

**RABIN FEARS U.S. INTERVENTION
AS CHRISTOPHER HEADS TO ISRAEL**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Dec. 5 (JTA) -- On his latest round of shuttle diplomacy, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher held talks with Syrian President Hafez Assad in Damascus on Sunday.

The Syrians termed the visit "good," but offered no details about the meeting.

Christopher is due to return to Israel on Tuesday, after meetings in the Jordanian capital of Amman.

Israeli officials have grumbled about the timing of the visit, which they say was based on Christopher's schedule and which threatens to increase the deadlock in Israel's negotiations with the Palestinians.

Israeli officials are said to have worried that Christopher's presence would only heighten Palestinian efforts to bring in American intervention to lean on Israel.

Talks between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization have stalled over a number of issues, including Israel's pullout from most of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho, which is scheduled for next week. That target date seems increasingly doubtful.

At the same time, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres are not eager for any developments on the Syrian front.

Meeting with Christopher on Saturday night and Sunday morning, the Israeli leaders reportedly made clear their preference for finishing the present Gaza-Jericho talks and implementing the agreement with the PLO before embarking on a separate -- and if anything more painful and controversial -- land for peace program with Syria.

Christopher To Meet With Arafat

Israeli sources said Rabin had stressed that despite his desire for a delay, Israel is seriously ready to engage Syria -- provided that Damascus shows a readiness for genuine peace and normalization.

In a first working session with the prime minister, Christopher reportedly spent most of the time listening to his host's assessments rather than advancing proposals of his own.

Israeli sources said the secretary apparently had some new ideas but was awaiting a propitious moment to put them forward.

The secretary is due to meet with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat in Tunis later in the week.

Israel Television Channel Two reported Sunday that Rabin and Arafat have agreed to defer for two weeks the Dec. 13 deadline for concluding a Gaza-Jericho agreement. There was no official confirmation of this.

Observers had expected a delay of some kind -- but believe the parties will make every effort to sign before the month -- and year -- end.

They say, too, that the parties are likely to arrange for some event on Dec. 13, even symbolic, denoting progress and reconciliation, to avoid the inevitably negative psychological effect if the date passes with no visible progress whatever.

**ATTACKS BY PALESTINIANS, JEWS
HEIGHTENING TENSIONS IN ISRAEL**

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Dec. 5 (JTA) -- A terrorist attack on an Israeli bus and actions by "rebellious" Jewish settlers heightened tensions a week before Israeli troops are scheduled to redeploy under the terms of the Israel-Palestine Liberation Organization accord.

The attack on a bus on the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway Sunday claimed the life of one Israeli as well as the perpetrator, who was shot and killed by a soldier.

The Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the attack, which was carried out by a resident of a Gaza Strip refugee camp. The man had forced his way onto the bus and had opened fire before he was thrown outside by the bus driver.

Over the weekend, Palestinian youths stoned the car of Rabbi Moshe Levinger, head of the Jewish seminary and settlement in Kiryat Arba.

Settlers later attacked Palestinians in Hebron, and one Palestinian was killed.

The Israeli army called the settlers' actions "provocation," while the settlers claimed self-defense.

Five settlers have been arrested and more arrests are expected.

'Passing Through A Very Difficult Phase'

Measures to curb the violence, by both Palestinians and Jews, were discussed in the Cabinet's weekly meeting.

Education Minister Amnon Rubinstein said Sunday's bus attack in such a central location was a very serious one.

It "makes it incumbent upon us to fight terrorism and to hunt for these assassins," he said.

Rubinstein also said the government would do everything within its power to combat the lawlessness of the settlers and to bring those responsible to justice.

"We are passing through a very difficult phase," he told Israel Radio. "We don't see the results of our agreement with the PLO, but we see only the problems created by those Arab terrorists and some of the settlers who want to sabotage the peace process."

Health Minister Haim Ramon demanded action against the Jewish "rebels."

"Today there is a very tough cell among the settlers which has decided to break the law and essentially declared rebellion against the rule of law in the State of Israel," Ramon said after the Cabinet meeting.

"I propose that the Israeli Defense Forces would deal with this cell the same way that they deal with lawbreakers on the Arab side," he said.

The bus attack provoked new charges by the opposition that the government's security policy is misguided and ineffective.

Police Minister Moshe Shahal said the government would not be persuaded to change its course toward peace.

Meanwhile, U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, on an official visit in Jerusalem, made an appeal to parties in the region to refrain from violence.

IN SHIFT, LIKUD OPPOSITION TAKES CASE TO CAPITOL HILL

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Dec. 5 (JTA) -- In a move stirring controversy, officials of Israel's former Likud government have been making the rounds here, voicing a less-than-optimistic view of the Middle East peace process and the way the Labor government is handling it.

Among the Likud officials meeting recently with members of Congress was Yossi Ben-Aharon, who served as director-general of former Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's office.

"We came to the United States to present views critical of the government's policy on the agreement" with the Palestine Liberation Organization, Ben-Aharon said last Thursday in a telephone interview from Israel.

"We believe that, contrary to impressions, there is a groundswell of opposition to the government's policy," he said.

The visits of Ben-Aharon and other opposition figures have revived a longtime controversy in the American Jewish community about whether and to what extent Israeli political debates should be exported to the United States.

In previous years, when the Israeli government was controlled by the Likud, members of the Labor Party tended to show up in Washington to offer their opinions, which often differed from the positions of the Likud government.

And the Likud government was known to complain bitterly about such activities.

The recent flurry of meetings on the Hill and elsewhere here represent a turning of the tables.

The Likud party is in the opposition, having lost to the Labor Party in Israel's 1992 elections.

The Likud has, for the most part, expressed pessimism and skepticism about the Israeli-Palestinian accord negotiated by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's government.

Debates Will Dilute Understanding

Some in the American Jewish community, like Abraham Foxman, the national director of the Anti-Defamation League, have long believed that the phenomenon of Israeli opposition figures criticizing the Israeli government in the United States is counterproductive.

"It's inappropriate and ill-advised today, just as it was in the days when Labor was in the opposition," Foxman said in an interview.

Such debates should take place in Israel, not in the United States, he said.

"It will dilute the understanding and support of the American people and Congress when Israel will really need it," Foxman said.

Former Israeli Ambassador Zalman Shoval also recently visited Washington.

Ben-Aharon said he is aware the current Israeli government is concerned about the Likud visits, but said the times demand such meetings.

The situation "is so critical and vital to Israel's security that political considerations are overshadowed by the need to explain our viewpoint," both in Israel and in the United States, Ben-Aharon said.

Israeli officials in Washington note that it is not unprecedented for opposition figures to hold meetings in Washington.

But once the opposition figures start talking about bringing down the government, or saying that the government's policies will lead to dis-

aster, the level of concern at the embassy starts to rise, as has been the case recently.

And groups on the left of the political spectrum here, like Americans for Peace Now, who came in for their share of criticism during the Shamir years for questioning Israel's policies, are now calling the Likud figures' activities hypocritical.

Ben-Aharon and two of his colleagues met here with members of Congress, pro-Israel and Jewish groups, and think tank scholars the week of Nov. 15.

The former Likud officials stressed two major points on which they would like American help, Ben-Aharon said.

The first is their belief that the United States should not grant waivers to the PLO.

Since the Sept. 13 signing of the Israeli-PLO accord, Congress has approved temporary waivers allowing some U.S. money to go to international organizations financing the PLO and allowing the PLO to reopen its office here.

The second point concerns the issue of American security guarantees on the Golan Heights.

Reports indicate that if Israel and Syria agree on some sort of Israeli withdrawal from the Golan, American troops could be deployed there.

Congress Said To Be Sympathetic

Ben-Aharon and his colleagues think it would be a mistake for Israel to withdraw from the Golan, and a mistake to depend on American troops.

He said the response from the members of Congress was "sympathetic."

Among the members of Congress with whom he met were Sen. Connie Mack (R-Fla.) and Rep. Bill McCollum (R-Fla.), who heads the House's Republican Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare.

Following his meeting with the Israelis, McCollum released a statement Nov. 19 summing up their positions, including their idea that the Israeli-PLO accord could lead to further destabilization in the region and more enmity toward Americans.

"This is not a far-fetched scenario," McCollum said. "Since the peace process, there has been an increase in terrorism in the Middle East."

Ben-Aharon also said he met with Sens. Hank Brown (R-Colo.), Charles Grassley (R-Iowa), Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) and Arlen Specter (R-Pa.), and with Rep. Sam Gejdenson (D-Conn.).

A Capitol Hill source present at one half-hour meeting said that the Likud figures did not urge Congress to do anything in particular about the peace process, but merely sought to present their perspective.

"I wouldn't portray them as lobbying against government policies," the source said, but as "reporting on the view and opinion in Israel and their perspective. They weren't saying, 'We need your help in killing this thing.'"

Ben-Aharon was joined by Yigal Carmon, who served as Shamir's adviser on terrorism, and Yoram Ettinger, who previously worked at the Israeli Embassy here.

All three are private citizens now, Ben Aharon said.

"We did not represent formally any political party. We are not politicians," he said. But he added, "We are in contact with some in the Likud."

U.S. DEFENSE OFFICIAL MEETS WITH RABIN

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Dec. 5 (JTA) -- U.S. Defense Undersecretary Frank Wisner has met with Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and leaders of the security establishment about U.S.-Israel military cooperation and military challenges in the region.

Wisner is the highest-ranking Pentagon official to visit Israel since the Clinton administration took office.

Last week's visit came at a time when the United States is reviewing its defense capabilities with an eye toward possible reductions.

Wisner's visit is being seen here as a gesture of continuing U.S. military support for Israel and was not expected to produce new agreements. It followed Rabin's meeting in Washington with Defense Secretary Les Aspin, who pledged continued cooperation and support.

Defense Ministry sources would say only that Wisner was briefed on "the military situation in the Middle East" and Israel's defense capabilities.

Sources also said the threat of Iran and expanding Islamic fundamentalism were discussed.

According to recent reports, this month Iran will receive and test North Korea's surface-to-surface Rodong ballistic missile, which has the capacity to strike Israel.

JEWS PAY HOMAGE TO RESCUERS,

COIN A NEW WORD: 'SCHINDLERISM'

NEW YORK, Dec. 5 (JTA) -- Two weeks before the opening of the film on his extraordinary wartime deeds, Oskar Schindler was honored for his rescue of more than 1,000 Jews.

In ceremonies punctuated by sobs, Emilie Schindler, the businessman's widow, accepted awards and accolades on behalf of her husband and herself last week in New York and Washington.

"It is time to bear witness to goodness, not only to evil," Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, said at a ceremony Thursday in New York.

"I stand here primarily as a survivor," said Foxman, who was hidden in Poland by his Catholic nanny. "I stand here because I was a recipient of ... 'Schindlerism.'"

During the war, Oskar Schindler convinced the Nazi authorities that the 1,100 Jews employed in his bogus munitions factory "were essential to the German war effort," Foxman said.

With this ploy, which survivors called an act of moral courage, Schindler and his wife were able to save all of the "Schindlerjuden."

On Tuesday, Oskar Schindler, who died in 1974, was honored by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum.

At the ceremony in Washington, Emilie Schindler accepted the museum's Medal of Remembrance from Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

The awards coincide with the release of Steven Spielberg's movie "Schindler's List," which is scheduled to premiere in North America on Dec. 15.

In New York, the Jewish Foundation for Christian Rescuers/ADL gave Emilie Schindler, now 85, the Courage to Care award, which was inaugurated on Yom HaShoah in 1987 to honor rescuers.

Standing under a red banner that said, "Goodness is rare but sacred in history; it must

not be neglected," Emilie Schindler started to speak in German.

In the hushed room she began to cry. "She is thanking those assembled," her translator said, "and those who are not here."

UNCERTAINTY ON CZECH REPARATIONS

FOR CONFISCATED JEWISH PROPERTY

By Joseph Klansky

PRAGUE (JTA) -- A bill before Parliament providing for the partial return of confiscated Jewish property faces no open opposition by any Czech political party, but its fate remains uncertain, according to Jiri Danicek, the president of the Federation of Jewish Communities in the Czech Republic.

The bill, now under debate by different parliamentary committees, will probably be submitted to a plenary session of the house before or shortly after the end of the year.

The measure deals exclusively with former Jewish property now held by the state that was confiscated by both the Nazi and Communist regimes. It is based on a list of 208 items whose original Jewish communities have requested their return.

The list comprises mostly synagogue buildings and Jewish cemeteries, as well as the collection of the Prague State Jewish Museum, which was expropriated by the Communists in 1950.

The proposed law also provides for the return of some private property, which was not returned to surviving owners or their relatives between the Nazis' defeat in 1945 and the Communist takeover in 1948.

Only a limited number of individual cases are involved, since most Jewish estates expropriated by the Nazis and taken over by the state have no legal heirs who survived the Holocaust.

Legislation on property restitution is not very popular in this country, without regard to the religion of the property's original owner.

Strong popular feelings have been expressed, for example, against the restitution of estates and land to the Roman Catholic Church, as proposed by another bill being discussed simultaneously with the "Jewish" bill.

Discussions on the return of Jewish property are complicated by the fact that these claims antedate the statute of limitations of Feb. 25, 1948, the date of the Communist takeover.

The reason the country adhered to this deadline was to exclude claims by the ethnic Germans of the Sudetenland, whose property was confiscated after the Nazi defeat, when most of them were expelled from then Czechoslovakia.

Therefore, the "Jewish" bill must present a strong case for former Jewish property appropriated by the state after 1945. "If we do not receive back those items listed in the bill," said Jewish communal leader Zeno Dostal, "some Jewish communities in the Czech Republic will not be able to survive and care for the remnants of the Jewish heritage."

The newly constituted nation of Slovakia is ahead of its former Czech half with respect to the return of property to Jewish communities.

Slovakia adopted a law this past September for the restitution of property to Jewish communities.

This law, however, does not deal with private property that was confiscated from the Jews by the fascist puppet regime of Josef Tiso during the war.

RAINS, FLOODS FORCE ISRAEL TO CLEAN UP MANY RIVER AREAS

By Michele Chabin

TEL AVIV (JTA) -- Occasionally, a catastrophe turns out to be a blessing in disguise.

During the winter of 1992, record-breaking rainfall and violent snowstorms caused many rivers to overflow into residential areas.

Entire neighborhoods were flooded, and several people lost their lives.

At the time, the disaster cost the country more than a billion dollars in ruined farmland and destroyed property.

Yet last year's disastrous flooding did have one positive consequence: It alerted the government and ordinary Israelis to the plight of the nation's rivers, which have become overgrown and polluted through decades of neglect.

"It's ironic, but the flooding really got the ball rolling," said environmentalist Aviva Harari.

"People were forced to wake up and ask why the rivers couldn't handle the extra water," she said.

"It's amazing how the flood focused public attention on the rivers and the problems of water pollution -- something environmental groups have been trying to do for years, without much success," said Harari.

Harari, who heads a project designed to clean up the Lachish River in the coastal city of Ashdod, attributed the lack of awareness to the fact that "since founding the state, Israelis have been preoccupied with security and building up the land. Other things simply took priority.

"Until the flooding, the nation's rivers were largely ignored. Over the years they became clogged with overgrown plant life and sediment.

"They also became the dumping ground for tons of sewage from private citizens and industrial plants. Any way you look at it, the result was a disaster," Harari said.

Stunned by the extent of the damage -- which cost the Treasury more than a \$100 million in insurance payments to stricken farmers and other flood victims -- the government scrambled for ways to shore up the rivers and avoid a similar scenario the following winter.

Rivers Getting More Unhealthy

The government called on municipalities, the Jewish National Fund and various environmental groups to help assess the extent of the problem and to come up with solutions.

As soon as the rains stopped in the spring of 1992, scientists began taking water samples from rivers around the country, while engineers devised strategies to widen the rivers and raise their banks.

"What we found was an unhealthy river system getting more unhealthy by the minute," said Yigal Seligman, a JNF environmentalist in charge of revitalizing the Kishon River in Haifa.

"In addition to an accumulation of tree branches and mud, we found the bigger problem of industrial plants dumping chemicals and other waste into our water supply.

"Water is a vital resource everywhere, but it's especially scarce in Israel, and it's a crime to pollute the little water we do have," said Seligman. He said that most of Israel's rivers are moderately polluted but still sustain plant and animal life.

But there are some spots -- notably along the Kishon and Lachish rivers -- where life has

ceased. This could soon change, thanks to a joint effort by government and private bodies to clean up the rivers.

For the past 18 months, JNF bulldozers have been clearing away rotting debris and tons of mud in a half-dozen rivers, allowing the water to run more freely.

As a result, the banks have been raised and the riverbeds widened.

Environmentalists Seek Enforcement Of Law

At the same time, environmental activists have been lobbying against industrial waste disposal, calling on legislators to enforce anti-pollution laws already on the books.

While the status of the rivers is far from optimal, there has been some improvement.

Two years ago, Tel Aviv's Yarkon River overflowed its banks and caused extensive damage to residential property.

Since an intensive cleanup program, during which the Yarkon was dredged and widened, the river no longer overflows, and much of the surrounding area has been transformed into a national park.

Showing a visitor around the newly opened site, which boasts freshly cut grass, picnic tables and a fishing hole, JNF project supervisor Yossi Rotlain said, "This area was once used for dumping. Now, nearby companies are cooperating with us to find alternative ways to dispose of waste."

Though the water "isn't 100 percent clean," said Rotlain, "I'd certainly eat the fish."

NEW YORK FEDERATION DEBATES SUBSIDY TO NEWSPAPER, BUT NO DECISION IS MADE

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Dec. 5 (JTA) -- A discussion by the board of the UJA-Federation of Greater New York concerning its relationship with The New York Jewish Week is being hailed by one of that newspaper's competitors.

Jerome Lippman, who publishes the Long Island Jewish World, has long criticized the exclusive arrangement under which The Jewish Week is mailed to federation donors.

"There is no question in my mind that the democratic process of the organization is in play right now," Lippman said following the Dec. 1 federation board meeting.

The meeting drew a larger-than-usual attendance, and at least 20 people spoke on the issue. No consensus emerged, according to those present at the meeting.

No decision was taken by the board. Instead, the top-level management committee will review the issues and make recommendations, which will be voted on by the board next year.

Under review is the arrangement by which the New York federation allocates \$825,000 annually to purchase subscriptions from the Jewish Week for the more than 80,000 donors who donate at least \$36 to the federation.

The Jewish Week returns its profits to the federation, amounting to \$58,000 in 1992, according to Stephen Solender, the federation's executive vice president. In addition, "they provide a significant amount of free advertising to us on an annual basis," said Solender.

Critics of the relationship have called for a "level playing field," under which the federation would give donors a choice of subscriptions to various local Jewish newspapers.