

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. XXXVIII - Fifty-Fourth Year

Friday, January 8, 1971

No. 5

Zalmanson Sentenced To 10 Years; Termination Of Trial Of Nine Seen As Ploy

NEW YORK, Jan. 7 (JTA)--A Leningrad military tribunal today handed down a 10-year prison sentence in the case of Lieutenant Wolf Zalmanson, it was learned this afternoon. The 31-year-old Jewish army officer and engineer from Riga, was under court-martial on charges of treason and desertion for participating in the alleged hijacking last June of a Soviet airliner. Fear had been expressed that Lt. Zalmanson would receive the maximum sentence of death if he was found guilty. Eleven others, including nine Jews, arrested with him at Smolny Airport on June 15, were tried separately and sentenced to severe prison terms. Lt. Zalmanson was tried separately because of his military status. A knowledgeable source noted that Lt. Zalmanson escaped the death sentence because Soviet authorities did not want to spark another worldwide public outcry similar to that which occurred when the death sentences were handed down in the case of two Jews in the Leningrad II trial. These sentences were commuted to severe prison terms.

Meanwhile, the reasons for the sudden and unexpected termination of the second trial of nine Jews, which opened yesterday and halted after 10 minutes, continues to baffle and intrigue observers of the Soviet scene. Some Western sources reported the relatives of the Leningrad Nine had been told by court officials that the trial was postponed because one of the defendants, Lev Naumovich Yagman, 30, was ill with influenza. There were other reports, however, that the trial may have been cancelled because the Soviet authorities did not want another expression of worldwide protest. Jewish sources, however, said it was still not certain whether the new trial had actually been postponed or cancelled or whether this was only a ploy to conduct the trial in entire secrecy as an "underground trial." It had been reported earlier this week that the Leningrad Nine, charged with knowing about the alleged hijacking attempt but failing to report it to Soviet authorities and accused of anti-Soviet and pro-Zionist activities, had been forced to confess while in prison awaiting trial. There were also reports that the defendants would "confess" in court which would be open to the public and foreign press.

Authority On Soviet Law Says If Prosecution Drops Charge There Can Be No Trial

Professor Harold Berman of the Harvard Law School, a leading authority on Soviet law, in a telephone interview told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that "if the prosecution drops the charges there can be no trial and the defendants, under Soviet law, are free. They can, however, be detained for possible investigation. Ordinarily, persons can be kept under preliminary investigation for a maximum of one month. However, with the permission of a higher Procurator, they can be detained for three months, and with the permission of the Procurator General, this can be extended for nine months." Professor Berman added that under Soviet law, nine months is the maximum detention period. "However, this law has been known to have been violated in a few instances," he added. "Under Soviet law, a person can be kept under investigation without access to counsel." Assessing the motives for the "postponement" or cancellation, Allan Rose, assistant national director of the Canadian Jewish Congress, said today that in the view of the CJC, "the Soviet Union is deeply embarrassed by world public reaction, particularly from the Communist Parties around the world. The Soviet leaders cannot claim to be leaders of the Third World struggle for anti-racialism and anti-colonialism when the Jews in the Soviet Union are kept in bondage." Rose felt the Soviet attitude toward requests for emigration will begin to soften.

Meanwhile, sources identified the Leningrad Nine as: Lev Leibovich Korenblit, 48, mathematician; Solomon Dreizner, 38, engineer; Vladimir Osherovich Mogilever, 30, engineer; Mikhail Korenblit, brother of Lev Korenblit; Viktor Shtilbans, 28, physician; Viktor David Boguslavsky, 30, engineer; Grigory Ilya Butman, 37, engineer; Laasal Kaminsky, 40, engineer; and Yagman. Boguslavsky was arrested July 12, Shtilbans and Mikhail Korenblit were arrested Nov. 16, and the other seven were all arrested June 15. There was no word today about the fate of other Jews awaiting trial in Riga and Kishinev. Jewish sources identified those in Kishinev as: Aleksander Galperin, 24, arrested July 24; Arkady Voloshin, Gari Kirschner and David Rabinovich, all arrested Aug. 15, and Simeon Abramovich Levit, arrested in November.

Jarring's Trip To Israel Seen As Positive Step For Peace Talks; Invited By Eban

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y., Jan. 7 (JTA)--Ambassador Gunnar V. Jarring's arrival in Israel tomorrow morning is seen by observers here as a sign of stepped-up Israeli interest in the success of the peace negotiations under his auspices. Foreign Minister Abba Eban had invited Dr. Jarring, in a message delivered Dec. 30, "to meet you in Jerusalem at your earliest convenience and my intention is to survey the situation, to acquaint you with the basic views of my government and to discuss steps necessary to ensure the fulfillment of your mission for the promotion of agreement on the establishment of peace." That invitation was sent after Israel decided on Dec. 28 to rejoin the peace talks. Dr. Jarring, who met with Egyptian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Riad in Moscow in late December and has not been in Israel for 18 months, will be conferring in Jerusalem with Premier Golda Meir and Eban. Israel's United Nations ambassador, Yosef Tekoah, will accompany Dr. Jarring on his flight. The UN negotiator plans to return here by Sunday night. An official announcement issued today by a UN spokesman said that Dr. Jarring "has accepted the invitation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Israel as conveyed in the latter's message of Dec. 30." The announcement gave no hint of what Dr. Jarring would be discussing, provided the time of the ambassador's arrival in and departure from Israel and noted that Dr. Jarring will be accompanied to Israel by Ian Berendsen who is the principal political advisor of the UN Middle East Mission.

When the peace talks began last August, Israel sought to have them take place as close to the Middle East as possible--perhaps at Nicosia, Cyprus--although there was no formal invitation then to Dr. Jarring to visit Israel. The Meir administration--which does not like New York as a negotiating site because, as Eban stated last month, it is not "part of the Middle East"--was reported today to have renewed her request to Dr. Jarring to relocate the talks in the Mideast. Such a shift, however, would require the approval of Egypt and Jordan, which is unlikely. Dr. Jarring's departure for Israel appears to indicate he is seriously intent on preventing the peace talks from faltering now as they did last August, when Israel left them the day after they began in protest against Egyptian missile violations in the Suez Canal zone. Since Secretary General Thant appointed Dr. Jarring as his personal Mideast representative on Nov. 23, 1967, there have been only five days of formal peace talks--last Aug. 25 and 26 and now Jan. 5-7 of this year. Last March, Dr. Jarring was here for what Under Secretary Ralph J. Bunche called "routine" discussions with "interested parties" and what Tekoah, one of those parties, called "exploratory talks."

Dr. Jarring's Israeli visit also appears to indicate that Israel--increasingly aware of the Feb. 5 cease-fire deadline and of Egypt's threats not to extend the truce without a timetable for Israeli withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories--is especially serious about wanting the talks to succeed and to have them conducted at the highest feasible level. Israel has always wanted the talks to be held at the Foreign Minister level, which Egypt and Jordan have never formally acquiesced to. It is believed that Israel wants, in that context, to have Dr. Jarring meet as soon as possible with her two most prominent diplomats--Mrs. Meir and Eban. The contention in some quarters that Dr. Jarring has decided to bow to Israeli pressure as the price for continuing the peace talks was discounted by knowledgeable sources here as "observation on the level of trivia." The mediator does not submit easily to pressure, the sources noted, adding that it was highly unlikely for Israel to have agreed secretly with him to return to the talks despite the Egyptian violations in exchange for a brief visit to Jerusalem by him.

The Jarring trip is thus seen here as more of a gesture to Israel than a substantive development. A British spokesman, for instance, emphasized that the most important thing was for the Swedish diplomat to "make substantive progress soon" and that such a goal would be enhanced if he obtained "authoritative expositions of the views of the parties at an early stage in his talks." The spokesman added that "In the case of Israel, this could best be done in Jerusalem," and "we are glad that he (Jarring) accepted it (the Israeli invitation)." Egypt's UN envoy, Dr. Mohamed H. el-Zayyat, said yesterday that the Jarring trip would be objectionable only if it represented an Israeli "delaying tactic." An American spokesman commented today that "Our attitude is that Jarring is the determiner of his own procedures." (In Washington, a State Department spokesman labeled as false a published report that the U.S. had not known in advance of Israel's invitation to Dr. Jarring.) (In Ottawa, Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs Mitchell Sharp made the general observation that all nations should "support Jarring in his continuing negotiating efforts." He refrained, however, from commenting directly on Dr. Jarring's trip saying he could not comment on the ambassador's day-to-day movements.) Various sources said flatly that Dr. Jarring's visit to Israel could only be a positive step.

Dayan Says Return To Peace Talks Is Right Decision And In Israel's Interest

TEL AVIV, Jan. 7 (JTA)--Defense Minister Moshe Dayan declared last night of his government's return to the Jarring talks that "Israel made the right decision to jump into the cold water, and I believe that we are able to swim in it without catching pneumonia or drowning." He was alluding to a criticism by opposition leader Menachem Begin, who had complained that Dayan's earlier endorsement of a "jump into the cold water" was dangerous because Israel might "catch pneumonia." Dayan told Haifa University students last night: "The present circumstances obliged Israel to return to the talks, and it is no disgrace for a nation of two and a half millions, with many great aims, to say that circumstances, not great powers, obliged us to do so." He added that he was convinced that Israel's return to the peace table was in her interest.

Israel Complains To UNTSO That Egyptian Planes Flew Over Israeli Positions

JERUSALEM, Jan. 7 (JTA)--Egyptian planes flew over Israeli positions on the eastern bank of the Suez Canal at noon yesterday, military spokesmen announced today. A complaint has been lodged with the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization. This was the fourth complaint over similar incidents since the current cease-fire went into effect Nov. 6.

One Israeli Killed, One Injured When Tractor Hits Mine In Western Negev

TEL AVIV, Jan. 7 (JTA)--One Israeli was killed and another seriously injured yesterday afternoon when the tractor they were driving hit a mine near Kibbutz Kisuifim in the western Negev. The dead man was identified as Menahem Harpaz, 24, a member of the kibbutz. One of the injured was identified as Raphael Shitrit, a volunteer from France who was staying at the settlement. His condition was reported as serious this morning. Kisuifim is near the Gaza Strip and it is believed that the mine was laid by terrorists from the Strip.

Jewish Family From Riga Appeals To Mrs. Meir For Aid To Emigrate To Israel

JERUSALEM, Jan. 7 (JTA)--Another letter from a Soviet Jewish family appealing for assistance in emigrating to Israel has been received by Premier Golda Meir. The signatory's full name and address was given as Shtroum Khasya Meerovna, 63 Surorova Street, Apt. 23, Riga, Latvian Soviet Republic. In her letter, Mrs. Meerovna writes that in May, 1969, she and her family were refused an exit permit to go to Israel to rejoin their only surviving relative who resides there. She had submitted applications for the permit since 1964 and all were consistently refused. Her husband, a former prisoner in a Nazi concentration camp, had died in 1953 and she was alone now with her daughter, son-in-law and granddaughter. "We are very lonely and dream of being together with my one surviving relative in our ancient homeland," Mrs. Meerovna writes. "Neither my children nor myself want any other homeland."

Egyptians Expected To Resume War Of Attrition After Expiration Of Cease-Fire

JERUSALEM, Jan. 7 (JTA)--The Egyptians will resume their war of attrition sometime next month, well informed circles here today told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. According to information reaching here, the Egyptians now have more than 1000 artillery guns in the Suez Canal zone facing Israel in addition to the SAM-2 and SAM-3 missiles. The expectation that the war will be unleashed soon after the current cease-fire expires on Feb. 5, was bolstered by the fact that the Egyptians also have a Soviet pledge to defend the skies over Egypt. Israelis are absolutely confident that they will be able to hold the Suez Canal bank but fear it will result in heavier sacrifices than last year when Israeli air superiority, prior to the missiles' installation, was unquestioned. Israeli sources noted that Israel has a United States pledge to intervene against an invasion of Soviet troops leaving Israeli forces to tackle any purely Egyptian invasion. But, sources observed, it is not yet clear to the Israelis at what point Soviet assistance turns an Egyptian invasion into a Soviet invasion.

(According to the New York Times' Washington correspondent, Tad Szulc, the Soviet military presence in Egypt "is estimated by United States officials here (in Washington) at 12,000 men, with no indication that this level of deployment is changing significantly." Szulc added, that of this total, "thousands of Soviet officers and soldiers are believed to be manning SAM-2 and SAM-3 missiles in Egypt, including nearly 200 sites near the Suez Canal, according to American sources." He added that most of the Soviet forces are believed to be "engaged directly or indirectly in operating the Egyptian defense system," and that Soviet pilots are still reported to be flying MIG jet fighter-bombers on patrol and training missions.) The appraisal here is that the Egyptians will extend the cease-fire on Feb. 5 but sometime later, when Israel refuses to agree to a timetable for withdrawal from occupied territories, pressure from the Egyptian officer corps will force the UAR to resume the war. President Anwar Sadat is insisting that a precondition for a cease-fire extension is an Israeli timetable for withdrawal. Israel has maintained that "withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the 1967 conflict to secure, recognized and agreed boundaries (is) to be determined in the peace agreements."

Sovietish Heimland Editor Says Trials Secret To Prevent Anti-Semitic Stirrings

GENEVA, Jan. 7 (JTA)--Aaron Vergelis, editor of Sovietish Heimland, the only Yiddish magazine published in the Soviet Union, contended today that the Leningrad trial of nine Jews and two non-Jews had been held in secret session "in order not to stir up anti-Semitic feelings among certain parts of the population." Anti-Semitism, he said at a news conference, exists in the USSR today "as it does anywhere in the world where Jews live." He predicted that all Soviet Jews who want to emigrate to Israel would be allowed to in due course, "but this will be a slow process, for administrative and bureaucratic reasons." He noted that the Kremlin preferred not to let Soviet citizens go, but added that nonetheless it was not in the Kremlin's interest to hold back "those elements who refuse to integrate." Vergelis estimated that 1,000 Soviet Jews had left for Israel in 1970--"a considerable number considering the non-existence of diplomatic relations between the two countries as well as the fact that Russia's planned economy precludes emigration."

But he stated that there was a continuing process of Soviet Jewish assimilation within the USSR and that it should not be interfered with. He said the average Russian was not interested in the trials. The Soviet Jewish editor asserted that Yiddish was still a living language in the USSR, noting that Sovietish Heimland was published in 25,000-copy runs and that it reflected "the cultural, literary and social life of Soviet Jews." (According to information reaching London today, the authorities in Birobidjan have been dressing up the library there after three decades of neglect and making it look "Jewish." Until last month the library had only a few dilapidated copies of Yiddish classics, but now, it is reported, it has added a stock of Yiddish books by a number of Soviet Jewish writers, including Aaron Vergelis. Most of the books stocked there are in Russian, since the library caters to the general population of 200,000 and not specifically to the 12,000 Jews.)

Iraqi Jews Live Under Intolerable Conditions In Ghetto; Rabbi Virtual Prisoner

JERUSALEM, Jan. 7 (JTA)--A tourist who recently visited Iraq and now is in Israel has disclosed that Baghdad's 2,000 remaining Jews are living under intolerable conditions and are being forced to live in a ghetto. According to an article published in "Haaretz," the tourist, who asked to remain anonymous reported that although many of the Jews have large landholdings, they do not receive rent from their tenants and are forbidden to engage in business, leaving them virtually dependent upon the charity of some 100 Jews who still have some savings. The aged rabbi of Baghdad, Rabbi Sasson Kadoorie, is reported by the tourist to be a virtual prisoner of the Iraqi authorities, and has not performed any Jewish ceremonies for several years.

A few Jewish families still have telephones but all their conversations are being tapped, according to the report. The Iraqis are informed about Israeli and Jewish affairs through the Israeli radio "Kol Israel" which is beamed to Iraq. Food for the ghetto population, mainly canned foodstuffs, is usually bought in bulk every few months; leaving the ghetto is considered risky. Moslem sources in Baghdad told the tourist that a few months ago a group of young Jews were caught trying to escape. The large sum of money found in their possession was seized by authorities. They were later released on bail; their trial is still pending.

British Jews Observe Day Of Fast; 2500 Jewish Women In Silent March

LONDON, Jan. 7 (JTA)--British Jews observed yesterday a day of fast and intercession for Soviet Jewry, in accordance with the proclamation of the Chief Rabbi, Dr. Immanuel Jakobovits, who dedicated "Assarah B'Teveth" (the tenth of Tevet) as the "Day for Russian Jewry." That day is the fast of Tevet marking the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem in 586 BCE. Some 2500 Jewish women marched silently to the Soviet Embassy where a delegation presented a petition to one of the attaches who promised he would deliver it to the ambassador. Prior to the march, a brief rally was held in Bayswater. Meanwhile, informed sources report that a group of Soviet citizens visited the American Embassy in Moscow today to protest against "activities of Zionist extremists in the United States." The group told the American diplomat who received them that "Americans could not expect to be left in peace in Moscow while Russians are terrorized in New York."

