

**BREAKING WITH TRADITION
AJCONGRESS URGES U.S. JEWS TO
PARTICIPATE IN ISRAEL'S DEBATE
ON HOW TO ACHIEVE MIDEAST PEACE**

By William Saphire

NEW YORK, Sept. 22 (JTA) -- The American Jewish Congress released a policy statement late Monday endorsing an international conference for Middle East peace to serve as the framework for direct Israeli-Arab negotiations.

The matter has split Israel's unity coalition government along party lines: Labor favors the conference scenario, Likud is adamantly opposed. The AJCongress statement clearly favors the position of Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, the Labor Party leader.

It acknowledged in its statement that by so doing the organization "broke tradition under which American Jewish organizations have refrained from speaking out on issues affecting the peace process."

The statement, released in the name of AJCongress president Theodore Mann, maintained that because "the government of Israel itself is divided and deadlocked over how to approach the peace process" it was "necessary and appropriate" for American Jews to "participate in the current historic debate."

Peres: Not Disturbed By A Debate

Release of the policy statement apparently was timed to coincide with Peres' visit to New York to attend the 42nd annual session of the United Nations General Assembly. Asked about it at a briefing for Israeli reporters at the UN Tuesday morning, the Israeli Foreign Minister said he thought American Jews had an absolute right to express their opinions about anything but he did not believe the AJCongress statement would change or have any effect on the debate over the issue in Israel.

"American Jews are our partners. I'm not disturbed by a debate within the Jewish people. The debate about an international peace conference is a legitimate debate and I don't see any harm in it," Peres said.

There were no other immediate comments from Israeli sources. But the reactions of other mainstream American Jewish organizations ranged from mildly negative to, in one case, an angry attack on the AJCongress' initiative.

First Policy Statement 'Killed'

The AJCongress appeared to have had second thoughts on the impact of its policy statement. The first text was "killed" after it was released to the press. It was followed by a new text several hours later which, while essentially the same, contained softer language in many instances.

Mann, reached by telephone in Philadelphia Tuesday morning, explained to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that the first text was a draft that had been put before the AJCongress National Governing Council at a meeting on September 13 but not approved and its release was an error. The second text, he said, was the one endorsed by the Governing Council on the same date.

In its statement, the AJCongress takes the position that an international peace conference "satisfied in sufficient measure Israel's insistence over the past 39 years that peace can be achieved only in direct, face-to-face negotiations."

It said a major consideration in releasing the position paper was the finding of recent demographic studies on Arab population growth. The rise in Arab numbers "is rapidly transforming 'Greater Israel' -- Israel plus the West Bank and Gaza -- into a de facto bi-national state, politically and culturally."

According to the AJCongress, "If no significant political adjustments are made, the demographic imperatives will force Israel to choose by the year 2000 between becoming a non-Jewish state or a non-democratic state." To find a "realistic alternative," the AJCongress supports an international peace conference, if, the statement stressed, there are "reasonable assurances" that "written understandings between Foreign Minister Peres and King Hussein (of Jordan) and the safeguards they contain" will be honored.

The AJCongress said it believes that direct negotiations under an international conference "might bring . . . genuine movement toward peace; the crafting of a consensual set of compromises, both territorial and functional that would remove the stigma and opprobrium suffered by an embattled occupier," and "the relief of Israel and its supporters from the anguish involved in the daunting choice between a non-democratic and a non-Jewish bi-national state."

Concedes There Are 'Risks'

The statement conceded there were "risks" in joining such a conference, such as "having to leave the conference table and suffer condemnation as the party that broke up the conference. But they are not security risks and they do not outweigh the advantages of an international peace conference based on safeguards agreed to by King Hussein . . ."

"These understandings propose that as a prerequisite, all prospective conveners will be obliged to recognize Israel, that it will be made unequivocally clear from the start that the essential purpose of the conference is to legitimize direct negotiations between and among the most interested parties, and that the referral to the conveners of any issue for resolution will require the consent of all parties to the negotiations."

The statement noted that "Israel has made clear that as a prerequisite for participation the Soviet Union will be obliged to restore diplomatic relations and liberalize Jewish emigration."

The AJCongress urged that "achieving these conditions and the subsequent convening of such a conference ought to be energetically pursued." It assailed "Arab intransigence and obdurate refusal to accept the legitimacy of a Jewish state in the area . . . But the fact of that refusal must never become a reason for abandoning or diminishing our pursuit of peace."

"Large numbers of Israelis and American Jews are convinced that there are realistic alternatives to the status quo that would enhance Israel's security and would avoid the demographic and other dangers of continuing an unavoidably

hostile occupation. A position that calls for maintaining the status quo or annexation of the occupied territories severely hampers the development of such alternatives."

The AJCongress acknowledged that "We offer our view with a sense of modesty appropriate to our awareness that we are remote from accountability should our views prove wrong..."

That reality was reflected in a statement issued Monday by Morris Abram, chairman of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations -- of which the AJCongress is a member.

Divergent Views Expressed

Abram said: "There are strongly divergent views about the wisdom and nature of an international peace conference both in Israel and in the United States. The people and government of Israel have the responsibility for the safety of the state and therefore they must make their decision through their democratic process."

Milton Shapiro, president of the Zionist Organization of America, declared that "If the rationale of the American Jewish Congress was followed, there would never have been a Jewish State established in the first place. By contrast, ZOA believes that Israeli policy in such matters is the prerogative of the people of Israel, who are quite capable of making decisions in their own democratic self-interest."

The ZOA, Shapiro said, "rejects the negative and defeatist conclusion of the American Jewish Congress." He noted that "The potential danger for Israel in an international peace conference under present circumstances far outweighs its potential for peace."

Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, rejected the AJCongress' implicit call on other American Jewish organizations to follow its initiative. "We won't do it. For me the stakes are too high to make a mistake. When and if Israel makes up its mind on how to proceed, then we'll deal with whether we support it or not," Foxman said in a statement to the press.

Differences In The Two Texts

The modification of language between the first and second texts released by the AJCongress was apparent in the first paragraph of each. The first text said the organization backed the international peace conference "rejected by Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir." The second text said it supported a compromise solution for the occupied territories and backs the international peace conference "as advocated by Foreign Minister Shimon Peres."

In the first version it spoke of American Jewish organizations' reticence "on issues affecting Israel's security." That was changed to read "issues affecting the peace process."

Elsewhere, the first text called on American Jews to take part in "the continuing examination of options." In the second text that was changed to "participate in the current historic debate."

A paragraph in the first version which spoke of relieving Israel of the "choice between a non-democratic repressive state and a non-Jewish binational state" appeared in the second text, but with the word "repressive" eliminated.

Also eliminated from the second text was a paragraph which stated, "We regret that the development of such alternatives has been severely

ly hampered by those who reject all compromise and seem immutably dedicated to the annexation of the occupied territories, no matter the risk to a democratic Israel or a viable Jewish state."

In releasing what he termed "this unprecedented policy statement" Mann described it as the product of a "careful, deliberate and responsible process." He said an 18-member AJCongress task force visited Israel in early July and during a week-long period held "intensive discussions on the subject with Israeli government officials, academics and foreign policy and defense experts representing the entire range of Israeli opinion."

MOVE TO STEM DRUG ABUSE

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Sept. 22 (JTA) -- The Education Ministry and the police have joined forces to combat one of the most urgent problems confronting Israeli society -- the prevention of drug abuse by the country's youth.

The Ministry and police announced after a meeting at national police headquarters in Jerusalem the establishment of a joint team to consolidate a comprehensive education and information policy on drug use and to coordinate with the various other authorities dealing with the issue. The meeting was attended by Education Minister Yitzhak Navon and Police Inspector-General David Kraus and their senior aides.

It is estimated that about 150,000 persons in Israel are totally addicted to drugs and between 150-200,000 are one-time, occasional or constant users. Almost all criminal offenders are drug users and criminal acts to finance the purchase of drugs are increasing.

But the main factor that has increased national awareness of the dangers of drug use is the risk of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), an invariably fatal condition which can be contracted by the use of contaminated needles to inject drugs.

Drug addicts were described at the meeting as the slaves of the 20th century. The police complained that the courts have been too lenient in the punishment meted out to drug offenders, thereby weakening the deterrent factor. The police charged there is insufficient cooperation between school principals and law enforcement authorities in the prevention of drug use and treatment for users.

STRASBOURG (JTA) -- The European Parliament, acting on a motion by French Deputy Simone Veil, has asked the European Economic Community (EEC) to intervene with the Syrian government to obtain information about four missing Israeli soldiers, believed held captive by Syrian forces or by militia under Syrian control. The soldiers were captured near Sidon and in the Syrian-occupied Bekaa Valley in eastern Lebanon over a four-year period.

TEL AVIV (JTA) -- More than 150,000 public service employees ended a two-day work stoppage Tuesday morning following a late-night compromise on a wages and other demands worked out between Histadrut and the Finance Ministry. Both sides backed away from their original demands.

THE JEWS OF ARGENTINA: NOT STRANGERS IN THE LAND

By Aviva Cantor
(Part Two In A Series)

BUENOS AIRES, Sept. 22 (JTA) -- "The Mexicans came from the Aztecs, the Peruvians came from the Incas -- and the Argentines came from the boats." This popular saying among Argentines summarizes the reality of the immigrant ancestry of the vast number of the current population of 28 million, of which one percent are Jews.

Of the estimated 250,000 Jews in Argentina-- "we have no statistics," is a phrase often heard in the country -- about 230,000 are concentrated in the capital city of Buenos Aires, home to about one-third of Argentina's citizens.

The second largest Jewish communities, Cordoba and Rosario, each has 10,000 Jews, followed by Tucuman, with 4,000; Mendoza with 2,000; and Mar del Plata and Salta, with 1,000 each. The rest are scattered, many of them in the towns near where the Jewish agricultural colonies established by Baron de Hirsch in the 1880's flourished until the mid-1920's.

"The history of the community is secular and leftist," said Joshua Flidel, director of ORT in Latin America, at a meeting with a delegation of North American journalists and communal leaders who recently visited the country.

Jewish immigrants were active in the Socialist, Anarchist and liberal movements of the early part of the 20th century. The grandparents of WIZO president Amalia Polack who settled in Rosario were among the founders of both the Socialist and the Radical Party. Moses Levinson was an important philosopher and leader in the old Radical Civic Union party in the 1940's and 1950's.

Many immigrants were fervent Zionists who saw the country "as only a stepping stone" to Palestine. Polack told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. "Jews who came here chose Zionism in place of religion," added Alberto Senderey, executive director of the Hebraica Community Center. "Part of that mythology is to make aliya."

Relationship With Israel

Argentine Jewry's relationship with Israel is primarily cultural, philanthropic and sentimental. In Cordoba, for example, the Jewish community took great pride in the fact that the city dedicated an "Israel Plaza" with a large menorah in the middle of it in May. Aliya runs about 1,000 a year, according to Israeli Ambassador Efraim Tari.

Activities in support of Israel are the main agenda of B'nai B'rith, with 800 members, 80 percent of them in Buenos Aires, and WIZO. Founded in Argentina in 1926, WIZO has about 20,000 members, many of them in the smaller cities -- "we have some chapters with three people," Polack told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. Though primarily involved with its 12 projects in Israel, WIZO also participates in philanthropic endeavors to help poor Argentines.

Possibly the most quintessentially Argentine Jewish institution is the Hebraica Community Center. Located in a 14-story building in the middle of town a short walk from the charming Claridge Hotel where members of the North American delegation stayed, the Hebraica is open and jumping with activities for 3,000 people from 7 a.m. to 1 a.m. The Hebraica, said Senderey, was founded by free-thinkers. Begun 60 years ago, its

by-laws forbid the introduction of politics (by which they meant Zionism) and religion. The politics clause was repealed; the religion clause was not.

"The thrust is secular and pluralistic," said Hebraica president Mario Trumper. Every Jewish holiday is celebrated, and the center is open for activities on the Sabbath. Senderey sees the Hebraica as a kind of cultural "supermarket" where people who "want to connect with Judaism come for a day-to-day experience which covers the whole span of life."

The center gears itself to serve three prime constituencies: the 2-12-year-old group, teenagers, and adults. Its feast of cultural activities for its 20,000 dues-paying members (and anyone else who wishes to attend them at nominal cost) ranges from films, to theater, a choir, lectures and forums, an open university for adults taught by professors at Argentine universities, and a 40,000-volume library. The cultural exhibits in the lobby travel to municipalities, schools and other non-Jewish institutions.

Hebraica places most of its efforts on Jews in their teens "when most of Jewish identity is formed," said Senderey. In addition to its Amos High School, it runs groups for teenagers led by college-age madrichim (counselors) trained by Hebraica, one for every 20 youths, and a supplementary two-afternoon-a-week school for children in non-Jewish primary schools. At 17, the young people spend two months in Israel's Carmiel, where each pupil is "adopted" by a local family.

A Major Success Story

The Hebraica -- which belongs to the Maccabi network of 60 community centers in Argentina -- also has a country club of 350 acres about a half-hour drive from town. Some 500 families own chalets and condos there, with a dormitory for the 300 non-residents who stay over for entire weekends. Between 3-4,000 people, including groups of teenagers, travel there on Saturdays and Sundays to take part in a variety of cultural and sports activities.

"When the community club trend started in Argentina 12 years ago, we had to react or Jews would join the non-Jewish clubs," said Senderey. The country club attracts couples with children who want their offspring to participate in Jewish activities and to meet other young Jews.

There is no synagogue or other religious activity at the club because the Hebraica respects the secular character of its members and does not want to confront the problem of what religious movement to give space to, said Trumper. It welcomes mixed couples who "understand that when they choose to come here they are making a decision on the education of their children."

Taking Public Stands

Hebraica leaders believe that addressing all the problems of Argentina and of the world in the free atmosphere of their forums and taking strong stands in support of human rights and against anti-Semitism has a strong educational impact upon the youth.

They pointed to the fact that when Msgr. Antonio Plaza, the former Archbishop of La Plata, charged in March 1987 that "the government is full of Jews" (who) "made us squander three years discussing (human rights) . . ." the Hebraica took out a newspaper ad calling Plaza "one of the originators of Argentine fascism." The next day, said Trumper, President Alfonsin used the same

arguments in a speech. A second example was the action of the Hebraica in March 1986, when the Peronist CGT (General Confederation of Labor) union leader Saul Ubaldini responded at a televised rally to a shout of "Jews sons of whores" by saying that "there are black sheep in every group." The Hebraica -- as well as B'nai B'rith-- took out a strong ad in the newspapers.

Hebraica also took out a newspaper ad when there was a bomb in the center's theater seven years ago during the reign of the junta.

"If you want to teach our children to be proud Jews, we have to (take such actions) without fear," Senderey told the North American delegation.

(Tomorrow: Part Three)

PERES HOLDS TALKS WITH SHULTZ

By Yitzhak Rabi

UNITED NATIONS, Sept. 22 (JTA) -- Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres said Tuesday that the improved relations between Moscow and Washington would contribute to efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East.

He said that was the impression he gained in a 20-minute talk with Secretary of State George Shultz Tuesday morning. "The next few months are very critical to the relations between the two superpowers and the progress in their discussions will affect the chances for peace in the Middle East," Peres said in a briefing for Israeli reporters here.

He said that Shultz told him at their meeting at the United Nations Plaza Hotel that when he (Shultz) met with Soviet Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze, their conversation dealt with, among other things, the issue of human rights in the USSR, and the peace process in the Middle East.

"I also know that the Arabs are in contact with the Russians about the peace process. I don't think that the peace process in the Middle East is a dead issue," Peres said.

'Gradual Progress' In Israel-USSR Relations

The Israeli Foreign Minister, who is scheduled to meet with Shevardnadze Wednesday morning, said that in his opinion there has been "a gradual progress" in relations between Israel and the Soviet Union.

"We would like them to be more forthcoming, but one cannot deny the fact that many changes have taken place," Peres told the Israeli reporters. He noted that all Prisoners of Zion have been released by the Soviet authorities, many Jews have been receiving exit visas and a Soviet consular delegation has come to Israel after many years of frozen relations between the two countries.

Peres reiterated his belief that an international peace conference is the best way to achieve direct negotiations between the parties in the Middle East. "I'm convinced that you can't conduct negotiations for peace without the Arabs and you can't bring the Arabs to the negotiating table without an international conference," Peres said.

Peres also met Tuesday with British Foreign Secretary Geoffrey Howe for discussions of Middle East peace prospects and recent developments in the Persian Gulf. A spokesman for Peres told reporters later that they discussed the position of

the Soviet Union and reports that the Kremlin has been showing new openness regarding the Middle East peace process.

Howe told Peres that Britain was concerned about a stalemate in the Middle East, the spokesman said.

Peres Invited To Visit Brazil

In addition to Howe, Peres met Tuesday with Foreign Minister Abreu Sobre of Brazil. They discussed bilateral relations and improved economic ties between their countries. Sobre invited Peres to visit Brazil. He accepted and may go there later this year. Peres reciprocated the invitation which the Brazilian Foreign Minister accepted but no date was set for his visit to Israel.

Peres met Tuesday afternoon with the Foreign Minister of Panama, Uffe Ellemann Jensen, and The Netherlands Foreign Minister, Hans Van Den Broek. He was scheduled to meet Tuesday evening with the Foreign Minister of Poland, Mariar Otzechowski.

REAGAN'S ROSH HASHANAH MESSAGE

WASHINGTON, Sept. 22 (JTA) -- President Reagan expressed a prayer for world peace as he issued his Rosh Hashanah greetings to Jews. The President's message in full:

"Each year at this time, the Jewish community prepares for the High Holy Days -- Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. This period of deep reflection is marked by prayer, repentance, and the giving of charity.

"These Days of Awe begin and end with the blowing of the shofar, the ram's horn, whose blasts fill the heart and the mind with their many meanings. The shofar was sounded as Moses ascended Mt. Sinai to receive from the Lord the tablets containing the Ten Commandments, the moral foundation stones of Western civilization.

"It was heard again as the Children of Israel entered the Promised Land. And the sound of the shofar and the shout of the people brought down the walls of Jericho.

"As Jews the world over come together as one to pray for forgiveness and the blessings of the Almighty in the year to come, Nancy and I join in those prayers for a world of peace.

"We hope that the great values upon which Judaism is based will be more fully reflected in all of our lives and that we will move closer to that day when 'Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall men learn war anymore.'

"We are pleased to extend our best wishes to all Jewish people in the United States, in Israel, and around the globe as you celebrate the beginning of the year 5748. L'Shanah Tova, may you be inscribed in the Book of Life for a happy and healthy year."

NEW YORK (JTA) -- Olga Goldfarb, daughter of freed dissident Prof. David Goldfarb, is scheduled to arrive in New York from Moscow on Wednesday, according to the National Conference on Soviet Jewry. This will be her second visit to her ailing father. She is expected to arrive with her daughter, Nadia, 5, and stay for two weeks. Her emigration application is pending.