

RABIN DENIES ISRAEL OFFERED SYRIA FULL WITHDRAWAL FROM THE GOLAN

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Oct. 25 (JTA) -- Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin has angrily denied reports that Israel is holding out to Syria the possibility of full withdrawal from the Golan Heights.

Rabin labeled untrue a report that Israeli negotiator Itamar Rabinovich told the Syrians Israel "does not rule out" a full withdrawal from the strategic plateau.

The prime minister told the Cabinet on Sunday he spoke after telephoning the professor-turned-diplomat in Washington overnight to double-check the story in the Labor-affiliated newspaper Davar. He labeled the report by diplomatic correspondent Menachem Shalev "irresponsible."

As Rabin spoke, scores of Golan residents demonstrated outside the Prime Minister's Office against the land-for-peace proposals offered by the Israeli delegation at the peace talks in Washington.

The seventh round of talks opened last week with a new Israeli signal of willingness to be flexible on the Golan issue. A document presented by the Israelis for the first time used the word "withdrawal" rather than vaguer formulations in indicating readiness to trade land for peace.

The offer was rejected the following day by chief Syrian negotiator Mouwafak al-Allaf as "nothing new."

Rabin told the Cabinet in a prepared statement that Israel is ready to withdraw to secure and recognized boundaries, after negotiation, as part of a peace package with Syria. His often stated conditions for such a package include open borders, trade and full diplomatic relations.

He said the Israeli formulation does not specify where the borders are to be and does not imply total withdrawal.

Settlers Complain Of Sellout

Davar correspondent Shalev said he stood by his story, which was attributed to "sources in Washington."

According to his report, Rabinovich told Allaf that Israel rejects the demand for the total withdrawal called for under the Syrian interpretation of the land-for-peace formula in U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 -- which was careful to exclude reference to the return of "all" lands taken by Israel during the Six-Day War of 1967.

But the Israeli negotiator went on to say that the formulation now proposed by Israel as the basis of a joint statement by the two sides could accommodate the Syrian interpretation.

The Israeli formulation of the withdrawal clause, as cited by Davar, reads: "A withdrawal of Israeli forces will be carried out to agreed and recognized boundaries following negotiation between Israel and Syria."

Settlement leaders from the Golan have accused Rabin and his aides of selling them out and violating election campaign promises. They pledged tougher public action to fight a government policy that, they said, was a "withdrawal from Zionism."

But Health Minister Haim Ramon, a Rabin confidant, went out to meet the demonstrators

and insisted that the position of the prime minister was entirely consistent with his election platform, which called for some territorial compromise on the Golan, but not total withdrawal.

In a television interview Friday night, Rabin spoke carefully of "withdrawal in the Golan, not from the Golan."

He said there would be no talk of withdrawal unless and until the Syrians spelled out the nature of the peace they envision.

In other recent statements, Rabin has insisted there must be face-to-face summit talks with President Hafez Assad before a peace treaty can be signed, in order to demonstrate to the Syrian and Israeli people that Damascus has genuinely embarked on the road to peace with Israel.

ARAFAT OFFER TO MEET WITH RABIN GETS COLD SHOULDER FROM PREMIER

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Oct. 25 (JTA) -- Yasir Arafat is ready to meet Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin at any time and any place, according to an Arab Knesset member who met with the Palestine Liberation Organization leader over the weekend in Tunisia.

Knesset member Abd el-Wahab Darawshe of the Arab Democratic Party, who had four separate meetings with Arafat, quoted the PLO chief as saying: "I reach out my hand to Rabin for peace, and hope that he will return my hand. I am willing to meet him in Jerusalem, Cairo or any other place."

But Arafat's gesture got a cold shoulder from Rabin's spokesman, Gad Ben-Ari, who told reporters Sunday there was no intention here of reacting to Arafat's message.

The government, he said, would stick to its policy of avoiding any direct or indirect negotiations with the PLO.

Arafat apparently told Darawshe that he decided to approach Rabin because of the present deadlock in the peace negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. He expressed confidence that a personal meeting with Rabin would bring about a real breakthrough in the peace process.

Darawshe told reporters that Arafat was making the initiative at the present time because he felt that his standing within the PLO had been strengthened following the recent meeting of the Palestine National Council, where even the rejectionist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine endorsed his moves.

According to Darawshe, Arafat did not make the same offer when Likud Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir was in office, because he did not believe such a meeting would have led to peace. When Israelis voted Rabin's Labor Party into power last summer, they expressed their desire for peace, said Arafat.

Arafat said that although he had full confidence in the Palestinian negotiating team, he felt that only a summit meeting, of the kind which took place between Egyptian President Anwar Sadat and Prime Minister Menachem Begin, would break the current deadlock.

Meanwhile, Darawshe may be in hot water

for meeting with the PLO leader. Although the government has said it intends to amend the law forbidding such contacts, the PLO is still regarded here as a terrorist organization that is off limits.

The Knesset House Committee was scheduled to meet Monday to discuss the "unlawful" meetings of Darawshe, as well as those that two other Knesset members, Naomi Chazan of Meretz and Hashem Mahmud of the Hadash Communist Party, had earlier with PLO officials.

Darawshe insisted Sunday that during the Likud government's tenure, too, Cabinet ministers had met with PLO officials.

PALESTINIAN KILLS IDF RESERVIST IN AN ATTACK AT PATRIARCHS TOMB By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Oct. 25 (JTA) -- A Palestinian gunman shot and killed an Israeli army reservist and lightly wounded another Sunday at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron.

The army's West Bank commander said the attack was carried out by a terrorist group affiliated with the Moslem fundamentalist organization Hamas, which opposes the Middle East peace talks.

The gunman fired two or three bursts of automatic fire from a range of 30 yards at the soldiers as they stood guard outside the tomb, which is holy to both Jews and Moslems.

Because of the close range, the shots penetrated the bulletproof vest worn by Shmuel Gersh, 32, of Rishon le-Zion, according to Brig. Gen. Moshe Ya'alon, the Israel Defense Force commander in the West Bank. The attack occurred at 1 p.m.

Both soldiers were able to return fire but the attackers fled down an alleyway, where they escaped in a waiting car. Efforts to save Gersh's life failed.

The army believes the same Hamas group that perpetrated Sunday's attack was responsible for an attack last week in which one soldier was seriously wounded and an officer slightly wounded. The attack occurred when the two were fired upon from a car as they drove an army vehicle south of Hebron.

The attack at the Tomb of the Patriarchs was the most recent in a wave of terrorist assaults over the past month which began in association with a hunger strike by thousands of security prisoners. That demonstration has meanwhile ended with an agreement between the prison authority and the inmates, but the resurgence in the intifada continues.

Buses Set On Fire In Gaza

Thousands of Palestinian workers rioted early Sunday at a Gaza Strip checkpoint, reportedly in protest against delays in getting through the barrier. They set on fire at least a dozen buses at the Erez checkpoint, reports said.

The Egged bus company called on the government to discuss the deteriorating situation.

Paradoxically, the Cabinet, at its weekly session Sunday, heard "senior security officials" report that the current wave of the intifada was on a downturn.

Responding to the latest killing of an Israeli by a Palestinian, hundreds of Jewish settlers from Hebron poured onto Jerusalem streets later in the day. They caused traffic snarls and also engaged in clashes with the police.

Some 700 of the settlers marched angrily to

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's residence, accusing him of not protecting them and calling for his removal from office.

They carried banners with such slogans as "Rabin go home" and "Peace talks in Washington. Jewish blood in Israel."

Opposition parties have also reacted angrily to this latest attack. The Likud bloc planned to submit a motion of no-confidence in the government as the Knesset opened its winter session this week.

It was likely to be joined by the right-wing Tsomet party, whose leader, Rafael Eitan, has been courted by Rabin as a possible coalition partner.

Eitan has demanded that Rabin instruct the Israeli delegation to the peace talks to return home from Washington immediately. The Tsomet leader urged that Israel order a curfew in Hebron and stage a house-to-house search for the attacker.

In the National Religious Party, Knesset member Hanan Porat plans to call for parliamentary deliberation into the worsening situation in the West Bank.

POPE MEETS WITH SHIMON PERES, SAYS HE WANTS TO VISIT ISRAEL By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Oct. 25 (JTA) -- Pope John Paul II has accepted an invitation from Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres to visit the Jewish state, but no date has been set.

The timing of the visit is linked to progress in the Middle East peace talks, according to reports from Rome.

It would be the second visit by a Catholic pontiff since the 1964 journey to Jerusalem of Pope Paul VI.

Peres met with the pope at the Vatican for 45 minutes Friday, as the two sides prepared to advance negotiations on normalizing relations that were begun three months ago.

Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin heads the Israeli team to talks with Vatican representatives in Jerusalem next month on moving toward full diplomatic ties.

Peres told reporters it would take up to two years to achieve the establishment of diplomatic relations.

He said Israel would not agree to the Vatican demand for special international status for the Old City of Jerusalem. He said he believed the Vatican was impressed by Israel's serious approach in guaranteeing religious freedom in Jerusalem, making international guarantees unnecessary.

Friday's meeting was Peres' second with the pope. The two met in 1985 when Peres was prime minister.

The pontiff reportedly told Peres that he prayed daily for the peace of the world, and particularly for Israel's need for peace. He voiced concern over a new wave of anti-Semitism in a number of countries.

In a weekend radio interview, Peres said Israel was "on the road" toward full diplomatic relations with the Vatican, although "in the Catholic Church, things move very slowly."

The foreign minister said that one important byproduct of his Vatican visit was that it signaled good will toward 800 million Catholics worldwide and would help encourage Christian pilgrimage to Israel.

RAVENSBRUCK HIT BY ARSONISTS, CEMETERY DESECRATED IN GERMANY

By David Kantor

BONN, Oct. 25 (JTA) -- The site of the Ravensbruck concentration camp was slightly damaged by arson and a Jewish cemetery was desecrated in the latest incidents of anti-Semitic vandalism reported in Germany.

Vandals targeted the crematorium of the former women's camp. Ravensbruck is located in the state of Brandenburg, in eastern Germany, near Berlin, an area where assailants last month burnt down a barracks at the Sachsenhausen death camp that contained a Jewish museum.

News reports said vandals also smashed 50 gravestones and painted swastikas at a memorial for victims on Nazi death camps at Uberlingen, in southern Germany.

Also in Brandenburg, police say they found large quantities of anti-Semitic propaganda as well as weapons in a crackdown on two neo-Nazi paramilitary groups last week.

Police found 150 Soviet-issue hand grenades, bombs and firebombs.

Meanwhile, German Chancellor Helmut Kohl said the issue of asylum for foreigners in Germany could lead to "a national emergency."

Asylum-seekers have been a target of a wave of assaults by right-wing and neo-Nazi gangs.

In an interview, Kohl said Germany's failure to contain the influx of refugees created a situation that was unacceptable to the public at large.

He blamed the opposition Social Democratic Party for blocking constitutional changes that would curb the number of asylum-seekers coming into the country. The leader of the Social Democrats, Bjorn Engolm, supports the changes but has not yet won his party's backing for them.

SLOVAK LEADER JOINS ISRAELI ENVOY AT UNVEILING OF MEMORIAL TO JEWS

By Josef Klansky

PRAGUE, Oct. 25 (JTA) -- Vladimir Meciar, the prime minister of the soon-to-be-independent republic of Slovakia, joined Israel's ambassador to Czechoslovakia, Yoel Sher, last week in the unveiling of a memorial to the 6,000 Jews who were deported from the Slovak city of Nitra 50 years ago.

The ceremony at the Nitra synagogue was the last in a series of observances in memory of the Slovak Jews deported to Nazi extermination camps in 1942 by the Slovak puppet regime of Josef Tiso.

The unveiling, which took place Oct. 21, was attended by representatives of the Slovak Jewish community as well as by high-ranking Slovak politicians. In attendance was Ivan Gasparovic, chairman of the Slovak National Council, which on Jan. 1 will become the Parliament of an independent Slovakia.

In his speech at the commemoration, Gasparovic said that the tragedy of the Jewish nation should induce "our contemporaries to fight against totalitarian regimes all over the world."

He also recalled the many selfless Slovaks who helped save Jewish lives.

Slovak leaders are doing their utmost to dissociate themselves from Tiso's heritage, which has many devotees among nationalist extremists.

In November 1990, the Jewish cemetery in Nitra was desecrated by vandals, who daubed gravestones with swastikas.

ISRAELI VETS OF JEWISH BRIGADE JOIN OTHERS AT ALAMEIN JUBILEE

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Oct. 25 (JTA) -- Some 40 Israeli war veterans who served in the British army's Jewish Brigade during World War II took part with other veterans Sunday at ceremonies in Egypt commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Battle of El Alamein.

They were joined by nationals of Britain, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Canada who fought in Egypt's desert against the forces of German Field Marshal Erwin Rommel in 1942.

Of the 26,000 Jewish men and women of Palestine who volunteered for service in British ranks, some 5,000 served in the Jewish Brigade, which took part in the fighting around the desert railroad station of El Alamein.

The Jewish Brigade was formed in September 1944 under the aegis of Brig. Ernest Frank Benjamin, an English Jew. The brigade fought in Egypt, northern Italy and northwestern Europe.

Other Jewish volunteers served with British forces in Palestine, other parts of Egypt, Cyprus, Malta and Iraq.

Unlike virtually every other national component of the British and Commonwealth forces, the Jews of Palestine were not permitted to fight under their own blue and white flag or define themselves as representatives of the Zionist Yishuv. They wore a shoulder insignia identifying themselves as Palestinians.

The Jewish Brigade served under Gen. Bernard Montgomery's 8th Army, the so-called Desert Rats, which formed a counterpoint to the forces fighting the Nazis at the Battle of Stalingrad.

Both thrusts were aimed at halting the Nazi advance toward the Middle East oil fields.

Beginning Of The End For Hitler

Montgomery's forces launched the assault on El Alamein on Oct. 23, 1942. They stemmed the advance of Rommel's Afrika Korps, which included more Italians than Germans, to the Suez Canal and the Middle East. The battle was one of the major turning points in the German army's assault on the West.

Montgomery's forces were very well prepared for the battle, on land and in the air, and Rommel soon saw his attempts to quash the British forces were futile. He withdrew forces but was urged to reverse this by Adolf Hitler.

His troops were pummeled and were forced to pull back. The forces on foot who did not withdraw surrendered. That loss was the beginning of the end for Hitler's army.

In the two weeks of fighting, some 13,500 British troops and 10,000 Germans and Italians lost their lives.

Twelve Israelis are buried in the El Alamein cemetery, where Sunday's observances were held.

Germans and Italians are buried at El Alamein, too. In an irony of history, this year's ceremony was arranged by German representatives, under an annual rotation plan of participating countries who clashed in battle there.

A ceremony was held at the German memorial and another ceremony at the British Commonwealth cemetery a few miles away.

The once-opposing forces stood together at the commemorations. Also present were the prime ministers of Britain, France and Greece, and other ministers from Germany, Italy, Australia and New Zealand.

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES:
DELEGATES TO JEWISH AGENCY ASSEMBLY
ARE BEING ASKED TO RETHINK ITS FUTURE**
By Larry Yudelsoa

NEW YORK, Oct. 25 (JTA) -- Delegates to the Jewish Agency Assembly, which formally opens Monday evening in Jerusalem, are being asked to help rethink the operations of the non-governmental body, which is the principal recipient of money raised by the United Jewish Appeal for Israel.

Despite the success of UJA's first Operation Exodus campaign for immigrant absorption, unexpected costs of resettling 20,000 Ethiopian Jews has led to a serious deficit, say Jewish Agency officials.

With the pace of aliyah from Eastern Europe and Central Asia expected to pick up, Jewish Agency leaders believe that only dramatic cuts will be able to ensure that its budget, now around \$600 million annually, balances in coming years.

The central question up for discussion, said Mendel Kaplan, chairman of the Jewish Agency Board of Governors, is "what should be the direction of the agency, taking into account the tremendous challenge in terms of aliyah and our limited financial income."

"Simply to go on doing things the way we have been doing is unacceptable," said Shoshana Cardin, who heads the agency's Goals and Priorities Committee.

"We cannot carry out all of our activities, so we must narrowly focus," she said. "You can cut a segment of each area, like dismembering a limb, and end up with a group of disabled entities, or remove one entity completely, acknowledging that we can't do everything and strengthening the things that are most important."

The clear implication is that some of the Jewish Agency's traditional departments and activities, many of which predate the State of Israel, may be eliminated.

Cardin's committee has drafted a questionnaire that will ask the 398 delegates to the assembly to help chart the agency's long-term direction.

Immigrants Vs. The Underprivileged

While the delegates will be asked to approve a final revised budget for 1992 and an initial budget for 1993, the rethinking process will not see any results until 1994 at the earliest.

Among the questions raised by Cardin:

- * How much Jewish Agency attention should be directed to Israel's new immigrants, and how much to Israel's long-term underprivileged?
- * Should the focus be on long-term or short-term assistance?
- * Should projects should be sub-contracted out?
- * What should be the extent of the agency's involvement in economic development, seen by its advocates as necessary to create jobs for the new immigrants?
- * How high a priority should be given to Jewish and Zionist education, particularly with regard to the Jews of the Former Soviet Union?

The annual assembly, along with its accompanying quarterly Board of Governors meeting, was also expected to put the finishing touches on an earlier streamlining process, which merged the Rural Settlement Department and the Renewal and Development Department, which oversaw Project Renewal.

Final details of this unification, scheduled to take place Jan. 1, will be worked out in a meeting with the government ministries that work with the departments.

One bitter controversy triggered by the streamlining plan apparently will not be resolved at this week's assembly.

The controversy concerns a plan by Diaspora fund-raisers, who make up half of the agency's Board of Governors, to eliminate the heads of the agency's various departments, who are responsible for setting policy, which is then implemented by the departments' respective director-generals.

Department heads are appointed by the World Zionist Organization, which is a partner with the Diaspora fund-raisers in the Jewish Agency.

Status Quo To Continue For Now

Fund-raisers say the department heads are wasteful patronage positions; the Zionists counter that the posts represent the democratically elected Zionist Congress and are the equivalent of the lay leadership of American Jewish organizations.

The Zionists saw the proposal to eliminate the department heads, backed by the United Israel Appeal leadership and the Council of Jewish Federations, as a declaration of "world war," as one of the department heads put it.

And indeed, for much of the past two months, both sides have been lining up the weapons they could use in any agency "civil war."

Both sides have now apparently backed down from the brink, perhaps scared by their own firepower.

On Saturday night, the Zionists and fund-raisers ratified an agreement to maintain the status quo while a new committee studies such issues as the appointment of department heads, the election process and procedures for an assured Jewish Agency budget.

The cease-fire was announced by Jewish Agency Chairman Simcha Dinitz, who will be authorized in the interim to have a member of the Jewish Agency Executive "act on his behalf in whatever department he sees fit."

(Contributing to this report was JTA correspondent Michele Chabin in Jerusalem.)

SKINHEADS DISRUPT '56 OBSERVANCE

By Agnes Bohm

BUDAPEST, Oct. 25 (JTA) -- Black-shirted Skinheads shouted anti-Semitic slogans when they disrupted an official ceremony last Friday night celebrating the anniversary of the 1956 Hungarian uprising against Soviet rule.

Hundreds of demonstrators, mostly young men, whistled and shouted outside the Parliament building to hold up a speech by President Arpad Goncz marking the 36th anniversary of the revolt.

The mob called for the resignation of Goncz, a liberal-democratic political figure who spent six years in a Communist prison following the unsuccessful 1956 revolt. Goncz paid an official state visit to Israel last month.

Demonstrators hailed the vice president of the ruling Hungarian Democratic Forum, Istvan Csurka, whose anti-Semitic outbursts have come under criticism in the West. An article by Csurka two months ago labeled Goncz as "an agent of Tel Aviv."

Opposition parties have called for the resignation of the interior minister, Peter Boross, for failing to take action to curb the demonstrators.