

**PALESTINIAN REPRESENTATION ISSUE
COULD SCUTTLE MULTILATERAL TALKS**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, April 21 (JTA) -- Disagreements over Palestinian representation have cast doubt over whether several sets of multilateral talks on Middle East regional issues will open next month, as scheduled, in various capitals.

A final effort to remove the obstacles will be made next week, when the Arab-Israeli bilateral peace talks reconvene in Washington.

But the prospects of reaching agreement are uncertain, and there is already talk of postponing the entire round of multilateral talks until after Israel's parliamentary elections on June 23.

The United States, however, is pushing hard for an agreement and appears confident that the talks will go on as scheduled.

All parties have said they plan to show up for next week's talks, which are supposed to be the last round of bilateral negotiations in Washington.

This was confirmed Tuesday when the U.S. State Department announced that the sixth round of bilateral talks would be held in Rome.

No date was announced, but a senior Bush administration official told reporters in Washington that would be decided at the end of the fifth round, which begins Monday.

The talks are being moved to Rome at the request of Israel, which has wanted them closer to the Middle East from the beginning.

The Israeli delegation wanted to be closer to the government in Jerusalem when decisions had to be made, and it did not want the Arabs to think that they could count on the United States to force a solution against Israel's will.

The State Department had asked all the parties to submit a list of possible sites, and department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler said Tuesday that Rome was on all the lists.

A Departure From Ground Rules

As in the previous four rounds of bilateral talks, which began in Madrid last fall and moved to Washington in December, Israel will negotiate separately with Syria, Lebanon and a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation.

During the gathering, the United States will try to resolve the differences over Palestinian representation at the multilateral talks.

The rules agreed to by all parties during the months of tortuous negotiations leading up to the opening of the peace talks in Madrid stipulated that Israel would not be required to negotiate with members of the Palestine Liberation Organization, with residents of East Jerusalem or anyone from the Palestinian diaspora, meaning outside of the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The Palestinians tried, unsuccessfully, to breach those rules at the multilateral conference that had its inaugural session in Moscow on Jan. 28 and 29.

They are continuing to try to insert people unacceptable to Israel into some of the five working groups convening during the first couple weeks of May.

Talks on arms control will take place in Washington; water resources in Vienna; environ-

mental issues in Tokyo; economic development in Brussels; and refugees in Ottawa.

A steering committee is to convene after the five working groups conclude their round. The PLO demands an official presence on it.

The Palestinians also are protesting the U.S. position that they have no place whatsoever on the arms control committee, since the Palestinians do not constitute a state.

Israel, for its part, is balking at U.S. willingness to allow non-PLO representatives of the Palestinian diaspora to sit on the working groups on refugees and economic development.

Israel has threatened to boycott both groups if diaspora figures show up. The Palestinians reply that they will not attend the environmental and water resources talks if Israel stays away from the refugee and economic development sessions.

Finally, Israel is opposed to European representatives at the arms control meetings.

U.S. Hopes For More Progress

But Western diplomatic sources believe much of this dissension is posturing. They told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that the Palestinians are expected to back down from their demands with respect to the steering committee and arms control group because they appear likely to achieve their main goal, which is U.S. backing for a diaspora Palestinian role on the economics and refugees panels.

Israel is not likely to relent on diaspora Palestinians, but may remove its objections to Europeans on the arms control group, sources say.

The Prime Minister's Office has announced, meanwhile, that David Kimche, former director general of the Foreign Ministry, has been appointed head of the Israeli delegation to the refugee talks in Ottawa.

Political observers see this as another move by Shamir to tighten his grip on key areas of the peace process, to the exclusion of Foreign Minister David Levy. In fact, none of the people appointed to head Israeli delegations to the other four working groups is from the Foreign Ministry.

But Levy will get to appoint the head of Israel's representation on the steering committee.

Attention has turned for the moment to the bilateral talks reconvening in Washington next week. But few in Israel expect any serious progress, given the uncertain political situation prevailing in Israel before the elections.

Nevertheless, government officials are discussing whether Israel should propose municipal elections in the major West Bank towns as a prelude to eventual Palestinian elections throughout the territories.

In Washington, a senior Bush administration official told reporters Tuesday that the United States would like to see more substantive progress achieved at next week's round of talks, especially between Israel and the Palestinians.

"We feel there is enough substance in the Israel-Palestinian forum for the parties to seriously start to begin the process of narrowing their differences on what would become the interim self-government arrangement" for the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the official said.

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

BONN CONSIDERING ISRAELI REQUEST FOR GERMAN FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

By David Kantor

BONN, April 21 (JTA) -- The Bonn government has confirmed that it is considering Israel's request for billions of dollars in financial assistance to aid in the absorption of new immigrants.

The announcement said that talks between the two countries are continuing but did not disclose what amounts were being discussed.

A government spokesman refused to comment on reports that Washington has asked Bonn not to grant Israel credits as long as the issue of U.S. loan guarantees for Israel remains unresolved. The U.S. State Department has denied making such a request.

Israel has asked the United States to underwrite \$10 billion in private loans to help it absorb 1 million immigrants expected in the next five years.

The Bush administration has refused the guarantees unless Israel freezes settlement activity in the administered territories, a condition the Israeli government rejects.

Israel reportedly has asked the Germans for about \$6.2 billion in aid. Bonn has offered \$1.2 billion in long-term loans, an amount Israel rejected as insufficient, diplomats here said.

Israel also rejected an offer of \$2 billion in credit guarantees, German television said Sunday. But negotiations with the Finance Ministry continue.

Israel's request for German financial assistance dates from Foreign Minister David Levy's visit to Bonn in March 1991, shortly after the Persian Gulf War ended.

Levy argued that former East Germany, unlike West Germany, never paid reparations to Nazi persecutees or to Israel.

When the two Germans were united in 1990, the Bonn government was supposed to assume that obligation.

E.C. SAID TO PRESSURE EFTA NATIONS TO DELAY TRADE ACCORD WITH ISRAEL

By Tamar Levy

GENEVA, April 21 (JTA) -- The European Community is reported to be pressuring an association of smaller European nations to delay signing a trade agreement with Israel lest it strengthen Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's hawkish government before the Israeli parliamentary elections on June 23.

"Such an agreement with Israel will increase the strength of Likud, which would see it as European backing for their policy," the Swiss daily *Le Journal de Geneve* said.

The pressure is being applied by the E.C.'s Economic Council for Europe on the seven partners of the European Free Trade Association: Austria, Finland, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland.

An EFTA diplomatic source said the E.C. was urging them to suspend negotiations with Israel until it shows greater flexibility and a desire to make more progress in the current peace talks with the Arabs.

The E.C. says, moreover, that it wants more than a token voice in the Middle East peace process.

The Israeli Mission in Brussels, seat of the E.C., is not happy. But the EFTA apparently is not yielding to pressure. It hopes that current

negotiations with Israel will culminate in an agreement next month.

The EFTA points out that the E.C. and the United States have each signed trade pacts with Israel, in 1975 and 1985 respectively.

JEWISH SETTLERS MARCH IN WEST BANK

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, April 21 (JTA) -- About 5,000 settlement activists participated in the annual march through Samaria on Monday, vowing that the West Bank will always be part of "Eretz Yisrael," or Greater Israel.

They inaugurated a new neighborhood in Karnei Shomron named Neve Menachem, in memory of the late Prime Minister Menachem Begin, the Likud leader who died last month.

Addressing the throng, Police Minister Ronni Milo said it was Begin's will to establish multitudes of Jewish neighborhoods in "our Eretz Yisrael."

Milo observed that 120,000 Jews now live in some 100 settlements, "and they will never leave."

But rousing rhetoric preached to the faithful has less influence on the fate of the territories than the relentless housing drive now under way, aimed at attracting as many Jewish residents as possible, regardless of ideology.

More than 2,000 apartments in the territories are ready or almost ready for habitation. Another 4,000 are in various stages of construction.

Although housing in Israel proper remains expensive and in short supply, roomy 72-square-yard apartments are being offered in the West Bank, just a half hour's drive from Jerusalem, for as little as \$36,400.

Moreover, the government eagerly grants potential settlers \$20,000 loans, half of which is forgiven.

ISRAEL, U.S. DIFFER ON APACHE COPTER

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, April 21 (JTA) -- Israelis frequently imply that they not only improve on U.S. or other foreign military hardware but take better care of it.

In the past it has been tanks and fighter planes. Now Israeli air force officers are expressing surprise at the bad marks the Pentagon has given the Apache combat helicopters used last year in the Persian Gulf War.

U.S. pilots were reported to have complained that 80 percent of the Apaches' performance failures in the 1989 invasion of Panama were repeated in the 1991 war against Iraq.

In contrast, the Israel Defense Force is so pleased with the Apaches that it has decided to purchase more of them.

Israel is well satisfied with the performance of the Apaches, albeit flown by Israelis. They concede that the American-flown craft encountered far more difficult conditions in the Persian Gulf arena.

Israeli pilots suggest that their more satisfactory experience may stem from improvements made in the American-built choppers after they got to Israel and by superior maintenance.

They explain that while in the American armed forces, helicopters are maintained by the ground units to which they are deployed, the Israeli practice is to assign maintenance to specially trained air force engineers and technicians.

JEWISH GROUPS WATCH WITH CONCERN AS COURT CONSIDERS ABORTION CASE

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, April 21 (JTA) -- Concerned that the U.S. Supreme Court is on the verge of seriously limiting, if not ending, a woman's constitutional right to an abortion, a host of Jewish organizations have joined the legal battle against a Pennsylvania law restricting abortions.

The Jewish groups, which include major secular organizations and women's groups, as well as organizations representing the Reform and Conservative movements, have joined friend-of-the-court briefs against Pennsylvania's Abortion Control Act.

The only Jewish group to file a brief in support of the Pennsylvania law is an Orthodox group, Agudath Israel of America, which rejects abortion as a fundamental right except when based on religious belief.

The Supreme Court was to hear arguments on the case, *Planned Parenthood vs. Casey*, on Wednesday.

The Pennsylvania law being challenged requires that a doctor inform a woman seeking an abortion of the risks involved and of alternatives. The abortion must be delayed for 24 hours after the woman receives the information.

If married, the woman must sign a statement that her husband has been notified of the abortion. If she is under 18, she must obtain the consent of one parent.

Any ruling that upholds part of the Pennsylvania law overturns *Roe vs. Wade*, said Joan Bronk, president of the National Council of Jewish Women. She was referring to the 1973 Supreme Court ruling that said that women have a "fundamental" right to an abortion under the constitutional right to privacy.

Webster Case Gave 'Green Light'

Bronk said that so many barriers to abortion have been set up by recent court rulings that "women will virtually not have reproductive freedom."

She said that the worst fear among supporters of reproductive choice for women is not that the court will overturn *Roe* explicitly but that it will do it indirectly.

This view was echoed by Samuel Rabinov, legal director of the American Jewish Committee, who said the court has been gradually whittling down the rights granted by *Roe*.

He said the 1989 decision in *Webster vs. Reproductive Health Services* "gave the green light to enact restrictions on abortion rights" where there was a compelling state interest to do so. In that case, the court upheld a Missouri law that barred the use of public hospitals or clinics for abortions.

Steven Freeman, legal director of the Anti-Defamation League, also expressed concern that the court will back away from *Roe vs. Wade*.

Freeman argued that *Roe* correctly balanced competing concerns as pregnancy progressed. He said that during the first three months of pregnancy, *Roe* left the decision between the woman and her doctor.

During the middle period, the government could step in to prevent abortion, and it certainly could prevent abortions during the last three months, especially when the fetus is able to survive on its own.

But David Zwiebel, general counsel for

Agudath Israel, maintained that abortion is not a fundamental right and that to allow abortions without restrictions is unwise.

"Laws that undermine the sanctity of life send a message that is profoundly dangerous for a society," he said.

Concern About Changes On Bench

On the other hand, Agudath Israel argues that religious freedom is a fundamental right. In the brief that it filed in support of the Pennsylvania law, the Orthodox group stressed that abortion is a fundamental liberty when based on a woman's religious belief, such as when a Jewish woman seeks an abortion because her life is endangered by pregnancy.

But this is the very reason for upholding the unrestricted right to an abortion, said Phil Baum, associate executive director of the American Jewish Congress.

Baum said *Roe* should be upheld since it leaves the decision on whether or not to have an abortion to the individual woman, "answering to God and her conscience," Baum said.

Among the 178 organizations filing briefs in support of the challenge to the Pennsylvania law are groups such as the New Jewish Agenda, N'amat USA, Hadassah and Women's American ORT, which normally concentrate on Israeli affairs.

But June Walker, chairman of Hadassah's American affairs department, said that since its inception, the women's Zionist group has involved itself in the American scene.

"We are Americans who have to exercise our rights as American women," she said.

Concern about what the high court will do has been heightened by recent changes on the bench. Only two members of the original five-justice majority in *Roe* are still on the court. They are Justices Harry Blackmun, the author of the decision, and John Paul Stevens.

The two newest members of the court, Justices David Souter and Clarence Thomas, have not yet voted on an abortion issue. But even without them, the court is expected to have the five votes needed to overturn *Roe*.

Abortion-related laws that are even more restrictive than Pennsylvania's are expected to come before the Supreme Court next year from other states. They, too, are aimed at overturning *Roe*. One in Guam was recently rejected by a federal appeals court, which said that *Roe vs. Wade* is still the law of the land.

Focus On Legislative Remedies

Supporters of *Roe* are now turning to the state legislatures and Congress to enact legislation providing the similar rights.

The National Council of Jewish Women, B'nai B'rith Women and other Jewish and non-Jewish organizations have for years been targeting state legislatures.

But Bronk said the major effort now will be in Congress, where Sen. Alan Cranston and Rep. Don Edwards, both California Democrats, have introduced the Freedom of Choice Act, which would codify the 1973 ruling.

The bill is picking up support in both chambers of Congress and is expected to gain momentum should the court uphold the Pennsylvania law.

"Getting that bill out of Congress clean will be the challenge for us," Bronk said.

That would mean with large majorities in both the Senate and House of Representatives, since President Bush has said he will veto it.

RIGHT-WING CHURCH GROUP TRYING TO STOP AUSCHWITZ CONVENT TRANSFER

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, April 21 (JTA) -- A right-wing faction of the Catholic Church has been agitating to prevent the transfer of the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz, and the Jewish community of Italy is asking the Vatican to intercede against it.

The schismatic church group, the Union of the Nations of Christian Europe, has called on "all Christians of Europe to oppose the transfer of the Carmelite convent from the camp of Auschwitz," according to Tullia Zevi, president of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities.

Such a demand would "be harmful to the agreements reached regarding the convent with the Catholic Church," Zevi said in a letter to the the Vatican secretary of state, Angelo Sodano.

Zevi specifically asked the Vatican to protest a rally that the Union of Nations planned to stage Wednesday at the convent site.

The demonstration was to be an anti-abortion rally and would follow a pilgrimage to the Jasna Gora monastery in Czestochowa, Poland, the site of the so-called Black Madonna.

A similar rally organized by the group last year was canceled at the last moment after massive protests from Jews as well as non-Jews.

Zevi wrote that such linkage of issues "tends to trivialize the specific nature of the Shoah and create ambiguous situations that are offensive to the memory of millions of men, women and children who were victims of Nazi-fascist barbarism."

Zevi pointed out that the right-wing group is composed of disciples of the late Cardinal Marcel LeFebvre, an anti-Semitic French cleric who challenged the Vatican's authority.

Moreover, it includes a deputy to the European Parliament from Jean-Marie Le Pen's far-right National Front in France and the president of the National Front of Belgium.

The convent at the site of the former Auschwitz death camp has been a painful issue in Catholic-Jewish relations since 1987.

Present plans call for the convent to be moved later this year to an ecumenical center under construction across the road from the Auschwitz site.

FILES OF EAST GERMAN SECRET POLICE FACILITATING WAR CRIMES PROSECUTIONS

By David Kantor

BONN, April 21 (JTA) -- Information from the files of Stasi, the notorious secret police organization of the former East Germany, has enabled German prosecutors to pursue cases against Nazi war criminals that were not previously possible.

The State Prosecutor's Office in Ludwigsburg is using files from the Stasi archives to investigate three people suspected of murder or complicity in the murder of Jews, according to newspapers reports here.

And the reports said the prosecutors may also reopen investigations of suspected Nazi war criminals that were dropped for lack of evidence.

Officials would not disclose the names of the suspects. They said Stasi used the incriminating evidence to blackmail them into spying for East Germany.

In a similar vein, the Ludwigsburg office has also criticized the state government of Branden-

burg, in former East Germany, for failing to prosecute Gustav Just, an ex-member of the state Parliament suspected of complicity in killing Jews during World War II.

Just, a Social Democrat, resigned from the legislature last month after the newspaper Welt Am Sonntag exposed his participation in the shooting of Jews in the Ukraine in July 1941, shortly after Germany invaded the Soviet Union.

The paper obtained its information from the defunct Stasi's files.

But Brandenburg's justice minister declined to pursue the case on grounds that Just, a 20-year-old soldier at the time, was compelled to take part in the killings and therefore his acts could not be considered murder or complicity.

Less serious charges, including killing, are subject to the statute of limitations and can no longer be tried. But according to documents that include Just's diary, the young soldier volunteered for the commando unit that did the killing and was rewarded with a promotion.

ITALIAN SOCCER OFFICIALS URGED TO CURB ANTI-SEMITISM AT MATCHES

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, April 21 (JTA) -- The head of the Italian Jewish community has appealed to owners and players of professional soccer teams to put an end to anti-Semitic invective by spectators, which has become a regular feature of the sport.

But while Tullia Zevi, president of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, brought up the issue in letters to the Italian Soccer Federation and the League of Soccer Professionals, she did not propose any solutions other than asking that "adequate measures be taken so that this reprehensible habit does not continue."

"It is already an established habit that the fans of the soccer teams insult each other reciprocally, calling each other 'Jew' in a pejorative way," Zevi wrote.

At first, she said, "we hoped that it might be a passing fad which would soon play itself out and that it was better not to publicize it. Unfortunately, the opposite proved true, and we are seeing the spread of this despicable manifestation."

EL AL POSTS REMARKABLE PROFITS

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, April 21 (JTA) -- El Al, Israel's government-owned airline, made a remarkable recovery after the Persian Gulf War and was one of the few international air carriers to show a profit last year.

It earned \$38.9 million in 1991 on revenues of \$877.6 million, the company reported Monday. That was nearly triple the \$14.1 million earned in 1990 when air traffic slumped badly during the prolonged crisis that preceded the war.

Revenue was up 12 percent, though passenger traffic stood at 1.7 million, down 1 percent from 1990. But 177,000 tons of cargo were carried, up 5 percent from the previous year.

El Al, which was put into receivership in 1982, has made an impressive comeback, so much so that its planned privatization has been given much lower priority by the government, according to airline spokesman Nachman Kleiman.

It was the only regularly scheduled airline that continued flying to the Middle East during the Gulf war, from January to March 1991.