



'JEWISH SAXOPHONE' SOUNDED AS CLINTON JOINS NEW YEAR'S SERVICES

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, Sept. 8 (JTA) -- There was a surprise waiting for worshipers at Rosh Hashanah services in Martha's Vineyard this year: President Clinton and first lady Hillary Rodham Clinton sitting in the front row, wishing the congregants a "Shanah Tovah."

It is believed to be the first time that a U.S. president has attended a High Holiday service.

The Clintons, who were vacationing on the island off the coast of Massachusetts, were invited by the rabbi and a prominent congregant to attend New Year's services at the Martha's Vineyard Hebrew Center. It is the only Jewish house of worship on the island.

According to Rabbi Joshua Plaut, spiritual leader of the Reform congregation, the idea to invite the president originated with the rabbi's mother, who lives in Jerusalem.

"She suggested that I invite the president," said Plaut. "I didn't think it would work, but she said it was the right thing to do, and I didn't want to enter the new year with a guilty conscience" about not heeding his mother. So he sent the president a letter of invitation.

Alan Dershowitz, a Harvard Law School professor and well-known attorney, was able to get the rabbi's letter, along with one of his own, through to the president. Clinton quickly accepted the invitation.

The president and the first lady arrived at the Monday evening services promptly, although entry was slightly delayed for the congregants because of security measures.

A Metal Detector And The Secret Service

"When we arrived for services there was a line of people waiting to get in, a metal detector and Secret Service crawling all over the place," said attorney Martin Fox, a congregant.

The first couple sat in the front row with Dershowitz and Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.), also a member of the congregation.

The Clintons sang many of the prayers, including the Shema, along with the Jewish worshipers. They were able to follow along with the transliterated prayerbooks used by the congregation.

The president, who is Baptist, "honored the spirit of diversity and religious pluralism in this country with his presence," said Plaut.

Before blowing a long blast on the shofar, the ram's horn used throughout the High Holidays, Plaut explained to the president that a shofar is "sort of like a Jewish saxophone," alluding to Clinton's famous love of that instrument.

In his remarks to the president and congregation, Plaut said he "explained the significance of Rosh Hashanah as a period of repentance and renewal, the whole concept of a Book of Life and that we inscribe our own destiny as God guides our hand.

"I spoke about peace, how he will go down

in Jewish history as an important contributor to peace for Israel and her neighbors.

"When Israel is at peace, Jews all over the world are at peace and I urged him to complete the comprehensive peace in the region," said Plaut.

The president then ascended the bimah, or platform from which prayers are led, and said "there was still a lot of work ahead to make the (Israeli-Palestinian) accord work," according to Plaut.

The congregation gave him a standing ovation.

Plaut also presented the president with a Moroccan Torah-pointer made of sterling silver and a copy of the Reform movement's Bible, which includes commentaries by his uncle, Rabbi Gunther Plaut.

Inside the cover of the Bible, Plaut wrote a note to the president saying "he honored us with his presence, thanking him for his role in the Middle East peace agreements and wishing him luck in pursuit of his domestic agenda," said the rabbi.

The service on the first night of Rosh Hashanah was the largest the congregation, and the island, had ever seen.

An estimated 650 worshipers -- triple the number of member families -- crowded into Edgartown's Old Whaling Church, a historic local building no longer used as a church, which had been rented out by the congregation for the services.

Though the president's plans to attend the synagogue had been kept secret until about an hour before services began, the crowd was still expected to be large.

The congregation has grown in recent years and the fact that the first night of Rosh Hashanah fell on Labor Day this year meant that many Jews extended their vacations to include the Jewish holiday.

Fox, one of the members, said he was not at all surprised that the president came to Rosh Hashanah services.

"He does everything up here, goes to all the stores and restaurants, goes sailing and fishing, and it's a small town," Fox explained.

"The biggest Rosh Hashanah service in the history of the island was taking place while he was here, so it made sense for him to come."

OPPOSITION PRESSES FOR NEW ELECTIONS AS RABIN OUTLINES NEW PLAN FOR SYRIA

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Sept. 8 (JTA) -- In the wake of a new Israeli proposal for peace with Syria, opposition leaders are pressing for the immediate dissolution of the Knesset and for early elections.

For the first time, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin this week outlined a two-phase proposal for peace with Syria that would involve withdrawal on the Golan Heights in exchange for normalized relations.

Syria, for its part, immediately rejected the proposal. At the same time, however, the Syrian

possible for Israel and Syria to reach a peace agreement by the end of this year.

The Israeli premier broke new ground in an interview Wednesday with Galei Zahal, the Israel Defense Force radio station, saying the proposed first phase of the withdrawal should span a three-year period. A peace agreement would be finalized, he said, after a three-year interim period during which Israel would test security arrangements and relations with Syria.

In the past, Israel reportedly was insisting on a five-year interim period.

Rabin compared the proposal to the phases of the Israeli-Egyptian peace accord. He recalled that in 1980 Israel pulled back in the Sinai to a line midway across the peninsula -- from el-Arish in the north to Ras Muhammad in the south.

The IDF maintained that line for more than two years, while normalization -- including the creation of embassies and the free flow of goods and persons -- went into effect between the two countries.

In the interview, Rabin said he had conveyed to Syria, via the United States, his basic view that a peace agreement must "stand on four legs, like a table."

The components he outlined included: the extent of an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights, a timetable for the duration of the withdrawal, provisions for a multistaged pullback and security arrangements.

Rabin emphasized that the first phase of the withdrawal would be "limited," and would be accompanied by security provisions, on the one hand, and by a steady normalization of relations, on the other.

Responding to strong public reaction to the new proposal, Rabin sought to backpedal on Thursday, telling his Cabinet ministers that the first phase of the withdrawal he had proposed was to be "minimal" and was not to involve dismantling settlements "if possible."

Minister of Agriculture Yakov Tsur, a Labor hard-liner, said the prime minister had not given "clear answers" regarding the withdrawal, but he had assured the ministers that "he is not talking about dismantling settlements" in the first phase.

But the Likud and other opposition parties were not assuaged. They demanded a special recess session of the Knesset -- which was immediately scheduled for Tuesday -- and said they would press for early elections.

Leaders of the Golan Heights settlements, meanwhile, sprang into emergency action. They announced the start of a public campaign, "Oz (Strength) 94" designed to persuade public opinion against withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

Representatives of all the settlements are scheduled to convene on Saturday night for the formal kickoff of the campaign.

Parallel to their planned actions in the public sphere, the Golan settlers are working feverishly within the ruling Labor Party to drum up opposition to the evolving accord.

A group of Labor Knesset members is urging legislation requiring a special majority of 65 percent of the nation, or 70 out of the 120 Knesset members, to approve any Golan-for-peace deal with Syria.

Rabin has pledged to hold a referendum on the Golan once an agreement with the Syrians has been worked out. In Rosh Hashanah interviews in

the Israeli media, Rabin conceded that he had no mandate from the nation to undertake a deep pullback on the Golan and, therefore, needed the endorsement of a plebiscite.

The prime minister did not discount the possibility that this plebiscite might ultimately take the form of regular elections for prime minister and Knesset -- with Labor and its allies running on a Golan-for-peace ticket.

Syria's foreign minister, meanwhile, rejected the Israeli plan for a limited withdrawal.

In a television interview broadcast here Thursday, Farouk al-Sharaa said, "We think from a realistic point of view, from a logistical point of view, and because of the small size of the Golan Heights, there is no need for a long period to conclude the withdrawal."

Israel Television said it received the tape of the interview from a Dutch television station.

Despite the rejection, Syria's foreign minister took on a conciliatory tone toward Israel on Wednesday. At a news conference in London, al-Sharaa spoke of "a warm peace" between Israel and Syria and, for the first time, answered questions from journalists who identified themselves as Israelis.

At a separate briefing for Arab journalists, the Syrian official said he could envisage an agreement before the year's end but that depended on Israel.

He also said a summit between Rabin and Syrian President Hafez Assad was "inevitable."

PALESTINIAN POLICE ARREST SUSPECTS; ISRAELI AUTHORITIES PRAISE CRACKDOWN By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Sept. 8 (JTA) -- In the wake of a drive-by fatal shooting of an Israeli soldier this week, Palestinian police, acting on the direct orders of Yasser Arafat, detained over 50 members of the Islamic Jihad opposition group in the past few days.

Israeli security officials praised Arafat and the Palestinian police for cracking down on the terrorists.

In Sunday's incident, for which Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility, Victor Shichman, an Israel Defense Force soldier, was killed and two others were wounded.

The crackdown also followed the stabbing of two Jews in the Muslim Quarter of Jerusalem's Old City on the eve of Rosh Hashanah.

The stabbings prompted Brig. Gen. Yigal Pressler, the prime minister's adviser on terrorism, to issue a general advisory to Israelis and Jews around the world to be on special alert during the High Holiday period.

An Israeli Southern Command source described the crackdown as a "step in the right direction as far as the Palestinian Authority's policy against terror is concerned."

But, the source added, "consistency and time will eventually judge its effectiveness."

Meanwhile, the Palestinian police released 10 members of the fundamentalist group on Thursday after questioning them.

Palestinian opposition groups, from both the left and from the religious fundamentalists, issued protest leaflets in the wake of the crackdown, accusing the Palestinian Authority of acting "like the Israeli occupation."

WJC VOWS TO FIGHT REPARATIONS TO HEIRS OF CREMATORIUM MAKER

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Sept. 8 (JTA) -- The World Jewish Congress has vowed to fight any efforts to compensate the heirs to the company that made the crematoriums used by the Nazis.

Heirs to the J.A. Topf and Sons company have filed for restitution for the factory site and other assets, which were seized by the communists after World War II. The heirs made their claim under the terms of legislation enacted when Germany was reunified in October 1990.

"We are calling for the German government to block any transfer of assets to the heirs. If that fails, we intend to take legal action," said Elan Steinberg, the WJC executive director.

The Topf family heirs have asked for the factory site and other assets or financial compensation for the property, which has been valued at more than \$2 million.

"That would be the money off the burnt bodies of Auschwitz and the other crematoria," said Steinberg.

The factory site, which is located in the eastern industrial city of Erfurt, was seized by the Soviets in 1945. Under current German law, land confiscated between 1945 and 1949 by communist authorities in what would later become East Germany, cannot be returned.

This does not apply, however, to private assets such as money, jewelry or private homes, for which restitution can be sought.

Last month, a regional German government office said the Topf heirs would not get back the factory site, but their claims for equivalent assets were still being determined.

The announcement inflamed not only Jewish groups but other Germans.

'Evidence Of The General Political Climate'

The Social Democratic Party issued a statement calling any consideration of reparations in this case "awful and shameful."

"The demand of the heirs of J.A. Topf and Sons to obtain reparations in the amount of \$2 million for expropriated land that belonged to the firm in the German Democratic Republic can hardly be surpassed by shamelessness. The firm J.S. Topf and Sons manufactured crematoriums for concentration camps during the Nazi period," the party said in a statement.

"The fact that they claim reparations does not give witness solely for the heirs of this concentration camp (manufacturing) company. It is evidence of the general political climate in the Federal Republic that they dare to do so," the statement said.

Last year, Gerald Fleming, a retired lecturer in German at the University of Surrey, England, discovered in Russian archives the records of the 1946 Red Army interrogations of employees of J.A. Topf and Sons.

Testimony from a senior engineer said the company's design innovation, to use the fat of burning corpses as fuel to operate the furnaces, "could not yet be approved" for a patent because it was classified by the Third Reich as a state secret.

The West German Patent Office gave Topf the patent in 1953.

EGYPT'S FOREIGN MINISTER URGES ISRAEL TO SIGN ON TO NON-PROLIFERATION TREATY

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Sept. 8 (JTA) -- In the first official visit here by a high-ranking Egyptian leader in years, Foreign Minister Amre Moussa called on Israel to sign a nuclear non-proliferation treaty.

"The money spent on armaments and (the) arms race (is) very harmful to the cause of stability and the development of the area," he said during his two-day visit last week.

"We have to divert our resources to concentrate on (economic) development rather than the development of weapons," he said.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, for his part, said that Israel could not support a ban on non-conventional weapons in the Middle East unless Iran, Iraq, Libya and Syria were involved.

After meeting with Rabin, Moussa visited President Ezer Weizman, who called on Egypt to help restrain Iran's development of nuclear weapons. They also discussed the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the region, a particularly troubling issue in Egypt, where Islamic militants have repeatedly vowed to topple the country's secular regime.

First Official State Visit

Moussa, who has hosted Israeli officials in Cairo since becoming foreign minister in 1991, has visited Israel for low-profile working sessions focusing on the Middle East peace process. But this was his first official state visit to Israel.

His trip appeared to be designed to develop stronger bilateral ties. Since the two countries signed a peace treaty in 1979, relations between them have generally been characterized as a "cold peace."

There was a general warming of relations in the aftermath of the signing of the Palestinian self-rule accord in Washington last September. Over the past year, Egypt has often acted as intermediary in advancing the Israeli-Palestinian peace initiative.

Probably the most closely watched item on Moussa's agenda was his brief visit to the Children's Memorial at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial. He initially said he did not have enough time for the visit, a move that broke with traditional diplomatic protocol here and set off a storm of protest over his perceived insensitivity to the events of the Holocaust.

Moussa was angered by the intense public reaction and singled out Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin for blowing the incident out of proportion. But after being pressed by Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, he agreed to visit the Children's Memorial.

"You should know," he said, "that we are very sensitive to (Jewish) sensitivities."

At the conclusion, Moussa wrote in the visitors' book, "These are sad memories of a genocide that must never happen again to any nation or any child," Israel Television reported.

He also visited the Temple Mount in Jerusalem's Old City and met with the Muslim officials who control the site. He reportedly told them it is vital for Muslims to have control over the Temple Mount and the Tomb of the Patriarchs in the West Bank town of Hebron.

FREE EXPORT ZONE WILL BOOST ISRAELI ECONOMY, SAY SUPPORTERS

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Sept. 8 (JTA) -- Get ready, Israel. The capitalists are coming.

After a two-year struggle, a group of American Jewish business executives have succeeded in obtaining Knesset approval for a Free Export Processing Zone, where foreign companies can operate free of Israeli taxation and bureaucracy.

Now, the group -- the Israel Export Development Co. Ltd. -- is working to sign up tenants.

Access to Israeli workers and isolation from Israeli ministries, the group promises, will create a haven for research and development, financial services and light manufacturing that can compete with similar zones from Ireland to Hong Kong.

The group expects to start building by March of next year, after a few legal and technical hurdles are overcome. David Yerushalmi, IEDC's chairman and chief executive officer, expects the first tenants to start moving in at the end of the following year.

IEDC's board of directors reads like a who's-who of American Jewish business executives, real estate developers and philanthropists.

Larry Silverstein, IEDC's president, was just named chairman of the board of directors of the United Jewish Appeal-Federation of New York. His company owns and operates over 10 million square feet of office space.

'This Is Not Charity'

Among IEDC's shareholders are Laurence Tisch, chairman of CBS, and Morton Mandel, billionaire Cleveland industrialist and past president of the Council of Jewish Federations.

Sy Syms, chairman of the New York-based clothing retailer that bears his name and a vice president of the IEDC, said the project had two goals: to create jobs for Russian immigrants and to make money for the investors.

"We said, somewhat jokingly, that this is not charity. We're ugly Americans who happen to be Jewish and like excessive profit. We can give to UJA" if charity were the goal, he said.

Looking back on the efforts to approve the zone, which culminated this summer, Yerushalmi said that "two years is a long time to fight a government bureaucracy. But two years to go from an idea thought up by a think tank, to a policy, to a draft bill, to approval by the finance minister and prime minister, to Cabinet approval and passage by the Knesset -- two years for this is revolutionary," he said.

The think tank Yerushalmi referred to is the Institute for Advanced Strategic and Political Studies, a Jerusalem-based group headed by Alvin Babushka, a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution of Stanford University.

Wielding a scalpel of free-market economics, the think tank has explained how Israel's milk cartel results in prices for Israeli cheese being lower in New York than in Tel Aviv, and denounced American loan guarantees as propping up Israeli bureaucracy.

For Babushka, much of the appeal of the Free Export Processing Zone lay in its elimination of Israeli bureaucracy, if only from 700 acres in the northern Negev.

If, as Yerushalmi insists, the project suc-

ceeds, it could put Israeli bureaucrats on the run. As now enshrined in Israeli law, companies doing business within the export zone will be exempt from customs, tariffs, foreign currency restrictions and a gamut of economic regulations.

Companies will pay no taxes, except for a flat 15 percent on profits repatriated out of the zone.

How much will this cost Israel? Yerushalmi insists that it will cost little more than most foreign investments in the country, which are heavily subsidized by the government.

Where the Israeli tax collector will benefit is from the payroll taxes, because workers in the zone will be taxed just as any other Israelis.

And employment is what the zone is about.

For the Israeli legislators who signed on to the idea, Yerushalmi talks of 15,000 people being employed when the zone completes its first stage of development, in about two-and-a-half years.

And he predicts an additional three jobs created outside the zone for each job created inside it.

"That's an enormous benefit" in a country where double-digit unemployment translates to around 150,000 people looking for work, said Yerushalmi.

Already, he said, the company has begun seeking potential construction workers among Russian Jews who have not yet made aliyah to Israel.

And an employment firm, which has been signed up to make available hiring and payroll services to zone tenants, has begun retraining Russian engineers and software developers to meet Western standards.

Yerushalmi believes the quality of the Israeli labor force is a major selling point for the zone.

"It's a work force that is as sharp and as good as in Silicon Valley," said Yerushalmi, referring to the high-tech zone in Northern California, "but much less expensive and less mobile."

For Yerushalmi, the project has ramifications not only for the well-being of Israel, but for that of the American Jewish community as well.

"We've been able to pull a group of men together who have always found it in their hearts and time and pocketbooks to support Israel as a charity case," Yerushalmi said.

"We've been able to turn their perspective, to say: 'Israel does have an enormous potential; it's another one of those incredible emerging markets, that if it's just dealt with properly, could become an absolute gold mine.'

"I would venture to say, investing in the free export zone will be the next major mode to relate to Israel," he said.

ISRAEL OPENS CONSULATE IN SHANGHAI

TEL AVIV, Sept. 8 (JTA) -- Israel's Consulate General in Shanghai was officially opened in the Chinese commercial and business capital Monday, when the Foreign Ministry's Moshe Ram presented his credentials as Consul General to a representative of the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

The Shanghai representation is the first official Israeli office in China apart from the embassy in Beijing.

Israel and China established diplomatic relations in January 1992.