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## **GROUND BROKEN FOR PRAYER CENTER TO REPLACE CONVENT AT AUSCHWITZ**

**By Susan Birnbaum and Allison Kaplan**

NEW YORK, Feb. 19 (JTA) -- Ground was broken Monday for the interfaith prayer and education center that is to replace the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz.

The ceremony was attended by Cardinal Franciszek Macharski of Krakow, in whose diocese Auschwitz lies, and representatives of the Polish government. No Jewish leaders attended.

News that the ground-breaking ceremony would take place Monday was reported Friday by the World Jewish Congress and confirmed by the International Jewish Committee for Interfaith Consultations, or IJCIC, which has been negotiating with the Vatican on the issue.

Elan Steinberg, WJC executive director, claimed that "the first spade had been struck" on Monday as a direct result of negotiations between his group and the Polish government. A WJC delegation arrived Sunday night in Warsaw, for meetings with Poland's leaders.

On Monday, Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki opened his conversation with the visiting WJC leaders by personally apologizing for "the hurt caused by the Auschwitz convent controversy," Steinberg said.

He said Mazowiecki told WJC President Edgar Bronfman, in a live television broadcast, "Today, the cornerstone is being laid for the center, as a first step in the implementation of the agreement."

Last Thursday, the president of the Bishops Conference for Relations With the Jews, Bishop Gaston Poulain, launched a fund-raising appeal among French Catholics for construction of the new center.

### **Nuns Still Not Leaving**

The construction work, which may take up to a year and a half, solves only a part of the problem posed by the convent. The estimated 17 nuns living there apparently have not left the site, and it is not clear when they will.

Steinberg said the WJC leaders will have a better idea of the timetable when they visit Auschwitz on Tuesday, when a representative of the Polish Catholic Church will officially present the delegation with the government's commitment to build the center and to move the nuns there.

Commenting on the ground-breaking, Steinberg said that Catholic-Jewish relations "have taken an important step forward today."

These were also the words of the chairman of IJCIC, Seymour Reich, who met with Vatican officials last week in Rome.

Reich called the ground-breaking "a concrete expression of an intention to resolve the matter. I sense a good-faith attitude on the part of Vatican officials."

Reich, who is also president of B'nai B'rith International and chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, said the Vatican officials acknowledged "that the wrong procedures were used" to try to oust the nuns.

In Brussels, meanwhile, progress on the construction of the interfaith center near Ausch-

witz did not stop several hundred demonstrators Sunday from expressing anger over the slow pace of the convent's removal.

A leading Belgian Jew said the construction work "will certainly last several years, and may be stopped at any moment because of lack of money."

The demonstration was called by the Coordinating Committee of Belgian Jewish Organizations. The Belgian Jewish community has been at the forefront of protests against the convent, since its presence was first made known in 1985.

The chairman of the Coordinating Committee, Lazard Perez, remarked on a disturbing coalition of members of extreme right-wing groups and neo-Nazis, "who are eager to support those who refuse to remove the Auschwitz convent."

*(JTA correspondent Yossi Lempkowicz in Brussels contributed to this report.)*

## **POLAND CONFIRMS PLANS TO RESUME RELATIONS WITH ISRAEL NEXT WEEK**

**By Susan Birnbaum**

NEW YORK, Feb. 19 (JTA) -- Poland will formally re-establish diplomatic relations with Israel on Feb. 27, officials of the Solidarity-led government confirmed Monday in Warsaw.

Israeli Foreign Minister Moshe Arens will arrive in the Polish capital on Feb. 26, to take part in the official ceremony the following day.

A delegation of World Jewish Congress leaders received confirmation of the plans Monday, in meetings with Prime Minister Tadeusz Mazowiecki and Foreign Minister Krzysztof Skubiszewski.

Details of the meeting were reported by Elan Steinberg, executive director of the WJC, who spoke in a telephone interview from Warsaw, where he arrived Sunday night.

The WJC group, which also includes its secretary-general, Israel Singer, and a vice president, Kalman Sultanik, is holding three days of talks with government leaders and leaders of the small Jewish community of Poland.

### **Polish Jews Allowed To Return**

Steinberg said the Jewish representatives, including Rabbi Menachem Joskowicz and Yiddish Theater director Szimon Szurmiej, spoke of heightened incidents of anti-Semitism in Poland. They mentioned, for instance, catcalls at a recent Poland-Israel basketball match in the city of Poznan, calling for "Jews to Auschwitz" and "Jews to Treblinka."

Mazowiecki told the WJC leaders that "the government would act in a firm and resolute manner to suppress such expressions" of anti-Semitism, said Steinberg.

Skubiszewski, speaking Monday at the Foreign Ministry during an official luncheon for the WJC delegation, also "pointed out that this government has nothing to do with the anti-Semitic campaign of the past, and particularly that undertaken in the 1960s," said Steinberg.

Moreover, the foreign minister officially informed the WJC group that any Jews who gave up their Polish citizenship as a result of the anti-Semitic government purges and anti-Jewish climate of the late 1960s "can automatically reclaim their

Polish citizenship," said Steinberg. Those who choose to do so could hold dual citizenship, the WJC was told.

"The practical effect" of the announcement is that "those who so choose can claim property that was lost as a result," Steinberg said.

The WJC group plans to meet on Tuesday with Solidarity leader Lech Walesa and later to visit Auschwitz.

## SHARON RESIGNATION SEEN AS BOTH A VICTORY AND THREAT FOR SHAMIR

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Feb. 19 (JTA) -- Ariel Sharon's move Sunday to formalize his resignation from the government is being seen at home and abroad as a victory for Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, whose peace diplomacy has been under fierce attack by the Likud hard-liner.

Sharon formally submitted his resignation at Sunday's Cabinet meeting. According to law, it becomes effective 48 hours later.

The removal of Sharon from the corridors of power, even if voluntary, should make it increasingly difficult for him to wield it.

But many pundits are warning Shamir and his supporters not to underestimate the political clout the outgoing minister of industry and trade retains. They say his potential to make serious trouble for the 74-year-old prime minister should not be taken lightly.

Sharon announced his resignation in front of 2,600 delegates to the Likud Central Committee meeting in Tel Aviv on Feb. 12, without informing Shamir beforehand. The meeting degenerated into bedlam when Sharon intervened to try to prevent a vote on a policy speech delivered by Shamir.

It marked a final split between the two men, who have been battling for years to control Likud.

Shamir's aides had said last week that if Sharon changed his mind about resigning, the prime minister would simply fire him. But that turned out not to be necessary.

Sharon told a farewell news conference Sunday afternoon that he would devote his entire energy to rally Likud against the "dangers" of Shamir's peace policies.

### No Plans To Leave The Likud

He reiterated his intention to run for the party leadership. If successful, he would head the Likud list in the next elections, with the office of prime minister as the prize.

Sharon said he would devote himself now to "touring the party branches and working as a member of the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee."

He flatly denied rumors that he might leave Likud to head up a coalition of extreme right-wing parties.

Sharon's political future may well hinge on Shamir's ability to steer the Likud through the treacherous shoals of the peace process.

But according to many observers, Sharon will benefit whether Shamir fails or succeeds. Failure to achieve the immediate goal of an Israeli-Palestinian dialogue to discuss Palestinian elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip would most likely lead the Labor Party to abandon its two-year coalition with Likud, they say.

Labor may well be able to form a narrow-based coalition of its own with the leftist and religious parties. In such an event, Sharon would

have the backing of other dissident hard-liners in Likud, plus the enthusiastic support of Tehiya and other factions to the right of Likud, in a bid to topple Shamir.

If current diplomatic efforts succeed, that could only mean Shamir made a major concession. It would mean he agreed either to allow Arab residents of East Jerusalem to participate in the Palestinian elections or to the inclusion of certain Palestinian deportees in the delegation that would negotiate with Israel.

Whatever the concession, it would presumably trigger a revolt among Likud hard-liners and among the rightist forces outside Likud. The disgruntled would naturally look to Sharon for leadership, the pundits say.

## GROUP OF FIVE BREAKS AWAY FROM LIKUD'S LIBERAL PARTY

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Feb. 19 (JTA) -- The Liberal Party component of Likud split Monday, when five key members, headed by Yitzhak Moda'i, declared themselves a separate faction within Likud.

The Liberals united last year with Herut, Likud's dominant faction. But the dissidents now say they are dissatisfied with the terms of the merger.

They pointed out that Liberals failed to receive the chairmanship of any of the party's key policy-making forums.

But most observers link the split to Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's expected elevation of Moshe Nissim to minister of industry and trade, an office vacated by Ariel Sharon's resignation.

Nissim, who now holds no portfolio in the Cabinet, is Moda'i's sworn enemy among Likud Liberals. He is a supporter of Shamir's policies, whereas Moda'i has fiercely opposed the prime minister's peace diplomacy, along with Sharon and Minister of Construction and Housing David Levy, both of Likud's Herut wing.

Political insiders also say Moda'i's group resents how state funds were recently allocated to politically linked educational institutions. They were peeved because they thought Nissim-backed institutions received much more than institutions connected with Moda'i.

The new faction calls itself the Party for the Advancement of Liberal Ideas. The Liberals are, in fact, a conservative business-oriented party, not militantly right-wing like Herut.

In addition to Moda'i, the breakaways are Knesset members Avraham Sharir, Pessah Grupper, Pinhas Goldstein and Yosef Goldberg.

## LABORITS HOPE TO REINSTATE WEIZMAN

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Feb. 19 (JTA) -- Labor Party doves are campaigning to restore Ezer Weizman to the policy-making Inner Cabinet, now that authorities say they have insufficient evidence of his alleged contacts with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Although the Laborites' demands have been contemptuously dismissed by Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, who originally dismissed Weizman last month, the issue has generated additional friction in the Likud-Labor unity coalition.

Attorney General Yosef Harish announced Feb. 15 that a police investigation did not produce sufficient evidence to try Weizman for alleged contacts with the PLO.

# ISRAEL CONCERNED ARABS MAY UNITE OVER SOVIET IMMIGRATION TO ISRAEL

By Gil Sedan and Hugh Orgel

JERUSALEM, Feb. 19 (JTA) -- Israeli officials are concerned that the normally discordant Arab world will unite over the issue of large-scale Soviet immigration to Israel and form a new military alliance against the Jewish state.

At the center of their concern is Jordan, which has taken the lead against the massive immigration wave.

Reports from Amman over the weekend disclosed that Jordan has reached an agreement with Iraq to form a joint air force fighter squadron.

While Israeli officials are said to be not unduly disturbed by the reports, they are nevertheless haunted by the "possibility that an eastern alliance will be formed and that it will introduce a large military force into this area," a military source said.

Both Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Gen. Dan Shomron, the Israel Defense Force chief of staff, have dismissed the military threat of an Iraqi-Jordanian air squadron, but not the long-term implications of cooperation between Arab states.

Jordan is desperately seeking the support of Arab states out of fear that Israel will settle large numbers of Soviet Jews in the West Bank.

King Hussein is quite aware that this has not yet happened, regardless of the massive influx of Jews from the Soviet Union in the past year.

But he feels threatened by the possibility that large numbers of immigrants will settle in the territory, attracted by the cheap housing Israel makes available in the West Bank, compared to the high cost in Israel proper.

## Mubarak To Press Soviets

In that event, Hussein foresees a mass exodus of Palestinians from the West Bank into his Hashemite kingdom, where two-thirds of the population of 3 million already is Palestinian.

Such a development could lend credence to the claim long made by right-wing Israelis that Jordan is, in fact, the Palestinian state.

The Arab countries, traditionally split among themselves on many issues, can easily rally around Jordan to bring international pressure to bear against the immigration of Soviet Jews to Israel.

President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt announced Sunday that he would raise the matter with the Soviet officials when he visits Moscow in March.

Mubarak's agenda also includes convening an Arab summit meeting on "the struggle against Soviet immigration" to Israel.

But Egypt's ambassador to Israel, Mohammed Basiouny, told Likud's Academic Forum in Tel Aviv on Sunday, "We are not against the immigration of Jews to Israel -- it is not my business. I am only against settling the immigrants in the territories."

Jordan's military arrangement with Iraq was known to Israel seven to 10 months ago, say military sources. The joint squadron is apparently a practical measure to continue the training of Jordanian pilots at a time of severe budgetary constraints in Amman.

The squadron will be based in Iraq and financed by Baghdad. Hussein's pilots will get in the flying hours he cannot afford to give them, while the bulk of Jordan's military budget goes to quell unrest in the turbulent kingdom.

# PALESTINIANS STAGE GENERAL STRIKE TO PROTEST WAVE OF SOVIET ALIYAH

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Feb. 19 (JTA) -- A general strike by Palestinians on Monday suspended all activity in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The strike, reported to be 100 percent effective, was called to protest the large-scale immigration of Soviet Jews to Israel, who Palestinians fear will be settled in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The clandestine Unified Command of the Palestinian uprising circulated leaflets in the territories calling for "a general strike to protest Soviet immigration to the State of Palestine."

Palestinians charge that hundreds of Soviet Jews are moving to the territories, attracted by cheap housing that is unavailable in Israel proper.

According to Israeli officials, less than 1 percent of the olim have gone to the West Bank.

The general strike followed a weekend of rioting, which culminated in the death of a 17-year-old Arab girl in Nablus.

The Israel Defense Force is investigating the circumstances of the killing. All that is certain at this point is that the girl was shot.

Meanwhile, the war against terrorist organizations in the West Bank seems to be going well, according to reports from security sources.

The sources said the Shin Bet, Israel's internal security service, has seized 60 percent of the terrorist groups operating there. They include groups responsible for executing Arabs suspected of collaborating with Israeli authorities.

The Shin Bet, officially known as the General Security Service, has uncovered about 1,000 terrorist cells responsible for more than 3,000 attacks, the sources said.

In recent weeks, Shin Bet agents have arrested 40 members of a Fatah terrorist organization in the Ramallah area. Another 20 suspects have been seized in Idna village, west of Hebron. That group is held responsible for the murder of an Arab policeman.

Some suspects reportedly turned themselves in. Five of 24 in custody from Sinjil village, near Ramallah, surrendered.

The Shin Bet detained three men in Jenin two months ago. They were described as members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and senior intifada activists.

## ISRAELI JETS STRIKE BASES IN LEBANON

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Feb. 19 (JTA) -- Israel air force jets on Monday attacked terrorist installations east of Sidon, in southern Lebanon.

The targets, near Jarrah village, were described as training grounds for Nayef Hawatmeh's Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine and a jumping-off point for incursions against Israel.

The raid was the fifth this year by Israeli aircraft over Lebanon.

The fourth occurred Friday night, when Israeli helicopter gunships fired rockets at an Amal base south of Sidon.

The attack was described as a "warning" to the mainstream Shi'ite militia in Lebanon not to cooperate with Palestinian terrorists.

Reports from Lebanon said the target, near al-Hajjah village, was damaged, but not destroyed, and that no casualties resulted from the attack.

## MOSCOW RABBI FEARS ANTI-SEMITIC TIDE, BUT EXPERT DOUBTS POGROMS WILL OCCUR

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, Feb. 19 (JTA) -- The chief rabbi of Moscow, Adolf Shayevitch, says his overriding fear is the emergence of classic Russian anti-Semitism in the new atmosphere of openness and freedom of expression in the Soviet Union.

The pogromist spirit is already abroad in the "absolute impunity" with which the fascist Pamyat group conducts its anti-Jewish ranting amid silence on the part of the authorities, Shayevitch said in an interview with the Moscow correspondent of *Il Messaggero*, published Saturday.

But a leading Jewish authority on Eastern Europe is convinced that while the fears of Soviet Jews are understandable, there will be no pogroms in the Soviet Union, because neither the Red Army nor the KGB would tolerate them.

That was the opinion Dr. Stephen Roth, former head of the Institute of Jewish Affairs of the World Jewish Congress in London, expressed Saturday in an address to the national convention of the American Jewish Congress in West Palm Beach, Fla.

Shayevitch was one of the signatories on a letter to Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev on Jan. 30 denouncing Pamyat's activities and urging Gorbachev to use his full powers to "prevent the possibility of bloodshed."

"I know of people who don't at all want to leave the Soviet Union, but who have now decided to do so," the chief rabbi, who presides at Moscow's famed Choral Synagogue, declared.

"And people fear for the lives of their children. This is not emigration, it's flight," he said.

### Red Army Would Intervene

"Anti-Semitism is growing, while for the first time in 70 years, we have the possibility of giving breath to our religious life, to our culture," Shayevitch said.

He said the Soviet authorities permitted a rally by Pamyat near St. Basil's Cathedral in Red Square, and "calmly allowed anti-Semitic slogans to be shouted."

At the AJCongress gathering, meanwhile, Roth acknowledged that the emergence of Pamyat is a "repugnant revival" of the classic anti-Semitism of the Russian Orthodox Church.

But he emphasized that at present, there is no apparent likelihood of pogroms in the Soviet Union such as marked the pre-revolutionary period.

"Pogroms will not be tolerated. There is still a Red Army and a KGB, which will step in if necessary, even under glasnost and perestroika," Roth said.

However, "we now see a panicky mass exodus of Jews," he observed, dominated by two fears: that Gorbachev might fall, or that if he survives, anti-Semitism will rise closer to the surface in the new climate of openness.

Roth was less optimistic about conditions confronting Jews in Romania and Hungary, where "the re-emergence of former anti-Semitic parties, such as the old Peasant Party in Hungary, give cause for concern."

Roth also worries about political parties in Hungary and Romania that have "Christian" as part of their name. The word "Christian" in the name of a political party "denotes only one thing: no Jews," he said.

## DIPLOMAT SAYS HE HOPES REFORMS WILL PERSUADE SOVIET JEWS TO STAY

PHOENIX, Feb. 19 (JTA) -- While "no obstacles exist anymore" for Soviet Jews who want to emigrate, there are inducements for the great majority of Jews in the Soviet Union to stay, a Soviet diplomat told an audience of American Jewish community leaders here Sunday.

Oleg Derkovsky, first secretary of the Soviet Embassy in Washington, addressed more than 500 delegates attending the annual plenary session of the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council.

He shared the platform with Sen. Dennis DeConcini (D-Ariz.), who said the United States is close to acting on a waiver of trade sanctions contained in the 1975 Jackson-Vanik Amendment, "because of the Soviet Union's dramatic relaxation of emigration laws."

"Assuming the 10 remaining refuseniks are allowed to leave, I believe we should consider a one-year waiver," said the senator, who chairs the U.S. Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe, which monitors compliance with the Helsinki human rights accords.

Derkovsky expressed hope that changes in Soviet law regarding religious and cultural expression would encourage Soviet Jews to fulfill their aspirations in the Soviet Union.

He said draft legislation that would codify the recent relaxation in emigration policy and the shifts regarding cultural and religious expression are designed to benefit not only Jews but all Soviet citizens.

"Our principle is to create the best possibilities for those who want to stay in the USSR and develop their culture, religious heritage and language," he said.

He pointed out that there are no longer obstacles to studying Hebrew in the Soviet Union.

"We hope those who have left the Soviet Union will be encouraged to come back," Derkovsky added.

## FOLLOWING COMPLAINTS, CNN ANNOUNCES IT WILL REASSIGN ISRAEL BUREAU CHIEF

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Feb. 19 (JTA) -- In the wake of accusations of anti-Israel bias in its coverage, Cable News Network announced Monday that its Israel bureau chief, Robert Wiener, has been reassigned and that its chief correspondent in Israel, Michael Greenspan, has resigned.

The changes came two weeks after Ted Turner, president of the American cable television network, publicly apologized to Hebrew University Professor Israel Gutman for the "unintentional" distortion of an interview the Israeli Holocaust scholar gave CNN last May.

Gutman's complaint was submitted to CNN in December by the Israeli office of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith. It charged that the interview implied Gutman likened a decision by the West Bank town of Ariel to have Arab day laborers wear yellow ID tags to the yellow Star of David forced on Jews by the Nazis.

ADL also objected to what it said was CNN's coverage of the intifada in a way that reflects poorly on Israel.

It accused the network of "repeated use of undocumented file footage" depicting Israeli soldiers beating Palestinians, "as if it were new material."