

THE DATE ONCE CALLED SACRED IS POSTPONED AT THE 11TH HOUR**By David Landau**

JERUSALEM, Dec. 12 (JTA) -- The date once called sacred was postponed Sunday, after Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat were unable to conclude negotiations in time to meet the deadline to begin implementing the Israel-PLO autonomy accord.

The two leaders announced their failure to reach agreement on several key details of the accord, whose implementation was scheduled to begin the following day with the beginning of a pullback of Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho.

Rabin and Arafat agreed only to meet again in the Egyptian capital in 10 days.

And Rabin gave no indication if Israel would make any symbolic gestures to the Palestinians by Monday's deadline, despite predictions.

The ambience in Cairo was considerably cooler than the one at the Sept. 13 signing in Washington of the Israel-PLO accord. And this time there was no public handshake.

Prompted by reporters to clasp Arafat's hand for the cameras, Rabin declined, saying only, "Later, later."

Rabin told a news conference after conferring with Arafat that a follow-up meeting had been decided upon in order "to give ourselves a certain amount of time to rethink" their positions.

At a separate news conference, Arafat said the two sides were still committed to implementing the accord, signed in Washington in September.

"We agreed that all of us are committed to the declaration of principles (which form the basis of the self-rule accord), but we have some differences over some points and we agreed to have another meeting," he said.

Arafat, who had previously warned of the dangers of not meeting the Dec. 13 deadline, told reporters that 10 days were "not a long time."

Rabin also downplayed the significance of the delay.

After 100 Years, 10 Days Is Not Too Long

"We need a little bit more time," he said. "Ten days -- bearing in mind over 100 years of Palestinian-Jewish conflict -- is not too long."

Rabin and Arafat also met for 30 minutes with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

The three leaders appeared relaxed as they posed for the cameras before their meeting. Rabin and Mubarak wore suits; Arafat was dressed in his trademark olive-drab fatigues.

They said the committee for establishing a Palestinian civil authority in the territories would return to the negotiating table in the Egyptian seaside town of el-Arish on Monday. The second committee, which will continue to discuss matters of economic cooperation, will resume its meetings in Paris the same day.

In a related development, on the same day as Rabin and Arafat were meeting in Cairo, Palestinian spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi

announced she was leaving the PLO to set up an independent human rights group.

The new group would monitor the performance of the new Palestinian government after it assumes authority in the territories.

Ashrawi, who has for years been a high-profile Palestinian spokesperson with ties to the PLO, is reportedly displeased with what she views as Arafat's dictatorial style of running the organization.

SECURITY ON ALERT IN TERRITORIES AS VIOLENCE FLARES BEFORE DEADLINE**By Cynthia Mann**

JERUSALEM, Dec. 12 (JTA) -- Israeli security forces have gone on full alert in the administered territories in an effort to prevent any further violence aimed at undermining the implementation of the Palestinian self-rule accord.

The stepped-up security measures were taken as violence, protests and strikes continue to take place throughout Israel and the territories.

Hamas, Islamic Jihad and other Palestinian rejectionist groups have pledged to step up their attacks to try to destroy support for the accord, which had been scheduled to begin on Monday.

Jewish settlers in the territories, fearing for their security once the accord goes into effect and reeling from the recent murders of settlers by militant Palestinians, have been responsible for a series of violent retaliatory attacks on Palestinians.

As a result, the violence from both sides has threatened to overwhelm the tentative steps Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization have been taking toward peace.

Attack Occurs Despite Military Presence

There was a wave of violent attacks over the weekend against both Arabs and Jews as well as continuing demonstrations, both for and against the accord.

Three Palestinians were shot and killed near the West Bank town of Hebron, and police believe that Jewish extremists were responsible.

The attack occurred despite an Israeli military presence in the territories that stands at its highest levels since the start of the Palestinian uprising, or intifada, in December 1987.

On Dec. 8, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin announced that there were upwards of 14,000 troops in the territories -- almost four times as many forces as Israel has stationed in the area encompassing the southern Lebanon security zone and Israeli-Lebanese border.

In Cairo on Sunday, Rabin and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat acknowledged that they could not meet Monday's deadline for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho.

Palestinian leader Faisal Husseini warned that the Dec. 13 deadline for the start of Israeli withdrawals should not be permitted to pass without a concrete development "on the ground" to mark it.

Only this, he said, would prove to both Israelis and Palestinians that the peace process should continue.

More than 1,000 Palestinian security prisoners were expected to be released on Monday as an Israeli gesture of commitment to the accord. Most of the prisoners are members of the PLO's mainstream Fatah wing who were convicted of minor offenses.

The accord is likely to begin only with such symbolic gestures because Israeli and Palestinian negotiators have not yet reached agreement on three major issues: the size of the Jericho area to fall under Palestinian self-rule; who will control border crossings between Gaza and Egypt and between Jericho and Jordan; and how to handle security arrangements for settlers living in Gaza.

Rabin, addressing the Cabinet at its regular Sunday meeting, said Israel will insist on retaining control of the border crossings points but may yield on the size of the autonomous area in Jericho.

Rabin also said he believes agreement can be reached with the Palestinians on Gush Katif, a bloc of settlements in Gaza. Israel wants to maintain territorial continuity between the settlements and Israel proper, while the Palestinians have been demanding control of the land falling in between.

On Sunday, a group of Knesset members from the opposition Likud and National Religious Party held a sit-down demonstration at the entrance to the Prime Minister's Office here.

Likud Knesset member Limor Livnat told Israel Radio she was deeply worried about the prospect of an armed Palestinian police force, which is scheduled to assume authority in the territories when the Israeli troop withdrawals begin.

"This is a strike to tell Prime Minister Rabin, 'don't give them guns (with which) they can kill us'" she said.

"We thought we should come here and ask him, tell him, shout, scream, cry: Don't give them guns."

The three Palestinians who were shot and killed in the Hebron area over the weekend were all members of one family. The dead were Sa'adi and Mohammed Fataftah, who were brothers, and their cousin, Ishaq Fataftah. All were in their 20s.

The militantly anti-Arab Kach organization claimed responsibility for the murders, calling them an act of revenge for the killings last week of Mordechai Lapid and his son, Shalom. Those killings, too, occurred near Hebron.

The Council of Jewish Settlements in Judea, Samaria and Gaza, a settlers organization opposed to the self-rule accord, condemned the murders of the three Palestinians.

In another violent weekend incident, three members of Fatah stabbed a settler, Zvi Fixler, in a greenhouse in Gaza. The three had worked for Fixler and reportedly had been assigned by Fatah to kill their employer as part of an initiation rite.

The father of one of the assailants, defending Fixler during the attack, was himself stabbed during the incident.

HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES IN SYRIA UNDER SURVEILLANCE, U.S. SAYS By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Dec. 12 (JTA) -- In the wake of the announcement that President Clinton will meet next month in Geneva with Syrian President Hafez Assad, the State Department said it is continuing to raise human rights concerns with

Damascus.

Speaking on Human Rights Day last Friday, the assistant secretary of state for human rights, John Shattuck, said Secretary of State Warren Christopher discussed human rights with Assad during Christopher's recent swing through the Middle East.

When asked whether the issue of human rights in Syria could be given short shrift as the United States pushed for progress in the Middle East peace process, Shattuck said, "Secretary Christopher has repeatedly brought up the issue of human rights, even most recently in his discussions with President Assad in Syria."

"So the consistent application of human rights standards to our bilateral discussions in the region is quite clear," Shattuck said.

The human rights situation in Syria, especially Syria's treatment of its 1,350-person Jewish community, has long been a concern of the Jewish community here.

After the Clinton-Assad meeting was announced last Thursday, some Jewish leaders said that to gain such a meeting, Assad should be required to live up to his recent promises to allow Syria's Jewish community to leave the country.

Next month, the State Department is expected to release its annual human rights report, viewed as a barometer of American attitudes toward human rights concerns around the world.

Syria has consistently been lambasted for its human rights record, not only for its detention of Jews but for the slaughters and imprisonments of other Syrians. It has been charged with torture, genocide and illegal imprisonments and is on the State Department's list of countries which support terrorism.

In the past year, the situation has reportedly improved, although Syria still supports rejectionist Palestinian groups and is reportedly engaged in drug trafficking.

Shattuck of the U.S. State Department also commented on the human rights situation in Israel.

He said he had seen improvements there, as well as some setbacks, since the Sept. 13 signing of the Israeli-Palestinian declaration of principles.

He specifically mentioned improvements in the "release of prisoners from Israeli prisons" and "the beginning of some reunification of families."

Shattuck said that during his recent trip to Israel and Egypt he had raised human rights issues with leaders of both countries.

200 DEPORTEES PREPARE TO RETURN By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Dec. 12 (JTA) -- Some 200 Palestinian deportees living for the past year in a tent camp in southern Lebanon are reported to be preparing to return to the administered territories later this month.

A year ago, Israel deported 415 Palestinians to Lebanon after a series of murderous attacks by Muslim extremists within Israel.

The deportees, who were suspected members of the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas and Islamic Jihad movements, have been living in a camp at Marj al-Zahour in Lebanon, some two miles north of Israel's security zone.

On Sept. 9, Israel allowed 181 of the deportees to return to the territories, with the rest to return by the end of December.

ASTRONAUT SPINS MORE THAN TELESCOPE By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Dec. 12 (JTA) -- The formerly malfunctioning Hubble Space Telescope wasn't the only thing spinning in the stratosphere.

Astronaut Jeffrey Hoffman, among the crew that repaired the telescope, was playing a nationally televised game of dreidel Saturday night aboard the space shuttle Endeavor.

This was not the first voyage of Judaica in space.

Hoffman, 48, who was born in Brooklyn and grew up in Scarsdale, N.Y., took mezuzahs into space and said special blessings during his first launch, on the shuttle Challenger in 1985.

For this trip, Hoffman also took a menorah and observed Chanukah on the shuttle, but he could not light candles for obvious safety reasons.

The dreidel belongs to Hoffman's synagogue, Congregation Brith Shalom of Houston. The menorah is his own.

Rabbi Shaul Osadchey of the synagogue had called the Johnson Space Center to inquire if the dreidel-spinning would get any television coverage and time was made for that event, said space center spokeswoman Barbara Schwartz.

"It was something Jeff wanted to do," said Schwartz, adding that "Jeff is very active in community affairs and in his synagogue."

When Hoffman made the first of his four trips into space, he took along a specially designed mezuzah, which orbited the Earth 109 times.

The mezuzah, which was donated to the Jewish Museum in New York, contains an inscription from Psalms: "When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars which thou has ordained."

At the time of his first flight, Hoffman was an active member of Congregation Shaar Hashalom outside Houston, where he moved in 1978 to be close to the space agency.

The astronaut asked his then rabbi, Arnold Stiebel, to fashion a short prayer for him to recite during his first flight. The prayer, recited in Hebrew, was drawn around "Aleinu":

"Praised art thou, Lord our God, ruler of the universe, who stretches forth the heaven and lays the foundation of the Earth, whose glory is revealed in the heavens above and whose might is manifest in the loftiest part."

Hoffman studied astronomy at Amherst College, astrophysics at Harvard, and worked on X-ray astronomy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Leicester University in England.

BOOKS FROM SCHOCKEN COLLECTION FETCH \$1.64 MILLION AT LONDON AUCTION

NEW YORK (JTA) -- Rare Hebrew books from the Schocken collection have fetched \$1.64 million at a London auction house.

The lot included 162 items from a private collection of Hebrew works belonging to publisher Salman Schocken, a German Jew who died in 1959, according to a statement issued by auctioneers at Sotheby's in London.

The collection included some of the world's earliest-known books. Some works contained the notes of Christian censors; others contained the family records of their Jewish owners.

Included in the collection were works of philosophy, religion, science and poetry.

Fetching one of the highest prices was the Rabbinic Code of Jewish Laws and Customs, an early compilation of authoritative interpretations of Jewish law written by Rabbi Jacob ben Asher, a 14th-century writer also known as the Ba'al HaTurim. The work went to a private British collector for \$120,600. Sotheby's had estimated the book's value at \$89,640.

A copy of the first Jewish prayerbook published in the United States fetched \$7,216. Sotheby's had expected the 1766 book to bring \$4,200.

Salman Schocken was born in 1877 in Posen. In 1901, he and his brother Simon founded I. Schocken Sons, a store in Zwickau, Germany.

The business grew into a chain and created a fortune that enabled Salman Schocken to buy rare Jewish books and found a publishing business.

Salman Schocken founded the Research Institute for Medieval Hebrew Poetry in Berlin, which he transferred to Jerusalem in 1934. He founded the Schocken Publishing House in Berlin, Tel Aviv and New York.

He endowed the Schocken Institute in Jerusalem, to house a research library, Schocken Library and the Institute for Jewish Mysticism.

After his death in 1959, the Institute for Hebrew Poetry, library and collection became the Schocken Institute for Jewish Research of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

Schocken's son, Gershom Schocken, is owner and editor of Ha'aretz and other papers in Israel.

LEADER OF ITALY'S NEO-FASCISTS VISITS MEMORIAL TO NAZI VICTIMS By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, Dec. 12 (JTA) -- Gianfranco Fini, national leader of Italy's neo-fascist Italian Social Movement, made a pilgrimage this weekend to Rome's chief memorial to victims of Nazi and fascist wartime terror.

The brief Saturday visit to the Ardeantine Pits, where Fini placed white carnations, was his symbolic attempt to distance himself and his party from traditional fascism and make the neo-fascist MSI leader of a new conservative movement.

Fini was defeated last week for mayor of Rome in a runoff election, although he garnered 45 percent of the vote.

Neo-fascists took most cities in the first round of voting, but were routed in most Italian cities by candidates supported by the successors to the old Communist Party.

In Rome, Naples and elsewhere, MSI members will form the core of the opposition.

At an MSI central committee meeting after the visit to the monument, Fini announced that MSI candidates in the spring's general elections would merge with other right-wing candidates under the name National Alliance.

Henceforth, the MSI is to consider itself "not fascist but post-fascist" -- similar, it is hoped, to the evolution of Italy's former Communists into the Democratic Party of the Left.

Fini's visit to the Fosse Ardeatine -- the caves south of Rome where more than 300 Romans, about 70 of the Jews, were executed by the Nazis in reprisal for a partisan attack -- had not been announced beforehand.

At the MSI central committee meeting, word of his gesture was greeted by applause.

"I went there to pay homage to Italian martyrs, in the name of freedom and national pacification," he said. His gesture was heavily criticized by almost all other parties.

GALAXY OF FACTORS PROPEL SPIELBERG TO TAKE RISK, FILM 'SCHINDLER'S LIST'

By Tom Tugend

LOS ANGELES (JTA) -- Steven Spielberg, just past his 46th birthday, is the most successful filmmaker in the history of motion pictures.

Four of the films he directed are among the all-time top 10 hits: His "Jurassic Park" is the highest-grossing film ever, with his "E.T." in second place.

Spielberg's latest movie, "Schindler's List," represents a radical change and a calculated risk.

Based on the book by Thomas Keneally, the film tells the story of Oskar Schindler, a veteran Nazi party member who came to Krakow shortly after the German conquest of Poland in 1939 to make his fortune as a freewheeling entrepreneur.

Schindler employed 1,100 Jews in his enamelware factory and, at some point, the hard-drinking, womanizing, black market-dealing German Catholic decided to use his fortune and risk his neck to save every one of his "Schindler-juden" from certain death in the nearby Auschwitz extermination camp.

His motives remain a mystery.

"I was always trying to discover through the survivors who knew him, who saw him, who were saved by him, why he did this," Spielberg said in an interview. "And most of the survivors said, 'We don't know why he did this. We only know that he did.'"

Filmed in black and white, the movie has the feel of a documentary and includes some of the most graphic Holocaust scenes ever shown in a Hollywood picture.

The director first thought about making "Schindler's List" in 1982, but he did not make the movie until 1993, when it overlapped with the production of "Jurassic Park" by three months.

"I could have been much easier and kinder to myself and my family by simply waiting until January '94 to start 'Schindler's List,' but I had just seen too many things on television that horrified myself and my wife," Spielberg said.

'A Outlet Message Was Passed On To Me'

"What was happening in Bosnia -- it was so familiar and it was so much a part of what I thought could never possibly happen again," he said. "And I just felt that sooner rather than later, a movie like this should come out and at least stir the pot."

When Spielberg was 3 and living in Cincinnati, he learned to read numbers from an Auschwitz survivor by using the concentration camp numbers on the man's forearm. The survivor enlivened the lesson with a flip of his arm and magically changed a 9 into a 6.

"I had a familiarity as a secondhand witness to the Holocaust from my family, who kept the memories of those years alive. It was something I grew up with," Spielberg said.

The director also experienced anti-Semitism as a teen-ager in an affluent part of northern California.

"I was physically abused. I was beaten up," he said. "At one point it became so bad that I had to stop going to physical education because most of the abuse happened then. And that's when I was struck many times and knocked down."

"I mean I am not feeling sorry for myself when I say this, it was just an experience I wasn't prepared for," he said.

When Spielberg proposed making this film, a

studio executive suggested that the director make a donation to a Holocaust museum and save the distributor grief.

"I felt that was a message," he said. "That was sort of a very, very quiet message to be passed on to me, which kind of capped my resolve to make the movie immediately."

The birth of Spielberg's son in 1985 led him to re-examine Judaism and to a road that also led to "Schindler's List."

"When I began to read books to him, I had to make a choice," he said. "Do I read books about Santa Claus or do I read books about Moses and Abraham and Isaac?"

"I made a very strong choice to raise him Jewish with my first wife, Amy Irving, who was half-Jewish," he said.

Spielberg's second wife, Kate Capshaw, converted to Judaism.

"Her conversion was a beautiful experience for all of us because I studied along with her," the director said. "She studied and I was the beneficiary of everything that she was learning that I had forgotten."

"I re-emerged (to Judaism), I would say, through the birth of my children and through a decision I had to make about how I was going to raise them."

Hollywood Didn't Make Films About Jews

"I think that's what led me, that and events around the world, very naturally and I think in a very smooth way, to the decision to make 'Schindler's List,'" he said.

When Spielberg began to look for movies to inspire him as he prepared to tell Oskar Schindler's story, he could not find any.

"It occurred to me that the predominant number of studio heads in the golden era of Hollywood were all Jews," Spielberg said.

"But they did not produce movies of the Jewish race, religion or culture or tradition. I also understood that they did struggle between the Jewish culture and race and the American culture and race, and they chose being American with fierce determination. And all I can say is that it's reflected in their choices of movies they didn't make," he said.

To prepare himself for "Schindler's List," the director turned to documentaries that chronicled the Holocaust.

"Documentaries were my only source of inspiration, because Hollywood flees from subjects like this," he said. "They always have and they still do."

Spielberg's \$23 million film will premiere Dec. 15 in 12 American and Canadian cities.

"I hope that people will say, 'Yes, I've heard of the Holocaust but I never knew anything about the Holocaust and now, maybe, I know more than I wanted to, but I feel I need to tell my children,'" he said.

Spielberg also hopes people will feel compelled "to be active in remembering -- not just on Jewish holidays and not just on the anniversaries of the Shoah," but constantly, he said.

"I am not saying that to devote your life to the Holocaust is a definition of being Jewish," he said. "I don't believe that."

"I think every human being owes a moral debt to the past, so that events that are happening as we sit right now, in Bosnia and with the Kurds, and just the heinousness of what could take place in the future, is at least given some serious time and attention."