

SHAMIR PLEDGES TO GO FORWARD**IN PEACE TALKS, DESPITE BUS RAID****By Gil Sedan and Hugh Orgel**

JERUSALEM, Feb. 5 (JTA) -- An angry Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir told the Knesset on Monday that the murderous attack on an Israeli tour bus in Egypt on Sunday afternoon would not deter Israel from pursuing peace.

But while thanking President Hosni Mubarak for his condolence telephone call Sunday night, Shamir held Egypt responsible for the outrage and demanded that it find the murderers and bring them to justice.

Ten Israelis and two Egyptians died, and 17 Israelis were believed wounded in the attack, which was perpetrated by two masked men armed with machine guns and hand grenades.

The Egyptian fatalities were a tour guide and a security officer, who boarded the bus when it crossed the Egyptian border at Rafah.

Shamir said the attack was planned in advance with the sole purpose of killing as many Jews as possible.

In Washington, President Bush on Monday telephoned Shamir to express condolences, while Secretary of State James Baker called Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Arens and the foreign minister of Egypt, Esmat Abdel Meguid.

"This horrible act of terrorism should be condemned by civilized people everywhere," said White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater.

The attack was also denounced by State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler, as well as in statements released by major national Jewish organizations in the United States and Canada, all of which said that the incident must not be allowed to derail the peace process.

Likud Session Canceled

Condemnations indeed were pouring in from all quarters and all points on the political spectrum, from Palestinians in East Jerusalem to Likud hard-liners.

The Palestine Liberation Organization issued a statement from its Tunis headquarters condemning the bus attack and disclaiming all responsibility for it.

According to the PLO, the incident underlines the need for quicker progress toward a peace settlement in the Middle East.

Minister of Industry and Trade Ariel Sharon, the most outspoken opponent of Shamir's peace initiative, denounced Egypt, and said Mubarak has proved to be an unacceptable partner in the pursuit of peace.

Meanwhile, the scheduled meeting Wednesday of the Likud party's Central Committee was postponed until next week. The meeting was foreseen as a showdown between Shamir and Sharon, and Sunday's bus attack is now expected to bolster the hard-line views of Sharon.

Shamir demanded in his speech to the Knesset that in addition to tracking down the killers, Egypt must prevent its territory from being used as a base for future attacks on Israelis, and that the Egyptian media should denounce the attack.

He added, however, that "the victims and the bereavement will not deter us" from pursuing the cause of peace.

Security sources in Cairo said a nationwide manhunt is under way for the attackers.

White House spokesman Fitzwater said whoever they are, "the Egyptians are working hard to apprehend them as soon as possible."

Egyptian police questioned the Palestinian driver of the bus, amid suspicion of possible collusion with the attackers. Both the bus driver and the driver of the white Peugeot 505 used in the ambush were Palestinians from the Rafah area.

At least two groups have claimed responsibility for the attack.

One is the Islamic Jihad, which has been active in Lebanon, and the other is a hitherto unknown group calling itself the Organization for the Oppressed in Egypt's Prisons.

(JTA correspondent David Friedman in Washington contributed to this report.)

BUSH TELLS DELEGATION HE'S UPSET ABOUT RISING SOVIET ANTI-SEMITISM**By David Friedman**

WASHINGTON, Feb. 5 (JTA) -- President Bush told two dozen Jewish leaders at the White House on Monday that he is disturbed about the reports he has been receiving about the increased threat of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union.

Bush understands that the issue now is not just emigration, but rescue," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive director of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

He said that there was a "real emotional content" to the discussion on Soviet Jews. "You could see he (Bush) was taking these issues very seriously," Hoenlein said.

The president met with 24 Jewish leaders, representing the Conference of Presidents and the National Jewish Coalition, an organization of Jewish Republicans. He has met jointly with the groups before, most recently last March.

Seymour Reich, chairman of the Conference of Presidents, led the delegation. He told reporters that the meeting centered on the issue of Soviet Jewry and the need for the United States to continue its efforts in the Middle East peace process.

"If anything came out of that meeting, it was a sense of unity that the American Jewish community has in terms of the Soviet Jewry, anti-Semitism and wanting to go forward on the peace process," Reich said.

No Clues On Baker Meeting

He said most of the Jewish leaders felt optimistic after the meeting that the peace process will move forward, despite occasional differences between the United States and Israel.

"The president and we were in sync, in terms of the peace process," Reich said.

But he said the delegation was not given any clues on when Secretary of State James Baker will hold an anticipated meeting with his Israeli and Egyptian counterparts, Moshe Arens and Esmat Abdel Meguid.

The meeting is to set the stage for preliminary Israeli-Palestinian talks hosted by Egypt.

Rumor had it that Baker was planning to

meet with the two foreign ministers in a European capital, such as Geneva, after the conclusion of his talks in Moscow on Friday with Soviet officials.

But such a meeting reportedly has been called off in the wake of the terrorist attack Sunday on an Egyptian tour bus full of Israelis.

"I think the meeting will occur after some continued planning by the United States, Israel and Egypt," Reich said.

Reich said the president was told of the "great fear of anti-Semitism" growing among Jews in the Soviet Union, one of the reasons Soviet Jews are leaving for Israel in ever increasing numbers.

He said the Jewish leaders had a sense that Bush understood that Jews in the Soviet Union are in "mortal danger."

"Israel is there, not like the 1930s, where there was no haven for Jews who tried to escape persecution of the Nazis and were swallowed up in the Holocaust," Reich said the president was told.

He said Israel is ready to take in all Soviet Jews, and the "United States might be called upon to give assistance to that settlement."

On a related issue, Reich said Bush understands that only 1 percent of the Soviet Jews immigrating to Israel had settled on the West Bank, despite the criticism of this by the United States.

He told Bush of his talks with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir by telephone last week, in which Shamir assured him it was not the policy of the government to settle Soviet Jews in the territories.

But Shamir added that "Soviet Jews have a right to settle and to live in any place in Israel that they want," Reich said. He added that Israelis understand that U.S. aid cannot be used in the administered territories.

"I think the president understood that, and I think that is an issue that is behind us," he said.

BAKER WILL CARRY TO SOVIET UNION SENATE LETTER ON DIRECT FLIGHTS By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Feb. 5 (JTA) -- Secretary of State James Baker is carrying to Moscow this week a letter signed by U.S. senators that asks Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev to permit Jews to leave the Soviet Union on direct flights to Israel.

Baker is expected to discuss the subject of direct flights during his meetings with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze on Wednesday and Thursday. The secretary of state is to meet with Gorbachev on Friday.

White House Chief of Staff John Sununu, speaking Monday at an American Israel Public Affairs Committee luncheon at the Israeli Embassy, said it would be appropriate for Baker to raise the direct flights issue while in Moscow, according to an Israeli official present.

The matter is especially urgent now, because thousands of Soviet Jews who have received permission to emigrate are unable to leave due to a shortage of flights out of the country.

According to the Israeli official, Soviet authorities issued about 6,000 exit visas for Jews in January. But about 15,000 to 20,000 Jews who want to leave the Soviet Union are currently "backed up," waiting to get out.

In New York, the National Conference on Soviet Jewry announced Monday that a total of 4,713 Jews left the Soviet Union on Israeli visas in January. A small number also emigrated on U.S. visas, but that number is not yet available from the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society.

Of those who left on Israeli visas, 4,585, or an unprecedented 97 percent, went to Israel, representing a continuation of the trend toward large-scale aliyah that began in December.

Held Up For 'Political' Reasons

But Israeli officials say the number of Soviet Jews reaching Israel per month could be significantly larger if direct flights were permitted.

An agreement to begin direct air service between Moscow and Tel Aviv was signed in December by representatives of the Soviet airlines Aeroflot and El Al Israel Airlines.

The accord was supposed to be implemented on Jan. 1, but "no actions related to the agreement have been taken," said the Senate letter, initiated by Sen. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) and signed by Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell (D-Maine) and Minority Leader Robert Dole (R-Kan.).

The letter is being circulated to members of the Senate and by Monday afternoon had been signed by 47 of the 100 senators.

The senators wrote that if the agreement is implemented, "two, or perhaps even more, 747 flights per day can be arranged" between the Soviet Union and Israel.

A similar letter, signed by 37 members of the House of Representatives, was sent to Baker on Feb. 1.

That letter, organized by Reps. Edward Feighan (D-Ohio) and Christopher Smith (R-N.J.), called it "disturbing that this purely commercial agreement has been held up due to political considerations."

One political consideration was revealed Monday by The New York Times, which quoted a Soviet official visiting Tunisia as saying the Soviets have no intention of allowing direct flights.

The official, Deputy Foreign Minister Genadi Tarasov, said his government was irritated at Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir for recently suggesting indirectly that Israel needs to keep the West Bank and Gaza Strip for resettling Soviet Jews.

The Israeli official here acknowledged that Tarasov's reported comment appears to reflect Soviet thinking. The Soviets, the official said, "referred to the prime minister's statement, and so it may be that they feel embarrassed for the Arabs."

But the official maintained that "the real Arab objection is aliyah to Israel in general."

SOVIET JEWS GET SHABBAT DISPENSATION By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Feb. 5 (JTA) -- Israel's Sephardic chief rabbi, Mordechai Eliahu, has given Jews leaving the Soviet Union for Israel dispensation to travel on the Sabbath.

In issuing his edict Sunday, the chief rabbi invoked the principle of "pikuach nefesh," the saving of lives, which overrides the religious ban on travel on the Sabbath and other Jewish holy days.

Eliahu expressed concern for the safety of Jews in the Soviet Union, in the wake of reports about rising popular anti-Semitism.

FEDERATION LEADERS CONFRONT OPERATION EXODUS CHALLENGE

By Allison Kaplan

MIAMI, Feb. 5 (JTA) -- Joy and trepidation mingled in the faces of Jewish community federation leaders from across the country here Sunday evening, as they viewed a video presentation on the need for Operation Exodus, the upcoming \$420 million United Jewish Appeal campaign to resettle Soviet Jews in Israel.

While the audience of 200 federation executives and lay leaders smiled at the images of newly arrived Soviet Jews in Israel dancing and singing "Shalom Aleichem," many winced during the parts of the presentation that laid out the number of immigrants Israel is expecting and the astronomical cost of their resettlement.

Officials of the Jewish Agency for Israel reported in the presentation that for each of the more than 200,000 Soviets emigres expected to go to Israel in the next three years, transportation and absorption costs covering only their first year there will reach an estimated \$5,000.

The \$600 million that Israel is requesting from world Jewry, including the \$420 million from UJA, "is the bare-bones minimum," said Martin Stein, chairman of UJA's board of trustees.

The federation leaders, who are attending the Council of Jewish Federations' Board Leadership Institute, appear to be inspired by Operation Exodus and ready to accept the challenge.

The current wave of Soviet aliyah "is one of the most cataclysmic events in Jewish history," exclaimed Robert Tropp, executive director of the Jewish Federation of Pinellas County, Fla.

But together with his excitement, Tropp said he has "concerns about the level of funding and whether it's achievable."

UJA Demanding 'Firm Commitment'

Federations must raise money for Operation Exodus at a time when they are also facing the cost of resettling 40,000 Soviet Jews expected to come to the United States in the next year. All of this is above and beyond their regular fund-raising campaigns, which fund domestic services and provide about \$750 million annually to UJA for Israel and other overseas needs.

At a special CJF general assembly here Tuesday, federations are being asked to endorse the "principle of collective responsibility for the resettlement of Soviet Jews in Israel and the United States."

In practice, this means that communities will be held responsible for raising a precise percentage of both the \$420 million Operation Exodus goal and the anticipated cost of resettling Soviet Jews in the United States.

A federation's percentage will be determined by the proportion of the national total raised for the general federation campaign in 1988.

For example, if a Jewish community raised 3 percent of the total raised by all federations in 1988, it will be considered responsible for raising 3 percent of the Operation Exodus target and 3 percent of the domestic resettlement price tag, estimated at \$40 million this year.

UJA will view the percentage to go to Operation Exodus as a "firm commitment." The national organization is drawing a lesson from last year's Passage to Freedom campaign, which achieved only \$50 million of its ambitious \$75 million goal.

"UJA is not making a request for a best

effort" from local federations, as it did with Passage to Freedom, said Marvin Lender, chairman of Operation Exodus and national chairman-elect of UJA. This time, he said, "UJA wants a firm commitment for each community's fair share of \$420 million."

For the first time, UJA leaders have outlined how the \$420 million Operation Exodus goal will be spent: \$151.2 million for transporting Soviet Jews to Israel, \$58.8 million toward their maintenance in absorption centers and \$210 million for "direct absorption" costs during the first year.

'Last Great Opportunity'

Though Operation Exodus will be launched nationally in April -- appropriate to its title, just after Passover -- UJA is already busy gearing up for the enormous drive.

Lender has already begun meeting with "major givers" and will soon go on a fact-finding trip to Israel.

During the first week of April, UJA will try to boost public awareness, with a National Soviet Jewry Week.

At Passover time, model seders will be planned to which celebrities and politicians will be invited. Shortly thereafter, the campaign will be officially launched.

Overall, UJA is attempting to create the kind of atmosphere of urgency and unrestrained giving that has come during Israel's wars.

"This is life-saving, but without any bloodshed," said Stein, the board chairman.

The Israeli government understands that, in both an economic and a demographic sense, "this is their last great wave of immigration and the last great opportunity for the State of Israel," said Morton Kornreich, UJA's national chairman.

And for American Jews, said Lender, "this is probably the last opportunity in our lifetimes to save and free one-third of the world's Jewish population."

ISRAEL BONDS AND HADASSAH LAUNCH EFFORTS TO AID SOVIET ABSORPTION

NEW YORK, Feb. 5 (JTA) -- Urgent action to help Israel absorb the tens of thousands of Soviet Jews beginning to arrive there has just been announced by the State of Israel Bonds Organization and by Hadassah, the Women's Zionist Organization of America.

Hadassah has allocated \$1 million for a wide range of absorption needs.

The Bonds Organization's aim is to help Israel build housing and create jobs for the Soviet Jewish immigrants.

The announcement by Bonds' North American chairman, William Belzberg, cited reports of a dangerous rise of anti-Semitism in the USSR.

The organization will launch an emergency effort to convince investors of \$10,000 or more to purchase bonds immediately, to provide loan funds to Israel for the absorption of Soviet emigres.

That will be followed during the Passover season in April by Operation Aliyah, a special mass campaign, to be conducted in synagogues all over the United States and Canada, for bond subscriptions to help Israel's absorption effort.

Hadassah's special allocation, approved at the midwinter meetings of its national board, was announced by Carmela Efros Kalmanson, the group's national president. It will provide for a wide range of programs in career counseling and vocational retraining.

**LAW ALLOWING RELIGIOUS TEACHING
IN SCHOOLS STRUCK DOWN IN ONTARIO**

By Ben Kayfetz

TORONTO, Feb. 5 (JTA) -- The Ontario Court of Appeal has struck down a 46-year-old provincial regulation allowing religious instruction in the public schools.

The court ruled unanimously last week that the regulation violated the freedoms of conscience and religion guaranteed by Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms, enacted in 1982.

Although the challenge was not initiated by Jewish interests, the Ontario Jewish community has a long history of opposition to sectarian instruction in public schools.

B'nai Brith Canada and the Canadian Jewish Congress were granted intervenor status as the case wound its way through the judicial system.

The court acted on a complaint by four parents in Elgin County, southwestern Ontario, and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association.

It enjoined the county Board of Education from "continuing to require or permit" its curriculum of religious studies to be offered in schools.

The ruling by the five justices of the appeals bench asserted that "state-authorized religious indoctrination amounts to the imposition of majoritarian religious beliefs on minorities."

It stated further that "teaching students Christian doctrine as if it were the exclusive means through which to develop moral thinking and behavior amounts to religious coercion in the classroom."

A lower court had ruled in favor of the Elgin County Board of Education, on grounds that as long as there was a provision exempting students from religious instruction, a case that there was compulsion could not be made.

Child Told She'd Go To Hell

But according to the appeals court judgment, exemption for non-Christians and dissenters is itself a denial of the right to equal protection and equal benefit.

In order to avoid religious indoctrination, non-Christians and non-believers would have to take a positive step likely to render them conspicuous, the judgment said.

The province may now appeal the ruling to the Supreme Court, but Education Minister Sean Conway has not indicated whether it will do so.

The 82-page ruling describes the case of an Elgin County second-grader of the Bahai faith who was taught in public school that if she was not a Christian, she would go to hell. The child testified she had recurring nightmares in which she was pursued by the devil and felt she was burning in hell.

The Elgin County school board had turned over religious instruction to a fundamentalist Bible Club.

Simon Adler, an attorney from Kitchener, Ontario, who represented B'nai Brith Canada's League for Human Rights in the case, welcomed the court's decision.

"The government must now ensure that any regulation recognizes the vast needs and rights of everyone within a diverse and vibrant society," he said.

Ontario Jewry has been fighting religion in the schools since 1897, when it allied with Baptists to fend off attempts by the Anglican Church to introduce religion into classrooms.

The Ontario regulation dates from 1944,

when the provincial premier, George Drew, introduced formal religious instruction. The Jewish community initiated challenges regularly over the ensuing years.

In 1969, a special committee headed by a distinguished jurist recommended that religious instruction "be abandoned." But nothing was done, because successive provincial governments preferred not to stir trouble over the issue.

The 1982 charter provided a principle enshrined in law to challenge religious instruction.

Contributing factors are a change in the climate of opinion in Canada and the increasingly heterogeneous nature of the Canadian population, which now includes sizeable numbers of Moslems, Buddhists, Sikhs and other non-Christian groups.

**WITH ATTENTION FOCUSED ON SOVIETS,
ETHIOPIAN OLIM FEAR BEING NEGLECTED**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Feb. 5 (JTA) -- Ethiopian Jews having a hard time adjusting to life in Israel worry that, with national attention focused on the new influx of emigres from the Soviet Union, their needs will be neglected.

Members of the government coordinating team on immigration and absorption heard such fears expressed by Ethiopian immigrants Sunday during a visit to absorption centers in Kiryat Gat and Ashkelon.

The Ethiopians also complained they are not being allowed to settle where they wish. An example was their experience with Ma'alot.

The Ethiopians wanted to settle in the Galilee development town, but the town council rejected them. The predominantly North African community there said it was unfair to demand that they bear the burden of absorbing Ethiopian Jews with their adjustment difficulties.

They changed their mind after a public uproar, but resentment persists on both sides.

Many immigrants refuse to leave the absorption centers. They say they are not allowed to move where they want and that they will not be forced to live elsewhere.

The authorities are now considering eviction orders against immigrants whose periods at the absorption centers have long expired.

A different sort of complaint was heard at the Ashkelon absorption center from Soviet, European and Latin American olim.

They say they can find neither proper housing nor jobs, despite the fact that most of them are university graduates.

ISRAEL AND CHINA BEGIN DIALOGUE

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 5 (JTA) -- Israel and China have begun talks aimed at normalizing relations between them, according to a recent report in Ma'ariv.

It said that Reuven Merhav, director general of the Foreign Ministry, met with Chinese government officials in Hong Kong several days ago to discuss the matter.

Israel will open an office in Beijing soon for the exchange of scientific information. Official circles in Jerusalem see it as a first step toward establishing higher-level relations.

Representatives of the Foreign Ministry and the Israel Academy of Sciences visited Beijing recently and selected a building to serve as the Israeli office, the Ma'ariv report said.