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## **HUNDREDS OF SOVIET JEWS GATHER IN MOSCOW TO FORM JEWISH CONGRESS**

**By Susan Birnbaum**

NEW YORK, Dec. 19 (JTA) -- Several hundred Jews from all over the Soviet Union convened in Moscow on Monday for a historic conference aimed at establishing the first congress of Soviet Jewish communities and organizations.

An estimated 700 Jews, representing 175 Soviet Jewish organizations from 75 Soviet cities, gathered at the Central Cinema, Moscow's equivalent of Radio City Music Hall, despite attempts by anti-Semitic demonstrators to keep them out.

About 60 members of the anti-Semitic group Pamyat gathered in subzero temperatures, waving placards that said, "Jews Out," and "Down with Communism and Zionism."

Several Jews testified that they had been physically assaulted, according to Israeli reporters attending the conference.

The assaults took place despite the presence of a number of Soviet militia officers engaged to prevent such occurrences. They largely managed to turn away the ruffians, telling them that they were demonstrating without permission, whereas the conference was being held with a permit.

"Had it not been for the police, one cannot tell how it would have ended," a Jewish participant told Gideon Allon, a reporter for the Israeli Hebrew daily Ha'aretz.

But the police made no arrests, the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews reported in Washington.

The Union of Councils sent representatives to the conference, as did a number of Jewish organizations, including the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, the World Jewish Congress and B'nai B'rith International.

### **'Exaggerated' Reports Of Anti-Semitism**

Rising Soviet anti-Semitism, in fact, was a prime topic of discussion at the conference.

Jews from the Soviet Asian republic of Uzbekistan complained that recent reports of anti-Semitic riots in that largely Moslem part of the country were "largely exaggerated."

Nevertheless, a top priority of the new congress is the establishment of a commission to deal with anti-Semitism.

It will be one of several commissions named to deal with various issues, including problems of youth; culture and religion; coordination with Soviet nationalist movements; Zionism; and refusniks.

"Soviet Jews came of age this week, with the establishment of this group," Elan Steinberg, executive director of the World Jewish Congress, said in a telephone call from Moscow.

The new Jewish federation, officially called the Congress of Jewish Organizations and Communities of the Soviet Union, has asked to be affiliated with the WJC and will probably send a representative of its executive committee to the WJC Executive meeting in New York next month.

The representative is expected to be Mikhail Chlenov, leader of the Jewish Cultural Association in Moscow.

Chlenov greeted conference participants with remarks stressing the historic nature of the gathering. Never had there been such an associa-

tion in Russia, even before the Russian Revolution, he proclaimed.

The congress encompasses all manner of Jewish groups. "Virtually every trend, except for the Anti-Zionist Committee, is represented," Steinberg reported.

The WJC official said he felt "a sense of exhilaration" being at the conference. "We were with this community which for so many years had been cut off from the rest of the world," he said.

### **No Longer 'Underground'**

Isi Leibler, a WJC vice president from Australia who was instrumental in bringing about the opening of a Jewish cultural center in Moscow last February, told the gathering Monday, "Let it be known from this day: The Soviet Jewry movement is no longer an underground organization."

In one sign of the spectacular changes in Soviet Jewish life, the conference was greeted by two members of the Israeli consular delegation to Moscow, Merom Gordon and Zvi Magen. Magen delivered a warm message of support from Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

"With interest and appreciation, we follow your blessed activity of maintaining the link of Soviet Jews to our homeland, to our culture, as well as to the awareness of the common fate of the Jewish people," Shamir said in the message.

"Every bit of reawakening Jewish life is like a fresh breeze to our suffering people."

They were also saluted by the Dutch ambassador to Moscow, P. Buwalda, who said, "Such a gathering only a short time ago would have been unthinkable."

The Dutch Embassy handled Israel's interests in Moscow for over 20 years, in the absence of an Israeli presence there.

A representative of the Soviet Foreign Ministry, Yuri Reshetov, attended the conference, but made no speech.

Opening blessings were given by Rabbi Joseph Goldschmidt of Israel, the director of the Adin Steinsaltz yeshiva in Moscow.

The meeting was officially convened by Chlenov and Grigory Kanovich, a novelist who is a member of the Soviet Congress of People's Deputies, representing Lithuania.

Kanovich has published an article on the desolate state of Jewish life in the Soviet Union and unsuccessfully tried to present Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev with a petition protesting prevalent anti-Semitism.

### **Slipkand Begun Attend**

Chlenov was elected to the nine-member presidium of the new congress, along with Joseph Zissels, a former prisoner of conscience from Chernovtsy; Roman Spektor and Alexander Shmukler, cultural activists from Moscow; Vladimir Dashevsky, considered the head of the Soviet Jewish religious community; Moscow refusnik and emigration activist Leonid Stonov; Boris Kelman, head of the Leningrad Society for Jewish Culture; and Samuel Zilberg and Gregory Krupnikov, who head Riga's Latvian Jewish Cultural Society.

The congress also elected a 40-member council.

The hall was decked with banners of Soviet Jewry groups from the West, a profusion of whose

members were represented at the historic gathering. There were delegations from the United States, Canada, France, Switzerland, the Netherlands and Israel.

Former prominent refuseniks and prisoners of Zion Vladimir Slepak and Yosef Begun attended from Israel. Their entrance into the hall was reportedly met by a standing ovation.

Former prisoner of Zion Natan Sharansky, however, did not receive a visa and was therefore also unable to attend the funeral of Andrei Sakharov, who died of a heart attack Dec. 14.

Slepak left soon after his arrival to attend the state funeral for Sakharov, the human rights activist who affiliated himself with the Soviet Jewry movement, particularly on behalf of the right to immigrate to Israel.

The Jewish congress included a moment of silence in memory of the Nobel peace laureate in its opening ceremonies.

(Contributing to this report were JTA correspondents David Landau and Gil Sedan in Jerusalem.)

#### U.S. SAYS ISRAEL BOUGHT IRANIAN OIL, WON'T COMMENT ON LINK TO HOSTAGES

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Dec. 19 (JTA) -- The State Department has confirmed reports that Israel recently bought large shipments of oil from Iran, but it would not comment Tuesday on media reports that the purchase was part of an oil-for-hostages deal.

NBC News reported Monday evening that Israel had paid Iran \$36 million for two million barrels of oil delivered to Eilat in November.

In addition, the network said, Israel offered to free "hundreds of Shi'ite prisoners," including Sheikh Abdel Karim Obeid, whom Israeli commandos seized from his home in southern Lebanon in July.

"In exchange, Israel would get back its POWs and other Western hostages could be freed," NBC reported.

The NBC report said that the United States "had given its blessing to the Israeli initiative."

When questioned about this Tuesday, State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler would not comment directly. But she said that U.S. hostage policy has not changed.

"We will not make deals for hostages, nor will we reward terrorists," she said, adding, "Israel is well aware of our policy."

Tutwiler confirmed that "Israel informed us a month ago, after the fact, that it had concluded a deal with Iran for purchase of Iranian oil."

State Department officials said they were unaware of the history of U.S.-Israeli diplomatic exchanges on the subject. But one official said that if Israel informed the United States after the fact, then the United States could not have given any blessing.

#### Military Spare Parts Mentioned

"It sounds like the old Iran-Contra affair," said one official. "Did Israel do it on its own, or did the United States suggest it?"

Asked if Israel sought U.S. approval in advance, Tutwiler said, "Foreign countries do not seek U.S. approval for all purchases from a third country."

An Israeli Embassy official here said Israel does not discuss energy matters with the press.

And in Jerusalem, Israeli officials refused to comment on the NBC report, which also spoke of

the possibility that Israel would sell military spare parts to Iran.

NBC said that Israel, "recognizing Iran's desperation," sent defense specialist Uri Lubrani to a series of secret meetings in Switzerland with Iranian officials.

Tutwiler did not confirm any Iranian interest in Israeli spare parts, but noted, "U.S. law prohibits the transfer of U.S.-origin equipment without U.S. approval. Israel is well aware of this requirement and has told us they will abide by it."

#### FATHER OF MISSING ISRAELI SOLDIER MET TWICE WITH PLO LEADERS IN TUNIS

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Dec. 19 (JTA) -- The father of an Israeli soldier missing in Lebanon since 1982 sought the help of Palestine Liberation Organization officials in Tunis nearly a year ago to trace his son and six other Israeli soldiers believed to be held captive by Shi'ite groups.

Yona Baumel was identified by Israel Television on Monday night as the first Israeli to have had officially sanctioned contact with the PLO.

The Defense Ministry, in fact, paid for his two visits to Tunis in January 1989.

Although his mission apparently did not accomplish its purpose, it demonstrated that Israel would deviate from its ironclad policy of never dealing with the PLO in order to achieve humanitarian ends.

Baumel's trip was revealed after Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin disclosed Monday that the strict legal ban against contact with the PLO had been waived to help the families of missing soldiers ascertain their whereabouts and state of health.

#### Held In Syrian-Controlled Area

Baumel said he was invited to Tunis by the PLO and was picked to represent the seven families, because he could travel there on the U.S. passport he holds. Baumel's family emigrated here from Brooklyn in the 1970s.

He told Israel Radio on Tuesday that he went to the Defense Ministry as soon as he got the invitation, and it immediately agreed to his trip and provided the necessary funds.

Baumel said he met in Tunis with, among others, Yasir Abed Rabbo, a senior official of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine who heads the PLO delegation that conducts talks with the U.S. ambassador in Tunis.

Baumel discovered, however, that the strings to pull to gain the release of the missing soldiers led through Damascus.

Baumel's son Zachary, and possibly others, are believed to be held in the Syrian-controlled area of Lebanon, most likely the Bekaa Valley.

Zachary Baumel and two other Israel Defense Force tank crewmen were in battle with Syrian tanks near Sultan Ya'acoub, shortly after Israel's invasion of southern Lebanon in June 1982.

Yona Baumel said he was told by a witness that his son was seen alive after he was captured.

The sister of Yehuda Katz, another missing soldier, said an unnamed "European official" had confirmed to her that her brother was alive and a prisoner in an Arab country.

In addition to Baumel and Katz, the missing soldiers are Zvi Feldman, Yosef Fink, Rahamim Alsheikh, Samir Assad and Capt. Ron Arad.

## CANADA CHARGES ONTARIO MAN WITH 8 COUNTS OF WAR CRIMES

By Gil Kezwer

TORONTO, Dec. 19 (JTA) -- Michael Pawlowski, a 72-year-old resident of Renfrew, Ontario, was charged Monday with eight counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity in the deaths of 410 Jews and 80 Poles during World War II.

He is the second person to be charged under Canada's war crimes law, which permits the prosecution of war criminals who are residents of Canada.

According to Bill Hobson, head of the Justice Department's war crimes investigation unit, Pawlowski is alleged to have murdered 400 Jews in the hamlet of Snov, another 10 who escaped the first massacre and 80 Poles living in the village of Yeskovich, in the Minsk region of his native Byelorussia, in 1942.

The five-page indictment, filed in the Supreme Court of Ontario, does not specify whether Pawlowski was serving in a military unit at the time.

If convicted, the charges carry a maximum penalty of 20 years each.

Jewish organizations that have long urged government action against Nazi war criminals living in Canada hailed the government's move to bring Pawlowski to justice.

"This charge is a very important step in the process of prosecuting war criminals in Canada," Les Scheininger, president of the Canadian Jewish Congress, said Monday, adding it was "an indication of the seriousness with which the government views this issue."

### Second War Crimes Arrest

Moishe Smith, president of B'nai Brith Canada, said the new war crimes prosecution "marks a significant advance in the quest for justice for Nazi war crimes suspects resident in Canada."

The arrest is the second under Canada's 2-year-old war crimes legislation, Bill C-71, which permits trials in Canada for war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Amendments to the Criminal Code were introduced in September 1987, following the report of a royal commission headed by Justice Jules Deschenes of the Quebec Superior Court identifying 20 prime suspects who found refuge in Canada after World War II.

Pawlowski has been living with his wife, Mary, in the Renfrew area, 65 miles west of Ottawa, since his arrival in Canada in 1951. He became a citizen five years later.

Neighbors described Pawlowski as a popular man who loves gardening and attends church at least once a week.

In Canada's other war crimes case, Imre Finta, 77, is currently standing trial in Toronto, where he has pleaded not guilty to charges of kidnapping, forcible confinement and robbery of 8,617 Hungarian Jews in the spring of 1944.

Finta is also charged with manslaughter in the deaths of an unspecified number of deportees who died in overloaded boxcars before reaching Auschwitz.

Denaturalization proceedings are pending against Jacob Luitjens, a retired botany lecturer at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, whom a Dutch court convicted in absentia after the war for collaborating with the enemy.

## ISRAEL PURCHASES COAL FROM COLOMBIA AS MERCENARY INVESTIGATION CONTINUES

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Dec. 19 (JTA) -- Israel has signed a contract to purchase \$125 million worth of coal from Colombia during the next five years, the Energy Ministry announced Tuesday.

Australia and South Africa are currently Israel's principal suppliers of coal. But Colombia will supply 600,000 tons next year, about 15 percent of Israel's requirements, and the contract allows the amount to be increased to 1 million tons, the ministry said.

Israel needs additional supplies of coal. About half of its electrical capacity is produced by the coal-fired Hadera power station.

The first of two new coal-fired generating plants will go into service at the port of Ashkelon at the end of 1990. The second unit is scheduled to start operating in 1991.

Meanwhile, investigators from the U.S. Congress were in Israel this week to question an Israel Defense Force reserve officer about allegations that he trained assassination squads for Colombia's drug cartel.

Officials of the Senate subcommittee on investigations have questioned Lt. Col. Yair Klein, who heads a company called Hod HaHanit (Spearhead), which specializes in security, as well as several of Klein's employees.

Klein had a contract last year to provide military training and equipment to private clients in Colombia. He insists he trained security guards for ranchers and farmers who were plagued by cattle rustlers and guerrillas.

But a videotape televised in August by NBC News showed Klein personally instructing a group alleged to be mercenaries in the employ of Colombian drug barons.

A Foreign Ministry spokesman said Israel is cooperating with the American inquiry to help combat the drug traffic and to prevent the future involvement of Israeli nationals in dubious enterprises in Colombia.

Klein was questioned by the IDF last summer. In the fall, he reportedly had been willing to come to Washington to be grilled on his Colombian connections. He said at the time that he would do so, despite an international warrant for his arrest that Colombia requested from Interpol.

A number of retired IDF officers and reservists are licensed by the Defense Ministry to engage in private arms dealing abroad or to provide security systems and training for legal clients overseas.

### ENVOY TO HUNGARY MEETS PRESIDENT

By Reinhard Engel

VIENNA, Dec. 19 (JTA) -- Shlomo Marom, Israel's first ambassador to Budapest in more than 22 years, presented his credentials last Friday to Hungarian President Matyas Szuris.

Diplomatic relations between the two countries, broken by Hungary at the time of the 1967 Six-Day War, were restored in full on Sept. 18.

At the time, Marom headed an Israeli consular mission in Budapest that had been established in 1987.

The 60-year-old Israeli diplomat was born in Hungary, received a Jewish education in Budapest and settled in Israel in 1949.

Marom, a former diplomat posted to Washington, was sent to Hungary two years ago.

## BBW VOTES TO RETAIN SEPARATE STATUS, DESPITE A WARNING FROM B'NAI B'RITH

By Elena Neuman

NEW YORK, Dec. 19 (JTA) -- The family feud between the world's largest Jewish organization and its women's affiliate entered its second phase this week, with B'nai B'rith Women voting to reaffirm its separate legal status.

It is now up to B'nai B'rith International to decide whether it will live up to its Dec. 3 ultimatum that such a decision would end the 92-year-old relationship between the two historically affiliated national Jewish organizations.

"The ball is in their court," BBW President Hyla Lipsky said in a statement issued Monday. "Our board has stood firm in showing that it will not change the governing structure of our organization, just because B'nai B'rith International has changed its mind about how it wants to operate."

BBI's president, Seymour Reich, issued a statement in response, saying, "The goal of the B'nai B'rith Women's leadership is clear: They want B'nai B'rith Women to become a separate and autonomous organization, while making it appear that it has been expelled from B'nai B'rith. That is not the case."

Longstanding tensions between the two groups over their relationship worsened on Dec. 3, when BBI adopted a resolution giving the women's group 14 days to rescind an October 1988 resolution that declared BBW a "separate, independent, autonomous organization."

According to Reich, it was a constitutional issue. "The women's leadership ultimately decided that they did not wish to follow the general precepts of B'nai B'rith," he said in a Dec. 7 statement on the issue.

### A Hostile Takeover?

Reich specifically was referring to Section 15 of the B'nai B'rith constitution, which states that BBW's "laws, rules, regulations and policies" are "subject to the approval of B'nai B'rith International or its board of governors."

"We all live in a society of laws," he continued. "If those laws are bad, out-of-date or ill-conceived, we change them; we don't simply state that they do not apply to us."

But according to Elaine Binder, executive director of BBW, it is more than just a constitutional matter. "We feel that we cannot maintain a relationship under the gun of an outmoded element of the constitution. There's always room for constitutional change," she said in an interview.

Binder feels that BBI, under the guise of a constitutional formality, is precipitating a hostile takeover of the 120,000-member women's group in an effort to bolster its flagging membership and revenues.

"There is no question that they have precipitated this," said Binder. "They are trying to create a situation in which they could get a good shot at our members. They have already written to our members."

BBI, on the other hand, sees the situation more as a matter of inflated egos and unrepresentative leadership. "No weighty issues are involved, political or otherwise," Reich said in the statement he issued Monday.

"Instead, we have a small group of individuals -- the B'nai B'rith Women's executive board -- engaged in an effort to form their own organization apart from B'nai B'rith."

"We believe that the women's leadership's

decision to leave B'nai B'rith does not reflect the views of the grass-roots membership of B'nai B'rith Women," he said.

### Legal Action Possible

As the stalemate between the two groups continues, it remains unclear whether or not BBW can continue to hold the B'nai B'rith name as an independent women's organization.

"Absolutely," answered Lipsky, when asked that question in an interview Tuesday. "That's our name, and we have a right to that name."

"We want to retain an affiliation with BBI, and we believe that people of good will should always be willing to negotiate," she said. "But we will do everything to protect our integrity and our name."

Does that mean a possible court battle? "It doesn't necessarily mean court," said Binder of BBW, "but it might."

"We understand that such a separation could hurt both organizations," said Lipsky, reaffirming her desire to negotiate a settlement. "But do I feel that BBW is strong enough to go it alone? The answer is yes."

BBI seems to agree. Although it refused to commit to the possibility of a court battle, Reich's concluding statement suggested that separation was imminent:

"We regret the course chosen by the B'nai B'rith Women leadership. We wish them well in their new organization," he said.

## KOOR CONGLOMERATE MAY GO UNDER UNLESS IT GETS IMMEDIATE BAILOUT

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Dec. 19 (JTA) -- The mammoth Histadrut-owned Koor Industries has sent an SOS to the government.

It is foundering in a sea of debt, and unless it gets immediate help in the form of a government bailout, it is likely to go down by the end of this month, taking 11,000 jobs with it.

That was the message delivered to Finance Minister Shimon Peres and the Knesset's Economic Committee this week by Benny Gaon, Koor's chief executive officer, and by other officials of the conglomerate.

Although the precise figures were not made available, Koor is seeking new loan write-offs and deferrals in the amount of \$120 million to \$160 million.

They would be on top of the \$120 million of loans deferred earlier this year, to which Koor's overseas creditors agreed reluctantly after the Israeli banks went along.

The new concessions can be obtained only if the government guarantees the loans. But Peres and his aides are demanding detailed figures and a new recovery plan from Gaon before committing the Treasury.

Peres has said publicly that his primary concern is for the future of the 11,000 people employed in the many Koor enterprises. The largest of them is Tadiran, a huge manufacturer of electronics and communications equipment, which is badly strapped for cash.

Gaon has been trying to sell it, so far without success. But he has sold several other Koor businesses in the past year and imposed severe austerity measures on others.

He has gotten high marks from Histadrut Secretary-General Yisrael Kessar, who issued a strong statement of confidence in Gaon Monday.