

HEALTH ASSEMBLY POSTPONES VOTE ON GRANTING PLO FULL MEMBERSHIP

By Edwin Eytan and Tamar Levy

GENEVA, May 10 (JTA) -- The World Health Assembly voted Wednesday to postpone by 48 hours a debate on the Palestine Liberation Organization's request for admission into the World Health Organization with the rights of a sovereign state.

The 166-nation assembly, the WHO's governing body, will examine the issue at a Friday afternoon session.

But most observers believe the delay has significantly diminished chances that the PLO's bid will succeed.

The vote to postpone the debate was 56-47, with 20 abstentions. Both the United States and the Soviet Union backed the motion, which also was supported by Israel.

The motion was introduced by Austria, a country that has been sympathetic to the Palestinian cause, and it was seconded by Canada, which raised the level of its dialogue with the PLO in March.

The postponement was opposed by the Arab states and a number of Third World countries. But several African countries were among the 20 that abstained.

The real issue in the vote was not the PLO's request, but the prospect of crippling the WHO, a U.N. agency that provides health services on which many developing nations rely.

The United States served notice last week that it would withhold its \$73.8 million contribution to the WHO's fiscal 1990 budget if the PLO were to be admitted. Efforts to induce the PLO to withdraw its application failed.

U.S.-Israeli Cooperation

A vote on the PLO request had been scheduled on Wednesday afternoon. The American and Israeli delegations, which have been cooperating closely here, felt there was a good chance of defeating it. Nevertheless, the outcome was very much in doubt.

Israel's health minister, Ya'acov Tsur, and the U.S. secretary of health and human services, Dr. Louis Sullivan, decided to push for a postponement.

The two met at an Israel Independence Day party at the home of the Israeli ambassador.

When the assembly convened Wednesday afternoon, several Latin American, African and Pacific rim countries expected to vote against the PLO had not yet received instructions from their governments, leaving the issue very much in doubt.

After a brief legal skirmish, the assembly's president, Chen Min Khuang of China, put the postponement motion to a vote.

The Canadian delegate summed up the prevailing mood when he said, "It would give us all additional time to consider a reasonable solution."

Israeli diplomats here now feel relatively secure that the PLO bid will be defeated.

A PLO success in Geneva would improve chances for its admission into other U.N. agencies with the rights of a state.

The organization announced Tuesday that it

will apply to the Paris-based United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the Food and Agricultural Organization in Rome and the International Labor Organization in Geneva.

The PLO also is seeking admission into the International Telecommunications Union, which meets in Nice later this month.

A two-thirds majority is required to gain admission to those organizations. Admission to the WHO, however, requires only a simple majority vote.

IF UNESCO ADMITS PLO STATE, U.S. WON'T CONSIDER REJOINING

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, May 10 (JTA) -- The Bush administration warned the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Wednesday that there is no chance the United States will rejoin UNESCO if membership is granted to a "state of Palestine."

The Palestine Liberation Organization applied for admission to the Paris-based international organization Tuesday as part of its campaign to gain international recognition for its self-proclaimed state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The U.S. warning does not contain a threat of withdrawing funds from UNESCO, as hangs over the World Health Organization, since the United States has not appropriated any funds for UNESCO since it withdrew in 1984.

State Department deputy spokesman Richard Boucher said Wednesday that the United States left UNESCO because of the organization's politicization, longtime lack of budgetary restraint and poor management. Washington had been planning to review the decision this year, he said.

But, he said, it is "clear that admission of the PLO as 'Palestine' seriously damages any prospects for resuming U.S. membership in UNESCO."

Boucher also pointed out that admission of the PLO would violate the requirement that members be sovereign states.

"UNESCO is not an appropriate forum for resolution of this divisive issue, which involves serious legal and political questions," Boucher said.

"We have urged UNESCO to make every effort to prevent actions that would have adverse consequences for the organization, the U.N. system and the Middle East."

Boucher said the United States would bring up the PLO's attempts to join international organizations at its next dialogue with the PLO. He said this would adversely affect the dialogue, since it would take time away from more substantive subjects the PLO might wish to discuss.

ISRAEL'S 41ST CELEBRATED IN MOSCOW

By William Saphire

NEW YORK, May 10 (JTA) -- For the first time in 22 years, Israel's Independence Day was officially celebrated in Moscow on Wednesday with a diplomatic reception.

The guests included representatives of the Soviet Foreign Ministry.

The reception was hosted by the Israeli consular delegation, headed by Aryeh Levin, which has been in the Soviet capital since last summer, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency was informed by Rabbi Arthur Schneier of the Park East Synagogue here.

Schneier, who just returned from the Soviet Union, received the information by telephone from Rabbi Adolf Shayevitch, religious leader of Moscow's Choral Synagogue, which has a sister relationship with Park East.

Shayevitch said he marked Yom Ha'atzmaut by affixing a mezuzah to the door of the building at 56 Bolshaya Ordinka, in central Moscow, where the Israeli consular delegation is located. The building was the Embassy of Israel until the Soviet Union severed all relations with the Jewish state in 1967.

Shayevitch told Schneier that the reception was held at the Mezhdorodnaya Hotel, one of Moscow's better hostels.

About 60 people attended, including many Soviet Jews, reported Shayevitch, who attended the reception with his wife.

Schneier returned earlier this week from the Soviet Union, where he visited as co-chairman of an international rabbinic delegation that included three chief rabbis of cities in Israel.

During the mission, Moscow Mayor Valery Saikin signed an agreement promising to return a two-story building formerly owned by the Choral Synagogue.

The building, which is adjacent to the synagogue, will be used as a Jewish educational and community center.

ISRAEL CELEBRATES YOM HA'ATZMAUT WITH TRADITIONAL PICNICS AND HIKES

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 10 (JTA) -- Beaches and picnic grounds were packed Wednesday as hundreds of thousands of Israelis enjoyed mild weather and sunny skies on the 41st anniversary of their independence.

The sunbathers and picnickers included many religious Jews who made the most of the secular holiday. The Orthodox do not travel on the Sabbath and religious holidays, which are the only other non-working days for Israelis.

Public transportation operated on a normal schedule, but thousands chose to hike around the country, following routes pioneered by immigrants and soldiers in the early days of statehood.

Independence Day military parades were dropped years ago, but the navy and air force put on a joint air-sea exercise for the benefit of thousands of spectators who lined the Tel Aviv beach.

The Israel Defense Force opened many military camps to the public for the day. They were visited mostly by families with children, creating a Disneyland atmosphere.

Other Independence Day traditions included the World Bible Quiz, won this year by an Israeli youngster, Yaron Yanai, and a reception for the diplomatic corps given by President Chaim Herzog.

Independence Day receptions were also held in Moscow, Warsaw and Budapest, where Israeli diplomatic missions are posted for the first time since 1967.

President Herzog received IDF soldiers and officers who distinguished themselves in service this past year, as well as welcoming newly arrived immigrants at a festive ceremony in Jaffa.

Uri Gordon, head of the Jewish Agency's Immigration and Absorption Department, reported that 5,300 immigrants arrived in Israel during the past four months, a 4 percent increase over the same period last year.

He said there has also been a rise in the number of immigrants from the Soviet Union.

At present, an estimated 10,000 immigrants are living at absorption centers all over the country.

ISRAEL MORE SUPPORTIVE OF U.S. THAN ANY OTHER NATION IN U.N.

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, May 10 (JTA) -- If friends of the United States are measured by how often they vote with Washington in the U.N. General Assembly, then Israel can be called America's best friend.

Israel voted with the United States 91 percent of the time, more than any other nation, according to the sixth annual "Report to Congress on Voting Practices in the United Nations," which the State Department submitted Wednesday.

The next highest supporters of U.S. positions during the General Assembly session last fall were Britain, with 83.1 percent, and West Germany, with 78.8 percent.

Among Washington's Arab friends, Jordan supported the United States the most, 11.8 percent of the time.

Egypt supported the United States 8.6 percent of the time; Saudi Arabia, 8.3 percent; and Morocco, 7.8 percent.

Vernon Walters, who prepared the report before ending his term as the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, cautioned that the votes in the world body are only one dimension of a country's relationship to the United States and its support of U.S. interests.

"Nevertheless, because a number of decisions taken by U.N. bodies significantly affects these interests, the positions taken by member states at the United Nations should be considered while assessing the state of its overall relationship with the United States," Walters said.

SHAMIR HOSPITALIZED FOR FATIGUE, BUT SAID TO BE IN GOOD SPIRITS

By David Landau and Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 10 (JTA) -- Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir was reported in good spirits and working from his bed at the Hadassah University Hospital here Wednesday evening, several hours after he was admitted for what was described as fatigue.

A hospital spokesman said he would be discharged in 24 to 48 hours, after test results are known.

According to reports, Shamir took sick after receiving a blow at his home Tuesday. The nature of the blow was not disclosed.

Nevertheless, the 73-year-old prime minister went ahead with two scheduled Independence Day appearances.

He attended the final rounds of the International Bible Quiz, where he posed the traditional prime minister's question and made a short speech.

He also visited the Mevasseret Zion immigrant absorption center near Jerusalem.

When he continued to feel ill, his doctor ordered him to the hospital.

JEWISH HERITAGE WEEK MARKED AT WHITE HOUSE CEREMONIES

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, May 10 (JTA) -- Jewish Heritage Week was commemorated at the White House on Wednesday, marking a return of the observance to 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

The annual week, sponsored by the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, had not been marked with a White House ceremony since April 1985.

It was at that ceremony that then President Reagan was strongly criticized by Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel for planning to visit the Bitburg military cemetery in West Germany, where Nazi Waffen SS soldiers are buried.

Michael Miller, the JCRC's executive director, refused to "fault anybody" over the absence of ceremonies the last three years.

He noted that the 1984 and 1985 events were planned by Marshall Breger, Reagan's Jewish liaison, who resigned shortly after the Bitburg visit.

Breger attended the ceremony this year, as did State Department legal adviser Abraham Sofaer.

The ceremony featured speeches by James Billington, librarian of Congress, and Lynne Cheney, chairwoman of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

A prayer for President Bush's health was delivered by Rabbi Abraham Shemtov, national director of American Friends of Lubavitch.

Bush, who underwent a physical examination on Wednesday, "should receive a clean bill of health and God should grant him health and the ability to govern this country," Shemtov prayed.

Bush Praises Jewish People

For his part, in a proclamation mandated by Congress, Bush praised Jews for making "important contributions to every sphere of American life."

May 7 through 14 was designated as Jewish Heritage Week in bills approved by Congress, sponsored by Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.) and Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.).

The proclamation was presented by Bobbie Greene Kilberg, director of the White House's public liaison office, to Martin Begun, a vice president of the New York JCRC, who is also dean of New York University Medical School.

Kilberg said Bush, at a White House meeting last week with U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council members, "talked about the extraordinary spirit and faith of the Jewish people."

Meanwhile, at a Jewish Heritage Week ceremony at City Hall in New York on Monday, A.M. Rosenthal, columnist and former executive editor of The New York Times, and Bernard Charles, liaison on black affairs to Gov. Mario Cuomo, were honored for contributions to helping people "overcome differences."

Charles chairs the Coalition to Celebrate our Differences, a New York group.

This year's theme in New York commemorates the 25th anniversary of the enactment of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The Sam Levenson Memorial Awards, presented by New York state Attorney General Robert Abrams, are awarded annually to a Jew and non-Jew by the JCRC, the New York City Board of Education and the Board of Jewish Education of New York.

WJC URGES POPE TO USE AUTHORITY TO REMOVE CONVENT FROM AUSCHWITZ

By Michael Solomon

MONTREAL, May 10 (JTA) -- The World Jewish Congress called on Pope John Paul II this week to "exercise his authority" to order the prompt removal of a Carmelite convent from the grounds of the former Auschwitz concentration camp.

The resolution, adopted unanimously Monday at a meeting of the WJC Executive here, said the pontiff's action was necessary to implement the agreement major European Catholic cardinals, including the cardinal of Krakow, Franciszek Macharski, signed with Jewish leaders on Feb. 22, 1987, in Geneva.

It stipulated that the nuns would vacate the convent in two years. But to date, they have made no effort to move, and recently they erected a cross on the grounds.

Explaining the resolution, WJC President Edgar Bronfman said, "It is not only a matter of the Auschwitz convent, but the broader implications of historical revisionism in which the uniqueness of the Holocaust and the murder of the Jewish people is being suppressed."

WEST GERMAN GOVERNMENT ACCUSED OF DISCRIMINATING AGAINST REFUGEES

By David Kantor

BONN, May 10 (JTA) -- A prominent member of the opposition Green Party has accused the government of discriminating against Jews who come to West Germany as refugees from the Soviet Union and other East European countries.

Jutta Oesterle-Schwerin, a co-chairperson of the Green's parliamentary faction, alleged that only Jews among refugees from the East are singled out to undergo "humiliating procedures" in order to "prove" their German origins.

She charged that this demonstrated a "double standard" and bias on the part of the West German authorities.

According to Oesterle-Schwerin, who was born in Jerusalem and holds an Israeli as well as a German passport, the Jews who apply for admission to West Germany have stronger "German origins" than many of the non-Jewish applicants.

The federal prosecutor in Karlsruhe, responding to an initiative by the Foreign Ministry in Bonn, opened an investigation last month into the cases of Jews who allegedly provided forged documents to prove the German origins of other Jews coming from the Eastern bloc.

Proof would make them eligible for a wide range of benefits, including housing subsidies, financial assistance and German language courses.

ONE KILLED IN WEST BANK

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 10 (JTA) -- Bloodshed continued in the West Bank on Wednesday, despite a blanket curfew aimed at preventing violence during Israel's Independence Day.

An 18-year-old Palestinian, Sami Liftani, was shot to death when youths clashed with soldiers at the Kadura refugee camp near Ramallah.

In Jericho, police arrested Rabbi Meir Kahane and several members of his extremist Kach party after they rioted in the Arab town. They were questioned in connection with the vandalization of Arab cars.

**REMARK ON OPRAH WINFREY SHOW
DISCUSSED WITH ITS PRODUCERS
By Susan Birnbaum**

NEW YORK, May 10 (JTA) -- Producers of "The Oprah Winfrey Show" and the star herself met Tuesday with Jewish leaders in Chicago to deal with the fallout from statements on an edition of the talk show last week accusing Jews of ritual murder.

The program's production company, Harpo Inc., requested the meeting and asked the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith to assemble Jewish leaders to discuss the program. It was broadcast May 1 and watched by an estimated 8 million households.

Participating in the session were representatives of ADL, the Jewish Community Relations Council of Chicago, Greater Chicago Board of Rabbis, American Jewish Committee and American Jewish Congress.

Winfrey's popular syndicated show, known for delving into controversial subject matter, went off on an unexpected tangent May 1, when a guest dubbed "Rachel" alleged that she had witnessed infanticide practiced ritualistically in Jewish homes.

The subject of the program was satanic killings. It focused on the ritualistic slayings that took place recently in Matamoros, Mexico, where 15 bodies were unearthed from a mass grave. Guests on the show discussed ritualistic killings they claimed to have witnessed.

Winfrey introduced "Rachel" as someone who was in psychiatric treatment for a multiple personality disorder. The inclusion of an identifiably mentally troubled person whose responses could not be predicted has drawn criticism and was the heart of the discussions that took place Tuesday.

Calls From Around The Country

"Rachel" described herself as Jewish and said she had witnessed ritual sacrifice of children by her family. She went on to say that ritual sacrifice takes place in "other Jewish families across the country. It's not just my family."

The switchboards of ADL offices in Chicago, Pittsburgh, other cities and national headquarters in New York lit up immediately, as viewers saw the syndicated program, said Jeffrey Sinensky, director of the ADL's civil rights division.

Barry Morrison, director of the Chicago ADL office, which received the first calls of protest, called the program's producers immediately to convey viewers' distress. Sinensky wrote to Winfrey and her producers, who expressed willingness to convene on the problem.

Morrison said Tuesday's meeting with Winfrey, her producers and chief executive officer produced several things, including "a greater understanding on the part of Oprah Winfrey and her producers about the sensibilities of the Jewish community."

"It hopefully created a greater commitment to scrutinize invited guests for potential to exacerbate relations between groups."

The Jewish representatives "felt very strongly that she intended no harm and was not maliciously motivated, did not want to see the Jewish people portrayed in a negative light and was sorry for whatever harm was rendered or offense taken," said Morrison.

Winfrey, not "Rachel," first brought up the woman's religion, but also expressed disbelief that Jews practiced ritual killing.

Winfrey asked, "Does everyone else think it's a nice Jewish family from the outside? You appear to be a nice Jewish girl."

"Rachel" pointed out that "not all Jewish people sacrifice babies. It's not a very typical thing."

Winfrey responded, "I think we kind of know that."

The talk-show host also said, "This is the first time I heard of any Jewish people sacrificing babies. But anyway, so you witnessed the sacrifice?"

Rachel said that when she "was very young, I was forced to participate . . . to sacrifice an infant."

Winfrey also interviewed another panel member, Tina Grossman, identified as a counselor of ritual abuse victims. Saying she was Jewish, she described the Passover seder. Grossman said, "But before there was Christ and before there was a system of one God, there was paganism, and it still exists in the world."

Morrison commented that Grossman "mentioned the rituals of Passover in such a way that it was very easy for listeners to confuse those rituals with the rituals of satanic worship, and that compounded the problem."

**SHAMIR REVEALS HOW FAMILY
DIED DURING THE HOLOCAUST
By David Landau**

JERUSALEM, May 10 (JTA) -- Yitzhak Shamir has always been known as a man who plays things close to his vest, whether it be of a political or personal nature.

So his revelation last week about the death of his family in Nazi Europe was met with much surprise, as well as armchair debate on the psychological nature of the Israeli prime minister's motivations and fears.

While reading out loud the names of his family members killed by the Nazis, Shamir disclosed that his father was killed by Polish childhood friends in his own village, after he succeeded in escaping from a German death train.

"My father, Shlomo Ysernitzky, who escaped before the train left for a death camp and while seeking shelter among friends in the village where he grew up, they, his friends from childhood, killed him," Shamir said in a trembling voice.

Shamir revealed this on Holocaust Remembrance Day last week, while participating in a daylong public reading of names of Holocaust victims at the Knesset.

He also listed many other members of his family who died at the hands of the Nazis. His mother, Pearl, and a sister apparently died in death camps, while another sister was shot dead by the Nazis.

An aide said he was unsure what prompted Shamir to go public with the information.

Shamir's family experiences have often prompted conjecture about his political motivations. In Sunday's New York Times Magazine, the paper's former Jerusalem bureau chief writes that Shamir's purported intransigence is the result of an obsession with the Holocaust.

Shamir "exemplifies those Israeli leaders whose vision of tomorrow is yesterday," wrote Thomas Friedman.

Shamir, 73, was born and raised in the village of Rozinov. He left in the early '30s to study at the university in Warsaw. He arrived in Palestine in 1935.