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EAST GERMANY ADMITS RESPONSIBILITY FOR NAZI CRIMES, OFFERS COMPENSATION

NEW YORK, Feb. 8 (JTA) -- East Germany has for the first time formally acknowledged its share of responsibility for Jewish victims of Nazi persecution and affirmed that it has material obligations toward them, the World Jewish Congress announced here Thursday.

The dramatic reversal of a 40-year policy of denial was contained in a letter from Prime Minister Hans Modrow of the German Democratic Republic to WJC President Edgar Bronfman. The WJC said it was "an important first step."

Modrow's statement was also welcomed as "a first step" by Dr. Israel Miller, president of the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany.

Miller has been in recent communications with Modrow on the issue.

Modrow's letter to the WJC, dated Feb. 1, was accompanied by an official declaration by the prime minister containing the same points which he said "might be published immediately."

It stated that the GDR recognizes "the responsibility of the entire German people" for the crimes of the Nazis and that it commits itself to "material support" to the Jewish victims.

The responsibility, Modrow's letter and statement noted, "is a consequence of the deep guilt of Hitler fascism which committed terrible crimes against the Jewish people in the name of the German people."

Modrow said that East Germany "recognizes its humanitarian duty with regard to the survivors of the Jewish people who suffered under Nazi oppression, and confirms its readiness in a spirit of human solidarity to provide material support to former persecutees of the Nazi regime of Jewish origin."

Vows To Prevent Anti-Semitism

The letter also vowed that East Germany would do everything it can to prevent anti-Semitism and hatred from again taking root in German soil.

It invited Bronfman to "an early meeting" with the prime minister "in order to further our common aims."

The WJC said Bronfman would leave for Israel next week to discuss with its leaders further steps in the implementation of the East German declaration.

"The acceptance of the GDR of its historic moral responsibility is an important first step," the WJC said.

"Its stated commitment of 'material support' to Jewish victims of the Nazi regime requires appropriate and speedy indemnification by the GDR as the necessary next step" the WJC added.

Miller said he met recently with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, Finance Minister Shimon Peres and Foreign Minister Moshe Arens to coordinate future negotiations on claims issues both by Israel and the Claims Conference, which acts on behalf of Holocaust survivors.

Nearly 40 years ago -- in 1951 -- the late Chancellor Konrad Adenauer of West Germany declared that "unspeakable crimes have been committed in the name of the German people

calling for moral and material indemnity."

That statement was followed by the Luxembourg agreement negotiated between the Claims Conference and the German Federal Republic in 1952.

It became the foundation of the massive indemnification program of West Germany amounting to billions of dollars in reparations to the state of Israel, Jewish organizations and individual Jewish claimants.

The Claims Conference currently administers a special hardship fund for Jewish victims of Nazi persecution.

It has already distributed about \$250 million to some 80,000 recipients, most of whom emigrated in recent years from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union.

In contrast, East Germany had, until Modrow's statement, rejected any share of responsibility for the Holocaust and refused to accept any obligation of material support to the victims.

The GDR maintained that since it only came into existence in 1949, it bore no responsibility for the actions of the Third Reich.

SURVEY FINDS U.S. JEWISH LEADERS ARE MORE DOVISH THAN THEY ADMIT

By Elena Neuman

NEW YORK, Feb. 8 (JTA) -- American Jewish leaders are privately more dovish than their public statements on the Middle East would lead one to believe, according to a survey of 780 American Jewish leaders that is expected to be released next week.

The survey, conducted under the auspices of the Israel-Diaspora Institute, a Tel-Aviv based public policy think tank, found that although 78 percent of the leaders believe that the Palestine Liberation Organization is determined to destroy Israel, a whopping 73 percent would support Israeli dialogue with the group if it "recognizes Israel and renounces terrorism."

Seventy-six percent said they favor "territorial compromise for credible guarantees of peace," and 59 percent believe that Israel should "offer the Palestinians a prospect of a Palestinian state in 15 years."

"The results are extremely surprising in light of the public statements these leaders have made," said Steven Cohen, professor of sociology at Queens College, who conducted the study.

"If you ask most observers where Jewish leaders stand on Likud vs. Labor, they think the leadership hasn't weighed in on one side or the other. But it turns out that in their private thinking, American Jewish leaders are squarely in the Labor camp ideologically."

"The survey also shows, however, that they think it's inappropriate, unwise or maybe even immoral to lean in one direction or the other professionally, even if they do have a strong personal opinion," said Cohen. "Thus, there's a public position at variance with a private position."

Over 1,310 American Jewish leaders were sent questionnaires in October and November of 1989. They represented three sectors: Jewish community federations, prominent rabbis and synagogue leaders, and agencies such as the

American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith and local Jewish community relations agencies.

This represents the first formal study of American Jewish leadership specifically with reference to their views toward Israel.

"Whoever sees the study and sees how forthrightly on one side of the political fence these leaders are is surprised. I'm an expert in this field, and I was surprised," Cohen said.

Consistently More Dovish

Cohen found that American Jewish leaders are consistently more dovish than the American Jews they represent. "It's lopsided," he said, "but it makes sense.

"The American Jewish public would become more dovish the more knowledgeable they became about Israel. The leadership is much more knowledgeable and sophisticated, in touch with political realities. The strength of Israel to compromise is more evident if you are in these positions."

"We always thought such findings might be true," said Fredelle Spiegel, project director for the study, "but no one ever proved it in a formal analysis before.

"We undertook the project, because we wanted to see exactly what the American Jewish leadership's position was toward Israel. There has been much talk recently about how the relationship has been weakened."

Recent signs of that weakening include the strong negative reaction the American Jewish community had to the idea of amending Israel's Law of Return to exclude non-Orthodox converts to Judaism who immigrate to Israel from receiving the automatic citizenship accorded to other Jews.

The survey found that if Israel adopted the so-called "Who Is a Jew" amendment, 78 percent of American Jewish leaders would be "very upset," and another 7 percent would be "somewhat upset."

Nevertheless, support for Israel remains solid.

"What we found surprising," said Spiegel, "is how strong the commitment to Israel still is and how anxious American Jewish leaders are to get involved in Israeli domestic issues."

The survey found that although American Jewish leaders widely approve of friendly criticism of Israeli public policies, they also reject the idea that American Jews should become involved in Israeli decision-making unless it has direct ramifications for the American Jewish community.

Disapproval Of Arafat Meeting

Whereas 88 percent approve of involvement in the "Who Is a Jew" issue, only 25 percent approve of interference in Israeli security matters. The vast majority disapprove of the meeting that five American Jews had in December 1988 with PLO leader Yasir Arafat.

"The leaders who are dovishly inclined, although troubled by moral questions, are more concerned with the security of Israel," said Cohen. "But they also feel they lack the moral standing to interfere in security questions."

It is not surprising, therefore, that an overwhelming majority, while supporting a two-state solution, insist that a Palestinian state should be limited by strong security arrangements.

Ninety-three percent found total demilitarization of the Palestinians either essential or desirable; 83 percent favored the deployment of

the Israeli army in the territories; and 81 percent said they want the Palestinians to renounce any claims to return to parts of pre-1967 Israel.

"American Jewish leaders are, on the one hand, very liberal, but on the other, overly cautious of Israel's security," Spiegel said.

"What might appear as a contradiction is a practical expression of the Jewish leaders' Americanism," said Arye Carmon, president of the Israel-Diaspora Institute. "Americans often join the table with their adversaries, but do not necessarily always eat what's served."

They study is likely to raise eyebrows in the Jewish community and, in the view of one academic, may have a significant effect on the peace process and on Israel-Diaspora relations.

"It takes a card away from Shamir, who consistently says that American Jews back him" and "gives more credibility to the Labor Party," said the academic, who requested anonymity.

"It also encourages Palestinian moderation," he added. "Arafat can say: 'Look at the attitudes of American Jewish leaders.' And finally, it releases the American State Department to be more aggressive in pushing for a two-state solution."

"This is just a preliminary study," said Spiegel, when asked of the effect she hopes the survey will have. "The real question is what should the relationship between Israel and American Jewish leaders be."

HAIFA'S TWO CHIEF RABBIS REJECT NON-ORTHODOX ON RELIGIOUS COUNCIL By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 8 (JTA) -- The election of two non-Orthodox rabbis and a non-observant woman to the Haifa Religious Council on Wednesday opened a rift between the Labor-controlled municipality and the religious establishment which could extend to national politics.

The Religious Council is a branch of city government which provides for the religious needs of the community, but is not itself a religious body and has no say in halachic matters.

Haifa's Ashkenazic and Sephardic chief rabbis nevertheless refused to recognize the elections of Reform Rabbi Reuven Samuels and Rabbi Bernard Ochs, a Conservative rabbi.

They said they were prepared to accept a religious woman on the council, but not Malka Ofir, who describes herself as a free-thinker.

Ofir and Samuels were elected by one-vote margins and Ochs by two votes.

They were among the 12 members of the 27-member body elected by the City Council. Twelve others are appointed by the Ministry for Religious Affairs and three by the Rabbinate.

Tova Aba'adi, an Orthodox woman candidate nominated by Mayor Arye Gurel, received 24 votes. Two religious council members abstained.

Religious circles said the election of the non-Orthodox candidates seriously undermined Vice Premier Shimon Peres' chances to put together a coalition of his Labor Party with the religious parties to replace the present Likud-Labor unity government.

Laborite Mayor Gurel voted against the non-Orthodox candidates "because their values and beliefs are in direct contradiction and opposition to the Religious Council," he said.

Ofir said she decided to run even though she does not feel bound by religious law because the Religious Council serves the entire community, including the non-observant.

SENATE APPROVES BILL REQUIRING U.S. TO DOCUMENT HATE CRIMES

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Feb. 8 (JTA) -- The Senate overwhelmingly approved a bill Thursday requiring the Justice Department to compile data on domestic "hate crimes" committed against Americans.

The bill, long sought by American Jewish groups, was adopted despite its inclusion of anti-gay violence among the crimes to be monitored. Some Senate conservatives had opposed the measure, believing it gave undue protection to homosexuals.

"There's a right every American ought to have, and that's the right to be free and unmolested from vicious hate criminal activity," Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), a co-sponsor of the bill, said during debate on the measure.

The so-called Hate Crimes Statistics Act was approved by a vote of 92-4. Last June, the House of Representatives approved the measure by a vote of 368-47.

A House-Senate conference committee will now reconcile differing language in the two bills and then send a final version to President Bush for signature.

The bill directs the Justice Department to track hate crimes for the next five years, "just as it now collects data on auto thefts, burglaries and other crime," said Sen. Paul Simon (D-Ill.), the bill's other principal sponsor.

Included are crimes against individuals or property because of race, religion, ethnicity or sexual orientation. Anti-Semitism is included under race and religion.

Simon said the measure "is the only civil rights-related legislation before Congress endorsed by President George Bush."

The bill is distinct from one signed into law in June 1988, which imposed criminal penalties as high as \$250,000 in fines and 10 years in jail for vandalism against religious property.

ADL Behind Both Bills

The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith was the principal Jewish group involved in gaining passage of both bills.

ADL hailed the Senate action Thursday, calling it "a major step in the right direction."

Burton Levinson, the group's national chairman, said the bill would help law enforcement officials to "gaug[e] the dimensions of the hate-crime problem, which has increased in recent years in many parts of the country."

ADL also has been seeking passage of hate-crimes legislation at the state level. According to an ADL report to be released Friday, during the agency's National Executive Committee meeting in Palm Beach, Fla., 12 states have enacted new hate-crimes laws or strengthened existing ones since 1988.

"All told, 43 states and the District of Columbia now have statutes aimed at combatting intimidation, harassment or institutional vandalism based on race, color, religion or, in some cases, sexual orientation," the statement said.

The seven states that have no laws related to hate crimes are Arkansas, Iowa, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Utah, Vermont and Wyoming.

The statistics bill adopted by the Senate on Thursday had originally been scheduled for a vote last summer. But it was held up by Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.), who opposed its inclusion of crimes against homosexuals.

In gaining passage of the bill Thursday, Simon and Hatch tried to placate Helms by adding an amendment that states nothing in the act shall be construed as trying to "promote or encourage homosexuality."

"Nobody can make the claim that homosexual rights are going to come from this particular bill," Hatch told Helms during the debate.

But Helms cited a recent article in a gay newspaper, the New York Native, that argued passage of the bill would lead to new civil rights protections for lesbians and gay men.

Hatch, himself a conservative, retorted that "homosexuals are human beings too. They are citizens of this country, and they ought to be treated like citizens of this country. They pay taxes, they ought to have the taxes go for their benefit, as well."

The amendment was approved by a vote of 96-0.

Helms ultimately voted against the overall bill, along with Sens. William Armstrong (R-Colo.), Gordon Humphrey (R-N.H.) and Trent Lott (R-Miss.).

SHARON ACCUSES SHAMIR OF SECRET DEAL ON PALESTINIANS

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Feb. 8 (JTA) -- Ariel Sharon accused Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir of concealing concessions he allegedly has made with respect to the proposed Israeli-Palestinian dialogue.

Sharon, who is minister of industry and trade, leads a hard-line bloc of Likud ministers and Knesset members who oppose Shamir's peace initiative.

Addressing the Press Club in Tel Aviv on Thursday, Sharon claimed Shamir has already consented to the inclusion of Palestinian deportees from the West Bank and Gaza Strip in the Palestinian delegation that would meet with Israelis in Cairo.

Sharon admitted he had no hard information to back that up, but rather a gut "feeling."

He claimed Shamir engineered the postponement of a tripartite meeting of foreign ministers in Washington to discuss the impending dialogue until after the Likud Central Committee meets on Monday.

According to Sharon, the prime minister does not want the Central Committee to know about his concessions before it takes a crucial vote on his policies.

The Central Committee was to have met on Feb. 7. But the terrorist attack on an Israeli tour bus in Egypt on Sunday, which killed nine Israelis, caused it to be postponed.

Foreign Minister Moshe Arens is expected to meet in Washington next week with U.S. Secretary of State James Baker and Egyptian Foreign Minister Esmat Abdel Meguid to work out details of the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue.

Sharon told the Press Club audience that the government's resolve to exclude East Jerusalem Arabs from the dialogue was weakening but there has been no "consent" yet on that point.

The Labor Party half of the unity coalition government is prepared to allow the East Jerusalemites to participate in the dialogue and in the Palestinian elections which might follow.

Likud is opposed, but Sharon seemed to be suggesting that the Shamir-Arens wing of the party is less than firm on that issue.

JEWISH DEMOCRATS SET UP GROUP TO SERVE AS LINK WITH THE PARTY

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Feb. 8 (JTA) -- Jewish Democrats, long reluctant to have a specifically Jewish caucus within the Democratic Party, have decided to establish a permanent organization to ensure that the party continues to advocate issues of Jewish concern.

Called the Jewish Democratic Study Group, the new organization is an outgrowth of the National Jewish Leadership Council, which was organized in 1988 to support Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis's unsuccessful campaign for president.

The study group is headed by Morton Mandel of Cleveland, a former president of the Council of Jewish Federations who also headed the 1988 campaign group. It includes many of the same Jewish leaders who were active in the Dukakis campaign.

This follows the pattern set by Republican Jews, whose National Jewish Coalition emerged from a group formed to support Ronald Reagan's presidential election campaign in 1980.

But the new Democratic group will be completely independent of the Democratic Party, so it will be free to criticize the Democratic National Committee, its chairman or any other Democrat, said Hyman Bookbinder, who is the Washington consultant for the study group.

Jewish voters have bucked the national trend in the last three elections and continued to support the Democratic candidate for president in overwhelming numbers.

"Jews can no longer take the Democratic Party for granted, and the Democratic Party can no longer take Jews for granted," said Bookbinder, former Washington representative of the American Jewish Committee.

In a statement announcing its formation, the study group said that there is "need for an active Jewish leadership presence to assure the continuation of the traditional, overwhelming preference that Jewish voters have shown for Democratic candidates, and to assure the kind of Democratic policies and candidates that merit such support."

Bookbinder said the Democrats have traditionally supported issues important to Jews and have provided the bulk of American political support for Israel.

But he said there is need to ensure that the party does not make such mistakes as failing to include resolutions condemning anti-Semitism in the party platform, as it did during the 1984 and 1988 party conventions.

FIRST JEWISH DAY SCHOOL TO OPEN IN BUDAPEST IN FALL

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Feb. 8 (JTA) -- The first Jewish day school in Hungary since World War II will be opened in Budapest in September by the America Endowment Fund for Hungarian Jewry, a group of private investors in United States and Canada.

Albert Reichmann of Toronto, chairman of the fund, signed agreements with the Hungarian Ministry of Cultural Affairs and the Finance Ministry on Jan. 22 and 23 to permit the establishment of the school and lay out the financial arrangements.

Reichmann is a real estate magnate whose family, originally from Hungary, owns Olympia &

York, one of the largest real estate firms in North America.

The school will be the first religious school of any kind in Hungary since World War II, said David Moskovits, a Brooklyn businessman, who is spokesman for the fund.

He explained that the Hungarian Jewish community is not without Jewish or religious instruction, but what has existed has been minimal or not formalized.

The day school, a joint venture of the America Endowment Fund and the Hungarian Jewish community, will continue operating the kindergarten and afternoon Talmud Torah supported by the fund, but will phase out the Anna Frank high school, Moskovits said.

Moskovits expects an enrollment of 300 to 400 students at the school at 44 Wesselenyi Street, which is adjacent to the Kazynski Synagogue and Budapest's kosher Hanna restaurant.

Hebrew, a language scarcely heard in Central Europe, will be the school's spoken language, Moskovits said. Classes will be held from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Jewish teachers from Budapest have been sent to observe teaching at yeshivas and day schools in the United States and Canada run by various trends in both the Orthodox and Conservative movements.

The teachers' visits were assisted by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee.

The Endowment Fund is also seeking outstanding teachers worldwide who would commit themselves to three years' teaching in Budapest.

COURT UPHOLDS WOMAN'S RIGHT NOT TO CUT OFF GANGRENOUS LEG

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 8 (JTA) -- Ruth Trabelsi, 84, will be granted her wish to enter heaven on two feet.

The Nazareth District Court ruled Thursday that the Tunisian-born great-grandmother from Tiberias has the right to refuse surgery to amputate a gangrene leg.

Doctors at Poriya Hospital in Tiberias say that without amputation, she will die a speedy, painful death.

The courts became involved when the hospital took legal action to prevent the patient from committing "passive suicide."

Trabelsi, a deeply religious, Arabic-speaking woman with 258 living children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren, refused to sign a waiver authorizing surgery.

Judge Oded Gershon, whose Nazareth court has jurisdiction in Tiberias, ruled against an appeal by the state attorney.

He reached his decision after a psychiatrist and a geriatrics expert found that Trabelsi was sane, lucid and understood fully the probable consequences of failure to have her limb amputated.

Judge Gershon's ruling is considered a landmark decision. The so-called "right-to-die case" generated intense debate in Israel, which split opinions mostly along religious and secular lines.

The Ashkenazic chief rabbi of Tel Aviv, Yisrael Law, insisted that according to halachah, sick persons have no right to prevent their cure.

Trabelsi was quoted as telling family members at her bedside, "I wish to enter the Garden of Eden with both feet."