

**RABIN AFFIRMS PURSUIT OF PEACE
IN ADDRESS TO JEWISH LEGISLATORS**

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Dec. 14 (JTA) -- Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin this week told an international group of Jewish legislators that he would not be deterred from his pursuit of peace, noting that there was no alternative but to continue his initiatives.

"Israel has two options," he said. "To live in peace, or to continue living with threats of war, violence and terror. Unfortunately, there is no third option."

But "we would like to see the defense line along the Jordan River," he said, and not on the old West Bank borders.

Rabin made the remarks in his office Tuesday to a group of some 30 Jewish members of the parliaments of more than 20 different countries.

While Rabin spoke to the legislators of his government's commitment to protect the settlers, he also referred to the strain "the whole structure" of Palestinian self-rule in the territories will place on the Israeli military because the settlements are so spread out in the West Bank.

Rabin warned that he anticipates a rise in the terrorist activities of Hamas and other Islamic rejectionist groups.

He said these attacks yield "the greatest dividend" to the opponents of the peace process because they succeed at "increasing public opposition to the (peace) agreement."

The group of Jewish legislators was in Israel for the Third International Conference of Jewish Parliamentarians, which is sponsored by the Israeli Forum, an organization of Israelis working to strengthen ties between Israel and Diaspora Jews.

Need To Fashion A New Dialogue

The two communities have grown apart in recent decades, said Igal Brightman, chairman of the forum.

There is a danger, he said, that the peace process, by decreasing threats to Israel's survival, "may contribute to our going further apart if we don't (fashion) a new dialogue" and craft a new agenda.

The legislators later met with Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, who also addressed Islamic fundamentalism, calling it "a secular protest hidden in a religious cloak."

He said the only way to combat fundamentalism is by raising the living standards of Palestinians living in the territories, noting that a major reason for the fundamentalists' appeal lies in the marked poverty of Palestinian communities.

Peres also said he was confident the peace process is not overly dependent upon the leaders of the countries involved in the process.

"It does not depend upon leaders, it depends upon policies," he said. "Leaders tend to exaggerate their own roles."

Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.), the sole U.S. legislator attending the conference, drew a distinction between the trips he makes to Israel as a member of U.S. congressional delegations and the Jewish parliamentarians conference.

"With a regular (U.S.) delegation, we are

interested in the latest developments toward peace and the U.S.-Israel relationship.

"A gathering such as this, with Jewish members of parliaments worldwide, gives us the additional perspective of our connection to Israel and to the survival of Jews around the world," said Waxman.

David Berger, a member of the Canadian Parliament, later said he was impressed by "the courage and even serenity" of Rabin and Peres in the face of their political challenges.

He also said he witnessed during his trip "how deeply divided" Israeli society seemed to be over the peace process.

"Even the people who are fairly supportive of it have their fears and concerns and wonder whether the government is going too fast and whether expectations have been too high," he said.

NEWS ANALYSIS:**RABIN SAYS NOT TO HOLD SACRED
DEADLINES FOR TROOP WITHDRAWAL**

By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Dec. 14 (JTA) -- Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin had been warning for weeks that Dec. 13 was "not holy."

Now that the deadline for the start of Israeli withdrawals from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho has come and gone, the Rabin government is anxiously assuring itself and others that the peace process is not in the throes of a major crisis.

"There are no more holy dates," the prime minister declared Sunday, hours after his eve-of-deadline summit in Cairo with Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat.

Arafat had referred to the date for the beginning of Israeli troop withdrawals as "sacred."

Rabin also said that the 10-day reassessment period the two leaders gave themselves before they would meet again in the Egyptian capital was not holy.

"It might be nine days and it might be 11," he said, showing that he knows how to play diplomatic brinkmanship with the best of them.

Despite the stiff upper lip and the word play, the two sides' failure to meet their first rendezvous along the road to peace has naturally introduced an element of concern and uncertainty into Middle East peacemaking.

Sunday's 10-day postponement represented the first serious setback to the self-rule accord since Rabin and Arafat's historic handshake on the lawn of the White House on Sept. 13.

Although Israeli and PLO officials are attempting to dismiss the postponement as being of minor importance, the delay will inevitably provoke further tension and more danger on the ground.

It will give additional opportunities for the rejectionists on both sides to erode public support for the accord.

The Israel Defense Force and other Israeli security forces, at the highest state of alert following Sunday's downturn in Cairo, were poised like a coiled spring throughout the territories as they waited for the next act of terrorism.

Among Israeli rejectionists, the post-Dec. 13 respite is being used by the hard-line right to intensify its public campaign against the government and its peace policy.

A groundbreaking ceremony for the new town of Modi'in on Tuesday turned into a near-riot as demonstrators heckled the prime minister with cries of "Traitor, traitor" and got into a shoving match with his guards.

Modi'in, inside Israel proper and being touted as a bargain in living costs, appears meant to attract people who might otherwise gravitate to the West Bank for affordable housing.

Meanwhile, the Likud has called on Rabin to "recognize the mistake -- and turn back while there is still time."

The Likud was presumably talking about Israel's self-rule accord with the PLO and not the cornerstone-laying at Modi'in.

In a related event, Knesset members from the National Religious Party held a weeklong protest vigil outside Rabin's office, and members of the right-wing Tsomet party vowed to boycott Knesset plenary sessions until the prime minister admits the patent failure of his peace policy.

Wide Gaps Between Israel And PLO

But Rabin was not about to change his course.

In a Cabinet session Monday, during which Rabin briefed his ministers on the summit with Arafat, he spoke firmly of his determination not to back down on the issues of security that have led to the stalemated negotiations with the PLO.

To Rabin, Israeli control of the border crossings between Jericho and Jordan and between Gaza and Egypt -- one of the issues that led to the deadlock -- would not be compromised.

Rabin maintained that the border issue represented the very embodiment of "external security" matters dealt with in explicit terms in the self-rule accord.

He also said that control over the borders should therefore remain in Israel's hands for the duration of the five-year interim period.

As for the size of the Jericho area to fall under Palestinian authority -- another key sticking point in the present impasse -- Rabin seemed to indicate some possible flexibility on his part.

This could mean he would allow his negotiators to hand over more land than the 18 square miles they were previously offering.

But he made it clear he would not agree to Arafat's sweeping demand that the Jericho district comprise an area of some 133 square miles.

Rabin told his Cabinet that he had been surprised by the breadth of the gaps between himself and the PLO chairman.

After all the months of secret negotiations in Oslo, Norway, that led to the accord, and after all the official talks in the wake of the Washington handshake, the two sides are still far apart on key issues.

Arafat, according to Israeli sources, argued that the border crossing points are a matter of national pride for the Palestinians.

Arafat said that Israel, which possesses the lands in question, holds all the cards. It is Israel, therefore, that must make the concessions.

The setback in Cairo has predictably set nasty tongues wagging in government circles.

Foreign Ministry officials said off the record that they could have handled the talks better than Rabin's delegation. They said advance diplomacy should ensure successful summit meetings.

It is better, their reasoning goes, to find some pretext to cancel a summit than to let it go ahead without firm prior assurance of its success.

Rabin's international political reputation, not brilliant before Dec. 13, has hardly been improved by the latest turn of events. Nor will the two leaders be able to strengthen their respective positions by arguing between themselves -- as they did in Cairo -- over which of them is in a deeper political hole.

Essentially, they are in the same hole, and their only escape is to climb out together.

STONE LAID FOR NEW TOWN OF MODI'IN, SEEN AS ALTERNATIVE TO TERRITORIES

By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Dec. 14 (JTA) -- In the Jerusalem hills, halfway between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, the foundation stone has been laid for Modi'in, planned to become Israel's third-largest city.

The city will stand just inside the old "Green Line" on the site where the Maccabees launched their rebellion against the Hasmonean Greeks, for which Chanukah is celebrated.

The ceremony took place Tuesday, the sixth day of Chanukah.

The city will be near a moshav, Me'or Modi'in, founded by Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach and his followers some 20 years ago.

The new city, situated between Ben-Gurion Airport and the pre-1967 border, is being built at the hub of the country's major north-south and east-west road complex.

The cornerstone was laid by Housing Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, at a ceremony attended by Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, a half-dozen Cabinet ministers, Israel's two chief rabbis, a score of foreign ambassadors and many invited guests.

Ben-Eliezer noted that the city is being planned for a population of 250,000. Public tenders for some 4,000 of 65,000 planned housing units have recently been issued.

Modi'in is the first of three new towns to be built at the turn of the millennium that will parallel the coastal plain.

The planned towns are a crucial part of Ben-Eliezer's answer to the growing housing demand in the country's central region and could provide an alternative to the inexpensive housing in the territories.

Housing Ministry officials admit privately that they hope the intended low costs of Modi'in housing will attract many future residents away from the cheap housing that is offered in the West Bank by settler groups for political purposes.

A group of demonstrators, angered that the planned city would compete with West Bank settlements, tried to disrupt the stone-laying ceremony by shouting insults at the prime minister. One threw an empty bottle at the dais where officials were seated but missed Rabin, hitting a bodyguard instead.

Modi'in is said to be one of the world's first new towns being built for the 21st century in terms of services, planning and quality of life.

Its entire infrastructure, for which the Housing Ministry plans to invest \$205 million, will be underground, and an ultramodern city center is intended to contain all commercial, community and education services, including vocational colleges, art schools and a university. Housing and other building is to be financed by private contractors.

IN HISTORIC VOTE, U.N. BACKS ISRAEL IN THE PEACE PROCESS

By Larry Yudelson

UNITED NATIONS, Dec. 14 (JTA) -- For the first time in two decades, the United Nations has thrown its support behind Israel's quest for peace.

It overwhelmingly approved a resolution that welcomed the peace process begun in Madrid in 1991 and expressed full support for the declaration of principles signed between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization in September.

Voting for the resolution on Tuesday were 155 nations, with only Syria, Lebanon and Iran opposing. Libya abstained.

The resolution was introduced by the United States and Russia, cosponsors of the ongoing peace talks, and Norway, which hosted the secret talks between Israel and the PLO.

The language was worked out by Israel, the PLO, Egypt and Jordan. Morocco and Tunisia were among the many cosponsors of the resolution.

"This is the first positive resolution by the General Assembly concerning the Middle East and Israel since the passage of resolutions 242 and 338," said Israeli Ambassador Gad Yaacobi.

He was referring to resolutions passed in the wakes of the Six Day and Yom Kippur Wars, which called for Israel to return territory to its neighbors in exchange for peace and which were the basis for the current peace talks.

The vote was held a day after the scheduled date for Israel to begin withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank slipped by, with implementation of the Israel-PLO accord deadlocked over the details.

Jerusalem, Golan Resolutions Also Passed

In applauding the agreement, the U.N. diverged sharply from its reaction to the Camp David accords Israel signed with Egypt, which the world body repeatedly condemned.

The resolution also supported the agreement between Israel and Jordan on a common negotiating agenda, and urged all parties to implement the agreements reached.

It further urged member states to provide economic, financial and technical assistance to "the Palestinian people" and "states in the region," and to "render support for the peace process."

The resolution concluded by encouraging "regional development and cooperation in the areas where work has already begun within the framework of the Madrid Conference."

Approval for the peace process did not prevent the General Assembly from passing resolutions concerning Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. Those resolutions were opposed by Israel.

The resolution concerning Jerusalem was supported by 141 states, with 11 abstaining, and Israel alone opposed.

Israel received more support on the Golan Heights, reflecting the state of the peace negotiations: 65 states voted for the resolution, 85 abstained, and the United States joined Israel in voting against the resolution.

Despite these defeats, Israeli officials predicted that when the General Assembly concludes voting on the whole package of Middle East resolutions, further diplomatic gains will be evident.

"The General Assembly will overturn, defer and change prior resolutions which are worn-out, negative and irrelevant," Yaacobi predicted.

CHRISTOPHER, BACK FROM MIDEAST, BRIEFS JEWISH LEADERS ON HIS TRIP

By Deborah Kalb

WASHINGTON, Dec. 14 (JTA) -- Secretary of State Warren Christopher wasted no time this week in updating Jewish leaders on his recent, eventful Middle East trip.

Christopher held a 45-minute meeting Monday with two leaders of the influential American Israel Public Affairs Committee: Steven Grossman, the group's president, and Howard Kohr, its acting executive director.

"He was anxious to share his perceptions," Grossman said in an interview, "and anxious to learn how the community was reacting to some of the news events in the region."

The meeting, initiated by the State Department, came at a crucial time for Israel, which is poised to begin implementation of its autonomy agreement with the Palestinians.

In addition, Israel and its Arab negotiating partners will be returning here next month to continue the long-stalled Washington-based peace talks, and President Clinton will be meeting with Syrian President Hafez Assad.

Grossman said Christopher expressed hope that the upcoming meeting in Geneva between Clinton and Assad would set the stage for progress in the peace talks.

The secretary reaffirmed that the Clinton administration currently had no plans to remove Syria from the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism as long as Syria continues providing shelter to terrorist groups, Grossman said.

Grossman said that he and Kohr emphasized to Christopher the importance of direct negotiations between the parties, as opposed to the United States pressuring Israel to make concessions.

He said the secretary agreed on the importance of direct talks.

Rabin-Christopher Relationship Has Grown

Grossman said he was struck by the warmth with which Christopher described his relations with Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.

"As the relationship has grown between the secretary and Rabin, so the mutual trust between the two of them has been enhanced," the AIPAC president said.

Christopher confirmed to Grossman and Kohr the accuracy of a New York Times story Monday that Israel and Morocco were on the verge of establishing closer economic ties.

And the secretary also said he was expecting acceleration in economic relations between Israel and Tunisia in the months ahead.

Grossman said the secretary told the AIPAC leaders that he was continuing to push Arab leaders to end their economic boycott against Israel.

Christopher has been working to maintain his dialogue with American Jewish leaders.

In October, he initiated a series of meetings on Middle Eastern issues with leaders of AIPAC and other groups.

In other AIPAC news, the group announced this week that it has hired a top fund-raiser, Joseph Brodecki, to work as national director of policy and development.

Brodecki directed the successful fund-raising campaign for the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, which raised over \$190 million.

2,000 JEWS STILL IN BELGRADE ARE SUFFERING, GROUP IS TOLD

By Ruth E. Gruber

ROME, Dec. 14 (JTA) -- The Jewish community in Belgrade needs the moral as well as material support of Jews worldwide as it struggles to carry on an active Jewish life against the background of war in the former Yugoslavia, according to a representative of the community.

Tamara Stainer-Popovic, director of cultural and educational activities at the Belgrade Jewish Community, made her appeal at a weekend seminar of the World Confederation of Jewish Communities, held in Rome.

"There has to be communication with world Jewry," she later told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency in an interview. "We never needed them like we do now."

She said the Belgrade community, the largest in the former Yugoslavia, with about 2,000 members ranging from young children to elderly Holocaust survivors, is "living two realities."

"We are reopening a Jewish kindergarten, we have teen-agers eager to learn about Judaism and we are planning to begin a Jewish Sunday school program," she said.

In addition, she said, a Belgrade man, Izak Eigenbach, is being trained in Israel to be a rabbi and is expected to take up his position in about one year.

Belgrade's current rabbi, Cadik Danon, is elderly.

"But all this is happening against the background of the war and the sanctions; life in the community is going on, parallel with the sanctions," she said.

The sanctions imposed by the United Nations have stopped not only import of food and fuel but also have impeded humanitarian aid, such as medicine, which is not supposed to be affected by the sanctions.

Mental patients are seen wandering the streets unmedicated.

Though so far there has been no shooting in Belgrade, people have been suffering greatly from disastrous material living conditions, uncontrolled inflation and devaluation of the currency, which has created extreme psychological pressure.

'Belgrade Is Sheer Hell'

"Belgrade is sheer hell," said Stainer-Popovic, a psychologist whose husband, Brane Popovic, became president of the Belgrade Jewish community 18 months ago. She said effects of the U.N.-decreed sanctions against what is left of Yugoslavia -- Serbia and Montenegro -- had hit Belgrade's mainly middle-class Jews hard, as they had affected most of the population.

"The estimated inflation rate for November was 20,000 percent," she said. This has been paralleled by a free-fall devaluation of the dinar against Western currencies.

"There are jokes," she said, "such as, if you are going out to lunch at a restaurant, change your money after you eat, not before -- because it will be considerably cheaper."

Average salaries, she said, ranged from 20 to 50 marks (\$12 to \$30) a month, but a kilogram of meat cost 15 marks. Medicine is virtually unobtainable, she said, and getting adequate food is also a problem.

Stainer-Popovic said the Belgrade Jewish community, which like other Jewish communities in the former Yugoslavia receives support from

the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, was doing what it could to help the Jews whose lives have been disrupted by the bloody conflict in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

"World Jewry, when it thinks of Bosnian Jews, thinks of Sarajevo," she said. "But there are other small Jewish communities in Bosnia -- some of them are in Serbian-held territory and can only be reached through Belgrade.

"Some of them are worse off than Sarajevo. With the Joint, we try to help," she said.

About 1,000 Jewish refugees from Sarajevo and elsewhere in Bosnia fled to Belgrade. Most stayed with friends or family for about six months before moving on to Israel and elsewhere, but about 200 have remained.

"Against the background of the Yugoslav horror," she said, there is "an apparent increase of anti-Semitism," although, she said she herself had not been targeted.

Before the outbreak of the war that destroyed Yugoslavia, and also after fighting erupted, Serbian officials had tried to win Jewish support from outside Yugoslavia, through such pro-government groups as the Serbian-Jewish Friendship Society.

Many Jews in Belgrade at the time expressed deep concern over attempts to manipulate the Jewish community and divide Jews in various parts of the country.

Stainer-Popovic said the leadership of the Belgrade community, mainly former youth leaders now in their 40s, had tried "to take a stand that in an ethnic war we won't do anything that will injure any Jews."

She said that while there had been no direct pressure on the community from the government, Jewish attitudes and activities were suddenly given much greater prominence in the mainly state-controlled media.

"For a while you got the impression that there were 2 million Jews in Belgrade, rather than 2,000.

"For example, Serbs are leaving all the time, but if 70 Jews left, it was highlighted as 'The Jews are Leaving.' What Jews were thinking became very relevant," she said.

This has eased somewhat, she said, but still, she added, there were at least two recent major television programs with an anti-Semitic slant.

One of them asked, "Were we wrong to trust the Jews as our friends?"

FLORIDA MAN, ONCE NAZI SS GUARD AT MAUTHAUSEN, IS ORDERED DEPORTED

WASHINGTON, Dec. 14 (JTA) -- An admitted SS guard at the Mauthausen death camp during World War II has been ordered deported to Britain from the United States, the Justice Department announced Tuesday.

Alexander Schweidler, 71, a resident of Inverness, Fla., was given until Feb. 1 to leave the country.

The Justice Department charged that Schweidler, a British subject born in Slovakia, fatally shot two Soviet prisoners of war at the Mauthausen camp in Austria in April 1942.

Schweidler did not admit killing the Soviet prisoners. But he signed an agreement with the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations admitting he had been an armed SS guard at Mauthausen. He also admitted he is deportable because he persecuted civilians on the basis of race, religion, national origin or political opinion.