

ISRAELI AND SOVIET DIPLOMATS TO MEET REGARDING SOVIET PROPERTY IN ISRAEL

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Aug. 3 (JTA) -- Israeli and Soviet diplomats are to meet officially in Helsinki, Finland, within two weeks to discuss consular matters and issues pertaining to Soviet property in Israel. This has been confirmed in Jerusalem over the weekend following several weeks of unofficial rumors.

Observers here attach significance to the impending meeting, even though it is formally billed as dealing with relatively unpolitical matters. They feel the Soviets are "signalling" something merely by their initiative to hold the meeting.

But there is no expectation that the meeting will lead to the early reestablishment of diplomatic relations, which were severed by the USSR and its satellites during the Six-Day War. At most, observers here believe, the meeting could lead to the establishment of consular relations.

Until three years ago, the Finnish Embassy in Tel Aviv maintained a special, separate department to handle Soviet consular interests here and matters of church property. But now, that separate department has been wound up and these matters are taken care of directly by the chancery of the Finnish Embassy.

Soviet Team Due In Israel

The newspaper *Yediot Achronot* reported Sunday that the Soviets seek to send a team to Israel for an extended stay, to survey and register all Soviet-owned property.

The Russian Church in Israel is divided into two denominations: the red or Soviet-linked Church, and the white or anti-Soviet Church with its headquarters in New York. Both have properties in Jerusalem, Jaffa and elsewhere. The State of Israel has consistently recognized the red church's claims in cases of dispute.

Meanwhile, Israel and Poland are making final preparations for the opening, later this month, of interest offices in Warsaw and Tel Aviv, as agreed earlier this year. Observers see that move, too, as evidence of new Eastern Bloc concern to step up presence and involvement in Israel -- albeit on a low profile at present.

SHCHARANSKY SAYS HIS FAMILY WILL BE ALLOWED TO LEAVE THE USSR IN 3 WEEKS

JERUSALEM, Aug. 3 (JTA) -- Anatoly (Natan) Shcharansky says his family will be allowed to leave the Soviet Union in three weeks.

In an interview Sunday to Israel Radio, Shcharansky said he had spoken by telephone to his mother, Ida Milgrom, and she, her voice choked with tears, had told him she was being allowed to join him in Israel together with his brother, Leonid, and his family.

He said he believed the permits had been issued as a result of pressure in the West. And, reacting to the reports of imminent consular talks between the USSR and Israel, Shcharansky warned against hasty establishment of such ties. He urged that any ties be made conditional on easing emigration restrictions.

Israel Radio's Washington correspondent reported Sunday, however, that White House sources did not expect Milgrom and her other son to be allowed out in the near future. The correspondent said these sources expected the Soviets to use the issue as leverage in connection with upcoming U.S.-U.S.S.R. talks.

ISRAEL MOURNS DEATH OF 10 KIBBUTZNIKS IN A ROAD ACCIDENT

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Aug. 3 (JTA) -- Israel has joined Kibbutz Heftziba in mourning the deaths of nine kibbutz youngsters and one older member in one of the worst road tragedies in recent history here. Just hours before the funeral of last Thursday's crash victims, the Cabinet announced it would hold a full-scale debate on the scourge of road accidents during its weekly Sunday meeting.

The 10 were killed after a kibbutz van, bringing the youngsters back from a seaside vacation, smashed into a huge semitrailer Thursday evening on a road in the Lower Galilee. The smaller vehicle, totally demolished, was hurled to the side of the road where it hit a tree and burst into flames.

By the time rescue squads arrived, some 20 minutes later, all that was left of the group were the charred bodies of the youngsters and the 35-year-old driver, and one boy -- severely injured -- who died on the way to the hospital in Afula.

There were heart-rending scenes at the kibbutz and at Afula's hospital, as relatives and friends were required to identify the burnt and mangled corpses. "Words cannot express our feelings, and no words can comfort," wrote President Chaim Herzog Friday, in a cable to the grieving settlement.

Government Comes Under Fire

The accident touched off criticism of the government for attaching low priority to the prevention of accidents. Experts noted that while road-accident figures seemed to decline during 1984-85, there had been an increase this year.

Part of the cause, they said, was reduced government budgets to repair and expand the road network. In this case, however, the road in question is straight and flat, and in a fair state of repair.

Premier Shimon Peres asked Transport Minister Haim Corfu to draw up a working paper to serve as the basis for the Cabinet deliberations Sunday.

Before the Cabinet meeting, Uriel Lin (Likud Liberals), who chairs a special parliamentary committee on road safety, publicly blasted the government for failing to give adequate attention to the problem of accidents on the road.

Lin, who before entering politics served as budget director of the Finance Ministry charged that state funding for road-building and road repairs was currently only 10 percent of what it had been in 1970.

Lin urged more stringent driving tests and more energetic enforcement of the traffic code by highway police. "Many drivers simply don't know how to drive," he said. "They don't know how to keep control in an emergency situation, and they don't know how to avoid getting into such situations."

U.S. SENATOR SAYS DEPLORABLE ACTS BY ROMANIA ARE NOT REASONS TO DENY THAT COUNTRY MFN STATUS

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Aug. 3 (JTA) — A Reagan Administration official told Congress Friday that the Rumanian government's bulldozing of the 600-year-old Spanish Synagogue in Bucharest July 21 and other deplorable acts by that government are not reasons to deny Rumania extension of Most-Favored-Nation (MFN) trade status by the United States.

Rozanne Ridgeway, Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, said the Jackson-Vanik Amendment set emigration as the "standard" an East European country must meet to be granted MFN status. At present, only Rumania and Hungary have MFN status.

Ridgeway was testifying before the Senate Finance Committee's subcommittee on International Trade which is considering two resolutions, one to permanently deny MFN status to Rumania, the other to deny it temporarily. The House is also considering two similar resolutions.

Sending The Wrong Message

Sen. John Danforth (R.-Mo.), the subcommittee chairman, suggested that for Congress to approve MFN for Rumania so soon after the synagogue was razed would be sending Bucharest the wrong message. He said it would be telling the Rumanians that they don't have to "worry" about criticism from the U.S.

"I don't think that they can possibly be getting that message," Ridgeway replied. She said the Rumanians would realize that they would be taking "risks" if they continue with such policies.

Ridgeway said that both the U.S. and Israeli governments have told the Rumanian government that they expect the assurances to Rumanian Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen "to be honored" that two other synagogues and a Jewish museum would not be bulldozed as part of an urban renewal project in Bucharest as was the Spanish Synagogue. Danforth noted that Rosen had also been given assurances on the Spanish Synagogue, which was the last remaining Sephardic synagogue in Rumania.

In her testimony, Ridgeway noted that "this deplorable act followed specific and repeated expressions of concern by the Rumanian Jewish community, American Jewish groups, the governments of the United States, Israel and Spain" and members of Congress.

The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, which took a leading role in trying to save the Spanish Synagogue, did not testify at Friday's hearing.

Alfred Moses, a vice president of the American Jewish Committee, represented the Presidents Conference at a House subcommittee hearing on MFN in June and supported extending the trade benefits to Rumania for another year despite "shortcomings" on human rights and emigration. The Presidents Conference has taken this position in past years.

Ridgeway said that the Jackson-Vanik Amendment has worked in Rumania allowing 154,000 Rumanians to emigrate to Israel, the U.S. and West Germany since 1975. However, she noted that the U.S. is "concerned about the rate of Rumanian Jewish departure for Israel, which has dropped below last year's level of 1, 327.

Ridgeway said she had no wish to defend Rumania's human rights practices. But she stressed that if this was to be used as the reason for denying MFN, it might endanger future emigration. "You have to be prepared to say to people standing in line for emigration, to say to each of them, 'sorry, it's all over,'" she said.

She stressed that by having a trade relationship with Rumania, both the Administration and Congress have "an opportunity to put something into the relationship on which we could fight on these other issues."

Increasing Pressure Urged

Also testifying before the subcommittee Friday was Jacob Birnbaum, national coordinator for the Center for Russian and East European Jewry. He urged using MFN to increase the pressure on Rumania to allow more Jews to leave. He said only 483 Rumanian Jews arrived in Israel during the first six months of 1986.

Birnbaum urged the establishment of a Congressional monitoring unit that would exert pressure on Rumania throughout the year. He said there must be an acceleration of the rate of Jewish emigration "to evacuate the bulk of Rumanian Jews in the next few years."

Birnbaum said one reason for speeding up emigration is fear of what will happen if the "ailing, aging" President Nicolae Ceausescu leaves the scene. He said there is concern that Rumania might become "a demonstrably anti-Semitic society" or that "the Soviets may greatly strengthen their hold on Bucharest."

PERES MEETS WITH MODERATE WEST BANK PALESTINIANS By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Aug. 3 (JTA) — Prime Minister Shimon Peres met Sunday in Jerusalem with 25 moderate Palestinians from the West Bank. He urged them to agree to the appointment of Arab mayors in all major cities, with expanded powers. Israeli sources said the group did not include front-ranking figures, and that it comprised mainly pro-Jordanian elements.

The meeting was seen as significant, nevertheless, because it comes in the wake of Peres' summit with King Hassan of Morocco last month, when the Israeli Premier promised the King to meet forthwith with "authentic representatives of the Palestinian people" with a view to discussing with them the prospects of a peace negotiation.

It was not clear Sunday whether the day's meeting with the 25 pro-Jordanians would be the first of a number of such encounters.

Israeli sources cited Peres as telling the group that Israel was ready to sit with any West Bank or Gaza representative and hear any view. Israel, he reportedly said, was not opposed to views, but only to acts of terror and violence.

The Premier was quoted as saying that Israel sought a solution that could accommodate Palestinian aspirations, a phrase which he used in his talks with King Hassan and which does not appear in the Camp David texts.

NO WAY TO PREVENT CONSTRUCTION OF MORMON CENTER, SPECIAL COMMITTEE SAYS

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Aug. 3 (JTA) -- A special ministerial committee has decided that there is no way to prevent the completion of the Mormon Brigham Young University center now being built on Mt. Scopus in Jerusalem. Israel Radio announced the committee's decision Sunday.

Chaired by Religious Affairs Minister of the National Religious Party, the committee in effect adopted the legal positions taken by Attorney General Yoseph Harish and his deputy, Yoram Bar-Sela, that the university had satisfied all legal requirements before commencing on the project.

Israel Radio said the committee would submit to the university strict conditions requiring that the center not engage in any missionary or para-missionary activities. The university's elders, in Utah, have already given assurances to the government and the Jerusalem municipality that this indeed will be the case.

The university project has been the subject of fierce and sustained controversy here, with ultra-Orthodox circles, led by the Hasidic Rebbe of Gur, mounting incessant protests against the building, and the university's Israel program, for its part, seeking to persuade moderate opinion that the center does not plan missionary activities.

KOHL URGES THAT HESS BE PARDONED

BONN, Aug. 3 (JTA) -- Chancellor Helmut Kohl sent a personal plea to the leaders of the Big Four wartime powers to pardon Hitler's former deputy Rudolf Hess, who spent 40 years in prison is now 92 and reportedly ill. Leaders of the Soviet Union, United States, France and Great Britain must approve the pardon.

Hess, who was reportedly hospitalized early last month, was sent back to his cell at Spandau Prison where he has been the only inmate for about 20 years.

The Soviet Union has blocked repeated British and West German appeals to pardon the ailing Hess; and Soviet guards at Spandau insure that this will not happen without their approval.

In personal letters sent to President Reagan, Mikhail Gorbachev, Margaret Thatcher and Francois Mitterrand last month, Kohl asked the leaders to "mercifully release the prisoner into the bosom of his family" to spend his final days in freedom. Over the years, dozens of similar appeals and rallies in West Germany have called for Hess's release on humanitarian grounds.

Hess was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment at the Nuremberg trials in 1947. He parachuted into Scotland and was captured in 1941 but his motivations for landing there remain a mystery until today.

EGYPTIAN TOURISM MINISTER IN ISRAEL

JERUSALEM, Aug. 3 (JTA) -- The Egyptian Minister of Tourism, Dr. Fouad Sultan, began an official visit to Israel Sunday with a brief visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial. The Minister is leading a 19-member delegation, which includes 12 travel agents and two journalists.

His program takes him to tourist sites around the country, including Eilat and the Dead Sea. He will

also hold talks with his opposite number, Avraham Sharir, and call on Premier Shimon Peres and President Chaim Herzog.

In his arrival statement, the Egyptian Minister conceded that tourism between the two countries was low, but contended that energetic promotion could improve that situation.

ISRAELI SUPREME COURT RULES THAT 45 BLACK HEBREWS BE DEPORTED

JERUSALEM, Aug. 3 (JTA) -- The Israeli Supreme Court has ruled that 45 members of the Black Hebrew sect living on expired visas in Israel be deported in April.

The decision last Wednesday came after Jacques Amir, Mayor of Dimona, where an estimated 1,500 Black Hebrews have settled, voiced his frustration over government inaction on the Black Hebrews' presence.

The lawyer for the Black Hebrews, Mark Levy, declared that the government's policy was to eliminate the sect. But Interior Ministry spokesman Yitzhak Agassi reportedly said the country's policy is simply to expel all illegal aliens.

Earlier last week, Israeli police arrested three sect members on their way to surrender their American passports to the U.S. Consulate. This is a common tactic used by the sect to become stateless and increase pressure on the Israeli government to allow them to stay.

Amir said the Black Hebrews had established a "state within a state" in the past two decades and they abide by their own laws, including polygamy, and reject Jewish State institutions.

The 45 Black Hebrews ordered deported were arrested last April and charged with working in citrus groves without permits and remaining in Israel with expired visas.

The Black Hebrews are a Chicago-based sect claiming to be descended from one of the lost tribes of Israel in Africa. But the Israeli Supreme Court ruled in 1972 that the Black Hebrews were not Jews and thus could not become Israeli citizens under the Law of Return.

The sect leader, a former Chicago bus driver, Ben Ami Carter, who calls himself the Prince of Peace, directs the group from Dimona. They live communally in the U.S., Liberia and Israel.

The sect preaches that Blacks are oppressed in America and promises salvation in Israel. Before moving to Israel though, the members usually spend two years in Liberia which they liken to the 40 years of wandering in the desert of Biblical times.

Earlier this year, Israel turned away 26 Black Hebrews who sought to enter the country as tourists. The Israelis said they really intended to join the sect in Dimona and stay in the country illegally.

NEW YORK (JTA) -- Only 31 Jews left the Soviet Union in July, the National Conference on Soviet Jewry reported. The July figure is the lowest monthly total since October of 1984. This brings the total for the first seven months of 1986 to 417.

**SPECIAL TO THE JTA
A MIRAGE BECOMES A REALITY**
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Aug. 3 (JTA) -- "Making the desert bloom" has apparently become too jaded a challenge for the Jewish National Fund. Now the JNF has made a reality of an even more far-fetched mirage: a swimming and boating lake in the torrid and once-desolate Arava desert.

To the visitor coming upon the lake in the Timna Valley park after driving for sweltering miles on the ruler-straight Arava road, a sense of the ultimate *fata morgana* is almost inescapable.

The 17-dunam kidney-shaped lake blends into the surrounding rocky landscape dotted with acacia trees, all in the middle of literally nowhere.

The lake was formally pronounced open last Tuesday, in a waterside ceremony attended by JNF officials, parents and children from the settlements of the local Eilat region, and Avram Chudnow of Milwaukee, who has pledged \$1 million dollars, the largest contribution made by an individual in the history of the JNF, to make the lake a reality. Chudnow summed up his commitment to developing the lake and the Timna park with the words: "I am a man of the Arava."

A Garden Of Eden In The Negev

World JNF chairman Moshe Rivlin, speaking at the ceremony, told Chudnow, who has already paid \$350,000 and plans to complete the rest of his pledge within two years, that the JNF would do all it can to turn the Negev into a Garden of Eden.

Rivlin recalled David Ben Gurion's vision of a blooming desert, which Israel's first Prime Minister considered essential to the survival of the State. "We can do the unbelievable," he said.

The JNF excavated the land, lined the bottom of the hollow with polyurethane to prevent the water from seeping into the soil, and piped in brackish water that is plentifully present under the ground.

Estimates put the total amount of brackish water under the arid ground of the Negev as high as some 70 billion cubic meters, says Menahem Perlmutter, director of the Jewish Agency's Negev engineering department, the man who first fired Chudnow's love for the Arava in 1983.

Perlmutter, who works in close cooperation with the JNF, told the JTA that as a result of research by Israel Prize winner Yoel de Malach of Kibbutz Reviv, local settlements use the high salinity brackish water to irrigate such crops as grapes, peanuts and cotton.

'The Future ... Is In The Negev'

One of the local settlements, Kibbutz Eliphaz, also operates the Timna park in addition to its grueling agricultural work under the fierce Arava sun. Chudnow was visibly moved during a tour of the three-and-a-half-year-old kibbutz, which only moved into its permanent quarters three weeks ago on land prepared by the JNF -- one of the many extensive land development projects of the JNF in the Negev. "The future of Israel is in the Negev," Chudnow said, commenting to the JTA. As though the reason for his commitment should be obvious, he said: "Well, the Negev is the biggest part of the country."

Chudnow, in addition to donating money himself, also travels all over the United States, attracting other donors "like a missionary," in the words of JNF U.S. executive vice president Rabbi Samuel Cohen, to raise the \$3.5 million needed to complete the park's development.

A land developer and president of a construction company back in Milwaukee, Chudnow said: "I have a developer's eye and can see the potential of raw land." He believes that the park will help strengthen the local economy, providing jobs, attracting more settlement and tourism, and "making it possible for people in the area to live happily."

The Site Of Ancient History

The JNF created the park in the Timna Valley some 30 kilometers north of Eilat to encompass the majestic King Solomon Pillars -- towering natural columns formed by wind erosion over the millennia -- and the ancient Timna copper mines which date back to pre-historic times.

The area also boasts serious archaeological sites -- an intact copper smelting furnace, the oldest one ever found, and ancient Egyptian wall drawings depicting the goddess Hathor, chariots and men hunting the local wildlife. All the evidence points to the fact that Timna was a busy industrial area 4,000 years ago.

So far, 11 kilometers of road have been built by the JNF throughout the park since 1977 to enable the 130,000 annual visitors to Timna to reach all the interesting sites. The JNF hopes to build a further four kilometers as well as a visitors center and camping site at the lakeside when the funds can be found.

The lake is divided into two sections, with two dunams set aside for swimming, and a larger section, with its own wooden jetty, offering boating and fishing facilities.

The Timna lake, which had only been a dusty plain till Chudnow pressed for its construction in 1983, was full of young, splashing children when the guests arrived for the opening ceremony last week. After the local *Iqbbutz* Yotvata children's choir had performed an elegant undulating dance entitled "Water," they too plunged in to cool off.

**PERES SEES TABA NEGOTIATIONS
CONCLUDED WITHIN 'A WEEK OR TWO'**

JERUSALEM, Aug. 3 (JTA) -- Premier Shimon Peres predicted Thursday night that the Taba negotiations would be concluded within "a week or two."

Peres made the remark to a session of his Labor Party's Knesset caucus in Tel Aviv, while in Eilat a round of Taba negotiations ended without the hoped-for announcement that the compromise or document of arbitration could now be signed.

The negotiators had spent some of Thursday clambering about on the hills and dunes overlooking Taba so that each side could designate in plastic terms its territorial claim over the two-square kilometer disputed tract of land. Peres said there was agreement on 95 percent of the accord.

This week, Israel's Avraham Tamir and David Kimche are to fly to Cairo in an effort to wrap up the remainder with Egyptian Foreign Minister Esmat Abdel Meguid.