

**CHRISTOPHER TO ARRIVE IN ISRAEL
WITH NEW DEMANDS ON DEPORTEES**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Feb. 21 (JTA) -- Israel is expecting to come under pressure to make further concessions on the deportation crisis, following U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher's visit to Arab capitals, where leaders told him Palestinians would boycott the peace talks unless the issue is resolved.

Israeli officials originally believed that a compromise deal worked out with Washington regarding the 415 Palestinians deported by Israel to Lebanon in December had taken the issue off the international agenda and paved the way for a resumption of the peace talks.

However, according to reports received from the Christopher shuttle, both Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and Syrian President Hafez Assad indicated the Palestinians would not return to the talks unless Israel made further concessions.

Israel has offered to take back immediately 101 deportees and the rest by the end of the year, but the Palestinians have rejected the deal.

Mubarak reportedly demanded three concessions: that Israel announce officially it would not resort again to deportations as a punitive measure; that it would accelerate the appeal process by which deportees have an opportunity to get their deportation orders canceled; and that the deportees be allowed to stay in the Israeli-controlled security zone of southern Lebanon until they return home.

Egypt reportedly suggested a third of the deportees be returned immediately, another third be returned in April and the rest by June.

No Official Change In Policy

Christopher, who was to arrive in Jerusalem on Monday, was not expected to exert direct pressure on Israel for further concessions, so as not to retreat from his agreement with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

However, it was expected here that he would convey to Israel the feeling in the Arab world that without further concessions, progress in the peace talks would be slow and the Palestinians would not show up at the negotiating table.

At the end of his visit to Jordan over the weekend, Christopher said Israel should find "soon" a way of allowing the return of most of the deportees.

Officially, there has been no further change in the Israeli position on the deportees since Rabin made his compromise offer. However, Israel is reportedly weighing several gestures of good will toward the Palestinians in the territories.

Such moves might include cutting terminal fees at the Allenby Bridge, used by Palestinian families crossing between Israel and Jordan, as well as new economic policies to facilitate Palestinian enterprises.

Israeli leaders said they did not expect any progress in the peace process before Rabin visits the United States next month and meets with President Clinton.

Mubarak has also been invited to meet with Clinton, but according to reports from Jordan, an invitation was not extended to King Hussein.

**NEWS ANALYSIS:
PALESTINIAN LEADERS TAKING CUES
FROM THE STREET ABOUT PEACE TALKS**
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Feb. 21 (JTA) -- Palestinians in the administered territories are awaiting the arrival of U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher here Monday in their all-too-familiar position: sitting on the fence.

If it were up to the Palestine Liberation Organization and its representatives in the territories, the negotiators would catch the earliest plane to Washington and return to the Middle East peace talks.

But Palestinians "in the street" are no longer solidly behind PLO-directed leaders such as Faisal Husseini and Hanan Ashrawi.

The last time Palestinian politics was firmly within the control of these secular nationalists was in November 1991, after the peace conference in Madrid.

Since then, ordinary Palestinians have drifted away from their traditional leadership, toward the extremes. The shift has meant a rise in popularity and strength for the Islamic fundamentalist movement, led by the Hamas organization.

There is no love lost between the secular and the fundamentalist Palestinian leaders in the territories. But when Israel deported 415 Hamas activists and supporters to Lebanon in December, the PLO and its affiliated leadership in the territories were forced to show complete solidarity with them. The "street" demanded it.

As long as the deportees had complete support in the international arena and the United Nations was threatening sanctions, there was no Palestinian dilemma.

Pressure From Egypt, Syria

But now that the United Nations has, in effect, endorsed Israel's compromise offer to accept back 101 deportees, Palestinian leaders face a difficult question: whether or not to resume the peace process without having achieved full reversal of the deportations.

Their Arab brethren, Egypt in particular but also Syria, are pressing the Palestinians to join the peace bandwagon.

In a series of intensive diplomatic consultations among Arab leaders since the beginning of the month, the Palestinians received a clear message: Now that Israel owed the new American administration for helping it in the deportees crisis, it might be easier to squeeze concessions out of Israel.

The Palestinians have again been warned not to miss an opportunity.

But the "street" seems to want nothing less than all of the deportees returned before the Palestinian delegation can rejoin the peace talks. And the leaders have been forced to follow the will of their people.

"We are finished if we do it," said Radi Jarai, a member of the advisory board to the Palestinian delegation.

Ironically, even the leader of the deportees in Lebanon, Dr. Abdul Aziz Ghantissi, made a moderate statement recently.

Welcoming a statement by Foreign Minister

Shimon Peres that the deportations were not "a policy, but rather an exception to a policy," Ghanitissi went on record as saying that if Israel "denounced" the expulsions, the deportees would "re-evaluate" their stand.

Settling For 20 Percent

Israel, of course, did not denounce a move backed by nearly the entire Cabinet. But Ghanitissi's statement was seen as an indication that the deportees themselves are ready for a settlement that would not necessarily return all of them home immediately.

But the "street" apparently speaks even stronger than the deportees themselves.

"The peace process will reach the end of the road now" if a U.N. Security Council resolution insisting on the deportees' return "is not implemented immediately," Ghassan al-Khatib, a member of the Palestinian peace delegation, wrote in the East Jerusalem daily Al-Kuds.

"If we accept the return of 101 deportees, which amounts to 20 percent of the total number of deportees," delegation member Saeb Erekat said at a rally in eastern Jerusalem, "they will ask us in the future to settle for 20 percent of Resolution 242," the U.N. document outlining the land-for-peace principle.

Following the Security Council's Feb. 12 decision to strike the deportation issue from its agenda, Nasser al-Kidwa, the PLO representative to the United Nations, ruled out continued peace talks unless the deportees were all returned home.

Time is running out for the Palestinians. As Christopher headed for the Middle East last week, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin reiterated that Israel is ready for a territorial compromise on the Golan Heights, a clear signal to the Palestinians that there are other partners to the peace talks.

For the time being, the Palestinian leaders are refusing to read that signal. They want to join the peace process but are afraid of being ambushed by the growing support for the Moslem fundamentalists.

And so they sit on the fence, fearing disaster on either side. It will be Christopher's job to coax them down -- on the right side.

U.S. SAID TO HAVE PRESSED SYRIA ON HALT IN TRAVEL FOR JEWS THERE

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Feb. 21 (JTA) -- Syria's halt in granting travel visas to its Jewish community was expected to have been discussed in the high-level U.S.-Syrian meetings held in Damascus over the weekend, advocates for Syrian Jewry say.

The activists say that both U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher and Edward Djerejian, a former ambassador to Syria who is now the assistant secretary of state responsible for the Middle East, had been approached on the matter.

Since Oct. 20, Syria has almost entirely stopped allowing Jews to leave the country, reversing a 6-month-old policy of permitting free travel abroad for Jews.

"About three a week come out, sporadically, but they're up to the old trick of keeping family members behind," said Seymour Reich, president of the American Zionist Movement and head of the Task Force on Syrian Jewry of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Reich and others say that behind Syrian President Hafez Assad's election-eve reversal of

the free travel policy was a desire to renegotiate the terms of the deal he had achieved with then-President Bush. The free travel policy was first announced through the White House last April.

On the campaign trail, Bill Clinton took a tougher line against Syria than did the Bush administration. Christopher's Middle East visit is the first chance for the new administration and Assad to size each other up. It is a pivotal moment, therefore, for the 1,450 Jews remaining in Syria, of whom 1,000 seek travel visas.

Activists are deliberately keeping a low profile on the issue, "to give Christopher an opportunity," said Reich.

They also want to avoid being seen as "bashing" Syria.

In addition to the expected representations from the State Department, the campaign is being fought through Congress, where lawmakers are being asked to make one-minute statements from the floor of the House of Representatives on behalf of Syrian Jews and convey their concerns to the Syrian ambassador.

"We want to be clear to Assad that we will not forget what he promised," said Abraham Bayer, a member of the task force and director of international concerns for the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council.

BUSH MAY HAVE HAD POLITICAL MOTIVE IN REJECTING CLEMENCY FOR POLLARD

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Feb. 21 (JTA) -- An advocate for Jonathan Pollard is accusing former President George Bush of "vindictiveness and meanness of spirit" for denying the convicted spy's appeal for clemency just one day before leaving office.

"I was shocked to see the request was rejected," said Seymour Reich, "because we had been led to believe that if the president could not approve it, he would not act on the papers but let his successor act on it."

According to Reich, who is president of the American Zionist Movement, the commutation application has been filed again with the Clinton administration.

The Jan. 19 denial of commutation followed the requests of several prominent Republican Jews for Bush to consider commutation. Given "the requests by people he knows and respects, for him to have denied the application is incomprehensible," said Reich.

But Reich thinks he may have evidence for a motivation in a letter Neil Bush, the president's son, sent in response to an appeal on Pollard's behalf.

The president's son explained that "I have had a policy of not lobbying Dad, a policy I have managed to uphold (for) three years, 11 1/2 months."

Neil Bush went on to write: "Keep up your effective advocacy. Maybe the next guy in the White House will reward the many Jewish organizations that supported him with the commutation you request of Dad."

This, said Reich, appeared disturbingly in keeping with a remark allegedly made by former Secretary of State James Baker, who was reported to have said, though he denies it, "Fuck the Jews, they don't vote for us anyway."

In November, at least 80 percent of the Jewish voters chose Bill Clinton, while George Bush received the lowest Jewish support of any Republican candidate in more than a decade.

LAU, BAKSHI-DORON ELECTED CHIEF RABBIS AFTER BRUISING CAMPAIGN FOR RABBINATE By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Feb. 21 (JTA) -- After a campaign marred by mudslinging and allegations of romantic misconduct, the nation's two new chief rabbis were elected Sunday for 10-year terms.

A 150-member council, made up of both rabbis and secular political leaders, elected Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau of Tel Aviv as Ashkenazic chief rabbi and Rabbi Eliahu Bakshi-Doron of Haifa as Sephardic chief rabbi.

Lau's victory to succeed Rabbi Avraham Shapira as Ashkenazic chief rabbi came following newspaper stories claiming Lau had engaged in improper relationships with women other than his wife.

Lau, a father of eight and a child Holocaust survivor, adamantly denied the womanizing allegations. He even filed a libel suit against one woman who claimed he had once tried to kiss her more than 10 years ago, when he was chief rabbi of Netanya, a position he held for nine years.

Lau was elected Tel Aviv Ashkenazic rabbi in August 1988, by a panel that for the first time included four women members.

The unprecedented dirty campaign that culminated Sunday prompted some Israelis to renew their calls to altogether abolish the state-sponsored institution of the Chief Rabbinate.

In the elections, Lau won 71 of the 142 valid votes cast in the battle for the Ashkenazic post and Bakshi-Doron 82 for the Sephardic one.

Rabbi Simcha Kook of Rehovot took second place with 46 votes and Rabbi Shear Yashuv Cohen of Haifa garnered 25 votes.

In the contest for the Sephardic post, Bakshi-Doron won 82 votes, with Rabbi Haim David Halevi of Tel Aviv coming second with 37 ballots and Rabbi Reuven Abergil of Beersheba collecting 24 votes.

The full 150-member electoral college comprises 80 rabbis and rabbinical court judges, and 70 political and public figures, including mayors, chairmen of religious councils and Knesset members.

Vote Seen As Triumph For Shas

Leaders of Shas, the Orthodox Sephardic party, greeted Bakshi-Doron's triumph as a major achievement for their party.

After the results were announced, Bakshi-Doron paid his respects to his aged mother and then led a jubilant crowd to the Jerusalem home of Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, spiritual mentor of the Shas party.

Bakshi-Doron regards himself as one of the most prominent and loyal disciples of Yosef, who himself served as Sephardic chief rabbi from 1973 to 1983.

Within Shas, Bakshi-Doron's victory is seen as a sort of victory by Yosef against the present incumbent, Rabbi Mordechai Eliahu, and against the politicians who pushed for the law, passed in the early 1980s, that limited the tenure of the chief rabbis to a single term of 10 years.

The law brought to an end Yosef's own term of office. Until then, chief rabbis could be re-elected, and generally were.

Among the Labor Party, key party figures said they now expected Shas Knesset members to line up solidly behind the Labor Party candidate for president of the state, Ezer Weizman, in exchange for the support Labor members of the

electoral college had given Bakshi-Doron in the chief rabbinate elections.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin met with the Labor members of the electoral college last week and instructed them to vote for Bakshi-Doron.

"I don't know much about rabbis. But I do know about keeping agreements with partners," Rabin said.

As for Lau, the new Ashkenazic chief rabbi said in his victory address that he "forgave and absolved everyone" involved in the mudslinging against him during the election campaign.

ISRAELI ENVIRONMENTALISTS HAIL U.S. MOVE TO SCRAP VOA PROJECT By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Feb. 21 (JTA) -- Environmentalists here are rejoicing over the Clinton administration's decision to scrap plans to build a Voice of America relay station in the environmentally sensitive Arava region of the Negev desert.

The Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel, which called a news conference Sunday to savor the news, termed its campaign against the station "the most difficult and drawn-out battle" in its history. It said the campaign's successful end is "a just reward for our extensive efforts."

But Yoav Sagi, chairman of the society, acknowledged there were several factors at play culminating in the decision, which was leaked from Washington but not formally announced.

The \$400 million projected cost of the relay station simply made no sense at a time of U.S. budgetary constraint, said Sagi, especially in light of changing geopolitics.

The station was intended to enhance U.S. broadcasts to the Soviet bloc as an integral part of Cold War strategy. The end of the Cold War has eliminated the project's justification, opponents had argued.

The agreement to build the station was signed between the U.S. and Israeli governments in 1987 and had been heavily promoted by the Board for International Broadcasting, headed by Malcolm Forbes Jr. Advocates said it would have created 600 jobs.

From the start, it was feared the transmitters would endanger what is part of a major bird migration route between Europe and Africa. Environmentalists were also upset that the plans called for the elimination of a nature reserve so that an air force training base could be relocated.

Arava residents and the nature society appealed to the High Court of Justice, which set a precedent by ruling in July 1991 that environmental impact studies of the project had to be considered before any decision could be made. Subsequent studies reinforced their concerns.

The society had spearheaded an international campaign against the project, lobbying the Knesset and the U.S. Congress and in the process enlisting the help of ornithologists and other conservationists worldwide.

It had stepped up its efforts in recent weeks, calling on President Clinton to re-evaluate the project and its "unwarranted damage to the environment."

The current Labor government was also decidedly less enthusiastic about the project than its Likud predecessor.

Israel's Environment Ministry had no comment on the U.S. move and referred inquiries to Sagi's organization, with whom it has worked closely on the controversial plan.

**ADL CATEGORICALLY REJECTS CHARGES
IT'S BEEN SPYING ON ARAB AMERICANS**
By Deborah Kalb
States News Service

WASHINGTON, Feb. 21 (JTA) -- The Anti-Defamation League has dismissed as "rubbish" charges leveled by the Arab American Institute that, in conjunction with U.S. law enforcement agencies, it has been involved for years in conducting surveillance of Arab Americans.

The Arab American Institute released a report titled "The ADL and Arab Americans: A Disturbing Relationship," at a news conference here last week, and ADL was quick to respond.

"This so-called 'study' plays fast and loose with facts in an attempt to tar ADL with a series of alleged civil rights violations against Arab Americans over the past 20 years," ADL National Chairman Melvin Salberg and ADL National Director Abraham Foxman said in a statement.

At the news conference, James Zogby, president of the Arab American Institute, and Khalil Jahshan, executive director of the National Association of Arab Americans, discussed their view that ADL has been involved in a series of incidents targeting the Arab American community over the years.

The charges and denials were played out against a backdrop of reports that the U.S. government has stepped up investigations of American supporters of the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas movement.

Hamas, which is to receive its own listing for the first time in this year's State Department report on global terrorism, has received worldwide attention recently following Israel's deportation of 415 Palestinians, many of whom have ties to the group, and Israel's arrest of two Palestinian Americans accused of funneling money to Hamas activists.

Israeli officials have suggested that the Hamas movement is now being directed by leaders in the United States and Britain.

Complaints About 'Hamas Hysteria'

The Arab American leaders cited the complicated case of a former San Francisco police officer who allegedly spied on Arab Americans and gave information to ADL.

The San Francisco Examiner reported recently that information on one of the men detained in Israel had turned up in the case. The Examiner also reported that ADL denied the man's name was in its files.

"ADL has played a leadership role in promoting civil rights and improved human relations among all Americans over the past 80 years," Salberg and Foxman said in their statement.

"We categorically reject any implication that ADL has acted improperly in pursuing its mission of combatting anti-Semitism, bigotry, extremism, terrorism and anti-Israel propaganda in America," they said.

The ADL statement concluded by saying, "This is not the first time that subjects of ADL information reports have attempted to undermine the credibility of the league through the use of smear and innuendo. We will not be deterred from exercising our legitimate and constitutional rights."

George Shadroui, director of communications for the Arab American Institute, said that at the news conference, Arab American leaders asked why it is seen as illegitimate for Arab Americans

to raise money for Arab causes, when it is acceptable for Jewish Americans to raise money for Jewish causes.

Shadroui said he is concerned that with the current "Hamas hysteria," a pattern will be repeated in which Arab Americans are all "tainted" with the terrorist label. "It's not fair," he said.

The Arab American Institute's report called on ADL and other Jewish groups to "work with Arab Americans, rather than defame and demonize our people and institutions."

**COURT DISMISSES SUIT BY AN EX-NAZI
TO INVALIDATE ACCORD TO LEAVE U.S.**

WASHINGTON, Feb. 21 (JTA) -- A federal court has dismissed a suit filed by ex-Nazi scientist Arthur Rudolph seeking to invalidate a 9-year-old agreement in which Rudolph agreed to permanently leave the United States in exchange for avoiding criminal prosecution for war crimes.

A federal judge in San Jose, Calif., dismissed the suit filed by Rudolph, a manager of a German V-2 missile production facility during World War II, the Department of Justice announced last week.

Rudolph, who sought to clear his name by filing the suit, argued that the 1983 agreement should be rescinded because it was made under duress and contained elements of fraud.

Rudolph, who had been employed by the U.S. Army and later by NASA as manager of the Saturn V rocket program, was also required to renounce his U.S. citizenship as part of the deal. Rudolph had become a naturalized citizen after the war.

At the time of the 1983 agreement, the Department of Justice's Office of Special Investigations, a special unit of the Criminal Division set up to deal with Nazi war crimes, was preparing charges against him.

U.S. District Judge James Ware dismissed on Feb. 9 Rudolph's suit for lack of jurisdiction, and cited at length a Canadian court finding that Rudolph "as production director, admittedly called for, made use of, and directed forced labor by foreign prisoners in the production of the V-2 rocket at Mittelwerk in the years 1943-1945. The conditions under which the prisoners worked were indescribably brutal."

CHRISTIANS AND JEWS MEET IN SLOVAKIA

By Josef Klansky

BRATISLAVA, Slovakia (JTA) -- Opening a new chapter of coexistence and understanding between Slovakia's Christians and Jews was the primary goal of an international conference held here in the capital of the 7-week-old Slovak republic.

Organized by B'nai B'rith and a Christian group, the Hanna Seidel Foundation of Germany, the conference was attended by high-ranking government representatives, clergy and scholars.

Deputy Prime Minister Roman Kovac, Foreign Minister Milan Kuznetsov and the chairman of the Slovak parliament, Ivan Gasparovic, called for a new ethics in interreligious relations.

Most of the country's Catholic bishops did not show up, and some blamed Cardinal Jan Chrysostom Korec for allegedly dissuading them from attending. Nevertheless, the conference was said by its Christian and Jewish organizers to have been a success.