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ARAFAT WON'T SEEK TO COME TO U.S. FOR U.N. SESSION, SAYS PLO OFFICIAL

By Allison Kaplan

UNITED NATIONS, Nov. 27 (JTA) -- Yasir Arafat will not seek permission from the United States to attend this week's U.N. General Assembly debate on the question of Palestine, the Palestine Liberation Organization's chief representative here said Monday.

"Had he wanted to come, he would have asked for a visa two weeks ago," Zehdi Terzi, who heads the PLO observer mission, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

But whatever relief the United States and Israel may feel at hearing this news is being tempered by indications of new PLO efforts on the diplomatic front.

According to sources here, a draft resolution is being circulated here proposing that the General Assembly officially change the name of the PLO observer mission from "Palestine" to the "State of Palestine," thereby upgrading the mission's status within the United Nations from an "observer" to an "observer state."

Such a move would indicate U.N. recognition of an existing Palestinian state.

The PLO is waging a parallel diplomatic offensive in Rome, at the General Conference of the Food and Agricultural Organization, a U.N. agency.

A resolution currently before the FAO conference would not only upgrade the PLO's status from non-state observer to full membership, but would channel international food assistance to Palestinians through the PLO.

U.S. Threatens To Cut Funds

In Washington, the State Department threatened Monday to withhold U.S. funding to any U.N. body, including the General Assembly and the FAO, that recognizes the PLO's proclaimed "State of Palestine."

"The United States government does not recognize Palestine," State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler said at a news briefing Monday. "It does not satisfy the generally accepted criteria under international law for statehood."

A law adopted by Congress bars U.S. funding specifically to any U.N. agency that "enhances" the PLO's status.

The General Assembly, however, is not just another U.N. agency. It receives its funding from the overall U.N. program budget.

If the U.S. cuts off its contribution to this budget, the United Nations could conceivably be seriously crippled. The U.S. assessment this year of \$216 million represents 25 percent of the total budget.

A cutoff of U.S. funds to the FAO would also severely weaken that agency. Of the \$267.6 million FAO budget this year, \$61.4 million was to come from the United States, though it has not yet been paid. In addition, the United States owes the FAO another \$21 million in arrears.

Tutwiler termed the PLO effort to gain full recognition in the FAO "an objectionable attempt to politicize the important work of this agency."

Such an effort "does nothing to contribute

to the settlement of the political issues involved and does substantial harm to the FAO's credibility as an organization worthy of U.S. support," she said.

Tutwiler said the U.N. Relief and Works Agency is the appropriate means for providing "humanitarian assistance to the Palestinian people." She pointed out that in 1989, the United States provided \$63 million to that agency, the largest contribution of any country.

Could Change Mind At Last Minute

The General Assembly debate on the "Question of Palestine" begins here Wednesday, on the 42nd anniversary of the day the U.N. adopted the plan partitioning Palestine into Jewish and Arab states.

The assembly already began to address the issue during debate Monday on an agenda item titled "The Situation in the Middle East."

Despite Arafat's reluctance so far to request a U.S. entry visa, neither Israeli nor American officials are ready to dismiss the possibility that the PLO leader will change his mind about addressing the assembly at the last minute, though they consider that unlikely.

But PLO representative Terzi stated flatly that "he has decided not to ask for a visa."

If Terzi is correct, the United States will be spared the difficult dilemma of deciding whether to grant Arafat a visa, which made it the target of worldwide criticism last year.

There has been some speculation that an oral message sent by Arafat to President Bush last week addressed the visa issue.

Harris Schoenberg, director of U.N. affairs for B'nai B'rith International, said he had been told by sources that in the oral message, Arafat asserted that his decision not to request a visa was a sign of his "willingness to accommodate" U.S. wishes.

(JTA correspondent Howard Rosenberg in Washington contributed to this report.)

ISRAELI CABINET MINISTERS EMBARK ON VISITS TO POLAND, SOVIET UNION

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Nov. 27 (JTA) -- The warming trend in relations between Israel and Eastern Europe may grow cozier this week, as a result of two ministerial missions.

Vice Premier Shimon Peres left Monday on a three-day official trip to Poland, while his aides were trying to arrange a visit for him to the Soviet Union before the end of the year.

Avraham Katz-Oz, the minister of agriculture, was due to land in Moscow on Monday, becoming the first Israeli of Cabinet rank to visit the Soviet Union since the Kremlin broke diplomatic relations with Israel in 1967.

Peres, who heads Israel's Labor Party and is a former prime minister, is scheduled to meet with President Wojciech Jaruzelski of Poland, Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki, Communist Party leader Mieczyslaw Rakowski, Solidarity leader Lech Walesa and other prominent figures.

Reports from Warsaw said Peres' trip had considerable advance coverage in the official news media.

Polish spokesmen were quoted as saying the visit would further improve bilateral relations with Israel, but they do not anticipate an early resumption of full diplomatic ties.

In fact, the Polish Foreign Ministry last week denied a report in an Israeli newspaper that the restoration of relations was imminent. Deputy Foreign Minister Jan Majewski was quoted by the official Polish news agency PAP as saying that the Israeli report "is not true."

"The Polish government is considering the possibility of restoring diplomatic relations with Israel in the not-too-distant future, but it has not taken any decision yet," he said.

Will Meet With Gorbachev

Poland and Israel established interest sections in Tel Aviv and Warsaw respectively in 1988. That is the most rudimentary form of diplomatic representation, but it was the first between the two countries in over 20 years.

Peres, who was born in Poland and settled in Palestine as a young boy, will visit the site of the former Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp complex.

Meanwhile, Peres' foreign policy adviser, Nimrod Novik, will go to Moscow shortly to continue talks that began several weeks ago to set up a visit by Peres.

An invitation has already been extended by the Soviet Peace Committee, and a Soviet delegation is due in Israel shortly to finalize the trip.

Peres will meet Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev and other top leaders during the trip, which is expected to take place at the end of December.

Katz-Oz, who is also a Laborite, is in the Soviet Union as a guest of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, an arrangement made necessary by the absence of Soviet-Israeli diplomatic relations.

He is traveling with his senior aides. They will discuss agricultural cooperation with their Soviet counterparts and the possibility of Israel exporting agricultural produce to the USSR.

The Soviets have shown a consistent interest in that area of economic relations.

Katz-Oz was involved in an embarrassing episode last month. On his way to visit Estonia, one of the Soviet Baltic republics, he had to turn back at Helsinki, Finland, because no Soviet visa was waiting for him.

The oversight was attributed to a bureaucratic error.

EGYPTIAN WOMAN WHO SPIED FOR ISRAEL TELLS STORY AFTER DECADE OF SILENCE By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Nov. 27 (JTA) -- An Egyptian woman who once spied for Israel with her husband has broken her decade-long silence on the affair with a complaint that the Israeli authorities are neglecting her.

The woman, who now lives in Israel, claims her husband gave Israel advance warning of the Yom Kippur War.

Her story has revived the controversy over why Israel was unprepared when the Egyptian and Syrian armies struck suddenly on Yom Kippur 1973. Israel suffered nearly 3,000 dead or missing in a month of fighting.

Inshrah Shahin, 45, who converted to Judaism and changed her name to Dina Ben-David, has no regrets about spying for the Jewish state.

But she is bitter over her economic condi-

tion, considering that she and her late husband, Ibrahim Shahin, worked for Israeli intelligence from 1967 until they were caught in 1974.

"I photographed every airport, every military base and every bridge in Cairo," she told reporters Sunday. "The films were hidden in puppets and sent to Israel. Every six months we sent more than 40 rolls of film."

Ibrahim, a Palestinian from Ramla, was hanged by the Egyptians in January 1977. Inshrah was sentenced to death but pardoned by President Anwar Sadat and released in a prisoner exchange.

She and her three sons fled to Israel 10 years ago and adopted Hebrew names. Nabil, Mohammed and Adel are now Yossi, Haim and Rafi.

'Want The Entire Country To Know'

The story unfolded this week because the military censor feared the family would sell it to a foreign news organization, which would then publish a distorted version damaging to Israel.

According to Rafi Ben-David, his father warned Israel that war was imminent in 1973, but his messages were ignored.

His mother acknowledged that she and her husband had spied for money. Each was paid \$1,750 a month. After coming to Israel, the government paid each of her children \$25,000, but she received nothing, the woman claimed.

She said she works as a cook for \$500 a month. One son is a cook, another a waiter and the third a student at a university in Cairo.

"We've lived here several years, and no one knows who we are and how much we contributed to the State of Israel," Rafi Ben-David said. "My father paid with his life. And now, for his sake, I want the entire country to know who was Ibrahim Shahin."

Security sources tended to play down the family's part in Israel's intelligence network in Egypt. They were employed to gather basic information. They never passed on "significant warnings on the Yom Kippur War," said one source.

MENACHEM BEGIN APPEARS THINNER, BUT ALERT, ON HIS ANNUAL OUTING By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Nov. 27 (JTA) -- Former Prime Minister Menachem Begin made one of his rare appearances in public Sunday. It was his annual outing to say Kaddish at the grave of his wife, Aliza, whose death seven years ago triggered the depression that propelled him out of office.

Wearing a blue suit and a blue hat, Begin arrived at the graveside, supported by his daughters, Hasia and Leah. He and his son, Binyamin, recited the memorial prayer.

The once fiery leader of the Likud bloc, who made peace with Egypt and shared the Nobel Peace Prize with the late Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, seemed a shadow of his former self.

He looked thinner than ever and physically weak. There was a frozen smile on his face as his family escorted him through crowds of spectators at the cemetery.

But Begin, who is 76, appeared mentally alert. He had a word for whomever shook his hand, and he recognized his former associates.

To Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, his successor, Begin said, "Welcome back, Sir, and good luck in whatever you do."

Shamir had just returned from a two-week visit to the United States and Western Europe.

BRONX RABBI SUES CARDINAL GLEMP OVER REMARKS ABOUT JULY PROTEST

By Allison Kaplan

NEW YORK, Nov. 27 (JTA) -- Avraham Weiss, the activist rabbi from the Bronx who staged a controversial demonstration at Auschwitz in July, has filed suit in a Polish court against Cardinal Jozef Glemp, charging that the head of the Polish Catholic Church slandered him.

The accusation centers around Glemp's provocative Aug. 26 speech, in which the Roman Catholic archbishop suggested that Weiss had violent intentions when he and six students held a demonstration on the porch of the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz.

Addressing a huge audience at a Catholic feast in the city of Czestochowa, Glemp said that "a squad of seven Jews from New York launched attacks on the convent" and that "it did not happen that the sisters were killed or the convent destroyed, because they were apprehended."

In an affidavit submitted last week to the Polish court, Weiss asserts that "the clear meaning of Cardinal Glemp's statement is that I intended and attempted to murder and pillage when I visited the grounds of the convent."

Weiss said since there were numerous media accounts of the incident indicating his group was engaged in non-violent protest, Glemp's remarks were knowingly false.

During the same speech, Glemp made comments that infuriated many Jews, accusing the Jewish people of using their influence with the news media to spread anti-Polish sentiments and undermine Poland's sovereignty.

Two Boston attorneys acting on behalf of Weiss and his chief lawyer, Alan Dershowitz, submitted the affidavit to the Czestochowa regional court last Friday.

Failed To Get Polish Lawyer

Dershowitz and Weiss had made attempts to retain legal representation in Poland, but said that several attorneys had turned them down because of the controversy connected to challenging the nation's highest-ranking Catholic official.

It is "close to impossible" to find a Polish lawyer who would take on the case, said Stanislaw Pomorski, a professor of law at Rutgers University and a former Warsaw attorney. Pomorski acted as a consultant and translator for Dershowitz.

"Suing the primate of Poland is without a precedent," Pomorski said, adding that he was "extremely interested and in suspense" over the outcome of the case.

A Polish attorney retained for a short time tried to contact Glemp to reach an out-of-court settlement. Weiss had said that if Glemp made a public apology, he would not pursue legal action.

But Glemp rebuffed the efforts at dialogue, according to Dershowitz and Weiss, and the decision was then made to file the suit on Nov. 24, two days before the three-month statute of limitations that exists for such crimes in Poland would have run out.

While Jewish leaders involved in interfaith relations and the convent issue say that Weiss has the right as an individual to pursue his case, some worry that it will reignite the convent controversy. Currently, they believe, there appears to be some progress towards the convent's relocation away from Auschwitz.

"My fear is that a public trial will raise the

fever while we are now moving toward a solution and could do harm," said Rabbi A. James Rudin, director of interreligious affairs for the American Jewish Committee.

Rudin said he would urge Weiss to "use any means to settle without going to trial."

But Weiss says that this is the only way in which to clear his name after Glemp damaged his "reputation as a peaceful man" and painted him as "a violent and dangerous man, an attempted murderer."

LE PEN'S NATIONAL FRONT DOES WELL IN PARLIAMENTARY SPECIAL ELECTIONS

By Edwin Eytan

PARIS, Nov. 27 (JTA) -- Jean-Marie Le Pen's extreme right-wing National Front scored important electoral gains in two parliamentary special elections Sunday and one regional contest.

The results made clear that the party, which unabashedly appeals to racism and xenophobia, is still a political force in France, despite Le Pen's dismal showing in the last presidential elections.

This is troubling to Jews. Although Le Pen denies being anti-Semitic, he has publicly claimed the Holocaust false, claiming there were no gas chambers.

In the constituency of Dreux, southwest of Paris, National Front candidate Marie-France Stirbois won nearly 43 percent of the vote, 20 percent ahead of her closest rival, who ran for the center-right.

In the 2nd constituency of Marseille, France's second largest city, the National Front's Marie-Claude Roussel scored 33 percent, 6 percent less than the center-right candidate, but 9 percent more than Le Pen himself scored in the same constituency last spring.

Since no candidate received an absolute majority in either of the elections, the law provides for a runoff, to be held next Sunday.

Stirbois is virtually certain of winning a seat in the National Assembly. Roussel could score an upset by mobilizing sympathetic voters who abstained Sunday because they believed the National Front had no chance.

The National Front also won first place in the race for a seat in the Marseille-Cote d'Azur provincial council. Its candidate beat both the center-right and the Socialists by better than 20 points.

Campaign Against Yarmulkes

Le Pen appeared on television Sunday night to exult over the election results. He declared himself a "happy man."

National Front candidates campaigned under the banner "France for Frenchmen." The slogan appeals to those who dislike the fact that France has become a multicultural society, with some 4 million Moslems, mostly emigres from Algeria or other former French territories in Africa.

The National Front candidates' vigorous opposition to the construction of mosques has a frightening parallel in the resort town of Aix-les-Bains, where center-right members of the local council are trying to overturn the mayor's recent approval of the construction of a new synagogue and Hebrew school.

The National Front campaigned against allowing the traditional Moslem veil to be worn in public schools. Now, some of its supporters are demanding a ban on the wearing of yarmulkes in state-run schools or by government officials.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES:**ON THE MATTER OF REUNIFICATION, ISRAELIS AND EAST GERMANS CONCUR**

By David Kantor

EAST BERLIN, Nov. 27 (JTA) -- East German officials believe they have found common ground with Israel and world Jewry in opposition to a reunited Germany.

That issue surfaced only recently with the drastic reforms that suddenly swept East Germany and put an end to the Berlin Wall as a symbolic and physical barrier between East and West.

The establishment of diplomatic and other relations between the German Democratic Republic and Israel now seems less remote than it was a few weeks ago.

But obstacles remain. There is the question of reparations for Jewish victims of Nazism, for whom East Germany refused for 40 years to acknowledge any responsibility.

There is also the GDR's lopsided pro-Arab policy in the Middle East.

But both of these issues are now being addressed at the highest political level here.

The new East German prime minister, Hans Modrow, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency last week that his country is seeking good relations with all countries in the Middle East, including Israel.

He said two principles guide East German policy there: the right of Palestinians to self-determination and Israel's right to live within secure borders.

Modrow made no mention of a Palestinian state or of the Palestine Liberation Organization, with which the East Germans have maintained close, friendly contacts.

PLO leader Yasir Arafat was a guest of honor at East Germany's 40th anniversary celebrations on Oct. 7. But that was before the recent upheavals, during which veteran Communist hard-liner Erich Honecker was deposed as East Germany's leader and replaced by Modrow.

Ready To Discuss Reparations

An even stronger signal that the GDR is disposed to improve relations with Israel was given by its foreign minister, Oskar Fischer, who was interviewed by the Israeli daily, Ha'aretz.

The interview was reprinted in the official Communist Party organ Neues Deutschland, and in most other East German newspapers. And it was the opening item on "Aktuelle Kamera," the main news program on East German television.

Fischer said his country was ready to talk about reparations payments. "This subject will certainly come up" in future negotiations between Germans and Israelis, he told Ha'aretz.

Fischer disclosed that he had approached the Israeli foreign minister, Moshe Arens, when both were at the U.N. General Assembly in New York two months ago.

But there was no positive response to this initiative, and "I understood that it may have been too early" for talks to get anywhere, Fischer said.

The fact that an approach was made to Israel on a high ministerial level and was publicized, despite its rejection, cast light on the posture adopted by the new East German regime.

The government intends to make clear to the world, and to Jews and Israel particularly, that the division of Germany is an enduring fact of global politics, speculation notwithstanding.

While in the United States a week ago, Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir spoke out emotionally against a united Germany. He feared a powerful, united Germany might try to complete the Nazi extermination of the Jews.

Reunification 'Out Of The Question'

East Germany responded swiftly through Fischer, assuring the Israelis they had no reason to worry, because a united Germany was "out of the question."

On this matter, East Germany's and Israel's interests converge. Both countries want to prevent the emergence of a "big" Germany, which conceivably could again become a haven for fascists and anti-Jewish elements.

East Germany is trying to establish itself as a socialist state on German soil. Many officials here think they have discovered a natural ally among Jews who oppose a huge, economically unbeatable, united German state.

Fischer contrasted the attitude in Bonn, which sees reunification strictly a matter of the Germans exerting their right to self-determination, and the view in East Berlin: that it is a matter which concerns all of Europe.

The existence of two German states is fully in accordance with the wishes of other European states, Fischer pointed out.

He said voices against reunification must be heard and respected when decisions of such magnitude are contemplated.

WEST GERMAN JEWS DEMAND THAT GDR TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR NAZI ERA

By David Kantor

BONN, Nov. 27 (JTA) -- West Germany's Jewish community is putting pressure on the East German government to pay reparations to Jewish victims of Nazi persecution, for whom it has refused to acknowledge responsibility.

The community's chairman, Heinz Galinski, stressed in a radio interview Sunday that the political and moral responsibility for the Nazi past applies equally to both German states.

West Germany has paid out an estimated \$40 billion in reparations to Jews and to non-Jews, including Germans persecuted for their political views.

East Germany, however, has refused any payment, on the grounds that it is an anti-fascist state made up of persecutees, whereas the West German Federal Republic is the successor to Hitler's Third Reich.

But the Jewish community does not accept that view, and a change of attitude may be in the making in East Berlin.

The recently deposed Communist Party boss, Erich Honecker, raised the possibility of paying \$100 million in symbolic reparations to victims of Nazism.

But he was seeking a quid pro quo: American Jewish lobbying on behalf of improved U.S. trade relations with East Germany.

East German Jews, taking heart from sweeping reforms in the GDR, are themselves demanding that the regime end the 40-year falsification of history, which insists that anti-Semitism was rampant in West Germany but non-existent in the East.

They also have asked that textbooks be revised to show that Jews were persecuted not only by the Nazis before the war, but by the East German Stalinists after the war.