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**MAZOWIECKI DECLARES POLAND OPEN  
AS TRANSIT POINT FOR SOVIET JEWS**

By Toby Axelrod

The New York Jewish Week

NEW YORK, March 26 (JTA) -- Poland's Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki announced Sunday night that Soviet Jews can use his country as a stopover on the way to Israel.

"Just as in the Middle Ages Poland gave refuge to Jews fleeing persecution," Mazowiecki said, "so today Poland will not evade humanitarian assistance to Jews emigrating from the Soviet Union."

Mazowiecki's offer was made at a dinner for over 300 people given here in his honor by the American Jewish Congress.

According to Mazowiecki's spokeswoman, Malgorzata Niezabitowska, Poland's national airline, Lot, is now prepared to provide charter flights for Jews leaving the Soviet Union.

"I can think of nothing that would develop stronger bonds between Poland and the Jewish community," said Robert Lifton, president of AJCongress, "than for Poland to be helpful in terms of Soviet emigres in enabling them to get to Israel."

Israeli officials expect 750,000 Soviet Jews to come to Israel in the next decade, based on the Soviet Union's current liberalized emigration policies and tighter entrance requirements to the United States.

**Threats Of Terrorism**

Last week, Malev, the Hungarian national airline, stopped flying the emigres to Israel because of threats of terrorism from the Islamic Jihad for the Liberation of Palestine.

The Hungarian airline also told the Soviet Union to stop flying Jews to Budapest, which recently had become a major transit point for the emigres. The USSR complied, announcing that Aeroflot would no longer sell one-way tickets to Jews bound for Israel via Hungary.

But even before the problems in Budapest, Israel had requested that Poland assist the emigres, according to the Polish government spokeswoman.

The Polish leader's decision to allow flights to come through his country was seen as "a decision of great moral and political significance that will be welcomed by Jews all over the world," said Henry Siegman, executive director of AJCongress.

In the Polish prime minister's only planned address to the Jewish community during his visit, he also decried anti-Semitism past and present.

"We regret the attempts to foster hatred against Jews, as it happened in (Poland in) March 1968, or in the resolution of the United Nations which identified Zionism with racism," Mazowiecki said.

He added that he was prepared "to restore Polish citizenship to everybody who was at that time forced to leave Poland.

"Now that we are opening up to the world, and after 23 years have restored diplomatic relations with the State of Israel, the time has come to make a breakthrough in the relationship between the Poles and Jews," he said.

**AS ALL EYES LOOK TO SCHACH,  
RABBI REFUSES TO TALK POLITICS**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, March 26 (JTA) -- Shimon Peres seemed no closer to achieving a Labor-led coalition government with the religious parties, and may indeed have suffered a setback from the speech delivered Monday night by Rabbi Eliezer Schach, spiritual leader of the ultra-Orthodox Shas and Degel HaTorah parties.

In fact, the venerated Lithuanian-born rabbi, who is in his 90s, refused to talk politics and instead assailed the non-religious, as he addressed some 10,000 followers at the first national convention of Degel HaTorah.

The convention was held at the Yad Eliahu sports stadium in Tel Aviv, where some spectators paid up to \$50 scalpers' prices to attend.

His eagerly anticipated speech in Yiddish and Hebrew, broadcast live on national radio and television, had been expected to indicate whether the small but pivotal haredi parties would continue to back the hard-line Likud or align with the more flexible Labor Party.

The aged rabbi thus disappointed all pundits when he stated baldly at the outset, "I will not talk politics."

Instead, he delivered a polemic against secular Jews, whom he charged were antagonistic to the religion that preserved the Jewish people. And he attacked the kibbutz movement, a stronghold of Labor support, for flouting Jewish custom.

**Not Appreciative Of Judaism**

"Kibbutzim which do not observe Yom Kippur, Shabbat -- can they have a link with their father? Can they be called Jews?" the rabbi asked.

While Schach, who controls eight seats in the Knesset, did not enjoin the faithful to avoid a Labor-led coalition, he charged the Labor Party with being insufficiently "appreciative" of Judaism.

No other party was mentioned in the 20-minute speech, delivered in Hebrew with occasional excited lapses into Yiddish.

Laborites had hoped Schach might lean in their direction because of his reputed sympathy for trading land for peace, based on the halachic injunction that saving lives is paramount. The concept of trading land for peace is anathema to Likud.

For all of his pacifism, Schach indulged in some warlike rhetoric.

"We live in a terrible period," he said. "War has not started now and has not ended now."

Therefore, he suggested, the Jew must be stronger than all the gentiles, who have the most powerful weapons, "including Russia and America."

"The people of Israel have passed exile after exile, hardships after hardships, fires and killings. Strong people have tried to annihilate us.

"For 2,000 years we have faced them with empty hands, without arms, but we have won, we exist," because the Jews did not break their links with their forefathers, the rabbi said.

Rabbi Avraham Ravitz, leader of Degel HaTorah, said the message he got from Schach's

speech was that his movement should support Likud.

He stressed, however, that the rabbi's criticism was merely cultural and educational, and did not contradict his known objection to holding on to territories.

Labor and Social Affairs Minister Ronni Milo of Likud said he had no doubt that the religious parties would align with Likud. He said Peres was wrong to think he could form a coalition.

Schach was followed on the podium by the former Sephardic chief rabbi, Ovadia Yosef, who is spiritual mentor of Shas and also a supporter of land-for-peace.

He, too, devoted most of his comments to religion. But in what seemed an indirect response to Schach, Yosef suggested that the many people who deviated from religion should be approached and brought back to it.

### **RELIGIOUS PARTIES STILL POWERFUL, BUT 'WHO IS A JEW' IS NOT THE ISSUE**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 26 (JTA) -- While the problem of forming a new government continues, political observers are asking -- appropriately on the eve of Passover -- why is this government crisis different from all other crises?

Shimon Peres of Labor and Yitzhak Shamir of Likud are still courting the pivotal religious parties as ardently now as they did after the inconclusive 1988 elections, but neither suitor has been asked for a solemn vow to amend the Law of Return.

That's because the Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox factions, though still using their position as power brokers between the major parties to promote sectarian interests, are no longer wielding "Who Is a Jew?" as the decisive factor in any deal.

Menachem Porush, veteran Knesset member of the Agudat Yisrael party, recently quoted a Talmudic aphorism: "Just as it is a mitzvah to say something at the right time, so, too, is it a mitzvah to refrain from saying it at the wrong time."

From the relatively moderate National Religious Party to the ultra-Orthodox Agudah and its recent offshoots, Shas and Degel HaTorah, the message seems to have penetrated that "Who Is a Jew?" is a non-starter.

That issue notwithstanding, the religious parties have discovered that their influence over the personal lives of Israelis -- particularly in the areas of marriage and divorce -- has not appreciably diminished for lack of the amendment.

The entire "Who Is a Jew?" issue revolves around the more stringent definition of a Jew that the Orthodox have long wanted incorporated into the Israeli Law of Return. They would have the right of automatic Israeli citizenship conferred not upon any Jew coming here, but upon those who are born to Jewish mothers or converted to Judaism according to the Orthodox interpretation of Jewish law, or halacha.

The Orthodox want the words "according to halacha" added to identity cards after the word "converted." This would invalidate conversions performed by Reform, Conservative or Reconstructionist rabbis, who represent the majority of Jews in Diaspora communities but are not recognized in Israel.

When Yitzhak Shamir promised the Orthodox parties in 1988 that "Who Is a Jew?" would sail

through the Knesset if they joined a Likud coalition, overseas Jews were galvanized.

Fund-raisers for Israel spoke of a sharp decline of income, and political supporters warned that Israel would lose its most effective friends. Philanthropic support for Orthodox institutions in Israel and abroad declined.

The lesson was not lost on the Orthodox. In any event, they have learned to live with the existing legislation by concentrating their clout on the marriage and divorce laws, which in Israel are administered exclusively by the religious authorities of each faith.

While the High Court of Justice ruled last year that converts cannot be denied identity cards describing them as Jewish, the minister of interior, Rabbi Arye Deri of Shas, cleverly ordered that future ID cards bear a legend explaining the rubric "Jewish" is not prima facie evidence of religious status.

This accomplishes, without need for Knesset intervention, the basic goal of the Orthodox: to keep non-Orthodox converts from mixing into the general Jewish population.

Deri's rule also facilitates the smooth entry of hundreds, possibly thousands of problematic Soviet Jewish olim, whose "Jewishness" by halachic standards can be clarified at some later time.

### **GERMAN INDUSTRIALIST CHARGED ON POISON GAS EXPORT TO LIBYA**

By David Kantor

BONN, March 26 (JTA) -- A West German industrialist in custody for almost a year has been formally charged with violating export laws to build a poison gas factory in Libya.

Jurgen Hippenstiel-Imhausen, founder and owner of a chemical company that bears his name, acted to the detriment of the Federal Republic, according to Peter Wechsung, the state prosecutor in Mannheim.

Imhausen is charged specifically with assisting Libya to build a factory at Rabta, about 40 miles south of Tripoli, which has been widely reported to have been producing poison gas for chemical weapons. Libya has repeatedly denied this, claiming the plant was only manufacturing pharmaceuticals.

A suspicious fire destroyed the plant March 14, reportedly putting it out of operation only a week after U.S. intelligence reported it had started up again, following a hiatus of about a year.

Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi blamed West Germany for the fire.

The West German prosecution said it would try to prove that Imhausen, owner of Imhausen-Chemie, broke laws that bar the export of certain items without a permit from the Ministry of Economics.

According to Wechsung, West Germany's foreign relations suffered gravely because of Imhausen's alleged illegal activities.

Bonn had initially denied that West Germans were involved with the Rabta plant, despite evidence produced by the United States and Israel. The eventual exposure of Imhausen was therefore doubly embarrassing.

He was arrested in May 1989, after trying to conceal his illegal activities by using the name "Pharma 150" for the Rabta plant. It was producing deadly gases known as Lost, Sarin and Soman, Wechsung said. Their only known use is for chemical warfare.

**A TENSE QUIET PERVADES ARAB TOWN AS ANNIVERSARY OF LAND DAY NEARS**  
By Gil Sedan

TAIBA, March 26 (JTA) -- The main square of the large Arab village of Taiba, in the heart of Israel, was empty. A few young people, unemployed, sat on stools outside the local cafes around the square, exchanging loud jokes. Some of them, absorbed in the headlines of the Hebrew dailies, loudly voiced their amazement at the way Rabbi Eliezer Schach is manipulating Israeli politics.

A marble monument here, situated at the side of the paved square, is a reminder of March 30, 1976, when a resident of a West Bank refugee camp, Nur es-Shams, was killed here by police, during violent riots, as Israel's Arabs commemorated Land Day for the first time.

Land Day began in protest over the expropriation of Arab land in the Galilee for the benefit of Jewish development towns there. That day ended with six dead and a permanent scar on the sensitive relations between the Arab population of Israel proper, who are full Israeli citizens, and the authorities.

That day has been commemorated every year since then, becoming a sort of national day for Israel's Arab population, a time to protest what they describe as their discrimination.

Fortunately, the bloodshed of that day 14 years ago has not been repeated. But every year, the last days of March are characterized by renewed tension and fears of an escalation of violence.

On Friday, Taiba's main square will again be filled with a mass rally of Arabs. Similar events will take place in the Galilee village of Arraba, and the Negev Bedouin town of Rahat.

What is notable is that this year, for the first time, the day will also be marked by a general strike, a mark of Israeli Arab unity with their Palestinian brethren in the territories.

**Evidence Of Tension And Frustration**

As this week begins, Taiba's square is quiet. But tension and frustration are evident.

"You don't need to ask why we are unhappy," said Kamal Jaber, 19, who worked as an auto mechanic until he was fired. "Just look at the entrance to the village, and compare it to the neighboring Jewish settlement of Kochav Yair, and you can tell the difference."

The difference is not quite as dramatic as he implied. The first visible part of the Arab village is dominated by several rows of spacious houses, showing that affluence has not entirely bypassed the Arab population in Israel.

Nevertheless, the difference still exists. There is nothing to be seen of the kind of large roads that cross the Jewish settlement, nothing of the sophisticated urban planning evident in the Jewish settlement, no local industry. And there is a lot of unemployment.

The local population has been quick to absorb the recent spate of statements by Arab leaders, both in and out of the country, that the immigration of Soviet Jews will come at the expense of the Arab population.

"They have fired me, and they will employ a Soviet immigrant instead," said Jaber, stating this as a matter of fact. "They will all take our places."

On Monday, the mayors of 47 villages declared an "open strike," protesting the govern-

ment's failure to live up to its promises to help them overcome their grave financial crisis.

The Arab municipalities have been promised a total loan of some \$51 million, but so far only \$1.5 million has been received, owing to what are described as "bureaucratic" difficulties.

The Interior Ministry spokesman expressed "surprise" that the Arab municipalities could not wait a few more days before they went on strike, "until their problems would be resolved."

But Rafik Haj Yihya, Taiba's mayor, could only remind that almost a month ago to the day, on Feb. 27, Arab mayors had called off a previous strike, assured "the money was on the way."

Anger was intensified here this week, as the Cabinet approved, in one session, the transfer of roughly \$70 million to Jewish religious institutions, undoubtedly a reflection of the intensive courting of the religious parties by both major parties.

"I want my residents to visit Netanyahu and Kfar Sava without feeling inferiority complexes," said Haj Yihya.

**ABIE NATHAN SAYS HE'LL RELEASE NAMES OF OTHERS WHO TALKED TO PLO MEMBERS**  
By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, March 26 (JTA) -- Abie Nathan, the Israeli peace advocate, said last week that if he is arrested and sent to jail again for meeting with Yasir Arafat, he would release the names of "dozens" of Likud party members, Laborites and religious party members who have also met with members of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Earlier this month, Nathan met twice with PLO chairman Arafat in Tunisia, the eighth direct contact between the two. But unlike their previous meetings, this one came after Nathan was jailed for four months for meeting the PLO leader, which is a crime under Israeli law.

Nathan may be arrested once again when he returns to Israel in the next few days.

When he first met Arafat in 1982, Nathan said, "His attitude wasn't for peace. It was bitter."

As a result, Nathan said he did not try to speak with Arafat for six years.

"But when a man tells me, any Arab leader, 'I see that you have a right to live next to me as neighbors, to live in peace and prosperity, we want you to live in secure boundaries,' I grab his hand and I embrace him," Nathan said.

Nathan was in Washington to speak to the annual convention of the American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee. For a keynote speech Friday, he received a \$2,000 honorarium, which he planned to donate to both an Israeli hospital, Tel Hashomer near Tel Aviv, and a Palestinian one in the Gaza Strip.

Nathan called it "absurd" for Jews to interpret the handful of raids into Israel by factions of the Palestine Liberation Organization as evidence that the group does not have peaceful intentions.

In Tel Aviv, 80,000 Palestinians work "in my backyard" every day, Nathan said, in an interview here in his hotel room in Arlington, Va.

"What has happened in the past 10 years in Tel Aviv? It's an absurdity to say, 'Oh, (the PLO is) doing that.' These guys can do it every day of the week. Nowhere has an enemy behaved in such a manner that he comes into your territory, he works and goes home," he said.

**THE NEW SOVIET ALIYAH:  
'WHERE TO LIVE?' IS CHIEF CONCERN  
OF BOTH NEW AND RECENT IMMIGRANTS**  
[Part 2 Of A Series]  
By Allison Kaplan

JERUSALEM (JTA) -- Clusters of Soviet Jews outside the community center in the city of Rishon le-Zion mingle and chat during their break from Hebrew class.

They are among the first large group of new immigrants who will not have known the protected feeling of an absorption center.

Those who work with immigrants describe absorption centers as "hothouses" that provide time for new olim to get their bearings.

They can see a bit of the country before they decide where to settle, and they can concentrate fully on their Hebrew studies. The conditions are far from luxurious, but all of their basic needs are provided for without cost.

By contrast, those in direct absorption communities like Rishon le-Zion are immediately plunged into the cold water of Israeli society and expected to swim.

With the grant money given to them by the government and the Jewish Agency, they have already found and rented their apartments and dealt with the hassles of arranging heat, electricity and telephone service.

Hebrew teacher Rachel Weitz, who has taught ulpan courses in both situations, said that those in direct absorption become streetwise faster. "They learn very fast what life is like in Israel. They have to organize their lives and learn quickly."

**Prices For Housing Climbing**

Judging from the ulpan students in Rishon, direct absorption seems to be working. A key to the success of the program has been matching the Soviet families with "adopted" Israeli families, who help them navigate their way into Israeli life.

Josef Bichman sits beside his wife, Ludmilla, in ulpan class. The couple, in their 40s, have gentle blue eyes and an intellectual air.

They have learned Hebrew quickly in their five months in the country. Josef enthusiastically explains a point of Russian history in Hebrew, as his teacher, Chaya, gently corrects his grammar.

Josef is very worried about finding a place to live. He has been anxiously watching the prices of apartments rise -- 35 percent since September and climbing, he observed. Prices can be expected to skyrocket even higher if more housing is not built soon.

The Bichmans know that they have a bit more time than those in absorption centers to find their housing solution. The direct absorption full subsidy for rent from the Israeli government and the Jewish Agency will run out at the end of their first year in the country.

The Bichmans have already learned that renting long-term in Israel is not a satisfactory situation. Ultimately, everyone in Israel is expected to buy an apartment, and they don't know how they can afford it.

The families in their Hebrew class would like to continue living in Rishon le-Zion, but apartment prices are high, even with the favorable mortgages offered to immigrants by the government.

Having come to the country with no savings, Soviet immigrants are taking out multiple loans in order to purchase homes.

The prices are climbing because demand is up, and plans for large-scale construction of apartments are creeping along at a snail's pace.

"The government talks about building houses, but they don't do anything," Josef says worriedly.

A group of several hundred of the Soviet immigrants living in Rishon le-Zion has even volunteered to do construction work for a few years if it means securing a place to live. The offer reflects their desire for housing as well as an anxiety not to be seen by the Israelis as spoiled professionals, but people who are willing to do a bit of modern-day pioneering.

However, the group is presently caught in the legal morass of obtaining land and building permits from the government. They are also finding out that the cost of the apartments, even with their donated labor, will still be steep.

Josef says that after ulpan is completed, he will look for work, and if he doesn't find it, he will enter a job-training program. As long as he continues studying, he will remain eligible for government assistance.

The Bichmans and their classmates clearly spend much of their time worrying about their future in Israel. But they say it is a different brand of fear than they had in their previous home.

"The problems in the Soviet Union were large, overriding issues of ideology and anti-Semitism. Here in Israel, the problems are practical and day-to-day," says Ludmilla.

Soviet Jewish immigrants are glad, at least, that the problems of jobs and housing in Israel, unlike the threat of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union, appear to be somewhat under their control.

"I hope that it will be all right," Ludmilla says with a smile.

**W. GERMANY REJECTS DEMANDS  
TO FREE LEBANESE TERRORISTS**  
By David Kantor

BONN, March 26 (JTA) -- The West German government rejected new demands to free the Hamadei brothers, who are serving sentences in West Germany for terrorist acts.

The demands were received Monday from an anonymous group in Lebanon, which charged that the brothers were being tortured and threatened retaliation.

The Hamadeis are Shi'ite Moslems who are believed to be members of the pro-Iranian terrorist organization Hezbollah, or Party of God.

A West German Interior Ministry spokesman pointed out that only the courts, not the government, have authority to impose sentences or release prisoners.

Mohammed Hamadei and his brother, Abbas, were arrested separately in 1987. A Frankfurt court sentenced Mohammed to life imprisonment last year, for the June 1985 hijacking of a TWA airliner on a flight from Athens to Rome. U.S. Navy diver Robert Dean Stethem was murdered during that hijacking.

Bonn was criticized for refusing a U.S. extradition request. Abbas drew a 13-year sentence in 1988 for taking two West German nationals hostage in Lebanon to hold for the release of his brother.

The trials of both Hamadeis were closely observed by the United States and other countries as tests of West Germany's resolve to fight international terrorism.