

## **PLO LEADERSHIP SEEN IN DISARRAY AMID CALLS FOR ARAFAT'S OUSTER**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 24 (JTA) -- With the peace talks scheduled to reconvene in Washington next week, there are numerous indications that the Palestine Liberation Organization's top leadership is in disarray.

Two top PLO officials have resigned their posts this month, and there have been numerous calls from the organization's leadership for Yasir Arafat to resign as chairman or share his decision-making powers.

A report of the latest call for Arafat's ouster was broadcast Monday on Radio Monte Carlo, a usually reliable station specializing in Arab affairs.

According to the report, Faisal Husseini, the chief Palestinian negotiator for the peace talks, has challenged Arafat's leadership and called for a new organizing body to prevent the downfall of the PLO. Husseini reportedly made the statement earlier this week in the West Bank town of Hebron.

But senior members of the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks denied the report Tuesday.

Husseini is presently out of the country, but Saeb Erekat, his close associate and a delegate to the peace talks himself, said it was ridiculous to attribute such a statement to Husseini.

While that report has been denied, recent events give credence to reports that the PLO leadership is deeply split.

Two leading members of the PLO executive committee -- Mahmoud Darwish, a poet and close adviser to Arafat, and Shafik al-Hout, the PLO's longtime representative in Lebanon -- have resigned in protest over what they perceive as Arafat's "moderate" policy toward Israel.

Lt. Col. Munir Maqdash, commander in Lebanon of a military branch of the PLO's mainstream Fatah movement, said Monday that Arafat should step down. Maqdash reportedly was responding to the grievances of his fighters, who have been disarmed and remain unpaid.

And on Tuesday, Khaled al-Hassan, one of Fatah's founders, called on Arafat to share his broad powers and form a collective PLO command.

### **A Serious Financial Crisis**

There are a number of reasons for the discontent within the top PLO leadership.

First, there is Arafat's leadership style, which has been seen as dictatorial. Hassan has not been alone in seeking Arafat to share his power.

Another cause of the rift is the deep financial trouble facing the PLO. The Persian Gulf states cut off their aid to the PLO in 1991 because of Palestinian support for Iraq during the Gulf war.

The PLO has had to adopt strict austerity measures to stave off bankruptcy. The measures have affected refugees, PLO fighters and the families of Palestinians killed in fighting, who in the past received compensation.

Salaries of top PLO officials have not been paid since June, and newspapers in the adminis-

tered territories have been forced to suspend operations.

To head off financial collapse, the PLO reportedly has begun selling its real estate holdings throughout the world.

A third reason for the internal discord is a PLO-drafted proposal to reach a settlement with Israel in the peace talks.

The proposal -- which calls for Israel to withdraw first from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho while the rest of the territories remain under interim Palestinian self-government -- is viewed by many as making far too many concessions to Israel.

Three top Palestinian negotiators -- Husseini, Erekat and Hanan Ashrawi -- resigned earlier this month over the proposal.

They subsequently were made members of the PLO steering committee overseeing the peace talks amid promises that they would be consulted before any new initiatives were taken with Israel.

Despite the challenges to his leadership, Arafat reportedly maintains a comfortable majority of supporters on the PLO executive committee. But in order to shore up his support in the Arab world generally, Arafat went to Amman on Monday to pay a call on King Hussein.

Jordanian leaders reportedly share the Palestinians' ire over not being consulted during the drafting of the PLO peace proposal.

PLO spokesman Yasir Abed-Rabbo announced meanwhile that the executive committee will meet with Palestinian negotiators in Tunis at the end of the week to discuss the internal differences.

## **ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS ALIKE EXPECT PROGRESS IN PEACE TALKS**

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Aug. 24 (JTA) -- As the Middle East parties prepare to return here for the next round of bilateral peace talks, optimistic statements coming from both Israeli and Palestinian officials are providing some hope for imminent progress.

Since the previous round of negotiations adjourned here in early July, much has happened in the Middle East, including upheaval among Palestinian delegates to the talks and fallout from fighting in southern Lebanon between Israel and the pro-Iranian Hezbollah movement.

But it remains to be seen whether these events will provide a boost for the slow-moving negotiations Israel is conducting separately with Syria, Lebanon, Jordan and the Palestinians.

The Clinton administration has made it clear that some sort of progress is essential before the end of 1993, now only four months away.

State Department officials, from Secretary of State Warren Christopher on down, have been jetting back and forth to the Middle East in hopes of brokering a deal that could break the talks out of their current stalemate.

Some observers have been suggesting that this type of shuttle diplomacy will take on an increasingly important role in the peace process, perhaps overshadowing the face-to-face negotiations here between the parties.

As it usually does, the State Department this week played down any hopes of a quick break-

through in the negotiations. When asked Monday what the administration expected from the 11th round of talks, set to begin Aug. 30 or 31, department spokesman Mike McCurry quoted Christopher as saying that progress could only be made "inch by inch."

"This is an ongoing dialogue that the secretary certainly expects will occupy a considerable amount of time for the balance of the year," McCurry said.

#### **'Very Tough Choices' To Make**

The parties have now reached a stage in the talks where difficult issues are on the table, McCurry noted.

"The next step," he said, is for the parties to "look back at those very tough choices that have to be made if they truly want peace and to begin to fashion some type of consensus on how those decisions can be implemented."

On the Israeli-Palestinian track, many ideas have been floated, and, at least so far, most of them have not resulted in concrete achievements at the negotiating table.

But early this week, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres was quoted as saying that "we are very, very near to a peace agreement on the Palestinian issue."

And in Tunis, Palestine Liberation Organization information chief Yasir Abed-Rabbo told the Reuters news agency that "there is a possibility of major progress happening in the coming round of talks, based on certain indications."

While it is possible that both officials were simply trying to put the best face on a very difficult situation, the tone at least was more positive than it has been for a while.

Israeli officials and other observers here say there is potential for progress in both the talks with the Palestinians and those with the Syrians.

The Palestinian delegation to the talks has had a tumultuous few weeks, consisting of battles and an eventual reconciliation with PLO leader Yasir Arafat.

At the same time, several of Arafat's top aides have either resigned or threatened to do so, reportedly, at least in part, over issues concerning the peace process.

#### **Is Assad Ready For Real Peace?**

It is still unclear what effect these developments will have on the upcoming round of talks on Palestinian autonomy. But Israeli officials expressed concern this week that unless the Palestinians get their "house in order," they may not be able to make substantive decisions during the next few weeks.

Arafat reportedly was more willing than the Palestinian negotiators to postpone discussion of the touchy issue of Jerusalem's future until after a Palestinian autonomy plan is implemented.

The Jerusalem issue hampered progress on the Palestinian track during the last round of negotiations. The Palestinian delegates said they wanted to discuss the city's future at this stage of the talks, an idea vehemently opposed by the Israelis.

Another issue about which there has been some discussion is the concept of "early empowerment," under which Israel would give authority over certain areas, such as education and health, to the Palestinians at an early stage.

Possibly connected to "early empowerment" are the "Gaza First" and "Jericho First" ideas. These concept, reportedly the centerpiece of a

proposal drafted by Arafat, would result in early Palestinian control over the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho.

Observers say that both the future and the specifics of these proposals are still hazy, and perhaps will not become clearer until the Israelis and Palestinians agree on a joint declaration of principles governing the framework for an interim agreement.

The State Department has been actively seeking an accord between the two sides on such a document.

Questions also hang over the Israeli-Syrian track, regarded as equally important to the talks with the Palestinians.

Some observers here, including Israeli officials, feel that Syrian President Hafez Assad may have recently come to believe that a real peace agreement with Israel, rather than just a security arrangement, is necessary.

Israeli officials credit Christopher's recent shuttle diplomacy between Jerusalem and Damascus, as well as other regional capitals, with providing a boost to the Syrian track.

#### **ISRAELI CHIEF RABBI TO MEET WITH THE POPE AT THE VATICAN**

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, Aug. 24 (JTA) -- Pope John Paul II has invited Israeli Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi Israel Lau to meet with him at the Vatican on Sept. 21, according to Israeli sources.

It will be the first time that a chief rabbi of Israel meets with a pope.

The two religious leaders are expected to discuss the establishment of diplomatic ties between the Vatican and State of Israel, as well as relations between Jews and Christians.

Lau is also expected to invite the pope to visit Israel and to ask the pope to intercede in efforts to locate missing Israeli airman Ron Arad.

Talks between Israel's Foreign Ministry and the Vatican have come to a virtual standstill in recent months and are not progressing as quickly as many observers had hoped they would.

Vatican officials are insisting on establishing relations not on the full ambassadorial level, but one step below that, sending personal representatives of each government to the other state.

"The Vatican is not willing to go the full step because it is probably being pressured by Arab countries" not to do so, said Avi Granot, counselor for church affairs at the Israeli Embassy in Washington.

The Israeli government may be willing to settle at less than a full exchange of ambassadors, if it means formalizing relations with the Vatican, said Granot.

"It would make sense. It's just a matter of time. Politics has its own course," he said. Establishing diplomatic relations, even at less than the ambassadorial level, would mean formalizing channels of communication "which would give dignity to both sides," said Granot.

While most issues relating to the establishment of ties have been discussed and settled, he said, those still under discussion at the last meeting of the working groups in May were: taxation of church-related institutions in Israel; protection of Christian holy places there; and authority over those holy places.

The next meeting of the small working groups involved in negotiating the agreement has not yet been scheduled.

**COURT RULING AGAINST SHAS OFFICIALS  
MAY STRAIN PARTY TIES TO GOVERNMENT**  
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Aug. 24 (JTA) -- In a move that could further destabilize Israel's coalition government, the Supreme Court here has lengthened the jail sentences imposed on several figures of the Shas party convicted on wiretapping charges.

The court ruling came this week as the result of an appeal by the state, which considered the original sentences too lenient.

The ruling is seen in political circles as another blow to the already weakened links holding together the Labor Party's coalition with the Shas party and the Meretz bloc.

Two top Shas party officials, Interior Minister Aryeh Deri and Deputy Religious Affairs Minister Raphael Pinhasi, have been given notice they will be indicted for financial improprieties if the Knesset strips them of their parliamentary immunity.

Their cases have already led to threats that Shas will abandon the Labor government. The latest Supreme Court ruling, involving other Shas officials, does little to alleviate fears of a defection by the haredi, or fervently Orthodox, party.

The court ruling involved three of six men convicted of illegally wiretapping a former chief of police and an investigative reporter, both of whom were looking into Deri's financial dealings.

Most highly placed among them is Eli Tsuberi, a close aide to the deputy housing minister, Rabbi Aryeh Gamliel, also of Shas. Tsuberi will now serve eight months in prison instead of the three in the original sentence.

Reacting to the ruling, Gamliel said the state's appeal was an example of the "relentless persecution and discrimination" perpetrated by the Justice Ministry and its various departments against Shas.

"Tsuberi deserves the Israel Prize" for exposing the plot against Shas by former Police Inspector-General Ya'acov Terner and journalist Mordechai Gilat, Gamliel said, referring to Israel's most prestigious award.

**Pundits See Shas Secession Looming**

Gilat, an investigative reporter for the mass-circulation Israeli daily Yediot Achronot, had been researching the police file on Deri.

His published allegations against Deri formed the basis of a three-year police investigation that has now resulted in a charge sheet against the minister.

Tsuberi refused throughout his trial to testify as to who had ordered the wiretap, saying he had taken a religious oath not to disclose any information.

The Supreme Court bench, convening as a High Court of Justice, said in its judgment that such an "oath" naturally raised a presumption that the accused had something to hide.

The court is currently hearing applications from various citizens' groups seeking to remove Deri and Pinhasi from their ministerial positions.

The Knesset recently voted not to remove Pinhasi's parliamentary immunity; it will debate Deri's immunity next month.

Political observers believe that court decisions against both Deri and Pinhasi would lead fairly swiftly to Shas' secession from the government.

Shas' spiritual leader, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef,

has to date instructed the party, which holds six Knesset seats, to stay loyal to the government.

But Yosef has warned that if Deri and Pinhasi are removed from their posts, Shas will quit the governing coalition.

Gamliel has long advocated Shas' secession from the government, and he reiterated his call following the Supreme Court's latest ruling.

But he conceded that other party leaders "still have faith in the judicial system -- though I do not. As far as I am concerned, we are in galut (exile) in Israel."

**TWO KEY U.S. DEMJANJUK SUPPORTERS  
HELPED NAZI CRIMINALS IMMIGRATE HERE**  
By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Aug. 24 (JTA) -- Two of John Demjanjuk's chief supporters in the United States have been linked to Holocaust-denial activities and were key players in secret post-World War II operations to admit Nazi war criminals to this country, according to a report based on recently declassified intelligence records.

Demjanjuk's case has evolved into one of the most controversial of war crimes prosecutions in both the United States and Israel.

The former Cleveland autoworker and Ukrainian native was stripped of his U.S. citizenship and extradited to Israel.

Demjanjuk and his supporters have proclaimed his innocence all along, and last month Israel's Supreme Court overturned his 1988 conviction. He may still face additional charges.

The revelations about his U.S. supporters were made by Charles Allen Jr., a war-crimes investigator writing for Reform Judaism magazine, which is published by the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

In his article, "Liberty Betrayed," Allen reports that Jerome Brentar and the late Edward O'Connor, two principal supporters of Demjanjuk, were participants in top-secret post-war U.S. government programs that helped fascist war criminals escape Europe and enter this country.

Brentar is a Cleveland travel agent. In 1989, Allen reports, Brentar appeared before a meeting of the Institute of Historical Review in Costa Mesa, Calif., a Holocaust-denial organization, where he "received a hero's welcome."

At the conference, Allen writes, Brentar compared the "crucifixion" of Demjanjuk by the courts of Israel to that of Jesus.

Brentar also lashed out against the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations, which prosecutes accused Nazi war criminals living in the United States.

The late Edward O'Connor -- father of Mark O'Connor, one of Demjanjuk's former lawyers -- was the chief architect of secret programs to bring fugitive Nazis into the United States after World War II, according to Allen.

A high official with the National Catholic Welfare Conference, O'Connor was appointed to influential government posts -- including the Displaced Persons Commission and the National Security Council -- by President Harry Truman.

Since the establishment of OSI, according to Allen, both Brentar and O'Connor have testified for and defended the only three suspected Treblinka SS guards known to have entered the United States -- Liudas Kairys, Feodor Fedorenko and John Demjanjuk. Demjanjuk was acquitted of war crimes at Treblinka but is still suspected of having served at other concentration camps.

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES:**

**BOSTON FEDERATION WORKS WITH SHULS TO CREATE FAMILY EDUCATION CENTERS**

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Aug. 24 (JTA) -- Nearly 25 years ago, young Jews in Boston rallied against Jewish federations for maintaining hundreds of agencies "where a Jewish student can have his appendix removed and a mental hospital where he can be committed" but offering nothing for the Jewish soul.

Now federations addressing the concerns for Jewish identity raised by the demonstrators of 1969 are finding that what they have learned running hospitals and social agencies can indeed be used to nurture Judaism.

These lessons from general philanthropy are likely to make an increasing mark on synagogues, as federations begin to work with them to reverse assimilation and intermarriage.

Under a new program of Boston's Combined Jewish Philanthropies, synagogues will give new member families the sort of intensive initial interviews hospitals give patients.

The synagogue "intake interviews," as they are known in medical and social-work jargon, will seek to diagnose not a ruptured appendix or a nervous breakdown.

Rather, it will try to figure out how best to give the family a healthy level of Jewish awareness and commitment through an educational program that involves the parents as well as the children.

The idea that synagogues can and should influence and educate their members is at the core of the CJP initiative, known as Sha'arim/Gateways to Jewish Living: The Jewish Family Educator Initiative.

An outgrowth of the local Commission on Jewish Continuity of the CJP and the state's synagogue council, Sha'arim will pay half the salaries for family educators hired by synagogues chosen to participate, and gives those educators two years of graduate training in the field at Boston Hebrew College.

Barry Shrage, president of the CJP, described the program "as the first critical, catalytic step in a process aimed at transforming our congregational gateway institutions and the lives of those Jews who pass through them."

**Attempt 'To Deeply Touch' Spiritual Lives**

The goal, he said, is to create "congregations that make a serious organized attempt to deeply touch the spiritual lives of every one of their congregants over time."

The program also aims to establish "universal adult Jewish literacy in our community," he said.

"We know now that the drop-off-your-kid-at-Hebrew-school method doesn't work. It didn't work for the whole generation that are now parents," said Lesley Litman.

Litman is educational director at Shir Tikva, a Reform congregation in Wayland, Mass., that is one of the seven synagogues participating in the program this year. (Besides the synagogues, the Jewish Community Center of Greater Boston is also receiving a grant.)

The family education movement argues that schools alone cannot transmit Judaism to children. Underlying what has become in recent years the hottest trend in Jewish education is the notion that parents are their children's most effective

teachers. It becomes the responsibility then of the schools to teach the parents, so that they will be able to teach their children, and so that the children will have role models for taking their Jewish studies seriously, according to this approach. But transforming a synagogue educational program from a child-centered institution to one that is family-centered or even adult-centered is not easy.

That's where the Boston federation comes in. Under the CJP grant, Shir Tikva will employ its family educator 30 hours a week, rather than six.

This has enabled Shir Tikva "to design a program to work with families at the place they come to us. Some come in gung ho, some have bad Jewish memories and just tiptoe in," said Litman.

"We need to figure out what's happening when they walk in the door and what programs will work," she said.

As part of the "intake" process, every new family approaching the synagogue will meet first with either the rabbi or the educational director, followed by a meeting with the family educator.

"There are families that are resistant to coming in. We have to get under that. It's a defense mechanism from their own bad experiences, that is probably justifiable.

"What we might say to that is, 'Fine, just come to a Shabbat dinner with your family.' We sometimes say, 'Don't jump in. Take two or three programs this year. Next year you can take a course,'" said Litman.

Litman said the requirement that parents be involved if their kids are to be a part of the synagogue's education program has not discouraged potential members.

"People are looking for this stuff," she said. "They just don't know how to walk in."

**YELTSIN RETURNS BILL TO PARLIAMENT THAT WOULD STIFLE RELIGIOUS GROUPS**

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Aug. 24 (JTA) -- Russian President Boris Yeltsin has sent back to Parliament a proposed law that threatened to stifle the ability of foreign religious groups to operate in Russia.

The bill, pushed by Russian Orthodox Church leaders, was said to be aimed primarily at the activities of evangelical Christians, members of the Hari Krishna sect and radical Muslims, who have encroached on spiritual territory the Orthodox Church sees as its own.

But Jewish groups have worried that their activities might be threatened as well.

Provisions of the bill, a series of amendments to Russia's Law on Religion, would have required all foreign religious organizations to work under the authority of local groups and to be registered by the government.

The passage of the bill by the Russian Parliament in July engendered international condemnation, particularly by the American Christian community.

Yeltsin received thousands of letters from abroad, according to Leonid Stenov of the Union of Councils, an American-based advocacy group for Jews in the former Soviet Union.

Among the letters was one from Sen. Richard Lugar (R-Ind.), signed by an additional 160 members of the U.S. Congress.

"No one expected the reaction they got from the West," said Mark Levin, executive director of the National Conference on Soviet Jewry.