

ARENS WARNS U.S. JEWISH LEADERS NOT TO FAIL ISRAEL IN SUPPORT

By Andrew Silow Carroll

NEW YORK, March 16 (JTA) -- Speaking in almost apocalyptic terms Thursday, Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Arens warned leaders of American Jewry not to allow the world to drive a wedge between them and Israel.

"During the Holocaust, it is agreed that the American Jewish leadership did not do everything it could have done or should have done," said Arens. "Let that be an object lesson that we never again fail to live up to our responsibilities."

Arens delivered his warning to the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations after meeting this week with President Bush and his top foreign policy advisers.

Like the "Solidarity With Israel" conference planned for next week, his words indicated concern within Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's government that American Jews may not fully support Israel's peace plans.

Shamir is expected to reveal those plans in detail when he visits Washington in April.

During Arens' meetings Monday with Bush and Secretary of State James Baker, the Americans were said to be exploring immediate steps to improve the atmosphere between Israelis and Palestinians. These were reported to include reductions in the Israeli troop presence in the territories and a Palestinian moratorium on violent demonstrations there.

Arens said his government is proceeding on a "three-track program": trying to bring Jordan's King Hussein to the peace table, finding Palestinian "interlocutors" with whom to talk and urging other Arab countries to follow Egypt's lead in making peace.

Scolds Five Who Met Arafat

He called Israel's struggles in the Middle East "a battle between civilizations, between cultures."

The Palestinian uprising, he conceded, is based on legitimate grievances and aspirations. "But over and above those desires and aspirations, and the squalor of the refugee camps, is an element of fanaticism, brutality, Islamic fundamentalism and Palestinian radicalism so characteristic of the region in which we live," he said.

Arens reproached Jews who see the conflict in anything less than those terms. His listeners applauded each time he criticized American Jews and Israelis who have met with members of the Palestine Liberation Organization, which he accused of "some of the worst atrocities since World War II."

Arens said he "couldn't understand" the five American Jews who met with PLO leader Yasir Arafat in Stockholm in December. "Why any Jew, or any self-respecting person, would want to do that, I have no answer," he said.

One of the five, Menachem Rosensaft, was in the room listening to Arens' address in his capacity as president of the Labor Zionist Alliance.

Arens also said that the left-wing Knesset members who met PLO members this week at a peace conference in New York "were putting

pressure on the Israeli government via other governments."

But the foreign minister also said he was "annoyed" by charges that Shamir does not want to make peace. "Nothing could be further from the truth," he said, admitting that impressions that Israel is an obstacle to peace are the result of poor public relations.

Danger 'Lurking In The Shadows'

Arens spoke repeatedly of the need to include Jordan's King Hussein in resolving the Palestinian conflict, something his Likud party formerly opposed.

"Jordan is a Palestinian country in everything but name," he said. "You can't talk about addressing the (Palestinian issue) without talking to Hussein or the Jordanians. They must wholly be part of the process."

If Hussein resists talking on behalf of the Palestinians of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as the king has indicated, then Israel "must find interlocutors on the ground," and protect them from threats from the PLO.

"Such authentic interlocutors may be sympathizers with the PLO," Arens said. "But there is a world of a difference between someone who has to respond to a constituency on the ground and who listens to orders from Tunis," where PLO headquarters are located.

Arens returned again and again to the theme of Israel's cultural isolation in the Middle East and the violence of Palestinian rioters in the territories. But he said there is "more of a danger to Israel lurking in the shadows" -- an oblique reference to a perceived decline in American Jewish support.

"Firebombs, rocks and knives are dangerous to individual Israelis, not a danger to Israel's existence. But there's no need for me to tell you what political ramifications it could bring about if there was a sense of political isolation," he said.

PLO SHOULD LET PALESTINIANS PICK

THEIR OWN LEADERS, SAYS PERES

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, March 16 (JTA) -- Vice Premier Shimon Peres advised the Palestine Liberation Organization Thursday to let residents of the administered territories find their own representatives.

This was the most senior and immediate Israeli reaction to reports from Washington that Secretary of State James Baker was pressing Israel to negotiate eventually with the PLO.

Baker told a congressional panel Tuesday that it may one day be necessary for Israel to talk with the PLO. But Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Arens said the same day that the subject did not come up in his talks Monday with Baker, President Bush and other administration officials.

Peres, who heads the Labor Party, maintained Thursday that Jordan is still in the negotiating picture, because of the many Palestinians living there. Labor has long advocated negotiations with a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation.

Housing Minister David Levy of Likud, who holds the rank of deputy prime minister, on Thursday rejected outright the idea that Israel

would one day talk with the PLO.

"What do we have to talk to them about -- the weather?" he asked during a visit to Lod.

Levy said the Israeli people are not interested in committing suicide and therefore Israel will not discuss with the PLO the only issue the PLO wants to raise -- the creation of a Palestinian state. That, he said, "would present a grave danger to the existence of the state."

BRITAIN NOW WARMING TO IDEA OF SEPARATE PALESTINIAN STATE

By Joseph Finklestone
London Jewish Chronicle

LONDON, March 16 (JTA) -- Britain is moving toward accepting the concept of an independent Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the government's chief Middle East policy-maker has hinted.

Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said in January that Britain did not intend to recognize the state proclaimed in Algiers last November by the Palestine Liberation Organization. She subsequently let it be known that she does not favor such a state.

But in an interview with the Jewish Chronicle, William Waldegrave said Britain must now take into account Jordan's strong preference for an independent Palestinian state.

Waldegrave, who is minister of state at the Foreign Office, met last week in Amman with Jordan's King Hussein, who in turn met with Thatcher this week in London.

Hussein "made it clear to me that he does not rule out some kind of confederation" between Jordan and the West Bank and Gaza Strip, said Waldegrave.

"But he clearly thinks that a separate Palestinian sovereignty has to come first and that no solution can or should be imposed on the West Bankers or, indeed, on him," he said.

"He made it very plain to us that he does not want to be rushed into a federal solution, to which neither he nor the Palestinians would feel a true allegiance."

A SETBACK FOR FUNDAMENTALISTS IN PICTURESQUE GALILEE VILLAGE

By Gil Sedan

KAFR KANNA, Israel, March 16 (JTA) -- The air of triumph that pervaded Umm el-Fahm on Election Day two weeks ago was absent in this village Tuesday, as Israeli Arabs returned to the polls to vote in runoff elections for mayor.

In Umm el-Fahm, Moslem fundamentalists swept the elections two weeks ago, winning 11 out of the 15 seats on the town council and electing a 30-year-old sheikh as mayor. It was a severe blow to the Communist Democratic Front for Peace and Equality, which had dominated the town for 14 years.

Here the fundamentalists also did well two weeks ago. But the scene was very different during the second round on Tuesday. The school hall that served as the headquarters of the Moslem fundamentalist movement was half empty.

Solema men gathered around their spiritual leader, Sheikh Kamal Hatib, and their candidate for mayor, Sheikh Atef Hatib, 39, a mathematics teacher at a local high school. They calculated the returns arriving from the ballot boxes and admitted that they had been defeated.

Kafr Kanna is a village of some 11,000

residents on the winding road from Nazareth to Tiberias. This village of almond and pomegranate trees is where Jesus supposedly performed the miracle of turning water into wine. It is also the site of a Jewish synagogue dating back to Talmudic times.

38.6 Percent In First Round

The Islamic movement has been active here for the past five years. Its popularity has grown mainly because of the services it has provided at low cost: a library and medical and educational facilities. Last year, the movement organized a huge event featuring singer Yusef Islam, known as Cat Stevens before he converted to Islam.

That popularity translated into votes two weeks ago, when the Moslem fundamentalists won 38.6 percent of the popular vote, just short of the 40 percent plurality needed to win the mayoralty without runoff elections.

In Tuesday's second municipal round, all the factions in the village, from right to the left, political as well as family camps, gathered to defeat the fundamentalists.

Tuesday night they succeeded. Aref Hamdan, the candidate of the secular camp, beat the Moslem candidate by a tiny, 150-vote margin. One major reason for the victory was that the town's Christians, who make up 18 percent of the population, were fearful of religious coercion by the fundamentalists.

The Moslems thus failed to win their second major Israeli stronghold. But Sheikh Kamal Hatib was pleased with the support his fledgling party received anyway. He said the results were promising.

Despite the disappointment in Kafr Kanna, the fundamentalists scored two other victories in Tuesday's second round: in the Bedouin town of Rahat, near Beersheba, and in the Arab village of Jaljulya, near Kfar Sava.

The so-called "Arab triangle" bounded by Petach Tikva, Hadera and Afula is now more Moslem than ever before.

U.S. TESTING ISRAELI GUNSIGHT SYSTEM

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 16 (JTA) -- The U.S. Marine Corps is currently testing a new Israeli-designed televised gunsight monitoring system, which could revolutionize anti-terror warfare by enabling commanders to "see" through the gunsights of their individual sharpshooters.

Emmanuel Gil, president of Elbit, one of Israel's most profitable defense companies, told reporters that the new Sniper-C3 (command, control and communications) system, which costs \$100,000 per unit, is the first of its kind in the world.

The device consists of a small black box fixed atop a sniper's gunsight, which transfers the image by cable to a nearby display transmitter, enabling the sharpshooter's assistant to see exactly what the sniper himself sees.

It also transmits the image -- complete with cross-hairs -- to a commander some distance away, who can thus monitor and coordinate the aim of five independent sharpshooters.

In the September 1972 Munich Olympics tragedy, an 11-member West German sniper team fired at seven terrorists but hit only four of them in their first volley. That allowed the remaining three to throw grenades that killed the Israeli athletes.

**STOLAR FAMILY ARRIVES IN ISRAEL,
BUT REFUSES TO BE HOUSED IN HOTEL**
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 16 (JTA) -- Longtime refusenik Abe Stolar arrived with his wife and son in Israel on Wednesday night, but refused to leave the airport and go to a hotel, as proposed by Jewish Agency and Absorption Ministry officials.

He demanded that the family be housed immediately in an immigrant absorption center. Officials tried unsuccessfully to convince him that there was no room available at the moment in absorption facilities.

Eventually, in the early hours of the morning, the Stolars deposited their personal papers with officials at the airport and moved in with friends in Jerusalem for the night.

Stolar told Israel's Itim news agency that he refused to sign an agreement to leave the hotel after a specified period and then move to a rented apartment, fearing he would not be able to abide by such an undertaking.

Absorption officials said they hoped to be able to solve the "Stolar problem" by next week.

Soviet Jews here complain that the available housing for arriving immigrants is sorely inadequate. Even Immigration and Absorption Minister Yitzhak Peretz acknowledged recently that the gaps in services for new immigrants were "astounding."

Stolar, a 77-year-old Russian-English translator; his wife, Gita, 71; and their 31-year-old son, Michael, were ready to board a plane on their way to Israel in 1975 when they were turned away at Moscow airport, on the grounds that Gita, a chemist by profession, knew state secrets and would not be allowed to emigrate.

He said Wednesday night that subsequently "all sorts of lies were used to stop us from leaving. Only after the intervention of former U.S. President Ronald Reagan, in a talk with (Soviet leader) Mikhail Gorbachev in May 1988, was exit permission finally granted."

Stolar, who was born in Chicago and has lived in the Soviet Union since his parents moved there in 1931, said he is "not a Zionist by political philosophy." But he added, "I always thought the Jews should have a country of their own, and that I should live there."

**AS BACKLOG OF REFUGEES SWELLS,
LADISPOLI BECOMES 'LITTLE MOSCOW'**
By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, March 16 (JTA) -- Foreign refugees, including an overwhelming majority of Soviet Jews, now make up more than 30 percent of the population of the seaside town of Ladispoli, and local officials are increasingly concerned about the effect on the community.

"All the statistics indicate that the maximum percentage of tolerance is 10 immigrants for every 100 residents," Deputy Mayor Crescenzo Paliotta told the Rome newspaper *Il Messaggero*.

"We have arrived at a fixed immigrant presence of more than 30 percent," he said. "For now, the situation is under control, but something could happen at any moment."

According to recent figures, there are some 7,800 refugees in Ladispoli, whose permanent resident population numbers about 16,000.

The refugees include 5,500 Soviet Jews and Pentecostals, 1,500 Poles, and small groups of

Egyptians, Afghans, Iranians, Tamils and Ethiopians.

All are living in temporary quarters, mainly rented seaside vacation apartments, waiting for immigration visas to the United States, Canada, Australia and elsewhere. They are trying to get by on limited funds.

In some ways, Ladispoli is turning into "Little Moscow," with shops and real estate offices featuring signs in Russian and one of the town's squares virtually taken over by a Russian-style flea market.

So far, there has been little open friction between the refugees and residents, although two years ago the local branch of the neo-fascist Italian Social Movement party tried to stir up trouble.

Today, Paliotta told *Il Messaggero*, the main problem is one of logistics and infrastructure.

"Imagine what may happen in any city that unexpectedly sees its number of inhabitants skyrocket. The public services, sanitation, sewers, water supply and public transport all are forced to support an unforeseen load," he said.

Officials at the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which helps the Soviet refugees with housing and provides a range of social services, are aware of the problem and have been trying to convince incoming Soviet Jews to seek temporary housing in other towns along the coast, where apartments are also available.

Il Messaggero said Ladispoli town officials told the Joint that the town ideally could handle only 3,000 refugees. It said they had also asked the Interior Ministry for help in channeling new arrivals elsewhere.

**IDF DEMOLISHES THREE HOUSES
HARBORING TERRORIST HIT SQUAD**
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, March 16 (JTA) -- A day after Israel revealed the existence of a hit squad operating in the Gaza Strip, Israel Defense Force troops demolished three houses there suspected of harboring the terrorists.

Military sources say the terror ring, which was instructed to liquidate Arabs collaborating with the Israeli authorities, received guidance from Al Fatah headquarters in Jordan. Fatah is the military branch of the Palestine Liberation Organization headed by Yasir Arafat.

One three-story house demolished early Thursday morning belonged to three brothers of the Jelis family in the Tufah neighborhood in Gaza.

The three, who belonged to a gang of 11 members, confessed to murdering a worker at the Nasser Hospital in Gaza on Feb. 22, a woman whom they suspected of collaboration with the Israeli authorities.

One terrorist allegedly entered her office in the hospital and shot her at close range. Four days later, they shot another hospital worker in the head at the Shifa Hospital in Gaza, wounding him seriously.

They were reportedly planning another assassination attempt, but were arrested before they could carry it out.

On Wednesday, the IDF arrested two teenage boys as they attempted to infiltrate Israel by crossing the Egyptian border. The interrogation revealed the existence of a network of "strike committees" operating in Gaza.

SEVERAL PROMINENT BRITISH JEWS BOYCOTTING SOLIDARITY CONFERENCE

London Jewish Chronicle

LONDON, March 16 (JTA) -- Some of Britain's leading Jews are boycotting next week's "Solidarity With Israel" conference in Jerusalem in an unprecedented snub to an Israeli prime minister.

Of 130 prominent British Jews invited, only about 50 will respond to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's personal plea for "the entire Jewish people to stand at Israel's side."

Absentees will include Dr. Stephen Roth, chairman of the Zionist Federation; leading pro-Israel Parliament members Greville Janner and Ivan Lawrence; philosopher Sir Isaiah Berlin; Baroness Birk; Lord Goodman; and Dr. John Marks, chairman of the British Medical Association.

"Talking to the present prime minister of Israel is like talking to a stone wall," Sir Isaiah said. "Stone walls have many uses, but talking to them is not the most productive thing one can do."

"The conference is meant to be an expression of solidarity with the Israeli government, and I don't have the heart to do that at the moment," he said. "I think its policies towards the Arabs are mistaken and counterproductive."

The snub should come as no surprise to Jerusalem.

During his visit to London last month, Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Arens was warned that Diaspora Jewry was split, and that many British Jews strongly disagreed with Israel's policies over the intifada, the Palestine Liberation Organization and the peace process.

Rabbi Sidney Silberg of Hendon will represent the chief rabbi, Lord Jakobovits, who had a bypass operation on Wednesday. The president of the Board of Deputies, Dr. Lionel Kopelowitz, is also scheduled to attend but is angry about the handling of invitations.

Organizers were anxiously telephoning invitees last week in a bid to raise the numbers.

Unset With Shamir Policies

Shamir's critics feared he would try to use their presence at the conference to claim a united Diaspora support for his policies when he meets President Bush next month.

Many British Jews were appalled by Shamir's performance in a television interview with the British Broadcasting Corporation's Peter Snow, in which Shamir said Israel would never talk to the PLO.

"Mr. Shamir has contempt for public opinion both Jewish and non-Jewish," Marks said. "That's why I'm not going. I do not accept his philosophy. I will not be a rubber stamp for his policies. I'm not going to play that game. I'm unwilling to be used."

Invitations were sent from Jerusalem with help from the Israeli Embassy in London. Two members of the organizing committee, Cabinet Ministers Mordechai Gur of Labor and Ehud Olmert of Likud, visited Britain several weeks ago and took advice on who should be invited.

Kopelowitz, who was later asked for nominations from the medical world, complained that the selection process was "cloaked in secrecy."

He was refused a list of invitees and his request that British participants should meet to discuss the conference before leaving London was also turned down.

On Monday, executive and Israel committees of the Board of Deputies issued a statement criticizing the arrangements. They "stated firmly" that Kopelowitz should lead the British delegation, a veiled reference to the prominent role given to publisher Robert Maxwell.

"There was no invitation to the board as such to send representatives. I would have liked to have been involved in the consultative process. I don't know the basis of some of the invitations," said Kopelowitz.

"There was a pretty fair cross section of communal leadership invited," said Trevor Chinn, who is attending.

"At the short notice, 50 out of 130 is a pretty good response," he added. "It's not for anyone to judge Mr. Shamir or anyone else in the Israeli government who hasn't discussed matters with them."

BRAZILIAN BANK CLERK WINS MARATHON

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 16 (JTA) -- With Tel Aviv virtually closed to traffic, the ninth annual Tel Aviv marathon was run through the city's streets Thursday. The winner was 27-year-old Osmiro da Souza, a Brazilian bank clerk, who finished in 2:13:23.

He was followed to the finish line by Jean-Claude Brusson of France and Henry Kluper of Poland.

The first woman home was Czeslova Mantilevich, from Poland, who finished in 2:53:14.

Shopkeepers complained over the lack of customers in their stores while the marathon runners passed through streets closed to traffic.

One was heard to remark: "We suffer enough from enforced holidays on election days. Why do we have to suffer because of roadrunners?"

The marathon was run by 250 participants, including 19 from abroad.

Some 2,500 participants took part in the half-marathon, with another 8,000 taking part in a shorter race.

The race was run in what the participants described as "perfect running weather -- dry and neither too hot nor too cold."

Throughout the morning, Israel Radio repeatedly broadcast police requests to those without urgent business in Tel Aviv to remain away from the city.

COST OF LIVING UP 1.7 PERCENT

TEL AVIV, March 16 (JTA) -- The cost-of-living index rose by 1.7 percent in February, the central bureau of statistics announced Wednesday.

The increase was slightly higher than the 1.5 percent anticipated, but was nevertheless welcomed as an indication that the economy was reaching stability.

The rise was partly an offshoot of the devaluation carried out at the beginning of the year, but was kept down by the continuation of seasonal sales of clothing and footwear.

ISRAELI EXPORTS TO ASIA RISE

TEL AVIV, March 16 (JTA) -- Israeli exports to Asia totaled \$1.5 billion in 1988, compared with \$1.04 billion in 1987 and \$725 million in 1986, Max Livnat, director of foreign trade administration in the Industry and Trade Ministry reported this week.