

**ISRAELI AND U.S. OFFICIALS CONDEMN
E.U.'S MOVE TO LIFT EMBARGO ON SYRIA**
By Joseph Kopel

BRUSSELS, Nov. 28 (JTA) -- Israeli officials are criticizing the European Union's decision this week to lift its eight-year arms embargo against Syria.

"What should have been lifted is (Syria's) embargo on negotiations, not the embargo on arms," Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres told reporters here, referring to Israel's stalled peace negotiations with Syria.

Peres was here this week meeting with Palestine Liberation Organization Chairman Yasser Arafat. The two leaders were urging European and other donor nations to move ahead with long-promised financial aid to the cash-strapped Palestinian Authority.

The E.U. decision to lift the arms embargo was reached at a meeting here of the group's 12 foreign ministers, who voted unanimously in favor of the move.

The embargo had been imposed in 1986 amid allegations that Syria was involved in international terrorism.

'Nations Should Not Sell Weaponry To Syria'

In Washington, the E.U. decision also drew strong protest from nine members of Congress, who fired off a letter to President Clinton urging he "express strong United States opposition to this action" and take all possible measures to "convince European states to reverse this mistaken decision."

"Until Damascus demonstrates its commitment to peace and stability by signing a peace treaty and ending its support for international terrorism, nations should not sell weaponry to Syria," the members of Congress wrote.

The members of Congress also sent a letter to E.U. President Jacques Delors, urging the union to reverse its decision.

Led by Rep. Eliot Engel (D-N.Y.), other legislators signing on to the letters were Reps. James Saxton (R-N.J.), Robert Andrews (D-N.J.), Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.), Peter King (R-N.Y.), Charles Schumer (D-N.Y.), Jerrold Nadler (D-N.Y.), Alcee Hastings (D-Fla.) and Nita Lowey (D-N.Y.).

In sharp contrast, a State Department official said the United States did not voice opposition to the E.U. decision. "The E.U. knows that the United States continues to list Syria on the list of nations that sponsor terrorism and narcotics trafficking," a State Department official said. "This was a completely independent decision."

The State Department's terrorism and narcotics lists ban Syria from trading privileges.

The E.U. decided to lift the arms embargo as a goodwill gesture aimed at getting Syria to move forward in its peace negotiations with Israel, observers here said.

The lifting of the arms embargo is the latest in a series of gestures by the Europeans toward Syria.

And Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk al-Sharaa met with his E.U. counterparts on Monday

-- marking the first direct E.U.-Syrian talks since 1977 -- to discuss further steps toward improved relations.

In a related development, Crown Prince Hassan of Jordan met with E.U. officials last Friday in an effort to establish a new accord that would lead to the opening of their respective markets and the establishment of an ongoing political dialogue.

Meanwhile, Israel is currently negotiating a new accord with the E.U. aimed at expanding their political, economic and scientific cooperation. The negotiations are expected to be completed by the end of the year.

(JTA correspondent Matthew Dorf in Washington contributed to this report.)

**EUROPEAN LIKUDNIKS RAISE HACKLES
WITH FUND RAISING FOR SETTLEMENTS**
By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Nov. 28 (JTA) -- A new fund organized by Likud leaders in Europe has enraged senior executives at the Jewish Agency for Israel, who claim it will sabotage the campaigns of both the United Jewish Appeal and its European counterpart, Keren Hayesod.

Heads of Likud offices in Europe, meeting in Brussels earlier this month, launched a new appeal to benefit Jewish settlers in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and the Golan Heights.

The sponsors of the appeal have also placed ads in prominent European publications. The ads, which charge that money raised by Keren Hayesod goes to the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Palestinians, urges donors not to contribute to the traditional fund-raising arms, according to the Jewish Agency. The ads encourage donors who want money to go to Jewish settlements to give to the new fund.

The Jewish Agency's Zionist executive lashed out at the fund on Monday, with Yehiel Leket, the acting agency chairman, demanding that it cease operation.

Leket said it was unthinkable that a Zionist party represented in the Zionist executive would do something that he said "undermines the Keren Hayesod and sabotages their activity."

Keren Hayesod Chairman Shlomo Hillel said the new appeal would greatly harm the mainstream fund-raising campaign. The chairman of the Likud faction of the Zionist movement, Shlomo Gravetz, said the Likud fully supports the new fund, according to a Jewish Agency spokeswoman.

At the same time, Gravetz called on the new fund not to harm the appeals of Keren Hayesod and UJA, the spokeswoman said.

NEWS ANALYSIS:
**AS POLITICIANS DEBATE TIMETABLES,
PALESTINIAN TALKS REMAIN ON TRACK**
By David Landau

JERUSALEM, Nov. 28 (JTA) -- Is Israel's peace train moving too fast?

Internal strife among the Palestinians, coupled with ongoing terrorist attacks, has some

Israelis rethinking the pace -- and price -- of progress on the Palestinian peace track.

But even as the debate over the timetable for negotiations continued, the train kept steaming along this week, with Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat meeting in Brussels to push for financial aid to the Palestinians and to discuss the next phase of Palestinian autonomy.

According to well-placed political insiders here, the second half of the current government's term of office could turn into a period of political retrenchment and diplomatic passivity rather than a time of further leaps forward in the peace process.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's government, voted into power in June 1992, faces elections on or before November 1996. Recent opinion polls show a closing of the gap between the ruling Labor Party and the opposition Likud, and between their two respective leaders, Rabin and Benjamin Netanyahu.

The polls, which no doubt are giving the Rabin government pause, reflect growing dissatisfaction among Israelis on a number of issues -- including the question of how best to deal with the Palestinians.

Some Cabinet ministers are saying in private that the peace process might be put on hold for the immediate future. They say that the Palestine Liberation Organization should be confined to ruling the Gaza Strip and Jericho until it proves -- mostly to the Israeli public -- that it has the domestic strength to control its own territory and beat down the internal challenge posed by the fundamentalists.

Reflecting this unease, Labor Party Secretary-General Nissim Zivili, himself a leading dove, admitted in an interview this week with the Israeli daily Ha'aretz that his views must not prevail if the public mood is uncomfortable with the fast pace of the peace process.

"If we have been going too fast," he said of the peace process, "we must now have the courage to say so publicly."

Others within Labor, however, believe this is not a realistic political option, since Rabin and the party are too closely identified with the Israeli-PLO peace process to be able to distance themselves from it at this midterm stage.

No New Policy Approach Has Been Worked Out

As Tourism Minister Uzi Baram put it Monday: The government's best hope of boosting its popularity ratings is to accelerate the peace process, not slow it down.

Baram called for immediate Palestinian elections, the next phase in the implementation of the self-rule accord. The accord also calls for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from the West Bank prior to the elections -- a move that could expose Israeli settlements there to increased dangers.

Given the high incidence of terror attacks against Israelis, the withdrawal looms as a major problem for Israeli leaders.

Some government leaders are saying privately that if redeployment requires the dismantling of isolated or awkwardly situated settlements in the West Bank, then so be it.

As the debate continues, no new policy approach has yet been determined.

In an effort to nail down an acceptable path, Rabin has scheduled a full-scale Cabinet debate on the peace policy for this coming Sunday.

And although there is no evidence that Rabin himself will initiate or acquiesce in the go-slow approach advocated by some in his party, his off-the-cuff reaction to Zivili's remarks this week illustrated his sensitivity to the current state of affairs.

Rabin told a party forum Monday that he would not "rush ahead" in the peace process. He added that the issues to be negotiated were "very complex."

The complexity -- and palpable dangers -- of the situation were highlighted Sunday, when Hamas terrorists opened fire on a passing car on the Hebron-Beersheba highway, killing Rabbi Ami Olami, a 36-year-old settler who was the father of five.

Following that ambush, the Israel Defense Force chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Ehud Barak, grimly warned at the weekly Cabinet meeting that fundamentalist terror would get "more sophisticated and more difficult to combat."

Government ministers later criticized Barak for his dour prognosis, which was instantly leaked to the media. Their concern no doubt stemmed, at least in part, from their keen awareness of the opinion polls showing a decline in public support for the government, for Labor, for Rabin and for the peace process -- as well as a marked rise in public concern over security.

As the political debate intensified, Peres and Arafat were meeting in Brussels this week, pressing European and other donor nations to make good on their promises of financial aid to the Palestinian Authority.

Palestinian Authority May Face 'Total Collapse'

The donor nations have pledged to deliver some \$700 million during this year alone to the Palestinians. Only a fraction of that has been handed over so far, primarily because Arafat has repeatedly refused to establish a set of clear accounting procedures that will reflect how the aid is being spent.

Peres and Arafat's success in raising immediate funds could prove a significant factor in the stability of the Palestinian Authority -- and in the Israeli government's readiness to move ahead to the next phases of the peace process.

According to David Brodet, the director of budgets at the Israeli Finance Ministry who accompanied Peres to Brussels, the Palestinian Authority needs \$20 million each month for operational expenses -- apart from the much-needed economic development projects that are waiting on the drawing board for financing.

Without the cash for day-to-day activities, Brodet warned, the Palestinians face "total collapse."

During their meeting in Brussels on Monday, Peres and Arafat also discussed further implementation of the Palestinian self-rule accord.

Though neither Peres nor Arafat would reveal details of the negotiations, Peres said that the two sides were negotiating seriously about the details of the Palestinian elections.

"Today we have agreed on an agenda," Peres reportedly said. "We intend to negotiate with our Palestinian partners very seriously."

AFTER REPUDIATING FOUNDER, LUTHERANS BEGIN NEW TEACHINGS

By Debra Nussbaum Cohen

NEW YORK, Nov. 28 (JTA) -- After repudiating its founder's virulently anti-Jewish attitudes last spring, the main Lutheran church in America is beginning to teach its adherents about anti-Semitism and Martin Luther's role in promoting it.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, which claims 5.2 million of this country's estimated 8 million Lutherans as members, adopted a declaration last April rejecting Luther's anti-Semitism.

Last week, the group's Consultative Panel on Lutheran-Jewish Relations met to map out a two-to five-year plan for implementing the new teachings.

The church's first step, according to Franklin Sherman, chair of that panel, will be to make available to its 11,000 affiliated congregations study materials on Luther's anti-Jewish attitudes.

After that, the movement will work to implement the new teachings at its seminaries.

"The study materials will deal with the period of the Reformation and try to explain to Lutherans the whole history of anti-Jewish teachings within the Christian tradition, and Luther's role in them," said Sherman, who is also director of the Institute for Jewish-Christian Understanding at Muhlenberg College, in Allentown, Pa.

Unique among schools in North America with ties to the Lutheran Church, Muhlenberg has a sizable minority of Jews, who make up about 20 percent of its student body.

About a week before Sherman's panel met, the Lutheran Church held a service of confession and a Lutheran-Jewish convocation near Chicago, where the church is headquartered.

On Nov. 13, after a service of confession at Grace Lutheran Church in River Forest, Ill., Bishop Sherman Hicks of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod led about 200 Lutherans in a procession to the nearby West Suburban Temple Har Zion.

'We Confess Our Sins'

There, before an audience of approximately 450 Jews and Lutherans, Hicks presented a large plaque inscribed with a copy of the church's declaration repudiating Luther's teachings to two Jewish representatives.

They were Rabbi Peter Knobel, president of the Chicago Board of Rabbis, and Maynard Wishner, president of the Council of Jewish Federations.

Hicks expressed sorrow for his church's sins. "We confess our sins. We repent for the wrong that has been done. We ask for forgiveness. As a bishop of the church, it is with humility and gratitude that I present this declaration to the Jewish community," he said.

It was, said participants, a highly dramatic and emotional ceremony.

"To probe the deepest recesses of one's spiritual tradition and to discover an anti-Jewish bias so painful, so raw, and so disturbing, is an act of courage," Rabbi A. James Rudin, national director of interreligious affairs at the American Jewish Committee, said in his remarks at the service.

Protestant reformer Martin Luther, who lived

from 1483 to 1546, wrote several essays, including the 1543 tract "About the Jews and Their Lies," condemning Jews for not converting to Christianity. He advocated that their synagogues be burned and their books confiscated, and that they be forbidden from teaching.

If they still refused to convert, Luther wrote, "then we must drive them out like mad dogs, lest we partake in their abominable blasphemy and vices, deserving God's wrath and being damned along with them."

His teachings have been quoted as justification by anti-Semites throughout history, and were used most notably by Adolf Hitler.

It was, in fact, a film shown at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington about the roots of anti-Semitism that in part led to the repudiation last spring.

Several leaders of the American Lutheran Church visited the museum and viewed the film. In the film, woodcuts made of Luther during his lifetime and anti-Semitic caricatures of Jews from the same era are projected on the screen, while Luther's anti-Semitic words are voiced over the images and a narrator describes how Hitler used Luther's teachings.

"Luther is portrayed, quite accurately, as a principal figure in the history of anti-Semitism," said Sherman. The Holocaust Museum is planning an addendum to the film which will express the Lutheran Church's new stance, he said.

'Wrestling With How We Are Heirs'

According to the Rev. Leon Rosenthal, the inclusion of Luther's words in the Holocaust Memorial film was so compelling to Lutherans because they "pride themselves on being 'middle America.'"

"There's been a wrestling with how are we heirs of this man. Do we accept him in toto to be his followers, or is there a legitimate way in repentance to reject part of him and accept" other parts of his message, asked Rosenthal.

The American Lutherans' repudiation of their founder's anti-Semitism, in a document adopted on April 18, 1994, states, in part, "We reject this violent invective, and more do we express our deep and abiding sorrow over its tragic effects on subsequent generations.

"Grieving the complicity of our own tradition within this history of hatred, moreover, we express our urgent desire to live out our faith in Jesus Christ with love and respect for the Jewish people."

The church's new stance is something of an effort to reconcile fundamentally contradictory beliefs about Jews.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, as its name makes clear, missionizes non-Christians to try and convert them to belief in Jesus.

And it is a central tenet of Christian -- including Lutheran -- theology that the Jews must be converted to belief in Jesus for the Messiah to return.

But Lutherans do not target Jews for evangelizing, according to Rosenthal. "We have chosen not to use terms like 'evangelizing Jews' or 'mission to Jews,'" he said.

"Given the events of the Holocaust and the tradition of anti-Semitism in the West, it is no longer an appropriate or scriptural way to refer to the Jewish people," Rosenthal said.

LIBERAL MOVEMENTS IN ISRAEL PROTEST REJECTION BY JERUSALEM CITY COUNCIL

By Cynthia Mann

JERUSALEM, Nov. 28 (JTA) -- The Reform and Conservative movements here will turn once again to the Supreme Court to protest the latest rejection by the Jerusalem City Council of their candidates to the local religious council.

The move reflects the escalating struggle between champions of religious pluralism and guardians of the status quo, which gives a virtual monopoly over religious matters in Israel to the Orthodox establishment.

At a late-night meeting last week, the City Council voted down a series of Reform and Conservative rabbis proposed as candidates for the local religious council by the left-wing Meretz bloc.

The council, which dispenses basic religious services to all Jewish citizens and oversees an estimated \$10 million annual budget, is supposed to represent all political parties serving on the City Council.

The rules entitle Meretz to two seats on Jerusalem's religious council.

Jerusalem Mayor Ehud Olmert apparently instructed council members not to discuss the candidates before the vote.

Afterward, he claimed the Meretz nominees were rejected on the basis of their individual qualifications and not their religious affiliations, a city spokeswoman said this week.

But Conservative Rabbi Ehud Bandel, one of the candidates, pointed out that Meretz nominated three pairs of rabbis, all of whom were summarily rejected.

It was obvious they were turned down because of their non-Orthodox religious affiliation, and therefore the council had acted in contempt of court, Bandel said.

The Supreme Court ruled last January that candidates for local religious councils could not be barred from serving because of their non-Orthodox affiliation. The ruling was in response to a petition filed five years earlier.

The Orthodox political and religious establishment reacted angrily to the decision as an unwarranted intrusion by the Supreme Court in religious affairs.

High Court Schedules Hearing

Knesset member Avraham Ravitz of the fervently Orthodox Degel HaTorah party said in an interview that the Reform movement is not a Jewish religious movement and does not belong on a religious council that oversees religious matters.

Two months ago, Ravitz and other politicians from the Orthodox parties took their protest to Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who promised to investigate the matter and try to find a solution to the problem.

City councils are required to form the religious bodies within six months after municipal elections. But Olmert, a member of Likud who is widely seen as politically boxed in by the Orthodox members of his city council, failed to adhere to the timetable.

This failure prompted a Supreme Court petition filed in protest last August by the Reform and Conservative movements.

The high court had scheduled a hearing on

the petition for early next year, but Olmert apparently preferred not to wait and last week convened the city council meeting to act on nominations to the religious council.

For his part, Olmert abstained from the votes in question, his spokeswoman emphasized.

The petition by Bandel and his colleagues will be filed in the coming days and "we expect the Supreme Court once again to say the (City Council) vote was illegal," he said. "I just hope we won't have to wait another five years."

The religious councils "are not the ones to rule on halachic matters," said Bandel, referring to matters of religious law. "They are administrative bodies, and we just want to ensure the monies are distributed on a fair basis."

"It is a test case (for) Israeli democracy and the status of the Supreme Court," he said.

Meanwhile, the Supreme Court is expected to rule soon on a controversial agreement between the fervently Orthodox Shas party and the Labor Party that, in effect, would nullify any Supreme Court ruling that undermines the religious status quo.

Shas has made the agreement a condition of its return to the governing coalition, while the Supreme Court's Deputy President Aharon Barak reportedly has termed it "an agreement to circumvent democracy."

Last January's ruling on the religious councils is a prime example of what the Orthodox establishment maintains is an unacceptable attack on the status quo.

RABIN MEETS WITH CANADIAN LEADER

By Gil Kezwer

TORONTO, Nov. 28 (JTA) -- Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chretien agreed last week to begin talks on a free-trade agreement between their countries that would eliminate all tariffs by January 1996.

Rabin was in Ottawa for a few hours on Nov. 24 to meet briefly with Chretien, External Affairs Minister Andre Quinlan and members of the Canadian Parliament.

Israel has had a free-trade agreement with the European Union since 1975 and with the United States since 1985.

Rabin's visit to Canada came after he had concluded three days of talks in Washington, where he met with President Clinton, members of Congress and other government leaders.

ISRAEL COMPENSATES FARMERS FOR DISASTROUS PREVIOUS WINTER

By Naomi Segal

JERUSALEM, Nov. 28 (JTA) -- Israeli farmers will receive a total of some \$31 million in compensation because of last winter's ruined fruit and citrus fields.

Unusually warm weather was to blame for the loss of 100,000 tons of fruit, according to the Fruit Growers Association.

Agriculture Minister Yakov Tsur said current shortages in vegetables are expected to continue for the next several months.

Meanwhile, Israel has received a shipment of tomatoes from Jordan, marking a firm advantage in the new peace between the countries.