

JTA daily news bulletin

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

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Vol. XXXVIII - Fifty-Fourth Year

Thursday, May 27, 1971

No. 102

Verdict in Riga Trial Due Thursday; Prosecution Asks 1-4 Years For Defendants

NEW YORK, May 26 (JTA)--A verdict will be handed down tomorrow in the trial of four Jews in Riga, Jewish sources reported today. The four, Ruth Aleksandrovich, Mikhail Shepshelevich, Arkady Shpilberg and Boris Maftsier, went on trial Monday on charges of anti-Soviet activities and face sentences of up to seven years. The trial had been expected to last for two weeks and there was no explanation for the sudden speed-up. Jewish sources here said that the prosecution in the trial asked today that Shpilberg be sentenced to 4 years in prison, Shepshelevich to 2 years, and Miss Aleksandrovich and Maftsier to 1 year each. The defense responded that there was no proof of "anti-Soviet activities," which carry a maximum sentence of 15 years, and asked that the charges be reduced to dissemination of anti-Soviet literature with the knowledge that the action is illegal, which carries a maximum 3-year term. The sources said the prosecution asked for only 1-year sentences for Miss Aleksandrovich and Maftsier because the former suffers from an asthmatic condition and the latter asked for mercy.

Yesterday, according to reports, 22 witnesses testified, among them five Jews who were convicted and sentenced at the first and second Leningrad trials for allegedly plotting to hijack a Soviet airliner. According to Tass, the official Soviet news agency, the Leningrad defendants implicated the Riga defendants. Jewish sources denied today that this was so. The Jewish sources identified the Jews who testified yesterday as Silva Zalmanson; her brother, Israel; Mendel Bodnia and Anatoly A. Altman, all convicted at the first Leningrad trial last December, and Vladimir Osherovich Mogilever, one of the nine convicted at the second Leningrad trial which ended a week ago. The Riga trial was conducted in almost total secrecy in a special building on a heavily guarded peninsula outside the Riga city limits. The foreign press and spectators were barred. According to Jewish sources, the courtroom was filled with KGB (secret police) officials. Relatives of the accused have not been permitted in the court except to take the witness stand. The presiding judge was identified as Latka and the state prosecutor Teibisov. Their first names were not given. The only official news from the trial comes from Tass which Jewish sources say is not to be trusted. According to these sources, the defendants looked well and conducted themselves with dignity. They reportedly refused to confess to any crimes against the Soviet state.

Evidence introduced but not produced in court included a suitcase said to have contained "pamphlets from Israel" which was dug up from the sand dunes near Riga. The defendants were accused of distributing the alleged pamphlets for subversive purposes. Miss Aleksandrovich reportedly told the court that she did not consider herself guilty of anti-Soviet activity in any form. Shpilberg reportedly testified that the only leaflet he distributed was one titled "Our Native Tongue" which was an appeal to study the language of the Bible. He denied involvement in any kind of conspiracy against the Soviet state. He said he and the other defendants met only to celebrate Jewish holidays, the sources reported. Meanwhile, Miss Aleksandrovich's fiancé, Isaiah Averbuch, and Misha Neuberger, who were jailed May 17 for 15 days, reportedly to prevent them from testifying at the Riga trial, have gone on a hunger strike, the sources said. They have threatened to continue their fast until the trial ends. As they are being held incommunicado, their only sources of news are the prison authorities.

Zand Reported In Misery, Despair Over Possibility He May Not Get Exit Visa

DETROIT, May 26 (JTA)--Prof. Mikhail Zand is experiencing "despair and misery" over the possibility that he may not obtain permission to leave the Soviet Union for Israel, according to Prof. Herbert Paper of the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, a friend of the Soviet Jewish scholar. Prof. Paper telephoned Prof. Zand in Moscow last night. He was told by Prof. Zand that after his application for an exit visa was again postponed last Friday for "an indefinite time," he went to the Dutch Embassy and asked it to intervene on his behalf. The Dutch Embassy acts as the intermediary for Israel in the Soviet Union. However, Prof. Zand said the Embassy was not too encouraging. "We now live in despair and misery," Prof. Paper reported his friend told him. Prof. Zand also said that he had applied for Israeli citizenship under the amendment to Israeli immigration laws which permit the Interior Minister to confer Israeli citizenship in absentia on any Jews abroad who want it and are prevented from coming to Israel. Prof. Zand said if citizenship is granted it might encourage the Dutch Embassy to act on his behalf to persuade the Soviet authorities to allow him to leave. Prof. Paper reported that Prof. Zand expressed the view that this hoped-for intervention is his last chance to obtain an exit visa. Prof. Paper said that his conversation with his friend ended abruptly when their telephones were disconnected.

Amnesty International Appeals To Kosygin To Cancel Upcoming Trials

NEW YORK, May 26 (JTA)--The U.S. affiliate of Amnesty International appealed today to Soviet Premier Alexsei Kosygin to cancel the trials of Jews in the Soviet Union and to exercise clemency in the cases of Jews already convicted in Leningrad. In a letter to Kosygin, Amnesty's U.S. chairman, Mark K. Benenson stated "Surely the USSR is strong enough to permit those who wish to leave to go." Amnesty International, with headquarters in London, is a private organization that assists non-violent political and religious prisoners throughout the world. Benenson's letter to Kosygin added: "We are saddened by reports of the newest convictions of Jews in Leningrad and the further trials in Kishinev and Riga. The censored press reports suggest that the trials represent gross violations of human rights. Just as Amnesty protests the oppression of socialists and communists imprisoned in other countries, so must we defend and ask justice for citizens of the USSR..." (Earlier this week it was reported that the Kishinev trial has been postponed. No new date or reason for postponement was given.)

Orthodox MK's Charge Non-Jews Being Registered As Jews

JERUSALEM, May 26 (JTA)--The question of who is a Jew was aired again in the Knesset yesterday by two Orthodox MKs who charged that the government was indiscriminately registering non-Jews as Jews in order to grant them all the rights of new immigrants. Rabbi Menachem Porush of Agudath Israel and Rabbi Kalman Kahana of Pealot Agudath Israel charged that by condoning the "automatic conversion" process being carried out in Vienna to expedite the admission of Soviet Jews into Israel, the government was destroying the achievements of generations of tradition. They claimed that the word "conversion" had been emptied of any real meaning and that Israel was in danger of total assimilation. Rabbis Porush and Kahana urged the Knesset's various factions to unite in spite of their political differences to guarantee "the future of a Jewish Israel." Interior Minister Yosef Burg of the National Religious Party, himself an Orthodox Rabbi, replied for the government and said it was not interested in registering non-Jews as Jews. He agreed that incorrect registrations should be avoided at all costs, and suggested that the Porush-Kahana motion be sent to the Knesset's Interior Committee for study. His suggestion was approved by all factions except for the State List and part of Gahal, which voted to reject the motion.

Ben-Gurion Urges Youth To Prepare Themselves To Go On Aliyah

NEW YORK, May 26 (JTA)--Former Israeli Premier David Ben-Gurion contends in a new magazine article that "All those American Jewish youths who have a pioneering spark within themselves should prepare themselves to go on aliyah to Israel," because "Prayer for aliyah is not enough." Writing in the 10th anniversary issue of "Olam Hadash," a periodical published by Hebrew Publications for Children, Inc., Ben-Gurion asserts: "The redemption of Israel can only be fulfilled by aliyah. Israel needs a big pioneering aliyah from the entire diaspora, but particularly from America where the greatest Jewish community is concentrated. We need an aliyah of tens and hundreds of thousands so that they can make Israel fruitful and bring peace to our land and our neighbors." Ben-Gurion also urges American Jewish youth to "pursue a Hebrew education not only to bar mitzvah, but beyond, so that you will thoroughly understand Judaism and its historic mission for our people." That process, he adds, "is possible only through a knowledge of the Bible in its original form, the learning of Jewish history, and the reading of Hebrew literature in addition to the English literature."

Pincus Considering Resigning From Jewish Agency; Offered Bank Leumi Post

JERUSALEM, May 26 (JTA)--Jewish Agency Executive Chairman Louis Pincus is considering resigning after the next World Zionist Congress in January, it is unofficially learned. He has been tentatively offered the post of Chairman of the Board of Bank Leumi Leisra'el, a key position in Israel's economy. The current Board Chairman Ernst Lehman wants to retire and is only waiting for a suitable successor. One of the candidates suggested for the post to be vacated by Pincus is Arieh Eliav, at present Secretary General of the Labor Party and formerly Deputy Minister of Immigrant Absorption. The Labor Party in principle supports Pincus' candidacy for the Bank Leumi job because until now it has been in the hands of Liberals whereas Pincus is a Labor man, but support for Eliav's candidacy for the Jewish Agency post is much weaker because his dovish ideas have estranged him from some sectors of his own party.

Arab Federation Demands Sharpe Resign Because He Represents Jewish District

TORONTO, May 26 (JTA)--The Federation of Arab-Canadian Societies has demanded that Mitchell Sharpe, Minister of External Affairs, resign because he represents the Eglinton district in Toronto, Canada's second largest Jewish constituency. A resolution adopted by the group at its annual convention yesterday affirmed that Sharpe cannot be impartial, under the circumstances, in duties vital to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Federation also adopted a resolution calling on the federal government to end the outflow of tax-free dollars to the "expansionist State of Israel," and to protest Israel's "violation of basic human rights which endangers the physical and mental health of the Palestinian people." Palestinian-born Marie Claude Giguere, 35, of Quebec City and an employe of the Quebec Province Catholic School Commission, was elected president of the Federation.

Eban Affirms No Power Can Change Status Of Jerusalem As Israel's Capital

JERUSALEM, May 26 (JTA)--Foreign Minister Abba Eban declared in the Knesset today that "no power in the world can ever change the status of Jerusalem as Israel's capital." That status, he said, "is rooted deep in Jewish history and in the Jewish people's faith, and has received tangible expression in the life of the State of Israel since its inception." Eban stressed that the government had never adopted the memorandum submitted three years ago by Moshe Benvenisti, now Jerusalem's city councillor, which noted the possibility of restoring some areas outside the municipal boundaries to Jordanian sovereignty.

Israeli Arab Appointed Deputy Minister Of Health; Highest Post Held By Arab

JERUSALEM, May 26 (JTA)--Health Minister Victor Shemtov informed the Knesset officially yesterday that he has appointed Abdel Aziz Zuabi, an Israeli Arab from Nazareth, to the post of Deputy Minister of Health. Zuabi, a Knesset member who served two terms as Nazareth's Deputy Mayor, is the first Arab to be elevated to semi-Cabinet rank in Israel. He and Shemtov are members of Mapam. Zuabi has publicly declared his loyalty to Israel, though he also proclaims himself a loyal son of the Arab nation, and has referred to the Arab-Israel conflict as "tragic." He has been a member of Mapam since 1950. The Cabinet approved Zuabi's pending appointment last week after nearly a year's delay. The delay was due to the Labor Party's insistence on a similar post for one of its own Arab MKs. The Labor candidate was Seif Eddin el-Zuabi, a cousin and bitter personal enemy of Abdel Aziz. The problem was resolved last month when Seif was elected Mayor of Nazareth as a result of a coalition agreement. As mayor he could not serve as a deputy minister. Abdel Aziz Zuabi told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency last week that he didn't think the appointment of an Arab as deputy minister was premature. "In fact, I think the time has come for an Arab to serve as a minister with full Cabinet rank," he said.

Yeshivas To Receive \$2 Million From New N.Y. State Bill

NEW YORK, May 26 (JTA)--Jewish all-day elementary and high schools in New York State will receive more than \$2 million additional state aid from the new "Aid to Non-Public Schools" bill introduced today by Gov. Nelson A. Rockefeller, according to Rabbi Moshe Sherer, executive president of Agudath Israel of America, who has been involved in the development of the measure. Rabbi Sherer said that with this sum added to the amount the yeshivas will receive from the 1970 Mandated School Law, the Jewish all-day schools will receive \$4 million in state aid during the 1971-72 school year. The Rockefeller bill calls for \$33 million in grants to non-public schools as partial reimbursement for their expenses in providing secular services to children. The non-public schools will receive a year per child in each elementary school and \$72 a year per child in the high schools. Those recognized by the federal government as serving a high concentration of students from very low families will receive an additional \$54 per student. Rabbi Sherer declared that while he has "no objection" to the concept of a parent-aid bill as the most suitable vehicle for the state to help resolve the financial problems of the non-public schools, "the new bill" "is a landmark move forward in the process of the recognition by the government of its responsibility to share in the funding of the secular education of children attending non-public schools." The bill prevents an actual expansion of the private-school system. The Committee for Public Education and Religious Liberty (PEARL), the umbrella group for organizations opposing public aid to private schools, opposes the Rockefeller bill on both Constitutional and economic grounds. New revenues may be required to fund the proposed new aid program.

Education Ministry To Aid Black Panthers; Split Develops In Panther's Ranks

JERUSALEM, May 26 (JTA)--The Histadrut jointly with the Ministry of Education and the Jerusalem municipality is planning to open a seminar for leaders of the Black Panthers, it was disclosed yesterday by Dr. Dan Ronnen, chief planning adviser of Education Minister Yigal Allon. He said the Ministry and the municipality are also planning to open a new kindergarten in Musrara, one of Jerusalem's slum quarters and a hotbed of Black Panther agitation. (The Ministry of Education itself, however, is located in the heart of Musrara--not by choice but for want of a better location.) A great deal of confusion has meanwhile set in with regard to who is a Black Panther and who is not. After the fracas last week with the police, some of the Black Panther leaders agreed to join the Moroccan Migrants Union, a self-help group. They were overruled by their rank and file, but some of them stayed within the Union nevertheless. Two rival groups, each of them calling themselves Black Panthers, have applied to the Registrar of Societies for official registration. Neither has been registered for the time being, pending clarification. Announcements to the press are being made by spokesmen of various Black Panther splinter groups, each of them claiming to speak for "the Black Panther Union." One of the Panther leaders, Eddie Mor, announced last night that his organization had changed its name to "Black Panthers--Blue and White." It is by no means clear whether all Black Panther groups agree to this.

Tekoah, Mrs. Aleksandrovich Confer With Thant On Plight Of Soviet Jews

UNITED NATIONS, N.Y., May 26 (JTA)--Israel's Ambassador to the United Nations, Yosef Tekoah, called today on Secretary General U Thant and drew his attention to the continuation of the trials of Ruth Aleksandrovich. Tekoah was accompanied by Mrs. Rivka Aleksandrovich, mother of the 23-year-old daughter of Ruth Aleksandrovich. Mrs. Aleksandrovich pleaded with U Thant to help save her daughter and other Jews persecuted for their desire to unite with their families and people in Israel. Tekoah transmitted to U Thant additional letters from Soviet Jews requesting UN assistance to ensure their rights to return to Israel. Following the meeting, Tekoah declared the Jews sentenced in the two Leningrad trials, those on trial in Riga, and those whose trials are to open in Kharkov, Kishinev and Tbilisi are "the victims of the relentless struggle of Soviet Jewry for the right of Jews to live as Jews, learn the language of their people and to live in the Jewish State." He said their "dedication and courage" will earn them the love, respect and support of wide masses, Jews and non-Jews, in the Soviet Union and in all parts of the world.

Seven Jewish Students, Charged With Tass Office Takeover, Sentenced; Pay Fines

WASHINGTON, May 26 (JTA)--Superior Court Judge George D. Neilson sentenced yesterday seven Jewish students to fines of \$25 each or 10 days in jail on disorderly conduct charges stemming from their takeover of the Tass office here on Nov. 20. The seven pleaded guilty and paid their fines. The eighth defendant charged with disorderly conduct in the same case did not appear in court. The charge against her was dropped because she was a juvenile. District Attorney Luke Moore had asked the court, prior to the sentencing, to lessen the charge from unlawful entry to disorderly conduct. The seven defendants were: Sheldon Zeller, a student at the University of Maryland; Ronald Cole, Mark Brand, Terri Gore, Mark Rosenbaum, Eve Berger, and Gill Genn, all students at American University. Sue Parker was the eighth student against whom charges had been dropped. The eight students of the Tass office in the National Press Building and sent a message in Russian on the Tass teletype Moscow station, "Let my people go." They then chained themselves to the office equipment and were cut loose and removed by police.

JTA Correspondent Danny Rubinstein Awarded Prize For Reportorial Excellence

JERUSALEM, May 26 (JTA)--The Jewish Telegraphic Agency correspondent for Arab affairs, Danny Rubinstein of the staff of the newspaper Davar, received today the Ben-Dor Prize for reportorial excellence. Eliahu Agres, managing editor of Davar, said at the award ceremony that the 30-year-old Rubinstein "personifies the continuity of generations within the paper from its inception to this very day." The correspondent was cited for "outstanding" articles on Judaea and the award jury said: "He has not only turned this rich material into a colorful journalistic report, he also analyzed it from the social, economic and political points of view so as to present a clear picture of the situation in the occupied territories."

