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ATTACK 2 DAYS BEFORE PEACE TALKS LEAVES 2 ISRAELIS DEAD, 5 INJURED

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Oct. 28 (JTA) -- Two days before the Middle East peace conference was to open in Madrid, Palestinian terrorists struck viciously, killing two Israelis and wounding five in a bus ambush in the West Bank.

The attack took place at 6:30 Monday evening, near the Tapuach junction, about three miles south of Nablus.

Gunmen fired automatic weapons at the vehicle, fatally wounding the driver and a passenger. Both died en route to hospitals in Tel Aviv.

One seriously injured youth was hospitalized at Hadassah-Hebrew University Hospital in Ein Kerem, Jerusalem. His condition was not immediately known.

The attack followed threats by various Palestinian extremists to sabotage the conference.

The bus was carrying Jewish settlers to a mass rally in Tel Aviv in opposition to Israel's participation in the peace conference with Arab states and Palestinians that opens Wednesday in Madrid. Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir is heading the Israeli delegation to the talks.

Word of the attack reached the rally, at which scores of thousands of demonstrators observed a minute's silence in memory of those who had just been killed.

When the news reached the demonstrators, thousands more poured into Malchei Yisrael Square, outside City Hall, crying for revenge.

Police reinforcements blocked access roads to prevent rioting.

The rally was described as "electric, somber and angry." Speakers decried the murderous attack, which they called a clear indication that the Palestinians and Arab states do not really want peace. They warned that Israel should not fall into the Arabs' trap.

Near-Miss Reported Outside Haifa

A typical reaction came from a National Religious Party politician, who demanded that Israel refuse talk to any Palestinians who do not immediately dissociate themselves from the bus ambush and similar terrorist attacks.

He accused Hanan Ashrawi, spokesperson for the six-member Palestinian advisory panel going to Madrid in an unofficial capacity, of inciting an escalation of the intifada.

Agriculture Minister Rafael Eitan of the Tsomet faction said the attack exposed the true intentions of the Arabs. Eitan was the only minister of the far right to vote for participation in the conference, on grounds that Shamir could be trusted to make no concessions.

Yuval Ne'eman, leader of the Tehiya party, who voted against the conference, demanded that 100 new settlements be built in the territories for every ambush victim.

Uri Ariel, secretary of the Jewish settlers association in the territories, denounced Palestinian activist Faisal Husseini as the "brain and mouth" behind the attack.

Husseini, who has been one of U.S. Secretary of State James Baker's principal contacts with the Palestinians during the last six months, leads the advisory group going to Madrid. Israel ruled him out as a negotiating partner because he lives in East Jerusalem and is also believed to have strong ties to the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Earlier Monday, a pickup truck tried to run down three women soldiers waiting at a hitchhiking shelter at Tirat Hacarmel, outside Haifa. They jumped to safety as the vehicle bore down on them. Police set up roadblocks and are searching for two young men seen in the truck.

An Israel Defense Force soldier was seriously wounded Sunday by a heavy brick dropped on him in the Nablus casbah.

Although the peace conference is supported by the local Palestinian leadership in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and by Yasir Arafat's Fatah wing of the PLO in Tunis, Palestinian radicals are committed to derail it.

NEWS ANALYSIS: SHAMIR GOING TO MADRID TALKS WITH SOLID POLITICAL BACKING

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Oct. 28 (JTA) -- While history alone will judge Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's performance as Israel's spokesman for peace on the international stage this week, there is little question that his political performance at home so far has been masterful.

As he prepared to fly to Madrid as head of the Israeli delegation to the Middle East peace conference opening there Wednesday, the 75-year-old Likud leader completely dominated Israel's political scene.

He adroitly isolated and is leaving behind his two principal Likud rivals: Foreign Minister David Levy, who is too moderate for Shamir's taste, and the hawkish housing minister, Ariel Sharon, whom he sees as too strident.

Shamir has won the wary trust of his far-right coalition partners, who view peace talks with the Arabs -- particularly the Palestinians -- as a step toward surrender. For the time being, they are staying in his government.

He also appears to have cowed the opposition Labor Party. Shamir vetoed their choice of a Labor representative in Madrid, brushed off their plea to freeze settlement-building while peace talks are under way and admonished them, in the name of patriotism, to silence partisan criticism while Israel negotiates with its foes.

Israel, for its part, has adopted a stance of strict compliance with the conference rules. And it has already complained that the Palestinians seem to be bending those rules.

The 14-member Palestinian team will negotiate under the umbrella of the Jordanian delegation, avoiding the illusion of Palestinian independence.

But the head of the Palestinian group, Dr. Haider Abdel-Shafi from the Gaza Strip, has been allocated 45 minutes for his opening speech, the same as the heads of delegations of sovereign states.

Israel has protested that accommodation on the grounds that it would confer on the Palestinians the status of a separate delegation.

The Israeli government is more seriously

disturbed about a statement made last week by one member of the Palestinian delegation, Saeb Erekat, who publicly identified himself with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Israel has a U.S. guarantee that it will not have to negotiate with anyone linked to the PLO.

But anxious to avoid the finger of blame should the conference abort for any reason, Israel has given no indication it will create a crisis around that issue.

Yossi Ben-Aharon, director-general of the Prime Minister's Office, who will be one of Israel's chief negotiators in Madrid, hinted in an interview Monday that Israel would not make an issue of Erekat's remarks as long as they are not repeated.

Tehiya To Remain In Government

Shamir hand-picked the Israeli team going to Madrid. With the exception of one Laborite, all are Likud loyalists committed to Shamir's program.

As a group, however, they are not as hard-line as might have been expected. And Shamir himself told The New York Times in an interview published last Friday that he was prepared to take risks for peace.

By shunting aside professional diplomats in favor of two of his most trusted and ideologically compatible aides to conduct the most delicate negotiations, Shamir succeeded in outraging Foreign Minister Levy.

Levy, who had expected to head the Israeli delegation, refused to play second fiddle. He announced he would not go to Madrid, and Shamir made no effort to change his mind.

Sharon, one of the three Cabinet ministers who voted against taking part in the conference, was isolated when the other two changed their minds.

Yuval Ne'eman of Tehiya and Rehavam Ze'evi of Moledet have decided to remain in the coalition for the moment, reversing an earlier threat to leave when the conference opened.

Without them, Shamir's parliamentary majority would have been shaved too close for comfort on the eve of an international peace conference.

But Ne'eman, who is minister of science and energy, prevailed upon the Tehiya militants to withdraw their plan to defect and agree to stick with the government a while longer.

Ne'eman, whose international repute as a physicist confers a cachet on the party, withdrew his decision to resign from Tehiya after it agreed to stay in the government.

Israeli People Backing Talks

Tehiya Knesset member Gershon Shafat, who mediated the crisis, rationalized that since the first phase of the Madrid conference would be ceremonial, it was too early to leave the coalition. When the conference got down to substantive issues, there would be time enough to quit, he argued.

The same reasoning apparently prevailed in Moledet, whose leader, Ze'evi, holds no Cabinet portfolio.

While Moledet's platform calls for expelling the Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, he and others of his ideological stripe apparently are convinced that Shamir can be trusted to defend what they perceive to be Israel's interests.

Moreover, a public opinion poll published last Friday in the mass-circulation daily Yediot Achronot showed an overwhelming 91 percent of the population in favor of Israel going to Madrid. Given such popular sentiment, right-wing politicians realized that opposing the conference could be a political error.

Sharon remains the only major political figure who refuses to budge. But he has been left in the cold and may be contemplating an alliance of convenience with the frustrated Levy against Shamir.

The prime minister could encounter internal political difficulties in the long run, though, if he is required to make substantive decisions.

Meanwhile, he will go to Madrid with the blessings not only of his natural allies on the right but his opponents on the left, as well.

Shamir met Monday with a Labor Party delegation consisting of party Chairman Shimon Peres; former Defense Minister Yitzhak Rabin; Haim Ramon, chairman of Labor's Knesset faction; and Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, deputy chairman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

Labor Urges Settlements Freeze

Labor had proposed Ben-Eliezer, a former coordinator of government affairs in the administered territories, as its representative on the negotiating team. But Shamir refused.

Likud instead proposed Laborite Edna Solodar, considered a hawk in her party. But the Labor leaders refused to accept Likud's "diktat."

As matters stand, the only Labor Party member at Madrid will be Shlomo Ben-Ami, Israel's ambassador to Spain, who could not very well have been excluded, given the talks' location.

Shamir would not even consider Peres' proposal that Israel freeze settlement-building if the Arabs lift their 43-year-old economic boycott of Israel.

Instead he told the Laborites to "lower the volume of their criticism" during the peace conference.

Shamir seemed untroubled by the mass demonstration in Tel Aviv on Saturday night, organized by Peace Now and the left-wing Knesset factions.

It drew a crowd of about 30,000, according to police estimates. Participants supported Shamir's decision to go to Madrid, but they urged him to be flexible and be willing to trade land for peace, a principle Likud opposes.

Defense Minister Moshe Arens branded the demonstrators "unpatriotic."

ISRAEL FRIENDSHIP GROUPS BACK PARLEY
By Josef Klansky

PRAGUE, Oct. 28 (JTA) -- Friends of Israel from five European countries met here over the weekend to endorse the Middle East peace conference in Madrid and wish it success.

Prague played host to members of Israel friendship societies from Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Romania and Czechoslovakia. They adopted a resolution supporting the search for peace in the Middle East.

It called on all parties in Madrid to open a "real dialogue" aimed at a just and lasting peace, with security between Israel and its neighbors.

The resolution also expressed sympathy and appreciation to Israel for absorbing hundreds of thousands of new immigrants, finding them homes and work.

Finally, it urged the U.N. General Assembly to rescind its 1975 resolution denigrating Zionism as a form of racism.

ISRAEL NEEDS TO RETAIN TERRITORIES, LIKUD POLITICIANS TELL U.S. GROUPS

By David Friedman and Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Oct. 28 (JTA) -- Israel is going into this week's Middle East peace conference, and the bilateral negotiations that are to follow, convinced that it must retain the administered territories and has the right to populate them with Jewish settlers.

That position was articulated forcefully by three Likud politicians during separate public appearances in Washington recently.

Israeli Health Minister Ehud Olmert, Knesset member Ze'ev "Benny" Begin and Zalman Shoval, Israel's ambassador to the United States, all pushed the familiar Likud party line, which rejects the land-for-peace formula.

But they stressed Israel's security needs rather than ideological imperatives.

Begin, the 48-year-old son of former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, dwelt on the dangers of a "terrorist state" being created in Israel's heartland if it relinquished the territories.

The younger Begin, a geologist who entered active politics only three years ago and recently announced his candidacy for prime minister -- but only after Yitzhak Shamir retires -- held a news conference at the Israeli Embassy here Oct. 22.

Since then, he and Shoval both were named by Shamir to the 14-member Israeli delegation to the Middle East peace conference opening in Madrid on Wednesday.

Begin, regarded as one of the most promising younger generation Likud Knesset members, spoke of the "conflicting premises" on which current U.S. policy toward the territorial issues is based.

Pointing out that Washington opposes an independent Palestinian state, Begin maintained that "he who opposes a terrorist state 20 miles from Tel Aviv must accept, willingly or unwillingly, that Israel should be able to control Judea, Samaria and Gaza."

'A Jewish Chess Game'

He expressed cautious optimism that the peace conference could produce a viable solution along the lines that his father worked out at Camp David with Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and U.S. President Jimmy Carter.

That means granting autonomy for the Palestinians now, with negotiations on the final status of the territories to begin after three years of self-rule, Begin explained.

Shoval and Olmert argued that Israel needs to have Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

Shoval, who spoke two weeks ago at the Jewish National Fund's National Campaign Leadership Gathering, called the positioning of settlements in the territories a "Jewish chess game" that must ensure a "large-scale civilian Jewish presence" there.

Olmert, addressing the State of Israel Bonds Organization's National Leadership Conference the same week, referred to Israel's pre-1967 borders as "indefensible."

"If anyone believes that this policy will ever be turned down and that Israel will withdraw back to the '67 lines, I am officially authorized to tell you that it will never happen," Olmert told the Bonds leaders to rousing applause.

Shoval took a more pragmatic line. The "matter of settlements is a pure political issue" that will "have to be debated" after the start of any regional peace conference, he told JNF.

SANCTIONS WAIVED AGAINST ISRAEL AFTER IT SOLD ARMS TO PRETORIA

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Oct. 28 (JTA) -- The Bush administration has confirmed reports that it refrained from punishing Israel for violating an international convention by selling ballistic missile components to South Africa.

According to administration officials, President Bush waived congressionally mandated sanctions after Israel promised not to violate the convention again.

A State Department official said that when confronted in September, Israel pledged to abide by the 1987 international Convention for the Limitation of the Spread of Missile Technology. The convention's goal is to deter Third World nations from acquiring the missiles.

To help promote the treaty, Congress last year gave the president authority to impose sanctions against countries that violate it. But, as it usually does, Congress included an escape clause that allows such sanctions to be waived if it serves U.S. national security interests.

By pledging to abide by the treaty, Israel "wipes away any past transgressions," explained a pro-Israel lobbyist.

Ruth Yaron, the Israeli Embassy spokeswoman, said that when Israel signed the agreement with the United States a few weeks ago, it also told the United States that it will continue its 1987 policy of phasing out existing military contracts with South Africa.

The administration's response to the Israeli violation was first reported over the weekend by The Washington Post. When asked about the report Sunday on the ABC-TV news program "This Week With David Brinkley," Secretary of State James Baker said the administration has been adhering to the congressional statute.

Because of the transfer, the administration on Oct. 15 imposed sanctions on the South African company that received the missile components, Armaments Corp., the Washington Post reported. Armscor is barred for two years from exporting or importing products from the United States, the Post said.

ISRAEL HAS NO COMMENT ON REPORTS OF GERMAN TANK TRANSFER TO MOSSAD

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Oct. 28 (JTA) -- Israel's Defense Ministry has declined to comment on reports from Bonn that the German secret service was transferring 12 Soviet-built tanks from the stocks of former East Germany to Israel's secret service, Mossad.

According to the reports, a German official justified the shipment as "entirely normal" between intelligence services of friendly countries.

But Chancellor Helmut Kohl's Cabinet apparently knew nothing of the impending transfer, which other sources in Germany said could be illegal.

The tanks and two containers filled with unspecified equipment were discovered by Hamburg police aboard the Israeli freighter Palmach II in the Elbe River port.

The ship's manifest reportedly listed them as "agricultural equipment." Hamburg prosecutors said they were investigating the case as a possible violation of Germany's strict laws barring the shipment of weapons to crisis areas.

GROUP RELINQUISHES SOME CONTROL OVER ACCESS TO DEAD SEA SCROLLS

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Oct. 28 (JTA) -- Biblical archaeology scholars have welcomed the Israel Antiquities Authority's decision Sunday to permit researchers to view copies of the Dead Sea Scrolls without receiving permission from the tightknit editorial team that has held exclusive control over the translation and publication of the ancient manuscripts.

But some scholars are complaining that the new policy still falls short of full disclosure.

In announcing that scholars would now be given access to photographs of the manuscripts, Professor Emanuel Tov, editor in chief of the official publication project, said the Antiquities Authority would require researchers to pledge not to publish the texts they view. This will not, however, preclude quoting "limited portions" of the documents, he said.

The copies that are being made available have been stored for safekeeping at Jerusalem's Rockefeller Museum, Oxford University in England, the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center in Claremont, Calif., and the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati.

The release of these copies follows the decision in September of the Huntington Library in San Marino, Calif., to microfilm a copy of the scrolls in its possession for general circulation.

The Antiquities Authority has stressed that its ban on general publication is designed solely to protect the rights and reputations of the officially designated researchers.

Under the "publish or perish" pressures of the scholarly world, being the first to publish an edited and translated version of a text would be a major career victory.

The Antiquities Authority, which claims a copyright on the pictures of the scrolls, says a complete list of the unpublished documents will be published by the end of this year.

'Continual Foot-Dragging'

Hershel Shanks, publisher of Biblical Archaeology Review, who has led the fight to open the scrolls, played down the Israeli move as "continual foot-dragging."

Shanks is publishing what has been described as a "bootleg" text of the scrolls, compiled by computer from a concordance to the documents.

The second volume in that series will be published before the end of the year, according to Professor Ben-Zion Wacholder of HUC-JIR, who is doing the research.

"We welcome the new guidelines," said Wacholder, who believes the Antiquities Authority's restrictions will be ineffective.

Professor Lawrence Schiffman of New York University agreed. He said the Israeli decision, coming as it does in the wake of the unauthorized disclosures, "has effectively brought about a completely open environment."

Schiffman said that it is a matter of ethical debate whether scholars who have been recently given texts to edit should have a chance to publish them first. But he noted that the most authoritative journal in the field, Revue de Qumran, has in the past published bootleg texts.

In Los Angeles, Dr. William Moffett, director of the Huntington Library, condemned the remaining restrictions, but lauded Michael Bar-Zohar, chairman of the Knesset Education Committee, for endorsing free and unfettered access in a meeting with Tov and others in charge of the scrolls.

"No longer can it be claimed that the Israeli government opposes free access to historical documents," Moffett said in a statement Monday.

"No longer will conventions originating in agreements designed to block Israeli scholars from the scrolls be invoked by an Israeli agency to deny access to American-Jewish scholars and others working in this field," he said.

At HUC-JIR, the library has not yet decided how to handle its scholarly windfall.

"It was intended to be an archive," librarian David Gilner said of the 1,400 pieces of negative film locked in the vault of the rare book room. "We don't have a light table to use the negatives," he said.

(Contributing to this report were JTA correspondents Hugh Orgel in Tel Aviv and Tom Tugend in Los Angeles.)

VANDALISM AND A SURVEY IN AUSTRIA PROMPT MARCH AGAINST ANTI-SEMITISM

By Marta Halpert

VIENNA, Oct. 28 (JTA) -- At least 5,000 people marched through the rain last Friday in a silent protest against anti-Semitism in Vienna.

The demonstration, occasioned by recent vandalism at a historic Jewish cemetery, may also have been a response to a new poll showing pervasive anti-Semitism throughout Austrian society.

The march, organized by the Austrian Students Association, had the support of almost all of the national political parties. Many members of Parliament participated.

They marched through a heavy downpour from the Judenplatz to the Memorial Against Fascism and Racism, where Professor Anton Pelinka, a political scientist, addressed the crowd.

In the past two years, 72 Jewish graves have been destroyed in the Vienna area. The most recent desecrations occurred the night of Oct. 10.

Several gravestones were toppled and remains scattered at Tor I (Gate 1) of the Zentralfriedhof, or Central Cemetery, where no Jewish burials have taken place since 1938, the year of Adolf Hitler's annexation of Austria.

Since the vandals struck, security has been tightened around Jewish institutions. Pelinka referred to that when he observed, "It is sad enough that members of the Jewish community have to sit in their synagogues while armed police forces are watching over their security.

"Now, in addition, the unguarded graves are being desecrated," he said.

The march against anti-Semitism was supported by President Kurt Waldheim, who has served his six years in office under the shadow of a Nazi past.

It had the backing of the Social Democratic Party, the Conservative Party, the Greens and various youth organizations.

Only the center-right Freedom Party remained aloof. Its chairman, Jorg Haider, labeled the cemetery desecrations mere "vandalism."

Similarly inclined was Mayor Helmut Zilk of Vienna, who insisted that the upturned gravestones were just a "boys' prank" and not a sample of "Viennese anti-Semitism."

Zilk is known to have been distressed by an American Jewish Committee-Gallup Institute poll taken here last summer and released last week, which disclosed strong currents of anti-Semitism in a substantial portion of the population.