

AN EMBITTERED WEIZMAN DEFENDS REPORTED CONTACTS WITH THE PLO

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Jan. 3 (JTA) -- Ezer Weizman seems as embittered toward his Labor Party colleagues as he is over the accusations leveled by Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir about his alleged contacts with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Weizman, a Laborite who has often publicly urged that Israel talk to the PLO, insisted he was working for the state and for peace.

Now he is being pilloried by Likud and deserted by his own party, Weizman told Yediot Achronon in an angry interview published Tuesday.

Shamir fired Weizman at Sunday's Cabinet meeting, to take effect 48 hours later. But just before the deadline Tuesday, he relented, presumably to save the unity coalition government.

A deal was struck whereby Weizman left the important policy-making Inner Cabinet of senior ministers, while remaining in the government as minister of science and development, a portfolio with little influence on affairs of state.

In the interview, Weizman sharply questioned the two documents on which Shamir said he based his decision to dismiss him.

He also made clear to Yediot Achronon that he felt let down by Vice Premier Shimon Peres, the Labor Party leader, and the party's No. 2 man, Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who is said to have engineered the compromise.

The prime minister read a prepared statement to the country Sunday night accusing Weizman not only of maintaining contacts with the PLO, but of "schooling them" on how to deal with Israel and the U.S. government to "undermine our peace plan."

Helped PLO Accept Baker Plan

The first document is the transcript of a report to the PLO in Tunis by its Geneva representative, Nabil Ramlawi, about a conversation he had with Weizman at a Geneva hotel.

The second is the transcript of a telephone conversation between Weizman and Dr. Ahmed Tibi, an Israeli Arab gynecologist who was in Tunis attempting to mediate between Israel and the PLO.

Tibi asked Weizman to advise him how the PLO should react to U.S. Secretary of State James Baker's five-point proposal for an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue.

Weizman said he asked Tibi to hold the line while he consulted with Peres, who was listening to the conversation on another extension.

Then he told the Palestinian, "The PLO should accept the five points and add constraints, if necessary, as Israel itself has done."

According to Weizman, he conveyed to the PLO exactly what he was told by Peres.

"In that telephone conversation, I helped the PLO accept the five points and enabled the peace initiative to continue. But now it has been decided to turn me into an enemy of the people, into a traitor," he said.

Weizman called Peres "a son of a bitch who now knows from nothing."

He was equally harsh on Rabin, who, he

said, knew all of the conduits and contacts.

The encounter in Geneva, according to Weizman, was not as described by Shamir. He said he had one, not two meetings with the local PLO representative, Nabil Ramlawi, in the hotel lobby, not in his room.

He is alleged to have told Ramlawi that Shamir might be flexible on the Gaza Strip, but not the West Bank, "because facts have already been created on the ground."

"All that I did was in order to help the country, not to harm it," said Weizman. "Today it's clear to me that the carcasses in my party won't defend me."

ISRAEL DENIES AMNESTY'S CHARGES THAT IT CONDONED KILLING OF ARABS
London Jewish Chronicle

LONDON, Jan. 3 (JTA) -- Israel has become embroiled in another conflict with Amnesty International over charges by the London-based humanitarian agency that it has encouraged and condoned the killing of Palestinians as a means of controlling the intifada.

The charges, published in Amnesty's January newsletter, drew an expression of "concern," from the British Foreign Office.

But a spokesman for Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir branded them "total nonsense and absolutely baseless" in a statement from Jerusalem.

The Israeli Embassy in London also rejected the allegations.

Amnesty International claimed that Israel Defense Force guidelines for the use of firearms against civilians "appear to permit the killing of people who are involved in activities which do not necessarily endanger life."

It charged further that the Israeli authorities "appear not to have taken adequate measures to investigate fatal incidents promptly and punish those found guilty of abuses."

The organization cited details of a dozen killings, several of them involving children, and concluded that "taken together, these factors appear to add up to more than just tolerance of serious abuses and amount to real encouragement of them."

Israeli military sources said IDF guidelines "strictly limit the use of gunfire to situations in which soldiers' lives are in danger or in which they are trying to apprehend suspects and masked youths."

The sources added that all killings are investigated and that soldiers who violate regulations are prosecuted.

61 Soldiers Convicted

The Israeli Embassy here disputed Amnesty's claim that only four soldiers have been convicted for civilian deaths. The embassy said 61 have been convicted, of whom 46 were sentenced to prison terms.

The embassy also rejected Amnesty's report that 70 Palestinians died in tear-gas incidents.

Amnesty alleged that leading intifada activists were killed "during operations whose ostensible purpose was arrest" and that "most appear to have been shot while trying to escape."

In Washington, State Department deputy

spokesman Richard Boucher noted Wednesday that Israel has denied the allegations contained in the Amnesty report.

"We agree that Israel does not have a deliberate policy of the indiscriminate use of deadly force," he said. "At the same time, we have long been strongly opposed to the Israeli military use of lethal fire in civilian disturbances, except in life-threatening situations.

The State Department will come out later this month with its own annual human rights report, which generally includes a section on the situation in the Israeli-administered territories.

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

LEADER OF ISLAMIC HAMAS GROUP GOES ON TRIAL IN GAZA COURT

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Jan. 3 (JTA) -- The first trial of a major intifada activist opened Wednesday with the reading of charges against Sheik Ahmed Yassin of Gaza, founder and leader of the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas movement.

Hamas has emerged as the major rival of the Palestine Liberation Organization for the loyalties of Palestinians in the West Bank and, particularly, the Gaza Strip. It is considered more ideologically militant and less willing to compromise than the PLO.

To avoid possible rioting by Yassin's followers, the trial was moved from the regular military court in downtown Gaza to a building in an industrial zone between the Gaza Strip and Israel proper.

Yassin, who is confined to a wheelchair, was defiant and spoke freely to reporters while being rolled into the makeshift courtroom.

He heaped scorn on the Israeli plan for Palestinian elections in the territories and rejected charges that he was responsible for Hamas violence.

He admitted, through counsel, that he formed Hamas and is a member, but he insisted it is his duty "to fight the forces of the occupiers."

The court charged Yassin with raising \$500 million for the intifada and issuing religious edicts sanctioning the murder of Arabs thought to be collaborating with the Israeli authorities.

He was also accused of recruiting the terrorists who murdered two Israeli soldiers last year, Avi Sasportas, whose body was discovered, and Ilan Sa'adon, who is still missing.

The families of both men were in court. The Sa'adons repeatedly shouted at the defendant to tell them where their son's body was, until the presiding judge threatened to have them removed.

The actual killers are believed to have fled the country long ago.

The trial, to be resumed at a later date, also was attended by observers from the International Red Cross.

ANOTHER LETTER BOMB DISCOVERED

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Jan. 3 (JTA) -- Another letter bomb was intercepted by postal security officers Tuesday.

It was the 11th such device found in the mail since Sunday and was detected in the sorting room of the central post office in Tel Aviv.

The authorities issued a second alert, warning Israelis to look out for unusually heavy

envelopes arriving from countries from where they do not usually receive mail.

The latest letter bomb was sent from Greece. The earlier ones all came from Cyprus and were contained in similar envelopes.

Police suspect that it may be on the way to Israel from either of those or other countries.

BRITAIN SOLD ARMS TO ISRAEL IN '59 TO MEND TIES AFTER SUEZ CAMPAIGN

London Jewish Chronicle

LONDON, Jan. 3 (JTA) -- Documents just released here indicate that Britain was trying to restore good relations with Israel three years after the Suez campaign debacle, by supplying it with submarines and Centurion tanks.

But the British Foreign Ministry, fearful of offending the Arab world, took great pains to keep it from the public.

The documents were made public here following the expiration of a 30-year ban on publishing secrets.

In 1956, Israeli forces overran and occupied Sinai, in a secret agreement to give Anglo-French forces a pretext to seize the Suez Canal, which had recently been nationalized by Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser.

The British and French withdrew under pressure from the United States. The Israelis had to abandon Sinai when President Dwight Eisenhower threatened to cut off U.S. aid.

The British sought to patch up relations with Israel by arms sales in 1959. But Tory member of Parliament Julian Amery, due to address an Israel Independence Day dinner, was warned by the Foreign Office not to mention the subject.

"Our sale of two submarines last October was a public sign of reconciliation," Amery was told. "The fact that we have also sold other arms, including heavy tanks, is not known; and friends of Israel think she should have more arms from us."

One of the submarines, the Dakar, disappeared on its delivery voyage to Israel in 1959.

Amery was also warned not to mention the possibility of Middle East peace, because "the prospects are remote, and mention of the problem raises mirages, such as the Western guarantee of Israel's borders."

Contract For 60 Tanks

British tanks were offered to Golda Meir, then Israel's foreign minister, in September 1958, according to the Foreign Office papers.

The Israelis, strapped for cash, signed a contract for 60 tanks with an option to buy 30.

When Israel wanted to buy more tanks from South Africa, the British Foreign Office was concerned. Meir warned Britain that the South African tanks might be bought by Egypt instead.

In the end, however, Israel lacked the money to buy the tanks and could not go through with the deal.

Asher Ben-Natan, director general of the Israeli Defense Ministry, told Britain's Foreign Office in 1959 that Israel was considering the modernization of its air defense system by installing anti-aircraft missiles. Israel guaranteed there would be no publicity if such a deal were made, the documents indicate.

Gen. Ezer Weizman, then the Israeli air force chief of staff, tried to buy such systems from the British without success eight years before the Six-Day War.

FLAT U.S. AID PACKAGE FOR ISRAEL BOOSTED BY LUCRATIVE CONTRACTS

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Jan. 3 (JTA) -- Israel will receive tens of millions of dollars in new benefits from the United States this year, offsetting the erosion that inflation has caused in the real value of the \$3 billion U.S. foreign aid package it receives annually.

New perks, obtained through lobbying by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, as well as competitive contracts won by Israeli firms "offset the inflation-induced loss because they increase trade opportunities," explained one official in the pro-Israel community.

The U.S. foreign aid package to Israel has remained constant since 1986, when the Jewish state began receiving \$3 billion annually, all of it in grants, rather than loans. Inflation has eroded the real value of that package considerably.

But AIPAC has not tried to increase the amount of direct U.S. economic and military aid, because of the likelihood that Israel would gain at the expense of other foreign aid recipients. It is already by far the largest recipient of U.S. aid.

So pro-Israel lobbyists try instead to secure funds for Israel through less politically charged measures.

They have succeeded in winning Israel an estimated \$600 million in direct aid or defense trading benefits beyond the nearly \$1.8 billion in military aid and \$1.2 billion in economic aid it receives as a grant each year.

AIPAC recently secured congressional passage of a measure that gives the Pentagon the option of reducing the costs of weapons purchased with foreign aid, saving Israel as much as \$56 million in 1990. A similar provision saved Israel \$90 million in last year, when it purchased 75 U.S. F-16 fighter planes.

Funds Mandated For Arrow Missile

Israel is still benefiting from a 1987 law that stretches Israel's economic aid by about \$100 million a year, by converting high-interest loans owed to the U.S. government into lower-interest private loans.

Israel owes the United States more than \$16 billion from loans received during various Arab-Israeli wars and prior to a conversion in 1984 of the foreign aid program from loans to grants.

The economic aid has also been stretched by congressional language requiring the State Department to disburse the entire \$1.2 billion package within the first month of the fiscal year, enabling Israel to reap \$50 million in interest.

Another new benefit for Israel this year is that for the first time, it has been assured of receiving funds to complete research and development on its Arrow anti-tactical ballistic missile.

In the past two years, Congress gave the Pentagon discretion to expend as much as \$158 million on the Arrow. Israel has received about \$100 million of that amount, with another \$52 million designated for 1990.

A second major benefit to Israel's defense industry is that, for the third consecutive year, Congress is requiring the Pentagon to purchase \$150 million worth of Israeli weaponry to help Israel offset the cancellation of its Lavi fighter aircraft program in 1987.

Also this year for the first time, Congress is requiring the Pentagon to permanently stockpile military equipment in Israel, worth \$100 million.

Besides the big-ticket items approved by Congress, the Pentagon purchases tens of millions of dollars of Israeli military equipment not required by lawmakers.

One such example is the award in September of a \$38 million multi-year contract to Israel Aircraft Industries to conduct research on unmanned aerial vehicles.

Competing With McDonnell Douglas

A similar contract was awarded to the McDonnell Douglas Co., with the two companies likely to compete in 1991 for a full-scale production contract worth \$400 million to \$500 million.

But many of the largest contracts for Israeli defense firms contain funds earmarked by Congress. They include:

- * \$30 million to \$50 million to buy the Single Channel Ground and Airborne Radio System, a new family of high-frequency anti-jam radios being developed by Tadiran Ltd. of Israel and General Dynamics;

- * \$11.6 million to procure, and \$18.3 million to develop, the Cobra Laser Night Attack System, also designed by IAI;

- * \$25 million to procure the so-called Tactical Air Launched Decoy, made by Israel Military Industries, and \$6 million to develop a more advanced version;

- * \$23.4 million to procure, and \$1 million to buy spare parts for, the Popeye air-to-ground missile, made by Rafael of Israel;

One official in the pro-Israel community said that the United States gains more benefit from defense trade with Israel than from distributing the foreign aid.

And by reducing its emphasis on U.S. foreign aid, which is often perceived as a one-sided U.S. favor to Israel, Israel is becoming "not as dependent on the good will of the United States," the official said.

Tempered By Proposed Surcharge

Marvin Klemow, director of the Washington office of Israel Aircraft Industries, said such trade could continue to grow even if President Bush decides to lower U.S. defense spending because of a declining military threat from the Soviet Union.

He argued such cuts "could possibly help increase business" for Israel's defense industry, especially if the Pentagon sees it can save money by buying "good existing systems in Israel."

In addition to the uncertainty of future U.S. defense budgets, Israel faces the possibility of a new surcharge this year on its weapons purchases, which could weaken some of the gains achieved through various military contracts.

By Aug. 1, Congress is required to approve new four-year regulations governing Pentagon purchases of foreign weaponry. As proposed by Sen. Alan Dixon (D-Ill.), a surcharge would be imposed when a foreign bidder does not meet U.S. environmental or minority set-aside standards, for example.

But Israel's defense industry also faces the prospect of winning billions of dollars in new U.S. defense contracts. The most lucrative of these, estimated in the billions of dollars, would be to deploy the Arrow ATBM.

Israeli firms are also being considered to supply the Pentagon with anti-jam radios and ammunition for 120mm mortars. Both of those contracts are estimated by pro-Israel activists to be worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

**DISSIDENT STAFF AT JERUSALEM POST
WINS SUPPORT, BUT NOT FROM OWNERS**

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Jan. 3 (JTA) -- Some 30 senior staff members of The Jerusalem Post who quit or were fired this week in a policy dispute with publisher Yehuda Levy have received support from the Histadrut and the Israel Journalists Association.

But they are making few inroads with the owners of Israel's only English-language daily, the Canada-based Hollinger group. And it is still uncertain that the remaining Post staff will join a strike on their behalf.

The dissidents, led by Managing Editor David Landau, accused Levy of violating his promise not to interfere in editorial policy.

In a letter to the owners, they said they would leave the newspaper if Levy was not removed as president and publisher in 30 days.

Levy responded Tuesday by dismissing them immediately. They were given half an hour to clear their desks and were barred Wednesday from the newspaper's premises.

The Israel Journalists Association instructed its members Wednesday not to fill vacancies on the Post's staff.

Histadrut, Israel's trade union federation, agreed with the association and promised to support the Post's employees if they called a strike.

A majority reportedly urged an immediate strike during what was described as a "stormy meeting" at the Post on Wednesday afternoon. But others seemed willing to settle for a firm understanding that management would not interfere in editorial matters.

Some staff members reportedly suggested that vacancies should be filled internally or by qualified outsiders to whom the current staff agreed.

Many Familiar Bylines Missing

The outcome of the meeting was not immediately known, since reporters from other newspapers were not admitted to the Post building.

The newspaper appeared Wednesday morning, without many of the familiar bylines. More than the usual amount of space was devoted to foreign copy prepared by news agencies.

Also missing were the news analysis and in-depth reporting for which the Jerusalem Post has been held in high esteem at home and abroad, regardless of its relatively small circulation.

The journalists who have left the paper include most of the key editors, as well as several highly respected correspondents, such as Yehuda Litani, Menachem Shalev and Charles Hoffman.

But publisher Levy apparently is not impressed with the journalists responsible for the paper's reputation.

"The real dispute," he told Israel Radio on Wednesday, "is between me and a small group of trivial journalists who decided for many or any reasons not to let me run the paper as publisher and editor -- I mean president -- since the first day I came into this new position."

The apparent Freudian slip may reflect Levy's ambitions. Although the retired Israel Defense Force colonel admits he has no journalistic background, he has applied for membership in the Israel Editors Committee, an organization of top professionals.

Owner David Radler, who spoke to Israel

Radio by telephone from Canada, maintained that the dissident staff members were unable to adjust to the change of the Post's ownership from Histadrut's financially ailing Koor Industries to the aggressive, profit-oriented Hollinger chain, which owns 200 newspapers and periodicals in Britain and North America.

"It is no longer a little clubhouse. It is a serious business, and some people just can't adjust to that," said Radler, who has owned the Post since last April.

He was quoted as telling Reuters, "All we want is fairness and balance. If they (the dismissed staff) are incapable of providing that balance, I'm glad they've gone."

Most observers see ideology at the core of the dispute. The Post, always somewhat left of center, has been sharply critical of the Likud bloc and Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's handling of the 2-year-old Palestinian uprising.

The new publisher says he wants more balance, but appears to be determined to give the Post a pro-Likud slant.

Joanna Yehiel, who had been editor of the paper's weekend magazine, said in that connection, "I don't think the public wants to read what will virtually become a propaganda sheet."

**WEST GERMAN CHANCELLOR ACCUSED
OF HAVING JOINED THE WAFFEN SS**

By David Kantor

WEST BERLIN, Jan. 3 (JTA) -- A West German writer has charged that Chancellor Helmut Kohl volunteered for the Waffen SS as a teenager in the closing weeks of World War II and swore allegiance to Adolf Hitler.

Herbert Josef Stender made that claim in a letter sent to hundreds of journalists Tuesday, announcing a book he expects to publish in March.

The Waffen SS consisted of elite combat units and also provided the personnel who ran Nazi death camps.

Stender alleges that Kohl, leader of the conservative Christian Democratic Union, volunteered as a 15-year-old and took the SS oath, which was a lifetime commitment of loyalty to Hitler and the Nazi cause.

According to the writer, Kohl was sworn in on Hitler's birthday, April 20, 1945, just 12 days before the fuhrer's suicide and 17 days before the Third Reich surrendered.

He was posted to a unit run by Arnold Frank, which was assigned to destroy incriminating documents and to provide bodyguards for prominent Nazis who had gone underground, Stender says.

He claimed that Kohl and scores of other Bonn politicians have refused to answer questions about their activities during the Nazi era.

It is well-known in Germany that Kohl was a member of the Hitler Jugend, the Nazi youth organization in his teen years. But even the chancellor's political enemies never argued that this made him a Nazi.

Former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt, a Social Democrat, and Hans-Jochen Vogel, current leader of the opposition Social Democratic Party, were also members of the Hitler Youth.

Stender contends that Kohl carefully concealed his membership in the Waffen SS from the public and Germany's post-war allies.

There was no immediate comment from Kohl's office in Bonn.