

PERES SAYS JORDAN HAS AGREED TO A JOINT ECONOMIC CONFERENCE

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Feb. 2 (JTA) -- In another sign that Israel and Jordan may be developing closer ties, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said this week that Jordan had agreed to the idea of hosting a joint economic conference in Jordan later this year.

"I think this may crown a very long list of negotiations between us and them, and though it will not be a formal peace, it will be really the closest thing to having peace," Peres said Wednesday in an address at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy here.

Peres said the Jordanians had agreed to the idea of such a conference, but had yet to specify a date.

A Jordanian spokeswoman was more cautious Wednesday, saying that Jordan was still considering the idea of an economic conference, which had been suggested by Israel, and had not yet made a decision.

"We are looking into it. We haven't ruled it out, we haven't taken any decision," the spokeswoman said.

Peres said that the Jordan River Valley that lies between the two countries "can become a valley of peace."

He said that economic development there would help Israel, Jordan and the Palestinians.

Encourage Jews And Arabs To Invest

The foreign minister's comments came just a week after Jordan's King Hussein, also visiting here, spoke of future cooperation between Israel and Jordan, and said he would be interested in meeting soon with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

During his visit here, Peres met with top administration officials and members of Congress.

On Wednesday, he met with Vice President Al Gore and with National Security Adviser Tony Lake.

A statement released by the vice president's office on Wednesday said that Gore had "solicited Foreign Minister Peres' views on the status of negotiations" between Israel and the PLO.

The two men also discussed the Builders for Peace project launched last September and designed to encourage American Jews and Arab Americans to invest jointly in the administered territories.

Peres also attended a luncheon on Capitol Hill with about 20 members of Congress, organized by Sen. Howard Metzenbaum (D-Ohio).

On Tuesday, Peres briefed Secretary of State Warren Christopher on his meeting with Arafat. The two also discussed the peace process.

State Department spokesman Mike McCurry was vague Wednesday when asked by reporters whether Peres had discussed Arafat's views on a future Palestinian state.

Peres reportedly told Israeli reporters Tuesday that Arafat had said in Switzerland that he would lead toward a confederation with Jordan, not toward an independent Palestinian state.

The question of the shape of a future Palestinian entity has long been controversial.

RIGHT-WING TSOMET PARTY SPLITS; NEW PARTY MAY JOIN RABIN COALITION

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Feb. 2 (JTA) -- The Rabin government's shaky coalition may stand a little firmer, following a split within Israel's second-largest opposition party, Tsomet.

Three of Tsomet's eight Knesset Members announced Wednesday the creation of a new party, Ya'ad.

The three denied they were negotiating a possible entry into the Labor-led coalition. But they did not rule out that option in the future.

The split follows weeks of acrimonious dispute between Tsomet's popular leader, Rafael Eitan, and the three Knesset members, Gonen Segev, Esther Salmovitz and Alex Goldfarb.

The three have been demanding that an outside investigator be brought in to investigate alleged mismanagement of Tsomet's funds and that the party's secretary-general, Doron Shmueli, step down pending the results of the investigation.

But Eitan has repeatedly turned down their demands.

Ya'ad, or Destination, is a Hebrew acronym for Yisrael Atzma'it Demokratit -- Independent and Democratic Israel.

Major Blow To The Opposition

The three defecting Knesset members said Eitan's refusal to suspend the secretary-general and allow an inquiry was incomprehensible, and in the end left them no choice but to secede.

Political observers here are describing the split within Tsomet as a major blow to the opposition -- an assessment that will have even greater substance if the three Tsomet defectors join the governing coalition.

But even if they do not join the coalition, say these observers, they will be unlikely to back any opposition calls for early elections. As first-term, relatively unknown Knesset members, they will need time to build up their names and reputations in the public mind before any new elections.

Labor Party sources said that unofficial contacts are proceeding with the three.

The sources noted that Ya'ad, if it joins the coalition, would be entitled to a seat at the Cabinet table.

There is even talk of handing the health portfolio -- about to be given up by Haim Ramon following a dispute over national health legislation -- to Segev, who is a medical doctor by training.

The split is a severe blow for the staunchly nationalistic Tsomet Party -- and an ironic one as well, especially since the party was founded, and scored a massive electoral success in the 1992 elections, on a platform that stressed above all else clean politics and accountability.

Political observers say the split is attributable to Eitan's inability to live comfortably with his subordinates.

Since the former military chief of staff doffed his uniform and entered politics in the early 1980s, his story has been studded with noisy and bitter quarrels.

After uniting his Tsomet party with the similarly right-wing Tehiya party, he clashed

publicly with Tehiya leader Geula Cohen and ran separately for the 1988 Knesset elections.

And even before this latest defection by his party members, Eitan has clashed with other members of Tsomet.

"He's a great general and a charismatic man," said a neighbor of Eitan's living in the settlement of Tel Adashim. "But he can't get on with the people under him."

KAHANE CHAI MEMBERS ARRESTED FOR TRYING TO OCCUPY ARAB HOMES By Cynthia Mann and David Landau

JERUSALEM, Feb. 2 (JTA) -- Eleven right-wing activists from the Kahane Chai group were arrested this week for trying to occupy homes in an Arab village close to the Jewish settlement of Kfar Tappuah.

The arrests took place Tuesday night after the members of Kahane Chai, a group opposed to the Rabin government's peace initiatives, attempted to use the Arab homes as the basis of a settlement of their own.

Kfar Tappuah, located east of Tel Aviv, was slated to be the next site for a new settlement to be built by the settlers group Zu Artzeinu, or This Is Our Land.

The group has been engaged in a campaign to establish 130 new settlements throughout the territories -- thereby effectively doubling the current number of settlements -- to protest the Israeli-PLO self-rule accord signed in Washington last September.

Members of This Is Our Land had made plans to set up a settlement in Kfar Tappuah in cooperation with its residents.

But David Romanoff, spokesman for This Is Our Land, sharply condemned the action of the Kahane Chai activists in Kfar Tappuah.

Romanoff said they had "completely fooled" him and had essentially taken over his own group's planned activities.

Against All Forms Of Violence

"We strongly object to this kind of activity and dissociate ourselves from those who took part in it," he said, maintaining that the group policy is to settle only state-owned or private Jewish lands, not Arab property.

Romanoff pointed out that the group is against all forms of violence.

Nonetheless, Romanoff added, the actions of the Kahane Chai group did not dissuade the members of This Is Our Land from their goal of "bringing the government down."

"This Is Our Land will absolutely continue its campaign against the government's policy of wholesale surrender of the land of Israel with non-violent protests and activities until its policy is brought to a complete halt," he said.

Dozens of members of Romanoff's group have been arrested since last week, when the campaign of erecting new settlements began.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin lashed out Wednesday evening at the Kahane Chai activists and other settler "extremists."

With his characteristic bluntness, Rabin referred to their "idiotic activities" and charged them with diverting the energies of Israeli security forces from fighting terrorism.

The government is determined to face down settler groups.

Clashes between settlers and Israeli security forces, replete with mass settler arrests, have

become an almost nightly occurrence. Police Commissioner Rafi Peled said earlier this week that the daily arrests of settlers may result in the overcrowding of jails.

But Peled said police authorities were prepared to continue the arrests -- and would set up special detention camps if the settlers persisted in their anti-government activities.

RABIN TELLS HADASSAH LEADERS TO IGNORE REMARKS DENIGRATING DIASPORA CHARITY By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Feb. 2 (JTA) -- Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin this week told 200 members of the board of Hadassah that their work was needed and appreciated. He urged them to ignore recent remarks by other Israeli officials that appeared to denigrate its value to Israeli society.

"Don't listen to some people here and there who don't understand the importance of Hadassah in Israel" and of the relationship "between Jewish communities all over the world and Israel," he said in an address Wednesday.

Rabin was referring to remarks made in recent weeks by Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin on the need to restructure Diaspora philanthropy. Beilin has called on Diaspora Jewry to focus more on the crisis in Jewish continuity back home and less on an increasingly wealthy Israel.

Without mentioning Beilin's name, Rabin called such remarks "noises" which do not represent "the position of the government of Israel."

"Don't pay any attention to youngsters who don't know about the real meaning of the (Israel-Diaspora) relationship," he said, provoking wry laughter. Beilin, 46, is considered a member of the young guard of Israel's leadership.

"We need you, we need your partnership," he said. "I will not be able to approach the U.S. Congress, the administration and the president and ask assistance if the Jewish community in the United States will not be in the lead of assistance to Israel."

In his speech, which focused heavily on the peace process, Rabin had harsh words for some of the settlers in the territories and for critics of the autonomy accord with the Palestinians who claim it is a security threat to Israel.

"If the only threat to Israel security were the Palestinians, I'd recommend a cut of 70 percent of the defense budget," Rabin said.

He said that under the agreement he would protect the Jewish settlers in the autonomous area as much as possible. At the same time, however, he blasted "some, not all," of the settlements which "don't contribute to Israel's security" and which have "no justification whatsoever."

"The way they were established creates problems for the (Israel Defense Force) and security forces" to protect them, he said.

"Only the IDF is protecting Israel, nobody else!" he said, adamantly.

Rabin also referred to the recent summit between President Clinton and Syrian President Hafez Assad, saying that, "unfortunately, I did not see a clear-cut sign" that Assad is ready for major steps toward a peace accord with Israel.

He said Assad has not done "3 percent" of what Egyptian President Anwar Sadat did "to convince Israelis he's really for peace."

But if and when an accord is signed with Syria calling for major territorial withdrawal, he would call for a national referendum on the issue.

FOCUS ON ISSUES:
**UJA PLOTS NEW COURSE FOR CAMPAIGN;
SHIFTS AWAY FROM ISRAEL AS 'CHARITY'**

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Feb. 2 (JTA) -- It is not hard to imagine the reaction at the headquarters of the United Jewish Appeal when word got back that Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin had told Diaspora Jews that their "charity" was no longer needed.

It is the UJA's job, after all, to raise the money for Israel that Beilin was appearing to denigrate, and to make sure that Israel's cause is heard amid the clamor of competing local Jewish needs.

At the same time, the thrust of Beilin's remarks -- at least as he clarified them after being called on the carpet by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin -- were remarkably compatible with the views of UJA's executive vice president, Rabbi Brian Lurie.

Lurie agrees that the idea of an impoverished Israel, totally dependent for survival on Diaspora largess, is both untrue to the facts and unfair to the real relationship between Israel and the Diaspora.

"We're dealing with a different kind of Israel," Lurie said in a recent interview.

"In the early 1950s, when the Israeli minister of finance used to come to the United States, his first stop was to the president of the UJA to find out when the next payment would be. UJA paid 30 percent of the Israeli budget," Lurie said.

The situation has changed.

"We're providing something important, but different. Israel is not a weak country. It's strong," said Lurie, noting the economic growth rate and the number of American companies interested in investing there.

And whatever the disagreement between Rabin and Beilin, the fact is, as Lurie noted, that when the prime minister addressed the Council of Jewish Federations in November, he called for a "new partnership" between Israel and the Diaspora.

UJA As 'Living Bridge'

Certainly, said Lurie, "There is a tremendous role for Jewish philanthropy in Israel. That hasn't ended."

Precisely how to calibrate the philanthropy into a new sort of partnership is something Lurie, a Reform rabbi and former head of the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, has been thinking about for a long time.

Now, Lurie, who came to the UJA in 1991, has a chance to put his ideas into play, as UJA gears up to launch its 1995 campaign in the late spring of this year.

The 1995 fund-raising drive will be the organization's first in several years not overshadowed by a "special campaign" to help Jews from the former Soviet Union and Ethiopia. Operation Exodus is scheduled to be completed by May and to have raised more than \$1 billion.

So instead of UJA as rescue squad, saving imperiled Jews around the planet, get ready for UJA as "the living bridge" between Israel and the Diaspora.

Lurie hopes the new metaphor will unite the disparate elements of UJA-funded activity -- and enable the organization to navigate the shifting currents of Israel-Diaspora relations.

The bridge is not just about money, said Lurie.

"It's a bridge of people coming in both directions, a bridge of ideas. It's really a bridge that has spirituality, that has sophistication, that has love, grace and dignity. Something to build the Jewish people. That's the bridge," he said.

Within the overall bridge metaphor, Lurie outlined five themes for campaign '95 and beyond, "five different, very tangible messages that all interrelate."

Israel as a charity case is not on the list of themes.

Two themes continue the Operation Exodus focus on Jews in the former Soviet Union.

First, the UJA will continue financing the emigration of Jews to Israel, estimated to continue at a rate of 70,000 a year.

Secondly, it will continue serving the hundreds of thousands of Jews who are expected to remain in the former Soviet Union, "allowing them to live out their years in dignity," in Lurie's words.

The American-Israeli component of the living bridge will be centered around "Partnership 2000," which seeks to revive the Project Renewal "twinning" system in which Diaspora communities work directly with Israeli communities in the Negev and Galilee to solve local programs.

Creating Jobs In Israel

Since the focus is being put as much on connection as on charity, the program will involve joint decision-making by the Israeli and American communities involved. There will be more of a "peer relationship" between the two groups than there was in Project Renewal, said Lurie.

And, reflecting comments by both Beilin and Rabin, the Partnership 2000 program will have an economic development component, underwriting programs to create jobs in Israel.

Unlike Project Renewal in the 1970s and 80s, Partnership 2000 is being planned not as a separate campaign, but will instead receive a percentage of a community's regular campaign, which will be "rebated" back to that community to underwrite its work in Israel.

While it is to be launched during the 1995 campaign, Partnership 2000 will be starting with a few communities and expanding over the next few years.

The final two themes move UJA past its traditional "overseas" focus to deal with issues of American Jewish continuity and identity.

One is promoting "the Israel experience," or educational trips to Israel. Lurie called this "a major building block in the annual campaign."

UJA is part of a consortium of groups hoping to raise the number of American Jewish youth traveling to Israel to 50,000 annually.

"Already we're putting a lot of money to play into this area; obviously that has to be sharpened and honed," said Lurie.

Finally, the bridge leads directly into Jewish continuity at home.

"If you believe in the Israel experience, you have to have something before and after, to prepare for the experience and to heighten it," said Lurie. "For the UJA, it means we have to take a hard look at what we're doing on campus."

At the same time, "we'll help local federations in publicizing concerns over continuity. It's the first time we've gotten involved in a domestic issue, but it's not really domestic, it's a worldwide Jewish issue."

**CLINTON PICK FOR CIVIL RIGHTS POST
IS WELCOMED BY JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS**
By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Feb. 2 (JTA) -- Jewish groups are responding in a low-key but positive way to President Clinton's decision to nominate Boston civil rights attorney Deval Patrick as assistant attorney general for civil rights.

Clinton named Patrick, 37, to head the Justice Department's civil rights division on Tuesday afternoon, eight months after withdrawing the nomination of controversial Professor Lani Guinier to the post.

Some in the Jewish community had raised initial concerns last spring about Guinier's positions on such issues as the Voting Rights Act. But they appeared to have no such qualms about Patrick.

"Deval Patrick is greatly respected in both the civil rights community and the general legal community," said Rabbi David Saperstein, head of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism.

Saperstein, who is heavily involved in civil rights issues, said he thought Patrick "would be a very strong appointment if confirmed."

Both Saperstein and Richard Foltin, who is legal director and counsel for the American Jewish Committee, said Patrick had worked with the Jewish community over the years.

Foltin said AJCommittee's Boston members "had good relations with him."

Robert Lifton, president of the American Jewish Congress, said his group "has seen no evidence that Mr. Patrick is an advocate of racial quotas," despite some critics' contentions.

"Mr. Patrick would bring a sharp mind and deep personal commitment to bear on the full range of issues which will come before the civil rights division," Lifton said in a statement.

Jess Hordes, Washington representative for the Anti-Defamation League, said it is important that an assistant attorney general for civil rights be in position "as soon as possible," to "combat bigotry" and work on other civil rights issues.

He said ADL would be closely following Patrick's confirmation hearings before the Judiciary Committee, including his views on race-based preferences, which ADL opposes.

Patrick previously worked for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund. He graduated from Harvard Law School in 1982.

**SENATE AMENDS PLO COMPLIANCE ACT
TO REFLECT NEW COMMITMENT TO PEACE**
By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Feb. 2 (JTA) -- In the wake of the historic Israeli-Palestinian peace accord last fall, the Senate voted last week to update a law dealing with the Palestine Liberation Organization's commitment to renouncing terrorism.

Both the original law and the new amendment require the administration to report periodically to Congress on PLO compliance with its pledges to renounce terrorism.

During consideration of the State Department authorization bill last Friday, the Senate voted to amend the PLO Commitments Compliance Act of 1989 sponsored by Sens. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) and Connie Mack (R-Fla.).

The amendment, also sponsored by Mack and Lieberman, ties the administration's report to commitments to renounce terrorism made by PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat last September.

Arafat pledged just before the historic Israeli-Palestinian signing ceremony that the PLO would renounce terrorism and recognize Israel.

"This time the PLO's commitments were not made in a vacuum, but in the context of the Israel-PLO declaration of principles and that handshake on the White House lawn," Mack said.

"This time, we have higher hopes that the PLO's commitments will be kept. But we must be no less vigilant," Mack told the Senate. The new amendment requires the administration to report to Congress every six months instead of three times a year. This change was made to link the report to recent legislation lifting some restrictions on U.S. dealings with the PLO for limited periods at a time.

**JUSTICE DEPARTMENT GIVES NEW EVIDENCE
OF WAR CRIMES AGAINST PHILADELPHIA MAN**

WASHINGTON, Feb. 2 (JTA) -- The Justice Department has presented new evidence of a Philadelphia-area man's alleged World War II atrocities against Jews in a new effort to withdraw his U.S. citizenship.

The man, Jonas Stelmokas, is a prominent member of Philadelphia's Lithuanian-American community and has lived in this country since 1949.

The Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations said evidence of Stelmokas' wartime crimes was so devastating that there should be no need for a denaturalization trial.

Justice Department documents filed Monday in U.S. District Court in Philadelphia charged that the 77-year-old Stelmokas, a retired architect, was a platoon commander of a Lithuanian police battalion involved in a so-called "cleansing" operation of the Jewish ghetto in Kaunas (Kovno) on Oct. 29, 1941.

The documents say that 9,200 Jews, almost half of them children, died in mass executions that took place that day.

OSI also charged that Stelmokas had been in the "chain of command" of a police unit involved in the mass executions of Jews in south-central Lithuania on Sept. 11 and 12, 1941; and that he was commander of Lithuanian guards in the Kovno Ghetto on Sept. 16 and 17, 1941 when his men shot at least seven Jews, two of them fatally.

The complaint also charged that Stelmokas was in the chain of command of a police unit that hunted Jews trying to escape from a labor camp in April 1944, in which at least one slave laborer was killed.

The Justice Department and U.S. Attorney Michael Baylson first charged Stelmokas with Nazi crimes in June 1992, saying he lied about his past when he applied for a U.S. visa in 1949 and for his American citizenship in 1954.

He was naturalized in 1955 and made no mention of any of the activities with which he has been charged in his sworn statement to a naturalization examiner.

OSI obtained its information from archives that the independent Lithuanian government made available to war-crimes investigators, from handwriting analysis and from an affidavit from Holocaust scholar Raul Hilberg.

In sworn testimony at his naturalization, Stelmokas said the only organization he belonged to before 1945 was the Lithuanian Boy Scouts.

On a 1951 form, he told the American Institute of Architects he had been a draftsman for the Kaunas health department from 1941 to 1943.