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**NO REASON TO DELAY PEACE CONFERENCE,
SOVIET FOREIGN MINISTER TELLS ISRAELI**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Sept. 3 (JTA) -- The new Soviet foreign minister, Boris Pankin, told an Israeli journalist this week that there is no reason to postpone the Middle East peace conference that Moscow and Washington are hoping to convene in October.

In a conversation with Gideon Kotz of the Labor Party daily newspaper Davar, Pankin also said he hopes to make a visit soon to the Middle East, including Israel.

"I hope to visit the region shortly, perhaps before October," Pankin said. "There is no reason why the conference should not take place in October."

The Soviet statesman's American counterpart, U.S. Secretary of State James Baker, is also expected to make another trip to the region soon, possibly after a visit to Moscow next week. His chief order of business will be to settle the still-unresolved issue of Palestinian representation at the conference.

President Bush hinted at a news conference Monday in Kennebunkport, Maine, that such obstacles could delay the conference. But he said that the current instability in the Soviet Union would not adversely affect the timetable.

Pankin told Kotz that the Soviet position regarding the Middle East peace process has not changed since the current upheaval in Moscow began with the attempted coup by Soviet hard-liners on Aug. 19. He said the Soviet Union would "certainly" continue cooperating closely with Washington in this matter.

Pankin said that Soviet foreign policy would likely be more complicated than before, with the various republics becoming active in major policy issues. But he pointed out that the major republics share a common outlook on most key foreign policy issues facing the Soviet Union.

He said he expected the leading foreign policy role to continue to be played by the central government in Moscow.

Pankin gave no commitment regarding the restoration of full diplomatic relations with Israel. But he added that he hoped "our relations with Israel will continue to be good, as were my own relations with your ambassador in Prague."

Pankin served as Soviet envoy to Prague before being elevated to foreign minister last week in the wake of President Mikhail Gorbachev's summary ouster of Alexander Bessmertnykh for inadequately opposing the three-day coup.

**ARAFAT DENIES CONGRATULATING
SOVIET HARD-LINERS OVER COUP**

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, Sept. 3 (JTA) -- In what was described as his first published interview since the failed coup in Moscow, Palestine Liberation Organization chief Yasir Arafat denied that the PLO had congratulated Communist hard-liners who attempted to oust Mikhail Gorbachev.

Arafat also said he thought the changes taking place in the Soviet Union would not have much effect on the Middle East peace process.

Arafat made his remarks in an interview given Aug. 24 and published in the current issue of the conservative, Catholic-influenced news weekly *Il Sabato*.

His remarks followed blistering scorn by Israeli leaders for how the Palestinians had, in supporting the coup, once again "backed the wrong horse," as they had during the Persian Gulf War.

'It's All Lies'

Palestinians and Iraqis had been reported to be reveling in the turn of events in Moscow, which had been retreating from its years-long support for the Arab states and clearly softening its stand toward Israel.

But "what happened in Moscow shows that perestroika, despite everything, has been etched deeply in all sectors of the Soviet world and has taken root among the people," Arafat said. "The Soviet people have shown that a return to the past is impossible."

Arafat denied reports that the PLO had sent a message of congratulations to the Communist diehards who tried to overthrow Gorbachev.

"That is absolutely untrue," said Arafat. "It's all lies."

He said it is "possible that there were declarations from some Palestinian personalities. But these were personal interventions that do not represent in any way the official position of the PLO."

"From the first days of the events in Moscow, from Aug. 20, we officially stated that the events going on represented an internal affair of the Soviet Union and that it would be up to the Soviet people to decide their future."

Arafat said the Palestinians had been convinced that the return of Gorbachev was "a guarantee for the maintenance of the Soviet-American accords" aimed at convening a Middle East peace conference.

Arafat remarked that it "is possible, and in fact it is very probable, that this conference will be postponed for some days because of the internal situation in the Soviet Union, but we do not anticipate further significant change."

No Decision Yet On Peace Conference

He said he had sent a letter to Gorbachev on Aug. 24, congratulating him on his return to power, and "this is exactly what I wrote" about probable postponement of the conference.

President Bush said in a news conference Monday that it was possible the conference would be postponed, but not because of events in Moscow. He hinted it was because of recalcitrance by other parties, seemingly in the Palestinian camp.

Arafat said in the interview that the PLO had not yet decided what attitude to take toward a peace conference.

He repeated the PLO's insistence that Israel give up East Jerusalem and said the Vatican could play a mediating role.

"I think that the Vatican could assume a fundamental role in the Middle East peace process," he said. "When I met with the pope, I understood very well the enormous importance John Paul II and the Vatican place on the questions of Jerusalem. For Christians, as for Muslims,

Arabs and Palestinians, Jerusalem is not just any city; it is Jerusalem."

Last month, Arafat sent a letter to the pope vilifying the Israelis for "Judaizing" Jerusalem, usurping it from other peoples. In the letter, he asked for the pope's intervention in the matter, playing up to issues that have impeded the Vatican from establishing ties with the Jewish state.

SOVIET ALIYAH DIPPED IN AUGUST, BUT IMMIGRATION TO THE U.S. ROSE

NEW YORK, Sept. 3 (JTA) -- A total of 8,688 Soviet Jews immigrated to Israel in August, and another 3,269 arrived in the United States under the government's refugee program, according to groups monitoring the flow of emigres.

The August figure for Israel is the second lowest monthly aliyah total this year and continues a decline from the peak of 20,473 in June, according to statistics provided by the Soviet Jewry Research Bureau of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry.

But the bureau also reported that 7,397 more Soviet Jews were granted entry visas to Israel in August, raising expectations that aliyah would soon increase.

Moreover, Soviet Jewish immigration to Israel so far this calendar year totals 105,680, up from the corresponding figure of 82,454 for the first eight months of 1990.

The August figure for Soviet Jews entering the United States was the highest monthly total this calendar year, according to the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, which assists the refugees in coming here.

But it is clear that Soviet Jewish immigration to the United States is still far smaller than was originally anticipated, in part because of slowdowns at local offices of the Soviet visa bureau, OVIR.

Under the U.S. refugee program, up to 40,000 Soviet Jews could have entered the country this fiscal year, which began last Oct. 1. But with only one month left, only 22,412 Soviet Jews have arrived so far.

It is not yet clear how last month's failed coup in Moscow and the ensuing instability have affected Jewish emigration. What is clear is that emigration has not been interrupted.

In a statement Tuesday, Shoshana Cardin, chairman of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, expressed gratification for the "continuation of emigration throughout the period of change in the Soviet Union."

UNIFIL, IRELAND PROTEST AGAINST SLA By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Sept. 3 (JTA) -- Ireland and the United Nations Interim Forces in Lebanon have lodged protests with Israel in response to recent incidents by Israel's allied South Lebanon Army in which, they say, SLA forces "indiscriminately" fired toward positions held by Irish troops with the international force.

In the latest incident, according to a protest Ireland made Saturday, a tank shell was lobbed at the main building housing Irish company headquarters in Barashit village. There were no casualties, but the shelling caused structural damage.

UNIFIL spokesman Timor Goksel said that just within the last week there have been 60 incidents of firings close to Irish positions or patrols in the Barashit area.

He said several Irish positions, along with two armored personnel carriers, were hit and damaged by SLA fire. The fire was part of artillery actions carried out against the Shi'ite fundamentalist organization Hezbollah, as well as against other targets operating north of Israel's so-called security zone.

"Unless the firing ceases immediately, someone is going to get hurt, and that will only serve to make an already bad situation worse," Goksel said.

GERMANY REPORTEDLY HELPING LIBYA BUILD MISSILES THAT CAN HIT ISRAEL By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, Sept. 3 (JTA) -- With assistance from Germany, Libyan leader Moammar Gadhafi is trying to build a factory for the production of ground-to-ground missiles capable of striking Israel, according to an article published Monday in the Milan daily Corriere della Sera.

The missiles would have a range of 1,000 kilometers, or 620 miles. Missiles fired from Libya's eastern border would be capable of striking anywhere in Israel.

The revelations come at a time of ongoing admissions at a trial in Mannheim, Germany, that a German chemicals company knowingly helped Libya build a poison gas plant. Other German firms have been accused of helping Libya manufacture non-conventional weapons.

"Suspicious and rumors about the secret plans of the unpredictable Libyan leader were already circulating in the past few months, but only now have new elements come to light," wrote Guido Olimpio, in an article published without a dateline.

He wrote that at the end of July, customs officers in Hamburg seized a Libyan ship whose cargo was later determined by experts to consist of machinery for ground-to-ground missiles. The machinery came from the Fritz Werner factory in Rheingau.

"Later investigations showed that this firm had substantial business dealings with Libya, naturally carried out behind a smokescreen of tricks and false declarations," he wrote.

Olimpio wrote that Werner signed a contract with Libya at the end of 1990 for "a factory for the construction of pipes for sewers and aqueducts."

According to the Corriere article, "sources in the Libyan opposition" have said the factory, which is located near Tripoli, is a workshop for the production of Al Fatah missiles.

The article quoted German technical staff sent to work in Libya as saying this factory is surrounded by huge security measures, "certainly not very usual for a simple pipe factory."

One technician was quoted as saying the parts used in the factory are high-technology instruments.

Sources at Fritz Werner told Corriere that the firm has long experience in high-tech and missile construction. Other sources, it said, reported that the company furnished parts to increase the range of Iraqi Scud-B missiles.

"What is alarming is that Fritz Werner is not the only (German) company to operate in Libya, despite Bonn's commitment to make its businesses respect the treaty on the sale of missile technology," the Corriere article said.

Other firms are eager for Libyan contracts, it said.

MOTION TO VACATE POLLARD PLEA IS SET FOR HEARING NEXT WEEK

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Sept. 3 (JTA) -- Jonathan Jay Pollard, after losing two appeals of his 1987 life sentence for conspiring to pass U.S. defense information to Israel, will finally get a new day in court next Tuesday.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia will consider a motion by Pollard's lawyer, Theodore Olson, seeking to vacate Pollard's June 1986 plea bargain agreement with the U.S. government.

Pollard's life sentence was issued in 1987 by Chief Judge Aubrey Robinson Jr. of the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. Robinson subsequently rejected two appeals by Pollard: one in February 1988, when he was seeking a reduced sentence, and the other in September 1990, when he sought to withdraw his guilty plea.

Olson, with the Washington firm of Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher, is appealing Robinson's 1990 ruling to a three-judge panel of the appeals court. Sitting on the panel are Judges Ruth Ginsburg, Laurence Silberman and Stephen Williams.

U.S. Jewish groups and prominent Jews and gentiles have signed on to a friend-of-the-court brief sent to the appeals court, including Nobel laureate Elie Wiesel and Rev. Robert Drinan, law professor at Georgetown University.

Others on the brief include the presidents of the three major rabbinical seminaries in America -- the Orthodox Yeshiva University, Conservative Jewish Theological Seminary and Reform Hebrew Union College -- as well as the World Jewish Congress, the Central Conference of American Rabbis and Agudath Israel of America.

The Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles has called for Pollard's sentence to be commuted to the five and a half years he has already served.

But support for Pollard is not unanimous among the organized Jewish world.

The National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, through its Ad Hoc Committee on the Pollard Case, announced in June that it had found no basis for the claim that "factors prejudicial to Mr. Pollard's rights entered into the determination of his sentence."

Not A 'Threat To Jewish Security'

According to the committee's chairman, Phil Baum, "the Pollard case does not constitute a threat to Jewish security in this country that would require us to assign it a greater priority."

Pollard was arrested in November 1985 and pleaded guilty to passing documents to Israel during 1984 as a U.S. Navy intelligence research specialist.

In November 1984, Pollard had met in Paris with Israeli intelligence officers, who provided him with detailed "tasking," specific requests for classified documents and information.

In his brief, Olson argues that the government violated an implicit understanding that U.S. attorneys would not seek a life sentence.

He contends that the government violated that agreement by arguing at the sentencing hearing that Pollard should never again "see the light of day."

U.S. Attorney Jay Stephens argues in the government's brief that it never explicitly asked Robinson to impose a life sentence but asked only for "a substantial period of incarceration and a

monetary fine," in accordance with the terms of the plea agreement.

Pollard "understood that the ultimate judgment was committed to the court's discretion and swore that no promises or representations of any kind had been made with respect to what the sentence of the court would be," Stephens says.

Called 'Venal' And 'Vengeful'

Olson also argues the government, at sentencing, "repeatedly and massively breached" that part of the plea agreement which limited the government to discussing "the facts and circumstances of the offenses committed" by Pollard, and to correcting "any misstatements of fact."

The breach, according to Olson, occurred when assistant U.S. attorneys present at the sentencing hearing called Pollard "vengeful" and "venal," accused him of having "utter contempt for the United States military and intelligence community" and charged that "his loyalty to Israel transcends his loyalty to the United States."

Stephens argues that "the government agreed to limit its allocution in one respect only: its sentence recommendation."

At the sentencing hearing, neither Pollard nor his counsel "understood these comments to be a breach of the agreement." That failure to make a timely objection, according to Stephens, precludes the court from considering the propriety of those comments now.

Olson's brief contends that Pollard's guilty plea was coerced and involuntary because it was linked, or "wired," to a similar plea by Pollard's wife at the time, Anne Henderson Pollard. The two have since been divorced.

Stephens argues that Jonathan Pollard had explicitly told the court that his plea arrangement was voluntary. Since "there are no factors in this case which raise special concern about the voluntariness of (his) plea, he is in effect arguing for a per se ban on wired pleas, a position no court has accepted."

Olson also contends that Jonathan Pollard was denied due process when one of two affidavits submitted by then Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger remained classified.

Stephens cites national security objections to its release.

The public Weinberger declaration stated that he could not "conceive of greater harm to national security" than that done by Pollard and that his punishment "should reflect the perfidy of (his) actions, the magnitude of the treason committed, and the needs of national security."

"Treason, of course, is punishable by death," Olson says in his brief, "and is not an offense that Mr. Pollard committed. But the district court got the message and imposed the most stringent sentence that Mr. Pollard's plea allowed."

The court is expected to take at least a month to issue its decision.

ISRAEL HAS WEST'S MOST CROWDED ROADS

TEL AVIV, Sept. 3 (JTA) -- Israel's roads are the most crowded in the Western world, according to economists at the Bank of Israel, the country's central bank, who cited a comparative study drawing on data from 18 Western nations.

Despite this, the Israeli government allocates less than 1.5 percent of its annual revenue for road construction, compared with an international average of 3.5 percent.

ANTI-SEMITIC TEACHER BANNED FROM CLASSROOMS IN CANADA

By Gil Kezwer

TORONTO, Sept. 3 (JTA) -- Malcolm Ross of Moncton, New Brunswick, an exemplary teacher with 23 years of experience, was permanently barred from the classroom last week by a provincial human rights panel because of anti-Semitic views he has expounded in books about a so-called Jewish conspiracy to govern the world and destroy Christianity.

Proceedings against the 45-year-old Ross, one of Canada's most vocal Holocaust-deniers, were initiated in 1988 when David Attis, a father of one of Ross' students, filed a complaint with the New Brunswick Human Rights Commission saying that Ross' school district condoned his views by employing him.

Yona Attis attended Magnetic Hill Collegiate, where Ross taught.

In response to the complaint, the commission appointed Brian Bruce, a Fredericton, New Brunswick, law professor to investigate the complaint.

Ross' lawyer, Doug Christie, known for defending Holocaust deniers, neo-Nazis and accused ex-Nazis who found refuge in Canada, challenged the commission's jurisdiction to hear the case.

But last year, Canada's Supreme Court dismissed the legal challenge, and Bruce was allowed to proceed.

Yona Attis and two of her classmates were among those to testify against Ross.

While Ross did not teach his views in the classroom, his ideas were well known through his four books, including "Specter of Hate" and "Web of Deceit."

Ross is believed to be the first Canadian teacher to lose his job because of views expressed outside the classroom. Former high school teacher Jim Keegstra of Eckville, Alberta, lost his job after expounding anti-Semitic views to his students.

The New Brunswick Teachers Federation came out in support of Ross' right to freedom of expression.

A 'Poisoned Environment'

But Bruce nevertheless ordered the school board Aug. 29 to immediately suspend Ross without pay for an 18-month "leave of absence" and either find him a non-teaching job or dismiss him.

Bruce issued a gag order forbidding Ross to publicly express his opinions about Jews. Violation of the gag order would result in termination either of Ross' leave or of his job.

Bruce's decision was sharply critical of the school board, saying it had allowed a "poisoned environment" to develop which led to discrimination against Jewish students.

Ironically, the ruling could mean a promotion for Ross to an administrative position with higher pay and more prestige, according to school board Chairman Carl Ross, who is no relation.

Previously, the board had refused to fire or suspend Ross but had ordered him to keep his opinions to himself.

Christie, in a telephone conversation from his office in Victoria, British Columbia, called the ruling unfair, saying his client is "being punished for what he believes to be the truth on a religious subject."

The Canadian Jewish Congress hailed the ruling.

"Teachers must not be perceived by children or parents as racist or hate-filled if they are properly to fulfill their function as a positive influence and role model in the classroom," said CJC spokesman Joseph Wilder.

B'nai Brith Canada has asked the New Brunswick attorney general to press charges against Ross under Canada's anti-hate-mongering law. The law has been used against other Holocaust deniers, including Keegstra and Ernst Zundel.

In 1978 and 1985, Dr. Julius Israeli, a retired chemistry teacher and Orthodox Jew living in New Brunswick, filed complaints against Ross with the local Royal Canadian Mounted Police, asking that Ross be charged under Section 281.2 of the Criminal Code.

Israeli said the attorney general told him in 1978 that the terms "wilful" and "hatred" in the Criminal Code were too nebulous to allow for a strong enough case.

In 1985, following Keegstra's conviction under the same statute, police launched a 13-month investigation of Ross. But the New Brunswick attorney general ultimately decided not to prosecute, saying that Ross' books were not generally available.

Journalists covering the story, however, reported that public libraries were stocked with his books and that they enjoyed healthy circulation.

ROMANIAN LEADER VOWS BREAK WITH PLO, MAKES A RARE VISIT TO THE WEST BANK

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Sept. 3 (JTA) -- Visiting Romanian President Ion Iliescu reiterated Tuesday that his country has broken ties with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Iliescu made a similar statement during a meeting last October with World Jewish Congress leaders in New York, who had expressed concern about the assistance the PLO received from the regime of Nicolae Ceausescu, who was overthrown and executed in December 1989.

On his second day in Israel, Iliescu saw both the Yad Vashem Holocaust memorial museum and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. As such, he became one of the few foreign heads of state to visit the West Bank recently.

Under tight security measures, Iliescu was whisked into the church, where a Romanian-speaking tour guide gave him background on the site and a Greek Orthodox priest presented him with candles.

Asked to comment on the significance of his visit to the administered territories, Iliescu insisted it was inappropriate to "talk politics inside the church."

Outside, Iliescu told reporters that after a day and a half in the country, agreements had already been forged between Romania and Israel.

"We find a very good climate of friendship and bilateral cooperation," he said.

Iliescu ended his sightseeing tour with visits to the Church of the Holy Sepulcher and the Western Wall in Jerusalem's Old City.

Because of Rosh Hashanah, the JTA Daily News Bulletin will not be printed Monday through Wednesday, Sept. 9 to 11. JTA wishes its readers a happy and healthy new year.