



daily news bulletin

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ELECTION DAY SET FOR MAY 17

JERUSALEM, Jan. 5 (JTA)--Elections in Israel will be held May 17. This was approved today in a 30-minute meeting of the Knesset. The Knesset session heard the second and third readings of the bill to disperse the Knesset and hold elections in May. Since this is now a law, approved by the Knesset, all other procedures regarding the formation of a government are cancelled.

Thus, Premier Yitzhak Rabin's present all-Labor government is to act as caretaker government until the elections are held. President Ephraim Katzir's moves, including his meeting yesterday with Rabin, have no relevance presently, and Rabin, as was actually expected, will not have to form a new government. Many of the Knesset members went immediately after the meeting to Tel Aviv to participate in the funeral services for Avraham Ofer. (See story P. 3)

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT CONFIRMS IT IS TAKING STEPS TO PERMIT SOVIET JEWS NOW IN ROME TO ENTER THE U.S.

WASHINGTON, Jan. 5 (JTA)--The Justice Department confirmed yesterday that it was taking steps to permit entry into the U.S. of Soviet Jewish emigrants now in Rome. Rep. Joshua Eilberg (D., Pa.) said earlier this week that he expected Attorney General Edward Levi to exercise his authority of parole for all Soviet Jews who arrived at the processing center in Rome by Dec. 31, 1976. There are some 4000 Soviet Jews in that category, according to Eilberg.

They left the USSR during 1976 with exit visas for Israel, the only destination for which the Soviet authorities issue visas. After crossing the border they declared their desire to come to the U.S. Eilberg, chairman of the House Subcommittee on Immigration, Citizenship and International Law, said:

"I have been informed that the State Department has requested parole for all Soviet Jews who arrived at the processing center in Rome by Dec. 31, 1976 and that Attorney General Edward Levi will give his approval. I am very pleased by this decision since it will eliminate a cruel situation which had thousands of individuals and families living in limbo, not knowing where their permanent homes would be and forced to live on charity."

Eilberg noted that persons who are admitted to the U.S. under parole are classified as refugees and given legal status after they arrive here.

AVINERI LEAVES FOR RUMANIA

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Jan. 5 (JTA)--Prof. Shlomo Avineri, Director General of the Foreign Ministry, left today for Rumania on an official visit. Officials said he would be discussing Mideast developments with his host, Deputy Foreign Minister Karol Cornel Pacoste who visited Israel some months ago.

Bucharest recently entertained PLO chief Yasser Arafat and the Syrian Foreign Minister on official visits. Observers here detect a seasonal upswing in Rumania's Mideast involvement. For several years Rumania under President Nicolae

Ceausescu has periodically delved into Mideast affairs. It is the only Comintern country to have maintained diplomatic ties with Israel after the Soviet breakoff in 1967 and is believed to indulge in Mideast diplomacy as a means of asserting its preciously guarded independence from Moscow in international affairs.

Israel, for its part, has usually cooperated in the various Rumanian sallies into Mideastern affairs since it is in Jerusalem's interests to show it can maintain warm relations with foreign countries despite political differences. Rumania has consistently advocated the establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank, which Israel totally opposes.

NY STATE HUMAN RIGHTS DIVISION FINDS TWO BANKS MAY HAVE VIOLATED ANTI-BOYCOTT LAW

NEW YORK, Jan. 5 (JTA)--The State Division of Human Rights has found "probable cause" in the complaint filed by the American Jewish Congress charging the Morgan Guaranty Trust Co. and Citibank with "unlawful discrimination" in violation of New York State's anti-boycott law. The AJCongress yesterday hailed the finding and said it looked forward to a final determination ordering the two banks to "stop handling discriminatory letters of credit."

The AJCongress has charged that the two banks are "pivotal" in implementing the Arab boycott because of their "dominant positions" in international trade between New York exporters and Arab importers. The AJCongress brief, drafted by Lois Waldman, assistant director of the organization's commission on law and social action, said the two banks were making the boycott effective by enforcing provisions in letters of credit that bar payment for goods shipped to Arab customers unless the American supplier certifies it does no business with Jewish companies or companies controlled by Jews.

Naomi Levine, executive director of the AJCongress, said: "We are gratified by the finding of the State Human Rights Division and we hope that, in response to it, the banks will reconsider their current practice. If so, the conciliation effort which will now be conducted by the Division will resolve the matter satisfactorily. If the conciliation effort fails, however, we are confident that the public hearing that follows will demonstrate conclusively that Citibank and Morgan Guaranty are playing a central role as enforcers of the Arab blacklist, which is not only anti-Israel but anti-Jewish. Their action is in clear violation of state law."

RECORDS OF THE NEW SENATE LEADERS

By Joseph Polakoff and Helen Silver

WASHINGTON, Jan. 5 (JTA)--The selection by the Senate Democrats yesterday of West Virginia's Robert C. Byrd to be Majority Leader assures that the direction of the majority party in the 95th Congress will continue to be strongly sympathetic to U.S. support for Israel and Soviet Jewry.

The Republicans, on the other hand, in the surprise election of Sen. Howard Baker of Tennessee as Minority Leader, named a legis-

lators considered to have a mixed record on support of Israel.

The possibility of weakening Congressional support for Israel never arose in the Democratic contest in the Senate since Byrd's principal rival, Hubert H. Humphrey of Minnesota, has a record as a friend of Israel that is written in superlatives. Humphrey withdrew his candidacy yesterday when he saw that he had no chance of winning.

In the House, the selection last month of Rep. Thomas P. O'Neill of Massachusetts as Speaker and Rep. James C. Wright of Texas as House Majority Leader, indicated continuity of support in the lower chamber, too.

Although not an initiator of legislation or resolutions for Israel or Soviet Jewry, largely because he is not a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, Byrd has been among their co-sponsors and voted regularly for them. His predecessor as Majority Leader, Montana's Mike Mansfield, who has retired, was never known to endorse such proposals and usually voted against them. Byrd, who generally opposes foreign aid, has supported aid to Israel when it has come up as a separate measure.

Baker's Record Uneven

Baker, who is a member of the Foreign Relations Committee, has said that the U.S. should have a general posture of aid and support for Israel while attempting to display an evenhanded approach to other countries that want to be friends of the United States. He has voted for some foreign aid bills and been absent during the voting of other key measures.

The Tennessee Republican was one of the first Congressmen to meet Palestine Liberation Organization chieftain Yasir Arafat. After meeting Arafat in 1975, Baker said in a television interview that the PLO head seemed to say without saying it directly that the PLO has moved from commando warfare to statehood. Baker said he couldn't get Arafat to say that he would recognize Israel's right to exist, but the Senator said the "Arabs don't want to drive Israel into the sea."

Baker, along with Sen. Abraham Ribicoff (D. Conn.) was co-chairman of a 13-member Senate delegation that visited the Middle East last summer to study potential U.S. sale of nuclear reactors to Israel, Egypt and Iran. After returning to Washington, he expressed some disappointment but no surprise at having been barred from visiting Israel's nuclear reactor at Dimona.

Regarding Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, Baker said the Egyptian "really is driving for some sort of accommodation." He said Israel seemed "far more cautious, which I translated to mean probably less flexible." Baker's predecessor as the Republican leader, Hugh Scott of Pennsylvania, was considered an ardent supporter of Israel.

HADASSAH LEADER EXPECTS HEALTHY MIDEAST POLICY UNDER CARTER

TEL AVIV, Jan. 5 (JTA)--Mrs. Bernice S. Tannenbaum, president of Hadassah, said here today that "based on President-elect Carter's statements, his appointments and the Middle East plank of the Democratic Party platform, we expect a healthy Mideast foreign policy."

Mrs. Tannenbaum, who came to Israel to plan Hadassah's first convention in Israel, scheduled for August, 1978; also said that Zbigniew Brzezinski, National Security Advisor-

designate, had summarized Carter's position on Mideast peace with the statement that "there can be no concessions on the gut issue involved, namely, not only the continued existence but full recognition of Israel" by the Arab states.

Mrs. Tannenbaum said the appointment of Rep. Andrew Young (D. Ga.) as U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, was positive because of his sensitivity to the issue of human rights. She said that Young, as a member of Black Americans to Support Israel Committee (BASIC) and as a co-sponsor of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment for freedom of emigration of Soviet Jews and others, brings moral credibility to the UN position.

The Hadassah leader declined to comment on Israel's domestic policies, explaining that Hadassah is a member of the World Confederation of United Zionists, a diaspora-based organization with a philosophy of non-affiliation with any political party in Israel. She said Hadassah is "non-partisan in Israel's election" and believes that "as Americans we have no right to participate in Israel's political life, even though we are committed to helping build a sound, creative society in Israel as we are in the United States."

Mrs. Tannenbaum is being accompanied here by Mrs. Rose Matzkin, immediate past president and Hadassah Medical Organization chairman; Mrs. Faye L. Schenk, HMO building and development chairman; and Mrs. Frieda Lewis, Hadassah treasurer.

2 JOURNALISTS REWARDED FOR HELPING APPREHEND MENTEN

AMSTERDAM, Jan. 5 (JTA)--Two journalists whose information led to the arrest of alleged Nazi war criminal Pieter Menten near Zurich last month will each receive a reward from The Netherlands government of 15,000 Guilders (the equivalent of about \$6000), Justice Minister Andries Van Agt announced today.

The recipients are Dutch Jewish journalist Hans Koop, editor of the weekly "Accent," which first published information leading to a warrant for Menten's arrest, and Martin Walzer, a Swiss newspaperman who spotted Menten in the Zurich suburb of Uster where the multi-millionaire art dealer had fled to avoid trial in Holland. Koop alerted Dutch police to Menten's whereabouts after being tipped off by Walzer. He reportedly paid Walzer a considerable sum of money for the information. Koop said today that he would donate his share of the reward to charitable organizations which he will name later.

Menten is accused of complicity in the deaths of hundreds of Jews and Poles while serving in a Nazi SS unit near Lemberg, Poland during World War II. The reward authorized by Van Agt is three times higher than any previously paid by the Dutch government for information leading to the arrest of a fugitive.

PARIS (JTA)--The Palestine Liberation Organization urged the French government Wednesday to conduct a thorough investigation of the murder of Palestinian militant, Mahmoud Saleh, who was fatally shot in Paris's Latin Quarter Monday. Ezzedine Kalak, the PLO's Paris bureau chief, told newsmen he rejected suggestions that Saleh was a victim of a feud between rival Palestinian factions.

THOUSANDS ATTEND OFER'S FUNERAL

By Yitzhak Shargil and David Landau

TEL AVIV, Jan. 5 (JTA)--Avraham Ofer, the Housing Minister who committed suicide Monday, was buried at the Kiryat Shaul cemetery here today. The funeral, during a cold winter rain storm, was attended by thousands of mourners headed by President Ephraim Katzir and Premier Yitzhak Rabin.

Rabin, in a solemn eulogy, said he had told Ofer, only a day before his death, that he believed him innocent of allegations of wrong-doing in a housing company scandal; the pressures of which had caused him to take his life.

The throng at the cemetery stood apart from Ofer's widow and three sons as the latter recited the kaddish at the gravesite. Then the El Moleh Rachamim was chanted followed by the final prayer, Tziduk Ha Din, and the funeral was over. Silently the Cabinet ministers, Knesset members, Histadrut officials, the honor guard and the many friends and associates of Ofer departed the rainswept graveyard.

Most Charges Found Baseless

Only a few hours earlier, information emanating from "most highly placed sources" said that police investigators had checked out 27 of the 32 charges brought against Ofer and found them baseless. The inquiry into the remaining charges was not completed and probably never will be. Legal experts pointed out that it is virtually impossible, as well as unjust, to investigate the deeds of a man now dead who cannot answer questions that may arise in a continued investigation.

Thus, Ofer's name may never be fully cleared as he had predicted it would be in his suicide note. But Rabin sought to dispel lingering doubts about Ofer's integrity. "Here we stand," he said, "pained and mournful over the coffin of our friend Ofer whose life was a symbol of a generation that bore the burdens of the preparations for Statehood and the establishment of the State, its upbuilding, its development. Avraham was a mixture of an ardent lover of literature and poetry, and yet a man of excellent executive ability, readiness to help a friend, fighting for his views even if they were not accepted by the majority."

Rabin Believed Ofer Innocent

Rabin added: "We knew his innocence. On Sunday he came to me and said, 'Yitzhak, believe me, I am innocent of any offense.' And I told him, I, Yitzhak Rabin, believe you."

Turning to newsmen at the gravesite, the Premier said grimly, "To the people who spread rumors, his death will be a lesson. It will move people and teach them to beware of any unfounded charges, to beware of the printed word when it seeks to pass judgement without trial." He concluded his eulogy with the words, "We believe in your innocence and it is with great pain that we now attend your funeral. May your memory be blessed."

One person at the funeral was heard to remark that if Rabin had said those words publicly earlier he might have prevented Ofer's tragic death. Only hours before he took his life, Ofer reportedly complained of "foot-dragging" by Rabin with respect to the police investigation of his activities. According to television reporter Avraham Kushnir, Ofer told him in a telephone interview that he had asked Rabin for details of the charges against him or a speedy conclusion of

the police probe. The Premier promised "tomorrow" but "nothing happened tomorrow," Kushnir said Ofer told him.

JDL OCCUPIES QUAKER HEADQUARTERS

NEW YORK, Jan. 5 (JTA)--A spokesman for the Jewish Defense League said today that 12 members occupied the offices here of the American Friends Service Committee in an effort to persuade the Quaker group to cancel plans for a national conference near Washington Feb. 11-14. The Friends, in a statement last month, said the purpose of the conclave was to take the opportunity in the period immediately after the new Administration is installed to induce President Jimmy Carter and Congress to include the Palestine Liberation Organization in any Mideast peace negotiations.

The JDL spokesman said that, unless the Quakers accede to the JDL the members plan to stay overnight. Asked what the plans of the protesters were in the event the Quakers did not agree by tomorrow morning to cancel the February conference, the spokesman said "We'll play it by ear." He said the initial response of Quaker officials was to start discussing the demand with the protesters and that they did not call police.

The JDL said that it had been asking for four years that the Friends act on behalf of Syrian Jews. Mrs. Bonnie Pechter, JDL director, said the Quakers were "the only group with the power to get into Syria and help relieve the misery of the 4000 Jews imprisoned there." She said the Quakers "have repeatedly thought of excuses not to intervene" in Syria though they "do not hesitate to rush to the aid of the PLO, a terrorist gang responsible for the deaths of innocent Jewish men, women and children."

360 ARAB INMATES IN ASHKELON PRISON STAGE HUNGER STRIKE

TEL AVIV, Jan. 5 (JTA)--About 360 Arab inmates of the Ashkelon prison went on a hunger strike today, the 24th day of protests and strikes of various kinds to demand recognition as prisoners of war, better food, less solitary confinement and treatment by Gaza Strip physicians. Their complaints about poor prison conditions, and especially the food, were rejected by a delegation of the International Red Cross that inspected the prison recently.

The Red Cross said that while prison conditions could always stand improvement, they were appropriate and that the food, which includes fresh vegetables, was adequate and plentiful. The demand for POW status was rejected by a court on grounds that only soldiers captured in uniform bearing unit identification could be regarded as POWs.

Most of the prisoners at Ashkelon, which has a total inmate population of 450, are serving life sentences for a variety of terrorist acts and are maximum security prisoners. About a third are from the Gaza Strip, a third from the West Bank and the remainder from Jordan, Syria and other countries. Their protests initially drew support from Gaza residents who demonstrated last week. But the support ended after a delegation of Gaza notables headed by Mayor Rashid Shawa failed after a six-hour meeting with the prisoners to persuade them to end their strikes. (By Yitzhak Shargil)

AJCONGRESS STUDY SAYS ISRAEL-BLACK AFRICA RELATIONS IMPROVING

NEW YORK, Jan. 5 (JTA)--In a year-end survey, the American Jewish Congress reported today that relations between Israel and Black Africa were "improving slowly but surely" as the result of recent diplomatic overtures and new information on trade with South Africa that put Israel's relations with that country in proper perspective.

The survey cited several examples of the thaw in relations. Thus, in a complete turnabout of policy, Nigeria--the largest and richest Black African nation--declared at a recent United Nations Economic Conference that it would seek to erase references to "Zionism as a form of racism" from all international resolutions in which it takes part. At the UN, the delegate from Malawi, J.T.X. Muwamba, accused African colleagues and their fellow sponsors of "double faced hypocrisy" in voting for General Assembly resolutions that condemned Israel for selling arms to South Africa while ignoring more blatant abuses from other countries.

The Malawi delegate's statement followed a report by the AJCongress comparing Israel's "miniscule" arms sales with the "massive arms traffic" through which the Pretoria government has imported more than \$1 billion worth of weapons from France and other countries since the 1963 UN embargo on arms shipments to the apartheid regime. That report went to every UN delegation and to UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim.

The AJCongress study also said that South Africa's armed forces were equipped with British tanks, French and British armored cars, French and British missiles, French submarines, British helicopters, British patrol boats, British bombers, French jet fighters, Italian and French air transports, French helicopters and American and Italian training planes.

Israel's military relationship with Pretoria "pales into insignificance" compared with South Africa's arms traffic with other countries, the study said, adding: "The sum total of Israel's arms deals with South Africa...consists of two items: Israel is building six Ramta-class patrol boats, essentially corvettes, for South Africa. Israel is supplying a quantity of Gabriel II surface-to-surface missiles to arm the six corvettes. And that is the whole of it."

Examples Of Improvement

The year-end survey by the AJCongress cited several examples of Israel's close ties with Black Africa. They included: members of Zambia's Parliament called for a return of the Israeli agriculture experts who had been forced to leave when Zambia broke off diplomatic relations with Israel under heavy Arab pressure; and several Black African countries that had severed relations with Israel in 1973 have quietly resumed sending personnel to Israel for special training courses.

Also, President Leopold Senghor of Senegal told Premier Yitzhak Rabin at the Socialist International Conference in Geneva in November that the African states had not permanently severed relations with Israel but merely suspended them "temporarily." Newspapers and private citizens in Ghana, Kenya and Sierra Leone have called for a full restoration of diplomatic ties.

The AJCongress survey also noted that Israel

in turn has reiterated its opposition to the practice of apartheid, and may re-examine its relations with South Africa. Foreign Minister Yigal Allon declared last September: "In order to dispel any doubt that our maintaining of diplomatic relations with South Africa might be interpreted either directly or indirectly as endorsement of the policy of apartheid, I must add that, as a democracy, Israel is opposed to this policy in principle, and it is our hope that a peaceful solution will be found to this painful problem."

AMERICANS WHO HELPED BRING JEWS TO PALESTINE AFTER WW II HOLD REUNION

NEW YORK, Jan. 5 (JTA)--About 85 Americans, who were among the some 200 Americans who helped bring in 90,000 Jews to Palestine after World War II, held a 30th reunion here this week. A simultaneous reunion was held in Israel.

Murray S. Greenfield, a former New Yorker who came here from Israel for the reunion, said many of these former sailors had not seen each other since they were interned by the British in Cyprus. The ex-sailors who had served aboard such ships as the "Exodus," "Haukvah" and "Haim Arlozoroff" spoke for the first time openly of their internment and of British naval attacks on the ships in open waters. Some 50 of the former naval underground runners now live in Israel while many of those in the United States have children who settled in Israel.

The ex-sailors have decided to tape their memoirs and hopefully publish a book on the period. The British Navy and Foreign Office are now releasing records of that time. The book will be dedicated to six Americans who died during that period, one of whom was killed on a ship and the other five who died in Israel's War of Independence. The meeting here was held under the auspices of the American Veterans of Israel.

'PROCLAIM LIBERTY DAY' IN MILWAUKEE

MILWAUKEE, Jan. 5 (JTA)--Mayor Henry W. Maier has proclaimed Jan. 6 as "Proclaim Liberty Day" in the city in honor of the dramatic and musical pageant "Proclaim Liberty," the national United Jewish Appeal show which stars Herschel Bernardi and Theodore Bikel. The mayor's proclamation states that "Proclaim Liberty," which portrays the heritage of the Jewish people and its yearning for freedom, is "meaningful to all cultural, racial and ethnic groups in Milwaukee." The proclamation also salutes "the outstanding performers who will visit our city for their furtherance of the cause of freedom throughout the world." The play has been sponsored by a number of Jewish Federations throughout the country.

JERUSALEM (JTA)--Almost 10,000 university degrees were awarded in Israel during the 1975-76 academic year, according to official statistics published this week. Some 7000 of them were first degrees (bachelor and parallel degrees), 1350 masters, 270 medical doctor, about 300 doctors of philosophy in various fields and some 1000 teaching diplomas of academic rank.

AMSTERDAM (JTA)--The number of Jewish and non-Jewish Dutch tourists visiting Israel increased in 1976 by 55 percent. In 1975, 18,500 tourists visited Israel compared to 29,000 last year.