

SOVIETS ALLOWING JEWS MUTUAL VISITS BETWEEN ISRAEL AND USSR

By Hugh Orgel (Tel Aviv)
and Andrew Silow Carroll (New York)

Dec. 29 (JTA) -- Soviet emigration officials are allowing Soviet Jews to apply for tourist visas to visit Israel and have eased restrictions on Israelis wishing to visit relatives in Moscow, the Israeli daily Maariv reported Tuesday.

Maariv quoted reports from Moscow saying that an announcement was posted on the doors of the OVIR emigration agency there last week, announcing that "those wishing to visit Israel may now apply to do so."

Israelis wishing to visit relatives in Moscow, meanwhile, may now apply to Moscow via the diplomatic missions of Eastern European countries, who pass on the entry tourist visas.

Previously, such requests for visas to visit the Soviet Union had to be made through Rakah, the Israeli Communist party.

The new procedures have been confirmed by the Israeli Public Council for Soviet Jewry, which also says that the number of mutual visits has increased recently.

Maariv quoted a Soviet resident now visiting his family in Israel as saying that when he applied to OVIR for a tourist visa he was told, "No problem. Make an application."

He was granted permission for the visa after a three-month wait and a payment of 200 rubles, he said. The visa itself arrived two weeks later through the Dutch Embassy in Moscow, which looks after Israel's diplomatic interests in the Soviet Union.

Soviet Jewry activists in the United States said that the eased restrictions are related to diplomatic strategies initiated by the Soviets this summer, when Soviet emigres in the United States were granted brief visas to visit relatives in the Soviet Union.

Advantages For Russians

"For the Russians, there are a lot of advantages" in easing restrictions on tourists, said Jerry Goodman, executive director of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry. Goodman said the new procedures provide the Soviets with improved public relations, a new source for bringing hard currency into the Soviet Union and what he calls a "low risk, non-political way of having ties with Israel."

In addition, said Goodman, by allowing separated families to visit one another, the Soviets are hoping to "take the edge off" of the desire of Soviet Jews to leave the Soviet Union.

Echoing Goodman's views was Micah Naftalin, executive director of the Washington-based Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, who said in a telephone interview, "The Soviets must feel that this might weaken the pressure by emigres who keep pushing for appropriate emigration levels."

"For instance," he said, "some Soviet Jews in this country are reluctant to do anything that might jeopardize their chances of getting a visa to visit their families in the Soviet Union."

Naftalin added that the Soviets have been sending "mixed messages" to the United States

since the days leading up to the superpower summit meeting between President Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

Prior to the summit, OVIR had seemed to be loosening up requirements that Soviet Jews applying for exit visas must have first-degree relatives in Israel. But recently, Naftalin said, those same officials have announced that after the first of the year, having first-degree relatives will again be required for application. It is as if to say, "the summit is over now," he said.

ISRAEL REJECTS U.S. APPEALS AGAINST DEPORTING PALESTINIANS

By Gil Sedan and David Landau

JERUSALEM, Dec. 29 (JTA) -- Israel has made clear that it reserves the right to deport Palestinians arrested for rioting, despite cautions from the United States in recent days against such measures.

Expulsions will depend on "our understanding" of the situation, Premier Yitzhak Shamir told reporters Tuesday during a visit to Abu Gosh, an Arab village on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

Thomas Pickering, the U.S. ambassador to Israel, is reported to have told Foreign Minister Shimon Peres last week that Washington does not favor deportations of Palestinians from the administered territories.

In Washington, the U.S. State Department reiterated that position Tuesday. "We have conveyed our opposition to deportations to various Israeli officials," said spokeswoman Phyllis Oakley.

Shamir said he "thanked the U.S. for her advice. But when the need arises, one must use the deportation procedure. It is no great pleasure, but we shall act according to our understanding."

Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin who is also understood to have been approached by Pickering on the subject, told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on Tuesday that Israel has detained and deported "agitators" in the past and will do so in the future "as she will deem necessary."

He reportedly has conveyed the same message to American officials.

But using less forceful phrases in speaking to reporters outside the Knesset chamber, the defense minister said Israel would consider using "all the measures available under our law, including deportation."

Entirely Up To Israel

A Foreign Ministry spokesman said Tuesday that Israel would continue to use "the legal means at her disposal" to maintain order in the territories and that deportations are "entirely" up to Israel.

These responses appeared to indicate Israel's determination not to be swayed by opinion abroad.

The deportation option is a holdover from the British Mandate's defense emergency regulations of 1945. According to some sources, the authorities want to expel at least 50 Palestinian activists. But so far, no deportation orders have been issued.

There were rumors in the West Bank on

Tuesday evening that six Palestinians had been detained with a view toward their imminent deportation.

But well-placed Israeli government sources maintained that there would be no decisions on deportations until the present phase of fast judicial proceedings against suspected participants in the rioting have concluded.

Scores of Palestinian detainees are being brought daily before military courts in the West Bank and Gaza Strip on charges of rioting and other security defenses. Seventeen defendants appeared Sunday before a military court in Hebron. All pleaded "not guilty."

Military prosecutors have prepared charges against 250 suspects and another 400 charge sheets are under preparation. According to official figures, more than 900 Palestinians have been detained since violent disturbances broke out in the territories on Dec. 9. Palestinian sources put the number arrested at 2,500.

There are some 600 detainees in Fara prison near Nablus and the Israel Defense Force has set up a new detention center near Dahariya village in the Hebron hills.

Palestinian lawyers have assailed the speedy judicial proceedings, contending they have not been given adequate opportunity to meet with and prepare cases on behalf of their clients.

Lawyers' Boycott Widens

A group of prominent West Bank lawyers announced Tuesday night they would begin boycotting military court proceedings, as their colleagues in the Gaza Strip have been doing for the past week.

In the Gaza military court Tuesday, three local youth convicted of throwing gasoline bombs were sentenced to two-and-a-half years in prison. The bombs caused no injuries or damage.

Dozens of other defendants in Gaza, Nablus and Hebron were fined and sentenced to several months in jail for their roles in the disturbances.

Four defendants in Gaza and nine in Hebron pleaded not guilty to the charges. Their cases were deferred until a later date.

American diplomatic observers have been attending the judicial proceedings, Israel Radio reported Tuesday night. The CNN television network here reported that the U.S. Embassy had received permission from the Israeli government to send two observers to the trials.

In Washington, Oakley of the State Department confirmed Tuesday that U.S. Embassy officials in Israel are observing proceedings against the Palestinians. She maintained it is "not unusual" for U.S. officials stationed abroad to monitor trials in foreign countries when there are political consequences.

(Washington correspondent Howard Rosenberg also contributed to this story.)

ISRAELI SOLDIER WOUNDED AS IDF BEEFS UP SECURITY IN WEST BANK

By Hugh Orgel (Tel Aviv)
and David Landau (Jerusalem)

Dec. 29 (JTA) -- An Israeli soldier in Nablus received a stab wound Tuesday evening.

His assailant was injured and captured, and soldiers and security forces held off a crowd with rubber bullets while both injured people were taken to a hospital. No further details were available at press time.

The discouragement of such individual acts

and group demonstrations of violence was on the mind of Chief of Staff Gen. Dan Shomron.

He told military correspondents here Monday that the Israel Defense Force has doubled its strength in the West Bank and tripled it in the Gaza Strip.

He said the crucial date was Friday, Jan. 1, the anniversary of the founding of Al Fatah, the main terrorist group within the Palestine Liberation Organization. The anniversary has triggered disturbances in the past.

Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin repeatedly warned Tuesday that the IDF would not permit violence and unrest to reach the intensity of the past several weeks.

Events Won't Be Repeated

The newspaper Haaretz reported his pledge that "the disturbances in the territories will not occur again. Even if we are forced to use massive force, under no circumstances will we allow last week's events to repeat themselves."

Shomron indicated that the beefed-up IDF presence in the territories and the recent arrests of agitators and potential agitators would quell trouble.

The chief of staff disclosed that riot- and crowd-control programs have been introduced into the training of soldiers and new recruits. He rejected the idea of special riot control units on grounds that they would divert the army from its main task, to prepare for all-out war.

Shomron hinted, however, that riot-control may be assigned to the largely Bedouin border police, which has received special training for that purpose. He said the border police force was being enlarged.

Shomron insisted that the IDF exercised remarkable restraint in face of provocation and danger during nearly three weeks of violent disturbances in the territories.

The few cases where soldiers opened fire without justification are under investigation by the military police, he said.

Twenty-two Palestinians were reported killed in the rioting.

Taken By Surprise

He acknowledged that the scope and intensity of the recent disturbances took the security forces by surprise. He said they lacked the equipment normally used by the civilian police to control rioting.

Largely because of budget constraints, the IDF ran short of rubber bullets, tear gas and other non-lethal means to restore order, Shomron said. Equipment is being procured from abroad and from Israeli manufacturers, including water cannons, he said.

He stressed during a television interview Monday night that the IDF is an army, and assumes the role of a police force only in extreme cases, such as the recent unrest.

He expressed satisfaction with the speedy arrests of those he termed "agitators." The arrests began on the first day of the riots.

"Naturally, as things continue, more agitators are identified, more demonstrators are identified, and naturally, more are arrested," he said.

"From the first day, we arrested every day, every agitator whose name was written down on our lists. We arrested them from the beginning," Shomron said.

Israeli authorities estimate that about 1,000 Palestinians were arrested during the unrest.

SELECTION OF PALESTINIAN PATRIARCH SEEN AS SHOW OF SUPPORT FROM VATICAN

By Ruth Gruber

ROME, Dec. 29 (JTA) -- Pope John Paul II's appointment Monday of a Palestinian as Catholic patriarch of Jerusalem is being viewed here as a political as well as religious move, despite Vatican denials of any such motives.

No one has expressed doubts about the ability of the new patriarch, 54-year-old Michel Sabbah, who was born in Nazareth.

The Israeli Embassy in Rome said "the nomination is a choice of the church. We, on our part, wish the patriarch-designate active success and we hope for a profitable and constructive cooperation, like that already existing with the other authorities of the various churches in Israel."

Sabbah will be the first Arab to head his church, which number 67,000 worshippers, 85 percent of whom are Arabs. Sixty-five of the 78 priests under him also are Arabs.

Sabbah, replaces 77-year-old Italian Giacomo Giuseppe Beltritti, who is retiring because of age. Vatican sources called Sabbah "the right person for the right job."

Nonetheless, coinciding as it did with the current unrest in the administered territories and the controversy over tough Israeli measures against Palestinian protesters, the appointment of Sabbah was greeted by supporters of the Palestinian cause as a demonstration of papal understanding and support for the Palestinians.

PLO Appreciative

"We greatly appreciate this appointment," the Rome office of the Palestine Liberation Organization said in a statement which noted that the move came "in a particularly delicate moment for the Palestinians."

"It is often forgotten that many Palestinians are Christian," the statement said. "The pope's choice is a recognition of this religious presence among our people."

Even more enthusiastic than the PLO in his reaction was Monsignor Hilarion Capucci, the Melchite Catholic archbishop of Jerusalem and Palestine National Council member living in exile in Rome since his expulsion from Israel in 1977 for his PLO links.

"It is a marvelous and splendid thing," said Capucci, who for a week has been staging a hunger strike in support of the Palestinian protesters in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

He called the appointment of Sabbah, "an objective moral support for the Palestinian people," adding that "I've always followed with pleasure every initiative of the pope and I greet this new initiative with extreme pleasure as a great gift to the Palestinian people."

Orazio La Rocca, a Vatican correspondent for the leading Italian newspaper La Repubblica, said it was difficult not to view the appointment as "an explicit, even if indirect, political signal" on the part of the pope.

Pope Wants 'End of Killing'

"Only a week ago," La Rocca noted, the pontiff asked, in the course of a prayer in St. Peter's Square, for "the end of killing in the land of Christ." According to the Vatican correspondent, the pope was referring to the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, "expressing himself clearly in favor of a homeland for the Palestinians."

He observed that the appeal was launched in the presence of 13 Arab ambassadors accredited to the Holy See who, responding to an initiative of the PLO's Rome office, gathered on Dec. 20 in St. Peter's Square "to silently protest against Israeli aggression in the Palestinian territories and to urge a direct intervention by the pope."

Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls, however, denied deliberate political overtones in the pope's appointment of Sabbah.

"The criterion followed for the selection of the new patriarch," he said, "was strictly religious and pastoral, taking into account the local reality, that is, that it is the only diocese for the 65,000 faithful of the Latin Rite, 85 percent of whom are of Arab origin, in the territory of Israel, Jordan and Cyprus."

He added, "Any criterion based on political opportunity was simply not taken into account."

TEXTILE FIRM COMPLAINS OF SABOTAGE BY ARAB EMPLOYEES

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Dec. 29 (JTA) -- The management of a major industrial plant has accused its Arab employees from the administered territories of sabotage and willful absenteeism resulting in significant damage and financial losses, according to news reports this week.

The complaint was contained in a secret memorandum from Dov Pollak, chairman of the Polgat textile mills in Kiryat Gat, to Minister of Commerce and Industry Ariel Sharon. The memorandum was prepared three months ago, Haaretz reported Tuesday, long before the latest wave of disturbances in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

According to Haaretz, Polgat officials initially refused to confirm the memorandum, but Pollak later told the newspaper that it had been prepared at his request to be forwarded to state agencies.

Pollak maintained that similar situations exist in other factories employing labor from the territories. But Haaretz reported that a survey by its reporters of industrial plants in the same area failed to substantiate his claim.

The memorandum said most of the sabotage occurred during the night shift, when 90 percent of the workers are Arabs. Arabs from the Hebron area and the Gaza Strip comprise about half of Polgat's work force of 1,200.

According to Polgat management, machinery was put out of action for several days at a time and textiles were slashed with knives. Polgat placed its losses at \$100,000 over three months.

The memorandum questions the ability of industrial plants in Israel to operate with labor from the administered territories. According to Haaretz, it was prepared to bolster Polgat's case for importing labor from abroad. Between 6,000 and 9,000 foreign workers are presently employed in Israeli industries, according to unofficial estimates.

This apparently is a result of unrest in the territories, past problems with Arab workers and the refusal of Jewish workers to perform manual labor. Polgat has recently brought in 60 workers from Portugal to replace Arabs from the territories, though 25,000 Arabs in the territories are presently registered as unemployed.

The Polgat memorandum complained that many of its Arab employees "disappear" during work hours, even though they know the factory cannot function without them. The absentee rate

among Arab workers in Israeli industrial plants in general has averaged 45 percent since the disturbances began on Dec. 9 and 70 percent in the Haifa area. Kiryat Gat is in the Negev.

Arab workers at the Polgat mills recently demanded a day off on Friday, the Moslem sabbath, and that the management provide a mosque on the plant premises. The latter demand was flatly rejected. Polgat sources said that since then swastikas were found painted on the factory walls.

Muhammed Miari, an Arab Knesset member representing the Progressive List for Peace, accused Polgat of spreading libelous and racist allegations against its Arab employees.

But Minister of Labor Moshe Katzav warned Tuesday that "if the unrest continues, with the Arabs from Judaea, Samaria and the Gaza Strip not showing up for work, we will have to consider positively requests by industrialists to import foreign workers."

(Jerusalem correspondent Gil Sedan also contributed to this report.)

YUGOSLAV ENVOY SAYS IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL A MUST

By Tamar Levy

GENEVA, Dec. 29 (JTA) -- Yugoslavia must resume full diplomatic relations with Israel, contends the Yugoslav ambassador to the United Nations here, Marko Kosin.

"Yugoslavia recognizes the fact that Israel should have a right for her sovereignty," said Kosin in the first official interview given by a high official from his country to an Israeli journalist.

"Israel is a main factor in the Middle East and there can be no solution to the problem without Israeli consent and participation. Therefore, we have to improve our relations with Israel."

He said Yugoslav public opinion and most members of Parliament favor re-establishing relations with Israel. Only the government is not unanimous on the subject. "We had prior to 1967 full diplomatic relations and therefore will re-establish them as before," he said. The relations were broken following the Six-Day War.

Reports on Israel in the Yugoslav press are favorable, in contrast to the past, and the Yugoslav press agency, Tanjug, placed a correspondent in Israel last summer, he said.

Kosin said a new foreign minister will be appointed at the beginning of 1988, most likely Budimir Loncar, who will be less likely to protect Arab interests than the current minister, Rais Dizdarevic, who is Moslem.

The envoy did not hide the fact that his country would prefer contact with leaders of Israel's leftist Mapam Party.

He also pointed out that Yugoslavia had good economic relations with Israel -- about \$35 million in combined trade a year, a sum very important to Yugoslavia -- and that Yugoslavia is ready to increase the economic ties.

His country also is interested in tourism from Israel; the national Yugoslav airline, Jat, opened a line to Israel earlier this month.

Kosin noted that many Israelis of Yugoslav origin kept in touch with their former homeland. And he was optimistic about further cultural exchanges.

He said Dizdarevic, the foreign minister, met with his Israeli counterpart, Shimon Peres, last

September in New York during the U.N. General Assembly. Kosin said the Yugoslav explained to Peres why it was not yet time to re-establish diplomatic relations.

Kosin added that the Yugoslav government had very good contacts with the World Jewish Congress.

In related developments, this correspondent was invited to a Yugoslav national celebration in November and Kosin has accepted an invitation to dinner by the Israeli ambassador to the United Nations.

MECHAM'S 'CHRISTIAN NATION' REMARK DRAWS INTERFAITH PROTEST IN ARIZONA

PHOENIX, Dec. 29 (JTA) -- A local coalition of mainstream Christian denominations has joined Arizona Jews in expressing dismay over Gov. Evan Mecham's remarks to a Jewish audience here Dec. 13 that "Jesus Christ is the God of the Land."

A public protest is planned by the Bishops' Executive Round Table, the Greater Phoenix Jewish News reported. The Round Table includes American Baptists, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, Presbyterians, Roman Catholics, Society of Friends, Unitarians, United Church of Christ members and Universalists.

Mecham, who is facing a vigorous recall campaign, is a Mormon. He astonished and offended Jews two Sundays ago when he spoke at the monthly men's club breakfast at Ahavat Torah Congregation.

According to Jewish News editor Leni Reiss, Mecham's strongly implied rejection of religious pluralism in the United States came when he was asked by a congregant to explain a story in the Arizona Daily Star about his recent speech at the National Center for Constitutional Studies banquet in Salt Lake City.

"I want you to recognize tonight -- on this 200th anniversary (of the U.S. Constitution) that this is a great Christian nation that recognizes Jesus Christ as the God of the land," he was quoted as saying.

Asked if he indeed said that, Mecham replied, "From my standpoint, Jesus Christ is the God of the land. I said it -- and I probably will say it again. If that is a problem for anyone, then it is their problem."

Bruce Jones, regional minister of Christian Churches' Disciples, told the Jewish News that the Round Table plans to write a letter protesting Mecham's remarks, circulate it and send it with as many signatures as possible to The Arizona Republic as a letter to the editor.

The Rev. Gary Skinner of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. will draft the letter. "Our concern is to express solidarity with the Jewish community as well as our conviction that the United States is a pluralistic country," Skinner told the Jewish News.

Sen. John McCain of Arizona said of his fellow Republican Mecham, "I think the governor's remarks were at best unfortunate, at worst offensive, to most Americans, not just those who happen to be of the Jewish faith."

Joel Breshin, regional director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, maintained that the governor is not anti-Semitic, "just insensitive."

Mecham responded that he is "not at all insensitive," has "many good Jewish friends" and is represented by a Jewish lawyer in his fight against recall.