

**ARAB BOYCOTT IS 'BREAKING DOWN,'
CHRISTOPHER TELLS JEWISH LEADERS**
By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Dec. 20 (JTA) -- The Arab boycott of companies doing business with Israel is "largely breaking down already," Secretary of State Warren Christopher said this week.

Christopher said that while there is likely to be no formal renunciation of the Arab League's secondary and tertiary boycott of Israel, "you can see it taking place on the practical level."

Christopher was speaking to reporters Monday, following a private address to Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations at which he reported on his recent visit to the Middle East.

The secretary of state said that "ice is being broken" in terms of Israel's relations with the Arab world.

He confirmed reports that Morocco had promised to establish mail and telephone links with Israel, and said that Tunisia is likely to take similar steps, including permitting Israelis of Tunisian origin to visit the country.

Christopher said he had the sense that the apparently deadlocked Israeli-Palestinian talks over the details of the Israeli army's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank are "moving forward now."

He reiterated that the United States will not intervene in the talks unless both sides request it.

But he said that the peace process is irreversible.

"The changes in attitudes have affected entire circumstances in the region, so I don't think it will go back to status quo ante," he told the reporters.

"The declaration of principles will be carried forward by the parties," he said, referring to the agreement signed Sept. 13 by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Arafat Pressed To Abide By Accord

He told the Conference of Presidents that the United States was pressing PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat to abide by the accord he signed with Israel and was urging him not to cling to symbols, according to people present during his speech.

Regarding Syrian President Hafez Assad's promise to allow his country's remaining 800 Jews to leave the country by the end of the year, Christopher said he was confident the pledge would be "substantially carried out" by the time Clinton meets with Assad next month, according to sources present at the address.

But fulfilling that promise is not a precondition for the meeting, Christopher reportedly told the Jewish organizational leaders.

He was quoted as saying, however, that Syrian failure to keep the promise would "affect the atmosphere of the talks" with Clinton.

While the meeting broke little new ground, "the important thing is he's sensitive to our concerns and feels he had to speak to the Jewish community about his trip," said Rabbi Israel Miller, a former chairman of the Conference of Presidents who was among those attending the meeting.

**PLO SAID TO REDUCE DEMAND
FOR BOUNDARIES OF JERICHO**
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Dec. 20 (JTA) -- Israeli and Palestinian negotiators will resume their talks in Paris later this week, officials in Jerusalem and Tunis have confirmed.

The negotiating teams completed two days of talks in Oslo on Sunday and returned home for consultations.

Negotiators for the Palestine Liberation Organization have reportedly stated their willingness to limit the size of the West Bank town of Jericho that will fall under their administration, a key sticking point in the negotiations.

The PLO had previously sought an area of 140 square miles around Jericho, but according to press reports, it will now accept an area of 80 square miles.

In a move apparently designed to keep their negotiating options open, both sides have had little official comment about the talks.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, who is leading the Israeli negotiating team, told Israel Army Radio on Monday that this was not a time for declarations.

"If we make declarations," Peres said, "we will be negotiating over the declarations instead of over the issues."

Palestinians Demanding Too Much

But Peres did tell Israel Television that he thinks the Palestinians have been demanding too much.

"Some of (PLO Chairman Yasser) Arafat's demands go beyond the declaration of principles (that form the basis of the self-rule accord) and we have told him so in the clearest terms," said Peres.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was quoted by the newspaper Ma'ariv on Monday as saying the Oslo II round, as the weekend's talks are known in the Israeli media, was neither a failure nor a success.

Earlier this year, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators met secretly in Oslo, where they successfully concluded the agreement that was signed in September in Washington.

At the time, Peres met with Abu Alaa, also known as Ahmed Karia, the head of the PLO's economic division. In the latest round of talks, Alaa served as the top Palestinian negotiator, again going face-to-face with Peres.

The only clearly optimistic note about the progress of the latest Oslo round was sounded by Norwegian State Secretary Jan Egdal, who participated in the weekend talks.

Egdal told Radio Oslo on Monday that clear progress had been made in the negotiations.

Implementation of the self-rule accord was scheduled to begin on Dec. 13, but was postponed after negotiators became deadlocked over key security matters.

The issues still to be resolved concern the policing of the borders between the Gaza Strip and Egypt and between Jericho and Jordan, the size of Israeli security forces that will protect Jewish settlements in Gaza and Jericho, and the size of the Jericho district.

SETTLERS VOW TO BRING TORAH TO TOMB OF JOSEPH IN NABLUS

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Dec. 20 (JTA) -- After twice being rebuffed by Israeli security forces, settlers have pledged to bring a Torah this week to Joseph's Tomb in the West Bank town of Nablus -- even if the Israel Defense Force withdraws permission.

Settlers initially planned to hold a procession Dec. 12 to bring a new Torah to the Od Yosef Hai Yeshiva at Joseph's Tomb.

But the army barred the procession because it violated curfews that had been imposed on the area, populated predominantly by Palestinians, and because the procession was viewed as too provocative at a sensitive time.

On the next day, Dec. 13, the Palestinian self-rule accord was scheduled to be implemented, and tensions between Palestinians and Jews were running especially high.

The Dec. 13 deadline was postponed following a deadlock in the Israeli-Palestine Liberation Organization negotiations.

The procession was subsequently rescheduled for Dec. 16, but the army again cancelled it after soldiers had a fierce confrontation with 2,000 settlers.

As a result, the army detained 39 settlers overnight and declared Nablus a closed military area.

The army has reportedly given permission for the procession to take place later this week -- if the security situation in the area permits.

But the settlers have reportedly said the procession will take place even if the army rescinds its permission.

Communications Minister Shulamit Aloni of the left-wing Meretz bloc was reported to have criticized the settlers, calling their efforts "provocative."

She said Jews should not be allowed to go to Joseph's Tomb "in these days" because the procession will create additional strains between Palestinians and Jews.

Aloni, whose rhetoric has precipitated crises in the coalition of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in the last year, previously stirred up controversy about the site.

Earlier this year, during a speech to hundreds of Jerusalem high-schoolers, she referred to the reputed grave in Nablus of the biblical Joseph as "the cave of some sheik Yosef."

IRAN SAID TO IMPROVE MISSILE ABILITY

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Dec. 20 (JTA) -- Within a year, Iran will have the capability to fire long-range North Korean-made "Nordong" missiles at Israel, according to the head of Israel Air Force Intelligence.

The official, identified as "Col. A." in an article in the current issue of the Air Force Journal, said the missiles presently can carry conventional high-explosive warheads, but in the future they can be fitted with chemical or nuclear warheads.

"Iran is undoubtedly trying to purchase the capability to produce such chemical and nuclear warheads," Col. A. wrote. "We know that Iran is making great efforts to develop its aircraft and missiles so that they can directly threaten Israel."

The intelligence official also wrote that Iran and Syria were cooperating in the purchase of long-range North Korean-made Scud-C missiles, which can present a direct threat to Israel's civilian population in the event of war.

The official indicated that Syria has not been able to buy advanced surface-to-air SA10 and SA11 missiles -- a top government priority -- apparently because of the country's dire economic condition.

6 KACH MEMBERS HELD ON CONSPIRACY CHARGES

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Dec. 19 (JTA) -- Six members of the militantly anti-Arab Kach organization have been detained pending the completion of a police investigation into charges that they conspired to carry out attacks against Palestinians.

In addition to the conspiracy allegations, they also face charges of illegal possession of and trading in weapons, organizing paramilitary drills, and belonging to an illegal organization.

The six -- four of whom are American citizens -- were picked up by police early last Friday and were ordered detained for periods of between two to five days while the police complete their investigation.

The six denied all of the charges against them.

Their arrests were carried out after the police were reportedly tipped-off by former Kach leader Rabbi Avraham Toledano, who was charged in Tel Aviv District Court on Dec. 9 with importing weapons from the United States and attempting to manufacture arms.

Toledano was arrested late last month at Ben-Gurion Airport after customs officers found about \$50,000 cash in his luggage, as well as radio scanners, bomb fuses, detonators and instructions on how to use explosives.

Police reportedly believed that Toledano, a resident of the West Bank town of Kiryat Arba, was planning to attack Palestinians.

Among the six detained was Mark Bluestein, 25, an American tourist and a student at Jerusalem's Temple Mount Yeshiva.

The other four suspects were Baruch Ben-Yosef, Aharon Weinstein Hachohen, Israel Fuchs, Howard Friedman and Lynne Sherry Handelman.

Ben-Yosef, the executive director of the Temple Mount Yeshiva and a central figure in the Kach organization, admitted that he is wanted by the FBI in the United States for his involvement in the militant Jewish Defense League during the 1970s and 1980s.

CHINA, ISRAEL PONDER COMMERCIAL TIES

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV (JTA) -- An industrial and trade delegation, led by China's deputy minister for trade and industry, has spent a week in Israel examining joint civilian commercial relations.

The six-member Chinese delegation is investigating possible cooperation in the spheres of communications and computer software and hardware, as well as in micro-electronic systems, with Israel Aircraft Industries and other high-technology concerns.

The group was hosted by the Eisenberg Group, which sparked Israeli-Chinese trade relations years before the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the two countries.

JEWISH COMMUNITY JUMPS INTO FIGHT AGAINST CRIME

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Dec. 20 (JTA) -- Sparked by a series of violent incidents and growing unease, the issue of crime has soared to the top of the American agenda, and President Clinton has been trying to involve the religious community in crime-fighting efforts.

"I am very, very worried about the enormous amount of crime and violence that is engulfing our country and is taking a terrible toll on children in this country," the president said in a roundtable discussion Friday with nine reporters from religious news services including the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

"And I'm worried about the fact that we have not been able to fashion an adequate response to it," he said.

On Nov. 13, Clinton delivered an address on the subject of crime at the Memphis church where the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. preached his last sermon.

Crime is due to the breakdown of the family and the community and the disappearance of jobs, Clinton said.

The nation, he said, must realize that the fight against crime "cannot be done by government because we have to reach deep inside to the values, the spirit, the soul and the truth of human nature."

Clinton invoked King's name, asking what the slain civil rights leader would have thought of the crime and violence prevalent in today's society.

Jews Have An Interest In Making Cities Safe

In response, a group of religious leaders wrote to the president, praising him for his speech and offering to work with him to combat crime.

The Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism and its director, Rabbi David Saperstein, played a key role in coordinating the Dec. 15 letter.

Like other segments of the population, Jewish groups are becoming more aware of the crime problem.

"The Jewish community is largely an urban community, and problems with crime are largely urban," so Jews have an "interest in making cities safe and secure," said Mark Pelavin, Washington representative for the American Jewish Congress.

"The health of the Jewish community depends on the health of the larger society we live in," he said.

"Some issues are Jewish issues because they directly apply to Jewish people per se," but other issues, like crime, "affect the Jewish community as they affect others," said Sammie Moshenberg, Washington representative for the National Council of Jewish Women.

Jewish organizations in Washington have been lobbying on Capitol Hill, supporting the recently passed Brady gun bill and seeking passage of a number of crime bills.

The Anti-Defamation League and other groups have been strongly backing hate crimes legislation that has passed both houses of Congress and is now awaiting a House-Senate conference committee.

The legislation would increase federal penalties for crimes committed because of the vic-

tim's race, religion, nationality, gender or sexual orientation.

The ADL is also pushing for legislation that would institute anti-violence and prejudice-reduction programs in public schools.

"Our data shows that upwards of 80 percent of people arrested for committing anti-Semitic acts are people under 21," said Michael Lieberman, associate director of ADL's Washington office.

Among other bills backed by various Jewish groups are a ban on assault weapons, a tax on ammunition, an enhanced witness protection program for people providing information on terrorism, and legislation to combat violence against women.

Jewish groups are also working within their own agencies and communities to institute programs against crime.

The National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, an umbrella group of national and local Jewish organizations, is preparing to form a crime committee that will address both the causes and prevention of crime.

"There's a sense in the community that these are issues that must be addressed," said Larry Rubin, the group's executive vice chairman.

On the local level, too, Jewish groups are beginning to work with others to fight crime.

"Up to this point, the Jewish community has been less involved in local initiatives" than some other groups, said Rabbi Daniel Swartz of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

"That is starting to change," Swartz said.

Rallying For Gun Control

For example, in Washington last spring and summer, a black-Jewish task force, including the American Jewish Committee, organized a series of gun control rallies outside the headquarters of the National Rifle Association.

"Most Jews do not live in neighborhoods where the bulk of the shooting takes place, but they feel touched (by violence) and feel the need to do something about it," said Jeffrey Weintraub, AJCommittee's Washington area director, who helped coordinate the rallies.

In New York, which has the largest concentration of American Jews, the Metropolitan New York Coordinating Council on Jewish Poverty is working with local police and others to combat crime.

Jews living in urban poverty are likely to be touched by crime, said William Rapfogel, Met Council's executive director, and nearly a quarter of New York City's Jewish population is either below the poverty line or in the "near-poor" category.

When asked how pending legislation on Capitol Hill would affect the Jewish poor in New York, Rapfogel said he "wouldn't single out the Jewish poor. The Jewish community in general suffers from crime."

B'nai B'rith's Community Volunteer Services, for its part, has been distributing booklets entitled "Play it Safe." The booklets, designed for parents and teachers, use role-playing exercises and discussion programs to help children ward off abuse and abduction.

Swartz of the Religious Action Center said the Jewish community has something to offer other groups who are also concerned about crime.

As a group classified both as "white" and as a minority, Jews can serve as bridges among other community groups, Swartz said.

FEDERATION BREAKS WITH UJA ON MEANS OF GIVING TO ISRAEL By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Dec. 19 (JTA) -- Taking discontent over Israel's economic policies to a new extreme, a Massachusetts federation has made a radical break from the United Jewish Appeal.

The Jewish Federation of the North Shore is allocating up to half of the money that would have gone to the UJA and giving it to a fund for small-business loans in Israel's Negev region.

"We think philanthropy has a lot of faces other than the traditional faces, and one of them is giving a man a job," said Neil Cooper, the federation's executive director.

Creating jobs, said Cooper, is necessary for the continuation and success of the immigration from the former Soviet Union.

But members of the traditional federation and UJA system are furious.

"It is an abrogation of their partnership responsibilities to the task of bringing Jews home from the country of distress," said Daniel Allen, assistant executive vice president of the United Israel Appeal, which oversees the money the UJA disburses in Israel to the Jewish Agency.

"Without the funds of the federation system, the Jewish Agency will not be able to continue the work of bringing 60,000 or more Jews to Israel from the former Soviet Union each year," said Allen.

The Jewish Agency pays all immigration costs and some resettlement costs for Jews immigrating to Israel. Its \$500 million annual budget is financed by the UJA and similar fund-raising organizations around the world.

A Choice For Donors

Donors to this year's North Shore federation campaign, which is expected to bring in about \$2.5 million, were given the chance to divide their gift, which helps Jews overseas, between the UJA and programs designed to create jobs.

This is believed to be the first time a federation gave donors the choice to contribute to Israel through a means other than UJA.

Cooper expects that when the pledges and choices are counted, the federation will be able to give 50 percent of the overseas money to the job creation program.

Last month, the federation decided that the money designated for job creation will go toward interest free loans. It allocated \$100,000 to the Israel Free Loan Association, and the remainder -- likely to be \$500,000 -- to a new non-profit loan fund, being set up by the San Francisco-based Koret Foundation.

"I think we're filling a much unaddressed niche in the Israeli economy," said Bob Lappin, chairman of the federation's Israel Free Market and Direct Economic Aid Committee.

In putting economic development on an equal footing to the UJA, the North Shore federation has raised to new levels an issue that has been steadily rising on the agenda of the federation and UJA system.

The Operation Exodus campaign to raise money for the absorption Jews from the states of the former Soviet Union has allowed federations to devote up to 5 percent of the funds to development projects, and there will be an economic development component to the Jewish Agency's forthcoming Project 2000.

"We have a piece of economic development,

but it doesn't become 50 percent," said Brian Lurie, executive vice president of UJA.

"The idea that we can take a massive role in creating jobs -- that's not our business," he said. "There is a tremendous role for Jewish philanthropy in Israel that hasn't ended."

It was Lurie who, as director of San Francisco's Jewish federation, several years ago became the first to break ranks with the UJA and to allocate money to Israel independently.

That was different, he said. The amount, \$100,000, allocated independently was only 5 percent of the campaign, not 50 percent, he said.

And his goal "was to reform the system. They're going totally outside the system."

But at the North Shore Federation, Cooper insists "We're still partners."

In the past year, Cooper's federation has taken a gaudy role within the system.

It has called on the UJA to review its relationship with the Jewish Agency.

And it offered a sharply worded resolution before the Council of Jewish Federations' Board of Delegates criticizing "Israel's socialist orientation." The resolution was overwhelmingly defeated.

BREAKING A 75-YEAR 'TRADITION,' SAUDIS JOIN JEWS TO ATTEND FETE By Steven Weiss

WASHINGTON, Dec. 20 (JTA) -- The spirit of peace has brought Jews and Arabs together in recent months to talk, and now to dine and dance.

The American Jewish Congress presented its annual Stephen S. Wise Award this year at a dinner dance attended for the first time by a group from Saudi Arabia.

The Saudi group of diplomats and businessmen paid \$10,000 for a table at the posh event Dec. 9, according to the AJCongress' public relations office.

It was believed to be the first time Arabs attended the event in the AJCongress' 75-year history.

The award was given to Robert K. Lifton at a black-tie ceremony at the Pierre Hotel in New York.

The Arab delegation joined some 300 guests at the affair, which was marked by speeches and then dancing to a variety of tunes.

Lifton, now completing his third two-year term as president of the AJCongress, received a telegram of congratulations from Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

The Saudis attended because of the good relationship they have enjoyed with Lifton during his tenure, said Belle Faber, assistant executive director of the AJCongress.

Lifton was "very touched" by the appearance, she said.

Among those attending this year's ceremony were New York Mayor David Dinkins and Mayor-Elect Rudolph Giuliani.

The AJCongress presented the award to Lifton for his "inspiring and dedicated leadership and for his enduring contribution to the advancement of human rights and the safeguarding of the security of Israel."

Previous recipients of the award include Vice President Walter Mondale; Earl Warren, chief justice of the Supreme Court; Golda Meir, prime minister of Israel; and Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.).