

**THE FENCES COME TUMBLING DOWN
ON THE ISRAELI-JORDANIAN BORDER**

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 4 (JTA) -- In a dramatic step toward implementing the Washington Declaration signed last week by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Jordan's King Hussein, Israelis and Jordanians this week began tearing down a stretch of fence that has separated their countries for decades.

After getting a signal from generals on either side of the border, the two teams of workers used tractors and wire cutters Wednesday to break through a barbed wire fence and open a border crossing some two miles north of Eilat and the nearby Jordanian resort of Aqaba.

The new crossing between the countries comes as a result of the Washington Declaration, which officially ended 46 years of conflict. The agreement, in part, called for the opening of borders to third-country tourists traveling between Israel and Jordan.

Stations for passport- and customs-control will be built on either side of the breach in the 40-year-old fence. A new stretch of road will also be constructed to link the two countries with already existing roads.

In another sign of the changed relationship between the two countries, King Hussein flew in his private plane over Israel late Tuesday. He passed once over Tel Aviv and then twice over Jerusalem as he made his way home from London to Amman.

Three Israeli air force F-15s escorted the royal aircraft as it passed over Israeli air space, which at the time was closed to all other aircraft.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin spoke to Hussein by phone as the king passed over Tel Aviv, which he described as a "beautiful city."

A Wall-To-Wall Show Of Support

During their phone conversation, Rabin informed Hussein that the Knesset had given the Washington Declaration an almost wall-to-wall show of support.

With President Ezer Weizman in attendance for some of the debate, 91 of the 96 Knesset members present voted for the government's motion. There were only three opposing votes, and two abstained.

Benjamin Netanyahu, head of the opposition Likud, said his party was not giving Rabin "a blank check" with its votes of approval for the declaration. He voiced concern over a provision in the declaration about Jerusalem and said the Likud would remain vigilant for Israel's interests.

In a speech before the Knesset members voted, the prime minister dismissed the controversy surrounding the Jerusalem provision as "a fuss about nothing."

Rabin solemnly reiterated his government's commitment to keeping Jerusalem as Israel's sovereign capital. This was sufficient to persuade almost all the opposition parties to join with the government in a rare moment of unity when the vote was taken.

**ALL FINGERS POINT TO IRAN, HEZBOLLAH
AT HEARINGS INTO ATTACKS AGAINST JEWS**

By Michael Shapiro

Washington, Aug. 4 (JTA) -- In the aftermath of the recent wave of bombings targeting Jewish and Israeli interests, two congressmen are planning to introduce a bipartisan resolution calling on President Clinton to convene "an action-oriented conference on international terrorism."

"It is essential that we give the greatest attention to this issue so that Teheran, the leaders of Hezbollah in the Bekaa Valley of Lebanon and the leaders of other rogue regimes which sponsor and shelter terrorism will know that the West is prepared to defend itself against terrorism," said Rep. Tom Lantos (D-Calif.), who plans to introduce the resolution with Rep. Newt Gingrich (R-Ga.).

Lantos is chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on International Security, International Organizations and Human Rights. The subcommittee held hearings on the recent terrorist attacks in Buenos Aires, Panama and London on Monday.

At the hearings, Lantos and Barbara Bodine, the State Department's coordinator for counterterrorism, targeted Iran and the Islamic fundamentalist movement Hezbollah as the main forces behind the attacks, which have left over 100 people dead and scores wounded.

'The Imprint Of Iran'

"These latest bombings have the imprint of Iran and its ally, the radical Hezbollah organization in Lebanon," Lantos said. "But others have also been involved in past terrorism and may well be involved in these incidents as well, including Libya, Syria, Iraq and North Korea."

Bodine said that although there is no forensic evidence linking Hezbollah to the July 18 attack on the Jewish community headquarters in Buenos Aires, "circumstantial evidence" points toward the Islamic terrorist group, which claimed responsibility for the 1992 bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires.

Despite Hezbollah's denials, "this bombing certainly has the hallmarks of a Hezbollah operation," she said in her testimony.

Bodine said the group, calling itself Ansar al-Allah, which claimed responsibility for the July 18 bombing, "appears to be an offshoot of Hezbollah."

Bodine also said Hezbollah could be connected to the July 19 bombing of a plane over Panama, which killed 21 people, 12 of whom were Jewish.

Bodine's assessment echoed similar remarks made by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher when he testified last week before the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

"It's a fair assumption to say that Hezbollah is at the bottom of some of those instances, perhaps all of them, and that they are supported by their patron, Iran," Christopher said.

"Hezbollah is causing difficulties all over the

world and it is clear at the present time that no country is immune from that kind of a dreadful attack," he said.

Christopher also said the administration has "raised the question" with Syria.

"We hope that they will respond to our determined request that they no longer support groups within their country that are responsible for terrorist acts outside of the country," the secretary of state said.

In the meantime, Christopher said, "we must take new and strong action to deal with this wave of terrorism, which we witnessed last week in such dramatic form."

Also testifying at the hearings, Ruben Beraja, president of the Jewish community in Argentina, said the Argentine Jewish community was targeted again after the 1992 bombing because the Argentine government had not arrested anyone involved in the bombing.

"Such a circumstance has special relevance today," Beraja said, "because it is a negative precedent regarding the ability of the state to punish international terrorism."

Beraja made the rounds on Capitol Hill after testifying before Lantos' subcommittee.

In a telephone interview with Sen. Howard Metzenbaum (D-Ohio) after a meeting with Beraja and Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-Minn.) Monday afternoon, Metzenbaum said, "Unfortunately there is not much more that Congress can do other than indicate its concern."

Metzenbaum said he is planning to introduce a resolution voicing congressional support for the "victims of the terrible tragedy in Argentina."

Last Friday, meanwhile, the Organization of American States' permanent council issued its second declaration condemning the attack in Buenos Aires. The OAS "expresses its most unequivocal repudiation of terrorism under any ideological or political banner as it is an attack upon peace, the security of nations and human dignity," according to the declaration.

Speaking to a special session of the OAS permanent council, Guido Di Tella, the Argentinean Minister of Foreign Affairs, said the attack on the Jewish community of Argentina "warrants international attention and cooperation in order to identify those responsible and punish them."

BOMBING OF PANAMANIAN PLANE NOW TIED TO ANTI-SEMITIC TERROR WAVE By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Aug. 4 (JTA) -- The Panamanian Jewish community and international law-enforcement officials now believe that last month's bombing of a Panamanian commuter plane, in which 21 people were killed, 12 of them Jewish, was in fact part of a wave of terrorist attacks targeting Jews around the world.

Earlier theories about the explosion linked the attack to the allegedly shady dealings of one of the Jewish passengers on board, Saul Schwartz.

Schwartz reportedly was under investigation by Italian authorities for links to the Colombian-based Medellin cocaine cartel.

Last year, Schwartz, a gold dealer, was kidnapped and later released, according to sources familiar with the Panamanian community. The kidnapping was believed to be tied to the drug cartel, community sources said.

But "the Jewish community (of Panama) has largely been discounting the initial reports of some possible ties to a Colombian cartel because of the 12 Jews on the plane, including the three Israelis," said Warren Eisenberg, director of the International Council of B'nai B'rith.

Eisenberg, who has been in touch with the Panamanian branch of B'nai B'rith, noted that Schwartz had not been expected to be on that plane, which was en route from Colon, a commercial free-trade center, to Panama City. The route is one commonly taken by Jewish business executives. The other 11 Jewish passengers were daily commuters on that particular flight, said Eisenberg.

Israel Radio reported Monday that Panamanian authorities had detained one Lebanese and two Iranians for suspected involvement in the July 19 downing of the plane. However, they were released Tuesday for lack of evidence tying them to the bombing.

Among the other indications pointing to the involvement of Islamic terrorists, said Eisenberg, was the discovery of a body in the wreckage believed to be of Middle Eastern origin that was covered with more explosive material than any other body on the plane.

Eisenberg was among a number of Jewish leaders who attended meetings last week in Washington at the Organization of American States and Monday at the House of Representatives on terrorist attacks in Latin America and Britain.

The Panamanian ambassador to the United States, Lawrence Chewling Fabrega, "condemned the bombing" of the plane "and spoke of the loss of life, particularly the number of Jewish casualties," said Eisenberg.

The Panamanian explosion is "now being mentioned as part of a package of terrorist attacks that occurred in the last two weeks," Eisenberg said. He referred to the attacks on Jewish targets in Buenos Aires, in which about 100 people were killed, and London, in which about 18 people were injured.

ISRAEL CALLS WALDHEIM AWARD 'TASTELESS' By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 4 (JTA) -- The Foreign Ministry has instructed its ambassador to the Vatican, Shmuel Hadas, to ask the Holy See for a clarification of reports that it awarded a papal knighthood to former Austrian president Kurt Waldheim.

In a July 6 ceremony in Vienna, Waldheim was made a member of the Ordine Piano, an order of knights named directly by the pope.

Waldheim, the former president of Austria and secretary-general of the United Nations from 1972 to 1981, was a Nazi intelligence officer stationed in the Balkans during World War II. He has been implicated in the deportations of Jews and reprisal killings of anti-Nazi partisans in the region.

Foreign Ministry Spokesman Rafi Gamzu said Israel was "shocked" by the award.

"If it happened, then it is a bad, tasteless joke," Gamzu said. "Whoever honors Waldheim for safeguarding human rights ignores his wartime record, which his U.N. term does not compensate for."

ISRAEL PROTESTS CANADIAN PRACTICE REGARDING REFUGEE STATUS FOR EMIGRES

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Aug. 4 (JTA) -- The Israeli Foreign Ministry has protested Canada's practice of granting refugee status to new immigrants to Israel from the former Soviet Union on the grounds of discrimination.

Both the ministry and the Jewish Agency said the practice damages Israel's international reputation.

Canada's ambassador to Israel, Norman Spector, was this week summoned to the office of the Foreign Ministry's acting director-general, Eitan Ben-Tsur, who "expressed Israel's annoyance and regret" over the matter, according to a Foreign Ministry spokesman.

Concern in Israel surfaced after the daily newspaper Ha'aretz published an article reporting that in the past few years, 150 Israeli citizens who were new immigrants from the former Soviet Union were granted the status of refugees in Canada.

Several thousand additional requests for such status are reported to be pending.

The claims apparently are being made on the grounds that Israel discriminates against the non-Jewish spouses of the Jewish immigrants.

Ben-Tsur told Spector that Israeli law calls for equality for all its citizens regardless of race, religion or sex. He also said the new immigrants from the former Soviet Union are granted generous benefits, regardless of their religion.

Spector pledged to look into the matter and report back to the Foreign Ministry, though at the same time he made a point of defending Canada's refugee policy.

Yehiel Leket, acting chairman of the Jewish Agency, said he was shocked by the scope of the problem. He said that in April he visited Canada, where officials assured him that the number of Israelis being granted refugee status was small.

This week he wrote to Canadian Jewish leaders, appealing to them to use their influence with the government to prevent the practice.

STRIKING WORKERS IN SOUTH AFRICA PROTEST WITH ANTI-SEMITIC RHETORIC

By Suzanne Belling

JOHANNESBURG, Aug. 4 (JTA) -- South African Jewish leaders have expressed concern over a series of anti-Semitic slogans used by strikers in Cape Town during recent widespread industrial unrest in the country.

Anti-Jewish sentiments crept into country-wide labor strikes last week when about 30 members of the National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union protested outside the Israeli Embassy in Cape Town, claiming they had been dismissed in April from their positions at the Highlands House, a Jewish home for the aged.

The protesters' placards read: "Jews are union bashers," "Jews dismiss innocent workers," "Jews are oppressors," "Jews stop using white police against workers" and "Down with Jews."

A union shop steward called for the reinstatement of 219 dismissed employees, and said that the management of Highlands House had refused to negotiate.

"It's not that we don't like Jews, but they

dismissed us. Now the Jewish community must come and tell us they are against what Highlands House is doing," said steward Walter Mabetshe.

The workers' anti-Semitic rhetoric became a focus of speeches made by Jewish leaders at the 43rd South African Zionist conference, held in Johannesburg over the weekend.

Abe Abrahamson, outgoing chairman of the Zionist Federation, called the Cape Town incidents regrettable.

"While some may wish to call this racism, I feel that when a (trade union) leader singles out Jewish bosses this is not only unseemly, disturbing and racist, but it is undoubtedly anti-Semitic."

Julius Weinstein, outgoing president of the Zionist Federation, voiced concern that now that some of the country's racial tensions have been eased with the all-race elections held in April, "the Jewish question is once again raising its head."

But Mervyn Smith, chairman of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, adopted a more moderate line. "Anti-Semitism is not a threat, nor is it perceived to be a threat," he said, adding, "We must be careful not to believe and accept that every anti-Semitic incident is the end of the world and a new Holocaust."

AN ISRAELI CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY

By Henriette Boas

AMSTERDAM, Aug. 4 (JTA) -- Dutch authorities recently detained four Israeli passengers on a KLM plane arriving in Amsterdam from London on the suspicion they were involved in the July 26 bombing of the Israeli Embassy in London.

Only after they were questioned for three hours and then released was it revealed that three of the detainees were Israelis.

Police took the four into custody last week after a passenger on the plane told a stewardess that a woman on the flight looked like the composite picture of a Middle Eastern woman who was spotted near the Israeli Embassy in London shortly before the bomb went off.

The woman, it turned out, was a Sudanese national on her way to Khartoum. The men were Shimon Korek, the director of the Maccabee soccer team in Tel Aviv; Abraham Grant, the team's coach; and an unnamed Israeli travel agent.

The three were on the way to watch the soccer team, which was in the Netherlands for summer training.

SOLDIER SHOT AT ON BUS IN HEBRON

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 4 (JTA) -- An Israel Defense Force soldier was lightly wounded Tuesday when shots were fired at the army minibus in which he was traveling through the Hebron Hills, in the West Bank.

The shots were fired from a car which sped by on the road. No other passengers were hurt.

Army reinforcements summoned to the scene gave chase but the assailants fled into a nearby village.

The car used by the gunmen was later found abandoned on the outskirts of Hebron. It had been stolen recently from within the Green Line, Israel's pre-1967 borders.

FOCUS ON ISSUES:

JEWISH CONTINUITY IN PERIL IN FORMER SOVIET REPUBLICS

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Aug. 4 (JTA) -- Jewish continuity is in grave jeopardy in the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union, and there is a limited amount of time in which to do something about it, officials of the Jewish Agency for Israel are warning.

If current patterns of emigration and assimilation continue, the Jewish population in the former Soviet Union is likely to drop by nearly 1 million over the next five years, said Baruch Gur, director of the Jewish Agency department dealing with the newly independent states.

The Jewish population in these areas already fell by a million in the last four years, and a decrease of another million would leave only 500,000 Jews, said Gur.

Uri Gordon, head of the Jewish Agency's immigration and absorption department, was even more dramatic in his pronouncements. "If Jews won't make aliyah, they will disappear," he said, using the Hebrew word for immigration to Israel.

Of the half-million Jews projected to remain after five years, only 150,000 will be children of two Jewish parents, he pointed out.

Currently, 100,000 to 120,000 Jews emigrate from the newly independent states each year, of which 60,000 to 70,000 come to Israel. At the same time, the rates of intermarriage run as high as 75 percent in Russia, Gur said.

Gordon pointed to the aging population and the low birthrate, which he said are contributing to the numerical demise of the Jewish community. For every Jewish child born, between 11 and 13 Jewish people die, he said.

Gur and Gordon sounded the alarm as aliyah figures rose in the second quarter of 1994. According to the National Conference on Soviet Jewry in New York, 14,929 immigrants from the former Soviet republics arrived in Israel during the second quarter, compared to 12,531 during the first quarter of the year.

Emigration Running Behind Last Year

Another 7,331 immigrants arrived in the United States during this period under the government's refugee program, compared to 8,156 during the first quarter of 1994, according to preliminary statistics released by the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society in New York.

Emigration from Russia and its former Soviet neighbors, though, is running slightly behind where it was at this time last year.

A total of 32,916 immigrants arrived in Israel during the first seven months of 1994, compared to 36,863 last year.

The Jewish Agency expects about 60,000 to arrive from the former Soviet lands by year's end, compared with roughly 70,000 last year.

"It is our responsibility to pay attention" to the critical situation in the former Soviet Union, said Gur, adding that the Jewish continuity problem is not limited by borders.

The possibilities of assimilation are increasing as a result of some of the recent political reforms in the newly independent states, he said. In many places Jews no longer must be registered as Jewish in their passports, so "those who want

to disappear can disappear." At the same time, Jews are "coming out of the closet as Jews," but primarily for the "privilege of emigrating."

These trends, said Gur, pose an urgent challenge for the Jewish world.

"On the one hand, we have those who will assimilate, and on the other, those who will emigrate," he said. "In the middle, we have those who are staying and haven't made the decision whether to leave or to assimilate and to what degree they want to remain Jews."

The Jewish Agency has stepped up programs in light of what it sees as a "window of opportunity" to reach this population, virtually doubling its activities in key regions in basic Jewish education and in the promotion of Israel and aliyah.

"We introduce them to Judaism and to Israel," said Gur.

For example, summer camps for youth that last year served 10,000 are serving 20,000 this summer. They were doubled after a Gutman Institute survey found the camps "increased involvement in Jewish activities and increased knowledge, ties and identification with the Jewish people and the State of Israel."

"Kids who know basically nothing (Jewishly) are coming to these camps from tiny communities," where the number of Jews is minute, said Gur, who in July visited three of the most remote camps in Siberia.

Ulpans Quadrupled In Former USSR

At the same time, the number of ulpanim, or Hebrew language courses, in the former Soviet Union has quadrupled from 30 to 120, while the number of Jewish Agency offices increases from 22 to 31 and shlichim, or emissaries, increased from 70 to 90.

Meanwhile, aliyah patterns have been in flux. So far this year, there has been a 20 percent decrease in aliyah from Russia, where an estimated 750,000 Jews remain.

The decline is a result of the stabilization of the economy and the fact that the "reservoir of Jews motivated to leave has been getting smaller each year," said Chaim Chesler, head of the Jewish Agency delegation in the newly independent states. But the Russian stabilization is "shaky," Chesler said. "If an extremist president is elected in '96, the situation will change."

In Ukraine, where there are half a million Jews, emigration is up this year between 50 and 60 percent, and is expected to be at least double the 1993 figure at year's end, Chesler said.

The increase is due to Ukraine's severe economic distress and the political instability that gives rise to nationalism, said Chesler. The Jews are also less assimilated than in Russia, so "the potential immigrant pool is stronger," he said.

The pressure in Ukraine to emigrate is not expected to ease despite the recent elections of a new president and government which enjoy the support of the Jewish community, said Gur.

"The prevailing sense of political and economic crisis is exacerbated in the Jewish community by the fear that without a rapid improvement in conditions, an upsurge in nationalist feelings can be expected," he said. "We are putting forth every effort" to reach those in the former Soviet Union still hesitating to make aliyah "for whatever the complicated reasons may be," said Gordon.