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SOVIETS OK NEW EMIGRATION LAW; JACKSON-VANIK COULD BE WAIVED By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Nov. 16 (JTA) -- The Supreme Soviet this week gave initial approval to an emigration reform law that may lead the United States to waive the Jackson-Vanik amendment, which has restricted U.S.-Soviet trade since 1974.

President Bush said in May that he would be prepared to grant a one-year waiver of the amendment "should the Soviet Union codify its emigration laws, in accord with international standards, and implement its new laws faithfully."

A State Department source said it would "directly contradict" U.S. policy for Bush to waive the amendment on or before his meetings with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, scheduled to take place aboard ships off Malta on Dec. 2-3.

The Jackson-Vanik amendment to the 1974 Foreign Trade Act, co-sponsored by the late Sen. Henry Jackson (D-Wash.) and former Rep. Charles Vanik (D-Ohio), linked most-favored-nation trade status for the Soviet Union and other Communist bloc countries to their emigration policies.

In announcing Bush's statement, State Department spokesperson Margaret Tutwiler denied that the United States and Soviet Union have already begun to negotiate on a commercial trade agreement, which would be needed to actually lower U.S. tariffs on Soviet goods.

The Soviet emigration law passed with a 355-10 vote, with five abstentions. Soviet passage of the amendment came on a first reading of the bill.

It next goes to the Supreme Soviet's Committee on Foreign Affairs, then back to the Supreme Soviet for possible passage.

Limit On 'State Secrets'

The law sets a five-year limit on the possession of "state secrets" as grounds for denying the right to emigrate. It does not state if the condition will apply retroactively.

A State Department source said the Soviet Union gave assurances that "secrecy" refuseniks will have their cases re-evaluated by emigration officials.

Yuri Dubinin, the Soviet ambassador to the United States, said at a news conference Thursday that the "state secrets" basis for denying the right to emigrate could be extended beyond five years only in "exceptional cases," and then not by administrative action, but by the Supreme Soviet's Committee on Citizenship.

He also said he knew of no time constraint the legislation would place on the OVIR emigration agency for granting visas.

The legislation also reduces the power of "poor relatives" to stop members of their family from emigrating because they would supposedly lose financial support.

The new law would force them to bring any such allegations to Soviet courts for adjudication, said Soviet Embassy spokesman Boris Malakhov.

In addition, the legislation apparently paves the way for Soviet Jews to directly apply to emigrate to the country in which they intend to reside.

Actually, this procedure went into effect

Oct. 1, because of new American immigration restrictions, which were predicated on Soviet passage of this emigration law.

The two major U.S. Soviet Jewry groups, the National Conference on Soviet Jewry and the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, welcomed the Supreme Soviet's passage of the measure.

But they are divided over when would be an appropriate time for Bush to waive the amendment.

In June, the National Conference, a coalition of 47 national Jewish groups and nearly 300 Jewish community relations councils and federations, said it would support a waiver if Bush receives Soviet assurances in four key areas: sustained level of emigration; limits on "state secrets"; reversal of refusals to "poor relatives"; and progress on cases of long-term refuseniks.

In a statement Tuesday, Shoshana Cardin, the National Conference chairwoman, praised the language on state secrets and expressed hope that the measure will augur "full religious and cultural rights to all Soviet citizens."

Pamela Cohen, president of the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, said Wednesday that the group will not support a waiver until "final enactment" of the legislation, and its "fair implementation."

Dubinin said Thursday the Soviets had not received any assurances that Bush would waive Jackson-Vanik. But, he said, "We expect positive steps from the American side."

42 LEADERS SIGN PROTEST STATEMENT EXPRESSING DIFFERENCES WITH SHAMIR

By Mark Joffe

CINCINNATI, Nov. 16 (JTA) -- Forty-two prominent American Jewish leaders sent a letter Thursday to visiting Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, asserting that there are "profound differences" in the American Jewish community over his peace policies.

The letter was delivered to Shamir in Washington, in advance of his address here Thursday night to the 58th General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations.

Its undisguised purpose was to prevent the prime minister from claiming that his warm reception here is proof that the American Jewish community fully supports his peace policies.

"When you are presented to the General Assembly and all rise to greet you with every courtesy that is due the prime minister of Israel, we respectfully ask of you this: Please do not mistake courtesy for consensus, or applause for endorsement of all the policies you pursue," the letter says.

The letter points out that American Jews hold "diverse views" on the Middle East peace process.

"We have differed on how best to move toward implementation of your government's proposal for elections in the West Bank and Gaza," it says.

"More basically, profound differences exist with respect to the principle of land for peace with secure borders, a principle that some reject outright, but, we believe, most American Jews do not reject."

Shamir has stated clearly on several occasions that he is opposed to giving up additional territory as part of a peace settlement.

Among the signers of the letter were Theodore Mann and Lewis Weinstein, both past chairmen of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations; and three past chairpersons of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council: Jacqueline Levine, Michael Pelavin and Weinstein.

Also signing it were a number of prominent leaders from the local federations, including Morton Mandel, past president of CJF; Peggy Tishman of New York; Esther Leah Ritz of Milwaukee; and past presidents of the federations in Boston, Houston and Miami.

Leaders of Reform and Conservative Judaism were also represented, as well as such names as actor Theodore Bikel and Hyman Bookbinder, the former Washington representative of the American Jewish Committee.

According to Mann, who helped organize the effort, the letter was intended to prevent a repeat of what happened in the spring of 1988, after Shamir met with the United Jewish Appeal young leadership in Miami.

At that time, Shamir returned to Israel and reported that American Jews "agree with everything I say and do," said Mann, a former president of the American Jewish Congress.

If the prime minister did that now, it would be "very harmful for the Israeli public to believe that and even more harmful for the (Bush) administration to think that," he said in an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

The letter is careful to say that "neither American Jewry nor the U.S. government can impose a solution or a process on you and the Israeli people. Only the Israeli people and their democratically-elected government can make final judgments on these matters.

"But we owe you more than courtesy and expressions of respect," it reads. "We owe you honesty and clarity as well."

Mann said the letter was significant insofar as its signers represent the mainstream of American Jewish life. "These are not in any way fringe people," he said.

AGUDAT YISRAEL QUILTS COALITION OVER LIKUD BACKING OF RIGHTS BILL

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Nov. 16 (JTA) -- The ultra-Orthodox Agudat Yisrael party formally severed its ties with Likud on Thursday, declaring the break to be unconditional.

It acted after the Knesset voted overwhelmingly Wednesday for a human rights bill. The Orthodox parties fear such a bill because it provides for a constitutional court which could invalidate religious legislation.

The defection by Aguda and the profound displeasure expressed by other religious factions renewed speculation that the Labor Party could draw Orthodox support for a narrow government to replace its shaky coalition with Likud, although such talks are not expected in the immediate future.

Agudah, which holds five Knesset seats, seceded last week from the Likud-led coalition, complaining that Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir failed to keep promises he made to them when the coalition was formed a year ago.

Agudah politicians made clear it was only a

trial separation. They said the party would return to the coalition in two months if it was satisfied that Likud made good on its pledges.

But the divorce is now final, according to the chairman of Agudah's Knesset faction, Rabbi Moshe Feldman.

Another ultra-Orthodox party, Shas, said it was profoundly hurt. While Shas Knesset member Yair Levy predicted there would not be a formal "divorce," he said relations with Likud were severely damaged.

Shas leader Arye Deri, the minister of interior, reportedly warned his Likud colleagues Wednesday that the human rights bill would be "a snowball that will eventually bring down this government."

HEART OF SLAIN ISRAELI SOLDIER DONATED TO SAVE LIFE OF ARAB

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Nov. 16 (JTA) -- In an unusual humanitarian gesture, the heart of a slain Israel Defense Force soldier was transplanted Wednesday to save the life of a 54-year-old East Jerusalem Arab.

The transplant took place only hours after the soldier died of wounds suffered in the ambush of his jeep in the Gaza Strip Monday.

The singular sequence of events began when doctors at Soroka Hospital in Beersheba gave up hope for the life of Sgt. Ze'ev Traum, 40, an IDF reservist from Moshav Yodfat in Galilee and the father of four children.

The doctors asked his wife if she would agree to donate his heart after death. She agreed, but has since refused to discuss the matter.

The heart recipient, identified as Khader Hanna, was one of two patients called to Hadasah University Hospital when a heart for transplant was made available.

Hanna's wife and three daughters waited out the five-hour operation in a room near the operating theater. They, too, declined to comment when informed by newsmen of the identity of the donor.

Hanna has since been reported to be in stable condition.

The operation was the ninth heart transplant performed at the hospital since it began those procedures 18 months ago.

Meanwhile, Traum was buried Friday at Moshav Yodfat.

He and another IDF reservist, Col. Yisrael Trechtenbroit, 43, of Afula, suffered head wounds in the ambush. Trechtenbroit died instantly while Traum was rushed to Soroka Hospital in critical condition.

IDF sources said they were the first military casualties in the Gaza Strip caused by firearms since the Palestinian uprising began two years ago.

Gaza was declared a closed military zone and a massive manhunt was launched for the killers, believed to be three gunmen who used Kalachnikov automatic assault rifles and attacked the jeep from the rear.

The search continued Thursday, but curfews were lifted in most of the territory as the investigation shifted from ground search to intelligence work.

Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin visited the area, and assured the members of the unit to which the slain reservists were attached that the assailants would be caught.

SYRIA EASING RESTRICTION ON JEWS; WILL ALLOW SINGLE WOMEN TO LEAVE

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Nov. 16 (JTA) -- Syria intends to make it easier for Jews to emigrate, specifically members of "divided families" and unmarried women, the State Department said last week.

The department praised Syria for taking a "more flexible approach" toward its Jewish population, including its stated intention of granting visas to unwed Jewish women who were having difficulty finding husbands.

The department said Syria's Foreign Ministry outlined the new approach to Edward Djerejian, the U.S. ambassador to Damascus.

The State Department estimates that there are 3,800 Jews living in Syria, including 3,000 in Damascus, 600 in Aleppo and 200 in Kamishli.

An administration source said Syria was motivated largely by a "desire to be accepted by the West and to gain certain advantages," including the lifting of U.S. economic sanctions.

The sanctions were imposed in 1986 after a British court implicated Syria in the attempted bombing in London of an El Al Airlines plane, which had more than 230 U.S. citizens aboard.

The sanctions include not allowing Syria to receive U.S. foreign aid and goods or technology that would improve its military capabilities. Syria is also barred from receiving Export-Import Bank loans or receiving subsidized wheat from the Agriculture Department.

The State Department also praised Syria's decision to bring to trial Salim Soued, 38, and Eli Soued, 27. The Soued brothers have been detained for two years without a trial on the grounds of having visited Israel.

Visitation Rights

Syria told the State Department that it would allow relatives of the brothers to visit them -- a promise Syria has fulfilled, a State Department source said Wednesday.

Under Syrian law, visiting Israel is illegal and will likely remain so until Syria ends its state of war with Israel, the source added.

Besides the Soueds, three other Jews are in Syrian jail, including Jacques Lalo, 50, who was arrested for allegedly trying to escape from Syria.

The other two imprisoned Syrian Jews are Albert Laham, 48, and his son Victor, 18, who were also caught trying to escape.

Suri Kasirer, executive director of the recently formed New York-based Council for the Rescue of Syrian Jews, said they have been in jail since December 1987, whereas Moslems trying to escape are generally incarcerated for just 15 days.

The Council for the Rescue of Syrian Jews has provided the U.S. Embassy in Damascus with a list of 11 of the estimated 400 divided Jewish families in Syria. Other families did not want to be identified as wanting to emigrate, for fear of reprisal from the Syrian government, said Kasirer.

She said that in general, young Syrian Jewish men -- but not women -- want to postpone marriage until they are able to leave Syria. A large number of men have tried to escape from Syria, but women fear being caught and raped, she added.

Meanwhile, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations recently contacted a senior Syrian official to request better treatment of Syrian Jews.

Malcolm Hoenlein, the group's executive director, confirmed that he made the contact, but refused to say with whom. The Jerusalem Post reported that Hoenlein's contact was with Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk a-Shara on Oct. 5.

Hoenlein said that it would be "presumptuous" to argue that the conference's contact with the Syrian official is responsible for the new Syrian treatment of its Jewish population.

S. AFRICAN FASCISTS RALLY

PRETORIA, South Africa, Nov. 16 (JTA) -- A white supremacist mass murderer who is appealing his death sentence got "siege heils" and Hitler-style salutes from about 25 Afrikaner neo-Nazis, who demonstrated in the heart of the South African capital Wednesday in support of his clemency appeal.

The object of their adulation is Barend Strydom, who shot to death seven blacks and wounded 16 other passers-by on Nov. 15, 1988, in the square where the anniversary rally was held.

The police seemed confused. Although they declared the demonstration illegal, they backed off when the demonstrators began singing hymns.

The rally was finally broken up after someone displayed in public for the first time the emblem of the Afrikaans Fascist Movement.

Strydom, an ex-policeman, is the self-styled leader of an extreme right-wing group that calls itself "White Wolves."

He told the court which sentenced him to death that he would not hesitate to repeat the shooting spree.

MAYOR OF FRENCH TOWN SAYS NO TO PROTESTS OVER NEW SYNAGOGUE

By Edwin Eytan

PARIS, Nov. 16 (JTA) -- The mayor of Aix-les-Bains in southwestern France has vowed to stand fast against a drive led by a right-wing town council member to cancel plans for the construction of a new synagogue and yeshiva.

Council member Jean Murguet argued that "there are, as it is, already too many Jews in our town," in an appeal made by him and six right-wing colleagues against the lease of a city-owned 6,000-square-meter plot to a Jewish foundation, just approved by Mayor Gratien Ferrari.

The foundation plans to erect a modern synagogue, a school, community center and library on the land.

The city of 25,000 on the shores of Lake Bourget is home to a well-known yeshiva and other Jewish centers of learning. Apart from seasonal students, the permanent Jewish population numbers no more than 1,000.

Aix-les-Bains is also a famous summer resort. Murguet and several other council members are spreading fear that the sight of people in traditional Jewish garb with beards and payot would discourage tourists.

Jean Kahn, chairman of CRIF, the representative council of French-Jewish organizations, denounced Murguet's remarks as anti-Semitism of the most blatant sort.

Mayor Ferrari, a center-right politician of Italian origin, told French Radio on Thursday that most citizens support his decision to approve the lease and he would not reconsider.

He charged that Murguet and his clique are close to Jean-Marie Le Pen and his far right-wing, racist National Front party.

EAST GERMANY FINALLY CONFESSES, ADMITS ANTI-SEMITISM EXISTS

By David Kantor

WEST BERLIN, Nov. 16 (JTA) -- East Germany has begun to reveal an ugly secret.

The Communist regime is finally admitting that anti-Semitism is prevalent within the borders of the German Democratic Republic, which heretofore has taken great pains to conceal it.

Even when perpetrators were punished, their trials were secret and never mentioned in the state-controlled news media, according to revelations Thursday by the chief prosecutor in the Rostock region, Harri Mueller.

Mueller said that a Jewish cemetery in the area was vandalized by neo-Nazis last summer.

In another incident in Stralsund, six young farm workers circulated anti-Jewish propaganda and sang anti-Semitic songs.

Two were arrested, tried in secret and sentenced to two years and three months in prison. The others got suspended sentences. But not a word was mentioned in the news media.

According to Mueller, an unspecified number of Rostock residents were arrested and sentenced for similar offenses.

Mueller said the practice of concealing anti-Semitic incidents was being reassessed. He offered the Jewish community any information it might ask for.

Mueller's announcement was reported by the official East German news agency, ADN.

Until recently, requests by Jews for information about anti-Semitic incidents were received with hostility and dismissed as attempts to discredit the state.

Cemetery Vandalism

The new openness on the subject is a direct consequence of the surge for popular reforms sweeping East Germany, and the Jewish community, which officially numbers around 400, has taken courage from the recent events.

In a statement issued in Dresden last week, the Jewish community demanded that the government stop treating anti-Semitism in the GDR like a "state secret."

Almost immediately, the vandalization of a Jewish cemetery in Erfurt was widely reported in East Germany, as were the arrests of two teenage suspects and a police statement that the investigation was continuing.

Until now, East Germany has kept up a drumbeat of propaganda, depicting West Germany as a semi-fascist state and hotbed of anti-Semitism, while portraying itself as a country without anti-Semitic taint.

But the Jewish community has now asked the regime to publicly acknowledge that Jews were systematically persecuted, thrown in jail and accused of treason by East German regimes dating back to the founding of the GDR 40 years ago.

Jews especially suffered under the Stalinist regimes of Communist Party bosses Walter Ulbricht and the recently deposed Erich Honecker.

East German Jews have also entered the once forbidden realm of foreign policy with their Dresden statement calling on the government to abandon its hostile stance toward Israel.

Dr. Peter Kirchner, chairman of the East Berlin community, said this week that more openness and a positive attitude toward Israel have always been "on the table" but never were clearly articulated.

EAST BERLIN JEWS TO ATTEND JEWISH ACTIVITIES IN THE WEST

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Nov. 16 (JTA) -- Members of the Jewish community of East Berlin will henceforth be permitted to join in the Jewish activities of their counterparts in the West, according to Dr. Peter Kirchner, head of the East German Jewish community.

"There will be an opportunity for people in the Jewish community to participate in cultural events in West Berlin, as well as prayer services," Kirchner said in a telephone interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

The activities include courses in Hebrew, Yiddish and Jewish history that are offered free at the Jewish Volkshule in West Berlin.

The new opportunities were arranged Wednesday when 30 members of East Germany's Jewish community spent a day with their West Berlin counterparts, at the invitation of West Berlin Mayor Walter Momper.

At 54, Kirchner was the youngest member of the group that made the trip. The oldest was 92.

The itinerary included not only synagogues, but places where the Jews were rounded up and taken to concentration camps, and other places of significance to the Nazi past, Kirchner said.

Most of the people on the trip were, like himself, from Berlin before the war. "For those people, the history of Berlin was very, very important," Kirchner said.

Many of them were in concentration camps, including Auschwitz. Kirchner himself was hidden from the Nazis with his father.

Their day included having lunch with members of the West Berlin Jewish community at its headquarters, hosted by Dr. Heinz Galinski, head of the West German Jewish community.

Young Jews To Meet

Recent political events have now made possible the planned meeting of young Jews to be held Nov. 30 to Dec. 2 in West Berlin.

The Jewish youth have been invited by the Jewish Student Union of West Germany. The East German Jewish youth will come from Berlin, Leipzig and Dresden.

"Originally, they were planning about eight delegates, but now there will be about 15 or 16," he said.

Wednesday, the son of the head of the Jewish Museum in East Berlin spoke about that invitation, in a brief telephone conversation.

He said there were "very, very few" young Jewish people, but admitted that more, previously unaffiliated people were inquiring about joining them.

Kirchner estimates that although there are only 400 Jews officially identified as Jews in East Germany, there are probably 5,000, most of whom became Communists or are the children of Communists, and did not speak about their Jewish origins. However, that is now changing, he said.

Another outcome of the new opportunities, Kirchner said, is that members of the East Berlin Jewish community will participate Nov. 28-29 in an academic exchange in West Berlin, which will include representatives from Bar Ilan University.

"The subject of the meeting will be the history of the Jews in Germany, and since there are quite a few historians in East Berlin, and also medical specialists, they will probably contribute," said Kirchner.