

U.S. PRESSING ISRAEL TO BE MORE FLEXIBLE ON PEACE PLAN
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, May 11 (JTA) -- The Bush administration is continuing to prod Israel to show more flexibility in its proposal for Palestinian elections in the administered territories.

First signs of the American pressure surfaced two weeks ago, when high-level American diplomats, meeting with Israeli leaders here, pressed them to clarify several points.

Last week, U.S. Secretary of State James Baker sent Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Arens a letter urging Israel specifically to address the issue of allowing Arab residents of East Jerusalem to vote in the proposed elections.

According to the letter, reported by the Israeli news media Thursday, Baker also pointedly stressed Washington's support of the land-for-peace formula and of political rights for the Palestinians.

Arens, in a reply letter this week, reportedly sidestepped the matter of East Jerusalem's eligibility, explaining that the entire election proposal has yet to be discussed by the Cabinet.

But according to media reports, written proposals currently evolving in top ministerial circles avoid specific references to that issue, apparently because Labor and Likud leaders do not see eye-to-eye on it.

Sessions With Palestinians

Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin of Labor supports allowing the East Jerusalem residents to vote, provided they do so outside the city limits, because the city is Israeli territory.

Other Laborites, notably Deputy Finance Minister Yossi Beilin, are strong advocates of the right of East Jerusalem Arabs to vote and to stand as candidates.

But many Likud ministers are forcefully opposed. Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, who formally proposed the election idea to President Bush last month, has remained quiet on the issue.

According to the Israeli proposal, the elections would choose Palestinian representatives with whom Israel would negotiate an interim arrangement for Palestinian self-rule in the territories.

Meanwhile, the U.S. Consulate in East Jerusalem was reported Thursday to be organizing meetings between a high-level group of American officials due here this weekend and local Palestinian leaders.

The group is headed by Dennis Ross, director of the State Department's policy-planning staff. He is arriving here from Moscow, where he accompanied Baker for meetings with Soviet officials.

Ross, who headed the U.S. working group on regional issues in Moscow, will be joined by Richard Haass, the National Security Council's director for the Near East and Southeast Asian affairs.

While here, the Americans are expected to help their Israeli counterparts draft the precise language of the election proposal.

The team is also expected to travel to Jordan and Egypt.

NO JACKSON-VANIK WAIVER WITHOUT REFORMS, SAYS BAKER
By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, May 11 (JTA) -- If Soviet emigration reforms are institutionalized, then it would be appropriate for the United States to consider waiving two major restrictions on super-power trade, Secretary of State James Baker said Thursday.

Speaking to reporters in Moscow, at the end of his two-day visit there, Baker said he told Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze that waivers for the Jackson-Vanik and Stevenson amendments would be considered only after Moscow adopts the new laws it has promised.

Soviet officials had said laws reforming emigration practices would be adopted by last month. They now say they will be introduced when the reconstituted Supreme Soviet convenes.

The Jackson-Vanik Amendment denies the Soviet Union and other East bloc countries most-favored-nation trade benefits until emigration figures are considered adequate. The Stevenson Amendment withholds trade credits for the Soviet Union.

The president can recommend that Congress waive provisions contained in those amendments, if he certifies that he has assurances the Soviets will allow substantial numbers to emigrate.

Jewish groups have been debating whether to support a waiver of Jackson-Vanik because of the large number of Jews now leaving the Soviet Union. Many have indicated that they will not approve of a waiver until the new laws are adopted.

Baker said he met with Soviet Jewish refugees during his stay in Moscow and pressed Soviet officials for "early positive action" on 400 to 500 unresolved refusenik cases. Their names were given to the secretary of state by the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, which welcomed Baker's comments Thursday.

In his discussions with Shevardnadze and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, Baker also outlined the Bush administration's approach to the Middle East peace process, including its support of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's plan for elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The proposal would have Palestinians in the territories elect representatives to negotiate with Israel for self-rule.

Soviet Interest In Shamir Plan

Baker said the plan differs from previous Israeli positions because it recognizes that there should be negotiations to determine a "permanent status" for the West Bank and Gaza Strip after an interim period of autonomy.

Shamir's proposal for elections contains "some significant differences" from language in Israel's text of the 1979 Camp David peace treaty with Egypt, Baker told reporters.

U.S. sources in Moscow quoted Shevardnadze as saying Wednesday that the election proposal is "worthy of attention, while many points remain unclear." The Soviets had not previously commented on the Shamir plan.

Baker said that Shevardnadze and he discussed "reciprocal steps" that Palestinians and Israelis could take to improve prospects for a

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peace settlement.

Baker, who departed for Brussels to brief NATO officials, said his next meeting with Shevardnadze may take place in September. He gave no indications of any planned summit between President Bush and Gorbachev.

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES:
HOW HARD WILL U.S. PRESS SOVIETS
AT PARIS HUMAN RIGHTS CONFERENCE?**

By Andrew Silow Carroll

NEW YORK, May 11 (JTA) -- An upcoming conference in Paris will test whether the Soviet Union is living up to its human rights commitments -- and whether the United States is willing to single out Soviet abuses at a time of warming relations between the two countries.

So say a number of non-governmental organizations, including Soviet Jewry groups, which plan to send delegations to the Paris Conference on Human Dimensions, which opens May 30 in the French capital.

The conference, which runs through June 23, is being held under the auspices of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the 35-nation human rights process that produced the Helsinki human rights accords in 1975.

Previous CSCE meetings in Madrid and Vienna have seen the Soviets inching toward an acceptance of Western human rights standards, at least on paper.

In January, the Soviets signed a 35-nation human rights agreement committing themselves to a far-reaching range of freedoms, including freedom of information, travel, equal rights and religion.

The document, signed in Vienna at the end of a two-year process, also promised significant improvements in the right of Soviet Jews to emigrate.

Delegates to the Paris conference will review media accounts, diplomatic reports and eyewitness testimony to determine who is and is not complying with the Vienna document.

A New U.S. Approach?

The Paris conference will be "an opportunity to test the principles of Helsinki, Madrid and Vienna -- to test the practices of the states against the principles they've agreed to," according to Morris Abram, the chief U.S. delegate to the conference.

Abram, who was named to the conference post Wednesday, is immediate past chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and the designated U.S. ambassador to the European headquarters of the United Nations in Geneva.

Non-governmental agencies support Abram's goals for the Paris conference, but they are concerned that with Washington developing an increasingly conciliatory approach to the Soviets, the United States will moderate its human rights demands.

"The State Department human rights bureau has developed a new approach that has angered a lot of the human rights community," said Cathy Fitzpatrick, research director of Helsinki Watch, an independent monitoring group.

"They intend to be less critical of the Soviet Union, Poland and Hungary, and the bad countries are now East Germany, Czechoslovakia and Romania. I'm not sure how vigorous the U.S. is going to be about confronting the Soviets."

"I have no evidence to support that kind of pessimism," said Abram, when informed of the remarks by Fitzpatrick and others. "Romania is an extremely intractable case. But that doesn't mean that if you treat someone for polio, you don't treat another person with a heart attack."

Among the ways Abram said the United States could "goad" the Soviets into improving their human rights record is by making conditions for U.S. participation in another CSCE follow-up conference to take place in Moscow in 1991.

Soviets Said To Be Backsliding

The Soviets are banking on that conference to build prestige among their citizens, allies and the West. A Western pullout would be disastrous.

"The Soviets know that the U.S. fully expects continued progress in human rights until then," said Abram. "They know that backsliding or lack of progress would cause us to reconsider our decision to attend."

Rights groups say the Soviets are already backsliding. They cite as evidence the killing by Soviet troops of ethnic Georgian protesters last month and widespread, albeit short-term, detention of ethnic protesters in Soviet Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Fitzpatrick acknowledged that the Soviets have "fine-tuned" their protection of human rights. But she said that while the Soviets have eased press censorship, for example, they also passed decrees in April that put new constraints on publicly criticizing the Soviet authorities.

Those contradictions, and the U.S. response to them, also trouble Pamela Cohen, president of the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews.

Cohen said she heard from European delegates to the London Information Forum, a CSCE conference on free speech and news-gathering ending May 12, that the United States was not specifically drawing attention to Soviet practices.

"It is incumbent on us to make sure the American delegation takes action on these issues," she said. "For the Paris meeting, they must take up obstacles to emigration. The Soviets promised to resolve all outstanding refusenik cases, but we still have a list of a hundred known cases."

Have Not Codified Reforms

Martin Wenick, executive director of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, said the Soviets need to be pressed to codify emigration reforms, as they promised in Vienna.

Asked if the United States seems willing to exert that pressure, Wenick replied, "Our feeling is that all countries ought to be pressed equally on their commitments. It would be a mistake, if that is what the State Department is doing, to stress the lack of commitment of one country over another."

For his part, Abram puts great stock in the Soviets' signatures both on the Vienna document and an East-West agreement Ronald Reagan and Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev reached during their October 1987 summit in Reykjavik, Iceland. He described that earlier document, which called for a "substantive meeting" on human rights and humanitarian issues, as a "watershed."

"The Declaration of Independence is only words. It had no power. But its message resonates throughout the world," said Abram. He added that Gorbachev's signatures on the documents say "I am answerable" on human rights.

But he added that the bottom line is matching words with deeds.

**TWO CABINET MINISTERS PROPOSE
LIMITING LABORERS FROM TERRITORIES**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 11 (JTA) -- Two competing plans to limit the number of Arab day laborers from the administered territories working in Israel were presented Thursday as a means of curbing mounting violence against Israeli citizens.

The proposals were offered by Police Minister Haim Bar-Lev of Labor and Transport Minister Moshe Katsav of Likud.

They were prompted by consternation over recent attacks on Israelis by residents of the territories. Two people were knifed to death in downtown Jerusalem last week by an Arab from the West Bank town of Ramallah. Another person was killed several weeks ago in the heart of Tel Aviv by an Arab from Gaza.

Bar-Lev made a formal request to Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin to be more selective in allowing residents of the territories to enter Israel proper.

He suggested that the existing ban on Arabs with a record of security offenses be expanded to include those with a record of certain criminal offenses. According to Bar-Lev, Rabin promised to give the idea favorable consideration.

Katsav went further Thursday, proposing that Israel seal off the territories for a three-month period, during which no Arab workers would be allowed into Israel. He also would bar journalists covering the Palestinian uprising from entering the territories.

In addition to meeting security needs, the measures would ease the "growing dependence of the economy on Arab laborers," he said.

Asked in an army radio interview if it was fair to punish all Palestinians by cutting off their source of income, Katsav replied: "I believe they deserve the punishment, because for more than a year they not only did nothing to quiet down the areas, but caused even more incitement."

He added, "Their free movement in Israel has become dangerous, so much so that they have kidnapped soldiers and children."

At least 100,000 Arabs from the West Bank and Gaza Strip commute daily to jobs in Israel. They do mostly menial work in the construction and service industries, jobs many Israelis refuse to take.

But Katsav thinks otherwise. He said some 300,000 unemployed Israelis, including students on summer vacation, could replace Arab workers during the three-month ban.

**ISRAELI COLONEL REPRIMANDED
FOR 1988 BEATING INCIDENTS**

By Cathrine Gerson

JERUSALEM, May 11 (JTA) -- An Israel Defense Force colonel in the West Bank has been severely reprimanded for brutality toward Arab villagers and will soon be relieved of his duties, it was announced here Wednesday.

Col. Yehuda Meir, former commander of the Nablus district, was reprimanded by the IDF chief of staff, Gen. Dan Shomron. Meir has been charged with exceeding his authority in incidents that occurred in two Arab villages last year.

In January 1988, he allegedly ordered soldiers to beat Arabs in Huwara and Beita villages. According to witnesses, four officers and more than 30 soldiers arrested 12 residents of Huwara.

They allegedly tied their hands and feet,

shoved rags in their mouths and broke their arms and legs with clubs. The battered villagers were left in the orchard where the beatings took place.

A military police investigation, ordered in response to complaints from the International Committee for the Red Cross and a letter from an officer who took part in the incident, found that Meir had ordered the beatings.

**WIDESPREAD DISTURBANCES CONTINUE
DESPITE CURFEW IN TERRITORIES**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 11 (JTA) -- Three Palestinians were killed and at least 30 were wounded in clashes with the Israel Defense Force in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, where blanket curfews were in force from Tuesday to Thursday.

The latest casualty was 17-year-old Silmi Abu-Kas, who was shot to death Thursday morning in Hebron when soldiers removing a roadblock were attacked by Arab rioters.

The territories were sealed off for security while Israelis observed Memorial Day for fallen soldiers on Tuesday and the 41st anniversary of Israel's independence on Wednesday.

In theory, some 1 million Palestinians were under curfew for the duration of the holidays. But there were numerous violations and widespread disturbances as the intifada seemed to gain momentum rather than wane.

The increased violence coincided with a call from Palestine Liberation Organization chief Yasir Arafat in Tunis to escalate the uprising, "because we are presently at the last quarter of an hour before victory and the establishment of an independent democratic Palestine."

Curfews were lifted in most of the West Bank on Thursday, but they remained in force for the 700,000 inhabitants of the Gaza Strip for the third consecutive day.

In Bethlehem on Thursday, a British tourist was slightly hurt when her tour bus was stoned.

**ISRAEL ASSAULTS REPORT BY THE WHO
ON STATE OF HEALTH IN TERRITORIES**

By Tamar Levy

GENEVA, May 11 (JTA) -- A report on health conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, which Israel says is biased, was circulated Thursday to the delegates from 166 countries attending the annual meeting of the World Health Assembly here.

The assembly is the governing body of the World Health Organization. The report will be used by the Arab states as the basis for a resolution condemning Israel, which the U.N. agency will be asked to adopt when debate on it opens Monday.

The report was prepared by three doctors, from Romania, Indonesia and Senegal, who were recruited by the Arab bloc.

Israel refused to let them visit the territories, claiming they were prejudiced. Israel has not cooperated since 1985 with medical teams sent to examine conditions in the territories for the WHO.

The report, focusing on the Palestinian uprising, states that 49 percent of the Arab casualties were caused by beatings, 39 percent by bullets and 8 percent by tear gas.

An Israeli diplomat here denounced the report as lopsided. He said it omitted any mention of the health services the inhabitants of the territories receive from the Israeli Health Ministry.

**U.S. REJECTS 'RETRACTION'
OF IRANIAN DEATH THREAT**

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, May 11 (JTA) -- An Iranian official's withdrawal of his death threat against Westerners "falls far short of any disavowal" of terrorism, the State Department said Thursday.

Deputy department spokesman Richard Boucher was reacting to what he called a "so-called retraction" of the death threat made by Ali Akbar Rafsanjani, speaker of Iran's parliament.

Rafsanjani made the threat last week, when he called for five Americans or other Westerners to be murdered for every Palestinian killed by Israeli soldiers.

The New York Times quoted Rafsanjani as saying Wednesday on Teheran radio, "I really do not advise this and consider it a weak point."

The Times said Rafsanjani clarified that "what he had meant was that Israeli oppression of Palestinians could lead to violence."

"Our view of Iran's support for terrorism has not changed," Boucher said. If it wants to join "the community of civilized nations, it must unconditionally rescind all of its death threats and exhortations to violence and cease its sponsorship of terrorism in all forms."

Boucher added that Iran should use its "admitted influence with the kidnappers in Lebanon to secure the immediate and unconditional release of all of the hostages."

Boucher and White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater would not comment on reports that the Central Intelligence Agency has concluded that Iran, in conjunction with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, planned the December downing of Pan American Flight 103, which exploded over Lockerbie, Scotland.

They said the crash investigation has not been completed.

**PLO OFFICIAL MANAGES TO MEET
WITH DUTCH FOREIGN MINISTER**

By Henrietta Boas

AMSTERDAM, May 11 (JTA) -- Foreign Minister Hans van den Broek was maneuvered by Arab diplomats into a meeting Thursday with the Palestine Liberation Organization representative in The Hague, Afif Safieh.

The occasion was van den Broek's biannual working luncheon with Arab ambassadors accredited to the Netherlands. This time, the envoys invited Safieh to join them, touting him as the ambassador of the "state of Palestine."

The PLO man has no diplomatic status here. His contacts up till now have been with junior officials, never with the foreign minister.

The episode is an embarrassment to the Foreign Ministry.

It had denied any knowledge when Safieh told the news media Sunday that he would be meeting van den Broek on Thursday to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian situation and the Middle East conflict in general.

Some Liberal Party members of Parliament and pro-Israel groups urged the foreign minister not to attend the luncheon or at least not to talk to Safieh.

But van den Broek was committed to attending and therefore was unable to avoid exchanging a few words with the Palestinian. They reportedly had an informal discussion.

**IMHAUSEN-CHEMIE EXECUTIVE ARRESTED
OVER LIBYAN GAS PLANT INVOLVEMENT**

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, May 11 (JTA) -- The State Department on Thursday welcomed West Germany's arrest Wednesday of a chemical executive accused of helping Libya build a poison gas plant.

The executive, Juergen Hippenstiel-Imhausen of Imhausen-Chemie, was arrested "on suspicion of violating West German export laws," The New York Times reported Thursday.

The Times quoted West Germany's prosecutor in the case, Holger Preisendanz, as saying he "is strongly suspected of having played a significant personal role" in planning and building the Libyan plant in the desert town of Rabta.

Hippenstiel-Imhausen, who is the first person arrested on charges of helping construct the plant, has denied any involvement with the facility, the Times reported.

State Department deputy spokesman Richard Boucher called the arrest "further indication that the West German government is serious about ending the involvement of German firms in chemical weapons proliferation."

The State Department has been trying to convince West Germany and other countries to restrict any contacts between their firms and the Libyan plant.

Boucher said Bonn's investigation into chemical firms with ties to Libya is "active." He added that the West German parliament is considering new restrictions on chemical exports and activities abroad by German nationals.

"These are positive elements in the worldwide effort to halt assistance to the Rabta facility and to prevent chemical weapons proliferation," Boucher added.

The Bush administration has asserted that the plant, about 65 miles south of Tripoli, was built to manufacture poison gas. Libya contends that the plant's purpose is to make pharmaceuticals.

In Zurich, Switzerland, meanwhile, a firm of consulting engineers has withdrawn its offer to participate in the construction of a plant in Iran to manufacture pesticides.

The company, Krebs A.G., acted at the behest of the Swiss Foreign Office. American diplomats had warned Switzerland that the Iranians planned to produce chemical weapons there.

(JTA correspondent Tamar Levy in Geneva contributed to this report.)

**SHAMIR CONDUCTS BUSINESS
FROM HOSPITAL SICKBED**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, May 11 (JTA) -- The Prime Minister's Office has moved temporarily to Hadasah University Hospital, where Yitzhak Shamir is conducting affairs of state from his bed.

He was admitted Wednesday, suffering from fatigue, according to a hospital spokesman.

His doctors said Thursday that he was given a series of tests, which should be completed by Friday, at which time he will be discharged.

Shamir's aides said he was feeling "very well." He conferred with members of his staff, took and made telephone calls and monitored radio and television newscasts.

Among many well-wishers whose calls were put through were President Chaim Herzog and Vice Premier Shimon Peres.