

SYRIANS REQUEST U.S. INTERVENTION AS TALKS WITH ISRAEL HIT BIG SNAG**By Cynthia Mann
States News Service**

WASHINGTON, Sept. 17 (JTA) -- The chief Syrian negotiator at the Arab-Israeli peace talks in Washington appealed for American intervention Thursday, after a negotiation session that both sides said failed to progress.

But while Israeli negotiators agreed that the talks had gone off track, after advancing the day before, they refused to acknowledge a deadlock, stressing that ups and downs are inevitable in such a process.

"We are at a down point now," said Itamar Rabinovich, the Israeli chief negotiator. What is needed, he said, is "calm and equanimity," not American intervention.

The snag seemed to be the same one that has dogged the talks from their beginning.

The Syrians have attacked Israel's negotiating posture as inadequate for not spelling out its willingness to make territorial concessions. The Israelis, meanwhile, have wanted to see a clearer configuration of the type of peace Syria envisions.

On Wednesday, the two sides had made progress in drafting a possible joint declaration of principles.

But those discussions apparently steered clear of the controversial issues of land and peace.

Hopes of a rapid agreement were raised last month when Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin indicated his willingness to consider territorial compromise on the strategic Golan Heights.

But he has not spelled out how much he would be prepared to compromise. The Syrian government has continued to insist on return of the whole plateau.

'No Progress Whatsoever'

According to Syria's chief negotiator, Mouwafak Allaf, the talks deadlocked as soon as the issue of the Golan arose Thursday.

"There was no progress whatsoever, and our fear is that the Israeli delegation did not come here with any authority to talk about peace and talk about all the important elements and issues," he said.

"We hope the sponsors, especially the United States, will interfere during this weekend in order to secure the non-interruption of the peace process because of this Israeli attitude."

Rabinovich said the Americans had until now maintained a perfect profile, showing "an enlightened touch."

But while denying the need for outside intervention, he did offer to work over the weekend to get the negotiations back on track, expressing the hope the problems could be resolved by Monday.

He blamed the problems on Syrian insistence on pinpointing "certain formulations," and making further discussion contingent on those formulations.

This, he said, is unacceptable. "Insisting on and demanding capitulation," he said, will not lead to progress.

GORE USING PRO-ISRAEL CREDENTIALS TO 'SELL' CLINTON TO JEWISH VOTERS**By Cynthia Mann
States News Service**

WASHINGTON, Sept. 17 (JTA) -- Sen. Albert Gore (D-Tenn.) is using his sterling credentials in pro-Israel circles to sell the Democratic presidential ticket to the Jewish community and at the same time discredit the Bush presidency.

The vice presidential candidate is a well-known and trusted commodity in the Jewish community. He is seen as a hard-liner on Israel's security and a liberal on social causes, from the environment to civil rights.

In a telephone interview Wednesday with a dozen representatives of the Jewish press, Gore touted Bill Clinton's "unshakable" commitment to a strong U.S.-Israel alliance, saying the Arkansas governor is committed to maintaining Israel's qualitative military edge and financial stability.

He said Clinton has the vision that will preserve America's economic strength to ensure its continued reliability as an ally and help Israel take the risks that the peace process requires.

He also pledged a Clinton-Gore administration would "never kow-tow to the forces of intolerance and bigotry" that have characterized the Republican presidential campaign.

Gore attacked President Bush for viewing Israel as "an occasional ally to be manipulated and placed in awkward positions," forcing it to make "unilateral concessions" during the delicate peace process.

He used some of his strongest language to blast what he charged were Bush's foreign policy blunders in the Middle East.

'So Many Disastrous Mistakes'

The Bush campaign has tried to contrast the president's foreign policy accomplishments with Clinton's inexperience, warning that a novice could jeopardize Israel's security.

But Gore does not buy that line.

"Experience doesn't necessarily breed success," he said. "If George Bush is such a wizard in foreign policy, then how does he explain so many disastrous mistakes? Why did his experience not teach him the futility of building up the military strength of Saddam Hussein?"

"Why, even after that disastrous series of outrageous mistakes and miscalculations, does he even now continue the relationship with Hafez Assad?" asked Gore, referring to the Syrian president.

"George Bush has a great deal to answer for when it comes to experience."

At the same time, the Tennessee Democrat defended Clinton's foreign policy knowledge and judgment, calling him "the most surefooted person on foreign policy I've seen in a long time."

He referred to Clinton's strategies on the crises in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Somalia, which he said had been adopted by the White House.

But it is clear that Gore's foreign policy experience is an asset Clinton wants to maximize. The senator said Clinton had made it clear to him that he would be the first member of the National Security Council.

And he took pains to characterize their

relationship as one "based on partnership and teamwork" that so far has involved a lot of talk about foreign policy.

Gore said he and Clinton would rise to the challenge of selling to Americans the importance of aid to Israel at a time of a shrinking domestic budget.

He blamed the president for blurring the argument for loan guarantees to Israel by "mischaracterizing their budgetary impact," which Gore said was "minuscule."

Remarks On Religion 'An Outrage'

Gore also pledged the Democratic administration would never attack the rights of pro-Israel lobbyists, resurrecting the darkest incident in recent White House-Jewish relations. In September 1991, Bush harshly criticized the pro-Israel community then lobbying for loan guarantees.

Gore also slammed Bush for the militantly religious and divisive strand that ran through the GOP convention in Houston last month and attacked Republican calls for mandated religious observance in the public schools.

"We will not sit on our hands, and smile and applaud politely when someone stands up and calls for a religious war," he said, referring to declarations made at the convention by GOP presidential candidate Patrick Buchanan.

"They want to unleash this poisonous phrase 'religious war.' What are they thinking?" he asked. "They're playing with fire. I think it's an outrage."

Religious freedom "is the foundation of this country, and you don't get any deeper than that," he said.

Gore spent much of the 40-minute interview recounting his early and profound emotional connections to Israel and the Jewish community.

As a Baptist, Gore said he had had a "special" feeling for the Jewish state from the beginning, which only deepened when he traveled there as an adult.

He also cited his father, former Sen. Albert Gore Sr., who authored and "shepherded" through a House Appropriations subcommittee the first foreign aid bill for Israel "at a time when it was not a politically salient" thing to do.

His father was also the Senate sponsor of Jewish Supreme Court Justice Abe Fortas, said Gore, adding that Clinton wants the administration and the judiciary to reflect an "unyielding commitment to strength and diversity."

VATICAN SAYS CLOSER TIES TO ISRAEL WON'T LESSEN CONCERN FOR PALESTINIANS By Malka Rabinowitz

NEW YORK, Sept. 17 (JTA) -- The Vatican has assured Palestinians of its continued concern for their welfare as it moves toward closer ties with Israel.

The assurance was conveyed by Joaquin Navarro-Valls, director of the Vatican press office, in a recent issue of L'Osservatore Romano, according to Rabbi Leon Klenicki, director of interfaith affairs at the Anti-Defamation League.

It followed expressions of concern by Moslem and Christian Arab clerics in Jerusalem in the wake of a July 29 decision in Rome to move toward normalization of relations between the Vatican and Israel.

The concern was conveyed in a letter to Pope John Paul II signed by Latin Patriarch Michel Sabbah, Grand Mufti Ibrahim Shaaban,

Melkite Catholic Patriarch Vicar Lutfi Laham and Anglican Bishop Samir Kafity, according to a church press service in Geneva.

Laham was quoted as telling the Swiss Catholic news agency APIC that the Jerusalem clerics were not objecting to the move toward diplomatic ties with Israel as such. They only wanted to be reassured there would be no deterioration in relations with the Palestinians.

"For many years, the Vatican has taken very clear positions on the cause of the Palestinian Arabs and on Jerusalem," Laham said, according to the Ecumenical Press Service of the Geneva-based World Council of Churches.

Laham said he was pleased Vatican representatives had briefed churches in Jerusalem before announcing the formation of a bilateral study commission with Israel.

Some of the signatories are members of a Moslem-Christian committee formed to closely follow the discussions between Israel and the Vatican, he said.

While expressing concern over the closer ties between the two states, Laham was optimistic about the future of Middle East peace negotiations.

"We are in favor of anything that can help the rapprochement between peoples," he said.

(Contributing to this report was JTA correspondent Tamar Levy in Geneva.)

LAST JEWS EVACUATED FROM SARAJEVO, ENDING 500 YEARS OF JEWISH PRESENCE

NEW YORK, Sept. 17 (JTA) -- The last 60 Jews in Sarajevo were evacuated from the war-stricken city this week and have arrived in Split, Croatia, the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee reported here.

The head of the Jewish community in Sarajevo, Ivica Ceresnjes, and his two deputies, were among the evacuees.

The departure of the convoy Wednesday brought to an end, at least temporarily, 500 years of continuous Jewish presence in the city.

The evacuation marks the final chapter in a complex air and overland operation that began in April, a JDC spokesman said. He said that with the onset of winter, emergency measures would be taken to aid the evacuees.

"We shall continue to look after these Jewish refugees in their temporary shelters in Split," said JDC Executive Vice President Michael Schneider.

He said that those who opt to go to Israel will be referred to the proper immigration agencies.

TOLERANCE EXHIBIT FEATURED AT EXPO '92 By Michel Di Paz

PARIS (JTA) -- The Simon Wiesenthal Center sponsored a "Day for Tolerance" last week at Expo '92 in Seville, Spain.

In cooperation with the Pavilion of the European Communities, Sept. 10 was declared "A Day for Tolerance -- The Holocaust as a Warning" at the World's Fair in Seville.

Shimon Samuels, director of the Wiesenthal Center's European office, opened its 40-panel Holocaust exhibit, "The Courage to Remember," and urged opinion leaders "to recall what may happen when, in socioeconomic crisis, democracies do not defend themselves against extremists bent upon their destruction."

ISRAELI MARKETS REACT CALMLY TO ECONOMIC TUMULT IN EUROPE

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Sept. 17 (JTA) -- Israeli financial markets are remaining calm despite the currency turmoil in Europe.

The Israeli shekel enjoyed stability Thursday amid the monetary crisis that shook the European market when Britain dropped out of the European Monetary System. Bank of Israel Governor Jacob Frenkel predicted that the stability of Israel's currency would continue.

The calm in the local market was attributed to the shekel's fluctuation vis-a-vis a basket of currencies. Currency changes within the international arena may impact on each other but do not necessarily affect the balance between the basket and the shekel.

The Tel Aviv Stock Exchange reacted calmly to the dramatic changes in the European markets with a moderate upward trend. Dollar-linked bonds rose by 1 percent Thursday.

But the crisis had an impact on Israeli exporters to Britain, Israel's second-largest trading partner, who may have suffered losses of up to 15 percent in recent weeks because of the devaluation of the pound. Textile exporters are believed to have been particularly affected.

The authoritative economic analyst of the daily Yediot Achronot, Dov Genihovsky, believes the stability of Israel's shekel amid sharp currency movements elsewhere may be no reason for rejoicing.

"A lucky country?" he asked rhetorically Thursday. "Not necessarily," he wrote. "The bottom line is that this was yet another proof of our detachment from the world economy and our isolation from the world, behind walls of controls, limitations and preferences."

ISRAEL INKS ACCORD WITH EFTA

By Tamar Levy

GENEVA, Sept. 17 (JTA) -- Israel this week signed a free-trade agreement with the nations of the European Free Trade Association.

The accord opens up reciprocal trade arrangements with Austria, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland, similar to those now enjoyed with the United States and the European Community.

The agreement was signed here Thursday by Israeli Minister of Commerce and Industry Micha Harish and Norwegian Minister of Trade and Shipping Bjorn Tore Godal in his capacity as chairman of the council of EFTA.

The accord is expected to be implemented in January after ratification by Israel and EFTA member countries.

Negotiations on the agreement opened in Geneva in June 1991. It was initialed two months ago after 10 rounds of talks.

INFLATION REMAINS UNDER 1 PERCENT

TEL AVIV, Sept. 15 (JTA) -- Israel's cost-of-living index rose by 0.8 percent during August, bringing the annual inflationary rate since the beginning of the year to 5.6 percent, the Central Bureau of Statistics announced Tuesday.

The August figure continues a trend in which inflation has remained below 1 percent per month, giving the Israeli government hope of fulfilling a longtime dream: reducing annual inflation to a one-digit figure.

MEMBER OF LITHUANIAN KILLING UNIT DEPORTED TO VILNIUS UNDER NEW ACCORD

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Sept. 17 (JTA) -- A former resident of Florida who was a member of a Lithuanian killing unit during World War II was deported Tuesday to Lithuania.

The expulsion of Antanas Mineikis was carried out in accordance with a deportation order issued in August against the former resident of Gulfport, near St. Petersburg. His U.S. citizenship had been revoked in January by the U.S. District Court in Tampa.

He arrived Wednesday in Vilnius, the Lithuanian capital, the U.S. Justice Department said.

The action marks the first time that a person stripped of U.S. citizenship for concealing Nazi-related activities has been deported to independent Lithuania.

In early August, the Justice Department signed an agreement with the Lithuanian government providing for mutual cooperation in Nazi cases. This is the first law-enforcement agreement signed between the newly independent Baltic state and the United States since World War II.

The agreement provides for cooperation in uncovering evidence on people involved in war crimes, said Victor Nakas, press officer of the Lithuanian Embassy in Washington.

Mineikis, 74, a retired motel owner, admitted taking part in Nazi-sponsored acts of persecution. In a sworn statement, he confessed to involvement in such acts while a member of the 12th Lithuanian Auxiliary Police Service Battalion.

He admitted that on "about six" occasions, he had been "ordered to drive a truck to where the people were and transport them to the place where they were shot." He said he remained at the killing sites to observe some of the murders.

ADL Appeals To Landsbergis

The Lithuanian Auxiliary Police were armed battalions deployed by the Nazis in killing operations in Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine and Poland, mostly from 1941 to 1942.

It remains unclear whether Mineikis will be tried in Lithuania for his wartime activities.

"If the evidence is there, there will be a criminal trial," said Nakas of the embassy.

Lithuanian Ambassador Stasys Lozoraitis told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency: "We are sending all the documents we have received from the Office of Special Investigations of the Justice Department, and the procurator general will start immediately proceedings to establish his culpability."

He emphasized that Lithuania has no statute of limitations on genocide. "Therefore from that point of view, there are no dangers that this thing will be stopped," he said.

He then added, "I would like to point out that we absolutely want to cooperate in these cases, because our laws have expressed a desire of the Lithuanian people that all those who are guilty be punished."

The Anti-Defamation League on Thursday sent a letter to Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis urging him to "take whatever measures are necessary" to ensure that Mineikis is brought to justice.

"As one who has survived the Holocaust in your capital city of Vilnius, this has particular personal interest for me," wrote Abraham Foxman, ADL's national director.

AUSTRALIAN JUDGE ACCEPTS SKETCHES AS EVIDENCE AGAINST ALLEGED NAZI

By Jeremy Jones

SYDNEY, Australia, Sept. 17 (JTA) -- A South Australian magistrate has accepted as evidence drawings by an artist who says he witnessed the atrocities of Heinrich Wagner, who is accused of murdering 124 people in Nazi-occupied Ukraine during World War II.

Nikolay Danilovich Velikiy, the artist, made a series of watercolor and black-and-white sketches allegedly after he witnessed one of Wagner's murders.

Velikiy, who identified Wagner in the Adelaide court, claimed he saw Wagner chase a man running from German gendarmes and Ukrainian police, heard the fatal shot and later saw the victim's body.

The prosecution claims the victim depicted in the sketches was a Ukrainian railway worker, Ivan Vasilievich Rudik, whose wife testified in tears about her husband's execution at the committal hearing for Wagner, an ethnic German who lived in Ukraine.

In Australia, trials of serious crimes go through a two-stage process, the first of which is the committal hearing, held before a justice, often a magistrate, but no jury.

The purpose of the committal hearing is to determine whether or not there is sufficient evidence to put before a jury the charges alleged.

Velikiy claimed he was one of a number of people forced to work in a labor gang near the village of Ustinovka in 1943 and had made his sketches to show "the exact moment" of incidents involving the alleged killer.

Other witnesses who have given evidence against Wagner during the committal hearing include a man who served eight years in a Soviet prison for involvement in the crimes of which Wagner is accused.

Former Wife Among Witnesses

This witness claims he saw Wagner throw a child in the air and fire during the mass murder of children of Jewish fathers and non-Jewish mothers near the village of Izraylovka in Nazi-occupied Ukraine.

Other witnesses include villagers who testified that Wagner wore a police uniform in 1942 and 1943; Wagner's former wife, who claimed he deserted her when she was four months pregnant, at the time German army withdrew; and two witnesses who testified they saw the blood-splattered mass grave of the Jews of Ustinovka.

The committal hearing, likely to be the last under Australia's 1988 war crimes legislation, has experienced a number of delays because of translation difficulties and complications in taking testimony in Ukraine.

Australia's prosecution of alleged Nazi war criminals has been grinding to a halt. Last month, the government confirmed that a fourth case against an alleged Nazi criminal would not be tried because funding would not be available for crucial final investigations.

The trial of Wagner has been marked by the volume of evidence given by individuals who have had contact with him over the past half-century and agreement by the defense to allow limited evidence to be given via a satellite link with historian Christopher Browning from a studio in Seattle.

Browning, who teaches at Pacific Lutheran

University in Tacoma, Wash., wrote a book about mass Nazi killings in Poland, "Ordinary Men: Reserve Police Battalion 101 and the Final Solution in Poland" (HarperCollins, New York, 1992).

He is the editor and primary author of one volume of a multivolume history of the Holocaust being prepared for the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial and Museum in Jerusalem.

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

CANADIAN COURT REJECTS APPEAL OF EX-NAZI'S DENATURALIZATION
 By Gil Kezwer

TORONTO, Sept 17 (JTA) -- Jewish organizations here are pleased with last week's decision by Canada's Supreme Court to reject a bid by convicted Dutch Nazi war criminal Jacob Luitjens to appeal a denaturalization order.

The Sept. 10 ruling removes the last hurdle before a deportation hearing, which will begin Oct. 13 in Vancouver.

The court did not explain its ruling, but revocation of citizenship is not usually appealable under Canadian law.

Luitjens, a 73-year-old retired University of British Columbia botany instructor, was stripped of his Canadian citizenship last November by a Cabinet order after a federal court ruled in October that he had knowingly concealed his past Nazi ties when he immigrated to Canada in 1961 and again when he applied for citizenship 10 years later.

That ruling set in motion efforts to send Luitjens back to the Netherlands, where he was tried in absentia in 1948, convicted of "aiding and abetting the enemy in time of war" and sentenced to life imprisonment.

Luitjens was a former member of the Dutch Nazi party and the Landwacht, a paramilitary unit which assisted the Gestapo in rounding up Jews and resistance fighters in occupied Holland.

"Given the long duration of this case (since 1988) and its importance in terms of bringing Nazi war criminals resident in Canada to justice, we trust the deportation process will continue with all due speed," stated Milton Harris, chairman of the Canadian Jewish Congress War Crimes Committee.

"Our position is that the government should be exploring both the deportation and extradition options, whichever route is quicker," explained Paul Marcus, who is national director of the Institute for International Affairs for B'nai B'rith Canada.

"This removes another roadblock from an already cumbersome and frustrating process," he said.

Luitjens could be the first person deported under the new extradition treaty between Canada and the Netherlands, which went into effect last December.

In 1981, the Dutch government requested that Luitjens be returned to Holland, but Canadian Justice Department officials ruled that the Canada-Netherlands extradition treaty of that time did not cover the crime of collaboration.

To date, Canada has successfully completed only one war crimes case.

In 1983, Albert Helmut Rauca of Toronto was extradited to West Germany to stand trial for the murder of 11,585 Jews in the ghetto of Kaunas (Kovno), Lithuania. Rauca died before the case could be heard.