

**ISRAEL, PLO MOVE A STEP CLOSER
TO FINAL AGREEMENT ON SELF-RULE**
By Dvorah Getzler

JERUSALEM, April 24 (JTA) -- A final agreement for implementing the Palestinian self-rule accord in the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho may well be concluded by the end of the week, according to Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres.

Speaking on Sunday with reporters at Ben-Gurion Airport as Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin took off for a four-day trip to Russia, Peres said it was "possible but by no means certain" that an agreement could be arrived at in Cairo by the close of this week's talks.

But at the weekly Cabinet meeting held in Jerusalem shortly afterward, Peres warned that any further delays in reaching a final agreement could lead to an unraveling of the entire peace process.

"If we don't finish it all within the next 10 days, the whole process may come to nothing," Peres was reported to have told his colleagues.

Police Minister Moshe Shahal later explained to reporters that the foreign minister "was describing the mood of the Palestinians, the problems they are facing, because of the erosion (of popular support) caused by the prolonged talks."

Peres had returned to Israel on Saturday night after holding five meetings with Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat in Bucharest, Romania.

He told reporters that he and Arafat had resolved several of the issues holding up the signing of a final agreement in Cairo.

But he added that a number of issues -- including the jurisdiction of Palestinian courts, passports, currency and telephones -- still remained to be resolved.

Peres, Arafat To Meet Soon In Cairo

Peres and Arafat were expected to meet again soon in Cairo in an effort to clear up those issues, but no decision on when they would meet was expected until Rabin returns from Moscow later this week.

The first Israeli prime minister ever to visit Russia, Rabin set off for Moscow at a time when the Russians are seeking to play a more active role in the peace process.

Prior to leaving for Moscow, Rabin discussed the ongoing negotiations with the Palestinians during a meeting held at the airport with Peres, Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin, Israel Defense Force Chief of Staff Ehud Barak and the leader of the Israeli delegation to the Cairo peace talks, Gen. Amnon Shahak.

In Paris, meanwhile, Finance Minister Avraham Shohat was more optimistic than he had been last week about the progress of meetings being held in the French capital to discuss economic aspects of the Palestinian self-rule accord.

The list of disagreements is fast diminishing, said Shohat, who heads the Israeli delegation to those talks.

**PLO AND HAMAS AGREE TO END
THE MURDER OF 'COLLABORATORS'**
By Dvorah Getzler

JERUSALEM, April 24 (JTA) -- The Al Fatah wing of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the armed wing of the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas movement have declared a monthlong truce in which neither group will harm those accused of "collaborating" with the Israeli authorities.

The agreement came at the start of a week-end of three violent attacks against Israelis in the Gaza Strip and West Bank.

A senior Fatah official, explaining the agreement reached last Friday, said that the Palestinian groups thought it would be best to deal with the issue of so-called collaborators once they have their own judicial system.

Israel and the PLO are expected to complete final negotiations for implementing Palestinian self-rule within the next week or two. Gaza and the West Bank city of Jericho will fall under Palestinian authority shortly after negotiations are completed.

Hamas, which is bitterly opposed to the negotiations, has been responsible for a series of terror attacks against Israelis in the months following the signing of the self-rule accord last fall in Washington.

In placards posted throughout Gaza last week, the PLO and Hamas urged those Palestinians who cooperate with the Shin Bet to sever their links with the Israeli internal security service.

The placards, which have long been used in lieu of newspapers in Gaza, said last week's meeting between the PLO and Hamas was "intended to strengthen national unity" and frustrate alleged Israeli moves to undermine such unity.

The placards also called for a curtailment of protest strikes, which have been crippling the already impoverished Palestinian economy. School strikes are to be eliminated, a move taken because the Palestinian community has been worried about the effect of the intifada and numerous school strikes on the education of their children.

In interviews on Israeli radio programs at the beginning of the week, PLO representatives were at pains to stress that the agreement between the PLO and Hamas does not presage any cooperation between the two groups against Israel.

'There Will Be No Civil War'

"We want the Hamas to be inside the agreement, not outside its scope," a PLO official said on Israeli television. "We know that Israelis think we will all start killing each other once they have left Gaza. We are going to show you that that won't happen."

"There will be no civil war. We are intent on stopping the killing," the official said.

But over the weekend, there were a number of incidents that left three Israelis in the hospital with stab, gunshot or ax wounds.

In Gaza's Gush Katif settlement bloc on Saturday, terrorists penetrated the settlement of

Neve Dekalim and stabbed Sigal Sofer, 23, a mother of two small children. Sofer was said to be in stable condition.

The terrorists came from the Khan Yunis refugee camp in Gaza. One terrorist was killed by Israeli settlers and the second, who was severely wounded, was saved from a lynching at the hands of the settlers by the intervention of the Israel Defense Force.

The soldiers, in turn, were set upon by the settlers and beaten up. The IDF is said to be considering pressing charges against the settlers of Neve Dekalim.

That same day in the West Bank city of Nablus, a soldier manning a lookout post was shot at from a nearby post office building and received moderate to serious injuries. He was later described as being in stable condition. His attacker has not yet been caught.

On Sunday, Aryeh Levin, a resident of the West Bank settlement of Kiryat Arba, was stoned by a crowd in a central square in nearby Hebron after he had started to argue with passersby.

Shopkeepers called on the IDF in Hebron to rescue the man, but by the time soldiers arrived on the scene he had been attacked by two people wielding axes.

He was taken to the hospital with moderate to serious injuries.

A search was launched for his assailants, who disappeared into the crowd.

PANEL URGES EXTENSION OF A LAW EASING REQUIREMENTS FOR REFUGEES

By Steven Weiss

WASHINGTON, April 24 (JTA) -- To the relief of Jewish groups and their supporters on Capitol Hill, Congress has decided to extend a law making it easier for Jews from the former Soviet republics to enter the United States.

A House-Senate conference committee decided last week to grant a two-year extension to the law, which eases the requirements on members of certain groups seeking to enter the United States as refugees.

Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-N.J.) originally sponsored the 1989 law, which specifically protects Soviet Jews as well as Evangelical Christians in Russia and Southeast Asians.

"The persecution of groups in the former Soviet Union continues to exist and, in some cases, has worsened," Lautenberg said in a statement last week. "While Soviet Jews have been permitted to emigrate in much greater numbers (in recent years), those remaining face a greatly increased threat to their well-being."

According to Arnold Leibowitz, Washington counsel for the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, the law originated in response to complaints in 1989 and 1990 that a number of Soviet Jews were being denied U.S. refugee status because they could not prove that they faced the threat of persecution.

The law protects those historically persecuted groups whose members seek refugee status because of continued adverse conditions where they live, Leibowitz said.

Leibowitz said the value of the law was emphasized by right-wing extremist Vladimir Zhirinovsky's stunning success in Russian parliamentary elections last fall.

The election "had an enormous impact," Leibowitz said. He added that the surprising popularity of Zhirinovsky, who has regularly uttered anti-Semitic statements since the election, "threw support behind an extension of the law."

Lautenberg also cited Zhirinovsky's popularity as a reason why the law needed an extension.

"Given the history of anti-Semitism in Russia and the emergence of right-wing xenophobes in Russian politics, this law will continue to be important," the senator said in his statement.

The law eases the requirements that members of certain groups have to satisfy to be considered political refugees.

Under previous requirements, in order to achieve refugee status, applicants had to prove that they faced a reasonable fear of persecution, Leibowitz said.

Lautenberg's law softens the requirements, so that applicants from specified groups need only show a credible cause of concern for their well-being, Leibowitz said.

HIAS worked with the Council of Jewish Federations, the American Jewish Committee and the National Conference on Soviet Jewry in lobbying for the extension on Capitol Hill.

The congressional conference committee met last week to discuss provisions of the State Department authorization bill for fiscal year 1995.

The committee's recommendation, which must be approved by both houses of Congress, would extend the refugee law through the end of 1996.

U.S. FINES ANOTHER BUSINESS FOR ANTI-BOYCOTT VIOLATIONS

By Steven Weiss

WASHINGTON, April 24 (JTA) -- The Clinton administration has fined another U.S. business for allegedly assisting in the Arab economic boycott against Israel.

Arab American Bank, a New York-based consortium of 22 Arab, European and U.S. banks, was fined \$35,000 by the Commerce Department's Bureau of Export Administration for alleged violations of U.S. anti-boycott laws.

The fine, announced April 21, came a week after the Commerce Department announced penalties against four other companies. The department also recently issued a disturbing report showing that boycott activity during the first three months of this year remained steady compared to the same period last year.

In its announcement of the latest fine, the Commerce Department alleged that the Arab American Bank furnished Syria, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates with information on other companies' business relationships with Israel and other blacklisted entities.

While agreeing to pay the fine, the Arab American Bank neither admitted nor denied the alleged violations of anti-boycott laws, which prohibit the release of information about any person's business relationships with or in a boycotted country.

Other fines assessed recently include \$31,200 against Arab Bank PLC of New York; \$10,000 against Boaleco, a Massachusetts manufacturer of educational equipment; and \$2,000 against each of two Honeywell Inc. subsidiaries.

THOUSANDS OF RUSSIAN JEWS GREET RABIN, THE FIRST ISRAELI PREMIER TO VISIT RUSSIA

By Lisa Glazer

MOSCOW, April 24 (JTA) -- In what was the first-ever visit here by an Israeli prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin arrived in Moscow on Sunday afternoon for a four-day stay.

The first stop of his trip was Moscow's Choral Synagogue, where thousands of Russian Jews were waiting to greet him on a warm spring evening.

The crowd included teen-agers waving Israeli flags, senior citizens, families and Chasidic Jews.

During his visit, which will include a stop-over in St. Petersburg, Rabin is scheduled to meet with Russian President Boris Yeltsin, Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev and other Russian officials to discuss the Middle East peace process.

Israel and the former Soviet Union re-established diplomatic ties in October 1991, ties that were severed by the Soviets after the 1967 war.

Rabin's visit follows a similar visit to Moscow by Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat and comes as Russia seeks more participation in the peace process.

Rabin said he also intends to talk with Russian officials about the immigration of Russian Jews to Israel.

(Contributing to this report was JTA correspondent Dvora Getzler in Jerusalem.)

SMALL GROUPS OF RUSSIAN NEO-NAZIS MARK ANNIVERSARY OF HITLER'S BIRTH

By Lisa Glazer

MOSCOW, April 24 (JTA) -- A small group of Russian neo-Nazis celebrated Adolf Hitler's 105th birthday last week by marching through central Moscow chanting anti-Semitic slogans.

Wearing camouflage-print military outfits, the 15 neo-Nazis shouted "Sieg Heil" and "Death to the Jews," as well as "Death to Yeltsin" and "Long Live Russia," as they marched along Moscow's main road, Tverskaya Street, toward the Kremlin.

The march ended near Red Square, where a handful of police officers observed the demonstrators but did not intervene.

The neo-Nazis said they belonged to Alexander Barkashov's Russian National Unity Organization, which was active in last fall's armed resistance to President Boris Yeltsin and used arms to defend Parliament when lawmakers refused to follow Yeltsin's orders to disband.

Barkashov and others were sent to jail after troops loyal to Yeltsin stormed the building. Those who were jailed were released in February.

In St. Petersburg, neo-Nazis also marked the April 20 birthday. Ten members of Smerch, a group whose name means tornado, met that day in front of Kazansky Cathedral.

Group leader Dmitri Bobrov, 24, told reporters, "We initially planned to organize a torch march across the city, burning pornographic, democratic and Jewish newspapers."

He said they changed its mind because the members felt they were being closely observed by federal agents. He also said the group planned to meet privately to watch a German documentary of the 1930s about the birth of the Nazi party.

JEWISH RESTITUTION ORGANIZATION SIGNS ACCORDS WITH HUNGARY, SLOVAKIA

By Agnes Bohm

BUDAPEST, April 24 (JTA) -- Jewish groups have reached agreements with the governments of Hungary and Slovakia for the restitution of Jewish property seized during the Holocaust.

The agreements reached last week -- the first such accords with former Communist countries in Eastern Europe -- call for the return of Jewish property seized between 1939 and 1945 or for compensating the victims or their heirs for the value of the confiscated property.

On April 21, Israel Singer, secretary-general of the World Jewish Congress and chairman of the World Jewish Restitution Organization, said that Jewish groups in Hungary had reached an accord with the Hungarian government that established the principles governing the restitution process.

A similar agreement was reached a day earlier with Slovak officials in Bratislava, said Singer, who visited both countries last week.

The Jewish community in Slovakia is drawing up a list of some 300 properties that it hopes to reclaim under the terms of the agreement.

Approximately 3,000 Jews currently live in Slovakia. Some 70,000 Jews from there perished during the Holocaust.

According to Singer, final details for returning property to Hungarian Jews could be completed within a month or two. But the actual restitution process, he said, could take up to several years.

GERMAN APPEALS COURT COUNTERS CHARGE IT SANCTIONED SPREADING 'AUSCHWITZ LIE'

By Igal Avidan

BERLIN, April 24 (JTA) -- Germany's highest appeals court is denying accusations that a ruling it issued last month gave the green light to right-wing groups here to spread the theory that the Holocaust never took place.

In the wake of a barrage of criticism from Jewish groups, German politicians and the media, the Federal Court of Justice in Karlsruhe issued a statement last week clarifying its position and denying it had acquitted an alleged perpetrator of the so-called "Auschwitz lie."

The federal court's March 15 ruling voided the one-year prison sentence given by the Mannheim District Court to right-wing extremist Gunther Deckert for denying the Holocaust occurred. The appeals court called for Deckert to be retried in the lower court.

Deckert, who is chairman of the National German Party, was convicted of incitement to racism by organizing a 1991 lecture in Germany by American Holocaust-denier Fred Leuchter. Deckert also served as Leuchter's interpreter.

The appeals court called on the lower court to demonstrate that Deckert himself identified with Nazi ideology and did not just translate another's words.

It said the lower court should determine whether Deckert had on his own committed the crime of "insulting and denigrating the dead."

"There is no question of an acquittal" of Deckert, the court said. The case was "sent back to the regional court in Mannheim, where a new verdict on inciting racial hatred is awaited."

JDC MARKS 80th ANNIVERSARY IN COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: TURKEY

By Cynthia Mann

ISTANBUL, Turkey (JTA) -- Some 80 years ago, Henry Morgenthau, the U.S. ambassador to Turkey, sent a cable from this city, known then as Constantinople, to Jacob Schiff, a Jewish philanthropist in New York, asking for \$50,000 to aid Jews in distress in Palestine.

Schiff raised the money, and shortly thereafter the Joint Distribution Committee was founded to assist needy Jews in Europe and Palestine.

Last week, American, Israeli and Turkish officials gathered here to mark the 80th anniversary of that historic cable and the founding of the JDC.

The organization now functions in 58 countries and has an annual budget of \$65 million.

A delegation of about 18 members of the JDC board from the United States celebrated the anniversary at the U.S. Consulate in Istanbul, from which Morgenthau sent the cable in 1914.

They held a brief ceremony marking the event and hosted a reception for U.S. Consul General Mark Dion, Israeli Consul General Yair Ben-Shalom, Turkish Chief Rabbi David Asseo and other leaders of Istanbul's Jewish community.

Norman Tilles, chairman of the board's Africa-Asia Committee and leader of the mission to Turkey, recounted the JDC's early history in formal remarks.

He recalled that the organization was founded to respond to emergencies and had fully "expected to go out of business."

"Unfortunately, history has not been so kind, and JDC assistance has extended to over 70 countries during the past 80 years, bringing rescues, relief and reconstruction programs to Jewish communities in need around the world," he said.

The JDC "epitomizes Jewish values" and therefore does not restrict its aid only to Jews, Tilles said.

"In Judaism's humanitarian tradition, JDC has provided assistance to Somali refugees in Kenya and to victims of the war in Sarajevo," he said by way of example.

Has Made 11 Evacuations From Sarajevo

Tilles noted that the JDC has made 11 evacuations from war-torn Sarajevo and has gotten 2,200 people out. Half of them, he said, were Muslims and Christians.

Tilles presented a plaque to Dion, who lauded Morgenthau and the JDC, which works "in partnership with local Jewish communities" to "respond to emergencies and provide immediate assistance to Jews living in distress."

Nancy Levinson of the Memphis Jewish Federation said she was particularly moved. She came here with her husband, Michael, a JDC board member, only days after she returned from Poland, where she participated in the March of the Living, a Holocaust remembrance ceremony, as part of a UJA national women's mission.

"In Poland, the Joint did such an incredible job helping sustain whatever Jewish life was left after the Holocaust. And now, with the fall of communism, it's helping to identify Jews and develop programs to support them," she said.

"To go from there, where they're so de-

pendent on the Joint," to "Turkey, where the whole thing started, and see that the community is self-sufficient but can rely on the Joint should it need to, is to come full circle," she said.

Similar sentiment was expressed by Linda Levi, JDC's director of programming, planning and budget in New York. "To be where the seeds of the organization originated (makes it) a very poignant celebration," she said.

Members of the JDC mission visited synagogues, the rabbinate, old-age homes, the hospital and other Jewish sites in Istanbul, where an estimated 22,000 of the country's 25,000 Jews live.

Turkey's Jewish community is today considered self-sufficient and gets only technical assistance from the JDC. But two years ago, Tilles pointed out, the JDC gave a mobile field hospital to the Red Crescent to treat people who had been injured in a strong earthquake.

The majority of the Jewish population in Turkey dates back 500 years, when the Jews were expelled from Spain and the Ottoman Turks opened their gates to Jewish refugees.

In 1927, there were 81,454 Jews in Turkey, but nearly 40,000 made aliyah after Israel was established, followed by more waves of emigration.

In spite of the dwindling numbers, the Jews here display astounding communal strength. They are fervently committed to maintaining their institutions, aided by community volunteers. Like their North American counterparts, they are concerned with countering assimilation and preserving their religious continuity.

While they admit to a 10 to 15 percent intermarriage rate, some say it could be double.

In a country that is 99 percent Muslim, the Jews have learned to accommodate by not making waves and keeping as low a profile as possible.

Quiet Concern Over Fundamentalists

They steer clear of political life and even political discourse, emphasizing that they have enjoyed an atmosphere of liberty, governmental support and tolerance for 500 years.

Only privately will some concede they are worried by the municipal elections last month, which saw the Muslim fundamentalists double their strength, from 10 to almost 20 percent.

Fundamentalists were elected mayors in both Istanbul and Ankara, the capital.

"I never believed that the fundamentalist party would ever win the municipal election in the two big cities," said one Jewish woman. "But there is a (strong tradition) of democracy and secularism and I have confidence in the government. We must be aware of the danger and of the worst that can happen, but live day to day without fear."

Some of the Jewish community's vulnerability is visible in the heavy and evidently costly security it employs at virtually all its institutions.

In 1986, 22 people were killed while at Sabbath prayers in the Neve Shalom synagogue here in an attack launched by what were believed to be members of the Abu Nidal gang. A recent grenade attack by the Islamic fundamentalist Hezbollah movement was foiled by security.

The JDC ceased most direct involvement in Turkey in the 1920s, in part because Turkey's Jews became self-sufficient and in part because Turkish law barred citizens from ties to foreign organizations. That law was relaxed in 1992.