

BUSH BEING URGED TO BACK ISRAEL AS BATTLE OVER PEACE PLAN LOOMS

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, June 28 (JTA) — A bipartisan group of U.S. senators has been pressing President Bush to make a strong statement of support for Israel that would bolster Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, whose peace plan is facing stiff opposition from elements within his own party.

President Bush reportedly assured a dozen senators who met with him last Friday that he would publicly reaffirm the U.S.-Israeli relationship sometime before July 5, when Shamir is due to present the plan to the Likud Central Committee.

But as of Wednesday afternoon, the president had not done so.

Sen. Howard Metzenbaum (D-Ohio), who attended the White House meeting, said in a telephone interview that it "is not fair to say" Bush agreed to issue a statement.

But the senators "expect him to address himself in some manner to the prime minister and the people of Israel," the senator said.

Metzenbaum would not comment on speculation that the senators had sought a statement from Bush that could be construed as specifically supportive of Shamir's initiative.

Among other things, the plan calls for Palestinian elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip leading to negotiations on Palestinian self-rule and eventually the final status of the administered territories.

Although the Israeli Cabinet endorsed the plan by a 20-6 vote on May 21 and it was subsequently approved by the Knesset, some of the most powerful Likud ministers oppose it.

Assurance U.S. Isn't 'Backing Off'

Ariel Sharon, the minister of industry and trade, is leading the opposition. He convened the Central Committee, of which he is secretary, with the intention of having it reject the peace plan or distort it with amendments.

Sharon is backed by Deputy Prime Minister David Levy, who is minister of construction and housing, and Yitzhak Moda'i, the minister of economics and planning who heads Likud's Liberal Party wing.

Shamir clearly will need all the help he can get to line up his own party behind the plan.

Metzenbaum said the senators "felt with regard to timing it would be appropriate for Bush to publicly indicate his posture vis-a-vis the State of Israel, which some in Israel have been concerned about."

He said the delegation was seeking a private or public statement to Shamir that would "make clear to Israel, as well as to the rest of the world, that Israel is a major ally" and that the United States is "not backing off from previously stated positions."

The meeting with Bush was initially sought by Metzenbaum and Sen. Rudy Boschwitz (R-Minn.), who approached the Senate Democratic and Republican leadership with the idea.

After the meeting, White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater told reporters that Bush "reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to Israel, speaking of

unwavering and unquestioned support, because Israel is a steadfast ally and friend."

"Israel is the first among equals in the region and Israel is, in fact, going through a difficult period, (which) the president fully understands," Fitzwater said.

At the meeting, Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) handed the president a list of 14 terrorist incidents allegedly perpetrated by constituent groups of the Palestine Liberation Organization since the start of the U.S. dialogue with the PLO last December.

Bush was accompanied by several of his top aides, including: Secretary of State James Baker; National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft and Scowcroft's deputy, Robert Gates; White House Chief of Staff John Sununu; and Dennis Ross, director of the State Department's policy planning staff.

The senators present, in addition to Metzenbaum and Boschwitz, were Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-Maine), Minority Leader Robert Dole (R-Kan.), Joseph Biden (D-Del.), Daniel Inouye (D-Hawaii), Carl Levin (D-Mich.), Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.), Paul Sarbanes (D-Md.) and Arlen Specter (R-Pa.).

JEWISH AGENCY VOTES TO RETAIN INVOLVEMENT IN ABSORPTION EFFORT

By Andrew Silow Carroll

JERUSALEM, June 28 (JTA) — The Jewish Agency Assembly recommended Wednesday that the agency and the government of Israel begin an "emergency cooperative effort" to expand the absorption of Soviet Jews in Israel.

The assembly also voted to review the proposed transfer of absorption activities from the agency to the government, a proposal that disappointed new immigrants and their advocates.

They had called on the assembly to revoke or suspend the two-year-old transfer agreement, in order to improve the morale of agency absorption workers who feel their jobs may be eliminated any day.

The recommendations on absorption were contained in two of five resolutions adopted by the assembly that address the anticipated influx of an estimated 5,000 to 7,500 Soviet Jewish immigrants this year.

In all, the assembly adopted nearly 20 resolutions on the final day of its four-day annual meeting here.

The resolutions contain the basic policy directives that will guide the Jewish Agency's Board of Governors over the next year.

They also stipulate how the agency will spend the \$360 million raised annually in the Diaspora on the agency's behalf.

The Board of Governors will assess whether the budget allows the assembly's recommendations to be carried out.

The nearly seven hours of debate were marked by little controversy, despite the apparent disappointment by various delegates that their own proposals on absorption, Jewish education, rural settlement and the structure of the Jewish Agency were either rejected or diluted.

In one hotly argued resolution that eventually passed, the assembly called for a special

committee to consider the relationship between the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Organization, with an eye toward improving the efficiency of the intertwined bodies while increasing the "financial independence" of the WZO.

The relationship issue was played out this week as a quiet battle between leaders of Zionist organizations, which implement WZO educational and outreach programs outside of Israel, and leaders of philanthropic organizations in the Diaspora.

Issue Of Accountability

The philanthropists, representing the United Jewish Appeal, United Israel Appeal, Keren Hayesod and community-based federations, want the WZO to be more accountable for the money they allocate to it.

Zionist organization leaders rejoiced in the resolution, which closely follows one adopted by their own Zionist General Council last week and avoids language that would have given more control to the philanthropists.

"There was a renewed Zionist presence," said Milton Shapiro, president of the Zionist Organization of America.

"I think the non-Zionist organizations have a new understanding of the impact of the Zionist movement," he said.

But Esther Leah Ritz, representing the philanthropists, said the Zionist organizations actually want programmatic, not financial independence.

"They are saying, 'We will decide how the programs should be run in the Diaspora and how the money is to be spent,'" said Ritz, who is past president of the Milwaukee Jewish Federation and a member of the Jewish Agency Board of Governors.

"We want to know how it is being used," she explained.

Among the other resolutions debated and passed by the assembly were:

- A "determination" that the educational priorities in Israeli educational institutions funded by the Jewish Agency are "democratic values, Arab-Jewish tolerance, religious pluralism and mutual respect."

- A call on the Board of Governors to "devote a higher percentage of its allocated funds to 'Jewish education programs in and for the Diaspora than is now the case.'"

- A charge to the current Jewish Education Commission of the agency to continue its evaluation of Zionist Jewish education programs and submit its report by June 1, 1990.

- A recommendation that the agency provide its Rural Settlement Department with "sufficient resources" to develop the Galilee, Negev and Arava regions of Israel.

'Who Is A Jew' Issue Surfaces

Delegates voted to table a resolution that revisited the controversial "Who Is A Jew" debate of the previous year.

The resolution said that the Interior Ministry, in refusing to register Reform and Conservative converts as Jewish citizens, had imposed "de facto" changes in the Law of Return that were thought to be shelved after the current Israeli unity government was formed.

But the resolution did not survive an impassioned appeal by Mendel Kaplan, chairman of the Board of Governors.

He told the delegates that the Jewish Agen-

cy had already worked on behalf of opponents to the proposed "Who Is A Jew" amendment by asking Israeli leaders to remove it from the political agenda.

"You have negated what we have done," Kaplan scolded the delegates. "Don't divide the assembly on a point which we successfully resolved last year."

The assembly drew to a close late Wednesday afternoon with a speech at the Knesset by Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

The Board of Governors was scheduled to meet Thursday, to begin the long and arduous process of implementing the resolutions worked out over the previous four days.

SETTLE IMMIGRANTS IN WEST BANK, LIKUD HOUSING MINISTER PROPOSES By Andrew Silow Carroll

MA'ALEH LAVONA, West Bank, June 28 (JTA) — Jewish families settling the West Bank should each "adopt" a family of recently arrived immigrants, Housing Minister David Levy declared Tuesday.

Levy said the government could aid in the building of new houses if settlers embraced the plan, which could conceivably double the number of Jewish families now living in the Israeli-administered territories.

Levy unveiled his plan at dedication ceremonies for 24 new apartments at this Orthodox religious settlement, located on a commanding hilltop between the Arab cities of Nablus and Ramallah.

The plan is the latest of several Levy has proposed to meet the absorption challenge posed by a wave of new immigrants from the Soviet Union. On Monday, he told world Jewish leaders of his plans to encourage "large-scale building" with tax incentives and to rehabilitate empty apartments in northern and southern Israel.

But the latest idea is also an attempt to deal with Jewish settlers' demands for increased government aid and military support in their almost daily conflict with Palestinians in the territories.

Levy's appearance among flag-waving settlers here was a frank statement of his and his Likud party's support for the settlement movement.

He boasted that despite the Palestinian uprising, Jewish settlers moved into 1,000 new apartments in the past year.

Levy said the government would help families move from temporary to permanent housing and would build roads between Jewish settlements that would circumvent potentially dangerous Arab towns and villages.

He said the money for these moves would come from the pledge by the national unity government earlier this year to allocate 30 million shekels for the settlements.

Leaders of Ma'aleh Lavona met privately with Levy before the dedication ceremony to press their demands. They later applauded his plans.

The settlement was established in 1984 and now has 128 residents. Settlers boasted that the community's 70th child was born Sunday.

JTA will not publish a Daily News Bulletin on Tuesday, July 4, because of the Independence Day holiday in the United States.

BOMB EXPLODES IN ISRAELI TOWN, WOUNDING THREE JEWS AND AN ARAB

By Cathrine Gerson

JERUSALEM, June 28 (JTA) -- An explosion shook the center of Ramla Wednesday morning, injuring three Jewish residents and one Arab, none seriously.

Police said the blast was caused by a hand grenade concealed in a garbage bin near the central bus station. It detonated at 11 a.m. local time, shattering windows in the vicinity.

About an hour after the explosion, local Jewish residents stabbed two Arabs from Hebron working in the Ramla marketplace, in an apparent reprisal attack.

The three Jewish victims of the blast, including a mother and child, were treated for minor cuts at a nearby hospital and sent home. The Arab suffered a concussion, but was not seriously hurt.

Seventy local Arabs were promptly detained for questioning.

The police were also hunting for two Jews suspected of the reprisal stabbing. According to one report, the two were arrested and their victims were taken to Assaf Harofeh Hospital with superficial injuries. One was discharged and the other kept for observation.

Ramla, a working class town about 10 miles southeast of Tel Aviv, is one of a handful of Israeli cities with mixed Jewish-Arab population.

Ramla's Jews And Arabs Get Along

Local residents said the two communities got along well. One Jewish woman told reporters, "It just can't be a local Arab responsible."

Ya'acov Turner, commander of the central police district, said the investigation was in full gear.

Referring to the attack on the Arabs, he told reporters, "Someone tried to pay back for the bomb, but we are looking for the two stabbers as hard as we are for the one responsible for the bomb."

Turner said police reinforcements would remain in the city until Thursday to prevent further retaliatory acts against Arabs.

The commander stressed that 5,000 Arabs live "very nicely in the city, and we have no reason to suspect them of anything."

He added, "This incident is not between Israeli Arabs and Jews or between West Bank Arabs and Jews, but simply the responsibility of the one responsible for the bomb."

SUSPECTED ARAB KIDNAPPER KILLED DURING CHASE BY ISRAELI SOLDIERS

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, June 28 (JTA) -- An Arab suspected of kidnapping an American relief worker was shot to death Wednesday by Israel Defense Force soldiers in Gaza.

Seven other Arabs were wounded in clashes with security forces in the West Bank.

The slain suspect, Mohammad Ahmad Hassan Nasser, was the target of an IDF dragnet in the Gaza Strip.

He is believed to have been one of the three gunmen who abducted Chris George, head of the West Bank-Gaza section of the Save the Children Foundation, from his Gaza office on June 22.

George, who was released unharmed 29 hours later, identified Nasser as one of his kidnappers.

According to security sources, Nasser also is suspected of injuring an Israeli security guard with an ax in the Gaza Strip two weeks ago and firing at an IDF officer in Gaza.

The officer was slightly wounded. An Arab bystander was killed.

Nasser, a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, was imprisoned for security offenses and later released in a 1985 prisoner exchange.

According to security sources, Nasser, trying to evade the Gaza manhunt, hijacked a taxi Wednesday night. It was stopped by soldiers. The suspect reportedly refused to surrender and was fatally shot when he drew his gun.

In Jerusalem, four Arabs were slightly wounded Wednesday on the Jerusalem Road. Two residents of the Balata refugee camp, near Nablus, also were injured.

In the West Bank town of Tulkarm, a 21-year-old Palestinian was wounded in a confrontation with soldiers.

Meanwhile, Jerusalem Magistrate Daniela Wechsler is expected to rule Thursday on a police request to extend the custody of two Jewish settlers from the West Bank suspected of killing a Palestinian in Bani Zeit village on June 23.

They are Meir Berg and Ariel Begun from Pesagot, near Ramallah. Five other settlers arrested with them have been released on bail.

According to the police, Berg is the prime suspect in the slaying of Aziz Khamis Arar, 22.

HERZOG WINS PLEDGE OF SUPPORT FROM CANADIAN PRIME MINISTER

By Michael Solomon

MONTREAL, June 28 (JTA) -- President Chaim Herzog of Israel addressed the Canadian Parliament in Ottawa on Tuesday and was assured by Prime Minister Brian Mulroney of "the unswerving support of Canada for the State of Israel, its security and integrity."

Herzog, who arrived Monday for a six-day official visit, was received by a guard of honor outside the Parliament building after landing at Upland air force base, near the capital.

He is the first Israeli chief of state to visit Canada.

Herzog was the guest of honor at a reception and state banquet given Monday evening by Canada's symbolic head of state, Governor General Jeanne Sauve, who represents Queen Elizabeth II.

Sauve praised Herzog as "an intellectual of international stature."

She also declared that Canada wishes to strengthen its relations with Israel and jointly examine means to respond to the challenges that Israel has to face.

Herzog, speaking at a joint session of the House of Commons and the Senate, defended Israel's handling of the Palestinian uprising.

He recounted in some detail repeated Arab rejections of peace with Israel, from the time of its founding 41 years ago.

"I know of no way to achieve peace without negotiations," he said. "The people of Israel want nothing more than peace."

Canada's opposition Liberal Party issued a statement on the occasion of Herzog's visit affirming the view that "to reach a just and durable peace between the State of Israel and its Arab neighbors" an international conference must be summoned "able to lead negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians."

ARRIVAL OF SOVIET QUAKE VICTIMS CREATES EXCITEMENT IN ISRAEL

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, June 28 (JTA) — The arrival of dozens of Soviet earthquake victims for medical treatment here aboard the first direct El Al flight between Israel and the Soviet Union is creating great excitement and raising hope for better relations between the two countries.

An El Al Boeing 757 brought more than 60 Soviet Armenian earthquake victims, most of them amputees, to Israel late Tuesday night, completing the first stage of a humanitarian mission.

The plane, chartered by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), which organized and financed the mission, flew back and forth to Yerevan, the capital of Soviet Armenia, in one day.

The mercy mission received considerable coverage by the official Soviet news media, and the Soviet authorities and people seemed genuinely appreciative.

The Israeli government and El Al hope the reservoir of good will created by the mission will hasten the establishment of direct commercial flights between Moscow and Tel Aviv.

They are especially needed now, if Israel is to divert many of the large numbers of Jews leaving the Soviet Union to its shores instead of the United States or other Western countries.

The patients, many of them children, were carried off the plane or descended on crutches. All were injured in the earthquake that devastated Armenia on Dec. 7.

All of them had been treated by an Israeli medical team that was dispatched to the disaster area at the time.

While in Israel, the amputees will be fitted with artificial limbs. All of the patients will receive further medical treatment and rehabilitation therapy before returning home.

The government-owned Sheba Hospital in Tel Hashomer and the Rambam Hospital in Haifa were selected to provide these services.

May Undergo Immediate Surgery

The patients were scheduled for preliminary examinations Wednesday and some may undergo corrective surgery immediately.

The flight between Tel Aviv and Yerevan took about two-and-a-half hours each way. The pilot routed the plane over Cyprus to avoid Syrian air space and flew straight to Armenia over Turkey.

The flight was accompanied by pool correspondents from the Foreign Press Association, Israeli journalists, a JDC delegation and representatives of the Israel Defense Force.

It also carried five tons of relief clothing to Yerevan.

On the return trip, the patients were accompanied by two Armenian doctors, four nurses and two interpreters.

Two Soviet journalists representing Novosti, the USSR's external news service, were also on the return flight.

The Soviet government newspaper Izvestia gave the mission front-page coverage Tuesday. A follow-up report appeared Wednesday in Moscow News.

Israeli journalists who made the round trip said the El Al crew and passengers were warmly welcomed by Soviet officials at Yerevan's airport.

Buses were there to take them to the best

hotel in town, where an elaborate spread of cold cuts, cheeses and Armenian delicacies awaited.

There was also a band that gave a rousing rendition of "Hava Nagila."

Narina Balayan, minister of social welfare of the Soviet Armenian Republic, greeted the Israelis at the hotel dining room, which was festooned with Israeli and Armenian flags.

She expressed profound gratitude for the humanitarian assistance given her people in the aftermath of the earthquake.

"I hope the time will come when plane loads like yours will land in Yerevan without any disaster having prompted their visit," she said.

The reception was attended by Aryeh Levin, head of the Israeli consular mission in Moscow.

During the stopover of several hours, the Israelis were taken on a tour of Yerevan, which was not damaged by the earthquake, whose epicenter was more than 100 miles away.

Raymond Epstein, chairman of JDC's Israel Area Committee, said the rescue mission was launched after the organization received an overwhelming response from the American Jewish community to its initial appeal to help Armenian earthquake victims.

"We had a half-million dollars at our disposal and wanted to do something constructive and beneficial with it," he said.

Aryeh Cooperstock, director of JDC's international development program, headed his organization's delegation on the flight.

HATE CRIMES BILL PASSES THE HOUSE AS MAJOR DRIVE BEGINS IN THE SENATE

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, June 28 (JTA) — Supporters of the Hate Crimes Statistics Bill are gearing up to prevent the legislation from being stalled in the Senate, as it was last year after the House of Representatives had approved it.

The bill, which would require the U.S. Justice Department to gather and publish annual statistics on crimes motivated by hate, was approved anew by the House on Monday, by a vote of 369-47.

Jess Hordes, Washington representative of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, said that supporters of the bill have moved earlier than they did last year in lining up Senate backing for the bill.

Last year, the House approved the bill as did the Senate Judiciary Committee. But action by the full Senate was prevented through stalling tactics by Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.). The Senate adjourned before the legislation could be acted upon.

Helms objected to the fact that the bill would require the Justice Department to monitor not only racist or anti-Semitic crimes, but also those motivated by hatred of an individual's sexual orientation.

In order to prevent Helms and other conservatives from filibustering the bill or introducing an amendment that would kill its chances of adoption, the bill's supporters want to get at least 60 co-sponsors before the bill goes to the Senate floor, Hordes said.

The legislation, introduced by Sens. Paul Simon (D-Ill.) and Orrin Hatch (R-Utah), now has 47 co-sponsors.

Hordes said efforts are being made to build up support for the bill by the time the Senate returns from its current recess July 10.