

**LATEST STATE DEPT. APPOINTMENTS
WELCOMED BY PRO-ISRAEL COMMUNITY****By Deborah Kalb
States News Service**

WASHINGTON, Jan. 19 (JTA) -- A series of high-level State Department appointments announced this week have left American Jewish groups feeling reassured that Bill Clinton's administration will put a high priority on the Middle East peace talks and on maintaining a strong U.S.-Israel relationship.

Among the nominations announced Tuesday were Samuel Lewis, a former U.S. ambassador to Israel, as director of policy planning and Edward Djerejian, who will retain his post as assistant secretary of state for Near East and South Asian affairs.

Sources said the Clinton team was also close to naming Martin Indyk, head of the pro-Israel Washington Institute for Near East Policy, to a National Security Council post responsible for at least part of the array of Middle East issues.

That appointment would be welcomed by many Jewish groups, but no official announcement has been made.

In addition, Dennis Ross, who held the policy planning post when James Baker was secretary of state, has been asked to stay on as a special State Department adviser. Ross has played a key role in facilitating the Arab-Israeli peace talks.

Others indications that the new administration will focus quickly on the Middle East were reports this week that Secretary of State-designate Warren Christopher would travel to the Middle East next month and that the new president himself is interested in an early meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

Christopher was unanimously confirmed as secretary of state by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Tuesday. The full Senate was expected to vote on the nomination Wednesday.

'A Clearly Outstanding Team'

According to sources in the pro-Israel community, Christopher would like to visit Israel and several Arab countries, possibly including some Persian Gulf states, in February. But there was no official confirmation of such plans from Clinton officials.

In Israel, the respected daily newspaper Ha'aretz reported that the new administration is prepared to set an early date for a meeting between Clinton and Rabin, but only if the crisis over Israel's deportation of over 400 Palestinians to Lebanon is resolved by then.

The Israeli premier has repeatedly signaled that he wants to meet the new president in advance of the major decisions the Israeli government must make if the peace talks with Syria, the Palestinians, Jordan and Lebanon are to make real progress toward agreements.

In the United States, meanwhile, Jewish groups praised the latest additions to the Clinton foreign policy team.

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chair of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said the individuals named Tuesday, together with the projected selection of

Indyk, would complement the appointments already announced.

These individuals "are familiar with the region and supportive of the peace process," he said.

Steven Grossman, president of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, praised the State Department appointments and the recent addition of Nancy Soderberg to the National Security Council staff.

The appointees represent a "clearly outstanding team that understands the Middle East, is committed to the peace process and is committed to the Bill Clinton vision of the peace process, which is to see the U.S. as a catalyst" in the negotiations, he said.

"At critical points in the campaign, Gov. Clinton expressed commitment to a strong U.S.-Israel relationship, and to the Middle East peace process," said Jason Isaacson, director of the office of government and international affairs of the American Jewish Committee. "These appointees are eminently qualified to follow through on those commitments."

Special Praise For Lewis

Jewish organizational officials were particularly pleased with the appointment of Lewis, who served as U.S. ambassador to Israel in the early 1980s, to the policy planning post.

Lewis is "viewed in a very positive way by the Jewish community," said Jess Hordes, Washington representative of the Anti-Defamation League.

Mark Pelavin, Washington representative of the American Jewish Congress, called the appointment a "terrific" one. "He's a guy well-respected in all quarters," Pelavin said.

"Sam Lewis is first-rate," agreed Gail Pressberg, president-designate of Americans for Peace Now.

The policy planning position took on great importance in the Bush administration, with Baker giving Ross major responsibility for coordinating the Middle East peace talks. It is not yet clear how Christopher will divide responsibilities among Lewis, Ross and Djerejian, a career diplomat who previously served as U.S. ambassador to Syria.

Pressberg of Peace Now called Djerejian "a top-notch professional" who would probably keep his experienced team in place.

Pelavin of AJCongress said Djerejian is respected on "all sides." He added, "Lewis and Djerejian are committed to the peace process, and that's really important."

"Both bring a tremendous amount of skill and insight" to the peace process, said Dan Mariaschin, director of international, governmental and Israel affairs for B'nai B'rith International.

Other high-level State Department nominations announced Tuesday include Peter Tarnoff, as undersecretary for political affairs, which is the No. 3 position at State; Lynn Davis, as undersecretary for international security affairs, a position with responsibility for arms sales; and former U.S. Sen. Tim Wirth (D-Colo.), who was named to a new position with eventual responsibility for global issues, including human rights.

(Contributing to this report was JTA correspondent David Landau in Jerusalem.)

**PANEL URGES LETTING FERRIS MORA
COME TO ISRAEL, BUT NOT AS JEWS**
By Gil Sedan and David Landau

JERUSALEM, Jan. 19 (JTA) -- After months of deliberations, a ministerial committee has made a landmark decision to recommend that Israel allow the immigration of the Ferris Mora from Ethiopia as individuals but not recognize them as Jews under the Law of Return.

The Ferris Mora, Ethiopians whose ancestors were Jews who converted to Christianity, are estimated to number between 20,000 and 50,000.

The committee, headed by Absorption Minister Yair Tsaban, recommended that the Ferris Mora not be admitted as a group under the state's Law of Return -- which guarantees automatic immigration for Jews -- but rather that they be admitted on an individual basis and according to such criteria as reunification with family members already in Israel.

At a news conference Tuesday, Tsaban refused to say how many people would be allowed to make aliyah under the proposal, but said he believed a large part of the community would be eligible under the suggested guidelines.

Leaders of the Israeli Ethiopian community expressed strong disappointment with the ministerial recommendation, which effectively said that the Ferris Mora should not be considered as Jews for the purposes of the Law of Return.

The committee did not, however, say whether the Ferris Mora are Jewish according to halachah, or Jewish law.

Members of the sect live as Christians but maintain ties to other family members and villagers who are Jewish.

Some 1,200 of them managed to board the planes to Israel during "Operation Solomon" in May 1991, when most of Ethiopia's Jews were airlifted to Israel.

About 4,000 Ferris Mora are now waiting in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital, hoping to immigrate to Israel. Thousands more live in rural areas.

In reaction to the committee's recommendation, the United Ethiopian Jewish Organization, an umbrella group, demanded that all Ferris Mora be allowed to make aliyah under the Law of Return. It claimed that Israel's chief rabbinical council has recognized them as Jews.

and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, represented by his deputy, Yossi Beilin.

Although the committee believed that the Ferris Mora did not meet the requirements of the Law of Return as a group, it noted that some individuals may qualify.

Those individual Ferris Mora who are allowed to immigrate would not necessarily be considered Jews themselves and would not automatically be entitled to the usual benefits granted to new Jewish immigrants.

The committee rejected, however, proposals that Israel be officially involved in a reconversion of the Ferris Mora to Judaism. That idea was rejected partly out of concern that the Ethiopian authorities would object.

According to the proposed guidelines of family reunification, any child, spouse, parent or sibling of an Ethiopian in Israel would be allowed to make aliyah.

Tsaban said there were dozens of urgent cases to be resolved, such as children who had arrived on Operation Solomon two years ago but whose parents were left behind.

The Israeli consul in Addis Ababa, assisted by a special team of consular officials in the Gondar province, would select those Ethiopians eligible for immigration.

An advisory body, appointed by the interior minister and including representatives of both the relevant governmental authorities and the Ethiopian Jewish community, would have the power to expand the categories of eligible immigrants.

Under the ministerial proposal, family reunification could be extended to relatives of "different degrees of relationships, should their remaining in Ethiopia place them in isolation or in grave distress."

In its news conference, the committee complimented the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee for its efforts to assist some 2,800 of the Ferris Mora presently in Addis Ababa.

A spokesman for JDC in Jerusalem said that the organization would handle no new cases from Gondar, since the recommendations of the ministerial committee offered a systematic way of processing applicants for emigration to Israel.

**ISRAELI GUARD SERIOUSLY HURT
IN WEST BANK SHOOTING INCIDENT**
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Jan. 19 (JTA) -- An Israeli guarding a gasoline tanker truck in the West Bank town of Beit Sahur was shot and seriously injured in an apparent terrorist attack Tuesday.

The guard, Yoram Fahima, 22, was accompanying the truck driver to the gas station office after the station's tanks were filled with gas.

The attacker appeared from nearby, shooting the guard at pointblank range. The assailant then tried to shoot the driver as well, but failed to do so because his pistol malfunctioned.

The attacker escaped from the scene with the guard's pistol, apparently with the help of an accomplice. The Israeli army clamped a curfew on Beit Sahur, a predominantly Arab Christian town near Bethlehem, and the manhunt for the attacker continued Tuesday evening.

There was still no further news in the search for the murderer of General Security Service agent Haim Nahmani. Security forces last week detained two suspects in the murder, but the third person believed to have taken part in the killing was still at large.

Fears Of Being 'Flooded By Blacks'

Adisu Messala, chairman of the association, stood outside the hall where the news conference was held and reacted bitterly to the news:

"If we are equal-rights citizens of Israel, we will not allow ourselves to be separated from our relatives. We will continue our struggle until the last Ethiopian Jew comes out of Israel, otherwise we will never feel like Jews ourselves," he said.

Avshalom Elitzur of the Public Committee for the Ferris Mora accused the government of discrimination, claiming that the administration feared "the country might be flooded by blacks."

Elitzur said the recommendations in effect constituted Zionist treason, since Israel was turning its back on Jews in distress.

He blamed Absorption Minister Tsaban for "running away" from the challenge of absorbing such a large number of Jews.

The ministerial committee, set up months ago to study the controversial issue, includes, besides Tsaban: Tourism Minister Uzi Baram, Interior Minister Arye Deri, Justice Minister David Libai

ISRAELI NEWSPAPER WINS APPEAL AGAINST GOVERNMENT CENSORSHIP

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Jan. 19 (JTA) -- The daily newspaper Hadashot won a court appeal Tuesday against the Israeli government in a decision that appeared to throw into question the way the country's military censorship currently works.

Hadashot was appealing a 9-year-old conviction for violating a press censorship law when it published articles about the April 1984 hijacking of an Egged passenger bus and the subsequent storming of the vehicle by Israeli security forces.

While storming the bus, Israeli security forces shot dead two of the four terrorists who hijacked the bus on its way from Tel Aviv to Ashkelon.

The other two attackers were photographed being led out of the bus alive, despite the fact that the government initially said that all four terrorists had died on the bus.

The two men apparently died while in custody, and orders to shoot them reportedly had been issued by Avraham Shalom, then head of the General Security Services, known popularly as the Shin Bet.

Shalom later resigned over the ensuing scandal.

Hadashot published the damaging photograph and also disclosed that a secret commission had been established to investigate the killing of the two captured terrorists by security forces.

Paper Closed For Three Days

The government's military censor closed down the paper for three days and sued it for breaking the censorship laws.

As a result of the suit, three of Hadashot's editors were fined by the court.

The severe disciplinary action was partially due to the fact that Hadashot was not a member of the Chief Military Censor-Editors Committee. This is a body that can substitute negotiations between the government and offending newspapers for the automatic legal action that otherwise results.

Hadashot appealed the fines originally imposed by the Tel Aviv Magistrate's Court to a higher district court, which Tuesday cleared the paper of any wrongdoing.

The district court ruled that while the chief military censor had issued a general notification to the media of "sensitive" topics which required pre-publication censorship review, the censorship list had never been codified in law as required.

The decision appeared to call into question the very basis on which military censorship presently works.

Military sources said the censor's office had not yet studied the new ruling and had not decided whether to take further steps against Hadashot.

The military censor's office came under scrutiny recently when it took action against foreign correspondents, including the withdrawal of press credentials, because these reporters failed to submit copy to censors for pre-publication examination.

In response to criticism over that incident, the military censor agreed to advise reporters about items considered "delicate."

That move by the censor would relieve reporters of the responsibility to make that decision themselves.

CABINET AGAIN APPROVES APPOINTMENT OF RABINOVICH AS AMBASSADOR TO U.S.

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Jan. 19 (JTA) -- Israel's Cabinet has reconfirmed its decision to appoint Itamar Rabinovich ambassador to the United States, and he is now expected to take up the post Feb. 5.

The Cabinet's original appointment of Rabinovich, who currently heads Israel's bilateral negotiations with Syria, was put in doubt when the Israeli news media reported that he had recently paid a voluntary indemnity to tax authorities for money earned in the United States several years ago.

The revelation prompted a Likud Knesset member to petition the High Court of Justice to invalidate the ambassadorial posting, on the grounds that the Cabinet did not know of Rabinovich's tax problem when it originally approved the appointment.

The court last week issued a temporary injunction barring Rabinovich from taking up the post until it could consider the merits of Knesset member Gonen Segev's petition.

But the court case now appears to be moot, since the Cabinet has again approved the appointment, this time with the knowledge of his tax problems.

The Cabinet on Sunday also confirmed Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's appointment of Elyakim Rubinstein as Cabinet secretary.

Rubinstein, who heads the Israeli team negotiating with Jordan and the Palestinians, served as Cabinet secretary under the previous government and was retained by Rabin for a temporary three-month term that was extended by a further three months.

Now his appointment has been made permanent.

An earlier move, backed by Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, to appoint Shlomo Ben-Ami as Cabinet secretary apparently fell through.

Ben-Ami, an academic expert on Spain, recently wound up a highly successful tour of duty as Israeli ambassador to that country.

Having lost the Cabinet post, he is now mentioned as a candidate for Foreign Ministry director-general, a post that falls vacant later this year with the expected retirement of incumbent Yosef Hadass.

KYRGYZ LEADER ARRIVES IN ISRAEL AND OFFERS PRAYER FOR PALESTINE

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Jan. 19 (JTA) -- The president of the former Soviet republic of Kyrgyzstan began a three-day visit to Israel this week by offering a prayer here for eventual Palestinian independence.

At a formal welcoming ceremony Tuesday in the Jerusalem Rose Gardens opposite the Knesset, President Askar Askaev said he would "pray to God to end the longstanding conflict between Israel and the Palestinian people," and added his hope that independence would eventually be won by the Palestinians.

Askaev arrived Monday night on what is the first visit to Israel by the president of one of the Moslem republics of the former Soviet Union. He held talks with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

A prominent physicist by training, the 48-year-old president invited the Israeli minister of science, Shimon Shetreet, to visit his country.

FOR MANY JAPANESE TABLOIDS, ANTI-SEMITISM IS FIT TO PRINT

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES, Jan. 19 (JTA) -- Pundits have attributed Bill Clinton's presidential victory to economic, generational and psychological factors, but readers of the Japanese tabloid press know better: Clinton won thanks to the machinations of Jewish-Zionist plotters.

"A select group of Japanese editors and commentators charges that Clinton's road to the White House has been paved by a conspiracy of American Jewish political interests, world Jewish capital and Zionist opinion leaders orchestrated from Tel Aviv."

So writes David Williams from Tokyo in a recent issue of the Los Angeles Times. Williams has taught Japanese government at Oxford University and is the author of "Japan: Beyond the End of History," to be published this year.

In his article, Williams criticizes both the United States and Japan for the chauvinistic prejudices each country holds of the other, but he concentrates on the hysterical anti-Jewish attacks that permeate Tokyo's tabloid weeklies.

One such publication, Shukan Gendai (Contemporary Weekly), carried a cover story on "President-elect Clinton's 'Jewish Strategy Towards Japan.'"

Across two pages, the headline shouted, "Jewish Capital That Pulls the Strings in the Clinton Administration and Its Frightening Plans for Japan."

The goal of the Jewish string-pullers, the weekly continued, is "to disguise America's troubles by attacking Japan, to exploit the U.S.-Japan security pact to fetter this country and to shift blame for America's economic failure onto Japanese shoulders."

According to Masatake Takahashi, described by Williams as one of Japan's legion of self-proclaimed foreign policy experts, the final ambition of the "Zionists" is "to throw Japanese society into disorder."

To more sophisticated readers, such rantings are taken as "yomi-mono" (chewing gum for the eyes), writes Williams, but he warns that "anti-Semitism, first lighted by the high-yen recession of the mid-1980s, and now reignited by Japan's post-bubble business downturn, is becoming a whole climate of opinion."

Japan 'At The Mercy Of The Jews'

In such a climate, a sports tabloid can alert its readers that a popular Japanese professional wrestler is "the target of Jewish capital" and a serious newspaper can assert that the plot of a Woody Allen comedy turns on Jewish domination of American radio broadcasting.

At the same time, thousands of Japanese snatch up anti-Semitic books, such as Ryu Ohta's "The Global Strategy of the Seven Great Jewish Zaibatsu (Plutocrats)," Go Akama's "The Jewish-Christian Conspiracy" and Masami Uno's "Understand the Jews and You'll Understand Japan."

The last work carries the subtitle, "As the time approaches when a hollowed-out Japan will be at the mercy of the Jews."

The flood of anti-Semitic outpourings has not been dammed by the recent diplomatic rapprochement between Tokyo and Jerusalem, nor by the Japanese government's call to Arab countries to ease their boycott of Israel, Williams writes.

Indeed, few Japanese voices are raised

against the press' anti-Semitic fantasies. One reason cited by Williams is that "Japan is not an heir to the humanizing influence of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, (which) may explain why Japanese critics of anti-Semitism are so few."

But Neil Sandberg, director of the American Jewish Committee's Pacific Rim Institute since its founding three years ago, cautioned that while the anti-Semitic stories cited by Williams indeed exist, they need to be judged within the context of Japanese society.

Sandberg has dealt regularly with Japanese government and industrial officials on matters affecting Israel and other Jewish concerns.

"There are fewer than 1,000 Jews in Japan and the Japanese know next to nothing about Jews," said Sandberg. "Anti-Semitism in Japan is far less dangerous than in Europe, or even the United States."

Nevertheless, because Japan is becoming a political as well as economic world power, which will eventually export not only goods but ideas, we need to watch manifestations of anti-Semitism in Japan without blowing the problem out of proportion, Sandberg added.

The U.S. Embassy in Tokyo has expressed its concern about attacks on American Jews by sensationalist tabloids, Sandberg said.

His own institute is encouraging serious Japanese publications to carry more objective articles about Israel and Jews, at the same time suggesting that influential Japanese go public with their private criticism of the tabloid tactics.

ENVIRONMENT MINISTER OPPOSES VOA TRANSMITTERS IN THE NEGEV By Hugh Orgel

JERUSALEM, Jan. 19 (JTA) -- Israel's newly appointed minister of the environment, Yossi Sarid, announced this week that he is unequivocally opposed to the construction of Voice of America radio transmitters in the Negev.

The proposed relay transmitters, designed to beam U.S. government-controlled news programs and American propaganda into the former Soviet Union, has long been a festering issue between the United States and Israeli environmentalists opposed to the project.

Sarid, a member of the left-wing Meretz bloc, told reporters Monday: "If I, as environment minister, don't consider the ecological interests in the area, then no one will do it for me."

Sarid was apparently referring to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Communications Minister Moshe Shahal and Sarid's predecessor as environment minister, Ora Namir, who all reportedly favor construction of the powerful relay station.

Namir, who held the Environment Ministry post until she took over as labor and social affairs minister two weeks ago, supported the radio project because she said it would provide employment in the area.

Environmentalists and residents in the area oppose the project, saying that electromagnetic radiation from the transmitters would harm nearby residents as well as interfere with the internal guidance systems of migratory birds passing over the region.

In any case, America's interest in building the transmitters has waned since the breakup of the former Soviet Union. The transmitters are likely to be shifted to Turkey, according to U.S. reports.