

**MEETING WITH ORTHODOX RABBIS
MARKS RABIN'S RETURN TO THE U.S.**

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Nov. 11 (JTA) -- A meeting with a group of Orthodox rabbis was one of the first items on the itinerary when Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin arrived here for his first visit to the United States since signing the declaration of principles with Yasser Arafat two months ago.

It was a move to shore up support from the segment of the Jewish community that has least embraced the Rabin government.

The cool relations began with the appointment of fervent secularist Shulamit Aloni as education minister, and have continued through the dramatic policy shifts inherent in the peace process.

While the group of Orthodox leaders invited to the meetings Thursday are mostly supportive of the peace plan between Israel and the Palestinians, that support is hesitant at best.

Even those who are not convinced Jewish law prohibits surrendering territory have grave concerns about the accord in general and the impact it will have on the settlers in the territories in particular.

For several of the participants in the meeting, like many in the Orthodox community, those settlers include their children and grandchildren.

At the meeting, which included the leadership of the Rabbinical Council of America, the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America and Yeshiva University, Rabin laid out his policies and the basis for them.

"At the same time, he really didn't answer our questions," said Rabbi Binyamin Walfish, executive vice president of the RCA.

He and others expressed their concerns for the deteriorating security situation faced by the settlers, and for the perceived failure of the Palestinians to abide by their side of the peace agreement.

Not least among their complaints were the repeated statements by Rabin that have been interpreted by some as the beginning of a deliberate effort to delegitimize the settlers in the eyes of Israeli public opinion.

Perception That Government Doesn't Care

"Our major concern is that he has to change the perception that the government simply doesn't care about what's happening in the territories," said Walfish.

The prime minister tried to put his comments against the settlers into perspective, noting that his statements were made within the context of the vitriolic public debate in Israel.

"He wanted us to be aware of his concern for the settlers," said Rabbi Jacob Rubenstein, another participant in the meeting, who chairs the social action committee of the RCA.

Despite its official support for the declaration of principles, the RCA has sent a 150-member delegation to Israel to protest the government's policies.

And one former president of the organization, Rabbi Max Schreier, proceeded immediately after meeting with Rabin to a news

conference announcing a campaign against the Rabin government and its peace plan.

The campaign is to be conducted under the umbrella of a newly formed World Committee for Israel, which says it is a non-partisan group of Jews and Christians that includes 150 rabbinic authorities in Israel and the United States as well as 150 active and reserve members of the Israel Defense Force.

The group's campaign will begin with a full-page advertisement in The New York Times scheduled to coincide with Rabin's visit to Washington.

"You can ignore rabbis. You can ignore generals. But you can't ignore both!" declares the ad, which is addressed to President Clinton and the prime minister.

The ad warns of the threats to Israel that could be posed by Katyusha rockets fired from the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It also warns of the risks to the Israeli water supply, because one of its main aquifers is in the West Bank.

It declares that "it is our moral obligation to clarify, explain and communicate the nature and substance of these threats to Israeli security while there is still time to avert catastrophe."

The ad itself does not say what, if anything, should be done about the already-signed declaration of principles.

Manfred Lehmann, chairman of the World Committee, said the unwritten bottom line is that Rabin "has to have new elections."

"We have a saying the Jews in Arab lands have always taught their children," said Rabbi Abraham Hecht, president of the Rabbinical Alliance of America, who, along with Lehmann, did not meet with Rabin.

"You cannot trust an Arab, even after 40 years in the grave. So now we're going to trust them when they're alive?"

"How can anyone in their right mind believe Arabs?" he asked.

**CANADIAN JEWISH CONGRESS MEETS
WITH JORDANIAN, MOROCCAN ENVOYS**

By Bram D. Eisenthal

MONTREAL, Nov. 11 (JTA) -- For the first time ever, the representative body of Canadian Jewry has met with the ambassador of Jordan.

On Thursday, a Canadian Jewish Congress delegation, headed by its national president, Irving Abella, traveled to Ottawa to meet with Jordanian ambassador Hani Khalifeh.

Later, the group met with Moroccan Ambassador Tajeddine Baddou.

The meetings are part of the flurry of get-togethers between Arabs and Jews that has followed the Sept. 13 accord between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

The meeting with the Jordanian envoy, which was requested by the CJC during talks between Israeli and Jordanian negotiators, "couldn't have gone better," Abella said.

"The ambassador was very pleased with events and called it 'the beginning of the beginning' of open communications between our respective communities," Abella said.

He also stressed that there were no fundamental differences between Israeli and

Jordanian positions in the negotiations between the two countries, "only those pertaining to things like water rights."

Abella said Khalifeh was so optimistic about a peace settlement between Israel and Jordan that he promised he would open his home to a reception for Jewish leaders when it happens.

Abella described the Jordanian envoy as "very knowledgeable about our community."

Abella said the ambassador had promised to try to arrange a trip to Jordan for him to coincide with a planned CJC meeting to be held next month in Israel.

Other members of the CJC delegation who met with the Jordanian ambassador were the group's national executive chairman, Charles Zalona; its national legal affairs committee chairman, Moshe Ronen; national director of communications and Israel affairs, Mike Cohen; and director of legislative analysis, Eric Vernon.

The Canadian Jewish Congress is not the first organized Canadian Jewish communal organization to meet with the Jordanians. B'nai Brith Canada met with King Hussein in Calgary, Alberta, when the monarch visited Canada in October 1989.

ETHIOPIA ASKS ISRAEL TO HALT BID FOR FALASH MORA ALIYAH

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Nov. 11 (JTA) -- The Ethiopian government has asked Israel to cease its aliyah activities in Addis Ababa on behalf of the Falash Mora, Ethiopian Christians who are converted from or are descendants of converts from Judaism.

A senior government official has formally advised the Israeli Embassy in the Ethiopian capital that Israel's activities among the Falash Mora constitute a serious infringement of Ethiopian sovereignty, according to a report in the Israeli daily Ha'aretz.

The official reportedly said the Ethiopian government considers the Falash Mora to be full Ethiopian citizens and subjects.

The Israelis have been working with the Falash Mora after agonizing debates about whether Israel should bring Christians to live here and under what circumstances.

The Israeli government decided to bring those Falash Mora who have direct family ties to Ethiopian Jews now living in Israel. Efforts are being made to bring the Falash Mora back to Judaism.

According to the newspaper report, a harsh conversation took place this week between an Ethiopian official, Hassan Shiffa, and Guy Ravid, the Israeli official in charge of working with the Falash Mora.

The Ethiopian official complained about ad hoc Israeli missions going to Addis Ababa and the province of Gondar on behalf of Israeli immigration and absorption authorities to check immigration applications by Falash Mora.

"We cannot accept that a foreign government determines the nationality of Ethiopian citizens," Shiffa reportedly said.

Ha'aretz described Shiffa as the strongman of the current Ethiopian government.

The newspaper reported that Foreign Ministry sources think this turn of events can be attributed to a particular incident that took place during an Interior Ministry mission some weeks ago.

Shiffa reportedly told Ravid that the Falash

Mora problem is not limited to the 130-odd families who have so far moved to Israel but that it "could affect millions of people."

There have been reports that tremendous numbers of Ethiopians believe themselves to be descendants of Jews and would like the same considerations that the Falash Mora are receiving.

SPANISH KING'S VISIT TO ISRAEL TERMED AN OUTSTANDING SUCCESS

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Nov. 11 (JTA) -- King Juan Carlos and Queen Sofia of Spain left Israel on Thursday following a state visit that Foreign Ministry officials called an outstanding success.

The seven agreements of cooperation signed during the visit are being seen as the foundation for extensive future economic cooperation between the two countries.

The king, at a farewell ceremony at President Ezer Weizman's official residence, said his visit had been "filled not only with success but with great enjoyment and great interest."

"I hope that our relations will go on increasing the cooperation of both countries and I hope both countries will know each other better," the monarch said.

"Your visit here, your majesty," Weizman replied, "adds confidence to the people of Israel and to the leaders of Israel that we're not as alone as we were for many years, that we now have come of age and are part of the big world."

During his stay, the king was awarded an honorary doctorate of philosophy by Hebrew University, where he and the queen received a standing ovation.

The degree was presented for the king's "efforts on behalf of his nation and his contribution to the renewal of the dialogue between the peoples of Israel and Spain."

After receiving the award, the king called on students throughout Israel to follow the road to peace that began in Madrid in 1991.

Analysts say the king's visit here will make a significant impression on public opinion in the Arab world, with which Spain traditionally has had close ties.

During his three-day visit, Juan Carlos also attended the signing of an agreement of cooperation between the Israeli and Spanish industrialists' associations.

Afterward, he said recent diplomatic developments in the region had raised hopes of a new and stable Middle East where the private sector would play a pivotal role.

Israeli industrialists said they believe that, within the European Community, Spain will help fight the Arab boycott of Israel, will have a positive influence on the Israeli-E.C. agreement and on Israel's participation in Middle East projects by the E.C.

RABIN MEETS NEW YORK'S NEW MAYOR

NEW YORK, Nov. 11 (JTA) -- Rudolph Giuliani, New York's newly elected mayor, accepted an invitation from Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to visit Israel again.

The two discussed the electoral upsets that brought them each to power.

"He said people wanted to see government moving and changing," Giuliani recounted after the meeting Thursday. "He was the benefit of it last year."

OUTSIDE PRESSURE ON GERMANY COMBATS XENOPHOBIA, GERMANS SAY

By Ruth E. Gruber

FRANKFURT, Nov. 11 (JTA) -- Outside pressure is one way to combat rising nationalism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism in Germany, Jews and non-Jews in several German cities told a visiting American interfaith group this week.

"Politicians and churches (in Germany) should know that outside Germany, people are talking of what is going on in this country," Ignatz Bubis, the leader of Germany's Jewish community, told a delegation from the Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding of Sacred Heart University in Fairfield, Conn.

"We need you from the outside," Benjamin Ortmeyer, a Frankfurt schoolteacher long engaged in anti-racist activities, told the 12-member delegation at another meeting.

Pressure from non-Germans "makes Germans think about what is going on inside the country," Ortmeyer said.

"If the outside world sees what is going on and then goes home and describes it, then good. We need this pressure. Outside pressure encourages people in combatting neo-Nazism," he said.

The interfaith group -- led by Rabbi Jack Bemporad, director of the center, and Anthony Cernero, the university president -- arrived in Germany on Monday for a weeklong series of meetings with Jewish leaders, academics, Christians involved in interfaith dialogue and other public figures.

Bemporad called for "more understanding" by both Christians and Jews.

Jews should be aware "of what is taking place among Christians" and "Christians have to know what is going on outside," he said.

"We hope to establish close connections between our center and centers of Jewish-Christian dialogue" in Germany, he said.

'I Will Do Everything In My Power'

In addition to fact-finding meetings with Jewish representatives, the U.S. group met with a number of Christians and Jews involved in interfaith dialogue and education in Germany.

They included members of the International Council of Christians and Jews, including its president, Martin Stohr, as well as individuals involved in educational programs at various educational levels.

The interfaith group also attended two ceremonies in Frankfurt marking the 55th anniversary of Kristallnacht, Nov. 9-10, 1938, when the Nazis launched the first Holocaust pogrom.

The ceremonies -- one in the city's ornate, reconstructed synagogue and the other, an hour later, in the municipal ceremony hall of the Paul's Church -- were among scores of observances held around Germany marking the event.

The day Nov. 9, 1938 "was the end of the beginning," American Holocaust historian Raul Hilberg told the audience at the municipal ceremony in Frankfurt.

"Building the gas chambers was the beginning of the end," he said.

At both Frankfurt ceremonies, Mayor Andreas von Scholer compared the current rise of nationalism, xenophobia and neo-Nazism with the rise of Nazism before World War II.

"I will do everything in my power as mayor to act so that right-wing extremism does not spread," he told the audience in the synagogue.

REPARATIONS SHOULD NOT LIMIT U.S. BENEFITS, CONGRESS SAYS

By Steven Weiss

WASHINGTON, Nov. 11 (JTA) -- Members of Congress have gone to bat for a Holocaust survivor who nearly lost her subsidized housing because she received reparations from Germany.

They came to the aid of Fanny Schlomowitz, 83, who lives in federally subsidized housing in Phoenix. Her rent more than tripled when the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development discovered that she was receiving war reparations.

Legislation discussed at a congressional hearing Wednesday would require federal agencies to ignore reparations received by Holocaust survivors in calculations for federal aid.

"Reparations payments are not meant to be full and adequate compensation for Holocaust survivors," said Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.), who introduced the House version of the bill.

"It is unacceptable for these payments to diminish survivors' eligibility for aid under any federal programs," Waxman said at a hearing of the House Governmental Operations subcommittee on human resources and intergovernmental affairs.

Schlomowitz, who had been badly injured by Nazi beatings in the ghetto in Budapest, won a battle in March with HUD officials, who promptly returned her rent to its normal level.

Wednesday's subcommittee hearing featured testimony by representatives of Jewish groups and a HUD official, all of whom spoke in favor of the bill.

The four-member subcommittee appeared "supportive" of the legislation, said Michael Lieberman, associate director of the Anti-Defamation League, which has pledged to work to support the bill in Congress.

The bill is expected to reach the House floor in early December, according to a Waxman aide.

JEWISH VETERANS LEADER TELLS CLINTON U.S. MUST FIND CAUSE OF GULF ILLNESS

By Steven Weiss

WASHINGTON, Nov. 11 (JTA) -- The head of a Jewish veterans group has told President Clinton that the government must work to find the cause of strange illnesses that have seriously disabled many veterans of the Persian Gulf War.

"The American government must acknowledge and seriously commit in working to find a solution to what is known as the 'Persian Gulf War Syndrome,'" Edward Blatt, the national commander of Jewish War Veterans, said Thursday at a Veterans Day breakfast held at the White House.

"The federal government must not ignore the fact that our troops were sickened by Iraqi chemical and/or biological agents," Blatt said.

Sources estimate that several thousand American troops have complained of symptoms including lethargy, confusion and skin rashes since returning from the war.

While a growing number of veterans attribute the syndrome to possible exposure to chemical weapons, the government has refused to blame the illness on any specific source.

"We believe that if Persian Gulf veterans show any symptoms" of the syndrome, "then they should be treated with no questions asked," said Michelle Spivak Kelley, national director of communications for the Jewish War Veterans.

AS MORE ISRAELIS FALL INTO POVERTY, LABOR MINISTER HAS PLANS FOR REVERSAL

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Nov. 11 (JTA) -- As more Israelis, especially children and the elderly, are falling into poverty, Israel's labor minister has announced that she will propose means to try to redress the worrisome trend.

Armed with a sheaf of statistical evidence, Ora Namir, minister of labor and social affairs, disclosed this week that some 616,500 Israelis were living in poverty in 1992, a figure up 9.7 percent over the previous year.

Even more troubling was the increased number of children living below the poverty line -- 261,700 in 1992, up 11.6 percent over 1991.

Namir said her proposal to ease the situation would cost 410 million shekels, the equivalent of some \$140 million.

Her plan includes an increase in child allowances for poor families allotted by the National Insurance Institute.

She also said her plan would help reduce the erosion of benefits to pensioners.

While 14.9 percent of Israeli families were living below the poverty line in 1991, their numbers increased last year to 16.9 percent.

Some 21,700 families slid below the poverty line in 1992, bringing the number of families classified as poor up to 174,000.

The Labor Ministry's definition of poverty, as of Nov. 1, is an income of no more than 791 shekels, some \$270, for one person; 1,672 shekels, or \$570, for a couple; 2,022 shekels, or \$690, for a couple with two children; and 2,369 shekels, the equivalent of \$808, for a couple with three children.

By comparison, Israel's gross minimum wage is 1,397 shekels, equal to \$477.

Impact On The Elderly

Namir noted that the two groups hurting the most are the elderly and an increasing number of families with four children or more.

She said that the gradual erosion of pensions in the past three years is the main factor impoverishing the elderly.

The percentage of elderly people living in poverty rose from 13.7 percent in 1991 to 18.5 percent last year.

Some 11,700 elderly households fell below the poverty line in 1992, bringing the number up 36 percent, to 44,200 households.

The number of large families under the poverty line also jumped 36 percent, from 19,200 families in 1991 to 26,200 in 1992.

But new immigrant families have improved their lot.

While 34.6 percent of new immigrant families were under the poverty line in 1991, their numbers had fallen to 29.5 percent last year.

Officials and Israelis in general were shocked by the figures released.

Likud Knesset members blamed the current Labor government for the problem and announced they would introduce no-confidence motions in the parliament and call for the government's immediate resignation because of the "shocking state of affairs."

But their complaints were silenced as soon as Labor Ministry spokespersons pointed out that the figures Namir was presenting referred to the 1991-1992 period, during which the Likud government was in power.

THE JEWS OF AZERBAIJAN ENJOY FREEDOM, REPUBLIC LEADER SAYS

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Nov. 11 (JTA) -- The Jews of Azerbaijan have full freedom of religion, the republic's president, Heydar Aliyev, assured a visiting delegation this week.

That message, to the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, was reinforced in a meeting with the chief Muslim cleric of the former Soviet republic, which is largely Muslim and borders Iran.

"Any relations that Azerbaijan may develop with Iran will not effect the friendly relations with the Jews of Azerbaijan," said the religious leader, Hadj Alla Pashazade, according to a participant in the meeting.

The delegation, headed by JDC President Milton Wolf, was visiting at the request of the Azerbaijani president.

The JDC helps support two synagogues in the capital city of Baku, as well as the central Club of Jewish Culture, Club Aleph.

Since 1989, 16,000 Jews have left the country for Israel, but 30,000 remain.

The president said the Jews who left were not fleeing the state, as in other Soviet republics, but were being reunified with their families.

Azerbaijani Jews, he said, are "free and respected and live equal life without any limitations."

For the president, as well as members of the Jewish community, a central concern was the war in Nagorno-Karabakh, the Armenian enclave in the middle of Azerbaijan.

Throughout Baku, the JDC visitors would see widows and bereaved mothers dressed in black. A central park has been turned into a cemetery, with thousands of new graves bearing photographs of the deceased soldiers.

In their meetings, the JDC officials were urged to inform the world of the "tragedy" of the war.

Wolf pledged immediate humanitarian aid, which will begin with a shipment of \$10,000 worth of hard-to-obtain medicines for the hospitals.

For the JDC officials, the simple act of exchanging gifts was a window into the world on the border between the former Soviet Union and the Middle East.

They brought kiddush cups as a gift for the president -- a former communist KGB general -- and received, in turn, a tea set. They gave a silver-encased shofar to the cleric. He responded that his Islamic training had included the study of Talmud, and he that knew about the shofar and the Jewish holidays. He presented Wolf with a Azeri-language Koran and prayer rugs.

And from the Jews, some of whom traveled 500 miles for the Monday meeting, the visitors received as gifts swords, daggers and bayonets.

FRIENDLIER SKIES FOR ISRAELI AIRLINE

TEL AVIV, Nov. 11 (JTA) -- Israel's domestic airline announced that it has already signed agreements with agents in Amman, Beirut and Damascus for air services to begin the moment peace breaks out.

Arkia said it has agreements to supply all ground and refueling arrangements and already has drawn up plans for regular services from Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and other Israeli cities to Amman and Aqaba in Jordan, and Damascus and Beirut.