

SHAMIR URGES EGYPT TO CONVINCE ARAB COUNTRIES TO NEGOTIATE WITH ISRAEL

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Feb. 18 (JTA) -- Israeli Premier Yitzhak Shamir urged Egypt Wednesday to convince its fellow Arab countries to enter into direct negotiations with Israel.

"Egypt, a partner to the Camp David Accords, could play a significant role by encouraging our other neighbors to follow her example and enter into face-to-face talks with us without preconditions," Shamir said after a meeting and working lunch with President Reagan at the White House.

While both Reagan and Shamir, in their statements in front of the White House's diplomatic entrance, stressed that peace can be achieved only through direct negotiations, the two leaders publicly stated their differences over an international conference.

"Our goal now is setting in motion a process acceptable by Israel and its neighbors which can lead to a comprehensive settlement," Reagan said. He said this requires "bilateral negotiations," adding that any "reasonable" method of bringing about such negotiations should be explored, "including an international conference."

Shamir, however, said the "only viable cornerstone to peace" is the method used by Israel and Egypt in achieving the Camp David Accords. "We renew the call to our neighbors to join us in direct negotiations for the obtaining of peace between us," he said.

Differences On An International Forum

The Israeli Premier was more direct Tuesday after his meeting at the State Department with Secretary of State George Shultz, when he called the idea of an international forum "a Soviet-inspired notion supported by radical Arab nations."

He said such a conference, demanded by King Hussein of Jordan, "will not bring peace to our area."

Shultz, admitting that the United States and Israel do not see "eye-to-eye" on this issue, said the U.S. believes that "all options" that could bring about direct negotiations should be explored, including an international conference.

"Our objective is not an international conference, our objective is direct negotiations," Shultz stressed.

Shamir differs on this issue with Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, who believes an international conference may be the only way to bring Jordan into talks with Israel.

A senior Administration official, briefing reporters Wednesday on Shamir's talks with Shultz and Reagan, said that the U.S. is not trying to "play one side" in the Israeli government against the other. He said the U.S. deals with the national unity government, headed by Shamir, as it did when Peres was Premier.

'Representative Palestinians' Must Be Included

Both Reagan and Shultz stressed that any negotiations must include "representative Palestinians." Shamir also agreed Tuesday that negotiations should include "representatives of Palestin-

ians living in the area." This apparently meant Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, rather than from outside.

Reagan and Shamir also said they discussed the situation of Soviet Jewry. "We took note of recent releases, but are waiting to see the gates truly opened for Jewish emigration," Reagan said.

Shamir said Israel was "grateful" for Reagan's efforts on behalf of "our brothers and sisters" in the USSR. He said the Soviet Union must continue to be pressed "to let all our people return to our ancient homeland, the land of Israel."

Iran Issue Discussed

Iran was discussed by Shamir with both Reagan and Shultz. Reagan said it was agreed that Iran should be encouraged to end terrorism and the use of force. He added that it was also agreed that it was important to "look to the future instead of dwelling on the past."

Shamir said Tuesday that while Iran was a leading supporter of terrorism, it was an important country in the Mideast and indicated that ways should be found to exert "influence" on it.

As for the U.S. sale of arms to Iran, Shultz said this was an American decision. The Administration official briefing reporters Wednesday said that Israel has agreed to cooperate with the various American investigations of the Iranian arms sales.

Other Issues Discussed

Both Reagan and Shamir pointed to the U.S. decision to give Israel the status of a "major non-NATO ally," which allows it to bid on Defense Department research and development contracts. Shamir called this a "new dimension to our relations."

Also discussed Tuesday and Wednesday was the Israeli economy and Israel's agreement to allow the U.S. to build a relay station for the Voice of America in Israel.

Not discussed, according to officials, was the case of Jonathan Pollard who was awaiting sentencing after pleading guilty to spying for Israel. When Shamir was asked about the Pollard case Tuesday, he called it "a very painful experience" for Israel and said spying on the U.S. was "not a policy of the Israeli government."

Shamir concluded his remarks to Reagan Wednesday by noting that this year was the 200th anniversary of the U.S. constitution and the 90th anniversary of the Zionist movement.

"Both events have enriched the quality of our lives," he said. "They are the roots of our present relationship, joint efforts, our dreams and our confidence in the future."

PERES AND MUBARAK TO HOLD TALKS

By Gil Sedan and Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 18 (JTA) -- Avraham Tamir, Administrative Director General of the Foreign Ministry, said Wednesday that planning for an international conference on Middle East peace will continue and will be a subject of Foreign Minister Shimon Peres' talk with Egyptian President Hosni

Mubarak when they meet in Cairo shortly. The date is not yet fixed.

His remarks, to reporters in Jerusalem, clashed with Premier Yitzhak Shamir's assertions in Washington this week that he is firmly opposed to an international conference and that the majority of Israelis supported his position.

Tamir, a close associate of Peres, said the Cairo meeting would continue the process begun when Peres, as Premier, met with Mubarak in Alexandria last September and agreed to preparatory moves for an international conference. According to Tamir, Peres' position was approved by the coalition government he headed at the time, a claim disputed by Likud.

Tamir explained that what will take place at this stage is a discussion of the basic framework of an international conference. "We are talking about talking, not about giving anything away," and no government approval is required, he said.

He said Peres was not looking for a showdown with Shamir, but observers here believe that Labor Party leaders are not going out of their way to avoid one. Shamir, for his part, has hinted that he is prepared to put the issue to a test in a general election.

The Egyptian Ambassador to Israel, Mohammad Basyouni, said here Tuesday that there is no doubt that the peace process and the international conference will top the agenda when Peres and Mubarak meet. Basyouni spoke at a press conference on the eve of the second anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Egypt and Israel.

ARAB CABBIE KILLED AFTER TRYING TO RUN DOWN TWO ISRAELI SOLDIERS

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 18 (JTA) -- An Arab taxi driver was killed Wednesday after he ran down two Israeli soldiers and was fired on by other soldiers near the Askar refugee camp outside Nablus. The injured soldiers were taken by helicopter to a hospital in Haifa.

According to eyewitnesses, the taxi deliberately swerved off the road to hit the soldiers who were on foot patrol. Other soldiers on patrol opened fire on the fleeing vehicle which crashed into the wall of a nearby school. The witnesses said the driver leaped from the taxi and hurled rocks at the approaching soldiers when he suddenly collapsed.

He was pronounced dead at a hospital but it was not certain whether he was hit by bullets or died of injuries sustained when the taxi struck the wall. An initial examination showed no bullet wounds in the driver's body. A post-mortem is expected to determine the cause of death. The taxi was riddled with bullets.

The incident was the latest in a week of violence in the West Bank. Palestinian youths continued to stone Israeli vehicles and burn tires in roadways throughout the territory Wednesday.

3 OLIM CONVERTED TO JUDAISM BY REFORM RABBIS ASKED TO POSTPONE APPEAL TO BE REGISTERED AS JEWS

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 18 (JTA) -- Three immigrants converted to Judaism by Reform rabbis

were asked by Attorney General Yosef Harish to postpone for six months their appeal to the Supreme Court to be registered as Jews, the media reported Wednesday.

The three are Julia Ann Biglaizer and Murilo Pinto Varela of Kibbutz Mishmar Hanegev, and Gail Mosacowitch of Kibbutz Gonen. Their attorney, Yosef Ben-Menashe, was approached by Harish who reportedly was acting at the behest of Premier Yitzhak Shamir.

The Supreme Court issued a show cause order on February 1 requiring the Interior Ministry to explain why the converts should not be registered. Harish, in seeking to postpone action, was criticized by senior legal figures who said he should have rejected Shamir's request outright instead of conveying it to the appellants.

Shamir temporarily holds the portfolio of Interior Minister which is being administered for him by Deputy Minister Ronnie Milo, a Likud MK. Interior Minister Yitzhak Peretz of the ultra-Orthodox Shas Party resigned last month rather than comply with a Supreme Court order to issue a Jewish identification card to Shoshana Miller, an American immigrant converted to Judaism by a Reform rabbi.

According to the media reports, the six-month delay sought by Shamir would give him time to persuade Peretz to revoke his resignation and return Shas to the unity coalition government. His request reportedly cited the deliberations of the recently appointed Interministerial Committee on Conversions which has been given six months to find an acceptable formula for registering immigrants converted by non-Orthodox rabbis.

KNESSET PANEL SAYS MEDIA WRONGLY REPORTED THAT A RABBI ISSUED A BAN ON WOMEN ATTENDING FUNERALS WITH MEN

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Feb. 18 (JTA) -- The Knesset Interior Committee found Thursday that Rabbi David Grossman, the Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi of Migdal Haemek, was misrepresented by the media when it reported that he had issued a ban on women attending funerals together with men.

Grossman, who appeared before the committee, was cleared unanimously and committee members expressed regret for the damage done his reputation. "If there is anyone capable of building bridges between the religious and secular communities it is Rabbi Grossman who acts to foster unity and mutual respect," the committee said in a statement.

Grossman, often referred to as the "disco rabbi," is known for his work with prisoners and disadvantaged youths. He explained to the committee that, "The matter of women and men attending funerals separately or in one group is entirely up to the family and is not covered by halacha." He added, "I gave no ruling and I made no comment on the issue."

The media reported that Grossman and Sephardic Chief Rabbi Avraham Menahem issued the ban because they associated the presence of women at funerals with the recent abnormally high death rate in the town. Grossman denied it at the outset. There has been no comment from Menahem.

FOCUS ON ISSUES
JEWISH LEADERS GRAPPLING WITH ISSUE OF ISRAEL'S TRADE WITH SOUTH AFRICA

By Margie Olster

NEW YORK, Feb. 18 (JTA) -- American Jewish leaders have begun to grapple with the uncomfortable issue of Israel's military trade with South Africa, a subject obscured by strict secrecy, distortion by Israel's enemies and by the minuscule amount of factual information actually available.

Few governments like to discuss their military exchanges with the racist regime of South Africa despite evidence that military exchanges with Western countries continue on some levels while tapering off in past months.

Israel is no different. With the government facing intense pressure from the U.S. Congress and from American Jews to cease military trade with South Africa, there is little said publicly on the exchanges.

At least part of the American Jewish leadership has taken an active role in the anti-apartheid movement in this country, on the picket lines and in divestment campaigns. Some even risked arrest for civil disobedience at South African installations throughout the country. But many Jewish leaders have chosen to remain silent -- or at least discreet -- about Israel's military trade with South Africa.

"The inconsistency is troubling American Jews," Allan Kagedan, an American Jewish Committee policy analyst said. "On the one hand, they are anti-apartheid morally. On the other hand, they support Israel who sells arms to South Africa. But no one is willing to publicly defend Israel arms sales to South Africa."

Expressions Of Concern

A sampling by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency of American Jewish leadership revealed a real reluctance to discuss openly -- and sometimes on the record -- what they know of Israel's military trade with South Africa. But the same leaders indicated that they have told the Israeli officials privately that they should not ignore the growing anti-apartheid sentiment in the American public and Congress and should not lag too far behind the pro-sanction mood of Western governments.

American Jewish leaders emphasized the primacy of Israel's security, survival and sovereignty to decide with whom and what it trades. On the other hand, the same leaders said they feel it is incumbent upon them to let Israel know that its South African policy is affecting them negatively in their efforts to deal with other domestic and foreign issues.

A pervasive argument by some Jewish leaders against the trade is that Israel's military relations with South Africa are increasingly straining Jewish-Black relations in this country and providing an excellent excuse for Black African countries not to resume relations with Israel.

Elan Steinberg, World Jewish Congress executive director, said although the military trade has been distorted, it has affected attitudes in the anti-apartheid community. "There is a perception that Jews and Israel are not in the forefront of anti-apartheid," he said.

The distortion of and disproportionate attention focussed on Israel's trade with South Africa was one of the great propaganda coups of Israel's enemies in the past decade. American Jewish officials are sensitive to the singling out of Israel

for criticism when other Western, Arab and Soviet-bloc countries provide far more valuable and critical support for the South African regime.

Unfair To Single Out Israel

On April 1, the State Department is scheduled to submit a report to the President containing an account of countries receiving U.S. foreign aid which are supplying military materiel to South Africa. Countries which continue the military exchanges could risk forfeiting their U.S. foreign aid, in Israel's case \$1.8 billion. One Israeli expert on South Africa, who asked not to be identified, said the Congressional legislation has turned Israel's military relations with South Africa from a moral issue to a realpolitik issue.

Malcolm Hoenlien, executive director of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, was among other officials who said they are concerned that this legislation has singled out Israel and one or two other countries and would effectively overlook the major trading partners of South Africa who are also U.S. allies.

Rabbi Marc Tanenbaum, AJCommittee director of international affairs, said "I hope the report to the President will give an overview which will talk about the UK, Soviet Union, Japan and others to keep it in perspective. Israel is not the primary culprit in sustaining South Africa." Kagedan said the legislation is unfair because it would not potentially hurt 20 other countries which sell much more to South Africa.

Kagedan, Tanenbaum and others said they believe a large volume of weapons is flowing from the West to South Africa despite the mostly "symbolic" Western arms embargo. "The same standard should apply to Israel as everyone else, no more, no less," Tanenbaum said.

Kagedan said, "There is a sense on the part of Israelis that Western nations are immensely hypocritical on sanctions."

Review Of Policy Within Israel

Within Israel, the policy on military trade with South Africa has been under review for about six months. Although a small group of intellectuals headed by Yossi Beilin (Labor), political director general of the Foreign Ministry, argue the trade is counterproductive foreign policy, the Israeli expert said the majority still advocates continuing the military trade.

The advocates of trade argue that it brings in much needed foreign capital and provides valuable research and development opportunities for Israel. Many also argue that severing relations with Pretoria could threaten the security of South Africa's 1,19,000 Jews.

There are also reports that South Africa has threatened to reveal the details of the cooperation if Israel severs relations. "There is tremendous resentment in Israel over what is seen as attempts to blackmail and manipulate Israel . . . South Africa revels in pointing out the similarities between itself and Israel," the Israeli expert said.

Kagedan said, "The South African government has an interest in projecting itself associated with Israel. It helps (Prime Minister Pieter Willem) Botha to appear to the U.S. as another Israel."

One expert said the official military transfers from Israel to South Africa are now virtually non-existent. But according to some sources, private arms dealers have taken up the slack of arms sales and some forms of military trade

continue. Israel's stated position is that it is adhering to the 1977 United Nations arms embargo. Although press reports and information from trade monitoring agencies on the military exchanges have never been confirmed by Israel and are difficult to corroborate, experts interviewed by the JTA said there are four major areas of military exchanges between the two countries:

** Exchanges of military hardware, technologies, electronic surveillance systems and radar. In March 1985, the Washington Post reported that South Africa bought up to 35 percent of Israel's \$1 billion per year arms exports.

** Israelis training South Africans were observed and reported. One expert said there is "a fair amount of evidence to bear this out, especially in the early 1980's."

** R & D, joint development of military technologies such as a sophisticated mid-air refueling system. Some observers note that the South African Cheetah fighter bomber bears a striking resemblance to the Israeli Kfir.

** Nuclear technology and cooperative research. These exchanges have been reported on frequently but never confirmed.

The Israeli expert said there is clearly a dramatic reduction of the Israel-South Africa conventional arms trade in the past decade as a result of significant development of South Africa's domestic arms industry and the availability of new markets to the Israelis.

Basis For Israel's Trade

The most outspoken opponents of the military trade in the American Jewish community come from the New Jewish Agenda (NJA). In a draft of a position paper, Agenda attributed the trade relationship to Israel's dependence on military exports and the military industrial complex for sources of foreign income. By 1981, Agenda noted, Israel's arms exports rose to \$1.3 billion or 40 percent of Israel's exports. This reliance, according to Agenda, partners Israel with repressive regimes around the world.

But the Agenda paper also stated repeatedly that Israel should not be singled out for criticism among South Africa's other major trading partner.

Rabbi Balfour Brickner, vice president of the American Israel Civil Liberties Coalition and spiritual leader of the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue in New York, said the trade with South Africa is "a source of embarrassment for American Jews which is causing them to silently walk away from their heretofore unqualified support for Israel."

An Uncomfortable Position

Israel should have halted the military exchanges long ago, Brickner said. But pressure from American Jews was not enough. Only pressure from Congress will instigate a change in Israel's South Africa policy, he said.

"I don't think the trade is in Israel's best interest," Brickner said. "Interest has to be measured in terms other than dollars. Israel's South Africa policy could erode American Jewish support for Israel."

Henry Siegman, executive director of the American Jewish Congress, described the uncomfortable position of American Jews on the military trade. AJCongress took a leading role in the Jewish community in pushing to impose sanctions on South Africa, Siegman said. Its leaders were arrested in an act of civil disobedience in front of the South African Embassy to protest apartheid.

"We obviously cannot begin to sanction the sale of arms from Israel. We have to assume this kind of trade is going on and from our point of view, it cannot continue," Siegman said.

"The pressure should not come only from Congress," he said. "There ought to be moral pressures within Israel itself. The Israeli government has to understand that there are things it cannot do." Arms supplies allow a government to stay in power, Siegman said.

"The Jewish State was not created to supply oppressive regimes with the tools of oppression," Siegman said. "If there is not that internal pressure within Israel, American Jews have to make it clear that (military trade with South Africa) is unacceptable."

SOLON SAYS U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONS NOT HARMED BY THE IRAN ARMS SALES SCANDAL

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla., Feb. 18 (JTA)-- A member of the Senate Select Committee investigating the Iran arms sale scandal told an audience of Jewish leaders here that Israel's role in the affair "has not had a significant amount of impact" on U.S.-Israel relations.

Sen. Paul Sarbanes (D. Md.) attributed the absence of negative reaction toward Israel to the underlying strength of the U.S.-Israel relationship which, he said, is based firmly on shared values. The U.S.-Israel relationship is "a cardinal element of a principled American foreign policy," Sarbanes said in a speech to 500 delegates attending the four-day 43rd annual Plenary Session of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council (NJCRAC) here.

Speaking of the Middle East peace process, the Maryland Democrat asserted that "We need to restrain and limit, or totally deny, arms transfers" to Arab countries "unless they are genuinely participating in or contributing to movement toward peace."

He said that while the U.S. is prepared to develop constructive relations with other Middle Eastern nations, it will not do so at the expense of Israel. He said the U.S. should "actively press the peace process forward," noting that "Camp David provides the framework within which we can hope to work out a solution to the conflict in the Middle East."

Another speaker at the Plenary Session, Nimrod Novik, special advisor to Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, said an international peace conference as the framework for negotiations between Israel and Jordan would be an "historic breakthrough." He stressed that while there are some obstacles to advancing and planning a peace conference, Israel is "tirelessly committed" to seek peace with its neighbors.

He said Israel agreed to the concept of an international conference in order to help facilitate the convening of direct, bilateral negotiations with Jordan. He noted that such negotiations within the broader context of an international forum would provide the umbrella covering sought by Jordan's King Hussein.

TEL AVIV (JTA) -- The cost of living index rose by 2.1 percent in January, a smaller increase than expected after the 10 percent devaluation of the Shekel.