

PLO SAID TO BACK, IN PRINCIPLE, PLAN FOR PALESTINIAN ELECTIONS

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, July 26 (JTA) -- Indications that the Palestine Liberation Organization has conditionally accepted Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's proposal for Palestinian elections in the administered territories are being viewed here as both a major advance and a potential challenge for the government peace plan.

Reports that the PLO leadership in Tunis has relaxed its conditions for accepting free elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip were based on details of a meeting in Paris last week between Israeli and Soviet officials, as well as an American memorandum said to have reached Jerusalem.

The reports were strengthened by comments made Wednesday by Bethlehem Mayor Elias Freij. Emerging from a meeting with Energy Minister Moshe Shahal, Freij declared that the PLO leadership has already given its consent to the elections plan.

Elections could take place "within a year," he said.

Freij, a widely respected Arab politician, reportedly told Shahal that the proposed elections should not be made conditional on an end to the Palestinian uprising, because the intifada would die down of its own volition once the elections process began.

Details of the Paris meeting were provided by Nimrod Novik, who met with Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Terrasov. Novik is a political adviser to Vice Premier Shimon Peres.

The two were said to have discussed the American memorandum, which reportedly said the United States had received PLO assurances that it has agreed to elections in the territories and is ready to set up a negotiating team to work out the arrangements with the Israeli government.

Wants Promise Of Territorial Concessions

According to the reports, carried in the Jerusalem Post and the Hebrew daily Ha'aretz, the PLO has dropped its demand that the Israeli army withdraw completely from the territories and be replaced by an international observer force before elections take place.

Instead, it would agree to have a team of American and Egyptian observers monitor the referendum.

But the PLO reportedly is insisting that before the negotiating team is set up to iron out the arrangements, Israel publicly accept the principle of giving up land for peace, as contained in United Nations Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.

That is an issue that could divide the Israeli government. Labor supports giving up portions of the West Bank, while Likud is staunchly opposed to further territorial concessions.

In Washington, State Department Margaret Tutwiler said Wednesday that she knew of no such American memorandum.

But she added, "The PLO has told us privately, as it has said publicly, that it supports the election concept as part of a comprehensive peace plan."

However, the PLO has put a number of

conditions on its support for elections which would prejudice the outcome of a negotiated solution."

"These conditions are not acceptable to us," she said. "This is a key issue which we continue to discuss in our dialogue with the PLO."

The reports of possible PLO concessions were the latest of a string of major developments on the government peace plan to occur since the end of last week.

On Saturday, acting on a longstanding U.S. request, Israeli authorities reopened schools in the West Bank, with the tacit cooperation of the uprising leadership.

A day later, the Cabinet voted 21-4 to reaffirm the government peace plan, without tough new conditions adopted by the Likud Central Committee.

Beilin Says Israel Talking With PLO

On Monday, PLO officials reported that they had endorsed recent meetings between Shamir and four Palestinians in the territories, a contention hotly denied by the Israeli premier.

The following day, one of those Palestinians, attorney Jamil Tarifi of El-Birch, came forward and confirmed that he was among the PLO supporters who had met recently with Shamir.

Both Tarifi and Freij were careful not to identify themselves with the PLO in any way. This enabled Shamir and his aides to continue to maintain that Israel is conducting no negotiations with the PLO, either directly or indirectly.

But Deputy Finance Minister Yossi Beilin, a Labor dove and close associate of Peres, took issue with that claim Wednesday.

Speaking on the Knesset floor, he declared that Israel has been conducting indirect negotiations with PLO, via the United States, Egypt and Romania, with the purpose of obtaining a green light for the election plan.

Speaking later in the day at a meeting of Likud ministers, Shamir said Beilin's comments amounted to a "distortion of the facts." He reiterated that there were no negotiations with the PLO, either direct or indirect.

And Foreign Minister Moshe Arens, who met Wednesday with a personal emissary of Romanian President Nicolae Ceausescu, again rejected proposals that Israel talk to the PLO.

Shamir's opponents within Likud were not so sure, however.

Economics and Planning Minister Yitzhak Moda'i described the prime minister's rejection of Beilin's remarks as "pretense." He warned in a radio interview that if the current talks with the Palestinians become full-fledged negotiations, it will mean a "Palestinian state and an end to the Likud."

He described the talks with the PLO as "nothing new" except for the fact that until now, no one had admitted that they were taking place.

Deputy Premier David Levy came out of the Likud ministers meeting describing the atmosphere, somewhat mysteriously, as one of "preparedness for developments." He would not elaborate, but added, "Soon we will need to give clear answers to certain questions."

(JTA correspondent Howard Rosenberg in Washington contributed to this report.)

TOUGHER VERSION OF BILL RESTRICTING PLO CONTACTS IS INTRODUCED IN HOUSE

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, July 26 (JTA) -- Angered by President Bush's apparent intention to ignore legislation restricting U.S. contacts with the Palestine Liberation Organization, two members of the House of Representatives have introduced a more stringent version of the bill adopted by the Senate last week.

The House bill contains provisions advocated by Sen. Jesse Helms (R-N.C.) that were rejected by the Senate in favor of softer language.

Reps. Edward Feighan (D-Ohio) and Christopher Smith (R-N.J.) introduced the bill Tuesday after President Bush indicated he would not pay attention to the version approved by the Senate.

Bush called the amendment unconstitutional Tuesday and said that the United States will continue its dialogue with the PLO as it has up to now.

The administration had negotiated the "watered down" version with Senate leaders, but, according to a Feighan aide, now says it has "no intention of paying heed" to the Senate measure, which was adopted as an amendment to a bill authorizing funds for the State Department.

Introduced as a free-standing bill, the Feighan-Smith legislation, like Helms' defeated amendment, would require the president to certify that every member of the PLO it holds talks with has not been involved in terrorist activity.

The Senate rejected the Helms amendment by a 72-23 vote. Instead, it adopted a less stringent amendment, introduced by Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-Maine) and Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole (R-Kan.), which only Helms opposed.

If signed into law, the Mitchell-Dole amendment would require the president to advise Congress if a PLO official has been involved in terrorist activities.

'Intrusion' In Foreign Policy

At the State Department Wednesday, spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler sought to clarify Bush's position.

"The president strongly believes that legislation that tries to restrict or manage the conduct of diplomacy is an infringement on presidential prerogative and is unconstitutional," Tutwiler said.

But "he acknowledges the widespread sentiment in the Congress that produced this legislation. Members of Congress should know that this sentiment and concern will be taken into account as we pursue our policy."

Before the Senate voted on the amendments last Thursday, Bush sent a letter to Mitchell warning that the Helms amendment "would interfere significantly, if not destroy, the ability of the United States to promote a viable peace process in the Middle East."

Bush also said the amendment was unconstitutional because it would be a "constraint" on his ability to conduct foreign policy.

"It is, as a result, wholly inconsistent with the Constitution and would be an unwarranted and unacceptable intrusion by the legislative branch on the powers and responsibilities of the presidency," Bush said.

State Department deputy spokesman Richard Boucher said last Friday that while the amendment adopted by the Senate "is far less offen-

sive" than the Helms amendment, it is still unconstitutional.

The congressional moves to restrict U.S. contacts with the PLO came after it was revealed that Robert Pelletreau, the U.S. ambassador in Tunisia, had met with Salah Khalaf, the second-highest-ranking PLO official.

Khalaf, also known as Abu Iyad, founded the extremist Black September terrorist group, which perpetrated the 1972 attack on Israeli athletes at the Olympics in Munich.

When asked if the United States will meet again with Abu Iyad, Tutwiler said, "We do not say, and are not going to say, who we do and do not meet with."

SHARP DROP OF JORDANIAN DINAR CAUSES PANIC IN THE WEST BANK

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, July 26 (JTA) -- There was panic in the money markets of the West Bank on Tuesday, as a result of the sharp devaluation of the Jordanian dinar, a major currency of the territory.

The dinar sank to a new low Tuesday, selling for 1.9 shekels, compared to 2.3 a day before and 5.8 shekels a year ago.

Blame for the devaluation can be pinned on Jordan's economic malaise. The decline of the dinar is threatening the economic stability of the West Bank, according to Yediot Aharonot.

The economic woes come as the West Bank marks the first anniversary of King Hussein's withdrawal of financial responsibility for the territory.

Last July 30, Hussein announced he would no longer pay the salaries of civil service workers and was leaving financial and administrative responsibilities in the West Bank to the Palestine Liberation Organization.

In recent months, the unified national leadership of the Palestinian uprising has attempted to fight the dinar's decline by setting a fixed rate of 3 shekels to the dinar.

However, despite threats, money changers and business owners have not complied with the venture.

SOVIET GEORGIAN OFFICIALS VISIT ISRAEL

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, July 26 (JTA) -- Two officials of the Soviet Republic of Georgia are in Israel on a nine-day tour and are being given almost royal treatment.

The Georgians, Culture Minister Valery Estiani and Foreign Trade Minister Raphael Aligurashvili, were greeted at the airport by Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and Knesset member Efraim Gur, a native Georgian who initiated the visit.

During their lengthy visit, the Georgians are to hold talks with government officials and will tour museums, universities and factories.

Observers say the Georgian officials may not have had to ask for Moscow's permission to make the trip.

But it is believed certain that they arrived with the full knowledge and consent of the central Soviet authorities.

Their visit comes on the heels of a report from an Israeli correspondent in Moscow that a Middle East adviser to Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze will visit Israel soon.

HIGH-LEVEL SOVIET OFFICIAL CONFERS WITH JEWISH LEADERS AT NCSJ OFFICES

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, July 26 (JTA) -- A high-level Soviet government official paid an unprecedented call to a Soviet Jewry organization here Wednesday to talk about the problems of refuseniks.

Deputy Foreign Minister Anatoly Adamishin, whose responsibilities include international humanitarian affairs, discussed the Soviet Jewish emigration issue with Jewish leaders during a three-hour luncheon meeting at the New York headquarters of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry.

Adamishin is in the United States for consultations with the State Department.

The conclave was described as constructive, frank, open and even remarkable.

It was a follow-up to a similar gathering in Moscow in May, at which leaders of the National Conference spoke with Yuri Reshetov, head of the Foreign Ministry's department for international humanitarian cooperation and human rights.

"This was obviously another step in the dialogue that has been initiated," Martin Wenick, executive director of the National Conference, said in a telephone interview.

"It was significant in the level of the individual who was involved and that it took place here," said Wenick.

Another participant remarked on the openness of the talks.

'A Very Frank Discussion'

"The very fact that it took place, with whom and where was significant," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive director of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. "It was a very frank discussion," he said.

"It's clear that he places great significance on the role played by the Jewish community, not only in the area of Soviet Jewry but overall in U.S.-Soviet relations," Hoenlein added.

Harvey Feldman, director of international relations for the American Jewish Committee, described the meeting as "fantastic."

He said Adamishin was open to disagreements and expressed understanding about the Jews' unusually hard plight in Soviet history.

The talks focused on the plight of Soviet Jews who have been refused permission to emigrate, the recent proliferation of grass-roots anti-Semitism and the need to rebuild the Soviet Jewish community.

Wenick said the Soviets had requested a meeting with leaders of the organized Jewish community and that arrangements for it were made through the State Department.

Richard Schifter, assistant secretary of state for human rights and humanitarian affairs, was instrumental in the arrangements and was present at Wednesday's meeting.

Other National Conference officials participating in the meeting were Shoshana Cardin, national chairwoman; Mark Levin, Washington office director; and Rabbi David Hill, secretary.

Other Jewish leaders present were Seymour Reich, president of B'nai B'rith International and chairman of the Conference of Presidents; Carmi Schwartz, executive vice president of the Council of Jewish Federations; Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith; and Rafael Danziger, assistant director of American Jewish Congress.

SWISS ARREST NAZI WAR CRIMINAL MISSING SINCE HIS ESCAPE IN APRIL

By Tamar Levy

GENEVA, July 26 (JTA) -- A convicted Nazi murderer known as the "William Tell of Auschwitz" has been arrested by Swiss police, following an intensive manhunt by Interpol after he fled West Germany in April.

Gottfried Weise, 68, a former SS guard at Auschwitz, was apprehended at a hospital in Thun, a famous summer resort in the German-speaking part of Switzerland.

Information on his whereabouts was communicated to Swiss authorities by a prosecutor in Wuppertal, West Germany, according to the Swiss Telegraphic Agency, a national news service.

Swiss police were instructed to look for an SS tattoo under Weise's arm, a common practice of the SS.

Wuppertal Prosecutor Horst Rosenbaum said Weise was hospitalized as a result of a mild stroke he suffered.

Weise said Tuesday he might agree to be extradited to West Germany, but said he wanted to think over his decision and would give an answer on Thursday.

Extradition seems highly likely, as West Germany and Switzerland have signed an extradition treaty.

Weise was convicted and sentenced to life on Jan. 28, 1988, for the murder of at least five persons in 1944 at Auschwitz. After a federal court upheld his conviction and sentence, authorities allowed Weise to remain at his home near Wuppertal to care for his ailing wife.

Officials confiscated his passport and Weise mortgaged his house to post a \$150,000 bond, but he fled before police showed up at his home April 20 to take him to prison to begin serving his sentence.

West German authorities speculate that Weise had some help to get new identity papers and escape.

Weise's wife, Ursula, 62, has also disappeared.

Rosenbaum said the West Germans had suspected Weise was hiding in Switzerland or Austria. It is presently unknown where he was hiding before his being located Tuesday.

Weise acquired the appellation "William Tell of Auschwitz" because of testimony during his 15-month trial that he killed an 8-year-old boy and 17-year-old girl by forcing them to balance tin cans on their heads, at which he shot.

IDF SAYS NO TO INTERVIEWS

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, July 26 (JTA) -- Israel Defense Force Chief of Staff Dan Shomron gave orders this week that senior IDF commanders, general staff major generals and chief officers of the various military corps may not grant interviews to the news media until further notice, Al Hamishmar reported Wednesday.

Shomron explained his decision saying that many military figures have recently given interviews and that he wishes to lower the profile of the IDF in the media.

In addition, Shomron said he will not allow corps commanders to appear during the coming months at the traditional news conferences held on commemorative days for the various military corps.

**JEWS ARE MIGRATING SOUTH,
ACCORDING TO NEW FIGURES**
By Andrew Silow Carroll

NEW YORK, July 26 (JTA) -- American Jews are flocking to the Sun Belt and the West Coast, according to updated population estimates contained in the 1989 American Jewish Year Book, published last week by the American Jewish Committee and the Jewish Publication Society.

Significant increases in 1988 in the Jewish populations of such communities as San Diego and the state of Florida were matched by Jewish population losses of 10 percent or more in many communities in the Northeast and Midwest.

Florida, with 596,100 Jews comprising 5.1 percent of the state's population, regained the No. 3 spot among the states with the highest concentration of Jews, behind New York and New Jersey and ahead of Massachusetts, Maryland and the District of Columbia.

The total Jewish population of the United States in 1988 was estimated at 5,935,000, according to the year book. That figure is down slightly from 1987, but still represents 2.5 percent of the overall U.S. population.

The population findings are contained in an article by researchers at the North American Jewish Data Bank in New York.

Their findings relied primarily on studies by local Jewish community federations, but they warn that population estimating is "not an exact science." Numbers may be adjusted from year to year, for instance, without there having been a demographic change in a community.

For the latest study, the researchers have adjusted for such factors as the number of non-Jewish spouses or children in a household and the number of part-time residents in a community.

The latter factor is especially important in the Sun Belt, they report, where the number of year-round residents is often over-counted.

Revealing Figures

But even when the figures are adjusted for the so-called "snowbirds" who summer in the North, the figures on the migration of Jews to the South and West are revealing:

- * In the San Diego metropolitan area, the Jewish population estimate increased by 33,000 to a total of 70,000 between 1987 and 1988, an 89 percent gain.

- * The Jewish population in Orange County, Calif., went up 5,000 to 85,000 in the same period.

- * Florida's Jewish population went up by nearly 47,000 between 1987 and 1988, representing an 8.5 percent jump. The Florida cities with the most significant increases are Fort Lauderdale, up 31,000 to a total Jewish population of 116,000, and Orlando, up 3,000 to 18,000.

- * Ten Northeastern and Midwestern communities report Jewish population declines of at least 10 percent between 1987 and 1988. The largest absolute decline by state occurred in New York, with a loss of more than 47,000 Jews.

New York is still on top of the yearbook's ranking of states with the highest Jewish concentration, with 1,844,000 Jews comprising 10.4 percent of its general population.

"Jewish Population in the United States, 1988" was prepared by Dr. Barry Kosmin, director of the Data Bank; Dr. Paul Ritterband, professor of sociology and Jewish studies at the City University of New York; and Jeffrey Scheckner, administrator for the Data Bank.

The Data Bank was established by the Council of Jewish Federations and Center for Jewish Studies of CUNY.

The 1989 American Jewish Year Book, edited by Dr. David Singer, is available from the Publication Service of the American Jewish Committee.

**POLLARD NOW SAYS ISRAEL
TURNED ITS BACK ON HIM**
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, July 26 (JTA) -- Charging that Israel abandoned him after his arrest, convicted spy Jonathan Pollard now says he has doubts whether it was wise for him and his wife to risk their freedom when they spied on the United States on behalf of Israel.

In a letter to Amnon Dror, the Israeli representative of the U.S.-based Committee to Free the Pollards, Pollard writes that he no longer is sure whether he wants to live in Israel when he completes his jail sentence.

The former Navy intelligence analyst was convicted of passing classified documents to the Israelis in 1986 and was sentenced to a life sentence at a maximum-security prison in Marion, Ill. He is eligible for parole in 1996.

His wife, Anne, was convicted of being an accessory to her husband's crime after the fact, and is serving two concurrent five-year sentences in a separate facility.

Pollard said Israeli Embassy officials in Washington had not only refused to grant him and his wife asylum when he faced arrest, but that they even cooperated with U.S. authorities in their capture.

"The government of Israel -- in no way do I mean the citizens of Israel -- has betrayed Anne and me, and in doing so, I believe, has betrayed the people of Israel," Pollard writes.

He also blames Israel for doing nothing to help bring to an end what he alleges is daily harassment of his wife, who suffers from a rare gastrointestinal disorder, among other ailments.

He said she is suffering "hellish pain."

**TWO ISRAELIS DIE MYSTERIOUSLY
AFTER DRINKING HOSPITAL SOLUTION**
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, July 26 (JTA) -- Police and health officials are investigating the deaths of two 67-year-old men who died while under treatment as outpatients at Beilinson Hospital in Petach Tikva.

The men died Sunday after drinking a standard laxative solution prepared at the hospital's pharmacy, before undergoing intestinal X-rays.

They drank the mixture at home but fell ill a few hours later, and both died shortly afterward, one at the Sheba Hospital in Tel Hashomer and the other at Meir Hospital in Kfar Sava.

A third person given a dose from the same batch, took a few sips but did not drink the rest. She became sick but eventually recovered.

Pharmacologists say that the polyethylene glycol solution with the brand name of Golytely is used daily throughout the country. It is ingested by patients about to undergo a scan for suspected intestinal blockage.

Its side effects are generally very mild.

Police are seeking to determine whether the deaths resulted from the solution being mixed with other substances, either deliberately or by mistake.