

BEHIND THE HEADLINES THE SOVIET - ISRAEL TALKS

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Aug. 5 (JTA) -- The Soviet initiative to hold consular talks with Israel later this month has already generated intense speculation here in Israel and around the world.

Many pundits purport to see in the Kremlin's move a sign that the Soviets believe there may be diplomatic movement in this region soon. Moscow, according to this theory, does not want to be left out of the action.

The Soviets have effectively been excluded from Mideast peacemaking ever since the step-by-step diplomacy of then U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger in 1973-75, which fashioned from the Yom Kippur War standoff, the separation of forces agreements with Egypt and Syria and the interim agreement with Egypt.

The subsequent peace treaty process under the Carter Administration was also brought to fruition with the deliberate exclusion of the Russians.

During and since that period, successive Israeli governments have developed a hostile attitude to the very notion of Soviet involvement, and thus to an international peace conference.

Indeed, it was only in the past year that the Israeli government under Premier Shimon Peres has somewhat revised that stance, and now official policy -- at least that enunciated by Peres and Labor -- favors international accompaniment for future peace diplomacy.

Israelis Are Cautious

While the pundits speculate about the motives behind the latest Kremlin move, senior Israeli officials are cautious in their prognostications, preferring to await the results of the talks, scheduled for Helsinki on August 18 and 19.

But Peres has made it clear that the Israeli side to the talks will raise the issue of Soviet Jewry. This can be justified even in the context of strictly consular talks since some of the Soviet Jewish refuseniks have asked for and been awarded Israeli citizenship and are thus -- at least from Israel's standpoint -- the legitimate subjects of the activities of a future Israeli consul in Moscow.

Do the Helsinki talks therefore presage an alleviation of emigration restrictions on Soviet Jews? Not necessarily, according to one well-placed observer, former Ambassador to the United Nations, Prof. Yehuda Blum.

Blum, an expert in international law, suggested Tuesday that the Soviets may be intending to establish ties with Israel in order, in part at least, to ward off international pressure on the issue of Soviet Jewry.

Once such ties are in place, Blum noted, the Kremlin would be able to tell Western statesmen to mind their own business: the issue can be dealt with directly between Moscow and Tel Aviv.

It is possibly for this reason that the most famous refusenik of all, Natan (Anatoly) Shcharansky, has seemed distinctly cool about the new Soviet diplomatic overture.

In statements in Jerusalem this week, Shcharansky urged the Israeli government to make any official relations conditional upon tangible improvements in the condition of Soviet Jews in general and refuseniks in particular.

Shcharansky spoke out toughly despite the good news, relayed from Moscow this week, that his mother and brother will be allowed to join him in Israel soon.

He said he believes that this family reunion has been achieved by incessant and public pressure from the West, and that such pressure must be kept up on behalf of the many others, too.

WALDHEIM'S ELECTION AS PRESIDENT VIOLATES AUSTRIA'S STATE TREATY

NEW YORK, Aug. 5 (JTA) -- Kurt Waldheim's election as President of Austria violates that country's state treaty -- its most important constitutional document -- which bars former members of Nazi organizations from membership in the armed forces, the World Jewish Congress has reported. Waldheim became commander-in-chief of the Austrian armed forces when he was sworn in as President last month.

In letters to Secretary of State George Shultz, Sen. Pete Wilson (R.-Calif.) and Rep. Stephen Solarz (D.-N.Y.) urged the State Department to intervene with Austria on the treaty violations.

The Austrian State Treaty of 1955 constituted undertakings by Austria to the United States, France, Britain and the Soviet Union in order to end its post-war Allied occupation and reemerge as an independent nation.

Several clauses deal with the dissolution of Nazi organizations in Austria. Article 12 specifically prohibits service in the Austrian armed forces by persons who had at any time belonged to the SA -- Hitler's brownshirted stormtroopers. Waldheim has denied having a Nazi past, but documents released in recent months show he had been a member of the SA.

The four nations have compelled Austria to comply with the provisions of the treaty in the past, according to the World Jewish Congress. In the 1960s, the Soviet Union successfully invoked the neutrality provisions of the 1955 treaty to prevent Austria from joining the European Economic Community.

Lawmakers Provide Documents

In their letters to Shultz, Solarz and Wilson provided documents containing Waldheim's photograph and signature, as evidence that the former UN Secretary General was a member of several Nazi organizations, including the SA.

Calling on the Administration to pressure Austria to comply with the provision by forcing Waldheim either to relinquish his office or formally denounce Nazi principles, Solarz wrote:

"If the terms of this treaty are plainly violated in this fashion, it will not only call into question the validity of one of the most important multilateral diplomatic agreements since the end of the Second World War, but it will also undermine the credibility of our own commitment to complete the process of denazification."

In New York, the World Jewish Congress again called on Attorney General Edwin Meese "to enforce the law and place Waldheim on the 'watch list' of aliens excludable from the United States."

In April, the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations (OSI) concluded that under American law, Waldheim should be barred from the United States as a "Nazi persecutor." The agency has not yet decided whether to adopt the OSI recommendation.

But Department spokesman John Russell told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency Tuesday that no decision was expected soon. He said that Justice Department officials were waiting for additional "information" from Waldheim's attorneys in Washington, and that the material was not expected to be submitted before the end of the month.

Thomas Caraccio, one of Waldheim's attorneys, declined any comment on the nature of the information he would submit or on any other aspects of the case.

GROUP OF RABBIS, LED BY GOREN, RENEW CAMPAIGN TO ALLOW JEWS TO PRAY ON THE TEMPLE MOUNT By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 5 (JTA) -- A group of rabbis led by former Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren launched Tuesday a renewed campaign to allow Jews to pray and to erect a synagogue on the Temple Mount.

Jewish prayer on the site here of the two destroyed Jewish Temples has been banned following a 1967 government decision to continue the status quo on the Mount, run by the Supreme Moslem Council. Also in effect is a ruling by the Chief Rabbinical Council not to allow prayer there for fear that Jews will enter the Holy of Holies, the chamber which was entered only by the high priests.

But Goren and a number of other prominent rabbis called for a gathering 10 days before the fast of Tisha B'Av to demonstrate that by Jewish law, Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount is not only permitted, but desired.

The gathering was held at the newly built Ibra Raba Yeshiva, overlooking the Western Wall. The Yeshiva is directed by Goren, who explained there was no need for Jews to be concerned over prayers on the Temple Mount.

Goren argued that most of the dissenting rabbis have not studied the matter thoroughly. He said that following thorough research, he had no doubt that the Mount contains a large plot on which the Temple was not erected, which could be accessible to Jews. The Temple was known to span 7,680 square yards, and the size of the Mount was twice that. Therefore, he noted, the entire southern section, presently the site of the Al-Aksa Mosque, could be open to Jews.

The meeting ended with a halachic (Jewish legal) ruling that Jews were permitted to go on the Temple Mount. It called on the government to lift the ban, erect synagogues there and halt what it called illegal building by the Moslem authorities on the Mount. The gathering established a new body calling itself the Supreme Rabbinical Council on the Temple Mount.

Among those attending the meeting were the Chief Sephardic Rabbi of Jerusalem, the Chief Rabbi of Givatayim, a member of the Chief Rabbinical Court and the head of the Kiryat Arba Yeshiva.

THREE WEST BANK RESIDENTS ARE PLACED UNDER ADMINISTRATIVE ARREST By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 5 (JTA) -- Israeli security forces Monday imposed administrative arrests for six months on three West Bank residents suspected of conspiracy to organize subversive or terrorist activities.

The three were detained by power of emergency regulations which had been enacted at the time of the British Mandate. They are: Hamis Tawfik Abu-Kishek, 30, of the Fara refugee camp, suspected of having been active in the Fatah terrorist organization and inciting the population against the authorities; and Mohammad Ali Faraj, 19, of the Dahaihe refugee camp, suspected of being a leading nationalist activist in the Bethlehem region. According to military sources, he organized and participated in terrorist activities and incited the population.

Ibrahim Ali Abu-Zahra, 37, of the Yatta village in the Hebron Mountains, was also arrested. He reportedly confessed to recruiting people into Fatah.

The imposition of administrative arrests -- that is, without any court procedure -- was instituted under Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin a year and a half ago, after an increase of terrorist activities in the territories.

SEMPO SUGIHARA DEAD AT 86

TOKYO, Aug. 5 (JTA) -- The passing of Sempo Sugihara, a Japanese diplomat who aided in the rescue of thousands of Jews facing annihilation by the Nazis in Lithuania during World War II, was reported here by the World Jewish Congress.

Sugihara, who was 86, was the Consul in the Lithuanian city of Kovno in 1940. Acting against Japanese government orders, he issued transit visas to nearly 6,000 Jews, the majority of whom were thereby able to escape the Nazis after their invasion the following year.

Sugihara was dismissed from the foreign service as Japan was allied with Nazi Germany during the war. He was cited by Israel's Yad Vashem for his humanitarian efforts, the first Japanese to be so honored.

Sugihara's memoirs are contained in two books, and a special television program about him was broadcast in 1984.

FLAP OVER REMARKS ON LABOR Doves

JERUSALEM, Aug. 5 (JTA) -- Labor Party Secretary General Uzi Baram has taken issue publicly with Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin over the Minister's tough remarks against party doves who have pressed for recognition of Palestinian self-determination.

Baram, himself a dove, said Sunday the argument within Labor over the Palestinian problem was legitimate and there was no need for name-calling.

During the weekend, Rabin, in a speech, said that those in the party who called for recognition of Palestinian self-determination were calling "for the strengthening of the PLO and of terrorism." He noted that Jordan for its part had closed Fatah-PLO facilities and had broken with the PLO. He urged his party comrades not to choose the PLO rather than Jordan.

The Minister was referring to a move last week by a dovish group within Labor, the Mashov Circle, to introduce a resolution to the party's Central Committee recognizing the Palestinians' right to self-determination.

SPECIAL INTERVIEW THE UNITED STATES AND ISRAEL By Yitzhak Rabi

NEW YORK, Aug. 5 (JTA) -- Morris Abram, the new chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, believes that American-Israeli relations today are "as good as they have ever been." He asserts that America supports Israel not only because the two nations share the same values but also because it is in America's "practical interests to support the safety and survival of Israel."

The 68-year-old Abram, a prominent New York lawyer and a former aide to four U.S. Presidents, succeeded Kenneth Bialkin, who completed his second one-year term in June.

A senior partner in the New York law firm of Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton and Garrison, Abram, who is also chairman of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, served in various posts under Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, Carter and Reagan. He resigned as vice chairman of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights upon his election to the chairmanship of the Presidents Conference.

Assertive, well-spoken and well-informed, Abram discussed in a special interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency major issues that concern the Presidents Conference, including Israeli-American relations, relations between Israel and the Presidents Conference, the extent of the Conference's influence in Washington and the prospects for peace in the Mideast.

Following are excerpts of the 45-minute interview:

Q: How do you view the present relationships between Israel and the United States?

A: The relationships are as good as they have ever been, primarily because this Administration sees its support of Israel in the context of the vital interests of the Western free world. It is in American practical interests to support the safety and survival of the State of Israel. That manifests in many ways: President Reagan's and Secretary of State George Shultz's view of the strategic tie-up between the two countries, the fight against terrorism as part of American foreign policy, and the free-zone trade agreement between Israel and the U.S. All these indicate that there is not only the old basis for the relationships -- the basis of shared values -- but also a new basis of mutual interests.

The Pollard Affair

Q: Did the Pollard affair influence in any way the relations between the two countries?

A: First of all, both Reagan and Shultz have acted consistently in such a way as to not let this one-time dereliction inflict any damage on the relationships. They treated it as an aberrational act.

I am sure the American citizens involved should be pursued and punished to the fullest extent of the law. I am positive that Reagan and Shultz wish to limit the affair and that the U.S. and Israel remain friends and allies which need each other.

Let's be clear: The U.S. is a super-power, with a large margin of safety. Israel is a small state which does not enjoy a large margin of safety. Therefore, it is beset by the problems created by its enemies and, as a result, its needs are greater. Nevertheless, American foreign policy recognizes that Israel's needs for security are congruous with American interests.

Q: To what extent does the Presidents Conference have influence on the Administration?

A: The Presidents Conference is a collection of elected heads of American Jewish organizations. It takes its direction from them and tries to express the will and the opinions of this community. The American Jewish community is a vital functioning of American democracy and it has a certain influence -- as it should have -- upon American policy-makers. It is not pretentious enough to say it's a shaper of policy, but it adds its influence to elements that shape policy. It does it openly, as others do in a free society.

Q: Can you give some examples?

A: The Presidents Conference had some influence, for instance, in the shaping of the ultimate arms-package to Saudi Arabia recently. But we were not the sole shapers of the policy. There were scores of Senators and Congressmen who joined, believing that certain weapons, such as the Stinger missiles, should not be sold to the Saudis out of the fear that they might end up in the hands of terrorists.

Q: Why didn't you strongly oppose the sale altogether?

A: You have to make a judgment as to when you most effectively can deal with an issue. It was believed that was the best course to follow, especially when the most dangerous part of the deal -- the Stinger missiles -- was withdrawn....

The Presidents Conference And Israel

Q: Does the Presidents Conference receive directions from the government of Israel, or does it express the Israeli point of view?

A: We are completely independent. Israel's ultimate decisions must be Israel's. Its actions and opinions are expressed by its representatives. We can't decide what the policy of Israel should be. The Presidents Conference expresses the consensus of the organized American Jewish community. I would listen, however, very carefully to the opinions and views of the elected officials of Israel.

Q: Do you see a situation where Israel and the Presidents Conference will have "a confrontation?"

A: Theoretically, I can conceive a difference of opinion between the Presidents Conference and the government of Israel. I hope it never happens on fundamental issues. But I don't anticipate any great divide or schism in the future.

Prospects For Mideast Peace

Q: What are the prospects for peace in the Mideast, in your view?

A: One always hopes for peace. But I am aware of the fact that there has been no complete peace in the area and that for 40 years there has been a situation of war or near war.

I think the peace with Egypt is a big plus. Also, King Hussein's apparent desire to come to the peace table is another plus. The fact is that Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia are friends of the U.S. on the one side, and Israel and the U.S. are also friends, while the mortal enemy of Israel, Iraq, is engaged in a long, deadly war with Iran. That leaves Syria alone as a danger to engage Israel in war. Viewing the situation as such, one might say that there are still chances for peace.

Q: Apart from U.S. Mideast policy and the situation in that area, what are the other major issues on the agenda of the Presidents Conference?

A: Well, we are very much concerned with the economic situation of Israel and the decline in tourism to Israel as a result of terrorism. Franklin Roosevelt once said: 'The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.' We have to remember that when we deal with the decline of tourism because of international terrorism.

We are also concerned with the situation of Jewish communities in distress around the world, especially the fate of Soviet Jews as well as the Jewish communities of Syria and Ethiopia.

THE ISSUE OF YERIDA

By David Friedman

COLLEGE PARK, MD., Aug. 5 (JTA) — The issue of yerida, Israelis leaving the Jewish State, has become of increasing concern to Israel with an estimated 10 percent of its population now living outside the country. The yerida problem has received wide attention recently with a discussion on ABC-TV's "Nightline" and a cover story in the New York Times Sunday Magazine.

With the vast majority of Israelis living abroad in the United States, "The issue of yerida is no longer only an issue for Israel," according to Micha Lev, author of the novel, "Yordim: Leaving the Promised Land for the Land of Promise" (Kensington, Md., Woodbine House, \$14.95). He stresses that it has become an American Jewish issue, too.

Lev and Asher Naim, Minister of Information at the Israel Embassy in Washington, D.C., discussed the issue Monday night at the 11th Annual Conference on Alternatives in Jewish Education at the University of Maryland here. Some 2,000 persons, representing every aspect of Jewish education, are attending the five-day conference sponsored by the Coalition for Alternatives in Jewish Education (CAJE).

Lev said that this was the first time that the issue had been on the public agenda of a national Jewish organization because the American Jewish community feels the yerida problem is too sensitive. But he said that historical experience would predict that most Israelis who live in the U.S. "are going to stay."

He noted that between 1880 and World War I, 30 percent of the immigrants to the U.S. returned to their former homes. Among Jewish immigrants the number was only 10 percent. Lev said while he would like to see most Israelis return to Israel, Israel is a land of immigrants and considering its problems, the 10-percent figure could be seen as a sign that "Israel is not failing, but succeeding as a viable modern state."

A Vital Concern

But Naim said Israel is not like other countries. He said Israel was founded not by people who wanted to improve their living standards, but who believed in an ideology for the "redemption" of the Jewish people. The people who leave hurt this ideology, he said.

Lev said he was not so much concerned with the Israelis who are here but with their children, many of whom were born in the United States. Lev, who spent five years in Israel before returning to the U.S., said most Israelis in the U.S. are like him, about 35 years old and with two children.

Lev said the children of yordim have the same conflicts that American Jews have. He said they can be a great resource to the American Jewish community. He urged the community to reach out to them and involve them in the community.

Naim, who stressed he was speaking for himself, said he was opposed to having Israelis become part of the American Jewish community. He said the Israel government had no policy on yerida. He said he believes there is no such thing as a yored, because every Israeli may be "physically here, but his mind and heart are in Israel."

Naim said Israelis do not come to the U.S. for economic reasons, that is only an "excuse." He said Israelis want to get out of their country for a while, and a year soon stretches to two and more. "Every Israeli says he wants to go home," Naim said. He said they eventually do return in 10 years, 15 or 20. "More often than not, it is the children who bring the parents home," Naim said.

Ronald Reynolds, school service administrator for the Bureau of Jewish Education in Los Angeles, said that the Jewish Federation Council of Greater Los Angeles decided four years ago to set up a commission on Israelis aimed at integrating Israelis into organized Jewish life. Los Angeles has the second highest concentration of Israelis in the U.S. after New York.

In addition to this, 15-40 percent of Israelis send their children to the 30 Jewish day schools in Los Angeles, Reynolds said. He said they should not be considered "yordim, but chaverim" (comrades).

Interestingly, Lev's book, the first to be written about yordim, might support Naim's argument. The book is extremely well written and the dialogue remarkably captures the way Israelis talk and think.

While occasionally a bit melodramatic, the novel accurately describes the life of some Israelis in the U.S. and their guilt about not being in Israel. It also shows how financial and other problems, as well as American life in general, keep many Israelis from returning.

A Serious Threat to Israel

As Lev pointed out Monday night, while the problem of yerida is a serious threat to Israel, the individual Israeli should not be judged. "Everyday life decisions are complex," he stressed.

Israelis in the audience stressed how emotional an issue it is. One said he left Israel because he could not be a Reform rabbi there. "I discovered my Jewish roots in America," he said.

A woman decried the criticism in Israel of those who leave. She said if there were less "pressure" by Israel, many more Israelis would return. Others suggested the contribution that Israelis have made to American Jewish life. One noted that many of the teachers in Jewish day schools and Hebrew teachers in universities are Israelis.

"We are not condemning anybody," Naim said. But, he stressed, Israel is not yet secure and its continued existence is not a certainty. It still needs people to defend it militarily, not just support it from the U.S. "Don't take Israel for granted," he warned. "If we lose this State after 2,000 years, we will not have another chance."

* * *

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Premier Shimon Peres' talks with King Hassan met with the approval and support of a large majority of Israelis, according to a poll published by Yediot Achronot.

* * *