

'WHO IS A JEW' ISSUE RAISES STORM OF PROTEST IN ISRAEL AND AMONG AMERICAN JEWS
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Jan. 13 (JTA) — Premier Shimon Peres' apparent willingness to seek a "compromise" with Israel's Orthodox religious establishment on the volatile issue of "Who is a Jew" has aroused storms of angry protest from many quarters in Israel and among American Jews.

Peres is scheduled to meet tonight with Orthodox Knesset members, a small but pivotal minority in parliament, who have revived pressure for an amendment to the Law of Return which would give the Orthodox rabbinate the exclusive right to determine Who is a Jew.

Both Labor and Likud have made no secret of their preference not to bring this perennial issue to a head at this time. Most Labor MKs would certainly oppose it and Peres has no desire to alienate the religious factions who would hold the balance of power should the Labor-Likud unity coalition fall apart and new elections be required.

Addition Sought To Law Of Return

The amendment, in the form of a private member's bill presented by MK Avner Shaki of the National Religious Party, a partner in the unity coalition, would add the words "according to halacha" to the definition of a Jew in Israel's Law of Return. Without the addition, a Jew is a person born of a Jewish mother or converted.

The words "according to halacha" added to the law would mean that persons converted to Judaism by non-Orthodox rabbis at home or abroad would not be recognized as Jews in Israel, nor would their offspring.

Peres and Labor Party whip Moshe Shahal, the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, are reportedly studying compromise proposals that would ward off a showdown. One is an amendment specifying that overseas conversions would be subject to endorsement by Israel's rabbinical courts if a convert needed recourse to those courts for the purpose of marriage, divorce or other matters within the religious ambit. Israel has no civil marriage or divorce.

Political commentators said today that if such an amendment were adopted it would give legal sanction to what is already a de-facto situation. The religious courts — Batei Din — do in fact examine and review foreign conversions on a case-by-case basis.

The Opposition Within Israel

But the proposed compromise has raised powerful opposition from liberal and feminist groups who feel it would prejudice the legal standing of women in Israel. The leadership of WIZO, the Womens International Zionist Organization, sent a strong protest today to Peres and Deputy Premier Yitzhak Shamir, leader of Likud.

Shinui, a leftist political faction within the unity coalition, and the opposition Citizen Rights Movement (CRM) are also vociferously opposed to the

idea, as are the Conservative and Reform movements in Israel which are battling Shaki's amendment. Leon Dulzin, chairman of the Jewish Agency and World Zionist Organization Executives, joined the fray over the weekend. He wrote to Peres demanding that the Jewish Agency be consulted before any decision is taken by the government on the amendment, in conformity with the covenant governing the government's relations with the Jewish Agency. This requires the government to consult with the Agency before taking any position on issues crucially affecting world Jewry.

The Opposition In The U.S.

Gershon Cohen, Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America, in New York, which trains and ordains Conservative rabbis, is understood to have sent an urgent letter to Peres warning him that passage of the Orthodox-inspired amendment could cause a grave breach between the Conservative movement and the State of Israel.

(It was announced in New York over the weekend that leaders of 20 national Jewish religious and secular organizations will hold a news conference tomorrow morning to express their protest against the latest effort by the Orthodox to amend the Law of Return.)

(They will publicly urge the Knesset to postpone any vote on the issue and will propose instead creation of an international commission of representatives of the major streams of Jewish religious and communal life all over the world to meet in Israel with Orthodox spokesmen to seek an agreement that would prevent deep division among Jews.)

(The press conference will be held at the New York headquarters of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations (UAHC), the congregational body of Reform Judaism in America.)

Further Embarrassment For Peres

Peres, meanwhile, was further embarrassed when the religious factions in the Knesset threatened a non-confidence motion if it was established that Energy Minister Shahal, whom Peres hastily summoned home from an oil-purchasing mission to Mexico, had travelled on the Sabbath.

Apparently the price for withdrawing the motion is a vote to bring the Who is a Jew amendment to the Knesset floor. The amendment has been before the Knesset several times in recent years and was decisively defeated, despite former Premier Menachem Begin's pledge to the religious parties that it would be passed during his Likud government's term in office.

PROPOSAL FOR UNILATERAL IDF WITHDRAWAL FROM SOUTH LEBANON SPLITS UNITY GOVERNMENT ALONG PARTY LINES
By David Landau and Hugh Orgel

JERUSALEM, Jan. 13 (JTA) — A Defense Ministry proposal for the unilateral withdrawal of the Israel Defense Force from south Lebanon, to be carried out in three stages over a 6-9 month period, has apparently split the Labor-Likud unity government, roughly along party lines.

The Cabinet devoted its regular weekly session today to the issue and is scheduled to convene in special

session tomorrow afternoon to continue the debate, but it is not certain when a vote will be taken. Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin and senior military officers briefed the ministers for three hours today on the plan. According to Cabinet sources, it won enthusiastic support from Deputy Premier David Levy, a powerful member of Likud's Liberal Party wing. It was strongly opposed by former Defense Minister Moshe Arens of Likud's Herut bloc, a Minister-Without-Portfolio in the coalition Cabinet.

Others favoring the plan included former Defense Minister Ezer Weizman of the Yahad faction and Amnon Rubinstein of Shinui. Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir, the leader of Likud, reportedly reserved his position. Likud Liberal Avraham Sharir, the Minister of Tourism, was said to oppose the plan. According to media reports, Finance Minister Yitzhak Modai, a Likud Liberal, is also opposed.

But political observers predicted unanimity or near unanimity among Labor ministers in support of the plan which is strongly favored by Premier Shim'on Peres and by Rabin.

Haim Kaufman, chairman of the Likud Knesset faction, called on the Cabinet today to defer a vote until Likud can convene tomorrow night to adopt a party position. Cabinet sources said no formal request has been submitted on behalf of the Likud ministers.

An early vote would be taken in the absence of Minister of Commerce and Industry Ariel Sharon who is still in New York pursuing his \$50 million libel action against Time magazine. Sharon, a former Defense Minister, is widely believed to oppose unilateral withdrawal from Lebanon. His presence before the Cabinet votes would bolster other opponents of the plan.

Basis For A Unilateral Pullout

Government sources have stressed, meanwhile, that no unilateral pullout would be implemented as long as diplomatic efforts were continuing to bring about a military security and withdrawal agreement between Israel and Lebanon. The two sides have been negotiating at Nakura for the past several months with no progress toward an agreement in sight.

The United Nations, which is sponsoring the Nakura talks, is about to make a last-ditch effort to break the impasse. UN Undersecretary General Brian Urquhart is due here tomorrow.

But government sources do not rate his chances high. They believe Beirut's decision-making apparatus is paralyzed by fragmentation and especially by Syria's refusal to sanction any agreement that it perceives as a political advantage for Israel. Many Israeli officials believe that Damascus, not Beirut, holds the key to an agreement.

Nevertheless, important circles here feel that if Israel demonstrates a determination to wash its hands of Lebanon and pull out the IDF with or without an agreement, the Lebanese might be spurred to negotiate terms acceptable to both sides.

The main issue is Israel's insistence that the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) take over responsibility for security between the Zaharani and Awali rivers after the IDF evacuates that area.

The Lebanese so far have refused, claiming that their regular army can handle the task.

The newspaper Maariv reported today that the plan under discussion by the Cabinet envisages the withdrawal of the IDF to a line between 21 and 30 kilometers from the Israeli border.

At the same time, Maariv said, Rabin intends to broaden and reinforce the zone held by the Israel-backed South Lebanon Army (SLA) to ensure certain freedom of action for the IDF inside Lebanon even after it is redeployed on the Israeli side of the international border.

According to Maariv, the zone between the Litani and Zaharani rivers would ultimately be patrolled by the SLA while UNIFIL polices the region north of the Zaharani. At each stage of the phased withdrawal, the IDF will review the situation before deciding when to proceed to the next stage, Maariv said.

Role Of South Lebanese Population

Meanwhile, Uri Lubrani, the coordinator of Israeli affairs in south Lebanon, said today that any arrangements made by the Israeli government would take into consideration the friendly attitude of the south Lebanon population.

Lubrani spoke in the Christian town of Marjayoun at ceremonies commemorating the first anniversary of the death of Maj. Saad Haddad, a native of the town, who commanded the Israel-backed Christian militia, predecessor of the SLA.

Lubrani was representing Peres at the dedication of a memorial to Haddad. SLA commander Gen. Antoine Lahad appealed to the Lebanese government to make use of what he said was the favorable world climate to reach a satisfactory solution to the problem of Lebanon's internecine strife.

WEST BANK RESIDENT SENTENCED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT IN GRUNZWEIG MURDER By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Jan. 13 (JTA) — The Jerusalem District Court today sentenced Yona Avrushmi to life imprisonment for the murder of Emil Grunzweig two years ago during a Peace Now demonstration outside the Prime Minister's Office.

The court found Avrushmi, a resident of the West Bank town of Ofra, guilty of murder after he threw a hand grenade into the crowd of demonstrators the night of February 10, 1983. Avrushmi's lawyers said they will appeal the verdict.

Grunzweig, a 33-year-old teacher, was part of a protest outside from where the Cabinet was deliberating on the recommendations handed down by the Kahane Commission on the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps massacre in September, 1982.

The defendant was convicted basically on circumstantial evidence, with the prosecution failing to bring any solid, substantial evidence that Avrushmi was the murderer.

Basis For Judge's Decision

In his decision, Judge Zvi Tal placed special importance on one brief passage in the testimony Avrushmi gave the police interrogators at the end of January, 1984, shortly after he was arrested by police authorities.

Asked why he had thrown the hand grenade, Avrushmi replied, "Why? — because I knew it was them or us. And I said to myself there is only one thing to do — scare them. That's what will stop them. We have to really scare them."

The judge ruled that Avrushmi's testimony to the police was not made under duress. It was part of the con-

sistent effort of plea bargaining, in which the suspect hinted he would tell all, if the charges against him were reduced from murder to manslaughter.

Although the prosecution provided no hard evidence to support its charges against Avrushmi, Tal found that there was enough circumstantial evidence to back up the prosecution's case. The hand grenade purchased by Avrushmi was the same type used on the demonstrators, his uncompromising political opinions, and the fact that he was in Jerusalem on the night of the murder, were all elements in that evidence, the judge wrote in his verdict.

Court Split On Key Question

The three member court, however, split on the key question -- whether the attack was pre-meditated or manslaughter. Tal was convinced that Avrushmi wanted to intimidate the activists, but not harm them.

But Judges Elishu Noam and Dr. Yaacov Bazak disagreed. Bazak wrote that since Avrushmi did not claim in court that he did not intend to kill anyone, the facts must speak for themselves. The facts are, he wrote, that a grenade was thrown into a group of people, it exploded, one man died -- and nine others were wounded.

Avrushmi, wearing a yarmulka and sporting a bushy beard grown during the trial, told reporters outside the court that "I have been waiting for six months for the verdict. They had serious doubts. The verdict was not reached by them, but by higher echelons. I was not surprised. I knew it ahead of time."

The Peace Now movement expressed satisfaction with the verdict, but concern that the Israeli political system has not yet drawn the appropriate lessons from the murder.

SPECIAL TO THE JTA A FIRST FOR ETHIOPIAN IMMIGRANTS By Deborah Nahsohn

JERUSALEM, Jan. 13 (JTA) -- Imagine witnessing a young Jewish child seeing a dreidle for the first time, watching in wide-eyed wonder as the Chanukah candles are lit, symbolizing an historical religious event that was never part of his known heritage. So it was for Kehilat Eshel Avraham, the Masorti (Conservative) synagogue in Beersheba, which invited the Ethiopian Jewish community from a local absorption center to a Chanukah party on the second night of the holiday.

Fifty new immigrants from Ethiopia joined Eshel Avraham in the congregation's small synagogue, located in a local air-raid shelter, for an evening of traditional Chanukah songs and games.

Traditions of the Ethiopian Jewish community originate only from the Torah -- the five books of Moses -- and until their aliya to Israel, the Ethiopians had no tradition of celebrating the victory of the Macabees over Antiochus. "For many of the Ethiopians, it was their first Chanukah celebration ever," said Rabbi Jonathan Perlman, the Baltimore-born rabbi of Eshel Avraham.

"One older man who was identified as a spiritual leader, spoke with the help of a translator on behalf of all of the immigrants present. He told us it was a privilege to come to Israel, to the promised land, to be together with the rest of the Jewish people."

The Ethiopian guests heard Perlman explain about the lighting of the "Chanukah" candles and other holiday customs. The children, who go to school and are learning Hebrew, warmed up to the children of Eshel Avraham over games of dreidle and "Pin the Shamash on the Chanukah menorah."

Anxious To Learn About Judaism

"I brought our youth group several times to the local absorption center to visit the new immigrants, entertain them and play with the children there. I was approached by a number of young adults who were anxious to learn about Judaism since their traditions include none of the Oral Law (Talmudic) traditions, and I have been tutoring a number of them," Perlman said.

Congregation Eshel Avraham held a meeting a week before their Chanukah party to hear a lecture on the Ethiopian community by the regional Education Ministry Supervisor. He suggested ways in which the synagogue could begin "cultural exchanges" so as to help ease the transition of the new immigrants into Israeli society.

"I think that the Ethiopians were very happy to be invited by veteran immigrants and Israelis to such a gathering," Perlman said. "The older people enjoyed seeing the children adapting so quickly and enjoying themselves with the synagogue children. If we can break the language barrier, we will have much to offer the Ethiopian community in Beersheba. I hope that our synagogue will be a leading force in helping their absorption."

GERMANY'S REQUEST TO SYRIA FOR WAR CRIMINAL'S EXTRADITION GOES UNHEEDED

BONN, Jan. 13 (JTA) -- Justice Ministry officials here reported that Syria has not responded to West German request for the extradition of alleged Nazi war criminal Alois Brunner who served as a top aid to Adolph Eichmann and was responsible for the deportation of thousands of European Jews to Nazi death camps during World War II.

According to officials here, West Germany made the extradition request to the Syrian Foreign Ministry December 18. Brunner is reported to have lived in Damascus under the assumed name of George Fischer for more than 20 years.

Brunner, 72 years old, served as Eichmann's secretary in Vienna in 1938 when Eichmann headed the Nazi Central Office for Jewish Questions, and later headed the office himself. He later became the commander at the Drancy concentration camp in France.

Paris-based Nazi-hunter Serge Klarsfeld, who first traced Brunner to Syria in 1982, asserted that Brunner is responsible with the deaths of 100,000 Jews. Brunner is personally accused of ordering the arrest and deportation on July 31, 1944 of over 300 children, none of whom was every seen again.

A warrant for Brunner's arrest in connection with the deportation of Jews from France was issued last October 10 by the Cologne prosecutor. In 1954, Brunner was sentenced to death in absentia in France for crimes against humanity.

ISRAEL'S ECONOMIC SCENE: AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE FOR TWO MAJOR ENTERPRISES

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Jan. 13 (JTA) — The Zim Lines, Israel's worldwide shipping company owned jointly by the government and the financially troubled Eisenberg industrial conglomerate, has been added to the list of major Israeli enterprises with an uncertain future.

Although Zim, which owns or charters 100 ocean-going vessels and has some 2,000 employes ashore and afloat is said to be basically sound, it is short of working capital. Because of the prolonged worldwide shipping slump, Zim finds it difficult to raise capital.

But economists stress that the company's troubles are not immediate. While its long term debts amount to about \$510 million, its short term obligations total only about \$40 million, lower than last year, a sum that can be managed with a year of good earnings.

Desperate Condition Of Haifa Shipyards

Far more desperate is the condition of the government-owned Haifa Shipyards whose orders have dwindled to a point where it may have to lay-off half of its 800-member work force.

The yards have already agreed to reduce its payroll by arranging early retirement for veteran employes and some dismissals. The Haifa Labor Council and the shipyard workers committee are pressing the government to place new orders for naval vessels.

The shipyards were hard hit recently when the Defense Ministry cancelled orders for two large landing craft for the navy. This followed cancellations by commercial shipowners and the order books are down to two tugboats for the Israel Ports Authority.

Spokesmen for the shipyard said that if new orders sufficient to keep it busy for the next 2-3 years are not forthcoming, there will have to be large scale dismissals. The yards will be reduced to repair and maintenance work that will require no more than 350 employes.

Problems Facing Zim And Ata Textile Combine

The problems of the Zim Lines, on the other hand, are linked to the downfall of the giant Ata textile combine, a much larger enterprise in terms of employes, which is part of the Eisenberg group. Ata, the largest single employer in the Haifa area, has been, for several months, in the hands of a government receiver who is seeking to find a suitable buyer.

If none materializes within the next month, Ata will be declared bankrupt. It survives today only because a Haifa district court, which had ordered the mills shut down on December 31, granted a 30-day reprieve at the 11th hours.

Both Ata and Zim are heavily in debt to local banks and should either or both go under, the banks would suffer a major blow as would Israel's already staggering economy. Observers pointed out that Zim, though not itself in crisis, could be pulled under by the collapse of Ata.

The shipping company is a major earner of hard currency for Israel. In addition to carrying the bulk of freights to and from Israel, its fleet of container ships, one of the largest in the world, maintains a wide range of services between non-Israeli ports.

Concern for the future of Ata, the shipyards and the Zim Lines is growing in Haifa. It was announced today that unemployment has risen by 15 percent in that port city. There are now 6,600 jobless workers registered at the labor exchange searching for new jobs.

LUGAR: U.S. 'BUDGETARY CONSTRAINTS' MAKE IT DIFFICULT TO INCREASE AID TO ISRAEL, EGYPT AND TO OTHER COUNTRIES

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Jan. 13 (JTA) — Sen. Richard Lugar (R. Ind.), the new chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, stressed that it will be difficult to increase aid to Israel and Egypt as well as other countries because the United States is dealing with "our own budgetary constraints."

There is "strong support" in both Congress and the Reagan Administration for aid to Israel and Egypt, Lugar said in response to questions by foreign correspondents at the Foreign Press Center here last Thursday. He noted that aid to the two countries are "related" and account for about half of the total U.S. foreign aid budget.

Lugar said the request for increased aid for the two countries comes at a time when the Administration and Congress are "grappling" with efforts to reduce the large U.S. budget deficit. He said there is a "poignancy" when members of Congress discuss foreign aid proposals with their constituents at a time when those constituents face elimination or at "best a freeze" of programs benefiting themselves.

He noted that Congress and the Administration is considering freezing every domestic program including the military budget, and is even discussing a freeze on the cost of living increase for social security recipients.

Decision On Aid Proposal Will Take Time

Lugar said that because of these problems it will take several weeks before a decision is made on the foreign aid proposal for 1986. He indicated that while Israel will probably receive the increase it wants in military aid, there may be difficulty in the economic aid proposals.

Israel has asked that military aid be increased by \$700 million to \$2.1 billion in 1986 and that economic aid be increased by \$700 million to a total of \$1.9 billion. Israel is also asking for an \$800 million emergency appropriation for the current year in economic aid in addition to \$1.2 billion it is receiving this year.

The Senator noted that the U.S. is aware of Israel's "awesome financial difficulty" and has offered "friendly advice" that it believes reforms have to be made in the Israeli economy. He said while some improvements have been made, "It does not appear enough has been done."

Lugar, at the outset of his appearance, said he believes that many of the foreign policy problems facing the U.S. this year will be economic rather than strategic. He said his Committee will hold five or six weeks of hearings to discuss both the overall foreign policy scene and specific issues. The hearings will begin January 31 with Secretary of State George Shultz testifying in the morning and Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger in the afternoon.

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Hebrew University has conferred the title of Honorary Fellow upon Prof. Alexander Scheiber, head of Budapest's Rabbinical Seminary, who recently led a delegation of Hungarian Jewish officials to Israel.