

SENIOR CBS OFFICIAL BACKTRACKS ON EARLIER CHARGE THAT THE IDF DELIBERATELY FIRED ON CBS CAMERAMEN
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 26 (JTA) — A senior CBS official backtracked tonight from his network's earlier charge that an Israel Defense Force tank had deliberately fired at two CBS television news cameramen who were killed in south Lebanon last Thursday.

But Ernest Leiser, CBS vice president for news, offered no formal apology for what he admitted were groundless charges against Israel. On the other hand, Premier Shimon Peres sent his personal deep regrets and condolences to CBS for what he described as a tragic mistake arising from Israel's efforts to protect its soldiers from terrorists in south Lebanon.

Leiser, who flew to Israel over the weekend, made his remarks following an hour-long meeting with Peres after his return from the Lebanese village where the cameramen were killed. He told reporters here:

"I think that knowing what I now know, we (CBS) might have qualified our language somewhat. I think our reaction was proportionate to what we experienced and knew at the time, (last Thursday) and I now certainly believe it was not a deliberate attempt to fire tank cannons against our camera people."

Tank Was Three Kilometers From Target

After visiting the site of the incident yesterday, Leiser was reported to have acknowledged that the tank which fired the fatal shots was about three kilometers distant from the target, not 500 meters as CBS had originally contended. He seemed to agree that at that range, it was not possible to distinguish hand-held television cameras from hand-held rocket-propelled grenade launchers — in short, the cameramen were indistinguishable from armed terrorists.

Peres did not agree to Leiser's request for a special inquiry into the incident but promised to inform CBS of the findings of a routine internal investigation conducted by the IDF. CBS, for its part, has not rescinded its earlier decision to cancel a series of Passover-Easter week broadcasts that were to originate in Israel next month.

Peres Furious With IDF

It was disclosed today that Peres was furious with the IDF for its failure to express regret over the deaths of the two cameramen in its announcement of the incident last week. The announcement, by an IDF spokesman, was given to Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin for approval before it was released. Despite his recommendation that it should contain an expression of regret, it was published in its original form.

Peres sent a personal letter of condolence to CBS president Ed Joyce but it arrived too late to mollify CBS executives in New York who were angered by what they called the IDF spokesman's "arrogance and stupidity" and demanded a full investigation.

Peres' letter to Joyce said: "I wish to express my deep sorrow at the tragic death of two newsmen in south Lebanon. Please convey my condolences to the families and to CBS News, and my wishes for full and speedy recovery of the wounded."

Peres added, however, "The tank crew involved did not deviate from the strict orders concerning the protection of innocent bystanders. It appears that the cameramen took position in the midst of a group of armed men who were engaged in active hostility against the IDF. I reiterate Israel's longstanding and unqualified commitment to freedom of the press and totally reject any suggestion that the incident was anything but a derivative of the tragic situation in Lebanon and the circumstances under which we are forced to carry out our duty to protect the lives of our soldiers."

SOUTH LEBANON CHRISTIANS AND MOSLEMS PROMISE TO COOPERATE WITH ISRAEL TO KEEP PEACE AND ORDER IN THAT AREA
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 26 (JTA) — Christian and Moslem residents of south Lebanon near the Israeli border have promised to cooperate with Israel to maintain peace and order in the security belt just north of the border after the Israel Defense Force completes its withdrawal.

But they may well have to deal with Palestinian terrorists who confirmed today that they are returning to the areas of south Lebanon from which they were ousted by the IDF in 1982, to continue their war against Israel.

About 100 Christian, Shiite and Sunni Moslem dignitaries from border villages met yesterday with Brig. Gen. Shlomo Ilya, the IDF's chief liaison officer with the population in the south of Lebanon. Ilya promised that the "good fence" — the arrangement by which Lebanese could freely enter and leave Israel for commercial or personal purposes before June, 1982 — would be re-instated after the IDF leaves Lebanese soil.

The village headmen promised in turn that they would support local civil militias to maintain order in the region and would encourage young men to enlist in them. Ilya, who met with them in the Shiite village of J'ba'il, a few kilometers inside Lebanon, said the civil militias, along with the Israel-backed South Lebanon Army (SLA) would have a central role in maintaining peace.

PLO Members Returning To South Lebanon

In Amman, meanwhile, Khalil Wazir, senior deputy and top military aide to Palestine Liberation Organization chief Yasir Arafat, said PLO members loyal to Arafat were returning to south Lebanon. He confirmed that they have participated in attacks on the withdrawing IDF, carried out mainly by Shiite terrorists.

Wazir said that 60 PLO fighters were killed in those attacks over the past five months. He confirmed reports current in Israel that PLO terrorists are returning to the refugee camps in south Lebanon from which they were driven by the IDF in June, 1982.

Arafat was reported today to have suffered another political setback when George Habash, leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, formally joined a pro-Syrian alliance against the PLO leader. Until now, Habash had backed Arafat against PLO dissidents.

Of the various terrorist splinter groups once under the PLO umbrella, only the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, headed by Naif Hawatmeh, continues to support Arafat and his mainstream El Fatah group. Hawatmeh is opposed to Syrian domination of the Palestinian liberation movement.

CUOMO RAPS REAGAN FOR HIS REFUSAL TO VISIT A CONCENTRATION CAMP SITE

NEW YORK, March 26 (JTA) -- Governor Mario Cuomo yesterday criticized President Reagan for his statement to reporters last week explaining why he would not visit Dachau, the site of the Nazi concentration camp, when he goes to West Germany in May to observe the 40th anniversary of the Allied victory in World War II.

In a strongly worded letter to the President, Cuomo wrote that Reagan's remarks "may suggest an insensitivity that is not appropriate to your high office. Your remarks can be seen as an affront to the memory of the victims of the Holocaust and an insult to the survivors. One would hope that your remarks were inadvertent and that you will correct them."

A statement issued by the White House last night said: "The President is very sensitive to the colossal tragedy of the Jewish population during World War II. He has often said the Holocaust should never be forgotten. But we also have to look for the future of peace and sharing with the German people."

At a nationally televised news conference last Thursday, Reagan said he wanted to emphasize relations that have developed between United States and West Germany. The German people, Reagan continued, have had a "guilt feeling that's been imposed upon them. And I just think that's unnecessary."

Cuomo, in his letter, said "Your comments ... only serve to aid the cause of those who have spent the years since 1945 attempting to expunge the memory of the Holocaust and to deny its reality." He added, "Your comments, I'm afraid, have made it more difficult to explain to young people the necessity of remembering the events and meaning of the Holocaust. Those who counsel to forgetting the Holocaust and its lessons expose humanity to a very serious danger." Cuomo is a member of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council.

ZVEE SCOOLEER DEAD AT 85

NEW YORK, March 26 (JTA) -- Funeral services were held today at the Riverside Memorial Chapel for actor and Yiddish commentator on WEVD Radio, Zvee Scooleer, who died here yesterday at the age of 85.

Scooleer's career included appearances in plays, movies and the Yiddish theater. He appeared in the entire seven-year Broadway run of "Fiddler on the Roof" and was a commentator on WEVD's Yiddish program for more than 50 years.

His film career included roles in "Love and Death," "The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz," "Hester Street," "The Wall," "The Pawnbroker," "The Chosen," "The King of the Gypsies," and "The Detective."

He appeared in Broadway and Off Broadway in such plays as "Haggada," and "Memories of Pontius Pilate."

But Scooleer was known by thousands of Yiddish listeners for his weekly program on WEVD, aired every Sunday morning from the 1930's on. He was known to his radio listeners as the "Gram-Meister" ("The Master of the Rhyme.")

Born in the Ukraine in 1899, Scooleer came to the United States as a teenager in 1912. He made his debut in the first American production of the well-known Yiddish play "Dybbuk" as a member of Maurice Schwartz's Yiddish Art Theater. He stayed with the theater for 25 years and appeared in numerous plays.

Scooleer received last week the Goldie Award from the Congress for Jewish Culture for his contribution to Jewish art and theater.

SPECIAL TO THE JTA NEW-FOUND CONFIDENCE OF IRELAND'S JEWS By Maurice Samuelson

DUBLIN, March 26 (JTA) -- A sense of relief is sweeping the 2,000 Jews of the Irish Republic after the government's ban of Pieter Menten, the 85-year-old Dutch millionaire found guilty of slaughtering Jews in Poland in 1941. Menten owns a big estate near the city of Waterford and was planning to spend the rest of his life there after serving eight years out of a 10-year sentence in a Dutch prison.

But last Thursday, following strenuous protests by the Dublin Jewish representative council, backed by a handful of Jewish members of the Irish Parliament, the Cabinet declared Menten an undesirable alien and prohibited him from entering the Emerald Isle.

The decision demonstrates the new-found confidence of Irish Jewry, the change which has overcome the Irish people's appraisal of World War II, as well as Ireland's sensitivity to international public opinion now that it is a fully-fledged member of the European Economic Community.

It may have also been not unconnected with the fact that Ireland is shortly to pay host to Israel's Irish-born President Chaim Herzog and its healthy respect for Jewish public opinion in the United States.

The protests against Menten's possible return to Ireland were initiated by Community leader Joe Briscoe, dentist son of the late Robert Briscoe, a Jewish Lord Mayor of Dublin. They were energetically taken up by Briscoe's politician son Ben, a member of the late Eamonn de Valera's Fianna Fail Party, and two other Jewish parliamentarians, Alan Shatter, of the ruling Fine Gael Party, and Mervyn Taylor, the Irish Labor Party's chief whip.

Menten Visited Ireland Before

Menten, whose wealth is believed to stem from valuables stolen from his victims during the war, had last visited Ireland in 1975, but his links go back to 1964 when he bought a large country house on a 22-acre estate near Waterford.

The house, which he used to visit about four times a year, is reputed to contain much of his art and antiquities collection said to be worth some 10 million Pounds Sterling. Some of it is said to have been looted from Jews in 1943 when Menten was permitted by Heinrich Himmler to bring three train loads of booty from Poland to Holland.

Menten was first arrested in Holland in 1948 but released a year later after successfully appealing against a conviction of collaborating with the Nazis. Subsequently, Holland turned down requests for his extradition by Poland, the Soviet Union and Israel.

In 1976, he left Holland secretly the day before his re-arrest was ordered following new allegations about his 1941 activities in Poland. Brought back to Amsterdam, he stood trial in May 1977 and was found guilty of complicity in the murder of over 100 Jews, including women and children, in August, 1941, near Lvov. The unprecedented campaign by the normally politically passive Jewish community against Menten, palpably influenced the Irish government decision.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES THE OTHER FACE OF ISRAEL

By Murray Zuckoff

(The third article in a series.)

JERUSALEM, March 26 (JTA) -- Israelis, like Goethe's Faust, have two hearts beating within their breasts in their attitude towards the Ethiopian Jewish immigrants. Most Israelis are enamored of the newcomers, almost to a point of treating them as an exotic specie from a distant planet. But others, especially the ultra-Orthodox, view them with disdain and with suspicion regarding their authentic Jewishness.

The Ethiopian Jews -- or Beta Yisrael (the House of Israel), as they call themselves -- are a remarkable people. They are eager to adjust to their new lives in Israel and show an amazing capacity to learn Hebrew and to acquire new skills in a short period of time. They also have an unquenchable thirst for anything Jewish and for studying the Torah.

On Purim eve, for example, a group of Ethiopian Jews who had recently arrived at the Kfar Saba absorption center near Tel Aviv watched intently as a group of Israeli primary school pupils performed a Purim play in Hebrew and explained the meaning of the holiday. The Ethiopians, who had not yet learned Hebrew, were given a running translation in Amharic, their native language, by an Ethiopian who had made aliyah earlier.

Celebrate Purim For The First Time In 2,500 Years

This was the first time in 2,500 years that thousands of recent Ethiopian immigrants celebrated Purim. Premier Shimon Peres, addressing a meeting of the United Jewish Appeal Ambassadors' Mission, pointed out that Purim "is not on the agenda of the Ethiopian Jews. They are committed to the Torah, to the books of Moses, but whatever happened in Jewish life since then was unknown to them because they were isolated, cut off from the life of the Jewish people in the diaspora. They know about Pesach because they participated in the exodus from Egypt. But they weren't present at the wedding of Esther and Ahasuerus."

In the spirit of the first Purim, the Ethiopian youngsters at Kfar Saba busied themselves making Purim masks, painting each other's faces in bright colors, making costumes, and passing out Hamantashen to the guests comprising the Ambassadors' Mission.

There was no understandable verbal communications between the two groups, but the Ethiopian youngsters, with ever-present smiles, extended their hands in friendship and tacit understanding. Their warmth and their ebullience permeated the air.

Time and again, Israeli officials involved in the absorption of the Beta Yisrael pointed out that despite their isolation and living under conditions of the most cruel experiences of religious oppression, assassination and discrimination in Ethiopia, they had retained their Jewishness and are passionately committed to it. "They are Jewish and remain Jewish," Peres asserted.

Absorption Is Intricate And Complex

The absorption process is intricate and complex. The Ethiopian Jews have come to a country that is entering the 21st century from a country that is, at best, still in the 19th century. They have to, as it were, break out of a two-century time warp and leap across both time and space.

To ease the transition and to avoid frustration, disappointments and social asphyxiation, the newcom-

ers have been encouraged to retain their tradition and culture. "Retaining their tradition and culture makes it easier and less tension-provoking for them to settle into their new society," said Chaim Arnon, head of the Jewish Agency's aliyah and absorption department.

It is also necessary, said Arnon and Harry Rosen, secretary general of the Jewish Agency and secretary general of the UJA in Israel, that they be given opportunities and encouraged to express their social and cultural, as well as their familial patterns, their pride and their independence, as well as their feeling of self-sufficiency. This is part of the dialectical process of their absorption and integration.

Challenges And Difficulties

But there are challenges -- and difficulties -- to the absorption and integration of the Beta Yisrael. Unlike immigrants from the West who do not know Hebrew but at least have marketable job skills and knowledge of the practical every-day world, the Ethiopians have neither.

In addition, the language barrier is at times insurmountable. There are very few people in Israel who can speak Amharic and ulpans in Hebrew are fraught with difficulties. Volunteer translators have to be found among either the few Israelis who can speak both languages or among Ethiopian Jews who made aliyah some time ago.

The process is nerve-wracking and time consuming. But the dividend comes when a new Ethiopian immigrant begins to speak Hebrew for the first time. The joy is immeasurable on the parts of both the Ethiopian and the Israeli teacher. Whatever shyness and inhibitions the Ethiopians had, suddenly evaporates. They have become Israelis and they are really at home.

Some Unique Problems

The absorption of Ethiopian Jews also poses other rather unique problems. "We have to integrate them without creating ghettos," said Boston-born Rosen who spent most of his adult life working in areas of social planning and community organization before coming to Israel in 1967 and since then.

During the early years of the State, new immigrants were sent to transit camps consisting of tents and, later, of huts and shacks. These became instant slums and ghettos. "We are determined to avoid the mistakes of the past," both Arnon and Rosen said. Now, the absorption centers provide housing facilities and residential, social and cultural facilities.

After their period of absorption, the Ethiopian Jews are sent to towns where they can be "mutually self-supportive, but not so much that the areas to which they are assigned become ghettos," Rosen said. This requires advance planning with local authorities so that there is some parity between the Ethiopian Jews and the local inhabitants.

But this itself is a problem because Israel suffers from a housing shortage, making it difficult at times to find the proper mix and often requiring holding back housing units from other immigrants. "Saying yes to one group means saying no to another, a classic cause of social tensions," Rosen observed. "We have to find ways of equalizing integration of all olim and Israelis without saying no to anyone. And this stretches not only budgets but also imagination and social and community planning."

Settling Ethiopian Jewish families is another problem, he pointed out. It's hard to find their relatives in Israel who made aliyah ahead of newcomers or those who follow them. The Ethiopians have six to 10 common surnames, the equivalent of Jones or Smith.

"There are no records to check by, like those who came here from the Holocaust," Rosen said. "Family relations are very important to them. Their concept of family is extended kinship family and putting these families together is vital but very difficult."

Juggling Budgets And Other Human Needs

Budgetary constraints, especially at this time under difficult economic conditions, also pose challenges in the absorption and integration of the Beta Yisrael. Rosen estimated that it costs between \$6,000 and \$9,000 to absorb and integrate each Ethiopian. It takes from one to one-and-a-half years for them to develop a marketable skill so that they can start earning an income. But absorption must go on.

To accomplish this, Rosen noted, other human needs have been cut back. "We've had to stop building settlements on the new borders with Egypt and stopped building new settlements in the Galilee," he said. "Again, saying yes to one need means saying no to another."

Issue Of Acceptance

Absorption, he observed, is only one side of the process. The other side is acceptance. But the latter is not always forthcoming and tensions between the Ethiopian Jews and others have flared up frequently.

For example, in Beersheba, the Habad Hasidic movement's Uziel School refuses to register Ethiopian Jewish children for the coming school year. A third of the pupils are presently Ethiopian immigrants and the Habad movement has announced that it will check their Jewish status before deciding if they will be able to continue their studies next year.

Ethiopian immigrants have also been rebuffed in other ways by the ultra-Orthodox. Two weeks ago, some of the Ethiopians were chased away from the Western Wall where they had come to pray and told that they were not Jewish. They have complained about the demand by the Chief Rabbinate Council that they undergo symbolic "conversion" rites, intimating that their authenticity as Jews is the question.

In some towns, they have been told that they are not welcome because the locals fear they will compete for jobs or because there is large-scale unemployment. Peres, in affirming the Jewishness of the Ethiopian immigrants, pointed out that the challenge to their Jewishness is part of the controversial Who is a Jew issue.

Welcome Mats Are The Norm

But there are welcome mats out for the Beta Yisrael, and this is the norm rather than the exception. One prominent example is in Jerusalem where arrangements are being made to recognize the traditional elders of the Ethiopian community, called Kessim in Amharic, as rabbis.

Machon Meir is the institution that is providing religious instructions to a number of Kessim. The institute, described by its director, Rabbi Dov Begun, as Zionist-oriented, has been offering courses in Hebrew to three of the Kessim for the past three months. Plans are under way for another 10 to begin a one-year program, which would also include Jewish history, religious thought and the Bible. The Kessim were respected leaders in Ethiopia but now find themselves without a legal position and penniless.

The institute also hopes to begin a program for 30 to 50 younger members of the Ethiopian community, who will, Begun hopes, form the core of the future spiritual leadership of the Ethiopian Jews. Begun

said at the same time, the institute would respect the tradition of the Ethiopians. In spite of some transitory difficulties, Rosen is certain that the Ethiopian Jews will make it here. "Their commitment to Judaism is unbelievable," he said. "They have been persecuted for hundreds of years for being Jews but they have stuck it out. Ethiopian Jews rejoice when they come here. They just cry. They are an amazing group of people. They have the patience of Job."

(Next: The West Bank)

HOLOCAUST DENIER GETS 15-MONTH JAIL SENTENCE, THREE YEARS PROBATION

By Ben Kayfetz

TORONTO, March 26 (JTA) -- Ernst Zundel, a resident alien in Canada since 1958, was sentenced to 15 months imprisonment and three years probation by a federal judge yesterday for spreading the lie that the Holocaust did not occur.

Zundel, 46, a citizen of West Germany, was convicted under a section of the Canadian criminal code forbidding the dissemination of false information, in his booklet "Did Six Million Really Die?" While the maximum penalty is two years in prison, any sentence over six months makes him liable to deportation proceedings.

During the three year probation period, Zundel is enjoined from writing, communicating or speaking directly or indirectly on the subject of the Holocaust. The defense is expected to appeal.

In pronouncing sentence, Judge Hugh Locke delivered a scathing denunciation of the convict, declaring "You are not a publisher. You are a neo-Nazi." He said Zundel's activities were a crude, unacceptable intrusion into the lives of Canadians. He described Zundel's booklet as a "false and racist diatribe."

Noting that Zundel showed no signs of contrition, the Judge stressed that the sentence reflects not only the feelings of the Jewish community but the entire Canadian people. He accepted, however, what he referred to as the grudging apology of Zundel's defense attorney, Douglas Christie, for his behavior during the trial.

Christie's courtroom tactics, for which the judge threatened to cite him for contempt, was to try to place the Holocaust, not the defendant, on trial.

CHARGES DISMISSED AGAINST PROTESTORS

NEW YORK, March 26 (JTA) -- A New York Criminal Court judge, acting "in the interests of justice" today dismissed charges against three rabbis, two journalism students and the national coordinator of the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry (SSSJ) who were arrested while staging a sit-in at the Soviet Mission to the United Nations here last month.

The charges dismissed by Judge Maxwell Sayah were related to "Operation Redemption," a series of non-violent civil disobedience actions at the offices of Soviet institutions here to protest the "new spiritual genocide" of Soviet Jews, an SSSJ spokesman said. So far, 250 persons including more than 125 rabbis have been detained by police in five separate actions since January.

The spokesman said the next action is planned for Sunday, April 14, at 11 a.m. at the Soviet diplomatic residence in Riverdale.