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**MURPHY MIDEAST DIPLOMACY TRIP
 TO INCLUDE ISRAEL, SYRIA**

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Feb. 4 (JTA) -- Richard Murphy, U.S. assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs, will travel to the Middle East in the next few days to confer with leaders on the latest U.S. peace initiative for the Middle East.

He will visit Israel, Saudi Arabia and Syria, despite State Department sanctions against high-ranking U.S. officials engaging in contacts with the Syrian government.

The State Department imposed the sanctions in November 1986, when the United States withdrew its ambassador to Syria due to Syria's complicity in international terrorist incidents. For the same reason, the United States and Libya no longer exchange ambassadors.

Murphy is not the first U.S. official to bypass the sanctions. A State Department source explained that the sanctions "issue flares up from time to time, particularly this summer when (U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Vernon) Walters visited Syria" during his trip to the region.

Another source at the department noted that Murphy broke the ban in 1987 as well. The source explained that "it's not a rule or regulation that can't be broken," invoking department spokesman Charles Redman's statement Wednesday that the United States must contact "some of the other key players" in the region.

Redman, during his news briefing Wednesday, noted the extensive contacts last week between U.S. officials and Egypt, Israel and Jordan.

The United States has offered few details of its peace initiative. Redman reiterated on Wednesday one aspect of the U.S. peace initiative: "early face-to-face negotiations" between Israel and Arab representatives.

Other aspects of the plan, including a call for autonomy measures to be instituted quickly for Palestinians in Israel's administered territories, have received no official comment by U.S. officials.

In other planned diplomatic efforts involving the Middle East, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Michael Armacost is to visit Israel next week for routine semi-annual talks with Yossi Beilin, director general of Israel's Foreign Ministry.

Saudi Arabia's foreign minister, Prince Saud al-Faisal, is scheduled to meet U.S. officials here Feb. 9. That meeting is to be part of a series of talks with the five members of the U.N. Security Council on the Iran-Iraq war.

**U.N. SECRETARY GENERAL SENDING
 ENVOY BACK TO THE MIDDLE EAST**

By Yitzhak Rabi

UNITED NATIONS, Feb. 4 (JTA) -- Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar is again sending Undersecretary General Marrack Gouling to the Mideast, a U.N. spokesman announced Thursday.

Gouling, who recently visited Israel and the administered territories, and reported on the situation to Perez de Cuellar, will shortly go to Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and probably Tunis,

where he will meet with representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

He is expected to hold talks in these countries and to explore new ideas to advance peace in the Middle East.

"The secretary general is sending Marrack Gouling on a further visit to the Middle East in order to pursue consultations with those of the parties directly concerned who were not consulted during last month's visit," the spokesman said, reading from a prepared statement on behalf of Perez de Cuellar.

In his report on his visit to the territories, Gouling sharply criticized Israel's way of handling the violent demonstrations by the Palestinians. Based on this report, the secretary general issued his own report calling for an international peace conference to resolve the Mideast conflict.

No date was set so far for Gouling's departure to the Mideast, but U.N. officials said Thursday that "it's a matter of days."

**MAJOR U.S. JEWISH GROUPS
 DECLARE SUPPORT OF ISRAEL**

By Andrew Silow Carroll

NEW YORK, Feb. 4 (JTA) -- A statement of "unity and identification" with Israel was released Thursday by 51 U.S. Jewish organizations, including four publicly critical of Israel's use of beatings to quell Palestinian violence in the administered territories.

The statement was circulated by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, a coordinating body of 42 organizations.

The statement said the signators had "received assurances from the president and prime minister of Israel that the policy of restraint continues," that they "have expressed to them our concern regarding any departures in contradiction" of the policy and that they "trust that this policy will be uniformly implemented."

The statement voiced regret at the loss of life in the territories and welcomed the efforts of the United States and others "to move the peace process forward to a just and lasting peace."

It also noted that for decades the Arab world "exploited and victimized" the Palestinians by refusing "to come to the peace table to negotiate a settlement with Israel."

"The security of Israel," it continued, "is a prime concern to Jews everywhere."

The signators said, "We believe we speak for the overwhelming majority of Jews across the country and around the world in this expression of unity and identification with the embattled nation of Israel."

A spokesman for the conference said the statement was meant to "reassure the Israeli community that it hasn't been abandoned and reassure the American Jewish community that Israel has the support" of the major American Jewish organizations.

Organizations critical of the beatings policy have come under criticism themselves from Israel and U.S. Jewish organizations either supportive of the policy or uncomfortable with public condemnation of the beatings policy.

Among the 42 constituent members and nine observer groups of the conference signing the statement were the American Jewish Congress and two Reform organizations -- the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and the Central Conference of American Rabbis.

All three organizations had previously issued statements critical of a policy announced two weeks ago by Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin of "might, force, beatings" to subdue Palestinian rioters.

A third Reform organization that signed the conference statement also voiced on Thursday its "alarm and distress" over the beatings.

Rabbi Charles Kroloff, president of the Association of Reform Zionists of America (ARZA), said in the statement that Israel's use of "excessive force" in maintaining order is "contrary to the moral values of the Jewish community and to the principles on which the State of Israel was founded."

HUNDREDS OF AMERICAN JEWS RALLY IN SUPPORT OF ISRAELI POLICIES By Yitzhak Rabi

NEW YORK, Feb. 4 (JTA) -- Hundreds of American Jews joined together in a rally Thursday to demonstrate support for Israel and the way it has been handling the disturbances in the administered territories.

More than 350 people attended the rally across the street from the Israeli Consulate here, at 800 Second Ave. Members of more than a dozen Jewish organizations participated in the rally, which was coordinated by the Zionist Organization of America.

It was one of the strongest expressions of American Jewish support for Israel since the unrest in the West Bank and Gaza Strip began more than eight weeks ago.

Marching in a circle and chanting "Am Yisroel Chai" and "Israel united -- never be divided," the demonstrators carried signs that read: "Arabs plot Israel's annihilation," "Arab rioters love to be on TV" and "Israel has a right to self-defense."

Dr. Kenneth Kelner, president of the Manhattan Region of the ZOA, told the rally, "We feel there is a strong attempt to isolate Israel and pressure it into political decisions that might be dangerous to its security. Such pressure could prevent Israel from taking defensive actions in the face of the ongoing rioting by the Palestinians in the territories."

Toward the end of the rally, which lasted about 90 minutes, Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, and Moshe Yegar, Israel's consul general in New York, joined the demonstrators.

SHAMIR SAYS IDF RESTORED QUIET IN GAZA STRIP By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Feb. 4 (JTA) -- Premier Yitzhak Shamir conferred with Israel Defense Force commanders as well as a local Palestinian leader during a visit to an unusually quiescent Gaza Strip on Thursday.

The premier said later he was impressed by the "quiet restored by the IDF." He also told reporters there was no connection between the unrest in the administered territories and political efforts underway to seek Mideast peace.

"In any case, we shall see to it that there will be no such connection," Shamir said, an allusion to reports that the peace initiative of the United States was a result of nearly two months of Palestinian rioting.

Shamir visited the Shati and Nusseirat refugee camps near Gaza in a motorcade. Shehade Nabwani, chairman of the local council, asked Shamir for Israeli government help to improve housing in the camps.

Shamir replied that Israel was willing to help, but that the Arab states continued to oppose any attempt to rehabilitate the camps.

The Gaza Strip remained paralyzed on Thursday by a commercial strike. All shops and businesses were shuttered.

Relative quiet prevailed in the West Bank, too, although one injury was reported. According to military sources, one Palestinian youth who allegedly threw a Molotov cocktail at a border police patrol when the curfew was lifted at the Balata refugee camp near Nablus was shot and slightly wounded.

Rioting broke out at the camp and the curfew was promptly reimposed.

Tens of thousands of Palestinians remained under strict curfew in Nablus and in several other West Bank towns and refugee camps.

The civil administration in the West Bank decided to close all schools and colleges for an indefinite period.

Attempts to reopen them earlier this week touched off a new wave of riots.

VATICAN OFFICIALS MEETS PLO FOREIGN POLICY SPOKESMAN

ROME, Feb. 4 (JTA) -- The Vatican received a top official of the Palestine Liberation Organization on Thursday, explaining in a statement afterwards that it "cannot remain indifferent in face of the painful and worrisome events that the population of the occupied territories is living through."

Farouk Kaddoumi, the PLO's foreign policy spokesman, met with Archbishop Achille Silvestrini, the Vatican's foreign minister. A Vatican spokesman said Kaddoumi "expressed the gratitude of the Palestinians for the moral support that the Holy See gives to the cause of the Palestinian people."

Pope John Paul II received King Hussein of Jordan on Monday. Following that meeting, the Vatican issued a statement saying the Palestinian issue was a "question of international justice." On Friday, the pope is scheduled to receive President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt.

A statement issued by the World Jewish Congress here Thursday said that "in receiving the PLO, a terrorist organization, and Kurt Waldheim, an unrepentant Nazi, the Vatican of late demonstrates a shocking insensitivity to Jewish concerns."

The pope granted Austrian President Waldheim an audience last June at which the pope praised him as a man of peace. Waldheim is accused of complicity in the deportation of Greek Jews and other atrocities when he served as a German Army officer in the Balkans during World War II.

His wartime activities, which he had concealed, have been under examination by an international panel of military historians in Vienna. It is scheduled to release the report of its findings Monday.

TERRORISTS KILL TWO SOLDIERS IN AMBUSH NEAR LEBANON BORDER

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 4 (JTA) -- Two Israeli soldiers were killed and a third was wounded in a clash with terrorists who breached the Lebanon border fence early Thursday morning.

One terrorist was killed and another captured. The third managed to escape into Lebanon.

An Israel Defense Force spokesman identified the dead soldiers as Eliezer Shefer of Herzliya and Avshalom Bishari of Kfar Zeitim. They were to be buried later Thursday.

The incident occurred shortly after 4 a.m. local time, when a paratroop unit was alerted to investigate a break in the security fence that runs the length of the Israel-Lebanon border. The unit was ambushed by the terrorists firing missiles and grenades.

Chief of Staff Gen. Dan Shomron told reporters later that the terrorist infiltrators planned to attack a "certain settlement" to kill civilians and take hostages. He said the infiltration may have been linked to Arab unrest in the administered territories.

According to an IDF spokesman, one of the terrorists surrendered quickly when he came under fire, shouting "stop" in English and holding up his hands. Another terrorist was shot to death when he continued to throw grenades at the IDF unit.

The paratroop unit killed three terrorists near Kibbutz Manera in the Galilee panhandle last month, suffering no casualties.

WORLD GROUP EXPRESSES CONCERN OVER SOVIET EMIGRATION RULES

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Feb. 4 (JTA) -- A new sense of urgency should be attached to the mobilization against Soviet regulations that make it difficult for Soviet Jews without first-degree relatives abroad to obtain permission to emigrate, a world Soviet Jewry group resolved this week.

The executive committee of the International Council for Soviet Jewry adopted that position during meetings here on Sunday and Monday.

The committee, which meets annually in New York to review policy, is chaired by Simcha Dinitz, who was recently elected chairman of the World Zionist Organization-Jewish Agency Executive. A meeting of the full council took place last fall.

The committee noted several positive changes in conditions for Soviet Jews that took place in 1987, including the emigration of more than 8,000 Jews, the release of the last Jewish prisoner of conscience and an end to the harassment of Hebrew teachers.

However, the committee noted the "alarming" restrictive emigration policy that seems to be increasingly implemented.

The executive committee said it had received reports that in recent weeks, applications for emigration not supported by affidavits from relatives of first-degree relationship were not accepted for processing by Soviet authorities.

Moreover, the committee noted that exit visas continue to be denied to long-time refuseniks for "spurious reasons of access to questionably secret information many years previously."

Some refuseniks, the committee reports, have

been told that although state security reasons are no longer valid in their cases, they have been nevertheless denied exit visas because they have no first-degree relatives in Israel. Others are refused permission because of relatives' unwillingness to sign waivers of financial obligation.

The committee also noted "with concern" the open functioning of anti-Semitic organizations such as Pamyat, which has become popular among strongly nationalistic Soviet youth.

With respect to the teaching of Hebrew and Jewish religion and culture, the committee noted that only in one city so far has the private teaching of Hebrew been approved. In addition, efforts to register Jewish cultural groups in several cities have been rebuffed.

JUDGE IN PROPAGANDIST'S TRIAL SAYS HOLOCAUST CAN'T BE DENIED

By Ben Kayfetz

TORONTO, Feb. 4 (JTA) -- The judge presiding at the second trial of neo-Nazi propagandist Ernst Zundel made clear Wednesday that he was taking judicial notice of the Holocaust.

Judge Ron Thomas told the jury of six men and six women that he has determined that the Holocaust is not a matter of dispute and is so notorious that among reasonable people it is generally known and accepted.

Zundel, 48, a German-born resident alien, published and distributed in Canada a new edition of a booklet entitled "Did Six Million Really Die?" which maintains that the Holocaust was a hoax invented by Jews.

Zundel was convicted in 1985 under a section of the Canadian Criminal Code forbidding the spread of false and malicious information. He was sentenced to 18 months in prison, but the Supreme Court overturned the conviction on technicalities and ordered a new trial.

Judge Thomas advised the jury that it must decide whether Zundel knew the booklet, written about 15 years ago by British fascist Richard Harwood, was in fact false when he purchased rights to it and circulated it in Canada with an introduction and conclusions of his own.

"It cannot be reasonably questioned among reasonable people that there was a mass murder and extermination of Jews in Europe during World War II," Thomas said.

Zundel, who has boasted that his second trial would give him a new platform to express his views, is accused specifically of "spreading false news, such as distributing a tale or story that he knows to be false and that is likely to do injury or mischief to the public interest." The "public interest" in this case is defined as racial tolerance and harmony.

The trial in federal court here is expected to last about two months. Zundel has long been active as a neo-Nazi propagandist. The Bundestag, the West German Parliament, has complained to Canada that he is the largest single source of neo-Nazi propaganda entering that country, which forbids the dissemination of such material by law.

Zundel will be defended by Douglas Christie, who seems to specialize in defending neo-Nazis and anti-Semites. Christie was attorney for Jim Keegstra, a former high school teacher from Eckville, Alberta, convicted in 1986 for preaching anti-Semitism in the classroom.

His next case will be that of suspected war criminal Imre Finta, accused of killing Jews and others in Hungary, Austria and Poland.

POLL FINDS JEWS ACCEPTED IN U.S., RABBI WORRIED ABOUT CHURCH-STATE

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Feb. 4 (JTA) -- A poll touted as the most comprehensive ever regarding U.S. religious views has found that Jews are widely accepted in the United States and that rabbis are more concerned about issues of religion-state separation than are Christian clergy.

Four percent of 3,000 people polled at random in December said Jews "have too much power and influence."

The poll, released here Wednesday by the Williamsburg Charter Foundation, also found that 61 percent felt "It's O.K. for Jewish groups to give money to politicians who support Israel" and that 10 percent would refuse to vote for a Jewish candidate for president.

By comparison, a 1958 Gallup poll on religion found that 28 percent of U.S. citizens at that time could not support a Jew for president.

The December poll was conducted by the Center for Communication Dynamics, Washington, D.C., under the direction of Professor William Adams of George Washington University, Washington, D.C.

The poll found that while 51 percent favor a "high separation" between church and state, overwhelming majorities favored prayer in public schools, use of schools by student religious groups after-hours and display of creches and menorahs on public property.

The study also found a contrast between views of the public with those of certain leadership groups, including religious figures, academics, journalists and business leaders.

Rabbis, Academics Agree

One apparent trend is that rabbis and academics agreed on church-state separation while priests and ministers often espoused a different viewpoint. Roughly 100 people were interviewed in each leadership group.

Eighty-eight percent of the rabbis felt "The Supreme Court is the best place to decide controversies about the separation of church and state." By comparison, 87 percent of academics agreed and 65 percent of the population concurred.

Sixty-three percent of the rabbis said that "freedom of religion" was their first instinct when they heard the words "the first Amendment to the U.S. Constitution."

By contrast, 45 percent of ministers, 44 percent of the academics and 42 percent of priests had the same reaction, although they far surpassed the national average of 4-percent concurrence.

While about 80 percent of the population, as well as ministers and priests, felt "It's O.K. for a city government to put up candles on government property for a Jewish religious celebration," 16 percent of the rabbis and 37 percent of the academics agreed.

They gave similar replies to a question regarding display of nativity scenes on public land.

Twenty-three percent of the rabbis and academics supported a moment of silence in public schools. By contrast, 77 percent of the population supported it, as did 74 percent of the ministers and 82 percent of the priests.

While 70 percent of the population, 75 percent of ministers and 83 percent of priests favored allowing the use of public school class-

rooms for voluntary religious activities, 28 percent of the rabbis concurred. The second most sensitive group in the sample was academics, at 54 percent.

The poll also found that 11 percent of the rabbis felt there is less religious tolerance today than "20 or 30 years ago." By contrast, 44 percent of the ministers and 45 percent of the population agreed.

The rabbis were less offended than the population by the use of the "Jesus Christ" as an expletive in movies and television. While 39 percent of the rabbis found it bothersome, 57 percent of the general population felt that way.

Thirty-two percent of the rabbis and 55 percent of the academics felt secular humanism has a "good impact" on the country. In contrast, 12 percent of the ministers and 14 percent of the priests concurred.

Disagreed On Secular Humanism

In addition, the rabbis disagreed with ministers and priests on the question of whether public schools are "teaching the values of secular humanism." While 24 percent of the rabbis thought so, 49 percent of the ministers and 61 percent of the priests agreed.

On tolerance for Islam, 4 percent of the rabbis felt "there is no place in America for the Moslem religion."

Asked whether they feel Moral Majority "should stay out of politics," 46 percent of the rabbis agreed. Among the various groups polled, only atheists (48 percent) and those 60 years or older (52 percent) opposed Moral Majority more than the rabbis did.

While 25 percent of the rabbis felt that racists, Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan represented a threat to democracy, 27 percent also felt that evangelicals and fundamentalists -- two conservative Christian denominations -- pose such a threat.

The Williamsburg Charter Foundation was established last year to study the role of religion in the United States. It is officially recognized by the Commission on the Bicentennial of the United States Constitution.

In June, it will hold a major celebration of religious liberty in this country and will disband at the end of the year.

'SKINHEADS' SENTENCED IN EAST BERLIN

By David Kantor

BERLIN, Feb. 4 (JTA) -- An East Berlin court sentenced eight members of a "skinheads" group to jail terms of up to more than three years Wednesday for attacking rock-music fans and yelling Nazi slogans at a church concert in October.

The official East German news agency ADN said the eight had used brutal force and injured many people "with blows and kicks" when they attacked the fans at East Berlin's Zionskirche (Church of Zion).

During the riot inside and outside the church, the "skinheads" screamed slogans from the Nazi era and insulted people, ADN said. ADN said the court noted that the riot had been instigated and led by West Berlin "skinheads."

The sentences ranged from three years and nine months to one year and three months.

Four other "skinheads" already have been jailed for up to four years for their part in the attack.