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STATE DEPARTMENT EASES RULES ON ASYLUM FOR IRANIAN JEWS, CHRISTIANS

ALBANY, N.Y., Jan. 6 (JTA) -- State Senate Democratic leader Manfred Ohrenstein today lauded an announced change of policy by the State Department regarding asylum for Iranian Jews and Christians.

The State Department Bureau of Human Rights has decided that the situation in Iran has deteriorated for Christian and Jewish minorities and, therefore, if people seeking asylum can prove they are Iranian Jews or Christians the State Department will now accept this as proof that they would be persecuted upon their return to Iran, according to a Department spokesperson.

The spokesperson said "roughly 2,500 Christians and 2,000 Jews from Iran have filed asylum claims" since the Khomeini regime was established. "We will continue to monitor the situation in Iran closely and our review of individual applications from all Iranians seeking asylum will, of course, reflect our conclusions as to conditions there."

Previous Standards Were Hard To Meet

Ohrenstein last month wrote to Elliott Abrams, Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs, urging the State Department to reverse its policy of denying requests for asylum. Before the Department's announced policy change, the Manhattan Senator said, "requests for asylum by Iranian Christians and Jews seemed to receive automatic denials, unless there was specific proof of persecution (in addition to minority status). The INS then sent letters to such applicants advising they must establish that their fear of persecution was well-founded."

The INS letters, Ohrenstein said, "placed the 'burden of proof' on the petitioners and demanded material evidence, as well as the respondents' testimony." The Senator said he was now "relieved to learn that Iranian Christians and Jews will no longer be subjected to standards that were often impossible to meet, in order to receive asylum here" in view of the fact that the State Department "has agreed that these two minority groups are the objects of persecution under the Khomeini regime."

Application for asylum are routinely submitted through the INS, then sent to the State Department for advisory opinions. Based on these opinions, the INS decides on individual cases. The State Department has informed the INS of its change in policy and a review of applications will continue on a case by case basis by both agencies, Ohrenstein reported.

TIGHTENING OF ISRAEL-RUMANIA COMMERCIAL TIES ARE IN THE OFFING

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Jan. 6 (JTA) -- Premier Menachem Begin met today with Vassily Pugnau, an emissary of President Nicolae Ceausescu of Rumania, in what was later described as a "very fruitful" discussion. A spokesman for the Prime Minister's

Office said the meeting would result in tightening commercial ties between Israel and Rumania.

But political observers here expressed disbelief that Begin and his Rumanian visitor spent almost two hours talking about commercial matters. David Kimche, Director General of the Foreign Ministry, was the only other official present at the meeting. Pugnau said before it began that he had brought Begin an oral message from Ceausescu.

Begin's spokesman said the Premier had accepted "in principle" an invitation to visit Rumania when his health and official duties permitted. Begin visited Rumania shortly after his election in 1977.

SOME 60,000 CIVIL SERVANTS STAGE A ONE-DAY STRIKE

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Jan. 6 (JTA) -- Government services were paralyzed today as an estimated 60,000 civil servants took what they termed "organized leave" for the day. The one-day strike was called to press demands for increased pay for the lowest grade of government employees. Post offices were closed, trains were halted, government offices were closed and radio and television silenced apart from news bulletins.

The only government offices exempted by the strike committee were those in the Defense Ministry. Hospitals maintained a skeleton staff and services were similar to those on Shabbat.

Civil Service Commissioner Eliezer Hochster pointed out that government workers had received increased pay some months ago, and he was prepared to entertain additional increases for the lower paid workers, but could not agree to the full demands of the strike committee. The government said all strikers today would have one day's pay deducted from their next pay check.

BACKGROUND REPORT 80 PERCENT OF AUSTRIAN POPULATION HARBORS ANTI-SEMITIC SENTIMENTS

By Monika Brenner and Reinhard Engel

VIENNA, Jan. 6 (JTA) -- After 36 years of democratic government, a prospering economy and social and political stability, anti-Semitic sentiments ranging from moderate to strong are still held by 80 percent of the Austrian population. This phenomenon occurs in a country of 1.6 million where the Jewish community numbers barely 8,000. And, paradoxically, one of the most popular politicians in Austria is Chancellor Bruno Kreisky who is Jewish.

The barometer of anti-Semitism was recently measured by Dr. Hildegard Weiss of the Institute of Sociology at the University of Vienna. Her 200-page dissertation on the subject was prepared to qualify her for the position of permanent lecturer at the university.

Weiss told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that there are roughly three sets of attitudes toward Jews in Austria. Only 20 percent of the population is completely free of anti-Jewish prejudice she reported. "Those holding indifferent to moderately strong anti-Semitic views comprise 60 percent and those with strong anti-Semitic prejudice 20 percent," she said. The variations in the intensity of anti-Semitic

views were demonstrated in the responses to the questionnaire Weiss used in her study. Asked, "Should there be a limit placed on the amount of property and land Jews can acquire," 20.5 percent replied affirmatively. Asked if they would oppose the marriage of their children into a Jewish family, 22.5 percent of parents said they would. Well over a quarter of the respondents -- 29.4 percent -- said they would not object "if somebody around you talks disparagingly about Jews."

Weiss said the results of her survey corresponded to a similar one she made in 1976. Weiss found furthermore that there was no strong correlation between anti-Semitism and age or affluence as some theories suggest. She pointed out that poverty has been largely eradicated in Austria so dislike of Jews cannot be attributed to envy or to the search for a scapegoat for economic deprivation as was the case between the two world wars.

Factors Influencing Anti-Semitism

The most important factors influencing anti-Semitic prejudices are level of education and the opinions of former or current peers and relatives, Weiss said. People lacking higher education are considerably more hostile toward Jews, she found. But within families, prejudices seem to be passed from generation to generation without any discernable relation to sociological factors.

For example, Jews are still believed to control banks and financial institutions, when, in fact, they are virtually non-existent in those areas in Austria today. There was a correlation between prejudice and geography. Rural people tended to be more anti-Semitic than city dwellers, but that corresponded to their relatively lower level of education, Weiss noted.

She observed that people with a university or gymnasium (roughly equivalent to junior college) education showed less hostility toward Jews. But this is due as much to social unacceptability as to their humanistic training, she said. Intellectuals, public employees, teachers and white collar workers would be breaking the rules of their social class if they were openly anti-Semitic, according to Weiss. Consequently, a high percentage of those people simply refused to answer questions which pin-pointed the extent of anti-Semitic prejudice.

Personal contact with Jews reduced the tendency to discrimination, Weiss reported. But because of the small size of the Jewish population this was possible for a minority of Austrians. Only 14 percent of her respondents said that anti-Semitic attitudes were grossly out of step with reality. But some people believed that Jews comprised 10 percent of the Austrian population, which would put their number at over 100,000. The old Nazi charge of Jewish domination of finance and foreign policy was often expressed, she said.

Positions Of Political Parties

According to the study, anti-Semitism decreased in proportion to interest in political matters and information on the subject. Weiss said that the rightwing National Democratic Party was able to garner three percent of the vote in the last elections only because of public apathy.

She found, however, that members of the Freiheitliche Partei (Free Party) and its sympathizers were especially hostile toward Jews. Anti-Semitic prejudice was somewhat stronger among members of the conservative Volkspartei (Peoples Party) than members of Kreisky's Socialist Party.

Weiss contrasted the degree of anti-Semitism in the Socialist Party today with the situation before World War II. At that time, the Christlichsoziale Partei (Christian Socialist Party), precursor of the Peoples Party, was outspokenly anti-Semitic whereas the Social Democrats carried most of the Jewish vote and had a number of leading Jews among its functionaries. She attributed the prejudice within the Socialist Party today to the large number of poorly educated working class voters who support it.

Anti-Semitic feelings do not necessarily translate into hostility toward Israel, Weiss found. Anti-Semites disapprove of Israel more than others but there is a considerable number of Jew-haters who admire Israel. A number of ex-Nazis are impressed by the military successes of the Israeli army, she said.

According to Weiss, her depressing statistics are not limited to Austria. Other Western European countries and the United States show similar levels of prejudice, she said.

CABINET TO CONSIDER COMPROMISE COMPENSATION FOR YAMIT SETTLERS

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Jan. 6 (JTA) -- A Cabinet sharply divided over compensation to the Yamit settlers will meet at Premier Menachem Begin's home tomorrow morning to consider a compromise package that reportedly would cost the government more than 4 billion Shekels.

The package was worked out between Deputy Premier and Agriculture Minister Simcha Ehrlich and the settlers of Yamit and Rafah in northern Sinai who must relocate after the region is returned to Egypt next April. Ehrlich insists the deal was "the best obtainable" if any agreement was to be reached.

But Finance Minister Yoram Aridor promptly announced that he would oppose it because the sum violated government guidelines. The 4 billion Shekel figure was reported by Israel Radio tonight but there was no official confirmation.

Deputy Premier and Housing Minister David Levy is also expected to oppose the settlement as a sell-out to the settlers. Levy has been the most outspoken of several Cabinet Ministers who have been urging the government to crack down on the Sinai settlers and the Gush Emunim settlers who have joined them in disorderly acts aimed at preventing Israel's withdrawal. Ehrlich has threatened to wash his hands of the entire matter if the settlement is rejected.

He is expected to have the support of Defense Minister Ariel Sharon who is the minister most sympathetic to the settlers' demands. Political observers said the decision would depend on Begin's position which remains unknown. The Premier, recovering from a painful hip injury, has not attended recent Cabinet meetings. Both Aridor and Ehrlich are key supporters and he will be loath to cross either one of them, observers said tonight.

JEWISH AGENCY IN DISPUTE WITH AUSTRIA OVER PROCESSING SOVIET JEWS

JERUSALEM, Jan. 6 (JTA) -- The Jewish Agency charged today that the Austrian government has taken measures that force it to abandon the hotel it uses in Vienna to process Soviet Jews for immigra-

tion to Israel. According to Leon Dulzin, chairman of the Jewish Agency and World Zionist Organization Executives, the Ministry of Interior in Vienna "decided recently and unexpectedly" to allow Jewish and non-Jewish groups, including church organizations "to enter the hostel and operate among Soviet Jews for immigration to countries other than Israel, despite the fact that these people emigrated (from the USSR) with visas for Israel only."

Dulzin said this move was in violation of the Jewish Agency's contract with the Austrian Red Cross which granted it exclusive use of the hostel. He said a meeting between Jewish Agency representatives and the Austrian Interior Ministry is scheduled for January 7.

"But as of January 5, the Austrian Ministry of Interior put into practice administrative steps to impose its new policy," Dulzin said. He said those steps consisted of putting up large posters in the hostel informing the immigrants of aid facilities offered by various Jewish and non-Jewish organizations to help them settle in the United States.

Israeli sources said Israel's Ambassador to Austria, Yissachar Ben-Yaacov, would attend the meeting tomorrow along with Jewish Agency officials.

STEIN RESIGNS WHITE HOUSE POST

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Jan. 6 (JTA) -- Jacob Stein, President Reagan's liaison with the Jewish community, is resigning as of January 31, the White House has announced. Stein, who worked out of the Office of Public Liaison, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency today that his resignation was entirely for personal reasons.

He said he wants to return to the real estate business in which he was engaged for 35 years and to spend more time with his family. He said that no discussions have been held yet on his successor.

Before returning to private life, the 65-year-old former Long Island resident will serve as a member of the U.S. delegation to the United Nations Human Rights Commission in Geneva. He said he would spend about seven weeks there.

Role In The White House

Stein was named to the Reagan White House after the Administration first denied that it would have a special liaison to the Jewish community or other ethnic groups such as the Carter Administration had. Stein was a member of the Coalition for Reagan-Bush, a group of Jewish Republicans who supported Reagan's election in 1980.

As White House liaison, he represented the Administration at various Jewish meetings and participated in the meetings that Jewish groups such as the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations had with Reagan and other Administration officials.

Stein is a former chairman of the Presidents Conference and former president of the United Synagogue of America, the congregational organization of Conservative Judaism. He has been a member of the Board of Governors of the World Jewish Congress.

ANTI-SEMITIC BIAS FOUND IN ITALY

NEW YORK, Jan. 6 (JTA) -- Anti-Semitic prejudice -- but without malevolence -- has been found in Italy in surveys conducted in an isolated rural area and in the two largest cities, Rome and Milan, the World Jewish Congress reported

today. The results were analyzed for broad trends by the Jewish Documentation Center of Milan, a research organization that monitors anti-Semitic incidents in Italy.

The most revealing was a series of short interviews, published in the Rome Jewish community's monthly journal, Shalom. They were conducted by a young anthropologist at the University of Arezzo, Tuscany, in townships and villages of the nearby Casentino Valley where the church archives contain records of many trials against Jews in the middle ages and later.

According to the report, "The question asked was 'How do you picture a Jew?'" and "the answers contained fantasy, folktales, stereotypes based on hearsay and legends, a general mistrust of Jews... Ancient maledictions were related by students, clerks and peasant women as though they had happened yesterday."

Absence Of Malevolence

But, the WJC reported, "Although there was much repetition of the classic stereotypes -- Jews gained riches as usurers, killed Christ -- the interviews were impressed by the absence of malevolence with which these 'facts' were related. A former teacher explained that, while there was no racism in the valley, there remains a traditional negative attitude toward Jews, much of it motivated by economic factors. But he pointed out that during the war, with many Jews in the area forced to hide, there was not a single case of betrayal."

Similar interviews conducted in Rome and Milan "showed no hatred or even strong dislike though there was clear prejudice... expressed with great civility." Respondents overestimated the number of Jews in Italy. "While Italy's total Jewish population is about 35,000, the guesses ranged from 500,000 to five million," the report said.

According to the WJC, experts at the Documentation Center in Milan have concluded that the interviews showed basic ignorance and confusion much more than hatred and racism. An independent finding of the Center indicated that the increase of anti-Semitic episodes in Italy was of fascist or neo-Nazi origin while church and religious inspired incidents have decreased sharply.

HAIG TO VISIT MIDEAST NEXT WEEK

WASHINGTON, Jan. 6 (JTA) -- Secretary of State Alexander Haig will visit the Middle East next week, the State Department announced today. He will fly to Israel and Egypt after attending a NATO foreign ministers meeting in Brussels which begins Monday. The announcement said his meetings with Israeli and Egyptian leaders would focus on the Palestinian autonomy talks and other subjects. Haig had been scheduled to visit the Mideast last month but cancelled it when the government of Poland imposed martial law in the country.

JERUSALEM (JTA) -- An agreement for increased economic cooperation between Israel and Canada was reached here Wednesday. A letter of understanding signed by Commerce and Industry Minister Gideon Patt and the visiting Canadian Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce, Herbert Gray, allows Israel to bid for contracts to sell equipment to Canada's Defense Ministry. Canada would also encourage its private sector to purchase more Israeli goods. Canada sold Israel \$72 million worth of products last year against imports from Israel of only \$40.7 million.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES POWER STRUGGLE AMONG CONSERVATIVE JEWS CONTINUES ON BEST WAY TO CREATE CONSERVATIVE ZIONIST GROUP

By Ben Gallob

NEW YORK, Jan. 6 (JTA) — A power struggle is underway within American Conservative Judaism over the best way to create a large Conservative Zionist organization qualified for membership in the American Zionist Federation (AZF).

The goal is to give American Conservative Jews a strong voice in the World Zionist Organization and to strengthen the Conservative movement's fight for recognition in Israel, denied to it by the dominant Orthodox rabbinate there, according to information provided by qualified sources to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

The protagonists in the conflict are Mercaz, the three-year-old "Movement for the Reaffirmation of Conservative Zionism" and the United Synagogue of America, the association of Conservative congregations. Rabbi Stanley Rabinowitz of Washington, president of Mercaz, lists Mercaz membership at 10,000. The United Synagogue claims a total membership of 1.5 million in its affiliated congregations.

Both Mercaz and United Synagogue leaders agree there should be one big Conservative Zionist organization, but Mercaz leaders point to the fact that Mercaz has been accepted for membership in the AZF, the coordinating agency for all American Zionist organizations; and that, accordingly Mercaz, structurally reorganized to handle a mass membership, should be the big Conservative Zionist organization.

Last November 22, Rabinowitz and Rabbi Wolfe Kelman, executive vice president of the Rabbinical Assembly, the association of Conservative rabbis, were formally voted in as AZF board members, representing Mercaz.

Powerful elements in the United Synagogue feel that Mercaz cannot build a mass membership and have proposed an admittedly novel concept of applying to the AZF for mass membership of a United Synagogue-sponsored Conservative Zionist group.

Sees Amicable Solution

Rabinowitz told the JTA, in a telephone interview, that he felt "confident" the struggle between the protagonists could be worked out amicably. He said his confidence was based on the results of a meeting he had in Washington Dec. 28 with Marshall Wolke, a Chicago businessman who was elected president of the United Synagogue at its biennial convention last November.

Rabinowitz told the JTA that, at the Dec. 28 meeting, he had been informed that Wolke had completed formation of a committee to negotiate the "outstanding issues," and that the committee would meet "within the next three weeks" with Mercaz representatives "to work out a procedure that will enable us to cooperate in mounting a mass membership campaign and that will permit us to face the forthcoming World Zionist Congress as a united group."

Rabinowitz was asked by the JTA whether Wolke understood, in the Dec. 28 meeting, that the "united group" to which Rabinowitz referred was an enlarged Mercaz. Rabinowitz replied, "well, he knows our position."

Rabinowitz said the timetable for a meeting between the United Synagogue committee and Mercaz leaders to work out agreement on the pro-

posed cooperative membership drive was dictated by the June 30 deadline for the filing of lists of members eligible to participate in elections for the forthcoming World Zionist Congress.

Seeking An Accommodation

The United Synagogue has scheduled a board meeting in Atlantic City Jan. 17. But Rabbi Benjamin Kreitman, United Synagogue executive vice president, told the JTA that the Wolke committee could not possibly prepare recommendations in time for the Jan. 17 meeting. He said the meeting to which Rabinowitz referred would probably be held at United Synagogue headquarters in Manhattan.

Last month Wolke told the JTA that his new administration would seek to work out an accommodation with Mercaz in the hope of negotiating the "one big Conservative Zionist movement."

But he also told the JTA that failing such an accommodation, the United Synagogue would probably proceed with its tentative plan to bring the United Synagogue, as a corporate body, into the AZF. The rationale for such a United Synagogue-sponsored Zionist group, according to proponents of the proposal, was the endorsement by a United Synagogue board meeting in Jerusalem, last March, of the Jerusalem Program, the prerequisite for AZF membership.

There has been considerable debate among those who favor seeking to bring into the AZF the entire United Synagogue movement, using some kind of Zionist label, as to just how this could be done, the JTA was told by several sources. An AZF spokesperson told the JTA last December that AZF rules would not permit the United Synagogue to bring its congregations as a corporate body into the AZF and then sign up individual congregants to the Jerusalem Program.

Wolke, in one of several telephone conversations with the JTA after the November convention, admitted the "en masse" proposal had problems and that "the machinery still has to be worked out."

Background Of The Struggle

In an earlier message to Mercaz members on Dec. 4 Rabinowitz wrote that it was his understanding that the United Synagogue planned "to create a separate instrumentality to enter the (American) Zionist Federation. This procedure, if effective, would create two Conservative Zionist organizations, which would hardly benefit either Zionism or the Conservative movement."

Wolke was authorized by a 1981 United Synagogue convention resolution to name the negotiating committee, which mandated him to "develop and implement the means by which the force and influence of the Conservative movement in America can be effectively carried to the World Zionist Organization and Israel."

The 1981 convention also issued a news release, described by Rabinowitz as "misleading," which declared that the delegates had acted to involve American Conservative synagogues in the Zionist movement through a United Synagogue-affiliated Zionist organization which would belong to the AZF.

The JTA was told that Reform leaders are watching with great interest the struggle within American Conservative Judaism because Reform Judaism is also rejected by the Israeli Orthodox rabbinate. In recent years, the refusal of that rabbinate to recognize the legitimacy of both Conservative and Reform Judaism and their rabbis, congregations and institutions has created a growing rift between Israel and diaspora communities, particularly American Jews.

NASHVILLE (JTA) — Two Ku Klux Klan members convicted of plotting to bomb a synagogue here have been sentenced to prison.