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**14 KNESSET MEMBERS FORM BLOC
BACKING 3 CABINET HARD-LINERS**
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Nov. 19 (JTA) -- A group of 14 Likud Knesset members has formed a bloc around three hard-line ministers dissatisfied with Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's peace initiative and the way he has handled negotiations with the United States.

The group, which calls itself "Protectors of Eretz Israel," supports Shamir's most severe critics in the Cabinet.

They are Minister of Industry and Commerce Ariel Sharon and David Levy, the construction and housing minister, both powerful members in Shamir's Herut faction; and Minister of Economics and Planning Yitzhak Moda'i, leader of Likud's Liberal Party wing.

Levy, who also holds the rank of deputy premier, encouraged the hard-line caucus over the weekend.

He lashed out at Shamir's handling of the diplomatic process surrounding American guidelines for an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, namely the five points proposed by Secretary of State James Baker.

Shamir, who met with President Bush and Baker on Nov. 15, is still in the United States and will spend several days in France and Italy before returning to Israel.

Meanwhile, his policies are being questioned by his own party and by his Labor Party coalition partners.

Israel's Acceptance Not Conditional

Vice Premier Shimon Peres, who heads the Labor Party and is acting prime minister in Shamir's absence, insisted at Sunday's Cabinet meeting that Israel's acceptance of Baker's five points was not "conditional" on receiving a half-dozen assurances from Washington.

Shamir made clear before leaving for the United States that he was seeking assurances that Israel would not be forced to negotiate with the Palestine Liberation Organization in any manner or form.

It also sought assurances that its dialogue with the Palestinians would be confined to the modalities of elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Shamir admitted after his White House meeting that he received no such assurances, but said that various problems were clarified and that there was no "tension" between Israel and the United States.

Levy, Sharon and Moda'i oppose an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, with or without American assurances.

Levy exchanged angry words with Shamir's associates over who was responsible for Likud's poor showing in the Histadrut elections last week.

The party won 28 percent of the votes in the Labor-dominated trade union federation, short of its goal of at least one-third of the votes cast.

According to Levy, Shamir's "flexibility" on peace policy scared off supporters.

Shamir's friends said it was the dissent at the top of the party that lost Likud votes.

**ARENS MEETS WITH SHAS LEADERS
IN EFFORT TO HEAD OFF BREAKUP**
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Nov. 19 (JTA) -- Likud is trying anxiously to mollify its ultra-Orthodox coalition partners, who are furious over the preliminary passage of a Human Rights Bill in the Knesset last week.

Likud politicians are trying to keep them from bolting the government until Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir returns from abroad.

Shamir reportedly asked Foreign Minister Moshe Arens and other ranking Likud people to hold the line until he can exert his personal powers of persuasion.

Arens met Sunday with the leader of the Shas party, Rabbi Yitzhak Peretz, who is minister of immigration and absorption.

Political sources said he and other Likud ministers are trying to reassure Shas that the measure will be steered back to the Ministerial Committee on Legislation for amendment.

Some say it could be "buried" in committee indefinitely.

The Shas Knesset faction said Thursday night it would recommend to the party's Council of Sages that they meet to consider leaving the government as soon as Shamir returns.

It was Likud Knesset members, who joined with Laborites and members from center and left-wing factions, that gave the Human Rights Bill a smashing 53-19 kickoff on its first reading last Wednesday.

The Orthodox dislike the bill because their authority in religious and social matters might be diluted. What they find most troubling is the provision for a constitutional court which would probably invalidate much religious legislation.

The Agudat Yisrael party quit the coalition last week, claiming Shamir's pledge to kill the measure was the latest in a series of broken promises by Likud to the ultra-Orthodox.

The defection of any or all of the four religious parties, which hold only 18 Knesset seats between them, would not affect the government as long as the Likud-Labor coalition holds.

But most pundits predict that partnership will not last much longer. Likud is determined to prevent Labor from putting together a narrow coalition government with the help of the religious parties.

Agudat Yisrael said it would consider joining Labor if the occasion arose.

Interior Minister Arye Deri of Shas said his party would not support a Labor-led regime.

The small Degel HaTorah party said over the weekend that it would coordinate its moves with Shas.

**U.S. SIDESTEPS SETTLEMENT ISSUE
ON WHETHER THEY'RE LEGAL OR NOT**
By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Nov. 19 (JTA) -- The Bush administration continues to refuse to say publicly whether the Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are a violation of international law, although it has repeatedly urged Israel not to create any new ones.

"This administration has not gotten into the debate on legal versus illegal," State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler said Friday.

But, she added, the administration has made clear, both publicly and privately, that Israel's establishment of new settlements "is not constructive to advancing peace."

President Bush and Secretary of State James Baker both repeated this view to Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir in their meetings with him Wednesday, Tutwiler said.

While Tutwiler refused to give any details of what was said, the discussion reportedly covered both the general settlement issue and Israel's announcement this week of a new settlement near Dugit in the Gaza Strip.

Tutwiler contrasted the Bush administration position with the two previous administrations.

The Carter administration called the settlements illegal under international law. The Reagan administration reversed that position and said they were not illegal, but were not constructive in the peace process.

The Bush administration has "just chosen not to" publicly state its view on the legality question, Tutwiler said.

PALESTINIANS BLAME CBS FOR IDF CAPTURE OF GANG By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Nov. 19 (JTA) -- Palestinian activists are blaming a CBS Television crew for the capture of an extremist gang by the Israel Defense Force earlier this month, and have put out a "contract" on the cameraman, Palestinian sources said.

The union of television workers has warned all foreign crews to take precautions, especially in the Nablus area.

The IDF raided the hideout of the gang, which calls itself the 'Red Eagles,' killing its leader and arresting five suspects. Several members had been interviewed by CBS-TV only a day before the raid.

Intifada activists suspect the cameraman, who shot the interview near Nablus in the West Bank, passed the tape to security forces, somehow facilitating their capture of the gang.

The cameraman has not been identified but is probably Israeli. Foreign TV news organizations operating in Israel employ mainly local people.

The word "eagle" has been found in documents purported to be directions by the Palestine Liberation Organization to kill Israelis and Arab collaborators.

The papers, reportedly found during the summer in the Gaza home of a PLO operative, stated that perpetrators should take responsibility for the attacks as the "Eagle of the Revolution."

Meanwhile, following the imbroglio with CBS, Palestinians are trying to patch up relations with the news media. They are aware of how important sympathetic coverage is to the intifada and are reassuring TV journalists and technicians of relatively safe working conditions.

WALESA PRAISED FOR JEWISH OUTREACH, CRITICIZED FOR NOT DENOUNCING GLEMP By Allison Kaplan

NEW YORK, Nov. 19 (JTA) -- Jewish organizational leaders emerged from an hour-long meeting with Solidarity founder Lech Walesa on Friday praising the Polish hero's sincerity in reaching

out to them, but uneasy over his denial of Polish anti-Semitism and his attitude toward the conflict over the Auschwitz convent.

Walesa was visibly torn between his desire to build a bridge of friendship between Poles and Jews and his ironclad loyalty to the Polish Catholic Church and the Polish people, according to those who attended the closed-door meeting.

While personally denouncing anti-Semitism, Walesa said he did not believe that hatred of Jews was historically part of the Polish character, and that Polish Catholic primate Cardinal Jozef Glemp is "not an anti-Semite."

In the midst of the dispute over the Auschwitz convent, Glemp accused world Jewry of violating Poland's sovereignty and of poisoning the international media against the nation.

Walesa said that Glemp's statements about Jews last August were "unfortunate" but that as a loyal Catholic, he would not publicly denounce the cardinal.

Walesa also said that his religion prevented him from speaking directly on whether he believed the Auschwitz convent should be moved.

"The blood that was spilled there obligates us to find a solution that will enable persons of all faiths to go there," Walesa said.

Asking for a "common understanding" between Poles and Jews, Walesa said that "the Holocaust was our common tragedy. We must put an end to fighting and remembering our common past, work together to transform Poland's future."

Polish Anti-Semitism

In response, Seymour Reich, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, which convened the meeting, told Walesa that while Jews "are prepared to engage in a new beginning with Poland, we can't forget the past, or the anti-Semitism that was rampant in Poland."

The most emotional moments during the meeting, observers said, came when Polish Jewish survivors of the Holocaust addressed Walesa.

Benjamin Meed, president of the American Gathering of Holocaust survivors, asked Walesa to see to it that the remnants of Jewish life in Poland that remain, including synagogues and cemeteries, be preserved.

Such preservation was necessary, Meed said, to remind future generations of the once-flourishing Jewish community in Poland and its destruction during the Holocaust.

"I will personally guarantee that any remaining Jewish holy sites will be declared historic shrines. Jews died in the concentration camps simply because they were Jewish. This must and will be acknowledged," Walesa said in response.

Meed and others were pleased with Walesa's pledge.

"He has now made a concrete commitment to which he can be held. I would hope that he meant it," said Menachem Rosensaft, founding chairman of the International Network of Children of Jewish Holocaust Survivors.

Despite the points of disagreement, Walesa generally charmed the group of 70 Jewish leaders, as he has all of his audiences during his week in the United States.

Walesa told the group that he believed full diplomatic ties between Israel and Poland were "a matter of time."

When presented with a 3,200-year-old vase by the President's Conference, he kissed it, because, he said, "it came from Israel."

SHAMIR TELLS DELEGATES AT CJF ASSEMBLY TO BACK RESETTLEMENT OF SOVIET JEWS

By Mark Joffe

CINCINNATI, Nov. 19 (JTA) -- Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir made an impassioned plea for Jewish unity Thursday night, in an attempt to rally American Jews behind his government's \$2 billion program to resettle the flood of Soviet Jews already pouring into Israel.

He indicated that Israel may also soon face the challenge of resettling thousands more Jews from Ethiopia, who may be allowed to leave in greater numbers in the wake of that country's resumption of diplomatic relations with the Jewish state earlier this month.

"By historic coincidence, the opening of the gates of the Soviet Union may be followed with the end of the tragedy of Ethiopian Jewry," Shamir told the 58th General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations, which met here Wednesday through Sunday.

"We are looking forward to the understanding and cooperation of the Ethiopian government in reuniting Jews who remained in Ethiopia with their families," he said, pointing out that there has been "an increase in the number of Jews reaching Israel" since ties were re-established Nov. 3.

"Anyone who sees the plane-loads of Jews arriving in Israel from the Soviet Union, or the groups of frail and tired Ethiopian Jews kissing the soil of Eretz Yisrael, cannot but be overcome with emotion and excitement.

'A Prophetic Period'

"We are truly living in a prophetic period," he said, quoting a passage from the Book of Isaiah about the return of the Jewish exiles to the land of Israel.

Shamir urged his listeners, who represent the cream of the American Jewish philanthropic community, to understand the historic nature of the exodus and to respond accordingly.

"My friends, such an opportunity occurs once in a generation," he said.

"We must grasp it. We must not lose it through inaction, debates on technicalities or indifference."

Such discussions, in fact, have dominated the proceedings of this year's General Assembly, to the same extent that the "Who Is a Jew" controversy superseded every other issue at last year's G.A. in New Orleans.

In fact, CJF devoted an entire day of its program Thursday to plenaries, forums and workshops on the Soviet Jewry resettlement issue.

Sessions ranged from an exploration of the changes under way inside the Soviet Union to "nuts and bolts" workshops on such issues as finding jobs for tens of thousands of Soviet Jews settling in this country.

There were also strategy sessions on how to mount campaigns in local communities to raise the millions of dollars needed to fund resettlement of Soviet Jews both in the United States and Israel.

The Jewish Agency for Israel is asking the United Jewish Appeal to raise \$350 million over the next five years, exclusively for the resettlement of Soviet Jews in Israel.

That campaign, which has not yet been formally launched, comes on the heels of UJA's difficult "Passage to Freedom" drive this year, which after eight months has raised \$44.59 million toward its \$75 million goal and only collected

\$15.8 million in cash.

Even if local federations are able to mount the dramatic campaign UJA is requesting, it will not fund the rising costs of resettling the thousands of Soviet Jews still pouring into the United States.

While a higher percentage of Soviet Jews is expected to immigrate to Israel in the coming months, close to 50,000 are expected to arrive in the United States in the next year.

Recognizing that, CJF has now established a blue-ribbon panel to examine the magnitude of resources that will be needed to fund both the absorption of Soviet immigrants in Israel and the resettlement of those who come to the United States.

In his speech, Shamir spoke of the urgency with which such efforts must be made.

"We must act quickly," he said. "Experience has taught us that, when dealing with the Soviet Union, no one knows what tomorrow might bring."

While dwelling on the present and the future, the prime minister also took a few moments to look back and praise the Soviet Jewry emigration movement for making the wave of migration possible.

And he thanked former President Ronald Reagan and his secretary of state, George Shultz, "who made a point of raising the Soviet Jewry issue at the beginning of every meeting with Soviet leaders."

Shamir met here for 20 minutes Thursday evening with the former president, who was in Cincinnati to address the local Bankers Club.

Asked by a reporter afterward if he had requested Reagan's assistance in the peace process, the prime minister nodded and said, "Yes."

Shamir discussed the peace process in broad terms during his address to the General Assembly.

While he reiterated his familiar ironclad refusal to deal in any way with the Palestine Liberation Organization, he also attempted to mitigate the perception of his intransigence with prophetic citations and lofty statements of intent.

"We have never abandoned our hope for peace," he said, adding somewhat cryptically that his government has made "a long list of attempts -- some of them secret, which will become public one day -- to break through the wall of enmity and open a process of peace."

But while he pledged that his government would "leave no stone unturned, no opportunity untouched in our quest for peace," he asserted, "We will not be pressured into committing national suicide."

"If the history of this century has taught us one thing," he said, "it is that peace without security is no peace at all."

ISRAEL GETS FIRST SNOW OF SEASON

By Cathrine Gerson

JERUSALEM, Nov. 19 (JTA) -- The first, but short lived snow of the season fell last Tuesday in northern Israel.

IDF soldiers posted on Mt. Hermon were prepared for the first few snowflakes that fell on them Tuesday morning, having already been equipped with heavy winter clothing and boots.

The soldiers were also comforted by electric blankets, which are new to their gear this year.

The snowfall however, was quite light. The little that fell melted immediately, and the precipitation turned into heavy rain later in the day.

THORNBURGH SAYS SOVIET UNION MUST DO MORE TO WIN CONCESSIONS

By Mark Joffe

CINCINNATI, Nov. 19 (JTA) -- The Soviets will have to do more than enact emigration reforms if they want to win trade concessions from the United States, Attorney General Dick Thornburgh told a gathering of North American Jewish leaders here Saturday night.

But at the same time, he said that "we had best recognize -- and do everything we can to capitalize on -- the extraordinary changes that are taking place" inside the Soviet Union.

Thornburgh was addressing the 58th General Assembly of the Council of Jewish Federations, which adjourned here Sunday morning. He spoke at length of his recent trip to the Soviet Union, on which two CJF officials accompanied him.

On the last day of that trip, Thornburgh got a peek at draft legislation that would institute a number of emigration reforms the United States and Soviet Jewry advocacy groups have long sought.

Last week, the Supreme Soviet gave preliminary approval to the legislation, adopting it on a first reading by a vote of 355-10.

But Thornburgh told the CJF audience here that "simply passing a law is not going to be enough to cure our concerns about the status of Soviet Jews.

"We must be convinced that not just the letter but the spirit of the law has taken root in the Soviet Union, before any relief" under the 1974 Jackson-Vanik Amendment is "put on the agenda," the attorney general said.

"We are, in short, watching to see that opportunities to emigrate are institutionalized, and not just episodic, in the present uncertain flux of Soviet democratization," he said.

Improvement In Emigration Policies

The Jackson-Vanik Amendment to the 1974 Foreign Trade Act denies most-favored-nation trade privileges to the Soviet Union and other Communist bloc nations until they make substantial improvements in their emigration policies.

In his speech, Thornburgh pointed out that Soviet Jewish emigration has skyrocketed in the last few years.

In 1986, the United States received 787 applications from Soviet Jews and non-Jews seeking to enter the United States. "By 1990, there may well be as many as 100,000 or more," he said.

"How to accommodate this modern-day exodus" has been a tremendous challenge for the United States, Thornburgh said.

He outlined a number of steps the Justice Department's Immigration and Naturalization Service has taken to respond to the dramatic influx.

One of the most recent moves was a decision to "clear the backlog in Rome," where upward of 15,000 Jews who had emigrated from the Soviet Union on Israeli visas were waiting to receive permission to enter the United States as refugees.

Since Oct. 1, the United States has not been admitting Soviets with newly issued Israeli visas. Those who want to come to the United States must apply for U.S. refugee visas while still in Moscow.

This means the waiting period is done in the Soviet Union, which costs the United States --

and groups such as the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee -- a lot less than housing them in Rome. It also means potential emigres can keep their jobs in the Soviet Union until they win refugee status from the United States.

While in Moscow, Thornburgh visited the INS processing facilities at the U.S. Embassy. "I am pleased to report we found that process swifter, more efficient and, perhaps most important, more compassionate," the attorney general said.

Earlier this year, the INS was criticized by the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, among other Jewish groups, for denying refugee status to an increasing number of Soviet Jews waiting in Rome. The government maintained that some Jewish refugees could not demonstrate a "well-founded fear" of persecution in the Soviet Union.

Said Mark Talisman, director of CJF's Washington office, who accompanied Thornburgh to the Soviet Union: "The system in Moscow is actually working."

MOSCOW ASKS STEINSALTZ YESHIVA TO VACATE SCHOOL'S PREMISES

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Nov. 19 (JTA) -- The yeshiva established in Moscow by Israeli Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz has been asked to vacate its premises by the Moscow municipality.

The mayor's office, which granted Steinsaltz the building last year, gave the yeshiva a week to vacate last Friday. However, there was no indication it would be moving.

In New York, Rabbi Arthur Schneier said the yeshiva had only been given the building for a year and that these orders were to be expected. Schneier said the Moscow municipality had indicated it wanted to sell the building housing the Judaic Studies Center.

However, he said the continuation of the yeshiva has the support of Professor Evgeny Velikhov, chairman of the Soviet Academy of Sciences.

Velikhov is currently out of the country, believed to be in Japan. The men who administer the yeshiva told the authorities they would not make a move before Velikhov returns.

In Jerusalem, Steinsaltz himself declined to comment, but a spokesman for the rabbi said the eviction order was "not ideological," and spoke to the Jerusalem Post of "bureaucratic infighting" between the municipality and the Soviet Academy of World Civilization, under which the yeshiva operates.

Velikhov, who heads the academy, was reportedly seeking premises to relocate the yeshiva. A source who asked not to be identified reported that the matter had been quietly taken of.

The yeshiva currently has 30 full-time students, including long-term refuseniks Vladimir Raiz and Vladimir Dashevsky.

Raiz, a 16-year refusenik, is a resident of Vilna but lives in Moscow to attend the yeshiva.

Shoshana Cardin, chairwoman of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, said, "The authorities' implied threat in their precipitous issuance just prior the Jewish Sabbath, of the order to vacate the premises of a yeshiva . . . is surprising in this era of glasnost.

"We trust that this matter will be reviewed expeditiously and that either the yeshiva will be permitted to remain in its quarters or alternate facilities will be made available," said Cardin.