

**LIBYANS' PILGRIMAGE TURNS SOUR
AS LEADER LASHES OUT AT ISRAEL**

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, June 1 (JTA) -- The leader of a group of Libyans on pilgrimage to Moslem holy places here this week lashed out at Israel, dashing hopes that the unprecedented visit would herald a thaw in Israeli-Libyan relations.

The nearly 200 pilgrims also announced they would cut short their stay in Israel, leaving Wednesday rather than Thursday.

At the same time, the group's anti-Israel remarks provoked right-wing Knesset members to call for the pilgrims' immediate return to Libya.

At a news conference here Tuesday, Haj Tajouri, leader of the Libyan group, called for the liberation of Moslem holy places from Israel, which he termed occupied territory. He also called for the establishment of a Palestinian state.

He pointedly remarked that the group's visit did not imply any recognition of the "so-called" State of Israel.

The comments contradicted earlier, more optimistic assessments by Israeli businessman Ya'acov Nimrodi, who helped organize the trip.

Nimrodi had insisted the visit signaled a political change in Israeli-Libyan relations and even spoke of Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi visiting here in the future.

But Tajouri said the trip was made only because the pilgrims could not get to Mecca for the annual haj, or pilgrimage. Saudi Arabia, he said, denied access to Libyan flights in honor of the international aviation boycott against that country, imposed after Libya's refusal to extradite suspects in the 1988 bombing of Pan Am Flight 103 over Lockerbie, Scotland.

Government Distances Itself

Israel's Foreign Ministry refused official comments on the Libyan's remarks, saying the trip should be seen in religious, not political terms.

But Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin pointed out that he had not been as "euphoric" as others about the pilgrimage in the first place. Still, he said, Israel must defend the freedom of access to all holy places.

Tourism Minister Uzi Baram, who had traveled to the Egyptian border to greet the pilgrims when they arrived Monday, said in the wake of the Libyans' news conference that his office had cut off all contact with the group.

Meanwhile, the Palestine Liberation Organization said the pilgrimage was a premature step by Libya toward normalizing relations with Israel and a futile effort to curry favor with the United States.

In New York, Lester Pollack, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said that the umbrella group had been approached by Arab diplomats and others acting on behalf of Gadhafi.

The conference was invited to send a delegation to Libya, but turned it down because "such a visit would be inappropriate and unwarranted at this time," Pollack said.

"At the same time as he (Gadhafi) reaches out, he continues to support terrorism and acquire weapons of mass destruction," Pollack said.

**ISRAEL ACCEPTED ON U.N. COMMITTEE,
ANOTHER EVENT ON ROAD TO NORMALCY**

By Larry Yudelson

UNITED NATIONS, June 1 (JTA) -- In another milestone in Israel's slow road toward a normal role in the United Nations, Israel has for the first time been accepted as a member of one of the world body's committees.

The United Nations Committee on Information decided on Tuesday, without a formal vote, to accept Israel's application for membership.

That approval requires confirmation from the General Assembly, which is expected when that body reconvenes in the fall. Opposition was voiced by some Arab countries on the committee.

The information committee oversees the world body's publicity offices and 18 information centers worldwide. On this committee, unlike most other U.N. panels, there is no limit to the number of members, and seats are not assigned on a regional basis.

Those requirements have excluded Israel from joining committees, among them the Security Council, because the Arab states have prevented it from joining the Asian regional caucus. Israel's efforts to be accepted into the Western European and Others group have not yet been successful, despite prodding from the United States.

France and England remain opposed to Israel joining their regional group, according to an official with the Israeli Mission to the United Nations, not because of the Arab position but because "it's like a fraternity club, and they don't want to have new members in the club."

The Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations praised Israel's nomination to the information committee as a "breakthrough signifying increasing acceptance of Israel around the world."

**NEWS ANALYSIS:
CLOSURE OF THE TERRITORIES HAS HAD
NEGATIVE ECONOMIC IMPACT ON ISRAEL**
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, June 1 (JTA) -- Two months after the government sealed off the territories, in a desperate effort to end a wave of Palestinian terrorism, Israel can point to a sharp decline in the number of terrorist attacks.

But Israel has paid a high economic price for this new-found security. Economists estimated the cost so far to approximate 1 percent of the gross national product -- some \$600 million.

The construction industry has slowed down considerably, along with dependent industries, such as cement and iron. Accordingly, apartment prices have risen, despite a high supply of housing units.

The prices of fruits and vegetables have also gone up, sending the consumer price index soaring. Israeli farmers, unable to harvest all of their agricultural produce, could not honor export commitments and lost millions of dollars. Commerce in general has slowed down.

Two months after the closure was imposed, only a partial ban on workers entering Israel proper remains.

Some 70 percent of the 70,000 Palestinians

who had worked in Israel proper with permits prior to the closure have been given permission to return to work, mainly in the agricultural and construction industries.

But almost a third of these workers have chosen to remain in the territories, presumably out of pressure from fellow Palestinians not to return to work in Israel proper as long as the general closure is in effect.

Another 40,000 or so Palestinians who worked as transient labor have not been allowed back.

As a result, two months after the closure was imposed, the construction industry is still short 45,000 workers, both organized and unorganized labor.

One of the major changes wrought by the closure is that unorganized, or transient, Arab labor has become almost totally non-existent. Prior to the closure, tens of thousands of Palestinians were privately and independently hired by Israeli employers, bypassing the regular employment services and at a cost much cheaper than Jewish labor.

The closure has forced Israeli employers to seek workers through the government's employment service. In an effort to encourage employers to hire Jewish workers, the government now insists on minimum wages for Palestinian laborers, another reason for the increase in the price of agricultural produce and housing.

Still Dependent On Arab Labor

But unfortunately, the closure has shown Israelis that they are still dependent on Arab labor, much more than they would like to be.

Despite a 10.6 percent jobless rate in Israel proper, the unemployed have not rushed to fill the cheap manual labor jobs held formerly by Palestinians from the territories.

Only 15,000 of the 150,000 unemployed Israelis have filled the mass vacancies in the construction industry.

Nevertheless, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin radiated optimism this week, saying he expected some 15,000 to 20,000 to join the construction labor force within the next few months, thereby reducing considerably Israel's unemployment rate.

The government has partially coped with the labor shortage by approving the import of some 6,000 workers from Romania, Poland and Thailand. But for unknown reasons, very few foreign workers have actually arrived since the closure was imposed.

The bottom line of the new situation is that for the foreseeable future, there is no way for Israel to cut itself off decisively from the territories. The two economies of Israel and the territories will remain interdependent for quite some time.

Yet the new situation can be termed "a controlled economic separation" between Israel and the territories. Arab laborers will gradually return to their work places in Israel. But the authorities will control the flow of labor and merchandise by operating check posts along the "Green Line" separating Israel proper from the territories, much like border stations between separate countries.

Palestinians from the territories will become, in effect, foreign workers, just like those from Eastern Europe and Thailand. Their entry into Israel proper will be subject to a special permit, given at the request of Israeli employers who will be personally responsible for their workers.

ISRAELI OFFICIALS IN ETHIOPIA TO BEGIN PROCESSING FALASH MORA By Michele Chabin

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia, June 1 (JTA) -- Israeli Interior Ministry officials arrived here this week on a special mission to begin processing requests from 200 Falash Mora wishing to immigrate to Israel.

The officials were acting on a recently approved set of new guidelines specifying which of the Falash Mora -- Ethiopians whose ancestors converted from Judaism to Christianity -- are eligible to make aliyah.

Prior to the release of these guidelines, which were drawn up last month by an inter-ministerial committee headed by Absorption Minister Yair Tsaban, the issue of how to proceed with the Falash Mora was in a state of limbo.

While many Ethiopian Jews consider the Falash Mora to be Jewish, Israel's religious establishment does not.

During their two-week visit here, the Interior Ministry officials plan to interview all of the 200 Falash Mora who have applied for aliyah and who have been separated from close relatives already in Israel.

Under the new regulations, Falash Mora are eligible to immigrate under any of the following situations: family reunification with a "first-degree" relative in Israel; a return to Judaism, provided it is approved by a rabbinical court; or under Israel's Law of Return, which provides citizenship to those who can prove they are Jewish, or whose parents or grandparents were Jewish and did not convert.

"Now that we have a framework, we will try to process the applications quickly," said David Efrati, who is heading the Interior Ministry delegation.

'Trying To Weed Out The Impostors'

"These 200 people are what we call 'urgent humanitarian cases.' These are the urgent cases -- children under 21 living without their parents, spouses living in two different countries," Efrati said.

In every case, he explained, "the request must come from the relative already in Israel."

Beginning next week, the officials will interview the applicants in either the capital or in the northern province of Gondar, where many Falash Mora reside, in order to determine whether they are indeed eligible under the new guidelines.

"We're here to check out the facts," said team member Ze'ev Schwartzberg, assistant director of the Jewish Agency's Ethiopian desk.

"We must compare the information provided by the sponsor with the facts in the field. Relying on just one source can lead to problems," he said.

According to another official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, at least two of the names on the list were shown to be bogus; the people listed already live in Israel.

Israel's ambassador to Ethiopia, Haim Divon, acknowledged there has been fraud in the past, but said, "We are trying to weed out the impostors."

"Some of the team members are themselves Ethiopian Jews who knew the people and the communities," he said.

"We want to bring as many eligible people to Israel as possible, as long as they meet the guidelines."

BEHIND THE HEADLINES: JEWS ARE CONSIDERED FOR HIGH COURT, BUT SHOULD THERE BE A 'JEWISH SEAT'?

By Deborah Kalb
States News Service

WASHINGTON, June 1 (JTA) -- As President Clinton neared a decision this week for a nominee to replace retiring Supreme Court Justice Byron White, two Jewish jurists were among the names reportedly at the top of his list.

The New York Times reported last week that Clinton had "made no secret of his desire" to appoint a Jew to the highest court in the land.

If he did so, it would resume a half-century tradition of there being a "Jewish seat" on the Supreme Court, which has been interrupted now for nearly 25 years. That tradition began with the appointment of Louis Brandeis in 1916 and ended in 1969 when Abe Fortas resigned.

Other Jewish justices to serve on the court during that period were Benjamin Cardozo, Felix Frankfurter and Arthur Goldberg.

Jewish communal leaders say they would welcome the presence of a new Jewish justice on the court but are more interested in the president nominating a justice whose positions on various constitutional issues are in line with those of American Jewry.

Unlike some other minority and women's groups, who have been pushing their own candidates to fill the court vacancy, Jewish organizations have taken a low profile.

Among those Clinton reportedly was considering for the seat were Judge Jon Newman of Hartford, Conn., who serves on the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, and Chief Judge Stephen Breyer of the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Boston. Both are Jewish.

Many in the organized Jewish community say that the future justice's religion is less important than his or her ideas and opinions.

"Jewish justices in the past served with such distinction and were a source of great pride to American Jews, and if a new Jewish justice served with distinction," that person would also be a source of pride, said Mark Pelavin, Washington representative for the American Jewish Congress.

"On the other hand, what is most important to us is their intellect and their views on the things that are important to us," he added.

'Criteria Should Be Merit'

"Of course, we would welcome another Jewish justice," said Samuel Rabinove, legal director of the American Jewish Committee, "but our view is that we do not seek religious or ethnic seats per se on the court."

Steven Freeman, director of the Anti-Defamation League's legal affairs department, agreed.

"The criteria should be merit, the best-qualified person for the job. We would not recommend that the person be chosen by ethnicity," Freeman said. "By the same token, we would be pleased if the best-qualified person happened to be Jewish."

And some scholars and legal experts held similar positions to these Jewish organizational professionals.

"I'm appalled by the notion of a Jewish seat on the Supreme Court," said Harvard Law School Professor Alan Dershowitz. The idea "should be anathema to Jews."

Dershowitz said that Supreme Court seats

should be based on merit, not on a "quota that suggests they should be allocated in a representative manner."

Jews, he pointed out, do not even represent 1/9 of the population. But Jews have a long tradition of distinguished legal service, and therefore, if the seats were merit-based, he said, it might make sense for there to be more than one Jewish justice on the high court.

He also pointed out that many of the Jews under recent consideration for the court have not been active members of the Jewish community.

"What do we as a Jewish community gain from having a person who happens to be Jewish on the court? It's an anachronistic notion."

Dershowitz and other experts said that at the beginning of the century, when Brandeis was nominated to the court, it was important to have a Jewish justice, but that times have changed.

"The notion of a Jewish seat was particularly important at a time when Jews suffered all sorts of discrimination," said Robert Katzmann, a professor of government and law at Georgetown University who specializes in the judiciary.

"Having someone Jewish on the court was a reminder of the importance of eradicating discrimination. Nowadays, there is not the same need as there was then," he said.

'Symbol Of Hope To Jewish Youth'

Others have argued that having a Jew on the court is still important for American Jews.

Judge Stephen Reinhardt of the 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Los Angeles wrote in a 1989 article in the Cardozo Law Review that "the only place where Jews have been represented at the highest level of our society, and have thus been able to serve as a symbol of hope to Jewish youth, has been the Supreme Court."

"It is wrong that the only branch of government in which Jews have been able to reach the top has now been closed to them at that level for an entire generation," he wrote.

Some court-watchers feel that either Breyer or Newman would be a positive addition to the bench.

"Both men come out of the progressive traditions of the Democratic Party and have had wide experience, not just in the judiciary but in the world of Washington," said Katzmann.

He noted that Breyer had served as the chief counsel to the Senate Judiciary Committee and that Newman had worked for former Sen. Abraham Ribicoff (D-N.Y.), both in his Senate office and at the Department of Health, Education and Welfare.

Breyer and Newman are just two of many jurists whose names have been floated in recent weeks. Often, White House officials use the press to send out "trial balloons" and see whether nominees are shot down when exposed to scrutiny.

Another possibility, Chief Judge Gilbert Merritt of the 6th Circuit Court of Appeals in Nashville, was criticized this week by the Simon Wiesenthal Center for his involvement in the case of John Demjanjuk.

Rabbi Marvin Hier, who is dean of the Los Angeles-based center, said in a statement that he was "very concerned" that Judge Merritt, "without any apparent justification on the record," reopened the already completed extradition case of convicted Nazi war criminal John Demjanjuk "and, as a result, called into question the judgment of the U.S. judges who had previously ruled on the case."

**GERMAN JEWISH COMMUNITY
CONDEMNS ARSON KILLINGS**
By David Kantor

BONN, June 1 (JTA) -- Germany's Jewish community has reacted sharply to a new wave of neo-Nazi violence against foreigners, strongly condemning an arson attack this past weekend that claimed the lives of five people of Turkish origin in the western German town of Solingen.

The tragic attack only proved that recent German legislation making it more difficult for political refugees to enter the country has not helped to curb hatred against foreigners living here, according to Ignatz Bubis, chairman of the Central Council of Jews in Germany.

"In a tragic way," Bubis said in a statement, "the thesis has been confirmed that the constitutional changes to limit the right of asylum have done nothing" to stop the neo-Nazi violence.

The German parliament adopted the changes last week after a lengthy, emotional debate.

Arson attacks against foreigners in other cities, such as Munich, have also been reported in the last week.

In Solingen, meanwhile, thousands of Turks continued Tuesday to protest against the lack of protection for members of their community.

For the past three nights, Turks and left-wing Germans have rampaged through the small German town, many of them demolishing shops and cars and causing heavy damage.

German Jewish author Ralph Giordano, who lives in Cologne, called on the foreigners in Germany to arm themselves in response to the Solingen arson.

**COMIC BOOK WITH SEPARATISTS AS VILLAINS
IS COMPARED TO ANTI-SEMITIC LITERATURE**
By Bram D. Eisenthal

MONTREAL, June 1 (JTA) -- A comic book that depicts Quebec separatists as the "bad guys" is being compared to anti-Semitic hate literature in a controversial debate making headlines here.

Angry Quebec separatists have denounced the premier issue of Justice League Task Force, a comic book published by the New York-based D.C. Comics.

Denis Lazure, a member of Quebec's National Assembly, has demanded that the book be banned, likening it to hate literature against Jews.

"If we withdraw hate literature against Jews, we can get literature against the people of Quebec withdrawn," said Lazure, who belongs to the Parti Quebecois, the provincial party that seeks Quebec's secession from Canada.

At the heart of the dispute is the June-dated comic book that features a green-skinned Martian Manhunter at the head of an elite group of superheroes dedicated to fighting "radicals who want Quebec to secede from Canada."

The separatists use a toy warehouse to plot their deeds and distribute weapons to violent groups throughout the province.

The comic book has become the latest focal point for separatists' anger in their battle against federalism.

Quebec Jewish leaders are not amused by the comparison of the comic book with anti-Semitic or racist hate literature.

Stephen Scheinberg, chairman of B'nai Brith Canada's League for Human Rights, said that "it trivializes real hate propaganda."

"I don't know why the Jews had to be

dragged into this story," Scheinberg told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. "And I'm not sure why hate propaganda had to be dragged into it either."

Scheinberg pointed out that Lazure's comments about banning the book were also inaccurate, since Quebec has not prosecuted anyone for distributing hate propaganda.

An 'Erroneous Comparison'

The government also has not ordered any such publications withdrawn from shelves, despite B'nai Brith requests, "even when we had a case of the 'Protocols of the Elders of Zion' distributed by a bookstore in Quebec," said Scheinberg.

"Such an erroneous comparison, of an attempt at humor and adventure with an attempt by those who wish to harm Jews or blacks, is absurd," Scheinberg said.

Max Bernard, chairman of the Community Relations Committee of the Canadian Jewish Congress' Quebec Region, said, "To call this hate literature demeans the kinds of things that we as Jews have to tolerate."

"I don't see the Denis Lazures of this world rise up and decry the (Ku Klux Klan) hate literature that was distributed in Quebec," he added.

D.C. Comics, which is selling the comic book for \$1.25, is owned by Time Warner Inc., the media conglomerate.

Patricia Jeres, D.C.'s manager of marketing and communications, said in New York on Monday, "I would never advocate book-banning."

However, she added, "I understand (the separatists') concerns. I will see what we can do to address them."

The controversy has boosted sales. A mere day after the negative publicity, some Montreal specialty shops were selling the book for \$25 and retailers were scouring Ontario for extra copies.

The possibility of banning copies from Canada is being investigated. Federal Justice Minister Pierre Blais denounced the comic book and asked that a copy be sent to federal officials immediately.

**FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 500 YEARS,
COUPLE WED IN CORDOBA SYNAGOGUE**
By Judith Lew

MADRID, June 1 (JTA) -- The centuries-old synagogue in the southern Spanish city of Cordoba, long in existence as only a museum of a vanished Jewish community, briefly came to life on Sunday to celebrate the wedding ceremony of a Canadian Jewish couple.

Some 501 years after its closure following the expulsion of the Jews of Spain, Edward Mirsky and Rebeca Romero Varo of Montreal were wed in the small, ornate Moorish-style synagogue, built in 1315 and closed in 1492.

The local media gave the event wide coverage.

The couple chose the site in Andalusia because it was the most convenient place to gather all their relatives.

The family of the bride, the former Maria Jose Romero Varo, is from Aguilar de la Frontera, a town near Cordoba. She converted to Judaism from Catholicism.

The synagogue in Cordoba -- the city is the birthplace of the great Jewish philosopher Maimonides -- is one of three in Spain remaining from the time of the expulsion of the Jews in 1492. The other two are in Toledo.