

JEWISH LEADERS FROM USSR WARN OF IMMINENT ABSORPTION TRAGEDY

By Charles Hoffman

JERUSALEM, May 9 (JTA) -- Soviet Jewish leaders visiting Israel this week asked Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir to give them a voice in setting absorption policy.

They warned that urgent steps must be taken to "prevent a national tragedy."

The leaders of the Vaad, the confederation of Jewish institutions in the Soviet Union, asked Shamir for an urgent meeting to discuss the establishment of an international coordinating body to cope with "the critical situation in immigrant absorption."

The Vaad leaders were attending the plenary assembly of the World Jewish Congress, which for the first time included a representative delegation of Soviet Jews, numbering 65 people.

In a letter to Shamir, Vaad leader Michael Chlenov cited recent hunger strikes and protests by immigrants, as well as a camp of homeless immigrants in the Galilee development town of Carmiel, as evidence of worsening conditions for the Soviet newcomers.

"The situation threatens to deteriorate to a social explosion, with unpredictable consequences for aliyah and for the State of Israel," he wrote.

On Thursday, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz published the results of a survey showing that over half of the Soviet Jews who arrived here during the last six months of 1990 are unemployed.

Only 15 percent of the families who arrived this year have at least one member working, and about 30 percent of them work as domestics.

The survey was conducted last month by the Tatzpit research institute, headed by Dr. Aharon Fein. A representative sample of 615 immigrants who arrived in Israel between September 1989 and March 1991 were interviewed at 40 locations.

Immigrants 'Have Almost No Voice'

Chlenov said in an interview that what the Soviet delegation heard this week from immigrants was "very worrying. We were urged by many immigrants to raise these issues, because they have almost no voice. Our voice is important to them."

The Vaad delegates met for six hours with Jewish Agency leaders to discuss preparations for aliyah made in the Soviet Union and the actual move to Israel, tasks which are handled by the agency. Providing jobs and housing for the mass aliyah is the responsibility of the government.

The Vaad delegates were frustrated that during sessions of the WJC assembly, attended by hundreds of Jewish community leaders from around the world, little time was devoted to aliyah and absorption.

Grigory Kroupnikov, a Zionist leader from Riga, Latvia, said that "the speakers at the assembly keep telling us that the Soviet aliyah is the most important event in Jewish history today. But why, out of a three-day conference, is only an hour and a half devoted to this subject?"

The WJC session on aliyah consisted mainly of speeches by Absorption Minister Yitzhak Peretz and Jewish Agency leaders Mendel Kaplan and

Simcha Dinitz. Very little time was left over for questions from the floor, which provoked an angry outburst from the Vaad delegates.

"I don't understand why we are limited only to a few questions," said Vaad leader Yosef Zissels of the Ukraine. "Why don't people want to hear what we have to say? Aliyah and absorption deserves a serious discussion, and not just a few brief questions."

A Leningrad journalist in the delegation said, "You must explain why the aliyah is not absorbed, why there are no jobs. Perhaps we should stop the aliyah until the people already here are absorbed?"

Finance Minister Yitzhak Moda'i spoke at another session, but did not say anything about what his ministry was doing to create the tens of thousands of new jobs needed to absorb the immigrants. After his speech, he left without answering any questions.

"We are sick and tired," Chlenov said, "of ministers coming here, talking and then leaving without giving us a chance to say anything."

The immigrants themselves are also frustrated, and that could have political repercussions.

According to the Tatzpit survey, only 35 percent of respondents polled about their political leanings would support one of Israel's existing political parties. Sentiment was overwhelmingly in favor of creating a separate Soviet party.

On Tuesday, one Soviet immigrant did just that. A little-known immigrant named Yosef Hurul announced he was forming the Zionism, Immigration and Democratic Party, which would focus on problems confronting the immigrant community.

(JTA correspondent Hugh Orgel in Tel Aviv contributed to this report.)

ISRAELI LEADERS CONCERNED BY REPORTS MOSCOW MAY USE EMIGRATION AS LEVERAGE

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, May 9 (JTA) -- Indications that the Soviet Union might use Jewish emigration or the restoration of diplomatic relations as leverage to extract concessions from Israel on the peace process have disturbed Israeli leaders on the eve of Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh's historic visit here.

Bessmertnykh was due to arrive here at noon Friday, becoming the highest-ranking Soviet official ever to visit the Jewish state.

All week Israeli leaders have been anxious about the visit, which could lead to the long-sought restoration of full diplomatic relations between the two countries, which Moscow severed in 1967.

But the jitters were heightened by reports of the foreign minister's remarks Wednesday in Damascus and late Thursday in Amman.

In Amman, Bessmertnykh spoke out strongly against the continued building of Jewish settlements in the West Bank. Then, after mentioning that Soviet Jewish emigration "may create some concerns" for Israel's Arab neighbors, he added, "I would not exclude anything when we talk about the necessity to stop the construction of these settlements."

Israeli leaders reacted angrily Thursday to the implied linkage.

Aliyah is a humanitarian matter that should remain entirely separate from the diplomatic process, said Eliahu Ben-Elissar, chairman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

Any Soviet linkage of it to the peace process would be met by Israel's solid resistance to a Soviet role in the process, the Likud Knesset member said in a radio interview.

'Violation Of International Accords'

In New York, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations issued a statement Thursday evening expressing concern about the reports of Bessmertnykh's remarks.

"Any endeavor to inject conditions on freedom of immigration would be a violation of international accords," said the statement, which was issued by the chairman of the conference, Shoshana Cardin.

Israeli officials stressed Thursday night that Soviet diplomatic relations, likewise, must not be offered with strings attached. Israel will not "pay a price" for the restoration of full diplomatic ties, said one official.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir said he hoped the restoration of relations would be announced during or soon after Bessmertnykh's visit. But neither he nor anyone else in the government seemed to know what the Soviet statesman intended to do on the subject, and Shamir seemed to prefer not to dwell on it.

One government source observed that "the more one is seen to want something, the higher the price one is perceived to be ready to pay for it."

Israel is especially sensitive to pressure to cease settlement building in the administered territories, which the Bush administration has repeatedly described as an "obstacle to peace."

The Soviet foreign minister will meet U.S. Secretary of State James Baker in Cairo over the weekend before Baker arrives here next week.

Israeli leaders fear the Soviets and Americans may "gang up" on Israel and demand a cessation or suspension of settlement building as a precondition for some confidence-building steps by the Arab side.

Both Shamir and Foreign Minister David Levy were expected to stress, publicly and privately, during Bessmertnykh's brief visit Israel's appreciation of the Soviet policy of liberalized emigration for Jews, and Israel's willingness to cooperate in a peace effort under the joint auspices of the two superpowers.

LEVY SAYS ISRAEL 'FED UP' WITH WAR, DENIES CABINET IS SPLIT OVER PEACE By Ben Kayfetz

TORONTO, May 9 (JTA) -- Israel wants peace with the Arabs, because "we are fed up with wars and we seek a situation where we will no longer be enslaved by the race for armaments," Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy said here Wednesday.

He spoke to reporters at Adath Israel synagogue, where he was about to address a community assembly. His visit to Canada, promised last year to the Canadian Jewish Congress, had been delayed by the Persian Gulf War.

Levy denied Israel's Cabinet is split over peace policy.

He has been attacked by right-wing members for agreeing to certain proposals of U.S. Secretary of State James Baker.

But Levy described the Israeli Cabinet as a body united in the goal of peace.

Speaking in Hebrew through an interpreter, Levy said that Israel is extending "the warm hand of peace." He said it is time the Arabs "put a stop to this taboo on talking to Israel."

Asked if he would consider trading territory for peace, Levy replied that no negotiator would agree to preconditions. This would be "capitulation, not negotiation," he said.

Levy will be meeting Friday in Jerusalem with Soviet Foreign Minister Alexander Bessmertnykh, the highest-level Soviet official ever to visit the Jewish state.

There has been speculation that the occasion will be used to announce the re-establishment of full diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and Israel, which Moscow broke in 1967.

Asked how far he would press the Soviets to re-establish those ties, Levy said, "We have no intention of pushing for recognition."

Israel "simply wants normality, not anomaly," Levy said, observing that "Russia maintains full diplomatic relations with states with which it has been at war."

"At this point, there is a consulate (of Israel) in Moscow, and the Israeli flag is flying in the city. But we are not standing at the door begging to be admitted.

"The level of recognition should be raised, and we are leaving it to the Soviets," he said.

Levy also met here with the family of Marnie Kimmelman, the teen-ager who was killed last year in a terrorist attack on an Israeli beach.

Earlier on Wednesday, Levy met in Ottawa with Canada's new external affairs minister, Barbara McDougall, who recently replaced Joe Clark in that office. It is believed that the personnel change in that position will move Canadian sympathies more in Israel's direction than they have been in the past.

After meeting with Bessmertnykh, Levy will go to Brussels for talks Sunday with the 12 European Community foreign ministers.

ISRAELIS FINED AT TRIAL IN CYPRUS By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, May 9 (JTA) -- Four Israelis were fined the equivalent of \$1,000 each Thursday by a district court in Nicosia, Cyprus, after pleading guilty to trespassing on the Iranian Embassy with the intent to commit a felony.

The surprise confession ended a case which the media claimed was the outcome of a bungled operation by Israel's foreign intelligence agency, Mossad.

The Israelis, two men and two women, were arrested during the night of April 23 in the basement of the building housing the Iranian Embassy in the Cypriot capital, in possession of burglary tools and espionage equipment.

They were widely believed to have been trying to bug the embassy's telephones. But since wiretapping is not illegal in Cyprus, they were booked on six other counts.

The judge, anxious to dispose of the case, readily dropped five of the charges after the guilty plea. Cyprus, he said, does not want to become involved in Middle East disputes.

The Israelis were speedily hustled out of the country. They had been free on bail since May 2 and were living at the Israeli Embassy, which posted bond, provided them with defense counsel and paid their fines.

GROUPS URGE GERMANY AND AUSTRIA TO CRACK DOWN ON NEO-NAZI GAMES

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, May 9 (JTA) -- Jewish groups and a U.S. senator are urging the Austrian and German governments to crack down on the proliferation of neo-Nazi video games in their countries.

An Austrian newspaper poll published last month reported that 22 percent of high school students in the municipalities of Graz and Linz have played such games, which are apparently manufactured in Germany.

There are currently some 140 such video and computer games, according to the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center, which held a news conference here Wednesday to call attention to the problem.

Reporters were given a demonstration of the "Aryan Test," which rewards players for answering multiple-choice questions with pro-Nazi responses and penalizes those giving anti-Nazi ones.

Another game, which is played to the tune of the German national anthem, challenges players to efficiently manage the Treblinka concentration camp by accumulating enough gas to kill as many "Turks" as possible.

The game, which has colorful graphics of Hitler and concentration camp scenes, awards additional points for extracting gold fillings from the victims' teeth and selling the victims' remains for dog food.

Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.), who hosted the news conference, wrote Wednesday to German Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Austrian President Kurt Waldheim, urging them to invoke hate crimes statutes to ban distribution of the games in their countries.

D'Amato, backed by the Wiesenthal Center, also asked the U.S. Customs Service to consider banning their import into the United States. Although no English-language versions have yet to be discovered, some of the German-language games promised to become available in English.

First Amendment Concerns Cited

Bill Anthony, a Customs Service spokesman, said his agency is trying to determine if such a ban can be made without violating free-speech guarantees contained in the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. "One of the problems might be there may not be any laws under which this is covered," he said.

Gottfried Haas, the spokesman at the German Embassy here, said the distribution of such games in Germany is "against our penal law."

"As soon as we have any clear evidence of that, our prosecutors will act immediately for sure," Haas said.

Ulf Pacher, the Austrian Embassy spokesman, said his government began investigating the matter on April 20, when the Austrian poll of high school students appeared. The date is also the anniversary of Hitler's birth.

Pacher said that although none of the games were apparently created in Austria, some may have been made by Austrian groups connected with German ones.

Pacher said he doubted any such game had been created in Austria, because "it's not a big enough market," although distributors in a larger market such as Germany "obviously have an incentive to come in."

The American Jewish Committee raised the

issue last week with both the German and Austrian ambassadors to the United Nations. It also wrote Kohl and Waldheim, urging them to "be vocal in their denunciation of these games" and to "initiate prosecutions."

Kenneth Stern, AJCommittee's program specialist for anti-Semitism and extremism, said the group will likely not press for any Customs Service restrictions on the basis that such games do not travel in packages "with pictures of Hitler on the front."

Since such games would enter the United States through underground means, Stern said his group would focus on raising awareness of them in communities where they are discovered.

Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean of the Wiesenthal Center, dismissed the argument that publicizing the games would only make them more popular. "I can't see any outcome that is positive unless we stop this," he said.

Hier said such games have allowed neo-Nazi groups to "tap into the mainstream" of Germany and Austria.

Games glorifying the Holocaust are not new in Germany. In September 1984, a court in the southwestern German city of Zweibrücken convicted a woman of devising and circulating a board game in which pawns representing Jews were sent to death camps by the throw of dice.

GREEN LEADER WHO SLAMMED ISRAEL REGAINS POSITION AFTER SUSPENSION

By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, May 9 (JTA) -- The Lyon branch of the French ecologist Green Party has reinstated Jean Briere as its official spokesman, despite objections from the party's national leaders.

National headquarters removed him last month, albeit reluctantly, for making anti-Semitic, anti-Israel statements in an internal party document, which some of his colleagues made public.

The positions articulated by Briere, a 58-year-old former member of the French Communist Party, touched off a heated debate among the Greens, who have frequently criticized Israel.

But the party was embarrassed by Briere's extreme language and the fact that it was quoted in the public media. Briere himself regretted his remarks were published but offered no apology.

He wrote on April 7 that Israel is "a racist, militarist, war-mongering state." He accused Jews of pressuring the U.S. government to launch war against Iraq.

After prolonged discussion, the party delegates agreed to condemn the statement, although about a third of them refused to vote on the issue.

Party leader Antoine Waechter would not condemn Briere beyond saying that his language might have been too strong. The national leadership decided, however, to strip Briere of the right to speak officially for his Lyon constituency in southeastern France.

But the local leaders decided otherwise Sunday. They voted 35-24 with 11 abstentions to retain Briere. There was no immediate reaction from national party headquarters.

The Greens, who have emerged as a small but vocal political faction in several Western European countries, are generally pacifist and concerned mainly with environmental issues.

According to the latest polls, the French Greens would win between 5-7 percent of the vote if national elections were held now.

**PROMINENT ISRAELI JUDGE RESIGNS
TO JOIN FRAY AGAINST ANTI-SEMITISM**

By Charles Hoffman

JERUSALEM, May 9 (JTA) -- Hadassah Ben-Itto, a highly respected Israeli jurist, announced Wednesday that she is stepping down from 31 years on the bench to devote herself to the worldwide fight against anti-Semitism.

Ben-Itto, a vice president of the Tel Aviv District Court, is head of the International Association of Jewish Lawyers and Jurists. She made her announcement at a session on anti-Semitism at the World Jewish Congress assembly held here this week.

"I am sorry to be leaving the court," she said, "but I feel so strongly about working in the fight against anti-Semitism that I must give this priority."

Ben-Itto, who was part of the Israeli delegation to the United Nations in 1975, fought against the U.N. General Assembly resolution denigrating Zionism as a form of racism when it was adopted that year.

She told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that one of her main projects will be to write a book and produce a film to expose the origins of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion," the notorious forgery which is gaining renewed currency around the world.

"The main danger of anti-Semitism today," she said, "are the ideologies that propagate the theory of an international Jewish conspiracy, as in the 'Protocols.'"

Professor Yehuda Bauer, head of the Center for the Study of Anti-Semitism at the Hebrew University, said, "Anti-Semitism has been increasing over the past 10 years in different regions and under different conditions."

Nevertheless, "the chances of fighting anti-Semitism are better now than in the past, because (the Jewish people) have more non-Jewish allies in this struggle," he said.

New War Crimes Cases Possible

Bauer warned that the "real danger" to Jews in the Soviet Union is not the marginal extremist groups represented by Pamyat, but "the anti-Semitic ideologies held by many of the conservative forces that are filling the vacuum left by communism."

Kalman Sultanik, a WJC vice president, said that in former Soviet satellite countries of Eastern Europe, "the political leaders say nothing against the Jews in public, in order to impress Israel and America. But it is astonishing how these leaders tolerate other expressions of anti-Semitism" in their societies.

At a session on the prosecution of Nazi war criminals, the WJC gave awards to Isser Harel, the former head of the Israeli intelligence agency Mossad, who tracked down Adolf Eichmann in Argentina and brought him to Israel for trial; and to Beate Klarsfeld, a French citizen of German origin who has campaigned in Europe and other countries to expose war criminals.

Neal Sher, the director of the Office of Special Investigations, a U.S. Justice Department unit that hunts down war criminals, said his office will be able to pursue more war crimes cases because of new access to archives in Eastern European countries.

"These files, mainly in East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Hungary, will be a big asset to us," he said.

**WORLD JEWRY MUST FOCUS ON OLIM,
SAYS NEW EUROPEAN JEWISH LEADER**

By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, May 9 (JTA) -- Jean Kahn, the French Jewish leader who was just elected president of the European Jewish Congress, believes world Jewry must focus all of its resources on helping Israel absorb immigrants from the Soviet Union and Ethiopia.

He expressed his views at the "Hillula sur Seine," an outdoor gathering in the Moroccan tradition on the occasion of Jerusalem Day. Its motto was "Am Ehad" (One People).

The main task of Jewish communities around the world is helping the immigrants, Kahn said.

"An end must be put to all the partisan fund raising. The money should be raised by only one organization and sent to help immigration," he declared.

He was referring apparently to the proliferation of fund raising by different Orthodox religious groups which help only those whose Jewishness is not disputed by their rabbis.

That approach excludes many Soviet and Ethiopian Jews.

Kahn is president of CRIF, the representative council of French Jewish organizations, and was elected this week president of the EJC, a World Jewish Congress affiliate which represents 26 Jewish communities in Europe, plus Egypt.

The Hillula, which is in Moroccan tradition a commemoration of any prominent rabbi, and whose root word is "hallelujah," was held in a huge tent city in a suburb north of Paris and had a distinctly Oriental flavor.

It featured lectures, scholarly discussions and light entertainment by performers from France and Israel, meat roasted over charcoal on skewers and camel rides for kids.

"For many people, being a Jew is what they eat," said one visitor.

Israel's ambassador to France, Ovadia Soffer, was on hand, visiting the multitude of exhibitions by Jewish schools, booksellers and art galleries.

The Hillula was also the occasion for about 40 Israeli mayors and town council members to sign "twinning" agreements with Jewish communities in France, providing, among other things, for cultural activities and youth exchanges.

The organizing force behind the event was David Sa'ada, director of the United Jewish Social Fund of France.

KOHL, HAVEL PAY HOMAGE TO JEWS

By David Kantor

BONN, May 9 (JTA) -- Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany and President Vaclav Havel of Czechoslovakia paid tribute Wednesday to what Kohl called "the common past of Jewish heritage" in their countries.

The two national leaders opened an exhibition at the chancery in Bonn called "Judaica Prague." It consists of 100 art objects and religious artifacts loaned by the state-run Jewish Museum in Prague.

The display included pictures drawn by Jewish children in the Theresienstadt concentration camp in Nazi-occupied Czechoslovakia during World War II.

About 1,200 guests attended, among them politicians, writers, artists and diplomats. Germany's chief of state, President Richard von Weizsacker, was present.