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VERDICT IN ACHILLE LAURO TRIAL DUE IN JULY

By Edwin Eytan

GENOA, June 25 (JTA) -- The Italian criminal court trying 15 people accused of the Achille Lauro hijack and the murder of Leon Klinghoffer will render its verdict next month. Court President Lino Monteverde said the court will continue hearing Thursday defense lawyers and the state prosecution and will then retire to consider its verdict.

Among the 10 defendants tried in absentia is Mohammed Abbas, a Palestinian terrorist leader charged with having masterminded the hijacking of the cruise ship and the murder of Klinghoffer an American Jewish invalid passenger.

An aide to Prime Minister Bettino Craxi claimed Tuesday that Italy had allowed Abbas to leave the country because the U.S. failed to submit sufficient proof to justify his arrest and because he was technically "protected" by being aboard an official Egyptian plane.

The aide, Euplio Badini, told the court that when Abbas, a leader of the Palestine Liberation Front, a PLO splinter group headed by George Habash, was allowed to leave Italy, the U.S. government failed to provide Italy with any concrete evidence of his involvement. Italian prosecutors appearing in court have shown beyond any doubt that the 37-year-old Abbas had organized the hijack. Badini said Tuesday when concluding his testimony "We did not know all this at the time."

Teenage Terrorist's Testimony

On Wednesday the court heard testimony from Bassam Al Ashker, a young Palestinian terrorist who will be tried by a juvenile court. He was 17 at the time of the October 7-9, 1985 hijack, a minor according to Italian law.

Ashker repeated the story told earlier by the other hijackers claiming that the original plan was to try to reach the Israeli port of Ashdod in an attempt to force Israel to free 51 imprisoned Palestinians. He said the hijackers were "forced" to seize the ship after a crew member found arms and grenades hidden in their cabin.

Ashker claimed that the hijackers did not kill Klinghoffer. He said "This is an American trick to spoil our reputation. We are Palestinian fighters and our laws bar us from killing civilians."

In Rome, Italy and the U.S. signed a special agreement Tuesday to coordinate their fight against world terrorism. Attorney General Edwin Meese and Interior Minister Oscar Luigi Scalfaro signed a special treaty extending the accord on cooperation against organized crime to the fight against terrorism. The two countries, Italian Radio said, will pool intelligence resources on this issue.

SHIN BET CHIEF RESIGNS, GETS PRESIDENTIAL PARDON, PROBE DROPPED

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, June 25 (JTA) -- Avraham Shalom, head of Israel's internal security services, Shabak,

or Shin Bet, resigned Wednesday and was granted a pardon by President Chaim Herzog for any acts on his part or failure to act in connection with a bus hijack incident in the Gaza Strip in April, 1984.

The Presidential pardon immediately raised questions in legal circles and drew strong criticism from some political quarters inasmuch as Shalom was never tried or convicted of any offense.

Herzog went on television Wednesday night to explain that his decision was made in "the national interest" and "to protect Shin Bet from further damage." He acknowledged that it was controversial but stressed he had to weigh all of the ramifications. He cited judicial and legal opinions to the effect that the President's exercise of pardon was not merely an act of mercy but could in some circumstances be an exercise of supreme national interest.

Herzog noted pointedly that he made the decision after hearing from the Inner Cabinet which had convened with the Attorney General.

The pardon would seem to preclude any investigation of charges that Shalom engaged in an elaborate cover-up amounting to obstruction of justice with respect to the unexplained deaths of two captured Arab bus hijackers while in custody of security agents. Three of Shalom's aides accused with him were also pardoned.

The announcement that Shalom resigned came from the Cabinet at noon local time after 12 hours of high-level meetings and consultations involving the Inner Cabinet, President Herzog, Attorney General Yosef Harish and top private attorneys.

Harish, who had promised to announce Tuesday night his decision on whether to proceed with an investigation of Shalom, told reporters that in light of the Presidential pardon there was no point in pursuing the investigation. He said he had not been aware of the approach to the President for a pardon until after it was made.

Commission Will Set Rules Of Conduct For Shin Bet

The official announcement said Shalom resigned because the affair resulted in his being identified publicly as the head of

Shin Bet, which made it impossible to continue in his post. The identity of the Shin Bet chief has always been a State secret.

The Cabinet's announcement of Shalom's resignation also stated that there would be no further police or judicial inquiry into the allegations against him and his aides. It announced that the Prime Minister would create a special commission to recommend regulations and norms for the conduct of Shin Bet in the future.

Some legal circles predicted Wednesday that the Presidential pardon would be challenged in the Supreme Court, though it was not clear who would initiate the challenge or whether the court would recognize the challenger's standing in the case.

One critic of the pardon, Energy Minister Moshe Shahal, a Laborite and a lawyer by profession, questioned its validity. He noted that the relevant law empowered the President to pardon only convicted criminals. Shahal told reporters that the Inner Cabinet's decision did not follow "The King's Highway" but

sought a solution through twisted byways. Communications Minister Amnon Rubinstein, of the leftist Shinui Party, thought the pardon is legal but "set a thoroughly negative and undesirable precedent."

Elazar Granot of Mapam, charged that the President and Attorney General were both "dragged by the politicians" into an elaborate package designed to avoid any inquiry into the policy-making level.

But if leftist politicians deplored the way the government resolved what had become known as the Shin Bet scandal, those on the political right hailed it as a wise move that enabled the nation to set aside an affair that preoccupied and embarrassed the authorities for months.

Deputy Foreign Minister Ronni Milo, a Likud MK, called the Cabinet's decision "good and brave." Milo is a close aide to Foreign Minister Yitzhak Shamir. The Likud leader had vehemently opposed any sort of investigation of the allegations against Shalom on national security grounds.

Peres, though also opposed, was prepared to accept a judicial inquiry conducted under strictest secrecy. But the Inner Cabinet (five Labor and five Likud ministers) agreed to the course unfolded Wednesday. Only Ezer Weizman, of the Labor-allied Yahad Party reportedly was opposed. According to unconfirmed reports, one other senior minister abstained. He is believed to be Education Minister Yitzhak Navon, a Laborite and Herzog's immediate predecessor as President of Israel.

Harish Says He Would Have Launched Probe

Peres reportedly was preparing to address the Labor Party's Knesset faction to win their support for the Inner Cabinet's decision. There have been demands from the Labor rank-and-file to know why Peres felt it necessary to stand with Shamir against a full scale inquiry into the case.

Both Peres and Shamir had objected strongly to former Attorney General Yitzhak Zamir's order of a police probe of the allegations against Shalom last month. Many observers believe Zamir's zeal to prosecute led to his replacement by Harish on June 1, though Zamir had announced months ago that he intended to resign.

Harish told reporters Wednesday that, after studying the case, his decision had been to follow in the footsteps of Zamir to proceed with the police inquiry without delay. It was not clear Wednesday whether Harish's advice had been sought by Herzog on the legal validity of the pardon.

REFORM, CONSERVATIVE LEADERS DENOUNCE STAMP ON ID CARDS OF JEWISH CONVERTS IN ISRAEL

NEW YORK, June 25 (JTA) -- Leaders of Reform and Conservative Judaism in the U.S. spoke out strongly Wednesday to denounce the practice by the Orthodox-controlled Ministry of Interior in Israel of printing the word "converted" next to the designation "Jewish" on the identity cards of Jewish converts to Judaism.

Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the congregational organization of Reform Jews, charged that "Now the Orthodox establishment in Israel wants to stamp the equivalent of the yellow star on the identity cards of immigrants to Israel who have been converted to Judaism."

A statement adopted by the executive council of the Rabbinical Assembly, the association of Conservative rabbis, urged Premier Shimon Peres and his Cabinet "to immediately rescind this unconscionable ruling."

The new regulation of the Interior Ministry which is headed by Rabbi Yitzhak Peretz of the ultra-Orthodox Shas Party, was disclosed Tuesday at a Supreme Court hearing on a complaint by a recent immigrant from the U.S., Shoshana Miller, who was converted to Judaism by a Reform rabbi. The Interior Ministry refused to register her as Jewish.

Flouts Tradition

The Ministry told the court that the designation "converted" was intended as a guideline to rabbis who register marriages. Schindler declared, "This ugly and humiliating requirement flies in the face of 3,000 years of Jewish tradition. From the earliest days of our history as a people, those who converted to our faith were regarded as fully equal. All were children of Father Abraham; never was there a stigma attached to the status of a convert."

Schindler added, "I have every confidence that this latest insult heaped upon the Jewish community by a small Khomeini-like minority will be rejected by Israel's Cabinet and repudiated by Israel's people." His reference was to the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini who established a theocratic Islamic state in Iran.

The statement by the Rabbinical Assembly said: "The unilateral decision of Interior Minister Yitzhak Peretz to stamp the word 'convert' on the passports of converted Jews in Israel represents a reprehensible action defying both Jewish tradition and the decision of the Israeli Supreme Court. We urge Prime Minister Shimon Peres and the Israeli Cabinet to immediately rescind this unconscionable ruling and to continue to abide by the existing Law of Return accepting the converts of recognized rabbis, including Orthodox, Conservative and Reform."

The statement noted that "Under Jewish law, converts are Jews and in no way should be distinguished from other Jews."

FORMER CHIEF RABBI GOREN BLASTS 'CONVERT' DESIGNATION ON ID CARDS By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, June 25 (JTA) -- The former Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Israel, Shlomo Goren, elaborated Wednesday on his sharp criticism of the Interior Ministry's new regulation that requires the word "converted" to be stamped next to the designation "Jewish" on the identity cards of converts to Judaism in Israel.

Goren said on a radio interview that the ruling was totally contrary to halacha, Jewish religious law. According to halacha one is absolutely forbidden from putting any stigma on a convert once the conversion procedures are completed. "He should not be reminded that he is a convert," Goren said.

The Orthodox rabbi added that the new regulation did injustice to most converts since they observe Judaism more strictly than secular Jews. He stressed that converts are equal to other Jews and even have privileges other Jews do not have. "It is a mitzva to love the convert," Goren declared.

Meanwhile, Leon Dulzin, chairman of the Jewish Agency and World Zionist Organization Executives warned Tuesday that the new regulation would create

divisions within Jewry and distance Israel from the diaspora communities. Dulzin spoke at a meeting of the Coordination Body, a panel of senior Cabinet ministers and Jewish Agency leaders.

PROGENY OF NAZI WAR CRIMINALS, EQUALLY HARD CORE, ACTIVE IN SOUTH AMERICA, AUTHOR SAYS By Yitzhak Rabi

NEW YORK, June 25 (JTA) -- "Pockets" of Nazi communities, consisting of the children of Nazi war criminals and local Nazis, have developed in several South American countries.

According to Gerald Posner, a New York attorney who is co-author of the newly published "Mengele: The Complete Story," (McGraw Hill, \$18.95), there are at least 20-25,000 hard core Nazis in South America, with large "pockets" in Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay.

"The remnant of the Nazi killing machine is alive in South America," the 31-year-old lawyer, who spent months in South America in the guise of a Nazi propagandist, told an Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith luncheon here.

"The Fourth Reich Nazis in South America hate the Jews with passion," he said, adding that the "second generation" of Nazis, the sons and daughters of the German Nazis who took refuge in South America, are unrepentant and willing to carry on with the atrocities committed by their fathers.

Became Interested In Mengele In 1981

Discussing his new book, which he co-authored with John Ware, Posner said he became interested in the Mengele case in 1981 when he was retained to represent twins who had survived the gruesome experiments conducted on them by Mengele, the "Angel of Death" at the Auschwitz concentration camp during World War II.

Posner disclosed that there are 118 known twin survivors who were tortured by the "medical" experiments of Mengele. About 97 of them live now in Israel, he said.

Until Adolf Eichmann was abducted in 1960 from Argentina by Israeli intelligence agents, Mengele lived in Buenos Aires almost openly, Posner said. But following the Eichmann abduction Mengele fled to Paraguay, where he lived in constant fear of the Israelis, Posner said.

According to Posner, Mengele's whereabouts were known to Israeli agents since 1962, but for reasons of manpower, budgetary considerations and the fact that the Mossad's resources were diverted to other cases, Mengele was not captured, and finally died in Brazil in 1979 in a swimming accident.

Posner, who obtained exclusive access to Mengele's 5,000 pages of writings and diaries, said that the "monster" died unrepentant. He said that had Mengele been captured and brought to trial, his testimony could have been used as an answer to all those who now say that the Holocaust never happened.

IAI SOURCES CHARGE SMEAR CAMPAIGN AGAINST LAVI FIGHTERS IN U.S.

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, June 25 (JTA) -- Sources at Israel Aviation Industries (IAI) charged Wednesday that an attempt had been made to smear the name of IAI in the U.S. by a lobby opposed to Israel's second generation jet fighter plane, the Lavi because it might compete on the international market against American fighter aircraft.

The sources, not identified, cited a just published report in Forbes magazine, a leading American business publication, that IAI was forced to recall aircraft wings it had contracted to manufacture for General Dynamics because of defects.

IAI said the faults discovered five months ago were long since corrected. The IAI sources expressed surprise that the story was published now.

The wings in question were for the American F-16 jet fighter which is manufactured by General Dynamics. IAI received a contract for 300 pairs of wings. An IAI spokesman confirmed that the third and fourth sets delivered to General Dynamics were recalled several months ago because a faulty machine had drilled holes in the wrong places.

The error slipped by both IAI quality inspectors and those of General Dynamics stationed in Israel. IAI is presently working on the 19th pair of wings.

Israel has been under some pressure by the Reagan Administration to abandon the Lavi project which is largely financed by the U.S. The Administration contends that the plane is not feasible because the cost per unit would be excessive. Israeli experts have disputed the American cost estimates.

N. AMERICAN OLIM SHOULD BE EXEMPT FROM ISRAELI TRAVEL TAX, PARENTS DEMAND

By Ben Kayfetz

TORONTO, June 25 (JTA) -- The parents of young Americans and Canadians who have immigrated to Israel are demanding that their children not be required to pay the travel tax levied on all Israeli citizens who travel abroad.

A resolution demanding that "olim travelling on visits to their families be exempt from this tax" was adopted by the 180 delegates attending the three day conference here of the Association of Parents of North American Israelis. Norman Moscovitz, a delegate from Albany, N.Y., warned that "If nothing is done about the tax, the money will come out of our United Jewish Appeal donations."

Moscovitz expressed the strong feelings of the parents when he declared, "We are not a bottomless pit of money. Our children's visits from Israel are a high priority. We can't pay so much and we certainly don't expect our children to pay."

The tax, a consequence of Israel's foreign currency drain, is currently \$100 per capita, including minor children. The Knesset is considering raising it to \$200 for the peak summer travel season. Last summer it was \$300.

One delegate compared the travel tax to the tax Soviet Bloc countries impose on Jewish emigrants to pay for their free educations and other benefits. "We believe in democracy and this tax is not democratic," he said. "If Israel needs to raise the money, it should be done in some other way."

An amendment to the resolution urging abolition of the travel tax was narrowly defeated.

TEL AVIV (JTA) -- Some 400 diamond manufacturers and merchants from centers throughout the world will gather in Ramat Gan near Tel Aviv next week, at the 23rd bi-annual World Diamond Congress comprising the World Federation of Diamond Bourses and the International Diamond Manufacturers Association.

ISRAELI WILDLIFE SOCIETY STRESSES NEED FOR CONSERVATION, PRESERVATION

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, June 25 (JTA) -- More than 150 people sat down at the Israel Embassy to eat a dinner of food that might have been served during Biblical days as a way of stressing the need to preserve in Israel the animals, flowers and other wildlife that existed during that period.

The event was sponsored by the Hai-Bar (Wildlife) Society of Israel which maintains three wildlife reserves in the Negev dedicated to preserving animals mentioned in the Bible, and the friends of Hai-Bar, the Holy Land Conservation Fund.

Samuel Lewis, the former United States Ambassador to Israel, who was the guest of honor, said Israel is not as advanced as the U.S. in conservation "but it is getting there."

Israel Is 'Pioneer In Conservation'

Dr. Bertel Brunn, president of Friends of Hai-Bar, said that while Israel was a "beleaguered country" fighting for its survival, it has "become the pioneer in the conservation of nature" in the Middle East.

Lewis noted that he was able to endure the long hours that his Ambassadorial duties required by getting out to see the variety of Israel's outdoors. He not only became a scuba diver in Eilat but "tramped the length and breadth of the country" with his wife Sally. "It is up to this generation of Israelis and their friends abroad to protect the wildlife for the generations to follow," he said.

Israel Ambassador Meir Rosenne expressed the hope that in the years to come there can be more concentration on "developing Hai-Bar than on developing weapons."

Knesset Law Aids Effort

Dan Peri, executive director of the Israel National Reserves Authority to which the Hai-Bar reserves are attached, noted that before 1964 it was only a handful of volunteers, like those in Hai-Bar who sought to protect animals and flowers in Israel. But then the Knesset passed a law setting up the authority.

Peri said that many Biblical animals such as ibex, the oryx, the wild ass, and the fellow deer are now in the Hai-Bar reserves. He noted that the last El Al plane to leave Iran after the Khomeini revolution carried eight deer whose ancestors roamed Israel in Biblical times.

Peter Andrews, board chairman of Friends of Hai-Bar, said 14 species are being preserved and some animals have been returned to the wilds. He noted that the leopard has returned to the Israeli wilds. Peri expressed the hope that the time will come when Israel will be able to help its neighbors in preserving their wildlife.

Fox Presented To Zoo

Peri and Rosenne presented to the national zoo an adult male fennec fox, the first of seven animals being sent from the Hai-Bar reserves to the zoo. The other animals, two female fennecs and four dorcas gazelles, will arrive this summer.

Animals today are more "menaced than they were during the Biblical flood," Dr. Michael Robinson, the zoo's director, told the Embassy dinner last month. He said there is a need today "for more Noahs."

The speakers urged not only financial support for Hai-Bar but visits to its reserves. Lewis said he believes all Americans visiting Israel should visit these areas, rather than just the usual sites.

POLL INDICATES WIDESPREAD ANTI-SEMITISM IN GREECE

By Jean Cohen

ATHENS, June 25 (JTA) -- Forty-one percent of the respondents in an exhaustive survey of public opinion perceived the existence of widespread anti-Semitism in Greece. Fifty-five percent believed a persistent anti-Semitic allegation that Jews control the economy and political activity in Europe and America.

Only 36 percent disagreed and nine percent had no opinion, according to the survey conducted by Eur-odim and edited by Dr. Panagioti Dimitras.

The survey, carried out in the greater Athens area where 35 percent of the Greek population lives, noted that Greece is "a uniquely homogeneous country" where 98 percent of the citizenry speaks the same language and adheres to the same religion, the Greek Orthodox faith.

Negative Attitudes Toward Jews

The survey probed Greeks' trust in values, institutions, organizations and professions. It found that attitudes toward minorities in general were based on political partisanship rather than age, sex, education, occupation, income or degree of religious faith. Nevertheless, better educated respondents tended to be less racist than others.

It was also found that negative attitudes toward Jews, though widespread across party lines, diminished toward the left wing of the political spectrum. Only 25 percent of the respondents who belong to the conservative New Democracy party expressed trust in Jews. For members of the ruling Socialist Party it was 45 percent and for the KKE (Communist) party, 48 percent. Among members of the KKE-Interior (Euro-Communists), trust in Jews was 65 percent.

There is little official data on the exact number of Jews and other minorities in Greece. Questions on minorities have been omitted from every census taken since 1961. It is believed that this might be rooted in the fact that some minorities live in sensitive border regions and data on their numbers could be used by neighboring countries to raise territorial claims on Greece.

BARBIE TRIAL MAY START NEXT YEAR

By Edwin Eytan

PARIS, June 25 (JTA) -- The court of appeals decided Wednesday to release its formal charge sheet against Klaus Barbie on July 9. According to court officials, the trial of the former gestapo officer, known as the "Butcher of Lyon," could start early next year.

The court met in closed session but court officials said the discussion centered on the precise legal definition of "crimes against humanity" which according to French law are not covered by the statute of limitations.

Several organizations of resistance fighters have asked the court to consider Nazi terror campaigns against underground fighters as crimes against humanity and not as war crimes, which are automatically covered by a 20 year proscription.

Neither Barbie nor his legal counsel Jacques Verges were in court. Verges submitted a written statement saying that all that he and his client want is for the trial to start as soon as possible.