

VOL. 68 - 73rd YEAR

MONDAY, APRIL 16, 1990

NO. 70

**IRAQI LEADER'S OFFER TO DESTROY ARMS
WELCOMED BY SENATORS AND STATE DEPT.**

By Cathrine Gerson and Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, April 15 (JTA) -- A reported offer by President Saddam Hussein of Iraq to dismantle his weapons of mass destruction if Israel does the same seemed to satisfy four of the five U.S. senators who held a news conference here Sunday, winding up their fact-finding mission to the Middle East.

Only Sen. Howard Metzenbaum (D-Ohio), the lone Democrat and sole Jew in the group led by Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole (R-Kan.), was dubious of Hussein's peaceful intentions. In fact, he suggested that the Iraqi leader suffers from a "war psychosis."

In Washington, the Bush administration welcomed Hussein's reported offer, but not the condition attached to it.

The senatorial junketeers visited Egypt, Jordan and Syria before coming to Israel. But it was their unscheduled side trip Thursday to Iraq -- reportedly arranged by President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt -- which aroused greatest interest.

That was possibly because Hussein on April 2 shocked the world with a threat to destroy "half of Israel" with chemical weapons in his arsenal.

In addition, Iraq has been accused by Britain and the United States of trying illicitly to obtain components of nuclear weapons or the means of launching nuclear or chemical weapons at distant targets in Israel and Iran.

There also have been media reports in recent weeks that Iraq is developing biological weapons that could be used against Israel.

Most of the visiting senators accepted that, in issuing his threat, Hussein was speaking hypothetically of retaliation against an attack on Iraq by Israel, such as the pre-emptive raid it launched in 1981, when Israeli warplanes destroyed Iraq's Osirak nuclear reactor near Baghdad.

Metzenbaum Is Skeptical

But a visiting American Jewish leader rejected that argument here Sunday.

"I am bewildered how anyone would view Hussein's threats as hypothetical rhetoric," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

"After all," he said, "this is a man who started a war resulting in 1 million deaths in the Persian Gulf and who used chemical bombs against defenseless Kurdish citizens."

Metzenbaum also was skeptical of the Iraqi president's intentions. He was quoted Friday as saying he "heard no mention of the word peace" from Hussein during his one-hour talk with the American delegation.

The Iraqi leader "concentrated on confrontation, military, war," the senator said.

The others on the mission were Sens. James McClure of Idaho, Alan Simpson of Wyoming and Frank Murkowski of Alaska, all Republicans.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said Friday that the United States "would, of course, welcome any offer to destroy chemical weapons."

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

**DOLE SAYS HE'LL SEEK TO RESCIND
SENATE RESOLUTION ON JERUSALEM**

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, April 14 (JTA) -- Senate Minority Leader Robert Dole (R-Kan.) came under fire from American Jewish leaders Sunday for saying he would seek to have the Senate rescind a resolution declaring that Jerusalem is Israel's capital.

He also was sharply criticized for implying that American Jews are selfish in opposing cuts in U.S. aid to Israel.

The Senate resolution, unanimously adopted on March 22, declares that Jerusalem "is and should remain the capital of the State of Israel" and that it "must remain an undivided city."

"I am not sure I can change it," Dole said Sunday in an appearance from Jerusalem on the NBC News television program "Meet the Press." But he said he had "made a mistake" in supporting the resolution, because it is hampering the peace process.

Dole made similar comments at a news conference in Jerusalem, where he and four other senators on Sunday ended a weeklong fact-finding trip to the Middle East that also included stops in Syria, Egypt, Jordan and Iraq.

In "every Arab country that we visited, instead of talking about the peace process, they wanted to talk about this amendment that has no binding effect, and they are very upset by it" he said.

"It sort of kept us from focusing on pushing the Arab countries to the peace table," he added. The resolution, he said, was "probably ill-timed."

Dole said that when the senators met Saturday with Jerusalem Mayor Teddy Kollek, he also criticized the resolution, although he considers Jerusalem to be Israel's eternal capital. Kollek told the senators that the resolution was meddling in the peace process, Dole claimed.

An 'Insult' To The Jewish People

But according to reports from Jerusalem, Kollek later sent a telegram to Dole denying and expressing surprise at the senator's version of their conversation. In fact, Kollek said, rescinding the Senate resolution would "harm the peace process and encourage Arab extremism."

The Senate Republican leader also said the White House had not fought the resolution, and a similar one in the House, because it considered it meaningless.

U.S. policy has been that the status of Jerusalem should be decided by negotiations. The United States has therefore refused to move its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

The resolution "doesn't mean anything" in terms of law, Dole agreed. "But it means a lot to the Arab countries and, of course, it pleases the Israelis."

In Jerusalem, a visiting American Jewish leader criticized Dole on Sunday for his stance on the resolution, saying it is "an insult to the U.S. Senate, the State of Israel and to the Jewish people."

"It is Sen. Dole's prerogative to have a change of heart after visiting Arab capitals," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-

Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. "But it is inconceivable that he should lead a campaign based on a chorus of criticism in the Arab world."

Foxman vowed that supporters of Israel in the United States would respond vigorously to retain the resolution as it stands.

Dole was criticized by another American Jewish leader Sunday for remarks made earlier in Israel that appeared to characterize Jews as selfish for supporting U.S. aid to Israel.

"I know the Jewish leaders," Dole was quoted as saying. "They wouldn't give one penny to anyone else. It's too bad. They shouldn't be that way."

'Never Want To Take A Penny Less'

He also compared foreign aid to Israel with drug abuse. "Some people get hooked on it. They never want to take a penny less. It's like drugs," he was quoted as saying.

In New York, Seymour Reich, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, on Sunday called those remarks "ill-advised, without foundation and not becoming a leader of the U.S. Senate."

"It is wrong to make it seem that American Jews care about Israel and nothing else," said Reich, who is also president of B'nai B'rith International.

"Sen. Dole knows or should know that American Jewish organizations have publicly supported aid to the emerging democracies in Eastern Europe and to Central and South American countries beset by faltering economies," he said.

He also said Jewish organizations have always supported increased foreign aid "to help the needy and depressed in many foreign nations."

In his NBC appearance, Dole said he spent a great amount of time in his discussions with Israeli leaders explaining his proposal that aid to Israel and other major recipients of U.S. foreign assistance be cut by 5 percent to meet the needs of emerging democracies in Eastern Europe and Latin America.

He indicated he did not expect this to happen soon, but was trying to get a debate on the issue started.

"I was trying to underscore the problem we have in America with a big domestic debt, with \$180 billion in interest every year on the debt and trying to convince people that foreign aid is not popular in America, and we need to take a look at it," Dole explained.

"Maybe Israel wouldn't get hurt much, maybe Israel wouldn't be hurt at all," he added. "But to stick our heads in the sand and say, 'Well, Israel forever' -- that's going to be hard to sell."

Claims Israel Is Losing Support

Dole stressed that he supports the U.S. special relationship with Israel. "They have been our ally in this region when we had no allies," he said. "They are very important to us, and so we are going to have this special relationship."

But he added that this doesn't mean that when the United States has to meet the needs of the emerging democracies "we shouldn't take a look at aid to Israel."

Dole said that even if aid was cut, it still would be substantial. He noted that Israel is asking for even more aid than it gets in the

annual \$3 billion foreign aid package by requesting \$400 million in loan guarantees to build housing for Soviet Jewish immigrants.

"Now we have homeless in America, we have homeless veterans in America," he said. "They are wondering why don't we get the same treatment."

Dole said that he and the other senators stressed to the Israelis that Israel is losing support among the American people.

"I don't know what caused it," Dole said. "Maybe it was television, maybe it was the intifada, maybe it was something else."

Dole also indicated support may be lessening because of the slowness of the peace process, though he added: "We can't dictate to Israel, and we don't intend to. There's no linkage between aid and the peace process," he said.

(JTA correspondent Gil Sedan in Jerusalem contributed to this report.)

OCCUPATION OF CHRISTIAN QUARTER UPSETS JEWISH-CHRISTIAN RELATIONS **By Gil Sedan**

JERUSALEM, April 15 (JTA) -- The reserved but generally cooperative relations between Jews and Christians in Jerusalem were stirred to the boiling point by the occupation of a housing complex in the heart of the Old City's Christian Quarter by 150 Orthodox Jews, who say they purchased it legally.

The Greek Orthodox Church says it is the rightful owner and never sold the property.

While the dispute is before the courts, tempers are rising on both sides.

Two tourists were slightly injured by stones thrown at their bus on the Mount of Olives in East Jerusalem on Sunday. Protest riots broke out in Nablus in the West Bank.

There were also ramifications overseas.

Noting pointedly that Jerusalem is sacred to Moslems, Jews and Christians alike, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said Friday, "We think that all parties are well advised to demonstrate mutual toleration and to refrain from provocative actions."

Statements critical of the settlers were issued over the weekend by the American Jewish Congress in New York and by B'nai B'rith International in Washington.

The authorities here insist the controversy is neither religious nor political, but rather a matter for adjudication by the courts. The Jerusalem District Court will decide Tuesday on a date to hear the church's complaint.

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

MARCH INFLATION LESS THAN EXPECTED **By Hugh Orgel**

TEL AVIV, April 15 (JTA) -- Israel's cost-of-living index rose 1.2 percent in March, according to figures released Sunday by the Central Bureau of Statistics.

The less-than-expected increase was attributed to the general economic slowdown.

A 2 percent rise had been forecast by economic experts and the Finance Ministry because of the shekel's devaluation last month and the 1 percent hike of the Value Added Tax.

But the economic downturn kept costs from rising. Experts noted that shelves remained fully stocked during the month.

GORBACHEV CONDEMNS ANTI-SEMITISM, IN A LONG-AWAITED PUBLIC STATEMENT

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, April 15 (JTA) -- Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev, addressing a meeting of the Communist Youth League in Moscow, has made what is believed to be his first public statement condemning anti-Semitism.

Leaders of Soviet Jewry advocacy groups responded to the long-awaited statement in mixed fashion, some welcoming it, but others saying it minimized or only partially addressed the problem.

Gorbachev's remark came quietly, in response to a question posed April 11 in Moscow at the 21st annual congress of Komsomol, the Communist youth movement of the Soviet Union.

Asked what measures he intended to take in response to "abnormal conditions of life and activities of Jews in the Soviet Union" because of anti-Semitism, Gorbachev replied, "I believe that we ought not to allow raging of nationalism, chauvinism, anti-Semitism or any other 'isms' to occur."

"It is necessary to take the path of harmonizing interethnic relations, to set up legal, economic and social prerequisites for people of all ethnic groups," wherever they live, he said. "There is no other way that I know of."

A copy of the statement was forwarded by Yuri Dubinin, Soviet ambassador to the United States, to Rabbi Arthur Schneier, president of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, an interfaith group that promotes religious freedom in Soviet bloc countries and other nations that experience any religious repression.

Schneier, senior rabbi of the Park East Synagogue in Manhattan, raised the issue of Soviet Jews' growing fears of anti-Semitism in recent meetings he had with Dubinin in Washington and with high-level Soviet officials in Moscow.

Dubinin said that Tass, the Soviet news agency, distributed the statement nationwide.

Some Not Satisfied

Shoshana Cardin, chairwoman of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, welcomed the statement, acknowledging it was "the first that we are aware of that he has made."

"We appreciate his expression of condemnation and hope that this will be broadcast fully," so that "all Soviet republics will be aware that the government, we trust, will try to prevent any violence at all," she said.

"We look forward to further statements," she said, particularly one that would indicate an investigation into an anti-Semitic attack in January on the House of Writers in Moscow.

Lynn Singer, executive director of the Long Island Committee for Soviet Jewry, registered some surprise, saying, "Nobody reported it to me in any of my conversations everyday with people in Moscow."

Such a statement, she said, "would make a tremendous impact if it were so, and would help defuse the fears of May 5," a date that anti-Semitic groups have threatened to stage a pogrom. It is the birthday of Karl Marx.

But the head of another Soviet Jewry group said the reply was given only in the context of several responses to nationalism, and that Gorbachev had not even pronounced the word "anti-Semitism" aloud.

Pamela Cohen, president of the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, said the response was

last in a two-hour broadcast of Gorbachev's replies to questions, all submitted in writing.

Acknowledging it was the first time in five years that Gorbachev had even addressed the issue publicly, Cohen said she understood that Gorbachev "could not even pronounce the word 'anti-Semitism.'"

She said he responded, "Yes, you know that I was always against nationalism, chauvinism" but only quietly muttered "against anti-Semitism."

"I would have liked him to say, 'Yes, there is growing anti-Semitism in this country, and you know it is liable to prosecution.'"

Rabbi Avraham Weiss, national director of the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry, also was not satisfied. He called for "a law, codified by the Soviet Parliament, which, in the strongest and most uncertain terms, forbids anti-Semitism. Words are not enough."

MYSTERY SURROUNDING TASS REPORTS OF ATTACK ON JEWISH EMIGRE PLANE By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, April 15 (JTA) -- Mystery surrounds Tass reports that a Soviet airliner carrying Jews to Israel was the target of a Palestinian terrorist attack in Cyprus.

Israeli and Cypriot authorities said they had no information about the alleged incident.

Soviet airliners, moreover, do not fly to Israel.

The official Soviet news agency reported Friday, nonetheless, that an Aeroflot jet carrying Jewish immigrants to Israel was attacked by Palestinians.

An amended version issued later by Tass referred to an attempted attack on an aircraft carrying Soviet Jews on a scheduled flight to Israel via Cyprus.

The report said, "After closing the airport, police escorted passengers to the port of Limassol, where they took a ferry to Israel."

Israeli government and Jewish Agency officials noted that Cyprus is not a way station for Soviet Jews immigrating to Israel.

But according to recent reports, Soviet Jews and non-Jews traveling to Israel as tourists buy return flights between Moscow and Cyprus and travel the short leg between Cyprus and Israel by ferry or local air services.

The Soviet tourists are said to buy duty-free television sets, videotape recorders and stereos, which they leave under bond at the Cyprus airport, to be picked up on their return trip.

Those items can be resold in the Soviet Union for more than the cost of the trip.

THREE PALESTINIANS KILLED AT SEA By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, April 15 (JTA) -- Israeli naval forces killed three armed Palestinians and wounded a fourth Thursday night in a clash off the southern Lebanese port city of Tyre.

A military spokesman said a Dabour-class gunboat on routine patrol intercepted a dinghy, which failed to respond to warning shots and orders to stop.

The dinghy, which appeared to be ferrying terrorist infiltrators to Israel, was fired on.

The Israeli gunboat came under fire from the Lebanese beach for about three hours while searching for survivors and wreckage. There were no Israeli casualties.

BUSH CRITICIZED FOR SAYING GERMANY SHOULD BE FORGIVEN FOR HOLOCAUST

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES, April 15 (JTA) -- A remark by President Bush that the time has come to "forgive" Germany for the Holocaust has drawn sharp criticism from Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

Calling the president's statement "morally wrong and politically dangerous," Hier said that "the generation of Germans who perpetrated the Holocaust can never be forgiven for their heinous crimes. Indeed, the only people who could have granted them forgiveness perished in the gas chambers."

At a time when East Germans have for the first time accepted moral responsibility for Nazi crimes, Bush's words sent the wrong signal to the young generation of Germans, Hier said.

While such Germans are not responsible for the crimes of their forefathers, "nonetheless, the legacy of Auschwitz must be permanently embedded into the conscience of the German nation," he said.

Bush made his comments Friday en route to Bermuda for a meeting with British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher. He characterized his remarks as "personal observations," rather than official policy.

"I'm a Christian, and I think forgiveness is something I feel very strongly about," the president told reporters aboard Air Force One.

"I'm inclined to think we ought to forgive -- not forget," Bush said, adding that the Easter season was a special time to take stock.

"For those of us who have faith, most of the teachings have ample room for forgiveness and moving on," he added.

RABIN'S POPULARITY IN LABOR GROWING AS PERES STRUGGLES TO WOO ORTHODOX

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, April 15 (JTA) -- The Labor Party seems to have lost confidence in its long-time leader, Shimon Peres, since his attempt to establish a new coalition government was thwarted last week by the 11th-hour defections of two ultra-Orthodox Knesset members.

Although the prime minister-designate is continuing his efforts under a new 15-day mandate granted by President Chaim Herzog, his chances appear to depend more than ever on the vagaries of the religious bloc, which is itself wracked by factional rivalry.

Accordingly, Laborites are looking for guidance to their No. 2 man, former Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

The party's Leadership Bureau is scheduled to meet Thursday to review the coalition-making situation.

Political insiders suspect that barring a Peres breakthrough by then, the party brass will demand openly that the chairman step down as prime ministerial candidate, in favor of the more popular Rabin.

Peres has brushed off hints that he might move aside. But the insiders say informal contacts already have been made between circles close to Rabin and elements in the Likud camp about the possibility of reconstituting the unity coalition.

This time, Rabin and Likud leader Yitzhak Shamir would rotate the office of prime minister between them, just as Peres and Shamir shared it

consecutively after the 1984 Knesset elections resulted in a dead heat between the two major parties.

Should a new unity government emerge, however, most observers believe its overriding mission would be to enact bold reforms of the electoral system to end the hold that small religious parties have on Israel's political structure.

Verdiger Withdraws Resignation

Grass-roots sentiment for reform is gaining rapidly in the aftermath of Peres' fiasco on April 11, the date his original 21-day mandate expired.

Convinced he had a 61-vote majority in the Knesset, Peres was about to present his slate for a vote of confidence when two of the five members of the ultra-Orthodox Agudat Yisrael party, Avraham Verdiger and Eliezer Mizrahi, announced they could not vote for a Labor-led government on ideological grounds.

They were in open defiance of their party's supreme authority, its Council of Torah Sages, which had given its blessings only a week earlier to an Agudah coalition agreement with Labor.

Mizrahi promptly quit Agudah, but retained his Knesset seat as an independent and committed himself to support Likud.

Verdiger initially resigned from the Knesset, a move that would allow Agudah to swear in the next man on its party list, David Halachmi, who presumably would obey the spiritual leaders' decision to back Labor.

But by law, resignations take effect only after a 48-hour cooling-off period. And only minutes before that deadline expired Friday morning, Verdiger changed his mind.

He said he would remain an Agudah member of the Knesset for the moment, leaving open how he would vote on the next confidence motion.

Verdiger made no effort to conceal his obedience to the wishes of the Lubavitcher rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, who presides over the worldwide Chabad movement from headquarters in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, N.Y.

Discord Within Likud

On Sunday, Verdiger proudly displayed a faxed message from Schneerson welcoming his decision not to leave the Knesset.

But without all five Agudah votes, Labor would still be a vote short of a majority.

Peres indicated that his efforts are now aimed at the ultra-Orthodox Shas party in hope that its spiritual mentor, former Sephardic Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, will reconsider his earlier decision to support Likud. Yosef is known to be dovish on peace and security.

Meanwhile, all is not smooth in the Likud camp, where Shamir seems about to reward four defectors with safe seats and ministerial posts for returning to the fold.

Likud's 3,000-member Central Committee will meet Thursday in Jerusalem to endorse an agreement with the prodigals, led by Yitzhak Moda'i, until recently one of Shamir's most outspoken critics.

But because there is a great deal of resentment among the Likud rank and file, the outcome of the Central Committee meeting is not a foregone conclusion.