

# JTA daily news bulletin

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Published by Jewish Telegraphic Agency / 165 West 46th Street / New York, New York 10036

Vol. XLVI - 62nd Year

Tuesday, April 10, 1979

No. 70

## PREPARING FOR PEACE ON TWO FRONTS

By Yitzhak Shargil

TEL AVIV, April 9 (JTA) -- Israel is preparing for the new era of peace with Egypt on two fronts -- autonomy for the West Bank and Gaza Strip and the first stage of withdrawal from Sinai which will begin with the return of El Arish to Egyptian sovereignty on May 26.

A ranking official of the Military Government, Gen. Danny Matt, has begun contacts with public figures in the Gaza Strip on the autonomy plan. Matt, who is chief coordinator of operations in the administered territories, will also meet shortly with Arab notables on the West Bank. His purpose is to solicit the opinions of local leaders on the various aspects of the autonomy plan. The 11-man ministerial committee assigned the task of drafting an autonomy program will begin its meetings shortly.

Meanwhile, plans for the evacuation of El Arish, the administering capital of Sinai, are proceeding at an accelerated pace. Israel intends to permit Arab workers from El Arish to retain their jobs in Israel even after the town reverts to Egyptian rule.

Similarly, El Arish children may continue to attend summer camps in Israel. Local Arabs employed by the Israeli Military Government will be given severance pay or they may continue to work for the Egyptian administration. Israel will provide the Egyptians with a list of these employees and the salaries due them.

## SPECIAL KNESSET SESSION TO DISCUSS CONSTRUCTION WORK ON BEDOUIN LANDS

By Gil Sedon

JERUSALEM, April 9 (JTA) -- The Knesset, recessed for Passover, will convene in special session next Monday to discuss the Supreme Court's citation of contempt against the government for unauthorized construction work on Bedouin lands in the Negev. The session promises to be a lively one since the government wants to limit debate to the narrow issue of "the need to obey the law during the military redeployment in the Negev."

But the opposition Labor Alignment and the Shai faction insist on airing both the high court's censure of the government and the legal ramifications of the construction work itself as well as present plans to redeploy Israeli troops in the Negev after they evacuate from Sinai.

The narrow issue, which brought the unprecedented reprimand from the Supreme Court last Thursday, is the failure of the government to obtain a permit from the Beersheba district court before it commenced construction on land claimed by the Bedouins. The matter of the legality of the work itself is presently before the courts.

That prompted Knesset Speaker Yitzhak Shamir of Likud to order a postponement of the debate yesterday. Today, Deputy Speaker Moshe Meron of Likud, said "We will discuss the contempt of court issue in a fortnight's time. Under the present situation, the discussion of the issue is sub judice." A compromise was reached to open debate next Monday.

Deputy Speaker Chalka Grossman of Mapam

avored discussion of the entire matter and claimed that the juridical process was an excuse by the government parties to avoid debate. Labor Alignment Whip Dan Rosolio charged that the decision to limit debate amounted to "overruling the Knesset." Other opposition MKs said they intended to discuss the entire Bedouin issue but Shamir warned that any attempt to raise questions now before the courts would be interrupted.

## SPECIAL REPORT FEAR EXPRESSED THAT MOST OF THE 1000 JEWS WHO HAVE DISAPPEARED IN ARGENTINA MAY BE DEAD

By David Friedman

NEW YORK, April 9 (JTA) -- Two officials of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith expressed the fear today that most of the more than 1000 Jews that have disappeared in Argentina over the last three years may be dead.

Benjamin Epstein, who retired recently as the long-time national director of the ADL, and Rabbi Morton Rosenthal, director of the ADL's Latin American Affairs Department, said in an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that in particular there was little chance that those missing for long periods were alive.

Since the military junta overthrew the government of Isabella Peron in March 1976, some 20,000 Argentines have disappeared from their homes, according to Rosenthal. He said while some of them were arrested, most were "kidnapped" by secret intelligence squads set up to wipe out leftist guerrillas.

These squads, wearing civilian clothes and using unmarked cars, have taken persons from their homes, to interrogation centers or to several detention camps in the country where their prisoners are tortured. Bodies have frequently been found on beaches or on river banks with the heads and hands severed to prevent identification.

Rosenthal said that while many of those arrested include people the government of President Jorge Videla considers subversive, many others are arrested for no reason other than that they were friends of someone who had been arrested.

"Jews are not specifically targeted as Jews," Rosenthal stressed. "However, the security agents tend to be suspicious of Jews." The security forces, which include many Nazis, also treat Jews worse than other prisoners, Rosenthal noted. He said prisoners who are released are more likely to be non-Jews.

## Plight Of The Families

Epstein, who is now executive vice president of the ADL Foundation, recently visited Argentina and said what he found saddest was the families of the missing people. They cannot accept the probability that most of the prisoners are dead, he said, despite the evidence of the bodies that have been found.

The relatives continue to believe strongly that their children, husband or wife are still alive, Epstein said. He said many Jews told him that the American Jewish community could help. They pointed to the efforts for Soviet Jews, Epstein noted.

Both Epstein and Rosenthal said U.S. Jews could help by writing President Carter, the Argentine Ambassador to the United States, and their

Senators and Representatives. They noted efforts have been made by the State Department, the ADL and other Jewish organizations, Catholic and Protestant groups, and other international groups, concerned with human rights. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, an organ of the Organization of American States, plans to hold hearings in Argentina in May.

The DAIA, the representative body of Argentine Jewry, has made appeals for individual Jews. The most active group in Argentina is the Permanent Assembly on Human Rights which includes Jews among its members. There are also Jews among the "Plaza Mothers," the group of women who walk silently in downtown Buenos Aires to publicize their missing sons. Recently, 13 of these women, including three nuns, disappeared.

#### ADL Cites Cases

Rosenthal noted that relatives of prisoners have frequently turned to the ADL for help. He said the ADL was able to compile a list of more than 1000 Jews missing through the help of relatives in Argentina, Israel, the United States and elsewhere. A group of Argentines in Israel asked Rosenthal for help in finding their missing relatives.

In some cases, the ADL, by making inquiries to the Argentine government, has been able to secure the release of prisoners. One such case was the Deutsch family -- Alejandro, 58; Elena, 57; Susana, 23; Elsa-Elizabeth, 29 and Liliana, 19, who were kidnapped from their home in Cordoba in 1977 and were freed after an international campaign was launched. They are now living in Los Angeles.

The most celebrated case is that of Jacobo Timerman, the editor and publisher of La Opinion, who is under house arrest in Buenos Aires but is not allowed to leave the country, although the Argentine Supreme Court has found no grounds for holding him. Many believe that Timerman, who was kidnapped from his home in April 1977, would not be alive if it were not for the international pressure brought on his behalf.

Rosenthal noted another case, that of Jaime Lokman, a Cordoba automobile dealer, who was taken away on the day of the coup in 1976 and has not been heard from since. He is probably the longest-term Jewish prisoner.

#### Government Must Take Responsibility

Epstein and Rosenthal noted that the Argentine government has gone out of its way to deny it is anti-Semitic. Videla has even denied responsibility for the kidnappings. Some observers have claimed each of the three armed services in Argentina has its own hit teams. They point to the discovery last January of Elena Holmberg's body. A diplomat and close friend of the president, she was killed six months after she returned from Paris where she had been part of the Argentine government's public relations campaign to deny charges of human rights violations. Many believed she was killed because she learned something about one of the generals in the junta while in Paris.

However, Rosenthal said the government must take responsibility for what is happening in Argentina. He said while the kidnapping has been denied no one has been arrested.

Rosenthal and Epstein noted that there is some effort now at controlling kidnappings. The number decreased in recent months. But Rosenthal said he hoped the government would now iden-

tify the prisoners who are being held in the detention camps and that they will either be released or allowed to exercise the "option," which all prisoners held without charge have in Argentina, that of leaving the country.

Argentina "has great potential" as a country if it returns to law and order, Rosenthal stressed. He said Jews have been in Argentina a long time and they can and want to have a share in helping Argentina reach its potential.

#### HAWAII'S JEWS SEND 'PASSOVER ALOHAS' TO SOVIET REFUSNIKS, POCs

HONOLULU, April 9 (JTA) -- In one of the first major efforts locally on behalf of Soviet Jews, many local residents participated in a 12-hour card-writing marathon to send Passover greetings to refusniks and Prisoners of Conscience in the Soviet Union. The project, "Passover Alohas to Russia," succeeded in sending some 400 Hawaiian picture post-cards in at least 10 languages.

According to Kirk Gahmery, director of the Hawaii Group for Soviet Jews, which sponsored the marathon, "a writing campaign from a place like Hawaii has far more impact on both the refusniks and the Soviet authorities because it drives home the fact that even in remote corners of the world people are aware of the injustices of the Soviet government against its Jewish citizens." The Hawaii Group for Soviet Jews, formed last July in the aftermath of the Anatoly Shcharansky trial, plans a similar campaign prior to Rosh Hashanah.

#### FORMER EGYPTIAN QUEEN TO HOLD ART EXHIBIT IN JERUSALEM

JERUSALEM, April 9 (JTA) -- The former Queen of Egypt, Queen Farida, wife of the late King Farouk, is holding an exhibition of her artwork in a Jerusalem gallery.

Some 15 of the Queen's original drawings are to be shown to the public, and then sold for approximately IL 6000 each. The drawings were purchased by the gallery's owner, Hamar Barkai, during a visit he paid the Queen at her home in Paris. The exhibition will open to the public tomorrow.

Barkai noted that the Queen herself had spoken of the possibility of coming to Israel, but these plans were cancelled out of fear of the reaction of pro-Palestinian circles in Paris. The Queen, however, noted that now that the peace treaty between Egypt and Israel has been signed, a future visit by her to Israel should not be ruled out.

JERUSALEM (JTA) -- Premier Menachem Begin was still confined to bed Monday, reportedly suffering from the flu. Contrary to earlier expectations that he would return to work Monday, it now seems that he will stay at home until after the first Passover seder night. However, it was reported that Begin continued to work at his home, and was up to date on the affairs of his office. One of his tasks Monday was preparing messages to the Jewish people on the occasion of Passover and Independence Day.

JERUSALEM (JTA) -- The Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty will serve as the main attraction of the Jerusalem International Book Fair, slated to open April 19. The treaty will be encased in a burglar-proof glass case, courtesy of the Israel Museum, and will be guarded throughout the fair. The idea was initiated by Mayor Teddy Kollek, who requested from Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan that the treaty be put on display. Dayan forwarded the request to the Premier's office, which approved.

**ISRAEL ANGERED BY EGYPTIAN REMARKS**

By Barbie Zelizer

JERUSALEM, April 9 (JTA) -- Israel reacted swiftly tonight to statements attributed to Egyptian Prime Minister Mustapha Khalil and Foreign Minister Boutros Ghali which, it said, "contradict the peace treaty" Israel and Egypt signed last month. A Foreign Ministry spokesman said tonight that Foreign Minister Moshe Dayan dispatched a letter to Secretary of State Cyrus Vance on the matter.

He said a copy of Dayan's letter was sent to President Anwar Sadat by Premier Menachem Begin accompanied by a personal message from Begin. The spokesman refused to divulge the contents of the letter. Khalil and Ghali were reported to have made their remarks to the foreign relations committee of the Egyptian People's Assembly (Parliament).

Khalil was quoted as having said that in the event Syria attempted to regain the Golan Heights, Egypt would be justified in aiding Syria because the Syrians were acting in self-defense. He also reportedly called on the Arab states to use their oil weapon to force the U.S. to pressure Israel to withdraw from all occupied Arab territories, including East Jerusalem.

Ghali was reported to have said that Egypt could continue to assist the Palestine Liberation Organization regardless of the peace treaty with Israel because the PLO was engaged in a war of liberation.

Some diplomatic observers here contended that the Egyptian ministers were probably attempting to pacify growing opposition to Egypt in the Arab world and for this reason alone their remarks should not be exaggerated out of proportion. But they agreed that Israel should take up the matter with both Egypt and the U.S. to prevent similar expressions in the future.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Hodding Carter said he received only "fragmentary reports" but "no independent information" about the Khalil and Ghali statements. He said the Department is in touch with the U.S. Embassy in Cairo but "at this point we have no comment."

**Sadat Sends Cable To Begin**

Meanwhile, Begin has received a cable from Sadat acknowledging the message of thanks Begin sent Sadat after his return from Cairo last week. Sadat's cable said, "I want to express my deep hope that the talks we had together during your visit here are a positive step in the direction of an everlasting and just peace in the Middle East. I pray to God that He will crown with success our efforts and those of our people to achieve peace and stability in the region."

**PERES CRITICIZES AUTONOMY PLAN**

By Yitzhak Rabi

NEW YORK, April 9 (JTA) -- Shimon Peres, leader of the opposition Labor Alignment, sharply criticized today the autonomy plan for the Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, declaring that the plan does not have "much chance" of success.

Addressing some 120 American labor leaders and members of the American Trade Union Council for Histadrut and the Labor Zionist Alliance, at a meeting at the Histadrut headquarters here, Peres said that the autonomy plan is a "pure Likud invention that nobody asked for. It has the

resemblance of an unfinished thought."

Peres added that he "can hardly see" how the autonomy complies with the Gush Emunim plans to establish 10 new settlements during the Passover holidays. (Meanwhile, it was reported from Jerusalem, the Gush Emunim backed off from their plans to break ground for 10 settlements during Passover.)

But Peres reiterated the support of his party to the just concluded peace treaty with Egypt. "We are an opposition to the government (of Premier Menachem Begin) but not against peace," he declared, adding: "This (the treaty with Egypt) was the only alternative, the only chance for peace."

The former Defense Minister and the present chairman of the Labor Party called on the American labor movement to participate in the process of peace between Egypt and Israel. "I believe that American labor -- which played in the past such a prominent role in the development of Israel -- should participate in promoting peace between us. I believe the Egyptians are interested in it, too.

American labor, together with Israeli and Egyptian labor, should cooperate in making peace a new reality."

**The Greatest Victory**

Peres said that Israel won its wars in the past because of its democracy. "Finally we have the greatest victory we ever had: the end of war with Egypt." He said that as freedom brought peace "I hope that peace will bring freedom to the Arab countries." He said that in his view, President Anwar Sadat of Egypt desires eventually to make Egyptian society more democratic in the Western meaning of the term.

In reply to a question as to the prospect that the peace treaty would be abrogated after Sadat is no longer the ruler of Egypt, Peres said that "the people around Sadat support his policy" of peace with Israel and that this attitude is shared by "many important" people in Egypt. Peres paid tribute to Sadat's courage in undertaking his peace initiative with Israel.

As to the relations of Israel with its other Arab neighbors, Peres said that the Jordanians "are more frightened than us" of the establishment of a Palestinian state on the West Bank. He claimed that between Jordan and Israel there are de facto "peace conditions but not a peace treaty," citing the open movement between the two countries on the Jordan River's bridges and "the most tranquil border" which the two nations share.

Peres also predicted that Syria, which is presently armed to the teeth by the Soviets, will "one day" seek support from Washington, discarding their Russian mentors.

Asked about the prospects of the Labor Party regaining power, Peres said the results of a recently published poll, after the peace treaty was signed in Washington, gave the party 46 percent of the votes compared with only 35 percent to the ruling Likud. "We are revitalizing our party, and I believe we are doing well," Peres said.

**LATE NEWS BULLETIN**

WASHINGTON, April 9 (JTA) -- President Carter today formally asked Congress to approve a \$4.8 billion program of loans and assistance to Israel and Egypt. "The peace process must not be allowed to languish," he said in proposing legislation to finance aid programs related to the peace treaty recently signed by the two nations. Swift action to enact the bill will demonstrate U.S. capacity to decisively "support our friends in the Middle East," Carter said in messages to House and Senate leaders.

## BEHIND THE HEADLINES CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM IN ISRAEL

By Barbie Zelizer

JERUSALEM, April 9 (JTA) -- "Conservative Judaism is what Israelis have been waiting for all along. We didn't have to give it to them. All we had to do was be here." This remark, expressed during the recent 12th International Convention of the World Council of Synagogues (Conservative) in Jerusalem, aptly sums up the sentiments of the leaders of the newly-formed Conservative movement in Israel.

Unlike the decades-old movement of the U.S. or Canada, Israeli Conservative Jewry -- as a national organized movement -- is a mere eight years old. Calling itself the "Movement for M'sorati (traditional) Judaism in Israel," it has secured steadily-growing public support since its founding in 1970. Twenty-five congregations have been established, two of them by second-generation members, and three more are presently being set up. Together they boast a membership of 2000 families, two-thirds of them Israeli-born.

In the last few years, the movement has established a center for Conservative Judaism in Jerusalem, 19 local youth chapters and three day camps, and in at least one city, it is responsible for third-grade Jewish content programming in the public-school system. Future plans include opening an overnight camp and two additional day camps, establishing a M'sorati high school, developing a national youth movement, publishing Hebrew editions of M'sorati liturgical materials and, in general, enhancing the movement in the eyes of the Israeli public.

These accomplishments, however, were only realized against a background of numerous obstacles. A minimal budget -- until last year, \$30,000 annually -- and shortage of both rabbinical and lay leadership characterize the movement even today. However, the most overriding barrier to its legitimate acceptance within Israel is the ideological one.

A decade ago, most Israelis had never heard of Conservative Jewry, or if they had, they were quick to denigrate its legitimacy. "Israeli society is polarized in terms of religion," contends Yehuda Mor, executive member of the United Synagogue of Israel. "There are two camps -- Orthodox and secular" -- and a dominant all-or-nothing approach to Judaism is practiced by most of the public.

### The Real Challenge

The Orthodox establishment, even today, refuses to formally permit Conservative rabbis to officiate at Jewish functions, and in only a few cases have the local rabbis managed to gain legitimacy in the eyes of their Orthodox colleagues. Yet many of the movement's leaders see the rabbinate as ultimately a product of society, and contend that once public support for the movement has grown, the rabbinate will have to adopt a more pluralistic approach to religious observance.

The real challenge, they contend, is in reaching this public and making it aware of the movement's character. Rabbi Michael Graetz, the Israeli movement's executive director, likens this task to changing the image of the American Black in the 1950s. "We must launch an assault on established stereotypes that claim there is only one way of being Jewish," he says. "Only then will people open up and listen to what we

have to say."

Rabbi Philip Spector, spiritual head of the highly successful model M'sorati community in Ashkelon, explains the movement's attraction as a question of timing. "The Israeli today has a lot of Yiddishkeit. He just doesn't have a spiritual hook to hang it on," he contends, adding that the movement is needed here because its open-ended approach to Judaism can withstand the characteristic tensions of Israeli society.

"On the other hand, the Conservative movement, as a whole, needs the Israeli desperately," he adds. "We need his vigor because we are tired. When an Israeli sets foot into a synagogue, it is not because he is running away. He is looking for values and a spiritual uplift. The healthiest thing the Israeli can do for us is show us how to develop without the need to be a haven from assimilation."

In that light, movement heads maintain that M'sorati Judaism in Israel must differ from that practiced in other countries. Of the 75-member families in his community of Omer, near Beersheva, Graetz notes that 40 "are serious about their Judaism. I foresee a more traditional movement here," he says, "one in which people really try to live out the ideology."

### Series Of Problems Cited

For all the energy exhibited by the local leadership, the movement still faces a series of problems. Only two congregations -- in Ashkelon and Netanya -- have their own buildings. Due to lack of money, all others meet in rented quarters that are not always available during the week.

Hopefully, this situation will soon improve to a degree. The Jewish Theological Seminary of America recently agreed to donate \$50,000 to the movement annually, in addition to \$36,000 a year recently promised by the World Council of Synagogues. A fund-raising tour is now being conducted in the U.S., and Graetz hopes to raise some \$250,000 through various Israeli ministries and institutions.

Manpower also still constitutes a problem, while over 80 ordained Conservative rabbis presently reside in Israel, only 10 -- all of them recent immigrants -- are employed by the movement, and only five of them on a full-time basis. "We must develop a cadre of indigenous leaders, of good consistent rabbinical leadership," observed Rabbi Moshe Cohen, director of the United Synagogue of Israel. The movement intends to actively attract local people to the rabbinate and hopes to eventually open a local branch of the Jewish Theological Seminary.

Movement leaders maintain that greater understanding of the M'sorati movement must be exhibited by Conservative Jewry throughout the world. Pointing to the poor American response to a recent request that communities abroad adopt synagogues here, Graetz notes that more efforts to educate constituencies abroad must be made.

David Zucker, international president of the World Council of Synagogues, has pledged backing of such an objective. "We fully support the M'sorati movement and its philosophy," he says. "And we want this support to follow the European conception of Kehilla, in which the Israeli section of the World Council of Synagogues will help each local community to gain administrative autonomy. With the aid of a central institution, we can build and create both synagogues and educational and cultural centers throughout Israel." All agree that, with assistance, the M'sorati movement could become a force for real change in Israeli society.