

**CABINET-SPONSORED PROBE INTO POLLARD
SPY CASE CONTINUES TO MARK TIME****By Gil Sedan**

JERUSALEM, March 23 (JTA) -- A Cabinet-sponsored probe into the Jonathan Pollard spy case, stalled before it got started because the first witnesses refused to testify, continued to mark time Sunday while their lawyer dickered with Attorney General Yosef Harish for immunity from prosecution.

David Libai, legal counsel for three former Israeli diplomatic attaches in the U.S., is seeking a written commitment from Harish that no information emerging from the investigation will be transferred to the American authorities. Libai advised his clients last week not to testify lest they incriminate themselves and face espionage charges in the U.S.

The three are Yosef Yagur, former scientific attache at the Israel Consulate General in New York; Ilan Ravid, former aide to the scientific attache at the Israel Embassy in Washington; and Irit Erb, former secretary at the scientific attache's office in Washington. All allegedly had dealings with Pollard, who has been sentenced to life imprisonment for spying for Israel. They left the U.S. immediately after his arrest in 1985.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres disclosed at Sunday's Cabinet meeting that the State is paying legal expenses for the three former government employees. Other Ministers despaired that the two-man inquiry committee could proceed unless the three agreed to testify. If not, there would be no alternative but to establish a full-scale judicial commission to carry on the investigation with power to subpoena witnesses under oath.

It was precisely to avoid a broader inquiry that the Inner Cabinet appointed the two-man body consisting of Tel Aviv lawyer Yehoshua Rotenstreich and former Chief of Staff Gen. Zvi Tsur.

Tsur may soon leave on a 10-day business trip which would further delay the committee's work. Premier Yitzhak Shamir was optimistic that the problem of testimony could be solved through "dialogue." He stressed that the government did not intend to pass any testimony on to "exterior bodies."

**SOLON PROTESTS U.S. PLANS TO SELL
ADVANCED ANTI-TANK SHELL TO ARABS****By David Friedman**

WASHINGTON, March 23 (JTA) -- Sen. Arlen Specter (R. Pa.) has protested to the Reagan Administration about its plans to sell the United States' most sophisticated anti-tank shell to Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and Bahrain. Specter lodged his protest in a meeting with Secretary of State George Shultz and in a letter to Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger last week.

The shell, made out of depleted uranium, has never been provided to the U.S.'s NATO allies or Israel, according to Michael Gale, an aide to Specter.

The U.S. plans to sell 15,000 of the 105-millimeter shells to Saudi Arabia, 10,000 to Egypt, 2,000 to Jordan and 1,800 to Bahrain at a cost of

\$635 per shell, Gale said. He added that in May 1986, the Department of Defense began negotiations with Egypt for co-production of the shell.

In his letter to Weinberger, Specter said that such a "transfer of technology" could upset the "precarious military balance" in the Middle East. He also warned of the danger of the shells falling into the hands of "radical" elements.

The shells can penetrate tanks and set them ablaze, Gale said. Although the depleted uranium can be converted into plutonium for use as nuclear weapons, this is a long and costly operation, he noted. However, the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission has prohibited the sale of the shells to Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, according to Gale.

CAMPAIGN TO COMBAT DRUG ABUSE**By Gil Sedan**

JERUSALEM, March 23 (JTA) -- The Al-Sam Association which combats drug abuse has launched a national campaign to educate the public to the problem. This follows a survey by the group which showed that between 10,000-20,000 adults in Israel use drugs regularly and about 10 percent of youths, between ages 14-18, use drugs at least once.

According to Amos Prushman, chairman of Al-Sam, even one-time use is cause for concern because a small percentage of the young population will be induced to more frequent consumption of drugs.

The Tel Aviv municipality's youth division recently conducted its own survey among 800 young residents of impoverished neighborhoods. It found 21 percent used drugs or come from families of drug addicts.

Public alarm was aroused last week when customs inspectors at Ben Gurion Airport caught a person smuggling crack, a cheap derivative of cocaine, into the country for the first time.

Al-Sam, which concentrates on preventing addiction in the 14-18 age group, can no longer work on a voluntary basis but needs government support, according to its national director, Levana Zamir. Zamir suggested the creation of a ministerial committee headed by the Prime Minister to cope with the problem.

An inter-ministerial committee recently recommended establishment of a national authority to combat drug usage. But that triggered a debate over who would run the authority and with what budget. So far the recommendation has not been implemented.

CANCER VICTIM GETS EXIT VISA**By Susan Birnbaum**

NEW YORK, March 23 (JTA) -- A refusenik cancer victim who suffered a heart attack at the Leningrad OVIR emigration office has been granted an exit visa, according to reports from Soviet Jewry activists in Israel and the United States. Yuri Shpeizman, sick with lymphosarcoma, got the news from his wife, Nelly, at the Leningrad hospital where he has been since March 11.

Shpeizman collapsed minutes after leaving OVIR, where he had been told his frequently refused application was incomplete and needed a

new photograph, according to his daughter in Jerusalem, Rita Levin.

Nelly Shepizman has been very active in publicizing her husband's condition by joining the hunger-striking women refuseniks who fasted concurrent with the International Women's Day observances. Their fast ended a day before Shepizman had his heart attack. Nelly Shepizman was also among eight signators to a telegram sent to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev last week saying they were tired of waiting to emigrate and would demonstrate this week.

Levin has been campaigning for her father's release, along with the help of Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek and Nobel Laureate Elie Wiesel. On Monday, she began a vigil in front of the U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv despite her father's impending release, to help publicize the plight of another Soviet cancer victim, Benjamin Charny, 49, who suffers from cancer and serious heart problems, is the fifth of an original group of five cancer patients organized as the International Cancer Patients Solidarity Committee by a Montreal oncologist, Dr. Gerald Batist. The other four, including Inna Meiman, were released in recent months. Meiman died in Washington on February 9.

Series Of Vigils Under Way, Planned

Benjamin Charny's brother, Leon Charny, a Soviet emigre studying at MIT, began a vigil Monday in front of the Soviet Embassy in Washington to make his brother's plight known, as well as to publicize the eight other known cancer patients, of whom the youngest is eight years old.

Charny is carrying a placard publicizing the recent deaths of cancer victims Inna Meiman and Michael Shirman, both of whom died because of delayed treatments resulting from the Soviets' refusal to accommodate their urgent medical needs.

The Charny brothers applied to emigrate in 1979, in two separate OVIR offices in Moscow. Leon was given a visa; Benjamin was not, with reasons of "state secrets" given for his refusal.

Two weeks after Leon Charny left for America, Benjamin was diagnosed as having malignant melanoma -- skin cancer. Since then, he has suffered from a host of other ailments.

The two brothers are extremely close; Benjamin, 15 years older than Leon, raised his teenage brother like a son after the death of their father 20 years ago, and their mother 14 years ago.

Benjamin's wife, Yadviga, will begin a hunger strike Wednesday in Moscow along with her son-in-law, Yuri Blank. Blank's wife, Anna, wanted to demonstrate but cannot because she is six months pregnant. The Blankes were refused exit visas in 1983 because Charny is a refusenik.

On Tuesday, Leon Charny will meet with Sens. Edward Kennedy (D. Mass.) and John Carey (D. Mass.) in a meeting organized by the Massachusetts Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

In addition, Alexander Slepak, son of long-time refuseniks Vladimir and Masha Slepak, will begin a 19-day hunger strike Friday in the Capitol.

JDC GETS \$150,000 GRANT FOR AGRICULTURAL PROJECT IN ETHIOPIA

NEW YORK, March 23 (JTA) -- United Support of Artists for Africa has granted the

American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) \$150,000 for an agricultural recovery project in the Gondar region of Ethiopia, according to JDC president Heinz Eppler. USA for Africa was founded in 1985 in response to the reports of widespread famine in Ethiopia. It gained immediate prominence with the song and music video, "We Are the World."

The JDC will use the funds to buy oxen, seeds, and tools that will help farmers regain self-sufficiency. "After so many years of famine," Eppler said, "thousand of rural families have completely lost their ability to continue farming. They have to start over from scratch, but they have nothing to start with."

Sylvia Hassenfeld, chairman of the JDC Committee on the Third World, said "Restoring traditional life styles and rebuilding the farmers' productivity is far more cost-effective than perpetuating the relief syndrome. We are very grateful for USA for Africa's support, and we look forward to working together to help Ethiopians recover from the horrible effects of drought and famine."

The project will help about 12,000 families, or 60,000 people, according to JDC executive vice president Ralph Goldman. "All are farmers who were directly affected by the emergency," he explained. "Either they were displaced from their homes, or they sold their tools and oxen during the worst of the drought to buy food."

Goldman said the oxen, seeds, fertilizer, and other supplies will be bought in Ethiopia and then distributed in the designated area.

JDC has been providing non-sectarian assistance in the Gondar region since 1983. In addition to the agricultural recovery project, JDC has built a health center in the village of Tedda and is planning a polyclinic in the town of Gondar.

IDF PLANES HIT TERRORIST TARGETS

TEL AVIV, March 23 (JTA) -- Israel Air Force planes attacked terrorist targets south of Sidon Monday morning and returned safely to their bases, a military spokesman announced. The attack was the second since Friday and the ninth in Lebanon since the beginning of the year.

It followed the firing of Katyusha rockets into Upper Galilee Sunday and several hostile acts against IDF units in the South Lebanon security zone over the weekend.

The targets were described as buildings which served as terrorist headquarters for planning attacks on Israel and as an arms storage depot.

EBAN DECLINES JOB AS ENVOY TO U.S.

TEL AVIV, March 23 (JTA) -- Abba Eban has politely declined a proposal that he become Israel's next Ambassador to the United States, a post he held with distinction from 1950-1959.

The suggestion was made by Likud MK Eliahu Ben-Elissar last week that one of the three former envoys to Washington now in the Knesset be named to succeed the current Ambassador Meir Rosenne, inasmuch as Labor and Likud have been unable to agree on a successor. In addition to Eban they are Simcha Dinitz and Moshe Arens.

Asked by an Israel Radio reporter if he would take the job, Eban replied, "no, thanks." The same response is expected from Dinitz and Arens.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES A SOARING EXPERIENCE

By Margie Olster

JERUSALEM, March 23 (JTA) -- The mission of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish organizations veered sharply away from the Jonathan Pollard spy case and politics to soar into the wild blue yonder.

The leaders of 40 American Jewish organizations, headed by Conference chairman Morris Abram, were introduced to two state-of-the-art combat aircraft -- the Israel-built Lavi now undergoing rigorous test flights and the American-made F-16, six of which were delivered last Thursday to an Israel Air Force base after an 8,000-mile flight from Fort Worth, Texas. This brought to nine the number delivered to date.

It was an interesting juxtaposition. The F-16s, which are already part of the Israel Air Force, may be the nemesis of the Lavi, which aspires to be Israel's second-generation jet fighter-bomber. The two aircraft may be said to be in mortal combat, not in their natural element but in computer cost projections.

The Pentagon, and many in Israel, are convinced that the Lavi, with all of its high-tech wonders, is too costly to produce. The Americans are pushing the latest model F-16s, tried and tested in combat and bruited to be one-third to one-half cheaper.

But Israel Aircraft Industries (IAI), manufacturer of the Lavi, is fiercely proud of its product and makes a strong case. The American Jewish leaders were invited to IAI's complex at Ben Gurion Airport to witness test flight No. 20 of Lavi prototype No. 1, and to hear an earnest sales pitch from IAI executives -- as if they were in the market for a good jet fighter.

Small Is Beautiful

The plane itself is almost toylike in appearance -- a small white fuselage and tail bearing a blue Star of David. But small is beautiful in the world of aeronautical engineering. A jet is no more, essentially, than a metal pipe where kerosene and compressed air are combined to generate enormous power. Here, as in many other unprepossessing vehicles, it's the options which count.

As the Lavi prototype zoomed off the runway at a sharp angle and swiftly became a dot in the cloudless blue sky, IAI president Moshe Kerret ushered his guests into an auditorium for an hour-long briefing on the issues of cost and quality of the Lavi program and an analysis of why the U.S. government is so set against it.

First of all, Kerret stressed, the purpose of the Lavi is to defend Israel, not to create jobs and high-tech spin-offs for Israel's industry. It will do those things, of course. The project is a stimulus to other technology-based industries and employs about 4,000 people, more than half of them engineers.

The U.S. government acknowledges Israel's need for the Lavi, according to a Defense Department report, Kerret said. The main risks, the Pentagon maintains, are related to schedule delays and cost increases. The Defense Department contends that Israel seriously underestimated the cost of the Lavi program.

(So did the Israel State Comptroller in a scathing report issued several months ago. See March 23 JTA Daily News Bulletin.)

But Nissan Abel, head of IAI's advanced projects, who joined Kerret on the platform, declared that the project is on schedule and cost overruns are slight. The Lavi's performance is also better than expected, he said.

Abel dwelt on what he said were the Lavi's advantages over alternatives, including the F-16s. The Lavi has advanced human engineering. It has a superior digital computerized system for the pilot. Because it is designed and built by Israelis, it is better suited to Israel's special needs than any other aircraft. And because it is built at home, modifications can be made more easily than on foreign-built planes, Abel said.

Abel explained that the digital computerized systems in planes like the F-16 are almost impossible to modify because the manufacturer keeps the software and gives the purchaser only a "black box" which controls the system.

He said that was one of the reasons Israel twice requested licenses to build the F-16 in Israel. It was rejected both times. But now that Israel has produced the Lavi prototype, the U.S. has offered five licenses to build the F-16 here, Abel said.

As for costs, the Lavi program, which includes the development and production of 300 jet fighters, has a \$9.1 billion price tag. The U.S. estimates the same number of F-16s at about half the price. But that figure does not include the cost of electronic warfare equipment, Abel pointed out. If equipment is figured in, the F-16s will cost as much as the Lavi and possibly more, he said.

But the real issue cannot be measured in cost. Its value lies in Israel's capability to produce its own major weapons system, the IAI executive said.

From the briefing room, the American Jewish leaders filed aboard an ancient Hercules transport plane for a 15-minute flight to an air base in northern Israel.

F-16s Make An Appearance

There was a large welcoming committee on hand and as they all looked skyward, a V-formation of F-16s appeared out of the blue, escorted by several Israeli jets. They circled the landing field once, peeled off and dropped smoothly to the tarmac a few hundred feet from the assembled onlookers. These were F-16Cs, the "C" designating the most advanced model. Israel has ordered 75 of them.

The American pilots, glad their grueling non-stop delivery flight from Texas was over, emerged from their plastic bubbles and waved to the applauding crowd.

The Israel Air Force formally took over. And as the American Jewish leaders boarded their purple, state-of-the-art tour buses for the ride back to Jerusalem, they were doubtlessly pondering the advantages of Lavi vs. F-16.

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PARIS (JTA) -- Five Tunisians were arrested here Sunday on suspicion of membership in a terrorist organization. Police who raided their flat and seized quantities of arms and explosives would not say whether the suspects belong to Abu Nidal's extremist terrorist gang or to the mainstream Palestine Liberation Organization which is headquartered in Tunis.

**SPECIAL TO THE JTA
EFFORT BY CHINESE ACADEMICS TO
STUDY ZIONISM AND HEBREW TO BE
AIDED BY GROUP OF AUSTRALIAN JEWS
By David Landau**

HONG KONG, March 23 (JTA) -- The People's Republic of China has hinted that it would like its academics to study Hebrew and Zionism in Western universities, and a group of leading Australian Jews proposes to launch a foundation to facilitate this.

The hints were dropped during recent informal contacts between the Jewish activists and key Chinese academics who are also involved in the Beijing government policymaking.

The Australian Jews, led by tourism tycoon Isi Leibler of Melbourne, want to involve the World Jewish Congress in their effort. Leibler, who has travelled to Beijing at the head of an Australian Jewish delegation, believes that a serious cultural dialogue between the two peoples would contribute, in the longer term, to political normalization between the People's Republic and the Jewish people.

Top Chinese academics have indicated to Leibler and his associates that they are aware of, and concerned over, their country's profound unfamiliarity with Hebrew scholarship and Jewish affairs at the academic level. They expressed their active interest in sending young scholars abroad to attempt to fill this lacuna.

A Step Toward Cultural Dialogue

One small but symbolic step in the direction of cultural dialogue is the participation here this week of Chinese Jewish writer Sidney Shapiro in the Asian-Jewish colloquium, a biennial event organized by Leibler and his Australian Institute of Jewish Affairs.

Shapiro, an American who moved to China in 1947 and recently produced a book on the ancient Jewish community of Kai Feng, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that while he did not represent Beijing at the colloquium, his presence at the gathering was indeed intended as a goodwill gesture by China.

Meanwhile, Israel's top China-watcher Sunday appealed to Asian Jewish communities to help Israel by providing a framework for a preliminary dialogue with China and other regional states with which Israel has no formal relations.

Areas Of Israel-China Cooperation

Reuven Merhav, Consul-General in Hong Kong, told the Asia Pacific Jewish Association (APJA) that the Chinese recognize Jewish solidarity -- with world Jewry and with Israel. While a move towards diplomatic recognition was not imminent, Merhav said, there were niches where Israel and China would usefully trade and cooperate. He urged Jewish businessmen in this region to help Israel identify such niches.

Merhav charged that Israeli governments had neglected the vast and growing potential of Asia. Jerusalem should send out its best diplomats, he said, and they should buckle down to learn the realities of the region.

The APJA embraces a dozen small -- some tiny -- Jewish communities under the leadership of Australia.

**SPECIAL TO THE JTA
A VICTORY FOR ORTHODOX JUDAISM
By David Landau**

HONG KONG, March 23 (JTA) -- Orthodox Judaism achieved a minor victory in this unlikely venue here Sunday when rabbis from around the Pacific region resolved to subordinate themselves halachically to the (Orthodox) Melbourne and Sydney Batei Din, (religious courts).

The rabbis, from such far-off communities as Singapore and Tokyo, decided to submit all their conversions and divorces to these ecclesiastical courts for halachic endorsement.

The rabbis, meeting under the auspices of the Asia Pacific Jewish Association (APJA), founded their own rabbinic fraternity and said it would be open to all members agreeing to accept the Australian Batei Din's authority.

Rabbi Michael Schudrich of Tokyo, a graduate of the (Conservative) Jewish Theological Seminary of America, said: "I care about my converts. I want them to be recognized internationally." He expressed confidence that his own teaching program for would-be converts would meet the Australian Batei Din's requirements.

Rabbis Isaac Ben Zakin of Singapore, Meir Bensoussan of Hong Kong, Schudrich and other regional rabbis present conceded that by no means were all of their congregants Orthodox but they believed that if they as rabbis were dynamic and caring their congregants would not interfere in halachic affiliation.

A number of APJA communities -- among them Bangkok, Taiwan, New Caledonia and Singapore -- issued a call to Jewishly knowledgeable students or graduates in larger communities to come to the region for six months or a year of service with the communities, especially with their youth.

JDC TO AID ECUADORIAN QUAKE VICTIMS

NEW YORK, March 23 (JTA) -- The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) is responding to the earthquake in Ecuador by opening its mailbox to donations for emergency relief and by implementing an assistance on behalf of the American Jewish Community.

President Heinz Eppler said the program will give people here the opportunity to offer financial assistance to Ecuadorians left homeless by the earthquake. JDC has opened its mailbox in past cases of natural disasters around the world, including crises in Mexico, Colombia and most recently, El Salvador.

JDC's Third World Development Projects committee, chaired by Sylvia Hassenfeld, will study the needs of the Ecuadorian survivors and how the JDC can be of assistance.

JDC executive vice president, Ralph Goldman, noted that the 'Open Mailbox' parallels the actions of Catholic, Protestant, and nonsectarian agencies providing humanitarian service to the disaster victims. "In the past, the 'Open Mailbox' has made possible a generous outpouring of support from the American Jewish Community."

People wishing to help may send contributions to: Ecuador Relief, Joint Distribution Committee, 711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017.