

WEST BANK REMAINS TENSE

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 23 (JTA) -- The West Bank remained tense today, with demonstrations, stone-throwing and fire-burning reported from many villages and towns, and in East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.

An officer and several soldiers were injured by stones thrown by youthful demonstrators. A number of Arab demonstrators were detained when caught burning tires or throwing stones. A Swedish journalist was slightly injured by a stone while walking along the Old City wall to report on unrest.

In Bethlehem, Mayor Elias Freij said he had received a threatening letter from the Village League of Bethlehem, one of the village leagues supported by Israel as a counterweight to the Palestine Liberation Organization. But a league spokesman said his organization had not sent the letter, which bore no names other than that of the league; and suggested the letter was an act of provocation.

WEST BANK VIOLENCE WIDELY REPORTED ON IN FRENCH MEDIA

By Edwin Eytan

PARIS, March 23 (JTA) -- The escalating violence on the West Bank in recent days has received wide coverage in the French media, including the three State-controlled television channels. Most editorial comment has condemned Israel's tough tactics in dealing with Palestinian demonstrators.

Le Monde warned in a front page editorial that the West Bank crisis could lead to a rift between Israel and Egypt after Israel completes its withdrawal from Sinai next month and suggested that this would force some of Israel's best friends, including France and the U.S., to adopt pro-Arab positions.

The Foreign Ministry, in communiqués issued yesterday and today, officially "deplored" the continued violence. It announced that the French Consul General in Jerusalem, on instructions from the Quai D'Orsay, visited the ousted mayor of El Bireh, Ibrahim Tawil, yesterday.

The removal of Mayor Tawil and his town council by the Israeli authorities last week was the immediate cause of the present wave of protest demonstrations on the West Bank and the Israeli army's crackdown.

Sympathy For West Bank Palestinians

But even before the El Bireh episode, France demonstrated sympathy for the West Bank Palestinians. While President Francois Mitterrand paid his official visit to Israel earlier this month, Foreign Minister Claude Cheysson, who accompanied him, met with five Arab mayors on the West Bank.

Cheysson said he was "personally affected" by what the French have termed the "mistreatment" of Mayor Bassam Shaka of Nablus, a leading Palestinian nationalist who was maimed two years ago by a bomb believed to have been planted by Jewish extremists.

So far the mainstream Jewish community organizations here and the traditional Jewish establishment have made no public comment on events on the West Bank. But a number of Jewish leaders have privately

expressed regret over the flare-up of violence.

Several leftwing Jewish organizations called today for "an end to violence" and an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue. The organizations, "Socialism and Judaism," "Identity and Dialogue," "Young Jewish Socialists," and "Michmar" are relatively small bodies but some of them have prestige in French intellectual circles. The Organization of Jewish Socialist Students (CLESS) issued a call to the leftist opposition in Israel to "present a credible alternative" to the policies of Premier Menachem Begin's government.

EGYPTIAN ENVOY SAYS EGYPT, ISRAEL ON WAY TO RESOLVING DIFFERENCES

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 23 (JTA) -- An Egyptian envoy indicated after a two-hour meeting with Premier Menachem Begin today that Israel and Egypt are on the way to resolving differences which have strained their relations in recent weeks. He brought Begin a message from President Hosni Mubarak.

Osama el-Baz, a top political aide to Mubarak, told reporters here that he believed Begin was "quite satisfied with the talks and exchange of messages and (felt) that all outstanding issues will be solved." He made it clear that the issues include the dispute over the international boundary line in the Taba region near Israel's Red Sea port of Eilat.

El-Baz did not say whether he had discussed with Begin the matter of Mubarak's projected visit to Israel. It has contributed to the strains between the two countries because Mubarak refuses to go to Jerusalem and Israel insists that he do so or not come at all.

El-Baz was dispatched from Cairo by Mubarak yesterday apparently to try to ease a situation that was becoming increasingly tense because of the border dispute, Mubarak's visit and the approaching April 25 deadline for Israel's final withdrawal from Sinai. The Egyptian emissary was accompanied by a leading Cairo intellectual, Anis Mansour, editor and publisher of October magazine. Mansour had a lengthy meeting with President Yitzhak Navon and conveyed to him an oral message from Mubarak.

The message, from President to President, was understood to be one of assurance that Egypt will continue the peace process and normalization of relations with Israel after it is in full possession of Sinai.

ISRAEL GOVERNMENT DEFENDS ITS POLICIES ON THE WEST BANK

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 23 (JTA) -- The government defended its policies on the West Bank today against motions of no-confidence in the Knesset by the Labor Alignment and other opposition factions. Defense Minister Ariel Sharon claimed, "The day is not far when quiet will return to Judea and Samaria."

The no-confidence motions were triggered by the escalation of violence on the West Bank this past week following the removal of the elected

mayor and town council of El Bireh for refusing to cooperate with the civilian regime Sharon set up in the territory last year.

Sharon said the government was carrying out a basic policy decision made a year ago to encourage "moderate elements" on the West Bank while huffing hard at "pro-Palestine Liberation Organization" elements. Ibrahim Tawil, the ousted mayor of El Bireh, and most other West Bank mayors are considered by the government to be conduits of PLO influence in the territory.

Sharon, in a speech frequently interrupted by opposition heckling, said, "It is not possible to implement any plan, our autonomy plan or any other plan as long as the PLO rules on the West Bank." He claimed that "This is the struggle for Eretz Israel" and that the government has "surprised" the opposition by acting in time.

Clash Between Sharon And Peres

The debate was enlivened by an angry personal clash between Sharon and Labor Party chairman Shimon Peres. The Defense Minister accused Labor of "responsibility for the rise to power of the PLO" on the West Bank because it allowed free municipal elections there in 1976. The elections brought to office a younger generation of mayors who are staunch Palestinian nationalists.

Peres called Sharon's charge "incitement and demagoguery." He said the Defense Minister was distorting history to mislead the public. He noted that candidates who were PLO members were barred from running for office in the 1976 elections.

But obviously, people who sympathized with Palestinian nationalism could not have been excluded then, no more than they could be excluded if the present government succeeds in holding elections for self-governing authorities under its autonomy plan, Peres said.

Sharon accused the Labor-led government of acting more harshly toward the West Bank Arabs between 1967-1977 than the Likud government has during its five years in office. Mapam MK Victor Shemtov reminded Sharon that he had served as Labor Premier Yitzhak Rabin's security advisor in 1976 and as such shared responsibility for the government's policies.

Peres, in a low key speech, criticized the government for its West Bank policy, for "unnecessary collective punishment against the Golan Druze," for worsening relations with the U.S. and for using American loan money to buy votes.

No-confidence motions were also submitted by the Shinui faction and the Hadash (Communist) Party. Amnon Rubinstein of Shinui traded barbs with Premier Menachem Begin and Justice Minister Moshe Nissim over the legality of cordoning off Druze villages on the Golan Heights because the Druze refused to accept Israeli identity cards.

Begin, still not fully recovered from the hip injury he suffered last December, entered and left the chamber supported by a cane.

PLO REP'S VISIT TO ITALY, A FAILURE

By Lisa Palmieri-Billig

ROME, March 23 (JTA) — The visit here of Palestine Liberation Organization representative Farouk Kaddumi last week was a political failure on all grounds and a public relations disaster as well.

Kaddumi, the PLO's foreign affairs spokesman, failed to achieve any of the objectives

he had set for himself. He was not received by Italy's President, Sandro Pertini; he was not granted an audience with Pope John Paul II; and he did not obtain Italy's recognition of the PLO as the "sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people."

At a press conference which he called, the PLO official was sharply grilled on the disappearance in Lebanon 18 months ago of two Italian journalists, Italo Toni and Graziella de Palo. They disappeared in territory dominated by PLO forces.

De Palo's parents, who attended the press conference, said they had received personal assurances from PLO chief Yasir Arafat that their daughter was alive. Arafat made a statement to that effect to the Italian news agency ANSA last June. However, the De Palos said they suffered repeated disappointments in their efforts to obtain further information.

Kaddumi's refusal to meet with members of the family or to reply to their questions provoked a negative reaction in the Italian press. He was also criticized for brushing aside the diplomatically "sensitive" issue of PLO arms shipments to Italian terrorist groups.

POPE PAYS HOMAGE TO VICTIMS OF ARDEATINE CAVES MASSACRE

By Lisa Palmieri-Billig

ROME, March 23 (JTA) — Pope John Paul II paid homage yesterday to the victims of the 1944 Ardeatine Caves massacre. In the presence of Roman Catholic and Jewish dignitaries he knelt to pray and laid a wreath of flowers on the graves of the 335 citizens of Rome, many of them Jews, who were shot to death at the site on March 24, 1944 in a Nazi reprisal for a partisan ambush of 33 German soldiers on a Rome street.

The Pope told the gathering that he had come "to hear the words, loud and clear, of those who had disappeared, victims of homicidal barbarism." They "demand," he said, "that their suffering was not useless for human society" and that "the world live in justice, harmony, peace, in reciprocal respect for the unalienable rights of the human being created in the image and resemblance of God."

The Pope added his signature to the book of visitors to the site. Looking on were the Chief Rabbi of Rome, Elia Joffe, the Mayor and the Vicar of Rome, Cardinal Poletti and the surviving families of the victims.

The last time the Ardeatine Caves were visited by a Pope was in September 1965 when Paul VI memorialized the victims.

ARMY SOURCE CONFIRMS BANNING OF BOOKS ON THE WEST BANK

JERUSALEM, March 23 (JTA) — An army source quoted by the Jerusalem Post today said there are about 1,100 titles on the list of books banned in the occupied territories by the Israeli authorities. The source gave no further details and the Post said it has been unable to obtain a copy of the list.

The issue was raised in the Knesset several days ago by Labor MK Abba Eban who said about 2,000 books were on the proscribed list and asked Defense Minister Ariel Sharon to explain why they were banned. Menachem Milson, who heads the new civil administration on the West Bank denounced as "lies" press reports here and abroad that the banned books include George Orwell's "1984," Alan Moorehead's books on the Nile and Shakespeare's "The Merchant of Venice." The book ban was originally questioned publicly by Ori Bernstein, a Tel Aviv industrialist and writer.

BEGIN PONDERING WHETHER TO RESIGN FOLLOWING A TIE VOTE IN THE KNESSET ON A NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION BY LABOR By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 23 (JTA) — Premier Menachem Begin was pondering resignation tonight following a tie vote in the Knesset on a no-confidence motion submitted by the opposition Labor Party critical of the government's policies on the West Bank.

The 58-58 tie does not require the government to resign but Begin had said earlier that he would quit in the event of a tie vote because it would deprive his coalition government of its moral mandate. He convened an emergency Cabinet meeting tonight after the Knesset met where, according to late reports, he was recommending his government's resignation. His fellow ministers reportedly were urging him to hang-on.

The unexpected tie vote was reached by the defection of MK Haim Druckman of the National Religious Party who broke with the coalition to vote with the ultra-nationalist Tehiya faction against the government. Druckman, a leader of the movement to stop the withdrawal from Sinai, resigned from a sub-Cabinet post recently because of the Sinai issue, although he remained in the NRP.

Tehiya is vehemently opposed to withdrawal from Sinai, due to be completed on April 25 and opposed the government on that ground although it was not part of the no-confidence motion. The two-man Telem faction, founded by the late Moshe Dayan, also voted against the government although it had been expected to abstain. The bulk of the anti-government votes came from the Labor Alignment, the small leftist Shinui faction and the Hadash (Communist) Party.

If Begin resigns he will nevertheless continue to head a caretaker government pending new elections which could be held in three months.

U.S. EXPRESSING INCREASED CONCERN OVER VIOLENCE ON THE WEST BANK By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, March 23 (JTA) — The United States expressed increased concern today about the violence on the West Bank and implied criticism of the Israeli army use of weapons against Arab demonstrators.

This was apparent in a statement on the situation by the State Department today although Department spokesman Dean Fischer said it was the "same tone" as a statement issued by the Department yesterday, but worded differently.

The statement read by Fischer today noted that the U.S. was "increasingly concerned" by "the heightened level of tension, demonstrations and especially the use of lethal force against demonstrators."

Yesterday's statement, which expressed concern about the "increased confrontation and violence," noted that "we are especially concerned about the use of lethal and potentially lethal force." The statement yesterday was more ambiguous as to who was using such force.

Fischer's statement today also said: "We deeply regret the tragic loss of life that has occurred. We hope that all those involved will exercise the utmost restraint, to calm the situation and to prevent further bloodshed."

Meanwhile, Morris Draper, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Near East and South Asian affairs, in response to questions while testifying before a House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee, said the U.S. was "disturbed" over the violence and called it the "most serious of its nature in many, many years on the West Bank."

Draper said the incidents on the West Bank will have a "negative affect" on efforts to stabilize the Mideast and to bring solutions to the region's many problems. He said the "turmoil" reflects some of the suspicions by some Palestinians toward Israel's intentions and thus harms efforts to bring the residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip into the autonomy talks.

Draper said a "change is underway" in Israel's policy toward the West Bank in which the Israelis are using a "barrot and stick" approach to reward West Bank officials who oppose the Palestine Liberation Organization and withdraw support from those who support the PLO. He said this can be seen in the efforts to establish the largely rural based Village Leagues which the Israelis see as alternatives to the urban mayors and councils.

Draper said that while the U.S. has not taken a position on the removal by Israel on the mayor and town council of El Bireh, it believes as a general principle that elected officials are best.

In another development, Fischer revealed that the U.S. has offered Washington as an alternative site for the next meeting of the autonomy working level committee scheduled Sunday. Egypt and Israel are deadlocked in a dispute over the site because Israel demands it be held in Jerusalem and Egypt wants to continue meeting in Tel Aviv. Fischer said yesterday that the U.S. considers the dispute a bilateral problem between Israel and Egypt and the U.S. will meet anywhere the two agree upon.

DISMANTLING WORK CONTINUES IN SINAI

TEL AVIV, March 23 (JTA) — Demolition and dismantling work was resumed today at Pri'el in the Yamit area and other villages after local farmers had at first prevented Jewish Agency workers from operating their cranes to pull houses down in preparation for their transportation and reconstruction in other replacement villages inside Israel proper.

The farmers at first blocked the work on the grounds that the size of their financial compensation had not yet been finalized. But they agreed when their representatives went to Jerusalem for a meeting with Premier Menachem Begin, whose decision on the matter they said they would accept.

LATE NEWS BULLETIN

JERUSALEM (JTA) — The Cabinet voted 12-6 Tuesday to reject Premier Menachem Begin's proposal that it resign following a tie vote on a no-confidence motion in the Knesset several hours earlier. According to Cabinet Secretary Arye Naor, the Cabinet majority regarded the 58-58 tie in the Knesset to be only a "chance" vote that could not be construed as a natural coalition and would not repeat itself again.

UNITED NATIONS (JTA) — Members of the Security Council were scheduled to meet here late Tuesday afternoon for informal consultations on Jordan's request Monday to convene an urgent meeting of the Council to discuss the situation in the West Bank.

SPECIAL IN INTERVIEW CONSERVATIVE JUDAISM IN ISRAEL

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 23 (JTA) -- Perhaps belatedly, but with much vigor and determination, the Conservative movement has decided to turn its attentions to Israel, with a view to establishing a strong and expanding Conservative ("Masorati") presence within the Jewish State.

The plans and programs that have been drawn up were given impetus this month by an extended visit to Jerusalem by Dr. Gerson Cohen, Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in New York City, a spiritual leader with a great deal of practical verve and drive.

"I keep being told by Israeli politicians that what counts here is not ideology, but numbers -- and I realize it is true," Cohen said in an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

So, while continuing to fight for religious pluralism in Israel's one-stream (Orthodox) establishment, Cohen is leading the Conservative movement in a bold new endeavor: to establish itself solidly at the grass roots level across the country.

At present, after years of quiet and unobtrusive activity, there is one Conservative school (in Jerusalem), a youth summer camp "Ramah" (also in Jerusalem), and a number of synagogues around the country.

Elements Of The New Program

The new program proposes to increase and multiply all these endeavors manifold. A planned "Foundation for Masorati Judaism in Israel," with an annual budget of \$1.5 million will:

- * Train Israeli rabbis and teachers for service in Israel, though the indigenous Conservative movement will evolve its own spiritual leadership.

- * Develop methods and materials and provide personnel for the teaching of Jewish tradition in schools in Israel. This approach, it is hoped, will in time provide a pluralist alternative to the present rigid religious/secular school structure.

- * Increase and strengthen the present network of Masorati congregations, adult education centers, summer camps for children, and family retreats, all over Israel.

- * Establish the movement's first kibbutz. A nucleus has been formed, Cohen said, and land has been earmarked in the Galilee.

- * Translate into Hebrew the classics of Conservative Jewish thought and extend publications programs in Israel.

Optimistic About The Plan

"I am sure," said Cohen, "that potentially 80 percent of Israelis are sympathetic to Conservative Judaism." So many Israelis, he adds, would like religious content in their lives but are put off by Orthodox-style synagogues that "represent to them the ghetto, dogma, and compulsion -- especially in the education of children."

"If we succeed," he continued, "we shall increase Shabbat observance by 100 percent in this country, increase kashrut, increase all aspects of religious life. I'm not saying everyone will observe everything in our congregations. But the overall effect will be to increase religion."

Cohen stressed the aspect of developing private religious institutions on the American pattern, instead of the government-funded system that prevails in Israel. He said the lay leadership of the Conservative movement in the United States was enthusiastically behind him and his staff in Is-

rael regarding the Foundation plan. The JTS hahacellor met in Jerusalem with spiritual and lay leaders of Israel's various Sephardic communities. He is convinced, he said, that there is tremendous potential for Conservative Judaism among the Sephardim, where the generation gap between observant parents and non-observant children is often very pronounced.

On "ideological" matters, Cohen had a lengthy interview with Premier Menachem Begin, where the "Who is a Jew" issue was a central subject.

Cohen said he found the Premier himself to be fully in sympathy with the Agudat-National Religious Party positions on such matters of Jewish identity as "Who is a Jew," marriage and divorce. Thus, in a hypothetical situation in which Begin did not need the religious parties for his coalition majority, he would still, in Cohen's view, take Orthodox positions on these controversial issues.

"There is little doubt in my mind that he (Begin) doesn't speak merely out of political utility on these issues," Cohen said. "He speaks with unequivocal conviction."

FORT WAYNE'S JEWISH COMMUNITY ESCAPED MAJOR DAMAGE FROM FLOODING

FORT WAYNE, Ind., March 23 (JTA) -- A Fort Wayne Jewish Federation executive reported today that the city's Jewish community of 1,350 largely escaped major damage from the flooding last week that caused an estimated \$20 million in damage here.

Eli Skora, Federation executive director, said the 9,000 Fort Wayne residents who were evacuated at the peak of the flood last week and who were given an "all-clear" signal by Mayor Winfield Moses, Jr. to return to their homes, included no more than five Jewish families.

Skora said there was some flooding of Jewish homes and businesses but that it was largely confined to water pouring into basements. He told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that like the rest of Fort Wayne residents and businessmen, "we are now in the clean-up stage."

He said the Federation is the Jewish representative on a non-profit agency formed by the city government last weekend to accept contributions for flood victims and to coordinate distribution of relief supplies and food. Skora said the city has hired a disaster relief consultant and that the committee will function out of the consultant's office.

Skora also reported that the Federation board plans to meet Thursday to discuss what the Federations should do to help the clean-up program. He said the board plans to consider financial help, food and clothing needs and organization of volunteer help.

NEO-NAZI LEADER GIVEN SUSPENDED SENTENCE AND FINED \$1,000

PARIS, March 23 (JTA) -- French neo-Nazi leader Marc Fredriksen was yesterday given a six-month suspended prison sentence and a 6,000 Franc (\$1,000) fine for hate mongering and racial libel. Fredriksen, 56, a self-styled French "fuhrer" and leader of the now outlawed neo-Nazi organization, Federation of European Nationalist Action (FANE), was also ordered to pay 4,000 Francs (\$850) fine to four Jewish organizations. Fredriksen was already given a similar sentence in March 1981 for articles published in a monthly magazine, "Our Europe," published by FANE. Two other former neo-Nazi activists were given lesser sentences and ordered to pay damages to Jewish and civil rights organizations.