

**BAKER MEETS WITH MIDEAST ENVOYS
AMID APPARENT SHIFT FROM SYRIA****By Howard Rosenberg**

WASHINGTON, March 26 (JTA) -- Secretary of State James Baker has begun a new round of Middle East diplomacy from Washington, but more interesting shifts appear to be taking place in the region itself.

Baker met Tuesday with Israeli Ambassador Zalman Shoval and Monday with a special adviser to Jordan's King Hussein, Adnan Abu Odeih.

Also Monday, Osama el-Baz, a top aide to Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, met with senior State Department officials and may meet later this week with Baker, said an Egyptian Embassy spokesman. Senior U.S. officials have been in touch with Saudi diplomats, as well.

But what seemed to have gotten even more notice was a statement made Monday by Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk a-Sharaa, who said his country is willing to participate in an international peace conference chaired only by the United States and Soviet Union.

A senior Israeli Embassy official found something positive in the Syrian statement.

Israel opposes international frameworks in principle, preferring direct talks with Arab parties. But the official said a conference under superpower auspices is "less ominous" to Israel than one under U.N. Security Council auspices, which would also include China, France and Great Britain.

Syria "would like to find a way that would be more convincing and less ominous to Israel," the official explained, and a-Sharaa felt he could do so "by actually mentioning the two superpowers."

'New Thinking' In The Arab World

An Egyptian Embassy official said there is a "new approach" and "new thinking" in the Arab world toward achieving an Arab-Israeli peace. The official cited a statement made Sunday on the CBS television program "60 Minutes" by the Kuwaiti ambassador, Sheik Nasir al-Sabah, who said Israel has the right to claim reparations from Iraq.

At the State Department this week, Baker and other senior officials have been meeting with Middle East diplomats as "part of our ongoing process and follow-through after Secretary Baker's trip to the region" earlier this month, according to department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler.

"The purpose of these meetings," she said, "is to begin the process of probing to see what they may be prepared to do."

The Israeli Embassy official revealed that Baker asked each of the parties to respond to his suggestions as well to submit "their own ideas" to him. But the official said the secretary did not ask for such responses by any specific date.

"I would characterize the phase that we are in now as trying to determine what the points of convergence are between the parties," Tutwiler said.

In his meeting with Baker, Ambassador Shoval discussed the U.S. criticism Monday of Israel's plans to deport four Palestinians from the

Gaza Strip, who the Israel Defense Force says have conducted military operations for the Palestine Liberation Organization's Al Fatah branch.

The Israeli official said there was nothing "earth-shaking" in the Shoval-Baker discussion. "It was in line with the ideas which the secretary has discussed with the leaders in the region," namely the U.S. conception of a "two-track" negotiating process involving Israel and the Arab nations, and Israel and the Palestinians.

The meeting took place after Shoval informed Baker that he was leaving for Israel this week for Passover and asked "on this happy note, if there is anything he can convey to the prime minister," the Israeli official said.

The Egyptian official said his government has taken the position that "we still believe firmly that we can achieve peace in the aftermath of the Gulf war."

The official said it is up to both the Arab countries and Israel to take the first steps toward peace simultaneously.

For its part, "The Arab world is more willing for negotiations" with Israel now than ever before, the Egyptian said.

At the same time, the official said that, absent an active peace process, the Arab countries will not forgo their boycott of Israel and companies that do business with it, or agree to repeal the 1975 U.N. resolution equating Zionism with racism.

**PERES SAYS LABOR READY TO GIVE UP
'IMPORTANT PORTION' OF TERRITORIES****By Yossi Lempkowicz**

BRUSSELS, March 26 (JTA) -- Shimon Peres, in Belgium to address an Israel funding dinner, has drawn the sharpest possible distinction between his opposition Labor Party and the Likud bloc that governs Israel.

"We are ready to give land for peace, which means to give up an important portion of the West Bank and Gaza Strip," the Labor Party chairman said Sunday in an interview on Belgian state television.

Likud rejects territorial concessions out of hand.

According to Peres, the "time is ripe to solve the conflict between us and the Palestinians by political negotiations and not by military means. We must make a compromise," he said.

He envisioned the West Bank and Gaza Strip in confederation with Jordan, "a state with a Palestinian majority."

"The Jordanian and Palestinian people are the same. The division is artificial," he said.

Peres came to Brussels to address the opening of the annual Keren Hayesod campaign.

He came here from Bonn, where he met with the German foreign minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, and with the leadership of the German Jewish community.

In his talks with the foreign minister, he expressed thanks for Bonn's assistance to Jerusalem during and after the Persian Gulf war. They also discussed the prospects for peace in the Middle East.

(JTA correspondent David Kantor in Bonn contributed to this report.)

GAZA ARABS ORDERED DEPORTED WAGING STRONG DEFENSE CAMPAIGN

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, March 26 (JTA) -- Four Palestinian activists from the Gaza Strip are waging a determined defense against orders issued by the Israel Defense Force this week to deport them.

Nine prominent Arab lawyers, including the chairman of the Gaza Bar Association, argued their case before a military appeals board of the IDF's southern command Tuesday.

The board was still deliberating late Tuesday.

The four are alleged by the IDF to be hardcore terrorists associated with Al Fatah, the largest faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

None, however, has been linked to the recent wave of knife attacks on Israelis by Palestinians.

But Maj. Gen. Mattan Vilnai, commander of the southern region, justified the expulsion orders he signed Saturday night on the grounds that the four men's activism created a climate that encouraged Arab violence against Israeli Jews.

The U.S. State Department has urged Israel to rescind the deportation orders.

The military board has rejected a defense motion to hold the appeals hearing in public. It also declined a request to postpone the hearing until next week to allow the defense lawyers more time to study the material.

Military appeals boards have invariably upheld deportation orders issued by the IDF. The deportees have recourse to the High Court of Justice. But it, too, has rarely, if ever, reversed a military deportation order.

In recent cases, deportees chose not to carry their appeals to the high court and were summarily expelled to Lebanon.

The IDF demanded these four expulsions in response to mounting public outrage and fear over revenge attacks by Palestinians on Israeli Jews inside Israel.

'Like A Death Sentence'

The brutal assaults began after Israeli border police shot to death at least 17 Palestinian rioters on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem last Oct. 8.

Since then, 16 Israelis have been slain and more than a score wounded in random attacks.

The latest murder occurred on March 21, when a 70-year-old furniture dealer was fatally knifed in his shop in Hadera. Three other stabbings followed, none fatal, perpetrated by the same assailant.

The suspect, who admitted to his previous assaults when he was captured Saturday, was a Gaza Strip resident who was living illegally in Israel.

Israel, for its part, has deported 64 Palestinians since the intifada began in December 1987.

Defense Minister Moshe Arens said the policy would continue so long as Arab violence persists, regardless of American objections based on the Fourth Geneva Convention.

The four presently facing deportation are Jamal Yassin Abu-Habal, 33; Hashem Dahalan, 31; Muin Mohammad Mussalam, 31; and Jamal Abu-Jidian, 33.

Their lawyers said they would insist the men be allowed to answer formal charges in a court trial, not be banished.

"Deportation is like a death sentence," they said.

ISRAELI JUSTICE MINISTER ASSAILS U.S. DOUBLE STANDARD ON EXPULSIONS

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, March 26 (JTA) -- While the United States condemns Israel's deportation of Palestinians it considers terrorists, Washington is silent about Kuwait's deportation of far larger numbers of Palestinians since the end of the Persian Gulf war, an Israeli Cabinet minister observed here Tuesday.

"I don't hear any condemnation of Kuwait" by the United States or the United Nations, Justice Minister Dan Meridor told reporters after addressing the annual national leadership conference of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

Meridor said the Israeli government knew it would be criticized when it ordered four Palestinian terrorists deported from the Gaza Strip over the weekend.

The State Department on Monday urged Israel to rescind the order, calling deportations a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949.

But Israel "has to do something to stop" the random violence against its citizens, such as the recent series of random stabbings against Jews, Meridor said.

He said Israel is criticized no matter what steps it takes to prevent violence, whether it is deportations, detention of suspected terrorists, curfews or the blowing up of homes that had been occupied by terrorists.

Everybody tells Israel "what not to do," but nobody says "what to do," Meridor pointed out.

In his speech to the ADL leadership conference, the Likud minister urged the United States to use the prestige it has reaped from the Persian Gulf conflict to bring the Arab countries into peace negotiations with Israel.

He also urged the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to begin talks with Israel "to try to see if we can live together." But he said if the Palestinians still look to the Palestine Liberation Organization for representation, "we are back to square one."

Mannings To Be Extradited

Meridor warned that bold steps toward peace have to be taken soon. "If we wait too long, people will forget who did what and who owes what to whom," he said.

In another matter, the justice minister told reporters that before leaving Jerusalem he had signed the papers to extradite a U.S.-born couple to the United States to stand trial for the murder of a secretary in California.

Meridor said that it was now up to the Jerusalem District Court to decide whether Robert and Rochelle Manning should be sent back to the United States to be tried in a U.S. federal court. He said the decision could take months.

The Mannings are charged with causing the death of Patricia Wilkerson, a secretary at a computer company in Manhattan Beach, Calif. She was killed when she plugged in what turned out to be an explosive device.

The device was allegedly sent by the Mannings to a Brenda Crouthamel, with whom the Mannings had a business dispute.

The Mannings and their two children live in Kiryat Arba, the Jewish settlement adjacent to the mainly Arab West Bank town of Hebron. Robert Manning is an activist in Kach, the movement founded by the late Rabbi Meir Kahane.

SENATORS PRESS JAPAN TO END COOPERATION WITH ARAB BOYCOTT
By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, March 26 (JTA) -- Japan's compliance with the Arab economic boycott of Israel is being targeted by those in the United States who believe that the successful outcome of the Persian Gulf War provides an opportunity to end the boycott.

Nine U.S. senators, describing themselves as "supporters of a strong U.S.-Japanese relationship," have sent a letter to Japanese Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu urging that Japanese businesses end their compliance with the boycott.

"The end of the boycott is an important first step" to realize the opportunities presented by the Gulf crisis in bringing about a solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict," the senators said in the letter.

Secretary of State James Baker is believed to have discussed the boycott with Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Nakayama when the two met at the State Department last Thursday.

But a State Department spokesman would only say that Japan was urged to play a more active and "more evenhanded" role in the Middle East. He also reported that Nakayama said he would like to make an official visit to Israel "in the near future."

Baker has urged Arab countries to drop the boycott as one of the confidence-building measures he would like to see both the Arabs and Israel make in order to foster an atmosphere conducive to a settlement of the Arab-Israel conflict.

In Congress, the boycott is becoming a major issue with senators and representatives urging the Arab countries to abandon the boycott or, at the least as a first step, to stop enforcing it against American companies that do business with Israel. They are also urging countries like Japan to end their compliance with the boycott.

'Gone Beyond The Demands' Of Arabs

The letter to the Japanese prime minister was drafted by Sen. John Rockefeller (D-W.Va.), who made a pledge March 18 at the 32nd annual policy conference of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee to personally work to get Japan to end its compliance with the boycott.

Also signing the letter were Sens. Claiborn Pell (D-R.I.), chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee; Alan Cranston (D-Calif.), Bob Packwood (R-Ore.), Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), Timothy Wirth (D-Colo.), Max Baucus (D-Mont.), Jim Sasser (D-Tenn.) and Nancy Kassebaum (R-Kan.).

"Many Japanese firms have gone beyond the demands of their Arab trading partners, voluntarily refraining from establishing ties with Israeli businesses," the letter said.

"Some of the largest and most prestigious Japanese firms have refused to deal with Israel. Discriminatory credit and financing practices have hindered the little Israeli-Japanese trade which does exist."

The senators said that the compliance by Japanese businesses is of "of particular concern because of the tacit support" of the Japanese government.

Japanese officials have been insisting that trade with Israel has steadily been increasing in recent years.

But a recent report by the World Jewish Congress calls Japan "the country whose indis-

criminate, government-encouraged compliance with the Arab boycott surpasses that of any other industrialized state."

The report charges that Japan complies with the boycott in order "to do nothing that would antagonize the Arab states" because of Japan's almost total reliance on Middle East oil.

KUWAIT SAID TO BE TAKING BIDS ONLY FROM FIRMS WITH NO JEWS
By Henrietta Boas

AMSTERDAM, March 26 (JTA) -- Kuwait, doubly devastated by six months of Iraqi occupation and the seven-week Persian Gulf war, is still demanding that firms submitting bids for work in that country include statements that they are not Jewish and do not employ Jews, according to Israeli officials.

The issue arises now particularly as Kuwait seeks to reconstruct its war-torn country.

The allegation that Kuwait is still asking for the affirmation of non-Jewish participation in work in the country was made by Israel's ambassador to the Netherlands, Micha Bawly, at a meeting of the Collective Israel Appeal, as the United Israel Appeal is known in Holland.

Bawly said the bids must state that no Jew sits on the bidding company's board, is part of its management or an employee. That was a condition of doing business with Kuwait before the war and remains so today, the envoy said.

There have been hopes expressed since the war that Kuwait, faced with the same menace from Iraq as Israel and benefitting from U.S. troops, which even included some Jews, would change its position.

KUWAIT, SAUDI ARABIA DENY VISAS TO SENATOR BECAUSE OF ISRAEL STAMP
By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, March 26 (JTA) -- The Saudi and Kuwaiti governments denied visitor's visas to Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.) because his passport contained Israeli entrance stamps.

The move, a somewhat unexpected happening following the Persian Gulf war, was denounced Tuesday by Melvin Salberg, national chairman of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, during meetings of the group held here.

Lautenberg, one of several Jewish members of Congress who have visited the Gulf countries, was able to continue the recent tour of the Gulf states with 16 other senators after being issued a new passport by the State Department.

But the action by the Saudi and Kuwaiti governments, said Salberg, "is yet another example of the Arab world's unrelenting, knee-jerk hostility toward the Jewish state and an affront to the United States, which sacrificed American lives to save Kuwait and Saudi Arabia from annihilation."

Salberg said the incident is a "setback" to the hopes that the two Arab countries "would take the lead in engaging in confidence-building measures with the Jewish state, in light of their experiences with Iraq."

"Confidence-building measures" is a concept invoked by Secretary of State James Baker in his recent whirlwind diplomatic tour of the Middle East in quest of a peace solution.

A spokesman for Lautenberg said the senator plans to discuss the incident with Baker and the ambassadors from the two countries.

JEWISH GROUPS URGE NEW LEGISLATION AFTER COURT RULING AGAINST MOSLEM

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, March 26 (JTA) -- Jewish groups are disappointed with a Supreme Court ruling Tuesday exempting U.S. companies abroad from compliance with federal laws barring racial and religious discrimination.

In a 6-3 decision, the court ruled against a U.S.-naturalized Moslem working for the Saudi Arabian American Oil Co., who was not allowed to take time off from work on a Moslem holiday.

The American Jewish Committee, American Jewish Congress and the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith joined a friend-of-the-court brief on behalf of Ali Boureslan of El Paso, Texas.

The groups argued that Boureslan's rights should be protected under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

But Chief Justice William Rehnquist, writing for the majority, said there was no clear evidence that Congress intended to apply the law to U.S. companies overseas.

Jewish groups immediately called for legislation to make existing civil rights laws applicable to Americans working abroad.

"The language can be formulated quite easily to say that Title VII does apply to American citizens working for American companies abroad," said Samuel Rabinove, legal director of the AJCommittee.

On Tuesday, Phil Baum, AJCongress associate executive director, wrote Rep. Jack Brooks (D-Texas), chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, and Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), to encourage them to include such language in a major civil rights bill that is intended to reverse several recent Supreme Court rulings scaling back the use of affirmative action to help minorities gain employment and promotions.

At the start of the 102nd Congress, Brooks reintroduced such a bill, which was vetoed last year by President Bush, who said he feared it would lead to minority hiring quotas. Kennedy is expected to reintroduce the bill in the Senate.

The Supreme Court decision, in *Equal Employment Opportunity Commission vs. Aramco*, upheld a 9-5 ruling against Boureslan by the 5th U.S. Court of Appeals in New Orleans.

Joining Rehnquist in the majority were Justices Byron White, Sandra Day O'Connor, Anthony Kennedy, Antonin Scalia and David Souter. Dissenting were Justices Thurgood Marshall, Harry Blackmun and John Paul Stevens.

ISRAEL, BULGARIA SIGN AIR ACCORD

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 26 (JTA) -- Israel and Bulgaria signed an aviation agreement Monday in Sofia, their first bilateral pact since resuming diplomatic relations last year.

The signatories were Moshe Katsav, Israel's transportation minister, and his Bulgarian counterpart, Vasilin Pavlov.

The accord opens yet another transfer point for Soviet Jewish immigrants bound for Israel.

Bulgaria's airline, Balkan Air, will begin weekly scheduled service from Sofia to Tel Aviv next month. El Al Israel Airlines is expected to inaugurate weekly flights to Sofia in July.

El Al and Balkan Air operated reciprocal services briefly in 1966. They ended when Bulgaria severed diplomatic relations with Israel in 1967.

A NEW HAGGADAH FOR SOVIET OLIM SAID TO DISPARAGE SECULAR JEWS

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 26 (JTA) -- The Orthodox politicians who control the Absorption Ministry are waging an all-out campaign to indoctrinate Soviet olim with religion, according to the Israeli media and at least one member of the Knesset.

Their drive peaks with the approach of Passover, which begins this Friday night.

According to Knesset member Shulamit Aloni of the Citizens Rights Movement, the religious traditionalists, known as haredim, have gone too far in the Pesach haggadah the ministry published for Soviet Jews in Russian and English.

It disparages secular Jews, Aloni charged in a letter to Rabbi Yitzhak Peretz, the absorption minister who sits in the Knesset as an independent.

She cited the parable of the Four Sons. The illustrations in the ministry's haggadah depict the Wise Son and the Simple Son as devout, clean-cut yarmulka-wearing youngsters while the Wicked Son is a non-Orthodox Yuppie-type modern Israeli.

There is precedent for haggadot in the Diaspora portraying the Wicked Son, who does not want to be included in the seder, as a secular Jew.

But this haggadah is paid for by the taxpayers. Aloni accused the ministry of "ingratitude and arrogance" for showing "an ugly, despicable secular figure" as the Wicked Son.

Her charges followed a spate of articles in the Israeli media reporting that the ulpanim, where Russian immigrants study Hebrew, are increasingly coming under religious influence.

The popular Jerusalem weekly Kol Ha'ir said last weekend that the Absorption Ministry directs olim to Orthodox-run ulpanim while allowing those with non-Orthodox staffs to wilt for lack of students.

The ministry moreover equates "cultural activities" for new immigrants with Orthodox religious practices and helps Orthodox activists advance religious indoctrination by providing them with budgets, rooms and facilities at the absorption centers, Kol Ha'ir reported.

Apart from the ministry, the strictly Orthodox Agudat Yisrael and Degel HaTorah parties have set up their own absorption departments for newcomers, headed by their rabbis and local politicians.

All of the religious parties are seeking to host Russian immigrant families at Orthodox homes for the seders.

Apparently the hospitality of the general public has fallen short of expectations, according to Housing Minister Ariel Sharon, who heads the Cabinet's absorption committee.

Most of the invitations come from the Orthodox or from the kibbutzim, which are for the most part vigorously secular.

But Peretz complained Tuesday that he wanted immigrants to attend only seders conducted according to halachah, Jewish religious law as interpreted by Israel's Orthodox rabbis. If he has his way, that would exclude seders at many kibbutzim.

Because of the Passover holiday, the JTA Daily News Bulletin will not be published Monday.
