

PERES WILL VISIT THE SOVIET UNION AT INVITATION OF TRADE OFFICIALS

By Allison Kaplan

NEW YORK, Sept. 24 (JTA) -- Israeli Vice Premier Shimon Peres has accepted an invitation to travel to the Soviet Union.

The offer was extended by Genrikh Borovikh, president of the Soviet Peace Committee and a member of the Permanent Committee on Foreign Relations of the Supreme Soviet.

Borovikh led a Soviet trade delegation that met with Peres for an hour on Thursday.

Peres, who is also Israel's minister of finance, would be the highest-ranking Israeli official to travel to the Soviet Union since 1967, when the Soviets cut ties to the Jewish state.

"I think this is an opening for economic relations between Israel and the Soviet Union," Peres told Israel Radio.

No timetable has yet been set for the meeting, and Peres would have to apply for a Soviet visa before he could travel there.

Borovikh, whose peace group is not an official government entity, told the Jerusalem Post that he would urge the government to issue an official invitation to Peres.

At the meeting Thursday, the Soviet officials discussed with Peres ways to enhance trade between the Soviet Union and Israel. Economic cooperation between the two countries has blossomed over the past year.

Besides Borovikh, the Soviet delegation included Yuri Znamensky, deputy chairman of the Foreign Economic Commission; Yuri Olkhovikov, deputy chairman for state planning; and Valeri Pekshev, deputy chairman of the state bank.

Jewish Business Leaders, Too

Their trip to the United States was sponsored and financed by Swiss Jewish businessman Nessim Gaon, who is president of the World Sephardi Foundation. In addition to Peres, the delegation met with members of Congress in Washington, as well as prominent business leaders from the United States and Canada.

In Los Angeles, another visiting Soviet trade delegation met with Orthodox Jewish businessmen, as part of an effort to enlist Jewish support for investments in the Soviet Union.

This delegation included the head of the Soviet Chamber of Commerce and the chief of the foreign economic section of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The six-member mission met with representatives from L.A. Gear, a firm specializing in jogging and tennis shoes.

"There's a great demand for athletic footwear and apparel in the Soviet Union, and I think this is a tremendous opportunity," said Elliot Horowitz, the firm's executive vice president for finance. Also talking business with the men from Moscow were aides to industrialist Armand Hammer, chairman of Occidental Petroleum.

The sponsor of these talks was New York City Councilman Noah Dear, who said that a good way to help ensure the success of President Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms would be to help bolster his country's economy through investment.

(JTA correspondent Tom Tugend in Los Angeles contributed to this report.)

SOVIETS SAY THREE-FOURTHS OF JEWS ON U.S. LIST WILL BE ABLE TO LEAVE

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Sept. 24 (JTA) -- Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze reportedly has told U.S. Secretary of State James Baker that three-quarters of those on a list of more than 500 longtime refuseniks will receive permission to leave "within a short frame of time."

The news was reported Sunday by Elan Steinberg, executive director of the World Jewish Congress, who spoke with both Soviet and American participants to the talks that took place this weekend in Jackson Hole, Wyo.

Officials of major Soviet Jewry organizations could not immediately confirm the report.

Some of those on the list are seeking only permission to travel abroad, rather than emigrate, Steinberg said. All those affected are Jews.

The names of the refuseniks, many of whom have been denied exit permits because of their alleged knowledge of "state secrets," appear on a list compiled by the State Department from information provided by several groups, including the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews and officials at the American Embassy in Moscow.

The list was given to Soviet authorities over the past two weeks as part of the preparatory activity for the talks between Shevardnadze and Baker.

Shevardnadze acknowledged the list during the talks and informed Baker that three-fourths would be receiving permission to leave soon. The remaining one-quarter of those on the list will have to be evaluated, Steinberg said.

In Leningrad, meanwhile, six Soviet Jews were arrested Friday in front of the Lenin Library during a demonstration by two dozen refuseniks seeking exit visas, the Student Struggle for Soviet Jewry reported.

The protest was timed to coincide with the Baker-Shevardnadze meetings.

AS PARTIES CLASH OVER MUBARAK PLAN, MINISTER URGES NATIONAL REFERENDUM

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Sept. 24 (JTA) -- Interior Minister Arye Deri drew criticism from Likud circles and applause from at least one Labor Party leader Sunday after he proposed that Israelis decide in an unprecedented national referendum whether their government should back an Egyptian plan for advancing the peace process.

Deri's proposal came against the backdrop of ongoing recommitments between Likud and Labor over Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak's 10-point proposal for implementing Israel's peace plan. The tensions were exacerbated last week by Mubarak's meetings in Cairo with Israeli Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin, a Laborite.

Deri's proposal for a nationwide vote on the Egyptian plan was rejected by Likud leaders, who called it impractical and claimed "Labor would not show its true hand" in presenting it to the public.

Deri, a leader of the ultra-Orthodox Shas party, may be responsible for helping develop one

of the most controversial elements of the Mubarak proposal: the inclusion of two Palestinians from outside the administered territories in a delegation to conduct preliminary talks with Israel.

Deri and former Sephardic Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yosef discussed this idea with the Egyptian president when the two of them visited Cairo earlier this year.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, the Likud leader, has totally rejected the Mubarak plan, largely because of the proposal to include so-called "diaspora Palestinians," who would likely be activists deported from the territories who have links but no formal ties to the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Taking Swipes At Peres

Rabin and Vice Premier Shimon Peres, who heads the Labor Party, have applauded the Egyptian proposal.

"During a visit to Los Angeles last week, he threatened a "divorce" in the national unity government if Likud did not take advantage of the momentum generated by the Israeli-Egyptian exchanges on the peace process.

Likewise, officials close to Shamir bluntly warned over the weekend that the government would likely collapse if Rabin did not reverse his support for the Mubarak proposal.

At Sunday's Cabinet meeting, Shamir did not expressly repeat this warning, nor did Rabin react to it, despite the fact it was the main headline in all newspapers.

Instead, Shamir took a swipe at Peres, pointedly remarking that ministers who travel abroad should stick strictly to the matters of concern to their ministry. Peres heads the Finance Ministry.

Following the Cabinet meeting, Shamir's close confidant Ronni Milo, who is minister for environmental protection, lobbed more direct criticism at Peres, accusing the vice premier of conducting a separate and unauthorized foreign policy during his current stay in the United States.

Meanwhile, Peres' confidant, Deputy Finance Minister Yossi Beilin, warmly endorsed Deri's proposal for a national referendum.

Separate Agendas In New York

The Israeli news media are playing up reports of the apparently separate political agendas of Peres and Foreign Minister Moshe Arens, who are both in New York.

Both are to meet separately with Mubarak; Peres is to see President Bush; and Arens is to meet with Secretary of State James Baker.

Peres has repeatedly reiterated the need to not allow this opportunity for peace to slip away. Shamir's office, on the other hand, insists that Arens, his Likud colleague, is not even empowered to discuss the Egyptian proposal, that his mandate solely rests on the Israeli initiative for elections in the territories.

Deri, who would be a pivotal figure in any coalition-making if the present government were to collapse, said Sunday he believed the gulf between the premier and defense minister was "not wide." He blamed a "lack of coordination" for the impasse.

The interior minister said the country wants this government to continue. He vowed that his own Shas party, which has six seats in the Knesset, would not lend its support to either of the

major parties to form an alternative, narrow-based government.

But he added that the nation is completely sick of the present situation and would support a pro-peace line in a referendum.

The National Religious Party also has been trying to mediate between Labor and Likud. The effort, however, appears to have boomeranged, triggering discord within its own ranks.

NRP leaders convened in a stormy meeting Sunday night after Religion Affairs Minister Zevulun Hammer presented Shamir and Rabin with a document that attempted to bridge the gap between them.

The NRP's other Cabinet minister, Avner Shaki, a hard-liner who holds no portfolio, vehemently attacked the document for "enshrining Egypt as the peacemaker."

Meanwhile, as the rhetoric between Likud and Labor got more and more ominous, Shamir closed Sunday's overheated Cabinet meeting with a Rosh Hashanah wish for a "year of unity." Political pundits say at this point it may take something akin to divine intervention to make the wish a reality.

ARENS BLAMES AMERICAN JEWS, IN PART, FOR SMALL ALIYAH FROM SOVIET UNION By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES, Sept. 24 (JTA) -- The Jewish leadership in the United States bears some of the responsibility for the low percentage of Soviet Jews opting to settle in Israel, Moshe Arens, Israel's foreign minister, charged here.

The responsibility, he said, lies both in "enticing" Soviet Jews to come to America and in the lack of large-scale U.S. aliyah to Israel, which would serve as a role model for Soviet emigres.

"When Soviet Jews see American Jews going on aliyah, they will go, too," Arens told a group of some 60 Californians planning to settle in Israel. He spoke during a five-day visit before attending the United Nations General Assembly session in New York.

Stressing the importance of aliyah in half a dozen public appearances, Arens emphasized that if more Jews had come to Israel between the two world wars, the Jewish state might have been established sooner and some of the horrors of the Holocaust could have been avoided.

In the same vein, he said that "of the half-million Jews who left the Soviet Union in the 1970s and '80s, only 170,000 came to Israel, and if more had come, the state would now be much stronger."

The whole issue of Soviet emigration is now coming to a head, Arens said, because at the moment, almost anyone who wants to leave the Soviet Union can do so. "A large part of the 2 million Soviet Jews want to leave and leave now, and they're afraid that the gates may not be open much longer," he said.

Arens bemoaned the fact that only 2,000 out of some 6 million American Jews make aliyah each year. And that figure does not take into account the large number who eventually return to America or Israelis who move to the United States.

Arens, who was educated in the United States and served in the U.S. Army, sought to encourage his listeners by presenting himself, and the late Prime Minister Golda Meir, as "living proof that you can come from the U.S. to Israel and reach a position of some importance."

BREAKING TABOO, GUSH EMUNIM RABBI MEETS WITH A PROMINENT PALESTINIAN

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Sept. 24 (JTA) -- A leader of the militant Gush Emunim movement of Jewish settlers in the West Bank has made a surprise visit to a Palestinian leader who supports the Palestine Liberation Organization.

"In an action that stunned his movement, Rabbi Menahem Fruman of the West Bank settlement of Tekoa paid a courtesy visit to Faisal Husseini of East Jerusalem, who is frequently described by Gush Emunim as the PLO commander in the Jerusalem area.

"I came to meet with an enemy," Fruman told the many reporters who surrounded him over the weekend.

"The idea of Greater Israel is so great that there is sufficient space also for the Palestinians who wish to live with us in coexistence," he added.

Fruman did not initiate the publicity. He wanted the meeting to be a non-political means of "trying to get the two peoples closer."

But once it was publicized, Fruman declared he would not be deterred by the angry reactions from the right wing. He said he intended to continue with the meetings.

"I represent the true option of the Jewish settlers in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, the option which means making peace with the Arabs," Fruman told reporters.

Fruman, who is 44 and the father of nine children, settled in Tekoa 13 years ago and has served ever since as the settlement's rabbi. He has made several attempts to meet with Palestinians and found the goal not easy to implement.

Gush Emunim, which believes in the idea of a Greater Israel incorporating the territories captured during the 1967 Six-Day War, is opposed to such meetings.

Fruman said he and Husseini exchanged views, disagreed on most issues but agreed to meet again.

Criticized By Fellow Settlers

With his move, Fruman has joined a virtual parade of Israeli government figures who have met with Husseini since he was released from prison in January, amid rumors that he was being groomed as a possible negotiating partner with Israel.

Husseini, who heads the Arab Research Institute in East Jerusalem, served two six-month terms in Israeli administrative detention for activities that were never made clear.

Among Jewish settlers, Husseini is deeply mistrusted. Nevertheless, Fruman's meeting with Husseini was backed by some Jewish settlers. Residents of Tekoa issued a statement supporting their rabbi's right to speak his mind.

Others were less generous.

A well-known Gush Emunim spokesperson announced over the weekend that by meeting with Husseini, Fruman excluded himself from the Gush Emunim circle, as well as the circle of true supporters of Zionism.

Daniella Weiss, a former chairwoman of Gush Emunim and one of the radical leaders of the movement, said the readiness to talk with the "No. 1" representative of the PLO "does not become a civilized person."

Baruch Marzel, a spokesman of Rabbi Meir Kahane's far right-wing Kach movement, declared

the movement would see to it that Fruman would be ousted from the settlement, "because he is in need of psychiatric treatment."

For Husseini, the meeting with Fruman served as a golden opportunity to prove that the PLO is now willing to talk even to Gush Emunim.

Husseini described the meeting as "an attempt to open a window, so that one will recognize and get acquainted with the other. In the meeting, we Palestinians removed a barrier. We hope that the Israelis will drop their stereotyped view and will follow in the steps of Rabbi Fruman."

IDF CHANGING POLICIES TO REDUCE INJURIES AMONG PALESTINIAN YOUTH

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Sept. 24 (JTA) -- In the face of mounting complaints from civil rights groups in Israel and abroad about the rising number of casualties among Palestinian children in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Israel Defense Force is revising army regulations and instituting new procedures.

The defense establishment also has adjusted its use of administrative detention, following appeals on the subject to the High Court of Justice.

The IDF's judge advocate general, Brig. Gen. Amnon Strashnov, last week ordered military investigators to give top priority to cases involving the deaths of children in the territories.

Strashnov issued the order a day after the Defense for Children International movement expressed concern about the high number of fatalities among children as Israeli troops try to control the Palestinian uprising, or intifada.

The IDF itself has registered concern over the mounting number of deaths and injuries among young children from IDF fire. Recently, a 2-year-old baby girl in Nablus lost an eye when hit by a rubber bullet.

In the past 10 weeks, 27 children, 10 of whom were under the age of 12, have been killed in the territories.

Strashnov ordered the military police to carry out intensive and speedy investigations of such cases and refer the files to the military prosecution as soon as possible.

Firing At All Masked Men Permitted

The army announced Sept. 19 that sharpshooters will accompany every patrol to extricate soldiers from life-threatening situations without inadvertently hitting innocent bystanders.

In another move two days later, military authorities announced new procedures to ensure that relatives are immediately informed when a family member is detained for activities related to the uprising.

The policy was announced after the Association for Civil Rights in Israel filed an appeal to the High Court. It has since withdrawn it.

The new procedures, to be implemented early next month, require the commander of any detention facility to ensure every day that all new detainees send postcards to their families.

Not all orders issued last week were concessions to Palestinian complaints. The defense establishment issued orders allowing live ammunition to be fired in the course of disturbances at masked persons, whether or not they are armed.

The IDF believes masked men are the on-scene leaders of the uprising.

HISTORIC CHARLESTON TEMPLE SPARED BY HURRICANE, BUT SERVICES IN DOUBT
By Allison Kaplan

NEW YORK, Sept. 24 (JTA) -- A graceful 149-year-old synagogue in Charleston, S.C., has remained standing through the Civil War, the earthquake of 1886 and now, Hurricane Hugo.

"We are very grateful to the Almighty for sparing us," said Rabbi William Rosenthal, who leads Reform Congregation Kahal Kadosh-Beth Elohim, which is housed in the historic synagogue.

But while the temple has remained unscathed, its congregants are coping with the estimated \$2 billion dollars worth of damage the hurricane has done to their city. Many have had their homes damaged, and most are without running water or electricity. Neither is expected to be restored soon.

"Since we have no power, we don't know what we will do over the High Holy Days," Rosenthal said in a telephone interview.

He said that if it is possible, he will hold Rosh Hashanah services during daylight hours. But even that may present a problem, since his synagogue is located in downtown Charleston, where local authorities are restricting access in order to prevent looting.

Gaining entrance to Conservative Temple Emanuel is also a problem, but for a different reason.

According to Milton Schwartz, a congregant who has surveyed the damage, more than 30 trees have fallen around the synagogue, and "the sanctuary is inaccessible."

Schwartz, who was also reached by phone, reported that "part of the roof caved in over the rabbi's office," and that there are several minor leaks.

Fund For Puerto Ricans Set Up

He also inspected one of the Jewish cemeteries in town and was grateful to discover that, although one of the outer walls had collapsed, all of the gravestones were still intact.

There is no word on the condition of Charleston's Orthodox shul or historic Orthodox cemetery, both located downtown, where some buildings suffered severe damage.

Among the Charleston officials leading the cleanup effort are Police Chief Reuven Greenberg, the famous black Jewish officer who was once featured on the CBS News program "60 Minutes," and Linda Lombard, who is the first Jewish woman to serve as chairwoman of the Charleston County Council.

In New York, meanwhile, the Jewish Community Relations Council is investigating the damage that Hurricane Hugo has done to the Puerto Rican Jewish community.

Michael Miller, executive director of JCRC, said that inquiries were being made as to the status of the "small but vital" Jewish community in San Juan, believed to number about 1,500.

The New York JCRC is working with local Hispanic leaders to bring aid to the hurricane victims and has set up a special relief fund.

Tens of thousands were left homeless on the island in the wake of the devastating storm, and 25,000 are reported to be living in Red Cross emergency shelters.

"The New York area is not only the home of the largest population of Jews outside Israel. But it is also the largest Puerto Rican population outside Puerto Rico," Kenneth Bialkin, president

of the JCRC, said in a statement.

"We feel close ties with the Hispanic community in New York and hope to do as much as possible to help their families and friends at their time of need."

For information about the relief fund, contact the JCRC at 711 Third Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

CARMELITE ORDER BACKS RELOCATION OF CONVENT FROM AUSCHWITZ SITE
By Allison Kaplan

NEW YORK, Sept. 24 (JTA) -- A statement issued Saturday by the Roman Catholic Carmelite order in support of relocating the convent at Auschwitz is "one more step forward" toward resolving the problem, according to Rabbi A. James Rudin, director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee.

Rudin returned this weekend from a visit to Rome that coincided with the Vatican's statement in support of the 1987 accord to relocate the Carmelite convent that was signed in Geneva by Jewish and Catholic leaders.

The agreement also was endorsed last week by the head of the Polish Catholic Church, Cardinal Jozef Glomp, who previously opposed moving the convent but reversed his stand after the Vatican announcement.

With the three central parties in the dispute now behind the agreement -- the Vatican, Glomp and the Carmelite order -- "all of the pieces to the puzzle are now in place," said Rudin.

The Carmelite statement, issued by Rev. Anthony Morello, stated that "all along," the position of the general of the Carmelite order, Father Philip Sainz de Baranda, has been that the agreement must be honored.

Rudin, who is the chairman of the newly formed Jewish Council for International Interreligious Relations, said he was "warmly received" at the Vatican last week and that he plans to return there after Yom Kippur.

He said that in his conversations with Vatican officials, there was no discussion as to exactly when the convent would be moved. "It was made very clear that it was up to the Polish Church to carry out," he said.

DUTCH REDEDICATE 90-YEAR-OLD SHUL
By Henrietta Boas

AMSTERDAM, Sept. 24 (JTA) -- A 90-year-old synagogue in the Dutch province of Overijssel was rededicated last week following its complete renovation.

Restoration of the synagogue in the north-east city of Zwolle was made possible by funds from the Committee for the Continuation of the Zwolle Synagogue, which was established four years ago.

The synagogue, which was first dedicated in 1899, served between 600 and 700 Jews before the Holocaust. Today only 50 Jews remain. Most of the Jews of Zwolle were deported to their deaths during the German occupation.

As part of the ceremony, the street adjoining the synagogue was renamed Samuel Judah Hirsch Street, after the former chief rabbi of Overijssel, who officiated in that capacity for several decades. Hirsch died in Zwolle in 1941.

Ten other nearby streets were renamed, honoring Jews who were prominent in Zwolle and who perished during the Holocaust.