

Second Thoughts On Exchange Of Prisoners SERIOUS CONCERN EXPRESSED OVER THE LONG-RANGE CONSEQUENCES OF THE ACTION By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Nov. 29 (JTA) — Some of Israel's leading writers, editors and military commentators are having sober second thoughts over the euphoria that swept the country last week when six prisoners of war captured by the Palestine Liberation Organization in Lebanon 14 months ago, returned home — in exchange for some 4,500 Palestinians and Lebanese held prisoner by Israel in Lebanon and Israel. (See separate story for President Chaim Herzog's reaction.)

These observers of the national scene, writing in major dailies, have expressed serious concern on two counts: first, the frenzied heroes' welcome given the returned POWs was not warranted by the circumstances and could have long-range deleterious effects on the morale and fighting spirit of the Israel Defense Force; second, Israel seems to have abandoned its long-standing policy of never surrendering to terrorist "blackmail."

Victory For PLO Seen

The prisoner exchange, given the vast disparity in numbers returned by each side, was clearly a moral and political victory for the PLO. Israel released men the PLO wanted released, among them many hard-core terrorists, and the long-range meaning of this acquiescence is yet to be determined.

"The practical damage of the repatriation extravaganza is that we ourselves encourage the other side, the PLO or whoever, to raise the ante, the price to be paid for the release of prisoners" in the future, according to veteran journalist Shalom Cohen writing in The Jerusalem Post yesterday.

Military correspondent Eitan Haber, writing in Yediot Achronot Sunday, measured the extent of the erosion of Israel's no-surrender policy. The government's rationale for the POW exchange was that the lives of the six soldiers were in immediate danger due to the warfare in northern Lebanon between PLO dissidents challenging Yasser Arafat's leadership and Arafat loyalists who were holding the Israeli prisoner.

Recalls Past No-Surrender Policy

Haber pointed out that lives have been sacrificed time and again in the past to uphold the principle of no-surrender to blackmail. He recalled the massacre of children in Maalot when Israeli troops charged the schoolhouse where they were being held hostage by PLO gunmen rather than accede to terrorist demands; the similar incident when terrorists seized the Savoy Hotel in Tel Aviv; and the 1972 massacre of the Israeli Olympics team in Munich.

In 1976, Israel carried out the long distance raid to rescue hostages held by terrorists at Entebbe airport in Uganda, despite the appreciable risk to the lives of the hostages and members of the rescue team, one of the leaders of which, Yoni Netanyahu, was killed.

Haber suggested, not without irony, that the policy turnaround began under the Likud government which has consistently taken a harder line toward terrorism and the Palestinians than its predecessor Labor regimes. The "threshold of suffering" of the nation has "dangerously declined" over recent years. "The government and the army must carefully think about what they have done," Haber wrote.

Anomaly Of Public Reaction Cited

Other commentators stressed the anomaly of the public reaction to the POW exchange. They pointed out that the capture of the six soldiers was hardly a glorious or edifying episode. The full details of how they were surrounded by a PLO unit on the front line in Lebanon in September, 1982 have never been released. But one fact is clear — they were not captured during a fight. No shots were fired.

Retired Brig. Gen. Yaacov Hasdai summed up the feelings of many observers in a newspaper column titled "Joy--But Not Honor." He urged the nation to make a careful distinction between the return of heroes and that of ordinary soldiers who had the misfortune of falling into enemy hands.

Haaretz columnist Natan Dunevitz noted bitterly that the country paid far less attention to tales of glory and heroism in battle for which the highest orders of bravery were awarded, often posthumously. The army publishes accounts but there is no national frenzy of excitement as there was when these six young men came home, he wrote.

"Champagne was poured on their heads as though they were some winning basketball team," Dunevitz continued. He recalled the far more modest celebrations that greeted the return of Yom Kippur War POWs. He disclosed that the late former Chief of Staff, Gen. Haim Laskov, had bitterly criticized even those celebrations as damaging to the very fibre of the army's courage.

Laskov said at the time, according to Dunevitz: "Soldiers who lost their limbs because they fought back harder than these prisoners were not accorded such a welcome ... Can you imagine what warping effect this can have on youngsters who might have to stand and fight sometime in the future."

Media Charged For Whipping Up Frenzy

Inevitably, critics seek scapegoats and the Israeli media, particularly radio and television, have become the target of charges that it whipped up the popular adulation bestowed on the six returned POWs. Shalom Cohen's piece in The Jerusalem Post, headlined "Sorry Spectacle," denounced "the wild celebration which was semi-organized and which verged on infantilism."

According to Cohen, "the effects on the national psyche, the exaggeration, synthetic self-gratification and the make-believe seen in the celebration did incalculable harm. The double-think of turning an unavoidable surrender to blackmail into a victory to be celebrated leads to dishonest obscurantism. A habitual refusal to face hard facts is not an asset for this beleaguered island. We descend to a level of a TV serial like 'Dallas', that of canned myth."

"Unfortunately," wrote Cohen, "an accusing finger must be pointed at the media which unleashed their professional efficiency as impressarios of pathos ... the original culprit was the Broadcasting Authority ..."

Haaretz faulted the media, especially Kol Israel Radio, for setting the tone. The State-owned radio decided last Thursday to cancel its regular programs for day-long coverage of the POW return. Yosef Lapid, director general of the Broadcasting Authority, rejected the criticism. Radio and television merely covered the events, they did not create or magnify them, he said.

HERZOG, EITAN ASSAIL HEROES' WELCOME FOR SIX ISRAELI POWs

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Nov. 29 (JTA) -- President Chaim Herzog said today that he "absolutely agreed" with former Chief of Staff Gen. Rafael Eitan who severely criticized the heroes' welcome which greeted the return last Thursday of six Israeli prisoners of war held by the Palestine Liberation Organization in exchange for some 4,600 Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners released by Israel.

Eitan, who was Chief of Staff during the war in Lebanon, told the Tiberias Rotary Club yesterday that the six POWs "fell into captivity in a disgraceful way." He did not rule out court-martialing them if the army's investigation of the circumstances of their capture in September, 1982, found such action was called for.

Herzog, talking to reporters here, said the POWs had surrendered "shamefully." He stressed that the Israel Defense Force had, early on, established "basic criteria" of soldierly conduct. "God forbid that we should fall below those standards," he warned.

Herzog, a former general in the Israeli army and chief of military intelligence, was an officer in the British army during World War II. He became one of Israel's leading military affairs commentators and served as its Ambassador to the United Nations prior to his election to the Presidency early this year.

The IDF's standards were set by Palmach during the War of Independence in 1948, Herzog said. "These standards have brought us safely to where we are today. We must not acquiesce in any reduction of them." Later, Herzog's spokesman, Ami Gluska, told reporters the President was not recommending court-martials for the six returned prisoners. That is for the military to determine, he said.

Eitan, for his part, implicitly supported the government's decision to exchange the Palestinian and Lebanese prisoners for six Israelis when he recalled that in the past, too, Israel had agreed to numerically lopsided deals. He said the country was right to rejoice over the return of the six men "but not to go wild."

PROPOSE WORLD JURIDICAL COMMISSION TO CATALOGUE LOSSES BY FORMER JEWISH RESIDENTS OF ARAB COUNTRIES

By Maurice Samuelson

LONDON, Nov. 29 (JTA) -- Fomer United States Supreme Court Justice Arthur Goldberg called here for the creation of an international juridical commission to catalogue the losses suffered by former Jewish inhabitants of Arab countries.

Delivering the keynote address at the three-day second international conference of the World Organ-

ization of Jews from Arab Countries (WOJAC), which opened yesterday, Goldberg said that a definitive report, compiled by leading Jewish and non-Jewish jurists, was essential if appropriate redress were ever to be made for the dispossession of the former Jewish populations of the Arab world.

Goldberg, a former Ambassador to the United Nations, urged the conference to speak up for the 6,000 Jews of Syria and the 60,000 Jews in Iran, who he said were in "virtual house arrest."

He added "for too long your voice has been silent."

Conference organizers said that about 800,000 Jews lost their homes in Arab countries, roughly the same number as the Arabs displaced as a result of the Arab-Israeli conflict. "In both cases those who were uprooted and their descendants number about two million today," a WOJAC spokesman said.

Another Conference Aim

While the conference is attempting to bring into focus the Jewish exodus from Arab countries, comparable to the Arab flight from Palestine, another aim, according to conference organizers, is "to let bygones be bygones, and to work for a resolution of the sufferings of both parties to the Arab Israeli conflict and to promote peace in the Middle East."

The WOJAC called for recognition of the shared sufferings of these peoples in order to encourage peace and understanding, "and to open the road to a Middle East settlement based on mutual recognition."

The primary force behind the conference is Mordechai Ben Porat, a Minister Without Portfolio in the Israeli Cabinet, who recently launched a proposal for rehabilitating Palestinian refugees currently living in camps in the West Bank. Ben Porat, originally from Iraq, intends to make this idea a theme of the conference.

Goldberg, in his address yesterday, recalled his role in drafting United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, and said that its call for a just solution of the refugee problems was deliberately phrased in such a way as to take account of the mass Jewish exodus from Arab lands as well as the Arab flight from Palestine. Restitution for Arab Jewry was also explicitly provided for in the Camp David accords, he said.

BLUM CHARGES THAT THE PLIGHT OF SOVIET JEWS IS GETTING WORSE

By Yitzhak Rabi

UNITED NATIONS, Nov. 29 (JTA) -- Israel charged today that the plight of Soviet Jews has worsened in the last year and accused the Soviet Union of closing its gates to Jewish emigration and conducting an anti-Semitic campaign against its Jewish citizens.

Addressing the Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee (The Third Committee), Ambassador Yehuda Blum of Israel charged that in the last year the Soviet authorities "have shown themselves even more callous in their attitude toward the Jews in their midst, more brazen in their flagrant disregard of international legal norms, and more contemptuous of their international obligations as well as of the opinion of the civilized world."

Blum said that while in 1982 the Soviet allowed 2,700 Jews to emigrate, in "the current year, as of 30 September 1982, fewer than 1,100 have been granted permission to leave."

He charged that the halting of Jewish emigration "has by no means meant a relaxation of the pressures upon Soviet Jews." He said that the Jews in the Soviet

Union are discriminated against and are denied their religious and cultural rights, including their right to study Hebrew and to have Hebrew text books or publications on Jewish history.

Urges End To Anti-Semitic Incitement

Continuing, Blum said that Soviet Jews are subject to "the increasing volume and ferocity of the anti-Semitic incitement in the government-controlled media, masquerading as anti-Zionism, which has recently introduced an ominous new element into the plight of Soviet Jewry."

The Israeli envoy declared: "In the name of decency and common sense, we call upon the Soviet government to put an end to this ominous campaign of anti-Semitic incitement. We call upon the Soviet authorities to conform their policies and practices regarding Soviet Jews to the international obligations of the Soviet Union as well as to Soviet law and, in particular, to end their discrimination against the Jewish minority."

The Jews Of Syria And Yemen

Turning to another issue, the plight of the remnant Jewish communities in Syria and Yemen, Blum called on the governments of those countries to allow their Jewish citizens to emigrate. He said that Syria "as a rule" denies Syrian Jews the right to emigrate. Those few who are granted exit permits, Blum charged, are forced to deposit some \$5,000 and leave their families behind in Syria as a guarantee of their return.

"We call upon the government of Syria to fulfill its commitments under the Helsinki Accord by honoring the fundamental human rights of the Jewish community there and by permitting unrestricted emigration for those who wish to leave," Blum stated.

He charged that the human rights of the members of the tiny Jewish community in Yemen are "gravely violated." "They have been forbidden any postal communications with relatives and Jewish communities outside Yemen," Blum said, adding:

"They are not permitted to leave Yemen, whether temporarily or permanently. Moreover, the authorities have denied entry visas to Jews of other countries who wish to visit relatives in Yemen." Blum also said that the Jewish community in Yemen must be allowed to receive religious articles from abroad.

REAGAN ANNOUNCES THAT U.S.-ISRAELI GROUP WILL WORK FOR CLOSER COOPERATION By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Nov. 29 (JTA) -- President Reagan and Israeli Premier Yitzhak Shamir ended two days of talks in the White House today with Reagan announcing U.S. agreement for several steps sought by Israel, including the creation of a joint U.S.-Israeli political-military group which would work toward closer cooperation between the two countries.

An Israeli reporter noted that Shamir and Defense Minister Moshe Arens would as a result of the visit be having a happy Chanukah when they leave Washington tomorrow on the eve of the eight-day celebration. "I wish to once again thank the President and the people of the United States for their support of Israel," Shamir said after today's two-hour meeting at the White House.

"We reconfirm the long-standing bonds of friendship and cooperation between our two countries and express our determination to strengthen and develop them in the cause of our mutual interest," Reagan said.

The President, who called Israel a "close friend and ally," announced the steps to be taken, including the joint political military group which Shamir said would have its first meeting in January. The meeting will be in Washington and then will alternate with Jerusalem on a semi-annual basis.

Reagan said the committee would discuss such things as combined planning, joint exercises and the stockpiling of U.S. military equipment in Israel. A senior Administration official said later that this list was "illustrative but not exclusive."

Reagan stressed that the "priority attention" by the committee would be given "to the threat to our mutual security by increased Soviet involvement in the Middle East." He also spoke of the "common concern with the Soviet presence and arms buildup in Syria."

A senior Administration official who briefed reporters later stressed that there were no plans for a joint Israel-U.S. attack on Syria and that the joint committee could not be seen as a threat to any Arab country.

Reagan also said the U.S. will provide more economic and military aid to Israel. Shamir said he hoped the U.S. would take into account "the great sacrifices made by Israel" in the peace process by abandoning its oil wells in Sinai and by having to build new military installations to replace the ones left in the Sinai.

The senior official said that no agreement has been made on the aid figure although the U.S. does want to increase the percentage of the aid given as a grant rather than as a loan. This was still being discussed by Israel and the U.S. at the State Department this afternoon.

Another agreement announced by Reagan was to allow the Israelis to use the \$350 million Congress voted in military aid funds for developing its Lavie jet fighter plane in the U.S. and \$250 million for development in Israel. Israel will also be allowed to spend \$200 million of foreign military aid funds in Israel for its Sinai redeployment projects. It is usually required that foreign military aid funds be spent in the U.S. Reagan said that Israel will also be allowed to bid on projects to supply the U.S. military forces.

Reagan said that Israel and the U.S. will also discuss setting up a free trade zone. The Administration official explained that this would be similar to the one Israel will have with the European Economic Community in 1989 and will allow Israeli products to be sold in the U.S. and U.S. products to be sold in Israel duty free.

One decision not announced by Reagan but revealed by the senior official was that the U.S. will resume delivery of cluster bomb artillery shells to Israel once an agreement is reached that contains both a definition and guarantee against violation of their use. The deliveries were suspended in July, 1982, a month after Israel invaded Lebanon.

On Lebanon, Reagan said "We affirmed our commonly held goals of a sovereign, independent Lebanon free of all foreign forces and of security for Israel's northern borders." He said that "we agree that every effort must be made to expedite" the May 17 Israeli-Lebanese agreement.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES THE JEWISH ROOTS IN CHINA

By Rochelle Saidel

(Part Two, Of A Three Part Series)

KAIFENG, China, Nov. 29 (JTA) -- Three descendants of Chinese Jews met here with the 32 participants in an American Jewish Congress tour of the People's Republic of China. Zhao Pingyu, 60, Shi Zhongyu, 48, and Shi Yulian, 60, all members of the original seven Jewish clans who settled in Kaifeng before the 12th century, answered questions about the now officially extinct community of their ancestors.

Described by the government tourist guide as "descendants of Chinese Jews," the three men are government bureaucrats who said they have played this scene many times. Zhao said he had met with Jewish visitors "scores of times" for some 42 years.

Although none practices Judaism (nor any other religion), they all said they consider themselves "Chinese Jews." They and their children still state on official forms that their "nationality" is Jewish. Their families, however, have not been practicing Jews for three or four generations.

Remnants Of Some Customs

Ritual circumcisions are no longer performed, but there are still remnants of some customs, Zhao said. Acting as spokesperson most of the time (with translation by the AJCongress tour guide), Zhao cited as current vestiges of Judaism the use of a form of matzah during Passover and the avoidance of the raising of pigs.

(The government neither encourages nor prevents the practice of religion. In China, there are 54 nationalities, most with their own religion. The population includes 2.3 percent Buddhist and 1.3 percent is "other." Members of the Communist Party -- 5.6 percent of the population -- cannot be members of a religious group.)

Zhao explained that the 1850's Yellow River flood marked the end of the formal Jewish community in Kaifeng. With the synagogue leveled by the flood, ceremonial objects lost, the last rabbi dead, impoverishment replacing former affluence, and no one with knowledge of Hebrew, the community disintegrated.

Today, Communism has taken the place of religion, he said. But Judaism supposedly faded here almost 100 years before China's 1949 "liberation" by the Communists.

Remembering a Jewish Past

When he was eight years old, there was a mezzuzah on the doorpost of his family's home, Zhao remembers. While the mezzuzah is no longer there, the family has lived in the same house for generations, passing on their Jewish history with continuity. Zhao said that the Jews of Kaifeng can trace their lineage as far back as the Sung Dynasty (960-1126 C.E.).

Upon their arrival in China, the Zhao emperor gave them seven Chinese names, including his own: Zhao, Gao, Ai, Li, Shi, Jin and Zhang. These surnames and noses more prominent than the flat-bridged ones of most other Chinese are said to be the clues leading to descendants of Jews in Kaifeng today.

Asked whether he felt any special kinship with the AJCongress group because they are Jewish, Zhao

said: "Of course, we have a special warm feeling for the Jews of the world." He said that he and the others knew about the Torah, and about the history of the ancient homeland of the Jewish people.

Zhao said his family home was near the site of the synagogue, which the AJCongress group had visited earlier. They had also visited the main street of the former community, around the corner from the synagogue site. The street was formerly called "The Lane of Plucked Out Sinew," referring to the deveining of some cuts of meat to render them kosher. Today a new name still links the street with its Jewish past: "Teaching Scripture Lane."

The 24-hour visit to Kaifeng was, for this correspondent, the most fascinating and the most frustrating part of AJCongress's 18-day tour to China. Following a set itinerary that limited the visit in Kaifeng to 24 hours made it impossible to pursue in depth the question of Kaifeng Jews. Wandering alone in China is not easy under the best of circumstances, and inability to converse in Chinese adds to the difficulties.

Questions, But No Answers

But these difficulties only spurred a greater effort to find answers to questions: are there any Chinese Jews left in Kaifeng who are privately practicing at least some aspects of Judaism much more vigorously than the three men with whom we spoke? Are there any Chinese "Marranos" in Kaifeng?

I was haunted by the feeling that there might be descendants of Chinese Jews who were "more Jewish" than the three who seemed to be trotted out for every visiting group. I wanted to seek out others, and talk to them without the presence of government tourist guides or officials. I wanted to visit the homes of these Chinese Jews, to see if their private practice deviated from what the three "official" government-selected representatives of the community had said.

During a free hour before our scheduled departure, I took to the streets to soak in the flavor of the city. Without realizing it, I began examining the facial features of passersby, looking for potential Jews. At one point, an old bearded man wearing a Chinese skullcap rode down the street in a wagon pulled by a tricycle.

His driver stopped for a red light, and the old man and I looked at each other for what seemed a long time. Perhaps the romance of the story of the Kaifeng Jews had affected me, but I was convinced I had discovered an authentic Kaifeng Jew. When the traffic light turned green, my anonymous "Jew" disappeared; I shall never know whether my intuition was accurate.

(Tomorrow: Part Three)

TEL AVIV (JTA) -- An Israel Defense Force patrol near the town of Jezzine in south Lebanon Tuesday freed a group of seven Palestinians who had been seized by Christian Phalangist forces. The seven, who had been freed last week from the Ansar prison camp as part of the general prisoner exchange for six Israeli POWs, were trying to cross the Awali River over a bridge near the town, on their way home to villages in the Shouf mountains. The Phalangists detained the seven Palestinians, claiming they were terrorists. The IDF patrol intervened and freed the seven, who then crossed the bridge and continued on to their homes.