

Soviets to Curb Jews' Flights to Israel - Correction Appended

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 **Correction Appended**

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Body

The **Soviet** Union has announced that it will severely limit flights to **Israel** for emigrating **Soviet** Jews, and Yitzhak Shamir, the interim Prime Minister, held urgent meetings today to find a way to counter the **Soviet** decision.

An announcement on Thursday night on the **Soviet** television said that Aeroflot, the **Soviet** airline, would no longer issue tickets to **Soviet** Jews planning to emigrate to **Israel** by flying first to Hungary and then on to Jerusalem.

Three-quarters of the 1,500 **Soviet** Jews who come here every week use Budapest as the transit point, largely because officials in other European cities have been unwilling or unable to handle the large numbers of emigres. If the Budapest transit point is in effect closed, the flow of emigrating **Soviet** Jews could be considerably slowed. Hungarians Acted First

The **Soviet** announcement came two days after Malev, the Hungarian national airline, suspended charter flights to **Israel** for **Soviet** emigrants in reaction to threats of retaliation from an Islamic fundamentalist group. A day later, Malev asked Aeroflot to stop flying **Soviet** Jewish emigres to Budapest, the Hungarian press agency M.T.I. reported.

Since the Malev charters carried only a small percentage of the emigrants, Israeli officials called the Hungarian decision worrisome more for what it might portend than for the harm it would actually cause.

The **Soviet** announcement seems to confirm those fears. If the two decisions mean that **Soviet** Jews will no longer use Budapest as a transit point, "it will be a tremendous problem," a senior immigration official said today.

That is especially true because even as Israeli officials ask other European countries to provide transit points, officials of the Palestine Liberation Organization say they are hard at work in the same cities, threatening and cajoling officials not to let the Jews pass through. Other transit points include Bucharest and Vienna. The major objection of the P.L.O. is that the Jews are ending up in the Israeli-occupied lands.

Will Seek U.S. Assistance

The Israeli Government seems to have few avenues now. The Prime Minister and several of the remaining ministers in his interim Government, who met today to discuss the **Soviet** immigration situation, decided that "what we are going to do now is immediately alert the United States," said Avi Pazner, a close Shamir aide, adding, "The situation is still murky, but it may be that the whole problem here is in the **Soviet** Union," which has no relations with **Israel**.

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Moscow is hoping that if it allows free travel and immigration, the United States will improve the **Soviet** trade status. **Israel** hopes Washington will press Moscow to change its mind.

The number of **Soviet** Jews arriving here in March is expected to reach 6,000, and more are moving to the United States as well. But despite the flow of Jews leaving the **Soviet** Union each month, Mr. Pazner said, it is the Israeli Government's view that "on the one hand the **Soviet** Union is letting them out, but on the other they are creating great difficulties for them."

Even before the recent decisions by Malev and Aeroflot, all the flights for Jews leaving the **Soviet** Union were completely booked. Would-be emigrants have had to wait many months for a reservation.

Threat by Militants

Then, reacting to Arab threats, Malev announced on Wednesday that it would no longer charter flights for **Soviet** emigrants to **Israel**. Islamic Holy War for the Liberation of Palestine, a terrorist group based in Lebanon and Iran, had threatened to attack airlines and airports if those and others flights continued.

For two months, Arab Governments and guerrilla groups have been complaining about the large flow of **Soviet** Jews to **Israel** because many are being resettled in the occupied West Bank. But the Malev decision, by itself, was not viewed as a sharp blow.

The airline had begun the charter flights early in March and was carrying about 200 immigrants a week. El Al charter flights and regularly scheduled Malev flights from Budapest would continue, Hungary said.

Still, **Israel** has been trying to persuade Hungary to change its mind. Tonight, Foreign Minister Moshe Arens said **Israel** was "surprised and disappointed as this is part of an organized effort by the Arab world to halt the immigration from the **Soviet** Union."

"We are making every effort to open additional routes," he said. "But pressure must be applied to the Hungarian Government."

This morning, Istvan Komoroczki, first consul in the Hungarian embassy in Tel Aviv, said: "The Hungarian airline is a commercial, profit-oriented organization which is naturally a state airline. But the Government doesn't usually interfere with the company's policies, and I don't think it will do so in this case."

Some Round Trips Omitted

The announcement on the main **Soviet** evening television news program, Vremya, said: "The sale of tickets to passengers departing for permanent residence in **Israel** has been stopped from the 22d of March 1990 for routes Moscow-Budapest-Tel Aviv, Leningrad-Budapest-Tel Aviv and Kiev-Budapest-Tel Aviv."

The announcement said Aeroflot would honor tickets that had already been purchased by would-be emigrants, but that no new tickets would be sold. The report also said that the airline would continue to sell round-trip tickets to businessmen or tourists to Hungary.

Today, Izvestia, the **Soviet** Government newspaper, quoted First Deputy Foreign Minister Yuli N. Vorontsov as saying that Aeroflot had "no plans in the immediate future" for direct flights to **Israel**. Although Aeroflot and El Al agreed in principle on direct flights last year, the agreement has not been put into effect.

Israeli officials said they had received no solid confirmation of the **Soviet** announcement on ticket sales to Budapest. Gad Ben-Ari, spokesman for the Jewish Agency, the large quasi-governmental agency with the largest responsibility in immigration matters said: "We're still checking. It's not yet clear what they are going to do."

Correction

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Because of an editing error, an article on March 24 about the emigration of Soviet Jews to Israel misstated the extent to which they are being resettled in the West Bank. Only a small number of the Soviet Jews - about 1 percent of the 30,000 who have arrived in Israel in the last few months - have moved to the occupied territories.
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