

**ISRAEL BEGINS WITHDRAWAL FROM GAZA WHILE EFFORTS TO RESUME TALKS GO ON**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 29 (JTA) -- Israel has begun the process of withdrawing from the Gaza Strip, even while Israeli and Palestinian officials continue in their efforts to restart the formal talks aimed at implementing Palestinian self-rule there.

In recent weeks, at least two bases belonging to the Israeli army and border police have been evacuated and their equipment and personnel relocated to positions behind the Green Line. Evacuation is also underway at other bases, where dozens of buildings have been trucked out of Gaza.

Army officials say that 70 percent of the evacuation has been completed, and that most of the rest could be concluded by mid-April.

Under the declaration of principles signed in Washington last September, the withdrawal was scheduled to begin Dec. 13 and conclude April 13. But the withdrawal has never formally begun because negotiations on the details of implementation have never been completed.

Completion of the withdrawal, according to the military, will require three to five weeks after Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization sign an implementation agreement.

The meetings in Cairo this week, meanwhile, were focused on the details of new security arrangements for the West Bank town of Hebron. These meetings were designed to resolve that issue in order to return both sides to the main talks on Palestinian self-rule that were suspended in the wake of the Hebron massacre Feb. 25.

Talks took place Tuesday under a cloud of Palestinian grief and outrage after six members of the PLO's Fatah faction were killed by Israeli undercover soldiers in Gaza's Jabalya refugee camp Monday night.

**'Not A Negotiation'**

This led PLO chairman Yasser Arafat to characterize Tuesday's Cairo meeting as "not a negotiation" but merely a response by the Israeli side to PLO questions posed earlier.

Nonetheless, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said in Jerusalem that he remained optimistic that an agreement would soon be reached on Hebron. Others in Jerusalem also remained optimistic that the talks could return soon to the issue of self-rule in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho, as agreed to last September.

Israeli sources have confirmed that the evolving agreement in Hebron provides for Norwegian and Red Cross observers -- their number still to be determined -- to take up positions in the city.

Israeli sources said that while there is agreement on a small Palestinian police force to be deployed in Hebron under partial authority of the Israeli army, there was still disagreement as to the force's size.

In Gaza and Jericho, Israel is likely to agree

to a police force of some 8,000 men. Israeli officials said Tuesday they are ready for an advance party of this force to enter the two areas as soon as next week.

The killings in Jabalya did seem to throw awry the two sides' intention to move from the Hebron issue straight into talks on self-rule.

Throughout Tuesday, serious violence swept the West Bank and parts of Gaza as young people took to the streets in a deliberate bid to seek confrontations with the army.

At Tuesday's negotiating session in Cairo, the atmosphere was distinctly cold and tense in the wake of the shooting the night before.

The Israeli team is led by the army's deputy chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Amnon Shahak and the director-general of the Foreign Ministry, Uri Savir.

The PLO delegation is headed by Nabil Sha'ath, who was quoted in interviews as referring to the shooting as "murder in cold blood."

PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, in a television interview, said the killing undermined Israel's contention that the Hebron massacre was an isolated case perpetrated by a lone settler.

**VIOLENCE ERUPTS IN TERRITORIES AGAIN, FOLLOWING KILLING OF SIX PALESTINIANS**

By Dvora Getzler and David Landau

JERUSALEM, March 29 (JTA) -- The territories burst into violence again this week, following the killing of six Palestinians on Monday by Israeli troops in the Gaza Strip.

The six were members of the Fatah Eagles, the armed wing of Al Fatah, the mainstream faction of the Palestine Liberation Organization led by Yasser Arafat.

In Tuesday's unrest, a 17-year-old youth was killed and more than 60 people were injured.

And in Petach Tikvah, in a related incident, a 70-year-old Jewish worker was attacked by two ax-wielding Arab workers who smashed his skull. The man was in critical condition on Tuesday evening. A manhunt was launched for his assailants, who came from the Gaza Strip.

The killings of the Fatah Eagles members in the Jabalya refugee camp came when members of an Israel Defense Force squad disguised as Arabs spotted a group of uniformed, kerchief-masked armed men in the camp about to enter a car.

Apparently in accordance with standing orders, the soldiers immediately and without warning opened fire at point-blank range, killing six of the Eagles who had been attending a local convention. None of the men killed was on an IDF wanted list.

Since the signing of the Israeli-PLO peace accord last fall, an unwritten agreement has kept the IDF away from uniformed Fatah men. The Fatah faction is the backbone of the PLO and the group most supportive of the Israeli-PLO accord.

Monday night's attack, generally regarded in Israel as a most regrettable mistake, caused widespread bitterness throughout the territories.

Israeli officials sought to assure the Pales-

tinian leadership in telephone and fax contacts that the shooting was unintended.

IDF sources said Tuesday night the soldiers had presumed the six were terrorists, belonging to fundamentalist or rejectionist movements, intent on perpetrating an attack on Jews.

By the same token, the attack in Petach Tikva provided fresh ammunition to those in Israel who are opposed to the accord with the PLO.

In Hebron, a Passover convention of rabbis and yeshiva students in the territories applauded calls for massive resistance to any attempt to uproot settlers from the historic West Bank town, where a Jewish settler killed at least 29 Arab worshippers Feb. 25.

"We will act so that every IDF soldier fully understands that he does not have the backing of the people," one of the rabbis said.

In a similar, if more restrained vein, former Defense Minister Ariel Sharon called for passive resistance to any evacuation of settlers from anywhere in the territories.

### **STRONG SHOWING BY NEO-FASCISTS IN ITALY'S ELECTIONS WORRIES JEWS**

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, March 29 (JTA) -- The landslide victory in Italy's parliamentary elections this week by a right-wing alliance led by billionaire media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi has opened the door to a government including neo-fascists and has left many Italian Jews deeply concerned.

"The trend is evident: It is the consequence of a period of great uncertainty resulting from the recession and corruption scandals," Tullia Zevi, president of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

She said she hoped that whoever became prime minister would remain true to Italy's post-war history, born "out of the ashes of fascism" and with a constitution that protects minorities and guarantees rights.

Many Jews -- like many non-Jewish Italians -- had a tough choice in the elections.

While some rightist candidates and Berlusconi's business-oriented platform appealed to some Jewish voters, many were reluctant to vote for any alliance that included the neo-fascists.

On the other hand, while many Jews were sympathetic to the left, some were reluctant to vote for an alliance that included hard-line Communists, who have long favored anti-Israel causes.

"I could never have voted for the right, and I supported the progressive (leftist) alliance in general," said one Rome Jew, a university professor. "But I could not vote for the Stalinists."

Berlusconi's so-called Freedom Alliance links his 2-month-old Forza Italia (Go, Italy!) party with the neo-fascist National Alliance and the separatist Northern League.

The three parties now control a majority of 366 seats in the 630-member Chamber of Deputies and a qualified majority of 155 in the Senate. By contrast, former Communist Achille Orcchetto's left-wing Progressive group won 213 seats in the lower house.

The right-wing alliance's victory opens the possibility of a government that for the first time would include the neo-fascists.

"However the seats are distributed, one

thing is clear," neo-fascist leader Gianfranco Fini told a victory rally. "There is no way a non-left government can be formed without our 13 percent."

Many here are worried about this possibility along with the overall success of the neo-fascists, who, with more than 13 percent of the vote, now constitute the third largest party in the country.

The neo-fascists are heirs to wartime fascist dictator Benito Mussolini and long languished at the extremes of the Italian political spectrum.

The polished, 42-year-old Fini has spent considerable effort attempting to rid the party of its old jackboot image. It even changed its name to the National Alliance from the Italian Social Movement after electoral successes in local elections last fall.

Fini also has pushed the image of his party as "clean," arguing that since it was ostracized by the government for so long, it was not involved in the corruption scandals that have virtually destroyed the traditional ruling parties and kicked hundreds of top politicians out of their jobs.

Nonetheless, militant right-wing youths were among the 2,000 people at Fini's victory rally in Rome's Piazza del Popolo, giving the straight-armed fascist salute and shouting "Duce, Duce." Il Duce, or the leader, was the title used to hail Mussolini.

### **Mussolini's Granddaughter Among Winners**

Mussolini's granddaughter Alessandra trounced her opposition to win a parliament seat in Naples. On the eve of the election, she had condemned the recent firebombing of a synagogue in Lubeck, Germany, saying, "However these elections go, in Italy's Second Republic there won't be room for intolerance or racism."

The elections were held over two days, Sunday and Monday, in order to allow observant Jews, barred from voting on Passover, to go to the polls after sundown Monday night.

Many non-Jewish politicians and celebrities chose to vote after sundown Monday to show solidarity with the Jewish community.

But Berlusconi angered many Jews by voting not just after sundown but -- with much fanfare -- at a polling place in Rome's old Jewish ghetto, where he was heckled and accused of blatant manipulation.

Tullia Zevi and other Jewish leaders told reporters that Berlusconi's move was "demagogic."

"It wasn't welcomed with an enthusiastic embrace because one can see that the right is not really inscribed in the chromosomes of our people," Zevi was quoted as saying.

She compared the move to Fini's having gone last fall to lay flowers at the Fosse Ardeatine monument outside Rome to more than 300 Romans, including about 70 Jews, executed by the Nazis in retaliation for a partisan attack.

In other races, television reporter Fabrizio del Noce ran successfully on the Berlusconi ticket in a Rome district with a strong Jewish community. He had courted the Jewish vote during his campaign based on his own well-known sympathy and support for Israel.

"For me, a candidate's attitude toward Israel and the Jews is an important reason to vote for him," said David Funaro, a Jew who actively worked for del Noce's election.

## FIREBOMBS HURLED AT GERMAN SYNAGOGUE IN FIRST SUCH ATTACK SINCE HOLOCAUST

By Miriam Widman and Igal Avidan

BERLIN, March 29 (JTA) -- In the first firebombing of a German synagogue since World War II, two Molotov cocktails were hurled at the synagogue in the northern port town of Lubeck last Friday.

The firebombs destroyed a meeting room on the first floor of the synagogue and endangered the lives of several Jewish residents who were sleeping on the second floor.

Local police focused their investigation on local members of neo-Nazi organizations.

The synagogue was destroyed once before, on Nov. 9, 1938 -- a night known as Kristallnacht, or the Night of Broken Glass -- when the Nazis conducted a nationwide pogrom against the country's Jews.

On Saturday, demonstrators reportedly numbering more than 4,000 marched through the streets of Lubeck to protest the firebombing. City authorities called for the observation of five minutes of silence Saturday to reflect on the implications of the attack.

That same day, however, Franz Schonhuber, leader of the extreme right-wing Republican party, said that the fault for the firebombing lay with the leader of the German Jewish community, Ignatz Bubis.

Schonhuber, a former member of the SS, described Bubis, a Holocaust survivor, as one of the country's "worst agitators," adding that the Jewish leader was "responsible for anti-Semitism in Germany."

A spokesman for the Bavarian Ministry of the Interior said Tuesday that the state prosecutor was considering the possibility of court action against Schonhuber for insulting Bubis. But, the spokesman added, if Bubis does not bring charges against Schonhuber, "our hands are tied."

### Won't Bring Charges

Bubis later issued a statement saying he will not bring charges, saying that doing so would only provide Schonhuber with a platform for launching more rhetoric.

The president of the German Parliament, Christian Democrat Rita Sussmuth, said in a statement issued Tuesday that Schonhuber, "who makes the Jewish victims into perpetrators, deserves to be outlawed by the whole society."

In Lubeck, some local commentators said the attack on the synagogue was timed to coincide with the start of Passover celebrations. But the state district attorney said an anti-Israel motive could not be ruled out, German radio reported.

The state government of Schleswig-Holstein, where Lubeck is located, offered a \$29,000 reward to anyone providing information on the attack that will lead to the arrests of those responsible. The Federal Attorney's Office in Karlsruhe has taken over the investigation.

Six families lived in the synagogue, including the synagogue's cantor and one of two Lubeck Jews who survived the Holocaust and returned to live in the town.

No one was hurt, as the residents managed to evacuate the synagogue in time. The attack occurred at 2:20 a.m. local time on Friday. The police said one explosive device did not detonate.

## SURVEY DOCUMENTS JEWISH SITES, RELICS THAT SURVIVED IN POLAND

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME (JTA) -- A New York-based monuments preservation organization has published a survey of historic Jewish monuments in Poland -- the first full-scale survey of existing Jewish relics in contemporary Poland.

Including much previously unavailable or unknown information, the survey describes the current condition and status of more than 1,000 Jewish sites throughout Poland, mostly cemeteries and synagogues.

The illustrated survey is a report of research carried out between 1991 and 1993 by the Jewish Heritage Council of the World Monuments Fund on behalf of the United States Commission for the Preservation of America's Heritage Abroad.

The commission, founded by Congress in 1985 to work with the U.S. State Department, negotiates agreements for the inventory and preservation of endangered monuments, historic buildings, archival material and cemeteries associated with the foreign heritage of U.S. citizens.

The survey of Poland, whose published report is the first in a planned series funded by the commission and focusing on central and Eastern Europe, was undertaken to encourage government and private strategies to protect and preserve these relics.

"This report should remind government and private citizens that preservation and restoration of eastern and central European cultural landmarks is of the utmost importance of to many Americans," said Rabbi Arthur Schneier, the commission's chairman.

### A Range From Ruins To Active Shuls

The survey lists all the approximately 300 known extant synagogue buildings in Poland, their dates of construction (if known) and present use.

The synagogues range from ruins, to buildings now used as cinemas, warehouses, shops, cultural centers, museums and other secular uses, to a handful still used as synagogues.

The survey also lists approximately 700 of the 1,000 Jewish cemeteries or sites of former cemeteries identified during the survey, with information including number of tombstones, condition, present use and threats from vegetation, pollution, erosion, vandals and construction. Many of the cemeteries have no visible graves.

Information about these sites has been installed in a computer database at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington.

"Of the once vast number of cemeteries, synagogues, communal buildings and other significant sites associated with the distinctive cultural and spiritual center of Judaism in Poland -- arguably the most important of its kind in Europe -- only a small number exist today," the survey states.

"Most are not recognizable for what they once were. The Nazi destruction of Jewish buildings and cemeteries with the goal of eradicating every trace of Jewish existence was followed by half a century of neglect of most of the places that managed to survive," the survey says.

An enormous task lies ahead to halt and reverse deterioration and correct the effects of mindless and inappropriate change, it reports.

**JERUSALEM MAYOR SEES SETTLEMENT AS PART OF CITY'S EXPANDED DOMAIN**

By Michele Chabin

JERUSALEM (JTA) -- The West Bank settlement of Ma'aleh Adumim, just outside Jerusalem, will ultimately become part of the capital, if the city's recently elected mayor gets his wish.

In a recent interview after his first 100 days in office, Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert expressed his hope that Jerusalem's boundaries will one day encompass Ma'aleh Adumim and perhaps other satellite neighborhoods outside the capital.

As a West Bank settlement, Ma'aleh Adumim's future status is unclear. Whether or not it remains in Israeli hands will depend on the outcome of negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

In the eyes of many Israelis on both sides of the political spectrum, Ma'aleh Adumim is a suburb, not a political settlement.

Situated just 15 minutes from the heart of Jerusalem, the town has become a mecca for young couples and families who cannot afford to buy homes in the city. Most of the town's residents commute to the capital for work each day.

Olmert, who served in the Cabinet in the Likud government of Yitzhak Shamir, called the annexation of Ma'aleh Adumim a "logical" step.

Gazing out over the city from his office in the new City Hall building, Olmert pointed out that "the gap between the city and Ma'aleh Adumim is just 500 yards."

He admitted that plans to annex the town "sound outrageous" to those unfamiliar with the city's layout.

"People say, 'What crazy plans do you have?' But if you remember that the gap is just 500 yards, the story is different," he said. "It's just a matter of time."

The mayor also outlined plans to develop eastern Jerusalem to alleviate the city's chronic housing shortage.

Jerusalem, he said, "will have to expand to the east. I'm not relating to political boundaries when I say this. Even if you satisfy the political issue, the natural growth of Jerusalem will go to the east."

**Vows To Build Thousands More Housing Units**

Olmert underscored his belief that Jews may live in eastern Jerusalem and noted that he had approved a building permit for the controversial Beit Orot Yeshiva on the Mount of Olives. The site, which stands between two Arab villages, had originally been zoned for an Arab girls' school.

"I said in advance that I would build Beit Orot, and I have not changed my position," Olmert said. "However, we have already allocated a new site for the girls' school, which is just next door, about 500 yards from there."

Olmert vowed to build thousands more housing units for both Israelis and Palestinians, but he admitted that this will not be easy.

But, he counseled, "First I must get the cooperation of the Housing Ministry and the Land Authority" and "it is impossible to determine who owns the land."

Asked if he had discussed Jerusalem's future borders with government officials, Olmert said no.

But, he added, "there are some discussions about the metropolitan area of Jerusalem, and how

it ought to be prioritized. We have discussed where to build, where to construct roads and industrial parks, and so forth.

By definition, he said, metropolitan Jerusalem "goes far beyond Ma'aleh Adumim."

While making clear his opinions about Jerusalem's future borders, Olmert conceded that final decisions are up to the Knesset and Cabinet.

Ultimately, he said, "things will have to be determined by the government."

**STANDOFF WITH YEMENITE SECT ENDS WITH NO CASUALTIES BUT LOTS OF CHARGES**

By Dvorah Getzler

JERUSALEM, March 29 (JTA) -- Israeli police ended a standoff with a group of heavily armed cultists last week without the loss of life.

This week, however, charges are flying that lower-level police officials caved in too easily to the group's demands and that some Knesset members rushed too quickly to the group's defense.

In a scene reminiscent of the Branch Davidians who holed up in Waco, Texas, last year, scores of armed followers of Yemenite Rabbi Uzi Meshulam barricaded themselves in the home of their leader in the development town of Yehud. They vowed to kill or be killed if the government did not meet a demand they issued.

Their demand was uniquely Israeli: that the Knesset conduct an "honest" inquiry into the fate of an undetermined number of Yemenite babies who disappeared during 1949 and the early 1950s.

Doctors who recall that period, when tens of thousands of Yemenites arrived in Israel, say the hospitals were ill equipped in the development towns to which the immigrants were assigned. Many children died and many were taken into hospitals without being properly registered.

In the end, last week's drama ended without the bloodshed that attended the Waco saga, as Knesset members Avraham Poraz, of the Meretz bloc, and Dov Shilansky, of Likud, promised to establish a commission to look into the issue.

**Police Say Law Shamelessly Flouted**

Two commissions have so far probed the alleged disappearance of the Yemenite children. One of these, set up in 1988 under a former judge, is still gathering information.

Police brass contend the law was shamelessly flouted and denied that lives were at risk.

Certainly, shots were fired by Meshulam's followers, many of them Yemenites and settlers in the territories who have been armed by the Israel Defense Force.

When they did finally leave shortly before the start of the Sabbath, police took down the serial numbers of their weapons. There have been hints that there will be further police action, possibly including Meshulam's arrest.

Meshulam did not help his legal situation when, in an interview with army radio, he disclosed the name and address of the head of Shin Bet. That information is confidential, though it is often an open secret among many in Israel.

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Because of Passover, the JTA Daily News Bulletin will not be published Monday, April 4.

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