

LAW OF RETURN AMENDMENT DEFEATED BY 62-51 VOTE IN FIRST KNESSET READING By Hugh Orgel

JERUSALEM, Jan. 16 (JTA) — The controversial amendment to the Law of Return demanded by Israel's Orthodox religious establishment, was defeated by a vote of 62-51 on its first reading in the Knesset today.

The voting was largely along party lines. Labor MKs opposed it, following the lead of Premier Shimon Peres who called the measure divisive. Likud joined the religious bloc in support of the amendment. But three Likud Liberals broke ranks to vote against it. Another Likud MK abstained and five were absent from the chamber.

The voting was preceded and followed by acrimonious debate that spilled into the Knesset corridors after the balloting. Members of the different Orthodox factions not only denounced the non-religious MKs but traded insults with each other over the defeat.

The amendment drew a powerful response from non-Orthodox religious and secular Jews abroad, particularly in the United States, when it was placed on the Knesset agenda last week. They warned in messages to Peres and other Israeli leaders that its adoption would create a serious rift between diaspora Jewry and the Jewish State.

The Law of return defines a Jew as a person born of a Jewish mother or converted. The proposed amendment would have added the words "according to halacha" which would invalidate conversions performed by non-Orthodox rabbis in Israel and abroad. The converts and their offspring would not be recognized as Jews in Israel.

Peres Sums Up Opponents' Case

Peres, summing up the case against the amendment, called for national unity. "Our generation was called upon to find a way of ensuring the continuity of the Jewish people in times of change and great dangers," he told the Knesset. "A way must be found to unify the people, not to cause rifts." During the week's discussion on the amendment, Peres reminded the proponents of the measure that "the gates of Auschwitz were open to all Jews, Orthodox and non-Orthodox, so surely the gates of Jerusalem must be open to all Jews."

Peres explained that the Law of Return, as originally formulated by the Knesset years ago, was a Zionist law rather than a religious measure and was not concerned with matters of religion or personal status.

The amendment went down to defeat when it was brought before the Knesset last year, under the sponsorship of the Agudat Israel party. This time it was introduced as a private member's bill by MK Avner Sciaky of the National Religious Party. Its most vigorous proponents were members of the Habad Hasidic movement, acting on orders from Habad headquarters in New York.

Although all of the religious parties backed it, those within the unity coalition were technically

not bound to take retaliatory measures against the government. The Orthodox Shas faction, which holds the Ministry of Interior, had threatened to leave. In the event, only one of the four Shas MKs announced he would resign, Yaacov Yosef.

One Labor MK, Rabbi Menachem Hacohen, supported the amendment. He had been released from party discipline out of respect for his rabbinical status. The three Likud Liberals who voted against it were Sarah Doron, Ariel Weinstein and Dan Tichon.

Two Likud ministers were absent — Minister of Commerce and Industry Ariel Sharon, who is in New York, and Minister of Tourism Avraham Shari; three Likud MKs, Eliahu Ben-Elissar, Pessah Gruper and Uriel Linn were also absent, as was Rabbi Meir Kahane of the Kach faction. Bennie Shalita of Likud abstained.

FRANCE IN ARMS DEAL WITH ARABS

PARIS, Jan. 16 (JTA) — France is about to deliver 20 Mirage-2000 jet combat aircraft to Abu Dhabi and is on the verge of signing a contract with Saudi Arabia for 20 or more of the highly sophisticated supersonic planes, the State-owned news agency Agence France Presse (AFP) reported today.

According to the report, the Saudis want the aircraft for their own air force and "on behalf of another Arab country" not identified. The AFP report said Abu Dhabi, a Persian Gulf oil producer, will pay for the Mirages with 15 million tons of oil. Most of Abu Dhabi's oil is extracted by a French company, Compagnie Francaise de Petroles-Total.

The Mirage-2000 has been operational in France since last summer and has been sold abroad. Egypt ordered 20 of the aircraft, Greece and India 40 each and Peru, 26. It is manufactured by the Dassault Co. which is still run by its Jewish-born founder, Marcel Bloch-Dassault, who is 92.

CONTROVERSY OVER EFFORT TO OPEN PLO OFFICE IN ARGENTINA

BUENOS AIRES, Jan. 16 (JTA) — The news media here are devoting an extraordinary amount of space to the Arab propaganda effort aimed at opening a PLO office in Buenos Aires and the subsequent reaction by the DAIA, the representative Jewish body in Argentina, which sought the direct intervention of President Raul Alfonsin in opposing this development.

The World Jewish Congress, in a survey of the media, noted that the traditional morning paper, La Prensa, in its lead editorial entitled "Historic Truth," speaks out categorically against the introduction of the PLO in Buenos Aires, and believes that the recent propaganda barrage was meant to be a trial balloon.

Amibito Financiero, the main business daily, foresees a confrontation between the Jewish and the Arab communities. It writes: "The Arabs will insist that Argentina grant room for a PLO office, but their pressure does not seem sufficient to make up for the pressure which the Jews will be exerting in the opposite direction."

According to the Latin American branch of the WJC, arguments in the government in favor of the PLO office are motivated by desire to demonstrate Third World

solidarity at a time when Alfonsín is being mooted for chairman of the non-aligned movement. On the other hand, newspapers report that the Radical Party of Argentina does not wish to offend the Jewish community, particularly since it collected the overwhelming majority of its votes in the recent elections in Buenos Aires. It is said that 120,000 votes favored the government party. In his meeting with the DAIA earlier this month, Alfonsín pledged there would be no PLO office. (See January 11 Bulletin.)

News agencies have expressed surprise that unnamed officials within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs have expressed displeasure with "the abstention of Israel in the Malvinas (Falkland Islands) case," noting that Argentina had consistently "spoken up in favor of Palestine in almost all international forums."

The controversy over the PLO office is being viewed in the context of an Argentine foreign policy of ambivalence and of contradictions in purpose.

Fueling speculation about Alfonsín's leadership of the non-aligned, is the announcement that the Argentine President will be going to New Delhi at the end of the month, to appear with Rajiv Gandhi, Olof Palme, Miguel de la Madrid, Julius Nyerere and Andreas Papandreu in a public meeting for peace, which will call upon the atomic powers to stop all manufacture of nuclear armaments. He will then travel to Greece and will also stop in Saudi Arabia to see King Fahd.

Despite this, however, Alfonsín last week stated that "Argentina has no ambition to lead the non-aligned" and this has further added to a feeling that there is confusion in Argentine foreign policy, the backdrop against which the PLO office controversy rages.

CEREMONY AT ISRAEL EMBASSY IN MEMORY OF MARTIN LUTHER KING

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Jan. 16 (JTA) — The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was remembered at a ceremony at the Israel Embassy yesterday, marking the 56th anniversary of his birth, for not only fighting for social justice for Blacks, but for all people who suffered discrimination.

The ceremony, attended by some 100 Blacks and Jews, also marked the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Forest in Israel's Galilee which now has more than 10,000 trees.

Max Kampelman, chairman emeritus of the committee that established the forest, said King was a "fighter not just for the welfare of Blacks but a fighter for all who suffered injustice. He was a fighter for democracy and freedom."

He said those who supported the King Forest hope its "growth will be a growth felt all over the world as people who are either themselves victims of discrimination or bigotry, or who are sensitive to the discrimination that might be leveled against others, continue to join together and struggle for democracy and liberty."

King's Contributions Recalled

Israel's Ambassador Meir Rosenn said that King, who was murdered nearly 17 years ago, is "not dead" as long as people "remain faithful to his ideas." He noted that 25 years ago King was one

of the first to raise his voice concerning the struggle for freedom of Soviet Jews at a time when many "hesitated" to do so.

Washington Mayor Marion Barry Jr., who was himself active in the civil rights struggle in the south, said "It would have been impossible for us to continue our movement" without the "life service" given to the struggle by Jews.

He said that King "recognized all of us are bound together in a bond of mutuality." He said that for groups to achieve progress in the U.S., they must build coalitions with other groups. "In a multiracial society no group can make it alone," Barry said. He said Jewish unity helped Jews make progress because Jews also made alliances with other groups.

Eric Fox, president of the Jewish National Fund of Greater Washington, also noted that King was not only a leader for Blacks but for Jews as well. He stressed that there is "far more that unifies" Blacks and Jews "than anything that separates us," pointing out that Jews are demonstrating with Blacks at the South African Embassy here against the "abomination of apartheid" and Blacks continue to support Israel and the struggle for Soviet Jewry. "Always keep in mind that only our enemies want to develop strife between Blacks and Jews," Fox said.

A Poignant Note

Lenore Siegelman, vice chairman of the King forest committee, told the gathering that the National Leadership Council of the JNF has announced that it is contributing a grove at the forest in memory of Dr. King's father, the Rev. Martin Luther King Sr., who died last year.

The ceremony at the Embassy ended on a poignant note as the choir of the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church sang "We shall overcome," with many of those standing in the audience linking arms and singing along as was done during civil rights demonstrations. Earlier, Joe Glazer, a local folk singer and labor troubadour, sang the song in Hebrew.

THE JUF OF CHICAGO HAS SENT \$4 MILLION TO ISRAEL TO HELP IN THE RESETTLEMENT OF ETHIOPIAN JEWS

CHICAGO, Jan. 16 (JTA) — The Jewish United Fund (JUF), Chicago's major Jewish philanthropy, has sent \$4 million to Israel expressly for the purpose of resettling Ethiopian Jews and will continue to send additional millions this year for resettlement and other humanitarian programs in the Jewish homeland, it was announced. The funds were sent on January 2, after the JUF Board unanimously approved a request from the United Jewish Appeal.

"JUF for years has funded the resettlement of Ethiopian Jews in Israel just as it has helped to resettle the millions of Jewish refugees who preceded them," said JUF president Charles Goodman. "But with the increased number of arrivals in recent months and with Israel's economy now in such a precarious state, our Board unanimously and wholeheartedly endorsed the immediate transmittal of these additional funds."

The monies will have to be raised by the 1985 Jewish United Fund-Israel Fund campaign, now underway. According to JUF-IF general chairman Sheldon Mann, the 1985 JUF-IF goal was increased by \$4 million to accommodate the "extraordinary circumstances and problems of resettling in Israel more than 10,000 Ethiopian Jews who suffer from centuries of persecution as well as from malnutrition, disease and the trauma of family

separation." Thousands of the new immigrants to Israel are parentless youngsters. "Israel is fulfilling her place in history as a sanctuary for all the oppressed and persecuted among our people," Mann said. "Israel's acceptance of the Ethiopian Jews at a time of great internal crisis is a courageous example of heartfelt concern that merits the approval of the entire world."

Mann said that donations to the resettlement effort would be sent to "Operation Moses" at the Jewish United Fund, Room 500, One South Franklin Street, Chicago, IL 60606.

JUDGE RULES JEWS, FREEMASONS CAN'T BE EXCLUDED FROM JURY IN ZUNDEL TRIAL

By Paul Lungen

(Editor's note: Paul Lungen, a staff writer at The Canadian Jewish News, is covering the trial of Ernst Zundel.)

TORONTO, Jan. 16 (JTA) -- A County Court judge in Toronto has ruled that Jews and Freemasons cannot be excluded from the jury in the trial of a publisher charged with spreading false information about the Holocaust and the existence of an international Jewish conspiracy.

Ernst Zundel, 46, has been charged under a little-used section of Canada's Criminal Code with two counts of knowingly publishing false news that caused or was likely to cause damage to social or racial tolerance. If convicted, he faces up to two years in jail.

Two pamphlets form the basis of the charge. "Did Six Million Really Die?", published and distributed by Zundel to over 40 countries, including West Germany, alleges that "not a fraction" of six million Jews could have been exterminated. It also claims that the term "Final Solution" meant only the emigration of the Jews.

The other pamphlet, "The West, War, and Islam," alleges there is a conspiracy of international Zionists, bankers, Freemasons and Communists who are "responsible for endangering world peace."

Judge Disallows Some Questions

In his ruling last week against a pre-trial motion by defense lawyer Doug Christie, Judge Hugh Locke said he saw no reason to "disenfranchise a substantial segment of our society from their rights and duties to sit on the jury."

He also refused to allow any question relating to the jury candidates' views on German stereotypes or the extermination of Jews during World War II. Nor would Locke permit jurors to be questioned about whether their relatives, friends or employers are Jews or Freemasons or whether they can keep open minds about the existence of gas chambers.

Christie, a lawyer from Victoria, British Columbia, received his license to practice in the province of Ontario, where the trial is taking place, only two months ago.

He previously represented Jim Keegstra, a former school teacher in Eckville, Alberta, at a preliminary hearing to decide whether Keegstra should be tried on charges of wilfully promoting hatred against Jews in his classroom teachings. Keegstra will stand trial in April. Meanwhile, he has been fired from his teaching job and lost his bid for reelection as Mayor of Eckville.

As the Zundel trial got underway in a heavily-policed courtroom, the 8-man 2-women jury heard Arnold Friedman, 56, a survivor of Birkenau, describe how flames and smoke spewed out of crematoria smokestacks after trucks and trains carrying prisoners were unloaded.

"The elderly, mothers, children, the young, those not fit to work headed in that direction," he said, "but they did not come back. The odor was the odor of burning flesh; the flames changed color from yellow to red. Sometimes the flames would shoot up to 14 feet above the smokestacks," he told a stunned and silent court.

Under cross-examination by Christie, Friedman admitted that he did not see people actually gassed or cremated. He saw people going in the direction of the crematoria and never returning, he said.

1985 DECLARED 'YEAR OF THE FOREST'

By Gil Sedan

BEN SHEMEN, Jan. 16 (JTA) -- This year, 1985, has been declared "The Year of the Forest" in Israel. Moshe Rivlin, chairman of the board of directors of the Jewish National Fund, made the proclamation this week before several hundred people who gathered in this veteran youth village to mark the 84th anniversary of the JNF.

The mission of the redemption of the land continues today, just as in the past, Rivlin said. "We want the Jewish people, not only as fundraisers, but as partners who contribute their share to the cultivation of the land which is theirs. We want each Jew and every Jewish community to feel that it has a share in this country," the JNF head asserted.

Ben Shemen, southeast of Tel Aviv, antedates the founding of the State by many decades. Established as a youth village, originally along the lines of a kibbutz, it stands adjacent to the Herzl Forest.

After the death of Theodor Herzl, the founder of political Zionism, in 1904, it was decided to plant a forest of olive trees in his memory. Ben Shemen was selected as the site. The forest today is one of the most popular picnic and camping sites in the country.

When the State was founded in 1948, it consisted of some five million trees spread over 10,000 acres. Today there are 170 million trees in the forest which has been expanded to 300,000 acres. "When I mention these figures to people, they just do not believe me," Rivlin said.

"The Year of the Forest" in Israel is part of the International Forest Year proclaimed by the United Nations. During the next 12 months the JNF will organize hikes and other activities in its forests all over the country.

TEL AVIV (JTA) -- A Katyusha rocket was fired from Jordanian territory into the Jordan valley Wednesday but caused neither casualties nor damage. It was the sixth time in recent months that rockets had been fired from Jordanian territory into Israel. An Israel Defense Force patrol found the remains of a Katyusha missile in an open field. It was the type of rocket used by the PLO.

ISRAEL'S ECONOMIC SCENE: TRADE DEFICIT CUT BY \$1 BILLION IN '84

NEW YORK, Jan. 16 (JTA) — Israel succeeded in reducing its trade deficit in 1984 by \$1 billion from \$3.5 in 1983 to \$2.5 billion last year — it was reported by the Economic Office of the Government of Israel here.

In disclosing Israel's first economic statistics covering the full year of 1984, Uri Oren, a consul and government spokesman, also said that Israeli exports of goods and services rose by 13 percent in 1984 while imports of goods and services fell by 1 percent. Most of the gain in exports came in industrial products, especially electronics and metals, he noted.

Another favorable development was a decline in Israel's balance-of-payments deficit last year, Oren reported. He said the decrease amounted to about 12 percent or some \$600 million, compared with 1983.

Per Capita Consumption Down Sharply

The Israeli spokesman said that "a conscious government policy to discourage private spending" had resulted in a drop in consumption, on a per-capita basis, of 7 percent compared with 1983. This decline, he said, was the largest year-to-year decrease in this category since 1950, a year of large-scale immigration to Israel.

"The actual erosion in the purchasing power of Israelis in real or dollar terms was more than 20 percent in 1984," Oren declared. "This decline in the ability of Israelis to buy on the local market encouraged producers to seek bigger markets abroad, leading in turn to the rise in Israeli exports."

No Change In GNP

The Israeli official noted that the Israeli system of linking wage increases to the rise in the cost of living had been significantly altered under the terms of an agreement late last year among the government, the Histadrut, and the Israeli Manufacturers Association. Whereas workers had previously been compensated by wage increases amounting to 80 percent of inflation, the new rate is only 60 percent of the former linkage.

"This means, in fact, that the linkage now covers less than half of the rise in the cost of living or 48 percent," Oren said.

Other statistics released by the Israeli Economic Offices here showed government spending up 3 percent — "largely as a result of a substantial rise in defense-related imports," Oren said — and a decline in local investment of 9 percent.

During 1984, he said, Israel's gross national product was the same as it had been in 1983. Manufacturing output in 1984 rose 1.2 percent over the previous year.

C.O.L. UP BY ONLY 3.7% IN DECEMBER

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Jan. 16 (JTA) — The cost-of-living index in December rose by only 3.7 percent, the lowest monthly increase in 18 months and the lowest for December in six years.

The figures, released yesterday by the Central Bureau of Statistics, were immediately hailed by the government, Histadrut and the Manufacturers and Employers Association as a vindication of the three month wage-price freeze package instituted last November.

December was the second month the freeze was in effect. According to the Central Bureau of Statistics the price rise would have been even lower — about one percent — were it not for a seasonal 14 percent rise in the prices of fruits and vegetables in December. Those edibles are not covered by the freeze package.

Plans To Renew The Freeze

Plans are underway to renew the freeze when it expires at the end of this month. Finance Minister Yitzhak Moda'i said the government would have to cut its price subsidies in order to reduce the national budget and that will have to be taken into account when preparing the next wage-price freeze package.

Histadrut complained that the government has not moved fast enough on the new package if it is to take effect immediately after the present one expires.

The manufacturers noted that wholesale prices have been kept low and hoped this indicated a trend to reduce inflation. Israel's inflation rate for all of 1984 stood at 445 percent, an all-time high. In 1983 it was 191 percent.

MAURICE PERLZWEIG DEAD AT 89

NEW YORK, Jan. 16 (JTA) — Rabbi Maurice Perlzweig, a founder of the World Jewish Congress who served as the first chairman of the British Section and who headed the WJC delegation in 1945 to the founding conference of the United Nations in San Francisco, died here Monday at the age of 89.

Perlzweig was born in Poland in 1895 and was educated in England where he received acclaim for his oratorical skills and his athletic abilities as a world-class runner at Cambridge. He was founder and chairman of the University Labor Federation of Great Britain and president of the World Union of Jewish Students. After receiving his ordination he officiated at the Liberal Synagogue in London.

Joining Nahum Goldmann and Stephen Wise at the founding assembly of the WJC in Geneva in 1936, Perlzweig shortly thereafter was elected chairman of the British Section. During the critical war years, Perlzweig was appointed director of the WJC international affairs department in New York.

In the post-war years he represented the WJC at the Economic and Social Council of the UN, drafting many documents submitted to the Commission on Human Rights. Notably, he served as a chief spokesman and negotiator at the UN on behalf of the rights of the North African Jewish communities during the turbulent period in the 1950's when the Maghreb states were achieving independence.

TEL AVIV (JTA) — Israel's police force, using 1984 as a base, has forecast a 40 percent increase in crime by the end of this decade and plans to beef up its manpower and equipment. Based on that prediction, the police say they will need another 4,500 men, 650 more vehicles and 250 more motorcycles during the next 5-6 years. Whether they can meet those requirements remains to be seen at a time when all government ministries and departments are under urgent pressure to reduce their budgets to cope with Israel's economic crisis.