

VOL. 68 - 73rd YEAR
FRIDAY, MARCH 2, 1990
NO. 42

SOUTH AFRICAN AND U.S. LEADERS DISMAYED OVER MANDELA'S REMARKS

By William Saphire

NEW YORK, March 1 (JTA) -- Leaders of American and South African Jewry who have been in the forefront of the anti-apartheid movement are urging Nelson Mandela to reconsider his recent remarks equating the Palestinian-Israeli conflict with the struggle of South African blacks.

Those who only two weeks ago hailed the African National Congress leader's release after 27 years in South African prisons were taken aback by the embraces he exchanged with Palestine Liberation Organization chief Yasir Arafat in Lusaka, Zambia, on Tuesday.

More disturbing were his remarks in a speech at Lusaka airport.

Like foes of apartheid, Mandela said that Arafat "is fighting against a unique form of colonialism, and we wish him success in his struggle," Mandela was quoted as saying.

At a news conference Wednesday, he reiterated his support of the PLO.

Asked whether such remarks might alienate South Africa's 100,000 Jews, who are prominent in that nation's business elite and in the anti-apartheid Liberal Party, Mandela retorted, "If the truth alienates the powerful Jewish community in South Africa, that's too bad."

He added, "We expect everybody who is exploring the possibility of lasting solutions to be able to face the truth squarely. I believe that there are many similarities between our struggle and that of the PLO."

"We live under a unique form of colonialism in South Africa, as well as in Israel, and a lot flows from that."

Seeks Meeting With Mandela

The South African Jewish Board of Deputies said Thursday that it wanted to meet with Mandela to explain why it was wrong to compare the Palestinian struggle with the black liberation movement.

Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, said he was dismayed and angered by "the deplorable statement by Nelson Mandela to Yasir Arafat."

Schindler said that Reform Jews and millions of Americans who oppose apartheid "will repudiate his comparison of Israel with South Africa and his support of the PLO, which has typified violence and terrorism in our time."

Sholom Comay, president of the American Jewish Committee, said that during his long imprisonment, Mandela "became an international symbol of freedom and justice. His recent statements on the PLO and Israel, however, are inconsistent with these values."

Israel responded with a low-key statement from Jerusalem, released by its Consulate General here Thursday.

"Israel, as is known, supported Mandela's release throughout the years he served in prison," the statement read. "Any meeting with Arafat, the leader of a terrorist organization which is brutal and violent even against his own Palestinian fellows, cannot contribute to the advancement of the principle of justice and equality."

ABSORPTION MINISTER TELLS BAKER OLIM NOT SETTLING IN TERRITORIES

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, March 1 (JTA) -- Israel's minister of immigration and absorption personally assured Secretary of State James Baker this week that Israel does not have a policy of settling Soviet Jewish immigrants in the West Bank or Gaza Strip.

Yitzhak Peretz said he told Baker and a top aide Wednesday that their recent warnings to Israel about settling immigrants in the territories were based on rumors about Israel's policies, not facts.

"I am the minister in charge of absorbing those newcomers, and I know exactly where each and every newcomer is going to settle," Peretz said he told the two U.S. officials.

"I want to make it very clear that the State of Israel does not direct newcomers to any place," he said at a news conference Thursday.

Peretz had a 15-minute meeting with Baker at the State Department and also met with Dennis Ross, director of the policy planning staff.

The Israeli official said he told Baker and Ross that, despite what they have heard, there are no special incentives for Soviet olim to go settle in the administered territories.

He quoted the two U.S. officials as saying "this made things easier for them."

Peretz, who spoke in Hebrew, said that just before meeting with Baker, he telephoned Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, who agreed with what he was about to tell the secretary.

Shamir made a similar statement Wednesday, in a speech to the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, which was in Jerusalem for its annual Israel seminar.

124 Settled There Last Year

Peretz, who heads the mainly Sephardic Orthodox party Shas, came to Washington this week to brief Israeli consuls general stationed in the United States on the immigration situation.

He maintained that Israel's new policy of "direct absorption" is based on freedom of choice. Only about 124 of the 13,000 Soviet olim who arrived in Israel in 1989 settled in the territories, he said.

He said most Soviet immigrants go to places where they have relatives or friends, and that is generally not the territories.

Because Soviet Jews were cut off from Jewish religion and education for more than 70 years, the territories do not have the same historical and religious meaning they have for some Jews.

Peretz said that 11,000 Soviet Jews came to Israel in January and February, almost as many as in all of 1989, and he expects the total to reach 100,000 by the end of the year.

He said he had personally checked this figure, but could not verify a prediction made Wednesday in Israel that the figure will be as high as 230,000.

"Divine providence has given the State of Israel the challenge to absorb Soviet Jewry and thus save them from a very unclear future," Peretz said.

BAKER TELLS CONGRESSIONAL PANEL THE BALL IS NOW IN ISRAEL'S COURT

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, March 1 (JTA) -- Secretary of State James Baker said Thursday that the United States has done all it can to advance the peace process in the Middle East, and that it is now up to Israel to take the next step.

"We've really done pretty much all we can do, we think, from our end, and we are awaiting a response from the Israeli government," Baker told a House Appropriations subcommittee hearing.

Israel's four top ministers, known as the Forum of Four, are expected to meet Friday to decide how to respond to Baker's intention of holding a trilateral meeting with Israel and Egypt as the next step in the process.

Baker's remarks came a day after John Kelly, assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs, told Congress he expects such a meeting to occur within the month.

Earlier in the week, another State Department Middle East expert questioned whether Israel and the Palestinians are committed to making the tough choices needed to advance current peace efforts.

"In our view, the question right now is essentially whether the parties themselves have the political will to continue in the process," said Peter Eicher, deputy director of the department's Office of Egyptian Affairs.

Eicher spoke at a panel discussion on "Palestine: The Peace Process," sponsored by the National Association of Arab Americans.

The Bush administration is on the "verge" of receiving decisions from Egypt and Israel on whether to attend a trilateral meeting with Baker, said Eicher. That meeting would pave the way for the first Palestinian-Israeli talks to take place.

The United States has devised "a simple agenda" for Palestinian-Israeli talks "which focuses on elections and practical progress but which allows each side the opportunity to state its views on the entire range of issues with which the parties may have to be dealing," Eicher said.

NETANYAHU RECOMMENDS ISRAEL REFRAIN FROM DIALOGUE PENDING CLARIFICATIONS

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 1 (JTA) -- Deputy Foreign Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said Thursday he would recommend to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir that Israel suspend its negotiations with the United States on peace diplomacy, pending a clarification of U.S. attitudes.

Netanyahu, who just returned from Washington, told a television interviewer that he left the U.S. capital "with a heavy heart" because there was a "complete lack of understanding for Israel's position" at the State Department.

He said he would advise Shamir not to agree to have Foreign Minister Moshe Arens attend a tripartite meeting with U.S. Secretary of State James Baker and Egyptian Foreign Minister Esmat Abdel Meguid to discuss an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue.

Netanyahu, Israel's former U.N. ambassador who is considered a rising star in Likud, insisted that all diplomatic moves should be put on hold until Israel receives specific replies from Washington to specific questions.

He said he had pointed out in Washington

that Israel's main interest at present is holding free elections in the West Bank without the threat of assassinations.

"This is precisely the U.S. interest throughout the world: in Nicaragua, where thousands of American observers were sent to ensure a free vote, and in Panama, where the United States sent its troops for the same purpose," Netanyahu said.

ISRAELI GOVERNMENT REJECTS BID TO MAKE POLLARD HONORARY CITIZEN

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 1 (JTA) -- The Israeli government has rejected a request by an ad hoc coalition of Knesset factions to grant honorary Israeli citizenship to convicted spy Jonathan Pollard.

Pollard, an American Jew, is serving a life sentence in a U.S. federal prison for spying for Israel.

Deputy Interior Minister Rafael Pinhasi told the Knesset Interior Committee on Wednesday that the government ruled against citizenship for Pollard after consulting with Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and other ministers.

He said Pollard's situation would not be improved by making him an Israeli citizen.

In fact, it could do grave harm to Israel and Pollard alike if he were granted citizenship while in an American prison, according to Ovadia Eli, chairman of the Interior Committee.

The petition on behalf of Pollard was submitted by Knesset members Edna Solodar of the Labor Party, Pinhas Goldstein of Likud, Shlomo Dayan of Shas and Geula Cohen of the opposition Tehiya party.

SHEKEL DEVALUED ONCE AGAIN; ISRAELIS MYSTIFIED BY HOW MUCH

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 1 (JTA) -- The shekel was devalued Wednesday night, but by exactly how much has Israelis scratching their heads in bewilderment.

Finance Minister Shimon Peres and Professor Michael Bruno, governor of the Bank of Israel, called a joint news conference to announce that the central bank had decided to reduce the value of the shekel by 6 percent.

Based on the "stable exchange rate," a "basket" of foreign currencies will now buy 2.1188 shekels, compared to 2.0649 at the time of the last previous devaluation in June 1989.

But since then, a series of "mini-devaluations" dropped the basket rate to 2.0964 as of the close of trading at noon Wednesday, a devaluation of only 4.5 percent.

At noon Thursday, the Bank of Israel announced a shekel-to-dollar ratio of 1.9626, a devaluation of only 0.2 percent since Wednesday. The shekel "basket" ratio was fixed at 2.0941, a change of only 0.1 percent.

But Bruno warned that this should not be taken as a norm. He said the low figure was the result of massive sales of foreign currency to the bank in the morning and the strengthening of the dollar against the West German mark.

The discrepancy between the two figures stems from the central bank's freedom to fix fluctuations of up to 3 percent against the stable June rate, depending on the direction of currency flows.

FIVE DALLAS SKINHEADS CONVICTED FOR VIOLATIONS OF CIVIL RIGHTS

By Stewart Weiss

DALLAS, March 1 (JTA) -- Five members of a white supremacist group were convicted Thursday of firearms violations and conspiracy to violate the civil rights of blacks, Jews and Hispanics.

The charges carry a maximum penalty of 25 years in federal prison. Sentencing is scheduled for April 19.

The charges stem from anti-Semitic and anti-minority incidents committed in 1988, in which several religious institutions were vandalized and several people were beaten up by Skinheads.

Those found guilty of 12 of 13 charges in federal court were Daniel Wood, 19; Sean Tarrant, 20; Jon Jordan, 19; Christopher Greer, 25; and Michael Lawrence, who were convicted before U.S. District Court Judge Barefoot Sanders.

The five are members of the Confederate Hammerskins, a Dallas-based white supremacist organization, whose members sport shaved heads and espouse Nazi ideology.

The convictions are based on several incidents. In August 1988, anti-Semitic slogans were painted on Temple Shalom in Dallas, and several Skinheads attempted to disrupt Shabbat services.

Temple Shalom was vandalized eight to 10 times in less than two years.

In October, the Dallas Jewish Community Center had several windows shot out, and phrases like "6 million more," and "This time we'll do it right" were painted on its walls in red spray-paint. An Islamic mosque was also defaced.

In one of the most chilling pieces of testimony, Gordan Buchanan, 18, a former member of the Confederate Hammerskins, told the court that Wood said he wanted to run lethal gas through the air conditioning ducts of a local synagogue.

Though no gas had been put in any of the air units, a spokesman at Temple Shalom of Dallas confirmed that the air conditioning had been tampered with on two separate occasions.

The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith in New York welcomed the news of the conviction, calling it "a major victory in the continuing battle against hate-inspired violence by Skinheads around the country."

FARRAKHAN: ONLY SOME JEWS 'PRACTICE DIRTY RELIGION'

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, March 1 (JTA) -- Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan said Wednesday that he is critical of particular Jews, especially supporters of Israel, but does not consider Judaism a "gutter religion."

Rather, Farrakhan said, he thinks that some Jews "practice dirty religion," citing Israeli policy-makers as "using God and religion as a cover" for their actions.

"I have no reference whatsoever to the religion that Jews practice," the Black Muslim minister told The Washington Post during a two-and-a-half hour interview published Thursday.

Yet in a speech given last week at Michigan State University, Farrakhan said he owed no apology to his Jewish critics for his frequent attacks on Jews because Jews have "sucked the blood of the black community."

He said that blacks had been demeaned in

movies he saw as a child, and he blamed Jews in the movie industry.

"You wrote us in as clowns and buffoons," Farrakhan said. "I never did that to you, but you Jews did that to black people."

When asked by The Washington Post whether Jews are collectively responsible for actions against blacks, Farrakhan said, "Certainly a majority of Jews are not involved in certain decisions that are made by others. No. You can't condemn a whole group of people for what some have done."

SENATOR SAYS REMARK BY DUKE INSINUATES JEWS OWN THE MEDIA

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, March 1 (JTA) -- Sen. Bennett Johnston (D-La.) accused campaign rival David Duke of making an anti-Semitic remark recently about Jews owning the New Orleans Times-Picayune.

Speaking here on Wednesday to the Hudson Valley Political Action Committee, a pro-Israel PAC, Johnston said that Duke, at a rally in Baton Rouge, insinuated that the reason why the New Orleans Times-Picayune has been sharply critical of him is because it is owned by Jews.

Johnston quoted Duke, a Republican state legislator and former grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan, as telling the crowd, "You know, the New Orleans Times-Picayune is down on me. But you know who owns the Times Picayune, don't you?"

"And those in the front rows were saying, 'Yea, Jews, Jews, Jews,'" Johnston told a gathering of predominantly Orthodox Jews, who were attending the New York-based PAC's annual meeting in Washington.

But Duke denied Johnston's account in a telephone interview Wednesday with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

"That's totally incorrect," he said. While not denying that his comments were essentially those quoted by Johnston, he said his comments were aimed at the "liberal media establishment" based in New York, and not at Jews per se.

Duke said the rally took place in Shreveport, not in Baton Rouge, and that "one person" in the audience had that reaction out of 1,500 people in attendance.

"I don't endorse that kind of reaction whatsoever," Duke added.

EAST GERMANY ENDS TRAINING OF PLO

By David Kantor

EAST BERLIN, March 1 (JTA) -- East Germany, after many years, has ended its military training program for Palestinian terrorists and asked the remaining participants to leave the country, well-informed sources confirmed here Thursday.

The shipment of weapons to the Palestine Liberation Organization and other terrorist groups was halted late last year, after the ouster of Erich Honecker's Communist regime.

The sources also affirmed indirectly that the issue of training Palestinian terrorists was raised at the secret talks between representatives of Israel and East Germany in Copenhagen last month.

The training program was one of the more tangible examples of close cooperation between East Germany and the PLO in recent years.

NEWS ANALYSIS:
RESTORATION OF POLISH-ISRAELI TIES
HAS MAJOR SIGNIFICANCE FOR 2 SIDES
 By Jonathan Spivak

WARSAW, March 1 (JTA) -- The Polish government's restoration of diplomatic relations with Israel on Tuesday, after a break of more than 22 years, is a move fraught with historical and political significance.

Although Poland now has only a few thousand Jewish residents, it has long been the cultural center of European Jewish life and plays a unique role in world Jewish affairs.

A sizable portion of Israel's Jewish population has roots in Poland. Israel's first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, was born there, as was the current one, Yitzhak Shamir.

So it was a major news event in Israel when Foreign Minister Moshe Arens came here to join his Polish counterpart, Krzysztof Skubiszewski, in signing the protocol restoring ties severed by Poland in the aftermath of the June 1967 Six-Day War.

In one sense, the step may make little immediate difference. Technically, the protocol elevates the present low-level interests sections the countries maintain in Warsaw and Tel Aviv respectively to full-fledged embassies.

But Israel's interests section in Warsaw, opened in 1986, already handles a full range of diplomatic affairs. "We are the busiest mission in Warsaw," insists Ami Mehl, the second secretary. "Other embassies are amazed at the volume of our work."

The four-member office is headed by Mordechai Palzur, who automatically became the new Israeli ambassador Tuesday. A new Israeli ambassador to Poland is expected to be named later this year, after Palzur completes the normal four-year tour of duty.

Israeli officials here say there will be no immediate increase in the four-member diplomatic staff.

Fourfold Increase In Trade

Yet while little functionally may change in the operation of the mission, there's little doubt that over the longer range, the formal restoration of diplomatic ties will have substantial significance.

It is being accompanied by discussions during the Arens visit of further cultural, scientific and business ties. Israeli-Polish trade reached a volume of \$60 million last year, a fourfold increase from the previous year.

"By establishing full diplomatic relations with Israel, we hope to improve the dialogue on both sides," Foreign Ministry spokesman Stefan Staniszewski observed in a recent interview. "We realize that we did not make the right decision" in 1967, he said.

The Polish recognition continues a rapid series of changes in Israel's diplomatic position in Eastern Europe, which have flowed from the fall of Communist regimes.

With the exception of Romania, all East bloc countries imposed a diplomatic boycott on Israel after the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict, though East Germany did not have ties to begin with. Hungary restored full diplomatic relations in September, and Czechoslovakia followed suit Feb. 9.

Here in Poland, diplomatic recognition comes at a critical moment in Polish-Jewish relations. Traditional antagonisms have been exacerbated by

the still smoldering controversy over the presence of Carmelite nuns at the former Auschwitz concentration camp.

The dispute embittered relations between Jewish and Catholic leaders, and produced a rash of anti-Semitic vandalism.

Jewish residents who are seeking to build their religious life in the new Poland badly want some reassurance, and Israel remains a key for them.

"Recognition of the State of Israel is important, of course, but I will believe it when I see it," Piotr Kodleik, who runs a travel agency, declared with typical skepticism last week.

Important For Catholics, Too

The move is important also for the Catholic community, whose leadership has been trying to smooth the rift with Polish Jews.

"Recognition of Israel is just as significant for us," insisted Waldemar Chrostowski of the Warsaw Academy of Catholic Theology.

There has been an immense upsurge of interest in Jewish history and culture among Catholic intellectuals here in recent years, a trend that paralleled the emergence of the work-led Solidarity trade union movement.

Diplomatic recognition may give such interest official sanction and could increase the exchange of Polish and Israeli visits.

Last year, 12,000 Israeli tourists visited Poland, and almost that number of Poles made the trip to Israel. Foreign Ministry sources say that Lot, the Polish airline, is now discussing with El Al Israel Airlines the possibility of increasing the twice-a-week flight schedule between the two countries.

Other results could be more joint ventures between Polish and Israeli business firms. "There is a very big field for this kind of cooperation," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Staniszewski.

Staniszewski also said the Polish government would like to play a role in hastening a Middle East settlement. "We want the relationship to be beneficial to both sides," he observed.

Poland supports the United Nations resolutions on the Arab-Israeli conflict and backs both an international conference on the issue and direct talks between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

A Diminished, Aging Community

"Poland stands for the guaranteed existence of a free State of Israel, but at the same time, we support the right of the Palestine nation for an independent existence," said Jan Pickarski, a Foreign Ministry expert on Israel.

The Jewish community in Poland is now variously estimated at 6,000 to 10,000, compared to a prewar population of 300,000 Jews in Warsaw alone.

After the tragedy of the war years, substantial numbers of Jews still lived in Poland, but three successive waves of migration depleted their numbers as they faced the hostility of the Community government.

Now the surviving Jewish community is heavily weighted with aging, often ill and isolated members, who need sizeable social and economic aid.

There is, nonetheless, the tentative beginnings of vibrant, young Jewish communities in Warsaw and Katowice. It is expected that Poland's new relationship with Israel will give them a tremendous boost.