

**LEVY EXPECTED TO MEET WITH BAKER
IN U.S. TO CLARIFY ISRAELI POSITION****By David Landau**

JERUSALEM, June 10 (JTA) -- Israel and the United States are trying to schedule a meeting in Washington on Thursday or Friday between Foreign Minister David Levy and U.S. Secretary of State James Baker.

Levy is expected to explain Israel's position on a peace conference in the aftermath of Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's recent exchange of letters with President Bush.

But Shamir made clear Monday that he is not sending the foreign minister to Washington with any "message" for the White House.

Levy, who is scheduled to leave Tuesday on a private visit to the United States, will be speaking Thursday night in New York at the 78th annual national commission meeting of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith.

In Washington, State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler said Monday that Baker and Levy would meet this week, although no date or time was announced.

The Israeli Embassy in Washington said the two sides were trying to arrange a meeting for Thursday.

Tutwiler denied that the Bush administration has given up trying to bring about a Middle East peace conference in the wake of Shamir's rejection last week of Bush's appeal for flexibility on procedural conditions.

The peace conference has not been "declared dead," Tutwiler said.

In his letter to Bush last Thursday, Shamir refused to consider including a U.N. presence at the conference and rejected Bush's proposal that it be allowed to reconvene periodically once direct, bilateral negotiations begin.

No Answer Yet From Arab Countries

The prime minister told reporters Monday, however, that he does not consider himself to be in a "polemical argument" with the president.

He said he had only sought to "explain Israel's position" in his letter and hoped to continue "maximal cooperation with the United States on the roads to peace."

Tutwiler, in Washington, stressed that two principles govern the U.S. peace initiative. First, she said, "we cannot want peace in this region more than the parties themselves."

And second, the United States is "willing to be a catalyst" and to remain involved, "provided there is something to work with."

At the White House, spokesman Marlin Fitzwater maintained that the administration does not want to "characterize" Shamir's letter as a rejection, because "it's not entirely clear" what Israel's position is.

He indicated Levy might clarify that when he comes to Washington.

He also pointed out that the United States "has not heard from other countries" in the region. In addition to writing to Shamir, Bush sent letters urging flexibility to the leaders of Jordan, Syria, Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

(JTA correspondent David Friedman in Washington contributed to this report.)

**JEWISH SETTLEMENT IN WEST BANK
ESCALATING RAPIDLY, REPORT FINDS****By David Landau**

JERUSALEM, June 10 (JTA) -- Some 104,000 Jewish settlers will be living in the West Bank by the end of this year, a 13.5 percent increase over the population at the end of last year, says a report released by the West Bank Data Project.

The estimate does not include East Jerusalem, which Israel annexed in 1967.

The number of Jewish settlers in the Gaza Strip is expected to total 4,200 by year's end.

The West Bank Data Project is a Jerusalem-based research program headed by Meron Benvenisti, a former deputy mayor of Jerusalem, and Yehuda Litani. Both are leading Israeli experts on the administered territories and the Palestinians.

Their report notes that the rate of growth among settlers slowed down during the first two years of the intifada, 1988 and 1989, but has since regained momentum. It is "expected to reach an all-time record in 1992," the report says.

The report's figures corroborate a point made recently by Housing Minister Ariel Sharon of Likud. He said that Jewish settlements underwent dramatic growth from 1984 to 1986, the two years when Laborite Shimon Peres was prime minister, even though the Labor Party is officially opposed to settlement expansion.

The paradox is attributable to the fact that Peres headed a national unity government in which Labor made concessions to Likud on settlement policy.

40 Percent Growth Forecast

The West Bank Data Project differentiates between "ideologically motivated" settlements, where growth is relatively slow, and settlements in "metropolitan areas," where it is rapid and where about 85 percent of the settlers live.

The ideological settlements are defined as those built in the Samaria region of the West Bank and in the Hebron hills mainly by the Gush Emunim, militant Orthodox Jews who believe they have a divine right to the territory.

The metropolitan settlements are those within 30 minutes' driving time from the center of Jerusalem or 45 minutes from central Tel Aviv.

Analyzing trends, the report concludes that the pool of settlers remains largely young, middle-class Israelis fleeing the congested cities in search of a suburban environment of one-family homes with gardens.

It says that about 3,000 housing units are under construction within commuting distance of Jerusalem and 3,800 in proximity to Tel Aviv, out of 22,000 new housing units completed in the West Bank at the end of 1990.

"If the construction program is fully implemented, the housing stock by the end of 1995 will reach approximately 35,000 units, a growth of almost 40 percent in five years," the report says.

It also describes the financial incentives offered settlers. "The average mortgage in a development town is one-third lower than in a West Bank settlement," it says, but "a West Bank apartment is 25 to 30 percent cheaper than in Israel."

**FIRM ACCUSED OF BOYCOTT VIOLATIONS
SCRAPS PLAN TO BUILD PLANT IN SYRIA**

By Aliza Marcus

NEW YORK, June 10 (JTA) -- Baxter International, a leading manufacturer of health-care products, announced Monday that it will abandon its plan to build an intravenous-fluids manufacturing plant in Syria.

But the move does not dispel allegations that Baxter violated U.S. anti-boycott legislation in its 1988 sale of a similar plant in Israel and subsequent decision to build one in Syria.

The U.S. Commerce Department, which had been investigating the allegations, referred the matter to the U.S. Attorney's Office in Chicago in February, paving the way for possible criminal prosecution.

Baxter's announcement that it is canceling plans for a Syrian plant was immediately welcomed by Jewish organizations, who had raised questions over Baxter's willingness to enter into an agreement with a country linked with international terrorism.

Jewish organizations had also argued that the proposed plant could have been converted by the Syrian military for other purposes, perhaps to produce chemical or biological weapons.

David Harris, executive vice president of American Jewish Committee, said in a statement that Baxter's "encouraging announcement today should lay to rest this regrettable controversy to the satisfaction of all concerned."

The Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, whose Institute of Public Affairs last month held a meeting with Baxter officials to discuss this issue, also expressed its pleasure with the decision.

And the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles commended Baxter's decision "not to do business with a terrorist regime."

Will Maslow, general counsel of the American Jewish Congress and editor of its "Boycott Report" newsletter, echoed these statements but said this "doesn't dispose of the remaining charges against Baxter."

Report's Release Urged

Baxter officials have repeatedly denied allegations that they followed the Arab-led economic boycott in their Middle East dealings.

The economic boycott of Israel forbids companies from doing business with Israel and also prohibits dealings with companies that have business ties to Israel. Adherence to the boycott is outlawed by a U.S. law enacted 13 years ago.

Baxter has been charged by Jewish groups with selling its plant in Israel in 1988 in order to have its name removed from an Arab list of companies that should be boycotted because they do business with Israel. Baxter officials say they sold the plant for financial reasons.

The company is also alleged to have paid a bribe eight years ago to have its name removed from the boycott list.

Baxter officials claim that a special report prepared by outside counsel last year found nothing improper or illegal in Baxter's Middle East dealings.

But the company has so far refused to make the report public, despite numerous calls by Jewish groups and others for its release.

At the company's annual meeting in April, shareholders rejected a resolution requiring that the report be disclosed.

But the 8 percent of shareholders who supported the motion was enough to have it put to a vote again next year.

"If they want to end the controversy, we have to know what's in the report that ostensibly clears them of any wrongdoing," said Sam Rabinove, legal director for AJCommittee.

The decision to terminate the plant agreement with Syria comes before construction was started or any investment was made, according to a statement issued by the company.

"The volatile situation throughout the Middle East and controversy surrounding Syria in particular now lead us to change our plan," the company's chairman and chief executive officer, Vernon Loucks Jr., said in the statement.

Baxter's total sales in 1990 were \$8.1 billion. Middle East sales accounted for \$12 million, and sales to Israel accounted for \$4.7 million, said a spokesman for the company, Les Jacobson.

**SYRIA A NO-SHOW AT PARADES,
BUT IDF TEAM PARTICIPATES**

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, June 10 (JTA) -- In the face of opposition from U.S. senators, Jewish activists and others, Syrian representatives did not participate in either of two giant parades staged here and in New York to honor those who served in Operation Desert Storm.

A Syrian presence had been expected at Saturday's national victory parade here, in which the Syrian flag was to be carried by an American soldier. But Syria's ambassador, Walid al-Moualem, who was to be present in the reviewing stand, did not show up.

In New York, Mayor David Dinkins had extended an invitation to Syria and 39 other nations to part in Monday's extravaganza, including Israel.

But when Syrian diplomats found out that Israel was participating, they apparently declined to join in the march Monday through New York's "Canyon of Heroes."

An Israeli delegation was not invited to the Washington parade, because Israel was not a member of the Desert Storm coalition, said Ruth Yaron, the Israeli Embassy spokeswoman.

Nevertheless, Syria apparently decided at the last moment not to show up.

A State Department official suspected that the Syrians had declined because going through with the honors "might simply have caused them more grief than it was worth."

Last week, the Senate voted 92-6 to adopt a non-binding resolution opposing Syria's planned participation at the Washington parade.

The resolution, sponsored by Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.), opposed the honors for any country on the State Department's list of terrorist countries or nations involved in drug trafficking.

In New York, a nine-man Israel Defense Force team that had helped operate Patriot anti-missile batteries during the war joined in the ticker-tape march on Monday. It was the same contingent that marched in New York's Salute to Israel parade on June 2.

One of the participants was Gaym Solomon, who immigrated to Israel from Ethiopia in 1982 at the age of 14, and was joined by his parents five years later.

(JTA student intern Mark Frenkel in New York contributed to this report.)

JEWISH AGENCY TEAM GOING TO ETHIOPIA TO ARRANGE TRANSIT OF THOSE LEFT BEHIND
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, June 10 (JTA) -- The Jewish Agency is sending a team of officials back into Ethiopia this week to arrange transportation to Israel for an estimated 2,000 Jews who missed last month's Operation Solomon airlift.

The airlift brought more than 14,000 Jews from Addis Ababa to Israel over a 36-hour period on May 24-25. But some 350 Jews did not make it to the airport in time for the airlift, and another 1,500 to 2,000 Jews are believed to be living still in the northwestern province of Gondar.

Also left behind in the capital were about 3,000 Jews who had converted to Christianity.

That triggered a controversy here over whether the converts should be helped to immigrate to Israel. In addition to those left in the capital, there are anywhere from 8,000 to 60,000 converts believed to be living in other parts of the country, including Gondar, where most of the Jews once lived.

Jewish Agency Chairman Simcha Diniz said the decision on whether they should be brought here rests with Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

Diniz disclosed that Shamir personally gave instructions during Operation Solomon not to take the converts, disregarding pressure from Housing Minister Ariel Sharon and other ministers and Knesset members who want maximum aliyah.

Diniz told a Voice of Peace radio interviewer that the 3,000 converts left behind in Addis Ababa had been brought to the capital from the Gondar region by the American Association for Ethiopian Jews, not the Jewish Agency.

The Chief Rabbinate resolved last week to send a delegation of rabbis and kessim to Addis Ababa to investigate the status of the converts and oversee their "return" to Judaism. The kessim are the Ethiopian Jewish religious leaders.

The Jewish Agency, however, is determined to bring out the remaining authentic Jews, who were on their way from Gondar to Addis Ababa during Operation Solomon or missed the airlift for other reasons.

Few Venture Out Of Absorption Centers

Diniz said the agency wants to get them all out as soon as possible. He rejected the notion of waiting for the country to return to normalcy following the recent overthrow of the government.

The Jewish Agency chairman reported, meanwhile, that the number of absorption centers housing Operation Solomon arrivals has been reduced from 49 to 33, as the family registration process progresses.

Diniz said about 25 percent of the new olim would soon be moved from the hotels serving as absorption centers to mobile homes, close to relatives who preceded them to Israel.

The new immigrants got official permission Monday to leave the absorption centers, where they have been confined since their arrival in Israel two weeks ago.

They were kept on the premises to allow for their smooth registration. But when the doors were opened, few would venture away from the now familiar environment.

Those who did leave were instructed by Jewish Agency personnel not to go too far. Some were given escorts. All immigrants received identification cards with their names and the addresses of the absorption centers.

EXPERTS DISAGREE OVER HOW MANY SOVIET OLIM WILL COME TO ISRAEL
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, June 10 (JTA) -- A sharp rise was predicted Monday for the number of immigrants from the Soviet Union coming to Israel in the months ahead.

The projection by Moshe Nativ, director general of the Jewish Agency, differed from a forecast made Sunday by Absorption Minister Yitzhak Peretz, who said the figures would remain low this month and next.

Nativ, who just returned from a 12-day visit to the Soviet Union, told the weekly meeting of the World Zionist Organization Executive that requests for Israeli visas had doubled in Moldavia and in the major cities of the Ukraine.

He said he analyzed the situation in light of the new Soviet emigration laws, which take effect July 1.

At that time, Soviet emigrants will be issued passports, an entirely new procedure, which is expected to bog down the OVIR visa agency.

For that reason, many Jews holding visas are expected to leave earlier than planned.

Yuri Reshetov, the Soviet Foreign Ministry official responsible for human rights, told Nativ that the Soviet authorities would try to ensure by administrative means that Jews bound for Israel would not be unduly delayed, even after the new law takes effect.

Nativ said similar assurances were given to Shoshana Cardin, chairman of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry and of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

According to Nativ, older Soviet Jews planning aliyah have postponed their departure in order to leave with passports, which allow them to keep their Soviet citizenship and hold property in the Soviet Union.

But younger Jews doubt the new law will be implemented and are anxious to leave, Nativ said. He said the trend is that would-be immigrants over 50 encourage their children to leave first and promise to join them once they are established in Israel.

HERZOG GOING TO HUNGARY, BULGARIA
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, June 10 (JTA) -- President Chaim Herzog is scheduled to leave Tuesday for Hungary and Bulgaria, on the first official visit to those countries by an Israeli chief of state.

He will meet with the Hungarian president, prime minister and foreign minister in Budapest, and will visit a transit point used by Jewish emigrants from the Soviet Union en route to Israel.

Herzog is scheduled to address a special session of the Bulgarian Parliament in Sofia, to be televised live. He is also to meet with the Bulgarian prime minister.

Herzog will be accompanied by prominent Israelis from each of the two countries he will visit.

They include former Bank of Israel Governor Moshe Sanbar, now chairman of the board of Bank Leumi, and former Mizrahi Bank chief Aharon Meir, who is now in private business, both of whom are originally from Hungary; as well as Mapam Party leader Victor Shemtov, who is from Bulgaria.

**TSOMET THREATENS TO QUIT COALITION
UNLESS LIKUD ALLOWS VOTE ON REFORM**
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, June 10 (JTA) -- The Likud bloc is under pressure from one of its coalition partners to push an electoral reform bill through the Knesset.

Agriculture Minister Rafael Eitan, leader of the two-seat Tsomet party, threatened Monday to pull out of the government "immediately" unless a free vote is allowed on the measure.

But there is strong counter-pressure within Likud's Knesset faction to kill the proposed legislation, on the grounds that it could cost the party votes.

Haim Corfu, a veteran Likud Knesset member, predicted a loss of up to 10 seats for Likud if the reform bill becomes law.

The measure provides for the direct election of the prime minister on a separate ballot. Its proponents believe the winner would thereby be unencumbered by the smaller parties when trying to form a governing coalition.

But Corfu warned a Likud faction meeting that the party would lose the votes of far right-wing sympathizers who support Likud now only to block a Labor-led government.

Under the proposed new system, they could split their vote between a Likud prime ministerial candidate and one of the marginal parties of the far right, like Tsomet, he argued.

The reform bill is before the Knesset Law and Constitution Committee, where it is proceeding at a normal pace, according to the committee chairman, Uriel Lynn of Likud.

Supporters have launched a vigorous campaign to get the measure out of committee and onto the floor this month, before the parliament adjourns for summer recess.

On Monday, activists spread a huge painted sign in support of their cause across a hilltop overlooking the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway.

**A SOLDIER'S MOTHER WINS BATTLE
TO WRITE 'LEBANON WAR' ON STONE**
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, June 10 (JTA) -- The bereaved mother of a soldier killed in the Lebanon war has won a six-year battle with the Israel Defense Force to revise the inscription on his headstone.

The standard inscription on the graves of Lebanon war dead states that the soldier fell in "Operation Peace for Galilee," the official name given to the June 1982 invasion of Lebanon.

But Ofra Spiegel, 58, of Ramat Gan, has repeatedly petitioned the Defense Ministry to change the wording on the grave of her younger son, Lt. Yoav Spiegel, killed in 1983 when his jeep overturned in Lebanon's Shouf Mountains.

She asked that "Lebanon War" be substituted for the official nomenclature, saying she could not live with "lying words" on the grave.

"It was not an 'operation' but a prolonged war, in which 650 boys died," Spiegel told reporters Monday. "It was not peace but exactly the opposite. And my son did not fall in Galilee. He fell in another country, a country they sent him to, Lebanon."

The Defense Ministry agreed to change the wording just hours before the High Court of Justice was to consider her petition. It will inscribe the words "fell in Lebanon" but not "Lebanon War." Spiegel approved the compromise.

**GREEN PARTY SPLIT OVER HOW TO DEAL
WITH LEADER'S ANTI-SEMITIC REMARKS**
By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, June 10 (JTA) -- The ecology-minded Green Party in France remains split over how to deal with the anti-Semitic pronouncements of Jean Briere, the former spokesman of its Lyon branch, in southeastern France.

Briere, 58, was temporarily suspended in April following publicizing of his anti-Israel, anti-Jewish remarks. But that decision, by the party's regional council in Lyon, France's second-largest city, was reversed last weekend at a national meeting of the Greens in Paris.

Briere became a center of controversy after an analysis of the Persian Gulf crisis that he contributed to an internal party publication was made public. Titled "The Warmongering Role of Israel and the Zionist Lobby," it criticized "the delirious declarations of Jewish writers."

"It is impossible to count the Jews and the non-Jews in the media," Briere maintained.

Commenting on the lawsuit brought against him by the Paris-based International League Against Racism and Anti-Semitism, Briere said he never espoused "racial doctrines," but "if the truth is anti-Semitic, then I am an anti-Semite."

He became an issue at the Greens' national meeting, although party leader Antoine Waechter said he did not want the matter discussed while passions were running high.

During the meeting last weekend, a motion to endorse the Lyon decision was defeated.

A motion condemning Briere's tract as "racist" was adopted only after the term "racist" was replaced by "with anti-Semitic connotations."

A third motion suspended Briere as party spokesman without calling for his resignation. It was overturned on a technicality. It will be taken up again at the next general meeting of the Greens in November.

Meanwhile, about 40 party militants have decided to create a support group for Briere to fight the international league lawsuit.

KOHL MAKES A TRIP TO BUCHENWALD
By David Kantor

BONN, June 10 (JTA) -- Chancellor Helmut Kohl placed a wreath Monday on a memorial to the 60,000 people who died at Buchenwald, one of the first concentration camps built by the Third Reich, which also served the Stalinist regime after World War II.

His visit, before attending a special convention of the Christian Democratic Union in nearby Weimar, focused attention on the fact that the many Jewish victims of Buchenwald, which was opened in 1933, are hardly acknowledged as such.

The memorial lists 32 nations from which the victims came but makes no reference to any of them having been Jewish.

The news media accompanying Kohl concentrated on his wreath-laying at a memorial to some 10,000 anti-Communists who died at the camp after its takeover by Soviet occupation forces.

It was erected only seven months ago, after the German unification. The concentration camp site is now managed by the state of Thuringia.

It includes a small Jewish memorial plaque, which tells visitors in Hebrew of the Jews who perished at the hands of "German fascists."

The German and Russian translations omit the word "German."