

VOL. 69 - 74th YEAR**TUESDAY, MARCH 19, 1991****NO. 54****REMARK ON ISRAELI TALKS WITH SYRIA
DRAWS FIRE FROM CABINET HARD-LINERS****By David Landau**

JERUSALEM, March 18 (JTA) -- An Israeli Cabinet minister's assertion that Israel is ready to enter negotiations with Syria on its territorial claims has triggered sharp protests among hard-line members of the governing coalition.

The government vigorously denied any change of policy with respect to the Golan Heights after Health Minister Ehud Olmert, a politically moderate member of the Likud bloc, told a pro-Israel audience in Washington on Sunday that Israel was prepared to negotiate with Syria on "all issues," including territory.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir said Olmert merely meant that the Syrians could raise their territorial demands in the course of negotiations. But he said that as far as Israel is concerned, the Golan is "not a subject for territorial negotiation."

Olmert gave the same interpretation Monday in media interviews in Washington.

Israel captured the Golan Heights from Syria in 1967 and formally annexed it in 1980.

Shamir made his comments on television after fielding questions about Olmert's statements at a hearing of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

But the uproar was a preview of the political explosion that could rock Israel if it ever entertained the idea of territorial compromise for peace with its neighbors.

Olmert spoke at the 32nd annual policy conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the main Israel lobby in Washington.

Discussing the situation in the aftermath of the Persian Gulf war, he told the 2,000 delegates that Israel would waste no time seeking peace with its Arab neighbors and is prepared to negotiate with Syria.

"We are ready to negotiate all the issues, all of the claims, all of the demands, including the territorial demands of the Syrians" as well as Israeli demands, he said.

Tehiya Threatens To Pull Out

Housing Minister Ariel Sharon, a Likud hard-liner, told the Knesset on Monday that the best answer to speculation about the future of the Golan Heights is more intensified building of Jewish settlements there.

Knesset member Geula Cohen, whose Tehiya party favors annexation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, called Olmert's statement "stupid and damaging." She threatened her three-seat party would quit the government unless Shamir put matters right.

The chief of staff of the Prime Minister's Office, Yossi Ahimeir, promptly telephoned the local council of Katzrin, the largest Jewish settlement in the Golan, to assure it that Shamir's position is unchanged.

The annexation 10 years ago remains the formal, unswerving position of the government, he said.

Eli Malka, chairman of the Golan Settlement Council, said he and his colleagues were satisfied by Ahimeir's call. He attacked Olmert for making

ill-advised, "irresponsible and immoral" statements and urged him to stick to his own department in the future.

But the government's speedy reassertion of its policy of no concessions on the Golan was somewhat deflated by Interior Minister Arye Deri of Shas, the largest religious party in Shamir's coalition.

He observed that like it or not, the precedent of land-for-peace was established when Israel withdrew from Sinai after signing a peace treaty with Egypt.

Shimon Peres, leader of the opposition Labor Party, did not comment on the Golan Heights.

But he said the "two-track" approach to the peace process advocated by Shamir to the United States led nowhere on either track. It calls for parallel talks between Israel and the Arab states and Israel and the Palestinians.

On the Palestinian track, there is nobody to whom the prime minister is prepared to talk, Peres said. And on the Arab states track, there is "nothing he is prepared to talk about."

The Laborite commented after Shamir told the Knesset panel that the Palestinian leaders who met with U.S. Secretary of State James Baker in Jerusalem last week were not people Israel would talk to.

According to Shamir, all of them are officials of the Palestine Liberation Organization, with whom Israel would never negotiate. He demanded that the Palestinians seek "other leaders" to represent them.

**WIESEL URGES BUSH NOT TO USE PRESSURE
ON ISRAEL AS HE SEEKS A MIDEAST PEACE****By David Friedman**

WASHINGTON, March 18 (JTA) -- President Bush was urged Monday by Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel to use persuasion, not pressure, on Israel as he seeks to bring about peace in the Middle East.

"We are confident that persuasion rather than pressure, trust rather than suspicion will continue to govern your relationship with Jerusalem," said Wiesel, a survivor of the Holocaust who writes and teaches about it.

Wiesel spoke at a ceremony in the White House Oval office in which he presented Bush with the humanitarian award of the Elie Wiesel Foundation for Humanity. Wiesel created the foundation after he won the 1986 Nobel Prize for peace, in order to promote human rights and peace around the world.

The award was a replica of the old-time charity box, or pushke, that once was in almost every Jewish home.

Wiesel also gave the president a pen, saying, "I hope you will sign the peace agreement between Israel and the Arab states with this pen."

The president replied, "Well, we're going to try."

Responding to reporters at the ceremony, Bush warned against missing the opportunity that now exists for progress toward peace.

"I think the longer one waits to take any initiative, the danger is that things will go back to the status quo," he said.

Before the ceremony, the president met for

45 minutes with Secretary of State James Baker, who reported on his 10-day trip to the Middle East and the Soviet Union. While Bush is expected to go the Middle East himself next month, he said Monday that the trip was not set yet.

Baker found everywhere "a recognition that we ought to go forward" to a solution of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Palestinian question, Bush said.

"I think the climate for fulfilling some of those hopes is better now than it's ever been," he said. "We're not going to miss this opportunity."

'Listen To Israel's Fears'

After the ceremony, Wiesel told reporters Bush should "listen to Israel's fears just as Israel should listen to the president's hopes."

The Nobel laureate said he had tried to make Bush understand the personal bond Jews have with Israel.

"Mr. President, I, a refugee from Eastern Europe, am now a proud and loyal citizen of the United States," he told Bush. "But spiritually I claim Israel's destiny as my own."

"I do not live in Israel. And yet I cannot imagine living without Israel," he said.

The only previous recipient of the award was Danielle Mitterrand, wife of French President Francois Mitterrand, who was honored for her work with children in the Third World.

Wiesel told reporters that he had planned to present the award to Bush 10 months ago, but scheduling difficulties and then the Persian Gulf War intervened. He said he particularly wanted to honor Bush for his efforts on behalf of the emigration of Ethiopian Jews.

As vice president, Bush was reportedly instrumental in facilitating the Operation Moses airlifts that brought thousands of Ethiopian Jews to Israel by way of the Sudan.

At Monday's ceremony, Wiesel also praised Bush for his "moral courage and unshakable resolve" in leading the international coalition against Saddam Hussein's aggression.

Wiesel said that because of Bush's action, "small nations feel more secure" and "the last decade of the 20th century may well be remembered for its quest for peace rather than its obsession with violence and death."

ISRAELI ANGER AT BONN SUBMERGED AFTER WARM TALKS, PROMISES OF AID

By David Kantor

BONN, March 18 (JTA) -- With an eye to future economic and political benefits, Israel seems prepared to forget, or at least submerge its anger at Bonn for the help German firms gave Iraq to produce poison gas and improve the Scud missiles that hit Tel Aviv and other parts of Israel during the Persian Gulf war.

That is how officials and observers here are evaluating last week's two-day visit by Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy.

Levy held extensive talks with Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher and other officials and met with Chancellor Helmut Kohl and President Richard von Weizsacker.

On two public occasions and in media appearances, the Israeli minister praised the Bonn government for showing solidarity with Israel under attack. When a television interviewer referred to tensions between the two countries, Levy interrupted to say, "We have had all along

continuous good relations, which have become even closer in the past few weeks."

His demeanor contradicted widespread assumption that German-Israeli relations were badly damaged during the Gulf crisis.

The public and the government here were deeply disturbed by the harsh criticism and even hatred demonstrated by Israeli activists, who compared the gassing of Jews in the Holocaust with the aid rendered Iraq by private German firms to produce chemical weapons.

But according to observers here, Levy values the good will of the Bonn government. He sees long-term gains for Israel, including a dramatic increase in German financial and other aid. According to television reports over the weekend, Germany will loan Israel 1 billion marks, roughly \$630 million, at low interest, to help repair Scud missile damage.

Billions more marks in German loans and other instruments are envisaged to help Israel absorb the hundreds of thousands of Soviet immigrants expected to arrive this year.

The Israeli delegation here argues that united Germany has a moral commitment to help Israel with that formidable task. It points out that the Volkskammer, the parliament of the former East Germany, decided last year, after over 40 years of denial, to pay reparations to Israel and to Jewish victims of Nazism.

The Israelis are aware that decisions by that defunct body carry no legal weight. But they are seeking a way to involve the former East Germany in reparations to the Jewish state.

They say financial and other compensation is owed Israel for the years of hatred and active assistance to its enemies, including terrorists, by the Communist regime. The Germans are said to have listened carefully to these arguments and, according to well-informed observers, may agree.

DAIMLER-BENZ UNDER INVESTIGATION FOR SELLING IRAQ MISSILE LAUNCHERS By David Kantor

BONN, March 18 (JTA) -- Daimler-Benz, the German automotive giant, is under investigation for providing the heavy-duty trucks that Iraq used as launching platforms for dozens of mobile Scud missiles fired at Israel and Saudi Arabia during the Persian Gulf war, the German news media reported over the weekend.

The weekly Der Spiegel charged that Daimler-Benz managers were bribed by the Iraqis not to properly register the transaction with the Economics Ministry. The ministry supervises the export of products that can be adapted for military use.

But Daimler-Benz spokesman Matthias Kleintert insisted that the export deals were entirely legal. He confirmed that the company's headquarters were searched last Thursday.

A top Daimler-Benz manager, Helmut Werner, said the investigation was triggered by an anonymous letter. He denied there was any truth to the media allegations.

The Stuttgart-based company does not deny selling the trucks but claims it had no knowledge of how the Iraqis intended to use them.

But experts interviewed by the media said that was inconceivable.

Another German company working closely with Daimler-Benz modified the trucks to serve as missile-launcher platforms, newspapers and radio broadcasters said.

**ARAB AND GREEK ARRESTED BY GREECE
FOR 1985 ACHILLE LAURO HIJACKING**

By Jean Cohen

ATHENS, March 18 (JTA) -- Greek police have arrested an Arab and a Greek who allegedly played major roles in the hijacking of the Italian cruise ship Achille Lauro six years ago.

The Arab, whose name has been variously reported as Abdulrahim Khaled or Abdul Rahmin Khaled, has been described as a right-hand man to Palestinian terrorist Mohammed (Abul) Abbas, who masterminded the hijacking.

Italy has asked for his extradition.

A wheelchair-bound American passenger, Leon Klinghoffer, was killed during the October 1985 hijacking, and his body was hurled overboard into the Mediterranean, off the Egyptian coast.

The arrests, which reportedly took place on March 5, seem to have been the fruit of a discovery by Greek police of a Greek-Arab terrorist network and an aborted plan to blow up a branch of Barclays Bank here.

A Greek weekly political and economic publication, Confidential Letter, reported last week that Greek police had uncovered the network and were saying the key person in the network is a Greek, Petros Floros.

Floros was arrested along with Khaled and two other Greeks, Evangelos Bakopoulos and Simeon Tsingoulis. Police found dynamite and a gasoline bomb in Floros' home.

According to Confidential Letter, during the time of the Italian trials in June 1986 of several Palestinians charged with involvement in the hijacking, Italian police had issued an arrest warrant against Floros for cooperating with Abbas' group, the Palestine Liberation Front, in the hijacking.

The Italians charged that Floros had himself been in contact with Khaled and Abbas a month before the hijacking. Floros reportedly gave Khaled his passport in Genoa so that Khaled so could board the Achille Lauro.

Klinghoffer Family Praises Arrest

Khaled, 56, who has been described variously as a Palestinian, an Arab and a Yemeni, is thought to have left the ship in Alexandria, Egypt, before the hijacking.

When arrested, he reportedly was carrying three forged passports -- from the Philippines, Iraq and Greece.

In Washington, the State Department on Monday confirmed Khaled's arrest, pointing out that he was the subject of an international arrest warrant. Asked if the United States wants Khaled extradited to Italy, Richard Boucher, the department's deputy spokesman, said, "We would like to see the rule of law applied against terrorists."

In New York, the Leon and Marilyn Klinghoffer Memorial Foundation of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith praised Greece's arrest of Khaled and Italy's call for his extradition in telegrams to the Greek and Italian prime ministers, Constantine Mitsotakis and Giulio Andreotti.

In a joint statement, Ilse and Lisa Klinghoffer, the daughters of Leon Klinghoffer, along with Abraham Foxman, ADL national director, said, "The Italian government should also ensure that Khaled serves out his full sentence."

Khaled had been sentenced in absentia by an Italian court to life imprisonment.

(JTA correspondent Howard Rosenberg in Washington contributed to this report.)

**LE PEN FINED \$18,150 FOR SLUR,
SECOND FINE IN MONTH FOR SMEAR**

PARIS, March 18 (JTA) -- A judgment amounting to \$18,150 has been imposed on the French right-wing extremist Jean-Marie Le Pen for slurring Holocaust victims.

It was the second time this month the leader of the racist National Front was fined for the same offense, committed on different occasions.

An appeals court in Versailles has ordered him to pay 100,000 francs, the equivalent of \$18,150, to each of nine organizations representing former deportees, plus a nominal 10 francs to MRAP, an organization fighting racism.

On March 11, a court in Nanterre fined Le Pen about \$2,000 for insults he made in 1988 to a member of the French government, which included a slur on the victims of gas chambers.

After the latest judgment, Bruno Megret, one of his aides, complained that it is now a crime to express an opinion.

Meanwhile, an instructor suspended by Lyon University for casting doubt on the Holocaust was restored last week to his economics lectureship by the Ministry of National Education, the highest educational authority of France.

The ministry decided that the suspension of Bernard Notin for one year at half pay was illegal. Nevertheless, it ruled that he cannot be considered for promotion for three years.

Notin gained notoriety last year for publishing an article in a magazine sponsored by the French National Scientific Research Center in which he denied that Nazi gas chambers existed.

**COURT TO HEAR CASE OF DEA AGENT
ALLEGING ANTI-SEMITIC JOB BIAS**

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, March 18 (JTA) -- A former Drug Enforcement Administration trainee who claims he was fired from the federal agency because he complained about anti-Semitic comments by instructors and classmates will have his day in court after all.

Paul Rosen brought a civil rights suit against the DEA and the U.S. Justice Department, but his case was dismissed in January by the federal district court in Manhattan.

Judge Michael Mukasey threw out the case, he said, because Rosen did not have the evidence needed to prove that discrimination was the primary reason for his dismissal.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit found last week that Judge Mukasey had improperly dismissed the case before considering all of the evidence, and the case has been sent back to the lower court for trial.

Rosen says he was a target of anti-Semitism from the time he began a 12-week training session at the Federal Law Enforcement Center in Glynn, Ga., in 1983.

The DEA and Justice Department claim Rosen was fired because he failed a mandatory driving test and a remedial test, adding that Rosen almost collided with another car.

According to Rosen, the second driving test was a sham, created just one day after he made a formal complaint about anti-Semitism at the law enforcement center.

Rosen also alleges that in a class about cultural diversity, an instructor said, "Jews only care about their money," and another teacher made derogatory remarks about Jews in Miami.

**ETHIOPIAN ALIYAH IS TO RESUME SOON,
BUT FUTURE OF JEWS THERE UNCERTAIN**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 18 (JTA) -- Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir confirmed Monday that Israel expects the imminent resumption of immigrant flights from Ethiopia.

He expressed concern, nevertheless, for the safety of Jews in Ethiopia and the continuation of their aliyah should rebel forces triumph over the government of President Mengistu Haile Mariam.

The weekly flights, which have brought about 2,000 olim from Ethiopia to Israel since the start of the year, were interrupted at the beginning of this month without explanation.

In Washington, a statement issued by the Ethiopian Embassy said 500 Ethiopian Jews had been granted exit visas in recent days and would be leaving the country soon.

Shamir was quoted Monday as saying he expects the flights to resume before the month ends.

But in briefing the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, the prime minister did not conceal his anxiety for the safety of Jews waiting in Addis Ababa to emigrate, considering the precarious military situation of the Mengistu regime.

Shamir put their number at 15,000. Other sources estimate there are over 18,000 Jews still in Ethiopia.

Israeli experts fear their exit would be blocked if rebel forces capture Addis Ababa, a possibility that seems more likely now than at any previous time.

Moreover, the safety of the Jews could be in jeopardy. Some of the rebel forces have been supported by Libya. And they tend to see Israel as having backed Mengistu.

When the immigrant flights stopped two weeks ago, there were media reports that Mengistu suspended them to extract gasoline and weapons from Israel for his beleaguered army.

The Israeli Foreign Ministry flatly rejected such speculation.

No Linkage With Arms

Unnamed government sources were quoted Monday by the respected Israeli daily Ha'aretz as declaring unequivocally that Israel would not consider supplying arms to Mengistu even if it might jeopardize aliyah.

The sources implied that Israel was not about to offend the United States, which has a negative attitude toward Mengistu, whom it considers a Marxist.

The newspaper emphasized that no linkage has been established between arms for Mengistu and the halted immigrant flights.

An announcement made after the weekly Cabinet meeting Sunday and elaborated upon Sunday evening by a government official, Uri Lubrani, said the resumption of the flights was imminent.

It followed "intensive contacts" over the weekend between the Israeli ambassador in Addis Ababa, Asher Naim, and the Ethiopian authorities.

Lubrani, a former ambassador to Ethiopia who now coordinates the government's efforts to bring Ethiopian Jews to Israel, visited Addis Ababa recently as Shamir's personal emissary.

Lubrani said Mengistu told him he considered the emigration of Ethiopian Jews to reunite with their families a strictly humanitarian issue in no

way connected to arms supplies or other bilateral issues between Ethiopia and Israel.

Mengistu made that statement "in my presence, as envoy of the prime minister and in the presence of an American envoy," Lubrani said in an appearance on Israel Television.

He said "technical and bureaucratic" difficulties caused the flights to be suspended but they were "not insurmountable." He counseled "patience, which we are sometimes lacking in."

Lubrani confirmed that the Ethiopian government is facing hard times as the civil war continues. But he would not speculate what effect any particular outcome of the fighting would have on Jews remaining in Ethiopia.

**HIGH COURT TO HEAR CASE INVOLVING
PRAYERS AT HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATIONS**
By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, March 18 (JTA) -- The Supreme Court's decision to hear a case involving the constitutionality of religious prayers at public high school graduation ceremonies has drawn a strong protest from the American Jewish Congress, which believes they should be banned.

The high court accepted a petition Monday, *Lee vs. Weisman*, that urges the court to scale back its 1962 *Lemon v. Kurtzman* ruling banning organized prayer in public schools.

Oral arguments will not be heard until the court's next term, which begins in October.

The case involves a high school in Providence, R.I., where a prayer offering thanks to God and asking God's blessing was delivered by a rabbi during a 1989 graduation ceremony.

The family of a graduating student, Deborah Weisman, contested the prayer on the basis that its recitation in a public school violated the separation between church and state as interpreted in the First Amendment.

Last year, a federal district court and later a U.S. appeals court ruled that the prayer was unconstitutional in that it had the effect of advancing religion. AJCongress filed friend-of-the-court briefs in both of those cases on behalf of Weisman and will do so before the Supreme Court as well.

The Bush administration, in filing a friend-of-the-court brief last month on the school's behalf, argued that unlike organized prayer in schools, graduation prayers occur once a year and take place in the presence of "families as a whole," which serve as a "natural bulwark against any coercion."

But in a statement released Monday, AJCongress said, "We are at a loss to understand why the Department of Justice thinks that a junior high school student who wishes to attend her own graduation, but not to participate in a government-sponsored prayer, is not 'coerced' into doing so."

Saying that "these are ominous times for all who treasure religious liberty," the group expressed disappointment that the Supreme Court "has agreed to reopen another area of the First Amendment which was long settled -- that officially sponsored prayers in public schools are inconsistent with the separation of church and state mandated by the First Amendment of the Constitution."

Many Jewish groups argue that any lowering of the wall between church and state in this or any other instance could open the floodgate for greater government entanglement with religion.