

JTA daily news bulletin

Contents cover the Middle East and its environs and elsewhere

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

Vol. LVIII - 63rd Year

Thursday, February 28, 1980

No. 41

FIRST EGYPTIAN VISA OFFICE IN ISRAEL

By Yitzhak Shargit

TEL AVIV, Feb. 27 (JTA) -- The first Egyptian visa office in Israel opened for business in the lobby of the Tel Aviv Hilton hotel yesterday. But only a few dozen of the 200-odd people on hand were seeking visas. The opening was a media event which coincided with the ceremonies in Jerusalem where Egyptian Ambassador Saad Mortada presented his credentials to President Yitzhak Navon.

The visa office's two-man staff, headed by Salah el-Din Soliman, Second Secretary of the Egyptian Embassy, patiently went through the clerical routine of receiving visa applications for the benefit of the local and international news media. The stamping and processing of documents, a slow-moving tedious job that would normally attract no attention, became the focus of television news cameras.

The First Applicants

The honor of being the first applicant went to Dieter Huckstein, the German-born, American citizen who is general manager of the Tel Aviv Hilton. He plans to be on El Al's first commercial flight to Cairo next Monday. As cameras recorded the event, Huckstein found he was without cash and had to borrow the \$2 visa fee from a television crew member. The second applicant was Pauline Grego, an Egyptian Jew who came to Israel six years ago. She was one of the few Israelis who managed to go to Cairo last October and she was going there again to try to persuade her son to join her in Israel.

Huckstein and Grego received their Egyptian visas immediately. Soliman explained that this was a gesture of good will. Most Israeli applicants will have to wait about 10 days. But foreign nationals of countries that have visa agreements with Egypt will be able to obtain them immediately. Soliman said that contrary to some reports, Israelis will not be required to show proof that they have a place to stay in Egypt. However, they will have to fly there as the overland route via El Arish has been closed pending the completion of negotiations between Egypt and Israel on the movement of tourists across Sinai.

The Hilton, one of Tel Aviv's luxury hotels overlooking the Mediterranean, is only a temporary home for the visa office and the Egyptian Embassy which occupies the 12th floor. Both will move when permanent premises are found. Meanwhile, the visa office is conveniently located in a corridor off the main lobby through which hundreds of guests and visitors pass daily. It was formerly the office of the hotel's public relations manager, Rina Mor, a former "Miss Universe." Mor told reporters she didn't mind being displaced but said she had virtually no contact with the Egyptian diplomats.

ISRAEL, U.S. TO DISCUSS NEW ISRAELI AIRCRAFT TO REPLACE KFIR INTERCEPTORS

By Yitzhak Shargit

TEL AVIV, Feb. 27 (JTA) -- Joseph Ma'ayan, Director General of the Defense Ministry, will go to Washington later this week to begin discussions with American officials on the next

generation of Israel-made combat aircraft to replace the Kfir jet interceptor. The U.S. is involved mainly because the new plane, like the Kfir, will be equipped with an American-made engine.

Israel therefore will require American permission to market the plane abroad. If this is denied, the unit cost of producing the aircraft will be much higher than otherwise. That problem is expected to be discussed by Ma'ayan with the Americans. Israel will also try to obtain permission to produce many of the American-made engine components at home on a license arrangement. There were indications as well that Israel will ask for American financial assistance to manufacture the new plane.

According to Ma'ayan, the second generation Kfir will be a good aircraft but will not be competitive with American combat planes which will continue to be the backbone of Israel's Air Force. The Defense Ministry's recommendation to design and produce the new plane in Israel was adopted by the government because Israel wants to be as independent as possible in military hardware.

Other factors were the jobs the new plane will create, the maintenance of high technological skills and the desire to keep the country's best designing talent from seeking employment abroad. The government has already invested some \$1 billion in planning and research for the new plane which will be built by Israel Aircraft Industries.

U.S. TO HONOR WIESENTHAL

WASHINGTON, Feb. 27 (JTA) -- America's honor to Simon Wiesenthal, the noted Nazi hunter, moved a step closer today to reality. The House Banking Committee approved striking a gold medal for him in the name of Congress and sent it to the House floor for a vote, probably on Monday.

The bill, introduced by Christopher Dodd (D. Conn.), said that the President "is authorized to present, on behalf of Congress, the medal in recognition of his contribution to international justice through the documentation and location of war criminals."

The subcommittee, which conducted hearings on the award, was headed by Rep. Frank Annunzio (D. Ill.), chairman of the House subcommittee on consumer affairs. The Senate had passed a somewhat different bill in honor of Wiesenthal last fall. It was introduced by Sen. George McGovern (D. S.D.).

IRELAND TRIES TO MOLLIFY ISRAELI OVER PRO-PLO STATEMENTS BY IRISH LEADER

By Maurice Samuelson

DUBLIN, Feb. 27 (JTA) -- The Irish Republic has given a conciliatory reply to last week's stiff Israeli protest over pro-Palestine Liberation Organization statements by the Irish Foreign Minister. However, according to Israeli officials, the fact remains that there has been a significant shift in Irish policy in favor of a Palestinian state and the role of the PLO.

Exchanges between the two countries were sparked off when Foreign Minister Brian Lenihan, on a visit to Bahrain, signed a joint statement backing an independent Palestinian state, and acknowledging the PLO's claim to represent the Palestinian people. It also spoke of the need for total Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories, including Jerusalem.

Israel was especially incensed by Lenihan's

description of PLO chief Yasir Arafat as "a most sensible element." His further remarks amounted to a virtual invitation to Arafat to visit Dublin, which would thus be the first country of the European Economic Community (EEC) to offer him hospitality.

The controversy marks the worst point in Irish-Israeli relations since diplomatic ties were set up about five years ago. To Israel's disappointment, Ireland refused to exchange embassies with her, and contacts are maintained through non-resident ambassadors -- by Israel's Ambassador in Britain and Ireland's envoy in Switzerland.

When it lodged its stiff protest to Ireland last week, Israel broke with precedent and gave it to the Irish Embassy in London, rather than sending it directly to the Foreign Ministry in Dublin. Although Israeli diplomats say that it did so to ensure speed of delivery, it could also have been interpreted as a sign of Israel's anger. Not having a resident ambassador in Dublin, Israel could not have made the usual gesture of displeasure by recalling him for consultations.

Since then, the Israelis have followed up their diplomatic message by sending their London press counsellor, Yehuda Milko, to Dublin to put the Israeli case to politicians and the press. He pointed out that the lack of an Israeli embassy here contrasts with the opening of one in Cairo.

Lenihan's Remarks Draw Fire

Among the Irish public, Lenihan's remarks have already been greeted unfavorably, partly because it was not prepared for them, and also because of the widespread assumption here that the PLO is linked with the Irish Republican Army terrorist organization.

Opposition politicians are expected to express their disquiet at a debate in the Dail (Parliament) this week. Frank Cluskey, leader of the Irish Labor Party, and Jim O'Keefe, foreign affairs spokesman of the Fine Gael Party, have already criticized the government at their own parties' national conferences. Criticism was also voiced at the conference of the ruling Fianna Fail Party.

Lenihan's remarks were also questioned by the Irish Times, Dublin's leading daily, not known for its sympathies for Israel. The strongest anti-PLO statement was made on local television by Ireland's newly appointed Chief Rabbi, who was brought up in England but studied in a yeshiva in Israel where he volunteered for army duty during the war of attrition in the mid 1970s. Ireland has only 3000 Jews, but they are proud of their links with Israel.

APPEAL TO HALT STOCK MARKET PANIC

By Gil Sedan.

JERUSALEM, Feb. 28 (JTA) -- Finance Minister Yigal Hurwitz appealed to the public today in an attempt to halt the stock market panic that greeted his new measures aimed at cracking down on tax evaders. He urged Israelis not to be "fooled by speculators" who are dragging the market down.

Prices dropped by 10-30 percent on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange yesterday and 67 stocks were not traded at all. It was the steepest plunge since the government declared war on "black money" last Friday -- money that passes through the economy without being taxed. Hurwitz sought to assure investors that he has no intention of using the

stock market as a tool against tax dodgers. He said the status of the market would be unchanged and the trend toward liberalization would continue.

He recalled that when he took office as Finance Minister last November, market prices dropped by 20 percent. "I called on the public then not to be fooled by speculators and the public believe me and the score disappeared. I again call on the public not to become victims of speculators. I only want to avoid black money transactions, both in local and foreign currency," he said.

Nevertheless, Israelis were clearly shaken by the government's abrupt economic moves and uncertainty is rife among individuals and in the business community. The stiff measures to enforce tax laws were announced simultaneously with the switch from the Pound to the new Shekel as legal tender, at a rate of 10-1. While Hurwitz was trying to calm fears, the Treasury initiated an amendment to the present tax law which will require hundreds of thousands of citizens to submit a detailed statement of their personal assets by a May deadline.

The statements will have to list the contents of private safe deposit boxes, a controversial measure. Hurwitz had demanded in addition that safe deposit boxes be opened in the presence of an income tax official. But a Cabinet majority rejected that requirement as an unwarranted invasion of privacy. The statement will be required from every person who earned over Il. 660,000 or 66,000 Shekels (approximately \$10,000) last year.

Meanwhile, economic analysts are criticizing Hurwitz for frightening the public with measures that have little real economic value. Prof. Assaf Rasimne, a former advisor to the Finance Ministry, said yesterday that the government would have done better to concentrate on drafting a constructive budget. Some commentators said Hurwitz is losing the popularity he has enjoyed so far.

JUDGE REJECTS DEPORTATION FOR FORMER WAR CRIMINAL

WASHINGTON, Feb. 27 (JTA) -- The case for the deportation of a 68-year-old Latvian native now living in Baltimore, for alleged war crimes against Jews was turned down by a U.S. immigration judge for lack of substantial evidence. Judge Emil Bobek ruled that none of the government's witnesses satisfactorily identified Karlis Detlavs as being the same man they saw beat and participate in the execution of Jewish residents in Latvia during World War II. Although Detlavs conceded serving in the Nazi-organized Latvian Legion during the war, Bobek ruled that lying about this on an application for a U.S. visa in 1950 did not warrant Detlavs' deportation.

Detlavs has admitted that he lied about the membership, but denied all other charges against him, including several reports that he had beaten Jews between 1941 and 1943 in Latvia, as well as having helped select a group of Jews for execution in Latvia in 1941. A spokesman for the Justice Department said yesterday that it has not yet been decided whether to appeal the judge's ruling.

CONCERN OVER ANTI-ISRAELI ISSUES AT UN WOMEN'S CONFERENCE

NEW YORK, Feb. 27 (JTA) -- In an "Action Alert" concerning the Mid-Decade World Conference of the UN Decade for Women to be held in July in Copenhagen, Eleanor Marvin, president of the International Council of Jewish Women (ICJW), warned its 32 worldwide affiliates that "an item on the economic and social problems of the Palestinian women had been added to the agenda."

The National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) responded immediately, along with several other affiliates including NCJW in Canada and Women's International Zionist Organization (WIZO) in Norway, in joining forces to fight the use of the upcoming conference as a forum against Israel.

"We've sent out an alert to our sections regarding participation in Regional Preparatory Conferences and our UN representatives have been alerted," said Shirley Leviton, national president of NCJW. "We are working closely with the Leadership Conference of Jewish Women's Organizations to prevent the politicization" of the Mid-Decade World Conference. Among its measures to counter this anti-Israel campaign, ICJW is asking "that the item on Palestinian women be enlarged to cover the situation in respect to 'All Refugee Women'."

In the United States, NCJW representatives have met with White House and State Department officials urging that the U.S. delegation to Copenhagen be instructed to oppose "extraneous matters" at the conference. Such a resolution was adopted last summer in Madison, Wisconsin, at a meeting of the Continuing Committee of the 1977 Houston (Texas) National Women's Conference, at the request of the Jewish Women's Caucus.

"Remembering the politicization of the International Women's Year (IWY) Conference in Mexico City in 1975, where 'Zionism equals racism' first reared its ugly head, we must be extremely diligent to do all in our power to prevent a similar turn of events in Copenhagen. Such a development could be most damaging to the interests of Israel in the world community," said Esther Landa, immediate past president of NCJW who is a member of President Carter's Advisory Committee for Women. She was also instrumental in forming the Jewish Women's Caucus at the Houston conference on women.

AUTONOMY TALKS HELD UNDER TIGHT SECURITY IN THE NETHERLANDS

By Henriette Boos

AMSTERDAM, Feb. 27 (JTA) — The ninth round of talks on Palestinian autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza Strip began today at the seaside town of Scheveningen near The Hague under tight security.

The talks between the United States, Israel and Egypt were being held on the third floor of the luxurious Kuthaus Hotel overlooking the North Sea. No one was allowed above the first floor of the hotel. The beach behind the hotel has been closed to the public and policemen with dogs are patrolling outside of the building while marksmen are posted on the roof.

The talks, which are expected to end Friday, began today with Sol Linowitz, President Carter's special envoy for Middle East negotiations, and Egyptian Prime Minister Mustapha Khalil present. Interior Minister Yosef Burg, head of the Israeli delegation, arrived late in the day.

Dutch Foreign Minister Christoph van der Klaauw, in an interview yesterday with the leading Dutch daily, "Handelsblad," said if the autonomy talks do not succeed by the May 26 deadline, the nine members of the European Economic Community may take the initiative to amend Security Council Resolution 242. Lord Carrington, the British Foreign Secretary, has proposed amending the resolution to give the Palestinians political status.

Asked about Iraq's sudden decision cancel-

ling his official trip to Baghdad because The Netherlands was hosting the autonomy talks, Van der Klaauw said that he had explained to the Iraqi Ambassador that Holland's role in the talks was "passive" since it was simply agreeing to an American request to have the talks here.

The Iraqi government abruptly cancelled a scheduled visit to Baghdad by Van der Klaauw earlier this week to protest Holland's agreement to host the tripartite talks between Israel, Egypt and the U.S. on Palestinian autonomy. Van der Klaauw was about to leave for Baghdad last Saturday when he was informed by the Iraqi Ambassador that his visit had been "postponed indefinitely." The Iraqis said they want further information on Holland's present position on the Middle East conflict before the visit can take place.

Van der Klaauw's visit, at the invitation of the Iraqi Foreign Minister, was intended to strengthen economic relations between Holland and Iraq. He also hoped to further normalize relations between Holland and other Arab countries which reached an all-time low after the Yom Kippur War. In 1975, Max van der Stoep, who was Foreign Minister in the previous Labor government, visited Egypt and Tunisia. Van der Klaauw has already visited Syria, Jordan and Morocco. Holland is providing development aid to Iraq, mainly in the fields of irrigation, cattle breeding, agriculture and transport.

ISRAEL CONCERNED ABOUT U.S. ARMS PACKAGE FOR EGYPT

NEW YORK, Feb. 27 (JTA) — Ephraim Evron, Israel's Ambassador to the United States, told the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations today that Israel was worried about the quantity, quality and dates of delivery of newly-announced U.S. arms for Egypt. Presidents Conference members, who attended the off-the-record briefing, said Evron reported that Israel was now giving intensive study to the Egyptian arms package and its effect on Israel's security.

Without predicting what his government's official policy would be, Evron expressed concern that the qualitative gap between Israel and Egypt would be narrowed, if not closed, under the terms of the proposed sale of U.S. advanced weapons to Cairo.

He noted that in the past, Israel had American arms while its Arab adversaries were equipped with Soviet weapons and jets. Because the U.S. arms were generally of superior quality, he said, Israel enjoyed a qualitative advantage, even though the Arabs had greater amounts of military equipment. But with the proposal to equip Egypt with large amounts of U.S. war materiel, Evron was reported as having said the Israeli advantage would be lost.

Evron voiced particular concern about the U.S. offer to sell Egypt the F-15 fighter bomber, regarded as the most lethal conventional weapon in the American arsenal. Israel is now taking delivery on F-15s it contracted for two years ago. Some of Israel's F-15s had been destined to Iran under the Shah. When the Khomeini regime took power and cancelled the arms deal, the planes were offered to Israel.

TORONTO (JTA) — John Ross Taylor, leader of the Western Guard Party, has been sentenced to a maximum one-year jail term and his movement has been fined \$5000 for contempt of court for disseminating anti-Jewish propaganda in violation of a decision by a human rights tribunal that has the force of a Federal Court of Canada order. However, the sentence and the fine were suspended on condition that Taylor and his associates respect the order.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES DEALING WITH ALIENATION

By Seth Hurwitz

NEW YORK, Feb. 27 (JTA) — The major paradox that now exists in Israel is that the country "has a population of Israelis more than it has a population of Jews." Israeli Jews, especially the youth, have no Jewish identity, and "a little feeling for the country. There's very little they believe in — there's a vacuum inside them."

These are the sentiments expressed by Hillel Wiener, the executive vice president of the Geshet Educational Affiliates, a non-political, independent organization based in Israel which is now tackling this problem. Although the group is little-known in the United States, Wiener, in an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, said that Geshet is, in Israel, the "largest Jewish education system outside of the Israeli government." Its purpose, he said, is "to bridge the gap that exists between the religious and secularist groups in Israel."

Along with that concept, "what we've tried to do is to set up what we call 'Jewish Identity Programs'... which involves trying to transmit to youngsters, in the most creative, intellectual, rational framework the basic concepts of Judaism, and to expose the youngsters to these ideas in such a way that it will be most palatable to them."

Geshet is not involved in proselytizing, nor is it concerned with building things material, such as rebuilding deprived neighborhoods in Israel as Operation Renewal does. Geshet is trying to guide the ideas of Israeli youth, so that the non-religious sector may, if not follow Jewish Law, at least appreciate its culture and heritage, and so that the religious sector understands why the secularists are the way they are and, says Wiener, learns "not to denigrate and talk down" to the non-religious.

Dr. Daniel Tropper, a native New Yorker, founded Geshet in 1969, when he went on aliya after, according to Wiener, becoming "disturbed at the disparate elements and the antagonism that existed in Israel." Tropper began to run informal educational seminar programs where Israeli religious and non-religious could ask questions and exchange ideas, with, in Tropper's words, "no holds barred." By using these methods, said Wiener, "he was able to get the youngsters to almost enjoy talking to one another," and to learn things previously "so misunderstood by them."

Developed Increased Confidence

Over the years, the organization developed because of the increased confidence it received from both the Israeli people and the Israeli government "to the point," said Wiener, "where we were able to get direct subsidies from the government, in terms of running seminars." Eventually, Geshet began to run seminars for the government — they were able to take youngsters out of school a certain number of hours a week, and work with them.

In 1976, when the organization became big enough, it purchased a campus in Safed where it expanded its seminar programs from running seminars for 1000 or 2000 youngsters a year to where they could run them for between 3000 to 5000 a year. The facilities in Safed also gave them the opportunity to run follow-up programs, including Shabbatonim (weekend seminars), coffee houses, study circles, mini-seminars within the school system, and even those specifically run

to include the entire family, not just the teenage son or daughter.

"About three years ago," Wiener said, "we started to produce curricula for the school system itself, where, under contract by the government, we wrote a series for the high school, which was entitled 'Have Ne'ayain,' really meaning 'Come Let Us Explore.'" In this program, during school hours, "youngsters were exposed, in official curricular form to the very basic elements of specific holidays, so that they would receive a much deeper understanding of what the historical and religious aspects of the holidays were."

This series is now distributed to approximately 55,000 students during each Jewish holiday and is so successful that Geshet now runs a junior high school series now being studied by over 40 percent of Israeli seventh graders.

The program is also unique in that before it goes about teaching the students it runs seminars for the primarily non-religious teachers. What is done, said Wiener, is "to get their (the teachers') input, prepare the materials so we know what is most palatable for them to teach, for the youngsters to learn, what is most acceptable in terms of approach, and then to run seminars to train them in the use of the materials."

Four 'Organizational Arms'

At present, Geshet has four "organizational arms": Mossad Geshet, which runs the student seminars; the David Schoen Institute for Creative Jewish Education, which trains the teachers and produces curricula for the junior high and high school; Jerusalem Productions, which is working to produce a Sesame Street-type television series embodying Geshet's approach to creative Jewish education in a further attempt to reach the entire family; and, finally, the Machonim or Institutes for Zionist and Jewish Education, formerly a separate organization founded in the early 1970s by Mordechai Bar-On, but which merged with what was then called the Geshet Foundation to become the Geshet Educational Affiliates.

The biggest arm of Geshet, the Machonim, which previously ran programs for over 40,000 youngsters, now enables Geshet to reach almost 50,000 students. "And our projection is that this year," said Wiener, Geshet "will be running seminar programs in basic concepts of Judaism, Jewish identity, values and heritage for 85 percent of the 11th graders in Israel, and some 30 percent of the 12th graders."

In addition to regular programs, Geshet now runs experimental programs, which include rehabilitating Israeli criminals, as well as working with the Israeli Sephardic population, trying to give it, in Wiener's words, "a sense of its own worth," rather than trying to impose upon it the Ashkenazic customs and laws "which the government has all too often been doing."

Geshet has also been working with Soviet Jewish emigres in transit in Rome, Wiener said. The Geshet representatives in Rome do not try to impress the emigres to go on aliya, but merely try to impart to them "a positive feeling towards their own heritage, towards their own Jewishness," so that they will not lose themselves to assimilation, Wiener said. Asked why Geshet has offices only in New York and in Toronto, outside of Israel, Wiener replied: "We have a captive audience in Israel; we have support from the Israeli government; and not only that, we have our homeland which should stand as an example to everyone else.... Let's start at home."