

**DUAL MISSIONS FOR CHRISTOPHER
ON NEXT MISSION TO MIDDLE EAST**

By David Landau and Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Nov. 23 (JTA) -- When U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher travels to the Middle East in the second week of December, he will attempt to accomplish two things.

First, he will launch an effort to put the Washington-based bilateral talks between Israel and its Arab neighbors back on track.

Second, he will seek to ensure that all the details of the self-rule accord signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization are completed by Dec. 13, when the PLO is scheduled to assume authority in the Gaza Strip and West Bank town of Jericho.

The bilateral talks were relegated to a back burner this fall following the success of secret negotiations in Oslo, Norway, earlier this year that led to the historic signing of the Israeli-PLO self-rule accord in September.

The resumption of the talks, particularly with Syria, is seen as the key to the establishment of a comprehensive peace in the region.

Israel's negotiations with Syria have been in limbo for months, prompting officials of the Clinton administration to urge Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to resume the talks with Damascus.

Rabin, who met with President Clinton two weeks ago in Washington, told his Cabinet on Monday that he is ready to negotiate with "whoever is ready to negotiate with us" -- an apparent reference to Syrian President Hafez Assad.

Some ministers and observers saw the statement as a shift from the prime minister's previous preference to conclude the implementation of the self-rule accord with the PLO before turning his attention to neighboring states.

Rabin, just back from a 10-day visit to North America, was quoted as telling ministers that he, like Christopher, was worried by the suspension of the Washington talks.

But in return for the "full peace" Rabin would like to establish with Syria, he will likely have to make concessions for a return of at least part of the Golan Heights -- a touchy subject on the Israeli domestic front.

Jordan Ready For Practical Accords

Rabin meanwhile has apparently managed to defuse a threat from Labor hard-liners to join the Likud party in a bid to pass legislation that would limit the government's right to negotiate withdrawal on the Golan Heights.

Assad's displeasure with Israel's signing of a separate agreement with the PLO, along with his insistence that only a comprehensive regional peace will succeed, has had its effect on Jordan.

Jordan has shown clear signs of reluctance to go ahead with a formal peace treaty with Israel as long as the Israeli-Syrian track remains paralyzed.

But at the same time, King Hussein and his brother, Crown Prince Hassan, who has acted on behalf of the king, are easing up on their former refusal to allow economic agreements and other practical elements of a normalization of relations to develop between Jordan and Israel.

The king is understood to have told Assad,

when they met in Damascus on Sunday, that while he will hold off on a formal peace agreement with Israel, he will allow these practical elements to grow and take shape.

It is not clear yet how this new Jordanian policy will play out.

Last week, a high-level group of Jordanian businessmen visited Israel and met openly with leaders in the public and private sectors.

And in the various multilateral talks, Israeli representatives have encountered a new openness on the part of the Jordanians.

This despite a decision by the Arab League, which held an ambassador-level meeting Monday, to continue the Arab boycott against Israel pending the conclusion of a comprehensive peace settlement.

Regarding Christopher's second goal -- to ensure the successful implementation of the Israeli-PLO accord -- Israeli and Palestinian sources were reporting good progress midweek on arrangements for the withdrawal and redeployment of the Israel Defense Force in Gaza, but less satisfactory progress regarding Jericho.

The talks between Israel and the PLO resumed Tuesday in Cairo. The resumption had been delayed a day so that Rabin, upon his return from his trip to the United States and Canada, could meet with the Israeli negotiators and give them new instructions.

Several Outstanding Differences

The talks reopened the same day Foreign Minister Shimon Peres arrived in Athens amid speculation he would meet with Yasser Arafat, who was scheduled to arrive the following day.

The PLO reportedly has requested a high-level meeting to resolve disagreements over security arrangements, but Israeli officials insisted on such meeting was on the foreign minister's schedule.

Meanwhile, the chief Israeli negotiator in Cairo, Maj. Gen. Amnon Shahak, observed there are differences that remain to be worked out in Cairo.

These include how the Palestinian and Israeli police forces will coordinate their activities to apprehend terrorists, and the type and frequency of Israeli military patrols around Jewish settlements.

There is also disagreement over Israel's insistence on controlling all border crossings and on the Palestinians' insistence that thousands more prisoners be released before any agreement is signed.

Also yet to be determined are the dimensions of the autonomous area surrounding Jericho.

Another set of talks opened the same day in the Sinai town of El Arish. They will focus on the civilian transfer of authority to the Palestinians and are expected to be much smoother than the security talks.

In the Gaza Strip on Monday and Tuesday, PLO military officers toured with local dignitaries in what was the first step toward the gradual deployment of a Palestinian police force.

The PLO says it is moving units of its Palestine Liberation Army from Yemen, Tunisia and other Arab states to Egypt to undergo training for their role as police.

SHAMIR, NOW FEISTY IN THE OPPOSITION, ACCUSES GOVERNMENT OF 'DESPERATION'

By Larry Yudelson

NEW YORK, Nov. 23 (JTA) -- Former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir has charged the Israeli government with "a desperate bid to preserve their power" in reaching an accord with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Shamir charged the government with acting "hastily under pressure that was self-induced."

"My generation remembers the other occasion when peace in our time was welcomed with great enthusiasm," he said. "This is the real tragedy -- and it is a terrible thing to say -- that our government may yet place its domestic interests above the national."

Speaking before the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations in New York on Tuesday, Shamir appeared lively and in a good mood, a year and a half after his Likud government was defeated in the elections that brought Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to power.

While Shamir has since yielded his position as Likud party head in favor of a younger generation, he has been working to rally opposition to the peace accord with the PLO in Israel and now in the United States.

Shamir said he was violating his principles against criticizing Israel's government abroad "only because my colleagues and I are convinced we are facing extraordinary circumstances."

This distinction left one opponent of American Jewish criticism of the Israeli government unimpressed.

"That's exactly what Peace Now said," in justifying its criticism, said Abraham Foxman, national director of the Anti-Defamation League.

Shamir warned that the agreement reached with the PLO "places everything we have created in Israel in great trouble. And if this is the case, it concerns every friend of Israel, every Jew, and everyone who cares."

Shamir said that if his Likud party returns to power, the new government "will find a way to get out" from the agreement with the PLO, which he said he hoped would be "abrogated."

'It Is A Terrible Mistake'

While Rabin and others have placed the peace accord in the context of a changing world, Shamir said the changes made the return of territories and the recognition of the PLO all the less necessary.

"In the past, when we had pressure to make peace and pay for peace with territory, it was a time when the Soviet Union was still a world power.

"Our situation is far better than it was 20 or 30 years ago. The Soviet Union doesn't exist anymore and Israel is not anymore threatened by any war on the part of the Arab countries," he said.

"We have decided to take this step without any pressure," he said, "and it is a terrible mistake."

For Shamir, the battle with the Arabs has been one of stamina. He did not worry about tiring from the continuing conflict.

"The moment we will get tired will be a very dangerous and tragic moment for us. The question is, who will be the first to get tired, we or the Arabs," he said.

"And it was crucial for us not to be the first to be tired, never to be tired.

"We have to defend ourselves, have to protect ourselves, until the Arabs come to the conclusion that through terrorism they will not get anything."

Shamir said, "The people of Israel must do everything to secure the future of the settlements, because they safeguard the Jewish hold on our most sacred places, (which) symbolize Jewish opposition to foreign rule on our land.

"It is up to us to give every support to the settlements, so they will still be deeply entrenched and don't have to rely on favors of people who are against their very existence. The stronger the settlements will be, the harder it will be for the Arabs and their supporters to remove them."

PERES IS IN GREECE ON FIRST TRIP BY AN ISRAELI FOREIGN MINISTER

By Jean Cohen

ATHENS, Nov. 23 (JTA) -- Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres arrived here Tuesday on the first leg of a visit to several European capitals this week.

Peres' visit here, which was planned to last a little more than a day, is the first ever to be made by an Israeli foreign minister.

During his stay, Peres met with Greek Prime Minister Andreas Papandreou, who was just returned to power; Foreign Minister Karolos Papoulias; and with the deputy foreign minister in charge of European Community affairs, Theodore Pangalos.

The visit is particularly important because Papandreou, in his earlier stint as prime minister, maintained a government that was hostile to Israel and laudatory of the Palestinian cause.

Peres and Pangalos held a joint news conference at which Pangalos said that Greece, which will be presiding over the E.C. starting in January, will do everything it can -- including providing financial aid -- to facilitate the self-rule accord signed by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization in September.

But the real question on everyone's minds here was whether Peres will meet with PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat, who was scheduled to arrive here on Wednesday shortly before Peres leaves the Greek capital.

At a news conference following his meeting with Papandreou, Peres said, "We don't have any plans to meet, but we are in permanent contact. So when we need to meet, why not?"

"We are in touch by telephone and by meetings, so there is nothing unusual about it, but it is not in the program," Peres said.

Pressed further about whether Israeli, Palestinian or Greek officials were urging such a meeting, Peres said, "No, no. Both of us are great travelers, so occasionally we cross each other at the same place. But there must be a special need to meet, and right now there is no need for it."

When Peres was asked by an Arab correspondent why Israel is unwilling to return the entire Golan Heights in order to establish a peace agreement with Syria, he replied, "What Syria calls peace is a peace with no embassies, no free trade and no security arrangements."

Prior to his departure Wednesday, Peres was to meet with the Jewish leadership here and with Constantine Mitsotakis, the former Greek prime minister, who made diplomatic ties with Israel a priority.

MOSSAD REPRISAL FOR '72 MASSACRE CONFIRMED IN ISRAEL TV INTERVIEW

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Nov. 23 (JTA) -- A member of Israel's intelligence community has confirmed for the first time that the Mossad assassinated several Palestinian terrorists in reprisal for the murder of 11 Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympic games in September 1972.

The disclosure that the Israeli government had approved the assassination of 10 to 15 terrorists by the country's foreign intelligence service was made by reserve Maj. Gen. Aharon Yariv in an interview broadcast Monday on Israel Television.

Yariv, who is currently head of Tel Aviv University's Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies, was at the time of the Munich massacre an adviser on terrorism for then-Prime Minister Golda Meir.

According to Yariv, Meir had full knowledge of the assassinations and had approved them.

Yariv was unavailable for interviews following the broadcast. He is recovering from the effects of a stroke.

The interview, which had been conducted more than a year ago, had been delayed by military censorship, according to Israel Television.

But the producers of the interview said censorship had nothing to do with the delay.

They said the interview aired now to upstage the BBC, which is planning to broadcast a documentary called "An Eye for an Eye" about the Mossad's activities following the Munich massacre.

According to the producers, Israeli authorities apparently preferred to broadcast the Yariv interview in advance of what may be a slanted and sensational version produced by the BBC.

In the interview, Yariv said that Meir had agreed to the assassination plans only with the greatest reluctance and had stressed that they were to be carried out at close range "to reduce the risk of any mistake and harm to family members or passers-by."

Yariv named a dozen victims, describing how they had been identified and killed by trained Mossad operatives working throughout Europe.

Can't Get Away With Murder

Meir was unhappy about ordering Mossad operations to be carried out in friendly countries, but had agreed that "Palestinian terrorists cannot be allowed to get away with the murder of Israeli civilians just because they are Jews," Yariv said.

The targets were all senior officials of the terrorist Black September group, which had claimed responsibility for the Munich massacre.

Many were close associates and friends of Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat. The assassinations prompted many senior PLO officials to change their residences virtually every day.

Yariv admitted that the only real failure had been the killing of a Moroccan waiter in Lillehammer, Norway, in July 1973, when Mossad operatives mistook him for their intended target.

The Mossad team was later picked up by the Norwegian police and its members were sentenced to prison terms for illegal activities on Norwegian territory.

"I was in shock when I learned that we had slipped up," said Yariv.

The intended target had been Ali Hassan Salame, the most-wanted man on Mossad's hit list,

who was the head of Black September and a close associate of Arafat.

Yariv said the waiter "could have been an identical twin of the target."

Salame was later killed in a 1982 bomb explosion in Beirut. The Mossad team that had infiltrated the Lebanese capital and carried out the assassination escaped after the incident.

NEO-FASCISTS NOW ITALY'S FAVORITE FOLLOWING LATEST MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, Nov. 23 (JTA) -- As a result of Sunday's local elections in Italy, the country's neo-fascists are now Italy's most popular party.

In an interesting twist, the party that came in a close second is that of the former Communists.

The elections, involving hundreds of communities and 11 million voters, were a watershed event that saw the collapse of the centrist parties that had long ruled Italy and have been heavily discredited in a 21-month-long corruption scandal.

Voters turned their backs with a vengeance on the longtime ruling parties, the Christian Democrats and the Socialists.

Instead they voted for the extremes: for the former Communists and other leftist parties, and for the far right, primarily the neo-fascist Italian Social Movement, known here as the MSI.

One of the most newsworthy electoral races was that for mayor of Naples, where the late dictator Benito Mussolini's flamboyant 31-year-old granddaughter, Alessandra Mussolini, gathered enough votes to participate in a runoff election.

In the Dec. 5 runoff, Alessandra Mussolini, who is also a niece of the actress Sophia Loren, will be pitted against leftist candidate Antonio Bassolino. In Sunday's vote, Mussolini received 29.7 percent of the vote while Bassolino received 48.5 percent.

In the Rome mayoral race, MSI national leader Gianfranco Fini also won enough votes to be in a runoff election.

He was locked in an unexpectedly neck-and-neck race for mayor of the Eternal City against Francesco Rutelli, who is supported by a coalition of leftist parties.

The scope of neo-fascist success in the elections was much greater than anticipated and has stunned many observers.

For most of its history, the MSI has been relegated to the political fringe, catering to fascist nostalgia and barred from any active role in government.

It has links with far-right parties in other countries, such as France's National Front. Skinheads routinely attend MSI rallies, giving the fascist salute.

"Italy has shown once again that a democratic turn toward the right is sweeping Europe," German right-wing leader Franz Schonhuber told MSI supporters in a congratulatory message.

Some analysts said the 50 years between Italy today and Benito Mussolini's defeat also played a role in the MSI success.

"More than an attraction, this is the end of a repulsion," sociologist Domenico De Masi told the newspaper *Il Messaggero*.

"Anyone 20 years old is too far away from the fascist era. Indeed, even his 40-year-old parents have only heard stories about those days. And in two generations, the past is canceled out," he said.

FOCUS ON ISSUES:
CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT IS FOCUSING ON STRENGTHENING OBSERVANCE LEVEL

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. (JTA) -- Conservative Judaism is turning back to tradition, judging by a recent convention of the movement's congregational arm.

After years of breaking new ground in such areas as allowing the rabbinic ordination of women, the Conservative movement is putting new emphasis on strengthening its members' commitment to observance of halacha, or Jewish law.

Nearly every speaker invited to address the recent conference here of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism spoke, in one way or another, about observance and educating congregants about Jewish tradition.

"We are moving to a recommitment to what Conservative Judaism stands for," Rabbi Jerome Epstein, executive vice president of United Synagogue, said in an interview.

"We're prepared to deal with the idea of returning to serious Jewish living, realizing we can't be all things to all people and maintain our integrity," he said.

His constituents seemed to agree.

Despite the lure of sunny Florida weather, the roughly 800 congregation presidents, board members and rabbis who attended the biennial convention here last week crowded into conference rooms to listen to speaker after speaker talk about various aspects of observance.

In informal interviews, the congregants attending the convention from all over North America said that issues that have recently riven the Conservative movement, such as whether homosexuals are fit to be clergy, are not high on the list of priorities of their synagogues.

Instead, they were hungry to learn about Jewish tradition, about effective adult and family education within the synagogue, and about inspiring their fellow congregants to be more committed to observance.

Most sessions were standing room only.

There were sessions on "Spirituality Through Mitzvot," or following the commandments, and workshops on such topics as tzedakah (charity), bikur cholim (visiting the sick) and tefillin, the phylacteries donned every weekday morning by observant Jews for prayers.

Range Of Observance Is Wide

There was a lunchtime mitzvah fair, in which booths lining a large banquet hall had people demonstrating, among other things, how to tie tzitzit, the ritual fringes worn by observant Jews to remind them of God's commandments, and how to put up a sukkah, the booth erected outside one's home during the holiday of Sukkot.

Conservative Judaism faces a paradox as old as the movement itself.

According to the Council of Jewish Federations' 1990 National Jewish Population Study, more synagogue-affiliated Jews identify with the Conservative movement than with any other. Yet only a small minority of the movement's estimated 1.5 million members live even semi-observantly.

The movement itself estimates that only about 10 or 15 percent of its synagogue members keep kosher and attend Shabbat services regularly.

According to a congregant at one workshop session, "Our congregational leaders are not shomer Shabbat or shomer kashrut, and the rabbis

keep quiet on this. Where the rabbi is afraid to speak about God or halacha from the bimah (pulpit), it is no wonder that the congregation becomes wishy-washy."

Even among the synagogue presidents and senior board members attending the convention, the range of observance was wide.

One synagogue president from Tennessee proudly reported that he and his wife attend Friday night Shabbat services with friends and then all go out to dinner together. Others described themselves as completely Sabbath observant.

The core of the problem, said congregants and organization leaders, is education.

"We don't know who we are," said Erica Raphael, president of Congregation Ohr Kodesh in Chevy Chase, Md. "Our laypeople are so uneducated about what Conservative Judaism is that they don't know what the rules are."

Congregation members and United Synagogue leaders acknowledged that their synagogues are losing members to Reform temples, which make participation easier for their congregants by having shorter Hebrew-school programs, for example, and making few demands in terms of observance.

A Guide For The Committed

"Halacha is not a marketing tool," said Epstein. "Halacha must remain a guide for those who wish to be committed, rather than a reflection of current popular opinion," he said in his speech to the convention.

"Parents constantly ask us to meet their needs. 'Lower the educational standards!' 'Shorten the number of hours of religious school!' 'Have more informal activities instead of religious school!' And, in frustration, we often succumb to the pressure," he said.

"We are afraid that if we don't respond positively, we will lose control and that parents won't send their children to our religious school. But when we lower our standards," he said, "we deceive our congregants."

"We cannot do more with less. We will not build Jewish identity and create Jews who live Jewish lives by reducing that which we give our children," he said.

"We must not demean who we are in order to make ourselves more popular."

In an interview, Epstein said that "we're not in business to create a higher 'bottom line' at the end of the year," in terms of our increasing number of congregants or number of affiliated congregations.

"Our mission is to change people, by not always giving them what they want, but what they need," he said.

He said that the direction United Synagogue is moving in is to emphasize the standards of Conservative Judaism to its constituents. "Over the years we've been afraid to set demands of people, but there is a difference between setting expectations and demanding," he said.

"When you don't get the expectation, people don't do anything. I wish our synagogues would express more disappointment when people don't do" things the way they should, he said.

Because of the U.S. holiday of Thanksgiving, the JTA Daily News Bulletin will not be published Friday, Nov. 26.