

FORMER SOVIET JEWS IN ISRAEL WARN AGAINST EXPECTING BETTER CONDITIONS FOR JEWS FROM GORBACHEV By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, March 18 (JTA) -- Jewish immigrants from the Soviet Union warned today that it was foolish and dangerous to assume that the change of leadership in the Kremlin would end repressive measures against Jews in the USSR.

Addressing a press conference here, members of the Israel Information Center on Soviet Jewry maintained that with respect to Jews, the policies of the new Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, would be no different from those of his predecessors. They spoke scornfully of the view expressed in some Western circles that Gorbachev, the youngest Soviet leader since Stalin seized the reins of power on Lenin's death, heralded a new, better era in Soviet policy.

"He may be good looking, well dressed, and so is his wife," speakers said, but that has no bearing on his policy towards Jews. They described Gorbachev as a bureaucrat who began his career in the Stalin era and could therefore be described as a disciple of the late Soviet dictator. World-wide optimism over his ascension to power is misplaced, serves Soviet interests and allows them to continue their repression of Jews, they said.

Swift Elevation Is Warning

Yosef Mendelevich, chairman of the Center, who served time in Soviet prisons for his activism on behalf of Jewish emigration rights, said the swift elevation of Gorbachev to the office of General Secretary of the Communist Party within hours of the death of President Konstantin Chernenko should serve as a warning that no changes are in the offing.

According to Mendelevich, Gorbachev was the defacto leader in recent months when Chernenko was immobilized by ill health. In that period, he noted, there was not only no improvement in the situation of Soviet Jews but it in fact deteriorated.

Other speakers cited individual cases as examples of the worsening treatment of Soviet Jews in recent months. Dan Shapiro, a Jewish activist who asked for and received Israeli citizenship while living in the USSR, was arrested. The conditions under which Aleksandr Kholmiansky and Yosef Bernstein are imprisoned have worsened. In the past six months, Kholmiansky went on a hunger strike. He was force-fed. Bernstein was attacked by inmates serving time for criminal offenses and almost lost his vision. The prison authorities transferred him to a labor camp where, despite his poor health, he is forced to do hard labor.

FORMER SS OFFICER GOES ON TRIAL

By David Kantor

BONN, March 18 (JTA) -- Horst Czerwinsky, a 62-year-old former SS officer, has gone on trial in Luenburg for the murder of eight Jewish inmates of the Lagischa concentration camp, part of the Auschwitz complex, in 1944.

The proceedings in the Lower Saxony court are expected to last two years. The defendant's state of health is such that he is able to appear in

court no more than six hours a week. He has pleaded not guilty, but 50 witnesses have already testified to judges who visited them in their respective countries. Altogether, about 200 witnesses will be questioned, many living in Israel, Canada, the U.S. and Australia.

Czerwinsky went on trial in Frankfurt in 1978 for war crimes. But that trial came to an abrupt end because of his health problems and legal difficulties. He was, however, cleared of charges that he murdered three camp inmates during an "evacuation march" from Gollerschau to Loslau in Poland.

JORDANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER IN WASHINGTON TO SEEK U.S. SUPPORT FOR AGREEMENT BETWEEN PLO-JORDAN By Judith Kohn

WASHINGTON, March 18 (JTA) -- Jordanian Foreign Minister Taher al-Masri arrived in Washington for talks with Reagan Administration and Congressional officials, in what he said would be a continued effort to win renewed American involvement in the peace process based on the agreement reached last month between Jordan and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

His arrival here follows a visit last week by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak who flew to Amman today for talks with Jordan's King Hussein. Mubarak and Hussein left Amman unexpectedly for Baghdad this afternoon.

"We have been positive; we expect the others to take a step," the Foreign Minister told reporters at a press conference sponsored by the quarterly, Foreign Policy. He maintained that the text of the agreement indicated that Jordan had "achieved something with the PLO," which "needs to be reciprocated" before any further Arab concessions could be made.

PLO Participation

The agreement concluded between King Hussein and PLO leader Yasir Arafat on February 11 calls for negotiations "under the auspices of an international conference" in which the PLO would participate as part of a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation.

Jordan and Egypt have argued that the agreement reflects a change in the PLO position because it accepts the principle of "territories for peace" on the basis of UN Security Council Resolutions. The U.S. has called the agreement "a positive step" but continues to insist on explicit acceptance of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, as well as recognition of Israel's right to exist, as a condition for beginning any dialogue with the Palestinian organization.

Seen As Last Chance

In response to questions at the briefing, the Foreign Minister reiterated warnings by King Hussein made most recently in an interview in yesterday's New York Times that the opportunity presented by the February 11 agreement "is the last chance" to move the peace process forward and that Jordan could go no further without some response from the U.S.

But he appeared to be discouraging the appearance of an impasse with the U.S. by noting that the agreement strongly resembled the Reagan initia-

tive of September 1, 1982, suggesting that the gap between Jordan's position and that of the Reagan Administration was relatively narrow. The Reagan initiative calls for ultimate "self-government by the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza in association with Jordan," while the February 11 agreement supports "Palestinian self-determination" to be achieved "within the context of the formation of the proposed confederated Arab states of Jordan and Palestine."

Neither Jordan nor the PLO have accepted the Reagan initiative in total, primarily because the initiative does not recognize a Palestinian right to "self-determination." Al-Masri called for U.S. recognition of Palestinian self-determination as reciprocity for the February 11 agreement.

Soviet Union Cool

In response to a question, the Foreign Minister noted that the Soviet Union, which would be involved in negotiations based on the Jordan-PLO proposal, had been "a bit cool" toward the February 11 agreement. "We got the feeling they don't want to commit themselves now," Al Masri said. "They are not negative; they are not positive."

Israel has rejected any participation in Middle East peace negotiations by the Soviet Union, which has no diplomatic relations with the Jewish State. Al-Masri said the Saudis had assured Jordan of their support for any agreement it might conclude with the PLO.

The Jordanian Foreign Minister was scheduled to meet today with members of Congress and on Wednesday with Secretary of State George Shultz. He said he would also be making arrangements for a visit here by King Hussein, but that no specific date had been set.

JEWS, OTHERS CRITICIZE COMPROMISE ON GERMAN 'AUSCHWITZ LIE' LAW

By David Kantor

BONN, March 18 (JTA) — Proposed legislation that would criminalize the neo-Nazi propaganda claim that the Holocaust never occurred — the so-called "Auschwitz lie" — continued to bedevil officials and legislators here despite a compromise reached by the government coalition partners last Friday intended to avoid a bruising debate in the Bundestag.

The compromise was sharply attacked today by local Jewish and non-Jewish groups and by prominent individuals, including members of the coalition parties. Helmut Leonardy, chairman of the West German Association of Judges, called it a "bad compromise" likely to worsen rather than improve the present situation.

Heinz Galinski, head of the West Berlin Jewish community, said the compromise failed to take into account the unique character of the Third Reich's annihilation policy against Jews. He also said that the bickering among the various parties over so grave a matter seriously damaged West Germany's image. "As a former inmate of Auschwitz I feel myself offended by this continuous quarrel," Galinski said.

Equates Holocaust With 'Terror Regimes'

The most offensive feature of the compromise legislation from the standpoint of German Jews and others is that it equates the Holocaust with the crimes of "terror regimes" against Germans during and after World War II. Persons who claim for example that millions of Germans were not expelled from the eastern regions of Germany after the war

would be subject to the same penalties as those who allege the Holocaust was a hoax. Another dubious element of the compromise is that it does not consider the "Auschwitz lie" an offense per se but rather an insult to relatives of persons who perished in the Holocaust. The coalition parties agreed to empower State Prosecutors to initiate legal action against persons who propagate the insult. Until now, proceedings of this kind were possible only when initiated by the victims.

Leonardy said it would be "practically impossible" to prove that persons who deny the Holocaust as such, thereby insulted individual Jews. It would be appropriate for the "sense of decency" of the German people, he added, if the "Auschwitz lie" was not linked to denials that Germans in general suffered as a result of the war.

SPD Rejects Equation

Han-Jochen Vogel, floor leader of the opposition Social Democratic Party (SPD) in the Bundestag took much the same position. He said his party rejected the equation of crimes against Jews with crimes against Germans. Heiner Giessler, Secretary General of the ruling Christian Democratic Union (CDU), urged a stronger law. He said any individuals who knowingly denied Nazi crimes against Jews, who claim Jews were not sent to the gas chambers, are liars and intellectual criminals and should be punished accordingly. He criticized the coalition compromise for waiving the prosecution of those who simply say there was no Holocaust.

The legislation, introduced by the CDU, ran into trouble almost immediately from coalition and opposition parties which insisted that the courts were not the proper place to fight the "Auschwitz lie." That position was taken by elements of the CDU, its Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU) and the opposition Green Party.

The Social Democrats demanded a strong law but could not agree with the CDU over its contents. Justice Minister Hans Engelhard, of the Free Democratic Party (FDP), the CDU's junior coalition partner, insisted that a law against denial of the Holocaust was absolutely necessary. The debate in the Bundestag promised to be fierce and the compromise was reached Friday only two hours before the floor debate was scheduled to begin.

One reason why a law is considered essential is widespread concern here over reactions abroad, particularly in Israel and in the American Jewish community if no legislation is passed. Coalition spokesmen said it intended to pass the law before May 8, the 40th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany.

CAMPAIGN STARTED TO INCREASE TOURISM By Yitzhak Rabi

NEW YORK, March 18 (JTA) — El Al, Israel Airlines, and Israel's Ministry of Tourism, announced here today that they are undertaking a joint advertising campaign this year, hoping to greatly increase the number of American tourists to Israel.

Moshe Shoshani, Israel Commissioner for Tourism in North America, and David Schneider, General Manager of El Al in North America, said that the aim of the joint campaign is to increase the number of American tourists to Israel this year to half a million, compared with 405,000 in 1984. They said that the new campaign will have a budget of \$1.2 million, with El Al and the Tourism Ministry contributing 50 percent each.

WOMEN IN ISRAEL APPEAR TO BE PLAYING MAJOR ROLE IN LAW, BUT FEMINISTS WANT MORE GENERALLY

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 18 (JTA) -- Many feminists in Israel complain that though this country was the first to have a woman premier, the status and personal rights of women have slipped behind those of many other countries -- largely because of the influence of the religious parties and establishments.

But figures cited at a recent panel discussion winding up a 10-day study tour of Israel by the Israel Bonds National Women's Division delegation from the United States appear to belie those fears.

Judge Blanche Kay of the Tel Aviv Magistrate's Court told the gathering that 60 percent of all law students in Israel were women, 50 percent of all practicing lawyers were women, 20 percent of all Israeli judges were women, and two Supreme Court justices are women.

Prof. Yaffa Kedar, Dean of the faculty of natural sciences at Tel Aviv University (TAU), who incidentally had been the first woman student at TAU, noted that one third of the professors in her faculty were women. She said that in her experience, an individual's level of motivation often proved more important than intellectual endowment in the advancement of a woman's status in her profession.

Employment Opportunities Urged

She appealed to the women Bond leaders to help create employment opportunities in Israel for Israeli academics and scientists who had gone abroad to further their careers.

A different view was stressed by Canadian-born Dr. Daphne Izraeli, lecturer in sociology and anthropology at the religious-oriented Bar-Ilan University who declared that the special contribution of American Jewish immigration was to raise women's consciousness in Israel.

She advised delegates during their travels in Israel to provoke awareness of feminist issues by asking three questions: "How many women are there in senior positions here?"; "How come?"; and "What are you doing about it?" She complained that only four percent of university professors were women.

Changes in Jewish Law Asked

Earlier in the week, the chairman of the National Council on the Advancement of the Status of Women in Israel, Ruth Lapidot, former legal adviser to the Foreign Ministry and currently a professor of international law at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, told the delegates that the most difficult subject her Council deals with is Jewish law in relation to women's rights.

"These laws can be changed, but courage is needed to do it," she said. She noted that a regression had occurred in the status of Israeli women in that the number of women in the present Knesset was lower than a decade ago, and that not a single woman had been appointed to head a Ministry.

Israeli journalist and radio reporter Freeda Keet attacked the strictures of Jewish law as now applied in Israel. "My Judaism is the Judaism of the school of Rabbi Hillel who always looked for the compassionate, humanistic, kind and generous way to interpret halacha," she said. "What is running Israel today is the school of Shammai, which finds the most rigid, most ultra-Orthodox and the most uncompromising interpretation of halachic law."

The delegation to the study tour was composed of 25 leading Israel Bond purchasers and organizational chairmen from 12 U.S. and Canadian communities.

GROUP SUPPORTING RIGHTS FOR WOMEN WINS IN DUTCH JEWISH COMMUNAL VOTE

By Henriette Boas

AMSTERDAM, March 18 (JTA) -- A faction that campaigned for full rights for women in Jewish communal affairs emerged the winner in the quadrennial elections of the Amsterdam Ashkenazic Community Council held here yesterday.

There were 83 candidates representing four electoral lists competing for the 30 seats on the Council. The Democratic Progressive list, headed by Hans Evers, polled 1,981 of the 3,000 votes cast to win 13 seats. The three other factions won eight, five and four seats respectively.

Evers' campaign on behalf of women's rights in both voting and running the community was considered the decisive factor in the Democratic Progressive victory. His wife, Bloeme Evers, chairperson of Deborah, a Jewish women's organization, has been advocating a greater role for women for years.

The Amsterdam Ashkenazic Community Council is the only Jewish community in Holland that elects its members by democratic ballot. It also appoints most of the members of The Netherlands National Ashkenazic Council. Most of the candidates in yesterday's elections were people born after World War II.

COL GOES UP 13.5 PERCENT IN FEBRUARY

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 18 (JTA) -- The cost of living index rose by 13.5 percent during February, the Central Bureau of Statistics announced here. The increase was as anticipated, due to price rises at the overlap (known in Hebrew as the seam) between the first and second package deals.

The Bureau noted that cost increases due to the cutting of government subsidies, towards the end of February which will be evident in the current March COL calculations, already account for an increase of between six and seven percent for the March COL figure.

In subsequent months the Finance Ministry anticipates a reduction in the monthly increase to single figure rises, indicating what they claim is the success of the economic package deal.

But both the Histadrut and the manufacturers complain that there is still much to be desired in implementation and operation of the agreement.

Employees will receive pay increases of between 14 and 20 percent with this month's salaries, to be paid on April 1. The basic increase will be 14 percent, with an additional six percent granted to industrial and production workers.

Half of the February increase was due to government initiatives in raising service prices of fuel, electricity and water.

NEW YORK (JTA) -- Charges of disorderly conduct against six women who had demonstrated outside the Soviet Mission to the United Nations last month were dropped in New York City Criminal Court last week.

The women were among seven who protested the current wave of arrests and trials of unauthorized Jewish educators in the Soviet Union in a demonstration sponsored by the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry. The charge against the seventh woman was also dropped when she appeared in court last week.

SPECIAL INTERVIEW

DIRECTOR SAYS OSCAR FOR ISRAELI FILM
WOULD OPEN DOOR FOR ISRAEL'S MOVIES
By Yitzhak Rabi

NEW YORK, March 18 (JTA) — The director of the Israeli film "Beyond The Walls," believes that if the movie wins an "Oscar" this year the gates of the international film market will finally open for Israel.

"Winning the Academy Award as the best foreign film for 1985 would represent a major breakthrough for Israel's film industry," Uri Barbash, the 38-year-old Israeli director of "Beyond The Walls," said in an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

"An Oscar would give the Israeli film industry instant international recognition. More movies will be made in Israel and there will be more co-productions of new films. Part of the problem of the Israeli film industry is not being recognized. An Oscar, I believe, would change the situation," Barbash said.

Third Israeli Nominee

Barbash was in New York on his way to Los Angeles where he will take part in the Academy Awards ceremony on March 25. This is the third time that an Israeli film is being considered for an Oscar as the best foreign film. The two other films, which did not win the coveted prize, were "Sala Shabati" and "I Love You Rosa."

"Beyond The Walls," which is competing with four other foreign films, is about the complex relationships between Jewish and Arab prisoners in a maximum security prison in Israel. The tension, violence and abuses of prison life are heightened by the political differences between Arabs and Jews. But the unfolding drama of racial and political tension turns abruptly into a story of cooperation and human dignity.

"We are very proud for what we achieved with this film," Barbash said. "First of all this is the first film made in cooperation with Arab and Jews in Israel. The actors are Jews and Arabs, as well as other members of the crew. Real prisoners, criminals and politicians, some Jews and some Arabs, also participated. The film is basically about friendship, love and compassion in a cruel and harsh world of a maximum security prison. This is a film against racism and prejudice"

The film so far has been a major success in Israel and won some major international prizes, including the International Critics Award of the Venice Festival 1984. It was also awarded best film in Israel for 1984.

Seen By 600,000 Israelis

According to Barbash, more than 600,000 Israelis have seen "Beyond The Walls," a record number in a small country like Israel. It has been, however, a controversial movie raising charges by rightwingers, such as Rabbi Meir Kahane and his supporters, that the film is pro-PLO and anti-Israeli. Kahane and his followers have staged demonstrations in front of theaters where the film was shown. They also demonstrated in front of the Knesset when the film was screened there for the Israeli MKs and their guests.

A major breakthrough for the makers of "Beyond The Walls" came a few months ago when Warner Bros. decided to buy the rights for worldwide distribution of the film.

"This is the first time that Warner Bros. is distributing an Israeli film," Barbash said with uncoiled pride. He said that Warner Bros. paid for the film about \$400,000 which is "a tremendous amount for us, considering that the entire film cost \$600,000 to produce."

"Beyond The Walls" stars actors Arnon Zadok (Jewish) and Muhammad Bakri (Arab). It was produced by Rudy Cohen.

BLINDED REFUSENIK SENT TO LABOR CAMP

By Judith Kohn

WASHINGTON, March 18 (JTA) — Isosif Berenstein, an imprisoned Soviet refusenik who was blinded in one eye while in detention last December, has been transferred from a hospital to a labor camp, according to Berenstein's wife, Fanya.

A friend outside the Soviet Union with whom Fanya Berenstein made contact earlier last week, told the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews (UCSJ) that Soviet authorities had refused to tell the imprisoned refusenik's wife where her husband had been sent.

Berenstein was arrested Nov. 12 while on a visit from his hometown Kiev to nearby Nevagrad Vilinski, where he is believed to have been lured by allegations of financial misdeeds that had been made against his aunt. Charged with resisting arrest, he was sentenced on Dec. 10 to four years imprisonment. While in prison, Berenstein was reportedly attacked with broken glass by two cellmates.

According to the UCSJ, Fanya Berenstein reported her husband had been taken from a hospital to a labor camp despite the loss of 99.4 percent of his vision. She appealed for world community support in urging the Soviet government to grant her husband amnesty.

Meanwhile, a number of Jews, including two visiting rabbis from New York, were detained for interrogation in the Soviet Union last week, according to the UCSJ. These interrogations, the UCSJ reported, have taken place since the death of Soviet leader Konstantin Chernenko.

DUTCH FIRM FINED FOR CERTIFICATION

By Henriette Boas

AMSTERDAM, March 18 (JTA) — The Amsterdam Higher District Court has imposed a fine of 750 Guilders (about \$200) on a local electrical installations firm for certifying that two of its employees sent on a project to Saudi Arabia were not Jewish.

The case developed two years ago when the firm, Flakt, stated, in its application for Saudi visas, that the employees' religion was Christian and that they had no relations with Israel.

A complaint of racial discrimination was lodged by the Center for Information and Documentation on Israel (CIDI) under an amendment to the criminal code dating from 1981. The Netherlands Supreme Court referred the case to the Amsterdam Higher District Court after a lower court ruled there was no racial discrimination in the firm's action.

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Room Tax will be imposed shortly on every night spent at Jerusalem's hotels, the Ministerial Tourism Committee has decided. The tax will be up to a maximum of \$1.00 per night at a five star hotel, to be imposed on both Israelis and tourists. The income will go for improvement of the tourism infrastructure in Jerusalem.