

**FROM OBJECT TO PARTICIPANT: ISRAEL
PLAYS A VERY DIFFERENT ROLE AT U.N.**

By Larry Yudelson

UNITED NATIONS, Sept. 19 (JTA) -- As the 49th annual United Nations General Assembly opens this week, Israel's ambassador to the U.N., Gad Ya'acobi, hopes to build on the diplomatic gains of a "breakthrough" year.

"We are very satisfied with what happened this past year concerning the Israeli-United Nations relationship," Ya'acobi said in an interview. "We are gradually becoming a participant and a legitimate member state, rather than a client and an object."

Ya'acobi attributes his country's new stature to recent progress in the Middle East peace process and the collapse of the Soviet Union, which had long targeted Israel in the international body.

As evidence of its growing acceptance, Israel, in the past year alone, established diplomatic ties with 21 additional nations. Israel now has relations with 146 out of the 185 member states in the U.N., the highest number since the state was established in 1948.

When Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres arrives in New York on Sept. 26 for the General Assembly, he will engage in a marathon of meetings with 30 or more presidents, prime ministers and foreign ministers, according to officials at the Israeli Mission to the U.N.

During his week-long stay, Peres also is expected to meet with representatives of Muslim countries with which Israel does not have relations, said Ya'acobi, declining to reveal which ones.

Israel's new status at the U.N. is reflected in part by the elimination, deferral or amendment of 23 of the 30 long-standing anti-Israel resolutions that, until this year, were renewed annually -- and with little fuss -- by the world body's non-binding General Assembly.

Three Israelis Elected To U.N. Posts

The change was also reflected in Israel's participation in such U.N.-sponsored projects as the monitoring of South Africa's first all-race elections earlier this year and the aiding of Rwandan refugees in Zaire.

In addition, three Israelis were elected, for the first time in decades, to U.N. posts.

Now Ya'acobi is hoping to move forward.

First on the agenda, he said, will be securing passage of a resolution endorsing the peace agreements of this past year -- the Cairo Accord on implementing Palestinian autonomy and the Washington Declaration ending the state of war between Jordan and Israel.

The resolution, a draft of which already exists, also would call for regional cooperation in the Middle East and a comprehensive peace based on mutual recognition of all the countries in the region.

This resolution would follow up on a resolution passed last year, which praised the Declaration of Principles signed in September 1993 in

Washington by Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization.

Ya'acobi said he expects the resolution to be pushed by the United States, Russia, Norway, Egypt and the PLO, and to receive the support of all but three or four member states.

These states -- likely to include Libya, Iraq and Iran -- now find themselves in a minority vis a vis their stances toward Israel.

Ya'acobi said he also plans to devote attention to the remaining seven anti-Israel resolutions that passed the U.N. body last year and are expected to return to the floor this year.

Israel, according to Ya'acobi, will argue that some of these resolutions prejudice the outcome of the ongoing Israel-Arab peace process.

These include resolutions that address the status of Jerusalem and demand Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights and Lebanon.

"Those issues have to be solved in direct negotiations," said Ya'acobi.

On these resolutions, Israel will be fighting the PLO and Arab states who say the U.N. should make its voice heard on these topics, even if they are eventually to be resolved in negotiations.

'Vital' Work Being Done By U.N. Agencies

One U.N. battle Israeli diplomats do not expect to win involves a group of resolutions authorizing and endorsing the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, which has traditionally been a source of virulently anti-Israel propaganda.

Explaining their pessimism, the Israelis note that the United Nations did not eliminate its committee on apartheid until after the election of Nelson Mandela as South Africa's first black president. The Israelis say they expect the Palestinians to insist on maintaining the pro-Palestinian bodies until a final settlement is reached.

But, according to Ya'acobi, Israel will counter that the money spent funding this committee, and a similar body affiliated with the U.N. Secretariat, would be better used in directly aiding the Palestinians.

Ya'acobi praised the work being done by the U.N. agencies in the territories as "vital."

The key agencies involved in the region are the United Nations Development Program and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees. UNDP has this year doubled its budget in the territories to \$30 million. And UNWRA has begun building permanent housing in the Gaza Strip for the first time.

Beyond their direct expenditures, Ya'acobi said that the two agencies are playing a crucial role as a conduit for international aid. With the PLO still unable or unwilling to provide the degree of accountability that foreign donor nations insist on, the problem is being "solved partially, as an interim arrangement, through the UNDP and UNRWA," said Ya'acobi.

"The donors' money will be passed through those two agencies, in full coordination with the Palestinian Authority," he said.

Another key diplomatic issue on this year's General Assembly agenda is the fate of a resolu-

tion condemning Israeli nuclear weaponry, according to Ya'acobi.

Last year, Israel came close to defeating the resolution; this year, Ya'acobi believes, it will succeed.

In its place, however, is likely to be a resolution calling for a Middle Eastern nuclear-free zone. Israel, the only Middle Eastern country generally believed to have current nuclear capability, insists that such a nuclear-free zone must follow, not precede, a state of comprehensive regional peace.

"It is not logical -- and it contradicts our basic interests -- to think that Israel will be inspected on this matter while Iran, Iraq and perhaps Libya are (developing) nuclear potential," Ya'acobi said, adding, "They are the declared enemies of Israel."

Referring to any potential proposal on the matter, Ya'acobi said, "We don't know yet if the proposal of some of the moderate Arab countries is acceptable to us."

Another matter which may have to await the arrival of a comprehensive regional peace is Israel's inclusion in a U.N. regional group.

The ability to serve on the Security Council and other key committees is dependent on being a member of a regional group. But admission to a regional group requires a total consensus of the group's members.

Israel belongs in the Asian group, but even after peace accords with its immediate neighbors, Israel cannot assume that Iran or Libya would allow it to join.

Until recently, in view of its isolation at the United Nations, Israel made little effort to join a regional group. But as Israel emerged from its pariah status at the world body two years ago, it turned its attention to seeking observer status in the Western European and Others regional group, which includes such Western but non-European nations as the United States and Australia.

This effort has floundered, however, because bringing Israel on board the European group would dilute the strength of the current members. While the United States has supported Israel's move, other states have blocked the bid.

While Ya'acobi said he does not expect to join the grouping this year, he said the effort has produced other positive results, such as the election of Israeli individuals to U.N. committees.

FOREIGN MINISTRY DENIES REPORTS OF MORE SECRET CONTACTS WITH IRAQ By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Sept. 19 (JTA) -- The Israeli Foreign Ministry is denying a British newspaper report that Israeli Cabinet ministers have met secretly with Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tariq Azziz in an effort to draw up a peace treaty between the two nations.

The report of the meeting, which appeared in The Sunday Times of London, was "without any basis and without any substance," Israel's Foreign Ministry stated in a one-sentence printed response to reporters' questions on Sunday.

The ministry linked the report to "several reports, repeated recently" of purported Israeli contacts with Iraq.

The Sunday Times' story stated that either or both of Israel's two Iraqi-born ministers--

Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, minister of housing, and Moshe Shahal, minister of police -- had headed an Israeli delegation that met with Azziz last month in Rabat, Morocco.

According to local media reports, Shahal and Ben-Eliezer have comprised something of a pro-Iraq lobby within the Cabinet, advocating a thaw in relations between the two countries.

Quoting sources in Britain's MI6 intelligence agency, The Sunday Times reported that Aziz had told the Israeli delegation in Rabat that Iraq would consider recognizing Kuwait's borders if Israel would pressure the United States into lifting sanctions imposed on Iraq.

The U.S.-imposed sanctions followed Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

The Sunday Times said Iraq had launched a peace initiative with Israel in the wake of last September's signing in Washington of the Declaration of Principles on Palestinian self-rule.

In recent weeks there have been several reports here and abroad of behind-the-scenes contacts between Baghdad and Jerusalem -- all of which have been flatly denied by the government.

The only contact from Iraq that Israeli government officials have confirmed was a recent overture from the Iraqi ambassador to the U.N. to the Israeli envoy, Gad Ya'acobi, reportedly requesting information on Israel's ongoing peace moves with its neighbors.

Government officials said Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin had ordered Ya'acobi to ignore such overtures in concert with the U.S. policy of boycotting Iraqi strongman Saddam Hussein's regime.

On Sunday, knowledgeable non-official sources in Israel suggested that The Sunday Times report may well have been an elaboration of earlier, speculative stories.

Some of these sources further suggested that the British sources behind the Times account might be interested in propagating this material in order to stir up discord between the United States and Israel.

ARAB AND ISRAELI INTELLECTUALS GATHER By Hugh Orgel

TEL AVIV, Sept. 19 (JTA) -- As part of last week's events marking the first anniversary of the signing of the Palestinian self-rule accord in Washington, Israeli President Ezer Weizman hosted some 400 Israeli and Arab intellectuals at a garden party at the presidential residence.

Among the Israeli writers, artists, musicians and intellectuals attending the ceremony were writers Amos Oz and A.B. Yehoshua as well as singer Ofra Haza.

Many of the Israelis were associated with the Peace Now movement, and had frequently met with Palestinian leaders when such meetings were still officially banned.

Among the Arab guests -- which included Moroccans, Tunisians, Egyptians, Sudanese and Syrians -- many were expatriates who are currently living and working in Europe or the United States.

Members of mainstream intellectual groups in the Arab world, including Egyptians and Jordanians, still refuse to have any contacts with their Israeli colleagues and have declined invitations to visit Israel.

FRENCH JEW DEFENDS MITTERRAND AGAINST CHARGES OF ANTI-SEMITISM

By Michel Di Paz

PARIS, Sept. 19 (JTA) -- In the wake of continuing reverberations from recent revelations about French President Francois Mitterrand's right-wing past, the leader of French Jewry has defended his president against charges of anti-Semitism.

At the same time, however, Jean Kahn, head of CRIF, the umbrella organization representing France's secular Jewish organizations, has taken issue with Mitterrand's refusal to acknowledge France's responsibility in collaborating with the Nazis during World War II.

"Let us not now pick on a man who is sick and has always been courageous, who never was an anti-Semite and has always shown that he is a friend of Israel," Kahn said in an interview last week.

Kahn's comments came amid the latest chapter of a long-simmering debate here about France's actions in connection with the collaborationist Vichy government of Marshall Henri Philippe Petain and whether the country should bear responsibility for Vichy's actions during World War II.

Kahn spoke after Mitterrand, 77, who reportedly is ailing from prostate cancer, appeared in a television interview on Sept. 12 to defend himself against charges of anti-Semitism and to explain his friendship with a former official of the Vichy regime.

The interview followed the publication of "A French Youth: Francois Mitterrand 1934-1947," a book by French investigative journalist Pierre Pean that details Mitterrand's activities before, during and after World War II.

The book describes Mitterrand as a right-wing student activist in prewar Paris, as a faithful officer of the collaborationist Vichy regime in 1942 and as a close friend of Rene Bousquet, a former Vichy official charged with crimes against humanity for ordering roundups of Jews for deportation.

Separating Vichy From Postwar France

Mitterrand apparently assisted in the research for the book, a development some observers attribute to Mitterrand's desire to defend his wartime activities as he concludes his last term in office.

During the television interview, Mitterrand sought to distance the actions of the collaborationist Vichy regime from the subsequent postwar governments of the French Republic.

Declaring that he was unaware of the anti-Semitic laws imposed by Vichy two years before he served as an official for the regime, he said the actions of the Petain government were attributable to the country's defeat at the hands of the Nazis.

France has no need to apologize for the crimes committed during that period, he added.

"The republic had nothing to do with all that. I do think that France is not responsible," he said. "Those who are accountable for those crimes belong to an active minority who exploited the (French) defeat. Not the republic and not France. I'll never ask for forgiveness in the name of France."

Mitterrand further denied that he had ever been anti-Semitic. He recounted how, in 1936, he had helped a group of young Jews who were being attacked by a mob and how one of the young Jews he helped became a lifelong friend.

"No one has ever found anything anti-Semitic in my deeds," he said.

While supporting Mitterrand's claims regarding his relationship with the Jews, Kahn of CRIF said the Jewish leadership of France has always disagreed with the French president about the role of Vichy.

"Mitterrand maintains that Vichy is like a parenthesis in French history," Kahn said in an interview. "We do not forget that it is the French Assembly who freely voted in favor of full powers to Marshall Philippe Petain, that the French administration served faithfully the Vichy regime.

"I cannot accept to hear now that the French Republic owes no apologies to the victims of this regime," said Kahn.

During the course of the television interview, Mitterrand said he had maintained a long-standing relationship with Bousquet, Vichy's police chief between 1942 and 1944. But Mitterrand said he had no knowledge of Bousquet's wartime activities.

Charged with the deportation of 2,000 Jewish children, Bousquet was killed by a self-styled avenger last June at the age of 82 before he could stand trial.

Mitterrand admitted he had hindered legal proceedings against Bousquet, but said he took the action to "appease the continuous civil war among Frenchmen" over the country's role during World War II.

Here, too, Kahn was critical of the French president.

"It seems hard to believe that the French president had no knowledge of the criminal deeds of this man," he said. "And we deplore that he could maintain ambiguous relations with him for such a long time.

"I was also very surprised to hear that the president of the republic has, in certain circumstances, slowed down legal procedures. I am very attached to democracy and to the principles of separation of powers," said Kahn.

"This suggests that some people responsible for the crimes of the Vichy regime, for reasons of 'civil peace' or 'harmony,' were not brought to trial," he added. "The Vichy regime should not be trivialized. Only a clear view of our past will guarantee this much sought-after 'civil peace.' "

DUTCH ROYALTY TO VISIT JORDAN, ISRAEL

By Henriette Boas

AMSTERDAM, Sept. 19 (JTA) -- Holland's Queen Beatrix and her husband, Prince Consort Claus, will pay a three-day state visit to Jordan from Dec. 8 to 10 and a three-day state visit to Israel from March 27 to 29.

Announcement of the intended visits follows years in which the Dutch Foreign Ministry determined that an official visit by the royal couple to the two countries was too sensitive.

There is no longer any apparent obstacle to the visits since Israel's Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Jordan's King Hussein put an official end to the state of war between the two states.

TAKING ADVANTAGE OF AN EARLY SUKKOT, ISRAELIS CELEBRATE AT HOME AND ABROAD
By Michele Chabin

JERUSALEM, Sept. 19 (JTA) -- Warmer than usual temperatures and the completion of the shmitta year are adding a new dimension to this year's Sukkot celebrations in Israel.

The fact that the Jewish holidays began in early September this year has provided Israelis with an extended summer vacation -- and they are making the most of it.

Taking advantage of the sultry weather, and the fact that all schools and many companies are closed for Sukkot, hundreds of thousands of Israelis have flocked to the seashore or completely flown the coop to Europe, Greece and Turkey.

About 1,000 Israelis with second passports were also expected to travel to Jordan, now that Israel is permitting dual passport-holders to visit their Arab neighbor.

Many of those who decided to remain in the capital for the holiday shopped for lulavs, etrogs and sukkah decorations in the huge Mea Shearim open-air market.

Located on the main street of Jerusalem's most religious neighborhood, the market is a once-a-year happening that attracts religious Jews from all over the country.

Closed to traffic a few days before the start of the festival, Mea Shearim Street was all tumult and activity as people walked from booth to booth, comparing the price and selection of sukkah decorations.

In addition to posters of religious texts and famous rabbis, the decorations included red and green tinsel and tiny flashing lights--decorations usually associated with Christmas.

Christmas Lights Become Sukkah Decor

American yeshiva students in Israel for the year could be heard exclaiming, "Those are the lights people put on Christmas trees. What are they doing here in Mea Shearim?"

Amused by the question, which he had heard many times before, a vendor told the students, "These are just decorations, and since Israelis don't celebrate Christmas, they don't associate lights and tinsel with anything Christian."

This year's selection of etrogs was smaller than usual, other vendors said, because of the shmitta year that was just concluded.

Oded Elbert, one of the hundreds selling etrogs, explained that "during the shmitta year, the land lies fallow. Theoretically, all of the fruit is there for the taking, but the reality is that the farmers must continue to make a living."

In order to comply with tradition and still make a living, he said, "the farmers sell their land to the Beit Din (the religious court), which in turns sells the produce to the public at cost."

This year's crop of etrogs was much smaller than usual, Elbert said, "because during shmitta, farmers are prohibited from providing all but the most basic care to their trees and plants. They can keep their plants alive by watering them, but nothing more than that."

The etrogs on sale reflected this low level of maintenance. According to many vendors, much of the shmitta-year crop was not fit for use during Sukkot. Yet, despite the smaller number of etrogs on the market this year, prices remained

fairly consistent with non-shmitta prices, thanks to the non-profit policy of the Beit Din.

A young yeshiva student who identified himself only as Yonasson admitted that the shmitta year had made the selection of etrogs "much more challenging." But, he added, "only people living in Israel can fulfill this mitzvah."

David and Ayala Levin-Kruss, one of the few married couples shopping together for lulavs and etrogs, recalled how they bought a sukkah before they were married.

"It was our first joint purchase before we were married," Ayala Levin-Kruss recalled, "and we used four of the poles for our chuppah."

DECADES AFTER ITS DEATH, A BOOK DETAILING MASSACRE OF JEWS IS REBORN

By Lisa Glazer

MOSCOW, Sept. 19 (JTA) -- After Jews were massacred by Nazis on Soviet territory during World War II, Soviet Jewish writers Ilya Ehrenburg and Vasily Grossman sought to chronicle the heinous deeds in the appropriately named "Black Book."

The Soviets, in turn, refused to allow the book's publication. That was in 1947.

But books, unlike people, can sometimes be reborn. A new, unabridged edition of the "Black Book," created from page proofs discovered in the KGB archives, is now being produced by a Jewish publishing house in Lithuania, with support from Russian and American Jewish organizations.

The book was officially presented Sept. 8 at a gathering in the former Moscow meeting hall of the Jewish Anti-Fascist Committee, a group of Jewish intellectuals and public figures, including Ehrenburg, created by the Soviet government during World War II to mobilize world Jewish support for the Soviet war effort.

Committee leaders, Ehrenburg not among them, were tried secretly in 1952 on trumped-up charges of trying to separate the Crimea from the Soviet Union, and all but one of them were executed on orders of Josef Stalin.

Speaking about the current production of the book, Isaac Zibuc of the YAD publishing house said 18,000 copies of "Black Book" are being printed in Russian, and he hopes the book will eventually be translated into English.

Running more than 400 pages, it includes testimonies of witnesses and photographs of Nazi atrocities throughout Russia, Ukraine, Belarus and Latvia.

"This book is a sort of concentration of evil," said Michael Heftman, who was involved in its publication. "The memories of those who were victims of fascism call us to action, based on understanding."

Other speakers included relatives of the book's original editors, Grossman and Ehrenburg, as well as Holocaust survivors and righteous gentiles who saved them.

The gathering was organized by Moscow's Holocaust Center, the YAD Publishing House, the State Archives of the Russian Federation and the Moscow bureau of the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews. Sponsors of the book include the Center for Jewish Renewal, Bay Area Council for Soviet Jews, Chicago Action for Soviet Jews, the Koret Foundation, the Masada Fund and the Union of Councils for Soviet Jews.