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SOVIETS WIN JACKSON-VANIK WAIVER BUT NOT FAVORABLE TRADE BENEFITS

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Dec. 12 (JTA) -- Jewish organizations applauded President Bush's decision Wednesday to waive certain restrictions of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment until next July to allow the Soviet Union to receive up to \$1 billion in U.S. government-guaranteed credits to buy wheat and other U.S. food products.

Flanked by Secretary of State James Baker and Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, Bush announced the decision in the White House Rose Garden after an hour-long meeting with Shevardnadze.

The president also announced he would go to Moscow for a summit meeting with Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev from Feb. 11 to 13.

"I am prepared to respond to a Soviet request for credit for purchase of agricultural commodities through a waiver of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment," Bush said.

"While I have taken this step, I still look forward to passage of the Soviet emigration law codifying general excellent practices of the past year," he said. "This will permit us to make further progress toward normalization of our U.S.-Soviet economic relations."

While Bush waived the Jackson-Vanik restriction on extending credits to the Soviet Union, he did not lift a provision of the amendment that bars the USSR from receiving most-favored-nation trade benefits. That means Soviet goods selling in the United States will continue to carry much higher tariffs than those sold by countries with MFN status.

Nor did the president say he will send Congress the trade agreement he signed with Gorbachev here last spring. Bush pledged at the time that he would not grant MFN status or ask the Senate to ratify the trade pact until the Soviets adopted the promised emigration law.

Jewish Groups Applaud Move

Shevardnadze said his Foreign Ministry has pressed for the law's adoption, and he predicted the Supreme Soviet would pass it soon.

The foreign minister, who earlier this week asked publicly for U.S. aid to prevent a food shortage this winter, said the Soviet Union appreciates the president's action.

Jewish groups that once stood solidly against a waiver of the Jackson-Vanik sanctions were quick Wednesday to show support for the president's move.

"We support President Bush's decision to waive the Jackson-Vanik Amendment," said Seymour Reich, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

"We believe that efforts to date warrant this step and underscore our hopes for the future," he said. "We hope the Soviet Union will continue the implementation of human rights and free emigration."

Shoshana Cardin, chairwoman of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, said Bush's decision acknowledges the Soviet Union's "move toward free emigration."

The National Conference last week urged

Bush to approve a one-year waiver of the Jackson-Vanik Amendment restrictions, including granting the Soviets MFN status, in response to increased Soviet Jewish immigration to Israel, which is expected to reach 180,000 by the end of the year.

The Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, which had supported the credits for food, but not a waiver of MFN status, also praised Bush "for understanding that American pressure remains the most effective encouragement for institutional reform and human rights guarantees in the Soviet Union."

Pressure From Farmers

Pamela Cohen, the union's president, said Bush "has balanced political demands and demands for improving U.S.-Soviet relationship without compromising human rights."

Praise also came from B'nai B'rith International and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

Bush said technical assistance will be provided to the Soviets to see that the food it receives is distributed. He said he will urge the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank to offer assistance.

"For the longer term, only steps that the Soviet Union itself takes can assure the economic health" of the Soviet Union, he said, adding that he supports efforts for democratization and economic reform.

Observers see Bush's move as another effort to help Gorbachev stay in power.

But Bush also acted under pressure from American farmers, especially wheat growers, whose prices are at an all-time low. The farmers fear losing the Soviets as a customer to other countries that are providing the Soviets with credit.

The July 1 date for reviewing the waiver is the date the president reviews Jackson-Vanik waivers for all other countries covered by the amendment.

Bush's decision Wednesday marks the first time sanctions contained in the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to the U.S. Trade Act of 1974 have been waived against the Soviet Union.

The amendment is named for its authors, the late Sen. Henry (Scoop) Jackson (D-Wash.) and Rep. Charles Vanik (D-Ohio), who argued last year that a waiver for the Soviets was justified.

SHAMIR ASKS SOVIETS TO RESTORE FULL TIES, LAUNCH DIRECT FLIGHTS

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Dec. 12 (JTA) -- Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir urged the Soviet Union on Wednesday to restore the full diplomatic relations with Israel that Moscow severed during the Six-Day War of 1967.

"Our relations with the Soviet Union are becoming closer every day," Shamir said after a speech to scholars from the American Enterprise Institute, a conservative think tank.

"We have to establish normal diplomatic relations, and we don't see any reason for not establishing them now," he said.

Shamir indicated a restoration of relations

would be the major issue he would raise with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze when the two met Wednesday evening.

He said he also would discuss the inauguration of direct flights between Moscow and Israel for Soviet Jewish emigrants. The Soviet Union was scheduled to institute such flights last January but has delayed doing so, reportedly because of pressure from Arab governments.

Shamir and Shevardnadze were also scheduled to discuss the Soviet foreign minister's proposal that the Middle East should be a zone free of nuclear and chemical weapons.

Shamir said Wednesday that Israel has been making such a proposal for the last 10 years and that he himself had proposed it in a 1987 speech to the U.N. General Assembly.

"We are, as always, eager to negotiate with the Arab countries on these issues," the prime minister said.

Shamir also had lunch Wednesday with Vice President Dan Quayle and had separate meetings with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the House leadership.

KNESSET MEMBERS PROTEST PERMIT GIVEN TO TEMPLE MOUNT FAITHFUL **By Cathrine Gerson**

TEL AVIV, Dec. 12 (JTA) -- The Knesset Interior Committee demanded Wednesday that the police rescind a permit allowing the Temple Mount Faithful group to tour the Moslem Quarter of the Old City and the Temple Mount next week.

Committee members criticized the police action as blatant provocation and said they would appeal to the High Court of Justice for an injunction barring the group's tour.

The Temple Mount Faithful is a group of Jewish zealots who advocate the removal of Islamic shrines from the Temple Mount and the erection of a new temple on the site to replace the Second Temple, destroyed by the Romans in 70 C.E.

Police Minister Ronni Milo and Police Commissioner Ya'acov Terner agreed to allow the group to march through the Moslem Quarter and enter the Temple Mount in pairs on Monday.

Their presence at the site on past occasions has triggered violent confrontations with Moslem worshippers.

Labor Knesset member Edna Solodar pointed out that the country is still suffering from the effects of the Oct. 8 Temple Mount riots, for which the Temple Mount Faithful are held indirectly responsible.

The rioting occurred during the Sukkot holiday. Arabs on the Temple Mount stoned Jews worshipping at the Western Wall below, after rumors circulated that members of the Temple Mount Faithful were on their way to demonstrate.

Israeli border police subsequently killed 17 Arabs and wounded scores more in an incident that tarnished Israel's image around the world.

The Knesset panel adopted a resolution banning demonstrative behavior on the Temple Mount and decided to ask Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir to convene the Cabinet committee on Jerusalem to consider the matter once Shamir returns from the United States.

Knesset members Yossi Sarid of the Citizens Rights Movement and Yair Tsaban of Mapam met with Police Minister Milo later Wednesday to demand that he withdraw the permit.

ROCKS THROWN AT ARENS CONVOY; TEEN-AGE ARAB GIRL KILLED BY IDF **By Cathrine Gerson**

TEL AVIV, Dec. 12 (JTA) -- A convoy taking Defense Minister Moshe Arens through the West Bank on Wednesday came under a hail of rocks from Palestinians.

But Arens reportedly was not aware of the stoning until after the incident, which occurred while the convoy was passing through Jericho after a visit to the Allenby Bridge.

The windshield of the lead jeep was smashed. No injuries were reported and the minister's car was not hit. An Israel Defense Force spokesman said two 10-year-old Arab children were arrested for the incident.

Elsewhere in the West Bank, a teen-age Arab girl was killed Wednesday when Israeli troops raided the village of Bidya, near Nablus.

The IDF confirmed that the body of a girl was brought to a hospital after the raid. A spokesman said security forces were checking the cause of death.

The victim was identified Ahlam Ibrahim Aayed, 16, who was said to have been shot in the head. She was buried before the IDF imposed a curfew on the village.

Israeli soldiers wounded three Palestinians during a rock-throwing incident Wednesday at the El-Bureij refugee camp in Gaza.

In East Jerusalem, police fired tear gas to disperse more than 50 supporters of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a pro-Syrian terrorist organization headed by George Habash. They were celebrating the 23rd anniversary of the Marxist group's founding.

LABOR PARTY DOVE FLOATS PLAN FOR PALESTINIAN STATE IN GAZA **By Cathrine Gerson**

TEL AVIV, Dec. 12 (JTA) -- Yossi Beilin, a dovish member of the Knesset, has stunned his Labor Party colleagues by proposing a peace plan that would include an independent Palestinian state in the Gaza Strip and possibly in the West Bank at a later stage.

Members of the right wing of the Labor Party reacted with fury against Beilin, a protégé of Shimon Peres, the party chairman.

Former Knesset Speaker Shlomo Hillel accused Beilin of "causing the party enormous electoral damage."

Beilin, who was director general of the Foreign Ministry when Peres served as foreign minister, proposed that Israel offer to withdraw from the Gaza Strip. In return, the Palestinians would pledge to respect the security of Jewish settlements in the territory.

That would be followed by negotiations with the intention to set up an independent sovereign state in the Gaza Strip, Beilin said. It would have its own flag, its own national anthem, representation at the United Nations and a civilian police force, but would be completely demilitarized.

At the same time, Beilin said, talks would begin with the Palestinians in the West Bank, who would bring Syria, Jordan and Iraq to the negotiating table with Israel.

Only after Israel concluded peace treaties with the Arab states would the Palestinians in the West Bank hold a referendum to decide whether they wanted to join the Gaza state, federate with Jordan or federate with Israel.

CHURCH GROUP SCORED FOR DRAWING PARALLEL BETWEEN IRAQ AND ISRAEL

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, Dec. 12 (JTA) -- Leaders of the Reform movement have sharply criticized efforts by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA to link the Persian Gulf crisis to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

At their biannual general board meeting on Nov. 15, leaders of the church group adopted a statement saying that "active U.S. efforts to implement U.N. Security Council resolutions relating to the occupation of Kuwait by Iraq stands in marked contrast to U.S. negligence regarding the implementation of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338."

Those resolutions call for Israeli withdrawal from territory taken in the Six-Day War of 1967.

The council represents 32 major Protestant and Orthodox churches with about 80 million congregants in this country, including the Methodist, Presbyterian and Episcopal denominations.

"The U.S. government's condemnation of the massacre on the Haram al-Sharif/Temple Mount and its endorsement of a U.N. mission to the occupied territories was a welcome departure from past policies," the statement also said.

"The failure of the U.S. government to take any substantive measures to oppose the Israeli occupation, however, weakens the effect of its appropriate outrage over Iraqi aggression."

Rabbi Jerome Davidson, chairman of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations' inter-religious committee, said he was "surprised that the NCC would have gone along with this ploy of Saddam Hussein's and other Arab leaders to link the two situations."

"This is an unfortunate position for NCC to take when they want to build a stronger relationship with Israel," he said.

Davidson and Rabbi Gary Bretton-Granatoor, the committee's director, sent an open letter to the council's leaders on Nov. 29, calling the parallel "a moral obscenity."

No Reply To UAHC Complaint

The Reform leaders have not yet heard any response from council officials. The group's position and its silence to the UAHC complaint could weaken the relationship between the two groups, according to Bretton-Granatoor.

Leaders of the two religious organizations meet periodically with each other and with other groups to discuss interfaith issues as they arise.

"This is a very troublesome, difficult issue that has not only spiritual and theological importance, but real political implications as well," Bretton-Granatoor said.

"We would like to meet with them soon. Unless there is a real commitment to hammer these issues out, it could eventually cloud inter-religious dialogue in the months ahead."

"We've made tremendous progress (on inter-religious concerns) in the last couple of years," he said. "This could scuttle a lot of the things that we're doing."

According to Dr. Jay Rock, director of the council's Christian-Jewish Relations Office, "We're glad to talk to them. We're open to further conversation. We have had a good relationship with the Union for a long time."

But he acknowledged his group has "not made a formal response yet, and it's hard to know how we will follow up."

EDITOR OF DEAD SEA SCROLLS FIRED AFTER ATTACKING JUDAISM AND ISRAEL

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, Dec. 12 (JTA) -- After attacking Jews, Judaism and Israel in a newspaper article, the chief editor of the Dead Sea Scrolls has been dismissed from his post.

Dr. John Strugnell of the Harvard Divinity School had also been accused of delaying publication of the ancient manuscripts and restricting access to them.

He was dismissed earlier this month by a team of the manuscripts' editors after being quoted in the Israeli daily Ha'aretz as saying "Judaism is originally racist" and that "the correct answer of Jews to Christianity is to become Christian."

Strugnell, a Roman Catholic, said in the article that Judaism "is a horrible religion. It's a Christian heresy." He also said that "the occupation of Jerusalem -- and maybe of the whole State (of Israel) -- is founded on a lie."

A member of the editorial team that dismissed Strugnell said he was removed because of his "declining general health, especially for the last month or so." But other editors, quoted in The New York Times, said Strugnell had a "drinking problem" and "mental condition."

Strugnell is in a New England hospital and could not be reached for comment.

The Ha'aretz article, by Avi Katzman, was published Nov. 9. It will be reprinted in the January issue of Biblical Archaeology Review.

Hershel Shanks, editor of that journal and of Moment magazine, introduces the article with the comment that "Strugnell's views, as expressed in this interview, are consistent with the stories that have been circulating for years."

"For the man, we have compassion," Shanks said, "but for his views, contempt."

'Totally Repugnant' Slurs

Dr. Eugene Ulrich, a senior member of the Dead Sea Scrolls research team and professor of Hebrew scriptures at Notre Dame University, acknowledged that Strugnell had long had a reputation for making inappropriate remarks.

"The slurs are tied to the removal, but are not the main cause," he said.

Strugnell's remarks in the Ha'aretz article, Ulrich said, "are totally repugnant and are to be repudiated."

Strugnell is to remain an editor of the scrolls, one of about 15 scholars working on deciphering the ancient texts. But his administrative duties will be taken over by Dr. Emanuel Tov of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

The first Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1947, in caves high above the Dead Sea, at the ancient site of Qumran. Recorded between 200 B.C.E. and 50 C.E., they contain the earliest-known written versions of the Hebrew Bible.

Strugnell has been castigated for denying scholars access to the unpublished scrolls, and for delaying publication of the 35 to 45 percent of the texts that remain in the hands of the editors.

At a Princeton University symposium last year, Shanks called for Strugnell's resignation because of the delays.

Ulrich admitted that "there has been too tight a grip on the scrolls" and said he would "push for greater access." He said "a lot of material" is now being "reviewed by the various editors and shoved into the publication pipeline."

CHANUKAH IS CELEBRATED QUIETLY BY JEWISH SOLDIERS IN THE GULF

By Aliza Marcus

NEW YORK, Dec. 12 (JTA) -- It was the first night of Chanukah, and on the USS Saratoga, somewhere in the Red Sea near the western coast of Saudi Arabia, four Jewish sailors took part in the lighting of a menorah.

Led by Lt. M.S. Kaprow, the Jewish chaplain assigned for the night to the aircraft carrier and its company of smaller ships, the sailors celebrated the Maccabean victory of 2,150 years ago, then opened gifts and took out dreidels.

Chaplains have been ministering to Jewish soldiers in the U.S. armed forces since the Civil War. But they face unique challenges in Operation Desert Shield, which has sent almost 300,000 U.S. troops so far to Saudi Arabia in response to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait.

The ultraconservative Saudi regime bans all but Islamic religious practices throughout the kingdom, making the observance of such holidays as Chanukah a bit tricky to negotiate.

Although a photograph depicting the scene on the Saratoga was released through U.S. military information, photos of similar Chanukah scenes taking place within Saudi Arabia will probably not be available to the press.

Military officials are worried the Iraqis could use such pictures to claim the Saudis are defiling Islam's holy spots of Mecca and Medina, of which the oil-rich kingdom is the protector. That might damage the fragile Arab coalition against Iraq and its Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait.

As a result, holidays such as Chanukah, Christmas and even Thanksgiving are celebrated "more discreetly," said a spokesman for U.S. Central Command, based in Florida.

"We don't have them outdoors, and we don't have decorations up, but all religious services are being held there," he said.

Restrictions On Troops Protested

The Pentagon has taken various steps to avoid religious conflicts in Saudi Arabia, including advising people here not to send large quantities of Bibles or other religious objects to soldiers in the Persian Gulf.

A Defense Department spokeswoman said the Saudi government was restricting shipments of large quantities of non-Islamic religious objects to U.S. and other troops. She said the Pentagon had set no policy but was recommending that people adhere to these restrictions.

Earlier this fall, the U.S. Central Command distributed a troop information pamphlet that set out a list of sensitive subjects soldiers should avoid discussing. This included any mention of U.S.-Israeli cooperation or of what it called the "Jewish lobby."

Such restrictions have drawn protest from some Jewish and liberal groups, who are saying the United States is not only protecting a repressive country, but has ended up repressing its own freedoms in the process.

"The American military is entitled to the full protection of their rights even, and especially, as our troops are sent to foreign soil to defend American values," Ira Glasser, executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union, said in a telegram sent last Friday to Defense Secretary Dick Cheney.

Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles, said the

situation for Jewish soldiers in the Gulf is not just a Jewish issue, but one affecting all non-Moslem soldiers who, after decades of free religious practice in whatever theater the U.S. military was based, must now almost hide their religion.

"It's not that we're opening shuls in downtown Riyadh, or putting a Christmas tree in Mecca," said Cooper. "Should we be feeding and catering to this kind of mentality?"

'Morale Leaders,' Not Chaplains

Yet, the director of the organization supervising Jewish chaplains in the Gulf said the steps taken by the military were understandable, given Saudi mores and the danger of Iraq using information to destabilize the Arab coalition against Saddam Hussein.

Until now, "a Jew that went into Saudi Arabia would never get out; he'd stay there forever," said Rabbi David Lapp, director of the JWB Chaplains Council.

The council, a division of the Jewish Community Centers of North America, sent 500 Chanukah menorahs, 500 boxes of dreidels and 1,000 donated gifts for the estimated 1,000 Jewish soldiers serving in the Persian Gulf.

Lapp said Jewish troops would soon be served by a total of six chaplains, in addition to lay leaders.

Chaplains, however, are now being called "morale leaders," according to military officials, and they have been asked not to wear their crosses or Stars of David when leaving the area of operation, in order to avoid offending their Saudi hosts.

STRIKING WORKERS AND THEIR BYLINES RETURN TO EMBATTLED JERUSALEM POST By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Dec. 12 (JTA) -- Israel's only English-language daily returned to a semblance of normality this week, as the union-management struggle at the Jerusalem Post took a new twist.

After a week of unsigned news articles, familiar bylines reappeared in the paper when most striking editorial staff members returned to work at the invitation of Post President and Publisher Yehuda Levy.

Levy, who had earlier fired the hold-outs, demanded that they sign individual contracts as a condition of their rehire. But most of the employees refused to do so, not wanting to forfeit the protection of their union, the Israel Journalists Association.

The fired workers are presently awaiting a labor court's decision on the temporary injunction they obtained voiding their dismissals.

The union staff committee was taken aback by the return to work, but assented as long as the members do not sign personal contracts with the publisher.

Labor circles consider that a blatant attempt at union-busting. They have accused Levy of violating a contractual agreement limiting non-union members to 20 percent of the editorial staff.

According to a report in the daily Ma'ariv, the Jerusalem Labor Council appealed to Histadrut for an advertising boycott of the Post by all of the labor federation's many enterprises.

In other media-related news, the income tax authorities reportedly seized equipment from the offices of the Labor Party newspaper Davar for alleged failure to pay taxes.