

**PERES LAUNCHES ATTEMPT TO SELL
PEACE ACCORD TO AMERICAN JEWS**

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Sept. 27 (JTA) -- The Israeli government's efforts to sell its peace accord with the Palestine Liberation Organization went into high gear this week, with the arrival of Foreign Minister Shimon Peres in New York.

He was here officially to address the United Nations and meet with other foreign ministers.

But he took the opportunity of his visit to rally the Jewish community's troops at a New York synagogue on Sunday and at a meeting Monday with the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

At the Conference of Presidents, Peres made an eloquent case for the agreement on Palestinian self-rule worked out under his supervision in Norway, defending it as both morally and pragmatically necessary for the Jewish state.

Addressing the key concerns of the Jewish community, Peres said Israel would not yield on the three central issues: the status of Jerusalem, the security of the settlements in the administered territories and the refusal to allow Palestinians to exercise their "right of return" to Israel.

"He took the argument to the community, which I think is praiseworthy," said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League, who participated in the meeting.

But Peres chose to confront head-on another source of concern over the self-rule agreement -- the religious argument regarding the sanctity of the Land of Israel and the prohibition against giving up any of it.

This confrontation may have decisively alienated American Orthodox leaders already inclined to oppose the accord.

"I see some rabbis, and rabbis are very powerful, opposing most of what we do," Peres said at one point, before confronting the arguments being made concerning the sanctity of the Land of Israel.

"We need to have a real discussion with the religious people," he said later. "They don't have the permission of the Lord to give preference to territory over (Israel's moral) spirit."

Orthodox Leaders Offended

In defense of granting Palestinian autonomy to the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho, Peres said that the religious laws regarding the sanctity of the Land of Israel never applied to Gaza, and that "Jericho was cursed in the Bible, a curse that was never taken off."

Peres said he would not shy away from arguing the Bible with the rabbis. "They think we don't know it. We won't give it up. We were born with the Torah, when we breathe the open air of our land," he said.

The Orthodox leaders in attendance, who had been taking positions on the Israeli-Palestinian accord ranging from quiet acceptance to loud opposition, were offended.

Rabbi Louis Bernstein, past president of the Rabbinical Council of America, termed these remarks "a fatuous swipe at the Orthodox" that he will not "easily forget."

Later in the day, Peres called Conference of

Presidents Executive Vice Chairman Malcolm Hoenlein to clarify his remarks. Hoenlein said the foreign minister had not meant to offend anyone.

Peres said his comments were "an attempt to portray the importance" of "the moral component to our policies," according to Hoenlein. "It was not my intent to insult."

At the Conference of Presidents meeting that morning, Peres reached for a vocabulary as much religious as realpolitik in describing the general principles underlying the accord.

He acknowledged that there are "hundreds" of hurdles on the road to peace, but added that "if you have a galloping horse, don't be afraid of the hurdles."

The solution reached in months of secret negotiations in Norway, said Peres, constitutes "an honest answer, not necessarily to the Palestinians, but to our own historic conscience."

"We are facing an issue of two peoples who are fighting for the same land," he said. "Two renaissances that instead of complementing each other are fighting each other."

Calls Gaza 'A Moral Shame'

"The fact we were running Gaza was a moral shame. I as a Jewish person couldn't stand it, to see the poverty, to see the camps," the foreign minister said.

By the same token, he said, there was no choice but to negotiate with the PLO.

But Peres emphasized the ground rules he laid for the Palestinians, concerning the lines Israel would insist could not be crossed.

"They wanted the right of return. We didn't agree to any number."

"If you will reduce our majority," Peres said he told the Palestinians, "it is the end of our state. So you must understand this cannot be negotiated in real terms."

"The second issue we explained clearly to the Palestinians is Jerusalem. We told them we do not have a mandate or a will to Berlinize Jerusalem. It took the world such an effort to unite Berlin, don't expect us to divide Jerusalem."

"Jerusalem was never an Arab capital, and the Jews have never had a capital other than Jerusalem," he added.

The third point he stressed concerned the settlements.

"It's not a secret that not everybody of us was terribly happy with every addition of settlements in West Bank and Gaza Strip. Politically, we will pay heavily for it. But no matter how a child is born, out of luck or an accident, once a child is born, it is the child that matters, not how he was born."

The fact that there are 140,000 settlers in the territories, said Peres, rules out a repeat of what happened to the Sinai settlement of Yamit, which was torn down as part of the 1979 peace treaty with Egypt.

"Neither do we want to do it," said Peres, since some of the settlements are part of Labor's strategic vision.

Finally, he said, "when it comes to security, no compromises. Jewish people are going to defend their own life. We never ask Americans or Russians to do it for us. That is really the meaning of returning for ourselves, for independence."

**RABIN'S OFFICE DENIES REPORTS
OF A MEETING WITH KING HUSSEIN****By Gil Sedan**

JERUSALEM, Sept. 27 (JTA) -- Press reports speculating that Yitzhak Rabin held a secret meeting this week with Jordan's King Hussein have been roundly denied by officials close to the Israeli prime minister.

But the rumors persist nevertheless, with officials in the Prime Minister's Office conceding that if there were any truth to the reports, they would not be able to confirm them.

Rumors of such a meeting spread here after Rabin canceled scheduled appearances, including several speeches, from 2 p.m. Sunday until late Monday, with no clear explanation why.

The Prime Minister's Office issued a statement Monday saying that Rabin had changed his schedule so that he could attend exercises of an elite security unit Sunday night.

Hussein is said to be concerned about the implications for his country, a majority of whose population is Palestinian, of the accord signed in Washington by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

If such a meeting took place, it would not be the first between a high-level Israeli official and the Jordanian monarch. Foreign Minister Shimon Peres was widely reported to have met in London several years ago with the king and reached preliminary agreement on a framework for peace negotiations. That framework ultimately was rejected by the Israeli government.

Egypt Ready To Host Talks

In Cairo, meanwhile, a spokesman for the Foreign Ministry said Monday that Egypt was willing to host talks between Israeli and Palestinian officials if it would help push the peace process forward.

The remarks followed reports that Israeli and Palestinian representatives would meet in Egypt soon to negotiate implementation of the self-rule accord signed Sept. 13 in Washington.

Earlier this week, Israel proposed holding these talks in the Sinai towns of Taba or El-Arish, both of which are under Egyptian control.

On the Israeli domestic political scene, meanwhile, several right-wing Knesset members have begun talking openly of forming a national unity government between the governing Labor Party and the Likud opposition.

In the past, Israel has formed national unity governments in times of crisis, such as the Six-Day War of 1967, or when neither party was able to form a coalition without the other, as in 1984.

Likud Knesset member Michael Eitan raised the idea earlier this week, and he was joined Monday by Knesset members Silvan Shalom of Likud and Gonen Segev of the Tsomet party.

Speaking on the radio, Eitan and Segev said that this was the only way that Likud and Tsomet would be able to ensure that they could reduce the security risks to Israel of the self-rule agreement with the Palestinians.

But on the same day, Labor's Knesset faction rejected the idea of a national unity government.

Eli Dayan, chairman of the party's Knesset delegation, said that even the mere discussion of the idea could work against the peace process.

The fact that the initiative for such a move came from Likud, said Dayan, served as proof that the accord with the PLO had been accepted by the majority of the Israeli people.

**CHIEF PALESTINIAN NEGOTIATOR
RESIGNS AMID TALK OF CHANGES****By Gil Sedan**

JERUSALEM, Sept. 27 (JTA) -- The head of the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks has announced that he will resign from political life and that he will not seek a position in any future Palestinian government.

Dr. Haidar Abdel-Shafi said this week that the signing of the accord between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization marked the end of his work with the Palestinian delegation.

Abdel-Shafi, 74, one of the founders of the PLO in 1964, was less than enthusiastic about the accord, but has accepted it as the verdict of the PLO's top leadership.

In recent months, he openly criticized the handling of negotiations with Israel. He also publicly called for a "reorganization" of the top ranks of the Palestinian leadership, implying that Yasser Arafat's rule of the PLO should come to an end.

Abdel-Shafi, a doctor from Gaza, intends to devote himself to the Palestinian Red Crescent, the medical relief organization he headed for many years.

Palestinian observers in Jerusalem said that Abdel-Shafi's resignation preceded an anticipated announcement from PLO headquarters that will name new delegates to the peace negotiations with Israel.

Orient House, the picturesque building in eastern Jerusalem that has served as headquarters for the Palestinian delegation, has already lost much of its prestige. Many of its functions have been taken over by regional offices of the PLO, which, since the signing of the accord, have been operating in the open for the first time.

The regional PLO offices were busy during the past few days interviewing hundreds of Palestinians who had registered as candidates for the soon-to-be-established Palestinian police force.

According to Palestinian sources, most of the volunteers would be turned down, since the PLO intended to forge the core of the police force from the Palestine Liberation Army, whose men have trained for years in various Arab countries.

FIRM FINED FOR BOYCOTT COMPLIANCE**By Steven Weiss**

WASHINGTON, Sept. 27 (JTA) -- Amid allegations that it complied with the Arab economic boycott against Israel, Nashua Corp., a New Hampshire-based exporter of paper and industrial tape products, has agreed to pay a \$26,800 civil penalty levied by the Department of Commerce.

The Commerce Department charged the company with 13 violations of the anti-boycott provisions of the Export Administration Act.

Among the violations were two counts of allegedly agreeing to refuse to do business with banks boycotted by Arab countries, 10 counts of failing to report requests it received to engage in restrictive trade practices or boycotts, and one count of furnishing information about the company's business relationships with Israel.

Nashua agreed to pay the penalty without admitting or denying the alleged violations.

The Export Administration Act prohibits U.S. companies and individuals from agreeing to observe foreign boycotts, and from furnishing information to boycotting countries about their business relationships in boycotted countries.

BEHIND THE HEADLINES:

PLO NO LONGER AS BROADLY BASED AS IT WAS WHEN FOUNDED IN 1964

By Gil Sedan

JERUSALEM, Sept. 27 (JTA) -- The agreement Israel recently concluded with the Palestine Liberation Organization was signed with an organization very different from the one that was founded in East Jerusalem in June 1964.

The new PLO is different not only in ideology but also in structure. In recent years it has shrunk considerably, a result of an endless chain of frictions, both personal and organizational. This process accelerated in recent weeks, as opponents of the peace process resigned from influential positions.

More than ever, Yasser Arafat can declare that he and the PLO are one and the same.

This is a situation that Arafat is none too happy about. He would prefer the representative body of the Palestinians to be broader-based, as it used to be.

The PLO was originally formed as a coalition of terrorist organizations. Its main components have been:

- * Al Fatah, a mainstream faction led by Arafat himself;

- * the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a rejectionist faction led by George Habash;

- * the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a socialist-oriented, rejectionist faction led by Nayef Hawatmeh;

- * the radical Popular Front of the Liberation of Palestine-General Command, led by Ahmed Jabril;

- * the Palestine Liberation Front, backed by Iraq and Libya, and led by Mahmoud Zeidan (alias Abu Abbas);

- * A-Saika, a protege of Syria; and

- * the Arab Liberation Front, supported by Iraq.

The Islamic fundamentalist Hamas organization, the second largest political organization in the administered territories, is not part of the PLO umbrella.

Negotiations to bring Hamas into the PLO have failed in the past, because Hamas wanted a minimum of 40 percent representation in the PLO bodies, whereas Arafat was willing to offer a minimal 5 percent.

Opponents Within Fatah

Since the October 1991 conference in Madrid that launched the current peace process, the two major rejectionist movements, the Popular Front and the Democratic Front, have boycotted meetings of the PLO's executive committee, the organization's chief governing body.

This has made Yasser Arafat's Fatah organization even stronger as the main body of the PLO, with a few small organizations left as coalition partners, as well as a number of politically "independent" representatives.

The leading members of the executive committee are mostly Fatah members: Arafat, who is chairman; Mahmoud Abbas, better known as Abu Mazen, who has been put in charge of the peace negotiations with Israel; Farouk Kaddoumi, head of the political department, who has not supported the accord with Israel; and Yasser Abud Rabbo, head of the information department, known as a strong advocate of the dialogue with Israel.

Of the 18 members of the executive commit-

tee, only 12 took part in the recent voting on the agreement with Israel. The others were members of the rejectionist fronts that have been boycotting the executive committee, or members of the Fatah organization who opposed the agreement.

These opponents within Fatah include Shafik al-Hout, the PLO's representative in Lebanon, and Mahmoud Darwish, a poet usually known for his relatively moderate views, whose motivation to resign from the executive committee is not quite clear.

Whereas Arafat has proven that he controls the executive committee, his majority is not certain in the broader bodies of the organization, such as the Central Council, numbering 53 members and of minor operational importance, and the Palestinian National Council, the Palestinian parliament in exile, numbering from 400 to 600 members (depending on the political circumstances at the time).

The PNC convenes, according to its charter, every two years to adopt major policy decisions. Recently it was demanded that the PNC convene to discuss the accord with Israel. Arafat opposed such a move, for fear that he might not have the necessary majority.

CLINTON CALLS ON U.N. TO REPEAL RESOLUTIONS CONDEMNING ISRAEL

By Larry Yudelson

UNITED NATIONS, Sept. 27 (JTA) -- President Clinton has called on the U.N. General Assembly to repeal its past resolutions condemning Israel.

Speaking before the world body Monday, Clinton said that "the repeal of outdated U.N. resolutions" would buttress peace in the Middle East.

The United States, along with Russia and Egypt, has said it would work with Israel to ensure that dozens of resolutions critical of Israel are not automatically renewed this year.

The drive to overturn one of those resolutions, which annually link Israel to South African apartheid, was expected to get a boost Monday evening, when Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres was scheduled to meet with Nelson Mandela, president of the African National Congress.

Mandela addressed the General Assembly last week, calling for an end to sanctions against South Africa in the wake of the scheduling of the country's first non-racial elections, and praising the agreement between Israel and the Palestinians.

Clinton, in his U.N. address, cited both the recent Israeli-Palestinian accord, and the agreements between Mandela and South African President F.W. de Klerk, as evidence that now "is a moment of miracles."

Clinton also condemned terrorism, which "assumes a horrifying immediacy for us here, when militant fanatics bombed the World Trade Center and planned to attack even this very hall of peace.

"Let me assure you, whether (they are) the plotters of those crimes or the mass murderers who bombed Pan Am Flight 103, my government is determined to see that such terrorists are brought to justice."

Because of the holiday of Sukkot, the JTA Daily News Bulletin will not be published Friday, Oct. 1.

ONLY MINORITY OF JEWS BELONG TO A SYNAGOGUE, STUDY SHOWS

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, Sept. 27 (JTA) -- Only a minority of American Jews belong to a synagogue, one of the most central institutions in Jewish life, according to a new study of synagogue affiliation.

And that minority of 39 percent who said they currently belong is actually likely to be much smaller in reality, according to the study's authors. They say that people who attend services may say they are synagogue members although they do not pay dues.

The analysis, by Gary Tobin and Gabriel Berger of Brandeis University's Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, is named "Synagogue Affiliation: Implications for the 1990s." It is based on data gathered from almost 2,500 households around the country as part of the 1990 National Jewish Population Survey conducted by the Council of Jewish Federations.

The study reveals that just one-quarter of American Jews reported attending services at least once a month.

One-third said they go on the High Holy Days or a few times a year, while another 23 percent go to synagogue just on special occasions related to rites of passage, like a wedding.

These figures mean that Jews are among the most "un-churched" of Americans, according to the study. Polls of Christian Americans have shown that about 40 percent of respondents say they go to church at least once a month.

Tobin, director of the Cohen Center, said that studies in communities comparing survey responses to questions about membership with actual synagogue membership rosters have shown that twice as many Jews say they are synagogue members than really are.

Even 43 percent of Jews who consider being Jewish to be very important in their lives say they are not currently affiliated.

Yet synagogue membership and attendance are key indicators of, and an essential gateway into, other aspects of Jewish identity.

Jews who are synagogue members are markedly more likely to participate actively in other spheres of Jewish life, according to the study.

Synagogue members are more likely to volunteer for Jewish organizations and more likely to give generously to Jewish and non-Jewish causes than non-members, the survey says.

The percentage of Jews who belong to a synagogue "includes the most activist elements of American Jewish society," said Tobin.

Affiliation Linked With Identity

And, according to the study, synagogue affiliation leads to growth in Jewish identity.

"While participation in organized religion originates as a private matter, it leads progressively to an expanding concern and commitment to the larger community of Jews," wrote the authors.

The study's key findings include the fact that Jews ages 25-34 are the least likely to belong to a synagogue; just 27.5 percent of respondents that age said they do.

The age groups with the highest affiliation rate are the youngest and oldest adults; just over 45 percent of Jews 18-24 and 75-and-over currently belong to a synagogue.

Forty-two to 45 percent of Jews between ages 45 and 74 belong.

Synagogue affiliation is at its very highest in families with children ages 10-13 and 14-17 at home -- 73 percent of respondents with at least two children in that age range affiliate.

Just under half of respondents with a child age 10 to 13 at home -- 49.5 percent -- said they belong to a synagogue, despite the widespread notion that families with bar-mitzvah-age children are more likely to belong so that their children will prepare for the life-cycle event.

"A growing number of kids don't get any Jewish education," said Tobin. "The notion that it's universal is just not true, especially among mixed marrieds."

Contrary to another popular misconception, synagogue affiliation increases as educational levels do.

While 34.5 percent of Jews who have no more than a high school education belong, 36 percent of those with some undergraduate college experience but not a bachelor's degree belong, and more than 45 percent of Jews with graduate degrees do.

Synagogue affiliation also rises along with income levels.

Just 30.5 percent of respondents with incomes between \$30,000 and \$40,000 belong, but nearly half the respondents with a household income of over \$80,000, 49 percent, affiliate.

Dropout rates are highest among those with household incomes between \$20,000 and \$40,000.

Synagogue affiliation also has a strong correlation to the denomination of the household.

Orthodox Jews are much more likely to belong to a synagogue than Reform Jews -- 65 percent as opposed to 40 percent.

Just over half, 52 percent, of Jews who identify themselves as Conservative belong to a synagogue.

Still, more than one-third of Orthodox Jews do not belong to a shul.

And Reform Jews have the highest rate of respondents who describe themselves as "synagogue dropouts" -- 38 percent, compared to 10 percent of Orthodox and 29 percent of Conservative Jews.

NAZI PLANS FOR GAS CHAMBERS PUBLISHED BY FRENCH MAGAZINE By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, Sept. 27 (JTA) -- The French weekly magazine L'Express has published documents described as secret Nazi files about the building of the gas chambers and crematoria at the Auschwitz extermination camp.

The files, according to a recent issue of L'Express, were kept in Moscow at the Central Archive, where some 80,000 Nazi documents taken from Auschwitz in 1945 were stored, apparently untouched until now.

A French chemist, Jean-Claude Pressac, gained access to the documents.

In the resulting work, "The Auschwitz Crematoria: The Machinery of Mass Murder," he made use of official Nazi documents, blueprints and letters exchanged between the SS and the builders of the gas chambers.

Pressac disclosed in detail how the Zyklon B gas was introduced into the gas chamber, how it worked and how the poisonous gas was removed from the chamber.

L'Express speaks of Pressac's work as presenting the ultimate and undisputable proof of the existence of the gas chambers.