Published by Jewish Telegraphic Agency 165 West 46th St. New York, N.Y. 10036

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Vol. XLIV - 60th Year

Thursday, April 28, 1977

No. E

OFFICIALS SAY SOVIET TRADE OFFER TO ISRAEL HAS NO IMPLICATIONS

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, April 27 (JTA)--An offer by a Soviet trading company to open a channel of trade with Israel has aroused wide speculation that it might represent an initiative by Moscow to end its 10-year trade embargo and possibly signal that the Russians want to restore diplomatic relations with israel. But experienced officials here said today that the approach has no political or diplomatic implications.

The overture was in the form of a letter from the Paris office of Intorg, the leading Soviet trading company, to the Tel Aviv Chamber of Commerce. It proposed that Israeli companies might want to import Russian printing equipment and

wood pulp for the manufacture of paper.

Zvi Amit, president of the Chamber of Commerce, said that as far as he knew this was the first approach of its kind since the Soviets broke diplomatic and trade relations with Israel in 1967. He noted, however, that Israel does trade with some Soviet-bloc countries and with many other countries with which it has no diplomatic ties. The Intorg letter did not mention prices for delivered Russian products. However, Amit said, "It's no accident, it must be a message.

Officials here said the government would certainly not discourage trade links with the USSR. But they pointed out that the Russians are aggressive traders always on the look-out for new markets. They cautioned that the Paris letter did not necessarily presage a thaw in the Soviet attitude toward Israel. But it was the latest in what some observers here believe to be a series of small hints that Moscow is interested in improving relations with Israel in order to have a more authoritative role at the Geneva conference when it is

resumed.

Such implications were firmly discounted by Foreign Minister Yigal Allon at last Sunday's Cabinet meeting. He denied reports originating in Cairo that the Russians had told a PLO mission in Moscow that they would renew ties with Israel before the end of the year.

Three Soviet Officers Visit Israel

However, another incident which accurred last week but was revealed by the Defense Ministry only today, has fed speculation that there may be an improvement in the climate of Israel-Soviet relations. Ministry sources disclosed that last Thursday, Israel's Independence Day, three Soviet officers attached to the United Nations Truce Supervisory Organization (UNTSO) in Egypt visited Israel accompanied by American officers from the UN peace-keeping forces.

They toured the Old City of Jerusalem and lunched with Gen. Ensia Siilasvuo, commander of UN forces in the Middle East who had invited the officers to his headquarters in Jerusalem for lunch. (According to some press reports abroad, some sources here said that Defense Minister Shimon Peres had granted special permission for the visit at the request of Sillasvuo and on his promise that it would not serve as a precedent. This, however, could not be immediately

confirmed.)

Israel does not normally admit UN person= nel serving in countries with which it has no diplomatic relations. The Soviet officers were based on the western side of the Suez Canal. UNTSO was established in 1949 to supervise the original Israeli-Egyptian armistice agreements.

REPORT U.S. DROPS OBJECTION AGAINST SALE OF ISRAELI KFIRS TO AUSTRIA By Maurice Fine

VIENNA, April 27 (JTA) -- The United States has reportedly dropped objections against the sale of Israeli fighter planes to Austria, but Austrian authorities have not yet made up their minds whether they really want them.

Government sources said the U.S. National Security Council indicated it was prepared to lift a ban of sales of Israeli-made Kfir (Young Lion) fighters to Austria. American authorities up to now stopped all sales of Kfir planes abroad because they contained highly sophisticated

U.S. -made equipment,

However, Austria was not sure whether it should accept the offer. The Austrian army wants to buy 20 new fighter planes to defend its air space more efficiently. The Kfir planes, after extensive tests, were considered the best choice. But government officials/indicated today they are afraid the purchase of Israeli planes may harm political and trade relations with Arab countries.

U.S. SEEKS TO DISPEL VIEWS THAT CARTER IS PESSIMISTIC ABOUT CHANCES FOR GENEVA TALKS, MIDEAST SETTLEMENT By Joseph Polakoff

WASHINGTON, April 27 (JTA)--The United States sought today to counter "interpretations" that President Carter is pessimistic on the prospects for a Geneva conference and progress towards a Middle East settlement this year.

The State Department took two steps to give reassurances the U.S. movement has not slowed and the Voice of America, in a broadcast that even preceded the Department's public assertions, declared the "cautious remarks" by the President do not "signal any change in the U.S. position."

The State Department said "We are still extremely interested" in a conference and "interested in the views of the possible participants of prospects for peace." It preceded this remark with an announcement that at Secretary of State Cyrus Vance's suggestion, the Secretary will meet with Israeli Foreign Minister Yigal Allon in London May 11 to bring him up to date on the Président's discussions with Middle East leaders.

However, a scheduled meeting between * Vance and Israeli Ambassador Simcha Dinitz for today at the State Department was cancelled. Department spokesman Hodding Carter said it was "a foul-up on our side. The Ambassador was not informed."

The spokesman pointed out in the wake of his meetings with Jordan's King Hussein that the President has not concluded his round of talks with Middle East leaders and that Vance will visit the Mideast after he does.

The President is to see Syrian President

Hafez Assad in Geneva about May 9, two days before Vance meets Allon, and Saudi Arabia's
Crown Prince Fahd on May 25 in Washington a
week after Israel's election. It is now expected
that the emergent leader of the Israeli elections
will be welcomed to Washington shortly after that.

Resolving A See-Saw Approach

In his extemporaneous remarks on two successive mornings while with Hussein, President Carter spoke less optimistically or confidently than on previous occasions that a Geneva conference would be held this year. In between, however, he indicated the chances continued good and this view was bolstered by White House comments.

However, Carter's last statement was that it would be better not to have a conference at all "unless we see some strong possibility for substantial achievements" in advance. When the State Department spokesman was asked to define "substantial progress," he referred the questioner to "the President."

The spokesman emphasized that "at this moment, the U.S. government is in no way backing away from its strong commitment to a major effort to reconvene the Geneva conference in the latter half of this year. The President's meetings with all the Middle East leaders have underlined our determination on this score."

The spokesman would not be drawn into naming the list of participants in the conference, saying, "We don't have a list at this point" except those "who are already parties" to a Geneva conference. The point at issue is the Palestinian matter with Arab governments divided among themselves about it and Israel refusing to allow the Palestine Liberation Organization to join and indicating the other Palestinians could come in with a Jordanian delegation.

The State Department spokesman, in pointing out the President was not pessimistic, emphasized that Carter had also said yesterday morning that "so far I have been encouraged" by his talks. The President, the spokesman said, was "sounding a cautionary note" and "stating the obvious" in his remarks. "To suggest problems look insurmountable and no conference will be held this year would be the wrong analysis," the spokesman said.

CANADA FIRM ON OPPOSING BOYCOTT By Michael Solomon

of State John Roberts stressed today Canada's opposition to the Arab boycott of Israel. "We are not prepared to have one country require our firms to cut off their trade with another country," he said.

Roberts, who substituted for External Affairs Minister Donald Jamieson at a luncheon at the opening day of the Canada-Israel Committee's sixth annual two-day conference here, said the government will prevent the Arabs from showing Canadian firms how to lead their affairs. "The government has penalized those firms who have tried to break the anti-discriminatory laws," he noted.

Mideast Peace Prospects

On the prospects of peace in the Middle East, Roberts said the Canadian government believed that President Carter's policy of opening up new avenues based on United Nations Security Council Resolution 242 would help bring about a climate conducive to peace. However, two Israeli professors who are teaching at Canadian universities this year, told the 500 delegates to the conference that

prospects for peace in 1977 were dim.

Prof. Yoram Dinstein, professor of international law at Tel Aviv University and a Visiting Professor at the University of Toronto, said chances for peace in 1977 are "nil" because the superpowers are chiefly concerned with their own interests in the Middle East. He said the U.S. support of Israel has given Washington important benefits, including its present foothold in Cairo and Damascus. Dinstein said that the Soviet Union backs the Arab countries to the hilt while the U.S. does not give Israel the same type of support.

Prof. Emanuel Sivan, a history professor at Hebrew University who is a Visiting Professor at the University of Montreal, said the reason he is pessimistic about peace chances is that the Palestinians have not yet found their representatives and there will be a long period of waiting until

they do so.

Mordechai Shalev, Israel's Ambassador to Canada; stressed the strong ties between Canada and Israel. He noted that Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau and several members of his government visited Israel last year and learned about conditions there.

CARTER SAYS HE WILL HELP ARABS, ISRAEL REACH A PEACE SETTLEMENT

WASHINGTON, April 27 (JTA)—President Carter sent a message to the American—Israel Public Affairs Committee last night saying that he will be "devoting much of my personal energies over the next year to assisting Israel and her Arab neighbors" reach a peace settlement and urged AIPAC's support in this endeavor.

In the message read to some 1000 persons attending the AIPAC's 18th annual policy conference dinner, Carter said if his Administration's efforts are to succeed "they will require the whole-hearted support of all our citizens and, in particular, of Americans like you for whom peace in the Middle East is such a special priority." He described AIPAC as "a powerful force in shaping of

public opnion in our country."

AlPAC, in a policy statement today concluding the conference, commended the Carter Administration and Congress for continuing to furnish "substantial military and economic aid to Israel." It cautioned against American efforts to unilaterally curtail arms supplies to the Middle East since that "would only undermine Israel's defense capacity." At the same time, it said "American arms shipments to Arab states, such as Egypt, which are still in a state of war with Israel, cannot be justified."

Core Of Mideast Dispute

AIPAC also stressed that "the core issue of the Arab-Israeli dispute remains the continuing refusal of the Arab states to recognize the legitimate right of Israel to live in peace as a Jewish State in the Middle East. The problems of boundaries and of the Arab refugees are the result of that refusal, not the cause of that conflict."

The Committee rejected a Palestinian state and said that "Jordan, the majority of whose citizens are Palestinians and which occupies 80 percent of historic Palestine, can best represent Palestinian interests" in any Middle East peace conference.

In other statements, AIPAC urged the United States to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, said persecution against Jews in Sytia and Iraq has become "intolerable," urged the U.S. to use every opportunity to persuade the Soviet Union

to end its denial of emigration rights to Jews and others and urged the U.S. to adopt a program to achieve greater energy self-sufficiency.

AJCOMMITTEE DENOUNCES CZECH ATTACK ON ITS JEWISH POPULATION

NEW YORK, April 27 (JTA)—The American
Jewish Committee today denounced a "slanderous
attack by the Czechoslovak government on its Jewish population." The Czech attack, apparently
motivated by governmental sensitivity to the human
rights issue, the Committee said, had branded Jews
as "allies of reactionary forces."

The AJCommittee's accusation arose out of a report from its European Office describing Czech efforts to blame Jews and Zionists for the recent manifesto known as "Charter 77." The "Charter" called on the 35 Czech signatories to the Helsinki agreement to carry out their pledge to uphold

human rights.

In recent years, the AJCommittee stated, the Czechs have engaged in persistent thinly-veiled anti-Semitic attacks. Thus, it said, the regime emphasized the Jewish origins of many of the leaders of the Dubcek-led attempt to move out from under Russian domination in 1968. The government, the AJCommittee said, has also engaged in widespread media attacks against the Jewish, community's pre-World War II leadership, alleging apoperation of Zionists and Nazis in the mass deportation of Jews to Nazi death camps.

The government has been particularly virulent, the AJCommittee stated, in attacks on Zionism and on Israel, going far beyond most other Eastern European countries in this respect. It has ordered publication and use in elementary schools of anti-Zionist books, and has organized seminars to demonstrate that Zionist ideology serves anti-Commun-

ism and anti-Sovietism.

The Charter 77' Issue

The current campaign against the Jews, the Committee stated, started with a whispering campaign that the majority of those who had signed "Charter 77" were Jews, in addition to being Nazi sympathizers. From there it quickly swung into the familiar line that the manifesto was part of the fight "consistently waged against Socialist Czechosiovakia by Zionism, a revenge after the UN resolution denouncing Zionism as racism."

Those who signed the manifesto were stigmatized as "paid agents constituting the stormtroopers of the counter-revolutionary attack on Czechoslovakia and "paid by Zionists to continue their subversive role inside the country." Typical of the expressions heard on Radio Prague were "such a Jewish creature...a man of the Jewish Quisling type...a Jewish toady of the true Viennese vintage...," the AJCommittee reported.

Aside from the "Charter 77" furore, the AJCom-

Jewish community "continues to be depressing."

The estimated population now is about 6000-divided between Bohemia/Moravia and Slovakia.

This is 25 percent less than last year's estimate.

The liquidation of a yet unspecified number of Jewish cemeteries in Slovakia, the AJCommittee said, has been reported by Julius Ehrenthal, recently elected chairman of the Union of Jewish Religious Communities in Slovakia. Ehrenthal declared that some were "hotbeds of infectious discases threatening the environment," a statement considered more political than scientific.

The Slovak Jewish community, the AJCammittee stated, has been re-organized and merged into ten

"parent communities," with other smaller communities being dissolved. The only positive note, it added, "is that for the first time since 1968 the Jewish community in Bohemia/Moravia was granted a license by the authorities to import Passover wine for use at the communal seder in Prague and Erno."

IDF DISPUTES COMPTROLLER'S CHARGES
OF NEGLIGENCE AND MISMANAGEMENT
By David Landau and Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, April 27 (JTA)—The Army is disputing charges by State Comptroller Itzhak Nebenzahl that it has been negligent in the storage and maintenance of military equipment. The Comptroller's annual report, released today, also accused the armed services of waste and mismanagement and cited instances where senior Air Force officers allegedly appropriated military aircraft for their private use at great expense to the taxpayers.

The report referred to an Air Force commander in the south who insisted on flying home in a light jet plane although regular flights by transport planes provided to carry military personnel on leave were only half-filled. The cost of flying the commander's plane was \$3300 per hour, the

report said.

Nebenzahl also reported that in an emergency call-up exercise by an infantry brigade in June, 1976, 53 percent of those called failed to acknowledge the call-up. He said a check of the same unit four months later: showed that no action had been taken to find out why the earlier failure had occurred. The report found conditions in military prisons below the standards prescribed by medical regulations.

It cited overcrowding of cells and windows too small to allow inmates a fair amount of air and light. The report said the lack of things to do was "very serious" in the case of long-term military prisoners. The Comptroller accused the prison authorities of failing to provide prisoners.

with educational opportunities.

The report specifically criticized the Defense Ministry for neglecting equipment for months and sometimes years after it was unloaded from ships. It found fault with the maintenance of a helicopter unit of the Air Force. Nebenzahl suggested that Army Headquarters check out all the charges to ascertain if they applied only to certain units or to the military establishment as a whole.

But the Army's response was that the Comptroller's criticism was unwarranted. It said some
equipment had to be left out of doors because
"the only alternative to this, until you finish
building the arsenals, is postponing the actual
purchase of the equipment and that would contradict the purchase policy of the Army." It also
said that "There is no direct link between the
standard of registration of equipment and the
standard of maintenance," indicating that if some
vehicles and other equipment were not immediately registered that did not mean the equipment was
improperly cared for.

With elections less than three weeks off, Nebenzahl said today that he would not hold the usual press conference that accompanies the release of his report. The annual report covers all government branches and agencies and usually creates a furore because it finds that the vast bureaucracy and administrative complex leaves multiple be desired. Opposition parties usually seize on this

report to castigate the government.

MISSIONARY TRACT FLOODING THE MAILS By Adena Berkowitz

NEW YORK, April 27 (JTA)—A free Bible correspondence course aimed at convincing Jews to accept Jesus as the messiah is being offered for mailing "to your home or office immediately... free and without obligation" by Morris Cerullo, the author of a 150-page paperback book entitled "Two Men From Eden."

A subscription blank for the course, which is entitled "Besorot Shalom" (Gospel of Peace) and enclosed in the book, is being mailed to thousands of persons who were apparently not solicited in advance by the Morris Cerullo Evangelism Headquarters located in San Diego, California, which is distributing the book. The address given is a post-office box number. The course promises to provide the true meaning of the "ancient manuscripts."

While there is no hard evidence that the book is being mailed solely to Jews the fact that its thrust is directed at conversion is underlined by the Hebrew name of the course, the concept of Jesus as messiah and Cerullo's claim in the book that 25,000 Jews in Israel are enrolled in a similar course prepared in Hebrew. In a postscript to the book, he writes: "Not knowing your faith, I ask you please not to feel offended at receiving this book. No ulterior motives were intended whatsoever. That is why it has come to you as a free gift."

Tries To Connect Adam And Jesus

The book attempts to show that there are close parallels between Adam, who is described as the first sinner who was loved by God but also made to suffer, and Jesus, who is described as the "second Adam" of whom God demanded death to the sinner as well as compassion. The book cites many reasons for accepting Jesus as the messiah and provides many quotes taken from Isaiah. In addition, there are numerous quotes from Genesis, Psalms, the Prophets, as well as Luke, Matthew and John.

Cerullo gives acknowledgement for most of the Biblical quotations to the "New American Standard Bible by permission of Lockman Foundation." The address of the Foundation is given as La Habra, California. The book also gives examples of Jews who were physically healed after accepting Jesus into their lives and provides a blank form which can be filled out by an individual attesting commitment to Jesus as the messiah.

David Mann, coordinator of the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York's special task force on missionary activity, recalled that Cerullo was the subject of controversy last year on the eve of Rosh Hashana because his television program entitled "Masada" was widely advertised in the secular and Jewish media without indicating its true sponsor or nature. The film featured well-known Israeli personalities who were not aware of the "messages" that were interspersed during the program, Mann said.

The son of a Jewish mother and a non-Jewish father, Cerullo, 46, formerly of New Jersey, purchased 3 1/2 million Jewish names from various lists which he uses to mail his book and other missionary material.

AMERICAN WORKERS HELPED BY TRADE BETWEEN U.S. AND ISRAEL

NEW YORK, April 27 (JTA)—Normal U.S. trade with Israel and U.S. grants and loans to that country have an overall beneficial effect on the American economy and help provide jobs for sub-

stantial numbers of American workers, according to Rep. Norman Lent (R.NY). Addressing a conference on trade with Israel at Hempstead, N.Y. recently, Lent noted that Israeli imports from the U.S. help employ 160,000 Americans and when employes families are included, they contribute to the support of 500,000 Americans.

The conference was organized jointly by the town of Hempstead, the New York State Department of Commerce and the American-Israel Chamber of Commerce and Industry. Lent contended that the assistance received by Israel from the U.S. in the framework of the International Security Assistance Act of 1976 was not a burden but "a bonanza" to the American economy. He noted that the Act requires recipient countries to use the credits to purchase civilian goods in the U.S.

"At one level, American firms export to israeli firms based on regular commercial contracts.
At the other level, the government of the United
States, being informed through the banking system of the Israeli private payments for goods imported from this country, credits the Israel government for the same amount, "Lent said. He
noted that he had supported the law "and now
everyone can see that only half of what Israel is
importing from this country is purchased with U.S.
grants and loans."

Lent said that on a per capita basis, Israel is second only to Canada as the largest customer for American products. He also lauded Israel's record of repayment of American loans. "They always were repaid in full and in time, compared with a 97 percent world-wide performance for the same kind of U.S. loans given to foreign countries. In short, "Lent said, "the foreign aid of the U.S. to countries like Israel, which in its world-wide totality represents only one percent of the U.S. federal budget, has a beneficial effect on the American economy."

NEW SOVIET TARGET: NON-ACTIVIST JEWS

NEW YORK, April 27 (JTA)—The prediction by Soviet Jews in a recent appeal that the Soviet anti-Jewish harassment campaign would spread to non-activists has evidently been borne out, according to the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry and Union of Councils for Soviet Jews.

The groups learned that Moscow Synagogue congregant Sergei Reser was sentenced April 19 to 15 days' imprisonment for "disrupting traffic" after he asked a plainclothes police agent to show identification as authorities sought to disperse worshippers after services on April 16. Other congregants attempted unsuccessfully to prevent his arrest.

In Leningrad, 68-year-old Communist Party member Mikhail Furman, who has not applied for exit but whose son, Lev,-is a refusnik, was sentenced to 10 days. Another activist said only that it was because the elder Furman "was help-ing the Jews," it was reported.

LONDON (JTA)—A rare copy of Maimonides! famous rabbinic code, Mishine Torah, was sold for 6000 Pounds Sterling to a private buyer at Sotheby's auction room this week. It was the most valuable item in a sale of more than 200 important Hebrew books, mainly of the 16th and 17th Centuries, which netted 36,000 Pounds Sterling. Bidders came from all over Europe, Israel as well as Britain for the sale of the collection whose owner remains anonymous.