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**CONGRESS GIVES FINAL APPROVAL
TO LOAN PACKAGE, REFUGEE FUNDING**By Kimberly C. Moore
States News Service

WASHINGTON, Oct. 6 (JTA) -- As the 102nd Congress drew to a close this week, lawmakers adopted legislation providing \$10 billion in loan guarantees to help Israel absorb immigrants and another \$381.5 million to resettle refugees in the United States.

But Congress decided not to take action this term on a bill that would have circumvented a 1990 Supreme Court ruling giving the government broad leeway to adopt and enforce laws that may have the effect of restricting religious practices.

The loan guarantees were contained in a foreign aid appropriations bill that received final approval Monday in a 312-105 vote by the House of Representatives and a voice vote by the Senate. President Bush has 10 days to sign the measure and was expected to do so this week.

The bill provides Israel with guarantees for commercial loans of up to \$2 billion over each of the next five years.

It also contains \$3 billion in U.S. aid to Israel, including \$1.2 billion in economic assistance and \$1.8 billion in military aid.

Adoption of the loan guarantee package for Israel ends a more-than-yearlong battle that sharply strained the Bush administration's relations with Israel and the American Jewish community.

The tensions erupted in September 1991, when President Bush attacked pro-Israel lobbyists for pressing for the guarantees despite his request for a 120-day delay in consideration of the legislation.

Early this year, the administration said it would not agree to the loan guarantees unless Israel froze all construction of Jewish housing in the administered territories, a proposition rejected at the time by the government of Likud Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

Arab Boycott Language Included

The tensions dissipated after the election in June of a Labor Party government committed to reducing settlement activity sharply. Less than two months later, Bush announced that he and the new prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, had agreed on the terms of the loan guarantee package.

But the legislation adopted this week leaves tremendous discretion to the president to suspend the loan program if he determines that the "terms and conditions have been breached."

The bill also includes language, originally introduced by the Senate, that calls on Arab League countries to renounce their boycott against Israel and the so-called secondary boycott of companies that do business with the Jewish state.

The provision urges Bush to take "more concrete steps" in ending the boycott, including encouraging American allies to enact laws prohibiting business companies from participating in it.

A related provision, introduced by Rep. Lawrence Smith (D-Fla.), calls on the president to take compliance with the boycott into considera-

tion when reviewing arms sales to foreign countries.

That language was seen as an expression of congressional disappointment over Bush's decision to sell up to 72 advanced F-15 fighter jets to Saudi Arabia.

But Congress was not expected to exercise its prerogative to vote down the sale, because it is seen as preserving jobs in an already shrinking defense industry, a benefit lawmakers would be loath to thwart in an election year.

Israel is also not mounting strong opposition to the sale, despite concerns that it might alter the strategic military balance in the Middle East.

That is because the administration decided late last month to offset the sale, in part, by providing Israel with 25 Apache and 10 Black Hawk assault helicopters.

The administration also agreed to provide Israel with 70 Patriot missile defense systems, in addition to storing \$700 million worth of military equipment in Israel, which can be used in an emergency.

Refugee Funding Shaved A Bit

In other legislative action, Congress approved a bill that will provide \$381.5 million in funding over the next year for the resettlement of refugees in the United States, including Jews from the republics that formerly constituted the Soviet Union.

An earlier version of the bill contained \$385 million for refugee resettlement, but that amount was shaved as part of an across-the-board cut to bring the bill in line with deficit-reduction targets.

While the final amount is below the current funding level of \$410 million, it is substantially higher than the administration's budget request of \$227 million, which would have represented a 45 percent cut in funding.

Such a cut would have been a serious financial blow to Jewish community federations, which together received \$39 million of the funding this past year to help resettle the nearly 47,000 Jewish refugees who arrived here from the republics that formerly constituted the Soviet Union.

White House officials said President Bush has received the bill for his signature.

Meanwhile, Jewish groups are disappointed that Congress failed to adopt the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

The bill was killed in the Senate Judiciary Committee last week by Sen. Alan Simpson (R-Wyo.), who said the committee should not be considering something as important as religious freedom "at the last minute."

The bill would have reversed the impact of the Supreme Court's 1990 ruling in *Employment Division vs. Smith*, which said that states no longer needed to prove a "compelling interest" in adopting laws that could encroach on religious practices.

Mark Pelavin, Washington representative of the American Jewish Congress, said he is disappointed that the bill will not be passed this year.

"Everyday that it's not in place, America's religious rights are in danger," Pelavin said. "We're optimistic that when Congress comes back next year, we'll see it enacted."

NEWS ANALYSIS:**U.S. MILITARY AID TO ISRAEL ENHANCED BY ELECTION CAMPAIGN, PEACE PROCESS**
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Oct. 6 (JTA) -- The Bush administration's recent military pledge to Israel -- unusual in its generosity and in the strength of its commitment -- reflects the president's wobbly standing in his re-election efforts and the quickening pace of progress in the Middle East peace talks, analysts here say.

A Sept. 26 U.S. pledge to maintain Israel's "qualitative military edge" over its neighbors caps weeks of discussions launched in August when President Bush hosted Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin for a day of meetings at his vacation home in Kennebunkport, Maine.

American assurances to Jerusalem were recently underscored in a letter to Rabin from acting Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger, which promised to maintain U.S. military aid to Israel at its current level of \$1.8 billion a year.

In Washington, the State Department confirmed Monday that "in addition to the measures that were announced by the White House on Sept. 26, the acting secretary expressed our intention to maintain, subject to the approval of Congress, and overall foreign assistance budget levels, the current levels of security assistance to Israel."

Defense sources here attribute the generous arms package and long-range commitments that have evolved in discussions between Israel and the United States to three factors:

- The desire to ensure smooth and rapid congressional authorization of the sale of 72 advanced F-15 aircraft to Saudi Arabia by providing a compensatory package to Israel.

- Bush's poor standing in the presidential race and his consequent wish to save jobs, leading to approval of such packages as the sale of 150 F-16 aircraft to Taiwan.

- Progress in the Middle East peace process following the June elections in Israel that brought a Labor government to power.

Fulfilling Every Israeli Request

Israelis saw Rabin's visit to the United States as an opportunity to "clear the table" of accumulated old affairs on both sides and to cast a new mold for U.S. commitment to the security of Israel, according to an analysis in Ha'aretz.

Washington has not hastened to comply with every request by Israel, preferring to gain maximum political advantage from gradual pronouncements of aid and reaping a succession of headlines in the Israeli media.

The United States said it would give Israel priority in delivery of surplus military equipment, even offering such items as the two-seater Skyhawk aircraft and the Yasour transport helicopter.

It has also announced it will present Israel with 25 Apache and 10 Black Hawk helicopters, as well as 70 Patriot anti-missile missiles.

At the same time it has stated it will store a considerable amount of military equipment in Israel, valued at about \$700 million. The equipment would be ready for use by U.S. armed forces but could also be drawn upon by the Israel Defense Force in the event of an emergency.

A letter from U.S. Defense Secretary Dick Cheney to Rabin has promised a strengthening in military cooperation, access to advanced technology and Israeli participation in the anti-missile Global Protection System.

COURT TO REVIEW SCHOOL ACCESS CASE THAT COULD IMPACT JEWISH COMMUNITY
By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, Oct. 6 (JTA) -- The U.S. Supreme Court, on the first day of its new term Monday, agreed to hear a case that is certain to have important ramifications for the Jewish community.

The case involves an evangelical church that sued the Center Moriches School District, on New York's Long Island, for the right to show a movie with a Christian theme on school premises after school hours.

The church, Lamb's Chapel, argues that the school's refusal is a censorship of religious speech and violation of its constitutional right to the free exercise of religion.

The church lost its suit in federal district court and on appeal, when the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit ruled that a school building is not a generally open public forum, so that excluding religious groups does not violate the Constitution.

According to the legal directors of Jewish organizations, many of which have not yet decided their official position on the case, the Supreme Court is likely to issue a ruling that will have substantial implications for American Jews.

The two most important aspects of the Lamb's Chapel case could both be detrimental to the Jewish community's interests, said Marc Stern, legal director for the American Jewish Congress.

If the court rules in favor of the evangelical group, it could lead to a situation where all religious organizations claim the right to rent space at public schools, even if their aim is to target students with their message.

The case really centers on free-speech issues, rather than the church-state issues, and whether a public school after teaching hours is a "limited public forum," said Stern.

'Broad Implications' For Orthodox

The legal definition of a limited public forum includes the forum's right to limit the type of speech expressed within it, based on the speech's content. For example, all religious speech or political speech can be prohibited.

So if the court decides that a public school, after school hours, is a limited public forum, it could have broad implications for other government-supported limited public forums, such as public auditoriums, or even government-run newsletters and newspapers, said Stern.

"There's a danger if you're going to allow government to start screening categories of speech, because it could be speech that we want to have heard," he said. "Which is the greater danger?"

But Agudath Israel of America is decidedly in favor of the court allowing religious groups to "occasionally" use public school property for activities after school hours, according to David Zwiebel, the Orthodox group's legal counsel.

The court's decision will have "very, very broad applications in our community," he said.

Yeshivas often want to rent out public school space for their graduations, athletic recreation, Chanukah plays or rallies, he said. Or a synagogue, if it needed to use other space temporarily, might want to rent out a school gymnasium.

"All of these ought to be controlled by what the Supreme Court agrees in this case," he said.

BRAZILIAN JEWS ARE WORRIED OVER ANTI-SEMITIC INCIDENTS

By Rochelle G. Saidel

SAO PAULO, Brazil, Oct. 6 (JTA) -- A recent spate of anti-Semitic incidents here has the Jewish community worried at a time of instability in Brazil, where the president has just been impeached.

The focus of the incidents has been Sao Paulo, home to half of the nation's 150,000 Jews, and Porto Alegre, capital of Rio Grande do Sul, whose Jewish community numbers about 12,000.

Reports of the attacks come as the nation copes with an unprecedented impeachment proceeding that has led to the suspension of powers of President Fernando Collor de Mello. Both he and his wife, Rosane Malta Collor, face trial on corruption charges.

In mid-September, members of a neo-Nazi group beat up two Jewish teen-age boys wearing kipot at a luncheonette near a Chabad facility in Santo Andre, in Greater Sao Paulo.

The attack was carried out by members of a group called Skinheads-White Power. It was reported to local police but brought to public attention only when a Holocaust survivor and self-styled Nazi-hunter, Ben Abraham, contacted the media and reported the incident to them.

The group is known to foster hatred for other groups, as well.

Six Skinheads are believed responsible for an attack Sept. 24 on a Sao Paulo radio station with a listenership among Brazilian migrants from the northeast of the country. The attackers daubed a wall of the station with a swastika and slogans such as "Death to the Northeasterners."

Incident Triggers Creation Of Forum

Two shots were fired during the assault, which was possibly staged in reprisal for criticism voiced by the station of a Sept. 17 television documentary in which the Skinheads called for extermination of Jews, Northeasterners, blacks and homosexuals.

The incident triggered the creation of a forum for action against neo-Nazism. Participants include the Jewish Federation of Sao Paulo, the Order of Attorneys of Brazil, the Commission of the Catholic Diocese on Justice and Peace, the National Federation of Engineers, a major labor union and several political parties.

The president of the Sao Paulo Jewish Federation said the Skinheads have a movement behind them.

"They are not merely rebel teen-agers. There are leaders who imbue ideas in the heads of young people, who come to believe in the Nazi flag," said Jayme Bobrow.

A founding meeting of the new anti-racist forum was addressed by the mayor of Sao Paulo.

Reports said federal police have knowledge of international groups that are subsidizing Skinheads-White Power in Brazil.

They include the neo-Nazi Condemned 84 in Ipswich, England; Streetwise in Maussluis, Holland; the Junta for National Defense in Lisbon, Portugal; and the Church Creator in the United States.

The last named has issued a racist book, "The Bible of the White Man," in North Carolina, with the support of the Ku Klux Klan. It also distributes a newspaper called Racial Loyalty.

Two other magazines with a limited circulation in the Sao Paulo area have called for death to the Jews and Northeasterners. The publications,

Determination and Courage, and Paulista (Sao Paulo) Pride, have included a drawing of a "good Jew" with a bullet through his head. Other photos show Skinhead-White Power groups marching to commemorate Adolf Hitler's birthday on April 20.

Forum spokespersons said they plan to issue a manifesto Oct. 8 calling for the preventive imprisonment of the Skinheads, who appeared on the Sept. 17 television documentary. But police say they have not yet identified them.

The manifesto is titled "Nazism Never Again." It will be read at a public meeting at the headquarters of the Order of Attorneys of Brazil.

The document says, "The hour has arrived to combat the myth that there is racial democracy in Brazil."

In Porto Alegre, the state governor has acceded to the request of the Jewish Federation and will provide police protection for the city's five synagogues and two cemeteries.

The request followed attacks Sept. 26 and Oct. 1, when the walls of two Jewish cemeteries were painted with swastikas and graffiti that included "Six million was too little." The identity of the perpetrators has not been determined.

In the city of Pelotas, in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, red swastikas were painted on the wall of the Sociedade Israelita. Police say they have suspects in the case.

The president of the Jewish Federation, Samuel Burd, said the incidents demonstrate that "the effects of a worldwide neo-Nazi movement are beginning to arrive here."

Meanwhile, federal police in Brasilia, the capital, are investigating a possible connection between neo-Nazis here and an American magazine founded by American political extremist Lyndon LaRouche.

The magazine, Executive Intelligence Review, has published articles attacking two prominent Brazilian Jewish political leaders.

Articles published about two years ago attacked Congressman Fabio Feldmann for "encouraging the destruction of the armed forces" and for "defending the exchange of the external debt for internationalization of the Amazon."

And they attacked former education minister Jose Goldemberg as "an agent of the neo-colonials."

The magazine's correspondent in Brazil, Lorenzo Carrasco, is a former candidate for Congress.

KOSHER CHOW COMING TO CHINA?

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Oct. 6 (JTA) -- The lack of kosher food in Beijing may soon be solved, according to Shen Jian Xiang, director of the official China International Travel Service in Tel Aviv.

Talking to travel correspondents here, he said that several investors in Israel and elsewhere had expressed an interest in establishing a kosher restaurant in Beijing, to serve not only observant Israelis now beginning to visit China but also the needs of the many Jews worldwide traveling to China.

Shen expects some 5,500 Israelis will visit his country this year, traveling on the new El Al direct flight and the parallel service to be begun next year by Air China. Other Israelis and Jews are expected to arrive on other airlines coming from elsewhere.

NEW RABBI INSTALLED IN PRAGUE; EMPHASIZES UNITY AND EDUCATION

By Ruth E. Gruber

PRAGUE (JTA) -- In a 75-minute ceremony just before Rosh Hashanah services last week, Karol Sidon was formally installed as the rabbi of Prague before a standing-room-only audience at the city's ornate Jubilee synagogue.

Sidon, 50, filled the gap left when the previous rabbi, Daniel Mayer, was forced to resign two years ago following revelations of his links with the local secret police.

In an address at his installation, Sidon -- who was a well-known dissident playwright before becoming involved in Jewish studies at the end of the 1970s -- stressed the importance of knowing and caring about Jewish traditions.

As rabbi of Prague -- and the only rabbi in the Czech republic -- Sidon will be the spiritual leader of a Jewish community facing many problems as it copes with the transition from life under communism to life under democracy.

"Are you sure you only have one day to talk about our problems?" Sidon joked in an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency a few days before his installation.

The Prague Jewish community numbers about 1,500 (out of a total of about 3,000 in the Czech republic), most of whom are elderly Holocaust survivors. However, the community has divisions and sometimes friction among the strictly Orthodox, liberal and Reform currents.

"My first goal is to help the community to be Jewish, to help these people feel that they are part of the Jewish nation," Sidon said.

Jewish Identity A Pressing Problem

"When Israel came out of Egypt, first they felt themselves a nation, and then they got the Torah at Sinai," he said. "I want first that (Prague Jews) feel that they belong to the entire Jewish people. There is no nation without the Torah and no Torah without the nation."

One of the most pressing problems facing the community involves Jewish identity. Many younger community members, including some who are the most active in community affairs, are children of marriages in which the mother is not Jewish and thus are not considered Jewish under traditional Jewish law.

"Most members of the kehilla (community) are Orthodox," said Sidon. "That's OK. But in the future, the kehilla will build on young people, on assimilated people -- my generation and my children's generation."

"They are returning to Judaism but don't know anything," he said.

Sidon said he has already held meetings with more than two dozen people who have "been waiting for years" to be formally converted to Judaism, and had arranged to hold weekly study groups with them to prepare the way.

Sidon knows first-hand the problems and pitfalls of returning to Judaism. Though he says he grew up feeling Jewish, he is the son of a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother.

His father was killed by the Nazis in the Terezin concentration camp in 1944, and as a toddler, Sidon had to stay in hiding. He underwent formal conversion to Judaism in 1978.

Sidon was a well-known writer and playwright in the 1970s and along with Vaclav Havel was one of the founders of the dissident Charter 77 movement in 1977.

Increasingly involved in Judaism and Jewish studies, he left Czechoslovakia after his conversion because of his political views and in order to move to Germany to continue Judaic studies.

After the 1989 revolution in Czechoslovakia and the forced resignation of Rabbi Mayer, the Prague community called on him to go to Israel and complete rabbinical studies in order to return to Prague as rabbi.

GRANDDAUGHTER OF SHOLOM ALEICHEM APPEARS AT JEWISH BENEFIT IN MOSCOW

By Alexander Lesser

MOSCOW, Oct. 4 (JTA) -- Bel Kaufman, granddaughter of writer Sholom Aleichem and an author in her own right, made her Moscow debut Sunday night narrating a Jewish oratorio about the Holocaust.

The event was a fund-raiser for a Jewish charity, moving Moscow even more firmly into the orbit of the world Jewish community.

Kaufman, author of the 1960s novel "Up the Down Staircase," told the story of a Czechoslovak concentration camp as rendered by British composer Ronald Senior in "Holocaust Requiem: Kaddish for Theresienstadt."

The presentation of the liturgical oratorio was accompanied by drawings and poems by children of the Nazi concentration camp, which were collected into a book, "I Never Saw Another Butterfly."

Jews flocked to the Great Hall of the Moscow Conservatory to hear Kaufman and the Moscow Philharmonic under the direction of New York conductor Joel Spiegelman.

The audience roared its approval of Kaufman, who is 80-something and a living link to the lost Russian-Jewish past.

Sholom Aleichem was born Sholom Rabinowitz in Ukraine in 1859 and wrote first in Russian and Hebrew. From 1883 until his death in 1916 in New York, he wrote more than 40 volumes of novels, stories, plays and memoirs in Yiddish. He is most renowned for his stories about Teyve the milkman, which became the basis for "Fiddler on the Roof."

Although knowledge of Jewish history and culture was denied to the generations born under communism, Sholom Aleichem was permitted. His work continued to be published in Soviet Russia as a kind of showcase Jewish writer.

Because of his fame, Russian Jews turned out in large numbers to see his kin in person.

Explaining her flawless Russian, Kaufman told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that she was born in Berlin but came to live in Odessa and Moscow before leaving Europe forever at the age of 19. "I was raised in the Russian language," she said.

The concert was a charity event -- still a novelty in Russia, where communist propaganda had derided the idea of philanthropy -- to benefit Yad Ezra, a local Jewish organization.

The charity is active in many areas, among them helping the elderly, both Jewish and non-Jewish, cope with the inflation and shortages now affecting Russian life.

The event was underwritten by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and the New York-based Jewish Presence Foundation.

REMINDER: The JTA Daily News Bulletin will not be published Thursday, Oct. 8