

ISRAEL CAUTIOUSLY WELCOMES SYRIA'S INTEREST IN ACHIEVING 'TOTAL PEACE'**JTA Staff Report**

WASHINGTON, Sept. 23 (JTA) -- Israel has cautiously welcomed a Syrian statement expressing willingness to establish "total peace" between the two countries.

The statement was made Wednesday by Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa, who met in New York with acting Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger. Both are attending the U.N. General Assembly's opening session.

The remark came a day before peace talks were to recess here Thursday for the Jewish High Holidays, which begin Sunday night.

Sharaa said: "We are willing for total peace, for total withdrawal from the occupied Arab territories."

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has demanded Damascus agree to a "full peace," including open borders, exchange of ambassadors and normalization of relations, before discussing territorial compromise on the Golan Heights.

Sharaa's statement appears to be the furthest the Syrians have gone toward meeting that condition.

Israeli negotiators here said they looked forward to an elaboration of the Syrian foreign minister's statement.

"My curiosity has certainly been aroused by the word 'total,' particularly when applied to the word 'peace,'" said Itamar Rabinovich, chief of the Israeli team negotiating with Syria.

"But we don't need to always hang on to a couple of words," he added. "Both parties have ways and means of amplifying, and I look forward to further amplification of what might be a positive direction."

The Syrian chief negotiator, Mouwafak al-Allaf, seemed to reinforce a positive tone in defining the concept of total peace.

"All that contributes to make the peace genuine and complete -- not partial peace, not a peace that is only on paper, but peace which is in reality between the two sides, and also for all other states and peoples in the region."

Israel Changes Stand On 242

Meanwhile, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said Wednesday that talks with Damascus should be upgraded to the summit level.

"I believe the time has come for Syria's leaders at all levels to meet Israel's leaders at all levels in the light of day," Peres told Israel Radio from New York, where he is attending the General Assembly session.

Peres was echoing an assessment made Tuesday by Prime Minister Rabin, that talks with Syria should be stepped up to a higher level.

The has been speculation in recent days about a possible summit meeting between the Israeli prime minister and Syrian President Hafez Assad, though both Israeli and U.S. officials have denied that any such plans are in the works.

In the talks with the Palestinians, meanwhile, Israel has reportedly affirmed that the exchange of land for peace called for in U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 applies to an eventual settlement in the West Bank and Gaza

Strip, although not to an interim accord on self-government.

This would represent a change from the policy of the previous Likud government, which never accepted the application of 242 to all the territories Israel captured in the Six-Day War.

Israel's position was conveyed verbally to the Palestinians by Elyakim Rubinstein, chief of the Israeli delegation to the talks in Washington, according to Chemi Shalev, diplomatic correspondent of the Labor-affiliated Davar newspaper.

But Jerusalem has not agreed to spell out this position in writing, Shalev reported.

If true, the move represents a significant step by the Rabin government in the direction of implementing positions it espoused in its election platform.

Arab negotiators have complained that Israel has been less forthcoming than the positions laid out in that platform.

Golan Settlers Meet With Rabin

Israel's willingness earlier this month to apply Resolution 242 to the Golan Heights was seen as a breakthrough in the talks between Israel and Syria.

But that position has created a storm of public controversy in Israel over the future of the Golan Heights.

Four settlers from Moshav Neveh Ativ in the Golan ended a 175-mile march from home Wednesday at a meeting in Jerusalem with Rabin, where they registered their opposition to territorial concessions on the northern plateau.

The settlers said Rabin received them warmly and told them he cared about the Golan. But he made no promises, at least not for the record.

Nevertheless, the settlers said they came out of the meeting encouraged. They presented the prime minister with a New Year's gift of apples and honey produced in the Golan.

Immediately after the meeting, they prepared to return home, this time by car.

Tel Aviv Mayor Shlomo Lahat, who often takes stands sharply at odds with his own Likud party, has repeated his belief that withdrawal from the Golan Heights is "inevitable."

He told Israel Radio on Tuesday: "In return for a peace agreement, with guarantees, and in a gradual manner rather than at one blow, with mutual trust, I am certainly in favor of the return of territories for peace."

"That has been my belief since the Six Day War, and my views have not changed," he said.

(Contributing to this report were JTA correspondents David Landau in Jerusalem and Hugh Orgel in Tel Aviv.)

TWO MORE ISRAELIS ATTACKED IN LATEST OF TERROR INCIDENTS
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Sept. 23 (JTA) -- A yeshiva student in Jerusalem and a farmer in northern Israel were targets of terrorist attacks Wednesday. Both men were reported out of danger.

The assaults came one day after a border policeman was shot dead by a 20-year-old Palestinian terrorist in East Jerusalem.

The student who was attacked Wednesday

was walking in the Cardo area of the Old City, near the Jewish Quarter, apparently on his way to the Western Wall, when he was stabbed. His wounds were described as light.

And in the north, police arrested a suspect in connection with an assault earlier in the day on Avraham Cohen, who was wounded by pistol shot on his moshav in the Ta'anachim region.

Three assailants are believed to have taken part in that attack.

Tuesday's deadly attack occurred in a northern suburb of the capital. Staff Sgt. Avinoam Peretz was cut down by a hail of bullets from an assault rifle fired point-blank by a terrorist in quasi-military garb.

Peretz was laid to rest Wednesday afternoon in his hometown of Migdal Ha'emek. He was promoted posthumously to sergeant major by the border police commander.

The officer said Peretz's prompt action in stopping the terrorist near a soldiers' hitchhiking stop had averted the loss of many lives.

Meanwhile, the Israel Defense Force and police continued their search in the West Bank for an accomplice or accomplices to the crime, who fled the scene by car.

RUSSIAN MINISTER APPEALS TO U.N. TO SAFEGUARD RIGHTS OF MINORITIES

By Larry Yudelson

UNITED NATIONS, Sept. 23 (JTA) -- In what may be a sign of a new era at the United Nations, Russian Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev has won applause from Jewish groups for his appeal on behalf of minorities in the republics of the former Soviet Union.

The minorities he cited included Jews and ethnic Russians.

In his address Tuesday to the U.N. General Assembly, Kozyrev singled out the situation in the newly independent republics of Estonia and Latvia.

In Estonia, elections were held last week in which 42 percent of the inhabitants were disqualified from voting, on the grounds that they were not native Estonians.

Despite official denials of anti-Semitism, the estimated 3,500 Estonian Jews feel disenfranchised by the citizenship restrictions primarily aimed at Russians who settled in Estonia after its occupation by the Soviet Union in 1940.

A similar situation is developing in Latvia. Kozyrev suggested the United Nations take a greater role in shepherding the former republics to independence, by reviving the old international trusteeship system.

"Today, ever more often, one needs to counter aggressive nationalism that emerges as a new global threat," he said.

While not directly addressing his trusteeship proposal, the National Conference on Soviet Jewry issued a statement welcoming Kozyrev's "most timely expression of concern," adding that such statements send a message to "those who would attempt to tread upon the basic human rights of those who seek to express their religious and ethnic individuality."

The linking of Russians and Jews -- as well as Ukrainians and Byelorussians -- as persecuted minorities deprived of their human rights illustrates the radical changes in the world community, which are having their impact on the United Nations.

For a decade and a half, say Jewish U.N.-watchers, the Soviet Union had kept the United

Nations from dealing with Soviet rights violations by inciting anti-Israel passions and resolutions.

Now the heir to the Soviet seat at the United Nations finds itself making common cause with Israel.

Ukrainian Envoy Picked

Appropriately, the United Nations was also the site Tuesday of another diplomatic advance between Russia and Israel, when Kozyrev and his Israeli counterpart, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, signed a memorandum of understanding outlining their goal of achieving closer ties between the two countries.

Peres also met with representatives from three other former Soviet republics, meetings he characterized as "fine and helpful."

"There's an exceptional atmosphere to Israel from all countries," said Peres. "There's a feeling that Israel took a serious step toward peace, and if there are problems, they are created more by the Arab situation than by the Israeli situation."

On Monday, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Anatoly Zlemko told Peres his country expects to send its first ambassador to Israel next month.

Last May, Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk said that he expected an ambassador to be in place within two months, but he cautioned that first a suitable candidate had to be found.

In his meeting with Peres, Zlemko said his country's minister of the environment had been selected to serve as ambassador, a move, he said, that reflected the importance Ukraine attaches to its relations with Israel.

Along those lines, work will begin soon on drafting joint economic, cultural, scientific and commercial agreements between the two countries.

The Ukrainian president is scheduled to visit Israel in late November or early December.

On Tuesday, the foreign minister of Belarus, Pyotr Kravhanka, expressed a similar desire for joint culture activities. He proposed publication of a trilingual edition of the poetry of Chaim Nachman Bialik.

Peres also met with the president of Armenia, Levon Ter-Petrosian.

Peres took the opportunity of his meeting with Canadian Foreign Minister Barbara MacDougall on Tuesday to express Israel's concern over the proposed Canadian sale of frigates to Saudi Arabia.

MacDougall responded that the decision to go ahead with the sale has not yet been finalized and that no contract has been signed.

Meetings With Cyprus, India

The meeting was one of dozens Peres is holding during the opening session of this 47th U.N. General Assembly.

In another sign of a warming diplomatic climate toward Israel, Peres said he met with the president of Cyprus and discussed the exchange of ambassadors.

On Wednesday, Indian Foreign Minister Eduardo Faleiro assured Peres that his country's first ambassador to Israel will present his credentials next month. The two countries raised their relationship to full diplomatic ties in January.

Besides discussing India's role in the multilateral peace talks, and possibilities of joint agricultural and technological cooperation, Peres raised the issue of two Israeli youths imprisoned in India for possession of hashish.

Faleiro said he would personally look into the cases of Noam Rosenberg and Amit Davidson.

ISRAEL PLANS TO AIRLIFT TAJIK JEWS AS VIOLENCE IN THAT AREA ESCALATES
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Sept. 23 (JTA) -- Israel is planning a large-scale airlift of Jews from the strife-ridden Moslem nation of Tajikistan as soon as logistical problems are solved.

The former Soviet republic has been racked with internecine violence. Some 10,000 of the country's 12,400 Jews have filed applications to immigrate to Israel, Jewish Agency Chairman Simcha Dinitz said here Tuesday.

The first direct flight will depart for Ben-Gurion Airport from the Tajik capital of Dushanbe, hopefully "within a week," after logistical and bureaucratic tangles are worked through.

Dinitz declined to spell out the nature of the problems, saying discretion was advisable in the interest of the would-be olim.

Unlike in other Asian areas of the former Soviet Union, the majority of the Jews in Tajikistan are Ashkenazim.

The Jewish Agency chairman, just back from a 24-hour visit to Moscow, sounded an optimistic note on prospects for aliyah and reported a marked upturn in current immigration figures.

The final week of September will see the arrival of an anticipated 2,000 olim, bringing the figure for the month to more than 6,000, the highest to date in 1992.

With 4,500 olim from the former Soviet Union registered for October flights, totals next month should top 7,000. Thus, despite the early "lean" months, Dinitz expects the year's total to reach 70,000.

By 1993, the monthly average should be hitting 10,000, with more than 100,000 arriving by year's end, he said.

Dinitz said this was not yet a renewed "wave" of aliyah. "But it is certainly an upswing, with current aliyah figures and the future outlook improving right across the former USSR," he said.

RUSSIAN JEWS TEACHING MUSIC TO ARAB CHILDREN IN ISRAEL
By Gil Sedan

BAKA AL-GHARBIYA, Israel, Sept. 23 (JTA) -- The Russians are coming -- this time to an Arab village near Hadera, which has welcomed eight Jewish emigres, who will teach music to their children.

Some 200 Arab youngsters are enjoying top-quality music instruction at the village's new music center. And the newcomers from the former Soviet Union have found steady jobs in a tight market.

The center is the first of its kind in an Arab community. It is a joint venture of the Absorption and Education ministries, the Jewish Agency and the Histadrut labor federation.

Students pay a symbolic 50 shekels a month (about \$20) for lessons at the center, which has a faculty of 10.

Alla Bachodina, who taught electric guitar for 10 years at a St. Petersburg conservatory, says she enjoys teaching Arab children as much as she did their Russian counterparts. "Neither they nor we speak Hebrew too well. So far as language is concerned, we get along just fine."

None of the teachers had reservations about working in the village, despite widespread mistrust of Arabs among Russian immigrants.

"On the contrary," says Bachodina, "Arab

children are easier to teach. Unlike many Jewish children, they listen."

Kusai Ghanayem, the director of the center, said it represented a major step forward in teaching music to Arab youngsters.

Ghanayem said he, too, had to overcome certain reservations existing in the Arab sector in respect to the Russian influx.

"But I got over my hesitation quickly. This was an opportunity to introduce something new, and I would not miss it."

Ghanayem said the undertaking illustrated that the Arabs of Israel, too, could benefit from the new wave of aliyah.

FERRIS MORA STAGE RALLY IN JERUSALEM TO PROTEST LIMITED ENTRY INTO COUNTRY
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Sept. 23 (JTA) -- Relatives of the Ferris Mora -- descendants of Ethiopian Jews whose ancestors converted to Christianity -- have begun a sit-down strike here to protest a government decision to allow only 100 of the group into Israel.

"One hundred is not enough," said a group spokesman.

"These are our brothers," said Shmuel Maharat. They are "Jews who made it to Addis Ababa in the hope of getting to Israel."

Some 4,000 Ferris Mora have left their villages and fled to the Ethiopian capital because of harassment by their neighbors. They are reportedly waiting in Addis Ababa for Israel to open its gates to them.

The sit-down follows a recent decision by the Cabinet Aliyah Committee to permit 100 of the group, who have close relatives here and whose cases have been individually considered, to enter the country.

The Ferris Mora, who are presently Christian, claim Jewish descent and say there were converted against their will long ago. Estimates vary widely as to how many of the group live in Ethiopia, and how many want to immigrate to Israel. Some put their numbers in hundreds, others in hundreds of thousands.

A government-appointed fact-finding team that visited Ethiopia earlier this year reported that the Ferris Mora, to all intents and purposes, live as Christians.

The team recommended against their early aliyah to Israel, but said efforts might be made while they are in Ethiopia to return them to the Jewish faith.

Jewish Agency Chairman Simcha Dinitz said Monday that the government determines immigration policy and that the agency has no decision-making function. "Nor are we a theological agency," he added, in reference to the halachic aspects of the issue.

But Jewish Agency experts who spent long periods of time in Ethiopia had reached conclusions about the Ferris Mora compatible with the findings guiding government policy, he said.

At the same time, all cases involving reunion of close family members need quick resolution, he said.

"It is inconceivable that family reunion be prevented because one or another party belongs to the Ferris Mora," said Dinitz. "The humanitarian aspect cries out for solution."

Still, the Ethiopian government does not view the group as Jewish and strongly objects to any attempt to bring them to Israel, he said.

CONGRESS RUSHING TO FINISH WORK ON LOAN GUARANTEES, OTHER BILLS

By Cynthia Mann

States News Service

WASHINGTON, Sept. 23 (JTA) -- With a little more than a week left before adjournment, Congress is rushing to authorize loan guarantees for Israel and may act on other legislation of vital interest to the Jewish community.

The Senate Appropriations Committee on Wednesday afternoon began marking up a bill with authorization for \$2 billion in loan guarantees to help Israel absorb immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

The money is the first installment of a five-year, \$10 billion loan deal hammered out by the Bush administration and the new Labor-led government of Israel. It follows bitter wrangling over the conditions of the loans imposed by the United States on Israel's former Likud government.

The legislation under consideration skirts the specifics of some of the biggest controversies, such as the construction of Jewish settlements in the territories. It apparently leaves such matters to the two governments to negotiate.

President Bush had conditioned the guarantees on an Israeli freeze on such construction, a condition rejected by former Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

But Shamir's successor, Yitzhak Rabin, has announced a halt to construction of new units in the territories, other than those units already being built.

The legislation leaves wide discretion to the president to suspend the loans if he determines the "terms and conditions have been breached."

It also stipulates the president's authority to deduct from the guarantees the amount of money expended by Israel on "activities which the president determines are inconsistent with the objectives" of the loans.

The legislation is expected to be approved by the Senate and then incorporated into a House-Senate compromise bill that would then have to be adopted by each chamber before adjournment, which is now anticipated by Oct. 4.

Two Bills On F-15 Sale

The measure is expected to pass, largely due to Israel's willingness to pick up the entire cost of underwriting the guarantees to ensure U.S. taxpayers bear none of the burden.

The legislation also acknowledges the need for continuing consultation between the two governments to promote Israeli economic reforms, such as budget reforms, privatization, trade liberalization and deregulation.

And it restricts the use of the guarantees to areas within Israel's pre-1967 borders.

Also working its way through Congress are two legislative initiatives intended to either thwart or condition the proposed sale of 72 advanced F-15 fighter aircraft to Saudi Arabia, announced by Bush on Sept. 11.

The president coupled that announcement with a pledge that he would not allow the sale to alter the region's military balance or erode Israel's qualitative military edge.

Pro-Israel Rep. Howard Berman (D-Calif.) has co-authored a bill to block the sale. On Wednesday, before a joint hearing of two House Foreign Affairs subcommittees, Berman conceded he had no illusions the bill would pass.

But he said he hoped his resolution would

sound an alarm that such a sale would seriously escalate the Middle East arms race and affirm the U.S. role as "premier arms peddler to the world."

The U.S. defense industry has worked assiduously to promote the F-15 sale on Capitol Hill as a jobs preservation program, a promotion hard for lawmakers to resist so close to the elections.

Eyes Also On Religion Freedom Bill

Rep. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) said Thursday at the same hearing that he agreed Congress could not muster enough votes to block the sale, which automatically goes through after 30 days if no resolution of disapproval is adopted.

But Schumer said "it is imperative Congress take more than symbolic action to address" the threat to Israel.

To that end, he has authored a bill to condition the sale on a formal Saudi renunciation of the Arab boycott of Israel, including the so-called secondary boycott of U.S. firms that do business with Israel, which he said costs American companies tens of millions of dollars annually.

Frank Wisner, U.S. undersecretary of state for international security assistance, testified that the sale was consistent with the president's commitment to Middle East arms control.

Jewish groups, meanwhile, are hoping that another bill, the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, will move quickly and be passed before lawmakers leave town.

The bill was conceived of as a way to reverse the impact of the Supreme Court's 1990 decision in Employment Division vs. Smith, which, Jewish groups contend, sharply limited the First Amendment's protection of the free exercise of religion.

The Smith decision obliterated the standard used by courts for years, which had barred government interference with an individual's religious practice unless it could demonstrate a "compelling interest" in doing so.

Marc Stern, a lawyer for the American Jewish Congress who helped draft the legislation, said the stakes are high.

"If we have to start again next year, we'll have to start from scratch," he said. "And with one-third of the House new, it would mean a significant delay."

SECOND-CENTURY CITY UNEARTHED IN GALILEE

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Sept. 22 (JTA) -- Impressive remains of an ancient center of Jewish learning have been uncovered in Galilee.

A second-century colonnaded avenue was turned up at the site of Sepphoris, seat of the Sanhedrin in the third century and home of Judah Hanasi, compiler of the Mishnah.

The finds at present day Zippori were reported by the Hebrew University Institute of Archaeology, which is conducting the dig in cooperation with the National Parks Authority, the Israel Exploration Society and the Galilee Foundation.

A second-century paved limestone road was found still pitted by the ruts left by wagon wheels. Remains of columns have been turned up along 60 feet of an avenue believed to be the main avenue of the city.

Known also as Diocæsarea, the site was also an important Roman and early Christian city.

The excavations will be incorporated into a planned tourism site.