

**ISRAELI-PLO ACCORD REACHED IN CAIRO
PUSHES PALESTINIAN SELF-RULE FORWARD**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Feb. 9 (JTA) -- The long-awaited agreement reached in Cairo late Wednesday night by Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat has pushed Palestinian self-rule a crucial step closer to reality.

It has also provided at least some positive response to the key questions long hanging over the peace process: Can the PLO be trusted? And can it deliver?

The document hammered out in Cairo after weeks and months of frustrating, nitpicking negotiations on the security-related aspects of the Gaza-Jericho accord plainly does not yet give a reliable answer to those twin questions.

But it does offer some hope. And that, over and above the specific issues that have at last been agreed upon, is the major significance of the Cairo agreement.

Details of the accord were not announced Wednesday, but Arafat and Peres signed the document late that evening amid loud applause at the palace of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak after two days of talks. Then the two leaders shook hands.

Israeli and PLO negotiators had been trying to work out the implementation of the declaration of principles since it was signed by the two sides last September.

Cairo was the venue for the talks on several occasions, as were a string of European cities. Each time, the two sides looked close to agreement, only to pull back at the last moment.

That, in itself, attests to the seriousness on both sides. An agreement too quickly and too easily reached would have raised suspicions that the signatories did not truly intend to honor it.

Israeli negotiators, led in Cairo and in several previous rounds by Peres, privately spoke disparagingly of the PLO side. The Israelis groused over internecine backbiting within the PLO leadership and negotiating team.

The PLO negotiators, for their part, poked fun at Peres for his inability to make decisions without referring back at every twist and turn of the talks to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin for instructions.

More Negotiations To Come

But beneath the mutual mudslinging, a certain mutual respect has evolved, and will percolate through the two nations.

Hard bargainers ought to make serious and honorable implementers: This is the reasoning to be heard in both camps as the exhausted negotiators head for their beds.

The real test, of course, will be the implementation.

The agreement constitutes the much desired and much delayed breakthrough for the Gaza-Jericho arrangement -- the first phase of the interim self-government package that was supposed to have begun last December with an initial

Israeli troop withdrawal from Gaza and the West Bank town of Jericho.

Much more negotiating remains to be completed -- on civilian and administrative aspects of the accord.

But that should be easy sailing compared to the tense and stubborn haggling over the security issues, such as the border crossings to Egypt and Jordan, the roads through Gaza and Jericho feeding the Israeli settlements, the size of the area around Jericho scheduled to receive autonomy and the responsibility for "overall security" in the two autonomous areas.

Still Hoping To Meet Deadline

Once the whole deal is wrapped up, Israel intends to move expeditiously toward redeploying its troops, hoping still to meet the April 13 deadline set in the declaration of principles.

Then, at last, the PLO under Arafat will be in a position, for the first time ever, to provide the only true and authoritative answer to the double question of its trustworthiness and ability to deliver its promises.

For then its police and civilian officials will take over the actual running of parts, albeit small parts, of the disputed land.

The answer will be molded above all by the state of security in the two regions.

Terror attacks on Israeli settlers or soldiers, or travelers through the Jordan Valley, will quickly give the opposition in Israel the answer it suspects to be true: that the PLO is neither trustworthy nor capable of discharging its undertakings.

Relative calm will immensely strengthen the government's hand as it embarks on the second phase of negotiations with the PLO -- for full self-government throughout the rest of the West Bank.

The Israeli public will also be watching how the Palestinians go about the business of governing themselves, setting up judicial, economic and administrative organs and absorbing the vast amounts of promised international aid.

Jericho and Gaza are tiny specks on the map. But in terms of the Israeli-Arab conflict, they will be a laboratory for testing credibility.

**CLINTON ENDS AN ADDRESS TO WJC
WITH DRAMATIC NEWS FROM MIDEAST**

By Steven Weiss and Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Feb. 9 (JTA) -- President Clinton had already finished addressing an international conference of Jewish delegates Wednesday when he returned to the podium with a stunning announcement.

After months of difficult negotiations, Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization had just reached agreement on the implementation of the accord on self-rule that they had signed at the White House last September, the president said.

Delegates of the World Jewish Congress were momentarily speechless at the news, which had broken during the course of Clinton's speech to the group in the Old Executive Office Building.

But after a brief gap of silence, the group erupted into thunderous applause.

Clinton called the agreement "a milestone," and then stepped down from the podium to shake hands with delighted delegates.

"This was an extraordinary end to a conference with the announcement of near peace in the Middle East," said Elan Steinberg, executive director of the World Jewish Congress.

Steinberg called Clinton's speech outstanding.

The address by Clinton and one by Vice President Al Gore capped a WJC conference that also included meetings with Secretary of State Warren Christopher and members of Congress.

The biannual gathering of the group's governing board attracted delegates from Jewish communities around the world, including those in the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union and Sarajevo, the beleaguered capital of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

In his speech, Clinton discussed a range of topics, including the situation in Bosnia, ethnic hatred, the Middle East peace process and religious freedom.

The president congratulated Gore for speaking out against anti-Semitism and bigotry around the world. "People must realize and move beyond antiquated beliefs" of hatred and racism, he said.

Clinton said his administration has worked "very hard to build a just and lasting peace in the Middle East."

He then outlined three of the administration's goals with respect to that peace: minimizing the risks being taken by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, helping with implementation of the self-rule accord and encouraging progress in Israel's negotiations with the other Arab parties.

The president also repeated his call for the abolition of the Arab economic boycott of Israel, which he said must "end now."

"Israel must be a partner of these (Middle East) nations and no longer a pariah," he said.

Hearing On Global Anti-Semitism

On the subject of Bosnia, Clinton said the United States would "begin to invigorate negotiations to bring about an end to the bloodshed and aggression" in the war-torn country.

He spoke as NATO announced that it would launch air strikes against Serbian-controlled targets unless Serbian insurgent forces lifted the 2-year-old siege of Sarajevo by Feb. 20.

Ethnic hatred was, in fact, one of the main topics discussed at the WJC conference.

On Tuesday, WJC leaders went to Capitol Hill and testified about the danger of global anti-Semitism.

In prepared remarks, WJC President Edgar Bronfman spoke of "the growth and spread of intolerance, racism and hatred of foreigners, and, as a central feature of that, the resurgence of the longest hatred of all: anti-Semitism."

In 1993, there was "no slackening of anti-Semitic pressures in certain key trouble spots," he said.

However, Bronfman also noted that "whatever the level of anti-Semitism, what Jews are experiencing is not remotely comparable to the discrimination, violence and abuse which are a daily occurrence for other minority groups throughout the world."

Tuesday's hearings before the House Foreign

Affairs Committee and its subcommittee on human rights were believed to be the first-ever House hearings on global anti-Semitism featuring firsthand international testimony.

WJC leaders from Europe, the former Soviet Union, South America and South Africa testified about anti-Semitism in their regions.

"What we wanted to bring out was the fact that instead of just reading about manifestations of anti-Semitism," the committee "should hear from the representatives of Jewish communities," Executive Director Steinberg said after the hearing.

The testimony revealed that "Jews are a barometer of the democratic process in any country," he said. "Where Jews are not faring well," human rights are also not going well.

Among the incidents specifically discussed at the hearing were the rise of Russian ultranationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, the recent attack on Argentina's chief rabbi in Buenos Aires and the recent erecting of a statue in Romania to wartime dictator Ion Antonescu.

Meanwhile, Steinberg said that the subcommittee chairman, Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), had pledged his support in efforts to regain Jewish properties seized by Nazi and Communist governments in Europe.

SENATE FOREIGN COMMITTEE VOTES TO APPROVE TALBOTT NOMINATION

By Steven Weiss

WASHINGTON, Feb. 9 (JTA) -- The Senate Foreign Relations Committee voted Wednesday to approve the nomination of Strobe Talbott as deputy secretary of state.

The committee vote was 17-2, with Republican Sens. Jesse Helms (N.C.) and Hank Brown (Colo.) voting against the nomination.

The full Senate was expected to confirm Talbott in a vote either late Wednesday or Thursday.

The committee's approval came against a backdrop of criticism regarding a perceived bias against Israel in some of Talbott's past writings.

On Wednesday, before the full Senate vote, Sen. Alfonse D'Amato (R-N.Y.) held a news conference with Jewish groups opposed to the Talbott nomination.

D'Amato and Sen. Connie Mack (R-Fla.) sent a letter to President Clinton on Monday urging him to withdraw the nomination because of Talbott's perceived bias against Israel in articles he wrote for Time magazine in the 1980s and early 1990s.

"Mr. Talbott's writings, taken together, go beyond common criticisms to a systematic attack upon the foundations of America's close relationship with Israel," the letter read.

But Talbott testified at his confirmation hearing Tuesday that his views on Israel had changed since the early 1980s, when he wrote some of the articles in question in Time magazine.

The matter's arrival before the full Senate survived an attempted delay by Helms, who proposed that the Foreign Relations Committee submit a report on the nomination, thereby postponing its consideration before the Senate.

In a partisan vote, Democratic committee members rejected Helms' proposal over the protest of Republicans, 10-9.

ROBERT MANNING SENTENCED TO LIFE IN PRISON FOR 1980 MAIL BOMB KILLING

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES, Feb. 9 (JTA) -- Robert Manning, the California-born Israeli found guilty of complicity in the 1980 mail bomb death of a Los Angeles secretary, has been sentenced to life imprisonment, without possibility of parole for 30 years.

U.S. District Judge Dickran Tevrizian rejected the request by Manning's lawyer for parole eligibility in 10 years, citing the "callous" and "hideous" nature of Manning's crime.

Before his sentencing in federal court, Manning denied involvement in what he called "this horrible crime," and asked the judge to recommend that he be allowed to serve his sentence in an Israeli prison.

"This whole thing is sickening to me," said Manning, who never took the stand. "I wouldn't have anything to do with this sort of thing."

An early Los Angeles member of the Jewish Defense League and a resident of Kiryat Arba since his emigration to Israel 10 years ago, Manning fought and lost a two-year battle in Israel to prevent his extradition to the United States.

Authorities here have cited Manning as a suspect in a number of attacks against Arab-Americans and neo-Nazis here, some of these acts allegedly linked to the late Rabbi Meir Kahane.

But the charges on which he was convicted had no ideological implications.

According to testimony given at his trial, Manning, 42, and his wife Rochelle, 53, were hired by a fellow JDL member, William Ross, 57, to construct and mail a booby-trapped device to the owner of a local computer firm, with whom Ross had a drawn-out business dispute.

The package was opened by the firm's secretary, Patricia Wilkerson, who was killed instantly when she followed enclosed instructions to plug the device into an electrical outlet.

Both Rochelle Manning and Ross stood trial on the same charge five years ago but were freed when the jury could not reach a verdict.

Claim Prison Didn't Honor Kosher Order

Rochelle Manning returned to Israel but has been re-indicted, and her extradition to the United States has been ordered by the Israeli Supreme Court and signed by Justice Minister David Libai. She is appealing the order on the grounds that her religious, eating and dress requirements as an Orthodox woman would not be met in an American prison. Both Mannings hold dual American and Israeli citizenship.

In her appeals petition, Rochelle Manning cited an affidavit by Rabbi Zvi Block, Robert Manning's spiritual adviser here, stating that despite a court order, her husband has not been given kosher food or allowed to wear tefillin in prison when he says his morning prayers.

Ross fled the United States in August after his re-indictment but recently surrendered to Canadian authorities and is back in Los Angeles.

It is expected that he and Rochelle Manning will stand trial together in July, if she is extradited from Israel.

The case has aroused strong emotions in Israel among Orthodox and nationalist groups. Robert Manning's supporters in Israel and here

claim that the real reason American authorities kept after him was to link him to a 1985 bombing that killed Southern California Arab-American activist Alex Odeh.

But according to the U.S.-Israel extradition treaty, he cannot be additionally prosecuted.

FRENCH DEFENSE MINISTER SACKS HISTORIAN WHO CAST DOUBT ON DREYFUS

By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, Feb. 9 (JTA) -- A century after the world-famous case rocked French society, the Dreyfus Affair still has the power to re-open old wounds here.

This week, the French defense minister abruptly fired the head of the army's history section for publishing an article that cast doubt on the innocence of Capt. Alfred Dreyfus.

The army historian, Col. Paul Gaujac, published a report in the army magazine Actualite leaving room to doubt whether Dreyfus -- a Jewish officer who was falsely convicted of spying for Germany -- was truly innocent.

Rather than speak of the Jewish officer's innocence, Gaujac wrote, "Dreyfus' innocence is the thesis now generally accepted by historians."

French Defense Minister Francois Leotard was reportedly furious after reading the report and immediately fired Gaujac.

Dreyfus was arrested in 1894 after a French spy in the German Embassy found a document purportedly in Dreyfus' handwriting that provided sensitive information to the Germans.

Dreyfus was subsequently arrested, convicted on charges of espionage, publicly stripped of his military medals and sent to Devil's Island, a French penal colony off the coast of French Guiana, in South America. Dreyfus had never even seen the evidence against him.

The case, which sparked a wave of anti-Semitism in France, was re-opened in 1898 when a French intelligence official concluded that a different officer, Maj. Walsin Esterhazy, wrote the document. But that case was dropped, and Dreyfus was sentenced to 10 more years.

In ensuing years, there were growing calls for Dreyfus' release, most notably by author Emile Zola, whose article, "J'Accuse," charged that top army officials fabricated the case against Dreyfus.

In July 1906, the verdict against Dreyfus was annulled by a civilian court, and he was reinstated into the army, where he rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel and fought in World War I. But the French army never reversed its 1899 verdict.

In his report, Gaujac did not write of the wrongful conviction.

Instead, he wrote how the case led to "the dismantling of the French army intelligence service and to the cutting of the budget of the army" while Germany was rearming.

Gaujac's report, published in late January, went unnoticed until the French leftist daily Liberation published short extracts this week.

The reaction of the French defense minister was swift. Leotard, who is an open friend of the Jewish community and of Israel, told Gaujac to leave his office immediately.

There was no immediate reaction from local Jewish community leaders, many of whom are in Washington for a World Jewish Congress conference.

COMPROMISE ON NEW AIPAC DIRECTOR FALLS APART AT THE LAST MINUTE

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Feb. 9 (JTA) -- The American Israel Public Affairs Committee, racked by a series of high-profile personnel problems over the past two years, was unable to agree on a new executive director before its executive committee met this week.

The executive committee had been expected Tuesday to approve a successor for Tom Dine, the highly regarded 13-year veteran who resigned last June after the publication of remarks he made denigrating fervently Orthodox Jews.

On Monday, a search committee and the officers of the lobby had recommended that the job be shared by the two final candidates for the post, Howard Kohr, AIPAC's acting executive director, and Neal Sher, currently director of the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations, or Nazi-hunting unit.

But by Tuesday morning, Kohr had rejected the joint directorship approach.

This sends the issue back to debate and leaves AIPAC still trying to move beyond its troubles. The ongoing debate takes place against a backdrop of an advancing Middle East peace process that is dramatically shifting the landscape of pro-Israel activism.

The scandals that have rocked the organization include the resignation of David Steiner as president of the organization after he had been taped boasting of AIPAC's influence on the Clinton transition team; the resignation last July of Harvey Friedman, a vice president of AIPAC, after he had been quoted as calling Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin a "slime ball"; and the resignation of Dine for having been quoted as saying Orthodox Jews were perceived as "smelly."

"AIPAC is focused on the abundance of tasks ahead of us," said the organization's spokesperson.

"We had 150 meetings with members of Congress today alone, and frankly there is a sense that this delay will not derail us," said the spokesperson.

'Delay Will Not Derail Us'

On the surface, the idea of Kohr and Sher sharing responsibilities made a certain amount of sense.

Kohr is in effect the incumbent, having been running AIPAC since Dine's departure and before that, as managing director, being responsible for most of the day-to-day management while Dine concentrated on public appearances and fund-raising.

Sher, who is said to have no direct experience in lobbying Capitol Hill, is seen as more charismatic than Kohr.

"People were looking to make use of both of their skills," said an AIPAC spokesperson. "This was somewhat of an unusual model, though not unprecedented in certain business organizations," said the spokesperson.

Others saw the arrangement as a poor attempt at compromise between supporters of the two men.

"It's a Rube Goldberg contraption," said an official with another Jewish organization. "I don't know of any examples working in the past of this

kind of bifurcated responsibilities," said the official.

Kohr is backed by the former chairmen of AIPAC, a group that includes Republican activists and who wish to maintain control over the lobbying group, according to some people familiar with the situation. Kohr previously headed the National Jewish Coalition, a Republican group.

Sher is not seen as having partisan political leanings. The issue, however, may be less that of Republicans against Democrats than of change.

At issue, said a member of the search committee who supported Sher when the OSI director emerged as one of the two finalists, was "vision, and coping with changes in the world, in the Middle East and in the American mood.

"Times have changed, and you need someone at the helm who can dream, who can create a vision, who can provide leadership, who can attract a following," said the search committee member.

Sher seemed poised to win the committee's nod on Monday, according to the committee member and others familiar with the situation.

Before the meeting, however, the idea of sharing the post was worked out by the officers, with an eye toward continuing Kohr's position in the organization.

"There was an accommodation for the past chairmen who were anxious to keep Howard in there, and Steve reluctantly went along with it," according to the member of the search committee, referring to AIPAC President Steven Grossman.

Grossman and other AIPAC officials, including Kohr, were not available for comment.

The officers are scheduled to emerge with one recommended candidate in a week. The broader executive committee, which includes a couple of hundred members, will vote by mail or fax on the candidate, probably by the end of the month.

HEARINGS HELD FOR NEAR EAST NOMINEE

By Steven Weiss

WASHINGTON, Feb. 9 (JTA) -- Robert Pelletreau, the Clinton administration's nominee for assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern affairs, said during confirmation hearings that he hoped to see "Israel at peace with its neighbors."

In testimony Monday before the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, Pelletreau said the United States faces "a period of unparalleled opportunity and challenge in the Middle East."

The opportunity "lies in the vision of Israel at peace with its neighbors, with their mutual security assured and vigorous," he said.

Pelletreau, who is ambassador to Egypt, was nominated for the post vacated by Edward Djerejian, has served as a diplomat in nine Middle East countries, including Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. Djerejian has since become ambassador to Israel.

As ambassador to Tunisia in 1988, Pelletreau was asked by the State Department to conduct a dialogue with the Palestine Liberation Organization, then considered a terrorist organization.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee had no comment Monday on the nomination.

Also testifying before the committee was Wesley Egan Jr., the nominee for ambassador to Jordan. Egan said one of his policy priorities would be to end the Arab boycott of U.S. firms that trade with Israel.