

FCO # 2 (ETHIOPIA)

7/15/81

MEMORANDUM

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date July 15, 1981

CONFIDENTIAL

to David Geller

from Howard A. Kohr

subject Falashas -- the latest.

On June 20th there will be a meeting with some Hill staffers, led by Michael Kraft of Senator Boschwitz's office and Dawn Calabria of Rep. Solarz's office, and Mr. Avileah of the Israeli Consulate in New York. Following this session the group is planning to meet with Richard Smizer, the acting Refugee co-ordinate of the State Department, officials from the Sudan desk, and the African refugee desk to discuss what might be done about the Falashas, and to ascertain what State knows about their situation. After last week's meeting in Rudy Boschwitz's office there is a renewed concern about the plight of the Falashas, and while concerned Senators, Congressmen & their staff are aware of the sensitivity of the issue, most are not aware of what the current situation of the Falashas is. In addition, most have not heard from the Israeli's or JDC or HIAS on this issue. (In response to this last problem, Marc Talisman has already called JDC & HIAS asking them to offer their services for the Avileah briefing). I will keep you informed as this situation develops.

Representative Howard Wolpe (D.Mich.), Chairman of the House Africa Subcommittee is planning to lead a Congressional delegation to Africa from July 31 to August 19. The trip has not been officially confirmed (they are awaiting confirmation from various embassies as well as the availability of an army airplane in which to travel), but the itinerary includes (in order of visit): Nigeria, Angola, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Ethiopia & Somalia. The delegation, as of today, consists of Rep. Goodling(R.Pa.), Rep. Crockett*(D.Mich.), Rep. Ottinger(D.Ny.), Rep. Bowen(D.Miss.), Rep. Savage*(D.Ill.), Rep. Deilums*(D.Ca), Rep. Chisholm*(D.Ny), Rep. Gray*(D.Pa.), Rep. Bedell(D.Ia.), Rep. Mitchell* (D.Md.), Rep. Erdahl(R.Minn.), Rep. Yatron(D.Pa.), Rep. Washington*(D.Ill), and seven subcommittee staff members.

The group is going to try to meet with Falashas while in Ethiopia, but even this is not a certainty due to the problem of an American group getting into Ethiopia. I am in contact with Wolpe's subcommittee staff representative and will keep you informed of this issue. One important thing to note about the delegation is that 7 of the 14 members are from the Congressional Black Caucus which means that they will be going with a certain agenda in mind.

Please inform me as to what information, if any, Bookie or I should be passing on to Members of Congress about this delicate matter.

cc: Abe Bayer

FCP # - (ETHIOPIA)

CONFIDENTIAL

7/28/81

July 28, 1981

Abraham Karlikow

David Geller

Ethiopian Jews

Paul Bernick called regarding the proposed Congressional trip to Africa. (See Kohr's memo) Paul believes that it would be very important to have an ORT representative to brief some members of the delegation. According to Paul, the situation now is somewhat sticky. Their man, Nadjar, has been asked to leave Gondar by the local government. Their man in London, Joseph Harmatz, had concluded that dealing with the local government was not going to be effective and, therefore, arranged for himself and Simon Feldman (ORT director of technological assistance) to be introduced to the Ethiopian representative to the ILO who then promised to introduce them to higher authority. In the meantime, Nadjar and Meyassed (handling the Ethiopian Desk in London and formerly ORT/Israel inspector of northern area) went to Ethiopia and met with people at the upper level of government, promising to try to get economic and technological aid for areas other than Gondar. While there, they learned that there is a good deal of tension between the central government and the local government in Gondar, which is making the situation there even more difficult.

Paul also reminded me that one of the members of Mitterrand's government in France is a former ORT man, Dreyfuss, and this may turn out to be helpful in terms of sensitizing the French Government to the plight of Ethiopian Jews.

Paul requested that when we learn further details of the Congressional visit to Africa that we contact Harmatz in London: Joseph Harmatz 431-13-33
Residence 431-12-84
Directdialing 011-44-1 and then the number

HOT FLASH! When I finished dictating this memo, I received a call from Howard Kohr reporting that Ethiopia had denied entrance to the Congressional delegation. This is being appealed but, according to Howard's informant, there is little chance that they will be allowed in.

DG/es

cc: George Gruen

bcc: Bertram H. Gold ✓
Lois Gottesman
Daniel Shapiro

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JUL 29 P.M.
B. H. GOLD

FCO / ...
OUR SUBJECTS A F...
SENT 8/24/81
8/13/81

Memorandum

CONFIDENTIAL

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE

date August 13, 1981
to Files
from Abraham S. Karlikow
subject Falasha Jews

Movement of Jews from Ethiopia via the Sudan is still at a standstill. The last group to have gotten out, you will remember, came at the very end of May. There was an attempt of a small group to run a Sudanese roadblock in June, but the people were picked up and sent back to the camps. Two persons were arrested by the Sudanese, one of whom has since been released, but the other one is in jail. As ever, a couple of small groups of 20-25 are organized and are waiting for an opportunity to move, but thusfar to no avail.

On the diplomatic front, agreement has been gotten from France and one other European country, as well as a Caribbean land, to act as transit countries, in addition to Greece and Germany which already permit this. Simply, there is no one to transit.

An awareness by the Governor of Gondar Province that Jews have been moving out of his territory led to the arrest of one of the Kohanim there several months ago. He is being queried as to whether he helped others go. According to his relatives, who bring him food in jail in accordance with Ethiopian custom, he has been tortured and they have asked the help of the Israel Government. The Israelis -- for the first time to my knowledge of such a situation relating to Ethiopia -- have turned to outside organizations to ask for assistance. As so many others, the Kohan was an ORT employee; and several of those whom the Governor is aware to be missing are likewise ORT employees, so ORT does not feel able to intervene on the spot.

Indeed, there are some indications that ORT is having its own difficulties with the government. Its representative in Ethiopia has been unable, recently, to get from Addis Ababa into Gondar and some letters coming out from Falashas indicate

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B. H. GOLD

that of late they have not been able to count on ORT help normally given them there in their role as "employees." Hopefully, one will have a clearer picture of the situation in Gondar itself and ORT's difficulties in the next few days.

In the meantime, the Los Angeles Jewish Community Relations Committee has sent out invitations to Jewish communal leaders there and in other cities announcing that it is organizing a delegation to travel to Ethiopia and visit the Falashas this coming October 21 - November 6. Barry Weise, who is Director of the World Jewry Commission of the Los Angeles Community Relations Committee is working to organize this in conjunction with the Ethiopian Airlines. He sought to have either Dan Shapiro or Abe Bayer of the NJCRAC Ethiopian Committee go along, and thus have an NJCRAC hechsher; but the decision of the Shapiro Committee today was that while it would not oppose, it also would not approve and so will inform community people who inquire. The Los Angeles group memorandum insists that the mission, while in Ethiopia, would not "discuss the politically sensitive question of Aliyah" or seek to meet with government officials but would direct their investigation to Falasha living conditions, relief needs and religious and cultural concerns. Following their trip to Ethiopia, the Los Angeles group plans to continue on to Israel for meetings there. One does not know at the present time how many actually will go on this mission (a minimum of 15 is needed) for all that many people have expressed interest. What is interesting is that the Israelis, who always have actively disapproved such missions before, did not do so in this case - though this does not mean they approve.

ASK:en
Attach.

cc: Bertram H. Gold