

**ARAFAT MEETS IN CAIRO WITH ISRAELI,
FIRST TALKS SINCE HEBRON KILLINGS**

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, March 7 (JTA) -- An Israeli official has met in Cairo with Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat, marking the first time the two sides have held talks since the Feb. 25 murders of Palestinian worshippers in Hebron.

An official close to Rabin confirmed that the secret talks were held Monday in the Egyptian capital in an effort to salvage the Israeli-PLO negotiations, which the Palestinians broke off abruptly after an Israeli settler killed more than 40 Palestinians at the Tomb of the Patriarchs.

Jacques Neriah, an adviser to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, presented Arafat with new proposals for security arrangements in the territories in light of the Hebron killings.

PLO sources in Tunis told Israel Radio on Monday they expect an Israeli minister to meet with Arafat within a day or two.

But Israel Radio also reported that Arafat, following a meeting with Egyptian Foreign Minister Amre Moussa, reiterated that the PLO will not resume talks with Israel until the U.N. Security Council issues a condemnation of the Hebron murders.

At the United Nations, Israeli sources said the resolution remains stalled over the Palestinian insistence that the resolution be specifically worded to call for an armed international presence in the territories.

The sources said the Palestinians are also demanding that Jerusalem be specifically mentioned in reference to the territories.

The United States, which has veto power over any Security Council resolution, is supporting Israeli opposition to these two points.

Rabin Standing Firm

Rabin is meanwhile standing firm against the PLO demand for an armed international force in the territories to protect Palestinians living there.

Speaking at Hebrew University on Monday, Rabin said he believes an armed presence in the territories would run counter to agreements already negotiated with the PLO and would cast doubt on any agreements reached with them in the future.

The self-rule accord signed last September includes a provision for the placement of international observers in the territories, but not for an armed presence.

In the wake of the Feb. 25 killings of Palestinians at a Hebron mosque, the PLO has repeatedly called for an armed international presence in the territories. The PLO has also called for the removal of settlements in Hebron and for the disarming of all settlers throughout the territories.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said Monday that Israel would agree to the temporary presence of observers in the territories, from nations that have offered financial assistance to the future Palestinian autonomous area.

Peres also said time was of the essence to reach agreement with the PLO. He said the biggest contribution to changing the current climate of tension and mistrust would be implementation of the self-rule accord.

"Instead of opening the agreement, let's realize it, and then all of us will see we do not have an agreement about a piece of paper but we do have an agreement about a new reality," Peres told the Knesset.

Dr. Ahmed Tibi, an Israeli Arab who is an adviser to Arafat, disagreed that the PLO demands violate the Israeli-PLO agreement.

"President Arafat and the PLO leadership (are) committed to the peace process," Tibi said in remarks Monday at Hebrew University.

"We are not talking about opening agreements. We are talking about new circumstances that were created after the massacre," he said.

He argued that the most important issue is the security of the Palestinians and said this should be solved as soon as possible if the two sides are to return to the negotiating table.

Meanwhile, Israel Radio reported that PLO official Nabil Sha'ath announced that Britain and Norway are ready to participate in an international observer force stationed in the territories under U.N. auspices.

**HEBRON ERUPTS IN VIOLENCE AGAIN,
RESULTING IN MORE PALESTINIAN DEATHS**

JERUSALEM, March 7 (JTA) -- Clashes resulting in casualties erupted again this week in Hebron and elsewhere in the territories, part of the spiral of violence that has overtaken the West Bank and Gaza Strip since an Israeli settler gunned down Muslim worshippers at a Hebron mosque last month.

Israeli military sources confirmed that two Palestinians were fatally shot Monday in Hebron by Israeli soldiers who were responding to attacks from rock-throwing Palestinian demonstrators.

The situation was not much better elsewhere in the territories.

At least 15 other Palestinians were reported injured the same day in clashes with Israeli forces in the West Bank town of Bethlehem and throughout the Gaza Strip.

The incidents took place during a suspension of the curfew which the Israel Defense Force clamped on the territories in wake of the Feb. 25 massacre at the Tomb of the Patriarchs.

A photographer for the Associated Press said he was shot in the leg with a plastic bullet fired by an Israeli soldier while he was taking pictures at a refugee camp in Gaza. The IDF was reported to be investigating the charge.

Meanwhile, Israel Television reported that the military wing of the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas movement has issued a warning to Jewish settlements in the Hebron area to evacuate the region by March 15 or expect attacks in revenge for the Hebron massacre.

That warning came a day after Israeli Cabinet ministers called for the forcible dismantling of Jewish settlements in Hebron.

PLO OFFICIAL URGING EUROPE TO SUPPORT INTERNATIONAL PRESENCE IN TERRITORIES

By Joseph Kopel

BRUSSELS, March 7 (JTA) -- The chief of the Palestine Liberation Organization's information department is visiting European capitals, where he is trying to enlist support for the PLO's demand for an armed international presence in the territories.

Yasser Abed Rabbo was in the Belgian capital last Friday, and after meeting with the Belgian State Secretary for Cooperation, Erik Derycke, Rabbo spoke with reporters.

"We are demanding an effective international presence in the occupied territories to ensure the security of the Palestinian population and the disarming of the settlers," Rabbo said.

Rabbo said at the news conference that the PLO demand was not a precondition for resuming negotiations with Israel.

"It's a demand which is serving the interest of both parties," he stressed. "As long as armed settlers will do the job of army patrols, there will be a danger."

According to Rabbo, "the international presence should be U.N.-mandated and supported by the peace process sponsors (the United States and Russia) and by the European Union."

Referring to the Feb. 25 mass murder of at least 40 Palestinians at a Hebron mosque, Rabbo said, "This massacre has proven that it is impossible to envisage a Palestinian autonomy if groups of armed terrorists continue to have the right to kill."

Derycke told reporters that the Belgian government, which supports a U.N. presence in the territories, had asked the European Union's Council of Ministers to discuss the issue.

The discussion could take place this week, when the 12 European Union Foreign Ministers gather in Brussels for their regular monthly meeting.

Greek Foreign Minister Karolos Papoulias, whose country recently assumed the presidency of the European Union, also supports the PLO's call for an armed international presence in the territories.

Papoulias met last week in Tunis with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat and this week is travelling in the Middle East.

"The European Union is going to study the means for creating an atmosphere of tranquility for the citizens of the occupied territories and take all measures to prevent the repetition of this massacre," Papoulias said this week in Amman, Jordan.

AS SHAS PREPARES TO RETURN TO CABINET, MERETZ ANGERED BY RABIN'S OVERTURES

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 6 (JTA) -- The fervently religious Shas Party has agreed to rejoin Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's governing coalition immediately.

An understanding to this effect was reached during a late-night meeting in Jerusalem on Saturday between Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and the spiritual leader of Shas, Rabbi Ovadia Yosef.

Shas left the coalition last fall, when its

political leader, former Interior Minister Aryeh Deri, was indicted on charges of bribery, fraud and breach of public trust.

On another coalition front, Rabin and his left-wing coalition partner Meretz locked horns Sunday over Rabin's desire to bring Rafael Eitan's right-wing Tsomet Party into the government.

Meretz's four ministers told Rabin over the weekend that they would resign if he began negotiating with Eitan.

Rabin, infuriated, shouted at Meretz leader Shulamit Aloni, the minister of communications, that he would negotiate despite her threats.

But political pundits were predicting late Sunday that the prime minister would have to back off because many within his own party are not prepared to see Meretz secede from the coalition.

Political observers said that Rabin and Eitan have been negotiating for months, but that recent events have given added impetus to their talks. The most important factor, they say, is that Rabin fears a wave of revenge attacks following the Feb. 25 killing of more than 40 Palestinians at a Hebron mosque, and that he wants to bolster his Cabinet ahead of time.

Meretz leaders said Rabin can take comfort from the fact that his "flirtation" with Eitan hastened Shas' return to the coalition.

It is not known whether Shas will rejoin before Rabin's coming visit to the United States, scheduled for next week.

On Sunday, Yosef and Deri were said to be resolving the question of who will represent their party at the Cabinet table. Deri is barred from doing so because he is facing criminal proceedings.

Observers expected Shas Knesset member Rabbi Moshe Maya to take over the Religious Affairs Ministry, with a battle between Knesset members Yosef Azran and Shlomo Benizri over the Interior Ministry.

Rabin is currently holding those portfolios.

ISRAELI ARABS BOUND FOR SYRIA

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, March 6 (JTA) -- A group of 50 Israeli Arabs embarked on an unprecedented trip to Syria to pay condolences to Syrian President Hafez Assad.

Assad's son, Bassel, was killed in a car accident in January.

The delegation, which left on Sunday for a first stop in Cairo, included Knesset Member Abdul Wahab Darawshe, head of the Arab Democratic Party.

The trip had been scheduled for last week, but was postponed after the Feb. 25 murders of more than 40 Palestinians at a mosque in Hebron.

The trip is reported to be the first time Assad has given permission for a group of Israeli citizens to visit Syria.

The trip was complicated, however, by Syrian demands that the delegation not cross into Syria from the Golan Heights and that they not use Israeli passports.

Prior to the Hebron murders, Darawshe had said he would not be conveying any messages from the Israeli government to Assad. But, he added at the time, he hoped the visit would add to an "atmosphere of good will in the region."

COURT DECLINES REVIEW OF RULING ON DEMJANJUK

By Steven Weiss

WASHINGTON (JTA) -- A federal appeals court in Cincinnati has refused a Justice Department bid to reconsider its ruling allowing John Demjanjuk to remain in the United States.

In an opinion issued Feb. 24, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit let stand its decision, which overturned Demjanjuk's extradition.

The retired Cleveland auto worker was extradited to Israel from the United States in 1986 to stand trial for war crimes committed as the Treblinka gas chamber operator known as "Ivan the Terrible." He was convicted and sentenced to death in 1988.

But last July, the Israeli Supreme Court overturned the conviction, saying there was reasonable doubt that Demjanjuk was indeed the man known as "Ivan."

The Justice Department may appeal the decision to the Supreme Court within 90 days. But late last month, a Justice Department spokesman said no decision about an appeal had been reached.

The Cincinnati appellate court's decision reaffirms a ruling made in November, when a three-judge panel of the appellate court invalidated a 1985 order calling for Demjanjuk to be extradited to Israel.

In its November ruling, the panel charged that the Justice Department had committed fraud when it sought to obtain the extradition order by intentionally withholding evidence that cast doubt on Demjanjuk's identity.

The panel also charged that the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations, the group charged with investigating and prosecuting suspected war criminals, had bowed to pressure from Jewish interests, including the Anti-Defamation League, when it decided to prosecute the case.

The charges infuriated the ADL, which called the panel's conclusions "mind-boggling."

'We Expected No Better'

Jewish groups expressed displeasure with last month's ruling, which made no amendments to previous charges that the Justice Department had been swayed by Jewish interests.

"We expected no better from the (appeals) court," said Elan Steinberg, executive director of the World Jewish Congress.

The ADL also released a statement saying, "The court's decision fails to correct the factual misrepresentation of last November's ruling that a relationship with special interest groups such as ADL tainted OSI's handling of the case."

Jewish groups were also angered by the appellate court's refusal to adopt the conclusions of an independent judge assigned in June 1992.

The court had appointed U.S. District Judge Thomas Wiseman Jr. to serve as a special master to oversee the investigation into the OSI's actions. Wiseman later concluded that the Justice Department had not committed fraud in the case.

Weisman's conclusions ran counter to last month's court ruling on every charge.

The appellate court's findings caused some observers to question the impartiality of the court and of Chief Judge Gilbert Merritt.

"The 6th Circuit (Court of Appeals) obviously has a bias in this case," said one source familiar with the proceedings.

Steinberg said, "Merritt has acted more as a defense counsel for Demjanjuk than as a representative of the court."

The Israeli Supreme Court overturned the conviction last July, finding compelling evidence that Demjanjuk had served as an SS guard at the Sobibor death camp and at the Flossenburg and Regensburg concentration camps.

Demjanjuk returned to the United States and has reportedly lived in seclusion.

He may still be deported as a result of a 1981 ruling by U.S. District Judge Frank Battisti in Cleveland that stripped him of his citizenship.

Battisti found that Demjanjuk had lied about his past on his application for citizenship. He also found that Demjanjuk had served at the Trawniki and Treblinka death camps.

The Justice Department filed a motion with Battisti's court in December asking him to reaffirm his decision, a move that would provide the department's lawyers with additional ammunition in its case against Demjanjuk.

"We expect to get better results from (Battisti's) court," said Steinberg.

Meanwhile, Rep. Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.) sent a letter to Attorney General Janet Reno requesting an appeal of this latest decision.

"The evidence proves that Demjanjuk lied, that he was a Nazi and that he has no business being in this country," said Schumer.

LOSING BID, ROCHELLE MANNING FACES EXTRADITION TO U.S. TO STAND TRIAL

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, March 7 (JTA) -- The High Court of Justice has rejected a petition by Rochelle Manning, an American-born immigrant to Israel who sought to block her extradition to the United States to face murder charges.

Manning, a resident of the West Bank settlement of Kiryat Arba, cited religious reasons in her efforts to prevent extradition.

In its ruling, the Israeli court said it saw no reason to believe that her religious needs would not be met in American prisons.

Justice Minister David Libai had signed an extradition order against Manning in November.

Manning is to face trial in the United States in connection with a 1980 letter-bomb killing of a California secretary. Her previous trial ended in a hung jury.

Her husband, Robert Manning, was tried and convicted on Oct. 14 on the same charges by a Los Angeles jury. In February, he was sentenced to life imprisonment, without the possibility of parole for 30 years.

For years, the Mannings fought a U.S. extradition request to be tried for the murder of Patricia Wilkerson. She was killed while opening a booby-trapped parcel addressed to her employer.

Rochelle Manning's lawyer told the high court her husband had been denied kosher food in prison, that his teeth were damaged by improper nutrition and that other prison practices infringe on Orthodox standards of modesty.

But the court accepted the prosecution's claim that Robert Manning does get kosher food and that religious needs would be met.

**ISRAEL FAILING TO MEET CHALLENGE
OF SOVIET ALIYAH, SHARANSKY CHARGES**
By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM (JTA) -- Former refusenik Natan Sharansky firmly believes that the aliyah of a half-million immigrants from the former Soviet Union since 1989 constituted an unprecedented historic challenge -- one the Israeli government failed to meet.

Charging that Israel allowed the unique opportunities presented by the mass migration of Soviet Jewry to slip away, Sharansky said another million Jews in the former Soviet Union might make aliyah if they got the encouragement they need.

But the Israeli government has not understood the significance of events, he said, and has instead adopted a "business as usual" approach rather than offering a comprehensive vision for the absorption of the olim.

Sharansky spoke with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency at the Zionist Forum, an advocacy organization he heads for immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

He said the political and economic instability in the former Soviet Union presents Israel with a "window of opportunity" of historic proportions for absorbing more Russian immigrants.

But that instability in and of itself is insufficient to bring further waves of immigrants from the former Soviet Union, he said.

"After all," Sharansky noted wryly, Jews "know how to survive." They "can imagine it could be worse tomorrow.

"While at the same (time) that we keep having the desire and the dream of 'next year in Jerusalem,' we feel that life is full if it is a life among other people in the Diaspora. We feel very comfortable (there)," he said.

Thus, in spite of all the instability, the Jews of the former Soviet Union need some kind of incentive to come to Israel, Sharansky said.

Because of the reports prospective emigrants get from their families or friends already in Israel, "each day they're comparing why they should leave and why they should stay," he said.

Encouragement Could Change Everything

"That's why, in this unstable situation, when the arguments for and against (emigrating) have almost the same weight, one little argument from here (Israel), one more encouragement from here, can change everything," said Sharansky.

He noted that potential immigrants' biggest fears and uncertainties, based on the information they get, are whether they will be able to work in their professions and whether their children will integrate happily into Israeli schools.

For Sharansky, the core problem is the Israeli government's concept of absorption, although he does not blame Absorption Minister Yair Tsaban.

The activist said Tsaban has little power to fight Finance Minister Avraham Shohat and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who have maintained that successful absorption of the olim will occur as a natural byproduct of a healthy Israeli economy.

"That's what's good for a normal country," and would be appropriate for the absorption of 30,000 to 40,000 immigrants annually in Israel, according to Sharansky.

But "it's not good for a unique historical situation when (there was a) 10 percent increase in population in the space of three years," he said. "And it's not good for a Zionist state which has the aim of encouraging people to come as quickly as possible."

And it certainly will not succeed in drawing a significant percentage of the Jewish population of the former Soviet Union to Israel, he maintained, noting that the Israeli government has to develop a plan to encourage more people to come.

The plan, he said, should focus on specific concerns about jobs and schools and should recognize the unprecedented nature of this aliyah.

"After all, why are they making aliyah? Because of their children.

"But our leadership is not even thinking in these terms," he said.

"We will give them some money and they will take care of themselves," is how he described the official attitude of the Israeli government to the situation.

Sharansky said he was told by top officials as early as 1988 not to be concerned because the immigrants would be absorbed the way they were absorbed in the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s.

But the old models do not apply, he said.

At the heart of the matter, he stated, is the challenge to the "orthodox, fundamental concept of the Jewish state" that this aliyah poses.

Old Rules No Longer Apply

"After all," he said, "the idea with which the Jewish state was (founded) is that it was like a melting pot where a new type of Jew is born" after shedding his characteristics and identity from the Diaspora.

It meant that those who came here had to become Israelis as quickly as possible. While this may have been appropriate at the beginning of statehood, said Sharansky, it no longer applies.

"Thank God, we already exist and we are a nation which justifies its existence correctly as a continuation of the Jewish people," he said.

He noted that there is no longer "an absorption of Diaspora Jews by Israel, but a kind of synthesis, a mutual change of all of the Jewish world."

There is no doubt that the Jews from the former Soviet Union have to change, and they are changing, said Sharansky.

But, he said, Israeli society, whether it wants to or not, is also changing, and officials are resisting that change.

"That's why (officials) say, 'In the '50s it was like this, why should it be different now?' " he said.

But this aliyah is different, according to Sharansky, who said that it is not Zionist in nature.

Olim from the former Soviet Union are professionally strong and very ambitious, and Israelis, whether working in universities, hospitals, hotels or gas stations, feel the competition, he said.

"So the aliyah becomes threatening and is hard for (Israeli) society to accept," he said.

Sometimes "it is difficult not to despair," he said.

"But I hope that Am Yisrael, the Jews of the world, have much more inner power than their leaders (believe) they do," Sharansky said.