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Kahane's Appearance Disrupts Conference; Other Disputes Also Mar Proceedings

BRUSSELS, Feb. 24 (JTA)—Less than 24 hours after it opened, the world conference on Soviet Jewry was disrupted today by the appearance of Rabbi Meir Kahane, leader of the Jewish Defense League in the U.S. Rabbi Kahane was arrested by local police after the conference presidium refused his request to be admitted as a delegate but no specific charges were lodged against him. Some sources said he was taken into custody "to prevent public disturbances." A report late this afternoon said Kahane had been expelled from Belgium. A dispute also developed on the conference floor today when Dr. Morris Brafman, of New York, president of the International League for the Repatriation of Russian Jews, charged that Rabbi Herschel Schacter had reneged on a promise that his group would be given the floor for the five minutes normally allowed delegates. Rabbi Schacter, chairman of the American Jewish Conference on Soviet Jewry, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that he never made such a promise to Dr. Brafman. He said he had promised only that the group's views would get a hearing which, he said, it did. Dr. Brafman told reporters that his League believes there is no future for Jews in Russia and therefore appeals to the Soviet government are useless. He said the conference should establish a world Jewish body to implement the principle that all people have a right to leave a country, including Soviet Jews.

But the appearance of the 38-year-old rabbi overshadowed all other developments at the conference. The proceedings were interrupted by heated arguments between excited supporters and opponents of Rabbi Kahane and there was some jostling and shoving on the floor. His supporters are mainly members of the Herut-Hatzohar delegation. They demanded that Rabbi Kahane be admitted to the conference as an observer. A motion to that effect, submitted to the conference presidium, was rejected. The presidium issued a statement on Rabbi Kahane's arrest stressing that he had committed no breach of conference regulations and that the conference was not preferring any charges against him. The statement said the Belgian authorities had been so informed. Rabbi Arthur Lelyveld, president of the American Jewish Congress who presided at this morning's session, said "I hear that Rabbi Kahane has been arrested, allegedly without cause. If so, efforts are sure to be made that he is properly represented and we are certain he will have a fair hearing in this free country." Reportedly arrested with Kahane were his press aide, Sam Shoshan, and Dov Spertling, a Russian Jewish emigre from Israel who supports the JDL. Spertling was reportedly freed after police ascertained that he is an Israeli citizen. Rabbi Kahane arrived at Brussels airport early this morning only hours after he was convicted in New York's Manhattan Criminal Court on charges of obstructing governmental operations and disorderly conduct. He will be sentenced April 13 but was permitted to leave the country on his own parole.

Conference Spokesmen Deny Charges Conference Responsible For Kahane's Arrest

Rabbi Kahane was stopped in the lobby of the Palais Des Congress and prevented from entering the auditorium. A conference spokesman had said earlier that he would not be admitted because his "tactics are repugnant to the members of the Jewish organizations present at the conference." But spokesmen emphatically denied charges that the conference was responsible for his arrest. The charges were made by Bertram Zweibon, the JDL's legal counsel, who accompanied Rabbi Kahane to Belgium. At a press conference held by JDL supporters, Zweibon claimed that Rabbi Kahane was arrested because the conference had asked police to keep him away from the gathering. He also read a statement which he said Rabbi Kahane had planned to make to the conference delegates. It demanded active measures against Russia such as an economic boycott, harassment of Soviet officials and "other militant acts." The JDL supporters charged that the conference leaders had panicked over the possibility that Rabbi Kahane might deliver his speech and in desperation asked the Belgian police to detain him. The official conference explanation for denying him admission was that he did not possess delegate's credentials or a visitor's card. A statement issued by the conference presidium this afternoon said, "The Jewish Defense League stands condemned as a handful of reckless men whose actions do serious harm to the courage and dignity of Soviet Jewry who are appealing for their human rights. The actions of the JDL can only repel the vast majority of men and women of all faiths."

(Addressing the Knesset in Jerusalem today, Foreign Minister Abba Eban reiterated the Israel government's firm opposition to the tactics employed by the JDL. He repeated verbatim a statement made in the Knesset by Premier Golda Meir last November accusing the JDL of sabotaging the legitimate fight for the rights of Soviet Jewry. He also read a condemnatory resolution adopted by the government and published Jan. 17. Asked about Kahane's attempt to participate in the Brussels conference, Eban said the event was being held by Jewish organizations, not on a governmental level and that the Israel government as such was not represented. He said, however, that the Israeli delegates shared the government's view with regard to the JDL's "illegal actions against Soviet representatives and institutions.") At last night's opening session of the conference, Arthur J. Goldberg, former Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court and former U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations delivered the keynote address. He said, "We feel a common and united bond with the Jews of Israel and with the Jews of the Soviet Union, and we believe that these attachments and loyalties are completely compatible with our deep attachments and loyalties to our respective countries." Goldberg continued: "We meet here today not to malign the Soviet Union but rather in sorrow and concern to speak the truth about the repression of Soviet Jews."

Orthodox Rabbi Says Conference Is 'Harassment' Of USSR Which Might Boomerang

NEW YORK, Feb. 24 (JTA)—Rabbi Abraham Gross, president of the Rabbinical Alliance of America, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency today he considered the Brussels conference on Soviet Jewry to be "harassment" of the Soviet Union. "I admit that the public outcry (on behalf of Soviet Jewry) has awakened certain elements that have been oblivious, but I'm questioning what it has accomplished for Soviet

Jewry," he said. Jewish emigration from the USSR has been going on unpublicized for a number of years, Rabbi Gross observed, and "harassing" the Kremlin with an international meeting on the matter could well lead to increased repression of Soviet Jews. Asked to give an example of increased repression as a result of peaceful protests to date, Rabbi Gross noted the recently reported Soviet consideration of a renewal of Jewish relocation in Birobidjan. He added that as a result of the late Rabbi Stephen S. Wise's call for a boycott of Germany during World War II, Nazi treatment of European Jews worsened. Rabbi Gross was elaborating on a statement he issued yesterday in which he asserted that the Brussels conference was the kind of project that "will only kindle the wrath of the Soviet government, and whose accomplishments for Soviet Jewry are highly dubious."

The conference organizers, his statement continued, "seem content with placing the Russian government on the defensive and thus feel they have achieved a goal," while "in reality, the backlash can be a devastating blow to the contacts and aid which are being given to our brethren behind the Iron Curtain." Rabbi Gross added that "not a single religious authority has sanctioned this conference." He urged its organizers to "be most scrupulous in their statements so as not to endanger the welfare of our Soviet brethren whom they seek to help." He recommended that efforts on behalf of Soviet Jews be conducted through "forceful and quiet diplomacy." Rabbi Gross added that he was "terribly disturbed" at the conference's expulsion of Rabbi Meir Kahane, national chairman of the Jewish Defense League. He said that while he disagreed with JDL's "violent procedures," Rabbi Kahane is a Jew and thus "entitled to his platform" at a convention of Jewish leaders. Rabbi Gross said he was disturbed to see "Jew battling Jew."

Agudat Israel World Organization Disassociates Itself From Conference

BRUSSELS, Feb. 24 (JTA)--The Agudat Israel World Organization disassociated itself today from the world conference on Soviet Jewry being held here, although representatives of the Orthodox group are attending the conference as observers. Their position was stated in a communication received today by Claude Kelman, chairman of the conference secretariat. The Agudat Israel said it was acting on the advice of its rabbinical authorities. A number of delegates, mainly from religious groups, today questioned the whole purpose of the conference and some expressed the view that it could do more harm than good for Soviet Jews. A conference spokesman said the position announced by the World Agudat Israel was not new because the group never participated in the conference at any stage although it advised the conference that it was sending observers. A spokesman for the Board of Deputies of British Jews noted that Agudat Israel observers were still attending the conference sessions.

Conflict Within Chief Rabbinate Over Beth Din Conversions In Vienna

JERUSALEM, Feb. 24 (JTA)--A bitter conflict has broken out within the Israeli Chief Rabbinate over the question of conversions to Judaism performed by the Beth Din (religious court) of the Jewish community in Vienna, the main way station for Jewish immigrants going to Israel from Eastern Europe. The dispute arose when two delegates sent by the Chief Rabbinate to look into the situation in Vienna, returned with a negative report alleging that the local Beth Din members were not always qualified rabbis and did not properly examine the would-be converts. The Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi, Isser Untermann, nevertheless favored upholding the Vienna conversions. He was supported by Brig. Gen. Shlomo Goren, the military chief chaplain who is also Chief Rabbi of Tel Aviv. Sephardic Chief Rabbi Itzhak Nissim has taken no stand so far. But other members of the rabbinate insist that the Vienna conversions cannot be recognized. The conversions carried out in Vienna are chiefly of non-Jewish wives of immigrants. Unless they are converted, their children are refused recognition as Jews when they enter Israel.

Observers noted that the underlying problem is that most of the immigrants are not religious and are not interested in the religious aspects of conversion. But the non-Jewish wives must undergo the rites in order not to jeopardize the status of their children in Israel. The Israeli rabbinate insists that the only valid conversions are those carried out by Orthodox rabbis according to strict Orthodox procedures, even though the converts are neither Orthodox nor religious. The issue has caused a rift between the National Religious Party and Rabbi Menachem Schneerson of New York, leader of the Lubavitcher Hassidic sect. The Jewish Telegraphic Agency learned today that the Lubavitcher rebbe refused to receive Dr. Joseph Burg, Israel's Minister of Interior and a leader of the NRP when he was in New York recently. According to the report, he snubbed Dr. Burg as an expression of disapproval of the NRP's alleged "soft" position on the Vienna conversions.

Comay Says Israel's Latest Reply To Egypt Leaves Door Open For Dialogue

LONDON, Feb. 24 (JTA)--Israeli Ambassador Michael S. Comay said today that Israel's most recent statement on the Middle East situation indicated that Israel was "leaving the door wide open to dialogue" with the Arabs. Comay, a former ambassador to the United Nations, added: "I hope there has been some shift of thinking in Cairo, because their past policies have only brought them sorrow, defeat, wastage of life and no glory." On Sunday, the Israeli Cabinet announced it "views favorably...the readiness of...Egypt to enter into a peace agreement with Israel." Comay, a 62-year-old native of Capetown, spoke at the first of a series of monthly speeches at the B'nai B'rith Luncheon Club, with Hayim Pinner, executive director of B'nai B'rith, as chairman. Comay remarked that "Egypt's recent statements were made to put the ball in Israel's court, but Israel this time has been careful not to raise any skepticism of the Egyptian offer for peace but to accept it at face value."

Javits Hopes U.S. Will Not 'Twist Israel's Arm' While Peace Accord Being Worked Out

WASHINGTON, Feb. 24 (JTA)--Sen. Jacob K. Javits said today that he thought the achievement of a Middle East peace settlement would "take some time" and expressed the hope that the United States "doesn't get impatient and really twist Israel's arm." The New York Republican appeared on the CBS Radio Network program "Capital Cloakroom." He said peace negotiations between Israel and Egypt should be "face-to-face." Javits said that he saw "some movement" toward a Middle East settlement was "not too optimistic for the near term." He said "I think this will take some time because I don't think Israel can give up everything that they're being asked to give up for a paper agreement. They have been too badly bruised."

Eban: Not A Single Friendly Nation Has Suggested Israel Accept UAR Proposals As Is

JERUSALEM, Feb. 24 (JTA)--Foreign Minister Abba Eban told the Knesset today that not a single friendly government, including the United States, has suggested that Israel accept the latest Egyptian proposals as they stand. However, some of them attach importance to Egypt's expression of willingness to enter into a peace agreement with Israel and the Israeli government shares this view, Eban said. The drafting of Israel's reply to the Egyptian note apparently has been completed but there was no indication today when it would be submitted to United Nations mediator Dr. Gunnar V. Jarring for transmission to Cairo. An official communique issued here today said the reply would refer to the Cabinet's declaration of last Sunday that Israel will not return to the borders that existed on June 4, 1967, the eve of the Six-Day War. Eban termed "groundless" reports that some members of the Cabinet wanted that reference omitted from the reply and that an alternative note was being considered by himself and Premier Golda Meir. Informed sources said the Israeli reply makes it clear that any subject can be raised in the course of negotiations between Israel and Egypt, including Egypt's demand for total Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories, but that Israel is not prepared to start negotiations under the burden of prior conditions. The sources said the reply also calls for a "direct dialogue" with Egypt and expresses Israel's willingness to discuss the reopening of the Suez Canal.

Eban told the Knesset that the reply makes no reference to the March 7 expiration date of the current cease-fire extension because Israel recognizes no time limit on the cease-fire. Eban said the U.S. government has disavowed any responsibility for the wording of Jarring's latest questionnaire to Israel and Egypt which the Israelis found objectionable. However, he said, U.S. Under-Secretary of State Joseph J. Sisco has informed Israel that the State Department approves the content of that document. Eban said he had "no reason to assume that the U.S. has abandoned its policy with regard to the need to draw defensible borders resulting from a peace agreement." Informed sources said the government has formed three committees to draw up territorial maps indicating what borders Israel would accept as defensible. Replying to questions, Eban said that "to the best of my knowledge, the U.S. does not support the precise delineation of guarantees" of a Mideast peace by the Big Powers "as long as the parties to the conflict have made no advance toward a peace agreement and have not asked for external backing for the agreement not yet reached." Mrs. Meir said in Beersheba last night that Israel wanted borders that would make Arab leaders "think twice before waging another war against us." She said defensible borders would "persuade them that another war would be too costly an adventure."

Jewish Cemetery Desecrated, Tombstones Overtumed; Youth Group Plans Protest

ROME, Feb. 24 (JTA)--Some 80 graves in the Jewish cemetery in Leghorn have been desecrated and many tombstones overturned, it was reported here today. Police so far have been unable to identify the vandals. The Federation of Italian Jewish Youth is planning a mass meeting Sunday in Leghorn to protest what they charged was anti-Semitism and racialism.

El Fatah To Seek Ways To Bolster Its Decimated Forces; Its Military Strength Is Down

JERUSALEM, Feb. 24 (JTA)--The 150-member Palestinian National Council will resume its meetings in Cairo on Feb. 27 in an effort to rescue the decimated Palestinian guerrilla movement from the consequences of a long series of disasters since the Jordanian civil war last September. The conference is expected to deal with various proposals, including one that the guerrilla movement go "underground" and another suggesting that it withdraw to Syria and conduct border warfare from there against both Israel and the Hussein regime in Jordan. The Council may also consider plans for the establishment of a separate Palestinian state on the West Bank. Support for such a plan would mark a major reversal of the guerrilla position which up to now has demanded the dismemberment of Israel and its replacement by a bi-national "democratic" state of Jews, Moslems and Christians. Israeli experts on Arab affairs say that a bitter struggle for leadership of El Fatah, the largest of the Palestinian commando groups, is being waged behind the scenes in Cairo.

El Fatah chief Yassir Arafat has come under serious challenge for the first time from both the military and civilian wings of El Fatah. His opponents are exploiting Arafat's failures and his personal weaknesses. He has been accused of serious mistakes in his dealings with King Hussein and of loosening El Fatah's ties with Egypt. Israeli sources say El Fatah's military strength is down to about 30 percent of what it was in mid-1970. This decline is reflected in the present scale of El Fatah operations along the Jordan River. From a peak of 30 incidents a day, they have dropped to an average of no more than five operations a week, mostly shooting across the river. El Fatah contingents have been ousted by Jordanian forces from the cities and towns and from the densely populated refugee camps. They and other Palestinian guerrilla groups have taken refuge in the hills near Jerash and Ajlun in northwest Jordan.

B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations, Hebrew U Develop Bridge-Building Program

WASHINGTON, Feb. 24 (JTA)--A new and unusual bridge-building program for North American students in Israel has been introduced by the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations at its Jerusalem Hillel House, it was reported here. Established in partnership with the Hebrew University, the Hillel Enrichment Program is an extracurricular activity which provides over 50 students with opportunities to study issues of concern to Israel and world Jewry. The students come from over 20 universities and were recommended for the program by the Hillel directors at their home campuses. One of the goals of the program is to train a corps of Hillel student leaders who, upon their return home, "will be better equipped to present Israel's case on the campus and tell their fellow students of Israel's significance for the life of American Jewry," says Rabbi Samuel Fishman, director of Israel and community affairs for the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundations. The focal point of the program is a series of seminars dealing with such subjects as Israel's social and economic structure, Israeli socialism, the nature of pan-Arabism, the great powers and the Middle East, and the Palestinian dimensions of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Much attention is given to learning about the Arab communities of Israel. There have been field trips to Arab villages and interviews with leaders from various walks of Arab life. Students will also have the opportunity to learn at first hand the problems of immigrant absorption with which Israel must deal.

