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**REPORTS CLAIM THAT ISRAEL IS ABOUT TO RENEW DIPLOMATIC TIES WITH A NUMBER OF AFRICAN STATES**

By Edwin Eytan

PARIS, Oct. 5 (JTA) -- Israel is about to renew its diplomatic relations with a number of African states according to reports in the French press. Among the countries mentioned as about to renew their formal ties with Israel are the Ivory Coast, Togo and the Gabon.

The French leftwing daily, *Liberation*, says that the head of the Israeli Foreign Ministry's African Department, Avi Primor, conferred in Paris with several African Presidents, including those of Togo, Liberia and Zaïre.

The paper said Primor and a delegation of Israeli officials were planning to attend the Franco-African summit now meeting in Vitell but gave in to French requests and remained in Paris so as not to embarrass the delegations from overwhelmingly Moslem African states.

Primor told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that at no time had he planned to go to Vitell and also denied most of these meetings. As for the resumption of diplomatic ties, he said "We hope indeed that most African countries will sooner or later resume their relations with us. Obviously, we hope that this will be sooner and not later and think they should never have broken off their relations with Israel."

Israel's relations with Africa will be one of the main subjects discussed at the Vitell conference attended by delegations from 37 African states. The subject will not be formally presented but diplomatic sources say they expect most African delegates to discuss the issue with the Presidents and delegations of the two countries which renewed them recently, Zaïre and Liberia.

**ISRAELI GOVERNMENT WAVERING IN ITS POLICY OF DEVALUATION**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Oct. 5 (JTA) -- The government appears to be wavering in its policy of devaluation which has triggered mass buying of foreign currency by the public before the Shekel is reduced still further.

The Ministerial Economic Committee, at an unusual nighttime meeting last night decided not to devalue the Shekel again at this time. It was devalued once already this month and once last month vis-a-vis the U.S. Dollar and European currencies. The aim is to ease the burden of Israel's foreign debt and to make Israeli products more saleable abroad.

But Finance Minister Yoram Aridor said on a television interview last night that his policy called for gradual devaluation in line with cost-of-living increases rather than a one-time large devaluation. Economic observers said today that Aridor may be forced to change his mind because the skeptical public believes a new major devaluation is imminent and is accumulating foreign currency before it becomes too expensive.

The Ministerial Economic Committee reaffirmed its resolve to proceed with the outgoing government's austerity program. Its goal is to prune \$1 billion from

the national budget but no practical measures are likely until a new government takes office.

Meanwhile, rising sentiment was reported in Likud ranks today to dump Aridor when the new Cabinet is formed. Maariv reported however that Premier-designate Yitzhak Shamir is resolved to give the Finance Minister "another chance" to execute an economic austerity program that would remove the country from the brink of economic disaster.

Aridor has been unable to achieve much so far, chiefly because each coalition partner is pressing demands regardless of the overall situation. Tami and the Aguda Israel are just two examples. The former, whose constituency is largely among impoverished Sephardim, is demanding tax cuts and increased aid to the poor. The Orthodox Aguda demands even higher government subventions for religious schools.

**WEST GERMANY UNDER PRESSURE BY SAUDIS TO SELL THEM LEOPARD TANKS**

By David Kantor

BONN, Oct. 5 (JTA) -- Chancellor Helmut Kohl will make no commitment to sell Saudi Arabia West Germany's sophisticated Leopard II tanks when he visits that country this week, government sources said here today. He may explore the possibility of providing the Saudis with other, less advanced German weaponry, the sources said.

But officials here expect the Chancellor to encounter demands in Riyadh to state unequivocally his government's position on the tank sale. The Saudis are already exerting strong pressure on the issue, claiming that former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt made a definite commitment to the sale.

Schmidt has publicly denied this and his former aide, Hans-Juergen Wischnewski, said the Saudis were in fact informed that Bonn is not willing to deliver the Leopard II.

Government sources said the Chancellor is anxious not to focus attention on the controversial issue of West German arms sales to Middle East countries, at least until after the deployment of the American Pershing Two and Cruise missiles in the country at the end of this year.

The powerful peace movement is preparing a series of rallies, sit-ins and blockades to halt the deployment of the American nuclear warheads, causing serious headaches for Kohl's government.

Nevertheless, arms sales are expected to be high on the agenda of Kohl's Middle East tour which will take him to Egypt and Jordan as well as Saudi Arabia. He was to have visited Israel as well but postponed that trip because of the resignation of Premier Menachem Begin. Kohl will probably go to Israel next month, after a new Israeli government is installed, sources here said.

**ARGENTINE POLITICAL FIGURES REPUDIATE ANTI-SEMITISM**

BUENOS AIRES, Oct. 5 (JTA) -- Leaders of the main political parties of Argentina, including the Peronists and the opposition Radical Civic Union, have signed a manifesto categorically repudiating anti-Semitism.

Meanwhile, a leadership delegation of the country's Jewish community held a private meeting with President Renaldo Bignone, during which they expressed concern at the recent outbreak of anti-Semitism in the country, it was reported by the Latin American branch of the World Jewish Congress here.

The manifesto, which was signed by distinguished politicians and intellectuals and published in the press, appealed "to the citizens to repudiate every anti-Semitic attempt against basic tenets of the Argentine Constitution, the basis of national coexistence." The signers noted a renewal of anti-Semitism and racism "expressed through various publications, violence against Jewish schools, and attacks on cultural institutions and synagogues."

The manifesto stressed that "public opinion should be aware of the fact that anti-Semitism, which is deplorable in itself, is a means of destabilizing democratic regimes and puts in motion authoritarian mechanisms." It further warned that "in times of crisis anti-Semitism and other forms of racist discrimination are used by elements who oppose pluralism as a form of life and democratic tolerance."

Among the political party leaders who signed the statement were Deolindo Felipe Bittel (Peronists), Raul Alfonsín (Radical Civic Union), and Oscar Alende (Intransigent Party).

#### President Meets With Jewish Leaders

The meeting between Bignone and representatives of the Delegación de Asociaciones de Israelitas Argentinas (DAIA), the central representative body of Argentine Jewry, was approved by the President five months after the Jewish leaders requested it. At the meeting, the DAIA representatives, led by the organization's president, Dr. Sion Cohen Imach, expressed the concern of the community "at the anti-Semitic outbreak lately noticed in the country."

They spoke of the proposed Article 213 of the Penal Code which outlaws any form of racial or religious persecution. This item was dropped from legislation during the government of Gen. Juan Carlos Onganía and the DAIA leaders stressed that it would enhance the prestige of the present government to have it reinstated.

The issue of anti-Semitism in Argentina was also the subject of a meeting early last month between DAIA leaders and Undersecretary of the Interior Guillermo Lascano Quintana. At that time, Cohen Imach detailed numerous anti-Semitic incidents that had taken place in the previous three months, including anti-Semitic graffiti on the walls of synagogues, threats against Jewish schools, and the proliferation of anti-Jewish publications and periodicals. Lascano Quintana promised the Jewish leaders that the government will investigate the situation and take measures to prevent their recurrence.

#### JORDAN READY TO COOPERATE TO ACHIEVE MIDEAST PEACE IF RIGHTS OF PALESTINIANS ARE FULFILLED

By Yitzhak Rabi

UNITED NATIONS, Oct. 5 (JTA) — Jordan declared today that it will "cooperate with all efforts to achieve a comprehensive and durable just peace" in the Middle East, provided the "legitimate rights of the people of Palestine" are fulfilled.

"We shall always accord the highest priority to the salvation of the people and the territory from Israeli occupation," Jordan's Foreign Minister Marwan Kasim said.

Addressing the General Assembly, the Jordanian Minister sharply attacked Israel's settlement policy, charging that the "annexation" of the West Bank by Israel was part of a continuous Israeli expansion in the region. "A decisive and immediate action is needed to stop this colonial policy if we are to arrest the dangerous escalation in the occupied Arab territories," Kasim said.

He added: "Israel's frenzied efforts to change the demographic, geographic and economic structure of the occupied territories must also be halted. The world community must deter Israel from implementing the canal project linking the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean," a project, Kasim said, that will damage Jordan's vital interests. (See related story, P. 3.)

#### Cites Jordan's Political Initiative

Charging that Israel reinforces its expansionist policy "ignoring and distorting all peace calls and signals of moderation emanating from Arabs and others" Kasim said Israel rejected the Arab peace plan after the Fez summit in 1982 and the Reagan peace plan of the same year.

"As far as Jordan is concerned, the search for a political solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict is a cornerstone in its foreign policy, and the principal goal of its diplomatic activity at both the Arab and the international levels," Kasim said.

He said that his country has been engaged in various "political initiatives" to break the impasse in the Mideast. "To this end we engaged in substantive consultations and contacts with several parties who are directly concerned with the Arab-Israeli conflict during the recent past. Though those contacts have materialized in a manner different from what we have hoped for, Jordan will continue to support and encourage every attempt which could lead to the salvation of our people and land from Israeli occupation."

The Soviet Ambassador to the UN briefly referred to the Mideast in his address to the General Assembly last night. Ambassador Oleg Troyanovsky said that the United States encourages Israeli aggression in Lebanon and the violation of the rights of the Palestinian people. He charged that "continued pressure" is being applied on Syria to make it change its steadfast course in Mideast affairs.

#### Australia Cites Basis For Mideast Peace

At an earlier General Assembly session, Australia's Foreign Minister, W. G. Hayden, said that a just and lasting solution to the Mideast dispute "means the need to sustain the right of Israel to exist behind secure and recognized borders." But he stressed at the same time that the Australian government "acknowledges the right of self-determination for the Palestinian people, including their right, if they choose, to independence and the possibility of their own independent state."

Hayden said that the "tragedy of Lebanon" proved the urgent need for a comprehensive and just solution of the Mideast conflict. He said that his government recognizes the centrality of the Palestinian issue in any future Mideast settlement.

"The Australian government also recognizes that whatever arrangement is finally agreed upon will evolve from processes involving the people of the immediate region, including Syria and Jordan," Hayden declared, adding that the roles and views of the superpowers "cannot be ignored in any such process."

## RABBI WARNS AGAINST CONTINUED THREAT OF INTERRELIGIOUS CONFLICT

By Kevin Freeman

NEW YORK, Oct. 5 (JTA) -- Rabbi Arthur Schneier, president of the Appeal of Conscience Foundation, warned last night against the continued threat of interreligious conflict, which he said may lead historians to describe the "era we live in ... as the age of religious wars."

"Hateful religious conflict seems to be the order of the day," Schneier, who is spiritual leader of the Park East Synagogue, told some 500 persons attending the annual award dinner of the Foundation at the Pierre Hotel.

"We live in a world of heightened interreligious tensions," said Schneier, adding: "Bahais, Catholics, Hindus, Jews, Moslems, Protestants and others have all been involved in violent sectarian strife. And while these conflicts have social and economic roots they have been exacerbated by and charged with religious hatred."

He proposed a world conference of religious leaders "to confront the festering, ever deepening religious conflicts that imperil world peace and that daily makes victims of innocent men, women and children." Schneier announced that the Foundation will convene in 1984 an international conference of religious leaders representing major faiths on the theme, "Peace, Tolerance and Human Dignity," to meet this challenge.

### Award To Guy de Rothschild

Baron Guy de Rothschild, a prominent leader of French Jewry who was founder and president of the Fond Social Juif Unifié for more than 30 years, was the recipient of the Foundation's award -- a Steuban crystal star -- presented by former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, for Rothschild's "distinguished service, leadership and vision that have advanced the cause of human rights and international cooperation."

Rothschild, upon receiving the Foundation's award, said, "Particularly in this most cruel and intolerant century, it is impossible to separate freedom of religion from freedom of conscience with all its implications: respect for every individual, respect for every form of expression, respect for the right to differ. At best, these conditions prevail only in the democratic world, which covers a relatively small part of the globe ..."

Congratulatory messages to Rothschild were received from President Reagan, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher of Great Britain and Governor Mario Cuomo.

Founded in 1965, the Appeal of Conscience Foundation is a coalition of Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Greek Orthodox religious and business leaders who believe that religious freedom is an essential human right, and that today's challenges to that freedom require ecumenical response.

## DOUBTS ABOUT PROPOSED MEDITERRANEAN- DEAD SEA CANAL HALTS INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO RAISE RUNDS

By Maurice Samuelson

LONDON, Oct. 5 (JTA) -- The international campaign to raise funds for a proposed Mediterranean-Dead Sea canal has been halted amid uncertainty over whether the \$1.3 billion project should go ahead.

Sources at the European headquarters of the State of Israel Bonds Organization confirmed here today that it had suspended "some time ago" sales of low interest shares in the scheme, intended to generate cheap electricity at a hydro-electric station on the Dead Sea.

The Bond Organization has already raised about \$100 million world-wide to be used as "seed money" for feasibility studies. Its decision to drop the canal from its fund-raising programs followed fierce disagreement over the canal project scheme between Israel's Finance Ministry and the Energy Ministry.

Prior to Premier Menachem Begin's resignation, the Finance Ministry had been pressing for a two-year postponement of the project because of Israel's perilous economic situation. This was resisted by the Energy Ministry which wanted the feasibility studies to proceed.

### Firm Government Decision Expected In 1985

During a visit to London this week, Israeli Energy Minister Yitzhak Modaí told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that he expected a firm government decision in 1985 on whether the canal should be built. The decision originally was to have been made next year.

It will depend in part on three related reports currently being carried out: at the cost of \$30 million. They deal with the canal's effects on Israel's underground fresh water table; on the geological difficulties of building a tunnel through the Judean mountains; and the effect of diluting the Dead Sea with less saline water from the Mediterranean.

A final report on the first of these was almost ready, Modaí said. He expected it to conclude that the risk of damaging the sweet water aquifers would be "almost eliminated" if the sea water canal followed a route preferred by the government, in the region of the Gaza Strip.

The report on the geology of the 81-kilometer route of the tunnel which would carry the water under the Judean mountains will be due in another year, Modaí said. It would indicate whether the tunnelling costs could be reduced to one-third of the total capital cost, a key financial condition for its construction.

The third, and most crucial report, would examine possible damage to the Dead Sea's valuable potash deposits.

### ADVANCED WEAPONRY UNVEILED

TEL AVIV, Oct. 5 (JTA) -- Advanced weaponry claimed public attention in Israel yesterday. A new improved model of the Israel-made Merkava tank -- the Mark II -- was unveiled at a public ceremony at Latrun, scene of a bitter battle during Israel's war for independence. And Israel Television disclosed last night that an Israel-manned American Hawk missile downed a Soviet-built MIG-25 fighter over Beirut in August, 1982.

The original version of the Merkava (Chariot) tank proved itself in action in Lebanon according to Maj. Gen. (res.) Israel Tal, the man most responsible for the design and production of the tank. He said the new model has a 30-50 percent improved capability over the old. It is more maneuverable, better protected and more accurate in its fire power, Tal said.

According to Israel Television, modifications and special tactics worked out by an Israeli technician manning the Hawk battery were responsible for the MIG-25 kill.

## COLPA HAILS SUPREME COURT'S REFUSAL TO REVIEW LOWER COURT RULING ON RELIGIOUS DIVORCE

NEW YORK, Oct. 5 (JTA) -- The U.S. Supreme Court's refusal Monday to review a New York State Court of Appeals ruling against an Orthodox Jewish man who refused to give his wife a religious divorce in violation of their prenuptial agreement, was hailed today by the National Jewish Commission on Law and Public Affairs (COLPA) which had filed a friend-of-the-court brief in support of the woman's complaint.

Dennis Rapps, executive director of COLPA, contended that while it is difficult to know why the Supreme Court turns down a case for review, since no opinion is issued, the effect in this case is to let stand the Court of Appeals ruling which affirmed that agreements to go to a Beth Din (religious court) is entitled to the same degree of enforceability as any other agreement to go to arbitration even to resolve religious issues.

The New York Court of Appeals issued its ruling last February in the case of Susan Avitzur who complained that her former husband, Boaz, whom she divorced in 1978 by civil decree, refused to honor their prenuptial agreement (ketubah) which required the couple to appear before a rabbinical court to settle marital disputes involving Jewish marriage standards. Boaz Avitzur would not appear before the Beth Din or grant his wife a religious divorce (get) without which an Orthodox Jew cannot remarry. He argued that enforcement of the agreement violated the principle of separation of church and state. When New York's highest court ruled against him, Avitzur appealed to the Supreme Court.

### Says Next Step Is Unclear

According to Rapps, it is unclear what the next step in the case will be. "While it is clear that the husband can be required to go to a Beth Din, there is considerable dispute as to the jurisdiction the agreement confers on the Beth Din," he noted.

Rapps said that the agreement "does not refer directly to a Jewish religious divorce but rather to the authority of the Beth Din to 'counsel' the couple in matters concerning their marriage. Thus there may be further litigation as what the Beth Din can decide before the parties ever get to the Beth Din."

### BEGUN TRIAL THIS WEEK

NEW YORK, Oct. 5 (JTA) -- The trial of 51-year-old Moscow Hebrew teacher Isaf Begun is scheduled to begin this week, according to information made available to the National Conference on Soviet Jewry. Arrested for an unprecedented third time last November 6 and held well past the nine month limit for pre-trial incarceration, he faces a possible 13-year term.

His case has elicited an outpouring of support, including letters on his behalf signed by 98 U.S. Senators and sent to President Reagan, Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin and Secretary of State George Shultz.

A mathematician by profession, Begun has long since been active in the Jewish cultural and emigration movements. He has been waiting over 12 years for permission to emigrate to Israel.

PRINCE PHILIP ASKS CHIEF RABBI IF BRITISH JEWRY WOULD SUPPORT A FUND TO REPAIR WESTMINSTER ABBEY  
By Maurice Samuelson

band of Queen Elizabeth II, has asked Chief Rabbi Immanuel Jakobovits whether British Jewry would support a fund for repairing Westminster Abbey, one of the most historic cathedrals in England.

The surprise suggestion is revealed in an exchange of correspondence published by Jakobovits. The Chief Rabbi, in his reply, did not rule out the Anglo-Jewish community's support, but suggested it would have to be directed at some aspect of the Abbey "not directly connected with worship, such as perhaps the library."

In his letter, dated March 31, Prince Philip said that as president of the Westminster Abbey Trust, set up to raise money for cleaning and repairing the Abbey, he had been told of a forthcoming display of the Abbey's archives. Among them were letters from a group of Jewish merchants in the north of England to the King, sending some money to help with the rebuilding of the Abbey in the 13th century.

He continued: "The thought occurred to me to ask whether it might be an idea to invite the Jewish community as a whole to make a contribution on the repair of the Abbey." He added that he would "quite understand" if the Chief Rabbi told him the idea was not worth pursuing.

Replying, Jakobovits referred to the Jewish associations with Westminster Abbey going back to the 13th century, including the Jerusalem Chamber and works of Jewish interest in the Abbey library.

What both men glossed over was the fact that the 13th century saw the climax of Jewish sufferings in medieval England, culminating with the community's expulsion in 1290. Among many ways of bleeding the community dry was to force individual Jews to contribute to the rebuilding of Westminster Abbey.

### CHRISTIAN ARAB NUN TO BE BEATIFIED BY THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Oct. 5 (JTA) -- Sister Miriam Bawardi, a Christian Arab nun who died in Bethlehem 86 years ago, will be beatified by the Roman Catholic Church next month, the first native of the Holy Land to receive the blessing in more than 1,000 years, it was reported today.

According to the Greek Catholic Archbishop, Maximus Saloun, Pope John Paul II will issue his pronouncement on the anniversary of her death which occurred November 13, 1897, at the age of 33. Beatification is the first step toward sainthood.

Sister Miriam was proposed for beatification by the mother superior of the Camelite convent in Bethlehem several years ago, supported by the Latin and Greek Catholic patriarchs. A Papal emissary later reported favorably to the Vatican.

Sister Miriam was born to poor parents in upper Galilee and took her vows after becoming the victim of an attempted rape and murder. She was a novitiate in France and, on her return to Palestine, established Camelite convents in Nazareth and Bethlehem. She lived a life of asceticism, helping the poor and afflicted. She was credited with having performed two miraculous "cures."

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PARIS (JTA) -- Israel's Ambassador-designate to France Ovadia Soffer, arrived here yesterday and will present his credentials to President Francois Mitterrand by the end of the week.

LONDON, Oct. 5 (JTA) -- Prince Philip, hus-