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'WHO IS A JEW' AND CONVERSION LAW AMENDMENTS DEFEATED BY THE KNESSET

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, June 14 (JTA) -- The Knesset on Tuesday firmly rejected two Orthodox-proposed measures governing conversions to Judaism.

It voted 60-53 against the so-called "Who Is a Jew" amendment to the Law of Return, which would have recognized as Jews only converts converted by Orthodox rabbis. The sponsors were the ultra-Orthodox Agudat Yisrael and Poale Aguda parties.

The Knesset also defeated by a 60-51 margin an emendation or "correction" to the Law of Return that would have required anyone seeking to convert from one faith to another to obtain the consent of the head of the conversion faith. For converts to Judaism in Israel that would be the Chief Rabbinate, even if they were converted abroad.

It was a relatively new measure devised by lawyers for the ultra-Orthodox Shas party as an alternative to the "Who Is Jew" amendment, which has failed to win approval the many times it has been before the Knesset.

Likud has always supported the religious bloc on the amendment, but has not invoked party discipline.

A Knesset defeat became apparent when members of Likud's Liberal Party wing, such as Sarah Doron, and one ex-Likudnik, independent Yigael Hurwitz, voted their conscience against the measures.

Similarly, right-wing hard-liner Rafael Eitan, formerly of the Tehiya Party, cast a negative vote.

The more moderate religious factions backed off, apparently sensing inevitable defeat. Yosef Burg, veteran leader of the National Religious Party, was abroad and did not return for the vote, as he might have done in past years.

Also absent was Likud-Liberal Moshe Nissim, the finance minister, who thought the furor over the amendment was disproportionate to the number of people it would affect if adopted.

Two Alternative Bills Defeated

The Labor Party and others of the center and left opposed the measure, as they have in the past.

But bills introduced by two small secular parties, Mapam and the Citizens Rights Movement, were decisively defeated. They offered more liberal definitions of a Jew than even the unamended Law of Return.

The outcome of the Knesset vote Tuesday was further testimony to the influence and determination of the non-Orthodox branches of Judaism to prevent the "Who Is a Jew" amendment from becoming law in Israel.

The Law of Return defines a Jew as anyone born of a Jewish mother or converted to Judaism. The Orthodox amendment would only recognize conversions performed "according to halacha" (religious law).

Opponents have argued that this would delegitimize Reform and Conservative Judaism in Israel, the movements with which the vast majority of diaspora Jews are affiliated.

Both the Reform and Conservative movements in the United States, backed by major American Jewish and Zionist organizations, such as the United Jewish Appeal, the Council of Jewish Federations and Hadassah, mounted a campaign to defeat the measure as soon as it appeared again on the Knesset agenda.

They argued that passage would polarize the Jewish people and create a schism between Israel and diaspora Jewry.

Appearing to bow to this pressure, Premier Yitzhak Shamir urged the Agudat Yisrael and Poale Aguda parties Monday to postpone reintroducing the "Who Is a Jew" amendment. But the Orthodox groups apparently failed to heed his call and were ultimately defeated.

ELECTION REFORM BILL PASSES FIRST READING ON WAY TO LAW

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, June 14 (JTA) -- An electoral reform bill which would replace the present system of proportional representation passed its first reading in the Knesset Tuesday by an impressive 69-37 majority.

The bill will need the votes of at least 61 of the 120 Knesset members on its second and third readings in order to become law. It would institute the direct election of Knesset members on a regional basis.

The reform is considered long overdue by many in Israel's legal establishment and the political community.

The fragmented vote arising from the present system has prevented any single party from governing, except in coalition with disparate and often recalcitrant splinter parties.

The reform is fiercely opposed by the religious parties, which represent a small minority of the electorate and owe their Knesset representation to the present system.

Under that system, Israelis do not vote for their legislators but for party lists. Knesset seats are then apportioned according to the number of votes each party wins.

The religious bloc and their right-wing allies suffered several setbacks in the Knesset. Two Orthodox-sponsored amendments to the Law of Return were defeated.

Also rejected, by a vote of 58-53, was a right-wing measure to reduce the prison terms of members of a Jewish terrorist group.

That bill was backed by almost the entire Likud, including Premier Yitzhak Shamir. Justice Minister Avraham Sharir, a member of Likud's Liberal Party wing, joined the Labor Party in voting against it.

Likud won a victory when the Knesset decided by 51-49 in favor of state control over the elections of Histadrut, the labor federation.

The Knesset voted 67-16 to elect retired Supreme Court Justice Miriam Ben-Porat the new state comptroller.

Because of the heavy volume of news, today's JTA Daily News Bulletin has been expanded to six pages.

AWAD LAUNCHES GLOBAL CAMPAIGN SEEKING RETURN TO JERUSALEM

By Andrew Silow Carroll

NEW YORK, June 14 (JTA) -- Palestinian activist Mubarak Awad vowed Tuesday to influence American and worldwide public opinion in his efforts to return to Jerusalem.

The Palestinian advocate of non-violence, who was deported from Israel on Monday, did not rule out the possibility of converting to Judaism and returning to Israel under the Law of Return, as he has threatened repeatedly.

But he indicated it would be a last step after he made appeals to the United Nations, American legislators, European parliaments and the next Israeli government.

Jewish organizations, meanwhile, released statements supporting Israel's right to expel the Palestinian activist.

Awad spoke at a news conference here sponsored by the National Council of Churches. He arrived in New York Monday night, one week after the Israeli Supreme Court rejected his appeal to remain in Israel. He had been in prison since May 5.

Born in East Jerusalem, Awad, 44, lived in the United States for 13 years and eventually became an American citizen. He had been staying in Israel under a tourist visa and directing the Center for the Study of Non-Violence in Jerusalem. The visa expired last November.

Although the Supreme Court ruled only on the expiration of the visa, Israeli authorities accused him of helping to direct the Palestinian uprising in the administered territories.

Asked Tuesday if he was an instigator of the six-month insurrection, Awad said, "That's true. I said that we cannot continue living under occupation . . . and have to struggle to get rid of occupation."

Says He Advocates Sabotage

Awad also said, in response to a question, that he advocates sabotage of electrical lines and water lines, but only when such sabotage is directed against planned Jewish settlements on Arab land.

He said he continues to denounce violence, however, and that he opposes the throwing of stones, the setting of forest fires or "injuries to anyone."

"I deal with people who always carry a gun," he said, when asked why in some public statements he has not totally ruled out the use of violence in the service of Palestinian nationalism. "But I give them an alternative. If the alternatives are successful, then they don't need the gun."

He said he does not tell fellow Palestinians "what you have to do," but rather gives them a choice.

Awad said his advocacy of non-violence does not conflict with his support of the Palestine Liberation Organization. "You do not have to agree with everything the PLO does to support them," he said, adding later that Israel had no choice but to accept the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people.

Awad said he has written Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir asking, "If you don't need violence, and you don't need non-violence, how are we to protest?"

He added that by ordering his deportation, Shamir had made Awad a hero among Palestinians and around the world. Shamir signed the deportation order in his capacity as interior minister.

Speaks Of Converting

In reference to his statements about converting to Judaism, Awad said that he was deported because he is a Christian. "That challenge (of converting) is still a very simple thing for me as a Christian," he said.

Later he added, "I'll have to take my chances with a rabbi and tell him frankly that it is not my belief to become a Jew, but that I am being persecuted because I am a Christian."

Awad was joined at the news conference by his American wife, Nancy Nye, and by Rajah Shehadeh, a lawyer who assisted attorney Jonathan Kuttab in Awad's defense.

Nye thanked the lawyers, the U.S State Department, "the support of many governments" and the press corps in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, and said there was still hope that Awad would be able to return to Jerusalem.

Shehadeh said Awad's case was similar to thousands of others in which "husbands and sons are unable to be in the place where they were born and lived."

The National Council of Churches released a statement saying it and its member-church bodies supported Awad and the work of his center for non-violence. The council is a member of Churches for Middle East Peace, which has written members of Congress to protest Awad's deportation.

Jewish Groups Comment

Jewish organization's responded to Awad's deportation and threat of conversion in statements released Tuesday.

Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, said in a statement that Awad "is not, as he claims, a believer in non-violence in the mold of Mohandas Gandhi or Martin Luther King Jr. Where in the teaching of Gandhi and King is advocacy for acts of sabotage: cutting of electric, water and communication lines, for example, or destroying roads and bridges?"

Seymour Reich, international president of B'nai B'rith, also released a statement, calling Awad a "fraud, who, under the banner of non-violence, promoted a violent solution to the Israeli-Palestinian problem."

"Any nation would have taken similar action -- and justifiably so -- against a non-citizen and a non-resident who was engaged in activity aimed at spreading chaos and undermining its security," Reich said of the deportation.

Leaders of Reform Judaism's rabbinic and congregational arms said in a letter to Reform rabbis that "whatever you think of Awad or his deportation, surely we need not remind you that extraneous motivations, political motivations, are not sufficient reason" for conversion to the Jewish faith.

The letter was signed by the president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and by the president and executive vice president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

A statement released by the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York said Israel was within its legal and political right to expel Awad. Noting that Awad supports the PLO, the group said he views non-violence as "a means of complementing violence to advance overall Palestinian-Arab political goals."

FOUR ISRAELIS INJURED IN WEST BANK; SCHOOLS TO BE CLOSED FOR TWO DAYS
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, June 14 (JTA) -- Three Israeli soldiers and a civilian were injured in the West Bank on Tuesday, when their car went out of control and crashed into a pole, after coming under a hail of stones near Tulkarm.

Disturbances continued elsewhere in the West Bank, where the Israeli authorities ordered all Arab schools temporarily closed again, only two weeks after they were reopened.

The incident near Tulkarm occurred in the morning, soon after a curfew was lifted. An Israel Defense Force officer, two soldiers and a civilian were riding in the car when it was stoned and the driver lost control.

The four were taken to Tel Hashomer hospital in Ramat Gan, where the IDF officer was reported seriously injured. The others were only slightly hurt.

Arab sources said a 21-year-old Tulkarm resident was wounded later, when IDF soldiers chased the stone-throwers.

In other incidents Tuesday, a firebomb was thrown at an Israeli vehicle in El-Birch. No one was hurt. Another firebomb was thrown at an IDF patrol in a Gaza market. It failed to ignite. One suspect was seized.

In the West Bank city of Ramallah, youngsters returning from school blocked several downtown streets. Soldiers fired rubber bullets to disperse them. No injuries were reported.

The military government in the West Bank announced that all schools in the territory will be shut for two days, beginning Wednesday, because students have been taking to the streets to participate in demonstrations.

The schools and universities had been closed several months for security reasons until the end of May, when the civil administration announced they would be reopened on a staggered schedule. The intention was to resume education for the young and demonstrate a supposed return to normalcy in the territories.

Brig. Gen. Shaike Erez, who heads the civil administration, said the renewed shutdown would affect 1,200 schools and some 300,000 pupils. He said it was a warning to the population that unless law and ordered are maintained, there will be no schools.

U.S. PROTESTS POLICY PERMITTING ISRAELIS TO FIRE ON FIREBOMBERS
By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, June 14 (JTA) -- The State Department has criticized Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin's pronouncement Monday that civilians may open fire on Palestinians who are seen with firebombs.

"We believe that Israeli civilians should not be given the authority to maintain law and order," department spokesman Charles Redman said Tuesday. "That requires proper training and is the province of the police authority."

"We have also made clear our position that lethal force should be used only when necessary," said Redman. He added, "We are very disturbed by the continuation of violence in Israel for over seven months. We again call on Israelis and Palestinians to exercise restraint and avoid confrontation."

Rabin announced the policy Monday in the aftermath of an upsurge in incidents involving the throwing of Molotov cocktails at civilians.

In one of the most serious incidents Sunday night, three firebombs were hurled from the roof of one of Tel Aviv's most popular shopping malls, on Dizengoff Street. Though no one was injured in the attack, the incident alarmed Israelis accustomed to hearing about firebombings in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, but not in major metropolitan areas.

U.N. MISSION RETURNS FROM MIDEAST WITH ONE-SIDED SLANT ON HUMAN RIGHTS
By Tamar Levy

GENEVA, June 14 (JTA) -- A special U.N. committee investigating Israeli human rights practices toward Palestinians returned from a 12-day fact-finding mission to the Middle East with damning information, all of it obtained from Palestinians.

Since the committee was set up by the U.N. General Assembly in December 1968, Israel has refused to allow it access to the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Golan Heights, territories captured by Israel in the 1967 Six-Day War.

The Israelis accuse the committee of a built-in anti-Israel bias. As a result, the committee takes testimony from Palestinians in Arab countries where no refutation is offered.

This year the panel heard 21 witnesses in Amman, Damascus and Cairo. They spent about three days in each capital between May 21 and June 1.

The committee currently consists of Daya Perera, the permanent representative of Sri Lanka to the United Nations in New York; Dragan Jovanic, a professor of law from Yugoslavia; and Alioune Sene, permanent representative of Senegal to the United Nations office in Geneva.

Sene also serves this year as chairman of the U.N. Human Rights Commission here.

The witnesses examined by the committee included Palestinian educators, public health specialists, a businessman, a farmer, a recent deportee from the territories and several Palestinians hospitalized with bullet wounds.

All were recently arrivals from the territories, where the uprising is now in its seventh month. They described curfews, school and university closures by the Israeli authorities, assaults on cultural identity, limits imposed on remittances from abroad, and restrictions of movement.

They complained of inadequate medical facilities for Palestinians, and the storming of Arab homes and hospitals by Israeli troops.

Most of the witnesses asked for anonymity on grounds they feared reprisals from the authorities when they return home.

In addition to hearing testimony, the committee met with senior Egyptian, Jordanian and Syrian officials. In Amman they met also with officials of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The testimony heard will be included in the committee's annual report to the General Assembly. The committee also depends upon government communiques and numerous intergovernmental and nongovernmental sources and newspaper reports on the situation in the territories.

It takes particular care to extract information from the Israeli press which has not been contradicted by government sources. The committee also takes note of statements by Israel government officials regarding policy in the territories.

AMERICAN LEADER AND ISRAELI ACADEMIC AGREE CRITICISM SHOULD BE MINIMAL
By Andrew Silow Carroll

NEW YORK, June 14 (JTA) -- American Jewish communal leader Abraham Foxman and Israeli academic Shlomo Avineri agreed at an academic forum Monday night that while diaspora Jewry and Israel need to develop a more sophisticated relationship, such sophistication shouldn't lead to public criticism by American Jews toward Israel's policy in the administered territories.

The forum between Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, and Avineri, professor of political science at Hebrew University, was billed as a rematch of the contentious debate they held in Jerusalem one year ago, at the height of the Jonathan Pollard spy affair.

But those expecting a grudge match over American and Israeli ways of thinking were probably disappointed. Foxman and Avineri found more to agree on than not at the opening of Bnai Zion's 80th anniversary convention.

In his call for a more "honest and realistic" relationship between Israeli and American Jewry, Foxman described the "maturation process" that occurred as a result of the Yom Kippur and Lebanon wars, the "embarrassment" over the Pollard affair, Israel's involvement in the Iran-contra scandal and, most recently, Israel's handling of the Palestinian uprising.

As a result of the maturation process, said Foxman, diaspora Jewry has begun to strike "dissonant chords" with once-inviolate Israel -- taking an active role in resisting changes in the Law of Return, for example, or demanding more control over the way in which Jewish Agency funds are spent.

Among other steps American Jews should take, he said, is to demand that Israeli political parties fully disclose the contributions they get from American Jews.

While acknowledging that the "dissonant chords" are a "product of reality rather than infidelity," Foxman had harsh words for those leaders of American Jewish organizations who have criticized Israeli policy in recent months, and "publicly aligned themselves against" the Likud bloc of Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

'Irresponsible Ego-Searching'

A critical article by Reform leader Albert Vorspan was "irresponsible ego-searching rather than soul-searching," he said.

"How sad, how wasteful, how counterproductive" is how he termed a scheduled satellite broadcast Tuesday featuring four former Israeli generals who support a withdrawal from the territories. The broadcast is being sponsored by the American Jewish Congress.

Avineri seemed to agree, in one of his few direct references to the recent debate over the propriety of criticism, that American Jewish criticism of Israel is inappropriate.

Despite a brief discussion of Israel's political choices concerning the territories, in which the left-leaning professor contended any choice is better than the current disunity, he returned to themes he expounded on six months ago, on the same stage.

American Jews should "take up the challenge of aliyah" and otherwise spend more time in Israel, he repeated, and as a result, "end up by refreshing and mutually enriching the cycle of Israel-diaspora relations."

But what should American Jews do concerning the current political debate? "They should do very little. But if they meet an Israeli, they should say to him, 'You have to make up your mind.' "

On the other hand, Avineri added later, Israel has to consider the impact of whatever actions it takes on the rest of world Jewry.

"If Israel is doing things that make the world's Jews uncomfortable, (Israelis) should think about it," he said.

FOREIGN PRESS HOLD NEWS CONFERENCE TO DENOUNCE BEATINGS AGAINST MEMBERS
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, June 14 (JTA) -- The Foreign Press Association has accused the Israeli police of physically assaulting journalists performing their duties and has demanded a stop to it.

The press association held a news conference in Jerusalem Tuesday -- an unusual step for reporters -- and gave details of physical assaults by police on its members. They called on Police Minister Haim Barlev to investigate and punish those responsible.

Association chairman Bob Slater of Time magazine said there were between 100 and 150 incidents of physical attacks on foreign journalists reported between last December, when the Palestinian uprising began, and early April.

Other association members complained of public hostility toward foreign correspondents. They cited bumper stickers popular with Jewish settlers in the administered territories which say "Country United Against A Hostile Press."

One of the more serious cases of physical assault occurred in Tel Aviv on June 4, during a demonstration by Yesh Gvul, an organization of Israelis opposed to government policies in the territories.

Sven Hackstrand, a photographer for Agence France Presse, the French news agency, was ordered by plainclothes police officers not to take pictures. He said they began to beat him and tried to seize his camera.

Hackstrand said he was knocked to the ground, kicked and beaten with clubs on his body and head.

He was then taken to a police van where the beating was resumed by men he believed to be border police, the photographer said.

When the demonstration ended, Hackstrand said he saw one of his assailants drive off in a police car.

Another press photographer required stitches above his eye. An official complaint was lodged with the police but no reply has been received, according to the association.

Veteran Time magazine photographer David Rubinger said the general atmosphere of hostility in Israel toward the news media apparently contributed to the attacks.

"It's not a question of exceptional cases," Rubinger said.

"It is rather a disease which is spreading like rot at the lower levels of the police force--the border police are among the worst offenders because of their social makeup -- and the army," Rubinger said.

The journalists also complained of restricted access to the territories and the fact that material has been confiscated from foreign correspondents arriving or leaving Ben-Gurion Airport.

JEWISH AIDE TO REPLACE BAKER AS REAGAN'S CHIEF OF STAFF

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, June 14 (JTA) -- President Reagan has promoted Kenneth Duberstein, his deputy chief of staff, to White House chief of staff, the first Jew to hold that post.

White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said Duberstein will take over for Chief of Staff Howard Baker Jr. on July 1, when Baker will return to his private law practice. Baker is stepping down for personal reasons.

In a statement read by Fitzwater, Reagan said, "I have known Ken since the earliest days of my administration, when he served in our office of legislative affairs.

"I welcome his leadership in the next several months as we attend the eighth economic summit of industrialized nations and conduct the affairs of government for the next seven months."

Duberstein was recommended to the job by Baker, who fondly nicknamed his assistant "Duberdog." He is the fourth man to preside over the 325-member Reagan White House staff.

"Ken will be my principal aide and will lead the White House staff as we head into the home stretch," Reagan said. "He is an outstanding manager and skilled strategist who has been fundamental to the significant accomplishments, foreign and domestic, we have achieved since Ken returned as deputy chief of staff in March 1987."

Duberstein was assistant to the president for legislative affairs in 1982 and 1983 and was deputy assistant for legislative affairs from 1981 to 1982.

A native of Brooklyn, Duberstein received a bachelor's degree from Franklin and Marshall College and a master's degree from American University. From 1965 to 1976, he worked for the late Sen. Jacob Javits (R-N.Y.). He also worked for Mayor John Lindsay of New York, and Gov. and Vice President Nelson Rockefeller.

Hyman Bookbinder, special Washington representative for the American Jewish Committee, said Duberstein, in his previous White House positions, was a "person you can go to to move something on the (Capitol) Hill."

Morris Amitay, former executive director of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, said Duberstein is "not a Middle East expert but knowledgeable" on the region.

JACKSON INFLUENCE ON DEMOCRATS TO BE FACTOR IN JEWISH VOTE

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, June 14 (JTA) -- A forum here on "American Jews and Politics, 1988" revealed that the issue of how much influence the Rev. Jesse Jackson has on the Democratic presidential candidate may be even more a factor in how Jews vote this November than it was in the 1984 presidential campaign.

Morris Amitay, former executive director of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, stressed Tuesday that the way Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis "handles" Jackson will affect the Jewish vote "more so than any statement the candidate may make on Israel."

"Should Jackson have a strong position in the Democratic Party, and should some of his views with regard to Israel prevail in any way, shape or form, I believe there will be a great deal of disaffection," he said.

Amitay, who called himself "a pro-Israel lobbyist," said that the swing vote in the Jewish community is about 15-20 percent and is made up of people whose chief concern is Israel.

He added that if the election is close, this swing vote in such key states as California, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Florida, Massachusetts and Maryland could decide the contest between Dukakis and his Republican opponent, Vice President George Bush.

Also participating in the forum, sponsored by B'nai B'rith International, were: Stuart Eizenstat, former domestic policy adviser to President Carter; Marshall Breger and Jacob Stein, both former liaisons to the Jewish community in the Reagan administration; and Rabbi Israel Miller, a former chairman, like Stein, of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Breger and Stein, both Bush supporters, said Jackson will be a problem for Dukakis because of Jackson's positions on the Middle East, his calls for defense cuts and advocacy of higher taxes.

Breger also noted that Jackson's support of quotas to provide opportunities for blacks and other minorities will also hurt the Democrats in the Jewish community.

Quotas Not An Issue

Eizenstat said that quotas are no longer a major issue. But he said that Dukakis would oppose any attempt by Jackson to include support for a Palestinian state or talks with the Palestine Liberation Organization, as well as defense cuts and higher taxes, in the party's platform.

Stein stressed that while Jackson's Middle East positions may not get into the Democratic platform, he would still have influence on a Dukakis administration.

In 1984, Republicans expected a large Jewish vote for Reagan because of Jackson's anti-Israel and anti-Semitic statements. But the Jewish vote swung to Vice President Walter Mondale after Reagan's speech in Dallas, in which he strongly attacked those who opposed prayer in the schools.

Although Jackson toned down his rhetoric this year, Jewish voters continued to be concerned about him. A study of various primary exit polls, published Monday by The New York Times revealed that Jackson received only 8 percent of the Jewish vote nationwide. Dukakis, meanwhile, won 75 percent of the Jewish vote.

Before Bush sewed up the Republican nomination, he did not do well among Jewish Republicans, with most of them voting for Senate Minority leader Robert Dole of Kansas and Rep. Jack Kemp of New York.

Eizenstat said he believes that the erosion of the traditional Jewish vote for Democrats will stop this year and Dukakis will get 75 to 85 percent of the Jewish vote.

Breger, however, said that Jews are moving toward the Republicans. While Mondale got about 65 percent of the Jewish vote in 1984, the majority of Jews under 24 voted for Reagan.

Stein added that the growing Orthodox community largely supports the Republicans, as do the 200,000 Soviet Jews now living in the United States.

Amitay said that he does not "jump for joy" that Dukakis' wife, Kitty, is Jewish because many times in the past, an action harmful to Israel has been "hidden behind the fact that a secretary of state or Cabinet member or close friends happen to be Jewish."

NCSJ TO COORDINATE SOVIET JEWRY POLICY UNDER CJF RESTRUCTURING PLAN

By Yitzhak Rabi

NEW YORK, June 14 (JTA) -- The National Conference on Soviet Jewry has been granted central responsibility, authority and accountability for Soviet Jewry advocacy on the national level, under a plan adopted last Thursday by the board of directors of the Council of Jewish Federations.

The restructuring of the national Soviet Jewry movement in America was decided in the first CJF board of directors meeting conducted over the CJF television satellite network.

The new plan calls on the NCSJ to maintain its "special relations" with the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council and to utilize NJCRAC to help coordinate local implementation of national policies and recommendations.

NJCRAC is an umbrella organization that coordinates policy for 114 Jewish community relations councils across the country and 11 of the largest national Jewish organizations. In the past, it has helped shape national Jewish policy relating to Soviet Jewry.

Morris Abram, chairman of the NCSJ, said at a news conference Monday that the National Conference is now "the final ultimate authority" in the movement on behalf of Soviet Jewry in America. Abram added that the NCSJ will work with NJCRAC and other groups in matters relating to Soviet Jews.

According to the new plan, the National Conference will communicate directly with individual communities across the country when it wishes to organize local activities relating to Soviet Jewry.

Such communications are to be done in cooperation with NJCRAC, which will continue to serve as "community coordinator for Soviet Jewry."

Leadership Overlap

To increase coordination between the two groups, the plan calls for:

* NCSJ and NJCRAC to have adjoining offices or be located in the same building;

* the NJCRAC chairperson to serve as vice president of NCSJ, as well as some overlap of leadership on the two organizations' executive committees; and

* NJCRAC representation on National Conference delegations meeting with government officials.

Dan Shapiro, CJF vice president and chairman of the CJF Committee on Soviet Jewry Advocacy, said that CJF will encourage the utmost use of NJCRAC's experience, resources and relationships, especially pertaining to the areas of community service and coordination with the local community federations and their Soviet Jewry programs.

The CJF announced that the projected 1988 budget for the restructured Soviet Jewry advocacy program is $1.22 million, which includes additional projected expenditures of $3,000 for office space, personnel, travel, programs and miscellaneous items.

Albert Chernin, executive vice chairman of NJCRAC, said in a telephone interview Tuesday that "this new formulation of the NCSJ and the special relationship with NJCRAC is something that we actively participated in negotiating. We fully anticipate that the conference and NJCRAC will find the means within this special relationship to advance the advocacy efforts on behalf of Soviet Jewry.

"What this relationship does," he continued, "is make the NCSJ the undisputed spokesman for Soviet Jewry, and we have always seen it in that role since its creation in 1973. It also acknowledges the role of NJCRAC as the instrumentality for community coordination, which has been our role on all community relations issues since our creation in 1944," he said.

"We are entering this relationship on the basis of good faith," he added, "and we are confident that we will be able to work out our day-to-day working relationships in a way that will be responsive to the needs and concerns of the conference and NJCRAC, and most importantly of Soviet Jewry."

SOME 60,000 ISRAELI CIVIL SERVANTS LAUNCH STRIKE OF INDEFINITE DURATION

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, June 14 (JTA) -- About 60,000 civil servants went on strike Tuesday in the first of a series of walkouts and work stoppages expected to involve more than 100,000 public sector employees before the end of the week.

The strike was called by the government workers union after wage negotiations with Treasury officials broke down late Monday night.

Union leaders emerging from the fruitless session at midnight said the strike would be of indefinite duration. Originally they had planned a 24-hour warning strike.

About 130,000 academics, technicians and engineers employed by government and public institutions are expected to strike or initiate work stoppages beginning Thursday. Histadrut, the labor federation, already has given notice of a general strike in the public sector in two weeks that would involve some 300,000 employees.

Tuesday's walkout affected the National Insurance Institute and Employment Service. It halted the state-owned railroad and blacked out educational television, though not regular radio and television broadcasts.

Later in the day, the strike committee gave permission to resume educational television broadcasts.

Clerks in law courts, and the income tax and customs departments were off the job. The Government Press Office worked on a reduced schedule. Knesset employees, following tradition, did not join the strike, but they asked Speaker Shlomo Hillel to announce for the record their solidarity with their fellow government workers.

Issuing Of Passports, Licenses Halted

Work stoppages Tuesday at the Interior Ministry halted the issuing of passports, identity cards and other official documents. At the Transport Ministry, driver testing had to be suspended. The absence of clerks at the rabbinical courts prevented couples from taking out marriage licenses.

The latest labor strife came on top of the crisis in Israel's health care system, which has vastly curtailed service at government and Histadrut hospitals during the past few months.

Medical and non-medical employees at the state-run hospitals and those of Kupat Holim, Histadrut's health care agency, have resorted to slowdowns, walkouts and refusals to perform all but emergency procedures in a running battle with the Treasury on wage-related issues.