

**'EARLY EMPOWERMENT' COMPLETED
WITH TRANSFER OF HEALTH, TAXATION**
By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Dec. 1 (JTA) -- Implementation of Israel's peace accord with the Palestine Liberation Organization passed another milestone this week as officials transferred authority for taxation and health affairs in the West Bank to the Palestinians.

The transfers on Thursday marked the completion of the so-called "early empowerment," under which Palestinians took over control of five key areas of authority in the West Bank, including education, welfare and tourism.

Israel formally handed over responsibility for tax collection at a ceremony Thursday in the civil administration building in the West Bank town of Ramallah. Health affairs were handed over during a ceremony in Nablus.

Thursday's ceremonies were due to take place earlier this week, but were delayed until the Palestinian Authority received confirmation from donor countries meeting in Belgium that money would be available to cover day-to-day expenses for the next few months.

At a two-day meeting in Brussels, a group of foreign donor nations, acting along with the World Bank, agreed to provide about \$200 million in grants and loans to support the cash-strapped Palestinian Authority.

The transfer came just days before Israel and the PLO were due to meet in Cairo to begin negotiations on the next stage of autonomy.

Those negotiations will focus on the redeployment of Israeli troops in the West Bank and the scheduling of Palestinian elections.

The talks are expected to be difficult. Israel has expressed concern that the security of Israelis who live in the territories cannot be guaranteed if and when a troop withdrawal takes place.

Officials Say Timetable Should Be Changed

According to the self-rule accord signed last year in Washington, the troop withdrawal should take place prior to the holding of Palestinian elections.

This week, some Israeli government officials spoke out about renegotiating the timetable of the self-rule accord.

Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin told Israeli Radio on Wednesday that there was no point in being stuck in negotiations over an interim arrangement -- which covers the first five years of Palestinian self-rule -- and that it would be more effective to move ahead with negotiations on a permanent arrangement.

The permanent-status talks, which will cover such issues as settlements and who will control Jerusalem, are scheduled to begin in May 1996.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin lashed out at Beilin for his remarks, saying, "The government will continue its policy toward negotiations on the interim arrangement."

Beilin, one of the architects of the self-rule accord signed last year in Washington, offered his view of a final-status arrangement: A confederation

between Jordan and the Palestinian entity, full demilitarization in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, changes to the 1967 borders and a Jerusalem united under Israeli rule.

As a result of Thursday's transfers of authority, the Palestinians will now be responsible for collecting some \$96 million in taxes from Arab residents of the West Bank. The agreement does not include Israelis who live in the territories.

Mohammed Nashashibi, the Palestinian Authority official in charge of finance, said he believed the self-rule government would be able to install the necessary mechanisms to collect these fees.

In preparation for the transfer, the Palestinian Authority has been recruiting tax and customs employees. Most Palestinians previously involved in such work resigned during the Palestinian uprising that began in 1987. Those officials viewed Israel's taxation of the territories as part of the government's oppression of Palestinians.

In the area of health services, meanwhile, the Palestinians have an annual budget of some \$33 million and some 2,000 Palestinian employees.

An Israeli civil administration spokesman said it would be up to the Palestinian Authority to decide if it wants to maintain any relationship with the Israeli medical system.

**ARIZONA UNIVERSITY STUDENT CONFESSES
THAT SHE FABRICATED ANTI-ISRAEL COLUMN**
By Pauline Yearwood

Jewish News of Greater Phoenix

PHOENIX, Dec. 1 (JTA) -- An Arizona State University student journalist has admitted that a controversial column, in which she claimed to have witnessed Orthodox Jews stoning a paraplegic to death at the Western Wall in Jerusalem, was a fabrication, according to two ASU journalism professors.

The State Press, the ASU student newspaper in which the column appeared, printed a retraction in a Nov. 29 editorial titled "State Press Repentance."

The student, Mary Leigh Summerton, now faces disciplinary action that could include expulsion from the journalism school or from the university.

The incident, which has attracted widespread media attention here, began Nov. 15, when the "State Press" printed a guest column in which Summerton, a senior journalism student and former managing editor of the paper, claimed to have witnessed Orthodox Jews, who were praying at the Western Wall, stone and kill a paraplegic in an electric wheelchair.

She said the Jews were angry because the man was using electricity on the Sabbath.

She wrote that the incident occurred while she was on a "United Nations-sponsored trip to the Middle East."

Summerton participated in an Anti-Defamation League mission for student journalists last summer.

Members of the ASU Jewish community, including David Don, president of the Jewish Law

Students Association, and Barton Lee, director of Hillel at ASU, challenged the story.

In letters to the school newspaper and in meetings with members of the paper's staff, the Jewish students said that the article contained numerous internal inconsistencies, and that they could find no record of the incident in other news media.

They also checked with the ADL, where officials said that the student group had not witnessed any such incident and that the group had visited the Western Wall on a Thursday rather than on Shabbat.

Summerton originally claimed, in conversations with the Jewish News of Greater Phoenix last week, that she did not write the article, but simply turned in a column written by members of an Israeli feminist group.

However, one of her journalism professors, Bruce Itule, said she had submitted the column as a class assignment before turning it in to the newspaper.

Summoned to a meeting earlier this week with Doug Anderson, director of the Walter Cronkite School of Journalism, and Itule, the director of student publications, a weeping Summerton "admitted that she wrote fiction, fabricated the whole story," according to Itule.

"She feels very guilty and is very sorry," he said, adding that Summerton gave no motive for her actions.

Summerton did not return calls from the Jewish News after her meeting this week.

Anderson and Itule said she has not been going to her classes for the past two weeks.

Anderson said the journalism school has made a recommendation for disciplinary action against Summerton. He said that academic privacy rules forbid him from disclosing what action was recommended. The recommendation now goes to either the dean of student life or to an academic dishonesty committee.

Art Carter, dean of student life at the university, said it could take weeks or months for the university to decide on the appropriate discipline.

Meanwhile, Anderson, Itule and State Press staff members met with Lee, the Hillel director, and representatives of other Jewish organizations to discuss the incident.

Lee said the meeting, which included representatives from ADL, the American Jewish Committee and the local Jewish Community Relations Council, was designed to "develop mechanisms to educate the (newspaper) staff about Middle East issues, and to alert them as to what should make the red flags go up."

Lee called it "a productive meeting."

Itule, who also has apologized publicly for his role in the incident, said, "I am going to be absolutely aggressive in the future about becoming more educated about Middle Eastern issues and make students more aware as well."

REVERTING TO PRE-PEACE ACCORD DAYS, PLO OFFICIAL SAYS FIGHT WILL CONTINUE

By Tamar Levy

GENEVA, Dec. 1 (JTA) -- United Nations officials here marked a day of solidarity with the Palestinian people with a speech reminiscent of the anti-Israel rhetoric commonly heard prior to

the peace accord between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Nabil Ramlawi, the PLO representative to U.N. groups meeting here, said Tuesday that Palestinian resistance to the Israelis was similar to the European fight against the Nazis during World War II.

He also spoke out against the self-rule accord signed by Israel and the PLO last year in Washington, saying that the Palestinians will continue to fight Israel until they establish a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital.

"The Palestinians will continue to resist occupation by any means necessary," he said. Last year's "negotiations between the PLO and Israel were unbalanced and will lead to no peace until the creation of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital."

The U.N. session here marked the 47th anniversary of the date that the U.N. General Assembly adopted a resolution partitioning Palestine, paving the way for the creation of the Jewish state.

Meanwhile, a former American Jewish diplomat was refused the opportunity to address the U.N. delegates and voice his support for the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Morris Abram, currently chairman of U.N. Watch, a non-governmental monitoring group, made the request to speak, but was turned down by the International Coordinating Committee for Non-governmental Organizations on the Question of Palestine, which had exclusive control over who would be allowed to speak at the event.

SLOVAK COUPLE HONORED WITH RIGHTEOUS GENTILE AWARD

By Josef Klansky

PRAGUE, Dec. 1 (JTA) -- The Israeli ambassador to the Czech Republic last week bestowed a posthumous Righteous Among the Nations Award to a couple who gave refuge to three Jews in a Slovak village during World War II.

At a ceremony at the Israeli Embassy in Prague on Nov. 24, Ambassador Moshe Yegar delivered the award to Ruzena Stepnickova, the daughter of Vojtech and Anna Mjartus, who risked their lives to hide in their home three Jews who were being pursued by the Nazis.

Stepnickova, who was 8 years old at the time of her parents' heroic action, was accompanied at the ceremony by her husband and two granddaughters.

Yegar said the action of Stepnickova's parents had been risky for the entire family and that it was a greater act of heroism than fighting on the battlefield.

"They could not guess whether their humanitarian deed would go on for weeks only, or for months or years," said Yegar. "They could not anticipate when the war would end or whether the Nazis would be defeated. In spite of this they acted as they did because of their humanism and moral strength."

Yegar noted pointedly that in the same village where the Mjartus family succeeded in saving three lives, 18 other Jews were hunted down and executed by the Nazis.

Some 8,000 individuals have been awarded the Righteous Among the Nations medal for their efforts to rescue Jews during World War II.

HUNGARIAN CHRISTIANS CALL HOLOCAUST 'MOST SHAMEFUL EVENT OF 20TH CENTURY'

By Agnes Bohm

BUDAPEST, Dec. 1 (JTA) -- Christian churches in Hungary have together issued a statement calling the Holocaust "the most shameful event of the 20th century."

The declaration was issued by the Hungarian Catholic Bishops and the Ecumenical Council of Hungarian Churches on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Holocaust in Hungary.

The statement was published Wednesday in the Hungarian media.

The statement asks forgiveness in the name of Christians who "failed to act against the deportation, persecution and killing of 600,000 Hungarian Jews during the Holocaust."

What happened to the Jews of Hungary was "not only the responsibility of the representatives of evil but also the members of the Christian churches, who did not raise their voices against the deportation and killing of the mass of Jews in Hungary."

"The Holocaust was the biggest shame of the 20th century," the document says.

The 50th anniversary, the document says, is the occasion for all churches in Hungary to pay tribute to the memory of the victims.

"The Holocaust is regarded -- based on the Bible -- as a shameful sin," the document says.

The statement was praised by rabbis here and abroad.

It was called an important document by Rabbis Joseph Schweitzer, head of the Budapest Rabbinical Seminary, and Peter Feldmajer, president of the Hungarian Jewish community.

'Of International Importance'

Rabbi Mordechai Piron, a former chief rabbi of the Israel Defense Force as well as a former chief rabbi of Zurich, in a statement published in the Hungarian press, called the declaration "a statement of international importance."

In an interview with the Hungarian News Agency, Piron said the statement "contributes to the creation of an atmosphere of reciprocal understanding between Jews and Christians."

The Catholic Church in Hungary issued a similar statement on its own in October, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Nazi takeover of Hungary.

Laszlo Paskai, archbishop of the Catholic Church in Hungary, expressed his sorrow over the events of 50 years ago.

Local observers are saying that it is not by chance that this latest church statement was issued on the eve of a meeting here of the Council on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the so-called Helsinki Commission on human rights.

U.S. President Clinton and Secretary of State Warren Christopher will be attending the conference this weekend, along with Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres. It is expected that the Middle East will be on the agenda.

Meanwhile, the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum and Memorial in Jerusalem recently awarded its Righteous Gentile award to 10 Hungarian Christians for aiding Jews during the Holocaust.

Since Hungary and Israel resumed diplomatic ties in 1989, over 170 Hungarians have received the Righteous Among the Nations award.

While more than 600,000 Hungarian Jews were deported and most of them killed during the Holocaust, several hundred Hungarian Jews were hidden and saved by Christians.

And tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews were saved by Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, who gave Jews Swedish citizenship, many of them just as they were about to be deported.

HOLOCAUST EXHIBIT IN HUNGARY EXTENDED AFTER ACCORD WITH HISTORICAL MUSEUM

By Agnes Bohm

BUDAPEST, Dec. 1 (JTA) -- An exhibition here on the Holocaust that was to close at the end of November has been extended at least through mid-January because of the considerable local and foreign public interest it has generated.

More than 25,000 people have seen the exhibit, which is the first of its kind here.

The exhibit will remain at least until Jan. 18, a date chosen because it is the 50th anniversary of the liberation of the Budapest Ghetto.

However, it is possible that the exhibit will remain through May, according to Ivan Beer, head of the Holocaust Commemoration Committee.

The extension was made possible by an agreement reached between the committee and directors of the Budapest History Museum.

Hungary began commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Holocaust in January. Commemorative ceremonies will end on May 8, 50 years after the Nazis were defeated by the Allies.

Meanwhile, talks are continuing about erecting a permanent Holocaust museum in Budapest.

Financial and logistical matters are now under discussion at the Ministry of Education and Culture.

If these plans do not materialize, plans are afoot to install part of the present Holocaust exhibition at the Budapest Jewish Museum. The museum would be enlarged to accommodate the addition, said Robert Turan, museum director.

Meanwhile, a Jewish theater was re-opened here this week at the headquarters of the Jewish community, 50 years after it was closed.

The last performance of the Jewish theater was held on the eve of the March 19, 1944 Nazi invasion of Hungary.

The Jewish theater had served between 1938 and 1944 as a place of shelter and subsistence for Jewish actors in Hungary, who had been forbidden to perform under Hungarian fascist law.

AUSCHWITZ GUIDES LEARN AT YAD VASHEM

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Dec. 1 (JTA) -- Fifty Polish guides at the Auschwitz Museum have just completed a three-week course at the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum and Memorial in Jerusalem that was designed to provide them with a background in Jewish history.

The guides at the Auschwitz museum, located on the grounds of the former Nazi concentration camp, studied Judaism, Jewish history, the Holocaust and facts about Israel. They were also provided with a tour of Israel during their stay.

The course was set up by Yad Vashem after it became known that the Auschwitz guides were unaware that most of the more than 1 million people killed in the death camp were Jews.

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AIDS IS SCHEDULED TO BE HELD IN ISRAEL

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Dec. 1 (JTA) -- Jerusalem will serve as the host city of the next international AIDS education conference, due to take place in November 1995, according to the Jerusalem AIDS Project.

The group made the announcement on Thursday to coincide with international commemorations of World AIDS Day.

AIDS educators and activists in Israel, who have repeatedly warned the public against complacency toward the deadly disease, say they hope that next year's gathering will boost awareness of AIDS in Israel.

According to Health Ministry figures, 307 Israelis have developed full-blown AIDS since the first case of the disease was recorded about 10 years ago. About two thirds of them have died. There are some 1,226 known individuals with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS.

But the ministry estimates that the actual number, including those who are afraid to be tested for the disease, is between 2,000 and 2,500.

"Right now, we have small numbers in comparison to other countries, but this is (false) because of collective denial," AIDS counselor Rachel Hayward told Israel Television.

"There are a lot of people who are probably walking around infected with HIV, but they aren't getting tested because they are afraid to go somewhere where people might recognize them, or they are afraid to lose their jobs," she said.

Israel marked World AIDS Day with a number of educational and prevention programs. Information booths were set up around the country, condoms were distributed and free AIDS testing was made available at such places as Tel Aviv University and Ben-Gurion Airport.

NEW YORK RESIDENT STRIKES JACKPOT, ARRIVING AS TOURIST NO. 2 MILLION

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Dec. 1 (JTA) -- Setting a record for the number of visitors coming to Israel in any given year, the 2 millionth tourist to enter Israel in 1994 received a festive welcome at Ben-Gurion Airport this week.

Marian Graves of Albany, N.Y., arrived on an El Al Airlines flight on Wednesday to find herself greeted by a welcoming committee that included Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Tourism Minister Uzi Baram.

Graves, a first-time visitor to Israel, received a check for \$1,740 to cover her plane ticket and expenses during her stay in Israel.

"I'm so excited, thank you so much for the welcoming committee," said Graves, who was accompanied on the trip by her husband.

Baram has spearheaded a tourism campaign aimed at reaping the benefits of the ongoing peace process by drawing an unprecedented number of tourists to the region.

PERES CONFERS WITH POPE AT VATICAN

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Dec. 1 (JTA) -- Foreign Minister Shimon Peres met with Pope John Paul II at

the Vatican this week and invited him to visit Israel.

A Vatican source said the talks during the private meeting centered on the peace process in the Middle East and the status of Jerusalem.

Peres was in Rome for a two-day visit. He earlier told an Italian television station that the Vatican could play a "very important role" in the peace process.

Israel and the Vatican established full diplomatic ties this year.

Peres was also scheduled to meet with Italian Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi.

OLDEST DUTCH SYNAGOGUE RESTORED

By Henrietta Boas

AMSTERDAM, Dec. 1 (JTA) -- Ceremonies were held this week to mark the completion of restoration work on the oldest synagogue in the Netherlands that is still in use.

The synagogue of Middelburg, located in the capital of the southwestern Dutch province of Zeeland, was built in 1705 and currently serves a community of 31 Jews.

Because of the synagogue's small size -- it is only 33 by 30 feet -- Tuesday's ceremonies for some 350 invited guests were held in the city's 17th-century town hall.

The tiny synagogue is surrounded on all sides by houses and is only accessible by going through an alley between two of the houses. The synagogue was damaged by a British grenade during a World War II battle in the autumn of 1944.

Because of its small size, the Jewish community of Middelburg was unable to pay the restoration costs.

Instead, non-Jewish members of the community set up a foundation in 1987 to collect donations.

In addition to its use as a house of worship, the refurbished synagogue will serve as a cultural center and exhibition hall.

ISRAEL TO LAUNCH ADVANCED SATELLITE

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Nov. 28 (JTA) -- Israel will launch an advanced communications satellite next November, officials with Israel Aircraft Industries announced Sunday.

The Amos-1 satellite, which is being built by IAI in cooperation with Deutsche Aerospace of Germany and the French Alcatel Aerospace company.

The satellite is expected to remain in orbit for some 11 years.

Amos-1 will be able to relay video, voice and data transmission across an area extending from Iran to Libya, and from Ukraine in the north to as far south as Sudan, Africa.

Officials at Spacecom -- a joint venture of the state-owned IAI and three other Israeli firms which are marketing the satellite's communications services -- say they are currently negotiating with potential Israeli, Arab and other international customers to lease the satellite's seven transponders.

Among potential customers for the satellite service are the U.S.-based Cable News Network and HBO, and Canal Plus in France.