

ISRAEL MOVES CAUTIOUSLY IN RESPONSE TO NEO-NAZI VIOLENCE IN GERMANY
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Nov. 30 (JTA) -- Israelis are caught in a dilemma as they watch in dismay the spread of neo-Nazi violence in Germany.

Mindful of the close economic and security ties that bind the two countries, Israelis have restrained the impulse to register their abhorrence by taking strong measures against Germany.

The country's unanimity in the face of the current wave of racism and anti-Semitism in Germany and elsewhere was expressed Monday by Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, at the opening of a special parliamentary debate on the issue.

"If there were a Jewish state at the time, the Holocaust itself might not have happened, or might have been far smaller in magnitude," he said.

He spoke a day after the government "strongly condemned" the outbreak of neo-Nazi violence in Germany and urged Bonn to crack down on the perpetrators more firmly than it has so far. But Israel rejected calls from both right and left to take strong action against Bonn.

Moshe Katsav, chairman of the opposition Likud faction in the Knesset, asked Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to sever diplomatic ties with Germany if it does not act quickly to curb the neo-Nazis.

From the opposite political corner, Education Minister Shulamit Aloni of Meretz said she would call on Israelis and Jews worldwide to boycott Germany if it does not take steps to stanch the violence.

Delegation Cancels Trip To Bonn

While the government spurned those options, a three-member parliamentary delegation canceled a scheduled official visit to the Bundestag.

Israel's measured response reflected links between the two countries that were highlighted in the visits here last month of German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel and the German chief of staff, Gen. Klaus Naumann.

Germany is Israel's most important trading partner after the United States and is one of the few countries in Europe that buys a substantial amount of advanced technological equipment from Israel, including military quipment.

Moreover, visitors from Germany registered a 200 percent increase in the first eight months of this year -- to 118,000 -- compared with the same period last year, and comprise a major component of Israel's important tourist industry.

At the same time, a large number of philanthropic organizations in Germany are linked with economic and cultural projects in Israel.

In the security field, Germany is in the forefront of countries with defense links to Israel, according to security sources.

Israel's dependence on Germany appeared to render moot, at least for now, calls by both coalition and opposition spokesmen over the weekend for a dramatic gesture of protest against Bonn's failure to take stronger action against neo-Nazi violence.

In Bonn, the government declined Sunday to comment on the statement by the Israeli govern-

ment, which was widely reported in the German media. But Cabinet members privately approved the decision by Jerusalem to refrain from calling for a worldwide Jewish boycott of Germany.

Leading members of the Bundestag, in private conversation, expressed understanding for the decision of three Israeli Knesset members to suspend an official visit to Bonn. But they said that had the Israelis visited, the Germans would have tried to make clear to them that every effort was being made to curb neo-Nazi violence.

The German ambassador to Israel, Otto von der Gablentz, listened to the Knesset debate on Monday from the distinguished visitors gallery.

He heard Likud member Dov Shilansky declare: "There is no 'new Germany.' It is the same Germany -- the Germany of Majdanek, of Auschwitz, of Buchenwald and of Bergen-Belsen."

The German envoy said he knew Shilansky was himself a Holocaust survivor. He was pleased, he said, that this view was not that of the majority of Israelis.

Meanwhile, President Chaim Herzog has approached several heads of state and other prominent personalities in Europe to propose a joint call against racism and anti-Semitism.

Informed sources said Herzog would seek the cooperation of German President Richard von Weizsacker in his appeal.

In a speech Monday night, at a dinner for Prince Hans-Adam II of Lichtenstein, Herzog said the Jewish people were watching "with growing concern" as "ugly and all too familiar incidents were occurring with increasing frequency in Europe."

"We hope that wisdom and tolerance will prevail ultimately," Herzog said. "The alternative is too horrible to contemplate, and we must do everything possible to prevent it."

In Russia and Ukraine, meanwhile, reports reaching Jerusalem speak of paramilitary units forming among ultra-rightist circles, in which virulent anti-Semitic propaganda is an integral part of their training program.

These reports also describe cooperation between the rightist-nationalist groups in Russia and the Palestinians.

Anti-Semitic manifestations are on the rise in the three Baltic republics too, according to informed sources here, with the right there blaming the Jews in its propaganda for the deteriorating economic situation.

(Contributing to this report were JTA correspondents David Landau in Jerusalem and David Kantor in Bonn.)

SHARON CHARGES GOVERNMENT NEGLECT OF CARAVAN PARKS FOR NEW OLIM
By Michele Chabib

JERUSALEM, Nov. 30 (JTA) -- On the heels of winter's first heavy rainstorms, which have wreaked havoc at caravan parks housing new immigrants, former Housing Minister Ariel Sharon accused the Rabin government of improperly maintaining the caravans.

Built of lightweight materials and without sturdy foundations, many of the 15,000 prefabricated units were damaged by the storms' heavy rains and gale-force winds.

In the worst cases, windows were shattered and doors ripped off their hinges. A few of the mobile homes began to list precariously as the cement blocks they leaned on shifted in the mud. Minor damage included leaky roofs and flooded passageways.

Amidar, the government-owned company that has been charged with maintaining the parks, immediately went to work repairing the damage.

Experts agree, however, that additional winter storms will cause further damage to the fragile structures.

In response to Sharon's charges of neglect, Housing Minister Binyamin Ben-Ari retorted, "If Ariel Sharon would come to the Knesset and hear what the members of his own Likud Party were saying about his caravan project, he would not dare open his mouth.

"Purchasing the caravans was a terrible idea. The present government came into office with the problem already in existence."

The only thing to do now, Ben-Ari said, "is to try to maintain the structures to the best of our ability, and to move people into permanent housing as soon as possible."

In the meantime, thousands of people residing in caravans are prey to the elements. At the Givat Hamatos Park, on the outskirts of the capital, 300 families are ankle-deep in mud. Just three months old, the site has not yet been linked to the city's electrical supply. When the portable generators break down -- and they do so often -- residents cannot use their electric heaters, their only source of warmth.

"Sure, I'd love to have a permanent apartment," said Israeli-born Leah Amouyal, who moved to the caravan park three weeks ago. "The problem is, I can't afford to rent a regular apartment."

The divorced mother of a 10-year-old daughter, Amouyal has already turned her tiny caravan -- which measures just over 9 square feet -- into a real home. Every inch has a personal touch: a poster, a favorite tape, her daughter's stuffed animals. "I think we'll be here for two or three years, till I get on my feet financially."

The token rent payment, about \$50 a month, compared to the \$550 she paid for a two-bedroom apartment in the city, does not justify the sad state of the caravans, she asserts. "No matter what a person pays, whether it's a new immigrant or a native-born Israeli, he deserves to get a dry, warm place to live."

Huddled by an electric space heater, she shook her head and added, "I'm still waiting."

ISRAELI ENVOY HAIM BAR-LEV PRESENTS CREDENTIALS IN MOSCOW

By Alexander Lesser

Moscow, Nov. 30 (JTA) -- Israel's new ambassador to Russia, Haim Bar-Lev, has officially presented his credentials to Russian Vice President Alexander Rutskoi.

Rutskoi received Bar-Lev on Monday in his reception hall in the Council of Ministers building, across from the Kremlin, which was abuzz with preparations for the Congress of People's Deputies, which was scheduled to begin the following day.

The hall in which the ceremony took place was swarming with deputies who had arrived from all over Russia for the Congress.

In the short ceremony, Bar-Lev told Rutskoi, "Russia as well as the United States is an in-

itiator and active participant in the Middle East peace process.

"That is why it is important for us to have close and friendly relations with Russia, so that our positions will be clear and understood."

The Israeli ambassador and the Russian vice president exchanged brief pleasantries after the ceremony.

They have a few things in common. Both are professional soldiers, and both are Jews.

Rutskoi, spoke about his Jewish mother during a visit to Israel last year.

Bar-Lev served as chief of staff of the Israel Defense Force in the late 1960s.

Rutskoi served as a combat pilot in the Soviet-Afghan war, during which he was shot down, taken prisoner by the Afghan fighters and later made a daring escape back to his own lines.

PROSECUTOR APPEALS ACQUITTAL IN KIBBUTZ SHOMRAT RAPE CASE

By Michele Chabin

JERUSALEM, Nov. 30 (JTA) -- The infamous Kibbutz Shomrat rape case, in which six young men were acquitted of raping a 14-year-old girl, took a new twist this week when the state prosecutor appealed to the Supreme Court to overturn the verdict.

The incident, which occurred in 1988, received unusually widespread coverage in the local media and prompted a nationwide debate on a subject that had long been considered taboo.

In his Nov. 2 verdict, Haifa District Court Judge Micha Lindenstrauss said the prosecution had failed to prove "beyond a reasonable doubt" that the girl had not consented to have sex with the defendants.

The judge noted that the girl's testimony was at times inconsistent, and that she did not immediately tell her parents about the incident. Another consideration, he said, was the fact that the victim did not cry out when the alleged rape took place.

Following the judge's ruling, which caused a public outcry, several women's advocacy groups called for an appeal on the grounds that the case had been decided by one judge rather than three. Until last year, all cases of rape, armed robbery and murder were tried before a three-judge panel.

"All serious crimes should be heard by three judges," Judge Hannah Avnor, former president of the Tel Aviv District Court, told the Jerusalem Post the day after the verdict.

"Many rape cases are problematic. The judge faces the decisive question of whether the woman consented to have sex. Not everyone sees things the same way. That's when three judges can sit and consult. You weigh the evidence, you ask what happened." In its appeal, the state is seeking the conviction of the defendants on charges of rape, sexual assault and violent extortion.

In its appeal, the state said, "The court erred in that it did not determine unequivocally that the actions of the accused were performed without consent, and this is given the fact that we are speaking of a 14 1/2-year-old-girl who was placed under pressure by many persons older than she, who treated her in a manner that negated her will."

Upon hearing of the appeal, Yael Eran, executive director of the Na'amat women's organization in Jerusalem, said, "I congratulate the state prosecutor's efforts. The original verdict was a license to go out and rape."

LUITJENS EXTRADITED TO HOLLAND, WHERE HE IS JAILED FOR NAZI PAST

By Henriette Boas

AMSTERDAM, Nov. 30 (JTA) -- After a deportation procedure in Canada that spanned a decade, Nazi collaborator Jacob Luitjens was extradited to Holland last Friday, where he was immediately transferred to jail.

Luitjens, a 73-year-old retired botany instructor, lost his struggle to remain in Canada. He was expelled because he had lied about his past, which included conviction in absentia in Holland for war crimes.

After failing to appeal a deportation order issued Nov. 23, Luitjens was picked up at his home by Canadian immigration officials and taken to Vancouver International Airport for the flight to Holland.

Dutch authorities arrested Luitjens as soon as he arrived. His arrest was covered widely by the Dutch media.

His extradition was hailed by Jewish groups, such as the Simon Wiesenthal Center. Sol Littman, director of its Canadian office in Toronto, emphasized that "the Dutch government has never lost interest in the case."

Dutch special prosecutor Marquart Scholz said a cell had been prepared for Luitjens in the regional holding center in Groningen, which is very close to his native village of Roden.

There, Luitjens was a member of the Landwacht, a local police force established by the Nazis to round up Jews and resistance fighters.

Sentenced To Life Term In Absentia

Luitjens was arrested in 1945 immediately after Holland was liberated from the Nazis. He managed to escape in 1947 from the detention camp where he was held and fled to Paraguay.

In the Netherlands, he was sentenced to a life term in absentia by a special tribunal for having been a member of the Dutch Nazi police.

In 1961 he arrived in Canada, where he became a lecturer in botany at the University of Vancouver. In 1971 he applied for and received Canadian citizenship.

Some years later, he was recognized by someone from his native region. Dutch authorities tried to have him extradited, but since he was a Canadian citizen, this was impossible.

There was also no extradition treaty between the two countries, a matter that was rectified last December with the signing of such a treaty.

Earlier this year, Canada revoked Luitjens' Canadian citizenship on the grounds that he lied to authorities about his past.

Luitjens' brother has submitted a request for a royal pardon. If that fails, Luitjens is expected to appeal his conviction by claiming it was an illegal sentence because he was not present for the proceedings.

Luitjens' deportation came just hours before B'nai Brith Canada issued a 94-page report expressing its concern over Canada's failure to prosecute successfully known war criminals residing in the country.

Canada's war-crimes law is five years old. "We have to look at the results," said David Matas, a spokesman for B'nai Brith Canada and author of a 1987 book on the subject, "Justice Delayed: Nazi War Criminals in Canada."

Two criminal cases were dropped for lack of evidence. Two civil prosecutions resulted in deportation -- that of Luitjens and Albert Rauca,

who was extradited to West Germany in May 1983. One criminal trial, that of Imre Finta, ended in acquittal.

"The bottom line, after five years, is not satisfactory," said Matas, who is an immigration lawyer in Winnipeg, Manitoba.

B'nai Brith Canada claims that judges, juries and the general public are not convinced of the need to try war criminals.

In its report, the organization points to a recent case in Ottawa, where a judge dropped charges against Michael Pawlowski after ruling that videotapes of witnesses living in the former Soviet Union were not valid.

The report also criticizes Justice James Chadwick of the Ontario Court, who sat on the Pawlowski case. Pawlowski, of Renfrew, Ontario, had been charged with the killing of 490 Jews and Poles in Byelorussia (Belarus) in 1942.

Canada's justice minister, Kim Campbell, admitted there is a problem with the system.

"Yes, it's difficult in front of the courts," she said. "But I am not sure that the mind-set is necessarily a negative one. There is concern about the evidence of people testifying about things that happened a long time ago."

B'nai Brith believes that Canada should concentrate on deporting war criminals rather than prosecuting them. But Campbell expressed concern about "whether the courts will see that as an abusive process."

Things would have been better, Campbell said, "if the war crimes legislation had been in place 30 years ago instead of just five."

(Contributing to this report were JTA correspondent Gary Pogrow in Vancouver and Gil Kezwer in Toronto.)

GRANDDAUGHTER OF MUSSOLINI SAYS HIS RACIAL LAWS WERE A MISTAKE

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) -- Alessandra Mussolini, granddaughter of Italy's wartime fascist dictator Benito Mussolini, has said that the anti-Semitic racial laws decreed by her grandfather in 1938 were a mistake.

In interviews published recently in several Italian publications, she dissociated fascists from the current wave of neo-Nazi skinheads.

"The racial laws are unacceptable," Mussolini, a member of Parliament for the neo-fascist MSI party, was quoted as saying in an interview with the La Stampa newspaper.

"The racial laws were introduced by 'German' fascism, under the influence of Hitler. The true, Mussolini-style fascist is not racist and condemns those who want to represent fascists as racists," she said.

She said her grandfather erred in "allying himself with Hitler, in an international political situation in which he ended up with his hands tied, without a way of escape."

She said that during World War II, "what happened in Germany did not happen in Italy. Many Jews were saved.

"I repeat, those (racial) laws were an error, but taking stock of the entire 20 years (of Mussolini's rule), my judgment of fascism is positive."

She said the violent, swastika-waving skinheads trouble her and are not true fascists. The MSI party, she said, rejects their actions.

"If I see the fascio (a bundle of wood symbolizing unity) used as a symbol, I am happy. When I see the swastika, I am not," she said.

YUGOSLAV RELIGIOUS LEADERS MEET AT BEHEST OF RABBI'S GROUP

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, Nov. 30 (JTA) -- Religious leaders from each of the warring groups involved in the ethnic conflict in the former Yugoslavia concluded an unprecedented summit in Switzerland last week that was organized by Rabbi Arthur Schneier's Appeal of Conscience Foundation.

In a joint statement, the leaders called for an immediate end to the "ethnic cleansing" going on in their country and for the release of all prisoners and detainees.

The heads of the Islamic, Serbian Orthodox and Croatian Roman Catholic populations called on "all countries and all people of good will" to "use all of their influence and all morally justifiable means in order to make further appeals like this one unnecessary."

The three religious leaders plan to try to "mobilize and energize world opinion to end this terrible tragedy," said Schneier.

Never before had leaders of all three religions met together, said Schneier, president of the New York-based Appeal of Conscience Foundation, in a telephone interview from Zurich.

Rev. Djuro Koksa, auxiliary bishop of Zagreb and a leader of the ethnic Croats, who are Roman Catholic, attended.

Koksa was joined by the Islamic community's religious leader, al-Hajj-Jakub effendi Selimoski, and the head of the Serbian Orthodox community, Patriarch Pavle.

Call For A Day Of Solidarity

After meeting at a retreat in Switzerland on the German-Austrian border, they called on world religious leaders to devote December 23rd to common prayer for total solidarity with all groups in Bosnia-Herzegovina, as well as all other afflicted people in former Yugoslavia.

In a joint statement addressed to Serbs, Croats and Muslims, "all the faithful" in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and to all political leaders, they "unanimously and in total unison launch this appeal for peace, this cry to God and to men, this cry of suffering and hope from the bottom of our souls.

"We demand the immediate, unconditional, and irrevocable end of the war," they said.

The three religious leaders formed a standing committee called Conscience in Action, according to Schneier, which will try and focus world attention on the war and devote itself to humanitarian relief issues.

They "emphatically" stated that the conflict is not a religious war, and said that "crime in the name of religion is the greatest crime against religion."

The religious leaders received messages of support from President Bush, United Nations Secretary-General Boutros-Boutros Ghali, and the president of the Swiss Confederation, Rene Felber.

According to Schneier, the idea for the summit came out of a meeting he had with Patriarch Pavle during a visit the Serbian Orthodox leader made to New York, on the eve of Yom Kippur, October 6.

As he explained the meaning of Yom Kippur to the patriarch, and they discussed steps for religious leaders to take in an effort to end the conflict, Schneier realized that the heads of the three communities had never before met, and they agreed on the date.

DELEGATION TRIES TO HALT CONSTRUCTION OF HOUSING OVER PINSK JEWISH CEMETERY

By Alexandra J. Wall and Laine Blum-Cogan

NEW YORK, Nov. 30 (JTA) -- Enraged at the recent discovery that an apartment building was being constructed on the grounds of the Jewish cemetery in Pinsk, a Jewish delegation traveled recently to Belarus to call a halt to the desecration.

Headed by Rabbi Hertz Frankel, spokesman for Athra Kadisha, the Society for the Preservation of Jewish Holy Sites, and a member of the President's Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad, the delegation included Rabbi Avrohom Schlesinger, chief Rabbi of Geneva, Rabbi Yitzchok Wolpin, chief Rabbi of Belarus, Sholom Fried of Vienna and Rabbis Aaron Gertner and Shmuel Weintraub, of the Athra Kadisha in Israel.

The group met with Belarus Foreign Minister Piotr Kravchenko, U.S. Ambassador to Belarus David Schwartz and First Secretary for the American Embassy Jeffrey Glassman.

Frankel reported that he made it clear that "the world Jewish community was shocked to have uncovered ongoing construction on the grounds of the Jewish cemetery in Pinsk."

He continued, "After the second World War and the destruction of the major Jewish community in Belarus, we at least expected the government to honor and respect the dead, to allow them rest in peace and not in pieces."

The foreign minister responded, according to Frankel, that Belarus understands the sensitivity of the Jewish community to the synagogues, cemeteries and holy places in his country. He promised to review the situation.

However, the day after the meeting with the foreign minister, the delegation visited Pinsk and was "shocked to find that additional digging of the cemetery site was performed by heavy-duty earth equipment in the last 48 hours."

Group Meets With Pinsk Mayor

The group held a meeting with Pinsk Mayor Vladimir Timoschenko and Pinsk city council members. Through an interpreter, Frankel urged the mayor to "cease all construction on the site of the cemetery."

The mayor and city council did not make any firm commitment to stop the cemetery desecration, according to Frankel.

If Pinsk authorities do not comply with the delegation's request to protect the cemetery, Frankel foresees protests on par with those that took place in a suburb of Hamburg earlier this year when a shopping mall was slated to be erected on a Jewish cemetery site.

In March, hasidic Jews from around the world took part in protests on the site of the ancient burial ground, some physically halting construction by chaining themselves to bulldozers.

Negotiations with the construction company and officials of Hamburg are still in process, and Frankel says he is "cautiously optimistic" that the shopping mall will be built upon stilts, protecting the remains in what was once the Ottenzen cemetery.

But Frankel is not so optimistic about protecting Jewish cemeteries as anti-Semitism heightens in the former Soviet republics. "Unfortunately this is becoming a serious problem in Belarus and Eastern Europe," said Frankel. "With freedom sometimes comes irresponsibility."