

**HARD-LINE STATES GAIN STRENGTH
AT ARAB SUMMIT MEETING IN BAGHDAD**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 29 (JTA) -- Israel found much cause for concern in the warlike rhetoric emanating this week from the Arab summit meeting in Baghdad.

In addition to open talk of military attacks against Israel, there were calls for coordinated action to stop the immigration of Soviet Jews to Israel and the administered territories.

The harsh tone of the public statements appeared to signal that the hard-line Arab states, led by Iraq, were gaining strength over the more moderate forces, led by Egypt, which have argued that it is in the Arabs' interest to pursue the peace process, rather than the military option.

Tough words also were directed against the United States for what the Arabs contend is its uncompromising support for Israel.

The Arab leaders reportedly were furious over a 16-page letter the U.S. State Department sent last week to the Arab League, urging Iraq to "moderate both its action and its rhetoric" and refrain from using "excessively ardent language."

In recent weeks, Iraqi President Saddam Hussein has made several statements threatening war against the Jewish state. In one case, he vowed to "destroy half of Israel" with chemical weapons if it contemplated a pre-emptive strike against Iraqi weapons installations.

His words this week were little different, and they set the tone of the proceedings in Baghdad, which Hussein personally hosted.

"If Israel attacks, we will hit back strongly, and if it uses weapons of total destruction against our nation, we will use against it the weapons of total destruction which we have," Hussein told the heads of the 15 Arab countries participating in the summit.

Arafat Urges Sanctions

Iraq is said to be in the process of amassing a deadly stockpile of chemical and biological weapons. There also have been reports that Iraq is building an underground nuclear reactor to replace the one destroyed by Israel nine years ago.

In Washington, the State Department said Tuesday that the words it used previously to describe Hussein's threats against Israel could be applied to his latest remarks. The department had called the Iraqi leader's earlier threats to destroy Israel "irresponsible, inflammatory and outrageous."

Hussein's tough stance at the summit was echoed by Yasir Arafat, chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization. In an aggressive speech at the summit's opening ceremony, Arafat seemed to part with his previous declarations about making peace with Israel.

Arafat also called for the Arab nations to impose sanctions against countries that abet the immigration of Soviet Jews to the Israeli territories.

"We are duty-bound to use all weapons--including sanctions, economic boycotts, and political and psychological pressures -- against states, establishments and companies that participate in

aggression against Arab territory," the PLO leader said.

"The ordeal of the Palestinian people under Israeli occupation is an intolerable strain on its patience," he said.

He called for the revival of the Arab Joint Defense Council, which he said should meet within a month to confront Israeli "challenges and threats" to Arab security.

Egypt Calls For Moderation

The council, made up of the foreign and defense ministers of the Arab nations, was formed in 1950 but has scarcely been used since. It was last convened, unsuccessfully, by Hussein during Iraq's eight-year war with Iran.

Arafat chided the U.S. Congress for its resolution declaring Jerusalem to be Israel's capital, and said that East Jerusalem "is part of the Palestinian territory under Israeli occupation. It is the capital of the state of Palestine."

On Tuesday, the Arab leaders met behind closed doors for almost three hours to discuss ways to impede Soviet Jewish immigration to Israel, including Arafat's suggestion to revive the defense council.

President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, the only country to have diplomatic relations with Israel, urged the Arab states to deliver "a humane and rational message" on the immigration question.

He was said to have told his colleagues that they can expect the United States to take "a series of calculated steps to limit the negative effects of the (Soviet Jewish) immigration" in the next few months.

**ON EVE OF SUPERPOWER SUMMIT,
U.S.-SOVIET TRADE PACT IN DOUBT**

By David Friedman and Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, May 29 (JTA) -- Two days before President Bush was scheduled to host Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev at their first full-scale summit meeting, the White House was still up in the air about whether a trade agreement would be signed.

White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said Tuesday that neither news reports that the agreement will be signed at the summit nor those saying it will not are correct.

"It is very much an issue that will be resolved between the two presidents," Fitzwater said. Although U.S. and Soviet negotiators have completed work on the agreement, "I would not prejudge the outcome," he said.

But a senior administration official, who briefed reporters on the upcoming summit Tuesday, seemed to indicate that a trade agreement would not be signed.

She gave two reasons. First, she did not believe the Soviet legislature would take action by the time the summit began Thursday on a bill codifying emigration reforms.

Bush has made Soviet implementation of an emigration reform law a condition for waiving sanctions contained in the Jackson-Vanik Amendment to the U.S. Trade Act. The amendment bars the Soviet Union from receiving most-favored-nation trade benefits from the United States until it improves its emigration policies.

A trade agreement would be meaningless for the Soviets without the trade benefits, which would allow the USSR to export goods to the United States at the lowest tariffs.

Emigration Law Up In The Air

But Bush is insisting on the adoption of a law by the Supreme Soviet that would institutionalize more liberal emigration procedures so that Jews and others would no longer be subject to whims of emigration officials.

The senior official said the proposed law has been on and off the schedule of the Supreme Soviet for the last six months.

When Secretary of State James Baker was in Moscow earlier this month, he was told the law would be debated May 31, the first day of the summit.

But Baker later learned that it had been removed from the Supreme Soviet's schedule.

"We have made clear to the Soviets at every opportunity that this emigration law is a precondition," the senior administration official said Tuesday.

But she said there was no reason to believe the law would be ready by the summit.

The official also noted that before Bush would waive Jackson-Vanik sanctions, the administration would want to consult with Congress and with various groups. Presumably, those include the Soviet Jewry advocacy groups.

The official also stressed that all of this was "shadowed" by the Soviet economic sanctions against Lithuania.

Bush seemed to indicate this at a news conference last week when he said, "I think that there's a political climate in this country that would make it extraordinarily difficult to grant" trade benefits to the Soviets.

The senior official stressed Tuesday that while signing agreements are important, this would not be the main focus of the Bush-Gorbachev summit. "It is a summit designed to do the hard work of trying to transform East-West relations," she said.

Letters, Appeals And Protests

Meanwhile, 51 senators and 139 members of the House of Representatives sent letters to Bush urging him to discuss with Gorbachev the issue of anti-Semitism in the Soviet Union. Baker indicated last week that Bush would bring up U.S. concerns about growing anti-Semitism, as well as the cases of long-term refuseniks.

The joint letters, which were delivered to the White House, urged that Bush "call on President Gorbachev to publicly condemn" the increasing incidents of anti-Semitism.

The Va'ad, the umbrella group of Jewish institutions in the Soviet Union, has urged Bush to persuade Gorbachev to change "his policy of indifference toward anti-Semitic, neo-Nazi trends in his own country."

The appeal was made in a letter Michael Chlenov, co-president of the Va'ad, sent to Edgar Bronfman, president of the World Jewish Congress.

At least two Jewish groups are considering holding protests in Washington on Friday during the summit. The Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry may protest across the street from the offices of Aeroflot to push for direct flights between the Soviet Union and Israel.

The Union of Councils for Soviet Jews may join Lithuanian groups at a larger human rights rally.

The SSSJ staged a demonstration Monday across from the Soviet Embassy, and later in front of the White House. The 180 participants from New York and New Jersey then protested in front of the Iraqi Embassy over the Arab League meeting in Baghdad, which was called to protest Soviet Jewish immigration to Israel.

VIOLENCE AGAINST ARABS CONTINUES AS VICTIM OF BOMB BLAST IS BURIED

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, May 29 (JTA) -- Violent attacks against Arab bystanders and journalists were reported Tuesday, after the funeral of Shimon Cohen, who died Monday when a bomb exploded shortly after noon in Jerusalem's crowded Machaneh Yehuda market.

Nine other Israelis, including a 6-year-old boy, were wounded in the attack, which enraged Jews and sparked reprisals against Arabs.

No injuries were reported Tuesday in the second day of such violence, which consisted mainly of rock-throwing attacks against vehicles driven by Arabs or journalists.

The attacks against Arabs were confined to the stoning of their passing vehicles, according to Army Radio.

The incidents took place along Shmuel Hanavi Street, near the Sanhedria funeral parlor. They occurred after the funeral cortege itself had left the parlor en route for the Har Hamenuhot cemetery, on the western outskirts of the city.

The Foreign Press Association protested the much more serious attacks Monday against journalists covering the aftermath of the bomb blast. Reporters and camera crews were pelted with rocks and other heavy objects, and one news photographer was hospitalized after being punched and kicked.

The press association indirectly blamed the violence on remarks made last week in Scandinavia by Israeli President Chaim Herzog, who was on a state visit there. The president, whose remarks were widely broadcast here, was quoted as blaming the press in part for the recent upsurge in international criticism of Israel.

The FPA, the Israel Journalists Association and the director of the Government Press Office all have issued statements demanding that journalists be enabled to perform their duties without encountering interference from citizens.

IDF KILLS THREE IN SOUTH LEBANON

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, May 29 (JTA) -- Three gunmen were killed in two clashes with an Israel Defense Force patrol in southern Lebanon early this week. There were no Israeli casualties.

According to an army spokesman, an IDF unit on routine duty Tuesday afternoon encountered a terrorist squad in Qantara, in the central sector of the border security zone. The soldiers opened fire at the terrorists, killing two.

On Monday, a lone gunman was killed in a skirmish with Israeli troops just north of the central sector of the security zone. The Tala'at Yacub faction announced in Beirut that one of its members had been killed in an encounter with Israeli forces.

REMINDER: There will be no JTA Daily News Bulletin published Thursday, May 31.

SHAMIR MAY PRESENT GOVERNMENT WITHOUT A CLEAR-CUT MAJORITY

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, May 29 (JTA) -- Yitzhak Shamir is planning to present a government to the Knesset next week that would have the backing of a 59-vote plurality of the legislature, as well as the tacit support of the Agudat Yisrael and Moledet parties, which would abstain from the vote of confidence.

That was the word circulating in Likud political circles Tuesday, as the country prepared to celebrate the Shavuot festival.

Independent observers, however, said the option of forming a unity coalition could not yet be ruled out and that Shamir, with more than a week left before his mandate expires, may yet attempt to reconstitute the partnership with Labor.

Shamir made it clear earlier in the week that he was not prepared to hand Rehavam Ze'evi, leader of the Moledet party, the Police Ministry, even if it meant the far-right party would fail to support a Likud-led government.

Likud apparently believes it can dispense with Moledet's two votes because it is counting on the tacit support of Agudah. Likud anticipates Moledet will abstain too, rather than join Labor and the parties of the left in voting against Shamir's government.

Ze'evi, for his part, has reiterated that he will not join the government if its platform contains any reference to the Camp David accords, the foundation of Shamir's peace initiative.

In recent days, Likud has made strenuous efforts to woo Agudah.

Shamir met with Agudah's Menachem Porush last weekend for what was billed a "reconciliation" meeting. It has been Porush more than any of the other Agudah leaders who has campaigned against entering a Likud-led coalition, because he says Shamir betrayed pledges to Agudah made during the November 1988 coalition negotiations.

Unity Option Still Live

Likud members of the Knesset voted last week in favor of a new law banning the rearing of pigs in Jewish areas of the country. A number of Labor Knesset members voted against the measure, thereby incurring Agudah's ire.

Similarly, a number of Likud lawmakers on Monday backed a bill that would reduce the list of hospitals empowered to carry out legal abortions. Several though not all Laborites opposed the measure.

But while Agudah has drawn somewhat closer to Likud, its Knesset members assured Labor leaders Sunday that the party had not "crossed the lines" and was still part of the Labor camp.

Shamir hopes that Agudah will eventually join a Likud-led government once it wins a vote of confidence from the Knesset. Anticipating this, he is expected to leave the labor and social affairs portfolio vacant, as well as the chairmanship of the Knesset Finance Committee.

But a high-level source within Likud maintained this week that the prime minister was still deeply reluctant to form a government that could only muster a plurality or thin majority of Knesset votes. His preference, the source said, is still a unity coalition.

"But the difficulties are still there," the source said sadly, apparently referring to the major policy differences over the peace process that divide the two parties.

ELECTORAL REFORM ADVANCES A STEP AS FOUR BILLS CLEAR KNESSET HURDLE

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 28 (JTA) -- Israel moved an inch closer this week toward reforming its electoral system, when the Knesset on Monday approved on first reading four bills whose main effect would be to institute direct election of the prime minister.

The rationale behind the bills is to free the premier from the lengthy and complicated coalition bargaining of the sort that has plagued the country now for more than two months since the national unity government collapsed on March 15.

Under the current system of proportional representation, the head of the party that is able to muster the most votes through elections and coalition deals becomes prime minister.

Most Likud and Labor members of the Knesset voted in favor of the legislation, choosing to ignore opposition from the smaller parties, which fear electoral reform will dilute their strength.

The National Religious Party was the only one of the four religious factions to support the legislation. And among the smaller non-religious parties, only the right-wing Tsomet and the center-left Shinui backed the four bills.

Shinui's Amnon Rubinstein was pleased with the outcome of the vote. "This is truly a revolutionary step for Israel," he said. "For the first time, we are beginning to relinquish a system which is totally bankrupt."

The catch is that the bills were passed only on first reading, giving opponents plenty of opportunity to try to kill the bills in committee, before they make their way to the crucial second and third readings of the full Knesset.

IDF COLONEL CHARGES HIS SUPERIOR SANCTIONED BRUTALITY AGAINST ARABS

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, May 29 (JTA) -- The senior Israeli army commander in the Gaza Strip personally witnessed brutality against Palestinian civilians and did nothing to stop it, an Israeli colonel has testified.

On one occasion, Maj. Gen. Yitzhak Mordechai personally beat the face and neck of an elderly, well-dressed Arab who had refused to remove a roadblock for which he had not been responsible, the colonel charged.

The Israel Defense Force officer, identified only as Col. A., was called to testify at the trial of four reserve soldiers charged with brutally beating two Palestinian prisoners in the Gaza Strip in February 1988, two months after the intifada began. One of the prisoners died of his wounds.

At the time, Mordechai was head of the IDF Southern Command, which includes the Gaza Strip. He now heads the IDF Central Command, which includes the West Bank.

Col. A., who served on Mordechai's staff at the time, said he was disgusted by the fact that "senior officers do not stand behind the order which they themselves gave," and allowed their subordinates to face judicial proceedings for obeying such orders.

He said orders were given to inflict such beatings as punishment, and the only restriction imposed was to not cause death by beating.

"And every junior officer did as he saw fit within that framework," he said.

REFORM PANEL RECOMMENDS ALLOWING GAYS AND LESBIANS TO SERVE AS RABBIS
By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES, May 29 (JTA) -- Qualified gay and lesbian rabbis should be allowed to serve as full-fledged members of the Reform rabbinate, without discrimination or restrictions, a panel of Reform rabbis has concluded.

The Central Conference of American Rabbis, an association of 1,557 Reform rabbis in the United States, will consider whether to adopt the panel's recommendations at its convention in Seattle from June 24 to 28.

The committee's report, some four years in the making, treads a careful line welcoming gay rabbis and reaffirming traditional Jewish family values, in an apparent attempt to limit recriminations from more traditional elements of Judaism.

But the key paragraph in the six-page report declares unequivocally that "the committee urges that all rabbis, regardless of sexual orientation, be accorded the opportunity to fulfill the sacred vocation which they have chosen."

If the report is adopted by the full conference at the Seattle meeting, as its sponsors anticipate, it would make Reform Judaism one of the first major Jewish or Christian religious bodies in the United States to include acknowledged homosexuals among its clergy.

In 1984, the Reconstructionist Rabbinical College adopted a policy of admitting students without regard to sexual preference. The Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association automatically accepts any graduate of the college.

The Episcopal and Unitarian Universalist churches have also admitted gay clergy.

Rabbi Joseph Glaser, CCAR's executive vice president and an ex-officio member of the 17-person committee, said that he and his colleagues were aware of the recommendations' potentially divisive impact, but that the decision was ultimately based on the principles of Reform Judaism.

Warns About Publicizing Sexuality

But bowing to pragmatic considerations, the report, in effect, urges gay and lesbian rabbis not to flaunt their sexual preference.

Put more diplomatically, the report warns that "publicly acknowledging one's homosexuality is a personal decision which can have grave professional consequences."

Pointing to the difficulty of assuring tenure to gay or lesbian rabbis who come out of the closet, the report notes that "the committee does not want to encourage colleagues to put their careers at risk."

This reference to a congregation's possible opposition to a gay or lesbian rabbi is re-emphasized by pointing out that "rabbis are both role models and exemplars. Therefore, the committee calls upon all rabbis -- without regard of their sexual orientation -- to conduct their private lives with discretion and with full regard to the mores and sensibilities of their communities."

Rabbi Yoel Kahn, a member of the Reform panel and religious leader of a San Francisco congregation with special outreach to the lesbian and gay community, said he believes it is "increasingly possible for rabbis who are gay or lesbian to be employed by synagogues."

He expressed confidence that just as women rabbis were once shunned and later welcomed into the Reform movement, lesbian and gay rabbis will eventually be accepted.

Committee members admitted that their task was made more complex by the unanimous condemnation of homosexual behavior by Jewish tradition, and by scientific disagreement on whether homosexuality is a matter of conscious choice or whether it is innate and unchangeable.

A majority of the committee strongly affirmed the "centrality of monogamous, heterosexual, procreative marriage in Jewish tradition," and declined to endorse wedding-like ceremonies between partners of the same sex.

Orthodox Condemn Move

After urging all rabbis and congregations to treat with respect and fully integrate all Jews into the life of the community, the committee "strongly endorsed the view that all Jews are religiously equal, regardless of their sexual orientation."

After vigorous debate, the report was backed by a majority of 13 committee members, with two opposed and two abstentions, Glaser said.

In New York, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America condemned the Reform panel's recommendation, saying "the entire idea is an abomination."

"The Torah in the most unambiguous terms says that the gay lifestyle is a sin and is against the natural order. People who teach the Torah are expected to uphold its standards," Rabbi Pinchas Stolper, executive vice president of the Orthodox Union, said Tuesday.

Rabbi Chaim Shnur, California director of Agudath Israel, said the report "simply confirms that the Reform movement is basically rudderless when it comes to halachic tradition."

By contrast, Rabbi Harold Schulweis of Los Angeles, a leading Conservative rabbi, said he was giving the Reform movement "a great deal of credit for tackling an issue that has long been muted and suppressed."

He urged the Conservative movement to re-examine its own position on the issue.

Two weeks ago, the Conservative movement's Rabbinical Assembly voted overwhelmingly to welcome lesbians and gay men in Conservative synagogues. But it did not take a stand on admitting gay rabbis to the Conservative rabbinate.

(JTA staff writer Elena Neuman in New York contributed to this report.)

HUNGARY CONFRONTS ITS ANTI-SEMITISM
By Yehuda Lahav

BUDAPEST, May 29 (JTA) -- A clear statement condemning anti-Semitism is expected shortly from the Hungarian government, as it already has been condemned by a ranking dignitary of the Roman Catholic Church here.

Bishop Asztrik Varszegi denounced anti-Semitism as "the cancer of our people, of Europe and of the whole world."

He was addressing about 20,000 people who had just marched in the first Catholic procession organized in Budapest in 43 years. Varszegi's remarks were the harshest condemnation of anti-Semitism by any Catholic priest here in memory.

Hungarian Prime Minister Jozsef Antall and Foreign Minister Geza Jeszensky met here with two representatives of the World Jewish Congress.

Leslie Keller, chairman of the WJC's Eastern European Section, and Lajos Bakos, deputy chairman of the WJC's Budapest office, expressed their concern over recent manifestations of anti-Semitism in Hungary.