

**ISRAEL TO DISPATCH HUMANITARIAN,  
MEDICAL AID TO WAR-TORN BOSNIA**  
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 6 (JTA) -- The Israeli Foreign Ministry has begun making arrangements for the dispatch of humanitarian and medical aid to war-torn Bosnia-Herzegovina.

This marks the first public effort on the part of the Jewish state to address a tragic situation that Jews themselves have compared to their own history in the Holocaust.

"The reports of murder and suffering of those detained in Bosnia cannot but revolt everyone in the world to the depths of their souls, and especially Jews," Foreign Minister Shimon Peres told the Knesset on Wednesday.

Meretz Knesset Member Yossi Sarid was scheduled to leave for the former Yugoslav state on Friday. He is expected to report on the situation there and to send for the relief supplies and a medical team when he thinks it safe to do so.

Sarid will head the Israeli delegation and oversee distribution of the supplies.

Yosef Hadass, director general of the Foreign Ministry, held a meeting today to lay down guidelines for the mercy mission. The meeting was attended by ministry officials and representatives of the Health and Labor Ministries, the Jewish Agency and the Kupat Holim Histadrut Sick Fund.

Hadass said he was receiving regular reports from the United Nations concerning the rapidly changing security situation in Bosnia, particularly in its capital, Sarajevo.

**Israeli Aid Intended For All In Need**

He said he had received enough information from the United Nations and from European countries to assure him that the aid will arrive safely at its intended destination.

Israeli officials stress that the Israeli aid will be distributed to all individuals in need, regardless of whether they are Jews, Christians or Moslems.

Knesset Speaker Shevah Weiss asked Sarid to express the shock and pain of the Knesset, and of the citizens of Israel, over the atrocities being perpetrated against civilians in Bosnia. He also asked Sarid to take advantage of his stay there and encourage the Bosnian Jews to make aliyah.

The Knesset speaker also expressed his hope that the moral voice of Foreign Minister Peres and the humanitarian aid from Israel will resonate in Yugoslavia and help speed the end of conflict there.

Likud member Dov Shilansky said the Knesset and the Jewish people have always demonstrated supreme sensitivity to any form of in-human conduct.

He called on all the Jews of the former Yugoslavian state to disengage themselves from the "Pompeii complex of life near a volcano" and immigrate to Israel.

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, which has been involved since the beginning of May in relief efforts and in helping Jews escape from Bosnia, welcomed the news that Israel intends to join in the relief effort.

"We're glad that the government of Israel is also making arrangements. But we are going to

continue with our operations" said JDC Executive Vice President Michael Schneider in New York.

According to Schneider, there are some 400 Jews remaining in Bosnia.

During the first two-and-a-half weeks in May, said Schneider, the organization chartered airplanes and brought out in three flights some 600 Jews, 80 non-Jewish children and one Righteous Gentile family that had requested to go along. The planes flew to Belgrade from the Sarajevo airport, which was still open at the time.

The flights, Schneider added, had been arranged by members of the local community and JDC advisers, who had helped in negotiations with the governments of Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia.

He said that many of the Jews who did not fly out at the time had been "hoping for a lull. They thought the situation would get better."

Describing the current situation in Bosnia as "pretty precarious" and noting that there is an increased presence of sniper fire and land mines, Schneider said that Jews are now attempting on their own initiative to leave the ravaged region on overland routes.

He noted that some 100 Jews were recently picked up in Split, the Croatian city located on the Dalmatian coast. These families, he said, have since been moved to other parts of Croatia, including the capital, Zagreb, where they are being provided with temporary housing.

Jewish families in Belgrade are also being provided with shelter and are being given the opportunity to leave for Israel.

Schneider added that trucks bearing some five tons of food have just managed to reach Sarajevo via precarious overland routes. He emphasized that the relief packages will be distributed on the basis of need, not religious affiliation.

He denied the presence of anti-Semitism in the Bosnian upheaval. "There is no evidence whatsoever of anything being directed specifically at Jews," he said. "But what we are worried about is Jews being caught in a cross fire in a situation in which they are totally neutral."

(JTA correspondent Mitchell Danow in New York contributed to this report.)

**OPPOSITION STAGES MASS PROTEST AGAINST  
RABIN'S RESTRICTIONS ON SETTLEMENTS**  
By David Landau and Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 6 (JTA) -- The nationalist opposition to the present Labor-led government fired on Thursday what it called "the first shot in the battle for Eretz Yisrael," holding a large demonstration in downtown Jerusalem.

The demonstration was timed to coincide with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's departure later that night for the United States.

Police estimated that some 8,000 people crowded into Menorah Square to hear leaders of all the opposition parties in the Knesset -- with the exception of Agudath Yisrael, which is teetering between joining the coalition and opposing it -- rail against building restrictions on the West Bank and in Gaza.

"Cry the Beloved Country," Rehavam Ze'evi, the Molechet Party leader, told the crowd. He accused the government of conducting its settle-

ment policy "in order to please the boss in Washington and the murderer in Tunis," the latter being a reference to Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasir Arafat, who is based in Tunis.

Rafael Eitan of Tsomet compared Housing Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer with Neville Chamberlain, the former British prime minister who was an author of a "white paper" forbidding Jewish settlement in parts of Palestine.

Gush Emunim leaders promised further demonstrations during Rabin's week-long stay in the United States. They also hinted at the possibility that the party will initiate new -- and potentially illegal -- settlement efforts in the territories.

On a local level, meanwhile, leaders of three right-wing factions in the Jerusalem municipal council joined ranks Thursday to launch an unprecedented, sharply-worded attack against Mayor Teddy Kollek and his attempts to put a halt to Jewish settlements within Arab population blocs in East Jerusalem.

This new development followed the announcement two days earlier by Police Minister Moshe Shahal that students of the Ateret Cohanim yeshiva -- who two years ago had taken over two buildings in the Moslem Quarter of the old city -- were residing there unlawfully.

The buildings had been confiscated in 1990 from their Arab owners "for security purposes." With the help of the housing ministry, the yeshiva students and their families subsequently took over the buildings.

Shahal maintained that as long as the buildings did not serve their original owners, they could only be used by Israeli officials for security purposes.

The heads of the right-wing factions were also irritated by Kollek's statement that he would no longer sign demolition orders on illegal buildings in East Jerusalem. Kollek cited the government's failure to provide the Arab population with adequate housing opportunities.

The right-wing leaders announced at a press conference here Wednesday that they were forming a new bloc that would be composed of representatives from Likud, Shas and the National Religious Party.

Knesset Member Hanan Porat of the NRP said that despite all of Teddy Kollek's accomplishments over the years, the very fact that he systematically opposed Jewish settlements in East Jerusalem meant that he ought not to serve as Jerusalem's mayor.

#### INVESTIGATORS PUZZLED BY EXPLOSION AT MUNITIONS PLANT NEAR TEL AVIV

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 6 (JTA) -- A team of experts investigating last week's massive blast at the Israel Military Industries plant at Nof Yam is trying to establish why construction elements used for the building of underground storage bunkers failed to contain the explosion.

"It seems unlikely that this was sabotage," an IMI official has been quoted as saying. "But there are some very peculiar things I cannot explain, which is why we must investigate the possibility (of intifada-style sabotage)."

The explosion killed two workers and injured 40 others, including nearby residents. It was composed of a series of successive blasts that occurred in a number of separate underground

bunkers built for the storage of low-explosive raw materials prior to their use in artillery shells and mortar bombs.

Each bunker had been designed according to U.S. safety standards. But last week's blasts had spread from one bunker to another.

Of the two workers killed in the blast, one had apparently been in or near the entrance to one of the bunkers. His body was found buried under a pile of sand at the entrance. The palm of his hands had been damaged by the explosion, but there were no other signs of injury on the back of his hands or elsewhere on his body.

Police investigators presume he had been injured by the detonation of a small quantity of the low-grade explosives he had been handling. The explosion apparently caused him to fall backwards and be buried by falling earth and sand before the subsequent series of explosions occurred.

The investigation team, headed by Maj. Gen. (Res.) Amos Horev, was told by IMI management that the installation had contained a total of 230 tons of low-grade explosives stored in seven separate bunkers that were lined with reinforced concrete.

The plant was almost completely destroyed by the blast and will probably not be rebuilt. But some work continued today in unaffected parts of the plant.

Virtually all the cottage-style houses in Nof Yam, just north of Tel Aviv, were damaged by the explosion, as were hundreds of houses further away in Kfar Shmaryahu, Herzliya Pituach and Herzliya.

In the wake of the explosion, government officials and local residents have demanded that the government speed up implementation of its decision last year to move IMI installations away from residential areas to remote sites in the Negev.

Economic Development Minister Shimon Shetreet said over the weekend that every effort would be made to move the IMI plant to the Ramat Beka area of the Negev as soon as possible.

Government officials had hoped that the sale of the land on which IMI factories are located would cover the nearly \$1 billion required for their reconstruction and move.

But the sale of the land may not yield as much money as originally hoped. The plants at Nof Yam, Ramat Hasharon and elsewhere were built on land now defined in national land allocation and planning maps as "agricultural land," which has less resale value than land designated for industrial or residential housing.

#### RECORD NUMBER OF DRAFTEES ENTERING THE ISRAELI ARMY

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 6 (JTA) -- The largest-ever induction of new recruits into the Israel Defense Force is now under way, due in part to the large number of draft-age immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

The August draft is generally the largest of the year, coming when the academic year ends.

The Israeli government does not disclose the number of soldiers serving in the IDF, nor the number of new inductees, for security reasons. But military sources note with satisfaction that the number of new recruits volunteering for crack assault units is also larger than usual.

**NEW ISRAEL-VATICAN INITIATIVE GETS WARM RECEPTION IN ITALY**

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, Aug. 6 (JTA) -- The announcement last week that Israel and the Vatican have set up a commission aimed at establishing full diplomatic ties between the two states has drawn praise from many quarters here.

"Worries are completely out of place," said Ali Rashid, the spokesman for the Palestine Liberation Organization office in Rome. "I absolutely don't see any dangers in any Islamic country in the Mediterranean region."

Italian politicians praised the move. Liberal Party leader Renato Altissimo called it a "courageous act that will surely have favorable repercussions on the peace talks."

Vatican Foreign Minister Jean-Louis Tauran told Vatican Radio that he felt "great satisfaction" at the announcement.

"Contrary to the past, the two sides, Israel and the Vatican, are not sitting at the same table only to confront one another, but to actively cooperate and to resolve in full synthesis all those problems that until now have put a brake on bilateral relations," said Tauran.

"The meeting between the Holy See and Israel represents certainly a qualitative leap in the history of relations between the two states," Tauran added. "We have now opened an official channel that will permit us to talk to resolve problems of common interest."

Tauran pointed out that over the years there have been regular contacts between the Holy See and Israel through the apostolic delegate to Jerusalem, and through the Israeli ambassador to Italy.

These contacts, he said, "have contributed to create a climate of faith."

**Move Not A Sign Of Change In Vatican Policy**

He denied, however, that the move to improve relations with Israel was a sign of change in Vatican policy.

"The initiative is within the framework of the line that the Holy See has always sustained and which affirms that there will not be peace in that region of the world if the situation of the Catholic Church in Israel and in the territories it administers is not bettered.

"There exists the necessity to resolve the Palestinian problem and there is also the famous problem of the status of the holy city of Jerusalem," he said.

He said he did not believe the announcement would have any negative repercussions within Arab countries because "the Arabs, too, are seated around a peace table together with the Israelis."

Rome's chief rabbi, Elio Toaff, also welcomed the announcement, but he did not think that it would ever lead to any theological rapprochement between Catholicism and Judaism.

In an interview with Rome's La Repubblica newspaper published over the weekend, he said that Vatican concerns for Christians living in Arab countries -- some 30 million people in all -- had been among the factors hindering the establishment of ties between the two states.

"But now the fact that the peace process has received a boost from Rabin and that the Arab states have declared themselves generally open to it, put the Church in a difficult position: It risked remaining outside the mechanism that

will decide everything in the Middle East," said Toaff.

He called the move to better relations "an important gesture," but added, "I don't think that it signifies anything from the theological point of view.

"In the eyes of the Church, we are only survivors, survivors of the 'old Israel' that gave origin to the 'true Israel.'

"We can have all the discussions we want, but not in the theological realm," he said.

Asked if Jews could ever pardon the Church for its key role in spreading anti-Semitism, with all its tragic results, Toaff said, "It is not a question of pardoning or not. Judaism does not forget. It has to remember, not for a sentiment of vendetta, but because it is necessary. It is a useful warning for us and for the others.

"I believe that after this latest step anti-Semitism within the Christian matrix will continue to exist, but it will not be official anymore," he said.

"Some time ago I was speaking with a senior prelate. I asked him if the bad parts of the Catechism regarding Jews have been removed. He said yes.

"But he also said that I should not think that everything would change in the blink of an eye. A priest who for 66 years had taught that the Jews had killed Jesus, that they are decides, cursed by God," he said, "will not change in a few days."

**ARAB BOYCOTT SAID TO COST ISRAEL \$45 BILLION OVER THE PAST 40 YEARS**

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 6 (JTA) -- Economists from the Israeli Federation of Chambers of Commerce have concluded that the Arab boycott of Israeli products worldwide has cost the Israeli economy \$45 billion over the past 40 years.

According to Ma'ariv, this estimate is included in an appeal by Danny Gillerman, president of the federation, to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, in which he suggests requesting the American administration to try to put an end to the boycott before convening the next round of peace talks.

The calculation of the damages to the Israeli market is based on the supposition that for the last 40 years, the Arab boycott prevented a growth of over \$20 billion in Israeli exports. This is based on an estimate that every year the boycott precluded a possible growth of 10 percent in exports.

The addition of income in foreign currency could have covered the entire foreign debt of the state, which today stands at \$24 billion, according to the economists.

The federation also estimated that the boycott cost Israel more than \$24 billion in investments, assuming that the Arab boycott impeded investments amounting to 15 percent of the total investments in the country.

In his appeal to Rabin, Gillerman insisted that Israel not acquiesce to the continuation of the boycott and that this issue should be made a top priority in the coming peace talks.

In the wake of elections in Israel and prior to those in the United States, he emphasized, a window of opportunities has opened that allows Israel to demand from the United States immediate and resolute action towards the abrogation of the Arab boycott.

**THE JEWS OF CENTRAL ASIA:  
A SHTETL THAT STILL SURVIVES:  
THE THRIVING TOWN OF KUBA  
[Part 5 Of A Series]  
By Gil Sedan**

KUBA, Azerbaijan (JTA) -- Kuba takes one back to the period before World War II, when the shtetls of Eastern Europe had not yet vanished.

The various Jewish communities of Central Asia -- a region once largely cut off from world Jewry -- have fared differently in the wake of communism's collapse. In some places, the Jews seemed uncertain of their post-Soviet identity; in some, Jews were eager to make aliyah to escape political unrest. Here in Kuba, there is a happy Jewish settlement with a proud history and a sure sense of what it is.

Kuba lies on the eastern slopes of the Caucasus. It has a population of 25,000, some 5,500 of whom are Jewish. Many in the community make their living in the local hand-woven carpet industry. And they make a good living: Kuba carpets are famous throughout the region.

Kuba once had one of the largest Jewish communities in the Caucasus. At its peak, the Jewish population had totaled approximately 18,000. But the community became smaller during the 1970s, when many began immigrating to Israel.

Kuba is located along the banks of a river. On one bank is a Moslem community; on the other is the Jewish town -- a cluster of small houses, surrounded by greenery.

Three magnificent synagogues dominate the town, their Stars of David rising skyward as if to say: Here lives a proud Jewish community.

**Jewish Presence Goes Back To 12th Century**

Inscribed on a plaque on the wall of the main synagogue is a blessing to the government of the Soviet Union for all the good things it had done for the Jewish community. It is a remnant of old, no-longer-relevant times.

The Jewish presence in the region has a long history. Some date it back to the 12th century, when Jews from Iran traveled to the northern end of the Caspian Sea. From there they dispersed along the coast toward the Caucasus Mountains.

But there is another, more intriguing theory about the local Jewish community's roots.

This is the area where in the eighth century the Khazar people converted from Islam to Judaism, by order of their king. He had listened carefully to a theological disputation conducted by three clergymen -- a Moslem mufti, a Christian priest and a Jewish leader, Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi. The Khazar king liked the rabbi's arguments best.

The legendary Jewish kingdom of the Khazars survived for almost 200 years. According to some, the inhabitants of Kuba are their descendants.

On a Saturday morning, one is greeted in Hebrew with "Shabbat shalom" and "Ma nishma?"

Kuba is still very much a village. The people live in small houses that have inner courtyards which serve alternately as kitchen, guest room, storeroom. The impression of village life is underscored by the sight of women doing their laundry by faucets on the streets.

The best view in town can be found at the local Jewish cemetery. Tombstones dating back to the 17th century cover a green hill that overlooks the river and the colorful roofs of the village.

Pictures and statues of the deceased can be found at each grave. It may not be a particularly Jewish way of honoring the dead, but it is in the best of Soviet tradition.

A year ago, Lyova Baradani, an emissary of the Jewish Agency in the region, came to Kuba to speak to the people about aliyah. At the time, not many wanted to listen.

But this year there were questions. Political problems -- particularly the war between Christian Armenians and Moslem Azerbaijanis in nearby Nagorno-Karabakh -- were causing many here to rethink their options.

Though many were still doubtful, people wanted to know about life in Israel. Is there work for us? they asked. What about our property here? "It is so difficult to leave everything behind," said one elderly Jew at the meeting with Baradani.

Kuba brought out the dilemma many Jews in the region face. Some here want to leave, but it is hard to make the sacrifice.

A solution to the dilemma was proposed at the meeting: The young people should go to Israel first. Let the older ones come later, after the children have paved the way for them.

But many others here have a different solution, one that Jews elsewhere in the region-- and elsewhere in the world -- have reached before. They will leave their homes, their cars, their cherry-tree orchards only when the political situation becomes intolerable.

In the meantime, life in Kuba is too good for most to abandon.

**HAMADEI BROTHERS RECEIVE FAMILY,  
APPARENTLY AS PART OF DEAL  
By David Kantor**

BONN, Aug. 6 (JTA) -- Mohammed and Abbas Hamadei, two Lebanese brothers imprisoned in Germany for terrorist acts, recently received visits from family members for the first time since their incarceration.

The visits were among a number of apparent concessions made by Bonn in exchange for the release of two German hostages, Heinrich Strubig and Thomas Kempfner, who were kidnapped in Lebanon three years ago and released this past June.

Kidnappers had demanded the release of the Hamadei brothers as a condition for freeing the German hostages, who were humanitarian aid workers. Germany has denied making any concessions to obtain the hostages' release, although officials had indicated in June that it was likely the Hamadei brothers would be given special privileges in prison.

The Hamadei were apprehended separately in January 1987. Mohammed Hamadei is serving a life sentence for the hijacking of a TWA airliner to Beirut in June 1985 and the murder of a U.S. Navy diver, Robert Stethem.

Abbas Hamadei is serving a 13-year term for his role in kidnapping two other Germans, released before the kidnapping of Strubig and Kempfner, in an attempt to free his brother Mohammed.

The Hamadei brothers, who are held in prison in the Saarland, were visited by their parents, a brother and two children.

It is believed the Germans and other Western hostages were held by Hezbollah, and that the Hamadei clan has ties to the Islamic fundamentalist movement.