

REFUSENIKS VLADIMIR AND MARIA SLEPAK RECEIVE PERMISSION TO EMIGRATE

By Mark Joffe and Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Oct. 14 (JTA) -- Refuseniks Vladimir and Maria Slepak, who have been seeking to leave the Soviet Union for the past 17 years, were informed by Soviet emigration officials Wednesday that they had been granted permission to emigrate.

News of the development first reached the West via an Associated Press report from Moscow and was later confirmed by the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, which contacted the Slepaks directly by telephone.

They said they will leave for Israel as soon as they "sell their car and have the money for the tickets," according to the reports.

Vladimir Slepak, a former Prisoner of Conscience and a leading Moscow activist on behalf of Jews seeking to repatriate to Israel, is the latest in a string of prominent Soviet Jewish refuseniks to be granted permission to emigrate.

Two weeks ago, another prominent former prisoner, Ida Nudel, was told she could emigrate, and earlier this year such well-known refuseniks as Yosef Begun, Vladimir Lifshitz and Aba Taratuta were told they could leave.

The latest moves have been interpreted in the West as part of a Kremlin strategy to improve its human-rights image on the eve of U.S. Secretary of State George Shultz's visit to Moscow and perhaps weeks away from an expected summit between President Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

Leaders In The Movement

The Slepaks' involvement with Jewish activists in Moscow goes back to the inception of the movement, in the late 1960's, during the renaissance of Jewish solidarity with Israel that came on the heels of the Six-Day War.

Vladimir Slepak was among the first group of Jews in the USSR to petition the United Nations by letter for the right of Jews to be repatriated to Israel. He led demonstrations and met with foreign dignitaries, journalists and visitors from abroad.

Vladimir and Maria Slepak first applied to emigrate in April 1970. Their first refusal came in June of that year, on the basis of Vladimir's work as a radio engineer, which was deemed "secret work."

From that time on, they were under constant surveillance and even house arrest. Their apartment was repeatedly searched and their books and belongings were confiscated on more than one occasion.

In June 1971, Vladimir was interrogated and called to testify at the second Leningrad trial of activists who had planned to steal a plane and fly it to Sweden. He was imprisoned twice that year on charges never made known to him. Publicity on his behalf mounted in the West.

Slepak was one of the original founders of the unofficial Moscow Helsinki Monitoring Committee, which he started in June 1976, along with Anatoly Shcharansky, Yuri Orlov, Andrei Sakharov and Yelena Bonner.

Slepak was vilified in the press and on radio and television programs. In a Moscow TV program "Traders of Souls," he and other Jewish activists were described as "soldiers of Zionism inside the Soviet Union" and as being part of a Western anti-Soviet conspiracy.

In March 1977, he was named in a malicious article in Izvestia that accused Jews of espionage and treason.

Sons Permitted To Leave

That year, his son Alexander was permitted to immigrate to Israel, joining Maria's mother there. In 1979, their son Leonid followed his brother to Israel. The two brothers currently reside in the United States.

In June 1978, both Vladimir and Maria were arrested for hanging a banner outside their Moscow apartment window that said, "Let Us Go to Our Son in Israel."

For this, Vladimir was sentenced to five years' exile in Siberia, on charges of malicious hooliganism.

Maria, a radiologist who is known by her nickname, Masha, was given a three-year suspended sentence, but volunteered to share her husband's exile. She would travel to Moscow periodically during that time in attempts to retain her residency permit.

Vladimir worked at odd jobs in Siberia, many of them outdoors in sub-zero temperatures despite ill health.

In a letter to friends in the West, Vladimir wrote: "But in spite of everything, we are now the happiest people in the world: Our children and grandchildren are free."

On Dec. 4, 1982, the Slepaks returned from Siberia to Moscow. Vladimir embarked on several hunger strikes, the latest in April, when he fasted for 17 days -- one day for each year in refusal.

He was joined in that fast and numerous vigils by his son Alexander, who currently resides in Philadelphia, where he is completing medical studies.

Reached by telephone Wednesday afternoon, Alexander Slepak said he had "very mixed feelings" about news that his parents would be permitted to leave.

Still Cautious

The younger Slepak, who had not yet spoken to his parents directly by telephone, said, "I want to be very, very cautious. Many times before I have heard the good news," only to find out later that it did not materialize.

But he admitted, "This time it sounds more correct. I just want to hear it from my father."

Alexander Slepak said he hoped his parents would be allowed to fly directly to Israel, where he would meet them; otherwise, he would fly to Vienna, the transfer point for Soviet Jews immigrating to the West.

Asked whether the good news changed his feelings about Gorbachev and his policy of glasnost (openness), the younger Slepak said, "Not at all. This is one additional drop in a bucket. It's a good political gesture for Gorbachev."

Noting that thousands of Soviet Jews are still awaiting permission to emigrate, Alexander

Slepak said, "In terms of numbers, nothing has changed at all."

"We need free emigration," he said. Refuseniks need to know whether they will be allowed to leave and how long it will take, he added.

The younger Slepak said he doubted the trend of releasing the Soviet Jews best known in the West would weaken a movement that has traditionally rallied around such names as Sharan-sky, Nudel and Slepak.

The movement is a dragon that "might be beheaded for a second," he said, "but the dragon has many heads" and will keep coming back.

Soviet Jewry organizations welcomed news that the Slepaks would be allowed to emigrate. The National Conference on Soviet Jewry said in a statement that it was "pleased that, after 17 years of struggle" the Slepaks had received permission.

But the organization added: "There are thousands of other refuseniks like the Slepaks who are still waiting, some for over a decade. There are hundreds of thousands of others too frightened to apply to a system that is basically arbitrary and restrictive."

Alan Pesky, chairman of the New York-based Coalition to Free Soviet Jews, said, "This development gives us reason for optimism, but there is still no room for illusion."

"Our elation is tempered by our awareness that the release of the Slepaks is undoubtedly timed with the scheduled meeting next week between Secretary of State Shultz and Soviet Foreign Minister (Eduard) Shevardnadze."

STATUS OF UN WAR CRIMES FILE STILL SUBJECT TO DISCUSSION By Yitzhak Rabi

UNITED NATIONS, Oct. 14 (JTA) -- Representatives of the 17 former members of the United Nations War Crimes Commission were meeting with UN Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar Wednesday to inform him of their respective governments' final position on opening the files of Nazi war criminals at the UN Archives in Manhattan.

A meeting on the issue held here Sept. 22-23 reached no agreement, and the second meeting was set for Wednesday to allow the representatives time to consult with their governments and receive new directives.

But informed sources told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that no decision was expected at the Wednesday meeting. They stressed that the final decision rests with the Secretary General, who has the authority to order the files open. It is not expected before the end of the month.

The issue is whether to allow access to scholars, historians and researchers to the dossiers on more than 40,000 accused Nazi war criminals. They are presently accessible only to the governments of UN member states.

The sources also told the JTA that 16 former members of the long-defunct War Crimes Commission have already expressed support for greater access to the files. The only country which has not yet disclosed its position is France.

After last month's meeting, a source said the French had suggested that scholars and historians be allowed to view the files at the archives but not to publish or announce their findings. The French position was attributed to the fact that the files contain more accusations of war crimes committed in France than in any other country.

It is contrary to the intentions of Israel, which originally demanded that the files be open to all. The reported French proposal would, for all practical purposes, leave them sealed.

Meanwhile, the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center used the occasion of Wednesday's meeting to release a list of what it says are 10 of the most notorious Nazi war criminals believed to be still at large around the world.

The list names Alois Brunner, chief deputy to Adolf Eichmann, who is believed to be living in Damascus under Syrian protection; Anton Burger, deputy commandant of the Theresienstadt concentration camp, at large; Friedrich Warzok, commandant at Janowska camp in Lvov, whereabouts unknown; Heinrich Otto Drechsler, a brigadier general in Latvia, whereabouts unknown; and Josef Schwammberger, commandant of Przemysl, Poland, believed to be in Argentina.

Also: Erich Gruen, chief doctor at Maidanek death camp, whereabouts unknown; Hans Wilhelm Koenig, a doctor at Auschwitz, thought to be in Scandinavia; Horst Schumann, also an Auschwitz doctor, whereabouts unknown; and Heinrich Mueller, head of Gestapo, thought to be in Eastern Europe.

Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean of the Wiesenthal Center, said, "It is outrageous that 45 years after its establishment, the UN War Crimes Commission should still be debating whether or not Nazi-hunters should have full access to important dossiers on these mass murderers."

Noting that Nazi-hunter Simon Wiesenthal had urged the UN Secretary General in April 1986 to open the files, Hier said, "We were disappointed that the UN Secretary General threw the ball back to the members of the War Crimes Commission to decide, thus further delaying access to this crucial information."

SOVIET CONSULAR DELEGATION GIVEN THREE-MONTH EXTENSION IN ISRAEL By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Oct. 14 (JTA) -- The Soviet Consular delegation in Tel Aviv has been granted a formal three-month extension of its original three-month visa to Israel.

Observers say this means, in effect, that the eight Kremlin officials have become a semi-permanent presence in Israel, and thereby constitute a step toward eventual restoration of normal diplomatic ties.

Last month, Israel refused Moscow's proposal that the two countries exchange permanent interest offices as Israel has recently done with Poland and Hungary.

Premier Yitzhak Shamir and Vice Premier Shimon Peres both felt that the USSR, unlike its satellites, can afford to offer a higher-level form of representation -- and should be required to do so.

The Soviet team in Tel Aviv -- three diplomats and administrative staff -- has clearly completed any consular tasks it ostensibly came here to perform, given the minute size of the Soviet-citizen community in this country (a few dozen monks and nuns) and the relatively small amount of Soviet-owned property here.

The second three-month term will therefore, presumably, be able to focus on reporting to Moscow on trends in Israeli politics and society.

Observers here note, however, that the Soviet diplomats have been slow -- so far -- to

seek out social contacts with Israeli politicians and officials.

FIERCE DISPUTE AWAITS SHULTZ WHEN HE ARRIVES IN ISRAEL FRIDAY

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Oct. 14 (JTA) -- When Secretary of State George Shultz arrives here Friday afternoon he will be stepping into the middle of a fierce dispute within Israel's unity coalition government likely to put his diplomatic talents to their most severe test.

Leaders of the Labor Party and Likud spent the Succoth holiday honing their arguments for and against the proposed international conference for Middle East peace. These will be heard by Shultz during his series of meetings with Premier Yitzhak Shamir and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, both of whom appear to have staked their political fortunes on the outcome, which is likely to set the course of Israeli foreign policy in the months ahead. Shultz's arrival will also coincide with one of the worst periods of violence and unrest in the administered territories. Palestinians seem determined to convey to the U.S. Secretary of State that no option for the peace process, whether Labor's or Likud's, has any chance without the involvement of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Shamir and his Likud Party are fearful that an international conference with the participation of the Soviet Union, a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, will be weighted against Israel and force it to relinquish territory and make other concessions inimical to its future security.

Attitude Of Likud Ministers

At a Likud meeting Tuesday, the Ministers agreed unanimously that the government must oppose any proposals Shultz might bring with him for an international conference and insist that only direct negotiations, based on the Camp David accords, can open the way to peace.

Peres, who strongly advocates the conference scenario, subject to certain basic conditions, took issue Wednesday with Shamir's remark that the international conference was "dead."

"The visit of Shultz to Israel proves the opposite," Peres declared. He recalled that "the 1973 international conference led to the settlement with Egypt." Peres also reacted to Shamir's charge that Labor wants to return the administered territories to the Arabs.

The Likud, Peres said, "is a builder of a binational state. The demographic situation is more dangerous than the geographical situation." He was referring to the apparently well grounded fear that Israel's continued rule over nearly two million Arabs will inevitably lead to an Arab population equal to or surpassing the Jewish population, given current demographic projections based on the Arab and Jewish birth rates.

Both Labor and Likud agree on one thing: that prospects are slim for a political breakthrough during Shultz's visit.

Issues On Shultz's Agenda

But American sources at the United Nations say the peace process will not be the main focus of Shultz's meetings with Israeli leaders, Haaretz reported Wednesday. The sources were quoted as saying that Shultz intends to discuss primarily the new U.S.-Saudi Arabian arms sales deal, agreed to

last week by the Reagan Administration and Congress, and will ask Israel not to enter into conflict with the Administration on this issue.

Reports from Washington indicate the Americans believe Shultz's visit to the Middle East before going to Moscow for arms control talks is intended to show the Soviets that the United States is still the most influential power in the region.

Hadashot reported Wednesday that Shultz will propose to Shamir that Israel enter into an interim arrangement with Jordan for joint administration of the territories in the framework of direct negotiations under the umbrella of an international conference.

According to Hadashot, Shultz will bring to Shamir, for the first time, the specific agreement of King Hussein of Jordan to an arrangement whereby most of the civilian administrative authority in the territories would be transferred to Jordan while Israel continues its responsibility for security.

Shultz will stress that the arrangement is only temporary and would not affect Jewish settlements in the territories, Hadashot said. It also quoted American sources as saying that Shultz is much concerned by the escalation of violence in the territories on the eve of his visit. He believes that only progress in political negotiations will curb terrorism and thwart extremist groups trying to torpedo the political process, Hadashot said.

Relative Calm In The Territories

The territories and East Jerusalem were relatively calm Wednesday although there were several rock-throwing incidents and a partially effective commercial strike in East Jerusalem and Ramallah. Maariv reported that security forces were deploying to prevent a renewal of disturbances during Shultz's visit.

A curfew was imposed on the Dahaihshe refugee camp south of Bethlehem after stones were thrown at Israeli vehicles. Twenty-five Arab youths were detained at the Anata refugee camp north of Jerusalem on suspicion of "public disorder."

Shultz will be in Israel from Friday to Monday, though he is expected to make a brief flying visit to Saudi Arabia on Saturday, when Israel government offices are closed. In addition to Israeli leaders, he has asked to meet with "moderate Palestinians." He is expected to greet Ida Nudel, the longtime refusenik who will arrive from Moscow Thursday night.

ISRAEL BROADCAST STRIKE BOOSTS PROPOSED SECOND TV NETWORK

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Oct. 14 (JTA) -- The strike by Israel Broadcast Authority journalists which has blacked out radio and television for eight days has given an unexpected boost to the proposed commercial TV network, known officially as the second channel.

Although the Knesset is still debating the legislation necessary to establish it, permission has been granted a private television production company in Jerusalem for live coverage of the arrival of Ida Nudel at Ben Gurion Airport Thursday night.

The longtime refusenik, who has just received the exit visa for which she first applied in 1972, is expected to arrive from Moscow in the

private jet of American industrialist Armand Hammer.

Special permission was also granted Tuesday night for a series of "experimental broadcasts" on the private channel. They will include nightly one-hour films, under arrangements made with the Cinema Owners Association.

Until now, the Communications Ministry's engineering department has been moving slowly in the direction of a second channel. During the past year it has screened still photographs for short periods each evening.

The purpose is to stake formal claim to Channel 22 on the Ultra High Frequency (UHF) band to prevent its pre-emption by Egypt or other neighboring Arab states. It has also been broadcasting reruns of shows from Israel Television and Educational Television.

Meanwhile, no progress seems to have been made in settling the broadcasters' strike. Radio and television journalists are demanding the same pay scale as print journalists. Although they are members of the Journalists Association, they receive lower salaries than their newspaper colleagues because they are employed by the IBA, a government agency, and are classified as civil servants. The Finance Ministry refuses to consider wage increases for any single branch of public sector workers, and the IBA management says its hands are tied.

In other strike news, Tel Aviv garbage collectors ended a weeklong work stoppage Tuesday, only to resume it on Wednesday because of a dispute between garbage truck drivers and the municipality over pay and working conditions. Refuse which was partially removed Tuesday is again festering on Tel Aviv streets.

AGRICULTURE AWARD PRESENTED AT SUCCAH CELEBRATION By Haviva Krasner

NEW YORK, October 14 (JTA) — City Council President Andrew Stein and actress Ann Jackson presented a New York state farmer with the first Volcani International Scholarship and Research Fund award Tuesday in a ceremony commemorating Israel's 40th anniversary and the Jewish holiday of Succoth, held under the roof of what is billed as the world's largest succah, located on 14th Street in Manhattan.

The Volcani Center established the award, which was presented to Wayne Stoker, to educate farmers and graduate students about the fields of agriculture in which they are ignorant, so that they can be self-sufficient. Stoker, from Munnsville, NY, will be spending two to four weeks at the Volcani Water and Soil Conservation Center in Israel, where he will learn how to cope with the problematic contaminated landfills and water supplies on his farm.

"We are also celebrating the 40th anniversary of the State of Israel today," Stein, who organized the succah project, said upon presenting the award. "No two states have more in common than Israel and New York. Therefore it is only fitting that in the City of New York, with the largest Jewish population, that we have the largest succah and celebrate Israel's 40th anniversary."

'Succat Shalom: Tabernacle of Peace'

The succah, which measures 80 by 60 ft., was named "Succat Shalom: Tabernacle of Peace," commemorating the 40 years of friendship between

Israel and New York and expressing the hope for future peace in the Middle East.

"No people want peace more than the people of Israel or have done more for peace," said Israel's UN Ambassador, Binyamin Netanyahu, who also addressed the approximately 350 people present. "The one thing that has changed for Jews in this century is that they have taken control of their own destiny with the founding of the State of Israel."

Netanyahu added that in his opinion no succah has ever captured the mood of the Israeli people as much as this "Succat Shalom," which was filled with various exhibits representing many of Israel's different accomplishments since it was founded in 1948.

On display were Israeli products, such as a Carmel Cabernet Blanc 1986, which is produced entirely from grapes grown in Israel's Samson region; sugar-and-chocolate coated almonds and hazelnuts from Kibbutz Geva in Israel; and Motorola Israel computer systems, designed to help control irrigation and perform other agricultural needs. Also available was paraphernalia regarding Third World development, specifically that augmented by projects coming out of Israel. Ben Gurion University of the Negev is involved in a series of projects providing certain Third World countries with dry environments similar to that of the Negev desert, with information about innovative agricultural developments.

Following the ceremony, the succah was opened to the general public, crowding the already-packed succah even more. The guests were invited to browse, while listening to live Israeli music and eating from an assortment of Israeli salads and drinking Israeli wine.

The succah, which was built by New York yeshiva high school students, is decorated with murals depicting the Succoth holiday, painted by New York artist Knox Martin and Israeli artist Ilan Raviv. Open from 11:00 a.m. till sunset, the succah will be available for public use through Oct. 16th, when other art works of Raviv and Martin will be on show.

"Through this succah we hope to reach thousands of New York metropolitan area Jews and help enhance their celebration of the important Succoth holiday," said real estate developer Jeffrey Glick, who contributed the land for the succah site. "I'd like to start a tradition," he added.

The event was organized by the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York as part of a much larger year-long celebration of Israel's 40th anniversary. The program will include events sponsored by every Borough President, Mayor Ed Koch, universities and others, according to project director Lori Posin. "All New Yorkers should participate," she said, "not just Jews."

CLARIFICATION: The official United Nations vote Tuesday against an amendment that would exclude Israel from the UN General Assembly was 80-39 with 10 abstentions and 29 absences. But the absent countries have unlimited time to cast a vote, and Israel expects a final tally of 88 or 89-40 or 41.

Because of Sh'mini Atzereth, there will be no Daily News Bulletin dated Friday, Oct. 16.