

**AIPAC SEEKS 'ACTION' AGAINST ZOA
AMID DEBATE OVER LOBBYING ON THE HILL**
By Matthew Dorf

WASHINGTON, Aug. 9 (JTA) -- Officials of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee have launched a campaign seeking "disciplinary action" against the president of the Zionist Organization of America for activities they believe go beyond the bounds of pro-Israel activism.

AIPAC, the pro-Israel lobby, has accused Morton Klein, the outspoken president of ZOA, of threatening to "put the entire pro-Israel agenda at risk."

For the second time in as many months, AIPAC has turned to the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations to try to force Klein to consult and coordinate with AIPAC's lobbyists on issues related to the U.S.-Israel relationship.

The Conference of Presidents has repeatedly reaffirmed AIPAC's mandate to lobby in the nation's capital on behalf of the organized Jewish community. The Conference of Presidents has requested that all member groups coordinate any activity on Capitol Hill with the veteran lobbying organization.

The latest feud in an ongoing debate over who represents the Jewish community on Capitol Hill resulted from Klein's appearance at a recent congressional conference committee hearing where members of Congress approved, among other things, Israel's \$3 billion aid package.

Klein has confirmed he was at the marathon session that lasted into the early morning hours of July 29. But he vehemently denies he did anything wrong.

Speaking With One Concerted Voice

Some observers are calling the flap a "turf battle" and some say the incident has been blown "way out of proportion." But many in the organized Jewish community are echoing one similar sentiment: The influence of the Jewish community rests on organizations speaking with one concerted voice.

Klein, along with Sandra Stein, ZOA's Washington representative, attended the House-Senate conference committee hearing where members of Congress reconciled differences between the two chambers in the Foreign Operations Appropriations Act. Klein and Stein emphatically lobbied members on an amendment that strengthened the link between aid to the Palestine Liberation Organization and its compliance with the peace accords.

The amendment, sponsored by Sens. Arlen Specter (R-Pa.) and Richard Shelby (D-Ala.), was approved by the conference committee despite the objections of the conference committee chairmen, Rep. David Obey (D-Wisc.) and Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.).

AIPAC officials have charged that Klein acted in "an amateurish and hostile fashion."

They said that his actions contributed to an early morning threat by Leahy to dissolve the conference without passing the foreign aid bill.

The conference culminates "a whole series

of intricately and subtly related pieces of legislation, and there is a real sense of balance, of waiting and of symmetry in lobbying members of Congress, each of whom have their own levels of concern," said Steve Grossman, AIPAC president.

"Mort Klein took unacceptable and inexcusable risks with a piece of legislation at the heart and soul of the U.S.-Israel relationship," Grossman said in a telephone interview from Jerusalem. "This has to stop before it goes further and significant damage is really done."

Klein acknowledged he approached members of Congress and their staff during the 13-hour session to press for their support for the provision relating to PLO compliance.

But Klein, who was instrumental in forming peace accord monitoring groups in both the House and the Senate, says he does not understand what the fuss is about.

'Jealousy Over Turf'

Saying he has every right to lobby Congress, Klein said, "One organization cannot possibly represent community consensus on every issue, and I have a responsibility to speak out.

"This is jealousy over turf. AIPAC is upset about our visibility and they don't want us to get credit," Klein said.

Incensed by the charges, Klein said that AIPAC lobbyists present at the conference committee never said a word to him.

He also said that earlier the same week, he had joined AIPAC lobbyists in a meeting with Specter in order to discuss the controversial amendment.

According to AIPAC officials, their lobbyists cautioned Klein about his activities during the congressional committee meeting.

They also said Klein showed up unannounced at the meeting with Specter in the senator's office.

Jewish groups outside the Conference of Presidents have lobbied on Capitol Hill for years. However, those inside the established umbrella agency have almost always coordinated their efforts with AIPAC.

The Anti-Defamation League, for example, is often active on the Hill with issues related to the Arab boycott of Israel. However, as ADL officials have said, their activities follow consultations with AIPAC.

"There is no American Jewish organization that does not have the right to speak out when something needs to be said in keeping with its mission," Grossman said. "But it needs to be done with prior consultation so it doesn't create confusion and send conflicting messages.

"This is an ironclad principle that must be maintained," Grossman said.

With its letter to the Conference of Presidents, AIPAC did not ask the umbrella organization to take specific actions against Klein. But it did request a meeting to discuss ZOA's lobbying activities.

In the Aug. 1 letter, Howard Kohr, AIPAC's managing director, wrote to the Conference of Presidents: "Disciplinary action must be taken

against ZOA to ensure such behavior is not repeated."

A similar discussion took place last month, when AIPAC expressed concern over Klein's methods regarding the peace accord monitoring groups in Congress.

Lester Pollack, chairman of the Conference of Presidents, said he will convene a fact-finding meeting to determine what happened at the July 29 conference committee meeting and to consider disciplinary action.

The organization has not yet set a date for the meeting, Pollack said.

One Capitol Hill aide with roots in the Jewish community said of the dispute: "All this is, is a Jewish turf battle."

"Mort Klein uses a primitive form of lobbying but he didn't put the foreign aid bill at risk," said another Capitol Hill source who asked not to be identified. "He just doesn't have that big an effect."

This staffer likened the latest debate over who represents the Jews to a battle two years ago over the role of Americans for Peace Now in the Jewish community.

'There Has To Be Coordination'

Peace Now, which often brought its own pro-peace policies to the Hill, at the time was seeking admittance to the Conference of Presidents. The group eventually gained entry following a long intracommunal battle.

Observers say that the difference between Peace Now's activities and ZOA's is that when Peace Now lobbied for its own agenda, it had not committed itself to the consensus prescribed by the Conference of Presidents.

Now, as a member of the consensus body, Peace Now officials say, they consult with AIPAC about their lobbying activities.

Some Jewish leaders are expressing concern over Klein's lobbying activities and what effect it could have on Jewish influence on Capitol Hill.

Jason Isaacson, Washington director of the American Jewish Committee, said, "On matters relating to the U.S.-Israel relationship, specifically foreign aid and other legislation that would effect that relationship, there has been and has to be coordination.

"To free-lance in lobbying Congress invites confusion and can undermine the unique and constructive relationship between the Jewish community and Congress," Isaacson said.

Ken Jacobson, assistant national director of the Anti-Defamation League, expressed similar concerns.

"The history of success of the Jewish community on Capitol Hill has been based on the principle of consensus," Jacobson said. "The absence of consensus and coordination creates a free-for-all and merely confuses the efforts."

ISRAELI ARABS THREATEN STRIKE AMID CHARGES OF INADEQUATE FUNDING By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Aug. 9 (JTA) -- Heads of local Arab councils have vowed to step up their protest against what they charge is inadequate Israeli government funding by calling a general strike at the end of this week.

The local Arab leaders say they are fed up

with the discrimination that is reflected in government allocations to their municipal budgets that are smaller than the allocations to their Jewish counterparts.

There are 800,000 Arab citizens of Israel who make up 18 percent of the country's overall population. However, just under 10 percent of the Arab population live in Arab villages or municipalities.

"We want equal funding," said Hussein Sulemain, the spokesman for the Forum of Arab Council Heads and the head of the Mash'had local council, near Nazareth. "Instead, we get 40 percent of the budgets of the Jewish councils."

The Israeli Arab leaders are also worried about their spiraling budget deficits, which now stand at more than \$80 million.

Sulemain made his comments Sunday at a strategy session of about 75 Arab leaders that took place on the grass in the rose garden opposite the Prime Minister's Office here.

Nearby was a small tent encampment where council representatives have been holding an ongoing protest vigil. The leaders had earlier staged a motorcade demonstration around the government complex, timed to coincide with the weekly Cabinet meeting on Sunday.

Yitzhak Belek, deputy director-general of the Interior Ministry, said he did not understand the current grievances of the council heads in light of agreements that have been made to remedy the problem.

The Israeli government has recognized the gap in funding between Arab and Jewish local councils and adopted a policy in 1991 to equalize the budgets over time, beginning with a four-year plan, he explained.

In 1990, national grants to the 53 Arab local councils totaled \$32 million, while in 1994, the last year of the plan, they totaled \$92 million.

For their part, the Arabs were supposed to increase their tax collection rates, but failed to do so, said Belek.

Nonetheless, he said, the government decided to continue the plan for incremental budget increases of about \$122 million over the next four years, beginning with an additional boost this year of nearly \$12 million.

Belek, meanwhile, was reluctant to make a precise comparison of budgets for Jewish and Arab councils, saying there are items funded for Jewish councils that do not apply to the Arabs, including immigrant absorption, security and Jewish religious services.

GERMANY SETS UP OFFICE IN JERICHO By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 9 (JTA) -- Greece and Holland have announced plans to follow the lead of Germany, which has established diplomatic representation in the Palestinian autonomous area of Jericho.

A German liaison office was opened Monday in Jericho, with the task of monitoring the Palestinian authority's use of Germany's financial grant to the autonomous Gaza Strip and Jericho regions.

On Tuesday, the Greek Foreign Ministry and the Dutch Foreign Ministry announced that their countries would also soon be setting up liaison offices in Jericho for the same purpose.

ADL AND CHRISTIAN RIGHT CONTINUE WAR OF WORDS OVER CRITICAL REPORT

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, Aug. 9 (JTA) -- After a brief truce, the Anti-Defamation League and Pat Robertson's Christian Coalition have resumed their ongoing war of words.

At issue is a recent ADL report, "The Religious Right: The Assault on Tolerance and Pluralism in America," which conservative Christians and their Jewish supporters have attacked as defamatory.

In what seemed like a move toward conciliation, ADL National Director Abraham Foxman apologized in an Aug. 3 letter to Robertson for two inaccuracies in the report.

Foxman expressed hope in his letter to Robertson "that you and I can move forward with added empathy for each other's religious and civic responsibilities."

He added, "Pat, I hope that you are assured of our good faith."

He promised that the two inaccuracies would be corrected in a forthcoming second printing of the book.

A day later Robertson accepted Foxman's "apology and corrections in the spirit of good will in which I know it was intended."

The spirit of good will does not seem to have lasted long.

The same day Robertson wrote his letter to Foxman, the Christian Coalition sent out a 29-page refutation of the ADL report to its members, Congressional leaders and the media.

The refutation is titled "A Campaign of Falsehoods: The Anti-Defamation League's Defamation of Religious Conservatives."

Attached was a memo from the Christian Coalition's communications director labeling the ADL book "a partisan attack on people of faith."

Also attached was a copy of an Aug. 2 advertisement placed in The New York Times signed by 75 Jewish conservatives, who saw the ADL report as an assault on the views of one of Israel's and the Jewish community's best friends.

The ad called the ADL publication "defamation" and "bigotry."

A Firestorm Of Criticism

It was published under the auspices of Toward Tradition, a group based on Mercer Island, near Seattle, which was founded two years ago by Rabbi Daniel Lapin in order to provide a forum for Jewish conservatives and a response to the "radical liberal" positions of Jewish communal organizations.

In response to the Christian Coalition's Aug. 4 mailing, the ADL fired off an Aug. 9 news release rejecting the implication of the Coalition and its Jewish backers that evangelical Christians cannot be criticized because of their support for Israel.

"ADL genuinely values the support of Israel these (Christian) leaders have demonstrated," the ADL statement said. "But this support cannot be used as a shield from legitimate criticism."

The June 9 publication of the ADL report on the Christian right launched a firestorm of criticism from political conservatives.

The report details the political ambitions of religious right groups and has become the center-

piece of an election-year political firestorm over the growing power and influence of the religious right.

The publication paints the Christian right's conservative political agenda -- most notably its stated opposition to the separation of church and state -- as a threat to religious pluralism in America.

In Foxman's correspondence with Robertson, he admitted two inaccuracies in the report.

The first was an assertion that Robertson never denounced David Duke during the former Ku Klux Klan leader's 1991 Louisiana gubernatorial bid.

In fact, Robertson did so on his "700 Club" television show three days before the election.

The second inaccuracy was the ADL report's statement that at a 1980 staff meeting of the Christian Broadcasting Network, Robertson said that Jews were "spiritually deaf" and "spiritually blind."

The quotes were not challenged by Robertson in his point-by-point refutation of the ADL report, but the ADL discovered during its own double-checking of its information that there was no proof that Robertson had actually made those remarks.

Foxman, in an Aug. 9 interview, defended his group's work.

"Two mistakes out of 166 pages, well, none of us is immune from human error," he said.

"The big crime (Robertson) said we committed was saying he did not denounce David Duke, and we finally found one place where he did, but that's far from the role a moral minister should have taken," Foxman added.

'Save Your Prayers For Yourself'

The conciliatory tone of the latest letters between Robertson and Foxman was in stark contrast to earlier correspondence between them.

In a July 14 letter, in the heat of the controversy over the report, Robertson wrote to Foxman that "it is painfully obvious that you are a deeply troubled individual who has somewhere along the way lost your Judaic roots.

"Please know, Abe, that I will pray earnestly that you may indeed meet personally the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

Foxman quickly responded by writing to Robertson to "save your prayers for yourself.

"It's just like you to decide for others what their spiritual needs are or should be. I have met my God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and do not need your guidance, prayers or intervention. May God be with you."

In an interview several days after Foxman's letter of apology to Robertson, Christian Coalition spokesman Mike Russell said, "we remain disappointed at this obviously partisan attack" by the ADL.

Foxman, for his part, said, "Ideological disagreement is still there. They not only believe they have the truth as opposed to a truth, but would like to impose their truth" on everyone. "Part of their truth is the concept of a Christian nation."

The dispute between Foxman and Robertson may yet have a constructive outcome, however. Plans for an October meeting in Washington between Jewish and evangelical groups, including the Christian Coalition, are under way.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES:

DESPITE QUEST FOR SELF-GOVERNMENT, PALESTINIANS STILL LINKED TO ISRAEL

By Larry Luxner

SAN JUAN, Puerto Rico, Aug. 9 (JTA) -- Few Israelis were prepared emotionally when Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat made his historic visit to the West Bank earlier this summer to establish Palestinian authority over Jericho and the Gaza Strip. For one Arab-Israeli joint venture, however, the peace treaty was already a *fait accompli*.

Tel Aviv-based Solan Telecommunications and Barat el-Arab in eastern Jerusalem had already agreed to provide temporary telephone, long-distance, fax and satellite services to the hordes of foreign journalists that descended upon virtually phoneless Jericho that hot July day.

Since Arafat's visit, the two companies have continued to work together to upgrade the tenuous phone links between Israelis and Palestinians.

"Telecom infrastructure in the West Bank and Gaza is very poor," according to Freeman Bandak, president of Barat el-Arab and official dealer of Motorola cellular equipment in the areas now under PLO control.

Bandak's joint-venture partner, Jacob Solan, earned fame -- some say notoriety -- several years ago when he set up a London computer link that allows Israelis and Palestinians to make direct-dial calls to 11 Arab countries, usually without those countries' consent.

Helping journalists cover Arafat's visit was easy next to the enormous telecommunication hurdles that lie ahead for the fledgling Palestinian entity, according to officials in the region.

According to statistics provided by Bezek, Israel's state-owned telephone company, the West Bank and Gaza -- with a combined population of 2.5 million people -- have an average phone density of only five to six lines per 100 households. This compares to 36 lines per 100 households in Israel proper.

'Bezek Runs The Show'

"Bezek serves all Arab towns and villages (in the West Bank) and runs the show," said Radwan Abu-Ayash, director of the Palestinian Broadcasting Service and the PLO's chief negotiator on telecommunications issues during peace talks with Israel.

"Now everything is connected with Bezek," added Abdel Hafiz al-Ashab, a doctor from Hebron who was recently named the PLO's minister of communications.

"We look forward to disengaging ourselves from any other outside company, but we can't at this time," he acknowledged. "On the contrary, we need to cooperate with Bezek until we have the capability to run the telephone system ourselves."

Meanwhile, the Palestinians are getting help from International Technologies Integration, a Virginia consulting firm active in the Middle East and in various Russian semi-autonomous regions.

ITI recently won a concession to build, maintain and operate the newly established Palestine Telecommunications Co., known as Patelco, in all areas under PLO control now or in the future.

"It's not a big system, and phone penetration is woefully minuscule," said Patelco's chair-

man, Dennis Schonacher, estimating there are only 23,500 telephone lines in the Gaza Strip and 2,000 in Jericho. "Over the next few years, we expect a lot of that to change."

Schonacher declined to say what other companies are in the consortium, or to discuss the financial details of ITI's agreement with the PLO.

He did say, however, that the Palestinians would need at least \$25 million in the next 12 months to bring their phone system up to minimum international standards.

"We're using whatever was available under the Israeli system," he said. "Until things are organized and we get Palestinians trained, the Israelis will be operating the company on a short-term basis under contract. It all depends on how fast we can get qualified people on board."

ITI is no newcomer to the Middle East. In recent years, it has developed an overall communications plan for the Lebanese Defense Ministry, designed a 200,000-line central office system for the Beirut Reconstruction Authority, done consulting work for the NESMA Group in Saudi Arabia, and established joint ventures with MCI to install Earth stations in Kuwait and Syria.

For what appears to be political reasons, the Palestinian entity will not get its own country dialing code for the time being. Rather, calls to Jericho and the Gaza Strip will continue to require Israel's "972" prefix as before. That will make it nearly impossible for the area's residents to receive calls directly from family members in Jordan, Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries.

Some Israelis are skeptical whether the Patelco can function at all without help from Bezek.

"They have the same technology as we do, but they have too little of it," said Avi Patias, Bezek's vice president for engineering. "They don't have enough capacity in switches or transmission, and they have a long waiting list for telephones. It's impossible to get a phone in Gaza or Jericho."

Added a Bezek spokesman in Jerusalem: "We would be happy to assist the Palestinians, and we would like for many reasons to do business with them."

"But they have this feeling now that since they've accomplished a kind of independence, they have to be independent in everything," he said, adding: "It doesn't make economic sense."

NO SHIFT IN YEMENI POLICY TOWARD JEWS

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Aug. 9 (JTA) -- Reports of a shift in Yemen's policy toward its Jews are exaggerated, according to people in New York familiar with the situation there.

The Associated Press this week quoted a Yemeni government official as saying Yemen has begun allowing members of its Jewish community to emigrate.

In fact, Yemen has been allowing Jewish emigration for well over a year, reflecting a general opening toward the West in the wake of the unification of the separate northern and southern Yemen states in 1990.

About 500 Yemeni Jews have left the country since then, most moving to Israel. About 500 Jews remain in Yemen.