

**EGYPT OFFERS TO HELP ISRAEL, ARABS
RESOLVE WHERE TO HOLD DIRECT TALKS**
By Gil Sedan and Hugh Orgel

JERUSALEM, Nov. 6 (JTA) -- If the flowering of peace is still a distant prospect, the Madrid conference has produced the first buds of hope that Arabs and Israelis can resolve their conflicts between themselves, with minimal prodding from outside the region.

That possibility emerged this week, when Egypt donned the role of intermediary between Israel and its partners in the three separate sets of bilateral talks: Syria, Lebanon and the combined Jordanian-Palestinian team.

The immediate problem of when and where the next bilateral meetings would take place was unresolved when the historic first round came to a close early Monday in Madrid.

Egypt has since volunteered to mediate between the parties to avoid intervention by Washington. Secretary of State James Baker told reporters at a briefing there Tuesday that if there is no agreement on a site in two weeks, "we will feel free to submit proposals."

Egypt, the only Arab state that has diplomatic relations with Israel, could mediate through its embassy in Tel Aviv and the Israeli Embassy in Cairo.

Although Israelis have long complained that their peace with Egypt is a "cold" one, Cairo is now seen as an acceptable mediator of controversial issues because of its conduct in Madrid.

The Israelis were impressed by the angry reaction of President Hosni Mubarak to Syrian intransigence at the conference.

Mubarak and King Fahd of Saudi Arabia are credited with persuading Syria finally to meet face-to-face Sunday with the Israelis in Madrid. Although the encounter was described as "frigid," it was nevertheless a historic breakthrough.

Israelis also appreciate the behavior of the Palestinian delegates, who abandoned their traditional reliance on Syria for an independent, constructive position of their own.

Jordan Ready To Negotiate

Israeli policy-makers are said to be quite willing to build on the good atmosphere of their first meeting with the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to reach an understanding on the venue of future bilateral talks.

There are also hopeful signs from Amman.

Reliable sources there reported that Jordan is sincerely interested in settling its conflict with Israel. Jordanian Prime Minister Taher al-Masri is said to be very pleased with the first results in Madrid and is determined to go forward.

"We will not withdraw from the process that was started, in order not to lose the historic opportunity," he said, adding that the face-to-face talks with the Israelis in Madrid broke down many barriers.

Arab-owned Radio Monte Carlo reported that the anti-peace Jordanian opposition, chiefly the Islamic fundamentalist groups, have lost their influence over the Jordanian masses because of an all-pervasive desire for peace.

The Israeli daily Ma'ariv reported that a public opinion poll taken in Amman this week

showed that 53 percent of the population is cautiously optimistic about peace, compared with 40 percent who are pessimistic.

On the other hand, there is persistent resistance to peace in some Jordanian quarters. The Jordanian Journalists Association sharply reprimanded one of its members who allowed himself to be interviewed by Israel Television in Madrid, according to the daily Yediot Achronot.

"We are shocked by the premature normalization," said the group's chairman, Fathi Kawar.

On the diplomatic level, however, the man who headed the Jordanian delegation in Madrid, Abdel Salam al-Majali, expressed regret in a Cairo daily that Jordan did not go along with the initiative of the late Egyptian President Anwar Sadat, who made peace with Israel 14 years ago.

In Jerusalem, meanwhile, the Knesset, devoting Wednesday's session to the Madrid conference, was supportive of the government's conduct.

The left and right wings were at odds as usual. Most significant, however, was the appearance of Foreign Minister David Levy, who appears to have patched up his differences with Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir.

Levy was angered and humiliated when Shamir announced shortly before the Madrid opening that he would personally head the Israeli delegation. Levy, who had expected to lead the delegation, stayed home, and his long-troubled relations with Shamir reached their nadir.

But after private meetings with Shamir, Levy seemed mollified, at least for the moment.

**NEWS ANALYSIS:
PALESTINIAN READINESS TO NEGOTIATE
WAS KEY TO SUCCESS OF MADRID TALKS**
By David Landau

MADRID, Nov. 6 (JTA) -- The consensus among thousands of journalists and hundreds of diplomats who attended the Middle East peace conference here is that the Palestinians stole the show.

Although camouflaged within a joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, the 14 official Palestinian representatives came off by far the best in terms of public image and international sympathy.

In contrast to the boorish behavior of the Syrians, the Palestinians were paragons of statesmanship.

"They've established themselves," said David Kimche, a former director general of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, now a member of the Israeli delegation in the bilateral talks with Lebanon.

"The Palestinian leadership is on the world map. There can be no going back on that now," said Kimche, a seasoned diplomat.

He was reflecting the widespread admiration of the representatives from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, led by Dr. Haider Abdel-Shafi, a physician from Gaza.

The delegation was in fact a cross-section of Palestinian professionals and intellectuals from the territories.

For decades, Israelis have coupled their absolute aversion to any contact with the Palestine Liberation Organization with expressions of hope that some day an "authentic, indigenous" Palestinian leadership would evolve from within

the West Bank and Gaza Strip population with whom they could talk.

That finally happened in Madrid. Almost overnight, a credible Palestinian leadership appeared. Unless rejectionist assassins cut short the careers of Abdel-Shafi, Faisal Husseini and Hanan Ashrawi, that leadership will increasingly overshadow the PLO as the peace process unfolds.

Willing To Consider Confederation

Husseini and Ashrawi are not part of the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation but of a six-member panel that went to Madrid to advise it.

Their advice apparently was well considered.

The Palestinians in Madrid were praised first for the relative moderation of their speeches at the three-day opening round.

Their statements were moderate compared to the tirade verging on anti-Semitism unleashed by the Syrian foreign minister, Farouk al-Sharaa, and even compared to the unyielding rhetoric of Israel's prime minister, Yitzhak Shamir.

Most significant in this respect was Abdel-Shafi's unequivocal, unambiguous commitment to a Palestinian state confederated with Jordan -- very different from Yasir Arafat's deliberately vague pronouncements on the subject.

That is a position with which a majority of world governments relate sympathetically. It was straightforward enough to be encapsulated in eye-catching media headlines, which likely earned the Palestinians the support of large bodies of world opinion during the dramatic days of the conference plenary.

Equally praiseworthy, in the view of the assembled world media, was the Jordanian-Palestinian delegation's civilized behavior during the two lengthy sessions of bilateral negotiations Sunday with an Israeli team, headed by Cabinet Secretary Elyakim Rubinstein.

Entirely absent was the theatrical posturing, the calculated rudeness and outright hatred that characterized Syria's appearances at the conference plenary and at the direct talks with Israel.

Handshakes And Banter

Instead, Abdel-Shafi and the Jordanian delegation head, Abdel Salam al-Majali, a close aide to King Hussein, willingly shook hands with the senior Israeli official while the cameras clicked and rolled.

Their exchange of banter with the unfailingly humorous Rubinstein was a welcome leitmotif that quickly broke the ice.

Nothing of substance or procedure was agreed upon. But that did not seem to cast a cloud over the huge success of having met and talked as equals in what both sides termed, in their unexpected joint communique, a "business-like atmosphere."

In the view of leading Israeli Arab affairs commentator Danny Rubinstein of Ha'aretz, the encounter, "the first in a hundred years between representatives of the Jews and representatives of the Arabs in Eretz Israel," was the truly historic event in Madrid -- more so, even than the first-ever face-to-face negotiations between Israel and its most implacable neighbor, Syria.

The Palestinians' dignified appearance at the bilateral talks seemed to hold out the prospect of a process of genuine conciliation between them and Israel.

But the really important reason why that prospect has become suddenly realistic, in the wake of Madrid, lies neither in the moderation of

the Palestinians' public statements nor in their mature conduct inside the negotiating chamber.

Rather, the revolutionary development in the Israeli-Palestinian relationship is the willingness of the new leadership to proceed with the "two-track, two-phase" pattern of peacemaking.

That scenario underlies the Israeli peace initiative of May 1989, the subsequent American plan and, in fact, every realistic diplomatic initiative in the Middle East since Camp David.

In 1978, the Palestinians contemptuously spurned the Framework for Peace worked out for them by Israel, Egypt and Jimmy Carter at the American presidential retreat.

It provided for a five-year period of autonomy, with negotiations to begin during the third year on the "final status" of the territories.

Those second-stage negotiations were to be conducted in concert with talks between Israel and Jordan on a peace treaty between them.

Almost a decade and a half later, the formula remains basically unchanged: still two stages, still autonomy to be followed three years later by the start of negotiations on "permanent status."

Changed Global Circumstances

What has changed is that now Egypt's dramatic quest for peace with the Jewish state is no longer viewed in the Arab world as an act of betrayal, but as a policy of pragmatism and foresight that even intransigent Syria reluctantly has agreed to follow.

Of course, the changed global circumstances, rather than any change of heart toward Israel, is the chief cause of the Arab change of strategy.

But for most of the Arabs, the long wait has cost little. The United States, especially since the Persian Gulf War, is ready to welcome them into its sphere of political and economic influence.

The Palestinians, on the other hand, have suffered hardship in the administered territories and bloodshed in Lebanon.

For the Palestinians too, though, the decline of the Soviet Union as the foremost power supporting radical politics in the world must be seen as the catalyst of their belated acceptance of the peace program, which in 1978 they rejected.

Privately they no longer balk at the long-standing contention, advanced by many of their friends in the United States, that had they accepted what was offered at Camp David, they would today have been far further down the road toward achieving their political aspirations.

The changed Palestinian attitude bodes well for the success of the first-stage negotiations, over the terms and modalities of autonomy in the territories.

The Palestinians may even prove more flexible over autonomy than were the Egyptians when they negotiated on their behalf between 1979 and 1982. Those talks expired, unable to resolve the legalistic differences between the parties.

This time, weakened strategically in global terms, but strong politically as a result of their performance at Madrid, the Palestinians may settle for inferior conditions, in return for their speedy implementation and the start of the three-year countdown to "final status" negotiations.

The Palestinians' goal remains not autonomy but self-determination. They appreciate now, however, that their only realistic way of advancing toward that end, and of hoping to convince Israel and international opinion, is to start out on the two-phase course prescribed at Camp David, and now, at last, embarked upon at Madrid.

**COURT ASKED TO WEAKEN STANDARDS
FOR GAUGING CHURCH-STATE BREACHES**
By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, Nov. 6 (JTA) -- Many Jewish groups are worried that the constitutional wall of separation between church and state could be severely breached if the Supreme Court agrees with the positions advanced by the Bush administration Wednesday in a case involving a Rhode Island high school graduation ceremony.

The administration wants the increasingly conservative court to scrap a 20-year-old test for determining when public involvement with religion is unconstitutional. It argued that such involvement should only be barred when the government attempts to coerce religious activity.

The issue came up when the high court heard oral argument Wednesday in the case of *Lee vs. Weisman*, in which the Providence (R.I.) School Committee is seeking to have a ruling by the U.S. Court of Appeals in Boston overturned.

The appeals court ruled that a rabbi's mention of God during an invocation and benediction at a 1989 Providence Middle School graduation ceremony violated the First Amendment's Establishment Clause. That clause, which says that "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion," is considered binding also on state and local governments.

The appeals court agreed with Daniel Weisman, a Rhode Island College professor whose daughter, Deborah, was one of the graduates, that prayers should not be offered at the Providence middle or high school graduation ceremonies.

Weisman complained in 1986 when his older daughter, Merith, graduated from the same school and a commencement speaker thanked Jesus for the students' accomplishments. When a rabbi was brought in for his younger daughter's graduation, Weisman, who is Jewish, sued the school board.

He believes that no clergy should officiate at public school graduation exercises.

Several organizations jointly filed a brief supporting Weisman's position, including the American Jewish Congress, American Jewish Committee, Anti-Defamation League, the National Jewish Community Relations Advisory Council, as well as numerous non-Jewish groups.

COLPA, the National Jewish Commission on Law and Public Affairs, which represents Orthodox Jewish organizations, has filed a brief supporting the school board.

It argues that the three-part test established in the Supreme Court's 1971 *Lemon vs. Kurtzman* ruling has been used by those intolerant of religion. Specifically, COLPA said the *Lemon* test has been used unsuccessfully to challenge the laws regulating kosher food.

Different From Prayer In Class?

The *Lemon* test requires that for a religious practice to be considered constitutional, it must have a secular purpose, must neither advance nor inhibit religion, and must not foster an excessive entanglement with religion.

But in their oral arguments before the Supreme Court, Solicitor General Kenneth Starr, representing the Bush administration, and Charles Cooper, a Washington lawyer representing the school board, maintained that prayers at commencement exercises are no different from those recited at the opening of sessions of Congress or at the inauguration of a U.S. president.

Starr said such public acknowledgements of

God have been an American tradition since the founding of the United States.

But he and Cooper agreed that if the prayer used at the Providence graduation was recited by a teacher in class, it would be unconstitutional.

Sandra Blanding, a Warwick, R.I., lawyer representing Weisman, maintained that a graduation is no different than a classroom, since it is part of the school program.

While Blanding argued for maintaining the *Lemon* test, she stressed that even if coercion were the criteria in this case, the children were coerced into participating in the prayer if they wanted to attend their graduation.

Blanding argued that prayer is different than the public display of creches or menorahs, which the court has allowed in certain circumstances.

"Prayer is inherently religious, not like a Christmas creche or a menorah," she said. "It is active, it is worship, not just the acknowledgment of religion."

But Cooper argued at one point that it would be all right for a state to adopt an official religion such as Christianity, as long as people were not coerced into practicing it.

While many of the Jewish and Christian groups have been expressing fear that the Supreme Court will use this case to end the *Lemon* test, some drew comfort from the questions of some of the justices. But they said this was not a sure-fire prediction on how they would vote.

Michael Lieberman, associate director and counsel in ADL's Washington office, said all the justices seem to have their individual views on the First Amendment.

He said Justice David Souter seemed to indicate that applying the coercion test in this case would be too extreme.

David Saperstein, co-director and counsel of Reform Judaism's Religious Action Center, expressed fear that a majority of the court wants to redefine the entire First Amendment.

He said whether the *Lemon* test remains or is removed depends on Justice Sandra Day O'Connor and the two newest justices, Souter and Clarence Thomas. Thomas did not ask any questions Wednesday.

**FOR FIRST TIME, AEROFLOT FLIES
IMMIGRANTS DIRECTLY TO ISRAEL**
By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Nov. 6 (JTA) -- The first direct immigrant flight by Aeroflot landed Tuesday night at Ben-Gurion Airport with 125 passengers from various parts of the Soviet Union.

They arrived without fanfare on a plane of Transair, a subsidiary of the Soviet state airline.

The pilot, Capt. Nikolai Konov, indicated Transair would be flying to Israel regularly from St. Petersburg, once Leningrad. "From now on, there will be regular direct flights in accordance with the agreement the Jewish Agency signed last month with Aeroflot and El Al," he said.

El Al, Israel's national air carrier, will participate in the joint service.

Jewish Agency Chairman Simcha Diniz said the direct flights were a new milestone in Soviet aliyah, which the agency had long sought.

They are quicker, more convenient, safer and more economical than the indirect routes through Eastern European capitals, which the bulk of immigrants have taken so far, Diniz said.

He predicted the availability of direct flights might bring about a modest increase in aliyah.

**WOFFORD WIN IN PENNSYLVANIA
WELCOMED BY JEWISH DEMOCRATS**
By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON, Nov. 6 (JTA) -- Jewish Democratic activists are relishing Tuesday's victory in Pennsylvania by interim Sen. Harris Wofford over former Attorney General Dick Thornburgh, a Republican closely linked to the Bush administration.

And pro-Israel activists are welcoming the defeat Tuesday of a referendum in Washington state that would have limited the terms of its congressional delegation to 12 years for senators and six years for U.S. representatives.

In the Pennsylvania race, there is no clear-cut gain for the Jewish community, as Wofford and Thornburgh appear to be equally supportive of Israel.

For example, they both supported unconditionally approving Israel's request for U.S. guarantees covering \$10 billion in loans to resettle Soviet Jews, the Philadelphia weekly Jewish Exponent reported.

But Morris Amitay, treasurer of the Washington Political Action Committee, said his group, which is one of the largest pro-Israel PACs, helped Wofford in part because it thought he would win.

In addition, Amitay said he was concerned that Thornburgh, who served under Bush, "owed the president too much to break with him on any issue." That could have spelled trouble if Bush continues to block the loan guarantee package.

While Wofford's populist message apparently won the day in Pennsylvania, such sentiment appeared to work on both sides of the referendum issue in Washington state.

"There are people who want the freedom to choose whoever they want," regardless of how long they have served, while others want to "throw the rascals out," explained Steve Gutow, executive director of the National Jewish Democratic Council.

The ballot measure was defeated by a vote of approximately 55 percent to 45 percent. Had it been approved, it would have effectively ended the term of House Speaker Thomas Foley in January 1995.

Philly Elects First Jewish Mayor

While Gutow's group did not take a position on the referendum, he said term limitations would likely hurt Democrats more than Republicans, simply because they hold an overwhelming majority of the 435 House seats: 267 versus 167 for the Republicans. An independent seat is held by Jewish Rep. Bernard Sanders of Vermont, who describes himself as a Socialist.

Approval of the referendum also would have set the dozens of pro-Israel PACs abuzz, as they generally like to see incumbents from both parties re-elected, unless the incumbents are anti-Israel.

In a victory letter to Wofford, Gutow wrote, "Your campaign underscored our need to aggressively remind these voters that the GOP is out of touch with the American public when it opposes extended unemployment benefits and favors tax cuts for the rich."

Matthew Brooks, executive director of the National Jewish Coalition, a Republican group, had no comment on the Wofford victory, the first in that state by a Democratic candidate for the Senate since 1962.

Wofford was appointed last spring to replace Sen. John Heinz, a Republican who died in a

helicopter crash. His re-election helps the Democrats retain a 57-43 edge in the Senate going into the 1992 elections, when 20 Democrats and 15 Republicans will be up for re-election.

Among the 15 Republicans is Arlen Specter (R-Pa.), one of eight Jews in the Senate. But Thornburgh has no plans to run against Specter in the 1992 primary, said Thornburgh campaign spokesman Dan Eramian.

Two House races were also decided on Election Day.

In Pennsylvania, Lucien Blackwell, a Democrat, defeated three candidates to win the traditionally Democratic House seat vacated by Rep. William Gray, who resigned to become president of the United Negro College Fund.

In Virginia, George Allen, a Republican, defeated Democrat Kay Slaughter to win a Republican seat being vacated by her cousin, retiring Rep. D. French Slaughter Jr.

There were also a number of mayoral races decided Tuesday. In Philadelphia, Edward Rendell became the first Jewish mayor of the "city of brotherly love."

**SLOVAK NATIONALISTS SEEK OUSTER
OF ENVOY OVER ANTI-SEMITIC CHARGE**
By Josef Klansky

PRAGUE, Nov. 6 (JTA) -- Slovak nationalists are demanding the removal of Czechoslovakia's ambassador to the United States, Rita Klimova, for allegedly slandering Slovakia by allegations of anti-Semitism in interviews with U.S. journalists.

The issue was put on Monday's agenda of the Slovak National Council, to be debated at a later date.

Klimova, who is of Jewish origin, is accused of unjustly reporting anti-Semitic demonstrations in Slovakia, which comprise the eastern half of the federated Czech and Slovak republics.

National President Vaclav Havel has come to her defense. He said the envoy did not speak of "anti-Semitic demonstrations" but of "demonstrations of anti-Semitism" in Slovakia, which are thoroughly documented.

The difference of meaning was lost in translation, said Havel, who has no intention of firing Klimova; nor has Foreign Minister Jiri Dienstbier.

But passions are running high among Slovak separatists, who cannot deny gross manifestations of anti-Semitism in their country, which was once a Nazi puppet state.

Vandals have desecrated Jewish cemeteries in several Slovak towns. Anti-Semitic graffiti appear on walls.

In the streets of Bratislava, the Slovak capital, news vendors freely hawk copies of "The Protocols of the Learned Elders of Zion," an anti-Semitic forgery that originated in Czarist Russia 100 years ago.

The primary target is not the present Jewish community of Slovakia, which numbers no more than 2,000, but the memory of the tens of thousands of Czechoslovak Jews deported to Nazi death camps by Josef Tiso, the Catholic priest whom Hitler installed as boss of the "independent" republic of Slovakia in 1939.

That was the only time in history that a Slovak state in any form existed, and nostalgic memories of it persist, even among Slovaks who were not born at the time. They are trying to vindicate their forebears by exculpating both the puppet state and its leader, Tiso, who was hanged as a war criminal in 1947.