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800 Delegates Begin World Conference On Soviet Jewry; Theme Is 'Let My People Go'

BRUSSELS, Feb. 23 (JTA)--Eight hundred delegates representing Jewish communities in some 50 countries filed into the Palais Des Congress here this afternoon to attend the world conference on Soviet Jewry, the theme of which was stated on a huge banner stretched across the hall bearing the words, "Let My People Go." The opening session was devoted to highly dramatic proclamations of the unity of the Jewish people with the Jews of Russia. Several recent Jewish emigres from the Soviet Union who came here as part of the Israeli delegation, spoke of an "awakening" of Soviet Jewry. The one concrete proposal to emerge from the initial session came from Mrs. Raya Yaglom, president of the world Wizo who heads a delegation composed of the Wizo presidents from Britain, France, Switzerland, Italy, Sweden and Holland. She told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that she would propose that the conference elect an all-Jewish delegation to go to the Soviet Union to discuss the condition of Russian Jews with government authorities and with whatever Soviet Jews were available for such discussions. Mrs. Yaglom said she was aware that the Soviet authorities might refuse to receive such a delegation but she didn't think that should deter the conference from electing one. The opening session heard from Maj. Grisha Feigin, a former Soviet Air Force officer; Vitaly Svechinsky, a scientist and Dr. Mendel Gordin, a biochemist, all recent arrivals in Israel from Russia.

They presented no first hand accounts of Jewish life in the USSR but gave ardent testimonials to Jewish self-assertiveness in that country. Feigin said the Soviet regime was bound to pay heed to world public opinion. He said the solidarity of world Jewry with Russian Jews "is very vital to them. They are now awakening and they draw great comfort and power from this solidarity." Svechinsky said, "It is too late to suppress Soviet Jews. They have asserted themselves and will fight for the right to be Jewish to the last Jew. If only one remains, he will strive to reach Israel." Rabbi Herschel Schacter, chairman of the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry, who presided at the initial session, said the conference had gathered to "proclaim, first of all, the unity of the Jewish people." He said, "We are gathered to speak on behalf of one party of Jewry which is not free to speak." Replying to Soviet charges that the conference organizers had insulted the Russian people by selecting Red Army Day to open their conference on Soviet Jews, Schacter said, "We pay homage to all the armies that fought against tyranny, including the Red Army. We are not here to denounce, challenge or argue. We are here to affirm our demand for human rights for Soviet Jews." He added, "We are witnessing the end of an era. Soviet Jews themselves are no longer silent. Young Soviet Jews, effective and efficient members of their society, affirm their Jewishness before the whole world."

Rabbi Israel Miller, president of the American Zionist Federation, said here today upon his arrival that the participants "have not come to Brussels to dispute the Soviet system of government, or its economic and political philosophy." Neither, he added, was the conference a "debate" with Soviet authorities "over the extent of anti-Semitism which exists in Russia, for they will only deny its existence and try to convince the world that Jews are treated fairly there." Rabbi Miller said the delegates were here to tell the world of "our concern for our brothers and sisters who today live unhappily under Russian rule," and to tell the Russians to uphold their obligation to the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to which they agreed. "Before this international forum and for all the world to hear, we say: Grant freedom to those who wish to leave. Let our people go." The same theme was sounded by Herman L. Weisman, president of the Zionist Organization of America. He declared that "Soviet Russia's seeking to make martyrs of its Jewish citizens can never succeed in suppressing the resurgent Zionism among the masses of Soviet Jews whose particular dream it is that they may go and settle in Israel." Weisman said he is hopeful that the conference will have an impact upon world opinion which will lead thousands of humanitarians--Jew and Christian alike--to appreciate more fully the plight of Soviet Jewry.

Marcuse Says He Was Never Invited To Conference; Javits, Ribicoff Unable To Attend

(SPECIAL TO THE JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY)

NEW YORK, Feb. 23 (JTA)--Prof. Herbert Marcuse, the leading theoretician of the New Left, denied today that he had been invited to attend the world conference on Soviet Jewry in Brussels. Reports from the Belgian capital had said he would be there, but he dismissed them as inaccurate. Speaking to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency by telephone from San Diego, where he is a professor of philosophy at the University of California, Marcuse asserted: "Nobody ever got in touch with me, and I never considered it." He added: "I cannot go to Europe now." Marcuse declined to comment on the conference until he saw "how it turns out." But he stressed that he has spoken out against Soviet treatment of Jews. The JTA in Washington received a copy of a telegram sent to Brussels by Senators Jacob K. Javits and Abraham A. Ribicoff which expressed "deep regret" that "previous commitments here" prevented their attending the conference. The New York Republican and the Connecticut Democrat had been scheduled to participate in the conference. In their joint telegram to Brussels, they pledged "our every effort to help to relieve the plight of 3 million Soviet Jews." The Brussels meeting, they said, was "vital to the future of Soviet Jewry." Addressing the participants, the legislators said they "await, with other Americans of all faiths, the results of your deliberations, and join you in the hope that the conference will achieve its objectives."

Goldman Denies Reports He Slighted Soviet Jewry Problem, Supports Conference Efforts

GENEVA, Feb. 23 (JTA)--Dr. Nahum Goldman said today that he welcomed and lent his "fullest support" to the conference on Soviet Jewry in Brussels. The president of the World Jewish Congress

issued a statement clarifying his views on the problem of Soviet Jewry after he was criticized yesterday by spokesman for the Brussels conference for alleged remarks attributed to him in press reports of a speech he delivered in Zurich last Saturday at a meeting of the Swiss Zionist Association. Dr. Goldmann said the reports were "erroneous." They had quoted him as saying that the problem of Soviet Jewry was being "over-valued and dramatized." In his statement issued here today, the Jewish leader said: "Next to the survival and well being of the State of Israel, I have always regarded the fate of Soviet Jewry as the chief priority of world Jewish concern. I do not believe that the plight of three-and-a-half million Soviet Jews can be 'exaggerated' or 'over-dramatized' as I have been misrepresented as saying." Dr. Goldmann observed that Soviet Jews were "not in danger of physical persecution 'but of enforced assimilation which threatens the spiritual, religious and cultural survival of the second largest Jewish community in the world.'"

He said it was "paradoxical" that the Soviet Union, the only country to recognize the Jewish community as a national minority, denies it "the rights and opportunities which many other minorities, most of them numerically smaller than the Jewish one, enjoy in developing their cultural, religious and national life and maintaining their identity." Dr. Goldmann said, "A specific aspect of the problem is the fact that large numbers of Soviet Jews, motivated by their loyalty to the Jewish people and their deep historical and sentimental attachment to Israel, claim the right to join their families there, a right which some years ago was recognized as justified by the Soviet Prime Minister Mr. (Alexsei) Kosygin, although it is granted only to very limited individual cases." He added that the "clear discrimination" against the Soviet Jewish community, sharpened by the vicious denunciation of Zionism as aggressive, "obliged world Jewry and both Jewish and non-Jewish public opinion to raise their voices in clear protest against this undemocratic attitude."

Russian Jews Try To Defend Soviet Regime But Meet With Hostility

BRUSSELS, Feb. 23 (JTA)—A capacity audience jammed the Shell Building auditorium and overflowed into the street last night to hear three prominent Russian Jews defend the Soviet regime and its treatment of three million Soviet Jews. The occasion was a meeting organized by the Belgian-Soviet Friendship Society to counter the world conference on Soviet Jewry sponsored by Jewish organizations which opens here tonight. Observers said that about a third of the audience consisted of Soviet sympathizers but the rest were either merely curious or bitterly hostile. The speakers were repeatedly interrupted by hecklers. One member of the audience was ejected when he shouted "Judass" after a speaker noted that many members of the friendship society were Jews. The principal speaker was Col. Gen. David Dragunsky, the highest ranking Jew in the Soviet Army, who insisted that three million Soviet Jews "live in freedom" and are "perturbed" by the anti-Soviet campaign conducted by Jews abroad. "What right have others to defend Soviet Jews? Do Soviet Jews need defending? Soviet Jews have defended the revolution and are now defending the Soviet Union against attack. We protest the anti-Soviet campaign in Brussels. We hope people will understand this," Dragunsky declared.

He shared the platform with Samuel Ziv's vice chairman of the Soviet-Bar Association and Vladimir Peller, chairman of a "kolhoz" (collective farm), both Jews. Heckling erupted when the speakers tried to explain a viciously anti-Semitic book by the Ukrainian author, Troymim Kitchko, as merely an anti-religious tract by one man. Members of the audience shouted, "anti-Semitism is rampant in Russia." "Let the Jews go to Israel." "You do not speak for them." Dragunsky retorted that "Russia has let Feigin go to Israel but he turned up in Brussels to agitate against the Soviet Union." He was referring to Maj. Grisha Feigin, a former Soviet Air Force officer who had been campaigning for Jewish emigration rights and was granted an exit visa last month. He arrived in Israel only two weeks ago and is presently in Brussels as a member of the Israeli delegation to the conference on Soviet Jewry. Ziv contended that the majority of Soviet Jews "are satisfied with the existence they lead." He said 3000 Jews emigrated in 1969 and 1970 but added that of the three million Jews in Russia, only "a few thousand" want to leave. He said the procedure for issuing exit permits was complicated by the fact that there are no diplomatic relations between Israel and the Soviet Union.

Rigerman Says False Statements By Soviet 'Paid Jews' Will Be Exposed In Brussels

WASHINGTON, Feb. 23 (JTA)—Leonid Rigerman told Congressmen and newsmen today that the Soviet Jewish officials sent to Brussels to try to counteract the world conference on Soviet Jewry were "paid Jews" whose statements there "will be contrary to the facts." The Soviet Jewish physicist, who arrived in New York last Saturday night after an eight-month flight to flee the USSR, said of those officials that "The falseness of their statements will be demonstrated there (in Brussels)." The press conference, arranged by New York Democratic Reps. James H. Scheuer and William F. Ryan, was attended by a number of other Congressmen, including New York Reps. Emanuel Celler, Bertram Podell, Bella Abzug and Benjamin S. Rosenthal and Sen. Jacob K. Javits. Rigerman said his "main consideration" was aid to "Soviet Jews who are desperately trying to go to Israel to be Jews in the full meaning of that word." He continued: "It is an international question. We all remember the fate of the Jews in Germany. What's going on in the Soviet Union is not physical annihilation as in Germany, but spiritual annihilation—which is much more subtle and as terrible as the physical one." Rigerman said leaving his Russian friends had been like leaving prisoners in "a concentration camp," and promised to "do what I can for them."

V. Techernychev, a Washington correspondent for Tass, the Soviet news agency, challenged Rigerman's charges of Soviet anti-Semitism. The computer programmer replied that having completed a course in physical chemistry he had been unable to obtain a job for four months, being told by one Jewish administrator that he was unacceptable because of his religion. When the Tass man demanded the name of the administrator, Rigerman elicited general laughter by responding: "I'm here now, and he's there." The short immigrant, wearing a blue suit, a yellow shirt and a blue-and-white yarmulke, elaborated on his charges: "What is the pretension of the Soviet Union about two Yiddish publications and not a single publication in Hebrew in the Soviet Union? What's the good of the Yiddish theater if Jews are deprived of all means of studying Yiddish, and if the audience can't understand what is taking place?"

Those who say there is no problem have no real understanding of the situation in the Soviet Union. They should live in the Soviet Union and try to be a Jew. Maybe after that they may have something different to tell." Rigerman was scheduled to meet today with Secretary of State William P. Rogers and Under-Secretary John N. Irwin.

World Watching Conference, Says Dr. Prinz; Hospitalized, He Will Not Attend

NEW YORK, Feb. 23 (JTA)--Dr. Joachim Prinz, chairman of the governing council of the World Jewish Congress, was today hospitalized by illness and will be unable to attend the world conference on Soviet Jewry which he was scheduled to address on Thursday. In a statement issued from his hospital bed, Dr. Prinz said that as one of the sponsoring organizations, the WJCongress hopes "that the gathering will be able to present clearly the true situation of those Jews in the Soviet Union who want to express and preserve their identification with the Jewish people and with Judaism, or who want to emigrate to Israel or other countries to be united with their families. Noting that the problem was a "tragic one" and the struggle for a just solution is not helped by "exaggerated dramatization," Dr. Prinz added "We hope that the voice of the Jewish people and of men of good will of every race and religion will be heard, and that the government of the Soviet Union will be responsive to this voice, so that there may speedily be established for the silent Jewish community of the Soviet Union justice and freedom."

Kahane Found Guilty On Two Charges, Not Guilty On Third; Going To World Conference

NEW YORK, Feb. 23 (JTA)--Rabbi Meir Kahane, national chairman of the Jewish Defense League, was today found guilty in Manhattan Criminal Court on two charges: obstruction of governmental operations and of disorderly conduct, and was found not guilty on a third charge of resisting arrest. Sentence will be handed down April 13. The guilty verdict will be appealed. The charges stemmed from a demonstration before the Soviet Mission on Dec. 3, 1969, in which Rabbi Kahane and 28 other members of the JDL were arrested. Late this afternoon, Rabbi Kahane left for John F. Kennedy International Airport from which he was scheduled to fly to Brussels in an effort to attend the World Conference on Soviet Jewry. Yesterday, JDL members staged a three-hour sit-in at the offices of the New York Board of Rabbis to protest what a JDL spokesman termed the Board's failure to provide bail money for Abraham Hershkovits, who has been in prison for five months "because there is no bail money," Lawrence Fine, JDL executive director, said. The JDL also demanded that the Board of Rabbis, which maintains a Chaplaincy Division, provide Hershkovits, a vegetarian, with more substantial kosher daily meals. "All that has been provided by the Chaplain has been some cheese and crackers," Fine complained.

Majority Of Israelis Want Plebiscite On Withdrawal; Nixon Popularity Soars

TEL AVIV, Feb. 23 (JTA)--A public opinion poll published today indicated that a majority of Israelis want a plebiscite before the government decides to withdraw from any of the occupied Arab territories within the framework of a Middle East peace settlement. According to the poll conducted by the Public Opinion Research Institute, 54.4 percent of Israelis want the issue of withdrawal put to a national vote while 36.6 percent were opposed. The poll also showed that the popularity of President Richard M. Nixon with Israelis has soared to 56.4 percent from a low of 15 percent last Dec. when the Rogers Plan for a Mideast settlement was announced.

Red Cross Reports 12 Israeli POWs In Egypt In Good Spirits, Receiving Mail

TEL AVIV, Feb. 23 (JTA)--A Red Cross representative who visited the 12 Israeli prisoners of war in Egypt on Feb. 13, reported today that they were in good spirits and were receiving mail and parcels from home. He said two of the POWs, both pilots, are still in a hospital. The other eight, most of whom are pilots, have been permitted to room together at the Abassiyeh Prison. Egypt however continues to turn down Israeli demands for a POW exchange under the terms of the Geneva Convention. Israel is holding 69 Egyptian POWs, 39 Syrians, and 10 Lebanese. There are three Israeli POWs in Syria but Syrian authorities have stopped regular visits to them by Red Cross representatives.

Experts Say Israeli Air Force Capable Of Destroying Egypt's Anti-Aircraft System

TEL AVIV, Feb. 23 (JTA)--Israel is preparing for the possible renewal of warfare with Egypt when the present cease-fire extension expires on March 7. Should it occur, most experts agree, Israel's Air Force would be capable of destroying Egypt's dense, Soviet-built anti-aircraft defense system. The experts attribute the increased strength of the Israeli air arm to the heavy infusion of American electronic equipment and other sophisticated devices in addition to the deliveries of more U.S. Phantom and Skyhawk jets. The equipment supplied to Israel by the U.S. includes drones and pilotless retrievable aircraft and Shrike missiles. Moreover, the Israelis have had time to assimilate the function of this equipment and train their personnel to operate it, the experts note. They observed that in the event of a new outbreak of war, Israel will employ a strategy of movement in order to end the conflict in the shortest possible time. It will not confine itself to the front chosen by Egypt but will strike at the softest spots of the Egyptian defense. The experts agree however that a new Middle East war would be on a larger scale than any hitherto because of the massive build-up of Egyptian artillery, armor and troop concentrations.

Youth Buried Despite Rabbis' Objections; Religious Council Accepts Fact

TEL AVIV, Feb. 23 (JTA)--Sixteen-year-old Aryeh Spectorovski, the victim of a road accident, was buried yesterday in the Jewish cemetery in Afuleh despite orders from the Rabbinate forbidding it because the boy's mother is not Jewish according to religious law. The Rabbinate's injunction aroused anger in the Jezreel Valley town. The Israel-born youngster was circumcized as an infant, was bar-mitzvah and had been called up to read the Law in Afuleh's Great Synagogue. The Afuleh Religious Council decided today to accept, ex post facto, the youth's burial and consider the case closed. The rabbis had claimed that he was not entitled to a Jewish burial because his mother was non-Jewish and had never undergone Orthodox conversion rites. The boy's father was killed in a road accident a year ago. He was buried by friends of the family near his father's grave.

