

International News

Israel, Vatican move toward diplomatic ties

Israel and the Vatican are on the verge of establishing full diplomatic relations as a result of Israel's recognition of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), according to World Jewish Congress sources cited by Reuters.

The sources said Israel and the Vatican made great progress in talks the week of Sept. 13, and could establish full relations within "a few weeks." Vatican officials said they saw the accords signed between Israel and the PLO as accelerating the recognition process. They said the first stages of recognition were possible by the end of the year. A visit to the Holy Land remains one of the few unfulfilled wishes of 73-year-old Polish Pope John Paul II, but no such trip is feasible in the absence of diplomatic ties between Israel and the Holy See.

An Israel-Vatican commission was established last year to negotiate the question of normalization of relations between the two states. A special meeting of the commission was held in Israel on Sept. 13, while Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres signed the peace accord with the PLO in Washington.

An official at Italy's National Conference of Catholic Bishops said that the peace accord would have an important impact on the church's relationships with Israel and Islam.

Serb soldiers demand resignation of Karadzic

A group of 300 Serbian soldiers, which later swelled to 1,000, mutinied in the Bosnian city of Banja Luka on Sept. 10, blockading the city with tanks and taking over the town. They demanded the resignation of Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, the arrest of racketeers who have made fortunes during the fighting, and the convening of early elections. Banja Luka is the second largest Bosnian city, after the capital of Sarajevo.

The soldiers' demands, reported by the

Bosnian Serb news agency SRNA, were included in a list of 20 conditions for their return to barracks.

The leader of the group is Maj. Ostoja Zec. "Karadzic is declaring his own kind of war on us. He thinks that if he puts us off long enough, we'll give up," Zec told Reuters.

Karadzic arrived in Banja Luka on Sept. 12, and a standoff ensued. The soldiers insisted that Karadzic meet them at the crisis committee headquarters, but Karadzic declined.

Moscow police official tells of mafia power

In an interview with the Moscow daily *Izvestia* on Aug. 6, Col. Sergei Dontsov of the Moscow mayoralty said that the authorities cannot succeed with a direct crackdown on organized crime, but have to make deals with it. He outlined how Moscow is home to mafias in the classic sense, "groups which have divided up territories, and merged to some extent into the state apparatus." Dontsov met with Azerbaijani mafia bosses to ensure the bloodless transfer of the Danilovsky market to the Union of Cossacks. There are also "Georgian," "Armenian," "Chechen," "Slavic," "Christian," and "Islamic" mafias, he said.

According to Dontsov, the frequent shootings at Moscow casinos and other enterprises are due to the lack of a strong leadership in the mafia apparatus, which would prevent petty criminals from taking violent actions against each other. Mafia representatives have demanded that leading mafiosi be returned to the city, to reestablish tranquility. As they put it, "Bring back Slava Ivankov, bring back 'Yaponchik' to Moscow. He'll restore order. . . . And you'll know whom you're dealing with: one strong *padrone*."

Without approving that plan, Dontsov says that the mafia cannot be eliminated, and "some forms of contact with them should be regularized." No matter what law enforcement might try to do, he concludes, "Strong mafiosi are going to emerge. They already

exist. . . . It's a different question, who will regulate the problem of the big mafia: they themselves, or should the government be involved? We need to think about this. . . . In the absence of a law on the struggle against organized crime, abetting this crime by semi-legalizing the return of its leaders is not an approach to the problem. If the state, being incapable of fighting them, were to eliminate smaller groups with their help, this would lead to even worse consequences."

Bosnia, Croatia agree to cease hostilities

For the first time in many months, the Presidents of Bosnia and Croatia, Alija Izetbegovic and Franjo Tudjman, on Sept. 14 in Geneva signed a Joint Declaration in which they agreed on "an immediate cessation of all hostilities and military conflicts" between the two countries, and an effort to "create conditions for a long-lasting peace on the territories of Croatia and Bosnia and Hercegovina."

The Joint Declaration stresses the necessity of economic development as the basis for peace between the two countries. In particular, it states the need for negotiations on a new Bosnian port city on the Adriatic as a "joint interest of development." The governments of Germany and France have expressed their readiness to participate in construction of such a port.

Lebanon's Aoun speaks out on Mideast deal

Syrian President Hafez al-Assad has been substantially weakened by the Israeli-Palestinian accord, and that might help relax the Syrian vise upon Lebanon, former Lebanese Prime Minister Gen. Michel Aoun told the French daily *Quotidien de Paris* of Sept. 16. Aoun was deposed by the Syrians in 1990.

General Aoun, living in exile in France, is happy about the Mideast accord, although worried that in the diplomatic discussions up to now, "the Lebanese people have been

Briefly

absent from the process." Now, however, the Syrian government has been "taught a lesson," that it is not as necessary to the "peace process" as it thought it had been. Assad doesn't have Lebanon as his "trump card," as he thought he did. So, Assad may now have to negotiate: "I think, therefore, if international pressure is applied to make Assad aware that he is not as strong as he thinks he is, he will have to negotiate on Lebanon."

Aoun, however, discounts the success of any strategy of offering Assad a deal over the Golan Heights, in the anticipation that he would relinquish control over Lebanon in return. Since Assad runs a "Stalinist regime" in Syria, said Aoun, he will continue to act on the premise that he can "have both" the Golan and Lebanon, unless he is disabused of this idea from outside Syria.

Abba Eban attacks opponents of accord

Abba Eban, the former Israeli foreign minister, criticized Jews of "American origin" who are attacking Israel's peace agreement with the Palestine Liberation Organization. At a forum on Sept. 13 in Washington, Eban underlined that the accord must be seen as a major breakthrough.

"Nothing is more corrosive to Israel than one nation ruling another, and without allowing the other to have an identity," said Eban, referring to Israel's occupation of the West Bank. Eban pointed to a number of factors which he felt created the basis for a peaceful resolution of the Middle East crisis: the Persian Gulf war and destruction of Iraq as a major military power; the fall of communism, which destroyed the backers of Syria and the PLO; the Egyptian-Israeli Camp David agreement; and a more amenable Syria, now without Soviet or Egyptian support.

Eban pointed to the stability of the Egyptian-Israeli agreement as giving the lie to the argument that the two cultures (Jewish and Arab) were "irreconcilable." Commenting on the statements of Likud party leader Benjamin Netanyahu attacking the agreements, Eban

said, "It's interesting to see the youngest Likud leader expressing the most antiquated doctrine [about Greater Israel]. There is a great wave of support for Netanyahu, and it is of American origin. Read the op-eds in the *Washington Post* and *Commentary* magazine, talking about the dangers of entering this agreement." "The consequences of rejection would be worse," said Eban. "The field would then be dominated by savage fundamentalisms," a situation which he characterized as "outrageous."

Eban also attacked the ideology of British aristocrat Arnold Toynbee, who predicted that the nation-state would wither away. Eban stressed that the nation-state still provides the necessary underpinnings of social and economic life.

'Palestinian state is not biggest danger to Israel'

The biggest danger facing Israel is not that there could now emerge a PLO-run Palestinian state, but rather that such a state would *not* emerge, wrote columnist William Pfaff in the *International Herald Tribune* on Sept. 17.

Pfaff took issue with those "conservative Israelis" who raise the bogeyman that "a PLO state" will now emerge. He stressed that "Israel needs the PLO to make this agreement succeed. If Gaza and Jericho are not effectively governed, chaotic conditions persist, the PLO's authority is lost, and Hamas and the other fundamentalist and radical factions flourish, then Israel will well and truly be threatened."

Pfaff argued that the PLO, ultimately, is a group whose ideas are European in origin: "Because the PLO's nationalism is based on western ideas of the state and economy, it is, in principle, capable of collaboration or integration with the Israeli state." This would not be true of an autonomous or sovereign Palestine ruled by a Hamas-type government. "Thus Israelis have every cause to want a PLO Palestine to succeed. The country's present leaders understand this. . . . The PLO is Israel's unwelcome but inevitable ally."

● **ITALIAN** Defense Minister Fabio Fabbri once again denounced U. N. operations in Somalia, after two Italian soldiers were killed there in September. "What is needed immediately is an incisive correction of an approach that has shown itself to be fruitless and wrong," Fabbri told Parliament. He said he did not believe the murder of the Italians was premeditated.

● **EDUARD SHEVARDNADZE** appealed to Russia and the world community on Sept. 19 for help in Georgia's conflict with the Abkhazian rebels. "The world cannot go on leading a serene, comfortable life while death threatens a nation, even if it happens to be the smallest one," said the Georgian President. Georgia has repeatedly accused Russian troops of helping the rebels.

● **UKRAINIAN** Foreign Minister Anatoly Zlenko told a conference in Brussels in September that Ukraine wants to be included in plans to expand NATO: "We only hope that NATO's enlargement, if it takes place, would not stop at the western border of Ukraine," Zlenko said. But he also recognized that the alliance was not yet prepared to take on Ukraine, which is locked in disputes with Russia.

● **THE SLOVAKIAN** government daily *Smena* on Sept. 8 published a full-page article by foreign policy editor Jaro Matyas on the cases of U.S. political prisoners Lyndon LaRouche and Michael Billington. Matyas interviewed Billington's wife, Gail, during her recent visit to Bratislava.

● **IRAQ'S** ruling Baath Party daily paper, *Al Thawra*, denounced the Israel-PLO peace accord on Sept. 20, calling for the formation of a new Palestinian leadership. The front-page editorial said the agreement violated "the sanctity of the Palestinian cause" in the eyes of Arab rulers and people, and that "the leadership of Yasser Arafat" was to blame.