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SOVIETS JOIN INTERNATIONAL PANEL INVESTIGATING FATE OF WALLENBERG

By Michael Solomon

MONTREAL, Aug. 27 (JTA) -- After four decades of maintaining that Raoul Wallenberg died in a Soviet prison in 1947, the Soviet government has agreed to cooperate with an international panel inquiring into the fate of the legendary Swedish humanitarian, who is credited with saving the lives of tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews.

The breakthrough was reported by the chairman of the international commission, McGill University Law School Professor Irwin Cotler, who spoke by telephone from Jerusalem before departing Sunday for Moscow.

Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev "authorized for the first time in Soviet history the creation of a special commission, including five Soviet ministers and five foreigners, to investigate the case of Wallenberg," Cotler told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

He said the panel was the fruition of a request he had personally made of Gorbachev when the Soviet leader visited Canada in March.

The Soviet government invited the panel to Moscow and is paying all of its expenses, Cotler said.

The commission, he said, would be akin to that set up to investigate the killings of Polish army officers in the Katyn forest in 1940. That panel found the Soviet Union guilty of the mass killings, discarding Soviet claims since the war that the Nazis had perpetrated the atrocities.

Other members of the Wallenberg commission include Guy von Dardel, Wallenberg's half-brother; Conrad Lubarsky, a former Soviet political prisoner now living in West Germany; and a representative of the Swedish Foreign Ministry.

They will now be joined by the Soviet ministers or deputy ministers of interior, justice, foreign affairs and the KGB.

Access To KGB Archives

While in Moscow, members of the commission plan to begin their foray into personal accounts and whatever material is available to trace the days of Wallenberg since he was last seen in Budapest on Jan. 17, 1945.

They will be permitted to interview witnesses, including former prisoners, and examine official documents relating to the case, Cotler said.

He said the Soviets told him they would open archives and files, including those of the KGB, and would allow the commission to visit Lubyanka and Chistopol prisons, where Wallenberg was reported to have been held.

Wallenberg, a Swedish diplomat, is credited with having saved tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews by providing them with Swedish passports. He also personally took people off trains bound for Auschwitz, saying they were citizens of Sweden.

Wallenberg reportedly requested a personal meeting with the commander of Soviet troops who had captured Budapest from the Nazis. He was never publicly seen again, but there have been over the years repeated sightings of a "tall Swede" in various prisons.

Cotler claims there is "incontrovertible evidence" that Wallenberg was alive after 1947 and through the 1960s and 1970s.

Shortly before Soviet dissident physicist Andrei Sakharov died in December 1989, he and his wife, Yelena Bonner, traveled to a prison in the Ukraine to check into reports from trusted friends that Wallenberg had been sighted there.

Sakharov and Bonner were not permitted to enter the prison that day. When they gained entry the next day, all traces of Wallenberg had disappeared, they told Cotler.

Soviet authorities claimed Wallenberg died of a heart attack in Moscow's Lubyanka prison in 1947, when he was 35 years old. Swedish authorities and others have never accepted that explanation and have repeatedly pressed the Soviets for more information.

If alive, Wallenberg would have been 78 years old on Aug. 4.

Last year, the Soviets invited members of Wallenberg's family to the Soviet Union to conduct some rudimentary inquiries. The family was given some of Wallenberg's personal effects.

But the Soviet Foreign Ministry maintained that Wallenberg had died in prison, in 1947.

A Wallenberg symposium held in June at Moscow University drew scant attention and fewer than 50 participants, despite attempts to publicize it.

JEWS WANT UNIFICATION TREATY TO INCLUDE ANTI-NAZI STATEMENT
By David Kantor

BONN, Aug. 27 (JTA) -- Members of the Bundestag, West Germany's parliament, began debate Monday on a proposal by the Jewish community to include a strong statement about the Nazi era in the preamble to the treaty that will formally establish a unified Germany on Oct. 3.

The Jewish community appealed last week to the various political parties to consider its proposal after the government circulated a draft of the treaty described by a community leader as unsatisfactory.

The government draft, released by Interior Minister Wolfgang Schauble, says that the unified German state would be conscious of the continuity of German history and the resulting special responsibility for human rights and peace.

It does not specifically mention the Nazi era.

The Jewish community expressed displeasure over the text, which, said community leader Heinz Galinski, "fails to address the crux of the matter."

The community proposed addition of a direct reference to the period between 1933 and 1944 in which Hitler ruled, and the "uniqueness of the terror acts perpetuated" by the Nazi regime.

A spokesman for the opposition Social Democratic Party predicted Monday that a compromise would be found on the question of the treaty's preamble. He also said that the majority in his party's parliamentary faction would want to adopt a text consistent with the Jewish community's proposal.

The maverick Greens, a left-wing, opposition faction, also appear likely to support the Jewish community's demand.

But Chancellor Helmut Kohl's ruling Christian Democrats failed to say whether they would agree to the Jewish community's request.

But an Interior Ministry spokesman said Monday that the Schaubel draft was not final and that deliberations were continuing. He said Jewish officials have been consulted all along and will be further asked to offer their opinions.

The Oct. 3 unification date was determined last week, when members of the East German government finally resolved their differences and voted in favor of it.

The event had been originally scheduled for December, when pan-German elections are set to take place, but economic woes and increasing lawlessness in East Germany created pressure to accelerate reunification.

The unity treaty between the two German states, which requires ratification by a two-thirds majority in both parliaments, is now being studied by the major political groups in both parliaments.

To win ratification in both houses of the West German parliament, the government needs the support of the Social Democrats, the main opposition party.

The chief outstanding problem is how to deal with abortion. The West German coalition government has had to bend to the representatives of the Christian Social Union, the Bavarian counterpart of Kohl's governing Christian Democratic Union, which is largely Catholic and anti-abortion.

The Social Democrats, seeking a more liberal abortion law, have threatened to block ratification of the treaty.

EUROPEAN JEWISH LEADER CONCERNED ABOUT ANTI-SEMITISM IN KOHL REGIME By Allison Kaplan

NEW YORK, Aug. 27 (JTA) -- As East and West Germany were agreeing last week on a date for unification, a European Jewish leader visiting here expressed skepticism about the ability of West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl to lead a united country into the future.

Some of Kohl's close aides "are really anti-Semites," charged Jean Kahn, president of CRIF, the Representative Council of Jewish Organizations in France, and the man slated to become president of the European Jewish Congress.

"I do not feel the circle surrounding Kohl has been de-Nazified," Kahn said in an address to the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. He said many European Jews were "concerned and worried about reunification."

Kohl has been a longtime advocate of reunification. His Christian Democratic Union championed the cause of speedy reunification in its last election campaign.

Voicing doubts about Kohl and his advisers, Kahn referred to a widely publicized incident in Poland, after West German Jewish leader Heinz Galinski protested Kohl's scheduled visit to a concentration camp on Shabbat.

Hans Klein, the West German government spokesman and a close friend of Kohl's, reportedly told Galinski, "We cannot always accept the precepts of international Jewry."

Kahn also claimed that German academics who are apologists for the Nazi regime have been known to serve as advisers to Kohl.

But Robert Goldman, ADL's European representative, said after Kahn's speech that "there is another side to the German story."

He said West Germany under Kohl has been one of the most responsive governments in the European Community when it comes to Jewish or Israeli concerns.

"I would not like to associate (the ADL) with any notion that there is anti-Semitism within the current government in Bonn," Goldman said.

While Goldman said fears over reunification are "understandable," he believes "the net effect of reunification will be positive."

The joining of East and West Germany means the end of the "hypocrisy and lies" that were told to the East German people by the previous Communist government, Goldman said.

Through education, he said, the East Germans will "come to grips" with the history of the Third Reich and the Holocaust.

Goldman said Kahn's negative feelings about Kohl should not detract from his effectiveness when he takes the helm of the European Jewish Congress.

But he added, "Obviously, I hope that as he goes on, he will perhaps develop a more balanced view" of the Germans.

AUSTRIAN PAPERS SPECULATE ON WALDHEIM RE-ELECTION BID By Reinhard Engel

VIENNA, Aug. 27 (JTA) -- Austrian tabloid newspapers are speculating that President Kurt Waldheim might be tempted to run for re-election when his term expires in 1992, as a result of his coup in bringing home 96 Austrian detainees from Iraq.

However, Waldheim himself said this was pure speculation, and would not give credence to the reports.

There is no age limit to the presidency, which is a six-year term, but one can be re-elected only once.

The 71-year-old president, scorned by most world leaders because of his wartime activities with the German Wehrmacht in the Balkans, has largely been applauded here for his surprise visit Saturday to Baghdad and his meeting with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

Waldheim said he had spoken on behalf of other foreign nationals who are trapped in Iraq. However, he returned only with Austrian citizens.

There has been some skepticism here over his trip, the first by a Western leader to Iraq since it invaded Kuwait on Aug. 2. But basically there has been approval of the fact that Waldheim acted in a humanitarian manner.

However, there has been much criticism over Austria's permission for unarmed American planes to use Austrian airspace to send equipment to U.S. troops in the Persian Gulf.

HUNGARIAN TEENS ARRIVE IN ISRAEL

JERUSALEM, Aug. 27 (JTA) -- A group of 60 Jewish high school students from Hungary arrived in Israel last week to start studies at institutions run by the Youth Aliyah Department of the Jewish Agency for Israel.

The students, between the ages of 14 and 16, arrived here without their parents. According to present plans, they will study here for three years, and then their parents will join them.

Some 12,000 students will study in the coming school year in Youth Aliyah institutions, among them some 3,000 from Ethiopia, 800 from the Soviet Union and 100 from Hungary.

LIKUD GOVERNMENT MOVES TO PROSECUTE ARAB KNESSET MEMBER FOR PLO CONTACTS
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 27 (JTA) -- The Israeli government is seeking to strip Arab Knesset member Mohammed Miari of his parliamentary immunity because of his alleged contacts with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Next week, the Knesset House Committee will discuss waiving Miari's immunity. Miari heads the one-seat Progressive List for Peace and Equality, a far-left party that openly identifies with the PLO.

Following complaints from Likud politicians, Attorney General Yosef Harish initiated the move to prosecute Miari for violating an Israeli law forbidding contact with a terrorist organization.

Miari left Israel on Monday for an international conference in Geneva, and therefore will not attend the Knesset session. The Geneva meeting is expected to be attended by PLO representatives. Before leaving, he told reporters that by going to Geneva, he was "fulfilling his duties."

He said that if Israeli peace activist Abie Nathan was willing to go to jail for meeting with PLO Chairman Yasir Arafat, then he would "sit in Ketziot or Ansar," two large detention camps for Palestinians arrested on security offenses.

Miari is suspected of having had extensive contacts with the PLO in November 1988 in Greece, in connection with an attempt to send a boatload of Palestinian deportees on a symbolic journey to the Israeli coast. The attempt was foiled when the boat was mysteriously bombed, many suspect by the Mossad, Israel's foreign intelligence agency.

Miari argued that his involvement with the PLO is in line with his duty to those who voted him into the Knesset. He described the efforts to prosecute him as an attempt to frighten the Arab population of Israel.

U.N. HUMAN RIGHTS PANEL IS AGAIN PLATFORM FOR ANTI-ISRAEL RHETORIC
By Tamar Levy

GENEVA, Aug. 27 (JTA) -- Israel has once again become the target of verbal attacks leveled by Arab delegates to the annual hearings here of the U.N. Human Rights Commission's Subcommittee on the Prevention of Discrimination and the Protection of Minorities.

Among the most vehement critics has been the Egyptian ambassador to the United Nations here, who assailed Israeli settlements in the administered territories.

Nabil el-Arabi said Israel was trying to alter the demography of the territories by planting settlers there. He said the international community should keep pressuring Israel until it agrees to withdraw from the territories.

Arabi expressed hope that the subcommission would accord first priority to the Palestinian question and said the parties to the Geneva Conventions had a duty to pressure Israel to assure the Palestinians' legal protection.

The 27 regular members and 24 alternate members of the subcommission are called "experts" and are technically not representatives of their respective governments. They are identified with signs bearing their names, not their nationalities. Israel does not have membership but is granted observer status.

Although the human rights panel shifted its

focus this year away from sole concentration on Israel's alleged misconduct, delegates still found time to rail against the Jewish state, including reviving the 1975 General Assembly resolution disparaging Zionism as a form of racism.

Preference To Jews Charged

Cuban expert Miguel Martinez defended the anti-Zionist resolution. He charged that in the event of a poison gas attack by Iraq, Israeli officials would distribute gas masks only to Ashkenazi Jews.

Responding to the slur, Israeli observer Rafael Walden quoted a statement by Defense Minister Moshe Arens saying he was responsible for everyone under Israeli jurisdiction, which would include Arabs as well as Jews.

Following lengthy bickering, Martinez indicated he was willing to accept assurances that everyone in Israel would be equally protected.

Hussein Raiani of the International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination said that although it was comforting that apartheid was on the way to being dismantled, other forms of racism and racial discrimination were still rampant in other parts of the world.

Israel, he charged, practices the most apparent form of racism. He characterized Israel's Law of Return and the World Zionist Organization as the embodiments of legal apartheid, since they give preference to Jewish immigrants over Arabs.

Walden, in his right of reply, spoke of the recent murder of a 17-year-old Jewish girl from Canada by a terrorist bomb on a crowded Tel Aviv beach, and of two Israeli teen-age boys who were brutally slain near their homes in the Jerusalem neighborhood of Ramot. He asked why the subcommission was silent on those murders.

In response, Jordanian representative Waleed Sadi requested the floor to say that he condemned the murders of innocent persons, whoever they were.

ISRAEL'S MOSLEM POPULATION GROWING FASTER THAN ITS JEWISH POPULATION
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 27 (JTA) -- Israel's population grew by 1.8 percent in 1989, with the Moslem and Christian communities growing at a faster rate than the Jewish community, the Central Bureau of Statistics reported this week.

It also said that the Jewish population in the West Bank and Gaza Strip is now growing at a slower rate than it has in several years.

At the end of 1989, there were 3,717,000 Jewish residents of Israel, making up 81.5 percent of the total population of 4.6 million. The Jewish population grew slightly more rapidly in 1989 than the year before, registering a 1.6 percent increase, compared to 1.3 percent the year before.

By contrast, the Moslem population grew 3.2 percent, totaling 665,000. And the Christian community grew 1.9 percent, to 107,000 people. Druse and other groups accounted for 80,000 Israeli residents, up 2.8 percent over 1988.

The Jewish population in Judea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip increased by 9.8 percent in 1989 and now totals 73,000 Jewish residents.

But the growth in those disputed areas was considerably slower than the three preceding years, which saw increases of 10.3 percent in 1988, 12.8 percent in 1987 and 15.8 percent in 1985 over the previous years.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES: MOOD IN ISRAEL IS ONE OF CONCERN, WITH OCCASIONAL BURSTS OF HYSTERIA By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 27 (JTA) -- The mood in Israel since the outbreak of the Persian Gulf crisis has been one of watchful concern, rather than widespread panic.

There was, in fact, a day or two of near hysteria about a week after Iraq's Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait, when rumors spread that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein had massed some 600 medium-range missiles equipped with chemical weapons near the Jordanian border with Israel.

The reports sparked demands for the distribution of gas masks to the public immediately, rather than at the end of the year, as originally scheduled.

Foreign Minister David Levy may have exacerbated widespread anxiety by challenging Defense Minister Moshe Arens' position that the Israel Defense Force was correct in wanting to stick to the original schedule.

But the panic died down when Israeli officials cited intelligence reports indicating that the number of missiles in the Iraqi arsenal was really 200 to 300, rather than the rumored 600, and none of them was equipped with chemical warheads.

Moreover, the intelligence reports showed that only a limited number were aimed at Israel, with the majority lined up against Iraq's main enemy at that moment: U.S. armed forces in Saudi Arabia.

Military officials also pointed out that if fired against Israel, the Iraqi missiles would be operating at their maximum range, with very low efficiency. If one or two missiles penetrated Israeli defenses, the results would be worrying but not devastating, they said.

Panic Buying In The Stores

Since then, the hysteria has subsided, though there are still calls for early distribution of the gas masks. Typical of the level of concern are the questions pet owners are asking about what provisions will be made to protect their cats and dogs. (They have been told that gas masks for pets are not available anywhere in the world.)

There were also two days of panic buying of food and other essential items, following television and radio interviews given Aug. 23 by Col. Dov Peled, head of the IDF's Civil Defense Department for Public Protection.

Asked what the public should do in an emergency, he said all homes should be stocked with a one- or two-week supply of canned goods and essential foods, including bottled mineral water, as well as candles, matches and batteries for transistor radios, which could be used to listen to emergency instructions in the event of power failures.

Within hours, supermarket chains reported a 20 to 30 percent jump in sales of such items. The main demand was for baking soda, which can provide temporary protection against poison gas when a handkerchief dipped in a soda-and-water solution is held over the mouth and nose.

Packages of baking soda have now replaced the privileged position near supermarket cash registers that is occupied during the Passover season by boxes of matzah.

Peled was criticized by Arens and the IDF chief of staff, Gen. Dan Shomron. They reassured

the public there was little chance of an Iraqi attack against Israel, because Saddam Hussein knew of Israel's military might.

By the beginning of this week, shops reported the demand was back to near normal.

Long-Term Impact Feared

The Gulf crisis has had little effect on immigration to Israel from the Soviet Union and other countries, and reportedly lesser impact than feared, so far, on foreign tourism to Israel.

According to figures released at the beginning of the week, some 90,000 new immigrants, mainly from the Soviet Union, have arrived in Israel so far this year.

But if the crisis continues into the fall, hoteliers and others in the tourism business fear they could suffer during the peak travel season.

Few tourists or foreign university students studying at Israeli universities have cut short their stays here. And most of those who have left apparently have done so at the urging of families in the United States, alarmed at exaggerated reports of panic inside Israel.

There is deep concern here, however, about the long-term political fallout from the Gulf crisis.

Israeli leaders and people on the street alike fear it will be difficult to protest U.S. plans to bolster the military power of Saudi Arabia, whose soldiers stand side-by-side with American troops along the Iraqi-Saudi border.

For the Likud and right-wing circles in Israel, there is concern that once the crisis has passed, the U.S. administration will again turn its attention to the Israeli-Palestinian dispute.

While Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasir Arafat appears to have overplayed his hand and, in Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's words, damaged the PLO's credibility, the United States can be expected to intensify its pressure on Israel to seek negotiating partners among Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, despite their support for Hussein of Iraq.

Military Solution Preferred

Much of Israel is united in an uneasy fear that international efforts to avert a further military confrontation with Iraq -- spurred by as diverse a cast of intermediaries as Arafat, U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar and Austrian President Kurt Waldheim -- will wind up allowing Hussein to descend gently from the high tree which he has climbed up.

One possibility is that Hussein will be persuaded to withdraw troops from Kuwait if they are replaced by some sort of multinational Arab League force.

Israelis fear this would leave the Iraqi leader with his new-found reputation in the Arab world as the modern Saladin or Nasser of the '90s. When all was said and done, he would still possess his military arsenal and be able to continue manufacturing chemical weapons as he pushes ahead with plans to develop a nuclear capability.

Israelis won't say it openly, but virtually all would prefer to see Iraq overrun and its military capability bombed out of existence, rather than allowing him to find a way out through political compromise.

The Tel Aviv Stock Exchange has reacted nervously to every new development in the Gulf crisis. Since the crisis began, the market has lost some 25 to 30 percent of its value, but it is still only back to its general level of a year ago.