

VOL. 65 - 70th YEAR

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 1987

NO. 23

KNESSET UNIT QUESTIONS TWO SENIOR OFFICIALS ON IRAN ARMS SALES

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 3 (JTA) -- Two senior officials believed to have been closely involved in the U.S.-Israel arms shipments to Iran appeared before the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Security Committee in closed session Tuesday.

Amiram Nir, the Prime Minister's advisor on counter-terrorism, and David Kimche, former Director General of the Foreign Ministry, reportedly supplied information to the Committee's Intelligence Subcommittee. They refused comment to reporters when they left. Nir will appear again Wednesday.

Israel Radio reported that the subcommittee members appeared satisfied with the evidence indicating that Israel acted in the Iran arms sale as a loyal ally of the United States and was only fulfilling an American request when it shipped weapons to Iran.

Committee chairman Abba Eban said earlier that the testimony of top officials was important in light of the report by the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence released in Washington last week. The report indicated that Israel had initiated the arms deal and the diversion of funds from it to the Nicaraguan rebels known as Contras.

Eban, meanwhile, has asked Premier Yitzhak Shamir for a written clarification of Israel's role. In a letter to the Premier he said that the various verbal reactions by Israeli leaders and spokesmen to versions of the affair published in the American media often left a negative impression. He said Israel needed a detailed report that would explain the government's actions and rationale on the subject.

SHAMIR: ISRAEL WILL NOT RELEASE ARAB PRISONERS IN EXCHANGE FOR HOSTAGES HELD BY EXTREMIST GROUPS IN LEBANON
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Feb. 3 (JTA) -- Premier Yitzhak Shamir reiterated that Israel will not release Arab prisoners in exchange for hostages held by extremist groups in Lebanon.

In a Voice of Israel Radio interview Monday, Shamir rejected a demand that 400 jailed terrorists be freed to save the lives of three American and one Indian university professors kidnapped last month in west Beirut.

Shamir identified the kidnappers as Hezbollah, a pro-Iranian Shiite group. But most foreign media reports say the kidnappers are a hitherto unknown group which calls itself the Islamic Holy War for the Liberation of Palestine.

It has threatened to kill the hostages unless Israel releases its prisoners within one week. Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin said Sunday that Israel has received no ultimatum from any group. He said he learned of the threat from the media.

Shamir said, meanwhile, that Israel is looking into ways to free two Israeli infantry soldiers and an Israel Air Force navigator being held prisoner in Lebanon. Their captors are believed to be Amal, the mainstream Shiite militia.

SHAMIR AND REAGAN TO DISCUSS THE ISSUE OF THE LAVI JET FIGHTER

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Feb. 3 (JTA) -- Premier Yitzhak Shamir's visit to Washington later this month has imposed a deadline on senior defense establishment officials to come up with recommendations about the future of the Lavi, Israel's second generation jet combat aircraft.

The officials are studying several American alternatives to the Lavi proposed by U.S. Assistant Secretary of Defense Dov Zackheim when he was here last month. The Reagan Administration expects a firm decision from Shamir when he meets President Reagan at the White House.

A team of experts from the McDonnell Douglas company, a leading American manufacturer of military aircraft, was here last weekend to promote alternatives to the Lavi. They reportedly presented the Israelis with a choice between the F-16, F-18 and the Harrier, all advanced flying machines.

These are under study and a report will be submitted to Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin within the next few days, to serve as a basis for the case Shamir will present in Washington.

The U.S. has been pressuring Israel for a year to abandon the American-financed Lavi on grounds that it is too expensive to produce. Israelis have disputed the Pentagon's cost projections. Menahem Eini, head of the Lavi project, has estimated that each Lavi fighter will cost some \$18 million, plus 51 percent for spare parts. An F-16 would also cost about \$18 million but spare parts would be between 65-80 percent above the base price, Eini said.

BAN BY A TOWN'S RABBIS AGAINST WOMEN ATTENDING FUNERALS EVOKES OUTRAGE
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Feb. 3 (JTA) -- Israeli women are outraged by a ban imposed by the rabbis of Migdal Ha'emek against women attending funerals on grounds that they may be "unclean" and therefore responsible for the abnormally high number of deaths in that town recently.

Women attending a funeral there last week were ordered by officials of the burial society to "stay back." The two chief rabbis of the town, Avraham Menahem and Yitzhak David Grossman, ruled that women must leave after eulogies are delivered for the deceased and before burial.

Burial society officials, all Orthodox Jews, said the failure of many women to observe the laws of family purity made them unclean and their presence at funerals together with men was therefore undesirable. They were allowed to visit the grave only after the men had left. These included not only friends but the daughters, granddaughters and sisters of the deceased woman.

Tova Lichtenstein, adviser on women's affairs to the Minister of Religion, protested the ban. "Men and women were created in the image of God and should be treated equally," she argued. Rabbi Pinhas Peli, a professor of Jewish studies at Ben Gurion University, in an Haaretz interview

Tuesday, accused the Migdal Ha'emek rabbis of "a primitive and paganist approach."

According to the rabbis, they were responding to the large number of deaths recently. "The public demanded that we do something about all these disasters, and since it is written in the Zohar that women's attendance at funerals can cause disasters, we decided this was the best course of action," Grossman said.

The Zohar, a 13th century mystical work, is the principal book of the Cabala.

Masha Lubelsky, Secretary General of Na'amat, the Labor Zionist women's organization, wrote to Religious Affairs Minister Ze'evulun Hammer Monday demanding an end to this "new fanatical norm." Knesset member Shulamit Aloni of the Citizens Rights Movement called for the dismissal of the Migdal Ha'emek rabbis.

HIGH COURT ACTS ON CONVERSION ISSUE By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Feb. 3 (JTA) -- The Supreme Court ordered the Interior Ministry Monday to show cause within 45 days why it refuses to accord Jewish status to persons converted to Judaism by Reform rabbis, despite a court order to do so in the case of Shoshana Miller.

The show cause order was issued by Justice Gabriel Bach on the appeal of a married couple in Kibbutz Mishmar Ha'emek who were converted to Judaism by a Reform rabbi in Brazil before they immigrated to Israel in 1985.

The couple was wedded after converting and was given Israeli citizenship under the Law of Return. But the Interior Ministry has consistently refused to register them as Jews. They said they were told by Ministry officials that their application would have to await the outcome of the Miller case.

Miller, an immigrant from the U.S. who was converted by a reform rabbi four years ago, was denied registration as a Jew. She appealed to the high court which ruled in her favor and ordered the Interior Ministry to issue her an identification card as a Jew, without qualification.

Rather than comply, Interior Minister Yitzhak Peretz of the ultra-Orthodox Shas Party, resigned last month. The Ministry was taken over temporarily by Premier Yitzhak Shamir who indicated he would postpone issuing Miller an ID card as long as legally possible. Shas has threatened to quit the unity coalition government.

LABOR AND LIKUD CLASH OVER FINANCIAL AID TO KIBBUTZIM

JERUSALEM, Feb. 3 (JTA) -- Labor and Likud clashed in the Knesset Monday night over financial aid to kibbutzim. The latest dispute between the coalition partners could delay approval of the new budget.

The Labor Party Knesset faction threatened not to vote for the budget when it comes before the plenum Wednesday unless the Finance Committee approves a decision by the Treasury to spread the 264 million Shekel debt of the Labor affiliated United Kibbutz Movement (Takam) over a number of years. The movement represents 55 kibbutzim.

The heads of the Labor and Likud coalition factions were scheduled to meet Tuesday night with Finance Minister Moshe Nissim to try to head off a crisis. A vote against the budget would be tantamount to a non-confidence vote in the

government. Likud says it is not opposed to helping the kibbutzim. But it will support easing the kibbutz debt burden only if similar treatment is accorded to development towns and Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

Likud also wants a written promise from Labor that it will not only support the budget but will vote for legislation needed to impose the new education tax and to reduce the top income tax rate from 60 percent to 48 percent. Both measures are important features of the new economic program approved by the Cabinet.

REP. SALA BURTON DEAD AT 61

WASHINGTON, Feb. 3 (JTA) -- Rep. Sala Galant Burton (D. Cal.), one of two Jewish women members of Congress, died Sunday of cancer. She was 61 years old.

Burton was elected to the House in 1983 to succeed her husband, Phillip, and was re-elected in 1984 and 1986. When she was unable to be present to be sworn in on January 6 to the 100th Congress, the House passed a resolution allowing her to be sworn in at her home. The oath was administered the next day by Rep. Don Edwards (D. Cal.), chairman of the California delegation.

Burton was born in Bialystok, Poland, and fled with her parents to the United States in 1939 ahead of the Nazi occupation of Poland. She said she learned from this experience that "politics is everybody's experience."

She grew up in San Francisco and represented a San Francisco district in Congress. In the House, Burton continued advocating the liberal policies of her late husband. She was also a strong advocate for the cause of Soviet Jewry.

OLDEST ISRAELI RESIDENT DIES AT 119

TEL AVIV, Feb. 3 (JTA) -- The oldest resident of Israel died Monday. Dib Ali Jordan of the Arab village of Jisr Zarka, south of Haifa, had a fruitful lifetime of 119 years and his descendants are said to number in the thousands. He fathered his youngest son at the age of 92.

Dib Ali had six children by his first wife, who died in 1932 and 14 by his second wife whom he married two years later and was 50 years his junior.

Villagers claim that about half the 5,000 residents of Jisr Zarka are Dib's kin. They say he had 200 grandchildren, 800 great grandchildren and several hundred great-great grandchildren.

According to some of his children, Dib led a clean, outdoor life. He did not smoke, or drink alcohol, was an avid hunter and took long walks daily until only a month before he died.

VIOLENCE IN THE GAZA STRIP By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Feb. 3 (JTA) -- Three Gaza high school students were arrested Monday night for allegedly splashing acid on a group of girl students who refused to join an anti-Israel demonstration. Twelve girls were hospitalized.

The three reportedly confessed to the incident which occurred Sunday and divulged the names of accomplices. The police are now searching for them.

The students had demanded that the girls join a demonstration against the recent deportation of Mohammad Yussuf Dahlan, 26, alleged leader of the El Fatah youth movement in the

names of accomplices. The police are now searching for them.

The students had demanded that the girls join a demonstration against the recent deportation of Mohammad Yussuf Dahlan, 26, alleged leader of the El Fatah youth movement in the Gaza Strip, and the fatal shooting of a young Arab by Israeli security forces during a riot in the Gaza Strip town of Kahn Yunis where Dahlan lived.

As unrest continued in the territory, enraged Jewish settlers blocked the main highway Monday at the Deir el Balah intersection to protest stonethrowing at Israeli vehicles. They removed barricades only after Gen. Yitzhak Mordechai, commander of the southern region, personally intervened.

A group of settlers spent the night at a nearby orchard on the look-out for Arab stonethrowers and demonstrators.

FORMER NAZI WHO REPRESENTED EAST GERMANY ON UN HUMAN RIGHTS PANEL HAS BEEN REPLACED

GENEVA, Feb. 3 (JTA) -- Hermann Klenner, whose wartime membership in the Nazi Party was exposed by Israel two years ago, has finally been replaced as representative of the East German Democratic Republic on the United Nations Human Rights Commission here.

Israel informed the Commission two years ago that Klenner joined the Nazi Party on April 20, 1944 and produced his membership card number, 9756141. Nevertheless, he continued to represent East Germany on the 43-member body and was elected one of its three vice presidents last year.

The Commission began its annual debate Monday which will continue through March 13. High on the agenda is the human rights situation in the Israel-occupied Arab territories "including Palestine."

GREEK OFFICIAL TOURS ISRAELI PAVILION AT AGRICULTURAL FAIR

By Jean Cohen

ATHENS, Feb. 3 (JTA) -- Minister of Agriculture Yiannis Pottakis toured the Israeli pavilion at the Agrotica-87 International Fair in Thessaloniki Monday, escorted by Moshe Gilboa, Israel's diplomatic representative in Greece.

Israel is the only Middle Eastern country participating in the agricultural fair which has exhibits from the United States, seven Western European countries, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria.

Gilboa, who holds the rank of Ambassador showed the Greek Minister sophisticated agricultural equipment designed and built in Israel and a modern poultry lay-out developed by the kibbutz industries in Israel for private and collective farming.

Gilboa will host a reception for Greek officials and representatives of the Thessaloniki Jewish community Tuesday night. It will also be attended by Ionnis Papadopoulos, a member of the Cabinet who is Minister of northern Greece, and by representatives of foreign countries.

NATAN AND AVITAL SHCHARANSKY GIVEN AWARDS BY THE WIESENTHAL CENTER

LOS ANGELES, Feb. 3 (JTA) -- "He commands no armies, he holds no elective office. Yet

his weapon, truth, has made the mightiest of powers stand in fear." This was how Natan Shcharansky was described by William Belzberg, a member of the Board of Trustees of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, at a dinner where the former Prisoner of Conscience was awarded the Center's 1987 Humanitarian Award.

More than 2,000 government and community leaders, celebrities and international personalities attended the tribute. It was Shcharansky's first appearance in the western United States.

Avital Shcharansky, largely responsible for her husband's freedom, was honored in absentia by the Wiesenthal Center with its Woman of Valor Award. In presenting the award, Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean of the Center, said, "One day when historians chronicle this period they shall write that it was a woman's staff that split the sea, a woman's voice that the Pharaoh heard, a woman's sacrifice that humbled him to say, let him go. . . let him go."

Accepting his award as well as Avital's, Shcharansky spoke of his experiences in the Soviet Gulag, the need for relentless public pressure on behalf of Soviet Jewry, and the recent death of Soviet dissident Anatoly Marchenko. He urged that everyone should continue to speak out for the remaining close to 400,000 refuseniks who are still confined within the Soviet Union.

The dinner was cochaired by Alan Casden, Rosalie Zalis and Belzberg, members of the Wiesenthal Center Board of Trustees. The event was emceed by Jane Fonda, who spoke of her work on behalf of Soviet Jewry, and her particular friendship and concern for Prisoner of Conscience Ida Nudel. Mayor Tom Bradley of Los Angeles described Shcharansky as "a giant among men."

EAST JERUSALEM ARAB EDITOR QUESTIONED ABOUT SYMPATHY WITH TERRORIST GROUPS

JERUSALEM, Feb. 3 (JTA) -- Elias Zananiri, editor of the Arab-owned East Jerusalem English-language weekly Al-Awda, was detained by police Monday for questioning in connection with suspicion that he violated a law which prohibits expressions of solidarity with terrorist organizations. The publication's owner, Ibrahim Karain, was questioned on Sunday.

The questioning concerned an editorial written by Zananiri last March in which he said the only solution to the Middle East conflict was a Palestinian state established through the "only legitimate leadership," the Palestine Liberation Organization. Neither the editor nor the owner was told whether legal action would be initiated against them. Zananiri said his interrogation was part of a campaign aimed against all Palestinian journalists. He noted that the Israeli authorities recently expelled Akram Haniyeh, editor of the East Jerusalem Arabic daily A-Shaab and that last year two other East Jerusalem newspapers were closed down.

JERUSALEM (JTA) -- Bank Hapoalim is seeking to expand its position as a key factor in the finance of U.S.-Israel trade. It said it plays a major role in financing the exports of American manufacturers to Israel through the Export-Import Bank, the American export credit institution. The bank also participates in arranging credit for the purchase of American-made equipment by Israeli companies.

**SPECIAL INTERVIEW
THE 'DOUBLE EDGED SWORD';
NAZI P.O.W. AND JEWISH
By Marlene Goldman**

NEW YORK, Feb. 3 (JTA) -- Outside the German prison camp Bad Orb, on a frigid and windy December day in 1944, thousands of American prisoners-of-war held hands as a German commander ordered all Jews to step forward.

A "bell of doom" descended over Private First Class Daniel Steckler, but despite the German's threats and commands, the entire battalion stood immobile. "We had heard about death camps and ovens," Steckler told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

Immediately after his capture during the Battle of the Bulge, Steckler had ripped off his dog tag with the Jewish name. But after repeated warnings from the Germans, he and 127 other Jews admitted their identity. "I stayed awake wrestling with my own conscience," Steckler remembered. "Should I deny myself, denying my very soul?"

Ultimately, he could not disregard his background. He was raised in a Conservative Jewish home of self-sacrifice in which his father worked hard to bring him, his four brothers and sisters and his mother through the Depression. But his commitment to remaining Jewish cost him four months of torture and almost his life.

After years of silence, the 62-year-old former P.O.W. emotionally recounts his painful memories -- which play in his head like a motion picture -- in the television documentary "P.O.W. - Americans in Enemy Hands: World War II, Korea, and Vietnam," created by Arnold Shapiro and written and directed by Carol Fleisher.

The two-hour special, produced by Arnold Shapiro Productions in association with USAA and shown on about 115 local stations in late January and early February, features nine former P.O.W.s and narrator Robert Wagner.

The P.O.W.s relate their stories of capture, torture, struggle, escape attempts and anxious relatives through insightful interviews. Also shown is rare film footage of the war, some never before seen on television.

Steckler is one of four Jews profiled, all from World War II, but the only one to have suffered because of his religion. "It was a double-edged sword -- a P.O.W. and a Jew caught up in the Holocaust," Steckler said.

At Bad Orb, the Jewish P.O.W.s were separated from the others. Their supposed transfer to a work camp with "better conditions" turned out instead to be Berga, the satellite labor camp of Buchenwald. Steckler likens his torture there to the enslavement of Jews in Egypt.

By this time, Steckler's 180 pound solid build had wasted to less than 100 pounds. Like many of the other P.O.W.s, he suffered from severe dysentery, among other diseases. He lost body fluids extensively. The 350 prisoners were fed about 200 calories a day, according to Steckler.

While not all those at Berga were Jewish, Steckler remembers "the Jewish boys got all the hell." They labored at night near eight deafening air hammers. Steckler believes this caused his hearing loss, for which he has recently begun to use a hearing aid. Steckler is heavy-set for his short stature, with a thin gray moustache, dark-rimmed eyeglasses and a rounded face capped by short gray hair. His voice exudes pain.

He shut his eyes and reenacted the harsh, but mandatory task of hoisting rails of "an impossible weight ... I can feel the weight on my shoulders and knees and legs now." "We did it," Steckler explained, "because if you failed, God help you." The Germans beat them often with rubber hoses, pick axes, shovels and whips. "How anyone survived is beyond me," Steckler said.

The Motto For Survival

Because of this work, Steckler is missing a disc in his back, suffers a heart condition that resulted in a heart attack about 15 years ago, experiences numbness of the knees and hands and swelling of the legs, and is still afflicted with Beri Beri, a Vitamin B1 deficiency resulting in inflammatory or degenerative conditions of the heart, digestive system and nerves. He walks stiffly and with a limp.

Through the mental anguish and physical abuse, Steckler survived by the motto, "Don't show the bastards the yellow streak in you." The P.O.W.s were not afraid to sing American patriotic songs and "Hatikvah."

Three of his bunk mates died, one from gangrene and another after an escape attempt. "I was becoming a jinx," Steckler said, suppressing his tears. "I had a guilt complex for years. Why did I survive and not them?" Steckler offered his own answer: "I had God to help me, I had faith in myself and I had faith in the people next to me."

Still Experiences Nightmares

When Berga was liberated, Steckler, lice-ridden and weighing just 85 pounds, received treatment in France and recuperated in the United States, but received no psychological counseling. He still experiences nightmares and his temper is short. "I was afraid to tell people," Steckler said. "I was afraid of the effects. Why involve them? It made no sense."

Each year, however, Steckler tells his horrible story at the Seder table, which now includes his wife of nearly 37 years and three children. But "P.O.W." is the first time he has presented his story publicly.

Steckler was found by Shapiro's office through a VA hospital in Boston, where he attends weekly P.O.W. therapy meetings. In June 1985, Steckler met two fellow P.O.W.s from Berga and last April 23 invited them to his Seder for the 41st anniversary of their liberation.

He participated in the documentary, he said, in the hope that his story will turn the experience into an instrument for peace and as assistance to others who have caged their own, similar horror stories. Last year, while filming the documentary, Steckler returned to Berga. He called the experience a "horror." But he plans to go back to the tunnels he slaved in sometime in April.

Not only does Steckler believe in facing reality. He feels he must return. "I want to be able to see the tunnels through the eyes of a free man," he explained.

JERUSALEM (JTA) -- About 150,000 Israelis of North African origin attended a memorial ceremony in Netivot Monday marking the third anniversary of the death of Baba Sali, the spiritual leader of North African Jewry.