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DAILY NEWS BULLETIN

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SUDANESE DETAIN 54 ETHIOPIAN JEWS

TEL AVIV, Feb. 16 (JTA) -- Sudanese authorities have recently detained 54 Ethiopian Jews who crossed the border into Sudan, according to a Sudanese newspaper which was quoted here last Friday by Al Hamishmar. The Sudanese paper, Al-Ittihad Al-Asbui, reported that the supervisor of refugee affairs in Sudan said the country's security authorities will continue to hold the Ethiopian Jews until a decision is made regarding their fate. There has been no independent confirmation of the detention.

JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER VANDALIZED

PARIS, Feb. 16 (JTA) -- Vandals devastated a Jewish community center at St. German El Laye near Paris Monday. Community leaders estimate the damage in tens of thousands of Francs but said religious services will be resumed Friday. Torah scrolls were torn, prayer books were desecrated, furniture was broken and anti-Semitic slogans were daubed on the walls. Mayor Michel Pericard, who visited the scene, said the police have been ordered to use every resource to track down the vandals.

BEGUN'S RELEASE STILL NOT CONFIRMED

By Margie Olster

NEW YORK, Feb. 16 (JTA) -- Relatives of Iosif Begun in Moscow still had no word on his rumored release when contacted Monday afternoon, the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry reported Monday.

Chaim and Zelda Tepper, cousins of Begun's in New York, who spoke with Begun's wife Inna in Moscow Monday, said they received the following message from Inna:

"Bad news from the penal officials. There is no statement about Iosif's liberation, not at the Ministry of Internal Affairs, not in Chistopol prison (where Begun is imprisoned). He is still in Chistopol. Mr. Arbatov told a lie. My husband has not been released and they are not going to liberate him. I have this from the chief reception desk of the Ministry of Internal Affairs."

Georgi Arbatov, a Soviet Central Committee member, said Sunday on CBS's "Face the Nation" that Begun had been freed. The announcement followed a week-long demonstration in Moscow by Begun's family and friends to rally for his release.

Jacob Birnbaum, director of the Center for Russian Jewry and of SSSJ, said the announcement was probably intended to diffuse an "enormously embarrassing situation" for Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. The demonstrations in Moscow on behalf of Begun ended in violence and coincided with an international peace conference called by Gorbachev in Moscow.

The announcement of Begun's release may have been simply a propaganda ploy to ease criticism, Birnbaum said. But it is also possible that Gorbachev gave Arbatov the information on the release which has not yet trickled to the lower echelons of the prison system or the Internal Affairs Ministry. Begun's son Boris was scheduled to begin a 15-day prison sentence

Monday for heading up last week's demonstrations, SSSJ reported.

Demonstrations In The U.S. And Israel

In at least two U.S. cities Monday, Soviet Jewry activists demonstrated on Begun's behalf. In New York, a group undaunted by freezing temperatures gathered outside the Soviet Mission to the United Nations. A similar protest was staged at the San Francisco Soviet Consul by the Bay Area Council for Soviet Jewry.

Six of Begun's relatives, New York City Councilman Noach Deer and seven others were arrested for disorderly conduct when they attempted to march to the gates of the Soviet Mission. The protesters, blocked by police, sat down in the street in front of the Mission and then were arrested. About 100 people turned out for the demonstration.

Meanwhile, in Jerusalem, six people demonstrating on Begun's behalf chained themselves to railings outside the Prime Minister's office Sunday. Police forcibly removed the demonstrators, who represented the Soviet Jewry Information Center in Jerusalem, headed by former Soviet Jewish prisoner Yosef Mendelevich.

Speakers at the rally excoriated the Israeli government for what they called a failure to express public support for the daily demonstrations in Moscow last week by Begun's family and friends.

Another rally was held opposite the Finnish Embassy in Tel Aviv by the Public Council for Soviet Jewry. Finland represents Soviet interests in Israel.

SHAMIR SAYS HE IS STILL WAITING FOR THE VERIFICATION OF BEGUN'S RELEASE

By Yitzhak Rabi

NEW YORK, Feb. 16 (JTA) -- Premier Yitzhak Shamir said on his arrival here from Israel Monday that he is still waiting "for the verification" of reports that Soviet Jewish dissident Iosif Begun has been released from prison, but offered congratulations to Begun's family should the reports prove correct.

Shamir, here for a 10-day visit which will include a meeting with President Reagan at the White House Wednesday, pledged that Israel "will continue the struggle on behalf of Soviet Jewry." Asked to comment on the latest Soviet "gesture," the release, according to Moscow last week, of 140 imprisoned dissidents, the Israeli leader replied: "We are not interested in gestures. We are interested in meaningful change."

Shamir, asked by reporters if his talk with Reagan will include the Iran-Contra arms sale affair replied, "We will discuss many subjects." Pressed on that matter, however, he answered, "Maybe." Israeli sources here said the Shamir-Reagan meeting would deal primarily with bilateral issues, the Middle East situation and other topics, but they did not think Iran would be among them.

Now An Official Ally Of The U.S.

Before leaving Israel, Shamir declared that Israel is now "an official ally of the United States." Questioned about this here, he stated that

"Israel is a major non-NATO ally of the United States" but did not elaborate. According to reports, Secretary of State George Shultz and Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger asked Congress to grant Israel the status of an official, special ally of the U.S.

Israel has sought the status which is conferred upon non-NATO allies including Japan and Australia. The change will allow Israeli firms to bid for valuable defense-related projects in the U.S. which could garner Israel up to \$300 million in additional revenue. The step towards formalizing bilateral relations between Israel and the U.S. comes after the U.S. and Israel have already signed a strategic cooperation agreement to hold joint military exercises.

Shamir met at his hotel here with Governor Thomas Kean of New Jersey, whom he met when the latter visited Israel two years ago. Governor Mario Cuomo of New York is presently out of the State. Shamir also met Monday afternoon with Mayor Edward Koch of New York City.

Purpose Of Shamir's Trip

A spokesman for Shamir briefed reporters following the meeting with Koch. He said that the Mayor had asked Shamir the purpose of his present visit to the U.S., to which the Premier replied that since Israel has become a major ally of the U.S., he wants to clarify the definition and contents of this new relationship.

Shamir also discussed Soviet Jewry with Koch and expressed dissatisfaction that Soviet Jews come to the U.S. with refugee status. They are not refugees, he said, because they leave the USSR with Israeli visas. He said he would raise this matter with U.S. officials when he is in Washington.

The spokesman said Koch and Kean had both urged that Israel not enter into negotiations with terrorists for the release of hostages and that Shamir told them Israel has no intention of doing so.

Israel Seeks To Build Solid Economy

The spokesman said Shamir lunched Monday with members of the Jewish Task Force for the Economic Development of Israel, at the Regency Hotel. The meeting was chaired by David Hermelin, international chairman of the Israel Bond Organization.

Shamir told the group that Israel is very much concerned with building and establishing its economy on solid grounds. He said he has confidence in the goals of the Task Force and believes that if they are correctly implemented, Israel will stabilize its economy in 10 years.

According to the spokesman, Shamir is satisfied with the atmosphere surrounding his American visit, despite media reports about Israel's involvement in the Iran-Contra arms scandal. He leaves for Washington Tuesday and will remain there until Friday, when he leaves for Los Angeles. Shamir will return to New York on February 23 for meetings with Jewish leaders and student groups.

The Premier is accompanied on his trip by four senior aides: Avi Pazner, his communications advisor; Elyakim Rubinstein, Cabinet Secretary; Gen. Azriel Nevo, his Aid de Camp; and Yosef Ben-Aharon, Director General of the Prime Minister's Office.

DEMJANJUK TRIAL BEGINS IN JERUSALEM

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Feb. 16 (JTA) -- The trial of John Demjanjuk opened in Jerusalem District Court Monday and immediately became embroiled in legal argument over the defendant's identity and the court's right to try him.

Demjanjuk's American attorney, Mark O'Connor, maintained that the accused is not the former Treblinka death camp guard who was known to the inmates as "Ivan the Terrible" because of his brutality and who was held responsible for the deaths in the gas chambers of 850,000 Jews and thousands of Gypsies.

Furthermore, O'Connor insisted, the Ukrainian-born retired automobile worker from Cleveland, Ohio, is a victim of evidence fabricated in the Soviet Union, the victim of a KGB plot; and that he was extradited from the U.S. on a murder charge but is now being charged with war crimes, crimes against humanity and crimes against the Jewish people.

O'Connor also challenged Israel's right to bring him to trial because the alleged crimes were not committed on Israel's soil, were not committed against Israeli citizens, and were not committed by a citizen of Israel.

Judge Don Levin, president of the three-judge panel hearing the case, enjoined O'Connor repeatedly to confine himself strictly to the matter of jurisdiction and to leave the question of identity to a later stage, after the prosecution has presented its evidence. But O'Connor insisted that the issues were intertwined, and the court allowed him to present his arguments on both jurisdiction and substantial proof. In addition to Levin, who is a Justice of the Supreme Court, the panel consists of two Jerusalem District Court judges, Dalia Dorner and Zvi Tal.

The U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) began legal proceedings in 1977 to strip Demjanjuk of his American citizenship on grounds that he lied about his collaboration with the Nazis when he entered the U.S. In 1984 he was ordered deported as a suspected war criminal. He was extradited to Israel for trial in February 1986, a year almost to the day before the opening of his trial.

The courtroom is a 300-seat converted cinema house. Its gallery was packed Monday with local and foreign reporters and television camera crews. The 66-year-old Demjanjuk, father of two, entered the prisoner's dock flanked by two policemen. He wore an ill-fitting brown suit and waved to the spectators.

Seated directly behind him was his son, John Demjanjuk Jr., and a Ukrainian Orthodox cleric, Bishop Antony, who came from the U.S. to attend the early stage of the trial and offer his assistance to the defendant. Ukrainian-American groups are believed to be financing Demjanjuk's defense.

The trial is expected to last at least three months. The proceedings are conducted in Hebrew and translated simultaneously into English and Ukrainian. Attorney O'Connor's words are translated from English to Hebrew by an interpreter at his side.

Assertion Is Rebutted

His assertion that the charges brought against Demjanjuk are inconsistent with the

charge of murder on which he was extradited from the U.S. was rebutted by State Attorney Yona Blattman, who noted that the American courts and the U.S. Department of Justice were fully aware of the crimes that Israel attributes to Demjanjuk and therefore the legal technicalities of the charge sheet were not relevant.

Blattman is assisted by State Attorneys Dennis Goldman, Michael Shaked and Michael Horovitz. O'Connor has an Israeli lawyer, Yoram Sheftel, assisting him on points of Israeli law. Sheftel told reporters before the trial opened that he was "eager to do battle" because he is convinced Demjanjuk is a victim of mistaken identity. He said he would not have taken the case otherwise.

Declared Purpose Of The Trial

A declared purpose of the trial is to acquaint the younger generation of Israelis with the terrible realities of the Holocaust. The Israel Defense Force and the Education Ministry plan to bring soldiers and high school students to attend the sessions, which will be held four days a week.

The proceedings are being broadcast live by Israel Radio. Galei Zahal, the Army Radio, is offering frequent updates, summaries and commentaries throughout the day. But Israel Television declined to broadcast the trial live on grounds that it is too expensive and there is insufficient public interest.

Demjanjuk is the first suspected Nazi war criminal ever extradited to Israel and the second to be tried here. Adolf Eichmann went on trial in Jerusalem 25 years ago and was executed as a principal organizer of the "Final Solution." Demjanjuk is being tried as an implementer. He faces a death sentence if convicted.

JUSTICE DEPARTMENT CRITICIZED FOR FAILING TO DEPORT NAZI WAR CRIMINAL By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Feb. 16 (JTA) -- Rabbi Marvin Heir, dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, criticized the U.S. Justice Department for failing to deport Karl Linas, a convicted Nazi war criminal, to the Soviet Union.

"There is no reason for Karl Linas, a man charged with horrific crimes, to spend an additional free day in the United States," Hier said at a press conference here last week. "It's an insult to democracy and an insult to the victims which he so callously and brutally murdered during the Second World War."

The press conference was held after the Los Angeles-based Center presented a list of 74 suspected Nazi war criminals living in the U.S. to Neal Sher, director of the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations (OSI), which investigates and prosecutes Nazi war criminals who illegally immigrated to the U.S. after World War II.

Hier, who was accompanied by Rabbi Abraham Cooper, the Center's associate dean, and Martin Mendelson, its Washington-based legal counsel, said Sher promised to "vigorously" investigate the cases along with the hundreds of other cases the OSI is now pursuing.

The Linas case was linked to the 74 new names because the Wiesenthal Center does not want it to be a "signal to all of them" that they could stall legal proceedings for "a quarter of a century," Hier explained. He noted that the 74 ranged in age from 64 to 85.

Linnas, 67, was stripped of his U.S. citizenship in 1981 by the Federal District Court on Long Island, NY, after it found him responsible for the murder of thousands of people when he was chief of the Nazi concentration camp at Tartu, Estonia.

The U.S. Supreme Court last December and again last month refused to hear an appeal against the Linas deportation order.

Hier said he was "very concerned" about the efforts of conservative groups to prevent the deportation. He said the issue of Nazi war criminals was not one in which conservatives and liberals should differ. He said the Wiesenthal Center and others would publicly fight any attempt to prevent the deportation.

The 74 names presented to the OSI included persons who were members of the Ypatinga Buras, a Lithuanian squad which murdered civilians; chief officers of prisons and concentration camps and officers and officials of the 11th, 12th and 13th battalions of the Lithuanian Security Police which was attached to the German SS, Hier said.

The list presented to reporters included birthdates, their war crimes, date of emigration to the U.S. and destination, but no names. Hier explained that the Center wants the persons listed to "be investigated by a government body. We do not want to try them in the press."

Hier indicated that most of the 74 are still alive, noting that 62 other names were eliminated because they had died.

He said this was only the beginning, since the Center had not completed its investigation of other war criminals from Lithuania, the Ukraine and Germany believed to have come to the U.S. He stressed that no ethnic group was being targeted, only war criminals.

Hier said that the Center has been able to conduct its investigation because it has legally acquired its own access to immigration data. He said previously these data were compiled only by international rescue organizations, such as the International Red Cross, which have refused to make them available.

This is the largest list compiled so far by the Wiesenthal Center, Hier said. Cooper said that in the past four months, the Center has provided 65 names to Australia, 44 to West Germany, 17 to Great Britain, 26 to Canada, 12 to Sweden, three to Venezuela and one to Brazil.

"This is not a question of an eye for an eye," Hier said. "Our future will be weak if the record reads you can be a mass murderer and a Nazi war criminal and live out the rest of your life in freedom."

APPROVAL OF BUDGET IN SIGHT

JERUSALEM, Feb. 16 (JTA) -- Likud and the Labor Party were reported to have reached an understanding Monday that might result in approval of the 33 billion Shekel (\$23.8 billion) national budget scheduled for its first reading in the Knesset Wednesday. But the fate of the budget still appeared to hinge on how the coalition partners will act on several matters in dispute between them.

One question that remains open is whether financial aid for the Labor-affiliated United Kibbutz Movement will be approved before the Knesset vote and whether Likud MKs will endorse it even if a parallel proposal for aid to Jewish settlements in the West Bank is not on the agenda by Wednesday.

SPECIAL INTERVIEW AN HISTORIC AND UNPRECEDENTED MOVE By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Feb. 16 (JTA) -- As it approaches the end of the 39th year since its founding, the State of Israel has made an historic and unprecedented move -- it has appointed a young Israeli Arab to an important and prestigious diplomatic post abroad.

Muhammad Masarwa, a 45-year-old lawyer from Kufer Kara village near Hadera, will be Israel's next Consul General in Atlanta, a post he assumes next summer. He will be the first non-Jew to head an Israeli diplomatic mission anywhere, and his appointment demonstrated Israel's confidence in itself and in its 750,000 Arab citizens.

Masarwa is Moslem. He speaks Hebrew with fluency and eloquence, as he does English and Arabic. He heads a successful law firm in Hadera and has often represented the mainstream of Israel's Arab society at public events. He combines boyish good looks and silvery curly hair with the shrewd intelligence often attributed to his profession.

Should Have Been Done Long Ago

Masarwa is not particularly excited by his elevation to the highest position ever held by an Israeli Arab. "This should have been done a long time ago, in other offices as well. The excitement is over the fact that after much talk something was done," he told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency in an interview after his appointment was announced last week.

Previously the highest position held by an Arab in Israel was Deputy Minister of Health, occupied until the early 1970s by the late Abdul Aziz Zuabi of Nazareth, a Mapam Knesset member. A Druze, Sheik Jaber Muadi, was Deputy Minister of Communications and Agriculture.

But there have been no Arabs in senior positions since 1977. There has been talk recently of appointing an Arab to the Supreme Court, but this has yet to materialize.

"There is no reason why an Arab should not be appointed Director General or Deputy Director General of a government ministry," Masarwa said.

But he does not favor a "symbolic" appointment of an Arab as a Minister or a Supreme Court Justice just because he is an Arab.

"I believe that Arab citizens of Israel should have an equal opportunity to put forward their candidacy to any civil service opening," Masarwa said. "Once this is done, I believe that Israel's Arabs will become full partners to the Jews in Israel and gain the place they deserve in the society."

Arabs Face 'Technical Limitation'

He is convinced there are plenty of Arabs capable of filling such jobs. But they face a "technical limitation" -- the condition often demanded by Israeli employers, public and private alike, that only veterans of the Israel Defense Force be hired.

Israeli Arabs are not permitted to serve in the IDF for security reasons. But Masarwa believes this is often used as a pretext not to employ Arabs. "One should do away with this barrier," he told the JTA.

Masarwa began his public life in 1963 as secretary of the Arab Student Union at the

Hebrew University in Jerusalem. At that time, there was a campaign to abolish the military government which had been in charge of Israel's Arab population since the war for independence in 1948. Masarwa was active in that campaign.

In 1976, he became the first -- and youngest -- Arab elected Mayor of his village when the system of direct elections was instituted. He held office for two years. He was elected Mayor again in 1983. Last May he resigned, in compliance with a rotation of power agreement, and now serves as Deputy Mayor.

Masarwa was not affiliated with any political party until Ezer Weizman invited him to join his new Yahad Party before the 1984 Knesset elections.

He was sixth on Yahad's list, but the party won only three Knesset seats. When Yahad merged with the Labor Party last month, Masarwa officially became a Laborite.

It is believed that Masarwa's appointment to Atlanta was due in large measure to Weizman's influence with the Foreign Ministry, headed by Labor Party leader Shimon Peres. He was one of four candidates considered for the post.

Masarwa says he and Weizman "have a lot in common, both on local issues and on Israel's foreign and peace policies." He does not see any possible conflict of interest between his private views and the official policy of the government he will be representing.

Reflects The Israeli Mainstream

"My views reflect the Israeli mainstream, and they were well known to those who appointed me to the job," he said. Although he has no previous diplomatic experience, Masarwa has a native diplomatic finesse.

He adroitly avoids such sensitive and emotionally charged questions as the demand for an independent Palestinian state which is shared by a majority of Israeli Arabs. For the record he said: "The Foreign Service, and the Foreign Ministry included, strive toward peace with the Arab countries, toward solving the Palestinian problem. This can be done through a number of venues."

On the controversial issue of an international conference for Middle East peace, Masarwa observed that: "Presently on the agenda is an international umbrella for peace talks. This is accepted by both the Arab countries and the Palestinian leaders." He made a point of not mentioning the Palestine Liberation Organization.

"Nothing is guaranteed," he added. "We shall try different ways to reach some progress on the course to peace."

At least outwardly, Masarwa appears untroubled by the possibility that Palestinian propaganda in the U.S. might depict him as a traitor. He also has no qualms about his ability to communicate with the large Jewish community in Atlanta and the southern region of the U.S. that his Consulate covers.

"I think that I will achieve greater credibility because the person representing the State of Israel will be an Arab," Masarwa said. He will go to Atlanta next summer with his wife, Hitam, and their three children, Amir, 14, Bashir, 10, and Nazir, seven.

Masarwa said he has not yet decided whether as the new Consul General of Israel he will attend all local Jewish events. "I have not yet decided if I will attend Yom Kippur service. I will follow my conscience," he added.