

**ISRAEL LETS DEMJANJUK GO FREE,  
MAKING RETURN TO U.S. IMMINENT**  
By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Sept. 19 (JTA) -- Holocaust survivors and their supporters are decrying an Israeli Supreme Court decision to allow acquitted Nazi war criminal John Demjanjuk to leave the country.

On Sunday, the Supreme Court lifted the restraining order that has delayed Demjanjuk's deportation, bringing to an end his seven-year legal fight against accusations that he was the notorious Treblinka death camp guard known as "Ivan the Terrible."

The court at the same time rejected appeals by Holocaust survivors and other petitioners that Demjanjuk be tried for other Nazi war crimes.

Demjanjuk's lawyer, Yoram Sheftel, said the retired Cleveland autoworker was waiting for the arrival in Israel of his family, who were expected to escort him back to the United States within days.

News reports said Demjanjuk's son and son-in-law would leave for Israel midday Monday.

Demjanjuk was extradited here from the United States in 1986 to stand trial for war crimes committed as the sadistic gas chamber operator at Treblinka. He was convicted and sentenced to death in 1988.

But on July 29 of this year, the Israeli Supreme Court overturned the conviction, saying that there was now reasonable doubt that Demjanjuk was the notorious Ivan of Treblinka.

At the same time, the court found that there was compelling evidence that Demjanjuk had served as an SS guard at the Sobibor death camp and the Flossenburg and Regensburg concentration camps.

It was on these grounds that the petitioners, including Holocaust survivors and the World Jewish Congress, called for a new trial, arguing that Israel had an obligation to see the case through to completion.

With Sunday's ruling, the Supreme Court upheld the recommendation of Attorney General Yosef Harish, who had argued that a new trial would not be in the interest of the state and that a conviction was uncertain.

**'A Sad Day For Israeli Justice'**

The decisions provoked anger and charges that the court had damaged Nazi-hunting efforts worldwide.

"Today is a sad day for Israeli justice, for Israel and the Jewish people," said Efraim Zuroff, director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center's office in Israel and one of the petitioners for a new trial.

Zuroff added that Demjanjuk's release "is a serious blow to efforts to prosecute the perpetrators of the Holocaust.

"It signals an end of active Israeli involvement in efforts to bring Nazi murderers to justice, although much remains to be done," he said.

Zuroff called on the Israeli government to "make a special effort" to bring to justice Alois Brunner, the lieutenant of Adolf Eichmann, whom Zuroff said was responsible for orchestrating the deaths of 128,000 Jews from Australia, Greece,

France and Slovakia. Brunner lived for years in Damascus under an alias, but his whereabouts now are uncertain.

Zuroff also called for a review and reform of Israeli laws governing the prosecution of Nazi criminals and collaborators so as to preclude the release of other war criminals.

Otherwise, Zuroff warned, "the Holocaust will be relegated to the history books."

The way was cleared for Demjanjuk's return to the United States when the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati ruled Aug. 3 that the Justice Department could not bar his re-entry.

Lawyers for the Justice Department subsequently appealed the court's ruling, but on Aug. 31 the Court of Appeals turned down the appeal request.

The following day, Sept. 1, Attorney General Janet Reno announced she would not appeal the Cincinnati court's ruling to the Supreme Court.

**White House Telegram Drive Launched**

Following Sunday's Israeli Supreme Court ruling, the Los Angeles-based Simon Wiesenthal Center announced plans to launch a telegram campaign aimed at President Clinton and Reno to ensure Demjanjuk's swift deportation following his anticipated arrival in Cleveland later this week.

"U.S. law demands that people who lied about their Nazi past do not have the right to live in our democracy," Marvin Hier, the center's dean, said in a statement.

"We expect to flood the White House with tens of thousands of telegrams to urge them to apply the letter of the law and move swiftly to deport Demjanjuk from this country.

"The real victims in this case are the innocent men, women and children who perished at Sobibor, not the guard who escorted them to the gas chamber," said Hier.

Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, said that he found it "incomprehensible" that Demjanjuk would be allowed to return to the U.S.

Foxman, who is himself a Holocaust survivor, said that "the pain for survivors on seeing him (Demjanjuk) greeted as a hero by his supporters will be unbearable."

He reiterated ADL's appeal to the Justice Department to "act with all due deliberate speed to ensure that this Nazi war criminal not be permitted to remain in the United States one minute longer than required by the 6th Circuit Court."

Elan Steinberg, executive director of the World Jewish Congress, said Demjanjuk's "impending return casts a shadow on the United States."

He added, "We will pursue him by every legal means" available.

Steinberg said he had spoken Sunday with the U.S. Justice Department, which, he said, had decided to allow Demjanjuk into the country on a temporary basis under the attorney general's parole authority.

At the same time, the department intends to pursue whatever legal recourses are available to remove him from the country permanently, Steinberg said.

While some are pursuing legal efforts against

Demjanjuk, others are turning to popular protest. Rabbi Avi Weiss of New York, president of the Coalition for Jewish Concerns-Amcha, vowed Sunday that his group would demonstrate outside the acquitted war criminal's home in Cleveland.

"We will be at his home in Cleveland when he returns to a hero's welcome, to declare that this man is not a hero but a Nazi," Weiss said in a statement.

#### **French Investigation Initiated**

In Paris, meanwhile, a French judge has launched an investigation to see whether Demjanjuk should be prosecuted there for crimes against humanity.

Jean Paul Getty was commissioned Sept. 16 to act upon a complaint filed earlier by French Jewish lawyer Arno Klarsfeld. Getty will see if there is enough evidence of Demjanjuk's involvement in the deaths of thousands of French citizens deported to the Sobibor concentration camp in March 1943.

Klarsfeld is one of the lawyers of the Association of Sons and Daughters of Deported French Jews. He is the son of Nazi-hunters Serge and Beate Klarsfeld.

Arno Klarsfeld told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that his first motivation when filing the lawsuit Aug. 20 had been to prevent Demjanjuk from stopping in Paris en route to the United States, as it was said he would.

"France is the last place in the world that should agree to have Demjanjuk on its soil even for a stopover between two flights," he said.

"The thought of having him giving interviews to the press here was unbearable to the children and relatives of those he probably helped to assassinate."

*(Contributing to this report was JTA correspondent Michel Di Paz in Paris.)*

#### **ISRAEL, VATICAN REPORTED CLOSE TO ESTABLISHING FULL RELATIONS** By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Sept. 19 (JTA) -- Israeli and Vatican negotiators have reached an agreement that could soon lead to the establishment of full diplomatic relations.

While the world's attention was focused last week on the signing of a historic Palestinian self-rule agreement by Israeli and Palestine Liberation Organization officials in Washington, members of a Vatican-Israeli commission put the finishing touches on a historic agreement of their own.

Successfully capping 14 months of negotiations, the commission met Sept. 13 and 14 and agreed on a 14-point agenda for the normalization of relations between Israel and the Vatican, said sources close to the talks.

The agenda includes a provision that the church will take a stand against anti-Semitism.

Israel's Foreign Ministry acknowledged on Sunday the reports concerning the Vatican-Israeli commission, but said the process of establishing full diplomatic relations would be gradual.

Nevertheless, an announcement that the two parties would establish full diplomatic relations is expected within weeks.

Negotiations for normalization of relations have been taking place since July 1992.

Disagreements over a number of technical issues -- including taxation, the disposition of church property and the church's official standing in Israel -- had held up the negotiating process.

But a major political hurdle was cleared last week with the signing of the Israeli-PLO accord.

The Vatican has resisted establishing full diplomatic relations with Israel since the state was founded in 1948.

Pope Paul VI visited Jerusalem in 1964, but the Vatican's formal recognition of Israel has always been sidelined by a number of issues, including Israeli recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people.

In New York, the agreement was welcomed by a spokesman for the International Jewish Committee on Interreligious Consultations, which represents world Jewry in dealings with the Vatican.

"The question of relations between the Catholic Church and the State of Israel has been of greater importance for the standing of the Vatican than for Israel. We, however, welcome it as auguring well for Catholic-Jewish relations," the spokesman said.

On Sunday, Israel's Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau left for Italy, where he was due to meet Tuesday with Pope John Paul II.

The meeting will mark the first time John Paul has met with a top Israeli Jewish leader. The two will meet at the pope's summer residence at Castelgandolfo just outside Rome.

According to Israel Television, Lau and the pope will discuss anti-Semitism and will call for an end to acts of bloodshed committed in the name of religion.

#### **ISRAEL CABINET BACKS PICK FOR NEW ATTORNEY GENERAL** By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Sept. 19 (JTA) -- Israel's Cabinet has unanimously approved the appointment of Tel Aviv District Court Judge Michael Ben-Yair to be the country's next attorney general.

The appointment is to take effect Nov. 1, when incumbent Attorney General Yosef Harish is due to retire.

The Cabinet vote Sunday followed a controversy surrounding Ben-Yair's candidacy that erupted over the Rosh Hashanah holiday weekend. The controversy centered on a claim that Ben-Yair is a personal friend of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's son-in-law -- and that this had influenced the decision to appoint him.

Justice Minister David Libai, who recommended the candidate to his fellow ministers, termed the accusation "a sordid attempt to blacken the reputation of a judge."

Libai told his Cabinet colleagues, after discussing the charges with Jerusalem lawyer Boaz Arad, that he was satisfied there were only "wicked rumors" and no hard information to suggest the appointment had been influenced by political considerations.

Ben-Yair's appointment has aroused intense political interest in light of an ongoing public exchange of recriminations between incumbent Harish and the Shas party.

Officials of the fervently Orthodox party claim that two of its leaders, Aryeh Deri and Rafael Pinhasi, have been victimized by the state prosecution, headed by Harish.

Last week, Deri formally resigned his post as interior minister following a Supreme Court ruling that he and Pinhasi step down as a result of charges of financial misconduct that have been brought against them. Pinhasi was expected to follow suit.

## RABIN CONFERS WITH MUBARAK ON HOW TO SPUR PEACE PROCESS

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Sept. 19 (JTA) -- Less than a week after his historic trip to Washington, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin conferred Sunday with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on how best to advance the Middle East peace process.

Rabin's one-day visit to Alexandria was aimed at giving added impetus to the peace process following the agreements Israel signed last week with the Palestine Liberation Organization and with Jordan.

One concern now is how to spur progress in the talks with Syria, which has found itself outside the limelight that is shining on some of the Palestinian and Jordanian negotiating tracks.

The meeting was a continuation of the close contact Rabin has had with Mubarak as the peace process has been unfolding.

The two leaders held a joint news conference Sunday evening, at which they expressed optimism about prospects for agreements with Syria, Jordan and Lebanon and for closer ties with other Arab countries.

"I have great hopes that agreements between the neighboring countries and Israel will be concluded, although there are still some difficulties," said Mubarak. "But after this step, I think the other steps will be easier."

"We'll continue our negotiations," said Rabin, "but the key for the future will be in the implementation of at least the first two, three or four months of the agreements that have been reached."

"This will be the sign of success and the capability to move ahead, and to solve the other problems and bring about a comprehensive peace to the region," he said.

### Christopher Expected Next Month

"There is a good chance that we shall overcome all the obstacles and difficulties," said Rabin, if the parties to the Israeli-Palestinian agreement keep their commitments, and if the Arab countries and the international community lend their moral, political and financial support.

"Mubarak's relations with the PLO will help to realize the accord with the PLO," Rabin spokesman Oded Ben-Ami told the Jerusalem Post. "Until now the agreement has only been signed, but now all the work of carrying it out has to be done."

Prior to Rabin's departure on Sunday, Deputy Defense Minister Mordechai Gur, who accompanied the prime minister to Egypt, said, "We are going to Egypt because Egypt is the biggest Arab country with whom we have peace and they (helped with) the negotiations with the Palestinians."

"I believe that, facing a new era," he continued, "it's logical that the prime minister would meet with the president of Egypt and would discuss all the problems that remain, in order to continue the peace process with other Arab countries."

U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher is expected to visit the Middle East early next month to help advance the peace negotiations between Israel and Syria.

Meanwhile, he extended an invitation Sunday to Foreign Minister Shimon Peres to a conference early next month in the United States on economic aid to the Middle East, particularly the Gaza Strip.

## ISRAEL DENIES REPORTS IT WILL LET PALESTINIANS RETURN BY THOUSANDS

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Sept. 19 (JTA) -- Israeli officials have denied reports that they have agreed to allow the return of 60,000 Palestinian refugees to the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho.

The reports of Israel's willingness to admit the refugees were made by sources within the Palestine Liberation Organization, which said the refugee question was covered under the self-rule agreement signed by Israel and the PLO last week in Washington.

PLO officials also said that Israel would eventually allow the return of some 400,000 refugees to the administered territories as a whole.

But government officials here have denied both statements.

On Sunday, Deputy Defense Minister Mordechai Gur played down the number of Palestinian refugees who will be allowed to return to the territories according to the Israel-PLO accord on self-rule.

Gur said Israel does not accept in principle the right of Palestinian refugees to return and will not agree to a change in the demographic balance currently in existence within the territories.

He made the statement during a visit to the strategically important Allenby Bridge river-crossing into Jordan, shortly before he joined Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on a one-day visit to Egypt.

Gur did not say how many refugees would be let into the territories under the terms of the agreement with the PLO.

Knesset member Rafael Eitan of the right-wing opposition Tsomet party said over the weekend that the deal would amount to a first-stage implementation of a policy granting a Palestinian right of return.

The PLO has been demanding that Israel allow the return of all refugees who left the territories following the 1967 war.

The PLO has further stated that all Palestinian refugees from the War of Independence in 1948 should be able to choose between returning to the territories or receiving reparations.

Israel has long objected to even discussing the possible return of refugees who left following during 1948 war.

### ISRAEL GREW 2.4 PERCENT IN 5753

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Sept. 19 (JTA) -- Israel's population grew by 124,000 people, or 2.4 percent, between Rosh Hashanah last year and this New Year's holiday, according to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics.

The bureau estimated on the eve of Rosh Hashanah that there are now a total of 5.28 million people residing in Israel.

The religious breakdown of the population within Israel's pre-1967 borders was 81.5 percent Jewish, 14.1 percent Muslim, 2.7 percent Christian and 1.7 percent Druse.

The number of immigrants arriving here from various parts of the world fell 17 percent, from 92,000 last year to 76,000 this year.

The Jewish population grew by 92,000, with new births accounting for nearly half the growth.

## SLOVAK OFFICIAL APOLOGIZES FOR ATTACK ON AMERICAN RABBI

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK (JTA) -- The foreign minister of Slovakia has written a letter of apology to a representative of the World Jewish Congress for an attack perpetrated on a rabbi in Bratislava.

But Foreign Minister Jozef Moravcik, who was replying to a letter of protest by WJC Eastern European President Leslie Keller, denied the attack had anti-Semitic goals.

He described it as "an individual act which does not reflect the real relations between members of the Jewish community and citizens of my country."

Rabbi Baruch Mayers, a 29-year-old American rabbi, was assaulted Sept. 5 by three teen-agers in the street. He was shaken but unharmed. The attackers, ages 14 through 17, were subsequently apprehended.

The foreign minister wrote that the youths have shown that "it was not a manifestation of hatred against Jews but a case of inexperience and thoughtlessness on the part of a few young people."

In his letter, the foreign minister told Keller, "As a member of the government of the Republic of Slovakia, I assure you, on my and my government's behalf, that we are taking the necessary measures to avoid similar incidents in the future."

"Efforts on the part of the Slovak authorities to solve this sad case as soon as possible are also shown by the fact that the perpetrators of this act, which is to be condemned, were identified and arrested in a short time."

The foreign minister then invited Keller to Slovakia to "show you the coexistence of the various religious groups and national minorities in everyday life."

Keller said he has accepted the invitation and will go to Slovakia in October.

## BILL WOULD HELP U.S. SURVIVORS OF HOLOCAUST OBTAIN REPARATIONS

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Sept. 15 (JTA) -- A panel of the House of Representatives has approved legislation that would enable U.S. citizens who were victims of the Nazi Holocaust to seek reparations from the German government.

Currently, only those victims who went through resettlement camps after World War II are eligible to seek reparations. But there were a few U.S. citizens victimized by the Nazis during the Holocaust who were repatriated back to the United States without going through the resettlement camps.

The legislation, offered as an amendment by Rep. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.), was designed to offer relief to Hugo Princz, who, although a U.S. citizen, was sent along with his brothers to Birkenau during the Holocaust because they were Jewish.

Princz's attempts, so far unsuccessful, to seek reparations from Germany have garnered support from Jewish groups, including the Anti-Defamation League.

Schumer's amendment would allow Princz to sue the German government. Currently, the Foreign Sovereign Immunities Act limits suits against foreign governments.

Eight members of the Princz family were

trapped in Czechoslovakia as World War II broke out, and were all sent to the camps.

Hugo Princz, the sole survivor, was rescued in 1945 by a U.S. armored corps. He eventually returned to the United States.

The amendment was passed by the House Judiciary subcommittee on international law, immigration and refugees, and is to be voted on by the full Judiciary Committee.

## MICHAEL JACKSON VISITS WALL AND ORTHODOX CRY: 'BEAT IT'

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Sept. 19 (JTA) -- Pop superstar Michael Jackson was mobbed by enthusiastic Israeli fans from the moment he arrived here last Friday with a retinue of some 200 assistants, managers, bodyguards and stage hands.

Jackson devotees greeted the singer wherever he went with awe and admiration -- until Saturday, when a group of fervently Orthodox Jews gave him a less-than-friendly welcome as Jackson attempted to approach the Western Wall in Jerusalem's Old City.

The group, finding all the stir surrounding his appearance there unseemly, overturned tables and chairs in an effort to barricade the path of Jackson before he could reach the Wall.

Jackson turned away from the barricade to avoid a confrontation.

It was the lone sour note during his Israeli sightseeing tour. The visit began Friday, following a 24-hour delay caused by a heavy rainstorm in Moscow, the previous stop on his world tour.

The teen idol was greeted at the airport by two young children of one of his locally hired security guards. They presented him with a basket of apples and honey, the food traditionally eaten on Rosh Hashanah.

In an effort to keep the crowds at bay, Jackson's managers said the star would remain at the Dan Hotel -- where he had taken an entire upper floor -- when he was not performing at the city's Yarkon Park auditorium on Sunday and Tuesday nights.

But within half an hour of his arrival at the hotel, Jackson was soon out and around, going on a shopping spree and taking in some of the country's many sights.

Although it was the second day of Rosh Hashanah, when businesses are usually closed, several stores in the Dizengoff Center here were opened especially for Jackson.

Owners of four book, music and poster shops in the shopping center, informed that Jackson was on the way, rushed to send over sales staff and open their doors for him.

Jackson spent a couple of hours browsing among the shelves and buying thousands of dollars worth of discs, tapes, videos and posters.

Police and security guards were out in force to deal with the crowds of teen-agers who mobbed him.

Later on Friday, Jackson visited the Luna Park in the Tel Aviv Fair Grounds, near where he was to make his two concert appearances.

A few teen-agers who gathered there were allowed into the closed grounds to join Jackson as he sampled the rides and trampolines.

On Saturday, Jackson was helicoptered to the Dead Sea for a sight-seeing visit to Masada. On his way back, he stopped in Jerusalem for a brief visit, during which the confrontation at the Western Wall occurred.