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**SHAMIR SPEAKS OF STRONG U.S. TIES
DESPITE PROBLEMS IN U.N., GULF**

By Aliza Marcus

NEW YORK, Dec. 13 (JTA) -- Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, looking relaxed and pleased at the end of his weeklong visit to the United States, told Jewish leaders Friday he was leaving confident of the strong ties between Israel and the United States despite ongoing problems in the U.N. Security Council and the Persian Gulf.

Shamir also assured the estimated 400 people who gathered at the headquarters of the United Jewish Appeal-Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York that "the areas of agreement are overwhelmingly greater than the points of disagreement" between the two leaders.

His prepared speech took just over 10 minutes to deliver, and it was concerned primarily with the Gulf crisis and his meeting Wednesday with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze in Washington, both areas in which Shamir said he felt secure.

"Shevardnadze told me that on the matter of normal relations between our two states, the matter will be carried out in due course and that there is no real obstacle to that fulfillment," Shamir said. The Soviet Union broke relations with Israel after the 1967 war.

In response to questions about the planned vote in the Security Council next week over a resolution that could include a call for a Middle East peace conference, Shamir stated clearly his opposition toward such a conference.

Not Interested In Imposed Decisions

"Everybody knows our strong position that such a conference wouldn't lead to peace in the area," said Shamir, adding that "it would be in international body that would more or less be like the United Nations or the Security Council. We are not interested in decisions by an international body that would be imposed upon us."

When asked about statements he had made in Israel concerning the need for a "greater Israel," implying annexation of the administered territories, Shamir said this did not preclude negotiations over the status of the territories.

"We are always ready to negotiate with our neighbors and the Palestinian population about the status of the territories of Judea and Samaria and the Gaza," he said.

Shamir faced the most difficulty over questions raised about his Likud party's accommodations with the religious Agudat Yisrael party in order to maintain a majority in the Knesset. Such accommodations included promises of bans on pork, "lewd" advertising and most remaining Shabbat bus runs.

At the same time, he seemed to hedge when asked what was being done about plans for electoral reform, plans which would raise the minimum percentage required to enter the Knesset from 1 percent to upward of 5 percent.

Supporters of electoral reform say such a change would reduce the dependency of major parties on tiny, factional groups such as Agudat Yisrael. But at the same time, it could mean the end of Likud's reign.

NEW ANALYSIS:**SHAMIR HEADS BACK TO ISRAEL
REASSURED BY HIGH-LEVEL TALKS**

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Dec. 13 (JTA) -- Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir left Washington on Thursday having achieved much good will, if not any specific gains. But in both his meetings with President Bush at the White House and with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, the fact that they occurred at all was the most important outcome.

Shevardnadze and Shamir appeared at a joint news conference Wednesday night, further evidence of the improved relations between the Soviet Union and Israel since Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev came to power.

However, Shamir did not get Shevardnadze to grant his request that the Soviet Union restore full diplomatic relations with Israel, which were broken by the Soviets after the 1967 Six-Day War.

"We have consular relations" and "are moving toward" full diplomatic relations, said Shevardnadze. "A process is developing in a normal fashion."

Shevardnadze denied that any preconditions were being set for the restoration of diplomatic relations.

"This process will evolve in a normal manner," he said. "Of course, generally we want normal relations with all countries, and you can draw your conclusions."

Direct Flights Rejected

Shevardnadze also rejected Shamir's request for direct flights between Moscow and Israel to facilitate the emigration of Soviet Jewish immigrants to Israel.

"The Soviet minister told us there are some problems that we have to settle, and he hopes they will be settled in the immediate future," Shamir said.

In both instances, Soviet reluctance to move on the issue of flights is believed to be based on a desire not to offend Arab states.

Shamir indicated that Israel would welcome a Soviet role in the Middle East peace process, something it had long sought to prevent.

In turn, Shevardnadze seemed to be moving away from Soviet insistence on an international conference to deal with the Arab-Israel conflict.

He said that he and Shamir agreed that what is needed is a "serious dialogue." How the dialogue should be conducted could be worked out, Shevardnadze said.

The 75-minute meeting between Shamir and Shevardnadze at Shamir's hotel Wednesday night was the second meeting between the two leaders. They met some two years ago at the United Nations in New York.

Shamir's two-hour meeting Tuesday with Bush did not result in any concrete steps forward, except to provide Israel with a promise that any solution of the Gulf crisis would not be at the expense of Israel.

But the meeting was important because it was the first encounter between the two leaders in over a year, and the first direct contact of

any kind between them since Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on Aug. 2. Since then, Bush has telephoned almost every friendly world leader except for Shamir.

Both Bush and Shamir went out of their way to show that their reported enmity did not exist or at least was being put behind them.

On Thursday, the same ground was covered during a one-hour breakfast meeting between Shamir and Secretary of State James Baker.

"In a good and friendly meeting, the importance of moving forward on the peace process in the aftermath of the Gulf crisis was stressed," said a statement issued by the Israeli Embassy.

The statement said the discussion on the peace process will continue when Dennis Ross, head of the State Department's policy-planning staff, goes to Israel soon. Ross accompanied Baker to the meeting in Shamir's hotel.

"On the Gulf crisis situation, the prime minister reiterated Israel's support for President Bush's policy in the Gulf, and expressed Israel's concerns over the Iraqi threat," the embassy statement said.

WALESA RENOUNCES ANTI-SEMITISM IN MEETING WITH AMERICAN JEWS

By Gabrielle Glaser

WARSAW, Dec. 13 (JTA) -- Three days after he was elected president of Poland, Lech Walesa told visiting American Jews that he denounced resurgent anti-Semitism here and urged Polish citizens to move forward to a "new chapter."

"This is a new chapter in Poland's history," Walesa was quoted as saying at a meeting in Sopot, in northern Poland. "I condemn all forms of anti-Semitism."

He met for 35 minutes Wednesday with Rabbi A. James Rudin, interreligious affairs director of the American Jewish Committee, in the port city of Gdansk.

According to Rudin, Walesa pledged a Poland free of "all forms of anti-Semitism, extreme nationalism and chauvinism."

It was not the first time Walesa had addressed the issue of anti-Semitism with American Jews. In November 1989, he personally denounced anti-Semitism in a meeting with Jewish organizational leaders in New York, saying he did not believe hatred of Jews was historically part of the Polish character.

He had also denied that Poland's primate, Cardinal Jozef Glemp, was anti-Semitic. This followed accusations by Glemp in the summer of 1989 that world Jewry had violated Poland's sovereignty over the issue of the Auschwitz convent.

Walesa had said that as a loyal Catholic he would not publicly denounce the cardinal.

His statements discomfited a number of Jews.

Since Poland overthrew its Communist government 15 months ago, resentment of Jews in this country of 38 million has been growing. It was a sticking point in election campaigns held here in this country where only a maximum of 10,000 Jews, most assimilated, remain in Poland where some 3.5 million lived before the Shoah.

Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, who had been expected to finish second in the first round of balloting on Nov. 25, was soundly defeated by emigre businessman Stanislaw Tyminski, a political and popular unknown.

Mazowiecki, a devout Catholic, was a target of a whispering campaign that his family had

Jewish ancestors.

Even Tyminski, a born Roman Catholic who writes in his autobiography that he has undergone "spiritual transformations" in Peru, was dogged by anti-Semitic charges.

For his part, Walesa seems eager to correct the situation. The Nobel peace laureate, who will be inaugurated later this month, acknowledges that he faces a challenge.

Anti-Semitism A Serious Problem

"Anti-Semitism has been a serious problem here," Walesa told his visitors this time. "We need to build a pluralistic society. We must do this, and we will do it."

The Solidarity leader, a Roman Catholic, also said that extreme nationalism and chauvinism were incompatible with the church. More than 90 percent of Poland's population identifies itself as Catholic.

Right-wing nationalism is on the rise all over Eastern Europe. Slovakia this week is testing Czechoslovakian President Vaclav Havel's leadership powers with threats to dissolve the Czechoslovak union.

A fringe group in Poland, Grunwald, has seen its membership grow in the last year.

For his part, Walesa acknowledged that he had made some remarks both in Poland and during his visit to the United States last year that offended many Jews.

"I've made some mistakes," he said.

Walesa was presented with a collection of Polish Jewish documents from the church and the teachings of Pope John Paul II by Rudin, who came here from Rome after an audience with the pope as a member of an international Jewish delegation.

The rabbi is on a tour of four eastern and central European countries -- Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Austria -- to meet with Christian leaders and "discuss the whole question of anti-Semitism, xenophobia and extremism," he said.

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

U.N. POSTPONES VOTE A THIRD TIME

UNITED NATIONS, Dec. 13 (JTA) -- The Security Council agreed Wednesday evening to again postpone a vote until Monday on a resolution to protect the Palestinians living in the Israeli-administered territories.

The postponement was the third this week, as the 15-member Security Council failed to come to an agreement concerning the exact wording of the resolution.

At issue is a draft resolution calling for an international Middle East peace conference, to be held at an "appropriate time," something the United States would like removed from the text.

Nine of the Council representatives supported the postponement, while China and France, two of the five permanent members, abstained. The sponsors of the resolution -- Colombia, Cuba, Malaysia and Yemen -- voted against the delay.

The delay was reportedly sought to give Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze time to meet Friday with PLO leader Yasir Arafat in Turkey.

The United States is trying to avoid using its veto power in the Security Council for fear of harming its Arab coalition against Iraq's Aug. 2 invasion of Kuwait.

POLL: AMERICANS STILL BACK ISRAEL AS CLOSE FRIEND OF UNITED STATES

By Aliza Marcus

NEW YORK, Dec. 13 (JTA) -- Although Israel's status may seem to have declined in the wake of the Gulf crisis and U.S. accommodations to its new Arab allies, a new poll shows that 70 percent of Americans continue to view Israel as a close ally or friend of the United States.

The poll, released Wednesday by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, also found that 54 percent of those polled support war with Iraq to protect Israel from a possible Iraqi attack, and more than one-third said Israel has become more important to U.S. strategic interests.

The low profile Israel has kept since the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on Aug. 2 has not hurt Israel's standing, and the poll results show that Israel remains an important military and strategic ally, said Abraham Foxman, national director of ADL.

"There is an appreciation in the United States that a low profile doesn't mean that Israel isn't important, or isn't a friend," said Foxman.

The poll also found that the majority of American people are firmly behind President Bush's decisions concerning Iraq and Kuwait.

Eighty-eight percent of those polled approve of the economic blockade of Iraq, while 75 percent support the initial decision to send troops to the Persian Gulf.

But if the Jan. 15 deadline for Iraq to leave Kuwait set by the U.N. Security Council passes without any change in Iraq's position, 51 percent believe the deadline should be extended, while 42 percent favor an immediate declaration of war.

Support For War If No Retreat

Overall, 70 percent of Americans polled support the United States going to war at some point if Iraq refuses to retreat from Kuwait, while 23 percent do not.

Almost two-thirds of the people think the objective of preventing Iraq from building nuclear arms is sufficient for going to war, while 64 percent think the objective should be to establish the principle that aggression by one country against another will not be tolerated.

Foxman believes it is significant that the poll found that 72 percent were skeptical over the chances for a peaceful solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the next two years because of the complexities of the situation.

"Americans traditionally believe that every problem has a solution, that there's a quick fix to everything," he said. "For the first time here we see that Americans are skeptical of a chance for peace because of the complexities, rather than because of the unwillingness of one side or the other to come to a solution," Foxman said.

In general, the American public tends to side with Israel instead of the Arab countries in the Middle East, the poll found. Forty-eight percent side with Israel over the Arab nations, while 20 percent side with the Arabs over Israel.

The poll also found that Americans sympathize more with Israel than with the Palestinians living on the West Bank and Gaza Strip by a margin of 38-29 percent.

The poll was conducted for the ADL by Marttila & Kiley Inc. in Boston. They polled 606 registered voters across the country between Dec. 4 and 6. The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus 4 percent.

HUSSEIN SAID TO BE FOND OF JEWS WHO REMAIN IN IRAQ

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Dec. 13 (JTA) -- President Saddam Hussein of Iraq, a sworn enemy of Israel and currently an arch-villain to most of the world because of his invasion of Kuwait, is fond of the remaining handful of Jews in his country, according to the chairman of the Institute for Babylonian Jewish Heritage, Mordechai Ben-Porat.

Ben-Porat, an independent Knesset member formerly of the Labor Party, has been an activist on behalf of the Iraqi Jewish community in Israel.

Discussing the condition of Jews still in Iraq, Ben-Porat said their numbers are indeed minuscule -- 130 Jews live in Baghdad, the capital, and there is one elderly Jewish woman in Basra, an oil port on the Persian Gulf.

One remaining Jew in Baghdad told The New York Times, in an interview published Thursday, that he thinks that perhaps 1,000 Jews still remain in Iraq. The country's population is 17.6 million.

Ben-Porat said that earlier this year, several dozen passports were issued to Baghdadi Jews, and about 20 took the opportunity to leave the country and settle in Europe.

Hussein personally intervened to expedite their passports after the Jews complained of bureaucratic delays, Ben-Porat said.

Hussein's mother has been quoted as saying that Baghdadi Jews were responsible for the safe, healthy delivery of the infant Saddam.

She was sick during pregnancy, and her parents sent her to the capital for treatment, where she resided with a Jewish family for two months.

Subsequently, Hussein's stepfather had a successful business partnership with a Baghdadi Jew.

A report from Baghdad in Thursday's Times quoted an interview with 65-year-old Tawfik Sofair, caretaker of Synagogue Mair Abraham Toag, the last Jewish house of worship in Iraq.

Sofair, who said his family has lived in Baghdad for 350 years, said that unlike most of his predecessors, Hussein allows Iraqi Jews and Christians to worship without harassment in that Moslem nation.

"Saddam has given Jews liberty to do business again, to become doctors, engineers. There is no problem for Jews in Iraq," the Times quoted Sofair as saying.

SOVIET JEWS NOT WARMLY WELCOMED

By David Kantor

BONN, Dec. 13 (JTA) -- Jewish immigrants from the Soviet Union who are arriving daily in what was formerly East Germany do not always get a warm reception, according to Jewish activists here.

In Leipzig, Dresden, Rostock and other cities and towns in eastern Germany, the local authorities complain of the burden of providing housing and municipal services for people who, they say, have little or no connection with Germany.

The authorities in some towns have appealed to the Jewish community in Berlin to take responsibility for the newcomers.

Jewish community leaders, meanwhile, continue to pressure the Bonn government to admit more Soviet Jews. About 10,000 are reported to have applied for entry visas.

CANADA'S HIGH COURT UPHOLDS VALIDITY OF ANTI-HATE LAW

By Bram D. Eisenthal

OTTAWA, Dec. 13 (JTA) -- The Canadian Supreme Court upheld the validity of the country's anti-hate laws Thursday.

In their landmark 4-3 decision, the justices found that although the statute may technically violate the constitution's freedom of expression clause, there should be a "reasonable limit" on freedom of speech in a just society.

The federal anti-hate law is reasonably and demonstrably justified and therefore will be allowed to stand "in the interests" of a free and democratic society, Canada's highest tribunal decided.

The Canadian Jewish Congress and the provinces of Alberta, Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba and New Brunswick had argued that the law is essential in a multicultural society.

The League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith Canada applauded the decision but, according to its counsel, David Matas, it remains "convinced that the present law is not strong enough."

Specifically, the League said, Holocaust denial should be covered under the Criminal Code and certain available defenses should be removed.

The League, along with Inter Amicus, the Women's Legal Education and Action Fund and the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, were interveners in two cases where the anti-hate law was invoked.

The validity of the legislation had been challenged before the court by former Eckville, Alberta, high-school teacher Jim Keegstra and by Donald Andrews and Robert Smith of the white supremacist Nationalist Party.

Keegstra was convicted in 1983 of promoting hatred of Jews in the social studies classes he taught.

Andrews and Smith were convicted under the same section of the Criminal Code for publishing the National Reporter, a limited circulation publication which claimed that non-whites were "inferior, unclean and responsible for violent crime."

Jack Silverstone, CJC national executive director and general counsel, said the decision affirmed the legislation as "an important tool in the ongoing battle against racism and hatred."

FRENCH JEWS POSTPONE CONFERENCE, FEAR FURY OF JEWISH EXTREMISTS

PARIS, Dec. 13 (JTA) -- A conference of French-speaking Jewish scholars scheduled for this weekend, which was to have included a lecture on the Palestinians, has been postponed indefinitely for fear of violence from Jewish extremists.

The conference was the 31st in the series organized by the French Section of the World Jewish Congress and the Foundation of French Judaism headed by David de Rothschild.

It was to be held Dec. 15 to 17 on the general theme of "Settlements and Exiles." Its traditional site is the Jewish Cultural Center in Paris, known as the Rashi Center.

Professor Bernard Kanovitch, the center's chairman, said the organizing committee requested "special security arrangements to be provided for one lecture liable to rock the boat, i.e., the one on the Palestinians."

It was to be delivered by Alain Gresh, a Jewish historian well known for his pro-Palestini-

an sentiments, at a session devoted to Armenian and Palestinian history.

"We answered that we were unable to provide 'special arrangements' and asked the committee to hold this particular lecture elsewhere," Kanovitch said.

"All I know is that the committee then decided to cancel the conference altogether," he added.

But Serge Cwaigenbaum, secretary-general of the French Section of the WJC, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that the conference, including the session on Palestine, will be rescheduled when a different location is found.

While members of the organizing committee declined to comment, rumors have it that the militant right-wing Zionist youth group Betar had threatened to disrupt the lecture on the Palestinians.

Professor Lilly Sher, a Jewish historian, remarked to the JTA that she was "shocked and sickened" by the attitude of some members of the Jewish community, such as Betar.

"We have fought against many enemies. Will we now have to confront Jewish fascism?" Sher asked.

HAMMER REMEMBERED AT BANQUET PLANNED FOR HIS BAR MITZVAH

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES, Dec. 13 (JTA) -- In one of the more unusual events in the colorful history of American Jewish testimonial banquets, a posthumous Bar Mitzvah was held Tuesday evening for Dr. Armand Hammer, the billionaire oil tycoon, art collector, philanthropist and free-lance diplomat who died Monday in Los Angeles at the age of 92.

The dinner had been planned well before his short, fatal illness, and organizers decided to go through with the event as a memorial tribute to Hammer.

About 800 people attended the dinner, including delegations from the Jerusalem College of Technology in Israel and the Pacific Jewish Center, an Orthodox synagogue in Los Angeles. The dinner's proceeds of several hundred thousand dollars will benefit the two institutions.

The Bar Mitzvah ceremony for Hammer, who was raised in a non-religious home, was to have marked his identification with the Jewish people.

Hammer was also to have lit the first night's Chanukah candle. His place was taken by his grandson, Michael Hammer, a vice president of Occidental Petroleum Corp., the company his grandfather had built into the 14th-largest industrial concern in the United States.

Hammer was also to have received, for the first time, a Hebrew name, and Zvi Weinberger, head of the Jerusalem College of Technology, announced it as Avraham Yehuda Maccabee.

The last part of the name was linked to the interpretation of Maccabee, which means "hammer."

In the main talk of the evening, Guilford Glazer, a longtime friend and associate of Hammer, alluded to Hammer's lifelong efforts for detente between the United States and the Soviet Union. "The Russians will miss him as much as we do," he said.

Referring to Hammer's phenomenal success in turning failing companies into highly profitable ones, Glazer said that "even now, Dr. Hammer is helping God to reorganize and expand."