



JEWISH AGENCY ASKS UJA TO RAISE \$700 MILLION MORE FOR SOVIET JEWS
By Charles Hoffman

JERUSALEM, Feb. 21 (JTA) -- The leaders of the Jewish Agency for Israel this week asked the United Jewish Appeal to raise \$700 million over three years as the next phase of Operation Exodus, but it appears that the actual goal for this special campaign will be considerably lower.

Agency leaders Mendel Kaplan and Simcha Dinitz asked UJA and Keren Hayesod, which raises funds for the agency outside the United States, to agree to a \$1 billion goal for what is being called "Exodus II."

UJA is being asked to raise \$700 million and Keren Hayesod \$300 million. The \$1 billion request was made this week during meetings of the agency's Board of Governors.

Kaplan, who chairs the Board of Governors, said that even if this billion dollars is raised over the next three years, the agency will still be short several hundred million dollars for its programs of immigration and absorption, education, settlement and Diaspora Jewish education.

The chairman of Keren Hayesod, Shlomo Hillel, told the Board of Governors on Thursday, the closing day of its session, that his fund-raising organization accepts the new \$300 million goal. Keren Hayesod was asked to raise \$180 million in the first phase of Operation Exodus.

UJA's national chairman, Marvin Lender, told the Board of Governors that a decision would be made on the Jewish Agency request during meetings of the UJA and federation leadership next month.

'We Will Do Our Best'

"I know that we can't raise amounts in the neighborhood of \$1.2 billion," said Lender. "Everyone thinks so except Mendel (Kaplan) -- he thinks our capacity is unlimited.

"In the end, we will do our best," he said.

Lender pointed out that UJA raised \$420 million during the past year as its part of Operation Exodus, in addition to a \$765 million regular campaign. UJA is now in the midst of a three-month \$400 million cash drive to collect on pledges made during these campaigns.

A senior American fund-raising official told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that "the federations and the UJA will probably agree on a campaign goal of between \$420 million and \$500 million for the next phase of Exodus."

The Board of Governors approved a budget of \$555 million for the nine months of fiscal year 1991, which starts April 1. The fiscal year, which normally runs from April to March, is being switched to correspond to the calendar year. The budget anticipates that 225,000 Soviet immigrants will come to Israel during this period.

The Board of Governors decided to cut regular Jewish Agency programs and economize, to make more money available for Soviet aliyah and immigrant absorption.

The agency covers the full cost of transporting the Soviet immigrants and their belongings to Israel, as well as a portion of their living and basic absorption expenses during their first year in Israel.

Earlier this week, the agency announced that beginning March 1 it wants to extend loans, rather than outright grants, to the immigrants for its share of their basic absorption expenses.

The proposal, which calls for loans on easy terms of \$1,000 per person to be made through Israeli banks, with federations in the United States guaranteeing them, drew sharp criticism from some Israeli officials.

Sharansky Assails Loan Plan

But Charles "Corky" Goodman, president of the Council of Jewish Federations, defended the plan, which CJF developed over the past several months, in coordination with the Jewish Agency and Israeli banks.

Goodman told the Board of Governors that if the agency continued to give cash grants, it would run up a deficit of \$300 million this year.

He said that in practice, elderly or disabled immigrants, or other hardship cases, would be exempt from repaying the loans. A \$200 million reserve fund for defaults and exceptional cases would be set up as part of the program, he said.

The plan was approved by the Board of Governors despite opposition from the head of the agency Aliyah and Absorption Department, Uri Gordon, and Natan Sharansky, head of the Soviet Jewish Zionist Forum, who joined the board several months ago.

Gordon said that if the agency did not have enough money for cash grants to immigrants, it should turn over all assistance programs for immigrants to the government.

He warned the agency would have colossal bureaucratic headaches from all the "exceptional cases" that would ask to be exempted from repayment. He said that 30 percent of the Soviet immigrants were elderly or hardship cases.

Sharansky said the real problem is that financial aid for immigrants was cut so much during the past year that they are forced to work right away instead of studying Hebrew for their first few months. He said the loan program would not make sense unless it substantially increased the funds available to newcomers.

IRAQI AGREEMENT TO PULL OUT TROOPS COULD LEAVE ISRAEL FACING A THREAT

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Feb. 21 (JTA) -- Iraq's announced agreement to withdraw from Kuwait under the terms of a Soviet initiative raised new questions about whether Saddam Hussein would emerge from the Persian Gulf war with his armed forces defeated but still a major menace to Israel.

The Iraqi agreement to a "full and unconditional withdrawal of its forces from Kuwait" was announced in Moscow early Friday morning local time after Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev met for more than two hours with Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz.

Under the agreement, Iraq said it would begin withdrawing its forces on the second day after a cease-fire and would complete the withdrawal in an unspecified "fixed time period."

But the agreement also calls for a lifting of all economic sanctions against Iraq once two-thirds of the forces are out of Kuwait, and a

nullification of all pertinent U.N. Security Council resolutions once the forces are out entirely.

President Bush, who was informed by Gorbachev of the agreement in a telephone call Thursday evening, told the Soviet leader he had "serious concerns about several points in the plan," White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said.

He said the United States would consult with its coalition partners to formulate a response to the Soviet-Iraqi agreement.

But meanwhile, Fitzwater said, there had been "no change in our schedule for prosecution of the war."

Earlier in the day, it appeared that Iraq had decided not to surrender and was bracing for an imminent ground assault by U.S.-led coalition forces. In a speech broadcast on Baghdad Radio, Hussein had declared that the Iraqi people are willing to continue the war until they reach martyrdom.

"In vowing to continue the war, (Hussein) once again demonstrates his determination to maintain the aggression against Kuwait and the absence of compassion for his people and his country," Fitzwater said shortly after the speech.

'Tiger Did Not Turn Into A Cat'

In Jerusalem, Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy told Israel Radio that he was not surprised by the bellicose tone of Hussein's speech.

Hussein is a danger to his own people and his megalomania will bring disaster to them and ruin Iraq, Levy said. He expressed the hope that the Iraqi people would finally realize where Hussein is leading them.

Levy spoke hours before Aziz informed Gorbachev of Iraq's willingness to accept the Soviet plan. But at that point, he said told Israel Radio that if the Soviet initiative were allowed to succeed, it would result in the constant threat of instability in the region.

Hussein would continue inciting the Arab masses, Levy said, and other Arab leaders would imitate him and endanger moderate regimes.

In New York, Israeli Consul General Uziel Savir said the world should remember that "the tiger did not turn into a cat." He said Hussein had "opted for war three times in this decade--Iran, Kuwait and Jan. 15 -- and he's opting for war again.

"The danger for the area, for his country and for the Arab-Israeli conflict is the combination of the devastating conventional and non-conventional armaments, and the cruel nature of his regime. The outcome of this conflict must find a solution to both," Savir said.

SHARON CALLS FOR RETALIATION FOR SCUDS, WITH OR WITHOUT U.S.

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Feb. 21 (JTA) -- Ariel Sharon, dissenting angrily from the government's policy of restraint, has publicly called for Israel to strike at Scud missile launchers in western Iraq, with or without U.S. cooperation.

Israel's failure to respond to the continuing missile threat injures its credibility and will weaken rather than strengthen its position in future diplomatic talks, Sharon declared Wednesday, in his first television interview on the subject since the Scud attacks began last month.

The former defense minister, Yom Kippur War hero and outspoken hawk has frequently criticized policies of the Likud government, which

he now serves as minister of construction and housing.

For the United States, he argued, the Scud launchers aimed at Israel from western Iraq are only a tiny, almost irrelevant factor in its war on Iraq.

But for Israel, they pose major questions of credibility and defensive strategy, with repercussions for the future, he said.

The United States should act to eliminate the threat, Sharon declared. Failing that, the United States and Israel should "share the day between them," each country hitting the missile sites at specified times.

And failing that, Israel should act alone, Sharon said. He said he did not believe Syria would become involved if Israel acted. Nor was Jordanian involvement inevitable, and in any event, it could be contained.

Israeli involvement no longer poses a genuine danger to the U.S.-led coalition, he added.

Sharon said that Israel's intelligence services had warned of likely missile strikes by Iraq before the Gulf war started.

The question of what the intelligence agencies did or did not know about Iraq's missile strength before the war has suddenly flared into controversy.

Doubts previously articulated only in private surfaced after Defense Minister Moshe Arens' remark Tuesday to the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that the performance of the intelligence services would be subject to review after the war was leaked to the media.

Yossi Sarid of the opposition Citizens Rights Movement, a veteran member of the Knesset panel, said the intelligence agencies had known virtually nothing about Iraq's missile capabilities. He said a review should concentrate on why "good people gave bad assessments."

EGYPT THINKS PLO STILL VIABLE DESPITE ITS SUPPORT FOR IRAQ By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Feb. 21 (JTA) -- Despite its outspoken support of Saddam Hussein, the Palestine Liberation Organization is still recognized by Egypt as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinians," according to a statement by Foreign Minister Esmat Abdel Meguid quoted in the weekly El Mussawar.

Meguid's comment means that Egypt, the only Arab country to make peace with Israel, believes the PLO should be a partner to any negotiations to resolve the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Although Egypt and the PLO have had their differences, and relations have grown still further apart as a result of the Persian Gulf war, Yasir Arafat's organization is still preferable to the rapidly rising Islamic fundamentalist movement.

If they boycott the PLO, the Egyptians could face the same radicals responsible for the murder of Anwar Sadat.

Even as Meguid spoke, Egyptian students demonstrated at Ein Shams University in Cairo against the Gulf war, in which Egyptian troops are part of the U.S.-led coalition fighting Iraq.

Egypt's political attitudes are affected by popular sentiment in the Arab world. Israeli policy-makers are concerned that the latest Egyptian overture toward the PLO could be part of a new radical line, which would eventually insist on an international conference on the Palestinian question and the future of the Golan Heights.

ISRAELI SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENT DOWN 20 PERCENT, BUT STILL HIGH

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 21 (JTA) -- Public support for the Israeli government's policy of restraint in the Persian Gulf war dropped 20 percentage points in a month but is still extraordinarily high, according to a poll conducted here for the American Jewish Committee.

The approval rating was 74 percent, down from 94 percent after Jan. 18, when Israel became the target of Iraqi missile attacks in the first week of the war.

The fact that four out of five Israelis continue to favor restraint after more than 30 Scud missiles have been launched at Israel shows a high degree of political sophistication and absence of public hysteria, according to Louis Guttman of the Institute of Applied Social Research in Jerusalem, which did the polling.

The survey also showed that 44 percent of Israelis approved the conduct of American Jews in the crisis.

Ron Kronish, head of AJCommittee's Israel office, said that was "remarkable," considering media reports that say resentment against U.S. Jews is rampant in Israel because so many of them have canceled planned visits since the war was impending.

Those results were challenged by David Clayman, who heads the Israel office of the American Jewish Congress. Clayman said he had serious reservations about the accuracy of the poll.

"Based on my conversations with Israelis and various experts, the general feeling is one of resentment because expectations have not been met," Clayman said.

BRITISH M.P. SAYS ISRAELI SOLDIER THREATENED HIS LIFE DURING TOUR

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Feb. 21 (JTA) -- A visiting member of Britain's Parliament complained Thursday that an Israeli soldier threatened his life during a tour of the Nablus casbah he was making with other members of a European delegation.

George Galloway, still visibly shaken by the incident, which reportedly occurred Wednesday, told a news conference here that "it is not every day that a British member of Parliament has a gun stuck in his direction and a soldier threatens to kill him.

"If we were Palestinians yesterday, I might be dead now," Galloway said. But he said he had no ill feelings toward Israel and did not intend to besmirch its image.

As far as the European guests were concerned, "it was an isolated incident," he said, stressing that only one soldier behaved "in an almost uncontrolled manner."

The delegation, which included trade union leaders from Scotland, was visiting the West Bank to observe "the impact of the long-range curfew on residents of the territories."

Accompanied in Nablus by Palestinian trade union leaders, the visitors were stopped by an Israel Defense Force patrol, which ordered them to the local police station on grounds that they had entered a closed military area.

An IDF spokesman denied that Galloway and his party were taken from the casbah at gunpoint. He said the soldiers mistook them for journalists

and that Galloway identified himself as a member of Parliament only after a senior officer arrived on the scene.

Galloway said he found "a very bad situation" in the territories. "In all the years that I have been coming here, I never saw more despair than currently exists, particularly in Gaza."

He described Gaza as "a giant powder keg that is waiting to blow. And when it blows, I wouldn't want to be an Israeli government which bears responsibility for that explosion," he added.

Security forces, meanwhile, detained a Jewish settler from Tekoa, near Bethlehem, on suspicion that he fatally shot a 15-year-old Arab boy, Jallal Mussalah, from a passing vehicle Tuesday. The youngster was standing outside his home in Beit Sahur village.

Justice Minister Dan Meridor continued to receive anonymous death threats because he voiced objections to a bill that would pardon IDF soldiers who killed or wounded Arabs in violation of orders during the early stages of the intifada.

Graffiti scrawled on the staircase of his Jerusalem residence accused the veteran Likud minister of being a leftist. Meridor has also received threatening letters because he has not deported Faisal Hussein, a prominent Palestinian nationalist from East Jerusalem.

HOLOCAUST DENIER FRED LEUCHTER ORDERED TO STAND TRIAL IN MAY

By Steve Rosenberg

The Jewish Advocate

BOSTON, Feb. 21 (JTA) -- Fred Leuchter, who manufactures gas chambers for states with capital punishment but claims the Nazis never used them to kill Jews, was ordered to trial May 9 to face charges of violating a Massachusetts statute that bans the practice of engineering without a license.

Malden District Court Judge James Killian rejected a motion Tuesday for dismissal filed by Leuchter's attorney, Texas lawyer Kirk Lyon, whose other clients include the Ku Klux Klan and assorted white supremacists and neo-Nazis.

The dapper 47-year-old Leuchter came to court under heavy security guard. It was his fourth appearance and, as on the previous occasions, it turned into a confrontation between Holocaust deniers and outraged Holocaust survivors and their friends.

About 30 Leuchter fans sporting "free speech" armbands carried signs reading, "The Holocaust is Dead" and "The Jewish Satanization of America."

They sang German nationalist songs, hurled taunts at the Holocaust survivors and scuffled with about a dozen members of the local Jewish Defense League.

Three men were arrested when someone tried to burn an Israeli flag. One was a JDL member charged with assault and battery and disorderly conduct. The other two, Leuchter supporters, were hit with the same charges.

The charges against Leuchter, which carry a maximum three-month jail sentence and \$500 fine, have nothing to do with his revisionism.

But Leonard Zakim, regional director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, is convinced the trial will be a history lesson about the Holocaust for many people.

"The eventual verdict will be less important than the messages the case has brought to the surface," he said.

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES:
THE NEED TO SHOW SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL
DOMINATED THIS YEAR'S NJCRAC PLENUM**
By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

MIAMI (JTA) -- The dictum that the Jewish community pulls together when Jews are attacked from the outside was played out in almost every event at the annual plenum of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council here Feb. 17 to 20.

A feeling of passionate support for Israel at this critical time, together with the new political realities in the Middle East, rallied delegates to unity on many issues about which there had been little agreement in the past.

For instance, a statement on the postwar period, adopted by the delegates Tuesday after little debate, says it is clear that "the Palestine Liberation Organization cannot play a constructive role, directly or indirectly, in advancing the prospects for peace" in the Middle East.

"A year or two ago, we couldn't have had this in the statement," said Martin Raffel, director of NJCRAC's Israel Task Force. "The general climate has pointed in certain directions now that create an environment of unity."

Historically, the annual NJCRAC plenum has been considered one of the few forums in American Jewish organizational life where an open airing of divergent opinions is possible.

But this year, some delegates felt that the strongly pro-Israel atmosphere of the plenum restricted the freedom of participants to speak openly if their views were not in concert with the majority position.

NJCRAC's executive vice chair, Lawrence Rubin, warned in his opening address that "it would be unfortunate if it were perceived that, out of some misguided notion of like-mindedness, the field appeared to exclude from its deliberative process energetic and independent-minded individuals and organizations."

Some 'Afraid To Even Talk'

According to Albert Vorspan, senior vice president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and its director of social action, some individuals with dissenting views were "afraid to even talk" at the sessions where debate over policy issues took place.

"We can't allow rallying around the flag to become our only agenda," he said.

Some participants, however, felt that critical points of view on some issues, particularly those relating to Israeli policy, should not be aired on the plenum floor, but discussed privately with Israeli leaders.

It has been "fashionable and easy to criticize Israel for the last couple of years" said William Rapfogel, executive director of the Institute for Public Affairs of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America.

"The Jewish community right now cannot afford to make a mistake," he said. "There are some in the (Bush) administration who will seize on any split in the Jewish community."

Israeli diplomats were among those who would like to see less criticism of Israeli policy aired at the NJCRAC plenum. Several diplomats were on the floor of every NJCRAC session where debate about Israeli policy took place, talking with delegates about the issues in question.

Mordechai Yedid, deputy consul general at the Israeli Consulate in New York, was seen

grabbing the arm of Maynard Wishner, NJCRAC treasurer and co-chair of its Israel Task Force, as he walked by in the corridor.

He urged Wishner not to bring up the sensitive subject of "transfer" at the next plenum session. "Transfer" refers to the proposal of the Moledet party, which has just joined the Israeli government, to expel Arabs from the administered territories as part of a peace settlement.

Issue Of 'Transfer' Avoided

Some delegates wondered if the Israelis were working too hard to influence the shape of the debate that was about to take place.

"I see nothing wrong with the Israelis expressing their views," said Thomas Smerling, executive director of Project Nishma, a dovish organization that tries to educate people about Israeli security and the peace process.

"But if they're going to be intimately involved with the debate with American Jewish organizations," he added, "it would be hypocritical for them to say that we shouldn't speak out."

As it turned out, the subject of "transfer," which many Jews find abhorrent, was raised by a delegate during the policy debate. The issue was referred to the Israel Task Force for consideration without being discussed by delegates.

The outrage felt by many delegates over the inclusion of Moledet in the Israeli government, and the fact that delegates were not able to take a public position on the notion of "transfer" during the plenum, became a bonus for Project Nishma's Smerling, who was collecting signatures for a letter on the subject to Knesset member Binyamin Begin.

The letter, which praised Begin's "principled stand" opposing Moledet's inclusion in the government, served as a way for many delegates to express themselves on the issue. It was signed by more than 100 Jewish leaders, including all eight past chairs of NJCRAC attending the plenum.

For the past several years, Israel has been the focus of debate at the plenum, and this year, that was the case more than ever.

While delegates said that it was natural for Israel to be the focus during the current crisis, some community leaders felt that domestic issues were shunted to the back burner and did not receive the attention they deserve.

Only One Issue Important To Jews

Only seven of 30 items on the agenda for discussions during Joint Program Planning sessions were related to the Middle East.

But domestic issues, including intergroup tensions, energy policy and anti-Semitism, were relegated to the very last hour of discussion.

Sen. Howard Metzenbaum (D-Ohio) criticized this preoccupation with Israel in a speech to the delegates Sunday night.

"Sadly, there is only one issue that the members of Congress think is important to Jews -- Israel," he said, adding that "on issues of civil rights and civil liberties, you are not doing your job."

While several delegates called Metzenbaum's remarks "an overstatement," one argued that "so many non-Jews work in domestic affairs," but "only the Jews are for Israel."

NJCRAC Chair Arden Shenker devoted his entire address Monday to issues of foreign policy. "The sore needs on our domestic agenda," he said, are "for another day, if not for another plenum."