

NEW ECONOMIC PLAN UNDER SEVERE ATTACK
By David Landau and Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Dec. 18 (JTA) -- The new economic plan which Finance Minister Moshe Nissim intends to present to the Cabinet Sunday, faced a massive revolt this week. Labor Party Ministers, gathered at the home of Vice Premier Shimon Peres in the early hours of Thursday, stated flatly they would "not support" the plan "as it is presently formulated."

It was unanimously rejected by the Histadrut Executive Wednesday where both Labor and Likud members urged that it be "re-modeled" so that "the economic burdens will be equally shared." The threat of a general strike was voiced if the government attempted to implement the plan without negotiating the disputed features with the labor federation.

It calls for an overhaul of the tax system and capital market and a reduction of the national budget by a half billion Shekels.

The plan has been attacked by the Manufacturers Association representing the country's industrialists and employers, on grounds that it fails to sufficiently stimulate production and exports.

Rabin Is The Most Outspoken Critic

Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin has been the most outspoken critic. He told the pre-dawn meeting at Peres' home that he would "vote against it, categorically." He said the reductions in the defense budget called for by the plan would "ruin the army," force abandonment of the Lavi jet fighterplane project "and more besides."

Opposition to the plan has been based on leaks to the media of its main features. The Finance Ministry published it officially only on Wednesday.

Nissim said on a television interview that he would seek Cabinet approval this Sunday. But it seemed unlikely he would press for a decision. He reportedly does not want the plan to rely on a tenuous majority composed of his own Likud and the small parties.

Likud, in fact, is divided. Deputy Premier and Housing Minister David Levy, a powerful voice in the party, has expressed serious reservations, as has Welfare Minister Moshe Katzav.

The Most Serious Argument Against The Plan

The most serious argument against the plan is the new tax structure that will reduce the marginal income rate from 60 to 45 percent while at the same time abolishing price controls and cost-of-living adjustments. Histadrut and many Laborites charge that the wealthy, the high salaried and businesses would benefit, leaving the low wage earners to bear the brunt of the economic burden.

Nissim admitted that the higher income groups would be the main beneficiaries but insisted that the lower income groups would benefit too. He said this was inevitable "if the purpose was growth, which everyone, after all, agrees must be the main goal of the government now that the initial phase of the economic recovery

program has been in effect for a year-and-a-half." By reducing taxes of individuals and companies, Nissim said, he intended to stimulate incentives to work and to invest. He referred to the "brain drain" to the U.S. where the tax reform bill passed by Congress this year reduced the marginal tax rate to 28 percent in the highest income brackets.

Cites Modest Aims

Nissim said his aims are more modest: to enable the worker and the investor to retain "at least half of his earnings in his own pockets."

Nissim also defended the expected reduction of prices on many imported goods beginning January 1. He said this was not a signal by the government for consumers to return to the buying spree partly responsible for the economic crisis of the 1980's.

He explained that the price reductions were the result of long-standing agreements between Israel and the European Economic Community (EEC). "If we do not honor these tariff-lowering agreements, we shall prejudice our credibility and, in the long run, harm our economy," Nissim said.

Nissim has indicated he is ready for a dialogue with the Labor Ministers, Histadrut and the Manufacturers Association. He stressed, however, that while he was willing to negotiate over "details" he would not compromise the principles embodied in his plan.

The Labor Ministers have also indicated a desire for serious negotiations. Observers are predicting a lengthy process of review and revision before the plan is approved by the Cabinet.

BRAVE FAMILY LEAVES THE SOVIET UNION
By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Dec. 18 (JTA) -- Soviet cancer patient and long-time refusenik Rimma Brave left the Soviet Union Thursday after seven years of waiting and two years of suffering from ovarian cancer. She and her husband Vladimir flew to Vienna, where they were met by her mother, Khanna Anbinder, and sister, Larisa Shapiro, both of whom are Soviet emigres and live in Rochester, NY. Shapiro hadn't seen her sister in 10 years; their mother last saw Rimma six years ago.

Also at the airport was Sen. Alfonse d'Amato (R. NY), who flew to Vienna this past weekend as chairman of the Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The Commission took testimony from non-governmental organizations in preparation for the Helsinki Final Act follow-up talks which are currently being held in Vienna.

D'Amato has been personally involved in the Brave case, as well as that of other Soviet cancer patients who are trying to emigrate. He has maintained regular, personal phone contact with the cancer patients' families and has spoken several times to the Soviet delegation to the Helsinki talks regarding these patients.

He will be accompanying the Braves to the United States Friday, and will hold a press conference at JFK Airport in New York upon their arrival.

The Braves had visas and airplane tickets in January 1980. But they were told to return their visas "for clarification" a week before they were to leave, and they did not receive them back.

A month ago, the Soviet Ambassador to the Helsinki talks, Viktor Kashlev, made a public speech in which he said that the Braves had received their visas the day before. The Braves, however, knew nothing of this and Vladimir Bravve was sent home several times from the OVIR emigration office in their native Moscow. They received written permission to leave last Friday, and the actual visas were put into their hands Tuesday. This time, said Shapiro, the Soviets were eager to get them out as soon as possible and waived half the paperwork requirements.

A Human Rights March For Soviet Jewry: WIESEL SAYS HE WILL TRY TO BRING A HALF MILLION PEOPLE TO WASHINGTON IF GORBACHEV COMES TO THE CAPITAL

JERUSALEM, Dec. 18 (JTA) -- Nobel Peace Prize winner Elie Wiesel said here Wednesday night that if and when Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev comes to Washington for a summit meeting, he will try to bring a half million people to Washington to demonstrate on behalf of Soviet Jews.

"What I want to do is that the civil rights march of the 1960's should be succeeded by the human rights march for Soviet Jewry in the eighties in Washington," Wiesel told a dinner in his honor.

He arrived at Ben Gurion Airport Tuesday night, on his first visit to Israel after receiving the 1986 Nobel Peace Prize in Oslo December 10. Wiesel told reporters he had promised himself that he would come to Israel immediately after accepting the award because "This is where I feel most at home."

But the 58-year-old author and Auschwitz survivor seemed taken aback by the sharp criticism leveled against him in some quarters. Many Israelis deride Wiesel for not settling in the Jewish State. He is an American citizen.

Nationalist elements have attacked him for asserting in his acceptance speech in Oslo last week that the Palestinian people also had rights which should be respected.

Cites 'Indescribable' Reception

Wiesel said he believes he was given the Nobel Peace Prize for his activities on behalf of the universal struggle for human and civil rights, for all people, not only Jews in the Soviet Union and elsewhere. He called his reception in Oslo "indescribable" both personally and as a Jew.

"I found great understanding for the Jewish people, and particularly for the plight of Soviet Jewry. I hope we shall succeed in bringing more Jews out" of the USSR, he told reporters at Ben Gurion Airport.

Wiesel lunched with Premier Yitzhak Shamir Wednesday and appeared in a video film being shot here about the Western Wall for Boston University. He also attended ground-breaking ceremonies of the Holocaust Memorial Synagogue and Torah Center in the Kiryat Ungvar quarter of Jerusalem. It will be named in honor of his father, Shlomo Halevi Wiesel, who perished with all other members of his family in the Holocaust.

MUSEUM APOLOGIZES FOR SLUR

NEW YORK, Dec. 18 (JTA) -- The Metropolitan Museum of Art has apologized for a slurring reference to Jews in its Summer, 1985 Bulletin after a protest was lodged by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. Museum president William Luers said the Met found the offensive passage "regrettable and distressing," in a letter to Carol Lister, director of the ADL's New York regional office.

Lister wrote to the Museum's director, Philippe de Montebello, protesting a reference to Jews that appeared in the Bulletin titled "A Medieval Bestiary," devoted to the allegorical use of animals in medieval art from the Met's collection.

The author, art historian J.L. Schrader, described the owl as "a symbol of darkness and hence of the Jews who rejected Christ, the light of the world, as their king; for they said, 'We have no King but Caesar.'"

Lister stated in her letter that "to perpetuate this ugly medieval notion is unworthy of our country's most distinguished museum and a gratuitous insult to many of its devoted patrons." Luers promised in reply "to redouble our efforts to guarantee that the like does not happen again."

He wrote that the museum was "genuinely grateful" to the ADL "for pointing out our mistake."

DELAY OF BARBIE TRIAL PROTESTED

NEW YORK, Dec. 18 (JTA) -- About 50 people demonstrated Wednesday for more than an hour in front of the French Consulate here, protesting the constant delay of the trial of wartime gestapo chief Klaus Barbie. Barbie has been in French custody since 1983.

The demonstration was organized by the New York Holocaust Survivors Association and The Generation After, an organization of Holocaust survivors' children. The demonstrators charged that the French government does not intend to bring Barbie to trial. A delegation representing the demonstrators was received at the end of the rally by the French Consul, Eliane de Dampierre.

(It was announced in Paris Wednesday that the trial of Barbie might begin next March. He will be charged with "crimes against humanity.")

YEAR-LONG DISPUTE SEEMINGLY SETTLED

JERUSALEM, Dec. 18 (JTA) -- The Energy Ministry and the Arab-owned East Jerusalem Electric Corp. appear to have settled a year-long dispute over the utility's debt and its allegedly unreliable performance in providing power to Jewish customers.

The agreement in principle reached Wednesday between Energy Minister Moshe Shahal and the company's board of directors provides for the Electric Corp. to surrender its franchise to provide power to Jewish neighborhoods in East Jerusalem and to Jewish settlements and military camps in the West Bank.

The Israel Electric Corp. will take over the equipment needed to serve Jewish customers and will waive a \$16 million debt owed it by the East Jerusalem Electric Corp. The latter's franchise to serve Arab areas, which expires at the end of this month, will be renewed for 10 years. The deal is subject to formal agreement between the parties and appropriate legislation by the Knesset.

Focus On Issues

GORBACHEV'S 'POTEMKIN VILLAGES'

By William Korey

(Editor's note: Dr. William Korey is the director of International Policy Research of B'nai B'rith. During this last month he served as a "public member" of the U.S. delegation to the Vienna review conference on the Helsinki accord.)

NEW YORK, Dec. 18 (JTA) -- Two hundred years ago, in 1787, Catherine the Great put on an extraordinary public relations effort to convince a Western monarch, Joseph II of Austria, of her benevolence and popularity.

The Tsarina's principal adviser, Prince Gregory Potemkin, had supervised the erection in the Ukraine and Crimea of entire artificial villages containing but one street, and arranged for peasant masses to greet exultantly the traveling Russian Empress accompanied by her Hapsburg colleague. The "Potemkin villages" almost worked but, in the end, the Western monarch failed to succumb to the Russian public relations gambit.

Remarkably, today's Kremlin ruler, Mikhail Gorbachev, has put on a similar fabulous show in Vienna where the third review conference of the Helsinki Final Act is being held. (The others took place in Belgrade in 1977-78 and in Madrid in 1980-83).

The aim of the current "Potemkin villages" is to demonstrate to Western leaders and populace the Soviet Union's "new look" of benevolence in the field of human rights and humanitarian affairs. But whether this artful image-building, even if at times awkwardly managed, has succeeded in convincing anyone is open to question.

Massive Soviet Public Relations Effort

That a massive Soviet public relations effort was extended in the absence of positive human rights steps could easily be understood. The Helsinki Final Act, while sanctioning the Soviet objective of making the post-war borders of Eastern Europe "inviolable," also made "human rights and fundamental freedoms" a regulating "principle" of interstate relations and obligated the 35 signatories to adhere to the various "humanitarian" purposes spelled out in Basket 3 of the accord.

Moscow's non-compliance and monumental abridgements of the Helsinki provisions were self-evident. It was not only that the Helsinki monitors in the USSR, legitimized by the language of the accord, had been smashed, dispersed, or jailed, but Jewish emigration had reached the lowest level in over two decades.

Refuseniks were trapped in a Kafkaesque world of helplessness and ostracism. Despite Gorbachev's promise on French television in October 1985 that Jewish refuseniks would be allowed to leave after 5 to 10 years, some 10,000 in this category remain caged, with almost no hope of obtaining exit visas.

Targeted by world public opinion as the principal abuser of human rights and inevitably placed on the defensive, Moscow in the late 1970's and early 1980's became increasingly indifferent to the promotion of the Helsinki accord. The hereto exalted agreement was unceremoniously dropped in 1980 from the Communist Party slogans, annually issued on the anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution.

But Gorbachev decided to reverse this trend. Benefits from the Helsinki accord in the security field (Basket 1), including the expectation of a

disarmament conference in Stockholm, were too meaningful and palpable. He even proposed in his unprecedented Vladivostok address in July that a Helsinki-type accord be drafted for Asia and the Pacific area.

An Orwellian Inversion

With Helsinki once again a centerpiece of Soviet policy, how to deal with human rights and humanitarianism? Orwellian inversion was required: Simply claim that the USSR embraced the concepts, indeed championed them. That's precisely what the cynical Gorbachev did in his policy address to the 27th Party Congress last February and in a speech greeting French President Francois Mitterrand in July.

The new Soviet posture necessitated a fundamental change of style at the Vienna meeting. No longer would inquiring reporters, non-governmental representatives, divided spouses and even aggrieved family members of human rights victims be brushed aside or avoided. The contrary was the case.

The Western media was meticulously cultivated. An unheard-of six press conferences during the opening week of the Vienna meeting in November was called by Soviet public relations officials, headed by Ambassador-at-large Vladimir Lomeiko and Gennadi Gerasimov. Western journalists were deliberately sought out and advised: "You know things are changing since the bad old days."

Soviet delegates responded to almost every request for a meeting (only Andrei Sakharov's stepson, Aleksei Semyenov, was refused) and courteously, even sympathetically, they listened to pleas about emigration restrictions and refuseniks.

Promises to look into individual cases were made and assurances were given of either arranging meetings with top Soviet officials or reporting back to the inquirer. But the promises were rarely, if ever, kept.

Optimism Was Shattered

As to whether the Soviet Union would change its emigration policy, Kremlin officials repeatedly pointed to the forthcoming publication of rules and regulations covering exit visas beginning on January 1, 1987. While this stirred hope in some quarters, concern was registered that talk about the rules remained vague.

Later, when the regulations became available, all optimism was shattered. The only significant change that the new rules offered was that an applicant for an exit visa would be given an answer within a month. The shape of things to come was indicated in the monthly Jewish emigration figures, which averaged a mere 75.

A Public Relations Bombshell

For a fitting climax to the new Kremlin style, Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze dropped a public relations bombshell. After contending that the USSR "attaches paramount significance" to the Helsinki "principle" on "human rights and fundamental freedoms" (it was in fact the first time that a Soviet official had even referred in a positive manner to this Helsinki "principle"), he then proposed holding in Moscow "a representative conference" of the Helsinki signatories to discuss a whole range of "humanitarian" problems.

Shevardnadze, of course, said nothing about whether ordinary Soviet citizens, including activists and dissidents, and international human

rights non-governmental representatives would have access to delegates (as in the case of all Helsinki meetings).

Soviet public relations officials in Vienna were extraordinarily vague in responding to reporters' normal queries on the "Potemkin village" proposal.

Illusions Began To Crumble

Whatever illusions may have existed began crumbling once the delegates moved from the public forum to the closed meetings, where sharp questions on Soviet conduct would be posed. Here concrete case studies of refuseniks and of Helsinki monitors were movingly presented by the head of the U.S. delegation, Ambassador Warren Zimmerman, and by Rep. Steny Hoyer (D. Md.), chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission.

The "new look" suddenly evaporated. Soviet delegates retorted with the standard response: What about the millions of homeless and unemployed in the United States?

Yet, the Gorbachev "Potemkin villages" can be expected to continue. Kremlin talk about human rights and humanitarian affairs will extend beyond government bureaus (the Foreign Ministry houses a new department incredibly called "Humanitarian and Cultural Affairs") and shortly to-be-created "citizens' commissions on human rights to regular state-issued reports on the presumed human rights condition of Helsinki signatories.

Meanwhile, little if anything is projected beyond the well-timed release of a tiny handful of activists, cancer victims and divided spouses. The "Potemkin villages" strategy serves but to lull world opinion while doing virtually nothing in the human rights field.

HUNDREDS OF NEW LUBAVITCH CENTERS TO BE OPENED ALL OVER THE WORLD

NEW YORK, Dec. 18 (JTA) -- The Lubavitch movement announced a major drive to establish hundreds of new Chabad-Lubavitch Houses all over the world to serve Jewish religious, social and educational needs. Plans are well advanced for 120 new houses to open in the next few months, according to an announcement at the conclusion of the movement's three-day conference at Lubavitch world headquarters here last weekend.

The movement also vowed to broaden its outreach program to Jewish children who receive no Jewish education. It was responding to the address by the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Schneerson, who called for a proliferation of Chabad-Lubavitch Houses.

"These houses will be a place where anyone can come to pray or study and avail themselves of all the Jewish educational and social services these centers offer," Schneerson said.

He referred to the "painful yet inescapable fact that more than three quarters of Jewish children receive no Jewish education whatsoever. This is true even in the New York area, as well as across the United States and around the world," he said.

The conference featured discussion sessions and workshops to find solutions to current problems of the Jewish community. The subjects dealt with were Jewish unity, Jews on college campuses, drug abuse, cults, summer camps, adult education, Jewish education generally, educational materials and the use of computer communications systems.

A FEDERAL GRAND JURY IS INVESTIGATING RACIST GROUPS

DENVER, Dec. 18 (JTA) -- The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith welcomed media reports that white supremacist groups, including those linked to the murder of Denver radio talk-show host Alan Berg, are under federal investigation at grand jury proceedings in Fort Smith, Arkansas.

Saul Rosenthal, director of ADL's Mountain States Regional Office in Denver, called this development "an extremely important step in bringing the Berg murderers to account for their heinous crime."

ADL had written to William Bradford Reynolds, head of the U.S. Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, urging federal investigation of the Berg murder and offering the resources of the ADL to assist in the investigation.

Rosenthal also said that ADL was disappointed that the Denver District Attorney, Norman Early, perceives that there is insufficient evidence at this time to file murder charges under Colorado law. The lack of prosecution, Rosenthal said, "may create a powerful message from Denver -- that a gang of neo-Nazi thugs can murder an innocent man and get away with it."

Efforts To Continue To Find The Guilty

Noting that Berg was assassinated because he was an outspoken opponent of bigotry and extremism and because he was Jewish, Rosenthal said "trenton ADL will continue its efforts to see that those guilty of this unconscionable act are brought to justice. Our commitment to the Jewish community and to the defense of civil rights for all individuals demands no less."

Last year, 10 members of the neo-Nazi group, The Order, were convicted in Seattle of racketeering and conspiracy as part of a campaign designed to finance a revolution against the U.S. government. The sentences meted out ranged from 40-100 years and were based, in part, on such acts as bank and armored car robbery and counterfeiting. All of the defendants could apply for parole in 10 years.

At the trial, there was testimony implicating members of The Order in the 1984 murder of Berg. One witness identified a defendant, Bruce Pierce, as the man who fired the automatic machine gun at Berg, killing him instantly. Others identified defendant David Lane as the getaway car driver and Richard Scutari as a lookout. Jean Craig, another defendant, was convicted of tracking Berg in preparation for the murder.

TRENTON, N.J. (JTA) -- Governor Thomas Kean has announced the formation of a committee of New Jersey public officials to work on behalf of Soviet Jewry. Kean will chair the committee, composed of Cabinet members, State Senators and Assemblymen. In making the announcement at a joint meeting of the Legislature, Kean said "If we continue to be active, vigilant and involved, then we send an ongoing message to the leadership in the Kremlin. We say that the issue is important to us. We say that accommodation with us on a variety of issues cannot be reached until it incorporates this one as well."