

**ISRAEL AND PLO READY TO SIGN
FINAL AGREEMENT NEXT WEDNESDAY**
By Dvora Getzler

JERUSALEM, April 28 (JTA) -- Israeli and Palestinian negotiators announced this week that next Wednesday is the target date for the signing of a final agreement for the implementation of Palestinian self-rule in the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho.

The announcement was made in Cairo on Thursday following a three-hour meeting between U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat and Egyptian President Mubarak.

"For us, this is the end of a long voyage and the beginning of a new chapter in the relations between the Palestinian people and ourselves, and another step towards peace in the Middle East," Peres said after the meeting.

Concluding a negotiating process that has dragged on for months longer than originally planned, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Arafat are expected to sign the final agreement in Cairo.

The signing will herald the start of the implementation of the Palestinian self-rule accord, whose broad principles were worked out during a series of secret meetings in Oslo last summer.

Rabin and Arafat attended the signing of the declaration of principles last fall in Washington, where they exchanged a historic handshake that promised an end to decades of bloodshed.

Rabin and Arafat were scheduled to meet next Tuesday on the eve of the signing ceremony to settle two outstanding issues: the size of the autonomous Jericho district and the establishment of a Palestinian police presence on the Allenby Bridge that connects the West Bank and Jordan.

Progress Also Reported At Paris Talks

Progress was also reported at the Israeli-PLO economic talks being held in Paris.

According to a spokesman for Finance Minister Avraham Shohat, the head of the Israeli delegation in Paris, the two sides had overcome all the obstacles facing them and should be able to conclude the negotiations for establishing economic relations between Israel and the Palestinians by the end of the week.

According to Israel Radio, Christopher lent the full weight of his prestige and influence during Thursday's meetings in Cairo to secure the signing while he was still present in the region. Christopher arrived in the Middle East this week for a new round of shuttle diplomacy.

Marathon talks between Israel and the PLO, punctuated by meetings involving Christopher, Peres, Arafat and Mubarak, started in Cairo on Thursday, giving a final push to bring the negotiations to completion.

Thursday's lengthy meeting with Christopher tidied up most of the outstanding issues, Peres told Israel Radio, adding that he would now be returning to Israel earlier than planned.

"We shall try to finish off whatever remains to be finished tonight, and then we can begin the

Syrian chapter tomorrow, when Christopher comes to Israel," Peres said Thursday, referring to the Israeli-Syrian negotiations, which have been stalled for months.

Reacting to the news that a final agreement would soon be signed, Likud spokesman Yehoshua Matza, who chairs the Knesset's Interior Affairs Committee and has just been elected party secretary, was clearly critical of the development.

"I demand that the government present the Knesset with the full text of the agreement, including any secret clauses, before it is signed. If it refuses, then a future government may not feel bound by this agreement," he said.

Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu has stated in the past that any future Likud government may refuse to recognize the Israeli-PLO agreement.

And earlier this week, a group of influential Palestinians circulated a statement that if certain of their demands are not met, they, too, will refuse to acknowledge the legitimacy of the agreement.

NEWS ANALYSIS:
**DOES THE PLO-HAMAS CEASE-FIRE SIGNAL
A NEW ROLE FOR HAMAS UNDER SELF-RULE?**
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, April 28 (JTA) -- The question of Hamas is looming larger than ever, as Israel approaches the signing of a groundbreaking autonomy accord with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Will the Muslim fundamentalist movement continue to undermine what the Rabin government sees as the promise of peace between Jews and Palestinians?

Will it join in the Palestinian autonomy as a tactical step on the road to its goal of an Islamic state in all of Palestine?

Or will it one day content itself to be simply a stream in a secular Palestinian society coexisting alongside Israel?

If anything, the events of the past week brought only the questions, and not the answers, into clearer focus.

The news that a Hamas cell had been arrested for the April 13 bombing of a bus in Hadera contrasted sharply with simultaneous reports of a cease-fire agreement between Hamas and the PLO in the Gaza Strip.

Military and civilian sources said the indications of Hamas pragmatism were not unwelcome, though the Israeli army and security services will continue their relentless war against Hamas terrorism.

Last week, in the aftermath of the Hadera disaster, the similar tragedy a week before in Afula and a string of lesser attacks, the army and security forces conducted a sweep of known Hamas activists throughout the territories, arresting close to 300 of them.

Often during the past months of domestic debate and controversy over the Israeli-PLO accord, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has argued that to spurn the PLO now could mean having to deal with the intractable Hamas later.

Yet Hamas officials and spokesmen -- those not rounded up in this latest dragnet -- are appearing in the Israeli media with increasing frequency these days. While that is not tantamount to a formal dialogue with the government, it does mean that Israel is, to an extent, "dealing" with Hamas now.

One dramatic sign that all is not typical came late last week, in an unwontedly moderate-sounding statement by Mussa abu-Marzouk, a senior Hamas political figure now living in Jordan.

He spoke of the movement's readiness to come to terms with Israel -- conditional on full withdrawal from the territories taken during the 1967 Six-Day War.

He also hinted that Hamas would participate in elections in the territories, which are scheduled to be held within months of the Gaza-Jericho self-rule accord going into effect.

This moderation was a far cry from the blood-chilling television appearances by Hamas officials in Amman, Jordan, in the wake of the Afula and Hadera blasts, vowing further bloody reprisals against innocent Israelis in retaliation for the Hebron massacre of February 25.

Moratorium On The Pursuit Of Collaborators

The cease-fire accord concluded last week between Hamas and the PLO provides for an end to internecine violence, and a month-long moratorium on the pursuit of "collaborators."

The cease-fire cannot but be seen as preparation, by both streams within Palestinian society in the Gaza, for the imminent advent of self-government.

This assessment is shared by both schools of observers on the Israelis side: those who see the signs of moderation in Hamas as merely tactical, and those who see them as presaging a deeper and more radical shift in approach by the Islamic fundamentalists living in the territories.

The present state of Hamas' ideological development has been compared to that of the PLO in 1974, when its leader, Yasser Arafat, first showed signs of pragmatism. He spoke then of Palestinian rule in any part of the homeland relinquished by the Israeli occupier. At that time, of course, the PLO was still steeped in terror and wanton violence -- as indeed it was to remain for many years thereafter.

The realization now, however, of partial Israeli withdrawal and partial Palestinian government presents Hamas with the need to make its choices faster than the PLO did.

Will Hamas take an active part in the governance of Gaza, the movement's stronghold and the first area, along with the West Bank town of Jericho, to experiment with self-rule under the terms of the peace accord? That question will have to be answered within a matter of weeks.

Says Walid al-Hindi, 32, secretary of the Islamic University in Gaza: "If life is democratic -- we will take part in running it, in order to rebuild Palestinian society."

Al-Hindi is considered one of the rising stars in the Gaza fundamentalist firmament.

Yet he speaks without inhibitions to Israeli reporters.

His message is that the fundamentalists represent a very substantial segment of Palestinian public life and cannot be ignored -- either by the PLO or by Israel.

The jailed founder of Hamas, Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, was quoted in Reuters this week as saying that Hamas opposition to the peace accord would be non-violent.

But for Israel, at this stage at any rate, the view of Hamas must still be, principally, through the sights of a rifle.

On Wednesday, a Hamas activist was arrested in the stabbing of two Israeli soldiers at Jerusalem's largest shopping mall. And on Tuesday, a day after the alleged Hadera bombers were apprehended, police sources disclosed that two Israeli Arabs had been arrested too, suspected of having abetted them in their ghoulish mission.

In Jerusalem, meanwhile, survivors of the Afula attack and relatives of the dead demonstrated in support of their demand for a commission of inquiry to investigate the episode. Why, they shouted, had the government, the army and the police not been able to prevent the attack?

Hamas, after all, had warned it would strike.

SETTLER WHO SHOT BOUND TERRORIST IS SENTENCED TO LIFE IMPRISONMENT By Dvorah Getzler

JERUSALEM, April 28 (JTA) -- A West Bank settler was sentenced to life imprisonment this week for shooting to death a suspected terrorist whose hands and feet had been bound following his capture.

In a sentence handed down in Jerusalem District Court on Thursday, Yoram Skolnik, of the settlement of Ma'aleh Hever, was found guilty of the premeditated murder of Mussa al-Sabah in an incident that took place a year ago.

"My son acted in self-defense," said Freddy Skolnik, the settler's father. "This is a cruel, inhuman sentence. Everything in this case points to the need for a verdict other than murder."

In what appeared to be a reference to Dr. Baruch Goldstein, the Kiryat Arba settler who in February killed at least 29 Palestinians worshipping in a Hebron mosque, Freddy Skolnik said, "I have the feeling that it isn't a man called Yoram Skolnik who is being sentenced here, but someone else, with another name."

The court rejected the accused's self-defense plea, preferring instead to listen to the testimony of witnesses who heard Skolnik say after shooting the prisoner who lay at his feet, "He had it coming to him. I had a moral right (to shoot him). I wanted to awaken the Jewish people. I think this nation's asleep."

Moshe Deutsch, a friend of the defendant from the nearby settlement of Suseya who had been stabbed by the terrorist, told Israel Radio, "We all know that the terrorist was armed with a grenade and a knife and that he meant to kill me and my friends. Natural justice dictates that a terrorist like that should die."

"I'm not bothered whether he was bound hand and foot or not," said Deutsch. "But there's a Jew who's just been given a life sentence because that terrorist's dead. That's a tough one to swallow."

"It seems to me that it's our judicial system that's on trial here. It doesn't matter whether the terrorist was bound or not. He was out to kill, there was no way he should have left there alive, and that's all there is to it. No terrorist should get away alive," he said.

ITALIAN JEWS REACT NERVOUSLY TO FASCIST PRESENCE IN GOVERNMENT

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, April 28 (JTA) -- In a development that has made many here increasingly edgy, billionaire media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi was this week named prime minister-designate of a new government that is expected to include neo-fascists for the first time since Italy became a republic after World War II.

"To be the first in Europe to bring the neo-fascists to power, after everything that has happened and is happening in the world, is anything but insignificant," Nobel laureate and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel told the Rome newspaper La Repubblica.

He said he would advise Berlusconi to remember that fascism had two faces, explaining, "One face is the word, which can be attractive. The other is power. And fascism's relationship with power has always been tragic."

Tullia Zevi, president of the Union of Italian Jewish Communities, sounded a note of caution about the followers of Gianfranco Fini, head of the neo-fascist National Alliance.

She noted that Fini, who wants to move the neo-fascists into the mainstream, had to beware of his own right wing.

"He has been able so far to keep on a leash the extreme right, the skinheads," she said. "He knows how to control them."

But she questioned if he would be able to maintain this control if economic and social conditions deteriorate.

In the month since the right-wing Freedom Alliance swept to victory in landmark general elections, controversy has raged in Italy over the legacy of fascism 49 years after fascist dictator Benito Mussolini was defeated at the end of World War II.

A broad, highly emotional debate has opened up over Italy's fascist past, amid attempts to rethink and, some say -- to rewrite -- history to minimize fascist evils and to regard fascism as a valid political ideology.

Fascist Sympathizers Become More Open

At the same time, fascist sympathizers have become much more open. Some have gone so far as to urge openly that one-time Italian territories now part of Croatia and Slovenia be reclaimed.

Fascism, the British newspaper The Guardian said, has now become an object of curiosity rather than contempt.

The Freedom Alliance brought together Berlusconi's Forza Italia (Go, Italy!) party with the National Alliance and the federalist Northern League. The anticipated entry of neo-fascists into government has raised deep concerns inside and outside of Italy.

Mussolini ruled Italy for two decades. Until he entered into an alliance with Hitler in 1938 and imposed anti-Semitic laws, his law-and-order regime had the support of many Italian Jews.

After the Allies liberated southern Italy in 1943, Mussolini established a last-ditch fascist state in northern Italy. He was arrested by partisans on April 27, 1945, and was executed the next day.

On April 29, 1945, his corpse and that of his mistress were hung upside down in Milan before a

crowd of thousands. Staunch anti-fascism became a firm, unquestioned pillar of postwar Italy.

On Monday, the national Liberation Day holiday marking Mussolini's defeat and execution, hundreds of thousands of Italians, led by the leftist opposition, staged anti-fascist demonstrations and commemorations.

In Rome, President Oscar Luigi Scalfaro laid a wreath at the Ardeatine Caves, where 355 Romans, including 75 Jews, were executed in reprisal for a partisan attack in 1943.

The biggest demonstration was a mass rally by as many as 300,000 people in Milan. While commemorating the defeat of fascism in World War II, the rally was also pointedly directed against Berlusconi and his allies, particularly the National Alliance and its leader, Fini.

The right accused the left of using the commemorations as a means of getting back at them for the left's humiliating defeat in last month's election.

The size and political slant of the Milan demonstration came in part as a reaction to what has been seen as a neo-fascist attempt to rewrite history and equate fascists with their victims.

Fini recently called Mussolini "the greatest statesman of the century."

Fini and other right-wing leaders have called for "reconciliation" between left and right. Fini had called for the April 25 Liberation Day holiday to be a day of national reconciliation, commemorating the war dead of both sides.

A television broadcast within the past month of wartime footage filmed by U.S. Army cameramen and held until now in Pentagon archives added fuel to the fire. The broadcast showed graphic footage of Mussolini's corpse and cruelty by both fascists and partisans, and touched off a fierce debate.

"My fundamental criticism is that this sort of broadcast is part of a campaign under way to try to put the two sides, fascist and anti-fascist, on the same level," historian Claudio Pavone told the left-wing newspaper L'Unita.

Zevi called the broadcast "revisionism, good old revisionism, and it was done in a very biased way.

"You cannot put on the same level murderers and their victims," she said.

SWASTIKAS APPEAR THROUGHOUT GENEVA

By Tamar Levy

GENEVA, April 28 (JTA) -- Swastikas and anti-Semitic slogans have appeared here in public places for the first time in recent memory.

Slogans such as "Jews Out" and "Heil Hitler" appeared this month in several prominent places here, such as the railroad station and at large shopping centers.

While anti-Semitic graffiti have appeared periodically in German-speaking areas of Switzerland, it is a relatively new phenomenon in Geneva, a French-speaking city known as a center for international diplomacy.

The police here ascribe the graffiti to wave of xenophobia coming in the wake of difficult financial times here.

The unemployment rate in Geneva recently reached 7 percent, the highest in the country.

Until the recent economic crisis in Geneva, the city had only a 0.3 percent unemployment rate.

**FRENCH JEWS CALL ATTENTION TO PAPON,
LAST FRENCHMAN ACCUSED OF WAR CRIMES**
By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, April 28 (JTA) -- Some 150 Jewish students demonstrated here this week in front of the house of Maurice Papon, the last remaining French citizen who has been indicted for crimes against humanity.

The students blocked the avenue in the luxurious area of Paris where Papon lives and read aloud some of the names of the Jews deported on his orders.

The demonstration came in the wake of the conviction last week of Paul Touvier for crimes against humanity. It was the first time that a French citizen had gone to trial on those charges. Touvier was given the maximum sentence of life imprisonment.

The Union of French Jewish Students vowed this week that they would do their best to hasten the start of Papon's trial.

During World War II, Papon was a high-ranking member of the French administration in charge of the Bordeaux area in southwestern France.

At a time when his region was not yet occupied by the Nazis, he signed orders to arrest and deport 1,690 Jews, most of whom never returned from the Nazi death camps.

Many here believe that Papon, who is now 84, will never be brought to trial.

While serving the Vichy regime during the war, Papon reportedly joined the Resistance near the end of 1943. After the liberation, he went on serving in French government.

Papon served as Paris police chief during the 1960s and was a Cabinet member in the 1970s.

Under President Charles De Gaulle, Papon was in charge of the Paris police in October 1961, a few months before the end of the war in Algeria, when a silent demonstration of Algerian Arabs living in Paris turned into a bloodbath.

Some sources said that more than 150 Algerians were rounded up, beaten to death and thrown into the river Seine by the police. Not a single police officer was ever tried in connection with these events and Papon was never subjected to a reprimand.

Papers That Tried to Tell Story Were Censored

Newspapers that tried to report on the issue were censored.

A few years later, President Valery Giscard d'Estaing asked Papon to become his budget minister.

Papon was first charged with crimes against humanity in 1981. He was indicted in 1983, but since that time, through various technicalities -- and some say because of an unwillingness to pursue the case on the part of successive French governments -- Papon was never brought to trial.

It is unlikely, say observers, that any government will allow a high-ranking member of the French administration to be tried for his role during World War II because it would mean the end of the Gaullist myth of a France wholly bent on resisting the Nazi occupiers.

Two other Frenchmen have been charged with crimes against humanity, but their cases never went to trial.

Rene Bousquet, who was Vichy's police chief

between 1942 and 1944 and was charged with deporting 2,000 Jewish children, was killed by a deranged gunman last June at the age of 82.

Jean Leguay, who was indicted in 1979 for organizing the first mass roundup of French Jews in 1942, died of natural causes in 1989 at age 79.

**ADMITTED SS GUARD LEAVES U.S.
PERMANENTLY, TO RESIDE IN GERMANY**

WASHINGTON, April 28 (JTA) -- Mathias Denuel, a resident of Naples, Fla., who admitted to serving during World War II as an SS guard at a division of the Mauthausen concentration camp, has permanently departed the United States.

The Justice Department announced Monday that Denuel, 74, a German citizen who did not take U.S. citizenship, left the United States last Friday from Miami International Airport for Germany, where he will reside.

Denuel admitted to federal authorities that he was legally deportable. He signed an agreement with the department's Office of Special Investigations, the Nazi-prosecutions unit, promising to leave the United States by May 1.

In the agreement, Denuel admitted that from July 1943 until May 1945 he was a member of the Waffen SS, which acted under the direction of the German Nazi government.

Denuel, an ethnic German born in Romania in 1920, acquired German citizenship in 1953, then immigrated to the United States two years later.

He was a tailor in Philadelphia until he retired. He came to the United States in 1955 under the Refugee Relief Act, and did not list his wartime activities when he applied for his visa.

During World War II, Denuel was a member of the SS Death's Head Battalion, guarding prisoners at the Gusen concentration camp, the largest subdivision of Mauthausen, in Austria, then considered part of Germany.

He also admitted to guarding a transport of prisoners en route from a concentration camp in southern Poland to Mauthausen.

**FRENCH POLICE ARREST TEENS
FOR DESECRATION OF CEMETERIES**
By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, April 28 (JTA) -- Police have arrested two groups of youths for the desecration of two Jewish cemeteries in the eastern French province of Alsace.

The five culprits were brought to court Tuesday. The young vandals, who range in age from 10 to 14, said they were not motivated by anti-Semitic motives.

The cemeteries are located near Strasbourg.

In Struth, 15 headstones were broken and at least 40 monuments were overturned. The population was outraged. The 300-year-old Jewish cemetery, along with a synagogue that is no longer used, are considered part of the local heritage.

Three teens, ages 13 and 14, confessed to having perpetrated that desecration.

In Merzwiller, where 12 headstones were broken, the two culprits are 10 and 12.

Last December, two Jewish cemeteries near Strasbourg were desecrated, and a community center was defaced. Earlier, 193 graves in the Jewish cemetery of Herrlisheim were desecrated. Police have made no arrests for those acts.