

ADL SAYS DEMJANJUK RULING IS 'FODDER FOR ANTI-SEMITES'

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Nov. 22 (JTA) -- In continuing fallout over a controversial appeals court ruling last week on the case of John Demjanjuk, the Anti-Defamation League has criticized the court for offering "fodder to the anti-Semites among us."

The section of the decision that sparked the most controversy among Jewish leaders here implied that Allan Ryan Jr., had gone to Israel in 1986 on a lecture tour sponsored by the Anti-Defamation League while Ryan was the head of a Justice Department Nazi-hunting unit.

But angry ADL officials said last week that Ryan had left the department's Office of Special Investigations in 1983 and was a private citizen when he went to Israel -- a fact Ryan himself confirmed Monday in a telephone interview.

The 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati last Wednesday overturned Demjanjuk's 1986 extradition from the United States to Israel.

Demjanjuk was acquitted in Israel earlier this year of being the Nazi death camp guard "Ivan the Terrible."

In its opinion, the court said attorneys from OSI worked very closely with "various interest groups."

The court ruled that the Justice Department prosecutors had withheld information and implied that the department had bowed to pressure from Jewish groups.

ADL National Chairman Melvin Salberg and National Director Abraham Foxman wrote last week to the judges in Cincinnati and to Attorney General Janet Reno, criticizing the decision and the allegations that ADL exerted undue influence over OSI.

"Rather than limiting yourselves to questions regarding OSI's handling of a particular case, you have, without any proof, offered fodder to the anti-Semites among us by making a sweeping and inflammatory allegation that the Jewish community set out to manipulate OSI and that OSI allowed itself to be manipulated," the ADL leaders wrote to the Cincinnati judges.

'Inaccurate And Misleading Reference'

The letter urged the judges to correct the record over the "inaccurate and misleading reference to the ADL."

From his office at Harvard University, Ryan said Monday that he was "very annoyed, to say the least," that the court did not mention anywhere in its opinion that he was no longer in government in 1986 and "implied I took the trip as a government official."

In 1986, Ryan was working as an attorney at Harvard University.

Ryan said he was "considering a great many things" that he could do in response to the court decision, but that he had not yet made a final decision on his course of action.

Debra Nagle, the court's public information officer, said Monday that under normal court rules, the ADL letter would be put into a file and not passed along to the judges.

The court only looks at communications from

parties with special "amicus" status with the court, and Nagle said ADL does not have such status.

But she said there was no way of telling what would happen in this case, which "has not followed the norm in any of its aspects."

The judges "may very well" review the letter, although no one in the court had received the letter as of Monday, she said.

Meanwhile, the Justice Department had no specific comment Monday on the ADL letter, nor did the department comment further on the Demjanjuk case beyond what Reno said last Thursday.

At that time, Reno said the department intended "to effect Demjanjuk's prompt removal from the United States as soon as we determine his legal status."

PROMOTING JEWISH CONTINUITY DOMINATES CJF GENERAL ASSEMBLY

By Larry Yudelson

MONTREAL (JTA) -- The thousands of American and Canadian Jews who gathered here last week for the annual convention of federation Jewry found neither a defining crisis nor a clear theme.

Instead, the General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations quietly advanced the issue that has been on the front burner for the past couple of years: promoting American Jewish continuity and identity in an era of assimilation and intermarriage.

Marcy Kolodny, who is campaign chairman for the women's division of Baltimore's Jewish federation, came to the G.A. for reasons true for thousands of others: "to get re-energized, to share and to learn, and to meet old friends."

By bringing together so many community lay activists and professionals for federations, the United Jewish Appeal and other organizations, the G.A. has in the past served as a catalyst for the burning issue of the moment.

Recent assemblies have been riveted by debates over Israel's definition of "who is a Jew" (1988) and how best to fund the massive emigration of Jews from the Soviet Union (1990).

And longtime delegates here recalled that when the G.A. was last held in Montreal, in 1979, there were protests from Sephardic activists complaining that their community was not getting a fair shake.

This year, though, "I know of zero controversy, and that might be the first year that it's true," said Jacob Kirschner of South River, N.J.

Kirschner is a member of the CJF Board of Delegates, the broadest governing body for CJF, which represents nearly 200 Jewish community federations in North America.

Still, the consistent attention paid to Jewish continuity and Jewish identity -- concerns that dominated last year's assembly in the wake of the 1990 National Jewish Population Study -- indicate that a revolution in attitudes has occurred.

"Ten years ago you would not have had 700 people in a room talking about those issues," said Lawrence Fine, executive director of the Jewish Community Federation of Greater Rochester, N.Y.

Similarly, Peter Geffen, who directs programs

of the CRB Foundation aimed at increasing the number of Jewish youth traveling to Israel, told a packed workshop on the topic that "this gathering is the first time we've had more than 30 people at a session about this."

The Cosmic And The Practical

The 150-page schedule for the G.A. presented a mind-numbing array of lectures, workshops and meetings. They began Nov. 15 with a seminar for new federation professionals and concluded Sunday with a program for student journalists.

In between, meetings ranged from the cosmic (Carl Sagan and Jewish Theological Seminary Chancellor Ismar Schorsch on Judaism and the environment) to the practical (how best to manage the billions of dollars in federation endowment funds).

A group of more than a dozen sessions devoted to continuity effectively picked up where last year's G.A. left off.

While the 1992 G.A. addressed broad questions of vision and attempted to rally the troops behind the cause, the focus this year was much more on the nuts and bolts of promoting Jewish identity.

While the Middle East peace process did not dominate the proceedings as some might have expected, it gave impetus to a series of discussions on the future relationship between Israel and the Diaspora.

A couple of dozen participants, North Americans and Israelis, met together throughout the G.A. for small-scale discussions of the Israel-Diaspora relationship.

And on Saturday, a number of Shabbat study sessions and workshops were devoted to Israel-Diaspora relations.

The Israelis present included representatives of the Israeli government, the World Zionist Organization, the Jewish Agency and other organizations funded by North American Jewry.

In addition, the G.A. was an occasion for national Jewish organizations to gather their boards and quietly conduct the business of American Jewish life in corridors and hotel suites.

The formal business of the CJF, including the election of incoming President Maynard Wishner, frequently took second billing.

In fact, this year even the name General Assembly was somewhat of a misnomer, following revisions in the CJF bylaws last year that made the Board of Delegates, rather than a General Assembly, the organization's governing body.

ISRAELI CABINET VOWS TO GET TOUGH ON SETTLERS WHO COMMIT ILLEGAL ACTS By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Nov. 22 (JTA) -- Israeli Cabinet ministers have pledged to step up actions against Jewish settlers who commit illegal acts while protesting the self-rule accord between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The Cabinet, which took the step Monday, also warned of a crackdown against settlers who commit acts of violence in retaliation for attacks on Israelis by Arabs.

The weekly Cabinet meeting was held after settlers groups announced that they will intensify their protest campaigns and will defy the authority of the nascent Palestinian police force, which will begin to assume authority in the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho in mid-December.

The head of the Council of Jewish Com-

munities in Judea, Samaria and Gaza qualified the announcement by saying it opposes violence committed by settlers against innocent Arabs.

The council also announced that its latest survey of some 500 Israelis showed that slightly more than half of those questioned would like to nullify the self-rule accord because of recent terrorist attacks against Israelis.

A separate poll of Palestinians released at the same time showed that support for Islamic fundamentalist and rejectionist groups has grown and that support for PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's Al Fatah faction has declined since the Israel-PLO accord was signed on Sept. 13.

The survey of Palestinians, conducted by the Center for Palestine Research and Studies in Nablus, showed that Palestinian support for Fatah dropped from roughly 46 percent to 41 percent between Sept. 10 and Nov. 11.

During the same period, support for the fundamentalist Hamas increased from 8 percent to close to 15 percent.

Support for the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a Damascus-based radical faction opposed to the peace process, increased from 4 percent to 9 percent.

Some 1,855 Palestinians were questioned for the survey, which was conducted by interview.

Settlers Called Fascists

Meanwhile, Israel's new attorney general, Michael Ben-Yair, prepared detailed proposals for the Cabinet on how security forces should deal with settlers who commit violent and illegal acts against Arabs or their property.

The proposals reportedly contain no new legislation but focus instead on enforcing existing laws. The proposals will not be voted on before next week at the earliest, after the Cabinet has had a chance to review them.

Environment Minister Yossi Sarid and Absorption Minister Yair Tsaban were particularly harsh in their attacks on settlers who break the law, calling them fascists.

Sarid promised that "new methods of dealing with the violent activity" would go into effect in the very near future.

Economics Minister Shimon Shetreet said the settlers' retaliatory violence against Arabs should not be condoned, but he said it had been exaggerated in media reports. He noted that Israel had yet to see an end to Palestinian violence.

But Shetreet also expressed his support for tough action against settlers who break the law.

"There was not at any time any policy that suggests we do not apply or enforce the law," Shetreet told Israel Radio.

The settlers "are subject to the law, and it is also our commitment to our Palestinian partners that we will preserve law and order as much as they are under (obligation) to prevent terror, to prevent violence," he said.

But in a heated Knesset Law Committee meeting Monday, Chairman Dedi Zucker charged that the army had not been effective in stopping organized violence by the settlers. He said arrests alone will not deter further violence.

Likud Knesset member Ron Nahman, who is also the mayor of the West Bank city of Ariel, responded by accusing the government of harassing all settlers because of the actions of a few.

Other representatives of the political right called for more government sensitivity to the fears and uncertainties the settlers have expressed since the Israel-PLO accord was signed.

LIKUD MEMBERS FAIL TO MUSTER NO-CONFIDENCE MAJORITY IN KNESSET

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Nov. 22 (JTA) -- Citing a recent report that increasing numbers of Israelis are falling below the poverty line, Likud Knesset members have brought a no-confidence motion against the governing coalition of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

But by a 10-vote margin, the Rabin government survived the motion in a Knesset vote Monday night.

While no-confidence motions are not infrequent in the Knesset, this was one of the few occasions when the motion was prompted by domestic issues.

The report by the National Insurance Institute showed that poverty had increased by 9.7 percent from 1991 to 1992, during which time Likud was governing the country.

Forty-nine Knesset members voted against the motion, while 39 supported it. Nine Knesset members who usually vote with the coalition abstained.

Representatives of the fervently religious Shas and Agudat Yisrael parties, along with members of the Communist-led Hadash party, were among the abstainers.

Shas had promised not to vote with the opposition in return for votes by some Labor Party members last week against two human rights bills that were opposed by Shas.

Eli Dayan, chairman of the Knesset coalition, had urged coalition members to attend the vote.

He said Likud "is the last organization that can complain about the increase in poverty. In the 15 years of its rule, poverty increased greatly."

Absorption Minister Yair Tsaban agreed that the statistics from 1992 were largely the responsibility of the previous government.

But he warned that the figures for 1993 were unlikely to be much different and that they "will be our responsibility."

CONGRESS PASSES RESOLUTION URGING END TO ARAB BOYCOTT

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Nov. 22 (JTA) -- In a strong statement of opposition to the Arab economic boycott of Israel, Congress has overwhelmingly passed a resolution urging the Arab League to lift the boycott.

But soon after the weekend vote, the Arab League voted to continue the anti-Israel sanctions until Israel withdraws from all occupied Arab land and a Palestinian state is created.

The House voted 425 to 1 in favor of the resolution, and the Senate passed the measure by voice vote. Both votes occurred over the weekend, as members of Congress rushed to complete their business before the Thanksgiving holiday.

The lone member of the House to oppose the non-binding resolution was Rep. Nick Joe Rahall (D-W.Va.). Rahall has previously opposed quashing anti-Israel activities.

Concern has been mounting on Capitol Hill over continuation of the boycott, which is even older than the State of Israel and affects not only Israel but American companies doing business with the Jewish state.

With Israel now engaging in economic relationships with the Palestinians and Jordan, the

boycott, which was established in 1946, is being increasingly viewed here as an anachronism and an obstacle to Middle East peace.

After Congress passed the anti-boycott resolution, an Arab League official in Cairo said the boycott would continue until Israel withdraws from all occupied Arab land and a Palestinian state comes into being.

Arab League Secretary Esmat Abdel-Meguid told reporters Monday, "We want to end the boycott, but the reasons that led to its imposition -- the continuation of the occupation and the need for Palestinians to regain their rights -- are still valid."

The league voted to continue the boycott.

Here in Washington, the Congressional resolution was sponsored in the House by Rep. Peter Deutsch (D-Fla.) and in the Senate by Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.).

In a statement issued Sunday, Deutsch said, "If the nations of the Arab League want us to believe they're serious about peace, then it's time that they show some real commitment and lift all forms of the boycott, including the blacklisting of hundreds of American companies."

CASE CHARGES ABSORPTION MINISTRY WITH RACISM ON ETHIOPIAN MORTGAGES

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Nov. 22 (JTA) -- A petition filed last week with Israel's High Court of Justice charges the Absorption Ministry with racism for restricting favorable mortgages for Ethiopian olim to certain cities.

The ministry currently grants highly favorable mortgages to Ethiopian immigrants for housing in a number of cities, such as Netanya.

But it withholds the mortgages if the immigrants attempt to settle elsewhere, including cities where there are already high concentrations of Ethiopians, such as Beersheba, Dimona and Nazareth.

This, according to the petition, unfairly deprives the Ethiopians of the right to choose where they buy apartments.

Further, the petition, which was filed by a resident of Hod Hasharon, calls the policy racist.

The Absorption Ministry is defending its policies, saying they are designed to promote integration.

A spokesperson for the ministry, who answered on condition of anonymity, refused to comment on the pending court case.

But the spokesperson said the ministry restricts mortgages to the Ethiopians "for their own good."

The policy is one of the ministry's "special integrative programs," and exists because "we don't want Ethiopian ghettos," the spokesperson said.

The program steers the immigrants into so-called "stronger" cities that can sustain the Ethiopian immigrants better because these cities have "better facilities, better education and better jobs."

A "weak population" concentrated in a development town "burdens the city," the spokesperson said.

But the spokesperson insisted that the immigrants are nevertheless free to live wherever they want.

The High Court has given the Absorption Ministry 45 days to explain the rationale behind its mortgage policy.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES: WAVE OF IMMIGRANTS FROM YEMEN FINDS LIFE HARSH IN 'PROMISED LAND'

By Larry Yudelson

ASHKELON, Israel (JTA) -- Yosef Keim does not want his complaints to dissuade anyone -- including his relatives still in Yemen -- from joining him in Israel.

"Everyone has to come," he insists, saying God is fulfilling the promise to gather the exiles from all over the Earth.

But nonetheless Keim has harsh words about his new home, and his complaints echo those of other recent Yemenite immigrants.

Some even speak of returning to the Arab country where they were kept isolated from the outside world for 40 years.

In the past year, half of the 900-member Jewish community of Yemen has departed, and the rest are expected to follow.

This was the first major emigration since 1954, although some Jews were able to sneak out in 1962 during the chaos of the civil war between North and South Yemen.

In the past three years, the newly unified Yemenite government has followed a relatively liberal course, which includes the right of Jews to leave.

The Yemenites have faced a profoundly difficult transition.

It is a transition from a way of life that has changed little in the past 2,000 years to a modern society where daily life involves mortgage payments, electric bills and jobs that do not allow for the traditional mid-afternoon siesta.

Unlike the 45,000 Yemenites who arrived in the new state in 1949 and 1950, these newcomers are not being housed in tents and are not having their traditional side curls shorn.

They are being housed initially in Jewish Agency absorption centers, alongside immigrants from Ethiopia and elsewhere.

But they remain distinctive.

At the absorption center here in Ashkelon, Yemenite men crouch on a ledge bordering the sidewalk. Next to them, women sit separately, their long-sleeved dresses, resplendent in rich blues and greens, distinctively Yemenite. Little girls play in long skirts and pantaloons.

'Majority Are Extremely Happy'

"The broad majority are extremely happy, and you can see that in people continuing to leave Yemen," says an American who familiar with the Yemenite immigrants.

"You can find people among any immigrant group who have high expectations and who are disappointed," the American added.

Count among the disappointed several immigrants at an absorption center in Rehovot.

"We are not like the Russian Jews who come with one child and one dog," an exasperated immigrant told a group of Americans visiting from the United Jewish Appeal last month.

"We have 11 children. We were jewelry makers in Yemen, but we tried it in Israel, and it didn't work out," he said.

"Now we have to learn another job. We have problems. We can't speak Hebrew, to write and to read. We don't have a profession."

And, in fact, some have two wives.

Should they thank the government for providing two very generous mortgages to buy two apartments for them?

Or should they curse the two bills they get each month?

"Electricity, rent, health insurance, rent, telephone, everything," said Amriyom Barhiali, counting on his fingers the bills pouring in.

"I have nothing. I have nothing to eat. Eight months I've been here. I have no food. What to eat? How will I make money? I have family in Yemen, an auto, money, it's true. Now I don't have anything," said Barhiali, a middle-aged man with a thin face and long side curls.

He went to the Interior Ministry to apply for a passport to return to Yemen. They sent him a bill for 1,300 shekels -- to repay roughly \$500 in government assistance to help him settle.

"I don't have the money to pay the government," he complained.

According to a report in the Yediot Achronot newspaper, one family at the Rehovot absorption center has already left Israel, and five more are planning to follow.

The families were convinced to leave Israel by anti-Zionist Satmar Chasidim and are relocating to Brooklyn, the newspaper reported.

'They Will Fit In Very Well'

In Yemen, most of the Jews were silver-smiths. Their craftsmanship was renowned, and with their departure, some of the sparkle has gone from the Yemenite markets.

But in Israel, they find they can no longer sell their wares to tourists or others willing to pay high prices. And the bills keep piling up.

"In Yemen, you can get by working only two days a week," said one woman who works with the Yemenites in the Rehovot absorption center, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

"Now they come here and we say, 'You have to go to work.' He finds work, and says, 'What, do you think I'm a slave? They won't let me smoke, want me to work 10 hours a day.'"

Arnon Mantver, director-general of the Jewish Agency's immigrant absorption department, says the Yemenite Jews are being well cared for.

"They will realize that this system is more supportive than in Yemen. There is social security that takes into account their situation," he said.

"If they won't be spoiled by different groups who try to intervene, they will fit in very well."

Other veteran Israelis also give short shrift to the Yemenites' complaints.

"When they came in 1949, my family had a very hard absorption," said one woman of Yemenite origin who works with the new immigrants. "They had no houses, only tents. When it rained, it came in. The wind blew, and whoop! There went the tent!"

But that is not how the newcomers see it.

"When they came, you could just throw a stone and claim the land. Today you have to pay 200 shekels for a \$50,000 mortgage," said one.

A look at those numbers -- less than \$70 monthly payments for a \$50,000 apartment -- and it is clear that the Yemenites are being heavily subsidized by the government.

It is also clear that they do not fully understand the society they have entered.

For Keim, one of the biggest shocks was having to surrender his own weapons when he immigrated, at a time when Arabs seemed to be killing Jews with abandon.

The religious situation is confusing too.

"I can't tell a Jew from an Arab," Keim said. The Jews in Israel, he said, do not wear yarmulkes or side curls.