

ARAB STRIKE, RIOTS CONTINUE AS THREE ARE TRIED FOR BEATINGS By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, March 17 (JTA) -- The Israel Defense Force's attempts to break a general strike in the West Bank appeared to have backfired Thursday.

The strike, which was called for two days ending Wednesday, continued Thursday in various parts of the territory. On instructions from Palestinian nationalist activists, merchants were ordered to open their shops in the morning until noon to allow local residents to purchase essentials.

The IDF over the past two days has been forcing shop owners to do the reverse: close in the morning and open for business at noon. Civil administration sources said that measure was taken to break the power of the underground Palestinian leadership.

But local merchants responded by keeping closed all day. Bethlehem, for example, which usually buzzes with activity in the morning, was completely paralyzed by the strike Thursday.

A curfew, imposed on the town of Tulkarm after rioting Wednesday night, was lifted Thursday. Security forces made arrests during the night at several trouble spots, including Tulkarm, Jenin and neighboring refugee camps.

Curfews were still in effect in the Jenin and Jalazoun refugee camps, and the towns of Kalkilya and Azoun, all scenes of heavy rioting this week.

Several Molotov cocktails were thrown at Israeli vehicles in parts of the West Bank during the past 24 hours, but there were no casualties or damage. A border police patrol was stoned Thursday as it passed Herod's Gate in the Old City of Jerusalem. One police officer suffered a slight head injury.

Soldiers Go On Trial

Meanwhile, three IDF soldiers charged with aggravated assault went on trial in the Jaffa military court Thursday. Their commanding officer is accused of inappropriate behavior. All pleaded not guilty.

The soldiers were filmed by a CBS television camera crew kicking and beating two handcuffed Palestinians near a military prison in Nablus on Feb. 5.

Three other soldiers involved in burying an Arab youth alive in a West Bank village were also scheduled to go on trial Thursday.

The sharp divisions in the country over the IDF's handling of unrest in the territories has spread to the army. About 250 reservists, up to the rank of brigadier general, signed a petition supporting IDF policy in the territories and strongly rejected criticism of the military. It was sent to Premier Yitzhak Shamir, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Chief of Staff Dan Shomron.

The reservists, who said they did not represent any political party or movement, stated in their petition that they stood behind the soldiers who must "struggle with agitators who humiliate and attack them."

Meanwhile, a delegation of five members of the Greek Parliament who completed a tour of the

West Bank and Gaza Strip sharply condemned Israeli policies there Thursday. They told reporters they found hunger and a shortage of medicine and said they would try to raise money and recruit volunteer doctors for the Palestinians.

They said that under present circumstances they could not see any way to "normalize" Greek relations with Israel. The two countries have diplomatic representation only on the consular level.

Yuval Neeman, leader of the ultranationalist Tehiya party, denounced the Greek parliamentarians. He charged that they spoke out of hatred for Israel, not sympathy with the Palestinians.

KNESSET DEBATE TURNS VERBAL BRAWL AS LABOR, LIKUD CLASH ON PEACE By Hugh Orgel and Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, March 17 (JTA) -- An angry Knesset debate over the European Community's refusal to ratify its new trade agreements with Israel turned into a verbal brawl between Labor Party and Likud members Wednesday that came close to an exchange of blows.

Likud and other right-wing Knesset members blamed the Laborites for everything from Israel's troubles in Europe to the stalled peace process and the unrest in the administered territories.

Their main targets were Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, the Labor Party leader, and his colleague, Abba Eban, chairman of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. They apparently took their cue from Likud Herut hardliner Ariel Sharon, the minister of commerce and industry, who has verbally savaged both men in recent days.

Eban in particular raised the hackles of Likud for going to the United States at the same time Premier Yitzhak Shamir, the Likud leader, is in Washington voicing his opposition to the new American peace initiative.

Uzi Landau of Likud introduced a motion to condemn "Labor's attempts to create American pressure on the prime minister during his visit to the U.S." Peres retorted by denouncing right-wing slurs on his peace policy and his staff as the "slander brigade."

Aharon Nahmias of the Labor Party shouted across the chamber to Landau, "You are a master of vilification, of slander," and Peres added for good measure, "You are dust beneath Eban's feet."

Likud's David Magen countered by saying, "It seems that the foreign minister is rattled." The foreign minister, in turn, reminded Likud of the fiasco of its 1982 war in Lebanon, where 650 Israeli soldiers were killed and 4,000 wounded, according to Peres, without achieving a single objective.

'Leading The Nation Astray'

Likud party whip Yehoshua Matza accused Peres of "leading the nation astray with fakery. You are dissension within the nation," he said.

Yossi Sarid of the left-leaning Citizens Rights Movement, called out to the Likud benches, "What dreadful rabble you are."

Despite the din, Peres upheld his policy of trading land for peace, a formula greeted by

shouts of derision from Likud. Israel must have peace, must refrain from ruling 1.5 million Arabs and must speak out clearly, the foreign minister said, a reference to the divided Labor-Likud coalition government, which remains deadlocked over the peace process and unable to make any decisions.

During the verbal slugfest, members of both parties mounted their seats or stepped into the aisles and approached one another with raised fists.

Order was restored only when Knesset Speaker Shlomo Hillel of Labor, who had left the chamber for awhile, returned and took over from Deputy Speaker Dan Tichon of Likud.

SECURITY FOR PERES STRENGTHENED

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 17 (JTA) -- Security protection for Foreign Minister Shimon Peres has been beefed up because of reportedly "clear signs that right-wing extremists will attempt to attack the head of the Labor Party," it was reported Wednesday.

Peres may be in danger of physical assault because of his political stance in favor of an international peace conference and territorial compromise, which is in direct contradiction of the position taken by Premier Yitzhak Shamir and his Likud bloc.

Peres has been called a "traitor" by Likud and other right-wing opponents and accused of "serving the Arabs' interests."

Agencies responsible for protecting leading Israeli public figures are said to believe that verbal attacks on Peres could incite people with an "extremist nationalist outlook" to assault him directly.

VILLAGE VOICE PHOTOGRAPHER DENIES HE THREW ROCKS AT IDF SOLDIERS

By Andrew Silow Carroll

NEW YORK, March 17 (JTA) -- A New York free-lance photographer denied charges Thursday that he was throwing stones at Israeli soldiers who grabbed him by the hair, broke his cameras and seized a roll of film during demonstrations in the Balata refugee camp near Nablus on March 7.

William Biggart, 40, told reporters that he had been taking photographs during a 45-minute demonstration when Israeli soldiers closed in on rock-throwing rioters. Biggart stumbled while running from the soldiers, he said, and was detained by three soldiers who "went a little crazy."

At a news conference at the offices of the Village Voice, the weekly newspaper for which Biggart had been under assignment prior to the incident, the photographer displayed two damaged cameras, one with the back torn off. He also displayed some of the pictures of Palestinian boys and women he took before and after the incident.

"They knew I was press and they just wanted to intimidate me," Biggart said of the soldiers.

But the officer who apprehended Biggart, Ziyad Abu Yamin of the Combat Engineers Corps, told the Israeli daily Maariv on Wednesday that he started chasing "someone" who threw a rock that hit the leg of a fellow soldier.

"I started chasing after him and he ducked into the alleyways. But there were puddles there and lots of mud, and he slipped and fell into

one," said Abu Yamin. "I came up to detain him, and was amazed to see a number of cameras dangling around his neck."

Biggart denied the officer's account and other reports that he had been wearing a kaffiyeh, the checkered headdress worn by Arabs.

No charges have been brought against Biggart by the IDF or civilian authorities in Nablus, although they are continuing to investigate the incident, according to Barukh Binah, spokesman for the Israeli Consulate in New York. Binah said Biggart did not appear for questioning after being summoned to civilian court in Nablus.

Biggart said that he had given his own account to an IDF major at military headquarters, but the summons to appear in civilian court did not arrive until the day before he was scheduled to leave the country, five days after the incident. Biggart said he consulted the U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem and they approved of his decision to leave the country March 13.

Editor Sends Protest Letter

Martin Gottlieb, editor in chief of the Village Voice, sent a letter Thursday to Israeli Consul General Moshe Yegar protesting the incident. In the letter, Gottlieb asked for a withdrawal of the allegations against Biggart, the return of a press pass that was seized in the incident and an apology "for the unprovoked physical attack and the destruction of his film."

Gottlieb told reporters at the news conference that the incident was "an act of misportrayal that will further a bad government policy" on press access.

Binah said Thursday afternoon that the consul general had not yet received the letter, and that it was "typical that the paper did not wait before a response came to gain support on an unfounded base."

(Tel Aviv correspondent Hugh Orgel contributed to this story.)

ISRAELI AIR FORCE RAIDS TERRORIST STRONGHOLDS SOUTH OF BEIRUT

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 17 (JTA) -- The Israeli air force attacked terrorist bases in the hill country south of Beirut on Thursday morning, a military spokesman announced. All aircraft returned safely to their bases.

It was the second Israeli raid on Lebanese territory within a week. On March 21, Israeli air force jets bombed targets in two refugee camps east of Sidon.

The spokesman said the targets of Thursday's raid were bases used by terrorists to plan and launch attacks on Israel. Sources in Beirut said the raid on the Shouf mountain area southeast of the Lebanese capital hit bases of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a terrorist group headed by George Habash that broke away from the mainstream Palestine Liberation Organization years ago.

The sources said the target area is also the turf of Walid Jumblatt's Druse militia. Its bases as well as a multi-story building used by the Popular Front were hit. Beirut's airport was closed for 15 minutes during the air raid.

According to the Beirut sources, the attack was retaliation for two Katyusha rocket attacks on Galilee this month. The latest occurred Wednesday morning, but caused no casualties and only minor damage.

**SAFeway SETTLES BOYCOTT CASE,
WILL PAY MILLION-DOLLAR FINE**
By Winston Pickett
Northern California Jewish Bulletin

SAN FRANCISCO, March 17 (JTA) -- Safeway Stores Inc. is claiming a victory in agreeing Tuesday to pay \$995,000 to the U.S. Commerce Department to settle charges that the supermarket chain cooperated with the Arab boycott against Israel.

But an American Jewish Congress boycott expert is calling the record settlement the actual victory as well as further proof that the government's Office of Anti-Boycott Compliance is doing its job.

Peter Magowan, board chairman and chief executive officer of Safeway, based in Oakland, Calif., said the cash settlement, a fraction of the one originally levied, "is a victory for us and in no way constitutes an admission by the company that we violated the law."

Moreover, he said, Safeway's conduct has been vindicated by the fact "that its practices did not merit the harsh penalties the government previously sought."

Last August the Commerce Department charged Safeway with 449 violations of the Export Administration Act of 1977, imposed a \$4.5 million fine on the supermarket chain and sought a two-year suspension of the company's export privileges.

Besides reducing the fine in Tuesday's settlement, the government dropped its demand to keep Safeway from doing business overseas.

Nevertheless, the penalty is the largest of its kind. Will Maslow, AJCongress legal counsel and author of its monthly Boycott Report, called the agreement "a victory for the OAC (Office of Anti-boycott Compliance) and shows how strong its case was from the very beginning."

The Commerce Department originally charged Safeway with supplying approximately 10 stores in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia between 1981 and 1986 with a list of the company's suppliers, some of whom were Israeli. According to the OAC, that list subsequently enabled the Arab-run grocery stores to boycott certain Israeli-manufactured products.

The Arab stores were licensed to operate under the Safeway name, but were not owned by the company. Safeway claims it no longer sells products to the Arab stores.

Safeway also was accused of requiring one of its wholesalers to submit the names of its manufacturers to an office in Kuwait for boycott clearance and of answering a Kuwaiti government questionnaire regarding its relationship with Israel and Israeli companies.

Denied Wrongdoing

At the time, Safeway vigorously denied any wrongdoing and charged the government with over-zealous application of technicalities within the boycott law.

Bernat Rosner, Safeway's chief legal counsel, said this week that Safeway was "so confident of our case, that had we chosen to pursue it to the finish, not only would we have won, it would have forced a re-evaluation of the way in which the anti-boycott law is administered."

Maslow disagreed. "The fact that Safeway denies it's guilty is meaningless, because no company is required to do so," he said, calling the company's response the equivalent of a no-

contest plea.

Moreover, Maslow contended that the settlement "is yet another indication of how well-prepared the OAC cases are, that they can prove them to the hilt, and that companies, when faced with the evidence, are always willing to settle."

Safeway's own decision to settle may have been based in part on the number of Jewish shoppers that patronize the store. The company is one of the largest grocery store chains in the United States and the firm has corporate and personal ties to Israel and the Jewish community here.

**POSSIBILITY OF MISTRIAL LOOMS
IN TRIAL OF WHITE SUPREMACISTS**
By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, March 17 (JTA) -- The trial of 14 white supremacists in Fort Smith, Ark.; could end in a mistrial, the federal judge trying the case has warned.

U.S. District Court Judge Morris Arnold last week told the federal prosecuting attorneys in the case, Michael Fitzhugh and Steven Snyder, that much of the evidence being presented in court is "hearsay" and that he has been allowing its presentation to continue because the prosecution promised to corroborate it later, according to Larry Lee, a reporter for the Southwest Times Record in Fort Smith who has been covering the trial.

Lee explained that hearsay evidence is normally not allowed, but that exception is made in the case of conspiracy. The white supremacists indicted for attempting to overthrow the United States government are standing trial on the charge of seditious conspiracy.

Arnold reportedly has had to instruct the jury repeatedly to ignore evidence as hearsay, and said that if he has to instruct the jury to ignore evidence too frequently, he will have no choice but to declare a mistrial, Lee reported.

The trial was slowed down early this week with the death of Arnold's father on Saturday. About two days' proceedings were canceled because of this.

Lee also said that several defense attorneys told him there probably will be a direct acquittal for two of the defendants in the case, William Wade and Robert Smalley, because there was reportedly no evidence against them that they had participated in any plot to overthrow the government.

Prosecution attorneys could not be reached for comment. But according to Lee, the prosecution was expected to rest its case as early as Friday or Monday.

Wade is charged with attempting to kill federal Judge H. Franklin Waters and FBI special agent Jack Knox for their roles in the trial of an Arkansas couple who had been convicted of harboring Gordon Kahl, a fugitive member of the white supremacist group Posse Comitatus.

Smalley is charged in the plot to overthrow the federal government by force.

The possibility of a mistrial is discussed at great length by Robert Miles, a key defendant who allegedly was part of a core group that initiated a plot to overthrow the government. Miles, a former grand dragon of the Ku Klux Klan and so-called ambassador-at-large of the neo-Nazi Aryan Nations, reports the news in two recorded telephone reports on "hotlines" of the white supremacist movement.

**WHAT IS A CONSERVATIVE JEW?
DEBATE PERSISTS DESPITE NEW STATEMENT**
By Andrew Silow Carroll

NEW YORK, March 17 (JTA) -- Judaism's Conservative movement was founded in Germany in 1845 by former Reform rabbis who felt that Reform had grown too liberal in its rejection of tradition.

But it took more than 140 years before the three major institutions of Conservative Judaism, whose 2 million members make it the largest branch of U.S. Judaism, issued the movement's first common statement of principles.

The statement, released last week, finally attempts to answer where Conservatism stands on such issues as belief in God, the role of women in Judaism, religious pluralism, and, most importantly, the movement's approach to halacha, or Jewish law.

But despite these answers, contained in a 57-page booklet called "Emet Ve-Emunah," or Light and Belief, questions remain:

- * Can a movement that has long defined itself by what it is not -- neither as liberal as Reform nor as unbending as Orthodox -- create a defining ideology?

- * Can such a definition reconcile differences that have developed between the movement's own "liberal" and "traditional" factions?

- * Will the statement achieve one of its goals, to reinvigorate a movement whose once extraordinary growth has levelled off over the last 20 years?

The leaders of the Jewish Theological Seminary, the Rabbinical Assembly and the United Synagogue of America, respectively the academic, clerical and congregational bodies of the movement, answer yes to all three questions.

In a joint statement, they called the document "a thorough exploration of the core of Conservative belief, allowing for diversity in thinking, but setting an even stronger guideline for the knowledge and observance" of halacha.

The chairman of the 35-member commission that prepared the document, Rabbi Robert Gordis, acknowledged during an interview that it was a challenge to create "a positive program for Conservative Jewry," a movement that he said "is not growing."

Attracting new adherents, said Gordis, means responding to the needs of lay people, who are seeking specific parameters of belief. "People today are looking for a point of view. They're asking, 'What is Conservative Judaism?'" said Gordis, a member of the JTS faculty for more than 30 years and a past president of the Rabbinical Assembly. "He finds out when he turns to this pamphlet."

Concerning ideological differences within the movement, Gordis said the statement was devised "in a spirit of fellowship" rather than "a spirit of confrontation." Gordis said he insisted on the appointment of a commission member who represented the "right wing" of the movement.

Nothing New, Says Critic

But according to that member, Rabbi David Novack of New York, "I don't think that it (the statement) is terribly successful. It doesn't indicate anything people don't know already."

Novack is vice president of the Union for Traditional Conservative Judaism, which was founded in 1983 to counter a "liberal" trend in Conservatism that culminated in the decision to

ordain women as rabbis. It claims a membership of 5,000 families and 500 rabbis.

Novack maintains that a gulf remains between traditional Conservatives such as those in the union and much of the Conservative mainstream. They agree on the fundamentals of Conservatism -- respect and observance of the halacha along with a belief that it may be adapted to social and technological change.

"We're not opposed to changes," said Novack, "but they have to be justified according to the halacha." By allowing women to serve as rabbis and permitting automobiles to be driven to the synagogue on Sabbath, said Novack by way of example, the Conservative mainstream is saying, "We follow halacha unless we don't feel like it."

The statement of principles, said Novack, is a statement of unity only in that it includes both sides in key debates. The section on women rabbis, for example, "pays tribute" to the expanded role of women within Judaism, but acknowledges that their functioning as rabbis or cantors has not been unanimously accepted among Conservative leaders.

Said Novack, who expressed annoyance that he was unable to see a final version of the statement before it was presented this week, "I fail to see that it's going to effect more unity."

Code Of Ethics Sought

The statement also has detractors within the "mainstream," as Franklin Kreutzer of Miami, president of the United Synagogue of America, pointed out.

Calling the statement "an historic first step in the correct direction," Kreutzer said nonetheless that "the laity would rather have had a comprehensive ideology rather than principles. The laity is looking for words that can be understood and used by practicing, committed Jews in everyday life."

Kreutzer, an attorney, said the laity was not sufficiently represented on the commission and that the rabbis on the panel "really had a different view and different agenda of where it should go."

Kreutzer said the laity desires an ideology that "clears up the areas of kashrut and Shabbat observance, the appropriate roles of women. They need to talk about morality and ethics in business life, personal life."

He said the movement must take clear stands on those issues -- even in the face of ideological divisions.

"I can't believe that there can be more strain than we've already had," he said. "We've crossed many difficult hurdles and the movement is still together."

The statement contains no single, clear ideology, explained Rabbi Wolfe Kelman, executive vice president of the Rabbinical Assembly, because it emphasizes what he called the perennial hallmark of Conservatism: "a uniformity of deed, but pluralism of ideology."

The statement, said Kelman, "is not a catechism. There is no hierarchy that lays down what is permissible."

The statement was expected to have its first test this week, when it formed the core of study sessions at the winter meeting of the Rabbinical Assembly in Kiamasha Lake, N.Y. Following the meeting, it will be distributed among the movement's 850 synagogues. To receive a copy, send \$4 to: United Synagogue Book Service, 155 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10010.