

SLEPAK ENDS HIS 17-DAY FAST WITH APPEAL 'DO NOT FORGET OUR FIGHT'

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, April 13 (JTA) -- "Do not forget our fight, that is the message to all no matter what is your religion."

This was the appeal made by Alexander Slepak Sunday as he ended a 17-day fast on the steps of the Capitol in support of the struggle of his parents, Vladimir and Maria Slepak, and other Jews to leave the Soviet Union.

Slepak ended his fast at a ceremony on the Capitol steps, one day before the 17th anniversary of his parents' application to emigrate from the USSR. He lost 20 pounds during the fast.

More than 100 persons attended the ceremony and heard similar appeals from Elie Wiesel, the writer and Nobel Peace Laureate; Jeanne Kirkpatrick, former United States Ambassador to the Soviet Union; and representatives of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry (NCSJ), the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, and the U.S. Committee to Free Vladimir Slepak.

They stood behind a banner which quoted Vladimir Slepak as saying: "If you turn your eyes from us, even for a moment, we will cease to exist."

Wiesel, a Holocaust survivor, stressed that "nothing is so terrifying to a prisoner or to an exiled person than to feel that no one cares."

"We Want Deeds And Not The Words"

Slepak, a 35-year-old medical student at Temple University, Philadelphia, said that "with all my heart I want to believe" in Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev's promises of democratization and "glasnost" (openness). But, "we want the deeds and not the words," he declared.

He noted that his father, who had also fasted in front of the Soviet Presidium in Moscow, was attacked by Soviet police Saturday and told he was under house arrest and would be beaten and arrested if he tried to leave his apartment. But on Sunday, he was allowed to leave the apartment.

The elder Slepaks are scheduled to attend a seder at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow Monday night where they are expected to meet with Secretary of State George Shultz. The Secretary visited briefly with Alexander Slepak last week and took pictures of his two children to show the Slepaks who have never seen their grandchildren.

Kirkpatrick said that "We would be concerned with the Slepaks if they were the only Soviet citizens denied their rights . . . They are not unique."

She said glasnost "has still not altered the plight of the Jewish community" which is denied Jewish schools and Jewish history books and the right to freely practice its religion. She said the Soviet Union still imprisons Hebrew teachers, attacks Zionism and continues to lead the effort in international forums to brand Zionism as racism.

"If it (the Soviet Union) uses its great force against its own citizens . . . how can we possibly expect that it will not use that force against any people, any country that is weaker

than it," she said. She added that no one who is "concerned" about peace and arms control cannot be concerned about the Soviet violations of human rights.

Openness Contradicted By Restrictions

Micah Naftalin, executive director of the UCSJ, also noted that "a nation that makes war on its innocent citizens, a nation that cannot keep its solemn international agreements even in human rights, can hardly be trusted to keep any other kind of agreement. So it is a measure of how fearful our own society can become when we hear expressions of hope and relief based only on soothing Soviet propaganda and the release of a handful of our enslaved brethren."

He stressed that while there is talk of openness, "restrictions on the right to emigrate are ominously being expanded."

Wiesel asked if the Slepaks are being denied exit visas because they were among the first to seek emigration and now the Soviets demand "they should be the last."

Slepak said his parents have suffered enough, noting that they were 43 when they first applied and are now 60 years old.

Mark Levin, the NCSJ's Washington representative, said this is "not an end, not a beginning, but a continuation" of the struggle for the Slepaks and other Soviet Jews. He expressed the hope that the traditional ending of the seder, "Next year in Jerusalem" will mean for Soviet Jews "This year in Jerusalem."

The event on the Capitol steps Sundays was led by Nathan Levinthal of the Committee to Free Slepak, which presented Shultz last week with a petition signed by some 10,000 persons urging him to make a personal appeal for the Slepaks to Gorbachev. Shultz has promised to do so as well as for other Soviet Jews, including those suffering from cancer who want to be reunited with their families.

In addition to his meeting with Shultz, he also met with House Speaker Jim Wright (D. Texas), who is leading a Congressional delegation to the Soviet Union this week.

PROFOUND CHANGE SEEN IN GREECE'S ATTITUDE TOWARD ISRAEL

By Jean Cohen

ATHENS, April 13 (JTA) -- The 100th anniversary of the birth of David Ben Gurion, the first Prime Minister of Israel, was celebrated here last week at the City Hall. The prominence of those attending, no less than the rank and position of the organizers of the centennial event, reflected a profound change in the attitude of Greece toward Israel, a country with which it still does not have full diplomatic relations.

The 500 guests included representatives of the government and Parliament, the Greek Orthodox Church and the foreign diplomatic corps. The government was officially represented on the occasion by the Minister of Culture, the world famous film actress Melina Mercouri, who, diplomatic observers noted, has "come a long way" since she embraced Palestine Liberation Organization chief Yasir Arafat in the Athens Stadium in

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1982. The Socialist-led government too has come a long way. Part of the ceremony was broadcast by Greek Television, which could not have been done without the express approval of Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu.

The entire event was under the auspices of Athens Mayor Miltiades Evert whose father, as chief of police during the Nazi occupation of Greece, saved the lives of many Jews by issuing them false identification papers. The committee which arranged the centennial celebration was headed by a former President of Greece, Konstantinos Tsatsos. Its chairman was the Deputy Mayor of Athens, Zachos Xadjifotiou.

The keynote speaker was Angelos Vlahos, a retired diplomat, now a professor at the University of Athens, who served for two years as Greek diplomatic representative in Israel. He shared the platform with Israel's diplomatic representative here, Moshe Gilboa, who holds the rank of Ambassador.

BACKGROUND REPORT SOUTH AFRICA REACTS MORE IN SORROW THAN ANGER TO ISRAEL DECISION TO CURTAIL RELATIONS WITH S.A. REGIME

JOHANNESBURG, April 13 (JTA) -- Israel's decision last month to curtail its relations with South Africa, including a halt to new military contracts, was greeted more in sorrow than anger here. Strong resentment was expressed against the United States which President P.W. Botha accused of "bullying" Israel into reducing ties with South Africa.

Editorial comment was generally along those lines. Understanding was expressed for Israel's dependence on the United States for economic and military aid and even sympathy for its being in such an equivocal position.

Anti-Semitic backlash, most of it from anonymous quarters, was reported in the daily press. The South African Jewish Board of Deputies issued a careful statement, noting that Israel "takes decisions having regard to the necessity to protect its own sovereign national interests . . . In this regard it is noted that Israel has been subjected to significant pressures from the United States."

The statement went on to reaffirm the Board of Deputies' opposition to "sanctions and disinvestment on the ground that it undermines the ability to create conditions in which steps can be taken toward the achievement of an apartheid free and just society . . ."

Differing Views By Parliamentarians

Harry Schwarz, a Jewish member of Parliament for the opposition Progressive Federal Party (PFP) sent telegrams to Premier Yitzhak Shamir and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres of Israel stating that he could understand the pressures being brought to bear, but that as a country itself subject to sanctions and boycotts it should appreciate that such measures were often counter-productive.

Another Jewish parliamentarian of the PFP, Helen Suzman, an outspoken foe of apartheid, told a Jewish women's meeting here -- reported in the press -- that Israel had to make up its own mind in its own interest. "It is unlikely the position of Jews in South Africa would affect the mind of the Israeli government" in this matter, she said.

The newspaper, The Star, commented on March 20, two days after the Israeli decision was

announced, that "the news that Israel is being coerced into the 'enemy' camp will be greeted more in sorrow than anger in South Africa where the realities of strong-arm international politics have been well understood of late."

The paper cited Israel's need to win back friends in Black Africa and for support at the United Nations on Palestinian issues. "Even the stoutest friends have felt compelled to condemn apartheid. When the chips are down they are being asked to stand up and be counted -- or suffer the consequences," The Star said.

Die Vaderland of the same date stated editorially, "We notice with disappointment but also with understanding that Israel had to succumb to American pressure and side with the sanctions campaign . . . There is also understanding that Jerusalem didn't want to sour its relationship with Washington any more after the Pollard spy incident."

Israel's Plight Is Not Envious

The Sunday Times observed that "The plight of Israel is not envious. Unlike South Africa it is not a repository of vast mineral wealth; it is a poor country which relies heavily on the wit of its people, the quality of its industry and the generosity of its benefactors -- primarily the United States. A decision to support sanctions was thus inevitable."

The effects of Israel's decision on the South African Jewish community was examined by Patrick Laurence writing in the Weekly Mail for March 20-26. He found South African Jews to be in "an awkward situation" caught between Pretoria and Jerusalem. According to the writer, "Anti-Semitism per se is no longer part of mainstream Afrikaner thinking. But when Israel adopts a belligerent stance to South Africa, hostility towards Jews can surface."

Business Day reported that "Swastikas have been drawn on mail from SA to Israel and the Israeli Embassy in Pretoria has received telephone threats after Israel's decision to impose limited sanctions. The Nazi symbols were drawn on several air mail packages mailed via Israel's El Al airlines to private individuals . . . Telephone callers have cursed, shouted anti-Israel slogans and made threats to the Embassy in Pretoria for the past few days . . ."

Die Afrikaner reminded Israel on March 25 that "the Jewish community in South Africa is one of their largest benefactors" and that the South African government, during the 1973 Yom Kippur War "allowed hundreds of thousands of Rands to leave this country freely (for Israel) and that this still continues."

President Botha, in a speech in Lichtenburg, reported in The Citizen on March 26, also indicated that billions of Rands in aid for Israel had been at stake when it made its decision. For the U.S. to apply pressure of this kind against Israel was nothing less than "bullying," Botha was quoted as saying.

The newspaper Beeld said, "In the past the power of the Jewish vote in America was able to prevent pressure being brought to bear on Israel. These days American Jews like all other Americans are being caught up with great success against us. Luckily we as well as Israel already have well developed arms industries. A termination of military cooperation should therefore not be crippling to anyone. Cooperation in other areas will hopefully still continue." S.E.D Brown, a rightwing extremist known for his anti-Semitic

views, wrote in the March 1987 issue of the South African Observer that "Thanks to Mr. P. W. Botha and his radical leftist revolutionaries, South Africa today is firmly on the road to the kind of 'nonracial democracy' for which every liberal, communist, Zionist and international financier has assiduously been working since the end of World War II . . . South Africans have yet to learn, and learn fast, firstly that Zionism is racism pure and simple and secondly, that wherever Western man happens to be he is in a racial war . . . with the forces of world Zionism, which teach not only their own 'racial superiority' but whose aim is control and dominion over all other races of mankind."

CROWN HEIGHTS TENSIONS MOUNTING; POLICE TRYING TO KEEP SITUATION COOL

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, April 13 (JTA) -- Police in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn "are doing their utmost to ensure that it will be a comfortable, peaceful summer" following tensions which have been heightened there in recent weeks over incidents between Blacks and Hasidim, according to a police spokesman who spoke to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency following a march Saturday by Black protesters through the Crown Heights neighborhood.

Problems in Crown Heights reached a crescendo because of a firebombing February 26 of a Black woman's house in the neighborhood, in which a witness claimed to have seen two white men dressed in what looked like Hasidic garb fleeing the scene. The woman whose home was firebombed claimed to have heard them say, "Burn, burn, burn," before allegedly vanishing into the dormitory of a nearby yeshiva.

Police, the spokesman said, are being educated there on the "ethnic awareness of both groups," and there is constant communication between the police community affairs department and community clergy and political leaders of Crown Heights, he said.

The local clergy informed their congregants not to participate in Saturday's march, the spokesman said. The local Hasidic leaders cooperated with the police in ensuring that the masses of Hasidim would not be lined up along the route of the demonstration.

The police were notified of plans for the march over two weeks ago at a church meeting called by a local Black political figure, according to the police spokesman.

Media Reports Rebutted

Jewish spokesmen in the Brooklyn neighborhood that is home to the world headquarters of the Chabad Lubavitch movement rebutted on Sunday recent media accounts of ethnic tensions in their community, which focused on a march on Saturday afternoon of Blacks through the streets of the ethnically mixed neighborhood.

Although the number of protesters in Saturday's march was estimated to be between 400-500, police said the number varied between 200 and 500 depending on the time of the march. One police spokesman said it was difficult to give an exact number of those joining the protesters, as it kept changing as the marchers swung to different streets and passersby or residents of the houses along the route joined them or left.

The spokesman in the police community affairs department said there is definitely tension

in the area on both sides, adding that "the complaints that we get in the police department are exactly the same from both sides of the fence."

Crown Heights is a racially, ethnically mixed neighborhood where it is estimated that presently about only 10 percent of the neighborhood is Jewish. The Lubavitcher Hasidim have lived in the neighborhood since the early 1940's, when the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Schneerson, came there from Europe.

There are also small numbers of other Hasidic groups living in the neighborhood, although the Chabad Lubavitch Hasidim outnumber them in the Jewish community.

Some 2,000 helmeted New York officers lined the route and a police helicopter hovered slowly above, as the demonstrators staged a noisy but peaceful march Saturday in response to what they claim is police bias toward the Jewish community.

Charges And Counter-Charges

Chanting "No Justice, No Peace!" the demonstrators drew attention to a private security patrol run by the Crown Heights Jewish Community Council, as well as to the firebombing, but enlarged their claims to embrace a host of issues in the torn Brooklyn community. Among the placards carried was a banner saying "We Lost, We Lost, We Lost," referring to the deaths of several Black and Hispanic individuals killed in what they claim are incidents of police aggression.

The Jewish community, on the other hand, has protested the deaths of two Hasidim in what appears to have been ethnically-motivated incidents.

Black anger has been directed at the private security force run by the Lubavitch community, which Blacks claim is a vigilante group. It is composed of only Hasidic members, "Lubavitch-paid, not trained by police, and perform to the best of their ability, sometimes crossing over what might be called the valid legalities," the police spokesman said.

"They've made arrests, held people at times," the spokesman said, adding that "some have been valid, some have been inappropriate. In this precinct, we have an organized civilian patrol through the police department. We've urged the Hasidic patrol to sign up with the police department and patrol their own area. They'd have radio contact with the police. A handful has signed up with the police," he said, "but the majority are independent. They communicate within their own group, telling a resident to call police emergency when necessary. Nobody admits to being armed."

The march, occurring on Shabbat, stopped briefly at the 770 Eastern Parkway Lubavitch headquarters, where the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Schneerson, celebrating his 85th birthday, was addressing a crowd reported to number 10,000. The demonstrators were kept a block away from the building. No incidents or arrests were reported.

TEL AVIV (JTA) -- Thirty-one immigrants from the Soviet Union arrived in Israel late Sunday night, aboard a specially-chartered Austrian Airlines plane hired by the Jewish Agency to bring them here in time to celebrate the Passover seder with relatives and friends. The newcomers, from Moscow, Leningrad and Kharkov, included two long-term refuseniks -- Daniel Fradkin and Anatoly Chechik.

LIBYAN JEWS TO SEEK INDEMNIFICATION OF PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY PROPERTY By Yitzhak Rabi

NEW YORK, April 13 (JTA) -- The first international convention of Jews from Libya will be held in Manhattan June 6-7, it was announced here Thursday.

Raffaello Fellah, founder and president of the Association of Jews from Libya, said in a press conference at the American Jewish Committee (AJC) that the convention is timed to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the forced departure of the Libyan Jewish community in the wake of the 1967 Six-Day War. Almost the entire Libyan Jewish community of 4,500 was forced to leave, including Fellah, a businessman who now resides in Italy.

During the conference, to be held at the Shearith Israel (Spanish-Portuguese) Synagogue on Central Park West, legal experts will seek ways to address Libyan Jewish personal and communal property claims against Libya.

Fellah explained that in 1970, Col. Muammar Qaddafi's revolutionary regime nationalized the property of Jews who had left Libya indefinitely, promising indemnification in 15 years. In 1985, when payment became due, the Libyan leader failed to fulfill his promise, Fellah charged.

Noting that since the establishment of Israel in 1948 and following pogroms with the outbreak of any new Mideast war, about 40,000 Libyan Jews left, most of them to Israel. Fellah estimated that the total claims of Libyan Jews against the Libyan governments are "some billions of dollars."

Other events at the up-coming conference, Fellah said, include the premier of a documentary film on the Jews of Libya, an exhibition of photographs of Libyan Jewry and religious objects from the Beth El Synagogue in Tripoli and a history symposium relating to the Jews of Libya.

According to Fellah, whose father was murdered in a 1945 pogrom in Tripoli, only "five-and-a-half Jews" are presently living in Libya. The half, he explained, is a result of a mixed marriage between an Arab and a Jew.

The convention, scheduled to be attended by hundreds of Libyan Jews from Israel, Italy and the United States, is jointly sponsored by the Association of Jews from Libya, the American Jewish Committee and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

MAX ETRA DEAD AT 83

NEW YORK, April 13 (JTA) -- Funeral services for Max Etra, noted attorney and communal leader who served as chairman of the Board of Trustees of Yeshiva University for nearly a quarter of a century during the institution's greatest period of growth and development, were held Thursday at congregation Kehilath Jeshurun in Manhattan.

Etra, who served as president of the congregation for 29 years, was found dead in his home Wednesday morning. He was 83 years old.

Senior partner in the New York City law firm of Etra and Etra, Max Etra served as chairman of the university's board from 1953 to 1977 and was then named chairman emeritus of the Board of Trustees. Etra, who was a benefactor of

the university, was honored on March 25 by the undergraduates of the institution at a special centennial celebration. In addition to his chairmanship of the Board of Trustees, Etra served as a member of all of the university's affiliated Boards, including the Board of Trustees of the University's affiliated Rabbi Elchanan Theological Seminary, the Board of Directors of the Benjamin Cardozo School of Law, and the Board of Governors of the Wurzweiler School of Social Work.

Prominently identified with leading local and national religious, educational, health, and welfare organizations, Etra received many honors and tributes.

He was honored by the Rabbinical Council of America, the United Jewish Appeal-Federation, and the Jewish Welfare Board. He received the Shofar Award from the Boy Scouts of America.

Etra was honorary president of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, vice president of Beth Israel Hospital in New York, a founder of the Ramaz School and chairman of the American Jewish Tercentenary Committee, and a member of the American Jewish Historical Society.

Etra was born in Rymanow, Poland, the son of Aaron and Sarah (Goldman) Etra. He was brought to the United States at the age of four. He graduated from City College of New York in 1924, and earned his law degree from Fordham University Law School in 1928.

JWV SENDS RUSSIAN-HEBREW HAGGADOT TO NINE SOVIET JEWISH REFUSENIKS

WASHINGTON, April 13 (JTA) -- The Jewish War Veterans of the United States has mailed Russian-Hebrew Haggadot to nine Soviet Jewish refuseniks who are veterans of World War II.

At a press conference on the steps of the Capitol this week, Edwin Goldwasser, the JWV's national commander, appealed to the Soviet government to allow delivery of the Haggadot in keeping with recent promises to allow dissemination of religious material.

Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R. NY) read an appeal to Soviet authorities, which noted that it was sending them one of the Haggadot. "We hope that reading it will assist you in understanding the great desire of Soviet Jews to practice their religious heritage and be repatriated to their historic homeland, Israel."

The refuseniks who were sent Haggadot are: Lev Ovsischer, Naum Rabinovitch, Benyamin Lifshitz, Arkady May, Leonid Menes, Solomon Inditsky, Semyon Yantovsky, Lev Elbert and Mark Belenkov.

JERUSALEM (JTA) -- East European publishers, participating for the first time, attracted the most attention at the 13th International Book Fair here last week. They are among more than 1,000 publishers from 40 countries displaying over 100,000 books on all subjects.

Crowds gravitated to the Polish stand where 300 books on display included many works of Judaica. Some dealt with the destruction of Polish Jewry in the Holocaust. Hungary, Rumania and Yugoslavia are also well represented at the book fair.