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BAKER DISCUSSES ARAB-ISRAELI ISSUE WITH IRAQI, BUT MAKES NO CONCESSIONS

JTA Staff Report

GENEVA, Jan. 9 (JTA) -- Fears that the United States might make concessions on the Arab-Israeli peace process in exchange for an Iraqi pullout from Kuwait evaporated after U.S. Secretary of State James Baker emerged Wednesday from six hours of talks here with his Iraqi counterpart.

Baker said he made clear to Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz that the United States would not agree to any "specific steps" in the Arab-Israeli conflict as a condition for Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait.

The secretary spoke at a news conference here after the marathon meeting with Aziz and his aides, which President Bush later described in Washington as a "total stiff-arm" from Iraq.

"Rewarding Iraq's aggression with a link to the Arab-Israeli peace process would really send a terrible signal not only to continuing peacemakers in the region but also to other would-be aggressors," said Baker.

He said his talks with the Iraqis were conducted in a "somber mood."

"Regretfully, I heard nothing that suggests to me any Iraqi flexibility," Baker said.

He reported that Aziz refused to take back to Baghdad a letter from President Bush to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein.

In Washington, Bush rejected any linkage of the Israeli-Palestinian issue with an Iraqi withdrawal of forces. "The argument with Saddam is about Kuwait," Bush said during a 45-minute news conference at the White House.

He said that while he was pessimistic about an Iraqi withdrawal, he had not "given up on a peaceful outcome."

Renews Threat To Attack Israel

Aziz, at a news conference of his own in Geneva, said Iraq would attack Israel if the United States attacked Iraq.

Questioned about that threat, Bush said, "We are prepared to do what we need to do." He said that not only the United States but others would respond if a "friend in the area was wantonly attacked."

He did not specify what the United States would do, but warned Saddam Hussein to "think long and hard before he started a war."

In Israel, there were conflicting reactions to the apparent failure of the Baker-Aziz meeting to find a peaceful settlement of the Gulf crisis.

Defense Minister Moshe Arens, who watched Baker's news conference, said, "War is nearer."

Foreign Minister David Levy, who appeared on television earlier Wednesday evening, predicted that further efforts would be made to reach a peaceful solution before the Jan. 15 U.N. deadline for Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait.

There had been "no surprises and no slamming of the door," Levy observed in a television interview.

In Paris, President Francois Mitterrand said if Iraq did not comply with the Jan. 15 deadline, "an armed conflict would become almost certain."

Contrary to earlier indications, France may

not move ahead with its own peace initiative. Mitterrand said that while there was no reason in principle why France should not send an emissary to Baghdad, "this, in my opinion, wouldn't be useful now."

But he made the comment earlier in the day, when it appeared Baker and Aziz were making progress toward a settlement.

Only Hope Is A U.N. Mission

Mitterrand said he understands that the United States feels an international conference to settle the Arab-Israeli conflict might look like a concession to Saddam Hussein.

But the French president made clear that he still favors that approach and had been urging an international conference since 1983.

Baker said at his news conference that he told Aziz that Iraq must either "comply with the will of the international community and withdraw peacefully from Kuwait or be expelled by force."

But the secretary of state has stressed that the United States and its international partners have not decided on the use of force and want a peaceful solution. He urged Iraq not to add another "miscalculation" to the many it has made since it invaded Kuwait, because, he said, Iraq cannot win a military confrontation.

Baker indicated that the only hope for a peaceful outcome might come from U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar, since Iraq is being asked to abide by 12 Security Council resolutions passed in the last five months.

But the "time for talk is running out," Baker warned.

At the United Nations, a spokesman for Perez de Cuellar said the secretary-general was contemplating a diplomatic mission of his own.

During the talks in Geneva, Aziz brought up the Arab-Israeli conflict, and there was a long discussion of it, Baker reported. He said he described U.S. efforts to bring about a solution, including the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty, as well as his own efforts in the region since becoming secretary of state.

Baker said he repeatedly stressed that the Arab-Israeli peace process is separate from the Persian Gulf crisis.

"I did make the point that I don't think that many people believe that Iraq invaded Kuwait in order to help the Palestinians," Baker said. "And if it did," he added, "it was another miscalculation, because it hasn't helped the Palestinians."

Jewish Groups Supportive

Baker added that "most people realize that Iraq is trying to use the Palestinian issue to shield its aggression against Kuwait."

Aziz said at his news conference, which followed Baker's, that "if the American administration changes its position and works with us and with the other parties concerned in the region to bring about peace -- a comprehensive, lasting peace -- we would be very glad, and very enthusiastic, to participate in that effort."

Aziz said he "explained that the Palestinian question is a question of national security here, that if the Palestinian question is not resolved, we do not feel secure in our country."

"Israel attacked Iraq in 1981, and we were expecting an Israel attack on Iraq" in March and April 1990, Aziz said.

Asked if Iraq would attack Israel if attacked by the United States, Aziz said, "Yes, absolutely yes." But he said no attack on Israel would occur if there were no U.S. attack on Iraq.

In New York, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations issued a statement Wednesday supporting the Bush administration's policy in the Gulf crisis and applauding its "refusal to accept any linkage of the occupation of Kuwait with the Palestinian issue."

"We trust that this U.S. policy will not be undermined by the attempts of other nations to appease Saddam Hussein or in any way to reward his aggression," said the conference, which represents 50 Jewish religious and secular groups in the United States.

(Contributing to this report were JTA correspondents Tamar Levy in Geneva, David Friedman and Howard Rosenberg in Washington, David Landau in Jerusalem and Hugh Orgel in Tel Aviv.)

VISITORS TO ISRAEL STILL ARRIVING, THOUGH OTHERS LEAVING IN DROVES

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Jan. 9 (JTA) -- The flood of foreigners leaving Israel is being balanced in part by arriving groups of American Jews, determined to display their solidarity with Israel even though it could become the target of Iraqi missiles should war break out in the Persian Gulf.

Although many of the visitors will be gone before the Jan. 15 U.N. deadline for Iraq to withdraw from Kuwait or face the possibility of war, others are here for relatively long stays.

They include 100 Jewish senior citizens who arrived Tuesday on a three-month B'nai B'rith volunteer program in Netanya and a 270-member mission sponsored by the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago. It will join a 250-member group from Atlanta already here.

Smaller missions from the Federation of Jewish Agencies of Greater Philadelphia and the Midwest Region of the United Jewish Appeal were due to arrive by the end of the week.

Other Jewish groups with missions in progress include the Association of Reform Zionists of America, the National Council of Jewish Women and the Zionist Organization of America, according to the National Committee for Tourism to Israel in New York.

Meanwhile, the wave of departures appears to have crested. The lounge at Ben-Gurion Airport where travelers wait for outgoing flights was less crowded Wednesday than earlier in the week. And the lines at the checkout counters were shorter.

Airport officials reported 7,385 departures on Sunday and 4,736 on Monday. But those figures were lower than on the corresponding dates a year ago, when the numbers were 8,245 and 7,282 passengers respectively.

The explanation is that tourism is sharply down, so there are fewer foreigners to leave.

The rush to get out of the country seems to have been triggered less by war fears than by the decision of foreign air carriers to suspend or curtail service to Tel Aviv and other Middle East destinations because of soaring insurance rates.

Transport Minister Moshe Katsav has urged foreign governments to try to persuade their national air carriers to resume normal service to Israel. So far, he has had little success.

The number of airlines no longer flying here reached eight Wednesday, when Spain's Iberia Airlines and Turkish Airlines announced their service would be suspended. Four other carriers have reduced the number of weekly flights.

They include British Airways, which cut its flights from six to four a week, and Dan-Air, a British charter service that suspended flights until the end of February, after reducing them last week from four to two.

Coping With War Anxiety

Both companies cited reduced demand and higher insurance rates. Had Dan-Air continued to fly to Israel, it would have had to charge its passengers a \$285 premium on each ticket to cover the insurance, an airline spokesman said.

El Al, Israel's national airline, said it would accept any passengers stranded by another airline.

The foreign residents already out of the country include students at the U.S. Embassy-sponsored International School at Kfar Shmarayhu, north of Tel Aviv.

The school has been closed for the duration of the crisis. Its student body included the children of American and other foreign diplomats and embassy personnel stationed in Israel.

Also gone are foreign athletes who played on Israeli basketball and soccer teams. Several international tournaments scheduled to have been played in Israel have been canceled or postponed.

Meanwhile, Israel Radio and Television have been giving the public free advice from psychologists and psychiatrists on how to cope with anxiety brought on by the war fever.

Israelis are being told not to bottle up but to verbalize their fears and to try to distract themselves with work or hobbies. Said one expert: "It's normal to be worried but not to panic."

PALESTINIAN JOURNALIST PREDICTS ARAB-ISRAELI WAR

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, Jan. 9 (JTA) -- A prominent Palestinian nationalist has predicted a major Arab-Israeli war after the Persian Gulf crisis is settled.

Hannah Siniora, editor of the East Jerusalem Arabic daily Al-Fajr, maintained that "the real problem is that after the crisis in the Gulf, there will be another one much more serious which is already ripening."

"I mean that there will explode a war between the Arab nations and Israel," he told Il Messaggero in an interview published here Tuesday, a day before U.S.-Iraqi talks in Geneva.

According to Siniora, the Arab countries "lined up against Iraq will form a coalition against the common Jewish enemy. We believe in Arab unity. It is the dream of every Palestinian."

He added that the Palestinians do not seek Israel's destruction but only a "political compromise we called 'land-for-peace.' Unfortunately it does not depend upon us to reach this," he said.

Siniora blamed the failure to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on the "obtuseness" of Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir and the growing strength of fundamentalism "among Moslems, Jews, Christians."

He expressed concern that Israel would take advantage of a Persian Gulf war to change the demographic makeup of the West Bank and Gaza Strip by installing hundreds of thousands of Soviet Jewish immigrants and transferring large numbers of Palestinians to Jordan.

GERMANY SAYS IT WON'T IMPOSE QUOTAS ON SOVIET JEWS SEEKING TO IMMIGRATE

By David Kantor

BONN, Jan. 9 (JTA) -- Chancellor Helmut Kohl and the prime ministers of the 16 German states agreed here Wednesday that the states would share the burden of receiving and absorbing Jewish refugees from the Soviet Union, who are arriving at the rate of 100 to 200 a day.

The federal government in Bonn will settle the legal status of Soviet Jews already in the country, and no quotas will be imposed on the future influx.

A government spokesman said the decision was unanimous but did not specify how the absorption burden would be shared between the states and the federal authorities.

Other sources said that, for all practical purposes, the absorption of immigrants is a matter for the states. The federal government's contribution will be mainly to help the immigrants get entry documents and to settle their legal status once they arrive.

The decision was a significant concession to the German Jewish community, which has been lobbying vigorously for free entry for Soviet Jews. The community hopes to strengthen its ranks with the new arrivals and reopen old Jewish centers in what until recently was East Germany.

Virtually all Soviet emigres arrive in what had been East Berlin. An office was established there last year by the East German government to offer the immigrants legal advice and direct them to agencies providing food and temporary housing.

Since unification however, the municipality of Berlin, which is also a state itself, has complained that it lacks the resources to keep pace with the influx.

It is demanding an equitable arrangement that would require other states to share the absorption burden, based on their wealth, income, population and available housing.

Foreign Ministry sources said some 15,000 Soviet Jews have applied for entry visas at German consulates in Moscow and Leningrad. Most have been coming as tourists and simply overstaying the six-week period allowed holders of Soviet passports. No Jew who has settled in Germany has been expelled.

SHARON'S REQUEST FOR FOREIGN WORKERS BRINGS REBUKE FROM DEPUTY MINISTER

By Charles Hoffman

JERUSALEM, Jan. 9 (JTA) -- Housing Minister Ariel Sharon's call to bring in construction workers from abroad to meet the housing shortage has snowballed into a minor coalition crisis.

The ministerial Aliyah Cabinet, which is headed by Sharon, approved a recommendation to allow building firms to import skilled workers from abroad. Sharon said that there is a shortage now of 10,000 building workers, and that no progress could be made on the mass housing program for immigrants without importing some workers.

Deputy Labor and Social Affairs Minister Menachem Porush objected to the decision of the Aliyah Cabinet, saying that this should not be done "at a time when there are 110,000 unemployed Israelis, and Soviet immigrants are coming in every day." The Histadrut trade union federation also expressed opposition to the plan.

In response, Sharon said on Monday that if Porush is opposed to bringing in workers from

abroad, then he should agree to mobilize 10,000 yeshiva students for emergency work on construction sites. Porush is a leader of the Orthodox Agudat Yisrael party, which acts as the patron of the traditionalist yeshivot.

Porush was offended by Sharon's proposal, saying that it indicated that Sharon was seeking to break up the government coalition. Porush called on Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir to force Sharon to retract his proposal.

Meanwhile, the heads of the hesder yeshivot, which combine Torah study with military service, said Tuesday that they are willing to allow their students to work part time on construction sites.

In contrast to the hesder yeshivot, the students of the traditionalist yeshivot are exempt from military duty or any other kind of alternative national service.

A spokesman for the construction industry said Israel needs to double the number of housing starts this year, from 50,000 to 100,000.

He said that even if more veteran Israelis and immigrants join the building trades, which they have been doing, doubling housing starts cannot be accomplished "without importing several thousand foreign workers to train local people in certain skills."

The number of Soviet immigrants is expected to drop this month from 35,000 to between 20,000 and 25,000. During the first week of January, 2,975 Soviet immigrants arrived. Late last month, similar numbers were arriving in 24 hours.

A spokesman for the Jewish Agency said that for administrative reasons in the Soviet Union, more newcomers arrive at the end of the month than the beginning. He added that a general drop-off is expected this month because the Soviet emigration authority, OVIR, is behind in processing the huge volume of exit applications.

He also said that some prospective immigrants may be worried about coming before Jan. 15, when the United Nations ultimatum to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein expires.

HIGH-TECH CENTER FOR EMIGRES LAUNCHED

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Jan. 9 (JTA) -- Soviet Jewish scientists have launched a project in the Negev development town of Ofakim aimed at creating jobs for newly arrived colleagues with degrees in science or engineering.

A team of 12 senior scientists, all recent immigrants, gathered Tuesday in Ofakim to inaugurate the Technology Center for New Immigrant Scientists. They are its first employees.

The center is dedicated to the research and development of high-tech products that could become the basis of new manufacturing industries employing immigrant scientists and technicians who cannot now find jobs in the private sector.

The center was set up by the Jewish Agency for Israel in conjunction with the Ministry of Construction and Housing and the Labor Ministry's Center for Absorption of Scientists.

The Jewish Agency's Department of Renewal and Development is financing the first phase of the project, which is part of a nationwide plan for economic development.

It hopes to develop such products as liquid ice, bearings for motors, batteries and exact measurement instruments that, it is hoped, will encourage entrepreneurs to open new plants or expand existing ones, thereby creating more job opportunities.

**MASSACHUSETTS GETS NEW LAWS
ON HATE CRIMES, KOSHER LABELING**

By Bette Keva
The Jewish Advocate

BOSTON, Jan. 9 (JTA) -- Two unrelated issues of serious concern to Jews were addressed by outgoing Massachusetts Gov. Michael Dukakis before he left office last week.

Among his last official acts, the governor, who was the 1988 Democratic presidential candidate, signed into law on Dec. 28 the Hate Crimes Reporting Act, which will require law enforcement agencies in the state to keep detailed records of bias-related crimes.

On his final day of office, Jan. 2, he signed a consumer protection bill specifically aimed at protecting consumers of kosher foods and products by tightening regulations on their labeling, display and sale.

Massachusetts was, in 1882, the first state in the Union to adopt laws protecting the kosher consumer. But the legislation had not been revised since 1929.

One of the provisions of the new law increases the fines for mislabeling or misrepresenting non-kosher foods to between \$500 and \$2,000. Previously fines had ranged from \$10 to \$100.

The Hate Crimes Reporting Act, which goes into effect 90 days after its signing, provides the police and district attorneys with another tool to fight crimes of hate and prejudice in Massachusetts.

In addition to having two of the strongest anti-hate statutes in the country, the Commonwealth will now have data-gathering requirements that could advance efforts to eliminate such crimes.

"It will give us a much better idea of where they are happening in the state, how severe they are, which groups are being targeted most frequently and which communities are hit most often," said Sally Greenberg, civil rights counsel for the New England region of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

Rise In Extremist Activity

The bill requires police officers investigating criminal acts motivated by bias or bigotry based on race, religion, disability or sexual orientation to fill out a form describing the incident.

The forms will be sent to the Crime Reporting Unit of the Department of Public Safety, where the information will be compiled and analyzed in an annual report.

"Right now, we have no statistics," said Greenberg, "aside from what specific groups and some police units gather. This bill will be very useful. It brings a consciousness to hate crimes. It's a data-collection device to give us much more information."

Preliminary statistics for 1990 indicate that hate crimes in Massachusetts did not increase by the staggering 1989 rise of 171 percent over 1988.

However, 1990 brought Holocaust revisionists and Ku Klux Klansmen into the limelight more often than in the recent past, observed Greenberg, who views this as an indication of extremist activity.

"The Organization of New England Revisionists meets in Burlington, Mass., regularly, and Tom Herman, a Klansman and former policeman, have been active this year. These are trends," she said.

Although ADL is still compiling figures for

1990, Greenberg believes that the numbers of incidents have increased from 1989.

The kosher food bill was sponsored by State Rep. John Businger and Rabbi Rachmiel Liberman, executive director of the Lubavitch-Jewish Educational Center in Brookline.

The law prohibits fraud and deception in stores and restaurants with respect to labeling and selling kosher foods and products.

For example, foods labeled "kosher-style" or "Jewish-style" will have to reveal in large type that the product is "non-kosher." The law mandates more stringent requirements for advertising and labeling "kosher for Passover" foods.

The state Attorney General's Office will be responsible for enforcing the legislation.

**HEAD OF RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH
TO MAKE FIRST-EVER VISIT TO ISRAEL**
By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, Jan. 9 (JTA) -- The head of the Russian Orthodox Church will fly from Moscow to Israel next week for a weeklong visit to the Jewish state, the first by a Russian Orthodox patriarch since Israel's creation in 1948.

It will also be the first pilgrimage abroad for Russian Orthodox Patriarch Aleksy II since he was named head of the church last fall.

The trip is "further indication of improved Soviet-Israel relations," according to Rabbi Arthur Schneier, president of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, an ecumenical organization of American business and religious leaders whose goal is to promote religious freedom around the world.

Schneier, who is also senior rabbi at Manhattan's Park East Synagogue, met with Aleksy II recently during a 12-day visit to Moscow and Kiev. They discussed new opportunities for religious expression in the Soviet Union made possible by a law on freedom of conscience enacted in November.

"The legislation not only protects freedom of worship but also gives churches and synagogues the right to carry out religious education, charity and social welfare projects," Schneier said.

"These are particularly important during the current period of food shortages and economic hardship."

The patriarch, leader of approximately 50 million Russian Orthodox Christians in the Russian, Estonian and Ukrainian republics, will fly to Israel aboard a chartered Aeroflot plane, accompanied by 30 pilgrims.

'Spirit Of Tolerance' Must Prevail

He will meet in Israel with Christian, Jewish and Moslem religious leaders, Schneier said. He also will meet with high-level Israeli political leaders, possibly including President Chaim Herzog and Religious Affairs Minister Avner Shaki.

While meeting with Schneier in the Soviet Union, the patriarch spoke of "the urgency of measures to end ethnic strife" and condemned chauvinism and anti-Semitism, which seek to divide the community, according to Schneier.

The understanding that the patriarch has of Judaism and the Jewish people is extremely important, Schneier said, because the Russian Orthodox Church can play "a very significant role in restraining some of the extreme nationalist forces which are spewing anti-Semitism."

"I was deeply gratified to hear (Aleksy II) tell me that the 'ecumenical spirit of tolerance' must prevail," he said.