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**RABIN SAYS PROGRESS IN PEACE TALKS
NOW UP TO SYRIANS AND PALESTINIANS**

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, March 18 (JTA) -- Responsibility for the peace process now rests with Syria and the Palestinians, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin told leaders of Jewish organizations here Thursday, toward the end of his weeklong visit to the United States.

Having agreed in principle to a withdrawal of forces on the Golan Heights, Israel is now waiting to hear from Syria what sort of peace it envisions in exchange and whether it is willing to sign an agreement that does not depend on the status of negotiations with the other partners.

Rabin said he told President Clinton on Monday that so far, Syrian President Hafez Assad "has not done even 1 percent" of what the late Egyptian President Anwar Sadat did to convince public opinion both at home and in Israel that he truly desires peace.

Sadat's efforts were made most manifest in his celebrated 1977 trip to Jerusalem.

The prime minister suggested that by its willingness to negotiate, his Labor government has placed Syria in a new bind.

"Assad thought he could go to negotiations without making an effort," because the Likud government insisted on negotiating "peace for peace," without reference to territorial compromise, a position, Rabin said, that "no one else" accepted.

Similarly, he said, the Palestinian negotiators "face a new challenge," now that Israel is ready for broad general elections for an interim Palestinian self-governing authority, rather than the municipal elections previously proposed.

Noting that the Palestinian negotiating team "doesn't move without getting approval from the people in Tunis," Rabin blamed the Palestine Liberation Organization leadership, which is based there, for the slow progress in the peace talks.

No Further Pressure From U.S.

"In my humble opinion, there are key people in Tunisia who don't want the agreement they were committed to by accepting the invitation to Madrid," he said, referring to the opening round of the peace talks in October 1991.

"But there are, in my opinion, people in the territories who don't want to repeat the mistakes of the past" of missing opportunities for peace, he said.

The Palestinians have said they will not come back to the negotiating table until Israel allows home the 400 Islamic fundamentalist activists it deported to Lebanon in December.

They have rejected an American-brokered compromise that would allow some of the deportees to return immediately and the rest to come back by the end of the year.

There had been speculation that the United States would pressure Israel to make further concessions on this front, to ensure that the peace talks do indeed resume. So far, none of the Arab negotiating teams has responded to the invitations for the next round of the talks, scheduled to open April 20 in Washington.

But Rabin seemed to confirm reports in the

Israeli press that the Clinton administration had not pressed him for further concessions.

The prime minister remained unapologetic for the deportations, which initially aroused a storm of outrage, most notably in the form of a harsh condemnation from the U.N. Security Council.

He said that the foremost reason he agreed to the American-brokered compromise was "the need to start with the new administration on the right foot" and only secondarily "to facilitate the resumption of peace negotiations."

Between the present Israeli and American governments, a sense of "confidence and credibility" has been established, Rabin told the 150 people attending Thursday's meeting, which was sponsored by the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

Reporting briefly on his talks with Clinton and other administration officials, he said that the president suggested "upgrading the discussion of the scope and scale of military cooperation, to discuss additional issues in the region."

Link To Bombing In Argentina

Among those issues would be the threat of Islamic fundamentalism. When Rabin addressed U.S. Jewish leaders shortly after his election last summer, he stressed that the need for peace negotiations was impelled, in part, by the growing threat from fundamentalist Iran.

Those warnings have taken on more immediacy with the indictment of three people linked to Islamic fundamentalism for the bombing of New York's World Trade Center.

"I won't elaborate about those who were indicted here," said the prime minister. "During the trial, many things will be discovered."

He also said he is "quite sure" Islamic fundamentalism was involved in the bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Argentina one year ago.

In addition to the Conference of Presidents appearance, Rabin met Thursday with U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali. But a planned dinner with the secretary-general was canceled, to enable Rabin to fly back before the weekend to deal with domestic crises, most notably the upsurge of terrorism.

On Wednesday, Rabin met with Madeleine Albright, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, as well as with Edgar Bronfman, president of the World Jewish Congress.

The prime minister arrived in New York from Washington, where he met Tuesday and Wednesday with congressional leaders, following his meetings earlier in the week with Clinton administration officials.

Among the members of Congress the prime minister saw was House Speaker Thomas Foley (D-Wash.), who told Rabin he was pleased that the Clinton administration had agreed to maintain the current level of annual aid to Israel for the 1994 fiscal year.

Foley indicated that Congress would act in the same spirit, according to an official at the Israeli Embassy.

"It was not a commitment," the official said, "but it was an important statement."

(Contributing to this report was JTA correspondent Deborah Kalb of States News Service in Washington.)

RIOTS CONTINUE IN THE GAZA STRIP, WITH 2 ARABS DEAD, OVER 40 INJURED

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, March 18 (JTA) -- Two Palestinians were killed and at least 40 others injured Thursday in the third consecutive day of riots and violent clashes with Israeli soldiers in the Gaza Strip.

But army officials said the two Palestinians did not die from army fire. One was definitely shot dead by a fellow Arab and the other appeared to have been as well, an army spokesman said Thursday night.

In Tunis, the Palestine Liberation Organization leadership demanded that the United Nations intervene to protect Palestinians in the territories. The Islamic fundamentalist Hamas movement, meanwhile, vowed that the intensified violence would spread to the West Bank and force an Israeli withdrawal from the territories.

During the riots, an Israel Defense Force reservist was mistakenly shot and injured by a fellow soldier who fired his gun when their vehicle was stoned.

In Jerusalem, right-wing Israelis protesting the deteriorating security situation began what they said would be a round-the-clock vigil outside the residence of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who was scheduled to return Friday from his visit to the United States.

The vigil included a memorial flame and a large placard listing the names of Jewish victims killed or injured in the violence of the intifada.

"I can't sit down and wait for the next victim," said one protester. "Every day somebody's getting killed."

Said another: "We call on Prime Minister Rabin to punish the Arab terrorists and to find a way with the army so there will be security all over Israel."

PLAN TO EXPAND ISRAEL'S HIGH COURT RAISES CONCERN BUT WINS APPROVAL

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 18 (JTA) -- A proposal to enlarge Israel's Supreme Court from 12 to 14 justices for a period of two years has won initial approval in the Knesset, despite reservations voiced by President Chaim Herzog.

The reason given was an overload of cases before the bar.

Justice Minister David Libai estimated that the court will have to deal with over 10,000 cases this year -- more than 6,000 new ones and 4,000 old cases held over from previous years.

The court was last expanded in 1979, from 11 to 12 justices. Its work load has increased substantially over the years, from 4,116 new cases in 1981 to 6,208 new cases last year.

Last year's figure was in addition to a backlog of 4,885 older pending cases.

Libai, presenting the proposed expansion bill to the Knesset, said the addition of two new justices would allow the creation of an additional fifth panel, enabling all five courtrooms in the new Supreme Court building to be used simultaneously.

But while the Knesset considered enlarging the Supreme Court, outgoing President Herzog, a lawyer by profession, seized an opportunity in one of his last public appearances to warn the nation about the judiciary's gaining too much power.

As Herzog swore in new judges in his office,

he said that the over-concentration of power in the hands of the judiciary has resulted in a "deep invasion of the area which should be reserved for the executive."

He noted the large and growing number of petitions to the Supreme Court, saying this phenomenon impedes not only the work of the executive branch, but also of the Knesset.

"We should remember that the sanction of the nation's trust in two authorities -- the government and the Knesset -- is expressed every four years in general elections, but not its trust in the judiciary," Herzog said.

He noted that in the past, the Supreme Court limited the subjects it considered under its jurisdiction and had refrained from intervening in political affairs.

But recently, the court has shown an increasing readiness to hear appeals of a political nature, Herzog indicated.

When the court heard an appeal of the government's deportation in December of 415 Palestinians to Lebanon, some Israelis complained it was interfering in a political issue.

JEWS AND BLACKS JOIN FORCES IN FIGHT AGAINST GUN VIOLENCE

By Deborah Kalb
States News Service

WASHINGTON, March 18 (JTA) -- With gun-related violence reaching epidemic proportions in the nation's capital, Jews and African Americans are joining forces to heighten awareness of the issue and support legislation regulating access to guns.

Activists from the two communities took part Thursday in a gun control rally outside the Washington headquarters of the National Rifle Association. Despite bitterly cold temperatures, several dozen people turned out, holding signs reading "Guns Are Killing Our Children, Our Families, Our Dreams."

Sponsored by the Washington Black-Jewish Dialogue, it was the first in a series of eight such rallies to be held on consecutive Thursdays.

Organizers pointed out that 66 people had been killed in Washington since the beginning of the year and that 56 of the homicides involved the use of a gun.

Known in recent years as "the murder capital," Washington has received worldwide attention for its high homicide rate. But organizers of Thursday's rally emphasized that gun violence is a nationwide concern.

Spokespersons at the rally spoke on behalf of the Brady Bill, named for former White House Press Secretary James Brady, who was badly injured in an attempt on President Ronald Reagan's life.

The bill, which has been introduced in Congress and supported by some Jewish groups, would establish a national one-week waiting period for handgun purchases.

"We have no illusions that the vigils will suddenly put an end to the violence, but we hope" that people affected by gun violence can express their frustration, said Jeffrey Weintraub, Washington area director for the American Jewish Committee, one of the event's organizers.

The Rev. Albert Gallmon Jr., pastor of a Washington church and another organizer of the event, expressed frustration with the NRA's encouragement of gun purchases. "It's time for us to get mad at gun violence," he said.

LATVIA LEADER HONORS SS LEGION IN 50TH ANNIVERSARY CEREMONIES By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, March 18 (JTA) -- A Simon Wiesenthal Center official has sent a letter to Latvian President Anatolijs Gorbunovs protesting his participation in ceremonies this week marking the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Latvian SS Legion.

These included a wreath-laying ceremony Tuesday at the Freedom Monument in central Riga and a moment of silence in Parliament.

The Latvian president signed a declaration indicating that the Zemessargi, the Latvian armed Home Guard, is the heir of the SS Legion, and its commander was officially honored.

There is now "a tremendous amount of sympathy" in Latvia for right-wing nationalistic fervor, Efraim Zuroff, director of the Wiesenthal Center's Israel office, said in a telephone interview from Jerusalem.

In his letter to Gorbunovs, Zuroff wrote, "It was with a sense of shock and outrage that we learned of the recent events commemorating and glorifying the anniversary of the establishment of the Latvian Legion, in which you personally participated.

"Given all we know about the horrors of the Nazi regime, it is shocking to see homage paid to those who willingly joined the ranks of the German military machine in an effort to achieve a Nazi victory."

The 50th anniversary was observed with a series of public events, the one in the Latvian Parliament being the most important.

Zuroff said he had learned from local sources that the only members of Parliament who did not stand and observe the minute of silence for fallen SS members were several members of the Russian Radical Party and Ruth Amriag, a Jewish member of Parliament, who walked out.

The wreath-laying ceremony "was attended by many well-known right-wing Latvian political leaders," said Zuroff.

Envoy Denies Any 'Respect For Nazism'

Zuroff said Latvia's 20,000-member Jewish community "is divided" about how to respond to the nostalgia for the Latvian SS.

"There are those who believe this should not be harped on, and there are others who feel they should be speaking out loudly and boldly," he said.

Asked about the commemoration, Latvia's ambassador to Washington, Ojars Kalnins, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency: "It is my understanding that these people (the Latvian Legion) fought to try to re-establish independence."

"The slaughter of the Jews in Latvia was done in 1941 and 1942 by the Nazis," whereas the Latvian SS Legion was formed in 1943, he said.

These commemorations are "definitely not any sign of respect for Nazism," he maintained.

Zuroff acknowledged that the legion was formed after the mass murder of Latvian Jews. But he said that many of its members had served in police units involved in the killings.

"We are talking about a unit that was part of the SS, that collaborated with the Nazis and fought to help achieve the victory of the Third Reich," he said.

"They were trying to obtain an objective which was too horrible to contemplate: a Nazi victory in Europe."

GERMAN EXTREMISTS GOING TO JAIL FOR BOMBING MEMORIAL AND HOSTEL By Igal Avidan

BERLIN, March 18 (JTA) -- A 31-year-old right-wing extremist has been sentenced to five years and nine months in prison for bombing a Holocaust memorial and a hostel for asylum-seekers last August.

The bomber, Detlef Meyer, confessed to the crimes, saying he wanted "to set a sign against Jews and foreigners, to give them a fright."

Meyer's 36-year-old accomplice, Lutz Meinig, received two years and nine months for helping in the attacks.

Prosecutors had requested penalties of six years and three years for Meyer and Meinig respectively. But no one was wounded in the attacks, hence the slightly reduced sentences.

The crimes, committed at the height of a wave of anti-foreigner and neo-Nazi violence in Germany last summer, attracted a great deal of media attention worldwide.

The Holocaust memorial on Berlin's Putzitz Bridge commemorates the deportation of Jews to Nazi concentration camps. The bomb caused considerable damage.

At the Berlin sentencing, the court's chief judge blasted the two men for their "extremely dangerous attacks" and said they severely damaged Germany's interests, particularly by hurting the country's image abroad.

After confessing, the two men expressed regret at what they termed "an act of stupidity."

The fact that the attacks were directed against Jews and foreigners was a critical factor contributing to the stiff sentence.

The judge said the attack "reminded Jews in Germany of old fears in a brutal way."

GERMAN ROCK BAND FACES CHARGES

BONN, March 18 (JTA) -- Prosecutors in the northern German state of Schleswig-Holstein have charged four far-right rock musicians with playing music inciting racist violence and hatred of Jews.

The charge was leveled Thursday in the town of Itzehoe, the hometown of the band, Kraftschlag, which means a blow of force.

According to prosecutors, songs performed by the band included calls for using violence against foreigners and promoting anti-Semitism.

In recent days, police searched the apartments of musicians and confiscated evidence that might be used in court.

SCHWAMMBERGER MAY BE TRIED AGAIN

BONN, March 18 (JTA) -- Josef Schwammberger, the former SS official serving a life sentence in a Stuttgart prison for murders during World War II, may face a German court again.

On Wednesday, the prosecution in Stuttgart called for new proceedings against the 81-year-old Schwammberger in 35 additional cases of murder.

According to the prosecution, material recently made available would make it possible to prove Schwammberger's personal responsibility in killing 35 individuals in the concentrations camps of which he was in charge in occupied Poland.

The Nazi war criminal was extradited from Argentina to Germany in 1990. He was given a life sentence in May 1992 after being found guilty of personally murdering seven Jews and being an accomplice in the murders of 32 others.

RETHINKING ISRAEL PROGRAMS: NEW MARKETING TECHNIQUES HELP BOOST TEEN ENROLLMENT IN SUMMER PROGRAMS

[Part 2 Of A Series]

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, March 18 (JTA) -- Enough about Jewish identity, Jewish continuity and fighting intermarriage.

Let's talk about self-esteem.

Hoping to connect youth to their Jewish heritage and counter assimilation, the American Jewish community is increasingly looking to boost the enrollments of summer programs for teenagers in Israel.

But those at the center of an effort to send more students to Israel say that the first step may simply be selling parents and teens on all the other benefits an Israel trip offers.

That was one of the recommendations that resulted from a marketing survey conducted by Jay Levenberg for the CRB Foundation.

The foundation, funded by Montreal-based billionaire Charles Bronfman, has launched an effort, along with the United Jewish Appeal, other national organizations and a dozen local Jewish federations, to increase dramatically the number of students participating in what are called "Israel Experience" programs.

In conjunction with this, the foundation is continuing earlier activities aimed at improving both the quality and quantity of Israel trips.

As part of this ongoing effort, CRB is paying Levenberg to supply his marketing expertise to organizations sponsoring Israel programs.

Levenberg's study of how Israel programs are presently being sold to parents has convinced him that the community needs "a new bag of tricks, a new set of ammunition" with which to market the Israel Experience.

Bronfman's, and Levenberg's, enthusiasm for the project flows from repeated findings that a well-run Israel Experience is the most effective way to strengthen a teen-ager's Jewish identity.

But Levenberg suggested that "for all those thousands who are not now coming to Israel, we should find new benefits to promote."

Among them: "A trip to Israel helps teens in a variety of areas, not just Jewish identity: self-confidence, awareness, decision-making, open-minded discussion," said Levenberg.

Radio Ads Doubled Enrollment

For Peter Geffen, director of Israel Programs for CRB, what the findings of the marketing survey boil down to is that "Among the most sophisticated people in the world, there is a very unsophisticated level of marketing when it comes to their own institutions."

But that's starting to change.

The American Zionist Youth Foundation, which oversees the trips taken by most teens, has instituted a toll-free number for information on Israel trips: 1-800-27-ISRAEL.

In Palm Beach, Fla., last year, a CRB grant enabled the community to advertise its trips on the radio. It worked: Enrollment more than doubled, to 48 kids.

In New York, Levenberg's expertise is helping design a "b'nai mitzvah marketing project." Rabbis would encourage congregants to enclose a card with bar or bat mitzvah invitations, asking that in lieu of gifts, family and friends put money into an account to be used for an Israel program.

Such accounts, as well as savings-incentive

plans where synagogues or federations add some money into the pot, are not totally new ideas.

But in another example of growing sophistication, CRB has negotiated with Bank Leumi to create a centralized banking system for the savings-incentive plan, bar and bat mitzvah registry programs, and other new ideas that may emerge for financing these trips.

CRB recently took 40 of the Reform movement's regional youth directors and camp directors to Israel, under the assumption that those who have never been to the country could not help others get there.

Did it work?

"We'll see this year," said Rabbi Allan Smith, director of the youth division of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

Smith agreed with Levenberg that the potential market for Israel trips has by no means been tapped. Seven or eight years ago, he said, the Reform movement decided that the Israel Experience should be a basic experience for its youth, and doubled the number of 11th-graders going on its summer programs from 500 to 1,000.

Smith believes that with a lot of work throughout the community, the numbers could drastically increase over time, to include half of the high school juniors affiliated with Reform temples -- about 7,500 kids.

'Full Of Wonderful Possibilities'

Beyond increasing the numbers going on the programs, the CRB Foundation is working to improve the quality of the programs.

It recently sponsored a program fair, in conjunction with the Joint Authority for Jewish-Zionist Education of the Jewish Agency and World Zionist Organization. The fair enabled people sponsoring Israel trips to meet people providing modules for the trip, ranging from hikes with the Society for the Preservation of Nature in Israel to encounters with different Israeli ethnic groups.

"The country is just packed full of wonderful possibilities," said Geffen of CRB.

He cited as an example the Nesiya Institute Summer Program, run out of Cleveland, which uses art and artists as means to explore Israel.

The institute last year featured an evening in a Tel Aviv night club with Shlomo Gronich, a popular Israeli singer who has recently been working with a chorus of Israeli children. Gronich and the chorus performed its music, while an Israeli disc jockey talked about it.

"It was a spectacular experience," said Geffen. "In Israel, we're trying to promote 50, 100 ideas in all different realms: in nature, art, museums, in the desert, in Arab-Jewish relations," he said.

Increasing the quality and quantity of Israel programs is a joint effort, said Anne Lanski.

She is director and founder of Shorashim, an intensive Israel program in which "American teens will experience Israel through the eyes and hearts of Israelis their own age." In each group, 25 Americans are joined by 15 Israelis.

This, as well as an initial visit to Poland, makes the program one of the most expensive. Nonetheless, it is growing rapidly, with 175 Americans expected this summer.

Eighty percent of those, estimates Lanski, would not have gone to Israel otherwise, but heard about the program and the friendships it formed from those who had gone before.

"When you provide excellence," she said, "the word gets out and people want in."