

75th ANNIVERSARY YEAR

FRIDAY, MAY 8, 1992

VOL. 70, NO. 89

CATHOLICS JOIN JEWS IN URGING VATICAN TO ESTABLISH RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

BALTIMORE, May 7 (JTA) -- Representatives of a papal commission have joined Jewish leaders in calling on the Vatican to make "significant progress" toward establishing full diplomatic relations with Israel.

They issued their joint communique after a three-day meeting here this week of the International Liaison Committee -- a joint body of the Vatican's Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews and IJCIC, the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations.

At the Liaison Committee's last meeting, in September 1990 in Prague, the Jewish and Catholic delegations jointly condemned anti-Semitism as a sin against God and humanity. But at that time, only the Jews called on the Vatican to establish ties with Israel.

The Catholic and Jewish leaders meeting here also called on the Vatican to consider opening its archives from the Holocaust and post-Holocaust period.

The Vatican currently seals its archives for 70 years, which means that no church documents after 1922 are yet accessible to outside scholars, and that Holocaust-era information will not be available for scrutiny until after the turn of the millennium.

The Catholic-Jewish statement asked the Vatican to consider making exceptions and allow "serious scholars" to examine the documents on a case-by-case basis.

Opening the archives would shed light on questions that Jews have been asking for decades about the pope's silence while Jews were being murdered, and about the role of the Vatican in enabling Nazi war criminals to find refuge after the war.

The changes reflected in the joint statement signal a maturation of the Jewish-Catholic relationship, say participants.

IJCIC's members are the American Jewish Committee, Anti-Defamation League, Israel Interfaith Committee, Synagogue Council of America, and the World Jewish Congress, whose president, Edgar Bronfman, currently chairs the interreligious body.

Past meetings of the Liaison Committee have focused on crises, like the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz and the remarks made by Poland's Cardinal Jozef Glemp, considered by many Jews to be anti-Semitic.

This year's gathering, May 4-7, focused on deepening the relationship between the two groups and extending action to areas of common interest, rather than painful controversy.

IJCIC Chairman Bronfman called it "a new era of mutual trust in Catholic-Jewish relations."

"We have addressed the past authentically and honestly, and are able to move into a completely new period," said Elan Steinberg, Bronfman's spokesman.

Some of the indications of closer relations are efforts to revise Jewish and Catholic textbooks so that they reflect the new mutual understanding, and joint cooperation on social welfare issues.

The Liaison Committee has asked that every country's national bishops conference and Jewish community meet annually for "mutual reflection on the goals and possibility of the dialogue between Jews and Catholics."

"The Vatican is sending this message to its church worldwide," said Rabbi Henry Michelman, executive vice president of the Synagogue Council of America, which represents the Orthodox, Conservative and Reform movements, and serves as the American secretariat for IJCIC.

"There is a Vatican endorsement and request for local Catholics to respond to various Jewish communities in the full spirit of these accords. To us, this is rather impressive," he said.

Still, at least one participant in the meetings wanted more commitment from the Vatican to increasing Catholics' understanding of Jews and Judaism.

Henry Sobel, rabbi of a Reform synagogue in Sao Paulo, Brazil, who was at the conference representing the Latin-American Jewish Congress, described efforts in his home country.

Before Easter, he said, the country's bishops received a letter asking them to ensure that the Passion Plays in each of their dioceses were devoid of anti-Jewish references.

And on the eve of Easter, on Hallelujah Saturday, the day when Jews were traditionally beaten by the Catholic masses, he said, he and the region's Catholic archbishop appeared together on television and spoke about the differences and parallels between Easter and Passover.

"This is what I mean by 'popularizing the dialogue,'" Sobel told his colleagues. "Imagine if the pope were publicly to condemn the sin of anti-Semitism and acts of anti-Semitism -- what an echo would be heard among Catholics all over the globe!"

"The Vatican should go out of its way to make sure that the new teachings with regard to the Jews are understood in every parish in the entire world -- and acted upon."

OVERCAST SKIES CANCEL HUGE AIR SHOW, BUT INDEPENDENCE DAY STILL JOYOUS

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, May 7 (JTA) -- Israelis expected a warm, sunny Independence Day, highlighted by a massive display of aerial strength at Ben-Gurion Airport.

Instead, what they got on their country's 44th birthday was a sandstorm, mammoth traffic jams and a canceled air show.

But most other Independence Day events went off without a hitch. Thousands picnicked at the beaches and woodlands by day, watched fireworks and festive street performances in the evening and gathered in cafes and private parties late at night.

Many a party continued till the wee hours of the morning. So did a massive youth "happening" staged in the plaza outside Tel Aviv's City Hall.

The day dawned overcast and gritty with southerly winds bringing clouds of sand and dust from the Negev, the Sinai and as far away as North Africa.

Tens of thousands of people nevertheless converged on the airport in a melange of private

cars and buses to watch a highly publicized demonstration of the nation's air capacity in action.

They created what police said was one of the worst traffic jams in Israel's history.

The huge crowd waited patiently while the air show was postponed hour by hour, hopeful that the weather would break, allowing the planes to take off.

The aircraft included two advanced American-made F-15Ds, delivered to the Israeli air force on Monday.

They are the first of five state-of-the-art jet fighters Israel ordered from the McDonnell Douglas Corp. at \$1 million apiece.

But high tech proved no match for Mother Nature.

The aerial part of the air show was called off in late afternoon because of the weather. Disgruntled spectators made for their cars and tour buses, creating new gridlocks.

Many stayed, however, content to inspect the air force's grounded planes lined up on the ground, jet engines silent, looking for all the world like oversized models on a toyshop shelf.

The Society for the Preservation of Nature, joined by the Jewish National Fund and the Government Information Office, mounted a rare exhibition of photographs of migratory birds in flight and birds in collision with aircraft.

The central theme of this Independence Day was the quincentennial of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain.

Twelve ceremonial beacons were lighted on Mount Herzl in Jerusalem to honor 12 Israeli families who say they can trace their ancestry to Jews forced to leave Spain in 1492.

A military ceremony -- the exchange of battle standards between branches of the Israel Defense Force, which has long been a staple of Independence Day, became embroiled in protests from the strictly Orthodox.

They objected to a rousing march titled "We Carry the Torch" because the words credit the bravery of soldiers for achieving independence, hence denying a "divine miracle."

The IDF, unwilling to get involved in a squabble with religious leaders, substituted a different march.

Other Independence Day traditions included the Jewish Youth Bible Quiz in Jerusalem, the president's reception for the foreign diplomatic corps and his reception for IDF servicemen and women who distinguished themselves during the year.

This year, one of the 120 young soldiers chosen to receive a Certificate of Merit from President Chaim Herzog could not attend.

First Sgt. Sharon Ben-Arye, 22, of Kibbutz Ein Gedi was one of two IDF soldiers killed in a guerrilla ambush in southern Lebanon on April 6, two days after he was notified of his selection for the award.

The certificate was presented to his bereaved parents.

The prestigious Israel Prizes were presented at ceremonies Thursday evening to leading figures in the fields of Jewish studies, social sciences, life sciences, literature and poetry.

The 10 recipients included, for the first time, an Israeli Arab, 70-year-old writer Emile Habibi of Nazareth, who received the literary award.

Women's groups protested that no women were selected this year.

ISRAEL CONTINUES TO UPGRADE ARSENAL WITH NEW FIGHTER JETS AND MISSILES

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, May 7 (JTA) -- Israel continued the endless task of keeping its defense arsenal up to state-of-the-art standards.

Two advanced American-made jet fighter aircraft were landed at an air base here by their American pilots Monday for delivery to the Israeli air force. The F-15Ds, known as "Peace Foxes," were the first of five jets ordered by Israel from the McDonnell Douglas Corp. at \$1 million apiece.

Last Friday, an Israeli-designed seaborne missile 10 years in the making successfully passed its acceptance trials by the navy.

Known as the Barak, the 7-foot-long, 189-lb. weapon will be mounted on Israel's new Saar-5 class missile boats and possibly on the upgraded Saars-4s. It has already been sold to two foreign navies, not identified.

Israeli military brass on hand to receive the new American jets Monday were joined by John Capellupo, president of McDonnell Douglas' Combat Aircraft Division.

Capellupo arrived Sunday to lobby Israeli political and military leaders on behalf of his company's new F/A-18 Hornet warplanes, which are being considered as the future backbone of Israel's air defense.

But the Hornet is up against stiff competition from the advanced version of the F-16, produced by the rival General Dynamics Corp.

Israeli air force sources say the F-16 has the advantage at the moment because Israel has had experience with its earlier models.

But they admit the F/A-18 Hornet is superior in certain categories of avionics, which makes it a strong contender.

Israel Aircraft Industries last month tentatively agreed to assemble F-16 fighter jets, a deal worth \$1 billion, according to sources in the defense establishment.

The acceptance ceremonies for the F-15Ds marked the 25th anniversary of the Israeli air force's relationship with McDonnell Douglas, which began with delivery of the first Skyhawk A-4s in 1967.

It was disclosed, meanwhile, that the Barak missile, intended for defense against sea or air attack, has an effective range of up to 6 miles.

It was developed by the state-owned Rafael Weapons Development Authority and built by Israel Aircraft Industries, another state enterprise.

The Barak, which succeeded in destroying a dummy missile in midair, passed two previous tests, a far cry from the U.S.-financed Arrow anti-missile missile, which has so far failed.

The Arrow is a project of the U.S. Strategic Defense Initiative, popularly known as "Star Wars," in which Israel was invited to participate.

GRENADE EXPLODES AT IDF CAMP

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, May 7 (JTA) -- Thirteen soldiers were injured, none seriously, when an anti-tank grenade exploded accidentally during a training exercise at an Israel Defense Force camp in southern Israel this week.

Three of the soldiers were reported to have medium injuries. The others were slightly injured, the IDF said. All were taken to a hospital in Beersheba for treatment.

The incident is under investigation.

AUSTRALIAN JEWS OUTRAGED AT DECISION TO REINSTATE HIGH-LEVEL PLO CONTACTS

By Jeremy Jones

CANBERRA, Australia, May 7 (JTA) -- The government's surprise decision to reinstate high-level contacts with the Palestine Liberation Organization has drawn expressions of incredulity and outrage from the Jewish community.

The announcement Wednesday night by Sen. Gareth Evans, the minister for foreign affairs, reversed a policy Australia adopted when the PLO supported Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait last year.

Australia "is not really contributing in a positive sense to the peace conference," said Isi Leibler, an Australian Jewish leader who is co-chairman of the World Jewish Congress.

Jews were especially incensed that the foreign minister made the move with no prior communication.

Evans announced the policy change on the eve of a trip to Europe and the Middle East. It will allow him to meet formally with PLO officials during the trip and permit his government colleagues to receive PLO representatives in Australia.

Evans claimed the PLO's "generally constructive role" in the current peace process justified the lifting of the ban on contacts.

Leibler said Australian Jews were "incredulous" because "there has been no indication by the PLO over the last few months that they have moved toward moderation."

Dr. Colin Rubenstein, a lecturer in Middle East politics at Melbourne's Monash University, contended that Evans' decision "will undermine the position of Palestinians who genuinely seek peace with Israel."

The announcement, made on the eve of Israel's Independence Day, also drew criticism for its timing.

CONGRESSIONAL RESOLUTION URGES BUSH TO SUPPORT AN UNDIVIDED JERUSALEM

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, May 7 (JTA) -- A resolution has been introduced in both houses of Congress urging President Bush and Secretary of State James Baker to issue an "unequivocal statement" that Jerusalem must remain an undivided city.

The resolution, which marks the 25th anniversary of the reunification of Jerusalem during the 1967 Six Day War, was introduced in the House Thursday by Reps. Stephen Solarz (D-N.Y.) and Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.), and in the Senate by Sens. Daniel Patrick Moynihan (D-N.Y.) and Bob Packwood (R-Ore.).

The reunification will be celebrated on Yom Yerushalayim, which this year falls on May 31.

The resolution "asserts the principle that Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, should remain for all time an undivided city in which the rights of every ethnic and religious group are protected," Solarz said.

But, he added, there is concern about support by the Bush administration over the past year for U.N. Security Council resolutions that called Jerusalem "occupied Palestinian territory."

This has "raised understandable concern in Israel that Jerusalem might one day be redivided," Solarz said.

Moynihan warned that while Israel will be required to make sacrifices for peace, "no Israeli

government will continue to participate in a process which it believes might end with the dismemberment of Jerusalem."

The administration has frequently said that it does not want to see Jerusalem divided again. But it also considers East Jerusalem occupied territory and maintains that the final status of East Jerusalem, as well as of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, should be decided by negotiations.

HEAD OF NCSJ WARNS U.S. SENATE OF DANGER TO JEWS IN FORMER USSR

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, May 7 (JTA) -- A Soviet Jewry advocate warned at a Senate hearing this week that Jews living in the republics of the former Soviet Union could become victims of a "mass outbreak of violence" if those new nations are overtaken by economic or political crises.

Martin Wenick, executive director of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry spoke before the Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee on European Affairs, which is considering technical assistance to the republics.

He stressed that any aid bill should include general language stating those countries' human rights obligations under the 1975 Helsinki Accords.

But Wenick and other Jewish spokesmen addressed a sparsely attended meeting. Apart from Sen. Joseph Biden (D-Del.), who chairs the panel, and a few staff people, no subcommittee members of either party showed up during the 3 1/2 hour session on Tuesday, one of six on the aid issue.

Wenick stressed that the new nations that emerged from the collapsed Soviet Union "must accept the obligation of making all their citizens truly equal before the law, by guaranteeing the security of the members of every ethnic and religious minority."

He observed that "while there has as yet been no organized or mass outbreak of violence against Jews, it is clear that, given the current political and economic crisis in these countries, anything is possible."

Last week, Secretary of State James Baker told the House Foreign Affairs Committee that he would be receptive to a human rights safeguard clause in an aid bill so long as it did not bind the president in conducting foreign policy.

Testimony was also heard Tuesday from three NCSJ constituent groups -- the American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League.

Henry Siegman, executive director of the AJCongress, praised the new republics for not seeking to block "the departure of Jews who seek to emigrate or to be reunited with their families in Israel."

Most leaders in the republics have condemned anti-Semitism and supported legislation "intended to preclude a return to discrimination and persecution" as practiced by the former Soviet Union, Siegman added.

Alfred Moses, president of the American Jewish Committee, who spoke on the treatment of Jews in other Eastern European countries, said that in many of them, "There have been disturbing outcroppings of anti-Semitism."

Melvin Salberg, national chairman of the Anti-Defamation League, urged the Bush administration to seek approval from Eastern European countries to let ADL staffers teach programs in them to combat prejudice.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES:**JERUSALEM SHELTER PROVIDES A HOME AWAY FROM HOME FOR BATTERED WOMEN**

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

JERUSALEM (JTA) -- It's dinner time, and on an evening a few nights before Purim, a house in Jerusalem is bustling.

Kids are running around, their faces streaked with makeup as they test out their holiday costumes. Onions are peeled and thrown into the soup for dinner. When a favorite song starts playing on the blaring radio, everyone drops what they're doing to dance around the kitchen in a spontaneous jitterbug of joy.

For a few moments this house seems almost normal, full of life and love.

But it is brief respite for the six women and dozen children living in the Jerusalem Shelter for Battered Women.

The song ends and sadness quickly returns to Etti Malka's blue eyes as she remembers her upcoming court date, scheduled so that she can get a divorce from her husband of four years.

It will be the first time that Etti, 21, will have seen or spoken to her husband in the two months since she arrived at the shelter without anything but her two kids and the clothes on their backs.

Though he beat her since their first year of marriage, and his mother hit her regularly as well, Etti had not told a soul of her predicament until she left for the shelter. Not her mother or father, or sister or friend.

"I don't want them to hate him," she says. Why? "So that it should all be OK."

Women Want To Smooth Things Over

"That's the mentality of these women: just to smooth things over, that they deserve what they get" says Ruth Rossing, an administrator and fund-raiser for the shelter.

The Jerusalem shelter has six bedrooms, each simply furnished with two trundle beds, white storage closets and shelves.

It can accommodate a dozen women in relative comfort, and 15 in a pinch, with all the children they bring with them -- as many as five, though on average, each woman brings two or three. The kids share beds, sleep in the trundles or sleep with their mothers when it is crowded.

There are four shelters for battered women in Israel: in Jerusalem, Haifa, Herzliya and Ashdod, with a total of 60 beds.

But demographic studies indicate that at any one time, some 100,000 Israeli women are in a relationship where they are being physically abused.

The number of Israeli women murdered by their husbands or boyfriends has skyrocketed, and violence against women is thought to be rising proportionally.

Thirty-six women were killed by their husbands or boyfriends last year in Israel. Thirty of the women were Jewish, six Arab.

Until 1989, four or five women were murdered by husbands or boyfriends each year. In 1990, that number leapt to 27.

And so far this year, nine women have died at the hands of their husbands or boyfriends.

The increase is directly related to the economic and emotional pressures on many of the new immigrants, according to Dr. Alice Shalvi, the founding chair of the Israel Women's Network, an activist and lobbying group.

One unemployed new immigrant from Russia murdered his wife in full view of their three children, turned himself in and told the authorities that "I couldn't bear seeing her go out to work everyday."

But most women are beaten, even beaten to death, because the culture in which they live permits it, says Rossing of the Jerusalem shelter. "Domestic violence is intergenerational. It's a way of life" in many families, she says.

Most of the women who stay at the Jerusalem shelter are Sephardi -- of Middle Eastern or North African background.

They are likely to be less educated and have a lower income than their Ashkenazi counterparts, and as a result, have fewer options. A woman with her own income can more likely afford to rent her own apartment to get away from her abusive spouse.

'Nothing Left To Give Up'

They are women who "have nothing left to give up. They are at the bottom. They have not been able to find any other solution."

Most arrive with nothing but their kids.

The shelter provides them with donated clothing, toys, food and everything else they need for the duration of their stay, which can last as long as nine months.

Ultimately, 75 percent of the women go back to their husbands.

One-third go back within two weeks of leaving home, another third go back within the first six months and one-third do not go back to their husbands within the first two years. But 20 to 30 percent of that last third do return to their husbands sometime after that, says Rossing.

They go back "for financial reasons, plain and simple. This is not a country where life is easy for single mothers. And finding affordable housing in Jerusalem is hell," Rossing says.

The women at the Jerusalem shelter are from all over the country. But none is from Jerusalem. They need to go to a place where their husbands cannot find them, so they never stay near home.

According to Naomi Shahar, a board member of the Herzliya shelter, the financial problems are part of a complex picture.

Must Leave Behind Family And Friends

The women must leave family and friends behind, take their kids from one school to another, find a place to live and find a job, often in the face of tremendous family pressure to just smooth things over, she says.

The emotional strength it requires is often more than these battered-down women can muster.

One woman at the Jerusalem shelter may, in the end, return to her husband, who has beaten her for decades, because she has no alternative.

Tamar Ben Yoseph is a tiny, 65-year-old woman whose much older appearance belies her difficult life. Born in Yemen, she has been married for more than 50 years.

She stayed with her husband until she married off the last of her nine children, whose framed photographs are proudly arrayed on the shelf above her bed at the shelter.

She is too old to work, and though each of her grown children has met with their mother's social worker, none is willing to take her in, according to Rossing.

"It's difficult for me at the shelter, but there's no money" to rent another apartment, Ben Yoseph says plaintively. "Where can I go?"