

**CONTROVERSY FLARES OVER NEW YORK
ARCHBISHOP'S VISIT TO THE MIDEAST**

By Margie Olster

NEW YORK, Dec. 28 (JTA) -- A diplomatic controversy has flared over New York Archbishop John Cardinal O'Connor's visit this week to the Middle East. He is in Jordan on an official visit meeting with King Hussein, but his visit to Israel is a private one. The Vatican and Israel have no diplomatic relations.

Last-minute changes in O'Connor's itinerary in Jerusalem, which appear to shun any official contacts, have dampened enthusiasm for the Catholic leader's scheduled arrival Thursday.

O'Connor will not meet with Israel's President Chaim Herzog, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek in their offices but has asked to meet with them privately in their homes, according to reports over the weekend.

Israeli leaders said Sunday they will not meet O'Connor if he insists on seeing them outside of their offices.

He also declined a tour of Christian holy places in Jerusalem with Kollek, designed to show the Cardinal investments the city has made in restoring and preserving such sites, the reports said. The changes are apparently designed in part to avoid recognizing Jerusalem as the capital of Israel.

Delicate Relations Disrupted

Officially, O'Connor claimed he had to cut short his visit because he was scheduled to be in Rome January 6 to attend the appointment of a new Auxiliary Bishop for New York, William McCormack.

The scheduled changes have disrupted the delicate relations between Jerusalem and the Archbishop, who first prompted an official invitation to visit Israel after making statements last summer in the press sympathetic to Palestinian nationalism.

"Somehow, a homeland has to be provided for the Palestinian peoples," O'Connor told a New York Times reporter upon his arrival in Rome in June. "But from a moral perspective, those people have to be given a homeland. Otherwise everything spills over into every area and that has to result in a very volatile situation. So I think that's imperative."

In efforts to show O'Connor the problem from an Israeli perspective, Peres, who was then Prime Minister, extended a personal invitation to O'Connor when the two met in New York in October.

Now, some Israeli and American Jewish officials say, it might have been better to cancel the visit rather than face a diplomatic controversy over O'Connor avoiding official contacts.

Reactions By U.S. Jewish Leaders

Meanwhile, officials here and in Israel have been careful not to criticize O'Connor, saying the changes were directed by the Vatican in Rome.

Rabbi Ronald Sobel of Temple Emanu-El, a friend of O'Connor's, said that although O'Connor

would not be going to Israel as an official envoy of the Vatican, there was much hope of improving relations between Israel and the Holy See.

"These latest events lead one to sadly conclude that perhaps it would have been better had the trip not been planned at all at this time," Sobel said.

Nathan Perlmutter, National Director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, agreed that O'Connor would have been better off to not have scheduled his visit under these circumstances.

"The Vatican has embarrassed John Cardinal O'Connor and itself more than it embarrasses Israel. The Vatican's long-expressed and genuine concern with theological anti-Semitism is welcome. But its concern is compromised by this kind of cynical, political gamesmanship," Perlmutter said.

Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, said it was disappointing that O'Connor would snub Israeli leaders immediately following an official reception by Jordan's King Hussein.

A Question of Equal Treatment

Seymour Reich, president of B'nai B'rith International, said, "It is a simple question of equal treatment. If the Vatican permits Cardinal O'Connor to be received by the King of Jordan I cannot see why he is apparently barred from calling on the President of Israel."

Morris Abram, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said:

"We regard Cardinal O'Connor as a friend but Israel is right to expect that it be dealt with as any sovereign state should be. A prince of the church cannot make a private visit to Israel when he makes an official visit to Israel's neighbor, Jordan. I still hope that an equitable solution can be found with good will so that Cardinal O'Connor's visit to Israel will be a wholly successful one."

O'Connor, who left New York Saturday for Amman, Jordan, arrived there Sunday. He will travel overland, crossing the Allenby Bridge to Israel on Thursday. He had to cancel a scheduled stop in Egypt for the ceremony in Rome.

**VANUNU PLEADS NOT GUILTY TO CHARGES
AS HIS TRIAL OPENS OFFICIALLY**

By David Landau and Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Dec. 28 (JTA) -- Mordechai Vanunu, the former technician at the Dimona nuclear facility, pleaded not guilty to charges of treason, grave espionage and passing information without authorization, as his trial opened officially in Jerusalem District Court Sunday.

"He denied the facts in the charge sheet," Vanunu's attorney, Aharon Zichroni, told reporters after a 90-minute closed session. The trial will resume in six weeks. If convicted, Vanunu could face life imprisonment.

The trial will be held in camera and only the sentence will be made public if the verdict is guilty. The tightest security was maintained to seclude Vanunu from the media as he was driven

to court at 7:30 a.m. local time Sunday. The authorities took extreme measures to avoid a repetition of the incident of December 21 when Vanunu was brought to court to be remanded in custody for the duration of the trial.

At that time he managed to flash a message to the media, printed on the palm of his hand, alleging that he was kidnapped in Rome on September 30 by Israeli agents.

This Sunday morning, the windows of the prison van were painted opaque white and a blanket was hung between the driver's compartment and the rear of the van to prevent anyone from catching a glimpse of the prisoner.

A person, presumably Vanunu, was taken from the rear of the van with a sack over his head and his body concealed partially by an umbrella held by a guard.

Vanunu is accused of passing information to a British newspaper alleging that Israel has been building an arsenal of nuclear weapons for 20 years.

An additional charge may be pressed against him for attempting to communicate with the press last week. Police are investigating the incident to determine whether there are grounds for an indictment.

JUSTICE MINISTER SHARIR RESIGNS; WARNS PERES THAT THE COUNTRY'S LEGAL SYSTEM IS IN SERIOUS DISARRAY By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Dec. 28 (JTA) -- Avraham Sharir announced his resignation as Justice Minister Friday with a warning to Premier Yitzhak Shamir that the country's legal system is in serious disarray and a complaint that he has been forced, unfairly, to bear the full burden of criticism in the case of William Nakash.

Sharir said his resignation was prompted mainly by the reaction to his refusal to extradite Nakash to France where he was sentenced in absentia to life imprisonment for the 1983 murder of an Arab in the city of Besancon.

According to Sharir, he was bound to that decision by a promise made to Nakash's supporters by his predecessor, former Justice Minister Yitzhak Modai, and other senior ministers.

Extradition of the Algerian-born, self-proclaimed Baal Tshuva was opposed by Orthodox and rightwing nationalist groups who formed a committee to pressure the authorities.

Sharir was castigated in legal circles and an appeal is now pending before the Supreme Court to overrule his decision.

Sharir Accepted Portfolio Temporarily

Sharir, a Likud Liberal who is also Minister of Tourism in the Labor-Likud unity coalition government, accepted the Justice portfolio temporarily when Modai resigned last August.

He told Shamir Friday that the poor state of the judiciary required a permanent appointee, especially in face of rising crime. He said the legal system is deteriorating and has reached its nadir.

Negotiations were under way among the coalition partners Sunday to find a replacement for Sharir. Transport Minister Haim Corfu, Likud-Herut, emerged as the candidate most acceptable to Likud and Labor. But so far he has shown no interest in heading the Justice Ministry.

WEIZMAN THREATENS TO PULL HIS YAHAD PARTY OUT OF LABOR COALITION By David Landau and Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Dec. 28 (JTA) -- Minister-Without-Portfolio Ezer Weizman is threatening to pull his Yahad Party out of its alignment with the Labor Party in the unity coalition, reportedly because he is frustrated over the lack of a meaningful role in the government.

He is scheduled to meet privately with Vice Premier and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, the Labor Party leader, to try to iron out their differences. Yahad has three Knesset seats and its defection would weaken the Labor Party vis-a-vis Likud.

Weizman's office is housed in the Foreign Ministry, but he complains he has no real input in policymaking. During Peres' tenure as Premier, before the rotation of power last October, Weizman was attached to the Prime Minister's Office and was active in Arab affairs and as a liaison to Egypt.

But since Peres changed jobs with Yitzhak Shamir, Weizman claims there has been a sluggishness over peace initiatives on Peres' part. He is also disenchanted by the footdragging with respect to appointments of some of his colleagues to key posts, such as Mordechai Hod to be chairman of Israel Aviation Industries.

Weizman attacked the unity coalition government last Thursday for what he claimed was a lack of achievement in the field of foreign policy and the pursuit of peace. He told a meeting of the Contractors Association that he was "in a fighting mood" and would be willing to negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organization if the PLO accepted the key United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.

"If Israel sits back and waits for a telephone call (from the Arab states) it will get an artillery shell," Weizman said. "The time has come for us to initiate the telephone calls to the Arabs."

The contractors, mostly rightwingers or members of Likud, attacked Weizman for leaving Likud and entering into a "covenant" with Peres. Weizman, a former Air Force commander, entered politics through Likud when he was Menachem Begin's campaign manager in the 1977 elections. He served as Defense Minister in Begin's first government.

Answering his critics, Weizman admitted he had changed his politics. "Anybody who doesn't change his mind in view of changing circumstances is simply a nobody," he said. He charged that there are "only four Ministers in the government," Premier Yitzhak Shamir, Peres, Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Finance Minister Moshe Nissim. According to Weizman, they run the show. "The other Cabinet Ministers are a Parliament and the Knesset as a whole has become a House of Lords," he said.

BEGIN'S SON SLAMS SHARON By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Dec. 28 (JTA) -- Benjamin Begin, son of former Premier Menachem Begin, has renewed his attacks on Ariel Sharon, who was his father's Defense Minister before and during the Lebanon war.

An interview in the Jerusalem weekly Kol Ha'ir quoted the younger Begin as describing Sharon as "a non-positive development which will

jeopardize the ability of Herut to recruit public support." Sharon, who is Minister of Commerce and Industry in the present unity coalition government, said he would not react to Begin's comments.

Begin denied later that he intended to attack Sharon personally. He said he had "no personal problem" with the outspoken Herut hardliner. But the interview made it clear that the younger Begin is determined to diminish Sharon's role in Herut, the party his father founded and led for more than 30 years.

Begin, whose political views are considered less hawkish than those of the former Premier, is making a major effort to strengthen his own position in Herut. He regularly visits the party's branches throughout the country. So far he has had little success. He failed to win support for his positions at the recent Herut convention.

But that defeat has not deterred him from political activity and he continues to make his voice heard though he normally shies away from public appearances.

DEFENSE MINISTRY CLOSES SWISS BANK ACCOUNT USED IN IRAN ARMS DEAL

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Dec. 28 (JTA) -- The Defense Ministry recently closed a Swiss bank account used to transfer money from weapons purchased by Iran to the Americans via Israel, according to Israeli press reports.

Press reports in the past month uncovered that part of the money from the Swiss account into which the Israelis deposited the payments was diverted to aid the Nicaraguan rebels, or Contras. But the Israeli government has vehemently denied any knowledge of the diverted funds.

A Defense Ministry investigation into all the financial accounts connected to the arms deal affair found that Israeli arms dealers Yaacov Nimrodi and Al Schwimmer delivered some \$3 million to Israel from the sale of the first TOW missiles in September 1985.

The Israelis, at the request of American officials, then deposited half the money in a Swiss account whose number was provided by the Americans. The rest of the money went to Iranian arms dealer and middleman Manucher Ghorbanifar, also at the Americans' request. About \$700,000 to \$800,000 went to the Israeli government to compensate for shipping expenses, according to the report in Haaretz.

The Defense Ministry has accounted for all the funds transferred to it, the report said. But the Defense Ministry's investigation did not account for money transferred to middlemen and arms dealers which did not reach Israel, according to the report.

MODAI CHARGES THAT THE CABINET SECRETLY APPROVED A \$2.13 BILLION SUPPLEMENT TO CURRENT F/Y BUDGET

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Dec. 28 (JTA) -- Minister-Without-Portfolio Yitzhak Modai charged Friday that the Cabinet secretly approved a \$2.13 billion supplement to the budget for the current fiscal year while it is locked in debate over the next fiscal year's budget.

Modai, a former Finance Minister, made his allegation on a television interview. He charged that the 10.5 percent increase in the current

budget was unnecessary. According to Modai, the Cabinet could have created a welcome precedent. During the past 10 years, he noted, the government has always been forced to tack on a supplementary budget. This year it could have been avoided, but "we have returned to our bad old ways," he said.

Modai said the secret vote was taken at the Cabinet meeting devoted to the new economic plan last Monday evening. He said he was not present because Premier Yitzhak Shamir had assured him when he left the session that no further votes were scheduled.

LEUKEMIA VICTIM TO RECEIVE BONE MARROW TRANSPLANT FROM HIS SISTER

JERUSALEM, Dec. 28 (JTA) -- Michael Shirman, a 31-year-old leukemia victim, will receive a bone-marrow transplant from his sister, Inessa Flerova, at Hadassah Hospital here this week, in a final attempt to save his life.

But doctors said Sunday that the prognosis was not good because his condition has deteriorated and it may have been too late to save him when Inessa arrived in Israel November 5 after a nine-month struggle with Soviet authorities to get exit visas for her whole family. According to the doctors, Shirman may have had a chance had his sister, the only possible donor, been allowed to come to Israel when she first applied for a visa last February.

They said the transplant procedure was postponed for more than a month because of Shirman's weakened condition. It has worsened in recent weeks and he is not responding to chemotherapy.

EDITOR OF EAST JERUSALEM ARABIC NEWSPAPER IS DEPORTED

By David Landau and Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Dec. 28 (JTA) -- Akram Haniya, editor of the East Jerusalem Arabic daily A-Shaab, was deported Sunday after dropping his appeal to the Supreme Court against the expulsion order.

Haniya was put aboard a Swissair flight to Zurich at Ben Gurion Airport and is believed en route to Algeria. He surprised his supporters and accusers alike Friday when he dropped his appeal, charging that he was "a victim of political revenge."

He said he decided not to fight deportation after the high court ruled last week that virtually all of the evidence compiled against him was classified information that could not be made available to his attorneys. This meant in effect that Haniya could not defend himself because he did not know what to defend against.

In a statement to his lawyers, he said: "I am a victim of political revenge for my struggle as a political person, as a journalist and as a writer, to achieve the legitimate rights of my people."

The Israeli authorities who brought charges against Haniya claimed he was a senior political activist of El Fatah, the military wing of the Palestine Liberation Organization, and a conduit for PLO funds and orders. He denied the charges. The authorities conceded there was no evidence to link Haniya to terrorist acts.

There will be no Daily News Bulletin dated January 1, New Year's Day, a postal holiday.

FOCUS ON ISSUES THE PLIGHT OF REFUSENIK SOVIET CANCER PATIENTS

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Dec. 28 (JTA) -- Now that Rimma Bravve has left the Soviet Union, and is in the United States, the matter of other known Soviet refusenik cancer patients remains very much in the hearts and minds of their kin, and supporters, in the West.

In fact, the release of Bravve this month and of Tatiana Bogomolny in October, gives increased hope to the cause of obtaining the freedom of other ailing refuseniks whose hope rests in some experimental medical techniques available in a few selected hospitals in the West, techniques that have the possibility of saving lives.

Earlier this month, Sen. Gary Hart (D. Colo.) met in Moscow with top Soviet officials, including Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev and Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, and raised the issue of about 12 people who want to emigrate, among them cancer patients with families in the West. High on the list is Inna Meiman of Moscow, whose husband's daughter, Olga Plum, lives in Boulder, Colo.

The Case Of Inna Meiman

Hart spoke specifically about Meiman, 54, who suffers from a recurrent tumor on her neck for which she has had four operations. Doctors in Moscow have told her there is little more they can do for her, in spite of the appearance of a fifth tumor on her neck.

Before he left Moscow on the flight to Vienna with Rimma Bravve, Hart was told by Shevardnadze that the Soviets would allow Inna Meiman to leave, but that her husband, Naum, 75, would not be permitted to accompany her. Shevardnadze reportedly told Hart that the people on his list who do not require security clearances are free to leave.

Naum Meiman, a refusenik since 1975, has had his visa request turned down on grounds of knowing "state secrets." He is also categorized as a dissident by dint of his membership in the now disbanded Moscow Helsinki monitoring group.

The group included Yelena Bonner, Alexander Ginsburg, Yuri Orlov, Anatoly Shchäransky, and Anatoly Marchenko, who was reported to have died December 8 in Chistopol Prison.

Inna Meiman is currently taking a position that she will not leave without her husband. Dr. Gerald Batist, a research oncologist in Montreal who has worked ceaselessly since April on behalf of the cancer patients, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that it is extremely important that the couple remain together in the face of Inna Meiman's critical medical situation.

He said that doctors strongly believe that "the psychological status is extremely critical" in the treatment of a cancer patient. "Separation from her husband," said Batist, "could compromise any benefit from medical treatment."

The Case of Benjamin Charny

The matter of these Soviet cancer patients has drawn support from the whole spectrum of American politicians, on a bipartisan basis, said Leon Charny, whose brother, Benjamin Charny, 49, has been waiting to leave the Soviet Union for seven years and has been suffering from cancer as long.

Benjamin Charny applied to emigrate in the spring of 1979 separately from his brother Leon who lived in another district of Moscow and went to a different OVIR office. Leon received a visa; Benjamin did not. Two weeks after Leon left, Benjamin learned that he had melanoma -- skin cancer.

A year-and-a-half later, Benjamin was refused a visa on the grounds of having access to "state secrets." Benjamin is a mathematician.

He was told by his superiors to resign his job before applying to emigrate. He has not worked since then, except for some brief free-lance assignments as a scientific translator from Russian to English.

At one point, he worked as a teacher of mathematics at a vocational school in Moscow, described by Leon Charny as more difficult than inner city schools in America. Teachers at these schools are in short supply, Leon Charny told the JTA. But Benjamin was, ironically, fired from that job as soon as school authorities learned he was a refusenik.

In And Out Of Hospitals

In 1980, Benjamin suffered a massive heart attack. He was in and out of hospitals, his brother said. In 1983, he was hospitalized for four straight months. Afterwards, he was classified as an invalid, which means he cannot work and receives a small pension.

All of the cancer patients are designated invalids, says Leon Charny. The status of invalid is reconsidered every year by Soviet authorities following a yearly month-long examination, he explained. The last time Benjamin underwent the examination was last May.

A year-and-a-half ago, a tumor was found growing on Benjamin's neck. Doctors didn't know what to do, Leon said. The oncologist wanted to remove it; the cardiologist didn't concur. He was not operated on because of his cardiac condition.

Of International Concern

Leon, who lives in Needham, Mass., and is a Ph.D. candidate at M.I.T. in engineering, has been trying to publicize his brother's plight since June 12, when a group of cancer patient refuseniks put together their own press conference in Moscow. The patients -- Charny, Bogomolny and Meiman -- did this as an act of desperation, said Leon.

In June, following the press conference, which was attended by Western journalists, Batist in Montreal started the International Cancer Patients Solidarity Committee. Batist had been in Moscow in the spring, visiting Bravve and Bogomolny.

Since that initial conference, these people have held eight press conferences, at least one per month, in the U.S., Canada, and in Vienna on the opening day of the Helsinki Accord follow-up talks.

At these conferences, prominent legislators, Ambassadors and over 1,000 physicians have thrown their support behind the cancer patients in what Batist described as a "humanitarian movement -- not anti-Soviet." These supporters "are joining a winning team," Batist said.

Leon Charny, speaking on the plight of the refusenik cancer patients, said, "This should not be repeated. I don't think that in a civilized world that cancer patients should spend their remaining lives' energy trying to get together with their families."