SOVIET JEWISH VA'AD ESTABLISHED; FIRST UMBRELLA GROUP IN HISTORY
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Dec. 21 (JTA) — Soviet Jewry achieved an historic milestone Thursday, when its representatives voted in Moscow to establish the Soviet Jewish Va'ad, an umbrella body that will coordinate activities of Jewish organizations all over the Soviet Union. It is the first such institution in Soviet Jewish history.

The Va'ad fulfills the primary goal of the founding conference of the Congress of Jewish Organizations and Communities of the USSR, which was to establish an independent federation of Soviet Jewish organizations that would develop a consensus on the priorities and objectives of their constituents.

Simcha Dinitz, chairman of the World Zionist Organization and Jewish Agency Executive, promised the new body the full support of the Israeli government and the agency in all of its endeavors and activities.

Dinitz, speaking in Hebrew, urged the Va'ad to make Israel the center of its cultural activities.

Va'ad is the Hebrew word for committee. Mikhail Chlenov, the conference organizer who heads the Jewish Cultural Association, was elected its chairman.

The conference, attended by some 700 delegates from 75 cities and towns across the Soviet Union, opened at Moscow's Cinema Center Monday and closes Friday. Representatives of international Jewish organizations and Diaspora Jewry attended as guests and observers.

Meanwhile, a group of 15 Soviet Jews seeking to emigrate to Israel began a five-day hunger strike when the conference opened in Moscow. But they are not protesting the refusal of Soviet authorities to give them exit visas.

In a statement issued through the Bay Area Council for Soviet Jews in San Francisco, the group complained of delays of between six to 18 months in obtaining invitations from Israel, which are needed to apply for permission to emigrate.

"We turn to world Jewry. Help us out," the statement said.

B'nai Brith Canada wrote, meanwhile, to the Soviet ambassador in Ottawa, Alexei Rodionov, to express concern over "the presence of the anti-Semitic group 'Pamyat,'" which demonstrated outside the conference with placards that said 'Jews Out' and 'Down with Communism and Zionism.'"

The letter observed that "The rapid growth of Pamyat is of grave concern," and urged the Soviet government "to be ever vigilant in its efforts to curtail the spread of anti-Semitism."

SOVIET JEWS EN ROUTE TO ISRAEL TURNED BACK AT ROMANIAN BORDER
By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Dec. 21 (JTA) — Soviet Jewish immigration to Israel via Bucharest has been stopped because of the unrest in Romania, according to reliable sources here.

Some 80 Jews who were traveling to Israel via Bucharest by train were turned back at the border Wednesday night by Romanian authorities, the sources said.

It is not known if there were any Soviet Jews on airplanes flying via Bucharest at the time.

The action was taken as Romanian leader Nicolae Ceausescu declared a state of emergency following a reported massacre of 4,000 people in the western Romanian city of Timisoara, during demonstrations for political reform.

Romanian authorities sealed all borders earlier this week. But until Wednesday, the flow of Soviet Jews through Bucharest continued uninterrupted.

Since then, however, the Romanian Embassy in Moscow has ceased issuing transit visas to Israel. But those already in Bucharest are reportedly being allowed to continue on to Israel.

Bucharest has been the favored route taken by Soviet Jews intent on making aliyah. Direct flights have been provided from Moscow to Bucharest and then from the Romanian capital to Tel Aviv.

Simcha Dinitz, chairman of the World Zionist Organization and Jewish Agency Executives, who was in Moscow for the first Soviet Jewish congress, held an emergency meeting with officials at the Israeli Consulate there Wednesday night, to look for alternate routes.

They discussed flying out emigrating Jews via Finland or Czechoslovakia.

The national airlines of Israel and the Soviet Union have agreed to begin direct flights between the two countries in January. But the accord must still win approval from their respective governments.

Meanwhile, as of Thursday evening, there were no reports of Jewish casualties or damage to any Jewish facilities in Romania.

IRAQ WILL HAVE NUCLEAR WEAPONS WITHIN 5 TO 10 YEARS, STUDY SAYS
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Dec. 21 (JTA) — A strategic survey of the military balance in the Middle East lists Iraq, Syria and Jordan as potential threats to Israel in the next few years.

The biggest potential threat is Iraq, which by conservative estimates will be able to produce nuclear weapons within five to 10 years, according to "Middle East Military Balance 1988-89," just published by Tel Aviv University's Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies.

Israel sent bombers over Baghdad in 1981 to destroy a French-made nuclear reactor purchased by Iraq, which the Israelis claimed could produce weapons-grade plutonium.

But there is a more immediate threat from the battle-hardened Iraqi army, which is a far more effective fighting force after the eight-year war with Iran than it was in the past, the study said.

Syria has reported further reductions in its defense budget, but has actually increased both its operational activities and military expenditures in most fields.

The Syrians seem to be preparing for the option of an independent military offensive in 1990 to recapture the Golan Heights from Israel,
according to the report. The researchers also noted that Jordan has taken its U.S.-supplied Hawk anti-aircraft missiles out of their permanent bases and deployed them on mobile platforms, in violation of its commitment to the United States.

The missiles pose a direct threat to aircraft flying from airfields almost anywhere in Israel. Jordan's armed forces were increased by 27,000 men for a total of 150,000.

Egypt's armed personnel now number 920,000, a reduction of 60,000, including reservists.

Israel increased its armed personnel by 60,000 reservists, and can now mobilize a total of 600,000.

500 KIBBUTZ PEACENIKS
SAY THEY'LL TALK TO PLO

By Gil Sadan

JERUSALEM, Dec. 21 (JTA) -- Some 500 peace activists from kibbutzim announced that they would go to Cairo for talks with representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

That would be a clear violation of the law, which forbids Israelis from any contact with the PLO. But the activists say they intend to conduct their mission "within the limitations of the law."

Their plans triggered a heated debate in the Knesset on Wednesday, the focus of which turned out to be the law itself.

Ran Cohen of the Citizens Rights Movement said it was a "stupid law," because it was pitted against morals, against conscience and against "the natural drive for peace."

"Whoever creates that tragic dilemma between the desire for peace and the rule of law leads thousands to violate the law," Cohen said, adding it would "be better to abolish this unfortunate law."

But Hanan Porat of the National Religious Party urged that the law be upheld.

"A law is a law, for better or worse," Porat said. "If in your view it is bad, then take it to the streets, convince the masses, wear out the public personalities, do whatever you wish to change it, but do not knowingly violate the law."

TWO ARABS KILLED IN CLASHES WITH IDF

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Dec. 21 (JTA) -- Two Palestinians were killed when they clashed with Israeli Defense Force troops in the West Bank village of Beit Furik on Thursday.

IDF sources said youths hurled stones and bricks, slightly injuring a soldier. The troops opened fire with plastic bullets.

A hospital source in Nablus said five residents were injured in disturbances, one seriously.

JNF PUSHKE BOXES STILL BLUE,
BUT NOW COME WITH DISCLAIMER

By Allison Kaplan

NEW YORK, Dec. 21 (JTA) -- The traditional blue boxes of the Jewish National Fund of America will look a bit different from now on as a result of a recent court ruling.

The boxes, known as pushkes in Yiddish, will still carry a map of the State of Israel, as they have for decades.

However, a disclaimer reading "Funds contributed to the Jewish National Fund of America are used only for projects within the Green Line" will now accompany the map.

In a Dec. 6 ruling, Judge Shirley Fingerhood of the New York State Supreme Court ordered the disclaimer on all JNF fund-raising materials, including the blue boxes, which show a map of Israel that includes the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The decision came after a yearlong legal battle between JNF, which supports afforestation in Israel, and a group called "The Ad-Hoc Committee for Jewish Survival in Judea, Samaria, Gaza and the Golan."

The committee filed suit against JNF, charging that the charity misled donors into believing that it supported projects on both sides of the Green Line, while in reality, it only allowed funds to be used within the pre-1967 borders.

Offers To Print Disclaimer

JNF had earlier in negotiations offered to print the disclaimer, but the committee had not accepted it.

The committee's leader, Michael Teplow, also heads Techiya USA. Teplow said that his group was not satisfied with this disclaimer and would pursue its case until JNF agrees to allocate funds in the administered territories.

Judge Fingerhood was asked to hold JNF in contempt of court for defying an earlier injunction, in which the organization was ordered to cease producing "deceptive" literature.

But Fingerhood denied the motion for contempt, and instead clarified the earlier injunction to specify that the disclaimer be printed on fund-raising material "which contains a map, outline of a map or a depiction of the area of the State of Israel showing the territories beyond the Green Line."

The committee continues to maintain that even this injunction is too weak.

"If a picture is worth a thousand words," Rubin said, "then clearly the small disclaimer now required on JNF literature cannot counteract its misleading and deceptive nature."

The injunction is related to a charge based on the General Business Law regarding misleading advertising. It is the only original charge by the committee against the charitable organization which is still standing.

Fraud Charges Dismissed

Four additional charges of fraud against the organization were thrown out by Fingerhood last March, and the committee is appealing that decision.

Meanwhile, JNF is appealing the decision not to dismiss the first charge.

JNF's communications director, Stuart Paskow, expressed satisfaction with the modified injunction.

"JNF originally volunteered to put a disclaimer on all our material containing maps of Israel," Paskow said. "Had the plaintiffs accepted this offer, the case would have been over quite a while ago."

JNF maintains, as it has throughout the case, that the committee's charges of fraud and deception are without factual basis.

"The JNF of America has never made false claims that it sponsored projects beyond the Green Line, and it has never denied that it works only within pre-1967 Israel," said Paskow.

"Those individuals who write to us asking for a statement of our policies are told exactly where we stand," he said.
E. GERMANY TO RETURN JEWISH PROPERTY,
BUT COMMUNITY NOT SURE IT WANTS IT
By David Kantor

EAST BERLIN, Dec. 21 (JTA) -- The East German government is reported ready to give
back to the Jewish community buildings that were
confiscated by the Nazis more than 50 years ago,
but the gift may prove more a headache than a favor.

There are many obstacles to the proposed
restoration of property to Adas Israel, an Ortho
dox community that was separate from the main
stream Jewish community in pre-war Berlin and still
retains its unique identity. The still existing
Adas Israel hopes it can revive itself in the
liberal climate that now prevails here.

Mario Offenberg, a leader of Adas Israel,
welcomed the authorities' decision as a turning
point in East Germany's attitude toward the
congregation.

Some former community members campaigned
for five years to re-establish the former Orthodox
community in Berlin, arguing that it would be
morally reprehensible to in any way allow the
shutting down of the community by the Nazis to
be the final verdict of history.

But the community has decreased considerab
ly since the Holocaust, and its present leaders see
no need or even possibility to maintain a separate
group. The community lacks recognition and
funds, and it is questionable that it could support
itself, even with its former premises restored.

In pre-war Berlin, there were three kinds of
Jewish congregations: the Reform, or Liberal; Adas
Israel; and the more Hasidic groups. Adas Israel
had its own cemetery. The government recognizes
the community's special status, even now.

Membership Of 200

Adas Israel claims a membership of 200,
which may be generous. But it says many more
Jews will join once the community is re-estab
lished.

It applied for funds from the West Berlin
municipal authorities, but was rejected in its
appeal by Heinz Galinski, veteran leader of the
entire West German Jewish community.

But the Adas Israel people don't agree. They
charge that the established community has neg
lected their needs, concerns and traditions and is
not even willing to memorialize those victimized
by the Nazis. They also point to the pluralism in
many Jewish communities around the world,
notably in the United States, where different
trends exist side by side.

A prominent Jewish activist who asked not
to be named said that, to the best of his know
ledge, not a single member of Adas Israel lives in
East Berlin. Moreover, he said, the situation is
hardly comparable to what existed before the war.

Berlin is still divided between two countries,
even though the Wall has been practically obliter
ated. The number of Jews living in both parts of
Berlin is very small, compared to the hundreds of
thousands who lived there before the Nazi perse
cution. In 1932, there were about 172,000 Jews in
Berlin. Now, about 6,200 live in Berlin, of whom
6,000 live in the West.

REFORM JEWS CHALLENGE AUTHORITY
OF GREAT BRITAIN'S CHIEF RABBI
London Jewish Chronicle

LONDON, Dec. 21 (JTA) -- The Union of
Liberal and Progressive Synagogues, the organiza
tion of Liberal congregations, issued a statement
last week asserting that the chief rabbi had no
authority to speak for it.

The statement came as a great surprise,
because the chief rabbi of Britain and the Com
monwealth is the recognized religious representa
tive of British Jewry in all affairs of state, and
the statement represents a potential schism in a
traditionally unified community.

The chief rabbi has by tradition been an
Orthodox rabbi, and while the majority of affili
ated Jews in Britain are said to be Orthodox, a
substantial minority are not.

The statement, reported in The Times of
London, incurred the wrath of the normally staid
Board of Deputies of British Jews, British Jewry's
representative body in the secular realm.

"Ill-conceived and ill-timed," said board
President Dr. Lionel Kopelowitz.

The incumbent chief rabbi, Lord Immanuel
Jakobovits, will retire shortly, and the process of
choosing a successor is under way. The Liberal
and Reform congregations do not participate in
electing the chief rabbi.

Kopelowitz pointed out that the chief rabbi
has "a representational role" which, though not
defined, "is recognized both within and without
the Jewish community as the public religious
representative of the whole of the British Jewish
community."

Kopelowitz added that he was firmly con
vinced "that it is not in the communal interest
for any group to take up a hard position at this
time before any new chief rabbi has been ap
pointed, to say whether they would or would not
accept him in a representative capacity."

Rosiya Rosenberg, the Liberal Union director,
said Kopelowitz's comments were "offensive."

"We are very happy for non-Jews to per
ceive that Anglo-Jewry is represented by one
person at a state occasion," Rosenberg said.

"But how can he speak for us, when he
can't recognize any of our rabbis or our con
versions? Many of his rabbis are not willing to
sit on the same platform as our rabbis."

"How can he speak for us on issues like
Who is a Jew?" or the ordination of women, when
his views are diametrically opposed to ours?"
Rosenberg asked.

POPE TO RECEIVE ARAB MINISTERS
By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, Dec. 21 (JTA) -- Pope John Paul II
will receive three Arab foreign ministers and an
official of the Arab League at the Vatican on
Saturday, to discuss the situation in Lebanon and
other Middle East issues, according to an an
ouncement by Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navar
ro Valls.

The pope was reported to be considering a
visit to Lebanon last summer, but the worsening
security situation there prevented it.

Valls said the pope's meeting would be with
the foreign minister of Saudi Arabia, Prince Saud
al Faisal, the Moroccan foreign minister, Abdel
atif Filali, Foreign Minister Ahmed al Ghozali
of Algeria and Akbar Al-Ibrahim, deputy secretary
of the Arab League.
BEHIND THE HEADLINES:
REICH, LERNER DEBATE OVER
WHO SPEAKS FOR U.S. JEWS
By Allison Kaplan

NEW YORK, Dec. 21 (JTA) -- One of the
most prominent figures in the American Jewish
institutional world sat elbow-to-elbow with organ-
ized Jewry's harshest critic recently for a panel
discussion entitled, "Who Speaks For American Jews?"

It was the first time that Seymour Reich, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of
Major American Jewish Organizations, had shared
a podium with Michael Lerner, editor of Tikkun
magazine, who has frequently condemned the
structure and operation of the organized American
Jewish community.

The visual contrast between the two could
not have been more striking as the tall, impec-
cably groomed Reich rose to make his opening
statement and Lerner, wearing his yarmulke and
scruffy post-'60s beard, listened intently.

In his speech, Reich said that neither he nor
the Conference of Presidents claims to speak for
all American Jews.

"We are not a monolithic community," Reich
said, and the Conference of Presidents does not
"seek to muzzle expressions of viewpoint differ-
ent from ours."

"But if we do not represent all American
Jews, we do speak in the name of the broadest
coalition of the world's largest Jewish communi-
ty," he added.

He said that the large and diverse number of
organizations under the conference's umbrella is
the reason "why the media are interested in what
we have to say," and "why the makers of public
policy come to our platform."

Full Spectrum Of Views

But Lerner charged in his presentation that
the Conference of Presidents, like the present
leadership of many Jewish organizations, does not
use its prominent positions to accurately represent
the full spectrum of views of American Jewry
when it comes to Israeli policies.

"What is correctly reported as support of all
of us for the State of Israel is incorrectly re-
ported to be support for the policies of the con-
temporary government of the State of Israel," Lerner
said.

He cited a recent study by sociologist Steven
Cohen, which showed that nearly half of American
Jews are deeply troubled by Israeli policies.

Yet, when Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak
Shamir returned last month from a visit to the
United States, he stated publicly that American
Jews fully support his actions, despite efforts by
his Israeli opposition on the left to undermine
that support.

Lerner said there are only two possible
explanations for the misrepresentation of the
views of American Jewry.

"One possibility to consider is that he is
straightforwardly lying to the people of Israel," Lerner
said.

The alternative theory, he said, is that
Shamir "has been lied to, or judged to, that the
facts have been misrepresented to him by those
who speak, or claim to speak, for American
Jewry."

Overall, Lerner said, a climate exists in the
organized Jewish world in which Jews do not feel
they can tell Shamir in "loud and clear voices"
that his policies are "destructive politically or
morally abhorrent."

The danger in these voices not being heard,
he said, is that Israelis do not realize that their
continued administration of the West Bank and
Gaza Strip is costing Israel support among Ameri-
an Jews.

The cost in the United States, he said, is
that many Jews have become disaffected with the
organized American Jewish world because there is
no forum for their views.

On that point, Reich said the Conference of
Presidents "respect(s) the idea of pluralism."

But he warned that since American Jewish
support is vital to the continuation of the massive
aid that Israel receives from Washington, "any
perception of American Jewish disassociation with
Israel would be extremely serious."

Rabbi David Saperstein, co-director of the
Reform movement's Religious Action Center, was
another panelist at the event at Manhattan's 92nd
Street Y, and although he sits on Tikkun's board
and has taken many left-leaning positions, he took
issue with some of Lerner's points.

Saperstein said he "truly believes" that
voices of dissent "have been heard in the main-
stream Jewish community," and that many of
those who are openly critical of Israeli policies
are also active in Jewish organizations.

FIRST A WASHOUT, THEN A WIN
AS BUSH SPINS DREIDEL WITH KIDS
By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Dec. 21 (JTA) -- President
Bush played dreidel at the White House on Thurs-
day, first getting a no-decision on "nun" and
then winning a pot of chocolates on "gimmel."

Bush played with students from the Charles E.
Smith Day School here as part of the first
large-scale Chanukah celebration at the White
House.

"From now on in the White House, we will
be thinking in terms of a 1,009 points of light,"
Bush quipped, after the Synagogue Council of
America presented him with a menorah.

The celebration was attended by close to 100
Jewish leaders, administration officials and day
school students.

After this year's main event, a delegation
led by Rabbi Abraham Shemtov, Lubavitch's
national director, met with Bush, in keeping with
an 11-year-old Chanukah tradition at the White
House involving American Friends of Lubavitch.

In addition to presenting him with a meno-
rah, the group videotaped Bush congratulating
Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, the Lubavitcher
rabbi.

Bobbie Greene Kilberg, director of the White
House's public liaison office, said the dreidel-
playing event was the president's idea and that it
would be the start of a Bush tradition.

As for the Synagogue Council's selection as
the group presenting the menorah, Gunther Law-
rence, its spokesman, said that the White House
"wanted to get a representative group" covering
a wide spectrum of U.S. Jewry. The group has
Orthodox, Conservative and Reform rabbis in its
membership.

JTA will not publish a Daily News Bulletin
on Monday, Dec. 25, because of the postal holiday
in the United States.