

BEHIND THE HEADLINES ISRAEL AND THE SOVIET BLOC

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 10 (JTA) -- Israel will resume diplomatic ties with Poland and Hungary before such ties are formed with the Soviet Union, according to political sources here. The sources noted that ties with Poland -- at the lowest diplomatic level of "interest sections" in Warsaw and Tel Aviv -- are expected to be established this month followed by similar relations with Hungary.

Poland's resumption of diplomatic contacts with Israel was initiated by Warsaw, although this move apparently received the green light from Moscow, according to Israeli experts on Poland. That green light was given in the past week which, the experts noted, explains the delay in the implementation of the agreement in principle which was reached several months ago in talks between Israeli and Polish diplomats in Bonn.

The talks in Bonn followed those between Shamir and the Polish Foreign Minister at the United Nations General Assembly in New York last autumn. Officially, Holland will continue to represent the diplomatic interests of both countries.

As for relations between Hungary and Israel, the two countries have had relatively developed contacts for some time. Hungary, for example, has for the past three summers been a popular destination for Israeli tourists.

Breaking The Diplomatic Ice

The pending resumption of relations with Poland and Hungary is seen here as part of an overall effort by the Israeli Foreign Ministry to break the diplomatic ice in Soviet bloc nations, without directly tying it to the scheduled Israeli-Soviet consular talks in Helsinki August 18 and 19.

The assumption here is that the USSR announced the talks a week ago -- albeit in the context of discussing Soviet assets in Israel -- as a sign that the Russians believe there may be some diplomatic movement in the Mideast soon. Moscow, according to this theory, does not want to be left out of the action.

Another diplomatic ice-breaker between Soviet bloc countries and Israel was the visit here at the end of last week by an emissary of Rumanian President Nicolae Ceausescu, who met with Premier Shimon Peres and Deputy Premier Yitzhak Shamir and reportedly urged them to agree to an international peace conference to be attended by all the parties concerned, including the Soviet Union and the Palestine Liberation Organization. (See related story.)

The mass circulation Yediot Achronot reported Sunday that El Al was making preparations for direct Tel Aviv-Warsaw flights. Poland, like Hungary, is open to Israeli tourists.

According to reports over the weekend, Mordechai Palitzur will represent Israel in Warsaw. Twenty-five years ago, he served as Second Secretary of Israel's Embassy in Warsaw. Until recently he served as Israel's Ambassador to the Dominican Republic. The timing of Palitzur's departure to Warsaw, along with a number of staff members, depends on technical issues, particularly finding suitable housing.

Yoav Biran, Deputy Director General of the Foreign Ministry, visited Poland two weeks ago to deal with those technical issues. He initiated work on the building that housed the Israel Embassy before Poland broke diplomatic relations in 1967. Israel has continued paying rent for the past 19 years.

A Polish delegation is also in Israel, for the same purpose, to resituate its office in the same building which served as its Embassy before the break in diplomatic relations -- the building of the Polish bank on Allenby Street in Tel Aviv.

In spite of the optimism in Jerusalem over these developments, sources stressed over the weekend that at this stage the ranks of representation by both Israel and Poland will remain at the low-level "interest sections."

PERES AND SHAMIR AGREE THAT PLIGHT OF SOVIET JEWS MUST BE A TOP AGENDA ITEM AT ISRAELI-SOVIET TALKS

By Gil Sedan and Hugh Orgel

JERUSALEM, Aug. 10 (JTA) -- Premier Shimon Peres and Deputy Premier Yitzhak Shamir told the Cabinet Sunday that the Israeli delegates to the Helsinki talks with the Soviet Union would place at the top of the agenda the demand that Soviet Jews who wish to emigrate should be allowed to do so.

Preparations for the Helsinki talks have been preoccupying Israeli leaders since the announcement was made a week ago.

In a statement last week, Peres stated: "We're not getting overly excited. But this is another kind of step in the direction of the breakup of the reservations about contacts with Israel, in the direction of development, of stability, and I certainly appreciate this."

"We want cultural ties, economic ties, commercial ties. The Russians also want to participate in an international conference which will open if negotiations between us and the Arabs get under way."

"We do not oppose their (the Soviets') participation in the opening, on the condition that they establish full diplomatic relations with us, and with the hope that they will stop taking one-sided stands on the Middle East."

Opposes An International Conference On The Mideast

"An international conference that will try to determine the future of our people and of the region cannot bring peace," Shamir told Jewish students here last Friday, a day after the leaders of Egypt and Jordan issued a joint statement in Alexandria favoring an international conference.

Shamir stressed that he opposed an international conference whether or not it was attended by the USSR. "Israel cannot agree to any attempt to impose solutions from the outside on the parties to the conflict," he said. "The solutions must come from within the region, and by direct negotiations."

"However," Shamir added, "a superpower such as the Soviet Union can influence developments in the Mideast by acting in a responsible manner, by publicly supporting the peace process and by refraining from providing support to aggressive regimes and terrorist organizations."

"We will conduct our contacts with the Soviet representatives with an open mind in the hope that the

real improvement in relations will come about. A real improvement will come about only if the Soviet government will change its attitude toward the Jewish people in the Soviet Union and will change its negative attitude toward the State of Israel in the Mideast."

But Shamir appeared to have softened his line toward the Soviet Union in an Israel Radio interview Saturday. In his latest statement, he said the Helsinki talks were a hesitant, modest step toward improved relations between the two countries. At this point, Shamir said, the Soviets want to discuss "some important" issues, such as their property here, but we will of course raise the issue which is most important to us -- Soviet Jewry."

Shamir described the absence of diplomatic relations between Israel and the USSR as abnormal. He said that Israel, for its part, wants a resumption of relations because of the vital role the Soviet Union plays in the Mideast and because of the intolerable situation in which the two million Soviet Jews live. "Progress in these talks must therefore be shown simultaneously in both these aspects of the problem," Shamir said.

While the Cabinet was in session Sunday discussing the upcoming talks, a group of former aliyah activists, among them Natan (Anatoly) Shcharansky, demonstrated outside the Prime Minister's office. They demanded that Israel make the emigration of Soviet Jews a condition for any talks with the USSR. The demonstrators argued against the euphoria which has characterized many Israelis in the wake of the reports of the upcoming talks.

U.S. CHESS FEDERATION WARNS AGAINST MAKING ISRAEL A PAWN IN THE 1986 INTERNATIONAL CHESS OLYMPICS

SOMERSET, N.J., Aug. 10 (JTA) -- The United States Chess Federation will send a team to the 1986 International Chess Olympics in Dubai, United Arab Emirates -- from which Israel's team has been barred -- but will insist on an end to such exclusions and will walk out of the tournament if its demand is not met, it was disclosed Sunday.

The decision both to participate in the tournament and to raise the issue at the meetings of the Federation Internationale des Echecs (FIDE) that will take place during the tournament in November was adopted as a compromise after more than two hours of debate at the U.S. Federation's convention here, according to Glenn Petersen, a regional vice president of the American chess body.

Commenting on the U.S. Federation's decision, Morris Abram, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said: "While we would have preferred that the American team boycott the tournament because Israel has been barred, we recognize the goodwill effort of the U.S. Federation to deal with the matter, and to make clear that it will quit the games if its demand to prevent any future recurrence of the bar against Israel is not satisfied."

Abram had written an open letter to all delegates to the U.S. Chess Federation's convention here charging that Dubai's refusal to permit Israeli participation in the 1986 chess olympics "establishes a dangerous and destructive precedent for the International Chess Federation and for international sports generally." He added: "The absence of a U.S. team will send a clear message to the world that our country will not tolerate bigotry or prejudice but will consistently advocate equal opportunity for all."

A resolution calling on the U.S. Federation not to take part in the Dubai games was introduced at the organization's convention here this weekend with the strong support of Lev Alburt, a former Soviet Jewish refusenik who is the current U.S. chess champion. That resolution was withdrawn in favor of the compromise proposal, according to the U.S. Chess Federation spokesman.

The resolution that was passed, introduced by another chess master, Gary Sperlberg, made these main points:

* The U.S. Chess Federation will participate in the 1986 Olympics.

* At the FIDE meeting that will be held in Dubai during the tournament, the U.S. Federation will introduce a resolution that would overturn the present FIDE by-law that permits any state hosting an international tournament to bar any other country with which it is at war. As the capital of the United Arab Emirates, Dubai has been technically in a state of war with Israel since the establishment of the Jewish State in 1948. The resolution is worded so that any country which insists on barring any other because it claims to be at war will no longer be permitted to serve as host for the international chess olympics.

* If the American resolution is rejected, the U.S. team will quit the 1986 games, even if play has not been completed.

Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R.-N.Y.) had also written to the U.S. Chess Federation calling for a boycott of the games. "Our country should not give comfort to those who seek to inject their self-serving political purposes into the apolitical world of sports," D'Amato wrote.

Israel had expressed firm opposition to holding the games in Dubai. Gershon Gan, Consul for Information at the Israel Consulate in New York, wrote to Alburt, declaring: "The government of Israel has and will remain constant in its unequivocal opposition to the holding of sporting competitions at venues from which Israel is barred."

WAR GAMES HELD ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS

TEL AVIV, Aug. 10 (JTA) -- A large military exercise was held on the Golan Heights last week, with the participation of infantry, tanks, artillery and engineering units and the Israel Air Force. A significant amount of the exercise was devoted to simulated gas warfare, with infantry units donning gas masks as they carried out various assigned missions.

Training for possible future gas and chemical warfare has been a marked priority in some of the recent large-scale maneuvers carried out by the Israel Defense Force, an army spokesman noted.

Simulated medical treatment of a contaminated unit was an important part of the exercise. Soldiers and equipment which had theoretically been exposed to enemy gas were quickly and thoroughly attended to.

Emphasis was also placed on precise coordination between the various participating forces, and featured a display of artillery and Air Force strength, followed by infantry and armored corps advances.

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JERUSALEM, August 10 (JTA) -- A bomb that was hidden under a pile of rocks exploded Sunday in the West Bank settlement of Efrat, slightly injuring three Israeli soldiers. The soldiers were standing at a hitchhiking post near the Jewish settlement south of Bethlehem when the device went off.

TERRORIST BASES BOMBED

TEL AVIV, Aug. 10 (JTA) -- Israeli Air Force planes attacked terrorist bases on the outskirts of refugee camps near Sidon on Sunday afternoon, an Israel Defense Force spokesman announced. All the planes returned safely and the pilots reported direct hits on their targets. The bases served as sites from which to launch terrorist strikes, the IDF said. According to Beirut Radio reports, four Israeli helicopters took part in the seven-minute attack. Two IDF navy missile boats patrolled the Lebanon shore opposite the refugee camps as the attack took place.

SENATE DEFEATS MEASURE THAT WOULD HAVE ALLOWED JEWISH MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES TO WEAR YARMULKES

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Aug. 10 (JTA) -- The Senate narrowly defeated an amendment last Thursday night that would have allowed Jewish members of the military to wear yarmulkes if it did not interfere with the performance of their military duty. The vote was 51-49 to table the amendment to the 1987 Department of Defense Authorization Bill introduced by Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D.-N.J.)

Lautenberg told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that by voting to table his amendment, Senators were able to reject the amendment without actually voting against it. He said he would urge the Senate-House conference on the defense authorization bill to include the amendment which is contained in the House bill. He said if this fails he and others would offer new legislation later.

Lautenberg and Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R.-NY) introduced the amendment after the U.S. Supreme Court voted 5-4 last March that the military had the power to ban the wearing of all headgear indoors.

The case involved Simcha Goldman, an Orthodox Jew, who as an Air Force captain working as a psychologist in 1981 was reprimanded for wearing his yarmulke on duty.

Elements In The Measure

Lautenberg noted that his amendment specified that Jews and members of other religions could wear headgear required by their religion only if such "apparel is neat and conservative." In addition, either the Secretary of Defense or any of the Service secretaries could prohibit the headgear if it is determined that it would interfere with the performance of military duties.

"Simply because a person has joined the military, he or she should not be deprived of their basic constitutional rights, such as the free exercise of religion," Lautenberg said. He said Jews and others should be able to feel free to be "religious and good Americans" and not "have to apologize" for practicing their religion.

Three of the Senate's eight Jews voted against the amendment, including Sen. Rudy Boschwitz (R.-Minn.), who had been one of its original sponsors. The other two were Sens. Chic Hecht (R.-Nev.) and Edward Zorinsky (D.-Neb.).

Hecht spoke against the amendment on the Senate floor. "When one enters the Armed Forces of the United States, certain religious obligations are foregone -- dietary laws, morning prayers and the wearing of religious items," he said. He noted that he served in the army. "I was proud to wear the uniform, which did not differentiate me from any other soldier of any other faith, and that is the way I always want it to be," Hecht said.

ISRAELIS WELCOMED IN CHINA

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 10 (JTA) -- An Israeli delegation to an international conference on Esperanto recently held in Beijing was warmly greeted by the hosts, according to delegation head Omri Vandell, Israel's representative in the World Organization of Esperanto. Esperanto is an artificial international language.

Vandell said that although the Israelis received their entrance visas only two days before the congress began, they were welcomed warmly, and encountered no difficulties.

He said the Chinese were well aware of Israel and that the official daily newspaper regularly mentioned Jerusalem in its daily weather report of major cities. The paper also reported extensively on the visit of Premier Shimon Peres to Morocco.

At the official reception given by the 71st International Congress on Esperanto, the delegates met a Chinese student who spoke fluent Hebrew -- one of 20 Hebrew students at the Beijing University.

SUSPECT HELD IN SYNAGOGUE VANDALISM

JERUSALEM, Aug. 10 (JTA) -- Police here Friday detained one suspect in connection with vandalizing a synagogue in the city's Givat Shaul industrial zone. The suspect, a 19-year-old resident of the Arab village of Dura near Hebron, works as a guard in a nearby workshop.

Police believe the vandals were looking for money or valuables, and that the incident is connected to earlier ones.

A Torah scroll and hundreds of prayer books were destroyed late last Wednesday at the Chabad Synagogue. According to police, vandals entered the synagogue by smashing a window. They broke into the Holy Ark and slashed the Torah scroll. Hundreds of prayer books were ripped and thrown on the floor. The damage was discovered Thursday evening by American immigrants from the nearby community of Har Nof, who came to prepare the synagogue for Sabbath services.

Chabad Hasidim from all over the city came to the synagogue Thursday night to recite psalms. Many tore their clothes as a sign of mourning. Mayor Teddy Kollek visited the synagogue and promised to provide a new Torah in time for Saturday's service.

GOLDA MEIR SQUARE DEDICATED IN CHILE

SANTIAGO, Aug. 10 (JTA) -- In a formal ceremony in the city of Vina del Mar, a central plaza was dedicated as Golda Meir Square, the World Jewish Congress reported here.

According to the Latin American branch of the WJC, the mayor of the city, Eugenia Garrido, and Israel's Ambassador David Ephrati unveiled a plaque giving the name of Golda Meir to the square. The ceremony also included the participation of Jewish and Catholic clergy.

Rabbi Esteban Veghaziz spoke in Hebrew, stressing the importance of keeping alive the memory of Meir. Afterwards, Father Hernan Vargas spoke of the fraternity between the Israeli and Chilean peoples.

The commemorative plaque describes Meir as "a woman who forged a world of peace and friendship."

SPECIAL INTERVIEW BUSH IN ISRAEL By Judith Kohn

NEW YORK, Aug. 10 (JTA) -- This month's Middle East tour by Vice President George Bush -- campaign motives and lack of diplomatic initiatives aside -- was significant both as a symbol of the current warm relations between the U.S. and Israel and as an opportunity to cement a warm personal relationship that had already been forged with Israeli Premier Shimon Peres.

This was the conclusion of Jacob Stein, one of eight Jewish Republicans who were invited to accompany Bush on the Israel part of his three-leg tour.

"On the first day of his visit, the press didn't seem to know what to make of it -- whether it was a photo opportunity, a political exercise, a goodwill trip, or what; but that soon dissipated," said Stein, a New York realtor who was President Reagan's first liaison to the Jewish community.

Stein and the other Jews invited on the Vice President's plane are officials of the National Jewish Coalition -- a relatively new Republican organization formed out of what had been a Jewish campaign group for the Reagan-Bush White House ticket. Stein said the invitations to the group of eight, who were asked to join as independent advisers and who paid their own way, were "unprecedented."

The other seven members of the group were Gordon Zacks, national cochairperson of the Coalition and a close friend of Bush; Ivan Novick, a former president of the Zionist Organization of America; Paul Borman, of Detroit; Joseph Gildenhorn, of Washington, D.C.; Barbara Gold, of Chicago; Richard Goldman, of San Francisco, and Jay Kislak, of Miami.

Cites Three-Fold Significance

The visit, said Stein, in an interview following his return to New York, was significant in three respects. First, he said, "there was the clear statement to the Soviet Union about what is expected of it as a necessary condition of improved political relations." This was brought out, he maintained, in the considerable time and attention devoted in his itinerary to meetings with former refuseniks.

They included a session with human rights activist Anatoly (Natan) Shcharansky, a visit with a former refusenik couple in a Jerusalem absorption center, and a meeting in the office of Knesset Speaker Shlomo Hillel with members of Mothers of Freedom, a group of women with refusenik family members left behind in the Soviet Union.

"I think one of the messages that Vice President Bush was trying to send was that we remain deeply concerned about the issue of Soviet Jewry, and if you want to take a step in improving relations with our country, you should deal with that issue," Stein said.

He said that in a private meeting between Shcharansky and the group of eight, the recently-freed Prisoner of Conscience urged them to "support a massive demonstration of concerned Jews in Washington" during the still unscheduled summit between President Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

The Bush visit, said Stein, was also important for the Vice President's "restatement of the American position that it will not impose a peace, but will serve only as a friendly supporter" in seeking a settlement of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

Finally, there was an important message of concern from Bush to the Israeli government about the need for the Jewish State to "pay attention to keeping its economic house in order," said Stein, who has been active in Operation Independence, a project initiated by Detroit businessman Max Fisher to reduce Israel's dependence on U.S. aid by stimulating its economy through private investment.

Seen As A Public Relations Tour

In the eyes of many observers, however, the Bush visit was, more than anything else, a public relations tour conducted with an eye to the upcoming Presidential elections. Following Bush around the Jewish State was a camera crew paid for by a political action committee raising funds for the still unannounced Bush campaign.

One already widely publicized photo that caused a few mild squirms among some American Jews, captured the Vice President reverently kissing the Western Wall in Jerusalem.

"He was with (Minister of Religious Affairs) Yosef Burg, when Burg walked up to the Wall and kissed it," Stein said, appearing mildly embarrassed for Bush, though amused. "So he followed Burg and put his head to the Wall and kissed it, too."

'An Unfortunate Incident'

A more embarrassing incident was the cancellation of an invitation to Jerusalem Post correspondent Wolf Blitzer to join the press team accompanying Bush to Israel, Jordan and Egypt. Blitzer, who had a visa signed by the Jordanian Ambassador in Washington -- was bumped from the plane at the last minute, after it became clear that the Jordanians had decided that the American Jewish journalist would not be welcome in Amman.

"It was an unfortunate incident," said Stein. But he added, "It looked worse than it was. It was a snafu. Part of it must have been the fault of the Jordanians; part of it was probably the fault of Bush's staff and part of it, I think, was Wolf Blitzer."

Blitzer, who was invited to join the Vice President, then bumped, then re-invited and ultimately bumped again, had initially been offered the option by Amman of going as a journalist for American newspapers only, according to Stephen Hart, assistant press secretary to Bush. But those were not the complete criteria, he said, declining to specify what other conditions the Jordanians had imposed.

In any case, Blitzer responded to his first bump with a front-page story in The Jerusalem Post about his ordeal, in which he blasted the Bush staff for failing to see that Jordan's request that he not be identified publicly with the Post was not a hint to have him dropped from the press team, but a diplomatic nicety, apparently too subtle for some of Bush's aides."

In the end, however, the Jordanians told Blitzer directly he should stay away. "The final outcome was that he wasn't welcome, period," Hart said.

On balance, though, the Vice President's trip should be seen neither as a successful get-start in the campaign for the Jewish American vote nor a public relations fiasco, said Stein, who said he plans to support a Bush candidacy for the Republican Presidential nomination. Instead, he stressed, it should be viewed as another important step in the continuous deepening of American-Israeli relations.