



**AUTONOMY SLOWLY LIMPING TO LIFE
AS PALESTINIANS START TAKING CONTROL**
By Dvora Getzler

JERUSALEM, May 11 (JTA) — One week after Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization signed an agreement in Cairo for implementing self-rule in the Gaza Strip and Jericho, Palestinian autonomy is limping slowly to life.

The week had been filled with high hopes, as crowds of Palestinians waited eagerly each day for the first signs of a transfer of authority. Instead, they encountered seemingly endless delays.

During the week, small numbers of Palestinian officials were given tours of civilian installations in Gaza and Jericho by Israeli representatives. But no actual transfer of responsibilities took place.

Indeed, there was no one for the Israelis to make the transfer to, since PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat had not yet named more than a few of the officials who will serve on the 24-member Palestinian Authority, the body that will oversee Palestinian affairs in Gaza and Jericho.

Financial problems as well as administrative foul-ups -- to say nothing of the internal battles being waged by top officials at PLO headquarters in Tunis -- appeared to be the chief causes of the delays.

On Wednesday, at least one PLO official admitted that the organization does not have the money needed to finance the deployment of its police force.

In an effort to help smooth the path to Palestinian autonomy in the face of the PLO's financial difficulties, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin persuaded the Israel Electric Corp. on Wednesday to maintain the supply of electricity to Gaza despite a debt of some \$12 million owed the company.

'History Is Being Made Here'

As a result of all the delays, only a small number of the newly created, 9,000-member Palestinian police force had arrived in either Gaza or Jericho by midweek.

On Wednesday, a group of 10 Palestinian officers toured Jericho together with Israeli security officials from whom they will be taking over the responsibility for maintaining law and order.

Crowds of Palestinians were out in the hot and dusty streets of Jericho to greet them -- as they had been on almost every day since the accords were signed last week in Cairo.

The crowds were full of enthusiasm, calling out excitedly, "This is the beginning of our state! Tomorrow it will be (the West Bank town of) Ramallah. This is history that is being made here in the streets of Jericho."

But the gaiety and excitement changed to growing bitterness when it became clear that the officers were not to be followed by any contingents of police.

The police units scheduled to assume duties in Jericho, known as the el-Aksa force, had

arrived at the Jordanian border with the West Bank earlier in the week.

But they did not cross the Allenby Bridge for reasons that a senior PLO officer admitted "have nothing to do with Israel."

It came to light Wednesday that the police had been trained in Iraq and that before leaving for Jordan en route to Jericho, all their identity papers had been confiscated.

The problem was certain to drag out even longer the process undertaken by Israel of checking the identities and fingerprinting each member of the arriving units.

As the Jericho residents realized that once again no police were to arrive, they started throwing stones at Israeli soldiers on patrol.

The soldiers soon responded by firing rubber bullets, and the acrid smell of tear gas burned the air. Several youths and a foreign journalist were injured in the confrontation.

That same day, 146 Palestinian police arrived at the Rafah border terminal separating Gaza from Egypt, where the units had undergone training.

The uniformed men were brought to the border town in the south of Gaza in three buses. They then went through the lengthy arms and identity checks that Israel is insisting upon for security reasons.

When the checks were completed, the police were scheduled to join a similar-sized police force that had traveled Tuesday night from Rafah to the Gazan town of Deir el-Balah, which became the first area to fall officially under Palestinian control.

The transfer to the Palestinians had taken place late Tuesday night, when Israeli officials thought it would be safest to remove their soldiers from the military headquarters in Deir el-Balah.

Just the same, thousands of Palestinians stayed up all night to welcome the newly arriving police.

On Wednesday, as the police presence in Deir el-Balah became more prominent, one officer who had spent 23 years in an Israeli prison compared his situation to that of newly elected South African President Nelson Mandela, who had also once been a prisoner.

One police recruit, who was barely 18, was asked why his eyes were full of tears.

"I'm so happy. It's such a great day," he said.

**KNESSET RATIFIES CAIRO ACCORD
AFTER OPPOSITION WALKS OUT OF HALL**
By Dvora Getzler

JERUSALEM, May 11 (JTA) — By a vote of 52-0, the Knesset voted its approval Wednesday night of the agreement signed last week in Cairo by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization that set in motion the long-delayed start of Palestinian autonomy in the Gaza Strip and Jericho.

But the rare unanimity of a Knesset vote occurred only after all the members of the op-

position parties walked out, demanding that the government hold a national referendum on the self-rule accord.

In the debate leading up to the vote, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin spoke of the "great pleasure" it gave him to see Israeli soldiers give up their posts on the strife-ridden streets of Gaza, where they were replaced this week by the first contingents of Palestinian police.

Israeli soldiers, Rabin said, have "no business there, and no one has the right to endanger their lives by keeping them there. No one!"

During his speech, Rabin assured the Knesset that the agreement signed last week in Cairo -- a copy of which was given to every Knesset member before the vote -- contained no secret clauses.

"This is a good agreement that presents us with a real chance for peace," the prime minister said.

Likud leader Binyamin Netanyahu countered with his own view of the situation, charging that Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres were the only people anywhere in the world who still trusted PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat.

As the leader of the opposition spoke of Arafat's expansionist goals -- which would extend far beyond Israel's borders -- the prime minister shrugged dismissively and said, "Nonsense!"

BUSINESS LEADERS MET IN CAIRO TO DISCUSS INVESTMENT IN GAZA-JERICHO By Steven Weiss

WASHINGTON, May 11 (JTA) -- As Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization finalized their commitments to each other last week in Cairo, representatives from the American business community met with political leaders from all sides to discuss the economic side of the peace process.

Builders for Peace, a group of Jewish and Arab Americans from the private sector that has agreed to invest money in the Gaza Strip and Jericho, met with high-level officials following the signing last Wednesday of the implementation accord for Palestinian self-rule.

Chief among the group's concerns was the ability of the Palestinians to implement the accord, according to Steven Grossman, president of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

In a conference telephone call with reporters on Monday, Grossman discussed the highlights of his trip to Cairo, during which he joined the group from Builders for Peace in several meetings with government officials who were there for the signing.

Following the signing ceremony, the delegation met with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who said he was concerned over whether PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat was prepared to assume control over the autonomous regions, according to Grossman.

"Arafat's preparedness was (Rabin's) greatest concern," Grossman said.

Rabin wanted the group to express his concern to Arafat in a meeting with the Palestinian leader later that day, Grossman said.

At their meeting, Arafat assured the group that he was prepared to direct the implementation of the accord, Grossman said.

"Arafat (has the ability to) use language to reassure people," Grossman said, "but let's see

what happens when Arafat has control on the ground."

Builders for Peace was created by Vice President Al Gore in November to provide better economic conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip that would lay the groundwork for successful implementation of the self-rule agreement signed at the White House in September.

Chaired by former California Rep. Mel Levine and Arab American Institute leader James Zogby, the group had to delay much of its investment plan while the Israelis and Palestinians slowly negotiated the implementation accord.

Arafat emphasized to the group in their Cairo meeting that he will encourage private business in the autonomous region, in part by appointing a special Palestinian liaison to Builders for Peace, Grossman said.

Grossman added that Arafat wanted to prove the skeptics wrong who doubt his ability to attract private business to the newly autonomous region. "Arafat said he wasn't a socialist even when it was fashionable" to be one, he said.

AJCOMMITTEE VISITS PLO OFFICE FOR FIRST TIME IN ITS ANNUAL MEETING By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, May 11 (JTA) -- Some of the delegates in town for last week's American Jewish Committee convention had a new stop on their busy agenda: the Washington office of the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Each year, AJCommittee delegates split into groups and visit embassies to meet with foreign dignitaries on issues of Jewish concern.

But this year -- the first AJCommittee annual meeting since last September's Israeli-PLO accord -- marked the group's first official trip to the Palestine Affairs Center, the PLO's downtown headquarters here.

The group of about a dozen AJCommittee members met last Friday with Hasan Abdel Rahman, the PLO's Washington representative, for about an hour and a quarter, and discussed the peace process, the Arab boycott and other issues.

Overall, "we felt he was presenting a strong case for Palestinian involvement in the peace process," said Jason Isaacson, AJCommittee's Washington representative, who participated in the meeting.

While Rahman's answers to some of the AJCommittee members' questions were not "in every respect satisfactory," the AJCommittee group appreciated his willingness to discuss the issues, Isaacson said.

"It was a very worthwhile meeting," Isaacson said, adding that the group would hold future meetings with PLO officials.

"We are an organization that is strongly supportive of the peace process, and we feel that it is in the best interests of the peace process to urge the parties themselves and other countries to push the process forward," said Isaacson, who noted that Rahman had attended the AJCommittee dinner the previous night along with other diplomats.

AJCommittee members also visited the embassies of Tunisia, Saudi Arabia and Jordan for the first time during an annual meeting, although the Jordanian ambassador had previously addressed an AJCommittee luncheon.

MANDELA MAKES GESTURE TO ISRAEL WITH SPECIAL MEETING WITH WEIZMAN

By Suzanne Belling

JOHANNESBURG, May 11 (JTA) -- Newly elected South African President Nelson Mandela made a special gesture to Israel by meeting with Israeli President Ezer Weizman before greeting any of the other heads of state gathered for his inauguration ceremonies this week.

And the Israeli leader was paid additional, perhaps unexpected, attention when officials from several countries with which Israel has no diplomatic relations -- such as Pakistan, Cuba and Sudan -- came up to greet Weizman during the ceremonies.

After attending the inauguration, Weizman addressed Israelis living in Johannesburg and told them that Israel anticipates positive relations with the new leadership in South Africa.

He said the newly signed self-rule agreement between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization would augur well for warm ties between Jerusalem and Pretoria.

"There is a great understanding between the Palestinians and Mandela," Weizman said. "They regarded each other as brothers in trouble, although there is a great difference here."

Weizman told how he had had a private conversation with Mandela, whom he described as having an active interest in becoming a sponsor of Israeli-Palestinian reconciliation.

After Weizman met with Mandela alone, the South African president asked PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, who also attended the inauguration, to join them.

'Mr. President, We Are Cousins'

"He calls Arafat by his first name, Yasser," Weizman told the group of Israelis. "They embraced, and he said he and Arafat were brothers. I said: 'Then, Mr. President, we are cousins.'"

Weizman said the new South Africa will attempt to hold an important political and economic position, not only in Africa but worldwide.

Regarding the role of the country's Jewish community, Weizman said Mandela "honestly speaks about regarding Jews as an element that will assist him in building the new South Africa."

In an effort to reach out and reassure South African Jews that they will have a place in the country's new political configuration, Mandela last Saturday visited the largest synagogue in the Southern Hemisphere -- Cape Town's Green and Sea Point Hebrew Congregation -- to attend a Shabbat service there.

The synagogue was packed with congregants who came to hear Mandela speak, and some members of the temple were sporting yarmulkes in the black, green and gold colors of the Mandela-led African National Congress.

Among the dignitaries who came to the synagogue to hear Mandela's message of reconciliation were Israeli Ambassador Alon Liel; South African Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris; the congregation's spiritual leader, Rabbi Jack Steinhorn; and the national chairman of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies, Mervyn Smith.

At Tuesday's inauguration, Mandela also made a point of including the country's Jewish population in the ceremonies by having Harris sit in the front row of the podium. That row also

included other religious leaders, Mandela himself and Deputy Presidents Thabo Mbeki and F.W. de Klerk.

Harris, who was among the Christian, Hindu and Muslim spiritual leaders attending the inaugural, read a message of peace from the prophet Isaiah before the crowd of 150,000.

In his inaugural address, Mandela also sounded the theme of peace, saying that South Africa was celebrating "a common victory for justice, for peace, for human dignity."

He called on the international community "to continue to stand by us as we tackle the challenges of building peace, prosperity, non-racialism and democracy."

"The time for the healing of the wounds has come. The moment for bridging the chasms that divide us has come."

"The time to build is upon us," said the man who had risen from being one of the world's best-known political prisoners to become his country's president.

Mandela pledged during his address to build a society based on egalitarian principles.

"We enter into a covenant that we shall build a society in which all South Africans, both black and white, will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their hearts, assured of their inalienable right to human dignity -- a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world."

"Never, never and never again shall it be that this beautiful land will again experience the oppression of one by another and suffer the indignity of being the skunk of the world," Mandela said.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT CONDEMNS LEADING GERMAN RIGHT-WING LEADER

By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, May 11 (JTA) -- The European Parliament this week adopted a resolution condemning the recent inflammatory remarks of one of Germany's leading right-wing extremist politicians.

The resolution by the Parliament -- the legislative body of the 12-member European Union, based in Strasbourg, France -- criticized remarks made by Franz Schonhuber, the leader of Germany's far-right Republican Party.

Schonhuber, a World War II member of the Waffen SS, recently verbally attacked Ignatz Bubis, president of the Central Council of German Jews, calling him "one of the country's worst trouble-makers."

Schonhuber also deemed Bubis -- who has been steadfast in attacking the xenophobic and anti-Semitic activities of German right-wing groups -- as himself responsible for the resurgence of anti-Semitism in Germany.

The European Parliament's resolution was introduced by a German parliamentarian, Mechthild von Alemann, with the support of the European Jewish Congress.

Officials of the EJC, which is an affiliate of the World Jewish Congress, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that the organization was pleased with the Parliament's stand against Schonhuber.

In a related development, the EJC this week issued a statement reasserting its dedication to combatting the revival of xenophobic and anti-Semitic ideologies in Europe.

ARGENTINA SAID READY TO EXTRADITE ACCUSED NAZI WAR CRIMINAL TO ITALY

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, May 11 (JTA) -- Argentine officials were reportedly prepared this week to turn former SS Captain Erich Priebke over to Italy, which has requested his extradition to stand trial for war crimes.

Argentine President Carlos Menem told reporters that if Italy's extradition request was in order, Priebke would be sent there immediately.

Priebke, 81, has been under house arrest at his home in the Andean resort of San Carlos di Bariloche since an Italian military court issued a warrant for his arrest on Monday.

The former Nazi officer has admitted to taking part in a March 1944 massacre of 335 Italians outside Rome. The massacre was ordered by the Germans in reprisal for a partisan attack that killed 33 Nazi stormtroopers.

The massacre is considered the worst war crime to have taken place on Italian soil and has become the country's chief symbol of Nazi brutality for Italians, and particularly for Italian Jews.

Priebke was the deputy to Herbert Kappler, the Gestapo chief during the Nazi occupation of Rome. In an interview Sunday on Italian television he called the massacre "a hard but just reprisal."

Italy initiated the paperwork necessary for extradition over the weekend following an ABC Television program, "PrimeTime Live," broadcast last Thursday in the United States, in which Priebke admitted to partaking in the killings.

Priebke has been living in Argentina without concealing his identity since 1948.

In an interview published Tuesday in the Rome daily La Repubblica, he said he and four others escaped the prison camp near the Italian Adriatic coastal town of Rimini on Dec. 31, 1946.

With the help of a Franciscan friar, he said, he and his family lived for two years in Italy. When they decided to leave Italy on an Italian cargo ship, he said he got help from the Vatican, "which got word to me through Bishop Alois Hudal that it was prepared to help me."

He said the family traveled to Argentina on Red Cross passports and that "the Vatican probably had a network of convents and monasteries where it could hide people, but it also has to be said that the Vatican helped everybody, Jews as well, and not just us Germans."

After the war, Priebke was found guilty of the Ardeatine Caves massacre by an Italian military tribunal and sentenced to life in prison.

As a result of the Priebke case, Argentina's leading Jewish organization demanded their government establish laws to bring to justice Nazi war criminals who have lived there for decades.

GREEK PRIME MINISTER PAPANDREOU MEETS WITH AMERICAN JEWISH LEADERS

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK (JTA) -- Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou impressed Jewish organizational leaders here recently with warm words about his country's ties with Israel and world Jewry.

But he appears to have disappointed them on an issue that has long concerned the Greek Jewish community and Jewish groups here: the

requirement that Greek citizens must state their religion on their national identity cards.

David Harris, executive vice president of the American Jewish Committee, which hosted the first of two closed-door meetings with the Greek premier late last month, said Papandreou said the matter was in the hands of Parliament alone and was an interest of the Greek Orthodox Church.

But "he made it very clear that he understood our views, that we expressed a legitimate concern," said Harris.

At the second meeting, hosted by the World Jewish Congress, Papandreou heard a suggestion that he try to arrange a meeting between Greek Orthodox Church leaders and Jewish representatives to try to resolve the problem.

The suggestion was raised by Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations and a WJC vice president.

That meeting was also attended by leaders of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, Anti-Defamation League, American Zionist Movement, American Jewish Congress, American Sephardi Federation and Rabbinical Assembly.

Another issue, discussed at the AJCommittee meeting, was a complaint by the 5,000-member Greek Jewish community that a Greek school textbook contains anti-Jewish material. Papandreou said he was aware of the matter and would look into it, said Harris.

The AJCommittee meeting was a luncheon attended by leaders of AJCommittee, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, Greek Foreign Minister Karolos Papoulias and Telemachos Hikiris, director of the Prime Minister's Office.

Also present was Andrew Athens of Chicago, the head of the American Greek community, known as the United Hellenic American Congress, with which the AJCommittee has long ties.

By all accounts, Papandreou was optimistic about Greek-Israeli relations, which were nearly nonexistent during his earlier stint as Greek leader, which ended in 1989.

Other topics discussed were the dangers of Islamic fundamentalism, the proliferation of mass weapons, the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Middle East peace talks.

Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chairman of the Conference of Presidents, said they also discussed concern about the Israeli soldiers missing in action in Lebanon and ways Greece could help.

DEAD SEA SCROLLS TO SHOW AT VATICAN

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, May 11 (JTA) -- The Dead Sea Scrolls will be exhibited for the first time in Europe this summer, when they will be featured in a special exhibition at the Vatican opening June 30.

Italian newspapers said the exhibit will be opened by Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Pope John Paul II.

The exhibition is described as the first major cultural event stemming from the agreement signed Dec. 30 opening the way to full diplomatic relations between the Vatican and Israel.

The exhibit will be arranged in cooperation between the Vatican Library and the Archeological Museum in Jerusalem.