

AS FIFTH ROUND OF PEACE TALKS ENDS, ISRAELIS SEEM SATISFIED WITH PROGRESS

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, April 30 (JTA) -- Israel appears largely satisfied with what has been accomplished in the five rounds of bilateral talks with its Arab negotiating partners that have taken place over the last six months.

Though the gulf between Israel and the various Arab parties is still wide, the two sides have gotten beyond the procedural haggling that characterized the first few rounds of talks and have begun to grapple with substantive issues.

The Israelis are probably most satisfied that this week's talks, which ended Thursday, was the last round to be held in Washington, where there have been four rounds after the opening sessions in Madrid.

Israel had long sought to move the site to the Middle East or at least closer to the region to lower the media spotlight on the talks and to prevent the Arabs from believing they would get U.S. help in pressuring Israel to accept their positions.

Israel, the Palestinians, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon all have agreed that the next round should be in Rome.

Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli negotiating delegation's spokesman, said Israel would be pleased if the talks were kept behind closed doors without any press briefings such as there were in Washington.

While the atmosphere here this week was improved over the previous four rounds, Israel and the Arabs continued to make harsh statements about each other, although much toned down from previous rounds.

Netanyahu, who holds the rank of deputy Cabinet minister, said that the Arabs were much more forthcoming in the negotiating sessions than they indicated in public.

Israel Suggests Convening May 11

Netanyahu said Israel has suggested that the talks resume in Rome on May 11. But Hanan Ashrawi, spokeswoman for the Palestinian delegation, said the Arab delegations have not yet decided whether to accept the offer.

Ashrawi added that the Arab negotiators do not want to be used by Israelis trying to score political points at home in advance of the June 23 national elections.

Elections in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were the focus of the talks this week between Israel and the Palestinians.

Israel offered to allow the Palestinians to have "pilot" municipal elections as a first step toward control over their daily lives.

Israel also proposed allowing the Palestinians to control Arab hospitals in the territories.

Netanyahu repeatedly explained that these steps could be implemented as the negotiations for an overall autonomy arrangement continued.

But Ashrawi rejected the elections as irrelevant and said they should be held only after a self-governing authority is put in place.

What the Palestinians want is a legislative assembly. But the Israelis are only offering administrative and judicial powers, since they see

a legislative body as the first step to a Palestinian state.

Ashrawi also dismissed Israel's offer for Palestinian control of the hospitals in the territory. She said the Palestinians have controlled the hospitals since even before 1967.

Not so, maintained Netanyahu. He said that while the hospitals are staffed by Palestinian doctors and other medical personnel, the management is in the hands of Israel.

Ashrawi charged that what Israel wants to do is an "assignment of special tasks" to the Palestinians, rather than handing over full authority. She said Palestinians have always been offered jobs in the Israeli civil administration of the territories but have declined to accept them because this would be cooperating with the "occupation."

While Ashrawi criticized Israel's initiatives, she made clear that the Palestinians were not rejecting them outright and would continue to study them.

Syria Considering Israeli Paper

Israel's proposals for peace with Syria, Jordan and Lebanon were also being studied by those countries, Netanyahu said. He said that during the latest round, Syria for the first time agreed to look at an Israeli paper offering its proposals.

However, Syria continues to demand that Israel withdraw from the Golan Heights before it will discuss peace talks. Lebanon has taken the same position on Israeli withdrawal from the border security zone.

The talks with Jordan appear to be moving ahead the smoothest. Netanyahu said Jordan and Israel discussed elements of relations between neighbors in many areas. He said this "step-by-step" approach has shown the best chance of progress.

Netanyahu also expressed satisfaction that Israel's talks with the Palestinians and its three Arab neighbors are all moving along on separate tracks, at different paces. He said before the talks began it was feared that the Arabs would coordinate their negotiations.

Meanwhile, Israel has sought to break the impasse over Palestinian representation at the upcoming round of multilateral talks on Middle East regional issues.

In the opening round of regional talks in Moscow in January, Secretary of State James Baker said Palestinians from outside the territories could attend the discussions on refugee affairs, scheduled May 13 in Ottawa, and on economic development, set for May 11 in Brussels.

Diaspora Palestinians have been barred from the bilateral talks, and Israel has threatened to boycott any multilateral talks in which diaspora Palestinians participate. Foreign Minister David Levy emphasized this when he met here with Baker on Tuesday.

But Israel's ambassador to Washington, Zelman Shoval, offered a compromise that would allow diaspora Palestinians to attend as part of the delegations from the countries in which they live.

Ashrawi, however, rejected the offer Thursday, saying Israel cannot determine the composition of the Palestinian delegation.

CANADIAN COURT BARS FINTA RETRIAL IN BLOW TO WAR CRIMES PROSECUTIONS

By Gil Kezwer

TORONTO, April 29 (JTA) -- Hopes for a successful war crimes prosecution in Canada received another setback Wednesday when the Ontario Court of Appeal dismissed a bid by the Justice Department for a retrial of Imre Finta.

The 79-year-old Toronto man was acquitted by a Supreme Court of Ontario jury here in May 1990 after a six-month trial, the first in Canada under a 1987 amendment to the Criminal Code permitting trials for World War II war crimes.

The five-judge panel was split in its 221-page judgment, with two of the Court of Appeal justices dissenting. One of the salient questions was the alleged impropriety of the closing address by Finta's chief defense counsel, Douglas Christie.

All five of the judges found that Christie's summation to the jury was inflammatory. Two would have ordered a new trial on that basis, while the remaining three found that the instructions to the jury by Judge Archie Campbell of the Supreme Court of Ontario were sufficient to offset Christie's address.

Christie attacked as "diabolical" the legislation allowing for the prosecution of war crimes committed outside Canadian jurisdiction against non-Canadians. He threatened that vengeance would be visited upon the members of the jury if they were to convict his client.

In an address tinged with anti-Semitic overtones, Christie read passages from the New Testament describing Jesus' refusal to answer false accusations put to him by Jews.

Supreme Court Appeal Urged

Jewish leaders were clearly disappointed by the ruling. "In our view, the case cannot be abandoned at this point, and should be appealed to the Supreme Court of Canada," said Manuel Prutschi, national director of community relations for the Canadian Jewish Congress.

"Today being the eve of Holocaust Remembrance Day, we think that it's a very appropriate time for the authorities to rededicate themselves to the task of bringing suspected Nazi war criminals to justice.

"In our view, we think that the political will has been there, but the bureaucratic will has been flagging. We certainly hope that will change in a dramatic way. There can be no moratorium on these kinds of heinous crimes," he said.

"The decision today reflects the overall unsatisfactory record of Canada in dealing with accused Nazi war criminals and collaborators who found safe haven in Canada following World War II," Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, said in a statement.

Looking for a bright note, Prutschi observed, "It's important to note that the court upheld the constitutionality of the law."

The Crown has the right to appeal to the Supreme Court of Canada within 30 days on every question where there was a dissent in the Court of Appeal. The Crown may also seek leave from the Supreme Court of Canada within 60 days on questions where there was no dissent.

Finta, a captain in the pro-Nazi Hungarian gendarmerie during the World War II, was accused of the forcible confinement of 8,617 Jews in the southern Hungarian city of Szeged from May 16 to June 30, 1944, and of robbing the detainees of their valuables while threatening violence.

AS ISRAEL REMEMBERS HOLOCAUST, DEMJANJUK PRESSES HIS APPEAL

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, April 30 (JTA) -- Israel observed Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Day on Thursday marking the 50th anniversary of the worst year of Nazi genocide against the Jews.

In Treblinka, a guard the prisoners called "Ivan the Terrible" operated the gas chambers. On this Yom Hashoah, the man an Israeli court decided was "Ivan" and sentenced to death four years ago is making use of the judicial system to try to prove he is a victim of mistaken identity.

Ukrainian-born John Demjanjuk, extradited from the United States in 1986 for trial in Israel, is waiting for the High Court of Justice to decide his fate while his Israeli lawyer, Yoram Sheftel, doggedly sifts for new evidence to substantiate his appeals.

A former member of the High Court and one of Israel's most distinguished jurists, retired Justice Haim Cohen, observed in a newspaper interview Thursday that Demjanjuk's appeals may be dragging on because the judges are themselves not certain he is the "Ivan" responsible for atrocities at Treblinka.

Sheftel is trying to convince them that the real culprit was one Ivan Marchenko, long deceased. Marchenko was the maiden name of Demjanjuk's mother.

In an effort to verify the claim of mistaken identity, the prosecution sent two representatives to Ukraine, where they examined KGB archives for two files said to contain evidence that Marchenko, not Demjanjuk, was the Treblinka executioner.

According to the defense, the files would yield 50 statements by camp guards who identified Marchenko when they were interrogated by Soviet authorities in 1961 and 40 photos of Marchenko in the "Ivan" file.

Two Minutes Of Silence

But the files could not be found. Prosecuting attorney Michael Shaked submitted an affidavit to the High Court on Wednesday attesting that they could not be located.

He said the authorities in both Russia and Ukraine cooperated in every possible way and did give him some new information which is being translated.

Meanwhile, Demjanjuk in his cell may have heard the sirens sound at 10 a.m. Thursday, bringing the country to a halt to observe the two minutes of silence that traditionally usher in Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Ceremonies were held Wednesday evening at Kibbutz Lohamei Hageta'ot, the home of many Holocaust survivors, and at Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial and museum in Jerusalem.

There were also ceremonies in the plaza outside the Knesset building. Knesset workers lit six torches in memory of the 6 million Holocaust victims. House Speaker Dov Shilansky, a survivor, placed a wreath at the foot of the torches.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir said the message of Holocaust Day to the Jewish people was that no one should surrender even in the direst circumstances.

The prime minister spoke at a memorial ceremony in Ashdod for the 1,069 illegal immigrants who died when their ships, the Struma and Mefkure, foundered enroute to Palestine during World War II.

CLINTON MARKS HOLOCAUST IN SHUL, COMMEMORATION HELD IN THE CAPITOL
 By David Friedman and Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, April 30 (JTA) -- Bill Clinton, the Democratic presidential front-runner, went to a synagogue in the nation's capital Thursday to mark Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Standing on the front steps of Adas Israel, a Conservative congregation, Clinton said the admonition "never again" was not just for the Holocaust but "is an admonition for daily living for all of us."

In his remarks during the ceremony, he emphasized "the heavy responsibility we all have, each in our own way, every day, to try unity over division, love over hatred."

The Arkansas governor was accompanied by Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.), who also stressed that the theme "never again" was not only to prevent another Holocaust.

"We say never again to hatred, never again to division, never again to such disorder that leads to chaos and to death," Lieberman said.

The ceremony was held at Adas Israel after Clinton asked Lieberman to find a way he could mark Yom Hashoah while in Washington.

Clinton noted that each year in his own state he commemorates the day as a remembrance "that the Jewish people suffered a gaping wound unlike that which any people have ever suffered before or since."

Also in Washington on Thursday, outgoing German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher and Israeli Deputy Minister Benjamin Netanyahu were among the close to 1,000 people who packed the U.S. Capitol Rotunda for the 12th annual commemoration there.

They were joined by German President Richard von Weizsaecker, who was on a state visit here, and dozens of Israeli delegates who are here for the peace talks with Arab and Palestinian delegations.

WJC Leader Receives Medal

The 1980 Nobel laureate in literature, Polish-born Czeslaw Milosz, read one of his poems from 1943 that was among his anti-Nazi writings while working for the underground Polish theater.

House Speaker Thomas Foley (D-Wash.) and Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-Maine) were among a few dozen lawmakers who attended the 75-minute ceremony, which also included several Hebrew prayers.

Mitchell lit one of six memorial candles with Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League.

The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, which sponsored the event, also presented its annual Eisenhower Liberation Medal to Gerhard Riegner. This was the first time the award went to a Jew.

Riegner is "best known for his chilling cable," in 1942, "that warned American and British Jewish leaders about the Nazi program to murder all European Jews," said Harvey Meyerhoff, chairman of the council.

Riegner, who at the time was the World Jewish Congress' Switzerland representative, sent cables to Rabbi Stephen Wise in the United States and to Sidney Silverman, a Jewish member of the British Parliament.

At the ceremony, Rabbi Alfred Gottschalk, president of Hebrew Union College, presented Riegner with the original copies of his letters, which had been stored at the Reform seminary.

5,000 YOUTH COMMEMORATE SHOAH IN STIRRING MARCH OF THE LIVING
 By Michele Chabin

OSWIECIM, Poland, April 30 (JTA) -- Amid the chimneys that dot the green fields of the Birkenau extermination camp, 5,000 Jewish youths, Holocaust survivors and visiting dignitaries paid tribute Thursday to the victims of the Holocaust.

Held to mark Holocaust Martyrs and Heroes Day, the ceremony was the culmination of the weeklong visit to Poland called the "March of the Living." After Shabbat, the youths will depart for Israel for a week of seminars and sightseeing.

The emotionally charged day began at 2 p.m., when the participants assembled at Auschwitz for a symbolic 2-mile march to Birkenau.

The groups, representing 42 countries, assembled just inside the entrance to Auschwitz. Each delegation marched behind banners bearing the name of their home country.

At 2:30 the participants, arms locked in unity, retraced the steps that hundreds of thousands of Jews were forced to take on their way to the gas chambers.

The march began with the sounding of the shofar. Along the way, local people could be seen pressing their faces against their windowpanes. In all, only a few hundred townspeople watched.

But if only a handful of Poles saw the procession in person, virtually all had the opportunity to watch it on television or read about it in the paper. At least two dozen Polish journalists and 120 foreign correspondents covered the event.

After the marchers entered the barbed-wire fence surrounding Birkenau, several teens read out the names of loved ones who had died in the Holocaust. Holocaust survivors, Jewish community leaders and members of the Knesset lit the six memorial torches.

'Came Here To See What Happened'

Tel Aviv Chief Rabbi Israel Lau, a Holocaust survivor, told the group, "Our enemies cannot threaten us, because we are not afraid anymore."

While he praised Polish President Lech Walesa's recent statements condemning anti-Semitism, Lau was critical of the Catholic Church's refusal to acknowledge any responsibility for its role in the Holocaust.

"We haven't heard from the church, but we are patient. Perhaps we will forgive them, because we are a forgiving people. But we are still waiting," Lau said.

After the ceremony, young and old "planted" small wooden signs that they had inscribed with the names of family members who had died.

Kneeling on the damp ground next to the railroad track that brought so many to their deaths, individuals hammered in the signs and lit yearzeit candles.

One was inscribed, "To the child who never saw another butterfly," while another read, "In memory of the 6 million who died at the hands of the Nazis. Your lives were not in vain."

Despite the very difficult visit to concentration camps and the Warsaw Ghetto, the youths all said they were glad they had come to Poland.

"I came here to see what happened for myself. Pictures and books just weren't enough," said Yael Levine of Voorhees, N.J.

But most teens were ready to leave. "I've seen what I wanted to see," said Avi Ciglen of Toronto. Now, he added, "I can't wait to get to Israel."

MORE THAN 700 PEOPLE ATTEND MOSCOW CONFERENCE ON GENOCIDE

By Sandy Wolofsky

MOSCOW, April 30 (JTA) -- A two-day International Conference on Genocide opened here Wednesday, attended by more than 700 people.

The conference, sponsored in part by the Russian Ministry of Culture, was organized by the Moscow Jewish Cultural and Educational Society.

It was more than five years in the making because of bureaucratic snags. Although life changed significantly in the former Soviet Union during those years, many participants saw little difference between contemporary groups such as Pamyat, which scrawls "Death to all Jews" on walls, and those that spread their messages of hate earlier in the century.

In addition to panel discussions, the conference featured an exhibition of photographs borrowed from Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Jerusalem, depicting life in the Warsaw Ghetto, and the dedication of a memorial in honor of the dead.

The group's goal is to attract the attention of Russian society, a spokesman said, because it is time the silence on the tragedy was broken.

The opening speeches by various community leaders recalled the 6 million Jews who died in the Holocaust and the countless millions never born as a result. They talked about the historical burden and responsibility of being Jewish because of what they called the "disease of anti-Semitism."

Many people perished in World War II, but it was "only the Jews who died for no other reason than they were Jewish," said Yuri Sokol, president of the cultural society.

"Fifty years ago there was a physical genocide. Now, there is a spiritual one," he added. What most upset many of the elderly members of the audience was the lack of knowledge by today's youth of the tragedy that took place 50 years ago.

The conference continued Wednesday night at the Jewish Chamber Music Theater at Taganskaya, with a memorial dedication in memory of the 6 million Holocaust victims.

Other sponsors of the event were the Russian Scientific and Educational Center of the Holocaust; the Russian Association of Jewish War Veterans, Partisans, and Prisoners of Concentration Camps and Ghettos; and the Israeli Fund for Education and Culture in the Diaspora.

HUNGARIAN RIGHTEOUS GENTILES ARE HONORED AT MEMORIAL RITES

By Agnes Bohm

BUDAPEST, April 30 (JTA) -- Non-Jewish Hungarians who helped save Jewish lives when their country was allied with Nazi Germany in World War II were given places of honor at the Holocaust memorial ceremony at the Budapest City Hall on Wednesday.

The Jewish community's focus on their valiant acts of a half-century ago was intended to serve as an indirect warning against the reversion to nationalism and anti-Semitism that is being witnessed today.

Only last week, graffiti on the walls of a Catholic church in Budapest equated a Star of David with the Red Star of the discredited Communist regime.

Five "Righteous Gentiles" were called upon

to kindle five of the six memorial candles symbolizing the 6 million Jews who perished in the Holocaust, 600,000 of them Hungarian Jews.

The sixth candle was lit by two Jewish youngsters in the name of Jewish youth in Hungary today.

The ceremony was the first Holocaust memorial ever held on state or city property. In past years, premises owned by the Jewish community were used.

The solemn gathering was attended by the president of Hungary, Arpad Goncz, and Gyorgy Szabad, speaker of Parliament.

The Israeli ambassador, David Kraus, praised the Hungarians who risked their lives to save Jews. He noted that 150 Hungarians have received the Righteous Gentle decoration of Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem. About 40 of them attended the ceremony.

The Holocaust memorial ceremony was the first of a series of Jewish-related events in Hungary to be held through May 10.

A cultural, tourist-oriented week will feature a "Taste of Israel." The chef and staff of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem will prepare the menu for one of Budapest's luxury hotels.

Habimah, Israel's national theatrical troupe, was supposed to come to Budapest for the week but had to cancel for financial reasons.

ANCIENT CZECH CEMETERY RESTORED WHERE TALMUDIC SAGE WAS BURIED

By Josef Klansky

LIPNIK, Czechoslovakia, April 30 (JTA) -- A historic Jewish cemetery destroyed by the Nazis in 1942 was rededicated here Wednesday in the presence of Orthodox Jewish leaders from the United States who undertook its restoration and descendants of a famous Talmudic sage who is buried there.

The ceremonies were also attended by Chancellor Karel Schwarzenberg, representing President Vaclav Havel of Czechoslovakia, and by representatives of the U.S. Embassy in Prague.

Attention was focused on the tomb of Rabbi Boruch Teomim Frankel, the most famous of the 15 rabbis interred in the 425-year-old cemetery in Lipnik, a town in Moravia about 190 miles east of Prague.

The gathering included leading personalities of Orthodox Jewry, including Rabbi Moshe Sherer, chairman of the Agudath Israel World Organization and president of Agudath Israel of America, and Rabbi Chaskel Besser of New York, a member of Agudath Israel's presidium in America.

Local residents attended in large numbers, mainly out of curiosity, for no Jews live in Lipnik today. Although there are records of Jewish habitation dating from 1540, there were only 220 Jews in the town when the Nazis occupied it. All were deported and only seven survived.

The ancient Jewish graveyard was restored under an agreement between the U.S. Commission for the Preservation of American Heritage Abroad and the Czechoslovak authorities. The work was initiated by the Agudath Israel with the cooperation of the local town council.

Rabbi Frankel's tomb was rebuilt on its original site in its original form and with its original inscription. The renowned scholar served as rabbi in Lipnik from 1802 to 1828.

An agreement signed by the mayor of Lipnik and Agudath Israel arranged for continuing care of the restored cemetery.