

NETANYAHU SAYS SOVIETS TO LET HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS EMIGRATE

By Eli Wohlgelemer

JERUSALEM, March 30 (JTA) -- Hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jews are on the verge of being allowed to emigrate, according to Deputy Foreign Minister Binyamin Netanyahu.

Speaking here at the closing session of the Jewish National Fund's fourth national assembly, Netanyahu said that Moscow is about to change its policy on emigration.

The result, he said, is that "Jewish citizens are going to have the opportunity to leave the Soviet Union in numbers that we don't even imagine." He said this could be "on the order of hundreds of thousands, and I'm being conservative."

The Jerusalem Post, in its Friday edition, confirms that the source of Netanyahu's information is a secret intelligence report delivered to the Foreign Ministry.

Netanyahu said the Soviet decision to release so many Jews is based on its desire to change its image. "It's going to do so, not because of the love of Zion, and it's not going to let out Jews exclusively."

"It's going to let out Soviet citizens basically under the assumption of, why should it carry the monkey on its back? Why should it be accused of being a prison?"

Netanyahu said that only two countries in the world will open their gates: "Germany, which will accept all Germans and repatriate them, and Israel. Now that's a fact of life."

The deputy foreign minister told the JNF audience that it must do all that it can to help absorb the expected influx of Jews.

"We're going to have to change our priorities," he said. "Our effort so far has been to open the gates. Our new effort is going to be to absorb these hundreds of thousands of Jews. And hundreds of thousands of Jews here make a tremendous difference."

CANADIAN MEETS WITH PLO OFFICIAL AS GOVERNMENT LIFTS RESTRICTIONS

By Michael Solomon

MONTREAL, March 30 (JTA) -- Canada announced Thursday it was lifting its restriction on contacts between government ministers and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The move was announced by External Affairs Minister Joe Clark as Canada held its first formal meeting with a PLO representative at United Nations headquarters in New York.

Yves Portier, the Canadian delegate to the United Nations, met with Nasser al-Kidwa, alternate representative for the Palestine observer mission, 40 minutes after Clark's announcement.

The discussion was "very general," lasting 10 to 15 minutes, according to a spokesman at the Canadian mission to the United Nations.

In Ottawa, Clark announced that the government had decided to "lift existing restrictions in contacting the PLO at the ministerial level."

He expressed the hope that his government "can play a constructive role in bringing together the parties to the conflict."

But he pointed out that the Foreign Ministry continues to maintain its policy of not recognizing the Palestinian state declared by the Palestine National Council in Algiers last November.

Clark has been lobbying for the shift in policy for some time, usually persuading Canadian Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, who had opposed high-level talks with the PLO.

FRENCH JEWS IN AN UPROAR OVER PLANNED ARAFAT VISIT

By Edwin Eytan

PARIS, March 30 (JTA) -- France's Jewish community is in an uproar over Yasir Arafat's forthcoming visit to France. It is planning a campaign of posters, newspaper advertisements and demonstrations to protest President Francois Mitterrand's plans to meet with the Palestine Liberation Organization leader.

No date has been fixed for that meeting, but diplomatic observers believe it will take place in Paris shortly after Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir concludes his trip to the United States on April 14.

Reports about a meeting between Mitterrand and Arafat had been circulating for several months, but Israeli diplomats and Jewish leaders had hoped that a face-to-face rendezvous could be averted.

Elysee Palace's official announcement Tuesday that the meeting will take place in France, rather than some distant country like Tunisia or Egypt, has further angered the local Jewish community.

Theo Klein, president of CRIF, the umbrella organization of Jewish groups in France, has asked Mitterrand for an audience.

Klein, who plans to meet the president with a representative Jewish delegation, has issued a statement stressing that because Mitterrand is "a sincere and loyal friend of Israel," an explanation for his decision is warranted.

Several other Jewish organizations and individuals have been more outspoken in their comments, calling on Mitterrand not to betray his former commitments and to cancel his meeting with the PLO leader.

Israeli Ambassador Ovadia Soffer met Wednesday night with Foreign Minister Roland Dumas to express the Israeli government's disappointment with Mitterrand's decision. He later issued a statement charging France with ignoring Israel's security needs.

The envoy also expressed his regret that Mitterrand had not waited before inviting Arafat to France until Shamir had presented his views on the peace process to Washington.

The French press has already started to turn Arafat into a media star. The various television channels are vying for interviews with the PLO leader, and most TV and radio stations have dispatched messengers to Tunis for interviews.

Newspapers and magazines are either following suit or planning to publish background stories, which, Jewish organizations fear, will have a pro-Palestinian slant.

Arafat's stay in Paris will be the occasion of a major Palestinian propaganda campaign in an effort to try to win over French public opinion.

FORMER SS GUARD AT AUSCHWITZ IS DEPORTED BY U.S. TO AUSTRIA

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, March 30 (JTA) -- Josef Eckert, a former SS guard at Auschwitz who lived for many years in the Los Angeles area, was voluntarily deported to Austria this week.

The success of Eckert's deportation was the fruit of a U.S. Justice Department effort that turned into an unexpected tragedy for the department's Office of Special Investigations.

OSI's deputy director, Michael Bernstein, was carrying Austria's agreement to accept Eckert when he lost his life last December in the explosion of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland.

Eckert's deportation was announced here Wednesday night by OSI Director Neal Sher, who was in New York to receive the 1989 Raoul Wallenberg "Hero in Our Time" Award from Shaare Zedek Medical Center.

Sher was one of seven award recipients at a dinner ceremony here to benefit Shaare Zedek's Raoul Wallenberg Pediatric Day Hospital in Jerusalem. All awards were given for fighting, seeking or capturing Nazis.

Other recipients of the award, which was presented by Texas billionaire businessman H. Ross Perot, included former Mossad chief Isser Harel; Nazi-hunters Serge and Beate Klarsfeld; and Bruce Teicholz, a Holocaust survivor who commanded Jewish guerrilla fighters in Poland and Hungary.

Also, Franz Muller, a non-Jewish German who was a member of the anti-Nazi White Rose movement, and reserve Col. Henry Plitt, an American theater-owner who was first to parachute onto the Normandy beach on June 6, 1944, and who later captured Nazi Julius Streicher.

Arrived Thursday

Sher, who received the award for his dedication to seeking out and deporting Nazis who have found haven in the United States, said, "The award really belongs to my entire office, whose staff worked tirelessly.

"And it belongs as well to the memory of Michael Bernstein, who was murdered on board Pan Am Flight 103."

Sher reminded his listeners that Bernstein was carrying with him that December day the Austrian government's promise to take Eckert. He used the podium to break the news that Eckert was en route to Austria.

Eckert, 75, was observed getting on a British Air flight from Los Angeles to London on Tuesday evening, a trip for which he had paid his own way.

The retired factory worker from La Puente, near Los Angeles, reportedly fell asleep at Heathrow Airport and missed his connecting Swissair flight Wednesday to Salzburg, Austria.

He arrived there Thursday evening.

Eckert, a native of Yugoslavia, does not face charges in Austria, the country where he requested to be deported.

U.S. deportation proceedings against Eckert began on Dec. 21, 1987. The Justice Department charged that Eckert "participated in the persecution" of Auschwitz inmates as a member of the notorious SS Totenkopf-Sturmabteilung (Death's Head Battalion) from 1943 to 1945.

On September 27, 1988, Eckert admitted having concealed his activities at Auschwitz from

immigration authorities when he entered the United States from Austria on April 10, 1956. He agreed to be deported without a trial.

Austria did not ask to extradite Eckert and did not initially want to accept him.

In Washington, Attorney General Dick Thornburgh praised Bernstein's work on the case during an official announcement of the deportation Thursday.

"The successful completion of the Eckert case is a fitting tribute to Mike Bernstein's prosecutorial and diplomatic skills and to his dedication in the pursuit of justice," he said.

JUDGE UPHOLDS POLLARD'S TREATMENT, REFUSING TRANSFER TO ANOTHER JAIL

By Andrew Silow Carroll

NEW YORK, March 30 (JTA) -- A U.S. district court judge on Thursday rejected a request by Anne Henderson Pollard to be transferred from a Minnesota prison facility to an institution where she could receive better medical treatment.

Judge Harry MacLaughlin of the Fourth U.S. District Court in Minneapolis approved the medical treatment she has been receiving as an inmate in the Federal Medical Center prison facility in Rochester, Minn.

He also upheld last month's decision by a prison court magistrate imposing a 24-hour medical watch on Pollard, whose husband, Jonathan, is serving a life prison sentence after being convicted of spying for Israel.

The ruling is the latest setback for Anne Pollard, who has complained of a variety of digestive and skin disorders during her incarceration.

Pollard is serving two concurrent five-year terms in federal prison for being an accessory after the fact to unauthorized possession of national defense information and being part of a conspiracy to receive and embezzle government property.

In his five-page ruling, MacLaughlin conceded that the court was "troubled" by the around-the-clock watch, which was imposed on Pollard for fear that she would inflict injury upon herself. But he said there was "adequate evidence to support why the watch was imposed."

The court also overruled Pollard's claim that her treatment by her prison doctor showed "deliberate indifference" to her medical needs, although her doctor "may have reacted poorly to petitioner's assertive demeanor and frustration with her illness."

The judge said that Pollard's continued incarceration at the Minnesota facility also did not constitute deliberate indifference to her needs. Pollard had requested a transfer back to a minimum security prison in Danbury, Conn.

"The court is not without sympathy for the plight of Mrs. Pollard. However, it should be borne in mind that Mrs. Pollard is a convicted felon," said MacLaughlin.

"Incarcerated persons simply do not have the same discretionary choices as those who are not incarcerated," he added.

Pollard's lawyer, Thomas Nelson, said he was disappointed by MacLaughlin's ruling, but said he appreciated the judge's words of sympathy for Pollard. He vowed to continue to press the Bureau of Prisons "to treat Mrs. Pollard in a caring and humane way." He did not rule out the possibility of a further appeal.

ARABS MARK LAND DAY DIFFERENTLY ON TWO SIDES OF THE GREEN LINE

By Elli Wohlgelehter

TIRA, Israel, March 30 (JTA) -- Arabs on both sides of the Green Line marked Land Day on Thursday, but with different methods and differing results.

One Palestinian was killed and 11 others were wounded in the West Bank, as Israel Defense Force troops sealed off the area, as well as the Gaza Strip, to any traffic coming in or out.

Inside the Green Line, however, all was relatively quiet as Israeli Arabs staged peaceful demonstrations in the northern, central and southern regions.

Land Day marks the day in 1976 when six Arabs were killed during demonstrations against the confiscation of Arab land in Galilee by Israeli authorities.

In this village about five miles northeast of Kfar Sava, a 3 p.m. rally in the town's square attracted some 2,000 demonstrators who chanted nationalistic slogans and held up signs in Arabic and Hebrew calling for the creation of two separate states.

Knesset member Tawfik Toubi, a member of Israel's Communist Party, joined 15 local village leaders, together with Islamic fundamentalists, in a show of solidarity with Palestinians in the administered territories.

One woman held up a sweater knitted with the black, white, red and green flag of the Palestine Liberation Organization, while all around her teen-agers held up two fingers in a victory salute.

Arabs Are 'Loyal Citizens'

In only one other place inside Israel was the PLO flag reported seen: on a building off the road near Zeita, just north of Tulkarm.

"I think the Israeli Arabs, in principle, are loyal citizens, and they want to obey the law," Police Minister Haim Bar-Lev told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. "Secondly, the massive police presence has a deterring effect, no doubt about it."

Bar-Lev said about 4,000 extra police officers were concentrated around Israeli Arab villages inside the Green Line, the border separating pre-1967 Israel from the West Bank.

On both sides of the line, Arabs observed a general strike that closed shops all day. Israel Radio broadcast a list of a handful of Israeli villages where the strike was not being observed.

Published reports said that in the West Bank village of Yatta, near Hebron, about 500 Palestinians marched on City Hall, which had stayed open in defiance of the strike call.

Reports said city guards opened fire and wounded at least two protesters.

A tour of some Israeli Arab villages Thursday morning found almost no trace of any commemoration of the day, except for the shuttered store fronts.

In Taiba, a village listed Monday by Police Commissioner David Kraus as one of the hot spots that would be monitored, Mayor Rafek Hagyhia stood in his second-floor office surrounded by 18 men, talking on a two-way radio.

"All is quiet," he told a television reporter in Hebrew. "Do you want to take a picture of the quiet?"

Hagyhia said he had received cooperation from all the village leaders to maintain calm among Taiba's 22,000 residents.

FOREIGN MEDIA SAY ARAB SOURCES MORE RELIABLE THAN ISRAELI ARMY

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 30 (JTA) -- Foreign correspondents working in Israel told a public meeting Wednesday that they now put more faith in information from Palestinian sources than in official statements issued by the Israel Defense Force spokesman.

Mary Curtius of The Boston Globe and Martin Fletcher of NBC-TV were addressing a Tel Aviv University seminar on the Palestinian uprising, titled "Covering the Intifada."

They said that in the 1970s, journalists trusted the accuracy of the IDF spokesman's reports, but now, the spokesman has become less credible.

The spokesman, Brig. Gen. Ephraim Lapid, explained that a distance of 70 to 100 yards often separates clashing soldiers and rioters. The soldiers who open fire often do not know how many Palestinians they have shot. But the army relies on soldiers' accounts anyway, he said.

The Palestinians base their accounts on information provided by local hospitals where the casualties are treated. But, he added, the Palestinians sometimes disseminate wrong information "in the interests of their propaganda."

Willy Werkman, a veteran correspondent in Israel for Dutch television, contested Lapid's propaganda charge, implying that Israelis were guilty of it themselves.

The foreign correspondents, who are able to cross most borders without problems, agreed, however, that it is much easier to cover Israel than any Arab country, except Lebanon and Jordan.

U.N. SAYS ISRAEL BLOCKING LESSONS AT HOME WHILE ARAB SCHOOLS CLOSED

By Andrew Silow Carroll

UNITED NATIONS, March 30 (JTA) -- The Israeli military is barring efforts to provide basic education for some 36,000 Palestinian refugee children while U.N. schools in the West Bank remain closed, a U.N. agency has charged.

In a statement issued Thursday, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees claimed that Israeli authorities are barring attempts to provide interim instruction to young pupils while 90 of the 98 UNRWA schools in the West Bank remain closed.

The schools have been periodically closed for security reasons since the early days of the 15-month-old Palestinian uprising. They have been closed continuously since Jan. 21, said UNRWA. Israel claims the schools have served as centers for agitation.

UNRWA said it had been preparing at-home lessons for children in the first three grades, but had been informed by the Israeli Foreign Ministry that military security precluded introduction of the interim measures.

UNRWA said it had been informed by the Israeli Foreign Ministry that it shared the agency's concern that young people are being deprived of schooling and hoped that education could be resumed as soon as possible.

"We want them open at least as much as the U.N. does," said a spokesman for Israel's U.N. mission Thursday. "The facts are that when all the kids are together, agitators come and do collective work in a short time."

REFORM-CONSERVATIVE TENSIONS EMERGE IN DEBATE ON JEWISH UNITY

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, March 30 (JTA) -- Rabbis from the three major branches of Judaism agreed Wednesday night that there has never been, and likely never will be, Jewish religious unity in the United States.

But unlike the "Who Is a Jew" controversy, which exacerbated strains between Orthodox and non-Orthodox Jews, Wednesday night's debate, at the annual convention of the Rabbinical Assembly here, was marked by tension between Reform and Conservative Jews.

The debate began when Steven Cohen, visiting professor at the Jewish Theological Seminary, argued that as a way of solving Conservative Judaism's identity crisis, it should engage more in ideological conflict with the other two branches.

"We have done far too little to differentiate ourselves from Reform Judaism," Cohen said to the applause of many of the 600 Conservative rabbis attending the five-day convention.

Conservative Judaism differs from Reform "in the very significant minority of Conservative Jews who, though non-halachic, do maintain some attachment to Jewish tradition, as contrasted with the near absence by such individuals in Reform temples," Cohen said.

But Eugene Lipman, president of the Reform movement's Central Conference of American Rabbis, said he was "amused" by Cohen's comments about Reform Jews, saying "there are more serious Reform Jews than he thinks there are."

Christmas Trees And Separate Dishes

Cohen, a sociologist at Queens College, cited a survey that a third of Conservative Jews maintain separate sets of dishes for meat and dairy meals, compared with 4 percent of Reform Jews.

"I am not sure that two sets of dishes would constitute a serious concern for diet," Lipman retorted, saying he knows many Reform Jews who won't eat pork products, "and that's a consciousness -- they are very serious about it."

Cohen also said that "just 2 percent of Conservative members have Christmas trees in their homes as against 9 percent of Reform families."

"I am fascinated that the Christmas tree is still with us," Lipman responded. "I have not seen a Christmas tree in a Jewish home in 40 years. I guess there are some, but I would be willing to bet that they are geographically centered -- Deep South, Southwest -- and the people who have them are probably over the age of 50."

There is "a lot more tension today" between Conservative and Reform Jews than there has previously been, Lipman said.

Reform Jews, Lipman said, "have to come to terms with the fact that Conservative people with whom they work, live in the same neighborhood, won't come for dinner."

On other points, Lipman said there has been "an amazing evolution in the number of Reform congregations that don't have a lunch break on Yom Kippur."

And recently, 15 Reform Jewish day schools have been founded, "with more coming," he said.

Lipman also conceded that the Reform decision to accept patrilineal descent -- recognizing children as Jews if either parent is Jewish -- "has caused almost as much fuss in relationships

between Conservative rabbis and Reform rabbis and some lay people as it has between us and all of the branches of Orthodoxy."

'Dead Wrong' On Patrilineal Descent

Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, "was dead wrong" in thinking the uproar over the policy shift "would go away," he said.

Rabbi Wolfe Kelman, executive vice president of the assembly, who also participated in the debate, said differences on patrilineal descent have "forced us to work more closely together in areas where we can work together, realizing the areas that we cannot."

Rabbi Haskel Lookstein, former president of the New York Board of Rabbis and an Orthodox rabbi himself, said he is "not in favor of conflict right now, because I see a lot of conflict."

He spoke of Orthodox colleagues who "do not agree with the simple statement that we are all family." At a recent debate, "one of them got up and said, 'They are not my family,' speaking of Conservative and Reform Jews."

Disunity "is not between rabbis. It is between laity," Lookstein argued, citing Jewish laity for being "up in arms" over the "Who Is a Jew" issue. He said that if the branches of Judaism speak together "with civility," they can set common standards for conversion.

JEWS AND BARBIE DOCUMENTARY WIN SHARE OF ACADEMY AWARDS

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES, March 30 (JTA) -- Jewish nominees for the Academy Awards, though relatively few compared to previous years, ran true to form and walked off with their Oscars Wednesday night.

Dustin Hoffman earned a standing ovation from the 6,500 spectators in the Shrine Auditorium as he accepted the best actor award for his portrayal of an autistic savant in "Rain Man."

Sporting a three-day growth of beard, Hoffman accepted his Oscar in a halting, almost tearful, voice, as if still in character.

Director Barry Levinson, as expected, received his Oscar for "Rain Man," and the picture itself was named best film of the year.

Actor Jeff Goldblum, though not nominated, at least basked in the glory of his wife, as Geena Davis won the best supporting actress award for her offbeat role in "The Accidental Tourist."

A highly popular award, judging by audience applause, went to "Hotel Terminus: The Life and Times of Klaus Barbie," a shattering documentary on Nazi war crimes and French collaboration.

Marcel Ophuls, the producer and director, thanked his two home countries, France and the United States, in their respective languages.

An unplanned moment of drama came when Willem Dafoe walked on stage as an award presenter, looking faint and with his head closely shaved.

The actor, who had sported long flowing hair as Jesus in "The Last Temptation of Christ" and a businesslike haircut as an FBI agent in "Mississippi Burning," explained his appearance by noting that he had just come from Auschwitz.

The former Nazi death camp in Poland is the current locale for the upcoming film "Triumph of the Spirit," in which Dafoe plays a Greek-Jewish boxer who survives the Holocaust through his pugilistic skills.