

**CHRISTOPHER TELEPHONES RABIN  
AS PEACE TALKS REMAIN STALLED**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, June 29 (JTA) -- U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher spoke by phone late Monday with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, as the Middle East peace talks in Washington hovered close to a breakthrough but remained deadlocked.

Israelis and Palestinians, with energetic American mediation, have been attempting to reach agreement on a joint declaration of principles that would serve as a solid basis for setting up an autonomy plan in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

These efforts have ground to a halt over the question of Jerusalem, with Israel insisting that the capital city not be subject to negotiation and the Palestinians demanding a formulation that would leave the final status of the city open to discussion.

In several statements this week, Rabin reiterated Israel's longstanding position that Jerusalem would remain united under Israeli sovereignty.

If the Palestinians "demand Jerusalem, they can forget about the chances of an agreement," Rabin said in an interview published Tuesday in the French newspaper *Le Monde*. "There is no point in going further."

In Washington, Ruth Yaron, the spokeswoman at the Israeli Embassy, said there was "not much to report" on the talks' progress this week.

**'Harsh Discussion' With Lebanon**

Yaron said the rumored American proposal for a joint Israeli-Palestinian statement had yet to be presented, and that while it was possible it would be presented by the time this 10th round of talks was scheduled to end Thursday, it would be "naive" to think the two sides could reach agreement on it before leaving Washington.

Negotiations with the Syrians remain stalled too, hindered by incomplete definitions of the extent of peace the Syrians are willing to offer Israel, and the extent to which Israel is willing to withdraw from the Golan Heights.

Rabin said this week that Israel has presented Syria with a proposal to implement peace through a phased process. The proposal may be a way to get around Syrian repetitions of the "everything in exchange for everything" formula that it has cited.

Regarding the Israeli-Lebanese talks, Yaron said there was a "harsh discussion" Monday over the issues of Israeli and Syrian control over Lebanese territory in the wake of recent Katyusha rocket attacks on Israel by Hezbollah forces in southern Lebanon.

Discussions with Jordan continued in their usual businesslike fashion, with the parties meeting in working groups.

After this round of talks is over, Israeli officials expect either Christopher or -- more likely -- the State Department's new coordinator for the peace talks, Dennis Ross, to visit the region in an attempt to push the process forward.

The trip apparently is to focus primarily on getting Israel and the Palestinians to agree on the joint declaration.

**NEWS ANALYSIS:****AIPAC'S CLOUT UNLIKELY TO SUFFER  
BECAUSE OF EXECUTIVE'S DEPARTURE**

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, June 29 (JTA) -- Jewish organizational leaders and Washington insiders alike predict the resignation of Thomas Dine as executive director of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee will not affect the clout of the powerful pro-Israel lobby.

Nor is there a sense that other groups in the pro-Israel community will suffer a negative ripple effect from Dine's resignation.

Dine, considered one of the most effective political professionals in Washington, stepped down Monday following protests over remarks he made that were seen as disparaging fervently Orthodox Jews.

Pro-Israel officials expressed regret at the AIPAC executive's departure, but seemed convinced that Dine had built such a strong organization during his 13 years at the lobby that his work would continue almost without interruption.

"AIPAC has never been stronger, in terms of its financial situation, its membership and its grass-roots outreach," said Steven Grossman, the lobby's president.

Lester Pollack, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, expressed the opinion that Dine's resignation would not have much impact on the pro-Israel community's effectiveness.

"The objectives of the organization transcend the role of one individual," he said.

**Lobby Expected To 'Bounce Back'**

The sense here was that after a period of readjustment, during which AIPAC would install a new executive director, the organization would pick up where it left off.

"There's only one AIPAC -- I have no doubt it will bounce back," said Seymour Reich, president of the American Zionist Movement. "There's nothing to replace it, and the community needs it."

"The institution is so deeply respected, the cause it stands for is so strongly supported, and Tom Dine is so personally liked, that AIPAC will be able to overcome its problems," said Rabbi David Saperstein, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

One pro-Israel member of Congress said that the way Dine handled his departure would also help ensure AIPAC's continued effectiveness.

"He resigned with dignity, and he didn't let it be a prolonged distraction or dispute within the organization," said Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.). He predicted that the departure would therefore have "a minimal negative impact on the organization."

While most in the Jewish community had fond words for Dine, they also praised other staffers at AIPAC, who, they said, would carry on Dine's work in fostering strong U.S.-Israeli relations.

"Dine or no Dine, the AIPAC legislative folks are always on top of every issue," said one pro-Israel Capitol Hill aide who deals with AIPAC staffers on a regular basis.

"The key to succeeding on the Hill is infor-

mation, and they have everything you need," the Hill aide said.

Officials at other Jewish groups said they did not feel they would have to fill in for AIPAC during its transitional period, because of the strong staff Dine had assembled.

No 'Activity Vacuum' Likely

"There's a rock-solid staff at AIPAC. I am confident there won't be an activity vacuum," said Matt Brooks, executive director of the National Jewish Coalition, a group dedicated to increasing ties between Jews and the Republican Party.

Many in the Jewish community also said that since the cause for which Dine worked, sustaining good relations between the United States and Israel, remains a popular one, it will not suffer because of Dine's departure.

The current climate of U.S.-Israeli relations is balmy, they said, in part because President Clinton and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin have forged a good working relationship, unlike their predecessors.

And despite the Jewish community's apprehension that the country's current preoccupation with domestic economic problems would weaken U.S. support for Israel, this Congress has remained every bit as pro-Israel as its predecessors.

Foreign aid legislation, for example, passed the House of Representatives relatively easily in mid-June, despite initial fears in the Jewish community that a package with \$3 billion in aid for Israel would have a tough time on Capitol Hill.

Dine's resignation will not make "even a ripple in the U.S.-Israel relationship, or in Israel's ability to get aid from the Congress and the administration," said Stuart Eizenstat, a former Carter administration official who is active in the Jewish community.

Some expressed the view that because U.S.-Israeli relations are stronger now than they were in the Bush-Shamir era, AIPAC's role in Washington is not as crucial as it once was.

"There was a time when AIPAC was such a singular focus," said Steve Gutow, executive director of the National Jewish Democratic Council. "It was the only real place where there was a conversation going on."

But at this point, Gutow said, "the focus isn't quite as singular as it was during the Bush administration."

**SOLDIER WOUNDED BY FRIENDLY FIRE**

JERUSALEM, June 29 (JTA) -- An Israeli soldier was seriously wounded in the Gaza Strip on Tuesday, when two army units mistakenly opened fired at each other.

The tragedy was the latest in a series of "friendly fire" incidents that have recently plagued the army.

The accident began when soldiers in an army unit on duty at the Nusirat refugee camp mistakenly believed that they were being attacked with a firebomb. The soldiers responded by firing into the air.

Another group of soldiers from the same detachment on duty nearby believed the shots were fired at them and they, in turn, fired into the air.

The incident soon developed into an exchange of fire, with one soldier suffering serious injuries.

**TERRORISTS ALSO PLANNED TO BLOW UP DIAMOND DISTRICT, PROSECUTOR SAYS**  
By Kenneth Dancyger

NEW YORK, June 29 (JTA) -- The Moslem fundamentalist group arrested last week for allegedly plotting to bomb several locations throughout New York City also considered targeting the heavily Jewish diamond district in Manhattan, a prosecutor said Tuesday.

The charge was made at a detention hearing for one of the suspects, Amir Abdelgani.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Lev Dassin quoted a taped conversation in which Abdelgani spoke of the possibility of bombing the diamond district.

Most of the shops in the area, which is anchored by 47th Street, are owned and run by Jews, many of them Hasidim and many Israeli.

"This is the heart of Israel here in Manhattan," Dassin quoted one alleged conspirator as saying.

"Boom, broken windows, Jews in the streets," he quoted another as saying.

The new charges came the same day that Reuters news agency reported that El Sayyid Nosair, the Moslem activist imprisoned in connection with the 1990 murder of Rabbi Meir Kahane, will soon be indicted for helping plot the World Trade Center bombing last February.

Nosair, the suspects in the World Trade Center bombing and the suspects arrested last week are all linked to the radical Sheik Omar Abdel Rahman, the Egyptian cleric preaching most recently in New Jersey.

The ringleader of those arrested last week, Siddiq Ibrahim Siddiq Ali, visited Nosair in prison on May 21.

Ali's group was charged with plotting to bomb the United Nations headquarters, FBI headquarters in Manhattan, and the Lincoln and Holland tunnels, which connect New York City with New Jersey.

'Hateful' Terrorist Agenda

Investigators also said the group had an assassination list that included U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.) and New York State Assemblyman Dov Hikind.

Prosecutors added there was evidence that the group planned to blast the area before the end of the month, when rent on the "safe house," where the bombs were allegedly constructed, was due to expire.

Early last Thursday, FBI agents raided the fundamentalist's bomb factory and arrested five suspects who were in the process of mixing deadly chemicals, which would allegedly be used in the bombs. Agents also arrested three others in the New York area.

Lloyd Jaffe, spokesman for Manhattan's Diamond Dealers Club, said New York's diamond district "has a history of being one of the most secure areas in the city," but there is some talk now about beefing up security in some areas.

In a statement Tuesday, Lester Pollack, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said, "Terrorism against any individual or institution is abhorrent to us."

He added that the prosecutors' finding regarding the plot on the diamond district "underscores the hateful nature of the terrorists' agenda, which goes beyond the political to the personal."

**GROUPS WELCOME HIGH COURT RULING QUESTIONING RACIAL GERRYMANDERING**

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, June 29 (JTA) -- Jewish groups welcomed the U.S. Supreme Court's decision Monday that questioned the constitutionality of creating legislative districts designed to ensure the election of minority representatives.

Many in the Jewish community have criticized redistricting plans around the country that have been drawn solely in recent years along racial lines.

"All Jewish organizations raise serious questions about compromising the color-blind nature of the Constitution," said Jerome Chanes, co-director for domestic concerns at the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council.

The court's 5-4 ruling supported that critique. It sided with five white voters in North Carolina who challenged a voting plan in their state that created a black district by stringing together a thin ribbon of black populations stretched out over 160 miles.

"Racial classifications of any sort pose the risk of lasting harm to our society," Justice Sandra Day O'Connor wrote for the majority.

"Racial classifications with respect to voting carry particular dangers. Racial gerrymandering, even for remedial purposes, may balkanize us into competing factions," she wrote.

The court ruled that the legitimacy of the district in question, North Carolina's 12th, would have to be judged by a lower court based on whether it met "traditional districting principles."

These include keeping districts compact, contiguous and within existing political subdivisions.

In the course of reapportioning districts following the 1990 National Census, minority districts were designed with often bizarre shapes. Some white legislators around the country found themselves without constituencies in the 1992 elections and either dropped out or lost re-election bids.

While the effects of this phenomenon have yet to be felt keenly within the Jewish community, the potential could be dramatic.

"Very few seats supported by Jews were districted out. Impact so far has been very small, though the potential impact is great," said Chanes.

**Aggravates Racial Polarization**

In May, NJCRAC convened a consultation of community relations councils and national agency representatives on the implications of reapportionment for the Jewish community.

Participants decided to hold off on defining their position on this complex issue until they had more time to investigate it. They plan to reconvene in the early fall.

The consultation also addressed the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which was at issue in the case decided this week, Shaw vs. Reno. The act has often been used to protect the rights of minority voters in the face of gerrymandering by whites.

But, O'Connor wrote in her opinion, "it is unsettling how closely the North Carolina plan resembles the most egregious racial gerrymanders of the past."

The act became a focal point in the failed nomination of Lani Guinier to become chief of the Justice Department's civil rights division.

Guinier's controversial views on the law

were questioned by some Jewish groups, who feared she would support even more radical efforts to create minority districts.

The only Jewish group to take a position in the North Carolina case was the American Jewish Congress, which submitted a friend-of-the-court brief urging the court to remand the case back to the district court.

Robert Lifton, president of AJCongress, said the group was "gratified" by the court's decision.

AJCongress "has long supported the Voting Rights Act as well as other efforts to guarantee all citizens, regardless of race, the right to fully participate in the electoral process."

"We have nevertheless been increasingly troubled by recent reapportionment efforts which, in an attempt to increase minority participation in the political process, solely employ racial considerations in drawing district lines to the exclusion of all other factors," he said in a statement.

"We are convinced that designing districts to reinforce racial voting patterns and making these the central organizing feature of political affairs inevitably aggravates the polarization of the races and generates racial and religious antagonisms -- damaging to our multiracial, multiethnic society."

**Effect Felt In New York, Florida**

Some Jewish communities have already felt the effects of reapportionment along racial lines.

The effect in New York was perhaps the most dramatic, as far as the Jewish community was concerned.

Former veteran U.S. Rep. Stephen Solarz, a Democrat who had long represented a predominantly Jewish area in Brooklyn, was effectively drawn out of a district in last year's election.

His district was eviscerated in order to create an awkwardly shaped district that wends its way through three counties to virtually ensure the election of a Latino representative.

Solarz decided to battle several Latino candidates in the Democratic primary, but eventually lost to Nydia Velasquez.

New York City Councilwoman Susan Alter, an Orthodox Jew, had her district boundary moved two blocks in an effort to increase the probability of a minority candidate winning election, a member of the New York Districting Commission admitted at the time.

Nonetheless, Alter soundly beat out her opponents in a 1991 election -- seven African American and Caribbean American candidates in a district dominated by those communities.

In Chicago, reapportionment did not seriously affect the ability of the city's Jews to elect a congressional representative.

Two seats in the House of Representatives were lost because of population shifts and a new district was carved out to provide for Latino representation.

But the reapportionment "did not lead to the loss of seats traditionally elected by the Jewish community, and the community was pleased by the result," said Michael Kotzin, director of the city's Jewish Community Relations Council.

In Florida, the redistricting had an impact on candidates supported by the Jewish community.

In one new district, drawn 90 miles long and no more than two or three miles wide, from Miami's South Beach to northern Palm Beach County, Gwen Margolis, the Democratic Jewish candidate, was routed by E. Clay Shaw Jr., a conservative Republican.

**LEADER CHARGES JEWISH COMMUNITY MOVING TOO SLOWLY ON CONTINUITY**

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, June 29 (JTA) -- One of the most prominent leaders of the organized American Jewish community has charged that community with failing to move fast enough, and seriously enough, in the effort to halt assimilation and intermarriage.

"In November, at the General Assembly (of the Council of Jewish Federations), people said it was the No. 1 issue," said Shoshana Cardin, a former head of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

"But now that I've begun to travel around the country, I've found it's business as usual," she told a symposium sponsored by the Wilstein Institute earlier this month.

Cardin is now serving as chairman of CLAL -- National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, an organization heavily involved in Jewish continuity issues.

The symposium, devoted to the topic of "Revitalizing Jewish Peoplehood in America," was held at the Boston Hebrew College.

In the foreground of the discussions was the state of the "continuity agenda," as the effort against assimilation is being called within federation circles.

The problem of assimilation is not new. But the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey, which showed a 52 percent intermarriage rate, brought the issue to the top of the communal agenda.

The responses to the problem given by the symposium speakers -- who included academics, rabbis and federation officials -- fell into two broad categories.

The more optimistic response focused on the fact that the population survey also identified solutions to the problem of Jewish continuity.

John Ruskay, executive director for Jewish continuity and community service at the UJA-Federation of Greater New York, said the survey provided evidence that Jewish identity could be anchored through programs such as intensive Jewish education, day schools, family education programs, youth groups and summer camps.

Along that line, Ruskay and Barry Schrage, president of the Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston, described federation-sponsored programs at various stages of development that are designed to address the issue.

**No Longer An 'Ethnic Category'**

Cardin, though, said that such efforts are too few, too slow and too meager. "The monies being shifted are small," she lamented.

The conference also addressed a second, perhaps revolutionary response to the continuity crisis: an effort to imagine, and perhaps create, a radically different Jewish community.

It is an effort based on the premise that the Jewish community has been mistaken in its belief that its ethnic identity is "innate and immutable, passed on from one generation to the next," as Jonathan Sarna, a historian at Brandeis University, told the symposium.

For one thing, "the larger society no longer recognizes Jewishness as an ethnic category at all," said Sarna.

And beyond the question of recognition, ethnicity is increasingly ignored. It is not only Jews who are intermarrying, but all ethnic groups.

Instead, said Sarna, in a view widely echoed

by others at the symposium, the reality that needs to be recognized is that people are Jewish because they choose to be Jewish.

And if people are not choosing to marry Jews, to affiliate with Jewish institutions and to be Jewish, then the blame lies not with those making the choice, but with the institutions--including both synagogues and federations -- that are failing to attract them.

Why, asked Cardin, is there no toll-free phone number offering Jewish spiritual assistance for those in pain, such as the one run by Christian evangelist Billy Graham?

She repeated the call she made back in November for a Jewish community ready to offer a "personal touch" in a dehumanized world.

In a subsequent interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, she said that the political work undertaken by local community relations councils should have a Jewish identity component, and at the same time that "synagogues should go back to social action programs.

"There is a spiritual, religious component to social justice," she said, that can attract young people.

"There are many ways in which one can identify Jewishly," she said, "whether through art, literature, formal or informal education, a visit to the Holocaust museum."

**CJF Commission Beginning To Move**

Such a rethinking of Jewish identity "requires the leadership of the community engaging others who have not been traditionally leaders, or involved in the community and sitting down together," she said.

One communal response to the continuity crisis, which was announced last October and is only slowly beginning to move, is the Commission on Jewish Identity established by the Council of Jewish Federations.

Cardin is one of the half-dozen or so people in the informal "kitchen Cabinet" set up by the commission's chair, Marvin Lender.

She said she is "frustrated that they have not moved as quickly as I had hoped they could move. For us to have sounded the alarm, and have asked the federations to begin working--and many have begun -- we need to move a little more quickly, a little more effectively."

Currently, after months of discussions, a steering committee is in the process of being named and is expected to be announced in early August, according to CJF officials.

It will have roughly 30 members, including not only representatives of the federations and national agencies, but leaders of the synagogue movements and academics too.

"The CJF will be a member of the commission, not the owner of it," said a CJF official, noting that despite being staffed by the CJF, the commission is not part of its governing structure.

Another person, not affiliated with CJF, confirmed that CJF has "bought the idea" that it doesn't control the commission, and is "very committed to getting congregations in on the process."

When the steering committee meets for the first time, it will face the critical questions of what will be the scope and makeup of the larger commission, which will number about 100.

The commission's slowness in establishing itself is being explained by CJF officials, in part, as due to the critical and sensitive nature of its mission.