

U.S. PEACE MISSION TO MIDEAST STYMIED BY BORDER HOSTILITIES

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, July 13 (JTA) -- American envoy Dennis Ross' visit to the Middle East this week did little to boost the Arab-Israeli peace process, which was overshadowed by a surge of violence in southern Lebanon.

Though Ross shuttled back and forth between Israel and various Arab capitals, holding a myriad of meetings with political leaders and peace negotiators, his team appeared to make little progress in breaking the deadlock in the talks, which recessed in Washington two weeks ago after a fruitless 10th round.

Ross' message midweek was essentially that the long, hard, frustrating slog continues. "Clearly, this is a process where discussions are designed to find ways to narrow gaps," he told reporters, avoiding specifics.

"I think it is clear we have to get comments from both sides, and that's what we are in the process of doing," he said.

Ross, the U.S. coordinator of the peace talks, arrived in Israel last Thursday and proceeded to make stops in Egypt, Syria and Jordan. He returned to Israel on Monday for further talks with Palestinians and Israelis, and was expected to leave before the end of the week.

Israeli sources said the American team was "moderately optimistic" as a result of the talks in the region. The Israelis said the Americans were satisfied that both Israel and the Palestinians were prepared to regard a U.S. draft proposal as a serious basis for a joint declaration of principles.

But Palestinian negotiators noted that they presented the American team with their own draft statement.

Will Christopher Come Next?

Ross himself added, encouragingly, that "everybody is very serious in that effort." He declined, however, to speculate publicly as to whether or when U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher might himself fly into the region.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres told an Israel Radio reporter that his impression was that Ross would recommend that Christopher make the personal trip.

Everyone involved in the negotiating effort -- including Christopher himself -- has indicated that a trip by the secretary would signify a meaningful breakthrough.

But it is believed that Christopher will come only if he can attend the signing, by Israel and the Palestinians, of the declaration of principles that has so far eluded them and remains the substance of the present logjam.

Peres, nearly always upbeat with his statements on the peace talks, could only say, "What is clear is that all parties are interested in continuing the peace process. No one has abandoned it."

Sources on both sides point to the issues of Jerusalem and the jurisdiction of a future autonomous plan as the two sticking points still under intense discussion.

Adding to the obstacles confronting Ross'

peace mission was a series of violent clashes in southern Lebanon that sidetracked his discussions in the region.

Five Israeli soldiers were killed in two separate incidents on Thursday and Friday of last week, with another soldier critically injured and seven more recovering from lighter wounds.

Katyusha rockets fired into northern Israel and retaliatory shelling by Israel and its allied South Lebanon Army once again disrupted civilian life on both sides of the border.

Jabril Ordered Out Of Lebanon

The United States urged restraint in a public statement Monday, as Lt. Gen. Ehud Barak, the Israel Defense Force chief of staff, and Cabinet ministers warned that Israel was considering sharp counter-blows against the Islamic fundamentalist Hezbollah and Palestinian guerrilla groups in southern Lebanon responsible for the escalation.

Israeli sources singled out Ahmed Jabril's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, whose headquarters are in Damascus. Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin charged that arms from Iran are reaching southern Lebanon via Damascus and called upon Syria to block the arms route.

Rabin reportedly sent a message, via Ross, to Syrian President Hafez Assad, warning him to rein in Hezbollah and the Palestinians.

On Tuesday, reports from Lebanon said the Beirut government had ordered Jabril to leave the country, after he held a news conference at the Ein Hilweh refugee camp near Sidon.

Ross and his team discussed the security situation Tuesday with Rabin, Deputy Defense Minister Mordechai Gur, Barak of the IDF and other senior officials.

The session originally had been intended to wrap up Ross' diplomatic shuttle in the area and be devoted to issues holding up the peace talks. Instead, a considerable part of the time was taken up with the Lebanon border situation.

Israeli sources said after the meeting that Ross had returned with no specific reply for Rabin from Assad. Nevertheless, Cabinet Secretary Elyakim Rubinstein reported somberly in public comments: "Our concern is fully known -- both in Washington and in Damascus."

DINITZ QUESTIONED BY POLICE AMID DEBATE OVER HIS FUTURE

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, July 13 (JTA) -- The ongoing police investigation of Simcha Dinitz reached the chairman of the Jewish Agency himself this week, when he was called into police headquarters here for questioning.

Dinitz was questioned Tuesday about allegations that he made improper personal use of Jewish Agency credit cards.

The police, investigating charges filed by two Knesset members, have already examined Jewish Agency documents in both Jerusalem and New York.

Dinitz has announced, meanwhile, that he will not quit his post as long as no legal charges are pressed against him.

In a letter to members of the Jewish Agency

Assembly, which convened in Jerusalem two weeks ago, Dinitz said the organization faces the question of "whether we are to surrender to press allegations or await the legal determination of the democratic process of Israel.

"Are we going to have a trial by the press or are we to follow the accepted dictum that a person is innocent, and should be treated as such, unless he is proven guilty?" he wrote.

That approach was echoed in New York, when the Cabinet of the American Zionist Movement expressed support for Dinitz, who also chairs the World Zionist Organization. AZM President Seymour Reich subsequently circulated a statement of support.

The statement, which was signed by Reich and nine other former chairmen of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said the embattled Jewish Agency chairman "deserves better than the public opprobrium to which he has been subjected" and urges that he be given "the fair chance he merits."

Of all the former chairmen still active in Jewish communal life, only one did not sign the statement: Shoshana Cardin, who is the only one who has been involved with the Jewish Agency on the side of the federations and fund-raising organizations that pay its bills.

Cardin said she would reserve judgment until the completion of an internal assessment being undertaken for the Jewish Agency Board of Governors.

Those involved with the Jewish Agency from the fund-raising side seem much less inclined to heed Dinitz's call for postponing all judgment until possible judicial resolution, which could take months or years if the case is not quickly dropped.

Norman Lipoff, chairman of the board of the United Israel Appeal, which represents United Jewish Appeal and federation activists in the Jewish Agency, drew criticism from Dinitz supporters for a letter seeking to distinguish between the alleged misconduct of Dinitz and the general health and success of the organization.

He noted that the leadership of the fund-raising organizations, including UIA, UJA and the Council of Jewish Federations, have been charged with monitoring the effect the Dinitz scandal has on the fund-raising drives and with taking "a proper course of action" no later than Aug. 31.

What this implies, say Dinitz supporters, is a demand that Dinitz step down by the end of the summer.

(Contributing to this report was JTA staff writer Larry Yudelson in New York.)

MANNING AVOIDS EXTRADITION WITH SELF-INFLICTED ILLNESS

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, July 13 (JTA) -- Robert Manning, wanted in the United States on charges connected to a 1980 mail-bombing murder, temporarily avoided extradition to America at the airplane door Tuesday when his ill health prompted U.S. marshals and airline personnel to call off the transfer.

Police said Manning had swallowed 20 sleeping pills, smuggled into prison by his friends, to make him appear sick at the time of the extradition.

Later in the day, Manning was said by police to be conscious and in good condition.

Manning, 39, and his wife Rochelle, 51, who

are American immigrants, are both wanted in connection with the California murder of secretary Patricia Wilkinson by a parcel-bomb addressed to her employer.

After learning at 3 a.m. Tuesday that preparations were being made to put his client aboard a New York-bound plane at 7 a.m., Manning's lawyer rushed to Jerusalem to lodge an urgent appeal with the Supreme Court to stay the action, this time on grounds that the extradition should have taken place within 60 days of the time from when it was ordered.

But the court rejected the petition, stating that the delay had been caused by Manning's own series of appeals to the court.

Meanwhile, Manning was being readied for the trip at his holding cell in Ramla prison with a medical examination by doctors and paramedics.

He complained of chest pains and a medical aide gave him tranquilizers to calm him.

However, Manning fainted and fell to the ground, sustaining slight injuries.

A prison warden reportedly decided to go ahead with the extradition anyhow, transporting him to Ben-Gurion Airport by ambulance and lifting him on a stretcher to the door of a TWA plane by a hoist used to raise incapacitated passengers.

But there, waiting U.S. marshals and TWA personnel refused to go ahead with placing him on the flight, saying they had not been warned to prepare for the transportation of an ailing passenger in need of special attention.

Manning was returned to the prison hospital and a police investigation was launched into the reports that he had obtained medication from friends to make him appear sick.

SHIN BET NABS KAHANE CHAI MEMBERS SUSPECTED OF A BOMBING LAST YEAR

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, July 13 (JTA) -- Shin Bet security agents and police have arrested four right-wing activists of the Kahane Chai movement, all minors, on suspicion of carrying out a bombing in Jerusalem's Old City last year, in which one Arab was killed and 10 others were wounded.

The four, all 17, allegedly exploded a hand grenade in the middle of the Arab butchers market in the Old City, reportedly to avenge the murder of their leader Rabbi Meir Kahane almost three years ago.

Police did not release the names of the arrested youths because they are minors.

One suspect, the group's leader, was arrested this week in the West Bank settlement of Tapuah, near Nablus. The other three were detained in a Jerusalem apartment which had served as their headquarters.

Police said three of the detainees confessed to the attack. They said they had formed a "Revenge Patrol" to avenge the death of their leader.

A few days before the actual attack, they stole a hand grenade from an army truck. They carefully chose the site of the attack, entering a building and breaking the windows.

Several days later, two youths threw the hand grenade into the busy crowd in the market, fatally wounding Abdul Razek Adkayek and injuring 10 others.

It took the security forces eight months to uncover the ring and detain its participants.

JEWIS FEARFUL AS MOSCOW SYNAGOGUE ATTACKED FOR SECOND TIME IN MONTH

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, July 13 (JTA) -- The mood among groups that monitor Jews in Russia has grown more fearful since the main Moscow synagogue was attacked this week for the second time in a month.

Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, chief rabbi of Moscow, told the World Jewish Congress that shortly before dawn Monday, youths reportedly wearing black uniforms threw bricks through two of the synagogue windows and tried to break down the main doors.

Goldschmidt, who is now in Israel, received the report from the synagogue's caretaker, who witnessed the attack and called the police.

The police showed up after the perpetrators had already fled, as happened after the earlier attack in June.

Mark Levin, executive director of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, said, "I think this (second attack) highlights what we've been saying for a long time now, that popular anti-Semitism remains a real threat, and it is articulated in many different forms."

Asked if Jews in Moscow are apprehensive, he said, "I think they are obviously concerned about the repeat of an incident."

Levin spoke to Michael Chlenov, co-president of the Vaad, which represents Jewish groups in the former Soviet Union. Chlenov told him that the Vaad has been working with the synagogue leadership to work out an agreement to provide better protection for the synagogue.

"We have informed our State Department about this as well as the Russian Embassy in Washington," Levin said.

Jewish groups have been in contact with the Russian ambassador to Washington, Vladimir Lukin, requesting a 24-hour police guard at the synagogue.

Goldschmidt requested police protection for the synagogue at the time of the earlier attack, which occurred June 13, but nothing resulted.

Police Guard Expected In A Week

But Rabbi Adolf Shayevitch, chief rabbi of Russia, reached at home in Moscow, said that some municipal representatives had shown up at the synagogue on Tuesday saying a police guard would be placed there within a week.

"It is not only the acts of the hooligans which are so gravely disturbing but the failure of police authorities to give proper protection to the synagogue that concern us," said Israel Singer, WJC secretary-general.

This latest attack on Moscow's main synagogue took place almost exactly one month after the first. The coincidence is "very interesting," said Leonid Stonov, international director of the human rights bureau in Moscow of the Union of Councils, formerly called the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews.

Stonov, a former refusenik who now works out of Chicago, said he had spoken to many people in the former Soviet Union and they are fearful.

The mood for the vandalism was set, he said, by the recent proliferation of anti-Semitic leaflets and signs in the former Soviet Union.

"There are slogans on public transportation vehicles, especially in Moscow and St. Petersburg. It wasn't (that way) before," Stonov said.

SKINHEAD VIOLENCE ON THE RISE IN THE U.S., ADL REPORT SAYS

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, July 13 (JTA) -- Neo-Nazi skinheads pose an increasing threat in the United States, according to a report released this week by the Anti-Defamation League.

The number and pace of murders committed by neo-Nazi skinheads in the United States is on the rise, according to the report. And besides committing 22 homicides since 1990, skinheads have committed thousands of other crimes including beatings, stabbings, shootings and synagogue desecrations.

No Jews have been among the murder victims, who have been Hispanic, black, Asian, gay, homeless and, in several cases, other skinheads.

The report, titled "Young Nazi Killers -- The Rising Skinhead Danger," states that there are now between 3,300 and 3,500 neo-Nazi skinheads in 160 gangs in 40 states.

In February 1988, the ADL tallied 1,000 to 1,500 skinheads in a dozen states.

There is no national skinhead gang or organization. Instead, networks of gangs with names including the American Front, Aryan Resistance League and SS of America are loosely linked with one another.

Groups often change names, according to the ADL, and link up with old-line hate groups like the Ku Klux Klan, White Aryan Resistance and Church of the Creator.

The seven states with the greatest number of skinheads are: New Jersey, with 400; Texas, with 300 to 400; Oregon, with 300; and Colorado, Florida, Michigan and Virginia with about 200 skinheads each.

U.S. Skinheads More Anti-Semitic

The skinhead phenomenon originated in Great Britain in the early 1970s, when gangs of shaven-headed, tattooed youths wearing combat boots began to be seen on the streets. They favored hard-driving rock music filled with bigoted and violent lyrics.

The American skinheads base their dress and behavior on the British model, according to the ADL, but are more openly anti-Semitic than their British counterparts.

In this country they range in age from 13 to 25 and are more likely to be male than female.

The new report, prepared by the ADL's civil rights division, says that from 1987 through June 1990, neo-Nazi skinheads murdered six people around the country. Since then, they have committed 22 more.

In 1989 the U.S. Justice Department created a task force to prosecute skinhead gangs, according to the ADL, which resulted in a series of successful arrests, convictions and a decrease in the number of skinhead crimes.

The ADL's last report on skinhead activity, issued in 1990, noted the reduction in crime while stating it would prove merely temporary unless skinheads are prosecuted with consistency.

The new statistics prove that "when tough law enforcement was not applied persistently it indeed provided only temporary relief," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the ADL.

"Unless the law enforcement community now develops a plan to address this problem and gets the resources needed to implement it, there is every likelihood that skinhead crime will continue unabated," he said.

U.S. GETS DEPORTATION ORDER AGAINST NAZI GUARD, BUT MAN TOO ILL TO LEAVE

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, July 13 (JTA) -- Anton Baumann, a Wisconsin resident whose U.S. citizenship was revoked for failing to reveal his wartime activities as a Nazi SS guard, has agreed not to contest deportation proceedings against him.

But under the terms of a settlement reached last month, the U.S. Justice Department has agreed not to oppose Baumann's application for a stay of deportation on the grounds of ill health, according to an announcement by the department.

This means that Baumann, 81, who lives in a Milwaukee suburb, will likely never have to leave the country because his rapidly declining health would make actual deportation life-threatening.

At a hearing in U.S. Immigration Court on Monday, Baumann, a native of Yugoslavia, admitted his service in the SS Death's Head Battalion at the Stutthof and Buchenwald concentration camps.

He also admitted that he had assisted in the mass persecution of civilians at the two camps, both in Germany.

The court found Baumann deportable on all the charges brought by the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations, which prosecutes Nazis in this country.

Baumann had already been stripped of his U.S. citizenship in May 1991.

Baumann was brought into this week's hearing in a wheelchair. In January, he underwent coronary surgery and is under medical care for a variety of problems, according to court documents.

"Baumann will be able to get a stay of deportation so long as there is no improvement of his medical condition. If improved, however, he can be deported," a Justice Department official said. "He will still have to convince the court that he is really too ill."

TOUVIER APPEALING COURT DECISION REQUIRING HE CHECK IN WITH POLICE

By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, July 13 (JTA) -- Paul Touvier, the 78-year-old former French Nazi collaborator charged with crimes against humanity, has appealed a court decision requiring him to report every two weeks to the police station close to his Paris apartment until his trial.

The court had also ordered Touvier, head of the intelligence branch of the pro-Nazi Vichy regime's Lyon militia, to surrender his identification papers to the authorities and remain in the Paris area.

No date has been set yet for Touvier's trial, but it seems that the court in Versailles will hear the case by the beginning of next year.

Touvier is likely to become the first French citizen to be judged for crimes against humanity.

Until Touvier's appeal is decided, he is free to travel.

His lawyer said he would nevertheless abide by the court order voluntarily. Jewish organizations have expressed concern that he would flee the country.

After a long time hiding in Catholic convents with the help of friends in the Catholic hierarchy, Touvier was finally arrested in 1989 in Nice and jailed until 1991, when he was released because of his reported bad health.

Observers believe Touvier's most recent appeal will be rejected.

French Nazi-hunter Serge Klarsfeld told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency he is convinced that "unless Touvier leaves France or is killed by a lunatic or dies of old age, the trial will take place."

Asked about the possible trial of Maurice Papon, another Frenchman accused of crimes against humanity, Klarsfeld said the French judiciary authorities were doing their best to delay the case.

"Apparently, everyone there is hoping that Papon, now over 80, will slip on a banana peel and break his neck. The judges are afraid to throw the case out of court, and at the same time, they will not put Papon on trial."

Papon was first indicted over 11 years ago, but due to various technicalities, he has never been brought to court. As secretary-general of the Bordeaux area during the World War II, he signed the orders to arrest and deport hundreds of Jews, including children.

He later became head of the Paris police and served as a Cabinet minister under president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing.

A third war criminal, Rene Bousquet, who was Vichy police chief, was murdered last month by a non-Jewish man considered mentally imbalanced who wanted to do something important.

Klarsfeld, speaking to reporters Tuesday, said Touvier should take care to avoid the same fate.

He spoke in advance of this week's tribute to Jews who were rounded up and deported on July 16-17, 1942.

Klarsfeld also urged French President Francois Mitterrand to refrain from creating new controversy by paying any honor to Vichy President Philippe Petain.

Last Armistice Day, Mitterrand raised many hackles by laying a wreath at the tomb of Petain because he had been a hero of World War I.

Klarsfeld this week published a "Diary of the Persecutions Against the Jews in France From 1940 to 1944."

The diary traces the origin of every single Jew who was arrested by the French police or gendarmerie and detained in the Drancy concentration camp near Paris.

Most of those detained there were later deported to Auschwitz.

GERMANY TO STOP SOME SS PENSIONS

By Igal Avidan

BERLIN, July 13 (JTA) -- The German Parliament's Committee for Labor and Social Affairs has decided to withdraw pensions from former SS veterans living outside Germany if they participated in crimes against humanity.

According to a German government official, 414 such veterans in the former Soviet Union have received German pensions for decades.

In changing this policy, the Ministry of Labor will actually be applying an old regulation, never used before, which forbids such benefits.

Most of these SS veterans are in the Baltic states and are suspected of taking part in massacres or in serving in concentration camps in Ukraine.

A parliament member from the Green Party, Gunther Saathoff, has demanded that this regulation also be applied to SS veterans living in Germany.