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NEXT ROUND OF TALKS ON REFUGEES TO BE HELD IN TUNISIA, WITH ISRAELBy Bernard Josephs
London Jewish Chronicle

LONDON, Dec. 9 (JTA) -- Israel will be in Tunisia for the next round of multilateral negotiations on Middle East refugees, marking the first time the talks have been conducted in an Arab nation.

Plans for the talks, scheduled to take place next May, were made at a meeting here last week of the steering committee for the multilateral peace talks on various Middle East regional issues.

Israeli officials said they would be happy to attend the session in Tunis despite the fact that the Palestine Liberation Organization has its headquarters there.

Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin, who headed Israel's delegation, said of the steering committee talks: "There was no attempt to score points, but a true desire to be constructive and plan the next round of meetings."

He said Israel has overcome one obstacle by agreeing that Palestinians from outside the administered territories could take part in the negotiations. The Syrians and Lebanese have boycotted the sessions, citing lack of progress in the bilateral talks now under way in Washington.

The mood of optimism at the two-day meeting was in sharp contrast to the gloom surrounding the bilateral talks, which began their eighth round in the U.S. capital on Monday.

Beilin said the negotiations here were "very encouraging" and his remarks were echoed by Mohamed Hallej, leader of the Palestinian delegation.

The co-sponsors, Russia and America, also hailed the London talks as a success.

Hallej regretted that Israel had turned down his team's request for additional working groups on Jerusalem and human rights. But, he said, "it was clear that everyone was interested in promoting the peace process and, to a degree, were competing with each other to overcome obstacles."

ARABS BOYCOTT BILATERAL TALKS ON INTIFADA'S FIFTH ANNIVERSARYBy Cynthia Mann
States News Service

WASHINGTON, Dec. 9 (JTA) -- The Arab parties to the bilateral peace talks boycotted the sessions Wednesday to mark the fifth anniversary of the intifada, provoking an angry reaction from Israel.

"Israel deplores this insincere and unproductive approach to the very serious business of peace-making and regrets this waste of precious time," Yossi Gal, the delegation spokesman, said in a statement.

Gal said the boycott, coming on top of the Palestinians' decision to send only a skeletal delegation to the talks this week, was "both baffling and greatly disturbing."

He said that while Israel had been informed Tuesday night about the boycott by the Palestinians and Jordanians, it had not been told the Syrians and Lebanese would join the boycott. He

said Israel was "dismayed" to learn of their support for it Wednesday.

The talks, which began their eighth round here Monday, were scheduled to resume Thursday.

But the round is clouded by a sense of frustration over the slow pace and the uncertainty triggered by the imminent change in U.S. administrations.

The exception is in the talks between the Israelis and Jordanians, where the parties are said to be making progress on their common agenda and have focused in recent days on water resources, energy and environmental issues.

The Syrians and the Israelis are still working toward a joint statement of principles that would serve as a basis for a peace accord. But the parties remain "unable to come to agreement on the core issues," said Itamar Rabinovich, chief of the Israeli team negotiating with the Syrians.

Israel is still waiting for Syria to spell out the terms of the peace it will offer before it declares what territorial concessions it will make on the Golan Heights.

Meanwhile, Yitzhak Lior, acting chairman of the Israeli team negotiating with Lebanon, reported disappointment with the failure of the Lebanese to respond to Israeli proposals made in the last round for a joint military group to improve security along their common border.

The last round of talks was marred by border hostilities initiated by the Islamic fundamentalist Hezbollah, which fired Katyusha rockets into northern Israel.

Last week, Acting U.S. Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger assured American Jewish leaders that the United States had asked Syria and Lebanon to prevent such violence from recurring.

"I share your outrage at the latest attacks on Israeli citizens and territory," Eagleburger wrote Malcolm Hoenlein, executive vice chair of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, in response to a letter from him and the conference's outgoing chairman, Shoshana Cardin.

"We have been in contact with the Syrian and Lebanese governments and made it clear that the U.S. expects them to do their utmost to prevent" further Hezbollah attacks, he wrote in a Nov. 30 letter released Wednesday.

Eagleburger, who had been acting secretary since James Baker became White House chief of staff in August, was sworn in Tuesday as secretary of state.

INTIFADA'S DEATH TOLL UP, HUMAN RIGHTS GROUP REPORTS

By Lisa Clayton

JERUSALEM, Dec. 9 (JTA) -- Israel's Labor government has failed to live up to its election promise to improve conditions for Palestinians in the administered territories, according to an Israeli human rights group.

Slight improvements have been balanced by a sharp rise in the number of Palestinians killed by security forces this year, says B'tselem, an independent watchdog group.

Over the past five years of the intifada, Israeli forces killed 923 Palestinians, including 186

minors, Yizhar Be'er, B'tselem's director-general, told the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

After an initial escalation -- 284 Palestinians killed in the first year of the uprising and 300 in the second -- the numbers decreased steadily to 127 and 96 over the next two years. But this year, as of Dec. 6, the number has gone up again to 116.

Israeli undercover units in the army and border police were responsible for 110 of the deaths.

Palestinians also stepped up their killing of Israelis this year, slaying 12 military personnel and 12 civilians, compared to two soldiers and six civilians in 1991.

Internecine Arab bloodletting is on the rise as well, said Be'er.

The five years of the intifada have seen 675 Palestinians killed by other Palestinians, usually on suspicion of cooperating with the Israeli authorities.

This year Palestinians killed 197 of their fellows, a rise from 154 last year.

The sharp increase has prompted B'tselem to prepare a report on violence in the Palestinian community, which is to be issued soon.

The current government has eased measures taken against detainees who are 16 years old or younger, and those accused of minor offenses, B'tselem acknowledges.

It said, too, that there had been a decrease in the number of Palestinians imprisoned or held in administrative detention.

PEACE NOW AND SETTLERS DISAGREE ON POPULATION TREND IN TERRITORIES

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Dec. 9 (JTA) -- Jewish settlers in the administered territories say their numbers are growing, but the dovish Peace Now movement maintains the settlers will always remain a tiny fraction of the population there.

Both sides cite statistics to back up conflicting claims over the effect the intifada is having on the demographic balance in areas beyond the pre-1967 lines.

Jewish settlement leaders point with pride to a virtual doubling in their numbers since the start of the intifada exactly five years ago Wednesday.

But officials of Peace Now cite statistics showing the settlers are still -- and will remain -- a negligible percentage of the overall population in the territories.

Observers connected with neither movement, like demographer Meron Benvenisti, say both sides are guilty of tendentiousness, though both make points that deserve serious consideration.

Peace Now, in a report based on official government statistics, predicts the Palestinian population of the West Bank and Gaza Strip will top 2 million in 1993.

The report cites a continuing high birthrate and a recent upswing in immigration into the areas, apparently in the aftermath of the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

According to the report, the present population of the territories includes 1.7 million Palestinians and 109,000 Jews, or 94 percent as against 6 percent.

The only area where Jewish settlement may have brought about a change in demography is the hilly region south of Hebron, which was always sparsely populated by Palestinians. Other than that, says the report, there is no specific

area of the West Bank or Gaza Strip where the Jews come anywhere near to outnumbering the Palestinians.

The report counts 144 settlements in areas beyond the pre-1967 borders. In 107 of them, the Jewish population is less than 500 souls; in 27, the Jewish settlers number less than 100.

A settlement umbrella group, on the other hand, says 115,000 Jews were living in the territories at the beginning of 1992, rising to 126,000 today.

The Council of Jewish Local Authorities in the territories maintains that the rise in the number of Jews living in the areas over the past five years is evidence that the Arab uprising has failed in one of its primary goals.

The settlement council claims its figures on Jewish demography are more current than those of Peace Now.

GERMAN CABINET INITIATES MOVE TO STRIP RIGHTS OF NEO-NAZIS

By David Kantor

BONN, Dec. 9 (JTA) -- In an unprecedented move, the German Cabinet decided Wednesday to seek to have two notorious neo-Nazi activists, Thomas Dienel and Heinz Reisz, stripped of their basic civil rights.

Both have recently shocked the public by making extremely aggressive anti-Semitic remarks at open meetings and even in court.

The initiative is pending the confirmation of the Karlsruhe-based constitutional court, which could stop the move. Legal experts said Wednesday that the court may be reluctant to accept the application of the highly unusual measure.

Interior Minister Rudolf Seiters, who initiated the move, said Wednesday that both activists contributed to the current wave of neo-Nazi violence by inciting against foreigners and Jews.

The civil rights to be scrapped would include free speech, the right to demonstrate, the right to vote and the right to establish an association.

Meanwhile, 24 houses and apartments were searched Wednesday as part of a crackdown on a neo-Nazi group in the northwestern port city of Wilhelmshaven, on Jade Bay, and its environs. The group is called Deutsche Kammeradschaftsbund Wilhelmshaven.

The authorities in the state of Lower Saxony, who ordered the crackdown, said in Hanover that their eventual aim is to ban the group. They said that large quantities of light weapons and propaganda material had been confiscated.

ISRAELI TEENS HUNTING DOWN NAZIS IN COMPUTER GAME POPULAR IN NORTH

By Lisa Clayton

JERUSALEM, Dec. 9 (JTA) -- Jews and Nazis hunt each other down in the latest computer game to have caught the fancy of Israeli teenagers.

The game was first given to a member of Kibbutz Ein Carmel a few years ago, in all probability by a German volunteer, according to a report in the newspaper Ma'ariv. It was then copied and has since spread throughout the north.

Idan Lazerson, a kibbutz teen-ager, said the game has a Jew trying to escape from a castle or ghetto as Nazis attempt to kill him; the Jew shoots back, earning a gun for every Nazi killed.

The computer prints the slogan "Heil Hitler" when the Nazis fire.

LETTER FROM DEMJANJUK BACKER SUPPORTS CHARGES AGAINST HIM

By Susan Birnbaum

NEW YORK, Dec. 9 (JTA) -- A longtime supporter of convicted war criminal John Demjanjuk wrote a letter to a German archive 10 years ago asking for Demjanjuk's "original military card issued in Camp Treblinka."

The letter seems to support charges that Demjanjuk did indeed serve as a guard in Treblinka. The Ukrainian emigre, who was convicted in 1988 of being the notorious Treblinka guard known as "Ivan the Terrible," has repeatedly denied ever having been at the camp.

The letter might also refute new evidence uncovered in long-secret Soviet archives suggesting that a guard by the name of Ivan Marchenko was in fact "Ivan the Terrible."

Jerome Brentar, a Cleveland travel agent described in various newspaper articles as Demjanjuk's main financial supporter, wrote the letter in German to a war research facility in Munich called the Institute for Contemporary History.

The 1982 letter was obtained by Charles Allen Jr., a researcher and writer on Nazi crimes. It was published in the latest edition of Reform Judaism, a publication of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

Questions about whether Demjanjuk, a retired Cleveland autoworker, had ever been at Treblinka arose in the past year and turned the case against him askew. He had been sentenced to death by an Israeli court for war crimes committed at the Treblinka and Sobibor death camps.

The Israeli High Court of Justice is reviewing the case and a federal appeals court in Ohio this year named a special investigator to study whether the Justice Department withheld possibly exculpatory evidence in his denaturalization proceedings.

Another Letter Also Supports Verdict

Another letter has been made available to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that was written to Brentar by the attorney for Kurt Franz, the commandant of Treblinka who is serving a life sentence in Germany for war crimes.

The attorney, Rudolf Stratmann, wrote in January 1990 that his client did not know anyone named Marchenko.

"But Franz does not remember if in this context the name Demjanjuk was mentioned," Stratmann wrote.

A Jewish witness who was called in the Demjanjuk trial wrote a letter, also obtained by JTA, which described Franz and "Ivan the Terrible" as regular companions.

This new information was made available by the World Jewish Congress, "in light of the publicity already given to the other material," said Elan Steinberg, WJC executive director.

Brentar, in his letter to the Munich research facility, denied one of the key pieces of evidence against Demjanjuk -- a military card from an SS training camp at Trawniki, Poland.

He said it was "obviously forged by the Soviets" and tried to tie the case against Demjanjuk to Simon Wiesenthal, the Vienna-based Nazi-hunter.

Wiesenthal had nothing to do with obtaining the card.

Brentar wrote that it would be "very important" to find "Demjanjuk's original military card issued in the Treblinka camp, to compare it to

the one for Soviet Wiesenthal's clique, which was accepted by the Cleveland court."

Brentar sent the letter to what he thought was a sympathetic audience, the Institute for Historical Research. He wrote the note on stationery with the letterhead of a group called St. Raphaels-Verein, which Steinberg of the WJC described as a Holocaust-denial group. Brentar signed the letter as president of the group.

But the Munich-based institute is one of the most respected, mainstream facilities for World War II research in Germany.

Brentar could not be reached by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. But he told The New York Times that the "letter was just exploratory." He denied that his note gave credence to prosecution charges that Demjanjuk had been in Treblinka.

He said, "The only way to get any information is by accepting there must have been something. And I would like to have that something or copy of that something so I can make my own decision whether the man is guilty or not."

Brentar was dismissed as co-chairman of an ethnic coalition backing George Bush's 1988 presidential campaign on charges of anti-Semitism.

He denied he was anti-Semitic but told the Times, "Hitler could not have accomplished what he did accomplish in the so-called Holocaust if it wasn't for the full-hearted cooperation of the Jews themselves."

JEWISH GROUPS TAKE HEART AS CANADA ARRESTS MAN CHARGED WITH WAR CRIMES

By Gil Kezwer

TORONTO, Dec. 9 (JTA) -- The arrest Tuesday of a Windsor, Ontario, man on war crimes charges has revived hope among Jews here that Canada will reinvorogate its flagging effort to bring Nazi war criminals to justice.

Radislav Grujicic, 81, was charged with 10 counts of premeditated murder and one count each of conspiracy to murder and kidnap.

His indictment says that as a senior official of a special section of the Belgrade police in wartime Serbia from June 22, 1941 to Oct. 1, 1944, he conspired with civil authorities and the German occupying forces in the arrest and interrogation of suspected communists.

As a result of Grujicic's activities, his victims were deported to Germany and elsewhere for forced labor. Ten people are alleged to have been shot in Belgrade on May 25, 1943.

Grujicic is the fourth person charged under a 1987 law allowing the prosecution of war criminals in Canada. So far, none of them has been convicted. But this time, the Justice Department has assigned its most senior prosecutor, Ivan Whitehall, to the case.

"After a frustrating interval of close to three years with no fresh indictments, it is reassuring to have tangible evidence that the government is still committed to the process of bringing war criminals in Canada to justice," said Milton Harris of the Canadian Jewish Congress War Crimes Committee.

B'nai Brith Canada spokesman Paul Marcus said the government should "consider using all remedies against accused war criminals in Canada, including denaturalization and deportation. We should make it as uncomfortable as possible for war crimes suspects."

B'nai Brith issued a highly critical report last month documenting the government's mishandling of war crimes prosecutions.

**BEHIND THE HEADLINES:
IMPACT OF CROWN HEIGHTS IS FELT
WELL BEYOND BORDERS OF BROOKLYN**
By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, Dec. 8 (JTA) -- The cries of "Get the Jew" that were shouted in Crown Heights in August 1991 are still echoing far beyond the boundaries of that Brooklyn neighborhood.

Amid the rhetorical battles, speeches and demonstrations that have surrounded recent events in Crown Heights, one thing has become clear: the images and language of victimization have touched a raw nerve in New York Jews of all religious and political persuasions.

Most New York Jews feel that justice has not been served, since no one has been convicted of murdering Yankel Rosenbaum, who was killed simply because he was a Jew during rioting by blacks in Crown Heights last year.

But beyond that, there are essentially two camps.

Lubavitchers and their supporters suggest that because New York Mayor David Dinkins is black, he is more concerned with placating the increasingly politically empowered black community and with solidifying his voter base for the 1993 mayoral election than with justice for Jews.

Other Jews also feel a sense of pronounced discomfort with the way the Crown Heights crisis continues to play out, even accusing the mayor, who has a long record of support for Jewish causes, of being insensitive to Jewish concerns.

But these Jews refute the notion that he is an anti-Semite and say that he is being scapegoated himself.

Resent Use Of The Word 'Pogrom'

It is these New York Jews who also resent the first group's use of the term "pogrom" to refer to the rioting that followed the accidental killing of a 7-year-old black child at the hands of a Lubavitch driver and in which Rosenbaum, a Hasidic scholar, was murdered.

These Jews also bristle at the Lubavitchers' use of Holocaust imagery, such as wearing yellow stars pinned to their clothes at the arraignment of Moishe Katzman, the Lubavitch man charged by police with beating a homeless black man behind the Lubavitch world headquarters on Dec. 1.

The debate over language and imagery reflects the profound impact of the Crown Heights episode on the Jewish psyche.

"The genius of Avi Weiss and crew has been their description of this as an attack on all Jews, as a pogrom," said Samuel Heilman, professor of sociology at Queens College and the City University of New York Graduate Center.

He was referring to the Bronx rabbi and social activist who has repeatedly confronted the mayor and been the most visible non-Lubavitcher to support the Crown Heights Jewish perspective.

Describing the black violence against Jews in Crown Heights as a pogrom resonates with Jews outside of the neighborhood because it reminds them of their differentness, after they have spent the last 40 years trying to show how American they are, he said.

"It reminds Jews of how fragile their existence is," said Heilman, who is also author of the book "Defenders of the Faith; Inside Ultra-Orthodox Jewry," published by Schocken/Random House earlier this year.

The way Jewish New Yorkers view the

Crown Heights crisis and how it is being handled by the Lubavitchers often depends on how secure they feel in America and in the city -- and those sentiments are often reflected in where they live.

Hasidim, including the Lubavitchers, are anomalous in the Jewish world.

They are the only major Jewish group not to have fled the inner city by the 1970s, but they want little, if anything, to do with their non-Jewish neighbors and, with the notable exception of the Lubavitch, have almost nothing to do with non-Hasidic Jews.

Inadvertently, they stand quite literally on the front lines of black-Jewish relations.

Sentiment outside of Crown Heights tends to be divided along an Orthodox/non-Orthodox axis and a Manhattan/outer-borough axis.

Jews who live in "Jewish" neighborhoods outside of Manhattan are generally Orthodox. They, along with their more assimilated, less observant and secular neighbors, "fled Manhattan in the first place and are more uncomfortable with the urban environment," according to Phillip Saperia, executive director of the American Jewish Congress' Metropolitan Region.

Those In Insular Communities Feel Threatened

"The city has followed them to the suburbs and they don't like it," he said. "Those who live in more insular communities are more likely to feel insecure than those who live in diverse areas."

Jews in Manhattan have, by and large, acculturated and assimilated into New York's Jewish cultural milieu and are "hermetically sealed" off from the black-Jewish tensions which beset the outer-borough communities, according to Heilman, the sociologist.

In contrast, Brooklyn and Queens Jews feel themselves to be "just a step away from Crown Heights," said Heilman.

But even the more mainstream Jews of New York are concerned that ethnic stability is in danger, said Saperia, "lest there be an erosion of the position of the Jewish community sociologically, economically, religiously, or politically."

The Lubavitch also hold a special place in the hearts of many American Jews. Countless non-observant Jews admire the outreach work Lubavitch does, consider Lubavitch the last outpost of "authentic" Judaism and give money to support their programs.

Sympathy For Lubavitch

So there is a large measure of sympathy among other Jews for Lubavitch that would not exist if the same things were happening to an even more iconoclastic sect, like Williamsburg's Satmar Hasidim.

Rabbi Gilbert Rosenthal, executive vice president of the 800-member New York Board of Rabbis -- which includes clergy from all the major branches of Judaism -- says he has gotten calls from Jews and non-Jews all over the country in support of the Lubavitch.

The Hasidic group is seen "as a besieged and beleaguered minority trying to maintain its integrity and identity as a community and not be forced out," he said.

Their sympathizers say that if it is the Crown Heights Jewish community that is being victimized by blacks and by the political system today, it could be Williamsburg or the Lower East Side tomorrow and Washington Heights and finally the Upper West Side, said Rosenthal.