

**ISRAEL ANNOUNCES NEW CONCESSIONS
AS PALESTINIANS DEPART LATE FOR U.S.**

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 23 (JTA) -- The Israeli government has announced a series of concessions to the Palestinians, in an apparent effort to "sweeten the pot" at this week's peace talks in Washington.

The move, which evoked sharp criticism from opposition politicians, was announced as the Palestinian delegation prepared to leave for Washington by way of Amman, after resolving a two-day tiff with Israeli border authorities that threatened to delay the negotiations.

Their departure, 48 hours later than planned, could mean a day's postponement in the opening of the Israeli-Palestinian talks. But separate Israeli talks with Syria, Lebanon and Jordan were expected to begin on schedule Monday morning.

This round of negotiations is the first since Israel's new government took office following the Labor Party's June 23 election victory over the right-wing Likud, led by Yitzhak Shamir.

Pressing ahead with its more flexible posture toward the territories, Jerusalem on Sunday announced a series of measures easing conditions for Palestinians. They included:

- the release of 800 prisoners, none of them sentenced for murder, who have served more than two-thirds of their terms;
- the reopening of houses sealed off in punitive measures five years ago and earlier;
- the gradual reopening of streets and alleys closed off by the army in commercial and residential areas; and
- lowering from 60 to 50 the age at which Arabs from the territories are exempt from an entry permit requirement to enter Israel for work or trade.

'Unilateral And Hasty Gestures'

A spokesman for Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said these measures would not slow down the fight against terrorism. But opposition politicians took vigorous exception.

The National Religious Party said the "unilateral and hasty gestures made by the government toward the terrorists amount to a new peak of government insensitivity."

Rehavim Ze'evi, leader of the far-right Moledet party, said Rabin had failed to learn the lesson of his mistake in 1985 in ordering the release of more than 1,000 terrorists as part of a prisoner exchange.

That deal "cost the lives of many Israelis and led to the outbreak of the intifada," he said.

Likud Knesset member Tzahi Hanegbi described the measures as tantamount to an "invitation to further acts of terror."

He urged a motion of no-confidence in the government when the Knesset reconvenes in October.

Rabin's office said in a statement that the concessions to the Palestinians would be introduced gradually and were intended to "improve the atmosphere among the Arab population in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip."

The statement expressed the hope that the measures "will have a positive contribution on the

willingness of the Palestinian population to support the progress of the peace negotiations."

The Israeli delegation to the peace talks arrived in Washington on Sunday.

Upon its departure Saturday night from Ben-Gurion Airport, Itamar Rabinovich, heading the negotiations with Syria, said a demand by Damascus for unconditional withdrawal from the Golan Heights would make it impossible for Israel to offer even goodwill gestures.

Jerusalem indicated last week that it was prepared for limited territorial concessions on the Golan Heights. But Rabin reportedly instructed negotiators to make no concessions at all unless Syria makes it clear that it intends to negotiate a full peace with Israel.

May Not Get Another Opportunity

Unlike the sporadic meetings that followed the opening of the peace talks in Madrid last October, the Washington round is due to proceed continuously for 35 days.

At the same time, the U.S. presence will be more low-key given the intense election campaign and the absence of James Baker, whose close involvement in the negotiations as secretary of state has necessarily diminished with his move to the White House as chief of staff, which became effective Sunday.

A noticeable difference between this round and those preceding is the more flexible tone set by the Rabin administration. It is urging implementation of Palestinian autonomy -- limited self-rule -- within a year.

Palestinians grappling with their stand on the negotiations were warned Sunday not to pass up an opportunity that might not return.

Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin said the Palestinians would not get a more moderate government than the present one.

"If they miss an opportunity of reaching an agreement with this government, no one knows when they will get a second chance," he said.

The 29-member Palestinian delegation crossed into Amman on Sunday, en route to the United States, stating that this time it had no problems crossing the Allenby Bridge, according to news reports from the Jordanian capital.

Spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi was quoted as saying, "All of us were able to make it without having to sign any paper, seek any permit or face any delay and with full respect from Israel."

A Public Relations Stunt?

The Palestinians, who are negotiating with Israel in a joint delegation with Jordan, turned back Friday to protest Israeli rules that held up the crossing of five support staff members because they lacked certain permits.

They left for Amman only after intensive negotiations with Washington, which reportedly promised that they would enjoy respectful treatment.

Israeli sources termed the Palestinian protest more of a public relations stunt than a matter of substance. Israeli regulations require a special pass for Arabs under the age of 35 who leave and wish to return in less than nine months.

Although the Israelis were ready to issue the passes on the spot, allowing the delegation to

proceed to Amman and join the Jordanian delegation to the talks, the Palestinians turned back to Jerusalem for consultations and intensive contacts with Washington.

Facing the Palestinians in Washington are Israel's proposals for a target date of April 1, 1993 for general elections in the territories, with interim deadlines of Dec. 1 and Feb. 1 for agreement on the structure and the responsibilities of a newly set up administrative council.

Israel opposes Palestinian proposals for a 180-member legislative body and seeks instead a smaller administrative council with areas of responsibility for the West Bank, in the spirit of the 1979 Camp David accords.

The interim self-governing council would be in place for a period of five years, with talks to begin in the third year on the permanent status of the areas.

TERRORIST KILLED, 9 SOLDIERS HURT, IN IDF-HEZBOLLAH CLASH IN LEBANON By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Aug. 23 (JTA) -- One explosive-laden terrorist was blown to smithereens and nine Israeli soldiers were wounded Friday in a clash near the ruins of the Crusader-era Beaufort Castle in the southern Lebanon security zone.

One of the soldiers suffered medium wounds; the others were slightly hurt.

The clash occurred when an Israel Defense Force paratroop brigade encountered four armed members of the Islamic fundamentalist Hezbollah as the brigade was sweeping the hilltop area.

The Israeli troops opened fire on the four, and their commander hit one of them. The injured man hit the ground but continued to fire on the Israelis from that position.

A second shot hit the man's knapsack, which contained explosives that the terrorists had apparently intended to plant on the road. He was blown to bits by the ensuing explosion.

The blast also wounded the IDF men, who were only about 3 feet away.

The Israeli commander, Capt. Zohar of Jerusalem, gave his account of the incident. The 23-year-old patrol commander said his men had noticed a gang of four armed men creeping through the underbrush early Friday morning and opened fire on them.

"I hit one of the terrorists with two shots at a range of several meters," he said.

"There was a tremendous explosion following one of the shots, which hit his backpack. Several of our soldiers were flung into the air, some suffering burns and shrapnel wounds," he said.

Zohar himself was wounded in the eye and his face burned. But his men had warm praise for the manner in which their unit commander "continued calmly to give orders and help direct reinforcements to the spot. He refused to let the medic treat him until all his men had been seen to."

Zohar himself had high praise for the unit medic, Corp. Itai Friedman of Carmiel, who, despite being wounded in the eye and arm, ran back and forth treating his wounded comrades.

As usual, Hezbollah claimed a great victory in its reports on the operation. The group said one of its members had been sent on a suicide mission, blowing himself up near an IDF patrol and wounding 18 Israeli soldiers in the process.

There was no word on what happened to the remaining three Hezbollah men.

RABIN REASSURES ISRAELIS ON IRAQ By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Aug. 23 (JTA) -- Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has reassured Israelis that the threat of an Iraqi attack on Israel is much smaller now than during the Persian Gulf War.

He said this was the assessment of military authorities who briefed a Cabinet meeting Sunday in the wake of indications that the Western powers would seek this week to enforce an air exclusion zone over southern Iraq and shoot down any Iraqi military aircraft that violated it.

In a statement, the prime minister, who also holds the defense portfolio, said there is no need for the Israeli public to take any protective measures now.

During the Gulf crisis in January-February of 1991, Iraq launched 39 Scud missile attacks on Israel, causing extensive damage but few injuries.

With each attack, Israelis donned gas masks and barricaded themselves in airtight rooms, in case the Iraqi missiles had chemical warheads.

Rabin said the defense establishment would continue to track developments in air activity over the skies of southern Iraq.

ARAFAT TO ATTEND U.N. CONFERENCE By Tamar Levy

GENEVA, Aug. 23 (JTA) -- Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasir Arafat will attend the international non-governmental organizations conference on Palestine at United Nations headquarters in Geneva this week.

The meeting, which opens Wednesday as Israel and the Palestinians hold talks in Washington over the future of the territories, is one of several held annually by the NGOs under the auspices of the U.N. Palestine Rights Committee.

Among some 200 expected participants are Israeli peace activist Abie Nathan and former Knesset member Meir Pa'il.

The theme of the conference is "Working for Peace -- European Coordination."

SURINAME JEWS MARK QUINCENTENNIAL By Henriette Boas

AMSTERDAM, Aug. 23 (JTA) -- The Jews of Suriname, site of the oldest permanent Jewish settlement in the Western hemisphere, held a special commemorative week in the capital city of Paramaribo to mark 500 years since both the discovery of America by Columbus and the expulsion of the Jews from Spain.

Special services were held alternatively in the Sephardic and Ashkenazic synagogues in this small country, the former Dutch Guiana, located on the northeast coast of South America.

There was also an exhibition on the history of the Jews of Suriname and a concert of Sephardic music to end the week.

Jews settled in the former Dutch territory, formerly spelled Surinam, as far back as 1639. It is thought they came from both Holland and Italy.

Another group of Jewish immigrants came from England in 1652 or 1662. A third group arrived in 1666 from Cayenne, French Guiana, and British Guiana.

For the special anniversary, Suriname's postal service issued a commemorative stamp depicting a ship with a menorah in the upper left corner and a Magen David with the word "Sephard" in the upper right.

POLICE HURT, 20 NEO-NAZIS NABBED, IN MELEE IN NORTHERN GERMAN TOWN

By David Kantor

BONN, Aug. 23 (JTA) -- Twelve policemen were injured and some 20 neo-Nazi vandals arrested Saturday night in Rostock, a northern German town, in one of the most serious attacks against foreigners living in this country.

The trouble began when hundreds of right-wing extremists, many of them masked, marched to a regional center for asylum-seekers, threatening the refugees and calling for expelling them from Germany.

The demonstrators, who included many Skinheads, threw firebombs and stones and overturned two police cars, which they set on fire. The melee lasted eight hours.

According to witnesses, inhabitants of the town, which is situated in the former East Germany, encouraged the neo-Nazis to attack the foreigners.

This reminded many observers of the late 1990 incident in Hoyerswerda, Saxony, when local inhabitants applauded neo-Nazis who registered a successful campaign to rid the town of asylum-seekers.

In Rostock, the neo-Nazis organized a demonstration to protest the policy of receiving asylum-seekers from various countries and allowing them to stay until decisions were taken on their applications.

Hundreds of police were deployed to protect the frightened refugees, who were told not to leave their quarters. The police used tear gas, clubs and even a water cannon to contain the violence.

One police officer described the situation as very dangerous, since the attackers had almost succeeded in making their way to a complex of buildings where the refugees were staying.

He added: "They were very violent and well-equipped. They would have done anything to promote their goal of driving the foreigners out of this town."

The asylum hostel in Rostock is reportedly slated to be closed down Sept. 1 following many complaints from the city's citizens about noise and filth there.

On Sunday morning, another grave incident was reported in Koeckto, a small town in eastern Germany. Dozens of neo-Nazis attacked a hostel for asylum-seekers but were repelled by police.

GERMANY URGED TO SPEND MORE MONEY TO MAINTAIN SITES OF FORMER CAMPS

By David Kantor

BONN, Aug. 23 (JTA) -- The opposition Social Democratic Party has urged the German government to increase its contribution to maintaining former Nazi concentration camps in Eastern Europe as memorial sites.

Meeting here Saturday, the SPD singled out Auschwitz-Birkenau, in Poland, and Theresienstadt, in Czechoslovakia, which have both fallen into decay.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl's conservative government has already committed the equivalent of nearly \$7 million this year to the purpose, after alarming reports that the barracks of Auschwitz were in extremely bad shape.

But the Polish government said that at least \$27 million would be needed for urgent maintenance work.

Two members of Parliament from the Social Democrats, Freimut Duve and Siegfried Vergin, demanded a quick and decisive response, saying it is primarily a German responsibility to keep the memorials alive.

They pointed out that thousands of Germans, many of them high-school students, travel yearly to Auschwitz for educational experiences, which can hardly be matched by lectures on history and morals.

Duve and Vergin accused the German government of indifference and said urgent initiatives and action are needed.

The two also urged Bonn to deal more actively with the task of redesigning the memorials left by the Communist regime in former East Germany. Those memorials, they observed, were ideologically biased and included many factual distortions.

Duve and Vergin said it is high time to eliminate injustices, such as that still existing at the site of the Dora-Nordhausen slave labor camp.

Last week, the Israeli Consulate in Berlin blasted the federal state of Thuringia for not acting to replace the plaque at Dora, which makes no mention of Jewish persecutees but, illogically, praises "victims from Arab states."

Thousands of Jewish slave laborers perished in Dora. The only known inmate of Arab origin at the camp was a French soldier whose family came from Morocco.

GERMAN PENSIONER DONATES ONE MILLION MARKS TO WIZO

By David Kantor

BONN, Aug. 23 (JTA) -- An elderly German retired state employee has donated a million marks to the Women's International Zionist Organization.

In a ceremony at the Israeli Consulate in Berlin, 84-year-old Gunther Rutschke explained his motive for the donation, which is equivalent to about \$700,000: "I want to prove that there are other, good Germans, who really care about what happened to the Jews."

Rutschke added that no sum can compensate the Jews for their sufferings under the Third Reich.

But he said it was nevertheless important to demonstrate to the Jews that many Germans love the Jewish people. "I do hope and believe," Rutschke added, "that I speak for the Germans and represent the real Germany."

Rutschke revealed that he had been saving for the past 35 years to make the donation possible.

The Berlin bachelor, who lives near Madeira, Portugal, said that his generous state pension left him with enough money to live modestly and save a good portion of the income for the good purpose of helping the Jews.

Rutschke lives without television or radio but owns a horse, a bicycle and thousands of books.

Lala Susskind of the Berlin branch of WIZO said that the donation left her and other activists speechless.

"We have never received anything near to that," she said. "We were really amazed."

Susskind invited Rutschke to Israel to see how his donation will be used. It has been decided that his gift will go to help the construction in Herzliya of a medical center for mothers who have just given birth.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES:**ONE YEAR AFTER CROWN HEIGHTS RIOTS, STREETS CALM, BUT FEAR EVER PRESENT**

By Jonathan Mark

The New York Jewish Week

NEW YORK (JTA) -- August returned to Brooklyn's Crown Heights section with the sound of screeching tires -- a car speeding out of control, smashing the life out of a pregnant woman.

A man, barefoot on a grassy traffic island across from Lubavitch headquarters at 770 Eastern Parkway, exploded in a primal scream over the blood that flowed from the woman's body.

Dozens of people, blacks and Hasidim, ran to the scene, as concerned for their own lives as they were for the person hit: Was the driver Jewish? Was the victim black?

As it turned out, both were black. Blacks and Hasidim alike seemed as relieved as they could be in the presence of death -- there would be no riot, at least not tonight.

On everyone's mind this Aug. 4 was the memory of last Aug. 19, when 7-year-old Gavin Cato, a black boy, was accidentally killed by a Lubavitcher's runaway car, leading to four days of anti-Semitic rioting.

This was the week before Tisha B'Av, a week the Lubavitchers say is "fraught with danger and misfortune."

The Hasidim may have nothing to fear but fear itself, but there is plenty of that going around. Sirens and the sounds of broken glass reverberate on the streets, "boom box" radios blare the poetry of death.

Some Hasidim say there is nothing more to fear in Crown Heights than in any other urban battlefield; others hear in the rustle of leaves the hoofbeats of a new pogrom.

'Continuous, Low-Level Harassment'

According to Rabbi Joseph Spielman, chairman of the Crown Heights Jewish Community Council, there has been "a certain continuous, low-level harassment by the (black) kids. If they want to get a rise out of a Jew, they say, 'We're gonna burn you down,' or 'Wait until Aug. 19.'"

Spielman says that despite a year of fence-mending, he still hears the old charges against the Lubavitchers, that they are "standoffish" and "don't want anything to do with the blacks."

"I don't see that as a legitimate complaint," he says. "The fact that we live near people, we have to have barbecues together? We have to play ball with them? We are, by nature, introverted, but not in a biased way."

David Lazerson, a young Lubavitcher in the community, has taken a different approach, organizing black-Hasidic basketball games, informal dialogues, cross-cultural murals and Jewish rap music performances.

But that's not for Spielman. Lazerson "means well," he says. "But I'm European, he's American. There was a swastika on my birth certificate, OK. So my attitude toward fraternization is somewhat different."

The Lubavitchers are a strictly disciplined, authoritarian community. Yet when it comes to the issue of how to confront the single most obvious threat to Crown Heights -- the blacks' sometimes violent resentment of Hasidim -- the Lubavitch response has been akin to a Chinese fire drill, everyone carrying ladders and hoses and pointing in different directions.

In one corner of Crown Heights, some Lubavitchers work on their plans to enter the belly of the beast, trying to find angry blacks with whom to play basketball and paint a mural. On the next block, other Lubavitchers work on forming vigilante groups such as Shmira (meaning "watch" or "guard").

Shmira has been putting up posters in synagogues and Jewish buildings warning Hasidim of every major or minor incident in the general vicinity involving a Jewish victim, leading to the impression that the community is infested with anti-Semites waiting to jump out of a bush.

One poster, telling of a black man's attack on a Hasidic woman in the Brooklyn Botanical Gardens, advises the Hasidim that if they see the suspect -- a tall black man with broad shoulders and a slender waist, missing two eyeteeth -- they should call Shmira rather than the police.

Jews 'Getting Away With A Lot'

According to Capt. Joseph Fox of the 71st Precinct, "there haven't been any major problems since (the riot). There's been a share of bias-related crimes, but not more or less than any other (police) command in the city."

However, Robert Troise, an officer in the precinct, was recently quoted as saying that in "the last few days the tension has been building up because of the anniversary. The possibility of another outbreak is on everyone's mind."

Although most Hasidim cannot believe it, many blacks in the neighborhood are afraid. One pigtailed black girl, painting with watercolors on the stoop of her President Street home, picked up her paints and papers and ran indoors when a Hasidic passerby asked her a question.

Other blacks in the neighborhood are more bitter. A woman in the Cato household told The Jewish Week: "There's still no justice. Almost a year has gone by," and the driver of the car that killed Gavin Cato and severely injured his cousin Angela "is still not in jail. Jews are still getting away with a lot of things."

Colin Moore -- the attorney for the Cato family in their negligence suits against Yosef Lifsh, the driver of the car that killed Cato -- told The Jewish Week that Crown Heights remains a community ready to erupt.

According to Moore, "nothing really has been resolved" since last August. "There still is the basic issue of the double standard" regarding "most governmental services."

The Hasidic Jews are "the beneficiary of police protection and swift police response, while the black community remains neglected," he says.

'Sure, I'm Scared'

Rosalyn Malamud, a Hasidic woman living a few houses from Lubavitch headquarters, senses the black mood and says, "Sure, I'm scared."

She points out that at the place on President Street where Cato was killed, there is a cross freshly painted on the sidewalk with blood-red paint. By the brick apartment wall where Cato was knocked off his bicycle, a wreath stands on a tripod, with fresh flowers.

An ersatz African flag, with black, red, green and yellow stripes, is nailed to wooden slats on the apartment house, bearing the slogan: "Equal justice under law for all."

"There's still a high rate of unemployment, of illiteracy, of unwed mothers, of drugs. The mood is set," says Malamud. "And it's not my fault."