

VOL. 71 - 76th YEAR

FRIDAY, JANUARY 15, 1993

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By David Landau

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"I am pleased and excited," the ever-cheerful Weizman said after the vote.

Some political observers described Weizman's victory as a further success for Shimon Peres, who had openly supported him. Peres also had strongly backed Knesset member Nissim Zivli, whom the Central Committee recently elected to the post of party secretary-general, over the opposition of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

The premier took no public position on the presidential candidacy. But some pundits felt he would be unhappy to see Weizman elected. It was Weizman, back in 1974, who first published the account of Rabin's brief emotional breakdown on the eve of the 1967 Six-Day War.

Weizman announced his retirement from politics 11 months ago, saying he was deeply concerned about Israel's fate and image in the years ahead.

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Csurka, who has blamed national ills on liberals, Jews, Western financiers and the press, was recently demoted from the No. 2 position in the ruling party to a newly created party presidium that has 21 members.

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It is more likely, however, that Prime Minister Jozsef Antall will be re-elected president of his party.

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES:
ENGLISH-SPEAKERS IN ISRAEL
WIN BATTLE OVER RADIO SHOW**
By Michele Chabin

JERUSALEM (JTA) -- It often isn't easy to fight the system, but that is what a bunch of Israeli citizens managed to do last week, when they convinced the country's national radio station to reverse an unpopular decision.

About a week earlier, Israel Radio had shortened its daily English-language news show and transferred it to Reka, a station with a limited range of transmission.

This week, the show is back on Station 1, and back to its original format, thanks to protests from its faithful listeners.

Israel Radio's unusual decision to restore the show to its original format follows numerous complaints from irate listeners, who demanded that the slashed feature segment of the news program be reinstated.

Many listeners, especially those living outside the major cities, also complained that they had been unable to receive the news since the first week of January, when the broadcasts were transferred from Station 1, which can be received throughout the country, to the much weaker Reka station for new immigrants.

Residents of the south, from Beersheba to Eilat, could not hear the broadcasts at all.

Israel Radio, which is government owned and operated, decided to transfer all non-Hebrew broadcasts to Reka in an attempt to consolidate foreign-language news coverage, according to spokeswoman Carmela Yisraeli.

There are more than a dozen such programs, including broadcasts in Russian, Romanian, Yiddish and Amharic, the language spoken by Ethiopian immigrants.

What Israel Radio did not anticipate was the fierce loyalty of its English-speaking listeners.

"We received several hundred phone calls and letters from people who were upset about the changes," said Yisraeli. "We didn't realize how many people in Israel rely on the English broadcasts for day-to-day information. Once we learned that the feature segments were so popular, we decided to reinstate them."

'A Total Victory For Us'

Asked why the news was transferred to a station with poor transmission capability in the first place, Yisraeli said, "We honestly didn't know that there were problems with Reka's broadcast range. Once we realized the problem, we immediately switched the English news back to Station 1."

"This incident was a useful lesson for us," said Aryeh Mekel, head of the Israel Broadcasting Authority. "In a way, the overwhelming response acted as a kind of listeners survey. Now we know who our listeners are and that they want the feature segments."

"This was a total victory for us," declared Ira Cohen, national program director of the Association of Americans and Canadians in Israel. "We encouraged our members to protest the change in the news broadcasts, and it worked."

The protest took many forms, Cohen said. "Hundreds of people called AACI offices around the country, and we encouraged them to write letters and make phone calls to Israel Radio, the Broadcasting Authority, the Communications Ministry and individual members of Knesset.

"The British and Australian immigrant societies did the same, and the effort paid off," he said.

"Cutting the news was a big mistake," Cohen maintained. "Many people rely on it as their main source of information. There are lots of immigrants who don't understand the Hebrew news, even after being in the country many years. Senior citizens, in particular, enjoy the feature broadcasts."

Cohen pointed out that the English news "is a good way for foreign visitors to learn about the country from an Israeli perspective.

"This is especially important when you realize that journalists, diplomats and other decision-makers tend to tune into Jordan's English-language radio station many times during the day," he said, adding: "Jordan's news certainly can't be described as pro-Israel."

Now that English-speaking listeners have won their battle, they are focusing their efforts on the plight of Russian- and Amharic-speaking immigrants who are unable to receive Reka.

Cohen said that AACI and other immigrant advocacy groups would be meeting this week with representatives of the various ministries to discuss problems facing olim.

"AACI and other groups intend to raise the issue and will press the government to either strengthen the station or come up with another solution," he said.

"After all, what good is a radio station for immigrants if the immigrants can't hear it?"

**NEW ISRAELI TECHNIQUE TO MAKE
MELONS RIPE FOR WINTER EXPORT**

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV (JTA) -- Agricultural scientists at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev are introducing a new technique that will enable melons to be grown in winter for export.

The new system is based on the theory that what is good for humans should help the growth of the fruit and thereby bring in high prices in Europe.

Israeli cantaloupe and honeydew melons sell for premium out-of-season prices at the best hotels and gourmet restaurants in Europe.

Professor Dov Pasternak of Ben-Gurion's Institute for Agriculture and Applied Biology said at a news conference Sunday that the technique uses "passive solar energy" and "solar blankets."

Solar energy would reduce the cost of heating, thereby bringing down the price of the melons.

The method of "solar blankets" uses plastic pipes full of water heated by solar energy by day.

At night, a "thermal blanket" of plastic sheeting is placed over the crop, preventing the heat from dissipating, and keeping the inside temperature about 13 degrees Fahrenheit above the outside temperature.

Pasternak called the idea "simple. People wrap themselves in blankets during the winter to preserve their body heat. We use a thermal blanket to warm up the plants.

"We have joined the principles of passive solar energy and hothouse farming," he said.

The JTA Daily News Bulletin will not be published Monday, Jan. 18, in observance of the Martin Luther King Day national holiday.
