

**ADMINISTRATION ASSURES JEWISH LEADERS:  
SYRIA WILL REMAIN ON TERRORISM ROSTER**  
By Steven Weiss

WASHINGTON, May 5 (JTA) -- High-ranking Clinton administration officials have told Jewish leaders that Syria will remain on the State Department's list of countries supporting terrorism.

According to the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, government officials told the group that Syria will not be dropped from the administration's annual report on state-sponsored terrorism, which is due to be released within days.

A source at the State Department said there was no reason to dispute the Conference of Presidents' statement.

There had been some speculation that Syria might be dropped from the list in light of recent developments both within that country and in the Middle East region.

The Syrian government had recently arrested and then released several leaders of the Iranian-backed Party of God terrorist group, and it had also shut down two training camps of the Abu Nidal group, according to the Conference of Presidents.

In addition, in meetings last week with U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Syrian President Hafez Assad apparently indicated continued interest in negotiating peace with Israel.

These moves have been seen by many as an attempt by Syria to get into the United States' good graces.

Syria is anxious to be taken off the list of nations that sponsor terrorism because those on the list are not eligible to receive U.S. foreign aid or purchase U.S. military supplies.

Last month, President Clinton decided to keep Syria on a list of countries who have not cooperated with the United States or made efforts of their own to combat drug trafficking.

**'Damascus Must Come A Long, Long Way'**

Clinton followed the recommendation of Christopher, who reportedly disagreed with other State Department officials who sought to remove Syria from the list as a reward for its cooperation in the Middle East peace process.

"While any sign of improvement in Syrian behavior is welcome, the Damascus regime must come a long, long way before it could be considered for removal from the list of terrorist-supporting states," said Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents.

"Scores of terrorist groups continue to operate freely in Syria, and many are headquartered there," he added.

Some observers familiar with the terrorism issue said this year's State Department report could be delayed because the administration is waiting for Syria's reaction to Christopher's recent round of shuttle diplomacy in the Middle East.

Christopher spent most of the past two weeks traveling to Jerusalem, Cairo and Damascus

in efforts to facilitate negotiations being carried out between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

The secretary is due back in the region later this month for further talks.

On Wednesday in Cairo, Christopher presided over the signing of an implementation accord by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization that will begin the process of Palestinian self-rule in Gaza and Jericho.

In the days prior to the signing, Christopher met with Assad in Damascus to discuss an Israeli proposal for withdrawal from the Golan Heights in exchange for the establishment of full diplomatic relations.

A source at the State Department said there was no link between Christopher's trip and Syria's status in the terrorism report.

Hoenlein said the State Department's delay in releasing the report had nothing to do with peace negotiations between Syria and Israel.

He called Syria's record on terrorism "a separate issue."

**LUTHERAN CHURCH FORMALLY REJECTS  
LUTHER'S ANTI-SEMITIC TEACHINGS**  
By Pamela Druckerman

NEW YORK, May 5 (JTA) -- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America -- the largest branch of the Lutheran church in the United States -- has formally rejected the anti-Semitic writings of the movement's founder, Martin Luther.

Though never incorporated into official Lutheran doctrine, Luther's 16th century anti-Jewish diatribes have long been used by right-wing groups eager to give historical and religious justification to their anti-Semitic claims.

In "The Declaration of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America to the Jewish Community," the movement's Church Council wrote that their members feel a "special burden" because of "catastrophes, including the Holocaust of the 20th century, suffered by Jews in places where the Lutheran churches were strongly represented."

"Grieving the complicity of our own tradition within this history of hatred," the declaration continued, "we express our urgent desire to live out our faith in Jesus Christ with love and respect for the Jewish people."

The April 18 declaration was issued in conjunction with the Lutheran World Federation, the movement's international arm.

In his 1543 treatise, "On the Jews and Their Lies," Luther described Jews as dishonest heathens, encouraging German civil authorities to confiscate their prayerbooks and burn down their synagogues and homes.

"In terms of the mythology of anti-Semitism," said Marc Caplan, research analyst for the Anti-Defamation League, "this is one of the essential works."

During World War II, Luther's anti-Semitic teachings were incorporated into Nazi propaganda, with only a minority of the Lutheran clergy objecting.

Luther's teachings have long been circulated

among the anti-Semitic literature of white supremacist and neo-Nazi groups.

Most recently, the Nation of Islam, the militant Black Muslim group, was selling excerpts from the 1543 treatise along with the notorious anti-Semitic tract, "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion."

But Lutheran leaders said they were moved to distance themselves formally from Luther's teachings on Jews because of anti-Semitic statements by Luther featured prominently at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington.

They said they wanted to make it clear that the denomination which bears Luther's name does not endorse all of his teachings.

"We honor Luther, but by no means do we take everything that he says as authoritative," said the Rev. Daniel Martensen, associate director for the department of ecumenical affairs for the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

Of the approximately 100 volumes of German and Latin writings which make up the body of Luther's work, only the portions known as the catechisms, and a few other writings, were adopted by church authorities in the late 16th century as the official doctrine of the Lutheran Church.

#### 'Most Lutherans Are Shocked'

The anti-Semitic portions of Luther's work are generally not studied, even by Lutheran scholars.

"Most Lutherans are shocked to learn that their man Luther ever said something like this," said Franklin Sherman, director of the Institute for Jewish-Christian Understanding at Muhlenberg College, a Lutheran institution in Allentown, Pa. Nonetheless, Sherman said, last month's declaration was thought necessary as an apology and an act of repentance.

A leader in the Protestant reformation, Luther had originally reached out to Jews in hopes of converting them to his brand of Christianity.

But while hopeful that his critique of Catholic conservatism would lead to greater religious tolerance, and sympathetic to his attacks on idolatry, few Jews were actually willing to convert to Luther's movement.

Frustrated by this, and fiercely critical of rabbinic interpretation of the Scriptures, Luther lashed out at Jews, calling them "stubborn as the devil," and advocating their forced labor and banishment.

His influence on Protestant rulers was said to have contributed to the expulsion of Jews from the German region of Saxony in 1543.

Rabbi A. James Rudin, head of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee, praised the Lutheran church for facing up to its legacy.

"Instead of walking away from it," Rudin said, "they said 'yes, he meant it, and it was wrong, and we repudiate it.'"

Although the statement cannot stop hate groups from appropriating Luther's teachings, Lutheran leaders say they hope the statement will cause a "ripple effect" throughout the Protestant world.

The statement grew out of a 1983 meeting between the Lutheran World Federation and the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations.

#### ISRAELI POLICE BEGIN TO TURN OVER RESPONSIBILITY TO PALESTINIAN FORCE

By Dvorah Getzler

JERUSALEM, May 5 (JTA) -- Israeli police have begun the process of handing over control to the new Palestinian police force, which will be responsible for law and order in the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho.

The handover of at least some responsibilities began Thursday, a day after Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat signed an accord for implementing self-rule in Gaza and Jericho.

In Gaza on Thursday, Israeli squad cars set out on patrol with two officers -- a veteran Israeli who will soon be leaving the beat, and a rookie Palestinian learning the ropes.

Meanwhile, during a visit to Druse residents on the Golan Heights on Thursday, Israeli President Ezer Weizman had sharp words for Syria, which earlier this week rejected Israeli proposals for a phased withdrawal from the Golan as a means for restarting the deadlocked negotiations with Damascus.

If Syria sets impossible terms for peace with Israel, that is Damascus's problem, not Jerusalem's, Weizman said.

He argued that Israel is an established, sovereign state of some 5 million people, adding that Syria should treat Israel with the respect it deserved.

#### REFLOODING HULA VALLEY BEGINS, REVERSING DECADES OF CULTIVATION

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, May 5 (JTA) -- A dam in the Jordan River was ceremoniously opened last week during the inauguration of a project to reflood a portion of the Hula Valley in the Upper Galilee.

The reflooding is part of a redevelopment plan overseen by the Jewish National Fund, the Israel Lands Administration, the Ministry of Agriculture and regional local authorities.

Plans call for the newly created water body to serve as a natural mecca for tourists.

Lake Hula was drained and its swamps dried during the 1950s by JNF to transform the area into agricultural land and to combat malaria by eliminating the habitat of the disease-bearing mosquitoes. It was at the time considered a hallmark of Zionist pioneering.

Following the lake's draining, the area was cultivated for orchards, crops and fish breeding, steps that helped realize the planners' original objectives.

But serious ecological problems arose over the years in some of the areas that had been drained. The peat soil began to sink, caught fire frequently, was infested with mice and lost much of its fertility.

The architects of the reflooding project are emphasizing that the new initiative does not represent an indictment of the draining that was done so laboriously 40 years ago.

The 1950s project fulfilled the needs of the time, said Bunny Alexandroni, JNF spokeswoman.

She added that the new project responded to the area's current needs and provided an illustration of planners and technicians working in harmony with nature.

## ISRAEL READY BUT NOT EXPECTING UPSURGE IN SOUTH AFRICAN ALIYAH

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, May 5 (JTA) -- The Jewish Agency for Israel is poised to respond to any increased interest in aliyah among South African Jews in the wake of the African National Congress' election victory there.

But it is being careful not to exploit the uncertainty some South African Jews feel in the face of their new and untested black leadership.

"This is a proper time to reassess our way of operating in South Africa," said Yehiel Leket, acting chairman of the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Organization.

But he said the Jewish Agency has "decided to adopt a policy of emphasizing the attractiveness of Israel" rather than of "warning Jews of the potential danger."

So, for instance, the agency is increasing the number of pilot trips it offers to Israel for South Africans considering aliyah.

And meanwhile it has established a "situation room" in Tel Aviv to facilitate up-to-the-minute monitoring of political developments in South Africa, which is home to 110,000 Jews, including 20,000 native Israelis.

But whether South African Jews will begin flocking to Israel remains unclear.

On the one hand, the transition to democratic, majority rule and the end of Pretoria's diplomatic isolation may usher in a new era of stability, one in which Jews feel they can "contribute to the upbuilding of a new South Africa," said Leket.

On the other hand, aliyah from South Africa has already increased from 200 newcomers in 1992 to a projected 1,200 in 1994. This is a "significant sign that many people feel it's the right time to come to Israel," he said.

Leket's sanguine approach to South African aliyah under the new regime contrasts with pronouncements by Hanan Ben-Yehuda, the Jewish Agency treasurer and chairman of its Committee for South African Affairs.

### Agency Leader Highlights Uncertainties

In recent articles, Ben-Yehuda has highlighted the potential for tension and upheaval during the new government's transition period.

He has predicted that many whites will be dismissed from key positions in the public sector, and he has warned that South Africa's Jews are already "fortifying themselves."

"A situation of uncertainty exists regarding the personal safety of the population," he said, noting that riots could be "instigated by extremists on both or either side."

Ben-Yehuda accused the Israeli government of having "failed to make South African Jewry a priority" because it wishes to maintain good relations with ANC leader Nelson Mandela, who is slated to become the country's first black president.

Yigal Antebi, director of the Israeli Foreign Ministry's African affairs department, defended the government's policy.

"We are following the developments very closely and are confident the elections were a success," he said. "It was a generally smooth process, and this reflects on the future as well."

"There is no panic, and no rush" to emigrate from among the "large, warm and Zionist community," in South Africa, he said. Indeed, "we believe our good contacts with the ANC will help the Jewish community in the near future, as well as the long run."

Antebi argued that Israel's recently improved posture among African nations -- it currently has full diplomatic relations with 32 of them -- will also ultimately bode well for the Jews in South Africa.

Other Israeli officials have said that any aggressive "lobbying" for emigration from South Africa now, in the wake of the victory for democratic principles, is inappropriate.

"The greatest thing about Israel is that Jews know they always have a refuge, in case," said one official. "It gives them extra room to maneuver, because they can always pick up and go. All we have to do is let them know we're here and be prepared."

Leket said the Jewish Agency is working "in full cooperation with the government of Israel, and there is no contradiction between our policy (of aliyah) and the good relations we (Israel) have to develop with South Africa."

Leket spoke to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency following a conference call Tuesday between members of the WZO Executive and Israel's ambassador to South Africa, Alon Liel.

### Concern For Foreign Investors' Trust

Asher Cailingold, the head of the agency's delegation in South Africa, also took part in the call, which was intended to inform the WZO and Jewish Agency about the atmosphere following the elections and their immediate impact on the country's Jewish community.

Ambassador Liel reported an atmosphere of celebration among the blacks and calm among the whites, along with an uncertainty over how well-prepared the ANC is to run the country.

The ultimate concern, he said, appears to be whether foreign investors will trust the new regime enough to put money into it and give the economy a healthy boost.

But there is no atmosphere of panic among the Jews nor a sudden increase in aliyah, stressed Cailingold.

Nonetheless, he reported a substantial increase in the number of people making serious inquiries about emigrating for Israel.

He said he believes they are responding more to the "pull" of Israel, however, than the "push" away from South Africa.

Many South African Jews come to Israel on repeated visits, often on pilot trips for prospective olim sponsored by the Jewish Agency.

During those trips, they often find jobs, which are the single most important factor in prodding them to make the final move, say agency officials.

While more pilot trips for South Africans are being planned, a resulting boost in aliyah rates is not expected this year, Cailingold said.

For every South African who leaves to go to Israel, three leave for other places, Cailingold estimated.

Leket told Ambassador Liel he wishes the new South African government well and hopes for a continued strengthening of relations between Israel and South Africa.

**CZECH PARLIAMENT PASSES LEGISLATION TO RETURN PROPERTY CONFISCATED IN WWII**  
By Josef Klansky

PRAGUE, May 5 (JTA) -- After lengthy debate, the Czech Parliament last week enacted legislation calling for the return of property seized from individuals during World War II.

As a result of the new legislation, citizens of the Czech Republic having their permanent residence in the country are entitled to submit their restitution claims for property currently held by the Czech state or municipalities.

Owners of property that was privatized after 1991 will receive financial compensation. Agricultural land and forests were not subject to the new law.

The legislation was passed two months after Czech President Vaclav Havel joined the local Jewish leadership in criticizing the failure of Parliament to pass a similar restitution bill.

In April, Jewish groups reached agreements with the governments of Hungary and Slovakia for the restitution of Jewish property seized during the Holocaust.

Czech Jews, whose property was confiscated by the Nazi occupiers during World War II, were entitled under postwar legislation to reclaim their estates, which had been taken over by the Czech state after the Nazis' defeat.

But in many cases, the postwar Czech authorities -- who were at the time already under strong Communist or nationalist influence -- refused to comply with Jewish claims and protracted the proceedings until the Communist takeover in 1948.

Following the takeover, claims for the restoration of so-called "capitalist" property were rendered impossible.

Under the new law, some 100-200 individuals -- mainly the heirs of the original Jewish owners -- will be entitled to submit their restitution claims.

Restitution claims for Jewish communal property held by the Czech Republic -- including synagogues, cemeteries and other estates, such as the collections of the Prague Jewish Museum -- will not be affected by the new law. Restitution claims for those properties will fall under separate legal provisions.

The return of former Jewish communal property held by Czech municipalities will not be obligatory under the new law, but will depend on the good will of local authorities.

The restitution legislation excluded the claims of those people -- Jewish and non-Jewish alike -- who do not reside permanently in the country or gave up their Czech citizenship.

The vote in Parliament to enact the legislation was 145 deputies in favor, three opposed and 21 abstentions.

**GERMAN POLICE NAB FOUR YOUTHS IN FIREBOMBING OF LUBECK SYNAGOGUE**  
By Igal Avidan

BERLIN, May 5 (JTA) -- Four young men have been arrested as suspects in an arson attack five weeks ago against a synagogue in the northern city of Lubeck. The men will be charged with attempted murder and arson.

The four suspects, who range in age from 19

to 24, were arrested Monday, the state prosecutor announced. Hatred of foreigners and Jews prompted the attack, which was planned a few hours before it was perpetrated, the Federal Prosecutor's Office said in a statement.

Early March 25, the four allegedly threw two Molotov cocktails into the entrance of the building which houses the synagogue, then ran away.

Five people who live over the synagogue were asleep. They were alerted by neighbors who heard glass breaking and discovered the fire in its early stage. No one was hurt and only slight damage was caused to the synagogue.

According to a newspaper in Lubeck, the four arrested live in a city district known as a stronghold of extreme right-wing parties.

Following the attack, thousands marched in Lubeck and other cities against racial hatred.

Last Sunday, 100 German artists opened an exhibit in Lubeck to raise money for repairing the synagogue. The organizers said the exhibition is "a sign of solidarity with our Jewish neighbors."

Ironically, the Nazis spared the Lubeck synagogue during the Nov. 9-10, 1938 Kristallnacht pogrom so as not to damage a nearby art museum. The firebombing of the Lubeck synagogue was the first such attack on a synagogue since the Nazi era.

**EJCONGRESS MEETS WITH KOHL TO SEEK WAYS TO COMBAT RACISM**  
By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, May 5 (JTA) -- A delegation of the leadership of the European Jewish Congress has met with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl to seek Germany's support in combating right-wing extremism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism in Europe.

The EJCongress sought to speak with Kohl because Germany will assume the rotating presidency of the European Union in July.

Among those attending Monday's 90-minute meeting in Bonn were EJC President Jean Kahn, Vice President Ignatz Bubis, Secretary-General Serge Cwajgenbaum and Judge Israel Finstein, chairman of the British Board of Jewish Deputies.

Also in attendance was Israel Singer, secretary-general of the World Jewish Congress.

The delegation discussed a proposal for the E.U. membership to work toward creating anti-racist laws that will apply to all member states.

The EJC delegation also spoke of its concerns about the inclusion of neo-fascists into the currently forming Italian government for the first time since the end of World War II.

The recent wave of hate incidents and attacks against foreigners and Jewish sites in Germany was also discussed, as was the question of the expected inclusion of Austria in the E.U.

Austria has been accepted for membership by the European body but awaits ratification by its own people, who will decide in a June referendum.

The EJCongress delegation wants assurances from the Austrian government that it is willing to confront its Nazi past before it becomes a member of the E.U.

The meeting also focused on the Berlin Document Center, an archive of some 25 million Nazi Party documents which the United States is planning to hand over to Germany when the U.S. Army completes its pullout from Germany later this year.