New York, N. Y. 10016.

Contents copyright: Republication only by previous arrangement.

Vol. XXXV - Fifty-First Year

Wednesday, April 17, 1968

No. 74 **A**

Council For Judaism Confirms Bid to Moscow Rabbi But Denies Talking With Soviets

NEW YORK, April 16 (JTA)--The American Council for Judaism confirmed today that it had invited Chief Rabbi Yehuda Leib Levin of Moscow to participate in the 25th anniversary conference of the anti-Zionist organization in May, but it denied in a statement, that there had been any negotiations between it "and any representative of the Soviet Union pertaining to the invitation to Rabbi Levin or to any other matter."

The Council's statement followed the disclosure by the Soviet Embassy in Washington that arrangements had been completed for the visit here of a "Jewish religious delegation" designated by the Soviet Government in cooperation with the Council. The Embassy did not identify the members of the delegation except to state that one of the members would be a rabbi. The Embassy said the delegation would arrive in May and that forums had been arranged by the Council in cooperation with the Embassy.

The Council said that in inviting Rabbi Levin, it was "motivated by a deep concern about the welfare and security of Soviet Jews and about their unrestricted right to practice their religion. This concern," it asserted, "is shared with our fellow-Jews and is consonant with the desire to hear from the acknowledged Jewish religious leader of the Soviet Union."

The Council said that Rabbi Levin had accepted its invitation on April 5 but asked that "because of recent surgery the invitation be extended to associates of his who would come in his stead." The statement added that the Council had, earlier, postponed its conference and "It is now hoped that an improvement in Rabbi Levin's health will enable him to attend on that new date." A Council spokesman told JTA the new date would be in the Fall. The Soviet Embassy, however, made it clear today that it expected the delegation in May, as previously announced.

The Council for Judaism said that in replying to Rabbi Levin, it had asked for the identity of the associates he had proposed. It declared that "at this date, there is no understanding or agreement with respect to the appearance in the United States under the auspices of the American Council for Judaism of any Jewish representative from the Soviet Union other than Rabbi Levin."

Conference on Soviet Jewry Denounces 'Grotesque Hoax' on American Public

Rabbi Israel Miller, chairman of the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry, in a comment on the Soviet Embassy disclosure said it "can only be deemed a cynical attempt to perpetrate a grotesque hoax on the American public."

He noted that "responsible American Jewish bodies have repeatedly petitioned and implored the Soviet Government to permit Russian Jewish representatives to visit the United States and establish relationships with Jews here" and cited extension of invitations from rabbinical groups.

He said that "we are necessarily pessimistic about the opportunity for genuine and meaningful dialogue with the Soviet Jewish delegation that would be provided by a visit on invitation by the American Council for Judaism. The auspices and the circumstances surrounding such a visit," he added, "suggest we may expect little more than a repetition of the standard Soviet line, with small chance for a breakthrough to the kind of people-to-people confrontation with the Jews of Russia for which American Jews long have yearned."

The Conference chairman charged that the American Council for Judaism "has repeatedly parroted the Soviet propaganda line that the root cause of conflict and tension in the Middle East is the international Zionist conspiracy which we know today to be a euphemism for anti-Semitism; and has been an apologist for the USSR's policy of depriving Soviet Jews of the same constitutionally guaranteed cultural and religious rights which are granted to all other recognized religions and nationality groups in the USSR."

Rabbi Miller concluded by expressing regret that "what we believe to be the first permission granted since the Russian Revolution for Soviet Jewish religious representatives to visit American Jewry should be in association with a group whose policies have been publicly and consistently repudiated by the overwhelming majority of the American Jewish community."

Jewish-Agency-American Section Condemns 'Clumsy Propagandistic Device'

A statement issued for the Jewish Agency-American Section, by Mrs. Rose Haiprin, its chairman, described the announced visit as "a clumsy propagandistic device" and described the arrangement as "an alliance of the great Russian bear with an insignificant American mouse." It described the Council for Judaism as "a fringe American group of some 20 or so thousand members that is completely outside the American-Jewish organizational structure" and which, it said, "is almost unanimously discredited in American Jewish circles."

That the Soviet Government had to "seek an alliance with the Council of Judaism," the statement said, "is an indication of the desperation of Soviet propaganda in trying to discredit charges that Russian Jewry is denied the right to live as Jews, the only ethnic group in Russia that suffers this discrimination."

The Soviet regime can indicate the sincerity of its desire to establish contacts between Russian Jewish religious leadership and its American counterpart only by dealing "openly and above board" with such organizations as the Synagogue Council of America, which represents all branches of American Jewish religious life, the statement concluded.

King Hussein, In Kuwait, Seeks to Rally Support for New Arab Summit Meeting

WASHINGTON, April 16 (JTA)--King Hussein of Jordan arrived in Kuwait today to rally support for an Arab summit that would form a militant front against Israel. Jordan's main new point is the accusation that Israel is establishing permanent settlement on the territories it occupied last June.

The Cairo newspaper, "Al Ahram," said special envoy Gunnar Jarring of the United Nations would arrive in Cairo Wednesday for talks that could decide next Arab moves. The newspaper said Egypt demanded that Dr. Jarring bring back "decisive word" on the implementation by Israel of the Security Council resolution of last November, which called for withdrawal of Israeli troops from occupied territories.

In an editorial entitled, "Blackmail," the Washington Post editorially assailed today President Nasser's declaration that Egypt was "fully prepared to support and arm the Palestine resistance movement." The newspaper said it might raise his stock among Arab extremists who favor violence "but more reasonable Arabs, and other men with a wish for peace, can only be dismayed."

The Post said "even if Nasser is only bluffing, his words will have a triply damaging effect; to incite Arab terrorists, to undermine diplomats on all sides, and to evoke an answering toughness from Israel. A more damaging formula could scarcely be devised."

The editorial declared that Nasser had in the past looked to a United Nations settlement "but he is now again preaching violence, perhaps as much to scare the United States into pressuring Israel as to reassert his own primacy among Arab militants. It is perfectly fair for Egypt to try by political means to hitch up American influence behind its own goals. A case can be made that American policy has appeared too partial to Israel to give the United States the standing it might otherwise have in Arab lands. But to use threats of violence to blackmail Washington is intolerable."

British Press Warns of New Middle Eastern Arms Race After French-Iraq Deal

LONDON, April 16 (JTA)--Warnings of a new arms race in the Middle East were sounded by two British newspapers today. The Times stated, in an editorial on the French agreement to sell 54 Mirage jets to Iraq, that "it is clear a further Middle East arms race is under way." Eric Downton, in a dispatch from Jerusalem to the Daily Telegraph, said "the grim escalation goes on, aided by the major powers, including Britain and France, who eagerly sell weapons to the Middle East while piously preaching peace."

(The JTA reported from Paris today that Israel had paid the final installment -- \$20 million -- on the 50 Mirage supersonic jet fighter bombers it ordered from France two years ago but which were embargoed by the de Gaulle Government following last June's Arab-Israeli war. The deadline for payment to the Dessault Co., manufacturers of the warplane, was April 15. Informed circles here noted that Israel, having discharged its legal obligations under the contract, now has grounds to demand that the planes be delivered. It was further noted that Israel can attack the embargo on her aircraft as biased in light of the French agreement this week to sell 54 Mirages to Iraq.)

(The Washington Evening Star commented editorially today that if the French-Iraqi deal for the Mirages is carried out, "the United States will be obligated to take another look at Israel's needs lest the Mideast balance of power be dangerously upset."

(The newspaper said "the development could activate the understanding reached early this year when Israeli Premier Eshkol met with President Johnson. There was talk then, but no final decision, on Israel's request to buy 50 American Phantom jet fighter-bombers. The joint communique simply declared that defense needs would be kept under "active review in the light of all relevant factors, including the shipment of military equipment by others to the area." A "relevant factor" is certainly the French Mirage deal with Iraq, the paper said.)

The Daily Telegraph correspondent noted that Egypt and Syria have been given all the weapons and equipment they can handle to replace last June's war losses while Jordan is receiving arms from Britain and America and Israel, too, continues to improve its military strength. The Arabs face the problem of raising their technological standards, the writer said. He suggested that the El Fatah terrorist campaign against Israel should be kept in perspective because "so far it has done more harm to King Hussein than to Israel." The Times, while decrying the Middle East arms race, asserted that the "Western powers, Britain in particular, should be grateful" to France for the influential role it is playing in the Arab world.

Key to Middle East Peace Is In Washington, Ambassador Tekoah Tells Jewish Leaders

NEW YORK, April 16 (JTA)--Ambassador Yosef Tekoah, Israel's permanent representative to the United Nations, told American Jewish leaders today that "the key to a Middle East peace is in Washington," as it had been since early June. He declared that Israel's primary objective was to secure a permanent Middle East peace settlement. "All those who share this objective," he said, "should encourage Israel to remain steadfast and uncompromising" towards that end.

In his first appearance before the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, the envoy declared that Israel and other Middle East countries were passing through "the most crucial period since 1948." What Israel and its neighbors did, he said, "will determine whether there will be peace between Israel and the Arab nations tomorrow. Every step, attitude and policy adopted by Israel, or urged by her friends, therefore, must be appraised in the light of whether it will bring us closer to our fundamental aim."

Mr. Tekoah cautioned against "wishful thinking" in giving credence to vague news dispatches emanating from Arab capitals in recent days. He stressed that the fundamental Arab attitude towards a peace settlement remained hostile and negative.

Polish Daily Accuses Jewish Doctor of 'Terrorizing' Communist Leaders

LONDON, April 16 (JTA)--The state-controlled Polish press has broadened the Government's anti-Jewish campaign with accusations of disloyalty leveled against poets, journalists, physicians, police officials and military men of Jewish background, according to reports reaching here from Warsaw today. Seven more Jews were fired from mobs or expelled from the Communist Party today in the continuing purge that has thrown Poland into turmoil. The firings brought to more than 50 the number of Jews purged in the wake of political unrest stemming from student demonstrations for freedom of speech and association.

The Polish news agency "PAP" announced that those expelled from the Communist Party in the latest development were Tadeusz Hirschfeld, deputy director of a building materials plant in Lodz; Monisz Izralewicz, of the Lublin sugar plant, and Andrzej Przytyk, an official of the National Council in Lublin. Warsaw newspapers said Prof. Kazimierz Laski resigned as chairman of the Warsaw branch of the Polish Economic Society and Seweryn Stryjer was fired as deputy director of the State tourism department.

In an article reminiscent of Stalin's "doctors' plot" in the early post-World War II years, the armed forces' newspaper, *Zolnierz Wolnosci* (Soldiers of Freedom) accused a leading Jewish doctor of having "terrorized" Communist Party chief Wladislaw Gomulka and Polish President Marian Spychalski when they were imprisoned in the early 1950's. The paper said that Dr. Anatol Fejgin, director of a medical clinic catering to top government officials, "terrorized many respected Party members and social activists, among them Gomulka and Spychalski." Dr. Fejgin, then a departmental director in the Ministry of Security, was sentenced to three years in prison for abuse of authority after Gomulka's return to power in 1956. The same newspaper denounced Stanislaw Wygodzki, a Jewish poet who emigrated to Israel a year ago.

The Government newspaper, *Sztandar Mlodych* (Banner of Youth), today accused several journalists now in Israel or in Western countries of having maliciously lied to confuse public opinion and of having "applied moral terror to their Polish colleagues."

Former Envoy in Warsaw Says Gomulka's Offer To Let Jews Go Was 'Mere Ruse'

LONDON, April 16 (JTA)--An offer to permit Polish Jews to emigrate to Israel if they wished, made recently by Communist Party chief Wladyslaw Gomulka, was "a mere ruse" according to Israel's former Minister to Warsaw, Katriel Katz. He told the Times today that Jews in Poland don't dare apply for exit visas because "they would be fired immediately from their jobs and would become marked men."

Mr. Katz who is recovering in a London hospital from injuries sustained in a plane crash last week, said that "the Gomulka regime, in order to denigrate the student revolt and preserve itself is once again reviving the old Polish fear of Germany and its traditional anti-Semitism by suggesting that there is an alliance between West Germany and Zionist agents against Poland." Mr. Katz formerly served as Israel's Ambassador to Russia. He is presently chairman of the Yad Vashem, the memorial and archives on the Nazi holocaust in Jerusalem.

Labor Group To Present Memorial To UN on Polish Anti-Semitic Campaign

NEW YORK, April 16 (JTA)--A memorandum protesting the Polish Government's current anti-Jewish campaign will be presented to the United Nations on April 19 by a delegation representing the United Jewish Survivors of Nazism, headed by David Dubinsky, retired president of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union and other American Jewish labor leaders. The presentation will be made following a memorial march to U.N. headquarters commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. The document addressed to the world body will also contain a memorialization of the Warsaw Ghetto battle and will call for the eradication of all brands of Nazism and racism everywhere.

Goldmann Protests Warsaw Regime's Refusal to Postpone Auschwitz Ceremonies

LONDON, April 16 (JTA)--Dr. Nahum Goldmann, president of the World Jewish Congress, today deplored the Polish Government's refusal to re-schedule official ceremonies inaugurating the Jewish pavilion on the site of the Auschwitz death camp, despite repeated requests to do so because the date set, April 20, falls on the Sabbath and is the last day of Passover.

In a statement issued here today, Dr. Goldmann said that "the date set by the Polish authorities is not only the religious Jewish day of rest, when services for the dead are forbidden by Jewish tradition and law, but it is also the concluding day of the Passover festival celebrated devoutly throughout the ages as the liberation of our Jewish forebears from Egyptian oppression and slavery. Regrettably, we can reach no other conclusion that, in ignoring our representations, the Polish Government has, with intent, prevented large numbers of Jews and Jewish organizations who respect these traditions from being present at Auschwitz...to render homage in prayer and sorrow to their dead," Dr. Goldmann said.

"Particularly disturbing," his statement continued, "is the fact that the Polish Government's decision to disregard the human feelings and religious sentiments of Jews throughout the world, coincides with the current intense anti-Jewish political actions and propaganda in Poland. To persist in this attitude is unworthy of the Democratic Republic...It is a slur on the memory of Jewish heroes who fought and died in their unequal battle against the Nazis...It is an affront to the memory of the innocent Jewish men, women and children from all over Europe who suffered indignity, persecution and death because of their devotion to their faith and people."

Greek Jewish Community To Mark Anniversary of Mass Deportations from Salonika

ATHENS, April 16 (JTA)--The 25th anniversary of the mass deportation of Greek Jewry by the Nazis in 1943 will be marked by special memorial services to be held at the Jewish cemetery in Salonika on April 25, it was announced today by the Central Council of Jewish Communities of Greece. The memorial will be organized by the Central Council and by the Jewish Community of Salonika, the Greek city which had the largest Jewish population prior to World War II.

According to the Central Council there were more than 77,000 Jews in Greece at the time of the Nazi invasion, 56,000 of them in Salonika. Of that number, 95 percent perished at Auschwitz, Birkenau and other concentration camps. Today's Jewish community in Greece numbers about 5,000 of whom 3,000 live in Athens, 1,000 in Salonika and another thousand in smaller cities and towns.

Three From Chicago Identify Defendant in Cologne Trial as Slayer of Grodno Jews

BONN, April 16 (JTA)--Three Jewish witnesses from Chicago, all survivors of the Grodno ghetto massacre of World War II today identified the principal defendant in the Grodno war crimes trial in Cologne as the man they saw shooting down Jews in cold blood. The defendant, Kurt Wieser, was pointed to in the court by Reuben Loren, 47, Aaron Berman, 46, and Lisa Berman, all of whom said their identification was positive.

Loren said he was born in Grodno and lived in the ghetto from 1942 until its destruction by the Nazis. He said that Wieser held the power of life or death over the ghetto inhabitants. In all, he testified, he saw some 300 Jews being shot, 50 of them at one time. Eighteen Jewish men and women who were captured in the woods shortly before the ghetto was destroyed were lined up in a courtyard and shot by Wieser with an automatic pistol. Loren said he witnessed this crime from his window. The bodies were left lying on the pavement for two days to terrorize other Jews, according to Loren. Berman, a Chicago businessman, and Lisa Berman, who escaped from the ghetto in 1942, also testified that they saw Wieser shooting Jews.

(In Hanover, a former Nazi police officer who had been sentenced to life imprisonment for the wartime murder of two Jewish women and their children in a ghetto in occupied Poland, has been acquitted here on an appeal. Kurt Jericho, 59, was given the life sentence at a trial in Lunenburg on his conviction for the murders in the Chenstochau ghetto in the winter of 1942-43. His conviction was reversed when the jury in the Hanover court agreed there was "insufficient evidence" to prove his guilt.

Cuban Jews Receive Passover Supplies Sent Them By Canadian Jewish Congress

MONTREAL, April 16 (JTA)--The Canadian Jewish Congress said today it had received confirmation from Havana of the receipt by the Cuban Jewish community of Passover shipments including 6,000 pounds of matzos and 3,000 pounds of matzoh meal. The Passover supplies, the Congress said, were received in Havana in good time for distribution to Cuban Jewish families. The Congress has been sending Passover supplies to Cuba since 1961. The community sells the holiday fare to those families which can afford to buy it and distributes it free to the needy.

Bethesda Synagogue Fire Is Blamed on Young Vandals; Damage Runs to \$100,000

WASHINGTON, D.C., April 16 (JTA)--A spokesman for the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith said today that the fire which severely damaged the Congregation Bethol Synagogue in nearby Bethesda, Md., last weekend was "completely isolated from the recent racial disorders." He said that an investigation by the ADL and consultations with the police and fire departments indicated that while the blaze was indeed arson, it was a case of vandalism and attempted burglary "bearing no anti-Semitic implications." Damage to the synagogue is now estimated at \$100,000. An investigation disclosed that one or more individuals, presumably youths, either secreted themselves in the synagogue or broke in, apparently to steal valuables, the ADL spokesman said. He called the episode "a youthful, clumsy attempt at larceny."