

JEWS ENCOURAGED BY SESSION WITH POPE, BUT DISAPPOINTED OVER STANCE ON ISRAEL **By Ruth E. Gruber**

ROME, Dec. 6 (JTA) -- An international Jewish delegation emerged from a nearly hour-long meeting Thursday with Pope John Paul II elated with the warm atmosphere if not entirely satisfied with the results.

The pope himself described the meeting with a 30-member delegation of the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations as "very important."

And Seymour Reich, chairman of the IJCIC delegation, called it "the beginning of a new chapter" in Catholic-Jewish relations.

He praised the pope's warmth, as well as the "obvious desire on the part of the Vatican to have good relations with the Jewish community."

But at the same time, Reich expressed some disappointment that the pope did not go further in some of his statements, particularly on the Vatican's continued refusal to recognize Israel.

The occasion of the meeting, the first of its kind in three years, was a two-day gathering of Vatican and Jewish leaders called to commemorate the 25th anniversary of "Nostra Aetate," the 1965 decree by the Second Vatican Council that redefined Catholic-Jewish relations and opened the way for dialogue between the two faiths.

During the gathering, the Vatican demonstrated its desire to resolve the painful three-year dispute with world Jewry over the establishment of a Carmelite convent on the grounds of the former Auschwitz death camp.

Money To Relocate Nuns Promised

Archbishop Edward Cassidy, chairman of the Holy See's Commission on Religious Relations With the Jews, announced that the Vatican is giving substantial financial assistance to help complete construction of a new convent and ecumenical center where the nuns at Auschwitz will be relocated. A Vatican spokesman said the aid amounted to \$100,000.

During his meeting with the Jewish leaders, the pope said, "This has been a very important day. Let's hope to continue."

He called the Nostra Aetate anniversary "nothing other than the divine mercy which is guiding Christians and Jews to mutual awareness, respect, cooperation and solidarity."

He also affirmed the "absolute singularity of God's choice of a particular people, 'His own' people, Israel."

Using the Hebrew word for the Holocaust, he added that "no dialogue between Christians and Jews can overlook the painful and terrible experience of the Shoah."

The pope also confirmed the conclusions put forward in a landmark joint Jewish-Catholic statement made in Prague Sept. 6.

He urged that the Prague declaration and its recommendation to fight anti-Semitism everywhere "be widely recognized and implemented wherever human and religious rights are violated."

Leaders of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, here to mark the Nostra Aetate anniversary, thanked the pope for his efforts to fight anti-Semitism.

But much still has to be done, especially in Eastern Europe, they said.

Reich remarked later that "the significant thing is the loud and clear confirmation of the Prague statement" by the pope.

"This is now official Vatican/church policy. It calls for repentance" for past Catholic wrongs against Jews, and "it calls anti-Semitism a sin. It envisages a plan to implement the concrete proposals to fight anti-Semitism set forth in the Prague document."

Pope Scarcely Mentions Israel

Nonetheless, Reich said he was "somewhat disappointed that the pope did not go beyond that which was set forth in his text."

In his own remarks to the pontiff, Reich called for concrete action in the future, particularly in fighting anti-Semitism in Eastern Europe. He also urged the Vatican to recognize Israel.

"We believe that full and formal diplomatic relations between the Holy See and the State of Israel will dramatically and substantively advance the cause of peace," Reich told the pope.

"The normalization of relations will send a strong signal to those nations that are still committed to the destruction of Israel.

"We live at a time when long-held ideologies are being abandoned in many parts of the world, and when new initiatives for peace are taking place every day," he said.

"Physical, political and psychological walls and barriers between peoples are falling everywhere. Now is the time for the full ripening of relations between the Holy See and the State of Israel," he said.

The pope, however, scarcely touched on the issue, referring only to his reverence for Jerusalem as a holy city.

"At the center of the Holy Land, almost at its hallowed heart, lies Jerusalem," he said. "It is a city holy to three great religions: to Jews, Christians and Moslems. Its very name evokes peace.

"I should like you to join in praying daily for peace, justice and respect for the fundamental human and religious rights of the three peoples, the three communities of faith who inhabit that beloved land," he said.

Meeting With Secretary Of State

The Jewish delegation also raised the Israel issue during a 45-minute meeting following the papal audience with the newly appointed Vatican secretary of state, Monsignor Jean-Louis Tauran.

"He told us there are problems with full normalization with Israel," Reich reported. "He said they are issues relating to Jerusalem, to the Palestinians, to borders.

"We had anticipated this; we have heard this in the past," he said.

But he stressed, "There can't be full normalization of relations between the Jewish and Catholic communities until the Vatican has full, normal relations with Israel. That is a basis for us."

Reich said the meeting with Tauran was particularly significant as it marked the beginning of a formal communication mechanism between IJCIC and the Vatican Secretariat of State.

Such communications will eventually, it is hoped, parallel in the political sphere the religious dialogue IJCIC already has with the Commission for Religious Relations With the Jews.

"Our religious relations don't deal with political matters," Reich said. Political cooperation, he said, should help "put out brush fires," heading off conflicts and misunderstandings between the two communities.

Conflicts in the political sphere have included the pope's embrace of Palestine Liberation Organization chief Yasir Arafat, his meetings with ex-Nazi Austrian President Kurt Waldheim and the convent controversy, which curtailed top-level Catholic-Jewish meetings for three years before it was resolved.

Reich said several other topics were touched on during discussions.

One was the repeated assertion that in the future, Catholic-Jewish dialogue must not be confined to hierarchies or elites.

"It's getting down to the grass-roots level that's important," he said.

Another was Jewish concern over recent reports that the Vatican was considering beatifying Queen Isabella of Spain, the monarch who expelled the Jews from Spain in 1492.

U.S. CLARIFIES UNITED NATIONS POSITION: WILL OPPOSE CONFERENCE, OMBUDSMAN By Howard Rosenberg and David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Dec. 6 (JTA) -- The United States continues to oppose an international peace conference on the Middle East and will not support a pending United Nations resolution that could support that, Secretary of State James Baker said Thursday.

"Precisely because of our consistent position that we will not link the (Persian) Gulf crisis and the Arab-Israeli dispute, this is certainly not an appropriate time for an international conference," Baker told the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

"We are not now recommending that an international conference on the Arab-Israeli conflict be held, nor are we supporting a resolution in the Security Council that would seek to convene a conference," he said.

Baker explained that the United States has "taken the position for a long time that an international conference, properly structured, at an appropriate time, might be useful. That has been the policy of the United States for a long time."

The U.N. Security Council was also expected to vote Friday on a resolution concerning Israel's treatment of the Palestinians in the administered territories, and there is a fear among Israeli and Jewish leaders that the United States might not exercise its veto power.

The final resolution, which was still being negotiated Thursday, could include calls to send an ombudsman to the territories to study the situation; convening a meeting of the 164 signatories to the Fourth Geneva Convention under which the rights of civilians living in occupied lands are laid out; and holding an international Middle East peace conference.

All these are propositions the United States would normally veto, given its historic ties to Israel, but the United States is trying not to antagonize members of its Arab coalition against Iraq.

There is also the sense that the Security Council, having punished Iraq for occupying

Kuwait, must take similar action on the issue of Israel's 23-year occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

The United States claims there can be no linkage of the two issues, but this is not the view held by most others sitting on the 15-member Security Council.

In addition, one working paper being circulated among Security Council members calls for the convening of an international peace conference "in an appropriate time," which might be viewed by the United States as vague enough to allow at least an abstention, if not outright support.

Unclear On Final Resolution

Abstaining in a Security Council vote by a permanent member, such as the United States, does not automatically kill the resolution.

A top American Jewish leader said it remained unclear what the final resolution would be, and that Israel's acceptance of a visit by the U.N. secretary-general's personal representative should satisfy Security Council members.

"Our position is that the United States has to put an end to this series of resolutions and can't accept a resolution that calls for a peace conference or Geneva convention or appointment of an ombudsman to the territories, given Israel's acceptance of the visit by (Jean-Claude) Aime," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive director of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Aime's visit, which Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar said he would schedule after the council finished deliberations on the resolutions dealing with Israel, was originally suggested by Israeli officials as an attempt to halt further discussion of the Palestinian-Israeli issue in the council.

In Santiago, Chile, where President Bush was visiting Thursday, White House spokesman Marlin Fitzwater said news reports that the United States would support such a U.N. resolution were "not true."

John Bolton, assistant secretary of state for international organization affairs, said Thursday that the United States opposes not only an international conference, but also a meeting on the Geneva Convention and a proposal to send a U.N. ombudsman to deal with the Palestinians.

No Decision On Veto

The United States is trying to avoid having to veto a resolution that would contain those proposals. But Bolton told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that no decision has been made yet on whether the United States would use its veto to block any of the three proposals.

At a symposium marking the 15th anniversary of the U.N. General Assembly resolution equating Zionism with racism, Bolton said that to agree to an international conference now would be a victory for Iraq's Saddam Hussein and the Palestine Liberation Organization, which have been trying to split up the international alliance against Iraq.

But he said the U.S. alliance partners understand this tactic, particularly Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Bolton stressed that once the Gulf crisis is over, the United States would return to trying to bring about an Arab-Israeli peace.

(JTA correspondent Aliza Marcus at the United Nations contributed to this report.)

SHAMIR DOESN'T THINK ISRAEL WOULD HAVE TO FACE IRAQ ALONE

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Dec. 6 (JTA) -- Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir said Thursday he did not expect that Israel would be "left alone against Iraq" after the Persian Gulf crisis ended, but said the country was "prepared for every eventuality."

He seemed to be toning down Israel's warning earlier in the week that if the United States did not destroy Iraq's military power, Israel would go to war to protect itself.

The prime minister spoke to reporters at Ben-Gurion Airport before departing on a visit to Britain and the United States.

He said he "welcomed" Secretary of State James Baker's assurance, in testimony Wednesday to the Senate, that the United States would respond if Iraq attacked Israel.

Saying he did not think Baker made that statement only to ease Israel's concerns, Shamir said he was curious to hear directly from President Bush about his policies and intentions in the Persian Gulf. Shamir is scheduled to meet Tuesday with Bush at the White House.

The premier spoke before reports were broadcast overseas that the United States was prepared to support a call for an international peace conference on the Israeli-Arab conflict.

The reports were subsequently denied by the White House. But Israeli observers felt there was "some fire" behind the smoke.

The observers noted that Shamir's office pointedly published part of his statement to a group of visiting members of the European Parliament in which the prime minister stressed Israel's implacable opposition to an international conference. He maintained it would be a "hostile tribunal" aimed against the Jewish state.

Pressing For Tough Resolution

Meanwhile, observers said, events unfolding at the U.N. Security Council could affect the atmosphere of the Bush-Shamir talks.

The Third World countries are pressing for a tough resolution on the Oct. 8 Temple Mount riots and the condition of Palestinians in the Israeli administered territories.

Israel is not certain the United States will veto such a resolution, given its need to maintain the coalition against Iraq.

Shamir on the eve of his departure dismissed reports of unfriendly personal relations between himself and Bush, whom he last met a year ago.

In an interview published Thursday in Yediot Achronot, Shamir observed that each of them represented his own country and its policies and interests. He said he hoped their upcoming meeting would build a firm basis for future cooperation.

Shamir indicated in his airport news conference that he would be asking for more American aid for immigrant absorption. He said Bush personally has a record of warm interest and concern for Jewish immigration to Israel.

In the Yediot interview, Shamir insisted the time is not ripe to initiate a new peace process with the Palestinians. Yet at the airport, he said he might have "new ideas" on "how to start" and "how to proceed."

Referring to an apparent escalation of the intifada, Shamir said "violence of any kind will get them nothing and nowhere."

Defense Minister Moshe Arens, meanwhile,

on a visit Thursday to the Ramallah area, where shots fired at a bus the previous night injured three Israeli settlers, vowed that Israel would "respond to fire with fire."

He said the intifada appeared to be resorting to firearms "out of desperation," after pointedly avoiding them throughout the three-year struggle.

The defense minister said the IDF would seize the hillock from which the shots were fired and erect a permanent lookout post there to protect the road to Jerusalem.

FIRST JEW TO LEAVE YEMEN IN DECADES HAS TEARFUL FAMILY REUNION IN ISRAEL

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Dec. 6 (JTA) -- Partially deaf and nearly blind, 87-year-old Yehya ibn Daoud Tsubayri, the first immigrant from Yemen in 38 years, arrived at Ben-Gurion Airport on Wednesday night for a tearful reunion with family members, including his three children whom he had not seen in almost four decades.

Tsubayri came here by way of New York, where he landed shortly before Rosh Hashanah. His departure from Yemen was facilitated by months of quiet diplomacy involving the International Coalition for the Revival of the Jews of Yemen, aided by several key members of Congress and the Republic of Yemen.

Dr. Hayim Tawil, chairman of the coalition, credited "the great hospitality and generosity of the Yemenite government" for "this great achievement."

Tsubayri was once a wealthy man in his native village of Raida, near San'a, the Yemeni capital. In 1949, he sent his children to Israel by way of "Operation Flying Carpet," the airlift in the early 1950s that brought nearly the entire Jewish population of Yemen to Israel.

Tsubayri had planned to join his family in a few months after selling off his property, but ill fortune intervened. Tsubayri sank into poverty, and was twice imprisoned by the Yemeni authorities on charges of spying for Israel.

On the first occasion, he was imprisoned for trying to preserve Jewish traditions among the young. The second time, he was arrested for receiving letters from his family in Israel by way of an American visitor.

Tsubayri went to the family home in Netanya, where his sons, Shalom and David, and his daughter, Shoshana, arranged a reception.

Shoshana, only a year old when she left Yemen, was raised by Ashkenazic foster parents in Israel. She found it hard to understand her father's Yemenite Hebrew dialect.

The family hopes Tsubayri's eyesight can be partially restored by surgery.

Yemenite Jewry is considered the oldest Jewish community in the world, dating back to the kingdom of Solomon and the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE. There are said to be about 1,500 Jews still left in Yemen, scattered among small villages where they are too few to organize a community.

The Coalition for the Revival of the Jews of Yemen has sent three missions to that country since September 1989 to distribute prayer books, religious objects and Torah scrolls. The group has been assisted by Reps. Lee Hamilton (D-Ind.), Benjamin Gilman (R-N.Y.), Stephen Solarz (D-N.Y.) and Mel Levine (D-Cal.).

(JTA intern Andrew Goldsmith in New York contributed to this report.)

JEWISH DOCTOR ASKED TO TREAT BARBIE IN QUANDARY OVER COURSE OF ACTION

By Edwin Eytan

PARIS, Dec. 6 (JTA) -- The Jewish doctor who was asked by the attorney of convicted Nazi Klaus Barbie to treat his client for cancer has not yet responded to the request.

Professor Leon Schwartzberg, one of France's leading oncologists, has been placed in an ethical and moral quandary by lawyer Jacques Verges.

Barbie, the "butcher of Lyon," who is serving a life sentence for crimes against humanity, is said to be suffering for terminal cancer.

Schwartzberg's parents died at Auschwitz.

So far, he has not flatly rejected the plea. But, as he said here Tuesday, he has not been officially summoned by the authorities of St. Joseph's Penitentiary in Lyon, the fortress-like maximum security prison where Barbie is incarcerated.

Moreover, Schwartzberg noted pointedly, "There are excellent oncologists in Lyon who can assure Barbie of the best available treatment."

Verges, who carried out an often anti-Zionist diatribe during the 1987 Barbie trial, is asking for his client's release from prison on grounds that he is a dying man who requires medical treatment.

The situation has caught the attention of Jewish medical and scientific circles in Italy.

Dr. Rita Levi-Montalcini, who shared the 1986 Nobel Prize in medicine and physiology, told the Milan newspaper La Stampa that the matter hinged on whether Schwartzberg was being asked to diagnose Barbie or to treat him.

Examining Different From Treating

"The oncologist is called on exclusively to establish how serious is the physical condition of this cruel Nazi. The moral responsibility to decide on his possible release from prison rests with the judge," she said.

Turin cancer specialist Alberto Cappa agreed that examining a war criminal was different from having to treat him.

"A doctor has the duty to treat a sick person independent of any other consideration," he told La Stampa.

He added, however, that "here we are not dealing with the question of treating someone but of an examination to suit legal requirements.

"Any good oncologist could evaluate Barbie's condition. Therefore, I find it understandable why Leon Schwartzberg refuses to cooperate," Cappa said.

Sources close to the French Ministry of Justice have indicated that Barbie receives the same kind of treatment in prison as other prisoners and, if necessary, medical specialists will be called in.

According to genetics professor Alberto Piazza in Rome, the request to Schwartzberg was deliberately provocative.

If he agrees to do the examination, Barbie stands a good chance of ending his days outside of prison, Piazza said.

If he refuses, then "the lawyer for the butcher of Lyon can say to the world that here is a Jew who 45 years after the end of Nazism still refuses to forgive the crimes of someone who is dying."

(JTA correspondent Ruth E. Gruber in Rome contributed to this report.)

MAURICE PAPON DEMANDS FAST TRIAL TO CLEAR HIMSELF OF WAR CHARGES

By Edwin Eytan

PARIS, Dec. 6 (JTA) -- A former high official of the Vichy regime is demanding a speedy trial to clear himself of charges of "complicity and assistance in committing crimes against humanity."

Maurice Papon, 80, was formally indicted in 1983 on the basis of a private complaint by Nazi-hunters Serge and Beate Klarsfeld. But his trial has been repeatedly postponed.

Papon charges that his accusers are politically motivated and trying "to convince public opinion that all Frenchmen were Nazi collaborators."

Meanwhile, he has brought a libel suit against the left-wing weekly Le Nouvel Observateur for publishing an article last spring which described him as "one of the French accomplices of the Nazi genocide policy."

Papon, who was secretary-general of the department and city of Bordeaux from 1942 to 1944, was cleared of wrongdoing by an investigating committee after the war.

Later, he served in the government of President Charles de Gaulle, became a banker and was finance minister during the regime of President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing.

But Klarsfeld and a number of prominent historians have accused Papon of employing the Bordeaux police and administration on behalf of the Nazis, to round up thousands of Jews. Most were deported to death camps.

Helped The Resistance

On the other hand, Papon has been defended by several influential persons with strong pro-Jewish credentials.

One of them is Father Michel Riquet, canon of Notre Dame cathedral, who was chief chaplain of the anti-Nazi underground resistance organizations in France during the war.

Riquet, who is known as a supporter of Israel and Jewish causes, told the court that Papon actively helped the resistance and saved countless Jewish lives.

He might be reproached for not resigning from the Vichy regime, said Riquet, a grand officer of the Legion of Honor.

But even then it was Maurice Cohen, the chief rabbi of Bordeaux, who begged Papon not to quit so that he could continue helping the local Jewish population, the French priest told the court hearing the libel case.

Maurice Bourges-Maunoury, a former prime minister and one of the founders of the Franco-Israel alliance prior to the 1956 Suez campaign, also testified on Papon's behalf.

Bourges-Maunoury, who headed the anti-Nazi resistance in the Bordeaux region, said Papon actively helped them.

The libel case is expected to end this week and a judgment will be rendered in about two weeks.

Papon's lawyers say they will use his libel action to prove his innocence.

If Le Nouvel Observateur is found guilty, the case could become a precedent for halting judicial action against other accused wartime collaborators.

One of them is Rene Bousquet, the former head of the Vichy police, who was indicted last month for crimes against humanity.