

**APPEALS MADE IN ISRAEL NOT TO TURN THE SAVING OF ETHIOPIAN JEWS INTO PARTY-POLITICS INFIGHTING**

By David Landau and Hugh Orgel

JERUSALEM, Jan. 7 (JTA) — Israel's political establishment, spearheaded by President Chaim Herzog, whose office is non-political, appealed today for an end to the mounting flood of recrimination over who was responsible for the publicity fiasco which brought an abrupt halt to the airlift rescue of Ethiopian Jews.

Herzog, in an Israel Radio interview, "begged" the various factions "not to turn a glorious operation — the saving of Ethiopian Jews — into a matter of party-politics infighting." He was referring in part to the attempt by some young Herut activists in the Knesset to place the blame on the Labor Prime Minister, Shimon Peres, who heads the Labor-Likud unity government.

The Prime Minister's Office has come under attack from both left and rightwing elements for holding a press conference last Thursday at which it was confirmed that as many as 10,000 Ethiopian Jews had been airlifted to Israel, via Sudan, since last November. The immediate result was suspension of the airlift, leaving an unknown number of Jews still in Ethiopia or stranded in refugee camps in the Sudan.

**A Pledge By Peres**

Peres pledged today that he would "not rest" until the remainder of the Ethiopian Jewish community was brought to Israel. He will make a statement in the Knesset tomorrow but there will be no debate.

The airlift, though known to the media for some time, was subject to military censorship until last Wednesday when Yehuda Dominitz, director of the Jewish Agency's aliya department, was quoted by the Gush Emunim magazine *Nekuda* as saying the vast majority of Ethiopian Jews was already in Israel. Dominitz's disclosure, to an obscure, small circulation journal, infuriated the rest of the media, forcing the authorities to lift the censorship. The Israeli press and overseas media were filled immediately with sensational accounts of the arrival of Ethiopian Jews in Israel. There was a considerable emphasis on their poor physical condition and the rare-to-Israel tropical diseases from which many suffered.

Sources close to Peres insisted the press conference was the only way to shift attention from the politically charged subject of the airlift from Sudan to the great efforts being made to integrate and absorb the newcomers from Ethiopia in Israel.

**Accusations And Counter-Accusations**

But Haim Aharon, chairman of the Jewish Agency's aliya department, whose first act was to suspend Dominitz for his "leak," attacked the Prime Minister's Office for holding the press conference. Aharon was blasted today by Labor Minister Yaacov Tsur (Labor) who noted that the press conference was conducted jointly by the Jewish Agency and the government.

Many of the questions from reporters were answered by Akiva Levinsky, Jewish Agency treasurer and acting chairman of the Jewish Agency Executive in the absence of Leon Dulzín who is abroad. Tsur contended that the Agency people had been "among the greatest leakers" of the Ethiopian affair.

Dulzín himself hinted broadly that a rescue operation was underway when he addressed the World Zionist Organization-American Section in New York last November. But Dulzín never mentioned the airlift.

In the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Security Committee today, Likud Herut MK Dan Meridor, blasted the Prime Minister's Office for its handling of the affair. For seven years rescue efforts have been going ahead in secret, he said, but now, under a Labor Premier there was "a new culture of government—someone is looking to boost someone's image at any cost."

The organized rescue of Ethiopian Jews did indeed begin shortly after former Premier Menachem Begin and his Likud-led government took office in 1977. But the airlift it inaugurated was forced to end after two flights when Begin's Defense Minister, the late Moshe Dayan, made the politically dangerous disclosure that Israel was selling arms to the Marxist regime in Ethiopia with which it has never had diplomatic relations.

**Seeking To Calm The Waters**

Deputy Premier Yitzhak Shamir, leader of Likud, sought to calm the waters today when he told the Knesset committee to dismiss any notion that a deliberate attempt had been made to sabotage the rescue operation — as implied by some local Ethiopian activists. But Shamir, and Herzog as well, agreed that the press conference had been a mistake.

The efforts to reduce tension resulted in a rare instance of cooperation between the far rightwing Tehiya Party and the leftist Citizens Rights Movement, both opposition factions. Each agreed today to withdraw its motion of non-confidence in the government which had been placed on the Knesset agenda.

Meanwhile, Dulzín said in an interview from Britain today that there was hope the rescue efforts could, somehow, be resumed. The same hope was expressed by other Israeli officials. But most agreed that the immediate need is to end the public mud-slinging.

**THE AIRLIFT STORY**

BRUSSELS, Jan. 7 (JTA) — While Israel was in uproar over the importunate "leaks" by its own officials that forced disclosure of the airlift rescue of Ethiopian Jews, sources here described today how Trans European Airways (TEA), the Belgian charter company engaged for the task, managed to operate the airlift in absolute secrecy since it began last November.

TEA made 40 flights in that period, bringing some 10,000 Ethiopian Jewish refugees from Khartoum, Sudan to Tel Aviv with a brief stopover at Brussels' Zaventem International Airport. The last flight, before TEA withdrew from the operation yesterday, left Brussels at midnight Saturday.

The stopover at Brussels was required because Sudan, an Arab League member-state having no relations whatever with Israel, would not allow direct flights from Khartoum to Tel Aviv. This complicated the maintenance of secrecy. But it was never breached.

#### A Model Of Organization

This was attributed to the model of organization and discipline by the 200 persons mobilized at Brussels airport for various tasks during the two-hour stopover. TEA's Boeing 707s invariably landed at midnight, for refueling and other services. The Belgian authorities listed them as charter flights in transit and they arrived and departed unnoticed. The passengers stayed on the plane during the stopover.

TEA was conducting not only an airlift but an ambulance service. A large number of Ethiopian refugees was suffering from starvation and a variety of tropical diseases. They were given medical care during the flight and the stopover, which, together, totaled 12 hours from Khartoum to Tel Aviv.

The sources here disclosed that several doctors, nurses and volunteers participated in the airlift. The refugees were provided with special diets adapted to their physical condition.

TEA confirmed today that it has suspended the operation. It refused to say why. But the premature disclosure of the airlift in Israel appeared to have disturbed the company's top management.

The charter company, owned by George Gutelman, a Belgian Jew, was originally selected as the airlift carrier because of its good relations with the Sudanese authorities. Each year TEA charter planes carry thousands of Moslems from Khartoum on their annual pilgrimage to Mecca.

It was learned today that the Belgian government had been informed of TEA's assignment which the Israelis dubbed "Operation Moshe."

#### UNICEF Denies Financial Participation

Meanwhile, a spokesman for the United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) denied here any financial participation by that agency in the rescue operation.

The spokesman said "The UNICEF has granted \$5 million for Ethiopia since 1983 and the 'Falasha' children were among the beneficiaries of the aid." He added that "aid to the airlift is not compatible with the UNICEF policy which consists of helping children to grow in their natural environment."

#### JDC ETHIOPIA EFFORTS CONTINUE

By Kevin Freeman

NEW YORK, Jan. 7 (JTA) — The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee reported today that its non-sectarian program for famine relief in Ethiopia is continuing.

The JDC said that since its efforts began on November 1, 82 tons of clothing, cloth, blankets, medicine and medical supplies have been distributed in the Wallow and Bale provinces and other areas affected by the famine.

To date, the JDC has received an estimated \$2 million worth of cash and goods, with \$961,275 in cash received since the JDC "opened its mailbox" to contributions.

The cash figure includes, according to the JDC, \$85,000 from the Central British Fund — World Jew-

ish Relief of London, which has also shipped medicine to Ethiopia. The JDC has received more than 12,000 individual contributions directed to its famine relief operations, as well as additional contributions from synagogues and communities representing other concerned persons.

The JDC has also received permission to operate feeding stations in the Gondar region, and is engaged in negotiations with the Agency for International Development to obtain U.S. surplus foods that would be provided to the feeding stations.

As with previous efforts (Cambodia, 1980; Italy, 1981; and Lebanon, 1982), JDC programs parallel that of Catholic, Protestant and non-sectarian agencies, providing assistance to disaster victims.

#### U.S. SHRUGS OFF JORDANIAN PURCHASE OF SOVIET ARMS

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Jan. 7 (JTA) — The Reagan Administration appeared to shrug off today the announcement by Jordan that it had purchased arms from the Soviet Union, reportedly shoulder-held ground-to-air missiles.

"This would not be the first time Jordan has purchased Soviet equipment," State Department deputy spokesman Alan Romberg said. "Such a sale would be consistent with Jordan's long-standing policy of purchasing military hardware from a variety of sources."

While Jordan has not disclosed details of what it has bought from the Soviet Union, Romberg said "The reported sale appears to be consistent with previous purchases and does not appear to represent any fundamental change in Jordan's traditional defense procurement practices."

King Hussein has made no secret that he was seeking missiles from the USSR after the Reagan Administration, last March, withdrew a proposal to sell 1,600 Stinger shoulder-held ground-to-air missiles to Jordan and 1,200 to Saudi Arabia, because of strong opposition to the sale in Congress.

A similar move occurred in 1981 when Congress demanded that a proposed sale of Hawk missiles to Jordan be required to be fixed in place against Jordan's claimed fear of attack from Syria, so that they could not be used against Israel. Jordan then bought from the Soviet Union 20 mobile batteries of ground-to-air SA-8 missiles and 60 batteries of rapid-fire anti-aircraft cannon.

Romberg would not say today whether any arms requests from Jordan were now being considered by the U.S.

#### LEGION OF HONOR AWARDS

PARIS, Jan. 7 (JTA) — Theo Klein, president of the Representative Council of Major French Jewish organizations (CRIF), was last week awarded the Legion of Honor and appointed a Knight in the order by Prime Minister Laurent Fabius as part of the new year's promotion and awards.

Also appointed Legion of Honor Knights were Enrico Macias, a popular singer and entertainer, Jacques Melamet-Beer, a United Jewish Appeal leader, and Eliahou Kammoon, a former Algerian Jewish leader who now lives in France.

A Jewish judge, Jean Pierre Leon, who heads one of Paris' courts of appeal, was awarded the much higher rank of Commander in the Legion of Honor. Anthropologist Claude Levi Strauss was awarded the still higher rank of Grand Officer.

## SPECIAL TO THE JTA THE SHABBAT OF ETHIOPIAN JEWS

By Wendy Elliman

**SAFED, Jan. 7 (JTA)** — It is late Friday afternoon. In the villages of Ethiopia, the Jews knew that Shabbat had begun when a man's shadow measured 12 paces under the setting sun.

In Safed in northern Israel, the time has been calculated long before, printed in the morning newspapers, announced over radio during the day, and finally signalled with a long steady blast on the air-raid siren as the day fades.

Safed's houses of prayer fill slowly: the 16th century building in Safed's old city in which Rabbi Yosef Karo worked and prayed; the synagogue where one memorable day 400 years ago Rabbi Isaac Luria is said to have summoned Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Aaron, Joseph and David to read from the Torah; the Hasidic congregations founded late last century; the synagogues started by immigrants who settled in Safed after the State was established — Hungarians, Rumanians and Poles, Moroccans and Tunisians; and, the newest synagogue of them all, the Ethiopian synagogue, only six months old, in the basement of one of Safed's three absorption centers for Ethiopian Jews.

### Concentration Is Absolute

Men sit on one side in jeans, sweaters and sneakers donated by Safed residents, skullcaps on their heads. The women, especially the older of them, are mostly in traditional dress, wrapped in large white woven shawls. Infants with big dark eyes are strapped to the backs of girls scarcely beyond their early teens, or quietly nursing at the breast.

Concentration is absolute. One of the dozen Israelis there is leading the service. Each word is read slowly, aloud, the whole room chanting together.

Yaffa is 11 years old. At a swift glance from her mother, she has given up her seat to one of the adults, and stands clutching her prayer-book, her thin finger tracing each word as it is read. "Here?" she asks, every few lines. "Is it here?"

Yaffa began learning Hebrew when she arrived in Israel five months ago. She reads enough to follow, and speaks enough to tell you about herself. She comes from the village of Ambovar, in the Gondar, she says. She came to Israel with her mother, sister and brother. They walked a long way. Her father is dead.

### Prayer Services In Ethiopia Were Different

Yaffa's younger sister stands next to her. She is also called Yaffa. The Jewish Agency official who helped the girls choose their Hebrew names did not realize they were sisters when they both opted for Yaffa.

Shabbat prayer services — the only prayers permitted the Jews in Ethiopia — were different, says the girls' mother, Shoshana. The village would gather in the synagogue, a grass hut with a Star of David on top, at sundown. Their "kess" or priest would intone the prayers in the ancient Ethiopian tongue, punctuated with fervent "amens" from the congregation.

Jews in Ethiopia were all observant, says 16-year-old Shmuel, visiting the family in the Safed absorption center for the weekend from the residential

Youth Aliya village where he has been studying for the past year. If they lapsed in their religious practice, they would leave the villages and were no longer Jews. It was a shock to discover white-skinned Jews in Israel who do not keep Shabbat, he says.

"Shabbat is the Ethiopian Jews' most strictly held observance," says Richard Sivan, a British-born high school chemistry teacher who lives in Safed and comes weekly to the absorption center for Friday night services — usually bringing three or four of his five daughters with him.

### A Common Denominator

"So Shabbat seemed a good place to start making contact with these people from another time and place. What the Jews of Israel and Ethiopia have in common is our identity as Jews. They're here because they're Jewish," Sivan said.

The Friday night prayer service is coming to an end. Shmuel, who is now studying in an integrated class with Israelis at school, is invited to recite the Kiddush. He reads the Hebrew blessings confidently, then sips the wine — looking quickly away from his mother's beam of pride.

The room breaks into song, and some of the men and children begin to dance. They sing "Am Yisrael Hai" ("The People of Israel Live.")

Two Ethiopian children join Sivan, his wife Hilary and their daughters for Shabbat lunch the next day. Their mother has also been invited but, explains Noga, the elder of the two children, she had a dream last night. She dreamed about Noga's father and two elder brothers in Ethiopia, with whom they have had no contact for almost a year. It was a bad dream, says Noga, and she decided not to come.

### An Ancient Tradition

Noga and her four-year-old brother are, like all the Ethiopian Jewish children whom 11-year-old Avi-gail Sivan has met, "much better behaved than us Israeli kids."

They sit at the table, their eyes on the family to see what silverware to take, and when and how to use it. The meal begins with melon. Noga insists that she feed her brother, so he will not spill food on the tablecloth or on his Israeli clothes. The two visitors speak when spoken to, smile a lot, and take in everything with their eyes.

Next comes chicken and salads. The Sivans are observant Jews. They do not cook on Shabbat, and the chicken has been kept warm in the oven since before Shabbat, the previous day. Noga takes a careful mouthful — and spits it out in alarm. She gets up from the table in embarrassment and confusion. "We can't eat this," she says.

The problem is unraveled. Noga has never eaten hot food on Shabbat. The Torah, which Ethiopian Jewry carried with them to the source of the blue Nile where they lived for 2,000 years, says that no fire is allowed on the holy day — and so for two millennia, Ethiopian Jews have shunned heat and light on Shabbat.

### Walked Hundreds Of Miles To Reach Israel

But, long after Ethiopian Jewry became separated from the Jewish world, the oral law that Jewish tradition believes God gave to Moses along with the Torah — amplifying and explaining the Torah's commands — was set down in the collection of writing

known as the Talmud. Following Talmudic guidelines, Jewish communities from Yemen to the Russian Pale, Moscow to New York, enjoy hot food on Shabbat, Naga is told.

She accepts the explanation. She goes into the kitchen to see the oven still burning and returns to the table. She is 12 years old, but she has nonetheless walked hundreds of miles at risk of imprisonment or death, with her brother on her back, hungry and afraid, to reach Israel.

In the months that she has been in the Jewish State, she has adapted to indoor plumbing and electric lights, staircases and stone apartment dwellings, cars and supermarkets, Hebrew and Western clothing, shoes and schooling.

If Israel says that there is a new book called the Talmud, which alters the 2,000-year-old customs of the Jewish villages of Ethiopia, she will adapt to that as well.

#### BARBIE TRIAL LIKELY TO BE HELD BEFORE THE END OF 1985

PARIS, Jan. 7 (JTA) -- Judge Christian Riss, the investigating magistrate compiling evidence to try Nazi war criminal Klaus Barbie, completed his file Saturday and passed it on to the public prosecutor's office which will decide what formal charges will be brought against Barbie and when his trial will begin.

According to court sources, the trial could be held before the end of this year. The sources said Riss dropped five of eight possible charges against Barbie because of insufficient evidence or because they are covered by the statute of limitations.

The three charges retained and passed on to the public prosecutor concern the 1943 deportation to death camps of 90 members of the Union of French Jews in Lyon where Barbie was gestapo chief; the deportation of 650 people whom he forced to board the last train to leave Lyon for the death camps before the end of the war; and the deportation of 52 Jewish children and two teachers from a children's home in the town of Izieu.

Riss' investigation took 33 months to complete. He interviewed hundreds of witnesses during that time. Barbie, 71, has been confined to the same prison in Lyon where he and his henchmen once interrogated and tortured their victims. He has been there since February, 1983.

Barbie, who had lived in Bolivia for 30 years under the alias Klaus Altman, was expelled from that country in January, 1983 and handed over to French authorities. He was imprisoned for crimes against humanity. The public prosecutor will draw up the specific charges for which he will be indicted.

#### CABINET VOTES TO AUTHORIZE SETTING UP INQUIRY PANEL ON BANK SCANDAL

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Jan. 7 (JTA) -- The Cabinet decided by a 17-4 vote yesterday to authorize the establishment of a commission of inquiry into the alleged misconduct of the country's largest banks which resulted in the collapse of bank shares in October, 1983.

The Cabinet's decision was in line with the recommendations of State Comptroller Yitzhak Tunik whose report, released December 31, accused the banks of

"reprehensible manipulation" to inflate the price of their shares which made a crash inevitable.

Tunik, backed by Attorney General Yitzhak Zamir, urged a full-dress judicial investigation of the banks because as private institutions they are outside the purview of the Comptroller's office.

The minority voting against an inquiry consisted of Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin (Labor), Minister Without Portfolio Moshe Arens (Likud-Herut), and two Likud-Liberal ministers. They argued that the Comptroller's report was so exhaustive that reforms rather than further investigation, were required.

Thousands of investors sustained severe losses when the price of bank shares plummeted on October 6, 1983. The government intervened at the time to guarantee the prices in order to stem the sell-offs—an action that will cost taxpayers an estimated \$2.6 billion when the shares mature in five years.

Premier Shimon Peres, who favored an inquiry, has assigned a committee of ministers to discuss its terms of reference with MK David Libai, chairman of the Knesset's State Control Committee.

#### PLO PROPAGANDA OFFENSIVE IN ARGENTINA

BUENOS AIRES, Jan. 7 (JTA) -- Starting with a public manifestation commemorating November 29 as the "International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People," PLO propaganda has become more intense in Buenos Aires, culminating with a New Year's Day statement by the president of the Argentine-Arab Foundation that it is "quite likely" that the government will allow the opening of a PLO office in the country in 1985, the World Jewish Congress reported today.

An internal report by the Latin American branch of the WJC characterizes the recent PLO propaganda offensive as a virtual "publicity explosion." It details the following developments:

\* The November 29 public meeting took place in a municipal hall and included among its speakers the pro-government parliamentarian Horacio Huarte and Peronist parliamentarian Antonio Paleari, who suggested that President Raul Alfonsin be requested by Parliament to recognize the PLO. Ambassador Julio Barbosa, director of International Organizations at the Foreign Ministry, also spoke at that event.

\* At the same time, and with great publicity, a Spanish-language "Magazine for Palestine Studies" was launched by the "Institute for Palestine Studies." In its issue on special documents, it included a report on the Kahan Commission, which investigated the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps massacre in West Beirut.

\* The Jewish Movement for Human Rights took part in the November 29 meeting, responding to a very warm invitation from Saad Chedid, president of the Argentine-Arab Foundation. The invitation and the attendance had wide publicity, so much so that an Argentine-Arab radio program criticized the invitation to the Jewish movement.

\* On New Year's Day, Chedid told the press that "the Argentine government is showing positive signs in its attitude concerning the Palestine people issue," and added, "It is up to the PLO now to request permission for the opening of an office in Buenos Aires, which the Foreign Ministry will decide on in due time." Chedid also said that "Alfonsin sent me a cable on the occasion of the November 29 event, wishing me success."