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**PLO CONFIRMS TALKS WITH ISRAEL,  
BUT RABIN DENIES REPORT IS TRUE**  
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, July 12 (JTA) -- Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has denied a newspaper report that Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization have held secret talks, but both Palestinian and Israeli sources have confirmed the report.

The Israeli newspaper Ha'aretz on Monday quoted a "senior political source" as saying that talks between Israeli and PLO officials from Tunis have been held during the past few weeks, through messengers in both Israel and an Arab country, with the full knowledge and support of Rabin and PLO leader Yasir Arafat.

The American administration was also involved in the talks, the source told Ha'aretz.

If true, that would be a change in policy for the United States, which severed a 17-month dialogue with the PLO in June 1990.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Mike McCurry said Monday that he was aware of reports about Israeli meetings with PLO officials. But he referred reporters to "the parties who were cited in those news reports."

"As you know, we don't have discussions directly with the PLO," he added.

In Tunis, meanwhile, Arafat told the Reuters news agency Monday that senior PLO officials had met with Israeli diplomats in Washington twice during the last round of Middle East peace talks.

But Arafat said the talks failed in their attempt to break the stalemate in the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

**Peres Also Denies Report**

The source quoted by Ha'aretz did not mention who took part in the negotiations but said that they were being held at a level "high enough to make decisions."

The purpose of the talks, said the source, was to break the deadlock in the bilateral negotiations.

"If these contacts bear results," said the source, "this will be a bombshell. The public will be amazed when things get clearer."

Gad Ben-Ari, Rabin's spokesman, denied the report Monday, stressing that the peace negotiations were being held only within the framework of the rules laid down at the October 1991 peace conference in Madrid, which launched the current negotiations.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, who has generally been more open than Rabin about the possibility of future talks with the PLO, also denied the newspaper report.

But Arafat's political adviser, Nabil Sha'ath, a member of the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks, confirmed the report in a news conference he convened Monday in Cairo.

And here in Israel, Deputy Housing Minister Ran Cohen of the dovish Meretz bloc also said Monday that the report was correct and had been corroborated by "a Palestinian source" with whom he had been in contact.

Cohen said a "senior PLO source" told him the talks were being held in a "positive and constructive atmosphere," although no substantive results had been achieved so far.

**GROUP QUILTS CONFERENCE OF PRESIDENTS  
IN PROTEST OVER A DIPLOMATIC RECEPTION**  
By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, July 12 (JTA) -- An advocacy group for Jews in the former Soviet Union has quit the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, in a rare protest against the umbrella group.

At issue is a reception co-sponsored by the conference last week for diplomats from the Asian republics of the former Soviet Union.

The Union of Councils, formerly known as the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews, argued that three of the republics -- Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan -- perpetrate human rights abuses and should not be seen as having "friendly relations" with the American Jewish community.

Israel's permanent representative to the United Nations, Ambassador Gad Yaa'cobi, sponsored the reception as well.

In a resignation letter sent before the reception, the Union of Councils raised the issue of whether the diplomacy conducted by the American Jewish community should be motivated by Israel's foreign policy concerns or by a broader, and less realpolitik, human rights agenda.

The resignation also highlights the difficulties faced by an organization such as the Union of Councils, which prides itself on its maverick, grass-roots status and yet at the same time wants to work within the communal umbrella represented by the Conference of Presidents.

**Complained It Was Not Consulted**

In the resignation letter, signed by Pamela Cohen, national president of the Union of Councils, and Micah Naftalin, its national director, the organization complained that it was not consulted on the reception, which falls directly within its bailiwick.

Instead, the National Conference on Soviet Jewry -- itself an umbrella agency, representing many of the Conference of Presidents' members on Soviet Jewry issues -- joined the reception as a co-sponsor.

The focus of the evening was more symbolic than substantive. Several diplomats were hampered in getting to know the Jewish community by their lack of English-language skills.

"We're here to recognize change, change for the better" Lester Pollack, chairman of the Conference of Presidents, told the diplomats and Jewish organizational officials at the July 7 gathering.

Yaa'cobi pointed out that Israel now has formal relations with all eight countries present. Turkmenistan, with which Israel hopes to establish ties, was invited but did not send a representative.

In fact, several of the former Soviet republics have closer ties with Israel than with each other, given the several conflicts occurring in the former Soviet Union.

"You can be a bridge between Israel and the Moslem world," Yaa'cobi told the diplomats.

Present were representatives from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Georgia and Russia. Most

of these states share borders with Iran or Afghanistan.

Represented too, though not part of the former Soviet Union, were neighboring Turkey and the United States.

For its part, the Conference of Presidents maintained that the reception should not be seen as a blanket endorsement of the policies of the invited countries.

In recognition of the human rights concerns, Pollack emphasized in his introductory remarks "concern for the safety of people," and that "this is a time of change that is not complete."

Similarly, Mark Levin, executive director of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry, told the diplomats, "We look forward to working with you as you make progress in fulfilling the human rights documents that almost all of you have signed in the past few years."

But the Union of Councils was not assuaged by these diplomatically worded statements.

"They didn't really take them on their human rights record," said Naftalin. The three most controversial republics "are terrible countries, and there's no indication of that in what they said."

#### An Ambivalent Relationship

The failure of the Conference of Presidents to take a stronger stand called into question the conference's efforts to smooth over the conflict with the Union of Councils, according to Naftalin.

The two groups have been in discussions since before the reception to resolve the conflict. But Naftalin was not optimistic about reaching an accord.

By contrast, Pollack said he was "optimistic and encouraged" about prospects of getting the Union of Councils back into the Conference of Presidents.

"We are continuing to have discussions to make sure we put this episode behind us," he said.

"Our ultimate goal is for them not to implement their withdrawal."

In its resignation letter, the Union of Councils stated that "we have no quarrel with the State of Israel pursuing its national interests, including with such regimes as Karimov's," referring to President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan.

But Jewish organizations, argued the Union of Councils, should have higher standards of friendship.

The Uzbeki government has in effect told the Jews there that they can practice their religion and even emigrate to Israel, as long as they stay out of politics. Naftalin explained in an interview with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

"For Israel, that's acceptable," said Naftalin. "But the American Jewish community doesn't have to buy into it."

At the Conference of Presidents, Executive Vice Chairman Malcolm Hoenlein argued that events such as the reception would open doors for the conference when it wishes to raise an issue with the republics.

In recent years American Jewish organizations have played a key role in helping Israel establish ties with countries around the world.

Prior to the establishment of relations between Israel and China, for instance, several Jewish organizations, prominent among them the American Jewish Committee and the World Jewish Congress, sent delegations to China.

The withdrawal of the Union of Councils

from the Conference of Presidents concludes a relationship that has always been ambivalent.

As one source close to the Union of Councils observed, the organization valued its membership enough to place its affiliation on its letterhead, as few other members of the conference do.

On the other hand, the Union of Councils for decades charged inaction regarding Soviet Jewry on the part of the "Jewish establishment," including the National Conference.

#### **SOVIET JEWRY GROUPS FIND AGREEMENT ON DISMAL CONDITIONS IN UZBEKISTAN**

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, July 12 (JTA) -- The Union of Councils and the National Conference on Soviet Jewry do not always see eye to eye on the situation in the former Soviet Union.

That was made clear last week when the Union of Councils protested a diplomatic reception co-sponsored by the National Conference.

But when it comes to the human rights situation in the central republic of Uzbekistan, one of the reception's invitees, they both agree: It's downright dismal.

A report on the former Soviet republic prepared last month by the National Conference describes the "unpredictable and often ominous circumstances" under which both Jews and non-Jews in the republic find themselves.

Ruling the country is President Islam Karimov, who heads the People's Democratic Party of Uzbekistan, which, according to the report, emerged out of the old Communist Party.

This year, his government has shut down the country's only independent newspaper, denied entry to a human rights delegation and refused to sign a human rights accord at a conference of the Commonwealth of Independent States in Minsk.

These and other actions, according to the NCSJ report, "severely cloud the credibility of Karimov's devotion to protect democracy and human rights."

While Jewish cultural and religious activities have not been threatened, Jews who wish to emigrate in the face of decreasing economic prospects and increasing conflict face a perilous path.

They are barred from taking foreign currency out with them when they leave the country.

In addition, Jews in the process of seeking visas and leaving the country have been robbed and beaten.

These attacks are motivated less by anti-Semitism than by the belief "that people who are leaving the country are more likely to have stockpiled valuables and cash," according to the National Conference.

Nonetheless, "brutal physical attacks" in these robberies have killed at least one Jew.

The NCSJ denied that any endorsement of the Uzbeki regime can be construed from its being invited to the reception last week.

But in any case, a simple policy of ostracism against Uzbekistan may not necessarily be the wisest, according to the NCSJ report.

In a classic example of the dilemmas facing those working for Jews in the former Soviet Union, waiting in the wings to wrest power from Karimov are two groups likely to be less hospitable to Jewish interests.

The NCSJ report identified "nationalist and fundamentalist parties that advocate the purging of 'all foreign' influence from Uzbekistan."

# OUTSPOKEN JUSTICE EMPLOYEE FIRED FOR QUESTIONING LAWMAKER'S LOYALTY By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, July 12 (JTA) -- An attorney who has served in Israel's Justice Ministry for 33 years and headed its civil division for the past 22 has been fired after questioning a Knesset member's loyalty to the state.

Plia Albek, one of the ministry's most senior attorneys, has raised an uproar on a number of past occasions by issuing legal opinions and statements seen by many as serving the political right.

Until now, though, she had always managed to survive the controversy.

The latest uproar was caused when she issued a legal opinion on a bill proposed by Knesset member Chaim Oron of the left-wing Meretz bloc that called on the government to grant equal compensation to Arab and Jewish victims of terrorist attacks. Currently, only Jewish victims are entitled to such compensation.

Albek wrote: "One receives the message from Oron's bill that the State of Israel is not endeared to him and that he does not understand that as a member of Knesset he has the duty of being loyal to the State of Israel."

The decision to remove Albek from her post was made jointly by Justice Minister David Libai, Attorney General Yosef Harish and the director-general of the Justice Ministry, Haim Klugman.

Libai also told Albek that she would face charges in civil service court regarding the issue.

Albek, 55, is considered an expert on real estate law. Many of the settlements in the territories were made possible by a legal formula devised by Albek that legalized the acquisition of land without actually confiscating it from Arab owners.

For this position and others, she was often accused by the political left of using her position at the Justice Ministry to serve Jewish settlers in the territories.

## Intensive Pressure By Ministers

Albek denied the charges, saying she had worked strictly according to the law.

Albek angered critics with her various rulings and statements. In one controversial case, she ruled that an Arab who died in the custody of the Shin Bet security agency should be regarded as an absentee and that therefore compensation for his death must be given to the state and not to his widow.

She also ruled that a Palestinian ordered by soldiers to remove a Palestine Liberation Organization flag from an electricity pole -- his arms were amputated after being electrocuted -- did not deserve compensation for losing his ability to continue his job selling falafel since he could still use his prosthetic arms.

The decision to remove Albek followed intensive pressure by ministers and Knesset members in reaction to her latest statement.

Libai met with Albek and asked her to clarify her statement, but she refused to retract the legal opinion.

Albek claimed that her legal opinion was written two weeks ago and that its contents were known to her superiors.

She claimed her opinion was taken out of context as part of an ongoing campaign designed to remove her from office. She was to be moved to another unspecified position, but it was not clear if she would remain with the ministry.

# VIETNAM, ISRAEL SIGN MEMORANDUM TO ESTABLISH DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, July 12 (JTA) -- Vietnam and Israel signed a memorandum of understanding this week to establish diplomatic relations.

The agreement was signed Monday in Jerusalem by Nguyen Dy Nien, Vietnam's visiting deputy foreign minister, and his Israeli counterpart, Yossi Beilin. It was described here as a significant step for Israel in building up its relations with the Far East.

Beilin said the agreement represents "a new chapter in Israeli foreign policy."

For the past year, the two countries have exchanged trade delegations and engaged in other low-level diplomatic activities. A few Israeli technical experts already work in Vietnam on a semi-official basis and Vietnamese students study in Israel.

Speaking during the signing ceremony, Nguyen said his country is interested in Israeli expertise to help restore an economy destroyed by 30 years of war.

He also said Vietnam believes that friendship with Israel will help achieve reconciliation with the United States.

Beilin noted that Vietnam is a "very important country in Southeast Asia" with a population of 70 million and said Israel wants to play a part in the development of Southeast Asian countries.

Nguyen stressed Vietnam will continue to maintain its traditionally close relations with the Arab world, but does not think this will be affected by the new friendship with Israel.

# STRIKE KEEPS ISRAELIS GUESSING WHICH SERVICES WILL BE HIT NEXT By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, July 12 (JTA) -- Israelis were left guessing this week which workers would join a strike by government employees, as work stoppages disrupted operations at Ben-Gurion Airport and radio programs among other services.

The strike by some 60,000 government workers, seeking higher wages, entered its fourth business day Monday.

The various strike committees have started a new policy of announcing work stoppages without prior warning, making it impossible for the Finance Ministry to seek back-to-work court orders in advance.

In fact, it was only when Israelis turned on their radios Monday morning did they learn that Ben-Gurion International Airport had been partially shut down from midnight to 1:30 a.m. the previous night.

Planes arriving were able to land, but no planes departed.

Those listening to Israel Radio were also surprised Monday to hear, after the hourly news bulletin, a high-pitched whistle. Switching to the rival army radio station, listeners learned that workers for the Israel Broadcasting Authority were on strike, too, and that the hourly news updates would be the only broadcasts aired.

On the brighter side, Israel Railroads, which had been on strike Sunday, was operating again Monday, apart from the main Tel Aviv to Haifa line, which was shut down for roadbed and track maintenance work.

Israelis were guessing what would be struck Tuesday. Rumors said universities were next.

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES:**

**CHILDREN OF PROMINENT NAZI OFFICERS FIND IT DIFFICULT TO RECONCILE PAST**

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) -- The children of former Nazi leaders lead lives that are in many cases still marked by the crimes and memories of their infamous fathers, according to an article in an Italian magazine that traced several such children.

Some of them have tried to atone for the sins of their fathers, while others have tried to forget. Some have found themselves attracted to Judaism and the Jewish culture their fathers sought to destroy, while others have tried to disassociate themselves from the past.

All, according to the article in *Gente* magazine, grew up with the paradox of trying to reconcile memories of loving parents with the knowledge of their overwhelming crimes.

One son, Martin Bormann Jr., now 63, told *Gente* he turned to religion. During the war, he was an enthusiastic member of Hitler Youth, but lived protected and under a false name in a peasant village in Austria.

There he read of the war's end in a local newspaper.

"I could see the photos of the liberation and of the concentration camps. It was as if the world around me crashed down on my head," Bormann said.

This sudden knowledge set off a profound personal crisis, which led him to Catholicism. In 1947, he converted and began studying for the priesthood. He eventually became a missionary in Zaire, where in the 1960s he and other missionaries were captured and tortured by rebels.

He was rescued and returned to Germany in 1967, but the experience had turned him from the priesthood.

Bormann married and taught religion.

"It was the only way I had to contribute to educate young Germans to understand and overcome the past, a past in which my father had formed a tragic part," he said. "Together with my students, I always analyzed the texts of Nazi propaganda.

"I helped them identify the linguistic subtleties which for years had tricked young Germans, manipulating their minds. I wanted to 'vaccinate' my students, to put them on their guard, so that they would not fall into traps the way I did," he said.

**Hess' Son Still Blames Jews**

Wolf Hess, the 55-year-old son of Hitler's deputy, Rudolf Hess, works as an architect in Munich and has remained proud of his father and his father's memory.

Rudolf Hess parachuted into England in 1941 in what he said was an attempt to negotiate peace with Winston Churchill. He was convicted of war crimes by the British and remained in prison until his suicide death in 1987.

Wolf Hess refuses to believe his father killed himself.

"He did not commit suicide," he told *Gente*. "He was killed by the Allies because, despite his age, he was a disturbing witness whose mouth had to be closed forever."

Hess remains something of an apologist for the Nazi regime.

"I have come to the belief that if I had been 20 years old in 1920, I would have acted exactly like my father," he told *Gente*.

"Concentration camps were not invented by Germany. During the Second World War the Americans, for example, closed into camps all the citizens of Japanese origin, even if they had been residents for decades.

"It was a form of defense against a potential enemy. And the same way we Germans had to defend ourselves against the Communists dominated by the Jews," Hess said.

Two of the people interviewed by the magazine have developed an interest in Judaism.

One is Thomas Heydrich, 62, nephew of Reinhardt Heydrich, one of the architects of the "Final Solution," who was assassinated in Prague in 1942.

Only at the age of 16, he told *Gente*, did he realize what his uncle had been a part of in his career.

**Nazi's Son Became A Rabbi**

"It was a terrible, shocking experience, impossible to describe in words," he said. "Someone, a person who carried my own name and who had my own blood, had devised and committed terrible atrocities.

"My uncle transformed himself before my eyes into a devil with a human face," Heydrich said. "And all at once I felt responsible for his actions, a feeling which accompanied me for 20 years of my life. In the end, I found the way to liberate me from these terrible ghosts: I became an actor -- the theater was my refuge," he said.

But ultimately he found this a false refuge.

"I left the theater, quit acting," he said. "I decided instead to consecrate my life to the protection of and to the popularization of Jewish literature, that is, to the culture that Nazism had wanted to eliminate from the face of the Earth."

"Thus," he told *Gente*, "little by little, I have been able to regain faith in myself. Today, I am no longer ashamed of my name.

"I intend to act in my way so that the past does not return," he added.

Wolfgang Schmidt, son of SS officer Edmund Schmidt, who survived the war, went even further in his reaction against the deeds of his father.

Schmidt, born in 1940, converted to Judaism and became a rabbi, the magazine said. Today he is known as Aharon Shear-Yashuv and teaches at Tel Aviv University.

"I began my reflections on 'the Jewish question' when I was 14 or 15," he told *Gente*. "I understood quickly that anti-Semitism had been the basis of all the Nazi ideology and actions.

"I arrived at this conclusion thanks to my school -- certainly not from my family, seeing that this was a taboo subject," he said. "My father remained faithful to his principles until his death in 1986."

Shear-Yashuv said he first decided to become a Protestant minister, but his main interest was in Judaism and in the Jewish people.

So he enrolled in Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati in 1967 in a doctoral program. With this, he made a clean cut between his life and his origins.

"It was a real catastrophe for my father," he told *Gente*.

"Even more so two years later, in 1969, when I decided to convert to Judaism and move to Jerusalem. I never saw my father again.

"I took my own course, independent of the actions of my father," said Shear-Yashuv.

"My conversion was the fruit of a long theological and spiritual reflection," he said.