

**REGIONAL TALKS OPEN IN WASHINGTON
AMID DISCORD AND LOW EXPECTATIONS**

By David Friedman

WASHINGTON, May 11 (JTA) -- Talks on Middle East regional issues opened here and in Brussels on Monday amid greater discord and lower expectations than attended the five rounds of bilateral Arab-Israeli peace talks held to date.

Israel is boycotting the Brussels talks on economic development because diaspora Palestinians are present. It will be absent from the refugee talks in Ottawa on Wednesday for the same reason.

Israel is attending the arms control talks here and is expected to attend the talks on water resources in Vienna on Wednesday and the environmental issues discussions opening in Tokyo on May 18.

But Syria and Lebanon are boycotting all five regional talks on the grounds that they are pointless as long as no serious progress is made in the bilateral phase.

Israel, in addition, is quarreling with the European Community over its role in the arms control talks, preferring to reduce the E.C.'s participation or eliminate it altogether.

But even the U.S. State Department is calling the talks here involving Israel and 21 other countries a "seminar" on Middle East arms control.

The United States, in fact, is stressing the "educational" aspect of the regional talks to distinguish them from the supposedly substantive peace negotiations going on between Israel and the Palestinians and Israel and three of its Arab neighbors.

Israel Calls Talks A 'Learning Experience'

The seminar aspect was also accentuated when the Israeli delegation arrived at the State Department on Monday to open the arms talks.

This will be a "learning experience," said David Ivri, secretary-general of the Israel Defense Ministry.

He said Israel hoped the lessons of arms control in other areas would serve as a confidence-building measure for the Middle East even though Syria and Lebanon are absent.

In Jerusalem, Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir repeated Monday that Israel will never agree to participate in negotiations with Palestinians who are not residents of the West Bank or Gaza Strip.

To do so would imply recognition of the Palestinians' right to return to territory now part of Israel, "as is clear to everyone," Shamir told the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee.

Yitzhak Rabin, leader of the opposition Labor Party, has not taken a clear position on the issue. But he was sharply critical of the peace talks to date on both bilateral and multilateral levels. They seem to be heading nowhere and in fact have regressed, Rabin told the Knesset committee.

Shamir confirmed that he had a rare telephone conversation with President Bush the day before the multilaterals opened in Washington. He did not indicate whether the issue of diaspora Palestinians came up.

The United States and Russia, co-sponsors of the multilateral phase, agreed to admit non-indigenous Palestinians to the talks on refugees and economic development, but they are excluded from the rest.

Bush has said the United States would not force Israel to negotiate with any parties it found objectionable.

The multilateral talks are "designed to complement and act as a catalyst to progress in the bilateral negotiations," said State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler.

She said the arms talks would cover "methods and concepts of arms control; the evolution of the confidence and security-building process; the history of the U.S.-Soviet hotline agreement; and the incidents-at-sea and dangerous-military-activities agreements."

Israel At Loggerheads With Europeans

The United States and Russia are the chairs for the arms control talks. The other host countries will chair the talks in their capitals; in Brussels, the talks are being chaired by the E.C., which is headquartered there.

Israel finds itself at loggerheads with the E.C. over the Washington talks, arguing that the European group should not be attending on an equal basis with the co-hosts.

It wants substantive discussions to include only the Middle East parties and the co-sponsors without European or other participation.

But the 12 E.C. states say they are seriously concerned over stability in the region, and arms control is a major issue to them because some member states have been major arms exporters to the Middle East.

Israel seems to fear most that the Europeans will raise the issue of Israel's reputed nuclear weapons arsenal.

The E.C. demonstrated its pique over the Israeli position, and apparent U.S. acquiescence in it, by deliberately sending a junior-level delegation to the Washington opening.

Meanwhile, Israeli Foreign Minister David Levy was in Brussels on Monday for his annual meeting with his 12 E.C. counterparts devoted to Israel's relationship with the European economic entity. The meeting has no connection with the multilateral talks in Brussels.

Israel May Be Holding Out For A Deal

Some Israeli commentators have suggested that the Jerusalem government is in fact holding out for a deal with Europe.

If the Europeans make good on their trade promises, Jerusalem would agree to their full-scale participation in the arms control talks, the commentators said.

In addition to Israel, 12 other Middle East and Arab countries are participating in the arms control talks.

They are: Algeria, Bahrain, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Also participating are: Canada, China, the European Community, India, Japan, Turkey and Ukraine.

(JTA correspondent David Landau in Jerusalem contributed to this report.)

ISRAELI POLITICAL SCENE INFLUENCED BY FAILURE OF ARAB PARTIES TO MERGE

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 11 (JTA) -- Although far from the center of the political tempest, the failure of two Arab splinter parties to form a joint list for the June 23 Knesset elections could have far-reaching political consequences for the country and the region.

Most Israelis, caught up in the mounting campaign frenzy, were not even aware last week that the Arab Democratic Party, led by Abdel Wahab Darousha, and the Progressive List for Peace, headed by Mohammed Miari, failed to reach an agreement on how to join forces in the coming elections.

The two Arab Knesset members despise each other. Nevertheless, their mutual interest in survival demanded that they try to form a single Arab list.

Most Israelis feel this is internal Arab business of little concern outside the Arab community. But given the present political situation, the animosity between two Arab Knesset members could prevent the Labor Party from either forming the next government or blocking another Likud-led coalition of right-wing and religious parties.

Of Israel's approximately 780,000 Arab citizens, over 300,000 are expected to vote next month. That is a formidable bloc representing about 12 percent of the electorate, equivalent to 13 Knesset seats.

If the Arabs ever united behind a single party, they would constitute the third-largest political force in Parliament. The Labor Party, which the Arab community seems to prefer over Likud, would have an unbeatable advantage building a governing coalition.

But Israeli Arabs have traditionally dissipated their vote between the Communist Party, which has no influence whatsoever in Israeli politics, Zionist parties such as Labor, and the three small leftist parties that have consolidated this year into the Meretz bloc.

Some Arabs have voted for Likud and even for the National Religious Party, which is Orthodox Zionist.

Darousha and Miari barely managed to get themselves elected to the Knesset when the minimum for one seat was 1 percent of the total votes cast.

This year, the minimum has been raised to 1.5 percent of an expected 2.5 million votes. That means that each Arab party will need to poll nearly 40,000 votes to stay in Parliament.

Both parties realized that would be difficult, if not impossible. Although Darousha and Miari barely speak to each other, serious negotiations were begun some time ago aimed at creating a united Arab party.

There is a public yearning for one in the Israeli Arab community and the influential Islamic movement in Israel hinted it would give its blessings to such a union.

But last weekend they gave up the effort. Darousha, confident that he was more popular in the "streets" than his rival, closed ranks with a small body of Arab mayors and started campaigning on his own.

Miari added a Christian Arab to his list, hoping for the support of Israel's Christian community.

But it seems more likely that thousands of

Arab votes will again be wasted on the Communist Party, which has always been excluded from coalition governments even though it is larger than some of the parties in the government.

Those lost votes would be essential to the creation of a Labor-led coalition. At the very least, they would assure a bloc of 60 leftist Knesset members barring the way to a Likud-led coalition with the right.

As matters stand now, much depends on the Islamic movement.

In the past, it opposed Arab participation in the Knesset elections on principle. It is trying to decide now whether to oppose the upcoming elections as well. A recommendation is expected in the next few days.

If the movement urges its supporters to vote, many of those disenchanted with the two Arab parties may cast their ballots for Labor or Meretz. The latter list, composed of the Citizens Rights Movement, Mapam and Shinui, stands to gain the most.

That too could radically alter Israel's political complexion.

But if the Islamic movement, as expected, takes no stand or tells its followers to stay home on Election Day, the 1988 results may be repeated. They led to a Likud-Labor unity government which could accomplish little and soon fell apart.

Thus, paradoxically, the outcome of next month's elections may be influenced fundamentally by Moslem religious extremists who up to now opposed the very existence of the Jewish state.

LIKUDNIKS BRISTLE AT POLL SHOWING THEIR PARTY LAGGING BEHIND LABOR

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, May 11 (JTA) -- In what may be a classic case of blaming the messenger, Likud activists were reported to be furious with Dr. Mina Tsemach, a leading pollster, for publishing an opinion poll over the weekend showing Likud lagging behind the Labor Party little more than a month before Knesset elections.

Tsemach was commissioned by Likud to conduct periodic surveys of the electorate during the campaign. But the poll she published Friday in Yediot Achronot was commissioned by the newspaper, the leading daily in the country.

It showed that if the elections were held now, Labor would win 46 Knesset seats to Likud's 31. The respondents were from a representative sample of 506 voters.

Tsemach said the results were a continuation of a trend she detected early this year, showing Likud slipping relative to Labor.

But more important in terms of coalition-building after the June 23 elections, Friday's poll showed Labor and the left-wing parties with a combined total of 63 of the Knesset's 120 seats, a working, if precarious majority.

Labor and the leftist Meretz bloc, along with the Arab splinter parties, would be able to prevent Likud from forming a coalition government with the small parties of the extreme right and the religious bloc.

Labor's goal in this election is said to be to achieve such a "blocking" ability in the hope that in that situation one or more of the religious parties would swing over into a Labor-led coalition, or else that Likud would have to agree to a unity government under Labor leader Yitzhak Rabin.

**ISRAELI ARAB ACCEPTS ISRAEL PRIZE;
TEHIYA LEADER NE'EMAN STALKS OUT**
By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, May 11 (JTA) -- Israel bestowed its most prestigious prize for the first time on an Arab citizen last week.

But the presentation on Yom Ha'atzmaut of the 1992 Israel Prize for Arabic literature to 71-year-old writer Emil Habibi triggered an outburst of ideological protest symptomatic of the dichotomy in Israeli society.

As Habibi mounted the stage to accept the award from President Chaim Herzog, former Cabinet minister Yuval Ne'eman rose from the audience, announced he was returning the Israel Prize for physics he received in 1969 and stalked angrily out of the huge Binyanei Ha'uma convention hall in Jerusalem.

Ne'eman is leader of the extreme right-wing Tehiya party, which quit the Likud-led coalition government earlier this year to protest its participation in the bilateral peace talks with Palestinians and other Arab delegations.

Ne'eman, a professor of nuclear physics at Tel Aviv University, and former minister of science and energy, said in a letter to Education Minister Zevulun Hammer that he was returning his prize not because Habibi is an Arab.

Indeed, he claimed, it was a "joyous fact" that an Israeli Arab was found qualified for it.

Rather, Ne'eman wrote, he was objecting because two years ago Habibi accepted "The Jerusalem Prize" from Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasir Arafat.

He also complained that Habibi's most acclaimed work, a satire on the Arabs of Israel titled "The Optimists," "compared Israel to Nazi Germany, and perhaps even worse."

Most Israelis Never Heard of Habibi

Until a few weeks ago, when this year's 10 Israel Prize recipients were announced, most Israelis had not heard of Emil Habibi.

He had been a member of the Israeli Communist Party from 1951 to 1962. But that was long ago to most Israelis.

His opus consists of four books in Arabic, only two translated into Hebrew, and even those were limited to the most highbrow readers.

But the Israeli literary community recognized Habibi as the foremost writer among Israel's 780,000 Arab citizens and one of the leading Arab writers of the entire Middle East.

Still, members of the Prize Committee showed considerable courage in selecting him, an Arab of openly nationalistic views. If they expected controversy, they were not disappointed.

The first to protest Habibi's receipt of the award were Palestinians. Mahmoud Darwish, a former Israeli Arab writer, now an adviser to Arafat, urged Habibi not to accept the prize.

According to Darwish, accepting the award on Israel Independence Day and shaking the hands of the Israeli president and prime minister amounted to sacrilege.

Habibi hesitated for a time. A staunch supporter of the PLO, he did not want to do anything that might harm the organization.

On the other hand, rejecting the prize would have serious consequences for Arab-Jewish co-existence in Israel, of which Habibi has been a leading advocate.

He spoke to Arafat by telephone in Tunis and got the PLO chief's blessing.

Another hurdle cropped up in the case of an Israeli Arab poet, Shafik Habib, who was tried and sentenced for writing mediocre nationalist verse. Habib testified for his colleague at the trial. Habib got a suspended sentence. Had Habib gone to jail, Habib said, he would not have accepted the prize.

When Ne'eman walked out with his Tehiya entourage, part of the audience cheered and part jeered. When Habibi rose to receive the prize, shaking the hands of President Herzog and Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, the audience burst into prolonged applause.

Habibi wanted to use the opportunity to say he was accepting the prize "on behalf of all people of good will in the country, Arabs and Jews, on behalf of those who recognize the established fact that all solutions of genocide have failed."

But he was prevented from delivering his little speech "for lack of time." Another Israel Prize winner thanked the jurors on behalf of all 10 recipients.

Habibi said Sunday that after the ceremony he received dozens of cables, letters and telephone calls congratulating him. He said they came from editors of Arabic newspapers throughout the Middle East, from former Israel Defense Minister Ezer Weizman, and from the Egyptian Nobel Laureate in literature, Naguib Mahfouz.

**POLICE, SOLDIERS SEARCH ISRAEL
FOR ESCAPED PALESTINIAN KILLER**
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, May 11 (JTA) -- Hundreds of police and soldiers fanned out over southern Israel Monday searching for an escaped Palestinian terrorist who killed an Israeli soldier last year and may well kill again.

Police, at the same time, could not conceal their profound embarrassment over the laxity that allowed Jamil Ismail Baz, 44, to escape from a guarded prison van even though he was in chains.

The head of the Southern District Police, Rafi Peled, called the incident "a grave mishap" and assured reporters "we will deal appropriately with all those responsible for it."

Peled said the police are conducting a high-level internal inquiry into the matter.

He insisted that the breach of security was an aberration, not an example of standard police discipline.

Baz, a resident of Gaza, assaulted a group of soldiers at a bus stop outside of Tel Aviv in July 1991, fatally stabbing Nadav Deri and wounding three others.

He escaped northward in a vehicle and later hijacked a taxi to continue his flight. But he was stopped at a police roadblock and arrested.

Baz, incarcerated near Ashkelon, was being transferred to a different prison when he found himself alone in the rear of the van while his two armed guards, contrary to standing orders, sat up front in the cab.

Somewhere along the road, the prisoner managed to open the rear of the van and escape, even though his legs were manacled. The search was hampered because neither the guards nor the van driver could say exactly where or when their prisoner had bolted.

Police sources, warning that the man was a dangerous fugitive, speculated that he would try to cross the border into Egypt or find a hideout in the Gaza Strip.

CHALLENGES ON THE CAMPUS: COMMUNITY LOOKING AT HOW TO COMBAT JEWISH ILLITERACY AND ASSIMILATION

[Part 2 Of A Series]

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, May 11 (JTA) -- While anti-Semitism and ethnic exclusion are increasingly common features of campus life, some of the most dangerous trends confronting Jewish college students come from within the Jewish community rather than from the outside.

There is growing concern about whether today's Jewish college students are sufficiently Jewishly literate and committed to the larger community to ensure that they will be part of it once they graduate.

Nearly everyone working with Jewish college students has a similar tale to tell of widespread apathy and ignorance of basic Jewish history, culture and religious practice -- crippling inabilities when it comes time to refute the anti-Semites preying on the campus population.

Then there are the statistics in the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey, which sent shockwaves across the organized Jewish community: more intermarriage than in-marriage among the youngest marrying Jews, and the widespread inter-dating that precedes it.

An increasing percentage of Jewish college students are the children of intermarriage themselves.

The impact of accumulating assimilation is revealed in the way Jewish students identify themselves. They "don't identify as Jews religiously, but as ethnic Jews, which is a much softer, elective category," said anthropologist Ruth Cernea, director of research at B'nai B'rith Hillel Foundation.

Organizations Now Focusing On Students

"People change their ethnic identity. It doesn't have the sense of shared national destiny, and it doesn't have the power to bring Jewish students from one generation to the next as Jews," she said.

This crisis in continuity has prompted Jewish organizations that in the past did not deal much with students to concentrate attention on the 90 percent of 18- to 22-year-old Jews who attend college.

The Council of Jewish Federations, the association of Jewish federations in North America, is in the early stages of addressing the issue. It recently established a Commission on Jewish Identity and Continuity under whose purview will fall a task force on services to college students.

One federation is well on its way to addressing the issue substantively. The Atlanta Jewish Federation has established a new agency designed specifically to serve the needs of college-age and young-adult Jews.

It spent more than a year investigating the needs of the area's young adults with the aid of research techniques, including focus groups.

It found that while there were many different activities designed for young adults, both on and off campus, few of the 5,000 Jewish students in the area were participating.

Atlanta's 3,500 post-college young adults, ages 22 to 30, had even fewer ties to the organized Jewish community.

The federation discovered that graduate students and those just out of college were falling through the cracks -- feeling too old for

Hillel and too young for "young leadership" groups.

The newly established agency does not yet have a name or a director, but it plans to serve 18- to 30-year-olds as a central address for Jewish activities that already exist and to provide them with year-round activities, on and off campus, to fill in the gaps.

The study found that college students and those between the ages of 23 and 30 have different needs. "Those just out of college are heavily social, and older ones are looking for something substantive," according to Glenda Minkin, who chaired the study committee.

But "the whole age group is looking for some place to volunteer in the community," Minkin said. "And they're looking for mentoring in business, ways into the organized Jewish community without feeling like outsiders.

The agency will direct the activities of Emory's Hillel House, which had been funded nearly wholly by the federation for the last decade and is the only on-campus center for Jewish students in the area, according to David Sarnat, executive vice president of the Atlanta federation.

The approximately \$200,000 first-year budget will come from a variety of federation-funded agencies, according to Billie Feinman, chair of the new agency.

Another effort is being undertaken by the Council for Initiatives in Jewish Education, a body formed after a two-year study of the state of Jewish education in North America.

CIJE is in the process of selecting two or three lead communities in which it will support new, experimental educational structures and systems.

CIJE requires that any Jewish community applying to be a lead location include a plan for the colleges in their area, said Seymour Martin Lipset, the sociologist who is analyzing the educational implications of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey on CIJE's behalf.

CORRECTION: In Part 1 of this series, "Challenges on the Campus," that appeared yesterday, reference was made to a decision by the University of Washington not to allow courses related to Judaism to fulfill an ethnic studies requirement. The ethnic studies course was only a proposal and has so far not been made a requirement.

DUTCH CELEBRATE YOM HA'ATZMAUT

By Henriette Boas

AMSTERDAM, May 11 (JTA) -- Israel's ambassador to the Netherlands, Michael Bawly, tried something different on Yom Ha'atzmaut this year, apparently with great success.

Instead of the usual Independence Day reception at the Embassy May 7, the Israeli envoy arranged a concert in the vast new concert hall in The Hague, featuring young Israeli musicians.

Instead of several hundred guests, several thousand were able to attend, including diplomats, politicians, members of Parliament and guests from the local Jewish community.

Among the featured performers was 13-year-old violinist Yonathan Gandelman, accompanied on the piano by his mother. Both artists recently arrived in Israel from Russia. They were greeted with a standing ovation.