

EGYPT IS AWARDED TABA IN FINAL ARBITRATION

By Tamar Levy

GENEVA, Sept. 29 (JTA) -- An international arbitration panel, by a 4-1 vote, awarded the Taba area to Egypt on Thursday, but left in question a 200-yard strip of beach over which Israel and Egypt will have to come to a separate understanding.

Nevertheless, the 6-year-old boundary dispute on Taba and 13 other locations claimed by both countries was finally settled.

In Washington, the U.S. State Department was quick to praise the outcome. "We are pleased that this longstanding difference between Egypt and Israel has been amicably resolved," department spokeswoman Phyllis Oakley said Thursday.

"It is now up to the parties to implement the decision fully, expeditiously and in good faith as they have agreed to do, and as the (Camp David) peace treaty requires," she added.

The verdict was announced at ceremonies in the Geneva city hall, two years after Israel and Egypt agreed to binding arbitration. The process began in Geneva in December 1986.

At the United Nations, meanwhile, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said Thursday afternoon that Israel would honor the judgment of the arbitration panel.

Peres told reporters he made that commitment to the foreign minister of Egypt, Esmat Abdel Meguid, with whom he had just concluded a 45-minute meeting.

Neither man would say when the decision would be implemented. They explained that they had to return to their respective capitals to discuss the matter and further study the arbitration panel's ruling.

Peres told reporters that Israel honors its 1979 peace treaty with Egypt, and inasmuch as the Taba arbitration was provided for under the peace treaty, it was going to honor that as well.

Peres refused to respond to charges by Premier Yitzhak Shamir, who accused him of being responsible for the outcome of the Taba arbitration.

Shocked By Debate

A close aide to Peres said the foreign minister and his entourage were "shocked" by the political debate initiated by Likud as a result of the Taba decision.

The aide accused Likud of putting petty party interests above the national interests of the country. He said Peres would not respond until his plane lands in Israel Friday afternoon.

The arbitration panel in Geneva, consisting of five experts in international law from Sweden, Switzerland, France, Israel and Egypt, ruled unanimously in Egypt's favor on five border locations and in favor of Israel on four.

But the ruling on the location of five other border markers, resulting in the award of Taba to Egypt, was by a 4-1 decision.

Professor Ruth Lapidot, the Israeli member of the panel, dissented in a written statement issued as an appendix to the ruling.

She said the majority had sanctioned as border markers "pillars erroneously erected at

locations inconsistent with the lawfully recognized international boundary between Egypt and the former mandated territory of Palestine."

That line was originally marked in 1906 by an agreement between Britain, which had asserted a protectorate over Egypt, and the Ottoman Turks, who then ruled Palestine.

Taba is a 765-yard strip of beach on the Red Sea adjoining the Israeli resort town of Eilat. The panel, which inspected the site last February, left the final 200-yard stretch from the beach to the edge of the sea undefined.

This leaves unsettled the status of the Avia Sonesta, a luxury hotel Israelis erected on the beach some years ago.

Nabil el-Arabi, the Egyptian ambassador to the United Nations in Geneva, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, "We are very satisfied and as far as we are concerned, the issue is over."

Immediately after the verdict was announced, Arabi met with Avraham Tamir, director general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry and the ministry's legal adviser, Robi Sabel.

Tamir said the two countries would have to come to an understanding over the unresolved portion of the Taba boundary.

The Israeli delegation which came to Geneva to hear the decision reportedly is of two opinions.

Some members say Israel must stick to the agreement and implement it. Others say the uncertain aspects should be exploited to gain time.

(JTA correspondents Yitzhak Rabi at the United Nations and Howard Rosenberg in Washington contributed to this report.)

PERES MEETS WITH SOVIET MINISTER, SAYS EMIGRATION CHANGES SIGNIFICANT
By Yitzhak Rabi

NEW YORK, Sept. 29 (JTA) -- Israel is satisfied that the Soviet Union is taking meaningful measures to remove obstacles in the way of Jewish emigration, Israeli officials indicated Thursday, after a meeting here between Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Petrovsky.

But differences between the two countries remain. Moscow is insisting that the restoration of diplomatic relations between the two countries be conditional on the convening of an international conference for Middle East peace.

Israel further finds objectionable the Soviets' continued elevation of the Palestine Liberation Organization as the rightful representative of the Palestinian people, entitled to speak for them in the peace process.

Those were the key points that emerged after the two diplomats conferred for 90 minutes at the Park Lane Hotel, a meeting that had been scheduled to last only a half-hour.

Petrovsky was substituting for Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, who was suddenly called home for an urgent meeting Friday of the Soviet Communist Party's Central Committee.

Petrovsky and Peres each answered reporters' questions after they get-together. The substance of their meeting was elaborated on later by an aide to Peres, who briefed Israeli reporters.

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According to the aide, the two discussed the situation in the Middle East, bilateral relations and the issues of Soviet Jewry.

Petrovsky indicated that a story appearing in The New York Times Thursday regarding the Soviets relaxing steps in the emigration process was essentially correct.

Liberalization Policy

The Soviet Union is undergoing a process of liberalization, including changes in its immigration policy, Petrovsky said.

"The highest international standards will be applied" by the Soviet Union on the subject of emigration, Petrovsky said.

One measure eliminated, according to The Times, was the requirement that would-be emigrants must have an invitation from a close blood relative living abroad.

According to the aide, Peres noted to Petrovsky that there has been real progress on the issue of Soviet Jewry since his meeting with Shevardnadze here in September 1987.

He said that all "prisoners of Zion" have been released and Jewish emigration has increased tenfold.

But Peres emphasized to Petrovsky the importance of giving Soviet Jews cultural autonomy and freedom to learn Hebrew and open more synagogues.

He also presented the Soviet official with a list of Jewish refuseniks asking permission to emigrate, the aide said.

According to the aide, Petrovsky indicated that the Soviet Union is adopting a new approach, and that these subjects are being discussed in the USSR today.

After the meeting, Peres told reporters "We had a very friendly talk. We have made some progress, but not enough."

Peres said he sees no reason why the Soviet Union will not re-establish diplomatic relations with Israel.

However, Petrovsky said that Moscow will resume relations with Israel once there is progress for peace in the form of an international peace conference.

Instrument Of Peace

Peres, who supports the idea of an international conference to lead to direct Israeli-Arab negotiations, nevertheless pointed out that diplomatic ties "are not a prize but an instrument" to advance the peace process.

Petrovsky also said that Moscow views the PLO as the only legal representative of the Palestinian people that should participate in a peace conference.

According to Peres' aide, the foreign minister disagreed with the Russian assessment that the PLO is in the process of change toward realism and restraint.

With respect to bilateral issues, Petrovsky said the Soviets had decided to give additional three-month visas to the Israeli consular delegation, which has been in Moscow since July.

Their original visas were only for two months. The Soviet deputy foreign minister said he hoped Israel would reciprocate and extend the visas of the Soviet consular mission, which has been in Tel Aviv since June 1987. Israel has regularly extended those visas.

Peres suggested, according to his aide, that the Soviet Union expand economic and cultural ties with Israel.

PROPOSED SOVIET EMIGRATION REFORMS WELCOMED, BUT SEEN AS INSUFFICIENT

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Sept. 29 (JTA) -- Soviet Jewry activists welcomed proposed reforms in the Soviet emigration code, but said the reforms would still not bring the Soviets into compliance with international human rights accords.

They were responding to a report in The New York Times Thursday that Soviet authorities had informed U.S. officials of some proposed changes during Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze's visit here Sept. 22 to 23.

One proposed change would end the requirement that potential emigrants receive a letter of invitation from family members abroad.

Also, those denied emigration on the grounds of access to "state secrets" could not be denied on those grounds, after a certain number of months or years had elapsed. Anyone whose parents refused to allow them to emigrate could appeal to a judicial board.

State Department spokeswoman Phyllis Oakley said Thursday that "even with these changes, not all individuals will still be able to exercise their right to leave the Soviet Union." Oakley said she was not aware of any timetable guiding Soviet enactment of the proposed changes.

Micha Naftalin, national director of the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, said that when he visited Moscow in June, Soviet officials had discussed precisely the proposed reforms and promised that they would be placed in draft form by the end of September.

Morris Abram, chairman of both the National Conference on Soviet Jewry and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, called the possible changes a "hopeful sign."

Nevertheless, he added, "We judge by performance."

Changes Are Coming

Abram, who met Sept. 16 with Secretary of State George Shultz, also said he was not surprised by the possibility of changes. "We have been told for a long time that changes are coming."

A group of Jewish leaders met privately Wednesday night in New York with Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

They discussed Israel's demand that Jews leaving the USSR with Israeli visas go directly to Israel, and not to the United States and other countries, as most now do.

Abram said they agreed on the principle of freedom of choice, and that Peres said it "was not the policy of the Israeli government to coerce anybody."

Naftalin explained that recently, the Soviets have allowed the "overwhelming majority" of Jews immigrating to Israel to receive letters of invitation from even distant direct relatives.

Glenn Richter, national coordinator of the Soviet Struggle for Soviet Jewry, said the possible reforms represent "another dangle of promise in front of the West, just as the Soviets have done many times before."

Richter said that Soviet leaders have previously promised such reforms and have not followed through.

In addition, if the reported possible changes came to pass, they would still not allow an "absolute right to emigrate," he said.

ISRAEL DEFENDS PLASTIC BULLETS IN FACE OF GROWING CRITICISM

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Sept. 29 (JTA) -- In the face of growing international criticism, Israel defended its use of plastic bullets against rioting Palestinians in the territories and explained why they were adopted by the Israel Defense Force a month ago.

A spokesman for Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin on Thursday clarified a statement attributed to Rabin regarding the use of the bullets.

Rabin was quoted as saying, "If more rioters are hurt, that is our intention."

But his communications adviser, Eitan Haber, denied that this meant the IDF is under orders to shoot as many Arabs as possible.

"The shooting of plastic bullets is intended to cause more injuries, but only among the rioters," Haber said.

He insisted they are intended actually to avoid the damage caused by live bullets, and are supposed to be aimed only at the leaders of violent demonstrations, who are usually found at the rear of the demonstrators.

Unit commanders had hoped the plastic bullets would reduce the incidence of stone-throwing. So far, they have not.

The plastic bullets are substitutes for rubber bullets and live ammunition, but have been found to inflict severe wounds and in some cases have been fatal.

Their use has been officially protested to Israel by the United States and Britain.

"We believe that measures must be taken to reduce rather than to increase casualties among Palestinian demonstrators," U.S. State Department spokeswoman Phyllis Oakley said Wednesday.

According to military regulations, plastic bullets may be fired only from distances of at least 230 feet. They must be aimed at the legs, below the knees.

But doctors at Ahali hospital in Gaza testified that eight Palestinians have been killed by plastic bullets in the month since they were first employed.

GAZA MAYOR BURIED BY CROWDS OF CHANTING PALESTINIAN YOUTHS

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Sept. 29 (JTA) -- Radical Palestinian youths used the funeral procession of former Gaza Mayor Rashad a-Shawwa Thursday as cover for a provocative nationalist demonstration.

They carried a huge Palestinian flag, chanted Palestinian songs and slogans and pelted soldiers and journalists with stones. One reporter was slightly injured.

Curfews were imposed on the Gaza suburbs and refugee camps to reduce the number of demonstrators at the funeral. Omar el-Mukhtar Street, the main street of Gaza, was closed off hours before the procession began.

Shawwa, whom the Israeli authorities twice appointed mayor of Gaza and twice deposed, died Tuesday of a heart attack at the age of 79.

Israeli security forces were under orders to exercise maximum restraint. They fired tear gas at one point to scatter stone-throwers, but they did not intervene otherwise.

The soldiers were careful to avoid turning the cortege of a Palestinian moderate into a bloody street confrontation.

Shawwa, although fiercely opposed to Israeli rule in the administered territories, was one of the few Palestinian leaders openly critical of the Palestine Liberation Organization and terrorist tactics.

This earned him the enmity of PLO supporters. They had no qualms, however, about turning his funeral -- a dignified family event attended by dozens of Palestinian notables from the West Bank and members of the foreign diplomatic corps -- into an anti-Israel rally.

Youths, chanting "Israel No -- PLO," took over the procession as it approached the mosque where prayer services for the dead were held.

Three masked youths climbed to the roof of the mosque where they unfurled the black, white and red Palestinian colors, to the cheers of the crowd below.

This was a clear breach of regulations, but the demonstrators were confident that given the nature of the occasion, Israeli troops would not interfere.

As the funeral continued on to the family plot, youths stoned the local police station. At the cemetery, they hurled barrages of stones at a group of reporters on the roof of a nearby building.

The crowd dispersed without incident after the burial services.

U.N. PEACEKEEPING FORCES WIN 1988 NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

JERUSALEM, Sept. 29 (JTA) -- Israel hailed the announcement Thursday that the United Nations peacekeeping forces were awarded this year's Nobel Peace Prize.

"Even more than a prize for existing achievements, this is a testimony of the yearning for peace and understanding," the Israeli Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

The Nobel committee said in Oslo that the 10,000-troop peacekeeping forces were chosen for voluntarily taking on "a demanding and hazardous service in the cause of peace."

U.N. forces are now on patrol in seven trouble spots worldwide, including Afghanistan, the Persian Gulf and Lebanon.

The multinational United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, or UNIFIL, is headquartered at Nakoura on the Lebanese side of the frontier.

UNIFIL consists of 5,700 soldiers drawn from nearly a dozen countries, including 850 from Norway, where the Peace Prize was announced Thursday.

UNIFIL was established following the first major Israeli incursion into southern Lebanon, known as the "Litani Campaign," in 1978.

Its mission was to separate the contending forces in Lebanon and prevent terrorist infiltration into Israel.

But there was friction from the outset, with the Israel Defense Force charging that UNIFIL was not stopping Palestine Liberation Organization infiltrators, but merely taking weapons away from suspected terrorists headed toward the Israeli border and returning them soon afterwards.

Since its establishment by the U.N. Security Council 10 years ago, 156 UNIFIL soldiers have been killed there, most of them in drunk driving accidents rather than in peacekeeping-related incidents.

U.N. peacekeeping and observer forces are also stationed in the Golan Heights, Cyprus and Kashmir.

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES:
EBAN SAYS PLO IS MELOWING,
BUT THE TIME IS NOT YET RIPE**
By Andrew Silow Carroll

NEW YORK, Sept. 29 (JTA) -- Like the Labor Party he has served for his entire political career, Abba Eban has greeted the Palestine Liberation Organization's latest hints of moderation with a mixture of enthusiasm and skepticism.

But during a week when PLO leader Yasir Arafat was scheduled to meet with members of the 12-nation European Parliament, the veteran diplomat and Knesset member had to wonder: would European leaders tread that same careful path?

Or would they take indications that the PLO may be ready to recognize Israel as reason enough for supporting a Palestinian declaration of independence?

Unsure, Eban made cautionary stops on behalf of his party colleague, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, earlier this month in Rome, Brussels and Madrid. He plans further diplomatic meetings in Paris and Bonn after he concludes his current working visit to the United States.

"I wanted to say to the Europeans that we should all note with some degree of satisfaction that there seems to be a growth of rational consciousness (within the PLO), but we shouldn't pluck the tree before it is ripe," Eban said during an interview last week at his Manhattan hotel suite.

"I offered a proposal of caution, saying they should be sanguine to some degree, but shouldn't go overboard in recognizing unilateral proclamations or telling the Palestinians that they are fine fellows and have done enough.

"They haven't done enough," he said.

"Enough" would be a decisive, unambiguous message from Arafat that the PLO is ready to recognize Israel and to renounce its terrorist tactics of the past 20 years, he said.

'Open Door Of Repentance'

In short, Eban was suggesting to the Europeans an approach that he hopes Israeli voters will take to the polling booths Nov. 1.

He would like them to see Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir of the rival Likud bloc as an obstacle to a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He would like them to see Labor as the party that, in Eban's ironic phrase, "leaves open the door of repentance" to the Palestinians, and, less directly, the PLO.

Although Labor Party leader Shimon Peres has said he doubts the PLO can play a constructive role in the peace process, he has hinted at ways the organization can at least change its rhetoric to increase its credibility in Israel and the rest of the world.

"Rhetoric does have its importance," Eban said of the PLO's guarded overtures. "You can't have it both ways. When we hear virulent Palestinian rhetoric, we say that's very significant. You can't turn around then and say rhetoric is unimportant when it is moderate rhetoric.

"Some of my countrymen say it is just words. Then perhaps (the Palestinians') previous stupid utterances are just words as well."

Eban, who chairs the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, acknowledged that the PLO under Arafat still seems to lack the courage to issue an unequivocal declaration of peace. "The PLO must stop hankering after

organizational unity. If in 1947 through 1949 we decided not to do anything until all the Jews agreed with one another, we never would have had a state.

"But PLO moderates don't want to break up the facade of unity, and use very ambiguous language," he said.

Political Deadlock In Israel

Yet Israel is politically deadlocked as well, Eban pointed out -- and at a time when he sees real movement in the Israeli consciousness.

The Knesset member quoted polls that indicate a growing willingness on the part of Israelis to include a contrite PLO in negotiations on the future of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The public recognizes that maintaining the status quo in the territories is untenable, and that Israel is seen by Europeans and others as sacrificing its image as a democracy with strict judicial standards, he said.

Eban said he sees 1989 as a watershed year in the Middle East, but not if Shamir captures the November elections.

Reflecting on the possibility of a victory for the Likud bloc, Eban said "I'm not taking that terrible thing into account."

Nor is he comforted with an often cited parallel between Shamir and fellow Likudnik Menachem Begin, the former prime minister, who achieved peace with Egypt despite his party's hard-line policies.

The United States also faces a pivotal election in November, but Eban believes a similar mission will befall either a Bush or Dukakis administration.

"The U.S. should put a higher priority on yielding agreements between the PLO and Israel," he said. "Whether we like it or not, it's going to happen. In that case, we should accept Talleyrand's advice that we 'cooperate with the inevitable.'"

Eban prefers the word "activism" over "pressure" in describing the U.S. role. He cited Secretary of State George Shultz's initiative this year as a positive, although tardy, example of the activism he supports.

'No Respect' For Silence

The veteran Laborite said American Jews should support an active U.S. role in brokering a Middle East peace, and abandon what he called "paralyzed silence" on the topic of Israel's future.

"I have no respect for that. If you care about a cause you can't be indifferent. Silence is an indication of apathy, not solicitude," he said.

The former ambassador said he planned to spend a few weeks in the United States lecturing and writing. But Eban, who for the first time was not included high enough on Labor's election list to be considered for a seat in the Knesset, denied that he is settling into the quiet life of the elder statesman.

He cited polls and newspaper editorials indicating that he remains a popular and viable political figure in Israel and said that he "has no mandate to abandon politics."

Instead, he will serve Labor by engaging in high-level diplomacy like his European initiative.

"If my party wins, I don't expect to be idle," he said. "Not only is there no element of rejection, but the paradox is that I've been reading the kind of appreciative remarks that one normally never reads when one's alive."