

ISRAEL HINTS IT WILL NOT CHALLENGE U.S. OVER PROPOSED SAUDI ARMS DEAL By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 10 (JTA) — Israel will avoid an open confrontation with the Reagan Administration over its plans to sell \$300 million in advanced weaponry to Saudi Arabia, political observers here believe. The government will continue, however, to maintain its long-standing objection in principle to the sale of U.S. arms to avowed enemies of Israel.

That policy appeared implicit in a statement just issued by the Prime Minister's Office which asserted that "reports according to which Israel has intimated to the U.S. that it will not oppose the arms deal with Saudi Arabia have no basis. Israel adheres to its opposition to arms sales to countries that are in a state of war with it — a stand well known to the U.S. Administration."

According to observers, this means Israel will not mobilize its supporters in Congress and the U.S. Jewish community for a knock-down, drag-out fight such as it waged — and lost — in 1981 against the sale of AWACS reconnaissance planes to Saudi Arabia. Israel had more success late last year when Reagan was forced to shelve proposed arms sales to Jordan, which ran into overwhelming bi-partisan opposition in both houses of Congress.

There were strong reservations among the legislators over the arms deal with Jordan, apart from Israel's opposition to it. The government doubtless hopes the same reservations will manifest themselves when the Saudi arms sale comes up.

Reagan did not mention the Saudi arms deal when he met with American Jewish leaders at the White House on March 5. But Assistant Secretary of State Richard Murphy, who spoke to the group afterwards, said the Administration was "committed" to selling the Saudis arms.

NEW ROBOT TO AID BOMB DISPOSAL UNIT By David Landau and Hugh Orgel

JERUSALEM, March 10 (JTA) — Israel has developed a lightweight, easily portable robot that can lift and examine suspicious-looking objects and safely detonate bombs at long range. Called Bambi, it was unveiled by the police bomb disposal unit Sunday. It is the first such device made in Israel and has promising export possibilities.

The Tel-Aviv-based Sivan Century 21 Co. which manufactures the Bambi hopes to sell it abroad for \$20,000 each, half the price Israel pays for the much heavier, more cumbersome bomb-disposal robots it now imports from Britain and Ireland.

According to Yehuda Shalom, an engineer who helped design Bambi, it will make the larger imported machines obsolete. Shlomo Aharonishky, chief of the bomb disposal unit, described the 70-kilo remote-controlled robot as "unique" to Israel's needs. It can be transported in a pick-up truck or station wagon. In contrast to the Irish-made Golem robot which requires a special vehicle with a ramp, Bambi can be lifted easily by two men.

It can climb a flight of stairs, cross crevasses 20 centimeters deep and is controlled by radio signals, obviating the need for cables that are part of the imported models. It greatly reduces the dangers and stress faced by police sappers, Aharonishky said.

Bomb disposal police can guide it by closed circuit television from the safety of their vans. The robot carries an automatic rifle sighted by its own built-in television system, which explodes bombs at a safe distance. Aharonishky hopes to supply every bomb disposal unit in the country with a model. "It all depends on our budget," he said.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES ISRAELI-GREEK RELATIONS ARE ON HOLD By Judith Kohn

WASHINGTON, March 10 (JTA) — When Spain established diplomatic relations with Israel in January there was eager speculation that a similarly long-awaited move from Athens would follow. The expectations were heightened by a four-day meeting in Greece between Foreign Minister Karlos Papoulas and David Kimche, Director-General of Israel's Foreign Ministry.

Then, like a bucket of cold water dispassionately overturned on a barely rekindled flame, came the news from Belgrade, where the visiting Papoulas gave an interview to Greek journalists: Athens will stick by its "political principles," he told the journalists. Formal diplomatic relations are, for now at least, out of the question.

The unequivocal negative stance of Papoulas left disappointment and puzzlement in its wake, especially since relations had appeared to be warming up between the two countries. Greece has all the components of an Embassy in Tel Aviv. The only real difference is that they fail to add up to an Embassy, calling itself instead a "diplomatic representation."

Turkey, on the other hand, has an Embassy, but recently moved more closely into line with other Moslem states by lowering its diplomatic representation to the level of Second Secretary, and thus stripping the formal representation of its substance.

Concern about economic sanctions from Arab states and possible terrorist attacks against Spaniards at home and abroad had long delayed Madrid's decision to establish relations with Israel.

A Move That Failed To Materialize

But once the move was taken by Spain, a recently-admitted member of the European Economic Community (EEC), which had made recognition of Israel one of the conditions for Spanish membership, the simple step from de facto to de jure recognition of Israel by Greece — another EEC member — would have hardly appeared a dramatic break with past policy, according to advocates of Greek recognition of Israel.

"It's ridiculous," said Joseph Lovinger, veteran leader of Greek's tiny Jewish community, of his country's failure to come through after Spain made the move.

Lovinger, who was recently here on one of his frequent visits to the United States, said that before the Papoulas statement he had predicted to a U.S. Senator here that formal recognition would come about under the leadership of Prime Minister Andreas Papandreu.

But a relatively new and otherwise unrelated concern of Athens has worked its way into the issue, according to Lovinger, by adding to his country's sense of vulnerability to possible Arab sanctions.

The issue is the Greek-Turkish conflict over the island of Cyprus. The conflict provided a new chip for Arab states seeking to dissuade Greek recognition of Israel, according to Lovinger, when the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus was established in 1983.

The only country to recognize the new secessionist state was Turkey, and the U.S. has been among those applying diplomatic pressure to dissuade other Moslem states from following suit.

Chief Source Of Athens' Stance

But Lovinger said that Greek officials had told him of concern that if Athens were to establish full diplomatic relations with Israel, Arab countries would retaliate by recognizing the Turkish republic in Cyprus. This, Lovinger told the JTA, was a chief source of Athens' refusal to change its policy.

Lovinger suggested that his government's policy on Israel might change if Papandreou moves closer to the center of the political spectrum in Greece, as he predicts he will over the next couple of years. Fear of its isolation in a region that is becoming increasingly Islamic in character, Lovinger said, will naturally push Greece and Israel closer together.

In the meantime, Greece has extended an official invitation to Israel's Tourism Minister, Avraham Sharir, to visit Greece, Kimche announced during his visit there. Sharir would be the first Israeli Minister to be hosted by Greece in more than 20 years.

But formal recognition by Greece remains contingent on its longstanding conditions that appear to have little chance of being met any time soon: the total withdrawal of Israeli troops from territory occupied in 1967, and the commencement of negotiations between all parties concerned to find a just and permanent solution to the Middle East problem, including the Palestinian issue.

Situation Of Greece's Jews

On his 18th year as leader of the Greek Jewish community, Lovinger said that irrespective of disappointment on the recognition issue, Jews in Greece — who now number some 6,000, over half of them residing in Athens — had few grievances as Jews.

The appearance of a swastika "here and there," or an occasional rabid article from fringe group newspapers, are a fact of life, but no more, no less, than in other countries where Jews reside, he noted.

"Where is there not anti-Semitism?" asked Lovinger, a native of Hungary who made his way to Greece after fleeing a feared Nazi takeover in 1933. The now-retired pharmacist said he was eventually taken by the Nazis in 1944, but escaped after 20 hours, fleeing on a journey that took him to Aleppo, Beirut and Israel, where he stayed for 15 months.

Lovinger, who makes frequent trips to Israel as well as to the U.S., where his son and his family reside, said that the commitment of the Greek Jewish community to Israel and Zionism did not make the country's Jews especially vulnerable to charges of "dual loyalty."

"We are married with Greece. But our mother is Israel. And you must not forget your mother," Lovinger said.

O'CONNOR URGES SHCHARANSKY TO VISIT NEW YORK TO MARCH IN THE ANNUAL SOLIDARITY DAY FOR SOVIET JEWRY

By Gerald Regan

NEW YORK, March 10 (JTA) — John Cardinal O'Connor, spiritual leader for some 1.8 million New York Catholics, urged Anatoly Shcharansky, who was released last month from his imprisonment in the Soviet Union and was reunited with his wife Avital in Israel, to come to New York to march in the annual Solidarity Day for Soviet Jewry in May.

"Just one person becomes a tremendous symbol and reminds people throughout the world" of the continuing captivity of many other Jews in the Soviet Union, O'Connor said Sunday at a symposium at Pace University sponsored by American Professors for Peace in the Middle East. The Cardinal is an outspoken critic of the Soviet Union's treatment of its Jewish citizens.

O'Connor became the second major New York figure to invite Shcharansky to this city. Following his release last month, Mayor Edward Koch also extended an invitation to Shcharansky to visit New York. The former Soviet Prisoner of Conscience thanked Koch, but a date for his visit has not yet been set.

Gloomy Prediction About Lebanon

Turning his attention to the Middle East, O'Connor called upon President Reagan to issue a strong statement of concern about what the Cardinal described as Lebanon's slide toward disintegration. "It is conceivable that Lebanon is about to disappear as a nation," he told the audience.

The Cardinal, one of the most prominent of America's religious leaders since he became head of the Archdiocese in 1984, said he plans to travel to Lebanon in three weeks. Six earlier proposed trips to Lebanon had to be scrapped after events in the strife-torn country made the trip inadvisable, he said.

Issue Of 'Moral Relativism'

One of the key points he made in his one-hour talk, on the symposium's theme of "Just and Unjust Wars," was that a "moral relativism" had emerged, which wrongfully depicts the use of violence to accomplish social and political change as justifiable.

Elaborating on this theme, he pointed to the Nazi barbarism in exterminating millions of Jews in the Holocaust and others during its reign. "You could only do this," O'Connor said, if you felt that another human being is "only relatively human." He added that if "all values are relative, then human life is relative."

O'Connor called the Israeli raid in 1981 on an Iraqi nuclear facility justified. He said he would not consider the destruction of the "potentially harmful" facility an offensive act.

PERES ON FOUR-DAY VISIT TO THE U.S. BEGINNING MARCH 31 By Yitzhak Rabi

NEW YORK, March 10 (JTA) — Premier Shimon Peres of Israel will arrive in New York on March 31 to begin a four-day visit to the United States. His first public appearance will be on the night of his arrival at a United Jewish Appeal dinner here.

He will fly to Washington the next morning, April 1, to meet with top Administration officials, but will not meet with President Reagan, who reportedly will

be vacationing in California at that time. Israeli officials here described Peres' visit as devoted more to economic issues than to political ones. After his meetings in Washington, Peres will be back in New York the next day, April 2. He will meet that day with the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and will be the guest speaker at the 50th anniversary dinner of the World Jewish Congress at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel.

This will be Peres' third visit to the United States in his capacity as Premier. The two previous visits took place in October 1984 and October 1985. The Premier will return to Israel on April 3.

BACKGROUND REPORT ASSASSINATION OF NABLUS MAYOR PROVES TO BE A WINDFALL FOR THE PLO By Gil Sedan

NABLUS, March 10 (JTA) — The assassination of Nablus Mayor Zafer Al-Masri on March 2 has proved a political windfall for the Palestine Liberation Organization, which has embraced the moderate Palestinian in death as a martyr to their cause.

Al-Masri, who had close political and family ties to the Hashemite regime in Jordan, was appointed to office by the Israeli authorities two months ago. According to the usual PLO logic his acceptance of the post should have branded him a collaborator with the enemy. But the PLO now claims him as one of their own.

By doing so, they are in tune with the people of Nablus, the largest Arab town in the West Bank, among whom Al-Masri was immensely popular. One of the wealthiest men in the territory, he spent money out of pocket to help the needy. And, partly because of his wealth, he was not regarded as a run-of-the-mill political aspirant out to improve his personal fortunes.

The PLO also benefits by his death insofar as it is a setback for Israel's policy of restoring local governance in the territories to Arab hands. This policy has the practical advantage of relieving Israel of the burdens of administering municipal affairs in Arab townships and villages and the political benefit of encouraging moderates.

Could Have Been An Alternative To The PLO

"Al-Masri was ahead of his time," one Israeli official said, adding that the late Mayor could have proven there is an alternative to the PLO. But his murder sent a chill of fear through the politically active Arab community. Bassel Can'an, once considered for Mayor of Nablus, thanks heaven he didn't take the job. He blames the Israel government and media for Al-Masri's death.

Hafez Tukan, Al-Masri's deputy, was elected Mayor of Nablus by the Town Council Monday at its first session since the assassination. Israeli officials seemed heartened. They saw the prompt replacement of the slain mayor by a former aide as a sign that Al-Masri's moderate positions are strongly entrenched in Nablus.

But Tukan, also a member of a prominent family, is not considered as fit for the job as his predecessor. He shies away from reporters and appears nervous. According to some reports, shortly after Al-Masri was gunned down outside the town hall, Tukan fled to his home and locked himself inside until the funeral the following day.

A week after the assassination, Nablus appears back to normal. Gates closed for the six days of mourn-

ing re-opened. On a sidewalk in the center of town the municipality erected a small monument to Al-Masri — his picture decked in a wreath of flowers. But few passers-by stop to look at it. The impression of Israeli observers is that the Palestinian community adjusts very quickly to the loss of one of its most popular leaders.

RABBIS PLEDGE 390 TOUR GROUPS TO ISRAEL IN 1986

JERUSALEM, March 10 (JTA) — More than 200 Conservative, Reform and Orthodox Rabbis from 52 Jewish communities in the United States and Canada, who returned home from a special rabbinic conference in Israel on expansion of tourism, have pledged to organize a total of 390 tour groups this year "as part of our identification with Israel and our heritage."

During the three-day conference, the rabbis met with Prime Minister Shimon Peres, President Chaim Herzog, Finance Minister Yitzhak Modai, Tourism Minister Avraham Sharir and other leading members of the Israel government, as well as representatives of Israel's tourism, travel and hotel industries.

The conference was organized by the Israel Bond Organization at the invitation of the Israel Ministry of Tourism and received the cooperation of the Synagogue Council of America and El Al Israel Airlines.

In his address at the closing conference dinner, Peres stressed that "nothing equals the effect of actually visiting Israel in strengthening Jewish identification," a theme which was also echoed by Sharir.

Calling the rabbis "the discerning eyes of your communities," Herzog said: "It is a great experience to personally feel the pulsing life beyond the headlines in Israel. To see, savor, understand and identify with Israel is surely one of the chief positive experiences of the modern Jew."

BLACK HEBREWS FROM THE U.S. REFUSED ENTRY INTO ISRAEL

TEL AVIV, March 10 (JTA) — A group of 26 Black Hebrews who had sought to enter Israel as tourists last Friday were returned to the United States on Sunday. The Interior Ministry issued the expulsion order on the grounds that they were not tourists but intended to join the Black Hebrew community in Dimona and stay in the country illegally.

The Black Hebrews claim that they are the real Jews while other Jews are imposters. The government has restricted permission for members of the Chicago-based sect from entering the country. But since the arrival here some years ago of the first group, their numbers in Israel have increased to several hundred through illegal entry.

TEL AVIV (JTA) — "Oh Calcutta," the smash hit American musical banned in Israel because of its nudity and frank sexual content, will open in Tel Aviv on March 26 with the Broadway cast, despite vociferous protests from the religious community and other sectors of the public who find it offensive. The Film and Stage Censorship Board reversed its earlier ban after New York producer Norman Kean agreed to a series of changes and modifications. There will be six cuts in the version to be staged in Israel. The Censorship Board insisted that there be no body contact between dancers at the end of the nude ballet scene. Kean also agreed to dim the lights just before the scene ends. Persons under 18 will not be admitted to the performance.

PROJECT RENEWAL IN ISRAEL PRAISED BY FOREIGN EXPERTS By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 10 (JTA) -- Project Renewal, in which Jewish communities join with Israel to develop distressed neighborhoods, has produced "local patriotism," according to Minister of Labor and Welfare Moshe Katzav. The Minister was speaking at the International Conference on Urban Revitalization which has just ended in Jerusalem.

A delegate from the World Bank volunteered his organization's services to help share Israel's experience in urban rehabilitation with countries around the world.

Some 150 urban experts from 30 countries joined their Israeli colleagues for four days of discussions to compare data on Israel's Project Renewal and similar projects elsewhere.

Prof. Daniel Elazar, president of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs which organized the conference, said that the Israeli experts were "greatly encouraged" by the praise they received from the foreign participants.

The project, started in 1977 by then-Premier Menachem Begin, involves diaspora communities donating funds and know-how to improve education, social services and living conditions in run-down areas. The Israeli government matches the diaspora funds dollar for dollar.

The project has affected more than half a million people in 84 neighborhoods, according to Yosef Korazim of the Jewish Agency's planning department for Project Renewal.

Project Is At A Critical Point

Although Dr. Arza Chuchman of Haifa's Technion noted that the project has lasted much longer than anti-poverty efforts in other countries, where similar programs ended because they failed to produce immediate results, the project is now at a critical point.

Korazim noted that fundraising has decreased due to other concerns such as Ethiopian immigration and the war in Lebanon. Israel's economic situation has also called for a cut-back in government welfare spending. Yet much of the work started is still uncompleted.

Dr. Naomi Carmon of the department of architecture and planning at the Technion, reporting on a comprehensive study of Project Renewal, said that the project's main aims of improving social and living conditions have been significantly advanced.

The greatest success is in educational programs for children and adults, with many women deciding to go out to work after participating in the Project's programs. Very little, however, has been accomplished in the actual area of employment, it was noted.

U.S. BLACK COLLEGE OFFICIALS IN ISRAEL TO SET UP ACADEMIC EXCHANGE PROGRAMS WITH HEBREW U.

NEW YORK, March 10 (JTA) -- Five leading Black university officials from the United States are in Israel this week in a pilot project aimed at creating an academic bond between their institutions in the American south and Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

"Our goal is to inaugurate a series of academic exchanges between scholars in Israel and Black college leaders in the United States," said Jacques Torczyner, chairman of the interreligious and community relations department of the World Zionist Organization, which is co-sponsoring the project with the World Jewish Congress, Hebrew University and Israel Colloquium, an interfaith group. Torczyner added:

"We hope to forge these academic links by creating opportunities for Black scholars to conduct research in Israel and by affording Israeli scholars the opportunity to meet and know the American Black community and Black scholars in the U.S. In so doing, we hope to promote better understanding between the people of Israel and the Black community in the United States."

In addition to meeting deans, scholars and other academic leaders in Israel, the American educators will be received by Yitzhak Navon, Israel's Minister of Education; U.S. Ambassador Thomas Pickering; and Simcha Dinitz, a Knesset member and vice president of Hebrew University.

The Black Academicians In Israel

The Black academicians now visiting Israel are:

Dr. Barbara Carter, vice president for academic affairs, Spelman College, Atlanta; Dr. Ann Covington, dean of academic affairs, Tougaloo College, Tougaloo, Miss.; Dr. Mary Day, dean, school of social work, Howard University, Washington, D.C.; Dr. William P. Hytche, chancellor, University of Maryland-Eastern Shore, Princess Anne, Md.; and Dr. Timothy Langston, director of sponsored research, Florida A & M University, Tallahassee, Fla.

The group, which left New York Saturday night, will be meeting with Israeli scholars in American studies, professors of comparative religion, and scholars from the Middle East and Black Africa who are associated with Hebrew University's Truman Institute for Peace.

Hopes Program Will Open A Two-Way Road

The itinerary also includes the Hebrew University school of agriculture, the Weizmann Institute in Rehovot, the Afro-Asian Institute in Tel Aviv and other academic institutions. The academic exchange program is directed by Dr. Kitty Cohen, a professor and researcher now working in the Washington area, who said:

"We believe this program will open a two-way road: for Black scholars who are not familiar with the political, ethnic, religious and academic diversity of Israel, and for Israelis who are unaware of the goals, concerns and achievements of the Black community in America today."

Cohen concluded: "Only when we develop close social, academic and professional relationships can there flower the understanding and mutual respect that will overcome prejudice and ignorance. This is the goal of the pilot project now under way."

TEL AVIV (JTA) -- Uri Avneri, magazine editor and former Knesset member of the leftist Progressive List for Peace, said on his return from a visit to Amman last Thursday that he was not optimistic over Mideast peace prospects in light of what he heard in the Jordanian capital. Avneri, who said he met with several Jordanian and Palestinian leaders, though not with King Hussein, maintained that time was running out for peace. He said another push from the U.S. was needed to regain the momentum.