

**TALKS WITH PALESTINIANS WENT WELL,
BUT SYRIAN NEGOTIATIONS STRAINED**
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Nov. 4 (JTA) -- Israel's first direct talks with Palestinians in Madrid went off remarkably well, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir told Knesset members Monday.

The biggest threat to the future of peace negotiations is Syria, he made clear.

The initial round of talks was devoted to discussing where to hold future bilateral sessions. Nothing apparently was settled on that score, Shamir told the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

Nevertheless, the session with the joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation was a historic breakthrough. It was the first time ever that Israelis and Palestinians negotiated around the same table in the context of formal diplomatic talks.

The talks began Sunday morning and ended early in the evening with a long break in the afternoon.

For the first event of its kind in history, it was successful, said Shamir, who was not present but had reports from his negotiating team.

Shamir led the Israeli delegation to Madrid for the ceremonial opening of the peace conference last week. He returned to Jerusalem on Friday and briefed his Cabinet on Sunday.

A Frigid Atmosphere

On Monday, he reported to the Knesset panel on the bilateral talks with the Palestinians. They were conducted by an Israeli negotiating team headed by Elyakim Rubinstein, the Cabinet secretary and one of Shamir's most trusted aides.

They were held in a "positive, relaxed atmosphere" and jokes were exchanged by both sides, Shamir reported.

He said that contrary to published reports, the Jordanian-Palestinian team acted as one. Issues raised with one of the participants are discussed by the entire delegation, and the relevant party is free to express its own views, he said.

After hours of delay, the talks with the Syrian negotiators began Sunday evening and concluded in the wee hours of Monday morning. That Israeli delegation was headed by Yossi Ben-Aharon, director general of the Prime Minister's Office and another of Shamir's most senior aides.

Shamir described the talks as "correct," which in diplomatic parlance connotes a frigid atmosphere. At times the head of the Syrian delegation even raised his voice, he reported.

The Syrians rejected all Israeli compromise proposals, Shamir said. One, for example, was to hold the bilateral talks on a rotating basis at Syrian and Israeli embassies in European capitals.

Syria also balked at Israel's proposal that both countries announce their commitment to continue the talks and that the Syrians declare their recognition of the State of Israel.

Shamir described the Syrians as "very hard, very rough, very extreme." He said they were "doing their utmost to foil any progress."

But "they don't always succeed," the prime minister added. He said the Arab camp in general

is divided, which is positive from Israel's point of view because that prevents "the creation of a united front against Israel."

Shamir warned, however, that there is no guarantee this situation will continue.

Asked if he would suspend settlement-building in the administered territories as a gesture of good will while peace talks are under way, Shamir said, "This should not be a gesture; this is part of the negotiations."

What should be stopped is the intifada, he said. "The settlements should not be stopped."

Shamir won a vote of confidence from his Cabinet on Sunday for his leadership of the Israeli delegation at the Madrid conference. At the Knesset committee meeting, he was praised by his two political opponents, Labor Party leaders Shimon Peres and Yitzhak Rabin.

"There is room for hope," said Peres.

"This is a great opportunity," echoed Rabin.

Shamir, meanwhile, is seeking to patch up his differences with Foreign Minister David Levy, who refused to go to Madrid after Shamir announced at the last minute that he would personally head the Israeli delegation.

The two men met for a half-hour Sunday and agreed to meet again Tuesday or Wednesday.

Levy denied reports that he ordered his Foreign Ministry people to return from Madrid on Monday. Reports of a Foreign Ministry walkout are "imagination," he said, adding that there were about 20 Foreign Ministry officials still in the Spanish capital.

Levy rejected a proposal by Agriculture Minister Rafael Eitan at Sunday's Cabinet meeting to appoint Levy's archrival, Deputy Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, to be minister of information, in recognition of his masterful organization of Israeli propaganda at Madrid.

"Information does not create policy," Levy remarked. "When the policy is good, so is the information."

NEWS ANALYSIS:**ARABS AND ISRAELIS MUST NOW MOVE
FROM RHETORIC TO REAL GIVE-AND-TAKE**
By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Nov. 4 (JTA) -- Israelis and Arabs have broken new ground in Madrid by talking with each other, both publicly and privately.

But in the hoped-for second round of direct talks, to take place at a still-unresolved place and time within a few weeks, the parties will have to do more than just talk. They must begin discussing specific solutions to the Arab-Israeli and Israeli-Palestinian disputes.

With the parties now gone from Madrid, the issues of place and time will dominate the coming days. Secretary of State James Baker is working toward an agreement on this as soon as possible.

Procedure was the main agenda item in Israel's separate, face-to-face talks Sunday with Syria, Lebanon and the joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation.

Israel wants the direct talks to alternate between Israeli and Arab cities. Syria strenuously opposes doing so, because this would mean official recognition of Israel.

On issues of substance, Baker told reporters

that each side in Madrid staked out "maximalist positions" from which they would only back off in private, one-on-one negotiations.

The one gesture most acknowledged as an ice-breaker by the other side was the Palestinian position, backed by Jordan, of accepting some interim autonomy arrangement in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Of course the Palestinians hinged that position on being assured that a Palestinian state would eventually be created. But even that appeared reasonable, compared with Syria's demand that Israel return the Golan Heights before discussions could take place on any other issue, including future security arrangements there.

In addition to the face-to-face procedural talks that began this week, Israel wants to jump into multilateral negotiations involving such regional issues as water resources, arms control and economic cooperation. But Baker has yet to announce arrangements for those talks to begin.

The Arab delegates said they did not care about negotiating on any of those issues unless they got their land back. Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa charged that Israel is "only interested in entering bilateral negotiations on economic cooperation."

In general, the Arabs have shown little interest in confidence-building gestures until Israel indicates a willingness to give up territory.

Palestinian spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi dismissed the idea of suspending the four-year-old Palestinian uprising in the territories in exchange for a halt to new Jewish settlements. Ashrawi said the two are not equal.

Syria repeatedly invoked U.N. Security Council Resolution 242, which it interprets as requiring Israel to give up all land acquired in 1967.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, on the other hand, maintained that "the issue is not territory but our existence."

With little inclination toward compromise on either side, the parties resorted late last week to discussing their own countries' virtues and enumerating their enemies' faults, however irrelevant.

'This Is Strategic Territory'

This war of words took place not only on the floor of the majestic Hall of Columns, but also over the airwaves and in the pages of newspapers around the world.

Israeli officials reportedly gave over 2,500 interviews in Madrid, and the Arabs showed no less interest in courting the Western news media.

The ball may have started rolling when Deputy Foreign Minister Benjamin Netanyahu began extolling Israel's democratic virtues and berating the Arab world's support of terrorism and less "humane" way of treating citizens.

Sharaa of Syria snapped back during a CBS News interview last week when he compared Shamir with Iraqi President Saddam Hussein, calling both intransigent, undaunted by U.N. resolutions and unpopular around the world.

The nadir occurred at last Friday's closing of the plenary session, when Shamir called Syria "one of the most oppressive, tyrannical regimes in the world." Sharaa responded by unveiling an old photograph of a 32-year-old Shamir, saying he was wanted then for terrorist assassinations.

Despite the polemics, Sharaa indicated a recognition that Israel would have to be given security guarantees if Syria was ever to get back the Golan Heights.

Acknowledging the legitimacy of Israeli fears, he said, "As far as Israel concerned, this is strategic territory," because the Golan is "way above sea level."

"We are not against the idea of security agreements once Israel has withdrawn from the Golan Heights," he said. "If it desires to establish an arms-free area, this should be along both sides of the national boundary, a demilitarized zone."

His remarks indicated that Syria still considers the prospect of getting back the Golan within the realm of possibility. That may explain why Syria ultimately showed up Sunday for direct talks with Israel, after engaging in a prolonged procedural fight.

The Israeli-Syrian talks were reportedly strained. But they lasted five hours, and afterward, Syrian chief negotiator Muafaq Alaf said that "although we are not at all satisfied, we will continue talking with them."

Before leaving Madrid, the sharp-tongued Sharaa put in a nice word, saying that "the Israelis as a people desire peace." The problem, he said, is that the Israeli government is "more hawkish, more intransigent than its people."

That may or may not be true. But it is clear, nonetheless, that for the moment, Syria is prepared to negotiate with that hawkish government and still sees a chance at reconciliation.

SOVIET JEWS MOVE INTO GOLAN KIBBUTZ, IN MOVE LIKELY TO INFURIATE SYRIANS By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Nov. 4 (JTA) -- A group of Soviet immigrants moved into an abandoned kibbutz on the Golan Heights on Monday, in what could be construed a provocative gesture toward Syria on the day after Israeli and Syrian delegations met for the first time in direct negotiations in Madrid.

In fact, the ceremony, planned originally to take place two weeks ago, had been postponed at the request of the Cabinet, which feared Damascus might interpret the move as purposely insulting.

Kibbutz Kelah has a checkered history. Established by the United Kibbutz Movement, its residents abandoned the place two years ago. It was taken over by Nahal, a branch of the Israel Defense Force which combines agricultural work with military operations and training.

Recently the IDF decided to return the settlement to civilian control. It found 22 families, all new immigrants from the Soviet Union, willing to move into the abandoned buildings.

Those olim had been in the country barely a month but had already become members of the right-wing Herut-Betar movement.

The ceremonial revival of Kelah, on territory seized from Syria in 1967 and annexed by Israel in 1980, was attended by three right-wing ministers.

Two of them, Ariel Sharon of Likud and Yuval Ne'eman of Tehiya, had voted against Israel's participation in the Middle East peace conference, co-hosted by the United States and Soviet Union in Madrid.

The third, Rafael Eitan of Tsomet, voted with the majority of the Cabinet to attend the conference. He said he trusted Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir not to cede an inch of territory for peace. Plans call for converting Kelah into a village with 300 housing units.

**SUPPLY OF MATERIEL TO ISRAEL
RAISING HACKLES IN GERMANY****By David Kantor**

BONN, Nov. 4 (JTA) -- The clandestine shipment to Israel of Soviet-built tanks and other military equipment from the stocks of the defunct East German army has become a political issue here.

The opposition Social Democratic Party has demanded the resignation of Defense Minister Gerhard Stoltenberg. He allegedly turned the arms over to the German intelligence service, BND, which arranged to have them sent to its Israeli counterpart, the Mossad.

The "smuggling" operation was exposed a week ago when Hamburg harbor police found the tanks and several containers of military equipment aboard the Israeli freighter Palmach II listed on the manifest as "agricultural equipment."

According to leaks from a report prepared by Stoltenberg and the head of the BND, Konrad Porzner, the Germans and Israelis have been engaged in under-the-table arms exchanges since 1967, when Israel captured large quantities of Soviet-made equipment from the Arab armies it defeated in the Six-Day War.

The Germans were given access to Israeli-captured Soviet equipment over the years.

On Oct. 8, members of the German and Israeli intelligence agencies inspected the East German equipment to decide what Israel would want for testing and intelligence purposes. The Israelis agreed to bear the shipping costs, and delivery was scheduled between Oct. 23 and 26.

The Hamburg police, not privy to the deal, seized the illicit cargo on the night of Oct. 26.

Until now, there has been no serious criticism of the actual shipment of the materiel to Israel. The anger is over the avoidance of political channels. It has led to demands to tighten control over the Munich-based BND.

Porzner, meanwhile, has offered to resign.

The leaked report said the BND operatives who organized the shipments to Israel thought it unnecessary to involve the political leadership.

A secret government committee for defense matters decided in March to make the former East German equipment available to Israel. The Israelis were not supposed to get battle tanks, but only radar and anti-aircraft systems mounted on armored vehicles.

They were committed to return the equipment after a series of tests to measure its effectiveness and durability.

BONN VOWS TO CURB NEO-NAZIS**By David Kantor**

BONN, Nov. 4 (JTA) -- Interior Minister Wolfgang Schauble has promised swift measures to curb neo-Nazi extremists in the new federal states which were formerly East Germany.

Racist violence has been on the rise in those areas, aimed chiefly at guest workers, people seeking asylum in Germany and foreigners in general.

The minister admitted during a visit to the Berlin Jewish community that the office dealing with political extremists has been ineffective and will have to be strengthened.

Schauble said the office would be assigned experts from former West Germany to help it cope with the basic task of gathering reliable data on neo-Nazi groups.

**ISRAEL'S ARROW MISSILE PROJECT
IN DOUBT AFTER UNSUCCESSFUL TEST****By Hugh Orgel**

TEL AVIV, Nov. 4 (JTA) -- Israel's Arrow anti-missile missile project, financed largely by the United States, seems in danger of fading away, like much of the controversial U.S. "Star Wars" program of the 1980s, of which it is an offshoot.

The third test launch of the Hetz (Hebrew for arrow), was carried out from the deck of a ship last week. Despite tight secrecy, enough details were leaked to U.S. military journals to reveal it was a failure.

That was the third strike against the Arrow, designed and manufactured by the government-owned Israel Aircraft Industries for the purpose of protecting Israel from attack by long-range ballistic missiles.

U.S. funding for the project to date amounts to some \$440 million.

The first test, from a land-based launch site nearly two years ago, was pronounced a success by IAI, even though the radar-tracking system operated by the Israeli air force malfunctioned.

The second test, six months ago, was sea-borne. It failed because part of the navigation system burned out and the onboard computer malfunctioned.

Why the latest test fizzled was not disclosed.

The Arrow's designers said such a complex system would inevitably have "teething troubles."

But the U.S. defense establishment admits having second thoughts about the Arrow -- and about the entire "Star Wars" system, officially known as the Strategic Defense Initiative, which former President Ronald Reagan sold to the American public as an impregnable space-based defense against nuclear attack.

Nevertheless, Israel is still vitally interested in a missile defense system, especially after coming under attack by Iraqi Scud missiles during the Persian Gulf War last winter.

The much hyped anti-missile Patriot batteries provided Israel by the United States and Germany have since been disclosed as only partially effective, at best.

The Israel Defense Force, in fact, has just published a critique of the Patriots which casts doubt on their ability to intercept and destroy the relatively unsophisticated Scuds.

In some cases where Patriots intercepted Scuds, they showered more debris and caused more damage and harm than the Scuds alone.

VANUNU LOSES BID FOR BETTER CONDITIONS**By Gil Sedan**

JERUSALEM, Nov. 4 (JTA) -- Convicted nuclear spy Mordechai Vanunu lost his bid to improve conditions at Ashkelon prison, where he is serving an 18-year sentence for allegedly disclosing Israel's nuclear weapons capabilities to a British newspaper.

The High Court of Justice rejected his complaint Monday.

Vanunu, once a technician employed at Israel's nuclear facility at Dimona, was lured from London to Rome in 1988 and kidnapped by Israeli agents, who brought him to Israel.

He was tried there in secret, and convicted.

He is not permitted to talk to or be photographed by the media.

REFORM CALLS FOR GREATER RELIGIOUS ADHERENCE

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

BALTIMORE, Nov. 4 (JTA) -- Reform Judaism is at a critical juncture.

The movement has grown by 25 percent over the last 20 years. But with the rapid growth has come a crisis of faith.

Reform is bigger than ever, with 856 affiliated congregations and nearly 300,000 member families. Forty-two percent of American Jews identify themselves as Reform, according to a recent study.

As a movement, Reform has succeeded like no other in welcoming converts and the intermarried. And the social action programs, unique to the Reform movement in their breadth and scope, are firmly established on the national and local Reform agendas.

But along the way, something of the religious aspect of Reform Jewish life has been left behind. In its effort to embrace the unaffiliated, to be inclusive, the definition of Reform Judaism has become perhaps too elastic.

As a result, Jewish children attend religious school with non-Jews and, in some temples, non-Jews are the congregational leaders.

And many Reform Jews interpret the ideological pillar of the movement -- individual autonomy from halachic authority -- as freeing from the responsibility of practicing Judaism.

It probably did not surprise anyone, therefore, that calls for ideological coherence and religious adherence were heard throughout the biennial conference of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the congregational branch of Reform Judaism, held here Oct. 31 through Nov. 4.

'We Will Disappear'

"The greatest challenge to our movement is to take our manifest numeric growth and to make sure this burgeoning is accompanied by equally great inner growth in knowledge and in deed," Rabbi Alexander Schindler, president of the Union, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency in an interview.

Rabbi Simeon Maslin of Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel in Elkins Park, PA, phrased that challenge in more urgent terms.

"Unless we Reform Jews accept the idea that we must do something, we will disappear," he warned. "Unless we start specifically Jewish acts, we've given the heritage up."

In his address to the 4,000 delegates, Schindler called for an intensification of efforts to gain converts both before and after marriage.

"We need to move away from the 'neutral,' non-proselytizing stance that has hitherto informed our outreach effort," he said. "Our desire to welcome converts should be made explicit."

"We need to affirm our Judaism frankly, freely, proudly, and without fear that it will offend the non-Jewish spouses," he said. For "if we lack in missionary zeal, they are bound to surmise that we have no message at all."

Delineating that message means defining the boundaries of Reform Judaism, which are, Schindler acknowledged, "most difficult to draw."

He suggested the creation of a synod, a council of rabbinic scholars and highly educated lay people who would help form a non-binding consensus about Reform ritual and ideology.

"Perhaps it is time for us to visualize a movement, sufficiently matured and with a suffi-

ciently educated laity, that might risk a little autonomy in the name of commitment," he said.

Rabbi Walter Jacob, president of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the movement's rabbinic arm, and chairman of the Freehoff Institute for Progressive Halachah, agreed that codification of Reform position and practice is needed, as is more centralized Reform authority.

"We have autonomy and therefore we have chaos," Jacob said in an interview. "We need a greater sense of discipline and sense of direction."

"Build-your-own Judaism is absurd."

The sense of direction will come, in part, out of reliance on Reform halachah, "which may take 100 years to develop into something clear in every area," Jacob said, adding that the degree to which it should be binding is still being debated.

"It should be more than guidance and less than governance. It will be a guide to Reform Jewish life."

'Reform At The Expense Of Judaism'

This is not the first time the Reform movement has tried to jettison some individual autonomy for the sake of the common good, he noted.

A century ago, each congregation had its own prayerbook. People realized that was a problem and, though it took 50 years for the transition to a common prayerbook to be completed, it did happen, he said.

Schindler called for a return to the texts that are the foundation of the Jewish religion.

"Deeds, however good, when detached from Torah study are trivialized and denied their Jewish moorings," Schindler said in his address.

"Without such a mooring, deeds become entirely non-obligatory. They can be accepted or rejected at whim."

The problem, articulated Rabbi W. Gunther Plaut, senior scholar at Holy Blossom Temple in Toronto and chairman of the Reform movement's Committee on Responsa, is that "in the name of openness and tolerance, we are stressing Reform at the expense of Judaism."

The consensus at the conference seemed to be that the rationality which informed those who established classical Reform is no longer enough to bind Reform Jews to their Judaism or to give them what they seek in their religious lives.

'The Bearded Man'

"There is a much greater thirst for the holy" in Reform than ever before, said Schindler. Reform Jews "want to feel, they are searching for that which may not necessarily be seen, but which is nonetheless real."

"There is much more emphasis on the spiritual at this biennial" than there has been before, Schindler explained, "because we realize the impact it can have."

But a reconsideration of its fundamental direction does not mean that Reform is trying to become like Orthodox -- or even Conservative--Judaism, Schindler assured.

Even speaking about God or about religious identity is something that many Reform Jews find threatening, he said. It is as if "we are but resident aliens amid the true citizens of Judaism," a place where the "true citizens" are "the bearded man" and "the bewigged woman."

"This mind-set is entirely self-defeating," Schindler said. The manner in which Reform "recasts tradition, deliberately and openly," its vision of Judaism "as a dynamic and not static faith," is authentic Judaism, he said.