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ISRAEL HIT BY HIGHEST MONTHLY INFLATION INCREASE IN 2 YEARS

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 16 (JTA) -- Even the most pessimistic economic experts were surprised by the announcement that the price index soared by 8.7 percent last month, the highest monthly increase in 27 years without a drastic devaluation of the Pound. April's figures, published yesterday by the Central Bureau of Statistics, showed that housing costs led the upward spiral and, together with higher food prices, accounted for 70 percent of the increase.

Several Cabinet ministers reportedly have appealed to Premier Menachem Begin to intervene personally in economic policy; hitherto solely the province of Finance Minister Simcha Ehrlich. Begin was said to have told them yesterday that he feared galloping inflation would endanger Likud's prospects in the next elections.

Prices increased by 23.4 percent during the first four months of the year. Inflation is currently running at an annual rate of 88 percent, one of the highest if not the highest in the world. The chief contributor is the price of flats which went up by an average of 25.5 percent in April. The cost of an apartment in the coastal area north of Tel Aviv increased by 35.9 percent. A one-room flat in a good neighborhood in Jerusalem currently sells for IL 1 million, about \$40,000. These increases came on top of last year's rise in housing costs which amounted to 133 percent.

Not unexpectedly, Histadrut Secretary General Yehoram Meshel denounced the government's economic policies and demanded a new rise in the cost-of-living allowance by July. The wages and savings of Israelis are linked to the cost-of-living index and periodically adjusted to provide a cushion against inflation. They received a 28 percent c.o.l. allowance in April. Meshel noted that "since Ehrlich became Finance Minister, inflation increased by 140 percent." He said that "with such a state of affairs, there is no point in a five-year plan. It is the next half year that will be fateful."

He was referring to Ehrlich's five-year economic program presented to the Cabinet last Sunday which, the Finance Minister said, would reduce inflation by 30 percent. It is based on drastic curtailment of public consumption, private investments and government spending, although a special budget will be required to meet the costs of Israel's withdrawal from Sinai over the next three years and the redeployment of its forces in the Negev.

Retrenchment May Be Acceptable

Ehrlich's plan met with strong opposition from many of his Cabinet colleagues. But the shock of the latest inflation figures may improve the chances for its approval, according to observers here, if only because the ministers now agree that something must be done. With that view prevailing, Cabinet members who balked at the proposed cuts in their ministerial budgets may now be willing to accept retrenchment, the observers said.

Ehrlich declared yesterday that the unexpect-

ted rise in the price index left no room for compromise. "Steps that will not be taken now will only increase the spiral of inflation and force even stronger measures at a later date," he warned. But some Treasury experts said today that the new austerity economic plan was less than the minimum required. As soon as it is approved by the Cabinet, they said, immediate drastic measures will have to be adopted to curb inflation and make sure that it does not increase again in the coming months.

The April price index was the third highest since April, 1952. It was exceeded only in November 1974 when prices rose by 11.6 percent after a major devaluation of the Pound, and in November 1977 when the rise was 11.8 percent following the new economic policies launched by Ehrlich soon after the Likud government took office.

WEIZMAN SAYS ISRAEL CAN DEFEND ITS BORDERS IF PEACE TREATY FAILS

JERUSALEM, May 16 (JTA) -- Defense Minister Ezer Weizman assured Israelis yesterday that if the peace treaty between Israel and Egypt were to be broken, "Israel would still be capable of defending its borders."

Speaking to some 1000 people at graduation ceremonies at the Technion in Haifa, Weizman stressed that both Israelis and Egyptians took risks in agreeing to the treaty. He expressed the hope that Egyptian President Anwar Sadat would withstand pressure from the Arab world to renounce the peace process. Weizman also pledged that the Israeli army would continue to fight the Palestine Liberation Organization and would try to avoid civilian casualties.

The Defense Minister also said he agreed with the report by State Comptroller Ernest Nebenzahl last week criticizing the army for a lack of planning and coordination in Israel's invasion and occupation of south Lebanon in April 1978. The report cited errors in logistics, operations and intelligence, and serious breaches of discipline. "I both support criticism of this nature as well as a strong, uncompromising State Comptroller," Weizman said.

IRAN ASKED FOR ASSURANCES ON FUTURE SAFETY OF COUNTRY'S JEWS

By Joseph Polakoff

WASHINGTON, May 16 (JTA) -- Rabbi Joshua Haberman of the Washington Hebrew Congregation, the area's largest Reform group, yesterday addressed a letter to the Charge d'Affaires of the Iranian Embassy, Ali Ager, asking for specific information arising from the execution in Teheran May 9 of Habib Elkhanian, the leader of Iran's Jewish community.

The Haberman letter followed an oral protest to Ager by Haberman and a group from the Menorah organization led by Joseph Friedman and Moshe Brodetsky after their visit to the State Department. Haberman's letter encompassed the elements of the Menorah's views to Ager in their hour-long session with him at the Embassy.

These included: a full official statement of what happened at Elkhanian's trial shortly before he and six other Iranians were executed, including the factor of due process under Iranian law; permission for American legal experts to attend future trials involving Iranian Jews; reassurances on "the highest level" that the execution of Elkhanian does "not

betoken a wave of mass arrests of Jews, their disenfranchisement, losses of property and other acts of violence; and an official statement that Iranian Jews who wish to be reunited with family members abroad may do so without their remaining family members or fellow Jews who wish to remain in Iran to be harmed in any way.

Haberman said that petitions with hundreds of names were submitted to Ager and "that this is only the beginning. Many more are coming." The petitions said that "the vague charges of 'complicity with the Shah'" and "maintaining contact with Israel and Zionism" suggest that his (Elkanian) only crime was that of being a Jew. The conscience of humanity and the law of God can only condemn such bloodshed.

Haberman's letter pointed out that forthright responses from the Iranian government to his four points would quickly rebuild confidence, respect in the Iranian government's legitimacy and help create the friendly relations between the U.S. and Iran "that we so greatly desire."

Protest 'Political Murder'

Meanwhile, in New York yesterday, several hundred members of District One of B'nai B'rith delivered a statement protesting the "political murder" of Elkanian to the Deputy Iranian Ambassador to the United Nations, Seymour Reich, president of the District which includes New York and six New England States, pointed to the "violation of basic human rights" in Elkanian's conviction and execution. By linking his conviction with Zionism and Israel, the Iranian government invoked "the specter of anti-Semitism," Reich said.

He declared that this action was "nothing short of a dangerous assault upon the Jewish people and the linkage of fundamental and cherished Jewish beliefs to subversion is tantamount to an open appeal for unrestrained anti-Semitism." The B'nai B'rith delegation also warned that "we shall not be silent in the face of judicial murder and virulent bigotry."

In addition, members of the New York Metropolitan Conference of B'nai B'rith scheduled a protest demonstration this evening in front of the Iranian Mission to the UN.

In another development, Dr. David Hyatt, president of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, sent a mailgram to President Carter in which he called Elkanian's execution

"a shocking charade of justice." Hyatt declared: "Christians and Jews must fervently pray for the safety of the remaining Jews as well as other minority groups in Iran. The anti-Zionist outbursts of Ayatollah Khomeini and his so-called 'revolutionary' government are reminiscent of Hitler and the murderous executors of his Nazi regime."

"The fact that such a total miscarriage of justice can take place in Iran and that the persecution of Jews still continues not only in Iran but many other parts of the world proves once again why there must be an Israel -- a refuge and a homeland for all Jewish people who are denied their freedom and their human rights in other parts of the world."

ANTI-SEMITISM, EXECUTIONS IN IRAN: PRIORITY TOPICS AT WJC CONFERENCE

By Maurice Samuelson

LONDON, May 16 (JTA) -- Anti-Semitism in Europe, Iranian Jewry and the statute of limitations on Nazi crimes in Germany were dis-

cussed in Copenhagen last weekend by the European branch of the World Jewish Congress. Leaders of 21 communities from East and West Europe participated, including, for the first time in many years, a representative from Bulgaria.

The meeting voiced "shock and consternation" at the trials and executions in Iran and protested particularly the execution of the Iranian Jewish leader, Habib Elkanian. The meeting appealed to governments and world leaders to urge Iran to stop the trials and respect human rights and the rights of minorities.

On anti-Semitism, the meeting decided on better cooperation between communities in different countries and set up a special committee to prepare educational programs. Calling for legislation in West Germany to abolish the statute of limitations on Nazi war crimes, the meeting referred to "the great moral and political considerations of the issue."

Raanan Sivan, Israel's Ambassador to Denmark, addressed the meeting on the Middle East situation, which also discussed the elections to the European Parliament and the role of women in Jewish life. Copenhagen's Jewish community played host to the delegates, who were addressed by Chief Rabbi Ben-Zion Meir.

Dr. Maurice Grynfolgel, chairman of the WJC European branch, sent a message to the Queen of Denmark expressing the Jewish people's gratitude for Denmark's friendship during the Nazi era as well as in today's "troubled times."

MOTION FOR CIVIL MARRIAGE DEFEATED

JERUSALEM, May 16 (JTA) -- A demand that Israel institute civil marriage as an alternative option to religious marriage was struck off the agenda by the coalition majority in the Knesset today. The private motion was submitted by Yossi Sarid of the Labor Party, Shulamit Aloni of the Civil Rights movement, Meir Pavil of Sheti, and Mordechai Wirshovsky of the Shai faction.

Replying for the government today, Minister of Religious Affairs Aharon Abu-Hatzefra said it was futile to attempt to disrupt the delicate balance between the religious and non-religious population. He stressed that all previous governments had maintained the status quo on marital issues which are under the jurisdiction of the Orthodox rabbinate. Many bills calling for freedom of choice in marriage have been presented in the past but were defeated regardless of whether Likud or Labor controlled the Knesset.

NAVON VISITS GUSH ETZION

JERUSALEM, May 16 (JTA) -- President Yitzhak Navon toured the area of Gush Etzion today, the first Presidential tour beyond the Green Line in the State's history. The President, however, denied that his visit to the region had any far-reaching political significance. "My purpose was to visit the place and see its development. After all, the beginnings of Jewish settlement started here in 1927," he said.

During his visit, Navon spoke with both Jewish and Arab residents and paid a visit to the family of Prisoner of Zion Yosef Mendelevitch. The President said he hoped for a successful conclusion of the negotiations on autonomy, so that "I, as President, won't have to apply for a visa to visit here again." In the course of Navon's visit, it was reported that a new Jewish settlement will be established in the region, under the name of "Hafurit."

KNESSET DEFEATS MOTION TO DISCUSS POLITICALIZATION OF BROADCASTING BODY
By Barbie Zelizer

JERUSALEM, May 16 (JTA) -- The coalition

exercised its majority in the Knesset today to defeat a Labor Alignment motion to debate the politicization of the Israel Broadcasting Authority (IBA). The vote was 45-35. The immediate issue is the IBA Board's decision yesterday not to reappoint Mordechai Kirschenbaum, director of Hebrew programming. A petition signed by more than 100 television and production staff members, circulated before today's Knesset session, called the decision a "witch-hunt" directed against Kirschenbaum because of his alleged "leftist" views.

Labor Alignment MK Chaika Grossman of Mapam charged that a "political guillotine" has been employed by the IBA, a quasi-governmental agency, ever since the new Likud management took over in March 1978. She said that the new director general, Yosef Lapid, who has been on the job only a month, was making far-reaching decisions that had no relationship to the extent of his experience.

Replying for the government, Education Minister Zevulun Hammer, of the National Religious Party, who holds jurisdiction over the IBA, said he saw no signs of politicization. He said the IBA acted in accordance with the law as it concerns the hiring and firing of employees and expressed full confidence in Lapid.

The Board's decision was strongly criticized by Labor MKs in the Knesset's Education Committee yesterday. Kirschenbaum had been the producer of a popular satirical program that Likud politicians and religious elements frequently found offensive.

Reuven Yaron, chairman of the IBA's management committee, defended the dismissal. He said that the replacement of Kirschenbaum had been under discussion during the tenure of the previous director general and claimed it was untenable that employees who had known political views should enjoy professional immunity. But many IBA staffers charge that the new administration is penalizing employees for their ideas.

FRANKFURT POLICE CANCEL PERMIT FOR NEO-NAZI GROUP TO HOLD RALLY

By Alfred Schroeder

BONN, May 16 (JTA) -- Frankfurt police today cancelled the permit granted earlier to the neo-Nazi National Democratic Party (NPD) to hold its convention that was scheduled to open there on June 16. A police spokesman said the permit was revoked for security reasons. The NPD planned to bring some 6000 delegates to the convention but counter-demonstrations were announced by several anti-Nazi groups.

The police spokesman expressed concern for law and order. "We could expect that protest demonstrations will lead to serious clashes where by we cannot rule out bloodshed and damages to public and private property," he said. The NPD has not reacted and it was uncertain whether they would appeal the police decision in court.

Although not mentioned in the official announcement, the cancellation order followed a clash last weekend between a gang of 15-20 NPD youths and a Czechoslovakian television team that had been given official permission to shoot a film at the NPD's youth training camp in Kamen. Czech TV correspondent Cyril Smolik, his wife and cameraman were beaten by the NPD gang and their cameras and film were destroyed. Police are investigating but no arrests have been made.

The Foreign Ministry confirmed this morning

that the Czechoslovak government has lodged a strong protest with Bonn over the incident. A sharp letter of protest by the Czechoslovakian Press Association was presented to the West German Embassy in Prague. While the Czech newspaper, Vecerni Praha, said the German police had acted promptly and correctly, West German newspapers demanded that the authorities take action against the NPD and its bullies.

HARSH SENTENCES FOR THREE BELTSY JEWS

NEW YORK, May 16 (JTA) -- Three Moldavian Jewish refusniks arrested Jan. 5 in a Beltsy cafe for brawling with anti-Semitic thugs have received harsh prison sentences for their part in the melee, according to the National Conference on Soviet Jewry (NCSJ). The seven hooligans who provoked the incident were never arrested. Aleksandr Milner has been sentenced to six years in prison, while Arkady Feldman and Yankel Grobeman each received four-year terms. Their trial was April 13. An unidentified non-Jew who came to their defense during the fight was arrested with them drew an even longer, although unknown sentence, the NCSJ reported.

The three men, all of whom had applied to emigrate to Israel, were celebrating Feldman's receipt of his visa at the restaurant when seven youths began to insult and taunt them with such statements as "How long must we put up with you lousy Yids?" Eventually the Jews were provoked into defending themselves and were aided by the incensed Russian customer, the NCSJ said.

Grobeman, who was released from custody prior to the April 13 trial and was to be a material witness, actually appeared as one of the accused. His parents, wife and children, and Milner's father all live in Israel. Grobeman's exit application had been denied on the grounds that he holds state secrets as a result of his army service.

JERUSALEM ALIVE EXHIBITION

MONTREAL, May 16 (JTA) -- "Jerusalem Alive" is the theme of an exhibition of photographs and other items related to Jerusalem that opened last night at the Place Bonaventure, Montreal's largest shopping center, under the auspices of the Canada-Israel Cultural Foundation. Local authorities and prominent public figures attended the opening which was addressed by the Israeli Consul General Zvi Caspi who stressed the role of Jerusalem as a "city of peace."

Caspi said, "It is our determined intention to do all that is in our power to maintain its tranquility and to restore its beauty and to make and keep this city open with free access to all worshippers, never again to be artificially divided and to become a battlefield and a scene of destruction and desecration." Caspi read a cable from Mayor Teddy Kollek of Jerusalem expressing his hope that "This exhibition will turn each visit (at the exhibition) into a visitor to Jerusalem."

TEL AVIV (JTA) -- A Jewish delegation comprising representatives of the World Federation of Polish Jews, the World Organization of Jewish Fighters, Partisans and Survivors of Death Camps, and the World Jewish Congress will visit Warsaw in September to continue talks with Polish authorities about the demands of former Polish Jews for the updating and expansion of documentary and research materials regarding the history of Polish Jewish communities and institutions, according to Stefan Grayek, World Organization of Jewish Fighters chairman.

FEDERALLY-FUNDED DAY CARE SERVICES NOT REACHING POOR JEWISH CHILDREN IN NEW YORK CITY, POVERTY AGENCY SAYS

By Ben Gallob

NEW YORK, May 16 (JTA) -- An estimated 20,000 children from some 10,000 low-income New York City Jewish families are not getting federally-funded day care services for which they are entitled by federal income standards, Jerome Becker, chairman of the Metropolitan New York Coordinating Council on Jewish Poverty, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

Rabbi David Cohen, Coordinating Council executive director, charged that the Jewish poor and lower income working class families have been systematically excluded from an "adequate share" of such services from the start of the federally-supported day care programs.

Cohen said the New York State Department of Social Services is considering revisions in regulations on day care center operations. He told the JTA that the state Social Services Department was working on revisions in day care center regulations and had scheduled a final review on all comments in requested changes for some time this summer, with final regulations to be issued in the fall.

The comments by Becker and Cohen stemmed from testimony from the Coordinating Council given at a Social Services Department little-publicized conference on proposed day care regulations held in Albany on April 25, at which Joseph Langer, Coordinating Council operations director, submitted a statement asking for changes to make possible greater participation by children of poor Jewish families.

Cohen said that because of "kosher food needs, lack of Yiddish and Russian-speaking and geographical location, the Jewish poor and the lower-income large working families attempting to earn a living under adverse economic conditions, cannot take advantage of day care in New York City."

He added that currently there are some 430 federally-supported day care centers, receiving more than \$90 million in public funds, in New York City "with just half a dozen having the ability to provide kosher meals. For the observant family in Manhattan, The Bronx, Queens and Staten Island, there are no kosher federal day care centers available." What this means, he said, is that the observant Jewish family "cannot take advantage of day care in most of the city."

Lack Of Proper Staff Cited

Langer told the conference that a recent survey of the New York City day care centers "indicated the lack of bilingual Yiddish and Russian-speaking staff." He declared that traditionally, the Social Services Department has recognized the need for program activities in day care centers "to contain cultural awareness components and bilingual staffing to promote the physical, intellectual, social and emotional well-being of the child."

Langer added that since the day care center enrollee "spends 50 percent of his waking hours at the center, the environment must emulate the cultural roles of the home environment" and that, "without the necessary staffing, parents reject participation in the center on these grounds."

Becker declared that, for the working parent, "the location of the day care center is crucial. A geographic survey of New York City's

430 day care centers reflects neighborhood targeting similar to the exclusionary anti-poverty districts of the '60s and '70s," a reference to the organization of anti-poverty efforts in which 26 areas were designated as recipients of the bulk of poverty funds, an arrangement the Coordinating Council consistently criticized as discriminating against the city's Jewish poor.

Becker noted that New York City officials, in response to "the radical shifts" in the poor population over the last decade, are currently restructuring the city's anti-poverty efforts. He said "it is now time to re-evaluate the locations and services of day care centers" to make them more accessible to Jewish poor families.

PRESIDENTS CONFERENCE CALLS FOR U.S. WITHDRAWAL FROM W.H.O. IF IT MOVES TO EXPEL ISRAEL

NEW YORK, May 16 (JTA) -- The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations has called on President Carter to withdraw the United States from the World Health Organization if the WHO, which opened its meetings May 7 in Geneva, adopts an Iraqi proposal to suspend Israel.

Withdrawal by the United States from a world organ "whose non-political character has been fundamentally abridged is indispensable to maintain the integrity of the United Nations' specialized agencies and to safeguard the peace process itself," said Theodore R. Mann, chairman of the Presidents Conference, and Jack J. Spitzer, chairman of its UN task force. "We are convinced that you will pursue this objective," the letter to the White House stated.

Charging that the Iraqi proposal jeopardized "the very integrity of a United Nations specialized agency upon whose non-political character rests the health conditions of millions throughout the world," the Presidents Conference stated: "Beyond the question of the WHO itself is the integrity of the entire UN system. If the initiative of transforming a segment of the world organization into a Middle East battleground succeeds then no part of the system will be immune."

The Presidents Conference letter to Carter accused "the intransigent state of the (Arab) rejectionist front" of seeking to suspend Israel's membership in the WHO as part of "a massive effort to subvert the peace process.... The rejectionist states also hope to set in motion powerful currents of resistance to the Egyptian-Israeli peace agreement and thereby to challenge your great personal achievement."

The letter added that "we are certain that the United States will vigorously and determinately resist the politicizing drive within the WHO. In this connection, we welcome the warning extended by Ambassador William van den Heuvel at the Assembly of the WHO on May 9 on the dangerous implications of the anti-Israel suspension initiative."

MARCOS JAKUBOVITCH DEAD AT 82

RIO DE JANEIRO, May 16 (JTA) -- Marcos Jakubovitch, the oldest Yiddish novelist in Brazil, has died in Porto Alegre at the age of 82. Born in Poland, he came to Brazil 50 years ago. He contributed to various Yiddish newspapers, including "Di Presse" in Buenos Aires in which he serialized his novels.

JERUSALEM (JTA) -- Premier Menachem Begin will meet with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and Foreign Secretary Lord Carrington May 23 during a private visit to London. While there, he will also confer with U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance who will be meeting with Lord Carrington.