

PANEL FINDS 'NO PROOF' WALDHEIM COMMITTED WAR CRIMES, BUT SAYS HE LIED ABOUT HIS WAR RECORD
By Reinhard Engel

VIENNA, Feb. 8 (JTA) -- An international commission of historians has found "no proof" that Kurt Waldheim committed war crimes, according to the 200-page report it submitted to Chancellor Franz Vranitzky here Monday night.

But the Austrian president was far from an innocent bystander when he served as a lieutenant in the German army occupying the Balkans in World War II, according to several members of the panel who commented on the text of the report before it was made public.

The historians' report originally was scheduled to be released Monday, but some news reports late in the day said the Austrian Foreign Ministry suppressed the report at the last minute. The ministry obtained an advance summary of the document on Sunday.

The report was later released, but only after the historians reportedly complied with a demand from the Foreign Ministry to excise references to the Austrian president's "moral guilt."

Waldheim Reportedly Briefed

According to the news reports, Waldheim himself was briefed about the contents of both the original and the revised reports prior to the final version's release.

The commission was set up by the Austrian government last year to examine Waldheim's wartime record in light of charges that he was implicated in the deportation of Greek Jews and others and in atrocities committed against Yugoslav civilians and resistance fighters.

The head of the panel, Swiss military historian Rudolf Kurz, announced Monday that the commission found no proof that Waldheim personally took part in war crimes, but charged that the Austrian president concealed and "even lied" about his wartime activities.

The leaders of Austria's Socialist-Conservative coalition government each had different reactions to the report. Vranitzky, leader of the Socialist Party, said he was deeply concerned by the findings.

He said that while the panel found no personal guilt, its report contained some very critical passages about the Austrian president's military service.

Foreign Minister Alois Mock, who is vice chancellor and chairman of the conservative Peoples Party, stressed the fact that Waldheim was absolved of personal guilt. He said that while there were some remarks critical of the president, the commission's mandate had been solely to determine guilt or innocence of war crimes.

'An Accomplice'

A West German member of the commission, Manfred Messerschmidt, told the West German newspaper Die Welt on Monday that Waldheim "knew his unit committed war crimes." He said that on that basis, the commission concluded unanimously that Waldheim could be considered "an accomplice."

Another member, Jan van Welkhuizen of

Belgium, said in a French television interview that he believed Waldheim played a significant role in the Wehrmacht's action, which resulted in the deportation of about 63,000 Yugoslav civilians, including 23,000 children.

"The report will not be a whitewash and at the president's (Waldheim's) office, they will not be very happy about it," said van Welkhuizen.

He said the commission's findings consist of a "series of mosaics," not a single report. Observers here said, in that case, Waldheim will be able to stress whatever he finds useful to his case.

A summary of the final paragraphs of the report, obtained by the Austrian Press Agency, reflects a degree of ambiguity on the part of its authors or possibly pressure by the Foreign Ministry to soften or generalize the language.

It states at one point that "a certain guilt may arise" from "sheer knowledge about the violation of human rights" if "the person in question, be it because of a lack of strength or courage, violates his human duty to stand up to injustice."

Later on, however, the report seems almost to absolve Waldheim, saying he had "only modest means at his disposal for resistance against injustice."

"For a young member of the staff, the practical possibilities of acting against the orders are very limited and with all probability would have had hardly an effect. His means would have had to be restricted to protests or to a practical denial of his cooperation," the report says.

No Plans To Resign

Waldheim's spokesman, Jerold Christian, said Monday "the president will not resign whatever the results of (the commission's) findings."

Sources close to Waldheim told Austrian Radio that his decision not to resign "whatever the findings" was bolstered by a public opinion poll taken last week. The poll found that 72 percent of the respondents believed he should stay in office, regardless of the commission's conclusions.

The poll showed that among members of Waldheim's People's Party, 92 percent favored his remaining in office.

Waldheim, who served two terms as secretary general of the United Nations, was elected president of Austria in June 1986.

The first revelations of his Nazi past surfaced during the election campaign in evidence presented by the World Jewish Congress and other Jewish groups.

Evidence continued to mount from many other sources. Despite Waldheim's vociferous denials, he was forced to admit that for 40 years he had concealed his wartime service.

His name, in fact, appears on the list of 40,000 suspected Nazi war criminals compiled by the Allied War Crimes Commission during and directly after the war.

The War Crimes Commission turned its list over to the United Nations in 1947. The war crimes files remained accessible only to the governments of U.N. member states until late last year, when, at the urging of Israel, they were opened to the public.

U.S. ENVOY TO PROPOSE IDF QUIT TERRITORIES THIS SPRING

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Feb. 8 (JTA) -- The United States wants the Israel Defense Force to withdraw from the main population centers of the West Bank and Gaza Strip this spring, to be followed by Palestinian elections in early summer, informed sources said here Monday.

The sources confirmed in outline proposals that have been leaked from the highest American political echelons. They are expected to be presented to Israeli officials by Richard Murphy, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs, who is due in Israel on Tuesday.

Murphy, who has been the Reagan administration's chief troubleshooter in the Middle East, is presently visiting Saudi Arabia. It has been reported that he also will visit Syria during his current mission to the region.

The American ideas on how to come to grips with unrest in the Israeli-administered territories emanated from the Persian Gulf region, apparently from Murphy's entourage.

They also include Washington's thinking on how to advance the peace process toward an overall political solution.

Under the plan, the IDF would withdraw from major cities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip by the beginning of summer, at the latest. Soon after, Israel, Jordan and Egypt would jointly monitor local Palestinian elections in the territories.

Once the local elections have taken place, Secretary of State George Shultz would visit the region personally to set the stage for a new round of shuttle diplomacy.

After the general elections in the United States and Israel next November, Washington envisions convening an international forum in December to launch negotiations between Israel and Jordan, with Palestinian participation, to decide the permanent status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

CURFEWS RESTORE CALM TO CAPITAL, AS RIOTS CONTINUE IN GAZA STRIP

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Feb. 8 (JTA) -- A night of rioting in the Gaza Strip left two Palestinian youths wounded from Israel Defense Force rifle fire, one of them in the city of Gaza and the other in Khan Yunis.

Eighteen Palestinians were treated at local hospitals for beatings at the hands of IDF troops. A curfew was imposed on the Shati refugee camp, which Premier Yitzhak Shamir visited less than a week ago during a lull in the violence.

East Jerusalem was relatively calm Monday night after a day of fierce rioting. Police used tear gas to disperse dozens of rock-throwing youths near the Herod's Gate entrance to the Old City.

Two Jewish youths were injured by rocks while walking in the Old City. Police detained 18 Arab suspects.

Meanwhile, the commercial strike continued in East Jerusalem.

The curfew imposed on the Shuafat refugee camp in Jerusalem after rioting there Saturday night remained in force. But residents were allowed to leave their homes for two hours to

shop for food.

Shuafat is the second site within the Jerusalem municipality ever to be placed under curfew. The Arab neighborhood of A-Tur on the Mount of Olives was under curfew for 24 hours on Jan. 23 and 24.

West Bank Mostly Quiet

Much of the West Bank was under tight curfew Monday, including Nablus, Tulkarm, Kalkilya, Anabta and Beit Umar, where three Palestinian rioters were killed Sunday. Refugee camps in the Nablus and Ramallah areas also remained under curfew.

Violent outbursts were reported from several localities in the territory, but by and large the West Bank was quiet Monday, though tension ran high. A general strike was called to mark the 60th day since the current wave of disturbances began in early December.

Many Arab workers did not report to their jobs in Israel. Public transportation was irregular throughout the territory. Arab municipal governments, one of the few symbols of self-rule, seemed about to fall apart.

Members of the town councils of Ramallah and El-Birch announced their resignations. A week ago, three members of the Nablus city council resigned. Observers say it is a matter of time before Arab mayors and other council members succumb to Palestinian nationalist pressure to quit.

Most West Bank mayors were appointed to office by the Israeli authorities. There has not been an election in the territory since 1976.

Meanwhile, Premier Shamir took sharp issue with Gen. Dan Shomron, the IDF chief of staff, who told the Cabinet on Sunday that reprisals by Jewish settlers in the West Bank were escalating the violence.

Shamir Defends Settlers

Shamir insisted Monday that there have been no confrontations between the settlers and the IDF. He said the settlers are cooperating fully with the security forces.

The IDF suspects that the vandalizing of 50 Arab-owned cars in Hebron over the weekend was the work of Jewish militants from the adjacent township of Kiryat Arba. The army also blamed settlers for a motorcade demonstration and smashing windows in the Arab town of Anabta last week.

Shamir rejected comments by Mayor Teddy Kollek of Jerusalem that Jewish-Arab coexistence in the capital is now dead. He said he was confident that in the long run, Jews and Arabs would live peacefully together "in Eretz Israel," the biblical term for the Jewish state, which often connotes a "Greater Israel."

Reserve Gen. Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, a former coordinator of government affairs in the administered territories, told Voice of Israel Radio on Monday that the territories are presently under the rule of young mobs.

But he warned that the IDF's "iron fist" policy has only accelerated the unrest. Ben-Eliezer suggested that Israel engage immediately in political talks with Palestinian leaders in the territories.

Meanwhile, Gen. Uri Saguy, head of the IDF's ground forces command, told military correspondents Monday that the need to suppress the violence in the territories has interrupted the training of regular soldiers.

HUSSEIN TO ADDRESS EUROPEANS; MINISTERS TO ISSUE STATEMENT

By David Kantor

BONN, Feb. 8 (JTA) -- King Hussein of Jordan arrived here Sunday night on a three-day visit that will be highlighted by his address Tuesday to the foreign ministers of the 12 European Community member states.

The Jordanian ruler is expected to continue to lobby strenuously for an international peace conference, which he insists he must have as an umbrella for negotiations with Israel. The idea has been supported by the EC in the past.

The foreign ministers, who constitute the EC Council of Ministers, currently under the chairmanship of West Germany, is considered likely to issue a new statement on the Arab-Israeli conflict after their meeting with Hussein.

While it is rare for a visiting foreign leader to address the Council of Ministers, it is not without precedent. Last year, the privilege was accorded Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, who also is a strong supporter of an international peace conference as a prelude to direct negotiations between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

The issue has sharply divided Israel's unity government. The Labor Party backs Peres. Premier Yitzhak Shamir and his Likud bloc are vehemently opposed to the international conference scenario.

West German officials have been preparing the public for a "new European initiative" in the Middle East, implying that a major diplomatic move is imminent. It may be launched with the policy statement the EC ministers are expected to issue after hearing Hussein.

Observers here believe it will go beyond past declarations, such as that issued in Venice in June 1983, which supported Palestinian rights to self-determination and called for the Palestine Liberation Organization to be "associated" with future peace negotiations.

Brussels Statement, Too

Another declaration on the Middle East is expected to emerge from a meeting in Brussels on Thursday and Friday of the heads of state and government of the 12 EC nations.

That meeting will be devoted mainly to economic issues, but the Middle East situation is considered almost certain to be on the agenda.

Israeli diplomats are waging an uphill battle, meanwhile, to persuade the Strasbourg-based Parliament of Europe to ratify a series of trade accords Israel has signed with the EC.

The Parliament of Europe is the EC's legislative body. Its ratification of the accords, normally a routine matter, was delayed last month in what was seen as an expression of displeasure with the harsh measures employed by Israel to quell Palestinian rioting in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The accords affect Israeli products on the European market, particularly agricultural exports. They would reduce some tariffs and eliminate others. Failure to ratify them would not only impose hardships on Israeli exporters, but would be seen worldwide as a form of economic sanctions against Israel.

West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl has spoken out against economic sanctions, which he believes would be counterproductive to the peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict.

But several factions in the European Parliament are set against ratification. Parliamentary

leaders were to decide Monday whether to bring the matter to the floor for a vote.

Several of them told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency on Monday that further delay would be in Israel's long-term interest, because a vote this week may well result in a negative outcome.

Any treaty or accord must be endorsed by at least 200 of the Parliament's 518 deputies. On the average, no more than 350 deputies show up for any session.

"We know that Israeli exporters are losing heavily," one leading deputy told the JTA. "But a possible defeat on the Parliament's floor could have serious political and legal repercussions. Maybe it's a good idea to wait another few weeks," the deputy said.

CANDIDATES WOO JEWS IN IOWA

By Andrew Silow Carroll

NEW YORK, Feb. 8 (JTA) -- There are probably dozens of states where the Jewish vote counts proportionately more than it does in Iowa.

But Iowa is the setting for the first round of presidential nominating caucuses, and candidates have wooed Jewish voters with no less enthusiasm than they have farmers, fundamentalists and grandmothers.

Well, maybe not grandmothers.

For instance, Sen. Paul Simon (D-Ill.) and Rep. Jack Kemp (R-N.Y.) accepted invitations to speak after Shabbat morning services at Tifereth Israel Synagogue, the Conservative congregation in Des Moines.

"Some of the congregation did not want candidates here at all. But we felt they should be courting us as well," said Rabbi Jonathan Maltzman.

At Congregation B'nai Jeshurun, the Reform synagogue in Des Moines, Rabbi Steven Fink respectfully turned down the requests of campaign staffers to host speaking engagements, rallies and endorsements.

Still, said Fink, his congregation of 300 families remains "intensely political," and he was planning to attend his first caucus at a nearby junior high school Monday night.

Fewer than 7,000 Jews live in Iowa -- 3,000 in Des Moines, 750 in Iowa City and 700 in Sioux City. As a result, said Elaine Steinger, acting executive director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Des Moines, "the Middle East is by and large not a major caucus issue," even if it is of primary concern among Jews.

But Jewish issues are far from forgotten. There are other issues of concern to Jews -- the rise of the religious right, for one -- and Jewish Iowans are well represented on the staffs of presidential candidates and in the party organizations.

Lynn Cutler, formerly of Waterloo, is vice chairman of the Democratic National Committee, and Arthur Davis, a member of B'nai Jeshurun in Des Moines, is former chairman of the Iowa Democratic Party.

According to Doris Rosenthal, executive director of the Sioux City Jewish Federation, Jewish voters in Iowa seem divided in their support between Simon and Democratic Gov. Michael Dukakis of Massachusetts. Rabbi Fink mentioned the same two names.

"I can't believe how seriously they take politics here," added Fink, who called his congregants' reaction no different from most Iowans: "hysterical."

U.S. CAMPUSES QUIET ABOUT UNREST, BUT JEWS SAY THEY'RE CONCERNED

By Andrew Silow Carroll

NEW YORK, Feb. 8 (JTA) -- Jewish and Arab university students feel the same anguish, anger and confusion over the Palestinian riots and Israeli countermeasures being felt in the general Jewish community, students and observers say.

But that concern has not been translated into the activism or protests that were the hallmark of the previous generation of students. Indeed, American college campuses have been relatively free of demonstrations either favoring or opposing the events in Israel.

Jewish student leaders and professionals who work with them are torn between feelings of relief that Arab groups are less numerous and vocal than they have been in the past, and of chagrin that Jewish students have been unable, or unwilling, to publicly articulate their feelings about Israel.

"The overall feeling is one of great upset and confusion at what is going on," said Joseph Kohane, acting director of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

"Students have a classic confusion between their commitment to Israel and its need to protect itself, and questioning whether the level of violence is necessary. Students feel a little bit trapped between those feelings."

Jewish Students Discussing Issue

In response, at the University of Michigan and most of the more than 15 universities surveyed for this article, Jewish students are beginning to meet to discuss their feelings about Israel. Often Arab student leaders also are invited, but extremists on both sides are excluded.

Such a dialogue is being formed at the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana. Ten percent of the students there -- about 3,500 -- are Jewish, of whom some 400 are active in Jewish activities, according to Hillel director Rabbi Jay R. (sic) Davis.

"I've heard people say, 'What are we to do to make the situation (for Israel) better?' and 'Should we talk against our own in public?'" according to sophomore Aaron Becker, president of the Hillel coordinating committee at Illinois.

"The Jewish students are very confused," agreed Orli Ronen, a non-degree student and president of the university Israeli Student Organization. "A lot of students don't agree with the Israeli government, but they don't have an address for their criticism."

Students and Hillel directors at other schools also are reporting relative quiet. Sam Mendales, executive director of the B'nai B'rith Hillel Council of Greater Boston, which serves the major campuses there, said, "Students are concerned up to a point, and Jewish students are going through a lot of soul searching. Arab students don't seem to be well organized."

In Boston, southern California and the Mid-Atlantic states, discussions or regularly scheduled lectures by Mideast experts are sponsored through Hillels and other Jewish groups.

But many campus professionals, especially those who attended college in the 1960s, are distressed that too little programming is being conducted through student initiative.

"Students are very angry, but Jewish activism is down. In the '60s, Jews crawled out of

the woodwork over things like the (unrest) to express support of Israel, said Rabbi Norman Weitzner, Hillel director at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, N.J.

Rabbi Chaim Seidler-Feller, Hillel director at the University of California at Los Angeles, conceded he is pessimistic about student activism. In general, he said, Jewish students are shunning Jewish and Israeli cultural activities and Judaic and Middle Eastern studies, and failing to form key coalitions with other minority groups.

"I characterize the reaction (to the unrest) to be annoyingly docile. I'm not upset that the antagonists are not well organized. But Jewish indifference is very serious," he said. "It's upsetting that Israel is near crisis, a turning point, and most students seem to be unaware."

Of course, perceptions of the level of activism are subjective. Dan Hacker, a senior at the University of California at Berkeley and a member of the Israel Action Committee there, said, "The level of activism is very high now. We've had at least two meetings, and over 40 people attended each." The Israel Action Committee is sponsoring a pro-Israel rally on Feb. 10, and Hacker said he expects "a lot of screaming on both sides."

Little Arab Activity

However Jewish involvement is viewed by Jews on campus, a consensus emerges that Arab organizers have yet to capitalize on the unrest. "Over the last few years, Arab organizations have not gotten the money they previously received from donors, and numbers are down," said Jeffrey Ross of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

Among other reasons for their declining influence, said Ross, who directs the ADL's Department of Campus Affairs and Higher Education, is a decrease in the numbers of militant Iranian students studying abroad and, until recently, the tendency of the Iran-Iraq war to divert attention away from the Arab-Israeli conflict. He also suggested that graphic news coverage of Palestinian-Israeli violence leaves Arab students little else to say.

Khalil Jahshan, a member of the board of directors of the Association of Arab-American University Graduates, said he senses an increase in activity in support of the Palestinian cause.

Whether that means more campuses will begin to resemble Columbia University here, where activities are being planned on an almost daily basis, or the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, where, according to Hillel director Jeremy Brochin, "things are surprisingly quiet," most likely depends on an outside factor.

That is the Middle East peace process itself, and what effect it may have on quelling the rioting.

In the meantime, say staff members of Hillels and other organizations, including the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council and the University Services Department of the American Zionist Youth Foundation, Jewish students have shown a hunger for information about the situation in Israel.

They have a "need for history," said Stephen Schwartz, chairman of NJCRAC's Campus Advisory Committee. "We can't expect students born in 1968 to have any emotional feeling for the '67 or '73 wars. They are dealing only with the realities of what they've grown up with."

(JTA New York student intern Haviva Krasner contributed to this report.)