

**UKRAINIAN PRESIDENT PLEDGES
TO FIGHT ANTI-SEMITISM AT HOME****By Ilana Wernick**

NEW YORK, Nov. 23 (JTA) -- In his first meeting with American Jewish leaders, newly elected Ukrainian President Leonid Kuchma pledged to fight anti-Semitism in his country.

"We are not indifferent to cases of anti-Semitism in Ukraine, but the malignant term of neo-Nazism does not exist in Ukraine," Kuchma told the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations here Sunday.

"I promise that as president I shall fight against such phenomena," he said.

The Ukrainian leader said he recognized that his country's history "had black and bloodshed chapters" vis-a-vis the Jewish people and called for the establishment of a museum at Babi Yar, the site of one of the worst massacres of Jews during World War II.

"What was important was that the president of Ukraine was making a statement to fight anti-Semitism and reach out to the Jews," said Rabbi Arthur Schneier, chairman of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation.

The meeting also addressed a potential problem that had cropped up last spring, but appears to have been resolved.

Ukrainian officials had objected to some programs run by the Jewish Agency for Israel that encouraged young Jews to visit or move to Israel.

Jewish Agency, Ukraine Sign Agreement

At Sunday's meeting, Yehiel Leket, acting chairman of the Jewish Agency, expressed his satisfaction that the issue had been resolved and thanked the government of Ukraine for its ongoing cooperation with the Agency's work.

An agreement was signed last week between the Jewish Agency and the government of Ukraine which allows the Agency to facilitate aliyah, Jewish education and Hebrew-language education in Ukraine.

The agreement will make it possible for 500 youngsters to join the 991 youths already in the Na'Alah 16 program in Israel.

They will be arriving in Israel in the next two weeks.

At the meeting, Kuchma expressed his support for the Agency's efforts.

He also noted that Ukraine had the most rapidly growing Jewish community in the former Soviet Union.

Rabbi Yaakov Bleich, who is originally from Brooklyn but now resides in Kiev and acts as chief rabbi of Ukraine, thanked the Ukrainian government for supporting Jewish life and enabling the reconstruction of the Jewish community there.

When asked after the meeting about a recent "60 Minutes" episode that suggested that Ukrainians were perceived as "genetically anti-Semitic," Lester Pollack, chairman of the Conference of Presidents, said that Kuchma proved this was not the case.

"In terms of this president, I think the answer is given by virtue of his visit to the Holocaust Museum and by virtue of his forthright remarks" at the meeting, he said. Kuchma visited the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington on Monday.

**JEWS DEBATE VALUE OF ANTI-BOYCOTT
PROVISIONS IN UPCOMING GATT BILL****By Jennifer Batog**

WASHINGTON, Nov. 23 (JTA) -- As Congress gears up for the battle over the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, Jewish activists are debating the effect little-known provisions of the free-trade agreement will have on the Arab boycott of Israel.

Legislators have attempted to use GATT as an instrument to get the Arab League to abolish its boycott of Israel.

In July, the House Ways and Means Committee approved an amendment to GATT implementation legislation recommending that the World Trade Organization prohibit any countries who adhere to or impose any boycott from joining.

Although the amendment does not mention the Arab League's boycott of Israel specifically, it was clearly aimed at that.

Congress is poised to consider the GATT treaty during a special lame-duck session next week.

But Jewish observers are divided over the effect such language in GATT will have on the boycott, and whether it is even worth the effort.

Some say the language is too general to affect the Arab boycott, which is, by all accounts, winding down. Others say the language, however general, could act as a check on Arab countries who say they renounce the boycott but nonetheless continue to enforce it.

"You shouldn't waste any time on (boycott language) in GATT," said Will Maslow, who edited the now-defunct Boycott Report for the American Jewish Congress.

The amendment is not only too general, but also too difficult to enforce, Maslow said.

"GATT is not an organization that you can get any action on the boycott from. Nobody's bothering to enforce (the regulations in GATT). There are more direct routes (to deal with) the Arab boycott," he said.

Maslow said he believes the boycott is on its last legs, anyway. In September, the Gulf Cooperative Council, which includes Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, terminated the secondary and tertiary boycotts of Israel.

Maslow noted that some American and European companies that did not do business in Israel, like General Motors and Intel, are now opening plants there.

"All these are very good signs for the end of the boycott," Maslow said.

Although the boycott seems to be ending, some argue the language in GATT banning countries involved in the boycott is still worth having.

The GATT language reaffirms that the Arab

boycott is a global trade issue, said Rep. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.), co-chairman of the Congressional Task Force to End the Arab Boycott.

"For those countries who are wavering on their support of the Arab boycott, GATT gives them an excuse to end their boycott activity," he said.

While countries like Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have given assurances that they no longer adhere to the boycott, American companies still receive requests for boycott information from those countries, said Stacy Burdette, assistant director of the Anti-Defamation League's Washington office.

"Until we see requests for boycott information stop reaching U.S. (companies), we need these mechanisms in place; and until the policy directives of Arab leaders trickle down to the businessman, we need these mechanisms in place," Burdette said. U.S. law prohibits American companies from complying with requests from Arab boycott authorities.

Burdette pointed out that the Office of Anti-Boycott Compliance reported a sharp increase in the number of boycott requests from Saudi businesses.

She warned that it was too soon, statistically, to see what effect the Gulf Cooperative Council's recent statement against tertiary and secondary boycotts will have.

REPORT DOCUMENTS FAR-RIGHT THREAT TO DEMOCRACIES THROUGHOUT EUROPE By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, Nov. 23 (JTA) -- The growth of far-right parties in Europe "threaten the civil and constitutional rights of certain minorities," according to a recent report issued by the Paris-based European Center for Research and Action on Racism and Anti-Semitism.

The 130-page report, issued by the Jerusalem-based Institute of Jewish Affairs of the World Jewish Congress, assessed the influence of more than 450 extremist political groups in 35 European countries and reached the conclusion that they are increasingly becoming a part of the European political establishment.

"Europe, which believed it had gotten rid of its old evils, has reached a stage where extremists have become players" in the mainstream political process, Serge Cwajgenbaum, secretary-general of the European Jewish Congress, said at a Nov. 15 news conference.

"Let's not be mistaken on their real intentions -- taking power or at least destabilizing (Europe's political) institutions," he added.

According to Cwajgenbaum, the report had two goals: to document the range of extremist parties in Europe and to assess the political prospects of the far right.

Noting that far-right parties "may well be in a position to influence the mainstream political agenda," the report also found that extremists could rush in to fill a political vacuum created by "the collapse of a political system or decline of a political party."

Jean Kahn, president of the EJC, told the news conference that political extremists were taking advantage of political freedom in an attempt to destabilize European democracies.

Kahn, who also heads a European Union

committee investigating racism and xenophobia, added that some European countries have failed to crack down on the far right because of their adherence to principles of freedom of expression.

Cwajgenbaum voiced concern about the recent electoral victories of right-wing parties in Italy and Austria. "Those parties are indeed spinning a web. It is still a very fragile one, but the more they do, the more people they will catch," he said. "This potential danger shouldn't be overlooked."

KNESSET TACKLES DOMESTIC VIOLENCE; VOWS TO TAKE STEPS TO COMBAT PROBLEM By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Nov. 23 (JTA) -- The Israeli government has resolved to take steps to combat the growing trend of violence against women in Israeli society.

At a special Knesset session devoted to the issue this week, dozens of Knesset members took to the podium to discuss the issue and make recommendations for legislation that would help ease the situation.

Labor and Social Affairs Minister Ora Namir of the Labor Party said her ministry has established 10 regional counseling centers for troubled couples and that the centers have worked with 1,200 couples so far this year.

She also said that financial support for battered women's shelters has increased dramatically over the past two years, and that some \$1.3 million have been allocated to shelters this year.

Among the other speakers was Naomi Chazan of Meretz, who has introduced a bill that would recognize extenuating circumstances in murder cases stemming from domestic abuse.

She said the idea for the bill arose from two recent cases. In one case, a son killed his father, who had been abusing his mother for years. The other case involved a woman who murdered her husband, who had also been abusing her. Both individuals are currently in jail.

"Up to now there has been a compulsory 25 years to life sentence for murder, but there has not been an ability to take into account special circumstances," Chazan told Israel Radio. "The idea behind this law is (not) to condone murder, but to make it clear that there are extenuating circumstances which relate to violence."

Israeli activists have long complained about the difficulty of compiling hard statistics on domestic abuse, particularly since police files on assault and murder do not specify whether a case involved domestic violence.

EGYPTIAN-ISRAELI TRADE SOARS By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM (JTA) -- After years of relations disparagingly referred to as a cold peace, trade between Israel and Egypt rose sharply this year.

According to figures released by the Egyptian Economics Ministry, trade between the two countries more than doubled during the first nine months of 1994 over the same period last year.

Israeli-Egyptian trade, excluding oil sales, stood at \$30 million for the first three quarters of the year, up from \$13 million from the same 1993 period.

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ATTACK ON NETZARIM POST RENEWS DEBATE OVER FATE OF GAZA SETTLEMENT By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Nov. 23 (JTA) -- Renewing a debate that has been going on for months, government and opposition leaders traded barbs this week about the fate of the isolated Jewish settlement of Netzarim in the Gaza Strip.

Appearing before the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on Monday, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres repeated the position he has taken several times before, calling the settlement of some 30 families a thorn which must be removed from Israel's side.

But Peres added that Netzarim should not be dismantled now, in order not to give the impression that the settlement was being disbanded in the face of opposition by Palestinian extremists.

On Saturday night, some 300 Hamas supporters overtook an army checkpoint near Netzarim and raised a Palestinian flag after destroying the post.

Following standing orders, the soldiers fled the checkpoint under a hail of stones thrown by the demonstrators.

The soldiers then took up positions at a pre-arranged point to defend the 30 families in Netzarim, where a larger army presence is maintained.

They returned to the checkpoint after Palestinian police had dispersed the protesters.

Sgt. Maj. Gil Dadon, 26, of Tel Aviv, was later killed at the site, when a speeding car with Gaza license plates opened fire on the army post.

It was the same post where, on Nov. 11, a terrorist rode up on a bicycle and exploded a bomb that claimed the lives of three Israeli reservists and injured several others, including Israeli soldiers and Palestinians.

Addressing the key Knesset committee, Peres said some \$8 million had been spent on guarding the settlement, which is located south of Gaza City.

Other Settlers Show Solidarity

He said maintaining the settlement lacked any justification from an economic or security standpoint.

Peres was originally scheduled to brief the committee on Israel's relations with neighboring Arab states. But Likud Knesset member Ariel Sharon had asked that Netzarim, and the army checkpoint near it, be put on the agenda.

Sharon, who had visited the checkpoint earlier in the day, attacked the government for stationing soldiers there without adequate equipment or the means to protect themselves effectively.

Peres in turn defended the standing orders that led Israeli soldiers to abandon the post briefly Saturday night.

The Council of Jewish Communities in Judea and Samaria, a leading settlers group, meanwhile declared it was launching a show of solidarity for Netzarim.

The head of the council, Uri Ariel, said Monday the group would urge members of other settlements to take turns living at Netzarim to lend their moral support.

"People will not be living there permanently, but will stay for a few days to show solidarity," he told Israel Radio.

JORDAN NAMES AMBASSADOR TO ISRAEL AS OPENING OF EMBASSIES APPROACHES By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Nov. 23 (JTA) -- With Israel and Jordan prepared to open embassies in each other's respective capitals on Dec. 10, Jordan has appointed Dr. Marwan Muashar as ambassador to Israel.

Muashar, who served as spokesman of the Jordanian delegation during earlier peace negotiations with Israel, has also headed Jordan's information office in Washington.

The Israeli Foreign Ministry was expected to name an ambassador to Jordan by next week. Israel Radio reported that the diplomat will be chosen from the ranks of the Foreign Ministry.

The exchange of ambassadors was made possible by the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty that was signed Oct. 26.

Meanwhile, Israel Radio reported Tuesday that Saudi Arabian officials are interested in being involved in the establishment of an industrial park to be located near the Erez crossing that separates Israel and the Gaza Strip.

Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin reportedly met with an official from the Saudi Embassy in Washington during a conference held this week in Aspen, Colorado, for business leaders from Arab countries.

Beilin reportedly will discuss the proposal with Arafat in Oslo on Dec. 10, when Arafat, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres will be in Norway to receive the 1994 Nobel Peace Prize.

PALESTINIANS DEMONSTRATE FOR ARAFAT By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Nov. 23 (JTA) -- Thousands of Palestinians from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank streamed into Jericho on Wednesday to demonstrate their support for Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat and the Palestine Authority.

Observers said the mass demonstration in the Jericho soccer stadium was intended as a show of force in advance of a Hamas fundamentalist demonstration planned for Friday in Gaza.

On Monday, some 10,000 supporters gathered in a sports stadium in Gaza City to show their support for Arafat, who told the crowd that he held Hamas responsible for last Friday's riots, in which at least 14 Palestinians were killed and about 200 others were wounded.

Prior to the Jericho rally, pro-Arafat demonstrations were held in many towns in the West Bank. Fatah activists called on Palestinians to attend the rally and directed them to fleets of buses waiting to take them to Jericho.

Meanwhile, Israeli security officials are planning special precautions at Jewish settlements in Gaza on Friday, following threats by Hamas and Islamic Jihad to carry out anti-Israeli attacks to retaliate for what they claim were Israeli-initiated moves to foment last Friday's riots.

Because of the U.S. Thanksgiving holiday, there will be no JTA Daily News Bulletin published Nov. 25.

NEWS ANALYSIS:**INTERNAL PALESTINIAN STRIFE IN GAZA
PRODUCES NEW ROLE FOR ISRAELI ARABS****By David Landau**

JERUSALEM, Nov. 23 (JTA) -- Last week's confrontation in the Gaza Strip between the Palestinian Authority and the fundamentalist Hamas and Islamic Jihad movements produced a new phenomenon that both surprised and perturbed many Israelis.

Israeli Arab politicians took the unprecedented step of becoming actively involved as peacemakers between the two warring camps.

On Saturday, while Palestinians were still reeling from the worst instance of Palestinian infighting since the start of self-rule in May, a group of Israeli Arab Knesset members rushed to Gaza. Through intensive mediation, they were instrumental in restoring at least a modicum of calm.

During last Friday's violence, Palestinian police fired on demonstrating Islamic fundamentalists outside a Gaza City mosque, killing at least 14 and wounding at least 200.

By midweek, the head of the Islamic Movement in Israel, Sheik Abdullah Nimr Hussein, along with Dr. Ahmed Tibi, a close adviser to Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat, were still shuttling between the Palestinian Authority headquarters and various Hamas leaders in Gaza in an effort to reach an accord that would put an end to the violence.

Though the two sides reached a preliminary accord, Hamas was refusing to sign it until the Palestinian Authority took responsibility for last Friday's bloodshed.

In a move reflecting the discomfort among some Israelis with the involvement of Israeli Arabs, the Likud Knesset faction chairman, Moshe Katsav, introduced a bill in the Knesset on Monday that would prohibit any Israeli citizen from serving as an adviser "to a hostile organization."

Likud sources said openly that the measure, which provides a three-year jail term for anyone advising such organizations, is aimed primarily at Tibi.

Labor Leaders Ambivalent

But they agreed that it conceivably could be used to prevent, or to prosecute, the diplomatic activities undertaken by various other Israeli Arab leaders in Gaza this week.

Leaders of the Labor-led government are expressing ambivalence about this new development.

Some have welcomed Tibi's long-standing role as Arafat's aide, and they took a similar attitude to this week's dramatic involvement in Gaza by him and other Israeli Arab leaders.

The Israeli Arabs themselves are defending their role as intermediaries between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas.

"We neither deny nor apologize for our involvement," said Walid Tzadik, the Arab Israeli deputy minister of health from the Meretz bloc.

"In addition to being citizens of Israel, we are a part of the Palestinian people. Hence what is happening in Gaza is of concern to us," Tzadik said in an interview. "You Jews say, 'Kol Yisrael arevim zeh lazeh' (all Jews are responsible for one another). It's the same with us."

For years, Tzadik continued, Israeli Arabs suffered from the fact that Israel was at war with their people.

"Now, at last, when peace is at hand, we feel we must make our contribution to making peace happen," he said.

Tzadik told the newspaper Ha'aretz that the prompt intervention by him and other Israeli Arab public figures had stopped the bloodletting and brought an initial measure of stability to a highly volatile situation.

Some observers are also linking the high-profile Israeli Arab role in the Gaza strife to ongoing domestic political developments within the Israeli Arab sector.

Some 18 percent of Israel's total population of 5.4 million people are Israeli Arabs, and as the 1996 elections approach, both Tibi and the Islamic Movement are actively and publicly considering the possibility of forming political parties and running in the elections.

Tibi presumably would have the endorsement of his patron, Arafat. The Islamic Movement would meanwhile be building on a series of solid and impressive successes gained in municipal and local elections over recent years.

Many of the leading Arab mayors and local chairmen in Israel are members of the Islamic Movement and ran for election on an Islamic ticket.

However, some Islamic activists may be reluctant to delve into national Israeli politics because of the difficulty they may have, if elected to the Knesset, to swear the oath of allegiance to the Jewish state.

Some pundits familiar with Arab politics predict that Tibi and the Islamic Movement may run together on a single ticket.

Such a combined list would signal a radical realignment of political forces among Israeli Arabs and could spell the disappearance of the traditional parties, such as Hadash, which were Communist-based and have lost momentum since the fall of the Soviet Union.

The potential impact of a united Arab vote has been the subject of political speculation in Israel for decades.

Until now, those discussions have remained largely hypothetical because, in every previous election, the Arab vote has been dispersed over a large number of parties.

The next Israeli elections will be the first to take place alongside the reality of a Palestinian self-government.

This week's highly public Israeli Arab mediation effort graphically demonstrated the new role these leaders may yet play in the Israeli political process.

FRANCE TO FUND AUSCHWITZ PRESERVATION

PARIS, Nov. 23 (JTA) -- Saying that the dark history of the Holocaust "must be remembered," French Prime Minister Edouard Balladur announced this week that France will contribute about \$2 million to the Ronald S. Lauder Foundation to help with preservation efforts at the site of the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camps.

Balladur also said he will ask the French Parliament to strengthen legislation against racist and anti-Semitic acts, and added that France and Israel will expand economic and cultural ties.