

**CONVENT AT AUSCHWITZ TO MOVE SOON,
FRENCH CARDINAL TELLS JEWISH LEADER**

By Edwin Eytan

PARIS, June 18 (JTA) -- The Carmelite convent built at Auschwitz may soon be relocated, an action that would remove both a troubling symbol from the site of the former death camp and an obstacle in the path of smoother Catholic-Jewish relations.

The convent will be relocated to a site some 550 yards away from the former camp perimeter, a chief Catholic official involved in trying to resolve the dilemma reportedly has informed a Jewish leader here.

Theo Klein, who headed the Jewish delegation that negotiated the original agreement to move the convent, said he was promised in a letter from Cardinal Albert Decourtray of Lyon that the move would take place before July 22, a deadline suggested by the cardinal earlier this year.

"The cardinals have honored their pledge," said Klein, who is immediate past president of CRIF, the Council of Jewish Institutions in France.

But World Jewish Congress officials here and in New York, who have been following the controversy closely, expressed surprise Sunday, when told of Klein's announcement.

In fact, Serge Cwajgenbaum, director of the WJC Paris office, said that when he asked Klein for confirmation, Klein told him he had "no idea when the nuns would move," Elan Steinberg, WJC executive director, said in New York.

Decourtray and other Roman Catholic Church representatives signed a document two years ago agreeing that the convent would be removed by Feb. 22, 1989.

Prompt Removal Of Cross Urged

Failure to meet that date has caused a furor among Jewish leaders, who have met repeatedly, in Europe, Israel, the United States and Canada, with representatives of the Vatican and of the government of Poland, where Auschwitz is located.

To quell the fury, Decourtray suggested earlier this year that the convent be moved by July 22 to interim quarters, where the Carmelite nuns would stay until a new convent could be built.

On Friday, Klein said he hoped the nuns would remove without delay the 24-foot cross they have erected at the convent, which soars above the site of the former death camp.

Klein said Decourtray told him that the owners of the plot of land on which the nuns plan to build their new convent have agreed to the sale and that a contract would be signed in a few days.

The new convent would be separated from the former death camp by two streets, several blocks of buildings and a row of trees, Klein said.

He said local Polish authorities have delivered a construction permit to the head of the Krakow See, Cardinal Franciszek Macharski, another of the parties to the original agreement to move the convent.

But Steinberg of WJC said, "I know at

present that the proposed site of the new convent is an empty plot of land with no possibility of construction until 1990, according to Decourtray."

"We would welcome a resolution to this controversy, which casts a long shadow on Vatican-Macharski relations," he said.

Macharski, in whose domain Auschwitz lies, has been considered the Catholic leader most able to move the nuns from their controversial location. But as recently as this month, he said he was unable to convince the nuns to move.

(JTA staff writer Susan Birnbaum in New York contributed to this report.)

**DARING SHOOTING ATTACK IN GAZA
HIGHLIGHTS WEEKEND OF BLOODSHED**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, June 18 (JTA) -- An Israeli soldier was shot and slightly wounded Sunday in a daring attack near Israel Defense Force headquarters in Gaza.

The IDF officer was fired upon from a passing car as he was walking toward the offices of the civil administration.

The soldier, Capt. Yisrael Barshai, a 42-year-old reservist serving in the civil administration, suffered only a slight injury. But another bullet from the car hit an Arab, who was badly wounded in his hip.

The incident was one in a series of bloody events in the Gaza Strip over the weekend. Four Palestinians were killed and over 30 wounded during clashes with IDF soldiers at Gaza refugee camps.

Three were shot at the Rafah camp, and one, a 15-year-old Palestinian youth, was killed at the Khan Yunis camp.

In the West Bank city of Nablus, a 17-year-old Palestinian youth died Sunday. He had been shot by an IDF patrol after he refused to identify himself and ran away from the soldiers.

The army demolished eight houses during the weekend and sealed off another three. The houses were owned by suspected members of Hamas, the Islamic fundamentalist organization.

A group of Jewish leftist activists, led by Knesset member Yossi Sarid of the Citizens Rights Movement, expressed solidarity Sunday with the family of a suspected terrorist, whose house the IDF plans to demolish.

Standing near the house, Sarid said that demolition of homes is not a common practice in democratic countries and its practice here is detrimental to the foundations of democracy in Israel.

The group of activists visited the family in the house, although the army had tried to prevent them from doing so. The visitors said they had not known the area was declared a closed military area.

In Jerusalem, a firebomb was thrown Sunday at a border police unit patrolling the Old City. No one was hurt.

In Haifa, a synagogue was set on fire over the weekend. Police arrested four Arab suspects, all of whom deny any connection with the arson.

A fire was set in the same synagogue five months ago, after an arson attack on a mosque in the village of Ibtin.

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES:
LATEST ROUND OF LIKUD BATTLE
CENTERS ON DATE, TIME AND PLACE**
By Gil Sedan and Hugh Orgel

JERUSALEM, June 18 (JTA) -- The dispute in the Likud bloc over Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's peace plan is heading toward a major collision, with disagreement currently centered on the unlikely issue of the time and place of the party's upcoming Central Committee meeting.

Shamir and Foreign Minister Moshe Arens want to convene the meeting on the afternoon of July 4 in Tel Aviv, while three other powerful Likud members insist the meeting take place on the evening of July 2 in Jerusalem.

Although the date and venue of the meeting is temporarily the bone of contention, the issue at the center of the power struggle is the prime minister's peace initiative, which was approved last month by both the Cabinet and the Knesset, and will be voted on at the Likud meeting.

Opposing the plan are Industry and Trade Minister Ariel Sharon, Housing Minister David Levy and Yitzhak Moda'i, a minister without portfolio who heads the Liberal Party wing of Likud. They argue that the initiative in its present form will result in a Palestinian state.

Shamir and Arens say that changes in the plan proposed by the opposition will make it unacceptable to both the Arabs and the United States.

The tally of Likud Central Committee members who endorse the peace plan and oppose it is uncertain, but it is believed to be very close. Both sides believe a few votes may tip the balance.

Shamir's camp is concerned that if the meeting is held on the evening of July 2 in Jerusalem, Sharon, who is chairman of the Central Committee, could delay the vote on the peace plan until late at night, when some Shamir supporters -- many of whom are older and live in the Tel Aviv area -- could either leave early without voting or cut the debate short.

Washington Is Concerned

The vote is a battle Shamir cannot afford to lose. If the committee rejects the peace plan, it will be viewed as a vote of "no confidence" in Shamir by his own party. Acknowledging this, the prime minister has threatened to resign if Likud does not endorse the initiative.

In Washington, senior officials in the Bush administration told the Israeli newspaper Hadashot that they fear both instability in the Israeli government and an escalation in the Palestinian uprising if the Central Committee rejects Shamir's plan.

The committee meeting and the vote were scheduled after Sharon and his allies complained that Shamir sought international support for the plan without consulting his own party. Under heavy pressure, Shamir agreed to put the matter before the committee.

It originally had been agreed to convene the committee on July 2. But the cavernous Tel Aviv Cinerama building, one of the few large enough for the gathering, was not available on that date, so the meeting was put back to July 4.

But Sharon's aides, speaking for the minister, who was overseas, said Wednesday they had already sent invitations to committee members to convene in Jerusalem on July 2.

In a countermove Thursday, the Likud Secre-

tariat, which is chaired by Arens, ruled that the meeting would take place on July 4.

The next day, Sharon reacted angrily in telephone interviews from London, saying the Secretariat decision was illegal and that, as Central Committee chairman, it was he who had the right to determine the time and place of the meeting.

Israeli newspapers said Sunday that Shamir is losing patience with Sharon and is considering moving to throw him out of Likud.

In a secret poll conducted by the Shamir-Arens camp, 1,175 Central Committee members were asked whether they would support the peace plan. Of these, 565 said they would support it, 88 said they would oppose it, 151 were undecided and 371 refused to participate in the survey.

Observers here speculated Sunday that Shamir and his opponents would reach some form of compromise before the meeting, in the hope of avoiding a general showdown over the peace plan.

But if the issue comes to a head, they are predicting that the meeting will far outshine the 13th Maccabiah Games as being "the best show in town."

**HIGH COURT PANEL VISITS JAIL
AND FINDS IMPROVED CONDITIONS**

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, June 18 (JTA) -- A demand for the closure of the Dhahiriya detention facility in Hebron has been retracted by Israel's Association for Civil Rights.

The association, petitioning with four Dhahiriya detainees, had asked that the facility be shut down because of inhuman conditions there. Their petition included complaints about overcrowding, a lack of light and ventilation and generally unhygienic conditions.

But a visit to the West Bank detention center by a panel of judges from the High Court of Justice showed that improvements had recently been made, according to a report in the Israeli newspaper Davar.

In anticipation of the court's visit, wider windows were installed in the detention center, hygiene conditions improved and the time allotted for detainees' walks outside their cells had been extended.

Following the panel's visit, the High Court ruled that a committee of experts that now supervises conditions at the Ketziot detention facility should also supervise the conditions at Dhahiriya.

Davar also reported that leaders of detainees at the Ketziot facility have rejected a recent proposal by the Israel Defense Force.

The army had proposed that detainees work at binding books for Gaza schools. The detainees refused on the grounds that such cooperation with prison authorities was prohibited by the unified leadership of the uprising.

ISRAEL AGAIN STRIKES BASES IN LEBANON
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, June 18 (JTA) -- Israeli air force planes attacked terrorist bases in Lebanon again on Friday, for the second time in a week.

The targets of the raid were said to have been bases of George Habash's Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Abu Nidal group, located in the Rashidiya refugee camp, south of the coastal city of Tyre.

SENATE CONFIRMS BUSH'S CHOICE TO HEAD BUREAU ON MIDDLE EAST

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, June 18 (JTA) -- The Senate last week confirmed John Kelly to be assistant secretary of state for Near Eastern and South Asian affairs.

President Bush, meanwhile, announced that Richard Schifter would continue as assistant secretary of state for human rights and humanitarian affairs, retaining the post he has held since late 1985, when he succeeded Elliott Abrams.

Kelly, who was confirmed by voice vote June 14, began work immediately, co-chairing a U.S.-Soviet meeting of Middle East experts here last Thursday and Friday.

Kelly co-chaired the meeting with Dennis Ross, who heads the department's policy-planning staff and who led a State Department delegation last month to Israel, Egypt and Jordan.

Leading the Soviet side was Vladimir Polyakov, who heads the Soviet Foreign Ministry's Middle East department. State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler said Friday she would have nothing to report about the meeting.

Meanwhile, a letter signed by more than 230 members of the House of Representatives was sent to Secretary of State James Baker on Friday.

Similar to one sent a week before by 95 senators, the letter calls on the secretary to show full support for Israel's proposal for Palestinian elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Also on Friday, Israel's minister of justice, Dan Meridor, met with Baker, Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs Robert Kimmitt and Attorney General Dick Thornburgh.

Meridor also spoke Friday at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy and Saturday at the 76th annual meeting of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith in New York.

ARENS SAYS ISRAELI PEACE PLAN GETTING GOOD REACTION IN EUROPE

By David Kantor

BONN, June 18 (JTA) -- Israel's peace initiative is receiving a favorable, though cautious, reaction in European capitals, Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Arens said here Sunday.

Arens, who is here to discuss Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's plan for elections of Palestinian representatives in the administered territories, said the Europeans "are interested in hearing us, and they do display a sympathetic attitude."

Arens, emerging from a three-hour meeting with his West German counterpart, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, said he hoped his talks here will help shape a positive European attitude toward the Israeli plan, which is intended to provide for some form of Palestinian autonomy in the future.

"They certainly do not reject our idea," Arens said of European leaders.

Genscher was not available for comment, but one of his aides said the conversation with Arens had produced a better understanding of the Israeli point of view.

Arens took issue with the tendency of European government leaders to favor an international Middle East peace conference and to bring the Palestine Liberation Organization into the process, suggesting that both formulas were outdated.

"No one can think today of convening a

peace forum, which has to take into consideration the present situation and to move forward to a realistic assessment," Arens said.

On Monday, Arens will get a chance to put this position to a test. He is due to meet with Hans-Jochen Vogel of the opposition Social Democratic Party, who recently announced a decision to invite an official PLO delegation to Germany in October.

Arens also is scheduled to meet Monday with West German President Richard von Weizsacker and with Jurgen Warnke, the minister of economic cooperation, who handles foreign aid programs.

Refused To Step On German Soil

In a potentially embarrassing development, two of Arens' aides refused to accompany him, so as not to set foot on German soil. The refusal was reported in the German press but did not come up in his meeting with Genscher.

Sunday evening, Arens was to have dinner with Rita Sussmuth, chairwoman of the Bundestag, Germany's parliament. Sussmuth reportedly said recently that she could not visit Israel in an official capacity because the chairman of the Knesset, Dov Shilansky, refused to receive German guests.

Also on Sunday, Arens laid a wreath at a memorial built on the site of a former synagogue here, located on the bank of the Rhine River.

The foreign minister is due to follow up his stop in West Germany with a three-day visit to neighboring Denmark, where he will likewise test the diplomatic waters regarding Shamir's election proposal.

In Copenhagen, Arens and his wife will be official guests of Danish Foreign Minister Uffe Elleman-Jensen, who invited his counterpart for a reciprocal visit, following his stay in Israel.

The Danish government is divided in its approach to dealing with the PLO, which maintains an office in Copenhagen without enjoying diplomatic status.

The Danish Social Democratic Party invited PLO leader Yasir Arafat to visit Denmark, but the foreign minister refused to extend an official invitation.

In recent months, some leaders of the Social Democrats visited Arafat in his headquarters in Tunis. They followed this up with a visit to Israel.

Danish police are making tight security arrangements for the Arens visit.

(JTA Copenhagen correspondent Eli Kohen contributed to this report.)

JUDGE DESTROYS ANTI-NAZI PLAQUE

By David Kantor

BONN, June 18 (JTA) -- Disciplinary proceedings were initiated Friday against a West Berlin judge who destroyed a plaque commemorating draft resisters during the Nazi era who died for their beliefs.

Egbert Weiss last week ruined a plaque dedicated to the victims of the Reichskriegsgericht, a special Nazi court that sent to their deaths some 500 youths who refused to be drafted to military service.

The judge apparently was upset because many of the victims were "simply deserters."

The plaque was dedicated recently in a Berlin court in which Weiss presides. The building had been used as a Nazi court that handed down verdicts against conscientious objectors.

FATE OF 14TH-CENTURY HAGGADAH NOW IN HANDS OF SWISS JUDGE

By Tamar Levy

GENEVA, June 18 (JTA) -- The fate of a valuable medieval Haggadah is moving from the auction floor to the courtroom.

A Swiss judge will rule Monday whether the contested Wolf Haggadah will go on sale that same evening, or whether the sale will be stopped, in order to give those claiming ownership of the Haggadah time to submit their pleas.

Marek Potovsky, spokesman for Habsburg Feldman auction house, said the 14th-century manuscript, valued at about half a million dollars, is being claimed by three parties.

Two of the claimants are the Jewish communities of East and West Berlin. The third is the Polish government, representing the Warsaw's Jewish Historical Institute.

Court sources said Judge Vladimir Stemberger will meet Monday with attorneys representing the various claimants and then decide if the sale should proceed.

The possibility remains that the Haggadah could be sold that same evening, along with other Judaica scheduled to be auctioned.

The controversy over the Haggadah's ownership stems from its mysterious history.

Albert Wolf, a German Jew, reportedly donated the manuscript to Berlin's Jewish community around the turn of the century. The Haggadah disappeared during World War II and turned up in the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw in 1946.

In 1982, the Haggadah was part of an exhibit shown in three U.S. cities, entitled "Fragments of Greatness Rediscovered."

Shortly afterward, it was allegedly stolen from the Historical Institute.

Heskel Toporowitch of Tel Aviv, Habsburg Feldman's consultant on the Haggadah, disputes this version of the Haggadah's history.

Toporowitch claims the manuscript belonged to a small synagogue in Berlin, where it disappeared during World War II. No one knows, he said, what happened to it next.

Toporowitch, who is in Geneva for the auction, said he did not believe that either the East or West Berlin Jewish community or the Polish government had a legitimate claim on the manuscript.

Habsburg Feldman spokesman Potovsky told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency the auction house "shall obviously abide by the court's ruling."

(JTA staff writer Allison Kaplan in New York contributed to this report.)

RARE MOSAIC REPORTEDLY PURLOINED FROM BEIT SHE'AN EXCAVATION SITE

By Cathrine Gerson

JERUSALEM, June 18 (JTA) -- A rare mosaic floor was stolen from an archaeological excavation site at Beit She'an, in northern Israel, apparently late Thursday night.

The mosaic, dating from the Roman Byzantine period, measures 5 feet square and shows the Roman goddess Tyche with a crown on her head, holding a horn of plenty in her hand.

Experts have stated that the mosaic is one of the most impressive finds at the Beit She'an excavations.

Archaeologist Giora Soler of the Education Ministry's antiquities section said the theft was

revealed early Friday morning and that it was a professional job.

"The thieves removed the goddess from the rest of the mosaic in a most professional way, and probably without damaging the mosaic," Soler said. He said he believes the perpetrators were professional antiquities thieves and that the theft was well planned.

Soler said the value of the stolen mosaic cannot be estimated, "since it's one of a kind in Israel and abroad."

"I'm shocked by the sheer nerve of the thieves -- to steal such a rare mosaic," he said.

Archaeologist Gabi Mozer, manager of the Beit She'an site, said that there is no possibility of selling the mosaic in Israel. He said all seaports and airports have been notified to prevent the smuggling of the artifact out of the country.

BUNDESTAG REJECTS BID TO CENSURE OFFICIAL WHO DEFENDED WAFFEN SS

By David Kantor

BONN, June 18 (JTA) -- The West German parliament last week rejected a resolution censuring government spokesman Hans Klein for remarks last month in which he appeared to defend the actions of the Waffen SS.

Klein, a member of Chancellor Helmut Kohl's ruling Christian Democratic Union, was quoted as saying that members of the Nazi elite force were not criminals, but regular soldiers who acted in the belief they were serving their country.

The Bundestag also rejected a separate motion which sought to distance the house from Klein's remarks.

Both motions were easily defeated by the governing majority of the CDU and Free Democratic Party. Voting for the motions were the Greens and some members of the Social Democratic Party.

Klein, who holds the rank of minister, was quoted in early May by the Munich weekly Quick as saying the Waffen SS was "a fighting unit, not criminals."

Political observers believe Klein's defense was meant to recapture conservative voters who recently deserted the CDU for the extreme right-wing Republican Party and other factions.

Last Thursday in Parliament, Jutta Oesterle-Schwerin of the left-wing Greens, a Jerusalem-born deputy who holds Israeli citizenship, said no distinction could be made between the SS and the Waffen SS, a unit which sometimes had combat assignments.

Oesterle-Schwerin pointed out that during the war, regular exchanges took place between concentration camp guards and members of the combat troops.

She also said the Wehrmacht, the 3rd German army, committed many atrocities, too, and was part of the Nazi machinery.

Her statements caused an uproar.

Members of the CDU repeatedly shouted "rabble-rouser" when she said that opponents of the Nazis and deserters were the heroes of the time, not the Waffen SS.

Klein defended his remarks, saying it was wrong to earmark all members of the SS as criminals.

He also said he did not mean to offend Holocaust survivors and was merely echoing former utterances by leading West Germans, including the late Social Democratic leader Kurt Schumacher.