

FEB 28 1987

DAILY NEWS BULLETIN

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PUBLISHED BY JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY · 165 WEST 46TH STREET · NEW YORK, NY 10036-2574 · (212) 575-9370

VOL. 65 - 70th YEAR

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 20, 1987

NO. 34

**ISRAEL WILL ANSWER U.S. QUESTIONS
ON IRAN ARMS SALES, SHAMIR SAYS**

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Feb. 19 (JTA) -- Israeli Premier Yitzhak Shamir stressed Thursday that the Israeli government "will respond to every question and request to clarification" from Congressional committees investigating the Iran-Contra affair.

"It will become clear that Israel acted in accordance with its obligations as a friend and ally of the United States," he said in response to a question after his address at a luncheon of the National Press Club.

During his speech before some 300 persons, Shamir declared that "Israel was not involved in any way in the diversion of funds (from the sale of American arms to Iran) to Contras." He maintained that Israel's participation in the sale of arms to Iran was a result of its belief that Iran is a strategically important country and there is a need to influence its policies.

After Shamir met with some 60 members of Congress Wednesday, Sen. Daniel Inouye (D. Hawaii) and Rep. Lee Hamilton (D. Ind.), chairmen of the Senate and House special committees investigating the Iran affair, said the Israelis agreed to answer questions in writing and submit a chronology of Israeli financial transactions and contacts with Iran.

No Specific Answers

Shamir refused to answer any specific questions Thursday, such as whether President Reagan approved Israel's sale of arms to Iran in 1985. There has been a conflict in testimony on whether Reagan authorized the sale or not.

Asked whom he expected to win the Iran-Iraq war, Shamir shrugged his shoulders and replied, "I realize I come from Jerusalem, but I am not a prophet."

He said it was a "silly war" which "no one understands the reason" for, but which could continue for years. He said Iran has the advantage in manpower and Iraq in sophisticated arms, but it would be "a disaster" if either side won.

According to Israeli sources, Shamir was not asked any tough questions during his meeting with the members of Congress. But he got those questions at the National Press Club luncheon.

Asked about the case of Jonathan Pollard, the former civilian Navy employee who is awaiting sentencing after pleading guilty to spying for Israel, he again said this was a "painful experience" for Israel.

He stressed the operation was conducted by a small group of Israelis "against the policy" of the Israeli government. "We regret it very much," he added. He said Israel cooperated with the investigation and now that the case is in the U.S. courts, Israel "has nothing to say about it."

Won't Take Lead On South Africa

Asked about Israel investing or divesting in South Africa, Shamir replied: "We are looking for investments in Israel. We are looking for investments of Jewish people coming from South Africa to Israel." Shamir stressed that Israel opposes

apartheid, but in its relations with that country it must take "into consideration" the existence of an "important Jewish community."

He said Israel is a "small country" and cannot lead the struggle against apartheid. But he added, Israel's dealings with South Africa are less than those of many Black African and West European countries.

In his address, Shamir repeated his opposition to an international conference which King Hussein of Jordan wants to precede negotiations with Israel. He said the ideas were inspired by the Soviet Union, which wants to play a "major role" in the Mideast.

Shamir added that he would accept an international conference that would include only Jordan, Egypt, Palestinians and the U.S.

He again urged Jordan to agree to "face-to-face" negotiations, "if not in the region, which would be the most desirable, then right here in Washington or at Camp David."

Shamir said the U.S. can play host because it is "interested in peace and stability" in the Mideast and has "excellent relations" with both Israel and Jordan.

At the same time, Shamir said that despite his criticism of the Soviet Union, "we are interested in improving relations with Soviet Russia." He said it was not "normal" for the USSR to reject diplomatic relations with Israel.

He said that the first topic he would discuss with Soviet officials is Jewish emigration.

On Wednesday night, Shamir called for an end to the policy of providing "homeless refugee" status for Soviet Jewish immigrants that allows them to go to the United States and other countries rather than Israel.

"We are most anxious to put an end to the dropout phenomenon, which has caused much harm," he told some 600 Jewish leaders from the U.S. and Canada at an Israel Bond dinner at the Capitol Hilton Hotel.

During his three-days of meetings with the Reagan Administration, Shamir has urged that the U.S. no longer grant refugee status to Soviet Jews since their Soviet visas are for immigration to Israel.

But Administration officials have rejected this plea, arguing that the U.S. supports "freedom of choice."

"In Israel they are free to apply for a permit to go to any country of their choice," Shamir stressed to the Bond leaders. "Our State was not established for the purpose of enabling the transfer of Jews from one dispersion to another."

Noting that there are "rumors" of a change for the better in the Soviet emigration policy, the Premier said so far there is "no confirmation" of this. "We have to redouble our efforts to get the Soviet Union to let our people go and to do it right now," he said.

Invitation To Visit

Shamir urged American Jews to make a "pilgrimage" to Israel this year to help celebrate the 40th anniversary of the founding of the State and the 20th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem. "Send your children and grandchildren

to the country," he declared. "Let them see what has been accomplished in such a short time....Let them realize what yet remains for them to do in the years that lie ahead."

The Premier stressed that "never for a moment have the people and the leadership of Israel believed that Israel is an endeavor of Israelis alone. We have always considered ourselves as the vanguard of the Jewish people, forward scouts whose task is to pave the way for the return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel."

Shamir noted the economic reforms of the national unity government, stressing that the aim was to reduce inflation to less than 10 percent.

"We hope that all these measures will instill greater confidence in investors and entrepreneurs and encourage them to bring their capital, experience and skills to Israel," he said.

Shamir praised the accomplishments of the Israel Bond Organization, noting the record sale of \$603 million in bonds in 1986. David Hermelin, Israel Bonds international campaign chairman, said \$31 million in Bonds were sold for the dinner honoring Shamir.

FIRST WEEK OF 'IVAN' TRIAL FEATURES ATTORNEYS' CLASHES, DISPUTE OVER IDENTITY OF AMERICAN DEFENDANT

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Feb. 19 (JTA) -- The first week in the trial of John Demjanjuk, the only suspected Nazi war criminal ever extradited to Israel, ended Thursday with defense counsel challenging the ability of witnesses to identify the Ukrainian-born former automobile worker from Cleveland, Ohio. He is said to be the Treblinka death camp guard known to inmates as "Ivan the Terrible" because of his brutality.

The trial opened Monday before a three-judge panel of the Jerusalem District Court convened in a converted cinema. Much of the week was devoted to testimony by Yitzhak Arad, a historian of the Holocaust and chairman of the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem. He presented a detailed picture of day-to-day life at Treblinka, where nearly 900,000 Jews perished.

In contrast to the first three days of the trial, Thursday's session was electric with tension, marked by frequent sharp exchanges between the prosecution and defense that drew exclamations from the spectators.

The court intervened several times to reprimand one of the parties for unseemly behavior. At one point, it ordered the microphone removed from the table of Yoram Sheftel, an Israeli lawyer who is assisting Demjanjuk's American attorney, Mark O'Connor. Sheftel frequently interrupted the proceedings.

Is Identification Possible

The cross examination of Arad Thursday focussed on whether inmates could identify those who carried out the extermination process. The Treblinka Ivan, and another guard, Nikolai, ran the gas chambers. O'Connor questioned how an inmate who was "traumatized beyond belief in the history of man" could "look in the eye" and "stand and observe" the person who was beating him or operating the gas chambers.

Arad responded that he "had no doubt" that inmates used "in this terrible work for weeks or even months had the opportunity to look at the faces of the Germans and Ukrainians who en-

slaved them." He said inmates in the lower camp at Treblinka were aware of the events and people active in the upper camp where the gassings took place because they moved from one camp to another.

The court banned Arad from making a statement at the close of his testimony. He told the Army Radio later that he had intended to say that not all Ukrainians collaborated with the Nazis and that many joined anti-Nazi resistance forces and saved Jews.

Throughout the proceedings, Demjanjuk, 66, sat in the prisoners dock, stone-faced, as he listened to the testimony translated into Ukrainian.

SOVIET JEWISH DISSIDENT BEGUN PARDONED, SET FOR RELEASE FRIDAY, NCSJ REPORTS

NEW YORK, Feb. 19 (JTA) -- Soviet Jewish dissident Iosif Begun will receive an unconditional pardon and be released from Chistopol prison 10 a.m. Friday, local time, the National Conference on Soviet Jewry informed the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Thursday.

Jerry Goodman, executive director of the NCSJ, said Begun's wife, Inna was contacted Wednesday by Soviet Minister of Interior Aleksandr Vlasov. He said her husband's release was official and that she could meet him at the prison. She will be accompanied by Begun's son, Boris, Goodman said. He said his information came from NCSJ sources in Moscow.

Begun, a 54-year-old electrical engineer and mathematician was an activist for Jewish emigration rights, a long-time refusenik and a clandestine teacher of Hebrew, which is outlawed in the Soviet Union. In 1983, he was sentenced to seven years in prison and five years exile to Siberia for allegedly slandering the Soviet State.

Soviet Announcement Thursday

Soviet Foreign Minister Gennady Gerasimov announced in Moscow Thursday that Begun would be pardoned by decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet, the highest state body in the USSR, which pardoned more than 140 other dissidents including several Jews over the past week.

The NCSJ statement said: "This welcome action by the Soviet Union demonstrates that it is possible for that nation to treat its Jewish citizens as it does its other minorities, without such an action being perceived as a threat to Soviet society."

"As the Soviet Union has now demonstrated that it is possible to release a man who had been incarcerated because he sought to teach Hebrew and to pass on his heritage, we eagerly await the release of all the other Jewish Prisoners of Conscience. The world also awaits a firm decision to allow all Jews who wish to do so to emigrate, as guaranteed by the Helsinki Accords and other international agreements, and as practiced in some other Soviet-bloc states." The announcement of Begun's pardon ended a week of agonizing suspense for his wife, family and friends. Last Sunday, Georgi Arbatov, a member of the Central Committee of the Supreme Soviet, said on the CBS "Face the Nation" television program that Begun had been freed.

The announcement followed a week-long demonstration in Moscow by Begun's family and friends for his release, finally broken up by police who manhandled some of the demonstrators and

Western reporters. Initially, there was elation over Arbatov's statement because it came on the heels of the release of other dissidents. But on Monday, Chaim and Zelda Tepper, cousins of Begun's in New York, said they spoke to Inna Begun in Moscow by telephone and received a message of despair.

They said Inna told them, "Bad news from the penal officials." She said there was no statement from any source about her husband's release and that she was told by the chief reception desk of the Interior Ministry that "they are not going to liberate him. Mr. Arbatov lied."

On Tuesday, Soviet authorities announced that another dissident, Anatoly Koryagin, had been freed by decree, but that Begun remained in prison pending a decree approving his release. There were indications that it was being held up because Begun refused to sign the required statement that he would refrain from illegal activities in the future."

But the announcement from Moscow Thursday said his pardon was unconditional.

DENYING EARLIER REPORT, ISRAELI RABBI REQUESTS THAT NON-ORTHODOX DEFER TO ORTHODOX ON ISSUES OF PERSONAL STATUS

NEW YORK, Feb. 19 (JTA) -- A leading Israeli Orthodox rabbi made clear his view that Halacha (Jewish law) must take precedence over intra-Jewish politics in issues of personal status, such as divorce and conversion.

Rabbi Aharon Lichtenstein, who heads a yeshiva in the Etzion block of settlements south of Hebron, said, in a statement made available to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, that it was necessary for him to clarify remarks he made before a National Religious Party forum in Jerusalem last month which "were grossly distorted in certain press reports."

His remarks were interpreted in some quarters as a hint that Orthodox refusal to regard as valid the authority of non-Orthodox rabbis on documents of personal status may have to be modified in the interests of Jewish unity.

With respect to the area of personal status, Lichtenstein said in his statement: "We should strive to minimize the emphasis upon symbolic questions of pride and prestige and focus, instead, upon the substantive halachic issues. We should try to ensure that proper procedure be followed by halachically qualified personnel, and be less concerned with who gains some recognition by superintending or signing what."

'Part Of Compassionate Enterprise'

He said "this would entail our asking others to direct their adherents to obtain a kosher 'get' (religious divorce) wherever necessary -- this not by way of compromising their principles but simply as part of a compassionate enterprise..."

In the matter of "the composition of the Beth Din (rabbinical court) actually engaged in the specific formal steps" of conversion, "we should entertain an arrangement which would guarantee that the composition and procedures to be applied by the actual Beth Din meet our standards, although it might act under the aegis of a sanctioning Reform or Conservative authority," Lichtenstein said.

"This would admittedly grant that authority an inevitable modicum of implicit recognition, but given the gravity of the issue, I believe we can live with that, inasmuch as we need not actually

accord formal recognition but could simply skirt the issue."

The Jewish Telegraphic Agency reported from Jerusalem on January 26 that Lichtenstein suggested that Orthodox conversion courts might have their decisions formally approved by a Conservative institution as a way to break the impasse.

Just Such A Case

Israel is presently embroiled in the issue of non-Orthodox conversion in the case of Shoshana Miller, an immigrant from the United States who was converted to Judaism by a Reform rabbi in the U.S. The Israeli Supreme Court recently ordered the Interior Ministry to issue her an identification card as a Jew, without qualification. Interior Minister Rabbi Yitzhak Peretz of the ultra-Orthodox Shas Party resigned from the Cabinet rather than comply.

Lichtenstein emphasized in his statement that the non-Orthodox institutions acting in conversion cases would have to demonstrate the standards and "minimal scope and depth of commitment" as defined by "the leading 'poskim' (rabbinical interpreters of halacha) of the age."

He admitted that, "This approach may very well be nothing more than a pipedream. Perhaps no Reform or Conservative leader will even entertain it. But do we have the moral and halachic right to abstain from its exploration? We should explore it not for the sake of Israeli law or politics . . . but for the sake of 'Klal Yisrael' (Jewish unity)."

"The card of recognition," he said, "is far too precious to be given up in order to cope with a trickle of Susan Millers."

Orthodox rabbis in Israel refuse to acknowledge the convert's Hebraization of her given name.

SHARANSKYS PROTEST IN NEW YORK FOR BEGUN, ALL SOVIETS WHO WISH TO EXIT By Yitzhak Rabi

NEW YORK, Feb. 19 (JTA) -- Natan Sharansky, his wife Avital and his 79-year-old mother Ida Milgrom stood in a cage in front of the Soviet Mission to the United Nations here Thursday, calling for freedom for Soviet Jewish dissident Iosif Begun and demanding free emigration for all Soviet Jews who want to leave.

Sharansky and his family arrived at the demonstration shortly after their direct flight from Israel landed. They joined about 40 demonstrators who were carrying posters of Begun and chanting repeatedly, "Free Begun now." Almost as many reporters were on hand.

The demonstration, which was scheduled to last until Saturday, was organized by the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry (SSSJ).

Sharansky said that he was aware of reports that Begun was about to be released from prison, but he noted that Begun was still not free as long as he was denied the right to emigrate.

Begun has been in the Soviets' Chistopol Prison since 1983 for allegedly slandering the state. However, the National Conference on Soviet Jewry (NCSJ) confirmed reports from Moscow Thursday that Begun has been pardoned and is about to be released. Sharansky told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that he and his wife decided to join the demonstration after Avital spoke on the telephone with Begun's wife Inna. "We decided

to come here and demonstrate for Begun and for all Soviet Jews, 382,000 of them who are waiting for exit visas to leave the Soviet Union," Sharan-sky said.

In a statement at the demonstration, Avital Sharansky declared: "My family arrived in New York to inaugurate a protest for the release of all Prisoners of Zion and the free emigration of all Soviet Jews. Today the protest focuses on Iosif Begun."

Natan Sharansky said that Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev is attempting to win public support in the West by drawing attention to Soviet gestures to prominent dissidents while the situation of Soviet Jewry at large remains grim. He called for continued, open pressure on the USSR to ease the plight of Soviet Jewry.

After answering reporters' questions, Milgrom and Avital Sharansky marched toward the gates of the Soviet Mission carrying a poster of Begun. A worker at the Mission came out and received the poster from them without making any comment.

After an hour in the cage -- the one said to be used by Avital Sharansky when she previously demonstrated on behalf of her husband when he was imprisoned -- the family left to attend to their newborn daughter and escape the freezing cold. They said they will demonstrate all day Thursday and Friday.

GOLDA'S DENVER HOME SAFE - FOR NOW

By Andrew Muchin

NEW YORK, Feb. 19 (JTA) -- The Denver, Colo., house occupied briefly by Golda Meir is temporarily safe from demolition due to a 10-day restraining order imposed February 13 by Denver District Court Chief Judge Clifton Flowers.

The state-level trial judge was reacting to a suit filed the same day by the Golda Meir Memorial Association (GMMA), claiming that the Board of Appeals of the Building Inspection Division of the Denver Public Works Department does not have the authority to determine ownership, and thus the fate, of the house. The house could have been razed as early as February 15, the Board had ruled on January 15.

Indeed, ownership of the former home of the late Israeli Premier is under contention. Deputy City Attorney John Spessel, while not commenting on the pending litigation, asserted that the city has a signed contract of ownership with the predecessor of GMMA. Yet, Mel and Esther Cohen of Denver and GMMA claimed ownership by GMMA. The Board ruled in favor of the city on January 15, but Board chairman Ralph Nordhauser said that ruling "may well be" wrong.

Flowers will hold a hearing on February 20 to consider imposing a preliminary injunction that would restrict the city from demolishing the house, now sitting in disrepair on steel beams in a city park. No date has been set to hear the suit, according to the plaintiff's attorney, Jim Bretz.

The suit raises a laundry list of disputes. The plaintiff contends, in addition to the jurisdictional argument, that the Department and Board, in particular Board chairman Ralph Nordhauser, are prejudiced against the house.

Esther Cohen claimed that Nordhauser, who lived in the house as a child, recently told her, "Sure, we had a famous movie star's relatives there all the time ... Willard the rat."

In response, Nordhauser said that Cohen "has no sense of humor." He contended that his primary concern was public safety. When he visited the house in January and December, he said he found the fences around it insufficient to stop potential visitors and in fact saw children and a dog at play beneath the house. He added that he had pushed for city funds for refurbishing the house under the previous mayor.

His safety claims were corroborated by Robert Alson, chief structural engineer of the Division. While not commenting on the suit, he told JTA that the Division has maintained for several years that the house is unsafe.

Divisional inspectors had found last December and earlier in the year that portions of the fences around the house were down, allowing easy access, and that structural damage to the walls and roof presented a potential danger to the public.

However, Esther Cohen claimed that the five- and six-foot fences and the boards over of the windows and doors were all that reasonably could be done to ensure safety.

In the suit, GMMA also is asking for six months to demonstrate its ability to the Building Department to renovate and utilize the house. Katherine Archuleta, a representative of Denver Mayor Federico Pena, noted that GMMA has missed several such deadlines, which Cohen acknowledged, most recently the 30-day one imposed by the Board on January 15. But Cohen said she felt "coerced" into accepting the deadlines by Archuleta.

Archuleta had no comment on the suit Tuesday, but she did maintain that the Pena administration had attempted to find a use for the house from 1983 through late 1986. Then it became clear to the administration that perhaps the house could be refurbished for \$150,000-\$250,000, but probably was beyond repair, she said. Moreover, she found insufficient private interest, even among the Jewish community, in restoration.

But Mel Cohen claimed the house can be fixed. "You're not looking at it as it was, or for what events took place in it, and the beautiful restoration that's going to be," he said. "There's a beautiful, beautiful, set of plans that the city paid for, that the architects did three years ago."

Archuleta confirmed the existence of the plans, and noted that the city paid \$30,000 for them and for moving the house to the park in the summer of 1985. She blamed the current problems of the house on GMMA's inability to raise the funds for restoration, which she said it promised within three months of when the house was moved.

Mel Cohen said the Allied Jewish Federation of Denver can't afford to help, and attributed GMMA's lack of a treasury on "the constant negative words that are used in describing the house ... We've gone ahead and busted our asses for four years to overcome the negatives and opposition we've encountered primarily from the city."

Added his wife, "We're not mavens on money-raising."

The house has been vandalized with graffiti, and a fire destroyed part of the roof. Nevertheless, Eugene Padon of Eugene Padon Engineering, Inc. of Denver told the Board of Appeals January 15 that the house could be placed on a foundation and completely refurbished for \$65,000. He also contended that it posed no danger. "I have been in it in the last six months," he said.