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ISRAEL SUFFERED ECONOMIC SLOWDOWN DURING FIRST SIX MONTHS OF 1975

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, July 31 (JTA)--The Bank of Israel reported today that Israel has suffered an economic slowdown during the first six months of this year. Industrial production was down five percent and private consumption decreased by the same figure, the Bank reported. Exports declined slightly although they had been expected to rise as a result of the 43 percent devaluation of the Israeli Pound last November and the further two percent devaluation last May.

The Bank's report expressed particular concern over the export decline because exports are regarded as one of the most important means of reducing Israel's balance of payments deficit which is currently, unofficially, estimated at IL 6 billion.

The Bank of Israel's latest report refuted the optimistic statements of some of Israel's leading economic experts, including former Finance Minister Pinhas Sapir, who frequently claimed that the world economic recession was felt less by Israel than by the Western countries.

One of the most ominous features of the report was the announcement that unemployment increased by 3.5 percent in the first quarter of the year, the biggest increase since 1971. The report anticipated a moderate continuation of this trend although its statistics supported Labor Ministry claims of a manpower shortage, especially in the industrial sector.

According to the Bank of Israel, Israel's economic slowdown is due to the relative stability of world prices resulting from the production slowdown in the West which produced a negative effect on Israeli exports. The report cited as an example the Timna copper mines which has suffered from a sharp drop in world copper prices. The government's economic austerity measures and continued price controls were credited for keeping prices at a moderate level in Israel.

DESPITE OPPOSITION, PLO HAS BEEN

INVITED TO SEND OBSERVERS TO

INTER-PARLIAMENTARY CONFAB IN BRITAIN

By Mark Segal

LONDON, July 31 (JTA)--Despite strong opposition from Britain and other Western parliamentary delegations, the PLO has been invited to send observers to attend meetings of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) in London in September. It is understood that although the PLO representatives will not be allowed to vote, it is highly likely that they will be given permission to address one of the meetings, if the president agrees. More than 1200 delegates from all over the world will be attending the conference.

Thomas Williams, Labor MP for Warrington, chairman of the British group, intimated that as president acting for the host nation, he would give permission "if this was the majority view of the delegates." He confirmed that the British delegation had opposed the PLO presence but not on ideological grounds. The decision to invite the PLO was taken after Afro-Asian pressure had been exerted at a preliminary meeting in Sri

Lanka in April.

Williams said: "We took the view--and it was supported by other Western delegations--that although there is provision in the rules governing the conference for the invitation of international bodies, such as the UN, UNESCO and that kind, there is not for other types of bodies like the Palestine National Council, which represents the scattered PLO throughout the world." It was the Palestine National Council that had asked for permission to send PLO representatives, Williams said.

He added: "We feel that if the IPU invited groups of that kind, the rules should be changed in the future to include other organizations. After all, what is to stop the IRA (Irish Republican Army), for example, making a similar request?"

Meanwhile, strong representations have been made to the British government by the Israeli Embassy and various prominent members of the Anglo-Jewish community at the prospect of the PLO being permitted to attend the projected IPU meeting here in September.

ECC MEMBERS SIGN DECLARATION OPPOSING ISRAEL'S BAN FROM UN

PARIS, July 31 (JTA)--The nine members of the European Economic Community signed a declaration yesterday in Helsinki opposing expulsion or suspension of Israel from the United Nations, it was reported here. Such a move would be a "flagrant violation" of the UN Charter they said in the declaration adopted at a meeting held in conjunction with the 35-nation European Security Conference in Helsinki. The Common Market members are Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Ireland, Italy and West Germany. It was also reported that two Communist countries, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, supported the declaration.

U.S. TAKES ISRAEL AT ITS WORD

THAT SHE HAS NO NUCLEAR WEAPONS

WASHINGTON, July 31 (JTA)--The State Department today referred reporters to a statement by Israeli Premier Yitzhak Rabin last year denying that Israel possessed nuclear weapons. The statement by Rabin in a Danish television interview broadcast December 17, was cited by Department spokesman Robert Funseth when reporters asked him to comment on an article in the Boston Globe that said senior American analysts believe Israel has assembled ten nuclear weapons, each as powerful as the atom bomb that destroyed Hiroshima in 1945.

The Globe article was written by William Beecher, the paper's Washington correspondent who was, until recently, a spokesman for the Defense Department. Funseth said that "the United States strongly believes that every nation should strictly adhere to the nuclear non-proliferation treaty," a treaty Israel has not signed. Asked if that comment included Israel, he said "that is very clearly implied."

But Funseth also intimated that the U.S. accepted Rabin's statement that "Israel is not a nuclear power...which means Israel has no nuclear weapons." Funseth noted that Rabin stressed

In the interview the Israeli government's policy that it will not be the first to introduce nuclear weapons in the Middle East conflict.

In an unrelated development here, the office of Rep. Thomas O'Neill (D.Mass.), the House Majority Leader, reported that it expects that a House vote will be held tomorrow on the resolution urging the U.S. to consider withdrawing from the United Nations General Assembly if Israel is expelled from that body.

LEBANESE FIRE ON ISRAELI PATROL

TEL AVIV, July 31 (JTA)--An Israeli patrol came under fire from Lebanese territory last night and returned the fire. No casualties were reported. The incident occurred as the patrol was moving along a border road in the Metullah-Margalloth region. It was the third such incident this week in which Israeli patrols were attacked by small arms or bazooka fire from Lebanon.

EXCOMMUNICATION EDICT DRAWS SMILES

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, July 31 (JTA)--Israelis suffering through a long hot summer of political tension and economic woes received much needed comic relief this week when the ancient edict of excommunication was invoked by the Chief Rabbinate Council against Aguda bloc MK Shlomo Lorincz for likening Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren to President Idi Amin of Uganda in the course of a Knesset debate.

The excommunication edict and the war of the printing presses it precipitated between the newspapers of the rival Orthodox factions--the National Religious Party's "Hatzofe" and the Aguda's "Hamodia"--brought smiles and laughter to the populace.

It was a welcome change from the daily dose of news about stalemated interim negotiations with Egypt, Arab attempts to oust Israel from the UN, confusion and consternation among labor and management over the effects of the new tax reform measures and the rash of wildcat strikes.

While the Orthodox take the matter very seriously, a majority of Israelis have always looked with wry amusement at the feuding and recriminations within the religious establishment. Yet many thoughtful Israelis--religious and secular alike--are saddened by the continuing erosion of the image and authority of the Chief Rabbinate.

The excommunication of Lorincz was described by Maariv as a "comical anachronism." The Jerusalem Post headlined the story with photographs of Rabbi Goren and Amin. Both men were shown wearing Israeli paratrooper wings. Rabbi Goren won his as Chief Chaplain of the armed forces, and Amin, who once professed undying friendship for Israel, took his paratroop training in this country.

The paratroop wings were the nub of Lorincz's insult. The Aguda MK accused Rabbi Goren of Amin-like dictatorship in his domination of the Chief Rabbinate Council and appointment of "day-anim"--religious court judges. "Curiously enough, in Kampala (capital of Uganda) there, too, is someone who has got paratroop wings," Lorincz said.

The Chief Rabbinate Council excommunicated Lorincz yesterday afternoon at a session held under Rabbi Goren's chairmanship but boycotted--as usual--by its co-chairman, Sephardic Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yosef whose perpetual quarrels with Rabbi Goren make the news almost as frequently as the daily weather report.

Meanwhile, "Hatzofe" and "Hamodia," respectively, praised and condemned the excommunication. The Aguda newspaper claimed that even NRP circles found Rabbi Goren a liability and published rumors that he was about to resign. Hatzofe published a letter from Rabbi Zvi Yehuda Kook, the NRP's religious mentor, condemning Lorincz. NRP Secretary-General Zvi Bernstein demanded that Lorincz's remarks be expunged from the Knesset records.

CONCERTED ALIYA CAMPAIGN PLANNED

By Sheryl Anne Gura

NEW YORK, July 31 (JTA)--Yehoshua Yadin, executive director of the Israel Aliya Center of North America, yesterday outlined plans for an intensified public information campaign in an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. Yadin explained the concept behind the new educational program in these words: "The major emphasis in the past has been with those candidates for aliya who approached us; now we want to reach out and make our program known."

The new public information campaign evolved primarily through the efforts of Pinhas Sapir, former Minister of Finance and present chairman of the Executives of the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Organization, and Uzi Narkiss, director general of aliya of the Jewish Agency and the general who led the liberation of Jerusalem in 1967.

The International Aliya Conference on March 2, through the leadership of Sapir and Narkiss, originated two ideas that would give aliya in North America the needed push: an ongoing information program and aliya community councils which have already been established in Philadelphia, Cleveland, Detroit and Miami.

Yadin indicated that if there is to be an increase in aliya, "you need exposure to life in Israel." He added "the new educational program lays the foundation for this increase; it defines the concept of life and living in Israel as a meaningful and positive experience."

Basic Elements of Campaign

The basic elements of the new-public information campaign consist of supporting that portion of the shaliach's (emissary) role devoted to promoting activities to allow him more time for personal contact between himself and potential and committed new immigrants. A new coast-to-coast department in the Israel Aliya Center will now provide public relations and press services and devise effective means for disseminating information.

Other facets of the campaign are the introduction of field workers to university campuses; the establishment of aliya desks at each school; twice yearly seminars which will portray and detail issues of Israeli life; and continuing contact with students who participated in past events concerning Israel.

Yadin specified that "the purpose of so much attention on university students is because they represent a significant segment of potential new immigrants." He revealed that the campaign has the assistance of not only other departments of the Jewish Agency but also of Jewish organizations such as Reform, Conservative and Orthodox movements and B'nai B'rith. He stated that these "groups are setting up aliya desks at their headquarters."

Although the people involved with the campaign view this as a long-range program, Yadin added,

"with aroused Jewish consciousness, people respond immediately and there is better hope for the outcome to be seen shortly." He concluded by remarking that "we feel that in the process of becoming interested in Israel, more and more Jews will want to make aliyah."

**KISSINGER WARNS U.S. WILL TAKE
'DEFINITE AND SEVERE ACTION' IF
ISRAEL IS EXPELLED FROM THE UN**
By Helen Silver

WASHINGTON, July 31 (JTA)--Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger warned in Helsinki today that "the United States will take definite and severe action" if the United Nations expels or suspends Israel, a move the U.S. would consider in violation of the UN Charter. "What this action would be is inappropriate for me to say but such action would produce 'serious consequences for the world organization,'" Kissinger declared at a press conference in the Finnish capital this morning.

The Secretary's remarks, on the second day of the European Conference on Security and Cooperation, were piped into the State Department for the benefit of reporters here. He reiterated that "the U.S. has expressed its very strong opposition to either the expulsion or suspension of Israel from the UN" and "objects to this on grounds that it is in violation of the Charter." Kissinger said the American position was fully shared by its Western European allies.

Kissinger reported that at a four-power lunch-session meeting in Helsinki today attended by the representatives of the U.S., Britain, France and West Germany, "with respect to the UN each country stated its view that it would oppose the expulsion or suspension of Israel from the UN or the expulsion or suspension of any country." However, Kissinger added, "no conclusions were reached as to the particular measures that would be taken" by each of the four powers.

He said the four-power meeting also included "a discussion of the Middle East and prospects for negotiations as well as the positions these various countries might take with respect to issues before the UN. On these subjects we will have to have a further exchange of views." Kissinger disclosed that the Middle East was also discussed at a meeting today attended by President Ford and himself with the leaders of several other countries, including Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria and Turkey. He did not elaborate on the discussions at that meeting.

**WALDHEIM SAYS ISRAEL'S EXPULSION
FROM UN WOULD CREATE SERIOUS CRISIS**

VIENNA, July 31 (JTA)--Secretary General Kurt Waldheim warned here today that the expulsion of Israel from the United Nations General Assembly would create a serious crisis for the UN, especially because the United States and other countries have already threatened to take counter-measures. Waldheim, who arrived here to preside at the third round of talks on the Cyprus crisis, also expressed hope that Israel and Egypt could agree to an interim agreement in Sinai to defuse the dangerous situation in the Middle East. He said he considered the next few months crucial for that region.

Waldheim added that a new interim accord could only be a first step toward reconvening the Geneva conference where the entire Middle East conflict will be under negotiation. He said he was confident that a satisfactory solution could be

found. Waldheim also expressed hope that Egypt would agree to extend the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) mandate after its new three-month term expires in October. He said it was vitally important to have UN forces stationed in Sinai. Referring to Arab attempts to oust Israel from the General Assembly, Waldheim stressed the universality of the world organization which, he said, must not be violated.

Sadat Expresses Pessimism

(Reports from Alexandria today indicated that Egyptian President Anwar Sadat was pessimistic about the prospects of a new interim agreement with Israel. Returning today from Kampala, Uganda, where he attended the meeting of the Organization for African Unity (OAU), Sadat and his advisors were studying the latest Israeli proposals, conveyed to Cairo last week by U.S. Ambassador Hermann Eilts. Sadat is expected to indicate his response sometime next week. Government circles in Egypt reportedly believe that Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger's assessment that chances for success of a new Sinai accord are better than 50-50 may be over-optimistic.)

ISRAELI ENVOY IN CHILE HONORED

SANTIAGO, July 31 (JTA)--The government of Chile, headed by General Augusto Pinochet, recently decorated Moshe A. Tov, upon the termination of his four years as Israel's ambassador to Santiago.

The Order of Merit, "Gran Cruz" Class, was awarded to Tov by Chilean Foreign Minister, Vice-Admiral Patricio Carvajal, who said at the decoration ceremony that "Chilean-Israeli relations are inspired by similar ideals and experiences" and that both governments "guarantee respect and reverence for the superior values of the spirit, human dignity, and the right of nations to provide themselves with the constitutions which best give expression to their feelings."

Tov, a former head of the Latin American Department in the Israeli Foreign Ministry, described Israeli-Chilean relations as "excellent" and thanked Chile's government for its "understanding" of Israel's position in the Middle East conflict. To mark the occasion, Tov was feted by the Chilean Jewish community and by high ranking personalities from Chile's political and diplomatic circles.

TEL AVIV (JTA)--Ikrit and Biram, two abandoned villages near the Lebanese border, were hooked up to the national water supply system Thursday indicating that the government may soon permit the return of their original Arab Christian inhabitants who were forced to evacuate for security reasons during Israel's war for independence in 1948. The water pipes were laid by the Mekorot water company at the government's request on the recommendation of its advisor on minority affairs, Shmuel Toledano.

NEW YORK (JTA)--The National Conference on Soviet Jewry received a noble Thursday from Henrietta Markman in Israel thanking the Conference for its efforts on behalf of her husband, Vladimir Markman, in Moscow. The NCJ reported that Markman, who was released from three years' imprisonment last April, was granted an exit visa and will soon be joining his wife in Israel. The 37-year-old Markman was arrested after he asked for a visa to emigrate to Israel.

PLIGHT OF BLIND PERSONS IN ISRAEL WILL BE DISCUSSED AT CONFERENCE

By Mindy Yochelson

NEW YORK, July 31 (JTA)--Prior to leaving for Jerusalem yesterday to attend a three-day conference next week for the Jewish blind, Dr. Jacob Freid, executive director of the Jewish Braille Institute of America told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that "Israel has not yet accepted the normality of the blind person." The first world conference of the Jewish blind will take place at the Jerusalem Hilton Hotel August 4-6. It will include some 350 persons from Israel, France, England and the U.S. Israeli President Ephraim Katzir will be honorary chairman.

Dr. Freid, who is partially sighted, said he hopes the conference will be the start of "a revolution in the status and opportunities of the blind in Israel so that they can be fully sustaining members of Israel's economy and positively contributing citizens of the State of Israel." Dr. Freid said there are about 8000 Israelis who are considered legally blind by U.S. standards, having five percent or less vision. Israeli standards are stricter, he said. To be declared legally blind in Israel one must have two-and-a-half percent or less vision. About half of the 8000 measure to this standard.

Dr. Freid said, "This is an abnormally large amount of blindness," proportionately. The reasons, he said, Israel has so many blind persons is due to the poor medical care received by many Oriental Jews in their countries of origin and also the vision deterioration of many concentration camp survivors. In addition, there are about 100 blinded veterans of Israeli wars since 1948.

The Blind Can Be Productive

The Jerusalem conference will attempt to demonstrate to Israelis that given the proper training and education these 8000 blind persons, "a sizeable percentage" of whom Dr. Freid said, are on welfare, can be "dues paying citizens of Israel." About one-third of the conference participants will be blind persons and Dr. Freid said this will be their opportunity to "sit down with the top one hundred social workers in Israel" to discuss their problems.

According to Dr. Freid the problems of the Israeli blind are three-fold: Firstly, due to the financial stringency of the Israeli economy, the government cannot subsidize courses of study to train professionals in special education, rehabilitation and vocational guidance for the blind. Secondly, the blind in Israel don't have an equal say in the agencies that affect them. Dr. Freid said he didn't know of any blind persons who are board members of agencies for the blind. Thirdly, there is little acceptance of the blind in Israeli society, many of whom are "fixated at the level of switchboard operator." Dr. Freid was primarily referring to a switchboard training program set up for the blind by Dr. Nissim Higel which Dr. Freid said was "successful" but at the same time unfortunate because "many of the blind can do much better than this level of employment."

Barred From Many Top Positions

In Israel there is still a certain residual of the traditional belief that blindness "is a penalty or curse of God," Dr. Freid said. Also, throughout the Middle East the status of the blind was "a quarter of a century behind the U.S. as far as training and opportunities." The blind in Israel are now barred from government positions, foreign service, and the army where, Dr. Freid said,

he felt the blind could serve in a back-of-the-line capacity." According to him, "the whole world is going through a revolution in its attitude toward the blind and there are glimmerings of it now in Israel."

Attempts are being made for the universities in Israel to make available courses of study in rehabilitation and special education for the blind. Dr. Freid mentioned that former Brooklynite Lea Levavi, a staff member of the Jerusalem Post, is the first and only blind reporter in Israel. He also noted that Dr. Haim Blanc, professor in the social sciences at Hebrew University, and Dr. Albert Benjamin, psychology professor at Haifa University, are both blind. But Dr. Freid added, "The blind should not have to be super-brilliant to overcome their disabilities."

SENATORS URGED TO AID ROITBURD

NEW YORK, July 31 (JTA)--Following the arrest of long-term "refusenik," Lev Roitburd, a group of 16 Soviet Jewish activists addressed an appeal to the U.S. Senators who were in the Soviet Union at the time of the arrest, it was reported today by the National Conference on Soviet Jews. On July 2, Roitburd was about to leave Odessa for Moscow, when KGB plainclothesmen arrested him on charges of "resisting arrest." In their appeal, issued in Moscow and released today by the NCSJ, the activists ask the Senators to pay "special attention to this case" and to "take steps expressing your opinion about it as the incident took place during your stay in the USSR, and was, apparently, connected with your visit there."

The appeal noted that Roitburd, an engineer who has had to work as a metal worker, bought plane tickets for himself and his 12-year-old son in order to fly to Moscow and Leningrad on the first day of his vacation, July 2. On July 1, a KGB agent warned him not to leave Odessa, but Roitburd rejected this illegal demand and went to the airport with his son and his wife, who saw them off. They were not allowed to board the plane. "Right in front of his wife and son, men in civilian dress pulled him by the hair to a local militia office," the appeal stated.

His wife was not allowed to come into the office. The next day she was told by the militia that a case had been opened against her husband "for resisting arrest." Roitburd now faces a prison sentence of up to five years. Roitburd first applied for a permit to emigrate to Israel three years ago. "The case of Roitburd is not an exception in the practice of persecuting Soviet Jews who have applied for emigration to Israel," the appeal said.

The appeal was signed by: Aleksandr Lunts, Anatoly Sharanovsky, Vladimir Slepak, Aleksandr Lerner, Vitaly Rubin, Ida Nudel, Dina Bellina, Efim Davidovich, Lev Ovishocher, Vladimir Prestin, Ilya Essas, Benjamin Fain, Pavel Abramovich, Mark Azbel, Viktor Bralovsky and Vladimir Lazaris.

CARACAS, July 31 (JTA)--Two prominent Venezuelan-Jewish women were decorated by President Carlos Andres Perez for their achievements in the field of journalism. Dr. Paulina Almosny, lawyer and columnist in the influential daily "El Nacional," and Mrs. Alicia Segal, literary critic and executive director of the CAIV, Venezuelan Jewry's representative body, received the Order of Francisco de Miranda. Dr. Almosny was a member of Venezuela's delegation to the UN's conference on women in Mexico City. Mrs. Segal has just published a second volume of her collected articles.