

**SIGNING OF ISRAELI-VATICAN PACT OPENS  
A NEW CHAPTER IN CATHOLIC-JEWISH TIES**

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, Dec. 30 (JTA) -- The signing of an accord between Israel and the Vatican this week opens a new chapter in the nearly 2,000-year-old history of Jewish-Catholic ties, a relationship that has often been characterized by mistrust and hostility.

The agreement, which for the first time establishes formal diplomatic relations between the two governments, cites the "unique nature of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people, and of the historic process of reconciliation and growth in mutual understanding and friendship between Catholics and Jews."

The agreement includes a mutual commitment to combat anti-Semitism, racism and religious intolerance, as well as a pledge by the State of Israel to continue to respect and protect Catholic sacred places.

One of the document's 15 points expands on the Vatican's position on anti-Semitism.

"The Holy See takes this occasion to reiterate its condemnation of hatred, persecution and all other manifestations of anti-Semitism directed against the Jewish people and individual Jews anywhere, anytime and by anyone," it states.

"In particular, the Holy See deplores attacks on Jews and desecration of Jewish synagogues and cemeteries, acts which offend the memory of the victims of the Holocaust," the document says.

At the signing ceremony in Jerusalem on Thursday, Israel's deputy foreign minister, Yossi Beilin said, "Behind the agreement there are thousands of years of history full of hatred, of fear and ignorance, with a few islands of understanding, of cooperation and of dialogue."

"Behind the agreement there are very few years of light and many more years of darkness," said Beilin, who signed the agreement with Monsignor Claudio Celli, the Vatican's undersecretary of state for foreign affairs.

**'Climate Has Changed Dramatically'**

Jewish and Catholic leaders said the accord will have a profound impact on every aspect of the relationship between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people, from political to interreligious.

"The climate has changed dramatically already" as a result of the accord, said Cardinal John O'Connor, archbishop of New York and a leading behind-the-scenes voice who for years lobbied within the church for the Vatican to establish formal diplomatic ties with Israel.

"Israel is a kind of concrete embodiment of the great spirit of Judaism and is the representation of Jews throughout the world, a people that has been persecuted and dispersed, sometimes by Catholics," O'Connor said Thursday.

"This accord says that the church regrets any of this kind of thing (anti-Jewish attitudes) from the past and pleads that there be none such in the future," he said at a news conference.

The Vatican now expects to play a more prominent role in the effort to create peace between the Jewish state and the Palestinians and on negotiations over the future of Jerusalem.

In the accord, the Holy See reserves to

speak out as "a moral voice," but agrees to remain "a stranger to all merely temporal conflicts," specifically those related to "disputed territories and unsettled borders."

In Jerusalem, Beilin said the Vatican had expressed interest in taking part in the five multilateral working groups of the Middle East peace process that are dealing with such regional issues as water resources, refugees, arms control, the environment and economic cooperation.

At a reception following the news conference at O'Connor's residence, Israel's consul general in New York, Colette Avital, said she believed that the Vatican would be invited to send an observer to those multilateral talks.

Israel is also looking to the Vatican to "help promote peace among Christian Palestinians," she said.

"This constitutes a formalization of the moral presence of the church in Israel," said O'Connor. "Its very presence will affect the peace process because many Palestinians are Christians."

**Status Of Jerusalem Unresolved**

According to Monsignor Celli, not yet resolved is the status of Jerusalem.

We need "an international warranty in order to protect, to save, to recognize (the uniqueness) of the city for the three monotheistic religions," he said Thursday.

Also remaining unresolved is the location of the Vatican's Embassy in Israel.

The Vatican expects to establish it in Tel Aviv, possibly in Jaffa, a municipality outside Tel Aviv that is home to a large Arab population.

The accord was signed in Jerusalem with little fanfare, and the simple ceremony there concluded with the lifting of glasses of champagne.

A toast to Israel and the Vatican was also offered in New York by O'Connor at a small reception attended by representatives of Jewish and Catholic groups that had long been working with him on the issue.

O'Connor raised his glass to the future relationship between the two faith communities as he stood before a portrait of John Paul II and a gilded, red-velvet throne reserved for the pope in case he should visit.

Similar ceremonies involving Israeli officials and local Jewish and Catholic leaders took place in Washington and a handful of other cities around the United States.

The Synagogue Council of America, an umbrella group representing the three largest denominations of Judaism, issued a joint statement hailing the agreement with the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

"While we recognize that the accord which has just been signed is simply a preliminary agreement and many complex problems need yet to be resolved, we are convinced that it will bring rich rewards," the statement said.

"It demonstrates that dialogue and an attempt to achieve mutual understanding and regard may be translated into political action and reality and lay the ground work for a more peaceful world."

(Contributing to this report was JTA correspondent Cynthia Mann in Jerusalem.)

# ARAFAT NEGATIVE ON DRAFT ACCORD, BUT ISRAELIS ARE NOT GIVING UP HOPE

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Dec. 30 (JTA) -- Yasser Arafat has been sending out negative signals about the draft accord on security issues hammered out this week by Israeli and Palestinian negotiators trying to implement the first stage of autonomy in the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank.

But Israeli officials are refusing to be drawn into the Palestine Liberation Organization leader's talk of a crisis in the negotiations.

Officially, senior government officials are voicing disappointment over Arafat's failure, at least so far, to endorse the accord hammered out this week between Israeli and PLO negotiators in Egypt.

But privately, they are adopting a low-key, strong-nerved posture.

The basic attitude within the government continues to be optimism that the negotiations will eventually end in success, despite the difficulties.

As of late Thursday evening, Arafat had not formally rejected the draft accord.

But a bad sign was the failure of Egyptian Foreign Minister Amre Moussa to fly to Israel after talks in Cairo early Thursday between Arafat and President Hosni Mubarak. Moussa had been expected to fly here to report on the meeting.

PLO negotiator Yasser Abed Rabbo told reporters that Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres had "exaggerated" by describing the draft as an agreement when in fact Israel had "dictated" the terms.

The draft accord, reached by teams led by Peres and PLO negotiator Mahmoud Abbas in three days of strenuous negotiations, lays down detailed arrangements for the border crossing-points between the Palestinian self-governing areas of Jericho and Gaza, and the states of Jordan and Egypt respectively.

## A Shared Post With Separate Windows

According to widespread reports here, the draft accord calls for a shared post, with separate Palestinian and Israeli windows. Residents of the West Bank and Gaza Strip passing through the checkpoint would submit their documents at both windows. The Palestinian window would be flanked by the PLO flag and a Palestinian officer; the Israeli window would be similarly demarcated.

Most travelers would be checked electronically. Israeli-requested searches of Palestinians would be conducted by a Palestinian, with an Israeli border officer present. Both Palestinians and Israelis would have the right to demand identification from travelers and veto their entry.

The agreement reportedly specifies the size of the Jericho enclave as some 21 square miles, from Deir el-Kuruntul to the west of Jericho and Mahru Musa Alami to the east.

Despite the uncertain status of the draft accord, further Israeli-Palestinian discussions on security are expected to continue at the subcommittee level, most likely beginning Sunday.

But there is no sign yet that a summit meeting between Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is in the offing.

Peres reportedly insisted to the Egyptians, who are playing the role of intermediary, that there can be no such summit unless and until all the main issues of dispute are resolved.

# THREE HEAVILY ARMED INTRUDERS KILLED BY IDF AT NORTHERN BORDER

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Dec. 30 (JTA) -- Three heavily armed gunmen broke through Israel's northern border early Thursday morning, only to be killed by Israeli soldiers who rushed to the scene.

At least a dozen Palestinian terrorists have been killed in infiltration attempts since Israel signed its accord with the Palestine Liberation Organization in September. This was the first attack to have breached the fence lining the Israeli-Lebanese border.

Several Palestinian groups opposed to the deal claimed responsibility for the attack, with Fatah Uprising saying its men had stormed Kibbutz Dan and inflicted casualties before they were killed.

According to Israeli sources, the three gunmen crossed the border near the kibbutz, located in the foothills of Mount Hermon.

Israeli troops detected the breach, and located the infiltrators before they had gone more than a few yards.

The gunmen opened fire with shoulder-held rockets and the Israelis returned the fire from about 15 feet away.

The sharp firefight was over within seven minutes. The Israeli paratroopers overcame the infiltrators with a volley of grenades, killing them all. There were no Israeli casualties.

Later in the day, an Israeli soldier was lightly injured in a rocket and mortar attack on the security zone north of the border with Lebanon.

Two Israeli helicopters reportedly struck back north of the zone. One reportedly fired air-to-ground missiles at a vehicle towing a power generator, killing the driver.

The pilots may have thought it was a rocket launcher.

Another helicopter was said to have fired at a three-story building in a village in the zone's central sector, damaging the building and killing an occupant.

After visiting the site of the predawn infiltration, Maj. Gen. Yitzhak Mordechai, commander of the northern region, said that there was no doubt that the terrorists had planned to attack an Israeli settlement close to the border area.

Towns and settlements in the north had been put on alert as soon as the breach in the border fence was discovered.

Wide sweeps on both sides of the border found no further infiltrators in the area.

## ISRAEL GIVES SINAI ARTIFACTS TO EGYPT

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Dec. 30 (JTA) -- Two truckloads of antiquities excavated in Sinai by Israeli archaeologists between 1967 and 1982 were returned to Egypt this week, under an agreement reached last year between the two countries' archaeological authorities.

The transfer, to be completed by the end of 1994, is to include all antiquities found in Sinai in the 15 years the peninsula was in Israeli hands.

The artifacts were accepted at a ceremony in Jerusalem by Egyptian Antiquities Department curator Mohammed Abed el Maksud. "The return of the antiquities shows enlightened and cultured behavior on the part of Israel. We are dealing with our Israeli colleagues as friends," he said.

# **JUSTICE DEPARTMENT RESUMES BATTLE TO OUST DEMJANJUK FROM UNITED STATES** By Steven Wells

WASHINGTON, Dec. 30 (JTA) -- The Justice Department has resumed its legal battle against John Demjanjuk with full force, filing motions in two Ohio federal courts against the man once accused of being Nazi death camp guard "Ivan the Terrible."

In one motion, the Justice Department is appealing a court order that overturned the extradition of Demjanjuk to Israel. In another motion, the department is seeking to reopen the denaturalization case against the Cleveland auto-worker.

"Our objective is still to bring about Mr. Demjanjuk's prompt removal from the United States," Attorney General Janet Reno said in a statement Thursday.

"We want there to be no doubt," she said, "that Mr. Demjanjuk served in Nazi death camps and concealed that fact when he applied to become a U.S. citizen."

Jewish groups have fought strenuously against Demjanjuk's return to the United States after Israel's Supreme Court ruled in July that there was insufficient proof that he was the sadistic gas chamber operator at Treblinka known as "Ivan." In doing so, the court overturned his death sentence and cleared the way for his return to Israel.

"We are very pleased" at the Justice Department's decision, said Elan Steinberg, executive director of the World Jewish Congress. He said it was expected in light of the Justice Department's written promise to pursue the case "vigorously."

"We hope that today's filing will mark the beginning of the final chapter on the long road to justice in this case," said Rabbi Marvin Hier, dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

## **To Be Heard Before Entire Appeals Court**

The Justice Department asked the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati for a rehearing on its decision to revoke the 1986 extradition order that sent Demjanjuk to Israel.

That decision, made in November by a three-judge panel of the appeals court, also accused the Justice Department of committing fraud on the court by not submitting documents that cast doubt on Demjanjuk's identity.

Jewish groups had called that decision "a tragedy" and urged Reno to appeal it immediately.

The matter will now be heard before the entire appeals court.

The Anti-Defamation League filed a brief Thursday in support of the Justice Department's appeal. Among those joining the ADL in filing the brief were the American Jewish Congress, Hadasah, Jewish War Veterans and the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism.

The government also asked the U.S. District Court in Cleveland to reopen denaturalization proceedings against Demjanjuk, who is now 73.

The Jewish Telegraphic Agency learned that the Justice Department's motion asked the court to reaffirm Demjanjuk's denaturalization based on evidence that he served as a guard at the Nazi training camp in Trawniki, Poland.

Jewish groups claim Demjanjuk was a guard at other Nazi camps despite doubts about the evidence that he was at Treblinka. Israel's Supreme Court found compelling evidence he was an SS guard at Sobibor, Flossenburg and Regensburg.

# **SHUL IN MOSCOW IS DESTROYED BY A FIRE OF UNKNOWN ORIGINS** By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Dec. 30 (JTA) -- The Marina Roscha synagogue in Moscow, an institution run for decades by the Chabad movement of Lubavitcher Chasidim, has been totally destroyed by a fire of unknown origins.

But the Holy Ark and Torah scrolls were left intact, the synagogue's rabbi reported by telephone from Moscow.

Rabbi Berel Lazar declared the destruction of the wooden synagogue as "total besides a few miracles here and there. I mean, the main miracle is that the sifrei kodesh (sacred books) and Torahs are completely untouched."

He said there were about 30 fire engines and "hundreds of firefighters" trying to extinguish the blaze, which began around 3 a.m. Moscow time Thursday.

There was some speculation that the blaze could have been caused by an electrical problem. The Moscow Fire Department and police said it was impossible to determine the cause of the blaze at this time, Lazar said.

"By the time I got there, the flame was all around the building. In my life I never saw such kind of fire," he said.

He said people came from all around and stood in sadness and shock staring at the devastation.

The rabbi strongly credited the firefighters for their efforts over four hours of hard work but said it was obviously a lost cause from the beginning.

"We offered the fire people a lot of money to try to save the Torahs and they said, 'You can give us a million dollars and we wouldn't go in there. It would be too late.'

"Somehow that part of the building was not damaged," said Lazar, who believes it was a sign from God.

Other than that, he said, "part of the building is ashes, part is completely chaos." Most of the religious books were burnt, except for those by the Ark.

Lazar said Moscow government officials have been very accommodating about the problem of rebuilding, offering to cut through bureaucratic red tape to permit reconstruction to start immediately.

"There was nobody, thank God, in the building" when the fire broke out, the rabbi said. "There were some people sleeping in some trailers," he said of the mobile vans outside, which accommodate visitors from out of town.

The synagogue, built in 1926, is believed to be the only Jewish sanctuary in Russia built after the Russian Revolution.

"Every Chasid who came out of Russia came out of that shul," Lazar said.

He said the congregants, many of them old and veterans of the synagogue, determined they would go on praying there no matter what. "The old, the young, everyone said we would have a minyan this Shabbat," he said.

Lazar appealed to world Jewry for help in rebuilding. "Especially the people who visited this shul realize its importance and should help us put it back up," he said.

**REMINDER: The JTA Daily News Bulletin will not be published Monday, Jan. 3.**

# **RABBI MARSHALL MEYER DEAD AT 63; RELIGIOUS AND HUMAN RIGHTS LEADER**

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Dec. 30 (JTA) -- Marshall Meyer, a charismatic Conservative rabbi who invigorated Jewish religious life and championed human rights causes in both Buenos Aires and New York, died Wednesday at New York Hospital.

The 63-year-old rabbi suffered from liver cancer and had recently undergone surgery in an unsuccessful attempt to stem the illness.

Meyer, a man with a fiery oratorical style who involved himself in progressive and sometimes controversial causes, energized Jewish religious life and human rights activities in the Argentine capital, where he served for 25 years, and then at Congregation B'nai Jeshurun on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

He transformed the old New York synagogue from a moribund congregation mainly attracting older area residents to an "in" spot that continues to draw hundreds of Sabbath worshippers each Friday evening, many in their 20s and 30s.

Hella Moritz, a active member of the congregation, recalled going there shortly after he took up the pulpit in 1985. "There were about 40 old people in a dark synagogue," she said. "He made it into a place full of life and aspirations."

Meyer, a native of Brooklyn, was raised in Norwich, Conn. He attended Dartmouth College, Columbia University and Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and received his rabbinical ordination in 1958 from the Jewish Theological Seminary.

A one-time personal secretary of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, the Conservative luminary and civil rights leader, he also served as special counsel to the chancellor of JTS. In recent years, he taught religion at both Yale and Harvard universities.

On beginning his rabbinical position at B'nai Jeshurun, Meyer stressed the need of the synagogue to work within the greater community, Meyer said, "It would be the irony of ironies to be totally concerned with that which is Jewish."

"A community that is only able to speak out when confronted with anti-Semitism" and not when the rights of other community members are threatened "loses its right to speak," he said.

Meyer hosted Jewish-Palestinian dialogues at the synagogue, often having a Palestinian speaker at Saturday morning services.

He also got involved in the issue of sanctuary for Central American refugees and in the battle to combat homelessness.

## **Spoke Out Against 'Dirty War'**

And he fostered a proud gay and lesbian community at the synagogue, prompting one gay leader there to say, "I must be the first Jew to be 'outed' by my own rabbi."

Meyer went to Argentina in 1959, where he initially had a position as an assistant rabbi in a German Jewish synagogue in Buenos Aires.

What was to be a short-term assignment turned into a 25-year stay in that country, during which he led Congregation Bet El from a synagogue in a private home with 30 worshippers to Argentina's largest Conservative congregation.

Under his leadership, the synagogue grew to more than 1,000 families, had its own school system and summer camp, and sent thousands of youths on aliyah.

During his years in Argentina, Meyer witnessed the savage brutality of both the extreme

right and left and of the military regimes that followed the collapse of Maria Estela ("Evita") Peron's government in 1976.

He became an outspoken critic of the military regime when the so-called "Dirty War" was raging and tens of thousands of people were disappearing, most not to be heard from again.

Meyer also served as spiritual adviser to imprisoned newspaper editor Jacobo Timerman, a secular Jew who had been incarcerated and tortured for his human rights writings and activities.

Meyer's activities thrust him into national prominence. In 1984, he was one of two Jews appointed by then-President Raul Alfonsin to a 16-member government investigative body that looked into the disappearances and provided evidence at the military leaders' trials.

Meyer also worked at transforming Jewish life, not only in Argentina but in all Latin America. In 1962, he founded the Rabbinical Seminary for Latin America, the only Conservative rabbinical seminary in Latin America. He served as the institution's rector.

Between his careers in Buenos Aires and New York, Meyer served for a year as vice president of the University of Judaism in Los Angeles, the West Coast branch of JTS.

## **JEWISH GROUPS PRESS CLINTON ON HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR'S CASE**

By Steven Weiss

WASHINGTON, Dec. 30 (JTA) -- A broad coalition of Jewish groups has asked President Clinton to press German officials on the case of Hugo Princz, a Holocaust survivor denied reparations payments because he was an American citizen during World War II.

Leaders of 12 Jewish organizations signed a letter to Clinton asking him to raise the matter with German Chancellor Helmut Kohl at the NATO summit in Brussels scheduled for mid-January.

"Germany's failure to accept financial responsibility to Mr. Princz simply because of his American citizenship is a serious injustice," the letter reads.

The letter, dated Dec. 27, calls for Clinton's "personal intervention" in order to "produce some tangible measure of relief for Mr. Princz's suffering."

Princz, 70, spent three years at the Auschwitz and Dachau concentration camps during World War II. He is the only member of his immediate family who survived Nazi internment.

German authorities have denied him reparations payments for over 40 years because, as an American citizen, he did not meet the German government's requirement that recipients be "stateless."

Several members of Congress have come to Princz's aid.

The Senate passed a resolution in November urging Clinton and Secretary of State Warren Christopher to discuss the matter with the German government.

A companion resolution was introduced in the House of Representatives in November. The House will consider the resolution when it returns from its winter recess.

Bill Marks, an attorney representing Princz without fees, said that efforts have been raised in recent weeks to call the administration's attention to the case.

"The administration is committed to bringing this man a measure of justice," Marks said.