

**AN ISRAELI RALLY IN HEBRON
IS PART PICNIC, PART PROTEST**

By Michele Chabin

KIRYAT ARBA, West Bank, March 31 (JTA) -- Thousands of Israelis gathered in this West Bank settlement on Thursday to protest the Palestinian self-rule accord and to demand a continued Jewish presence in nearby Hebron.

Composed mostly of religious Jews wearing knitted kipot, the crowd, estimated at between 5,000 to 10,000, expressed anger at what many termed the government's "sellout" to the Palestinians.

Many of those at the rally -- called in part to celebrate the 26th anniversary of renewed Jewish settlement in Hebron -- were armed.

At first, the demonstration resembled a picnic rather than a protest rally. Parents and children, many with ice chests filled with soft drinks and matzah, sat on the grass and socialized.

The atmosphere became more charged, however, when speaker after speaker -- including Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu and Ariel Sharon, a Knesset member and former defense minister -- lambasted the Rabin government for negotiating with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The crowd warmly applauded Sharon, calling him "king of Israel," following his impassioned denunciation of the Rabin government and of Foreign Minister Shimon Peres in particular.

"This is no longer a Jewish and Zionist government, and Peres, who is handing over the Gaza Strip and Jericho to (PLO Chairman Yasser) Arafat should join him there as foreign minister of the state of Palestine," Sharon told the crowd.

He called for passive resistance to the Rabin government, adding that if the current policy of negotiating with the Palestinians continues, "We must paralyze the entire country, day and night."

'Dr. Goldstein, We All Love You!'

Knesset member Rehavam Ze'evi of the right-wing Moledet party took a similar anti-Palestinian stand.

"I believe in evacuating Hebron," he told the crowd. "I believe in evacuating the Arabs from Hebron."

Though many in the crowd shared Ze'evi's sentiments, others took a more moderate stand.

Before the rally began, a group of youths from Kiryat Arba gathered outside a building where Noam Arnon, one of the settler leaders, was being questioned by police. Arnon had refused to surrender his revolver.

"Police state, police state," the youths chanted.

They also voiced their support for Baruch Goldstein, the West Bank settler who gunned down at least 29 Palestinians at a Hebron mosque on Feb. 25.

"Dr. Goldstein, there's no one like you in the world," they chanted. "Dr. Goldstein, we all love you!"

(Contributing to this report was JTA correspondent Dvora Getzler in Jerusalem.)

**ISRAEL, PLO AGREE ON FORCE
OF INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS**

By Dvora Getzler

JERUSALEM, March 31 (JTA) -- Israeli and Palestine Liberation Organization officials have reached agreement for deploying about 160 international observers in the West Bank town of Hebron.

The agreement, reached Thursday in Cairo, clears the way for the resumption of talks to implement the Palestinian self-rule accord signed last September in Washington.

The negotiations on self-rule had been broken off by the PLO after the Feb. 25 murders of at least 29 Palestinians at a mosque in Hebron.

The PLO had called for an international force to guarantee the security of Palestinians living in Hebron as a precondition for resuming the negotiations on self-rule.

Some 160 Norwegians, Danes and Italians will be deployed to serve as observers in Hebron.

The move marks the first time since the 1967 Six-Day War that Israel has allowed an international presence in any portion of the territories.

Although the force will be allowed to carry pistols for self-defense, it will have no policing or military duties, according to the terms of the agreement worked out in Cairo.

The observers will be in place for an initial three-month period, a mandate that is renewable for additional three-month periods.

Denmark will reportedly send police rather than soldiers -- a move that may be followed by the other participants.

Police in Jericho Begin Next Week

Under the terms of the agreement, the observer force will wear distinctive uniforms and will travel in marked vehicles.

In a major concession, the PLO backed off from its original demand for a Palestinian police force to patrol the streets of Hebron, which have been the site of ongoing violence since the Feb. 25 killings.

Within hours of Thursday's signing ceremony in Cairo for the international presence in Hebron, Israeli and PLO negotiators sat down to discuss the deployment of a Palestinian police force in the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho.

Those discussions represented the official resumption of negotiations on the establishment of Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and Jericho.

Under the terms of Thursday's agreement, Palestinian police will begin moving into Gaza and Jericho next week.

The agreement -- which was signed by Amnon Shahak for Israel and by senior Arafat adviser Nabil Sha'ath for the PLO -- calls for the two sides to accelerate their negotiations on Palestinian self-rule and for Israel to speed up its withdrawal from Gaza and Jericho.

According to Israel Radio, Israel Defense Force officials said Thursday that they can complete the withdrawal from Gaza within 72 hours after the order to do so is given.

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES:
AMERICAN JEWISH, ARAB GROUPS
FINDING A COMMON PEACE POLICY**
By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, March 31 (JTA) -- Americans for Peace Now and the National Association of Arab Americans have jointly called on the Israeli government to evacuate settlers from Hebron and remove settlements in the Gaza Strip.

In asking that settlements be dismantled, APN is moving beyond the policy of the Israeli government, but is following the positions of its Israeli parent organization, Peace Now.

The call came in a wider policy statement concerning the Middle East peace process the groups issued in Washington on March 25.

The groups heralded the statement as the first joint policy recommendations related to the peace process made by mainstream American Jewish and Arab American organizations.

"The fact that we can carve out a joint agenda is important in terms of building support for the peace process here in this country," said Gail Pressberg, co-director of APN's Washington office.

"We made these recommendations that reflect the least common denominators on both sides, as to what it takes to nudge the process forward, and to engage in a qualitative jump forward that would transcend the current difficulties," said Khalil Jahshan, executive director of the National Association of Arab Americans.

The association, which bills itself as the premier Arab lobby in Washington, is seen as the closest equivalent in the Arab American community to the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, the pro-Israel lobby.

The two groups plan to take their joint case to Capitol Hill.

This lobbying will continue a trend in which American Jewish groups within the mainstream umbrellas of AIPAC and the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations act independently in Washington on issues related to Israel.

In recent weeks, the Zionist Organization of America launched a drive against Strobe Talbott's nomination as deputy secretary of state and for a congressional resolution urging the administration to veto a United Nations resolution concerning Israel, despite the decision by AIPAC not to fight those battles.

Independent Lobbying Grows

"This is new," said an Israeli official, "the sense that Jewish organizations who are part of the mainstream can lobby on Capitol Hill to force Israel to take position X, Y or Z. The proliferation of this is new."

While APN has long lobbied independently, that became a central issue when it joined the Conference of Presidents last year. In the vote on admitting APN, AIPAC abstained precisely over the issue of APN's lobbying plans.

But the Israeli official indicated that the feeling among many organizations that it is legitimate to work independently on Capitol Hill reflects a broader shift in the nature of the Israeli-American relationship, and the reaction to that shift by Jewish groups well to the right of APN.

"In the past, the Israeli government used the American Jewish community in order to stall and hide from various pressures," said the official.

"Today the Israeli government is moving ahead, usually in coordination with the United States. So a few interest groups who are trying to slow down the Israeli government are today trying to use Congress to force Israel to change its course."

Gary Rubin, APN's executive director, said that unlike groups on the right, "we're not challenging fundamental Israeli policy. What we're saying is that a very worthwhile peace process is under way that needs to be accelerated."

Rubin said that removing the settlements is not a matter of appeasing Palestinian demands, but something that needs to be done in Israel's interests.

The settlers in Hebron, he said, "are committed opponents to the peace process."

And for Israel to maintain security of the roads used by Gaza settlers, he said, would require a level of Israeli military presence inconsistent with Palestinian self-rule.

Talks On Jerusalem Now?

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has resisted calls to remove settlers from Hebron, which have been endorsed by nearly half of his Cabinet.

He has also been adamant against removing settlements in Gaza, saying that would be a violation of the Israeli-Palestine Liberation Organization declaration of principles, which reserves discussion of settlements for negotiations that are to follow the implementation of autonomy in Gaza and parts of the West Bank.

At the same time, Rabin has been indicating that he sees the Hebron settlements as being more a threat to Israeli security than an aide to it, and has made reference time and time again to the precedent said by the Likud government of former Prime Minister Menachem Begin of evacuating Jews from the settlement of Yamit, in the Sinai, as part of the peace with Egypt.

All this has led to wide speculation in the Israeli press, and fears among settlers, that Rabin just might implement the sort of unilateral, security-justified evacuation of settlers that Peace Now has called for.

The joint statement directly addressed Israeli concerns by calling on both Israel and the PLO to "promptly" implement and honor the commitments reached last Sept. 13, including PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's letters recognizing Israel, renouncing violence and promising to change the PLO charter.

They called on the Clinton administration to take a "more active and assertive role" in the Middle East peace talks.

And they asked for negotiations over the "final status" issues, including borders, settlements and Jerusalem, to begin promptly "so that uncertainties do not create an even more volatile situation."

Under the terms of the Israel-PLO accord, final status talks are to begin by Dec. 13, 1995.

REMINDER: The JTA Daily News Bulletin will not be published Monday, April 4.

**JEWS, CATHOLICS BLAST ADS
BY HOLOCAUST REVISIONISTS**

By Pamela Druckerman

NEW YORK, March 31 (JTA) -- Alarmed by a recent tide of Holocaust denial ads in university newspapers around the United States, Jewish and Catholic organizations have jointly condemned attempts to distort or deny the Holocaust, calling on editors not to publish revisionist claims.

The Synagogue Council of America along with the National Conference of Catholic Bishops issued a statement calling efforts to pressure universities to publish revisionist material a "perversion of the First Amendment" intended to incite racial hatred and promote the deniers' own fascist ideology.

"They have a legal right to lie," said Eugene Fisher, director of Catholic-Jewish relations for the bishops' conference, "but we can say they're lying."

Fisher said this current tactic is part of a second phase of Holocaust denial, whereby revisionists who had been denied access to legitimate academic channels are exploiting a climate of hypertolerance on university campuses as well as misguided notions of freedom of speech.

Masked as legitimate scholarship, the aim of most Holocaust deniers is to "rehabilitate the tattered image of National Socialism (Nazism)," the joint statement said.

The Catholic and Jewish groups are sending letters to representatives of their respective faiths on campuses across the United States, providing information on the deniers' real agenda and urging them to speak out against further publication of revisionist claims.

What is at stake in the debate, according to Fisher, is nothing less than a battle for historical memory, the outcome of which could have a far-reaching impact on future events.

"If we deny that massive a crime against humanity," Fisher asked, "what else can people get away with?"

More than a dozen university newspapers have published the advertisements, some on the grounds that even Holocaust deniers have a right to express their ideas in a public forum.

A Need To Repudiate Denials

Others published the text of the ads along with an editorial refutation, citing the need to publicly repudiate denial claims.

Rabbi Shel Schiffman, executive vice president of the Synagogue Council, said the deniers may have targeted college campuses because of the perception that students in particular are inclined to support what they perceive to be anti-establishment ideas.

But Dave Konig, executive editor of The Quad, the Queens College newspaper that ran the advertisement as an "editorial illustration" alongside a refutation, insists that the best tactic against revisionists is to confront them head-on.

"On a university campus, the whole goal is education, and you cannot educate through ignorance," Konig said.

However, Schiffman and others who have spoken out strongly against such tactics insist that editors should just say no.

"If someone has stated that the world is flat, we don't have to give it publicity as an

alternative view," Schiffman said. He added that, ironically, Jewish editors may be more likely than non-Jewish editors to publish Holocaust denial claims because of pressure to appear impartial.

This is the third joint statement issued by the Synagogue Council and the Bishops Conference since the two groups began holding biannual meetings in 1987.

Previous statements dealt with moral education in public schools and efforts to help stem what they called the proliferation of pornography.

Schiffman said the statement reflects a deep concern for Holocaust-related issues among many in the Catholic leadership, as well as the warming of relations between Catholics and Jews since Vatican Council II met in the 1960s.

**FORMER SS GUARD HEADS TO GERMANY
AFTER FACING DEPORTATION FROM U.S.**

WASHINGTON, March 31 (JTA) -- A longtime U.S. resident who admitted to being an SS guard at concentration camps during World War II has voluntarily left the United States rather than be prosecuted and deported.

Peter Mueller, a 70-year-old former resident of Longmont, Colo., left for Frankfurt, Germany, on Tuesday, a week after being served with an order to show why he should not be deported.

Mueller, 70, is a German national who never obtained U.S. citizenship. He lived in the United States since 1956 as a resident alien.

Formerly a resident of Illinois until he retired as foreman of a glass company, Mueller then moved to the Boulder, Colo., suburb of Longmont. He is recently married and had not told his new wife of his wartime history. She was informed by reporters who gathered at their home after the charges were filed against him.

Besides charging that Mueller had been a member of the Waffen SS and Death's Head Battalion from 1943 to 1944, the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations charged that he lied about his past when he applied for a U.S. visa.

Mueller admitted to having served as an armed guard at the Natzweiler Camp in Alsace, France, near the German border, and its subcamp, Schorzingen, in Wurttemberg, Germany.

He also admitted that he guarded slave laborers at the Natzweiler stone quarry and in underground mines at Schorzingen.

He said, however, "I didn't do criminal things. I did what a soldier does," according to the Denver Post.

The Justice Department's Nazi-prosecuting unit reported that during the time that Mueller served at the camp, thousands of Jews, Russians, Poles and Gypsies were subjected to inhumane living conditions, slave labor and murder.

HUNGARIAN JEWS SPENT PESACH IN ISRAEL

BUDAPEST, March 31 (JTA) -- More than 50 Hungarian Jews went to Israel to take part in a Passover seder this year.

Most who made the trip also wanted to investigate opportunities in case they decide to immigrate to Israel, said Jichak Blonder, deputy head of the Jewish Agency Budapest office.

Former Hungarian Chief Rabbi Alfred Schoner, who now lives in Israel, attended the seder.

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES:
WITH ITS VAST WORLDWIDE NETWORK,
CHABAD READY TO CONTINUE SERVICES**
By Pamela Druckerman

NEW YORK, March 31 (JTA) -- The key to how Lubavitch Chasidim would survive the loss of their spiritual leader may be found at outreach outposts across the globe where Lubavitch emissaries have set up shop.

The more than 1,500 Chabad houses, schools, synagogues, summer camps and social service programs -- and the 3,000 emissaries sent by the rebbe to direct them -- are the seat of a grass-roots infrastructure, whose largely non-Chasidic constituents may be tied more to their local Lubavitch representatives than to Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the movement's ailing leader whose headquarters is in Crown Heights.

Of the thousands who join adult education groups or send their children to schools run by Chabad -- an acronym for the outreach branch of the Lubavitch movement -- many are apt to think of the rebbe as a great leader but not, as some in the Lubavitch world have cast him, as the nascent Messiah who will rise from a Manhattan intensive care unit to redeem the world.

The fact that institutions built to spread the rebbe's teachings could outlive the rebbe may be by design, a part of the massive outreach effort pushed forward by Schneerson himself to bring increased Jewish awareness and observance to Jews around the world, but not necessarily to convert them to the Lubavitch brand of observance.

And so, while Lubavitch emissaries publicly espouse the belief that the rebbe's survival is a theological imperative, some also recognize that the mechanisms for post-rebbe Lubavitch life are firmly in place.

"If the teacher is not there, there's no reason why we should suddenly forget what we've learned all along," explained Dennis Brown, director of Chabad's residential drug rehabilitation program in Los Angeles.

Drug Program Won't Be Affected

Brown said his program would remain in operation as long as there are addicts who need his services.

Rabbi Sholom Gorodetsky, who manages Chabad's European and North African operations, said Chabad's European operation, which was started by the previous Lubavitcher rebbe right after World War II, will continue regardless of what happens with the rebbe's health.

"These institutions will go on. Nothing is going to fall apart," Gorodetsky said.

Chabad emissaries are given tremendous autonomy to determine community needs.

While all emissaries say they try to carry out the rebbe's will and teachings, the emissaries themselves -- with the rebbe's blessing -- effectively create and operate their own institutions.

Chabad centers also are financially independent of Crown Heights, relying instead on contributions from members of their local Jewish communities, many of whom are not Orthodox.

In Europe and the Soviet Union, funding for the extensive network of Lubavitch institutions comes from local donations, as well as from American Jewish organizations, which operate in

conjunction with many Chabad projects. And with a Chabad presence in more than 40 countries, many in the movement say Chabad has reached the mainstreams of Jewish life.

"Middle America is coming to Chabad houses today," said Rabbi David Eliezry, director of Chabad in Yorba Linda, Calif. He credits Chabad with changing the course of modern Jewish life by getting masses of largely secular Jews to increase Jewish observance and identification.

In some places, the Chabad house or school is the only Jewish institution.

Since the rebbe's first stroke two years ago -- which left the 92-year-old leader bedridden and virtually unable to communicate -- Chabad seems to have thrived, building 60 new enterprises, each with an annual operating budget in the hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Gorodetsky said the rebbe's poor health in the past two years has inspired increased Chabad activity. "If anything, we try to do more work to help the rebbe's health," Gorodetsky said.

In the vicinity of Crown Heights, much of daily life draws from events at Lubavitch headquarters at 770 Eastern Parkway.

But outside of Brooklyn, Lubavitch supporters, whose sole local access to the rebbe has been through videotapes and satellite feeds, could maintain nearly the same level of access to him.

"This is the first rebbe in history" with "a significant, VCR-accessible doctrine," said Alan Nadler, research director of YIVO.

Isolation As Way Of Life

Nadler, a longtime observer and critic of the Lubavitch movement, predicts that Chabad can coast on its organizational infrastructure without its spiritual leader.

However, emissaries sent to rural areas, where they are one of only a handful of observant families and where their impact on local Jewish life has been modest, may be more dependent on Crown Heights for moral support.

"Isolation is a reality, it comes with the territory," said Rabbi Yehuda Weg, who along with his wife runs the Chabad center in Tulsa, Okla. "It's not normal to take a couple from Brooklyn and transplant them to Oklahoma."

Nevertheless, Weg has been successful in establishing the only Orthodox presence in the state, running a "Shabbat Experience" program as well as holiday workshops and adult education.

But the rebbe's presence, even from a sickbed in Manhattan, may be what ultimately sustains him.

"What makes it possible for me to do this is the inspiration I get directly from the rebbe," Weg said.

Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, insists that most popular support for Chabad does not extend beyond donations and that Chabad activists are better at marketing their outreach efforts than on making inroads into Jewish life.

"Are they a powerful force for Jewish continuity on the American scene? Absolutely not," Schindler said.

Nadler called the desire of non-Orthodox Jews to donate money to Chabad "an ardent mix of nostalgia and guilt" and said, "A lot of Jews who feel vaguely guilty about their lack of Judaism feel comforted in supporting this."