

**WEIZMAN TO HOST SPECIAL DIALOGUE
ON ISRAEL-DIASPORA RELATIONSHIP**

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, May 8 (JTA) -- Israeli President Ezer Weizman will sponsor a two-day dialogue next month that aims to break new ground in Israel's relations with Diaspora Jewry.

Weizman took the initiative because he feels that "both Israel and the Jewish communities should re-evaluate their relationship and identities," said Yossi Amrani, the president's political adviser.

In a recent letter, Weizman called the dialogue a "launching pad" for efforts to strengthen the Israel-Diaspora relationship, "and in this way to face the threat of assimilation."

"New bridges are needed," he wrote, "to prevent ourselves from drifting apart."

Amrani said the discussion will be different from many other similar endeavors because the 200 participants who have been tapped represent intellectual, academic, political and artistic circles, and not just "official" Jewish leadership. One-third will be Israeli, while two-thirds will be from the Diaspora.

New developments require new ideas and new formulas for maintaining Israel-Diaspora links, said Amrani.

He pointed to the increasingly "inward" direction of the Jewish Diaspora, the improvement in U.S.-Israeli relations, and recent advances in the Middle East peace process and the Israeli economy.

A de-emphasis on the threat to Israel's "physical existence," he said, permits a shift in attention to what he called "spiritual" matters. Primary among these is the question of strengthening Jewish identity for both Diaspora Jews and Israelis.

'A Partnership Of Cooperation'

Israel's new economic strength calls for a "new partnership" between Israel and the Diaspora, wrote Weizman, "a partnership of cooperation, whereby we do not only receive but also give."

The dialogue is being launched in cooperation with the Foreign Ministry. But Amrani insisted that the event, which has been in the works for months, is completely independent of recent calls by Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin for "frank dialogue" and a radical reassessment of the Israel-Diaspora relationship.

Still, in an oblique nod to the explosion around Beilin's remarks, Amrani said it is clear that "something is happening" to shake up the relationship.

"It's important that someone take the leadership to exchange views and end the arguments," he said. "The president believes it's his responsibility. He believes it's important to have frank and open dialogue and find some common ground."

In holding the conference, Weizman appears to be trying to undo some of the damage he did early in his tenure with Diaspora leaders. At several meetings he emphasized the centrality of

aliyah to the degree that he was seen as disparaging Jewish life in the Diaspora.

His effort to explain himself and to set things right was apparent in a letter last month to a U.S. Jewish organizational leader.

"My whole life has been dedicated to the realization of the Jewish dream, building a homeland for the Jewish people," he wrote. "It has always been agonizing for me" to see "the majority of the Jewish people choosing to live somewhere else, not in Israel."

"Having so said, it should not be regarded as disrespect for Jewish life elsewhere," he added.

Arich Shomer, director-general of the President's Office, said Weizman still believes that aliyah is the "most important component of the peace process." There is strength in Jewish numbers, he said.

"But he understands that people have problems" that stand in the way of their making aliyah, Shomer said.

He added that the president's sponsorship of the dialogue is a clear indication that the issue of Israel-Diaspora relations is a high priority.

Meanwhile, leaders of the Jewish Agency for Israel and the World Zionist Organization, who work to strengthen Israel-Diaspora ties, reportedly were miffed that the president had taken the initiative and made plans without consulting them.

But a senior Jewish Agency official would only say they are worried it might not be planned properly. "This is a very important dialogue that may help further Israel-Diaspora relations," he said. "But we have some concerns such a dialogue has to be prepared more in advance."

Other Jewish Agency sources said they feared causing damage to relationships in the Diaspora if mistakes are made and certain people get excluded from the event, which is scheduled for June 22 and 23. Several Jewish Agency officials have been invited to participate.

**POLICE WAIT TO TAKE UP POSTS
AS ARAFAT SEEKS FURTHER DELAY**

By Dvorah Getzler

JERUSALEM, May 8 (JTA) -- As the first contingent of Palestinian police prepared to assume their duties in the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho, the Palestine Liberation Organization told Israel it needed more time before assuming control of the two areas.

Highlighting the delay in implementing the self-rule accord signed last week in Cairo, groups of Palestinian police gathered at Egyptian and Jordanian border crossings, but did not take over Israel Defense Force postings on schedule.

PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat said meanwhile that he needs yet more time to name the 24-member Palestinian Authority, which will have overall responsibility for directing Palestinian affairs in Gaza and Jericho.

Arafat had asked for more time to implement the accord when he and Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin met last week in Cairo to sign the final agreement for implementing Palestinian autonomy.

Some 330 Palestinian police, in new olive

green uniforms and red berets, gathered Sunday at the Egyptian side of Rafah, the border town separating Gaza from Egypt.

But it remained unclear when they would cross into Gaza and take over from the IDF the duties of maintaining law and order.

According to one report, the police would wait in Rafah until several other contingents, trained in Libya, Iraq, Yemen and Sudan, joined them there.

Another contingent of police was meanwhile gathering at the Jordanian border crossing into the West Bank. There, too, it was unclear when they would begin assuming their duties in Jericho.

IDF officials reported meanwhile that five large police installations in Gaza have been emptied of Israeli troops and are ready to receive the Palestinian police.

The officials said there have already been some joint Israeli-Palestinian patrols, which were undertaken in an effort to familiarize the Palestinians with the territory to come under their control.

According to the IDF officials, nearly all the police and security installations to be handed over to the Palestinians have already been evacuated of Israeli troops. All the remaining installations, the officials said, will be vacated by the end of this week.

BACK FROM CAIRO, SECRETARY OF STATE SETS HIS FOCUS ON ISRAELI-SYRIAN TALKS By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, May 6 (JTA) -- Now that Israel and the Palestinians have signed a landmark accord on self-rule in the administered territories, Secretary of State Warren Christopher is turning his attention to Israeli-Syrian peace negotiations.

Christopher, who carried new peace proposals back and forth between Jerusalem and Damascus last week, told a Jewish group here he would be returning to the Middle East "probably within the next couple of weeks."

Addressing the American Jewish Committee's 88th annual meeting here last week, the secretary expressed hope for progress on the Israeli-Syrian negotiating track, which has been stalled for months.

"I believe that there is a renewed seriousness of purpose on both sides, a purpose to engage comprehensively on all the issues that must be resolved across a broad range of the relationship between the two countries," he said.

The secretary also told the Jewish group that last week's Israeli-PLO agreement in Cairo is "an important step forward on the road toward a lasting peace in the Middle East."

The agreement is "an achievement to be cherished," Christopher said.

OBSERVERS ARRIVE IN HEBRON, ARE CAUGHT UP IN OLD CLASHES By Dvora Getzler

JERUSALEM, May 8 (JTA) -- A full contingent of international observers arrived in the West Bank town of Hebron this week, but on their first day of monitoring duties they found themselves caught in clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli soldiers.

The unarmed 114-member observer force,

recruited from Norway, Denmark and Italy, arrived in Hebron on Sunday in a convoy led by the Israel Defense Force.

They were accompanied by a busload of members of the foreign news media.

Shortly after the observers arrived, Palestinians protesting the presence of Jewish settlers in Hebron and nearby Kiryat Arba began throwing stones at Israeli soldiers.

The soldiers responded by firing tear gas into the crowd.

The observers, caught in the confrontation, soon found themselves choking on the tear gas.

"I guess we'll have to get used to carrying onions around with us," an Italian member of the observer force later said on Israel Radio, referring to a means to counter the effects of the gas.

The presence of observers, known officially as the Temporary International Presence in Hebron, was agreed to by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization in late March following the Feb. 25 slaying of at least 29 Palestinians at a Hebron mosque by an Israeli settler.

The agreement on the presence of an international team of observers had paved the way for the resumption of Israeli-PLO negotiations, which the Palestinians had suspended immediately after the Hebron massacre.

The observers will be in place for an initial three-month period, a mandate that is renewable for additional three-month periods.

ATLANTA BANK BRANCH WITH TIES TO IRAQ FINED FOR COMPLYING WITH ARAB BOYCOTT By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON (JTA) -- The Atlanta branch of Banca Nazionale del Lavoro, which was previously enmeshed in allegations concerning sales to Iraq prior to the 1991 Persian Gulf War, has been fined by the Commerce Department for allegedly complying with the Arab boycott against Israel.

The department levied a \$475,000 civil penalty on the bank branch for 104 alleged violations of anti-boycott provisions of the Export Administration Act and Regulations.

The bank agreed to pay the fine, but did not admit or deny that it had broken the law.

According to the Commerce Department, the violations were committed as the bank branch financed sales to Iraq between October 1987 and March 1990.

The department said that the bank branch provided 93 pieces of information to Iraqi banks about foreign companies' relationships with Israel and others on the Arab League blacklist.

In addition, the department said that the bank branch failed on 11 occasions to report requests for boycott-related information from Arab League countries.

The controversial boycott, in effect since before Israel's founding in 1948, has been under siege from the Clinton administration and others who feel that as Israel and its Arab neighbors move toward peace in the Middle East, the boycott is increasingly anachronistic.

In recent months, there have been signs of deterioration in the boycott, especially in the so-called "secondary" and "tertiary" boycotts directed at companies doing business with Israel. The so-called "primary" boycott is directed at Israel itself.

ITALY ASKING ARGENTINA TO EXTRADITE ACCUSED NAZI

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, May 8 (JTA) -- Italy wants an accused former Nazi, Erich Priebke, who allegedly helped carry out a 1944 reprisal massacre of 335 Romans, to be extradited from Argentina.

With the help of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, Priebke, now 80, was tracked down in a town in the Argentine Andes by ABC Television, which broadcast an interview with him last week.

Both military and civil Italian authorities began preliminary paperwork on the case over the weekend, and an extradition request was expected to be signed as early as Monday.

On Sunday, the Italian media quoted Argentina's foreign minister as saying that if Priebke's Nazi past can be proven, he will be turned over to the Italians.

Priebke was a captain in the Nazi SS and reportedly wartime deputy to Herbert Kappler, the Gestapo chief during the Nazi occupation of Rome.

After a partisan bomb attack in Rome on March 23, 1944, killed 33 SS stormtroopers, Kappler ordered 10 Romans to be executed for every dead German. There was an immediate mass roundup, and the hostages were massacred in the Ardeatine Caves at the southern outskirts of Rome.

Five additional people were killed, and the dead included 75 Jews.

Priebke's alleged responsibility during the massacre included crossing off the names of those people killed, but he admitted after the war to having personally shot two prisoners in the neck.

He also was reportedly involved in the deportation of thousands of Italian Jews to concentration camps.

The Ardeatine Caves massacre was the worst war crime carried out in Italy and has become the country's chief symbol of Nazi brutality for Italians and particularly for Italian Jews.

Priebke spent 20 months in custody after the war, during which he confessed his crimes, but he escaped from a German prisoner of war camp run by the English in 1948.

If returned to Italy and put on trial, he could face life imprisonment.

Italian Jews said they wanted justice, not a vendetta, to be carried out.

"Justice demands that sooner or later those who have stained themselves with crimes against humanity pay for their faults," said Rome Chief Rabbi Elio Toaff. "Terrible events such as this cannot be forgotten."

UNESCO HELPS RESTORE JERUSALEM SITES

By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, May 8 (JTA) -- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization will take up restorative work on several important Muslim sites in the Old City of Jerusalem, the group's director-general announced here last week.

The work will be undertaken to safeguard the cultural heritage of the Old City, said UNESCO Director-General Federico Mayor Zaragoza.

Following upon an initiative undertaken by

King Hussein of Jordan, restoration of the Dome of the Rock's cupola has been completed. Other basic work to preserve the mosque will soon be undertaken in line with a technical report drawn up by UNESCO experts who visited Jerusalem in mid-March.

UNESCO has already received numerous contributions for safeguarding the Dome of the Rock and other sites in the Old City. King Fahd of Saudi Arabia has stated that he will provide all additional funding needed to complete the work.

HAIM BAR-LEV DEAD AT 69; WAS GENERAL AND AMBASSADOR

By Dvorah Getzler

JERUSALEM, May 8 (JTA) -- Haim Bar-Lev, eighth chief of staff of the Israel Defense Force and most recently Israel's ambassador to Moscow, was laid to rest Sunday after succumbing to what was described as heart failure Saturday at a Tel Aviv hospital.

Bar-Lev, 69, was admitted to the hospital May 3 after returning home from Moscow in a generally weakened state. The hospital reported that medical tests indicated he suffered from muscular dystrophy.

"He was a noble knight," Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said in saluting Bar-Lev at the funeral.

Retired Gen. Shlomo Gazit called him "one of nature's real gentlemen."

Bar-Lev's name became synonymous with a line of fortifications at the Suez Canal built under his aegis when he was IDF chief of staff from 1968 to 1971.

A member of the Labor Party and an advocate of compromise with the Arabs, Bar-Lev switched from military life to politics in 1972, but returned to active duty during the 1973 Yom Kippur War. It was during that war that the Bar-Lev Line was breached by Egyptian troops.

He was a member of Knesset from 1977 to 1990, serving on the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee and as chairman of the Knesset subcommittee on the defense budget. He also served as minister of commerce and industry and later as police minister.

Bar-Lev was general secretary of the Labor Party from 1978 to 1984, when he became police minister. He quit the government in 1992.

During his stint as police minister, Jewish terrorists attacked an Arab bus en route from Jerusalem to Hebron, resulting in the death of one Palestinian and the wounding of 10 others. The weapon used was a missile issued by the IDF.

Bar-Lev vowed that Israel would "not acquiesce" in citizens "taking the law into private hands."

Bar-Lev was born in Vienna on Nov. 16, 1924. He was raised in Yugoslavia, immigrating to Palestine in 1939.

He was a member of the Palmach from 1942 to 1948. During the 1948 War of Independence, he was commander of armored units in the fledgling Israeli army.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, whom Bar-Lev succeeded as IDF chief, said, "He always lived up to the Palmach motto: 'We are always the first!' And so he was."

(Contributing to this report was JTA staff writer Susan Birnbaum in New York.)

RABBI MOSES ROSEN, GUIDING LIGHT OF ROMANIAN JEWRY, IS DEAD AT 81

By Odette Caufman-Blumenfeld

IASI, Romania, May 8 (JTA) -- Romanian Chief Rabbi Moses Rosen, the leading figure in the postwar Jewish community here, died in Bucharest on Friday after suffering two strokes in April.

The heart of the 81-year-old rabbi stopped beating after nearly a month of struggling against the effects of the strokes. The news of his death stunned the diminishing Romanian Jewish community, whose members had hoped and prayed that the rabbi would recover.

Jewish leaders from New York to Jerusalem were quick to express their praise for Rosen, a figure who tirelessly struggled with the Communist leaders in Romania on behalf of the country's Jewish community.

Rosen, who had been chief rabbi of Romania since 1948, wielded an extraordinary amount of influence within that country as a religious leader and a frequent envoy to the United States on behalf of Romania.

He enabled nearly the entire postwar Jewish community of Romania, about 400,000, to emigrate and settle in Israel. The exodus was unique in Communist Eastern Europe.

Before World War II, there were approximately 800,000 Romanian Jews. But that number was cut in half during the Holocaust. There are now only some 18,000 Jews, most of them elderly, living among Romania's 23 million people.

Rosen maintained an astoundingly strong Jewish religious and cultural life throughout Romania with the extensive help of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, providing Jews who remained, even in the most isolated communities, with kosher food, religious life and quality care for the elderly.

Rosen was sometimes subjected to criticism for channeling money to Romania's Communist regime in exchange for providing the country's Jews with exit visas. But he remained steadfast in his efforts to secure safe passage for the country's Jews to Israel.

Zionism 'Not To Bring Jews To Philadelphia'

In an incident that sheds light on his Zionist fervor, Rosen once told a hopeful emigre who inquired about leaving for the United States, "We didn't create this (Zionist) movement to bring Jews to Philadelphia."

In the years following the violent fall of dictator Nicolae Ceausescu in 1989, Rosen fought against a resurgence of Romanian anti-Semitism when many in the country sought a scapegoat for Romania's economic woes.

Rosen was born in 1912, in Moinesti, Moldavia, where his father was the local rabbi.

He recalled in his autobiography that "though small, this community became famous in the history of the rebuilding, because it was from Moinesti that the first Romanian Jewish settlers left for Palestine in 1882." The group was known as the Hovevei Zion, the "Lovers of Zion."

In his autobiography, "Dangers, Tests and Miracles," as told to Joseph Finklestone of the London Jewish Chronicle, Rosen recounted a life of danger, arrests and intrigue.

He was sometimes criticized for his love of

pomp and circumstance and his own sense of self-worth. Jokes abounded about Rosen as a "Jewish pope" because of his flowing purple and black robes, his tall, mitered hat and a California-size Magen David worn around his neck.

But there was method to the man.

In presenting himself to the Romanian public as a high religious figure, he earned the respect given to Christian Orthodox figures in a country where physical trappings meant much. And in so doing, he enabled the small Jewish population to be accorded a measure of respect and protection it desperately needed.

After Rosen's death, the Federation of Romanian Jewish Communities received condolence messages from Romanian President Ion Iliescu and other members of the Romanian government, who praised the rabbi and assured the country's Jews that they will continue to condemn any manifestation of racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia.

The news of Rosen's death, along with the messages from the government's leaders, were broadcast on Romanian television.

In New York, Ambassador Milton Wolf, president of the JDC, issued a statement saying that with Rosen's death, the Jewish world has "lost an extraordinary leader and a courageous man. He combined religion and diplomacy, Torah and political wisdom in an indefatigable effort to ascertain a dignified Jewish life for his community," said Wolf. "We at JDC were fortunate to be his partners for 45 years in this endeavor."

JDC Executive Vice President Michael Schneider accompanied Rosen's body from Bucharest to Jerusalem for burial.

'The Last Of The Giants'

Rabbi Arthur Schneier of New York, senior rabbi of the Park East Synagogue and founder of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, was a longtime friend and colleague of Rosen's and a frequent host to him in New York.

Schneier, who traveled to Bucharest for the funeral service there and who also accompanied the body to Jerusalem, said in a statement Sunday, "I am deeply saddened by the passing of Chief Rabbi Rosen. He was a giant of world Jewry, a man of courage, a committed Zionist and a powerful advocate of the Jewish people.

"He will be especially remembered for his achievement in winning the right of Romania's Jews to make a new life in Israel and his struggle, no less successful, to revive Jewish life in Eastern Europe," the statement read.

Elan Steinberg, executive director of the World Jewish Congress, called Rosen "the greatest Zionist leader ever" for his having motivated 400,000 Romanian Jews -- nearly the entire Jewish population of that country that remained after the Holocaust -- to make aliyah.

Israel Singer, WJC secretary-general, described the rabbi as "without a doubt the last of the giants, the end of an era, a man from another century transposed into ours. At once a rabbi, the president of his community, a negotiator with communists and fascists alike, a man who fought them all and yet could talk to them.

"A paradox, a conundrum wrapped in a contradiction. He really was all those things, and after him there is nothing," Singer said.

(Contributing to this report was JTA staff writer Susan Birnbaum in New York.)