

NCSJ CONDITIONALLY SUPPORTS WAIVER OF JACKSON-VANIK AMENDMENT SANCTIONS
By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, June 13 (JTA) -- The National Conference on Soviet Jewry said Tuesday it was "prepared to support a waiver" of sanctions contained in the 1975 Jackson-Vanik Amendment, if President Bush receives "appropriate assurances" from the Soviet Union in four key areas.

The conference's preconditions for granting such a waiver are a sustained high level of Soviet emigration; codification of emigration laws; progress on resolving the cases of long-term refusniks; and reversal of emigration refusals to those who allegedly had access to state secrets.

In essence, the vote gives a green light to the Bush administration to urge the 12-month waiver, something the administration would be loath to do without significant American Jewish support.

"It gives a signal that if they feel comfortable with a waiver, that's their option," said Martin Wenick, executive director of the National Conference.

A waiver would grant the Soviets most-favored-nation trade status and allow them to receive U.S. government credits for the first time since 1975.

On May 12, President Bush said he would support a temporary waiver if the Soviet Union codifies its emigration laws. A day earlier, Secretary of State James Baker said it would also be appropriate to waive the less-powerful Stevenson Amendment, which withholds U.S. government loan guarantees, should the emigration reforms be institutionalized.

President Bush "has that first responsibility -- to act in the best interest of the United States," Shoshana Cardin, chairwoman of the National Conference, said at a news conference convened Tuesday afternoon to announce her organization's new policy stance.

Only Three Members Dissented

The new policy was approved overwhelmingly by the conference's Board of Governors, which met here Monday and Tuesday. Of 52 voting members, only three dissented and one abstained.

The three voting against the policy change were the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry and representatives of two undisclosed Jewish federations. A third federation representative abstained.

The vote came after four hours of discussion and debate that were "wrought with emotion," said Cardin. The 14-year-old amendment has become for the Soviet Jewry movement the ultimate measure of U.S. intentions on Soviet emigration matters.

There was no discussion of the Stevenson Amendment, because it did not have the same "vested interest" for the Jewish community, said Cardin.

The National Conference, a coalition of 47 national Jewish groups and close to 300 Jewish community relations councils and federations, announced Jan. 10 that it planned to reassess its position on Jackson-Vanik.

The organized Jewish community had been anxiously awaiting NCSJ's decision, in the wake of

the marked increase in Soviet Jewish emigration over the past six months, projected to exceed 40,000 this year.

Supporters of a waiver include the World Jewish Congress, the American Jewish Congress, the Workmen's Circle and the majority of delegates to the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council plenum in February.

Delegates to the NJCRAC plenum included representatives from 110 local Jewish community relations councils, as well as national Jewish groups including the American Jewish Committee and American Jewish Congress.

NJCRAC Takes Action, Too

The decision Tuesday is "very much consistent" with an action taken Monday by the executive committee of NJCRAC, which met in Cincinnati.

Albert Chernin, executive vice chairman of NJCRAC, said in an interview from Cincinnati that his group also based its decision on "assurances" that the U.S. would seek the cooperation of Congress in granting a temporary waiver should the Soviet Union codify its immigration laws.

Opponents of a waiver at this time include the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, representing 50 local Soviet Jewry councils and 100,000 members worldwide.

Pamela Cohen, national president of the Union of Councils, said in an interview from Chicago that the National Conference decision could be seen by the Soviets as "a premature major concession."

Cohen said the Union of Councils wants more than "assurances" of Soviet progress, but "resolution of all the long-term cases and publication and implementation of legislation" consistent with past Soviet promises.

The Soviets pledged in January, in a human rights agreement signed in Vienna, to codify a liberalization of its emigration practices.

But according to Cardin of the National Conference, "this is not the end of the process, but a beginning." Noting that her organization's announcement "culminated six months of study," she called this a "historic day."

(JTA staff writer Andrew Silow Carroll in New York contributed to this report.)

RABIN SAYS DEPLOYMENT OF TROOPS DURING ELECTIONS IS NEGOTIABLE
By Edwin Eytan

PARIS, June 13 (JTA) -- Israel will not agree to remove security forces from the territories during the proposed Palestinian elections there. But where troops will be stationed is a matter "open to negotiations," Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin said here Tuesday.

Rabin, in Paris on an official visit and to attend the air show at Le Bourget, spoke to a group of French intellectuals about Israel's peace plan which, among other things, calls for Palestinian elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"I don't want to go into any details before we have a positive reply from our future negotiating partners," the defense minister said.

So far, none of those prospective interlocutors has stepped forward.

Rabin maintained that the Palestinians now have an option. "They must choose between negotiations and violence. It is up to them to make the decision," he said.

The Palestine Liberation Organization has informed the United States that it would consider the election option only if guaranteed that Israeli military forces will be withdrawn from the territories beforehand.

Israeli leaders have ruled out such an evacuation. But Rabin's stated willingness to discuss where troops would be deployed indicates that the Israeli position on this point may be more flexible than previously believed.

Rabin said that Israel has two parallel tasks in the administered territories: to maintain order and to prepare for the negotiating process.

He spoke at a breakfast meeting with a group of about 20 intellectuals, including Marie-Claire Mendes-France, widow of the late French-Jewish prime minister, Pierre Mendes-France.

Mendes-France has been sympathetic to both Israel and the Palestinian cause. She met with PLO leader Yasir Arafat last Friday in Tunis.

Rabin praised U.S. Secretary of State James Baker's May 22 speech on the Middle East, though it angered many Israelis.

"The only misgivings I have deal with the fact that he talked about the final outcome of the negotiating process by calling on us to give up the vision of a Greater Israel.

"The final outcome should be left open," Rabin said.

Rabin met Monday with Premier Michel Rocard and with the French defense minister, Jean-Pierre Chevenement, on Tuesday. He was due to return to Israel Wednesday morning.

IDF CRACKS DOWN ON WEST BANK GANGS, ARRESTING 50 AND DEMOLISHING HOMES By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, June 13 (JTA) -- The Israel Defense Force cracked down this week on terrorist gangs in the Nablus and Jenin areas that have targeted Palestinians believed to be cooperating with the Israeli authorities.

The army also imposed a curfew on the Tulkarm refugee camp Tuesday following disturbances there.

More than 50 arrests were made in the Nablus area. Four houses belonging to suspects were demolished and six were sealed off, following the arrests.

The security forces hope the roundup put an end to the yearlong firebomb attacks in the Nablus area, which badly burned several people and caused extensive property damage.

Targets of the bombings included the local planning office, a Bank Leumi branch and several cafes.

The Jenin gang was responsible for the death of a local policeman last year. The homes of two of its members were demolished, and four other houses were sealed off.

The demolitions were carried out after the High Court of Justice rejected an appeal from a family living in one of the two homes. The other family did not appeal.

In other punitive actions, the IDF demolished a house in Beit Ummar and sealed two others in Samua village, in the Hebron area. The owners were arrested for allegedly attacking local residents and for other acts of violence.

A Gaza military court imposed prison sen-

tences Tuesday on three Arab youths accused of illegal assembly and incitement.

One received 30 months in jail and another got two years for incitement. A third youth was sentenced to 20 months in jail and fined \$635 for throwing objects at an army patrol.

The army barred a pro-Palestinian group of Israelis on Tuesday from entering the Dehaishe refugee camp, near Bethlehem. The army said it could not be responsible for its safety.

Meanwhile, Shmuel Goren, coordinator of government activities in the administered territories, told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on Tuesday that the civil administration is searching for ways to reopen Palestinian schools.

Israel has come under considerable criticism abroad for the closures.

Goren said the civil administration would only agree to reopen the schools if it received guarantees they would not be used for incitement to violence.

SAGGING TRADE, UNEMPLOYMENT RISE POINT TO A RECESSION IN ISRAEL By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, June 13 (JTA) -- Israel's economy appears to be sinking into a recession and business leaders do not expect it to recover this year, despite rosier forecasts by the Treasury.

According to newly released figures, the trade deficit has widened, exports are stagnant and unemployment is on the rise.

Industrial output has fallen 2.5 percent so far this year, on top of a 3.5 percent decline in 1988, the Central Bureau of Statistics reported.

Treasury officials say the immediate effect of the economic downturn has been a sharp drop in tax revenues, which may force a further tightening of the state budget.

Officials of the Manufacturers Association told a news conference in Tel Aviv on Monday that measures the Treasury adopted in January to stimulate economic growth were insufficient.

They accused the country's economic policymakers of misleading the public, dubbing them the "national anesthetizers."

Exports have not risen despite the devaluation of the shekel and the erosion of salaries, the business leaders pointed out.

Industrial wages for the first three months of 1989 dropped to the level of the second quarter of 1987.

ANOTHER SOLDIER DIES IN ACCIDENT By Cathrine Gerson

JERUSALEM, June 13 (JTA) -- A reserve soldier was killed Tuesday morning and two other soldiers were injured in the second fatal road accident in two days involving an Israel Defense Force jeep.

It occurred in Halhoul, near Hebron in the West Bank, under circumstances that were not immediately clear. The driver is believed to have lost control of the jeep, possibly because a tire blew out.

The soldier who died was identified as staff Sgt. Rafi Baruch. The two injured soldiers were taken to Hadassah University Hospital, Ein Kerem.

An IDF soldier was killed and two others injured only 24 hours earlier, when their jeep overturned in the southern Lebanon security zone.

AUSCHWITZ CONVENT CASTS A SHADOW OVER INTERFAITH CEREMONY IN BRAZIL

By Rochelle Saidel

SAO PAULO, Brazil, June 13 (JTA) -- The issue of a Carmelite convent on the grounds of the former Auschwitz death camp cast a shadow over an interfaith ceremony here Sunday night at which a Catholic and a Jew were honored by the Brazilian Bishops Conference.

Dr. Gerhart Riegner of Geneva, co-chairman of the World Jewish Congress Executive, and Cardinal Johannes Willebrands, president of the Vatican Commission for Religious Relations With the Jews, received the Patriarch Abraham awards.

They were presented by the Bishops Conference's Commission for Catholic-Jewish Dialogue, in recognition of the leaders' lifelong devotion to strengthening relations between Catholics and Jews.

The presentation was made by Dr. Jihan Sadat, a prominent Moslem lay leader who is the widow of the late President Anwar Sadat of Egypt.

Riegner, in his remarks, urged the Bishops Conference to "use its influence in Rome and Krakow" to resolve "a serious conflict between the Jewish community and the Polish Church" over the convent.

He explained that its presence at a site of Jewish mass extermination "deeply hurts Jews everywhere" and, "because of the profound emotions it arouses, seriously risks affecting the future harmonious Catholic-Jewish dialogue."

"We had thought that we had found a solution to the problem in the friendly talks in Geneva in February, 1987," Riegner said.

"But unfortunately, nothing has happened so far to implement those agreements."

He was referring to an agreement four European cardinals signed with world Jewish leaders in Geneva on Feb. 22, 1987.

Under the agreement, the Catholic Church proposed to relocate the convent within two years.

25 Years Of Progress

The deadline expired in February. The convent remains on the site and a 24-foot-high cross has been erected there in recent months.

The WJC Executive urged Pope John Paul II last month to "exercise his authority to assure the removal of the convent from the grounds of Auschwitz without further delay."

Willebrands described Riegner as "one of the main pillars" of Catholic-Jewish relations over the past 25 years.

He reviewed the background to the "great change in our attitudes toward one another" that took place after the Second Vatican Council in 1965.

He recalled that shortly afterward, the Vatican established an office for Jewish relations. Then, in 1974, it instituted a Commission for Religious Relations With the Jews, now headed by Willebrands.

In 1970, a permanent international liaison committee was created, with five Catholic members approved by the pope and five Jewish members representing the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations.

Riegner was the first chairman of IJCIC.

In his speech accepting his award, the WJC official hailed the Brazilian Bishops Conference for condemning anti-Semitism, acknowledging "the

continuing tradition of the Jewish people as a living community" and recognizing "the right of the Jews to a tranquil political existence in their country of origin."

He noted that "for the Jewish people, these rights have become a reality in the existence of Israel."

The Vatican does not have diplomatic relations with the Jewish state.

'Model Of Mutual Recognition'

The awards ceremony was organized and overseen by Rabbi Henry Sobel of Sao Paulo and Leonardo Martin, coordinator of the Commission for Catholic-Jewish Dialogue of the Bishops Conference.

Sobel, spiritual leader of Congregacao Israelita Paulista, which is the largest synagogue in all of Latin America, called the event a milestone in the history of Catholic-Jewish relations in Brazil.

He noted that Brazil is the largest Catholic country in the world, with a population of 145 million, 90 percent of them Catholic. The Jewish population numbers about 150,000.

Despite this ratio of nearly 1,000 to 1, relations between Catholics and Jews in Brazil "are a model of mutual recognition and respect," Sobel said.

"The experience of Catholics and Jews in Brazil, working together against PLO extremists on the left and incipient neo-Nazi groups on the right, offers a paradigm for joint action in the face of common concerns -- and for building understanding of each other," the Sao Paulo rabbi said.

In her keynote address after presenting the awards, Sadat spoke of Abraham as the father of the three faiths and gave an overview of Abraham in the Koran and Islamic literature.

IRANIAN JEWS MAY BE WORSE OFF IN AFTERMATH OF KHOMEINI'S DEATH

NEW YORK, June 13 (JTA) -- As bad as their situation was under the rule of the late Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the Jews of Iran may find themselves in even more precarious straits under his successor.

That is the opinion of Rabbi Shlomo Berger, director of the Near and Middle East Section of the Agudath Israel of America. He is considered to be an authority on Iran's Jewish community, which is said to number between 25,000 and 30,000.

"While Khomeini was alive, the Jewish community encountered hardship and suffering, but the political atmosphere was relatively stable and they usually had a clear idea where they stood," Berger said.

"Now, with various factions rivaling for control, the uncertainty in itself compounds the precariousness of the Jews' situation."

Berger, who heads Agudath Israel's worldwide assistance efforts for Jews in distress, said his office is besieged by telephone calls from Iranian Jews who settled in the United States in recent years, seeking information about events in Iran.

He said his organization has received updated information from Jews who left Iran after Khomeini's death. But he would not be specific.

"We are monitoring the situation very closely. It's time to be alert and to pray that things will work out favorably," Berger said.

MEDIEVAL HAGGADAH UP FOR AUCTION SAID TO HAVE BEEN STOLEN YEARS AGO

By Allison Kaplan

NEW YORK, June 13 (JTA) -- A valuable French medieval Haggadah set to be auctioned in Geneva next week was stolen several years ago from Poland, Judaica experts say.

The Jewish Historical Institute of Warsaw, which last possessed the Wolf Haggadah, has alerted the police, the Polish Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Polish Foreign Ministry that the item is being auctioned in Switzerland, said Rabbi Philip Hiat, who has been in contact with the institute.

Hiat is assistant to the president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

The Wolf Haggadah, valued at half a million dollars, according to its pre-sale estimate, is expected to be the highlight of a June 19 auction conducted by Habsburg Feldman Co., the first major auction of Judaica held in Geneva.

But Hiat is calling on Habsburg Feldman to facilitate the return of the Haggadah to Warsaw.

"It should be returned to where it was stolen from," he said.

In 1982, Hiat organized the showing of the Wolf Haggadah, along with other Judaica, in an exhibit that traveled to three U.S. cities.

The exhibit, called "Fragments of Greatness Rediscovered," was displayed in New York's Jewish Museum before being taken to Baltimore and Los Angeles.

Habsburg's managing director, David Feldman, has said that the anonymous owner of the Haggadah had supplied his auction house with documentation of legal ownership.

Hiat called that documentation "pure, utter nonsense."

The Wolf Haggadah is named for a 19th-century German collector who donated the Haggadah to Berlin's Jewish community. It is believed that the Haggadah was confiscated by the Nazis, and ended up in Poland after World War II.

Hiat said the Haggadah was offered for sale two years ago in England, but the prospective buyer changed her mind after hearing it was stolen.

The richly illustrated Haggadah "is a very rare object, and very valuable," said Menahem Schmelzer, professor of medieval Hebrew literature at the Jewish Theological Seminary. "My concern is that this fine piece should become accessible to the public and should be preserved."

WORLDWIDE COMMEMORATIONS HELD MARKING ANNE FRANK'S BIRTHDAY

By Andrew Silow Carroll

NEW YORK, June 13 (JTA) -- The small, gray-haired woman climbed the marble pulpit and addressed the audience in a soft Dutch accent.

"I was Anna Frank's playmate. We used to meet after school in the big square in Amsterdam South. She was lively and popular and although we were the same age, she was already much more mature. While we were playing marbles, she was already smiling at boys.

"I remember being taken to meet her mother at their apartment. Five years later, beside a railway track in Russia, after our liberation from Auschwitz, I introduced my mother to Mr. Frank. In 1953, Anna became my posthumous stepsister."

Eva Schloss told her simple tale at a commemorative concert Monday night at New York's

Cathedral of Saint John the Divine, on what would have been Anne Frank's 60th birthday.

Frank died in the Nazi concentration camp at Bergen-Belsen in 1945, a month before British troops liberated the camp on April 15 and three months shy of her 16th birthday.

The diary she kept as her family hid from the Nazis in an Amsterdam attic, saved by non-Jewish friends and released by her father, has for 40 years pricked the conscience of the world.

The concert, sponsored by the American Friends of the Anne Frank Center and the International Center for Holocaust Studies of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, was one of the largest events being held this week worldwide to mark the anniversary.

Other ceremonies included a lecture at the Holocaust Resource Center in Allentown, Pa., special broadcasts on public television, and art exhibits and discussion groups at youth centers throughout Frankfurt, West Germany, the city of Anne's birth.

ADL chose the occasion to release a special Holocaust curriculum for secondary school students, and Doubleday used the event to publish an unexpurgated critical edition of the diary.

For Schloss and others appearing at the New York commemoration, including the actress Liv Ullman, the anniversary was a time not only to remember the gifts of the young writer but to decry those evils -- from war to homelessness -- that still cause the deaths of children.

The Brooklyn Philharmonic Orchestra played conductor Lukas Foss' "Elegy for Anne Frank," composed specially for the concert. And high-school student Matthew Silver read his prize-winning essay, "What Anne Frank Means to Me."

"Why weren't tears shed and protests held when they could have saved the victims?" he asked, his voice echoing and extending into the far reaches of the cavernous cathedral. "We must stand up for morality and decency and never allow inhumanity to be accepted by our silence."

HUMOR CONFERENCE NO LAUGHING MATTER

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, June 13 (JTA) -- The Third International Conference on Jewish Humor will be held at Tel Aviv University here next week -- but the participants will not be telling jokes or talking about the Palestinian uprising, the main topic of conversation in Israel these days.

Noting that politics remains the focus of any conversation in Israel, Avner Ziv, a psychology professor at the university, said that "there is life outside of politics. In fact, one of the original things about the conference is that there will not be one word about the intifada."

Sam Girgus, of the University of Oregon, will be lecturing on "Philip Roth and Woody Allen: Freudian Poetics and the Humor of the Oppressed," while Paulo Santarcangelo of Italy's University of Turin will talk about "Fundamental Features of Jewish Humor in Time and Space."

Ziv pointed out that when the Jews started leaving Eastern Europe, the "schlemiels" (fools) went to America and the "chutzpaniks" (gutsy ones) went to Israel.

The fools continued to invent and trade Jewish jokes in the "goldena medina," while the hard-headed idealists put their chutzpah to work clawing out the Jewish state.

But in the process, they became so serious, they lost one of the best Jewish traits -- humor.