

ARAFAT REFRAINS FROM RECOGNIZING ISRAEL IN SPEECH TO U.N. IN GENEVA By Edwin Eytan and Tamar Levy

GENEVA, Dec. 13 (JTA) -- Yasir Arafat offered no explicit recognition of Israel or renunciation of terrorism in his 90-minute speech to the U.N. General Assembly here Tuesday.

His only new, though not unexpected, appeal was for a United Nations force in the Israeli-administered territories "to protect our people and to supervise the withdrawal of the Israeli forces."

At no point did the Palestine Liberation Organization chairman say he recognized Israel, though he did mention the Israeli people by name.

He called for an international peace conference to resolve the Middle East conflict on the basis of U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, which recognize Israel only by implication.

Sources who expected Arafat to use the U.N. forum for more concrete commitments observed that his speech appeared to fall short of even the statement he issued Dec. 7 in Stockholm, where he met with an unofficial group of five American Jews.

On that occasion he clarified the positions adopted last month in Algiers by the Palestine National Council, the PLO's legislative body, which declared an independent Palestinian state.

The reaction of Israel's U.N. delegation to Arafat's speech Tuesday was scornful. The Israelis absented themselves from the session, having decided that a demonstrative walkout when Arafat mounted the rostrum would be "too much of an honor."

'Expert In Ambiguity'

According to Ambassador Johanan Bein, the head of the Israeli delegation, the PLO chief showed himself "to be an expert in ambiguity and metaphors, but with no departure from what we have heard in Algiers, except for a few additional distortions of facts and history."

U.S. Ambassador Vernon Walters sat through the speech. The American delegation will have to carefully study the text before responding, Joseph Petroni, the U.S. permanent representative to U.N. European headquarters in Geneva, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency later.

Arafat made clearly emotional appeals to American and Israeli public opinion. He urged the United States to implement the principles first articulated by President Woodrow Wilson after the first World War.

They are the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force and the right of peoples to self-determination.

"Do not deprive the Palestinians of what President Wilson prescribed," Arafat declared.

To the Israelis he said, "Come, let us make peace. Cast away fear and intimidation, and set aside all threats of wars to come, whose fuel could only be the bodies of our children and yours."

While Arafat condemned terrorism, he urge Third World countries to remember their own colonial past, when they were called terrorists because they fought for independence.

He also eulogized Khalil al-Wazir, known as

Abu Jihad, who headed up the PLO's terrorist activities until he was assassinated at his home in Tunis last spring. He is widely believed to have been the victim of an Israeli "hit squad."

PLO's Status Likely To Change

Arafat addressed the General Assembly in the context of its annual debate on Palestine. The session was moved here from New York after the United States refused to grant him an entry visa.

The PLO chairman was received here with all of the protocol usually reserved for visiting chiefs of government.

The General Assembly will vote Thursday on his proposals that the U.N. secretary-general convene a preparatory committee for an international peace conference and that a U.N. force be sent to protect the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Both are considered virtually certain to pass, given the pro-Palestinian majority in the world body.

The assembly also is likely to pass a resolution drafted by the Arab countries that would upgrade PLO representation at the United Nations from non-governmental observer status to "observer of the Palestinian state."

This change would enable the PLO to enjoy the same status accorded non-member states of the United Nations.

Meanwhile, some 60 Jewish student activists from the United States and European countries demonstrated here Tuesday on behalf of the "victims of the PLO."

U.S. SAYS ARAFAT DID NOT MEET ITS CONDITIONS FOR A DIALOGUE

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Dec. 13 (JTA) -- The U.S. State Department, the Israeli Embassy here and several major American Jewish groups expressed disappointment Tuesday over Yasir Arafat's statements to the U.N. General Assembly in Geneva.

Arafat did not meet the conditions set by the United States for a dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organization, the State Department said.

Department spokesman Charles Redman stressed that if Arafat meets the conditions, the United States is ready for a "substantive dialogue" with the PLO.

"The United States listened carefully to Mr. Arafat's speech," Redman said several hours after the PLO leader addressed the General Assembly debate on Palestine. The debate was moved from New York to Geneva, after Secretary of State George Shultz refused Arafat a visa to enter the United States.

"The speech contained some interesting and positive elements," Redman said. "But it continued to be ambiguous on the key issues which must be clearly addressed in order for the United States to enter a substantive dialogue with the PLO."

"Those issues are acceptance of (U.N. Security Council) Resolutions 242 and 338, recognition of Israel's right to exist, rejection of terrorism in all forms.

"These issues must be addressed clearly,

squarily, without ambiguity. That didn't happen," Redman said.

Asked if Arafat had met any of the conditions, Redman replied, "There are problems with all three."

The Israeli Embassy in Washington released a statement saying, "Those who expected a clear and moderate message from Geneva should be disillusioned."

U.S. Position Change Was Rumored

Arafat's U.N. speech "is a continuation of an effort to create a perception of change in the PLO's position. The speech proves that the PLO and its chairman continue to adhere to the (PLO) Covenant and its objectives."

The PLO Covenant calls for armed struggle against Israel, leading to its destruction.

Redman's remarks came after speculation in Washington and Jerusalem all Tuesday morning that the United States was ready to announce, after Arafat's speech, that it was prepared to begin talks with the PLO.

This speculation was broadcast by Israel Radio after it first appeared Monday night on NBC-TV.

The Washington Post said that such a message was conveyed to Arafat through Swedish diplomatic channels.

Diplomatic sources here said the Swedes had informed the U.S. government that Arafat would meet the longstanding U.S. conditions in his remarks to the General Assembly.

According to the sources, Charles Hill, a close aide to Secretary of State Shultz, telephoned Moshe Arad, Israel's ambassador to Washington, to say that if the Swedish report was true, the United States would open talks with the PLO.

Redman denied that the United States had dealt with Arafat through Sweden or other countries. He also denied that the United States had seen an advance copy of Arafat's speech or any of the early drafts.

But he said the United States had responded to requests from third parties for specifics on its conditions, which he noted had been U.S. policy for years.

"We did receive from third parties suggestions that, in fact, Arafat was prepared to be clear on the conditions," Redman added. "That didn't happen."

Jewish Groups Disappointed

But Redman acknowledged that there has been "some movement in the right direction" from the PLO. He said the United States "encourages this type of movement."

American Jewish organizations expressed disappointment at Arafat's words in Geneva.

In similar statements, leaders of the American Jewish Committee, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, B'nai B'rith International, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations said Arafat failed to recognize Israel unequivocally, fully renounce terrorism and accept Resolutions 242 and 338 without clauses that negate them.

"Yasir Arafat had an opportunity to break with the past and launch a new peace initiative. He blew it," said Morris Abram, chairman of the Conference of Presidents.

The Zionist Organization of America said Arafat's speech proved he is "not a rehabilitated

terrorist." It criticized the United Nations, Great Britain, Sweden and a group of American Jews for providing the PLO various forums over the past week.

"Yasir Arafat has failed again," Abraham Foxman, national director of ADL, concurred.

Said Warren Eisenberg, director of international concerns for B'nai B'rith: "For some reason, the straightforward, unequivocal words 'We recognize the State of Israel' remain stuck in Yasir Arafat's throat."

Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the UAHC, found the Arafat speech "bitterly disappointing." Last week, Schindler said Arafat's recent statements in Stockholm appeared to be a "step in the right direction."

SHAMIR BLASTS ARAFAT SPEECH AS A 'MONUMENTAL DECEPTION'

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Dec. 13 (JTA) -- Israel had two official reactions to Yasir Arafat's speech Tuesday to the U.N. General Assembly in Geneva.

While both were negative, they reflected the different approaches of the two major parties, Likud and Labor, toward the Palestine Liberation Organization.

According to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, the Likud leader, Arafat's speech was "an act of monumental deception."

He made clear at a news conference that Israel will have nothing whatsoever to do with the PLO, under any circumstances.

The Foreign Ministry, headed by Labor Party leader Shimon Peres, seemed less adamant. There was no news conference.

But according to an Israel Radio report, ministry officials saw "an improvement" in Arafat's references to U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, which recognize Israel by implication.

Still, they felt the PLO chief offered nothing new by way of recognizing Israel's right to exist and renouncing terrorism.

By contrast, a left-wing Knesset member said Arafat had gone "much more than half way" toward meeting Israel's conditions for negotiations. Yossi Sarid of the dovish Citizens Rights Movement said Israel should negotiate with Arafat and thereby "put him to the test."

Shamir, for his part, considers the PLO "inherently incapable" of changing its basic positions, which call for the eradication of Israel, and encourage violence and terrorism.

Israel "shall not recognize the PLO under any conditions," Shamir insisted. He said the PLO is "not a negotiating partner" for Israel, but a collection of terrorist groups out to destroy the Jewish state.

Shamir added that Arafat's "diplomatic assault" at the United Nations makes it all the more urgent for Israel to have a unity government. Labor and Likud resumed negotiations this week for a broad-based coalition, but have made little progress, as far as is known.

Shamir plainly saw his news conference as part of an international battle for world opinion with the PLO. He said Israel and the PLO were locked in a "contest in public relations."

He ended with a plea to "Israel's neighbors and the Arabs of Eretz Yisrael" to negotiate "without preconditions" for peace. He said anyone truly seeking peace "will find in us faithful partners."

ARAB-ISRAELI PEACE MUST BE MADE IN MIDEAST, NOT U.S., SAYS PERES

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Dec. 13 (JTA) -- Foreign Minister Shimon Peres accused the Palestine Liberation Organization Monday night of making moves "meant to travel well in Washington rather than make sense in Jerusalem."

Peres, speaking at the closing session of the fourth annual Jeanne Kirkpatrick Forum at Tel Aviv University, referred to recent declarations by PLO leader Yasir Arafat.

He spoke on the eve of Arafat's address Tuesday to the U.N. General Assembly, which is meeting this week in Geneva. Many observers believe he is conducting a peace offensive aimed at ending the American ban on talks with the PLO.

"The Palestinians must remember, as we do, that coexistence between the Palestinians and Israel must take place in the Middle East, not in North America," Peres said.

"The Palestinians must not only talk peace, they must behave peaceably," he said, calling for an end to the uprising in the administered territories.

Peres said a period of calm in the territories could be followed by free elections of Palestinian representatives, who could participate with Jordan in peace negotiations with Israel.

The Kirkpatrick Forum is named in honor of the former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations who was an outspoken friend of Israel in the world organization. Peres' political rival, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir of Likud, addressed the forum Sunday night.

THREE LAWMAKERS TELL BUSH THEY'LL OPPOSE ARMS TO SAUDIS

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Dec. 13 (JTA) -- Three Democratic lawmakers warned President-elect George Bush this week that they would lead a congressional effort to block a multibillion dollar arms sale to Saudi Arabia expected to be proposed next spring.

Sen. Alan Cranston and Rep. Mel Levine, both of California, and Rep. Lawrence Smith of Florida told Bush in a letter, delivered Dec. 10, that they "would take the lead in Congress to oppose actively an administration request to license export of such a major new Saudi arms package."

The three cited "persistent reports" about a possible new arms sale in the "early months of your administration."

The Washington Times first reported in late October that the Saudis were considering asking the United States by April for F/A-18 fighter planes, M-1 battle tanks, M-2 and M-3 Bradley Fighting Vehicles and Patriot tactical air defense missiles.

For Israel, the most objectionable component of the package are the fighter planes, which were first sold to the Arab world in August, when Kuwait received 40 of them.

"We view with alarm," the lawmakers said, "the prospect of a new divisive proposal to add our most advanced offensive weapons systems to the already teeming Saudi arsenal."

"We don't believe that such arms sales are justified, especially so soon after enormous Saudi arms purchases from both us and our allies."

ISRAEL READIES ADDITIONAL AID FOR QUAKE VICTIMS IN ARMENIA

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Dec. 13 (JTA) -- An Israeli relief team that flew to earthquake-ravaged Soviet Armenia Sunday has already rescued two women buried under rubble.

But a second Israeli aid group that was supposed to join them Monday remained grounded awaiting new instructions.

Two air force Hercules cargo planes carrying more than 40 Israeli Defense Force and Magen David Adom doctors and paramedics, along with tons of equipment, took off Monday for Yerevan, the Armenian capital.

They were ordered home in midflight by Brig. Gen. Aharon Vardi, the Israeli civil defense chief, who heads the IDF rescue effort in the Leninakan region of Armenia.

He explained that the additional team was not needed in Leninakan. Extra supplies are more important than personnel, he said.

One of the two Hercules transports has loaded additional supplies but fewer doctors and rescue workers. It was standing by at an air force base Tuesday waiting to be told when and where to fly.

Israeli ham operators have been working round the clock at their receivers and transmitters, monitoring transmissions from radio hams in Armenia requesting aid and supplies, and retransmitting them to the rest of the world.

Hadassah, meanwhile, announced that five doctors from its medical centers in Jerusalem are part of the IDF relief unit that arrived in Armenia Sunday.

The volunteers brought emergency supplies from Hadassah Hospital on Mount Scopus and the Hadassah University Hospital in Ein Kerem.

The group is being led by Dr. Yoel Donchin, head of the newly-formed trauma team at the Medical Center, and includes Dr. Shmuel Hyman, head of the emergency department at Mount Scopus, and Dr. Alexander Lussus, a neurologist at the medical center.

ISRAELI SETTLER SHOT DEAD NEAR NABLUS

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Dec. 13 (JTA) -- An Israeli settler was shot to death in an apparent altercation with an Arab shepherd in the Nablus area of the West Bank Tuesday.

The Arab was killed shortly afterwards by an Israeli Defense Force patrol.

There were conflicting versions of the incident, which took place at about the time Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasir Arafat was beginning his address at the U.N. General Assembly in Geneva.

According to one account, the settler, standing guard at Bracha, a Jewish settlement near Nablus, was attacked by a group of Arabs. One of the assailants grabbed his rifle, shot the settler and then hid in ambush for an approaching IDF patrol.

The Arab exchanged fire with the soldiers and was shot dead.

But according to another version of the event, the Arab and the settler had an argument over land, which turned violent. The Bracha settlers vehemently denied this to reporters.

Settlement leaders immediately demanded that the IDF take new harsher measures.

IN AN ITALIAN TOWN BY THE SEA, A NEW CLASS OF REFUSENIKS WAITS

By Ruth E. Gruber

LADISPOLI, Italy, Dec. 13 (JTA) -- In a modest two-room apartment, just a block away from the Mediterranean Sea, fear, uncertainty and bewilderment sit hand in hand.

"We can't understand why we were singled out from all the Jews in Ladispoli," said 22-year-old Eugene Zafrin.

"Our reasons for leaving the Soviet Union are strong enough to leave as refugees," he said. "They don't differ very much from those of people who were let in" to the United States.

Zafrin, a computer technician from Moscow, is one of approximately 200 Soviet Jews who have left the USSR in recent months and have been refused permission to enter the United States as refugees.

With grim humor, they call themselves "refuseniks" -- an ironic reference to the refusenik Jews still in the Soviet Union who have been denied exit visas by the Soviet authorities.

"Yes, we are refuseniks here," said Ljubov Myaskovsky, a vivacious 35-year-old economist from Moscow with dark brown hair and eyes.

She, her husband, Ramon, who is a 35-year-old auto mechanic, and their two young children also were refused refugee status.

"We were very surprised at the U.S. consul's decision, she said. "We didn't see any reasons for it."

Jewish sources here said that as of a few weeks ago, 67 Soviet Jewish families awaiting U.S. visas in Italy had been refused refugee status.

Room And Board Paid By JDC

Soviet Jews have been entering the United States as refugees through Italy for at least 15 years. Italy has a relatively open-door policy as a transit country for political refugees waiting for visas to enter such countries as the United States, Canada and Australia.

Besides thousands of Soviet Jews, there are also thousands of Poles, Ethiopians, Iranians and others here hoping for visas.

Currently there are about 1,000 Soviet Jewish families awaiting U.S. visas -- as many as 4,000 people. They are temporarily housed in this seaside resort town north of Rome.

They are given a per-diem financial allowance, covering rent and food, by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. HIAS, the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, assists the immigrants with documentation, pre-migration planning and transportation.

American sources say that about 6 to 7 percent of Soviet Jews who have applied for visas in recent months have been found not to qualify for refugee status.

The U.S. State Department, however, has said that Soviet Jews seeking entry to the United States will not be turned away.

If they do not qualify for refugee status, they may enter the United States under the U.S. attorney general's parole authority. But this disqualifies them from receiving U.S. refugee resettlement assistance and makes it much more difficult for them to become American citizens.

Under the parole system, potential immigrants must find sponsors in the United States. Soviet Jews waiting here say that if they do not find a sponsor within a month after they have been refused refugee status for a second time,

their living allowances are cut off, their stay in Italy becomes illegal and their only choice is to immigrate to Israel.

Many here who have been refused refugee status do not have family or friends in the United States. They do not know what they will do, said Zafrin, the computer technician from Moscow. "They are frightened of not being able to find a sponsor."

In fact, the Soviet refugees can go to Israel whenever they want. But most do not want to live there.

'Want To Live In A Free Country'

"The United States is the only country in the world where I have relatives and friends," said Zafrin, explaining his own preference for America over Israel. "I have an uncle, close friends from my institute in Moscow.

"Besides," he added, "I know the United States is the country which over the years has shown respect for refugees and immigrants."

The Myaskovsky family also chose the United States, because they have friends in New York, Boston and Hartford, Conn., but know nobody in Israel. "We want to live in a free country," Ljubov Myaskovsky added.

In order to obtain U.S. refugee status, immigrants must demonstrate a "well-founded fear of persecution" in the country of their origin.

Both the Myaskovskys and Zafrin detailed anti-Semitic harassment and discrimination in Moscow, which they said was as bad as the persecution suffered by those Soviet Jews who have received refugee status.

"For five years I could not find a job," said Ljubov Myaskovskys, the economist. "They checked the page on my identity papers. When they saw I was a Jew, they didn't want to hire me.

"When our child went to school, the teacher refused to have him in the class because he was a Jew," she added.

Zafrin said he was refused admission to Moscow State University, apparently for no other reason than his Jewish background. He said he could not attend synagogue, because "if you were seen in synagogue, you could be expelled from the institute where I worked."

Just Sitting And Waiting

Meanwhile, the "new refuseniks" sit and wait. Zafrin and the Myaskovskys left the Soviet Union together on Sept. 2. They spent about 12 days in a transit center in Vienna, then a week at a transit center in Rome, before coming to Ladispoli.

The three adults and two children share an apartment located, ironically, on Via Kennedy -- a quiet, block-long street leading directly to the Mediterranean, at the point where the Miami Beach Club is located.

It is a small apartment in a modern building, with two rooms, a good-sized kitchen and a bath.

The money they receive from the Joint Distribution Committee is sufficient for rent and food.

There are opportunities for Jewish life right here in Ladispoli. There is a rabbi. A movie house has been converted into a synagogue. A new synagogue is under construction.

Holidays are marked with traditional festivities. During Chanukah, for example, there were concerts, parties and candle-lighting ceremonies. There was even "Chanukah gelt" for the children, Zafrin said.