

NINETEEN SEVENTY-SIX and the beginning of 1977 were marked by unprecedented quiet on the borders; discussions with the United States on further progress towards peace; continued economic stringency and a high rate of inflation, accompanied by serious labor unrest, and a cabinet crisis which precipitated the struggle over the Labor party leadership and premature general elections.

The population, at the end of 1976, was 3,573,000: 3,020,000 Jews and 553,000 others. Almost all the rise over 1975—80,000—resulted from natural increase, as most of the immigration was counterbalanced by emigration.

Peace Policy

On several occasions during the year Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, Foreign Minister Yigal Allon, and other spokesmen reiterated Israel's readiness for the reconvening of the Geneva Peace Conference with its original terms of reference (on the basis of Security Council Resolutions 242 [1967] and 338 [1973]) and with its original membership (i.e. without the Palestine Liberation Organization [PLO]). Alternatively, Israel was willing to negotiate for a limited territorial withdrawal in the framework of an agreement to end the state of belligerency with its Arab neighbors (AJYB, 1977 [Vol. 77], pp. 491–92).

There was no response to the latter proposal during the year: it was neither accepted nor rejected by any of the Arab states. Nor were there more than general statements on the renewal of the Geneva Conference until after the United States presidential election, when Egyptian President Anwar al-Sadat told visiting American Congressmen on November 10 that “the Arabs are ready for peace” on condition that Israel withdrew “from territories occupied after the 1967 war” and agreed to the creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Rabin replied next day by urging Sadat to “stop speaking in generalities and to specify exactly what he means when he talks about peace with Israel.” In further statements Rabin said that, while preferring direct talks, Israel was prepared for peace negotiations by any practicable method, but called upon Sadat to address himself directly to Israel, instead of merely making statements to foreign visitors and journalists. “If you really want progress towards peace, then let us—your country and mine—negotiate peace,” he said. He also pointed out that the terms Sadat was now talking about were worse than those he had presented in 1971 to UN Special

Envoy Gunnar V. Jarring, when he had not demanded a Palestinian Arab state (AJYB, 1972 [Vol. 73], pp. 559–62).

Addressing the Congress of the Socialist International in Geneva on November 27, Rabin proposed the convening of a "Middle East Helsinki Conference," consisting of heads of government of the countries in the region and the two super-powers, to discuss not only security but also technology, trade, cooperation, and "human bridges." Israel, he added, was ready to depart from the Helsinki example in one respect, however: it did not consider "existing lines" as "final realities."

On December 6, toward the conclusion of the UN General Assembly debate on the Middle East, Israel Ambassador Chaim Herzog submitted a resolution calling on Egypt, Israel, Jordan, and Syria to "reconvene without delay at the Geneva Peace Conference" in order to negotiate a settlement "without prior conditions." This resolution was submitted to make Israel's readiness for peace talks unmistakably clear, as well as to forestall an Egyptian resolution calling, by implication, for the inclusion of the PLO in the talks; it was not expected to be adopted as drafted. After India, Sri Lanka, and Yugoslavia submitted an amendment expressly including the PLO in the Geneva Conference, Israel withdrew its resolution, and the Assembly passed the Egyptian and Syrian resolutions. The Israeli initiative was severely criticized by former Foreign Minister Abba Eban and former Ambassador to the UN Yosef Tekoah, but Foreign Minister Allon declared that it had attained "an information objective of supreme importance" by making Israel's positive stand plain to all.

The election of Jimmy Carter as United States president was generally welcomed in Israel, but his ban on the sale of Israel-made Kfir fighting aircraft (containing American-made engines) to Ecuador was resented. Prime Minister Rabin, the first Middle East leader to be invited to meet the new president, was received on March 7 with great cordiality. However, while satisfaction was expressed at President Carter's emphasis on the need for true peace between Israel and the Arabs, and his disclaimer of any intention to impose a settlement, there was apprehension in Israel at his statements implying the need for a return to pre-1967 borders and supporting the establishment of a "homeland" for the Palestinian refugees. On his return, Rabin said that there were "major differences" with the United States administration on these issues, although he welcomed the "marked improvement" in its position on the nature of the peace. (See also article, "United States, Israel and the Middle East," in this volume.)

Lebanese Border

Israel kept a close and constant watch over the situation in Lebanon in 1976, particularly in view of the Syrian intervention in the civil war and the danger that Palestinian terrorists might return to the south of the country bordering on Israel.

Defense Minister Shimon Peres said on January 8 that "Syrian intervention would not, whatever the reason, leave Israel indifferent and will require Israel to consider

what steps to take." But, according to a *Washington Star* report on 11 April, two days after the first direct intervention by regular Syrian forces in the Lebanese conflict, the Israelis had "secretly indicated" through the United States that they would not stage "an invasion of their own," so long as no Syrian forces entered the southern zone. Israeli officials denied, however, that Israel had given tacit consent to the Syrian action.

On April 15 Prime Minister Rabin stated; "We are watching with concern. When the Syrians overstep certain limits we have set ourselves—and they are not necessarily geographical lines but also affect the manner of their involvement—we shall have to take additional decisions." Israel's policy towards Lebanon, he added, was based on the principle of non-intervention, but also on the extent to which its security was affected. It was widely reported that Israel regarded the Litani River in southern Lebanon as a "red line," any Syrian or PLO encroachment south of the river being regarded as a threat to its security, and that the Syrians had been informed, through the United States, of Israel's attitude.

There was satisfaction in Israel at the suppression of the Palestinian terrorists by Syrian and Lebanese Maronite forces, but also apprehension at the long-term results of Syrian domination of the country, which might, together with the Syrian-Jordanian alliance, create a long, continuous hostile front on Israel's eastern and northern borders. Opposition leaders concurred with the government policy of refraining from armed intervention.

Peres informed the Cabinet on July 11 of measures taken to help Lebanese villagers in the south (mainly Christians and Shi'ite Muslims), who had been cut off by the fighting from sources of supply, deprived of medical services, and prevented from selling their crops, by the fighting. Medical attention was being provided at army field clinics set up by Israel at the border fence, Lebanese patients were being hospitalized in Israel, and some were being allowed to stay in the country to meet relatives. The Army provided food and water for the villagers and allowed them to sell their tobacco crop and purchase supplies in Israel. Peres declared that this assistance was being given purely for humanitarian reasons and that Israel sought no *quid pro quo* for what he called the "good fence" policy. He explained on another occasion that the aid might also be a starting point for peaceful and neighborly relations.

Israeli aid to the villagers in southern Lebanon expanded considerably during the second half of 1976. Semipermanent clinics, staffed by army physicians, were set up close to the border. Assistance was given in marketing the tobacco crop, employment was provided in Israel for Lebanese workers, and funds were collected by Israeli Christians and others to purchase food and other supplies for them. Agricultural advice stations, manned by Israeli experts, were set up to help Lebanese farmers, and government representatives met Lebanese merchants at the border to discuss trade facilities.

During the six months July-December, 15,824 Lebanese, about one-third of them Muslims, received medical attention under the "good fence" program, and 474 of

them were hospitalized in Israel; Lebanese purchased some I£2.6 million worth of Israeli commodities and sold I£447,000 worth of raw tobacco to Israeli dealers; over a thousand visited relatives in Israel. At the end of the year, 374 Lebanese laborers were employed in Israel: almost half in land reclamation, and the rest in textiles, canning, and other factories,

Terrorism

There was little terrorist activity inside Israel during the year. The northern border was almost completely quiet owing to the preoccupation of the terrorists in Lebanon with the civil war. On April 28 two police officers were killed while investigating an explosive device in Jerusalem. Thirty-three persons were injured and considerable damage was done when a booby-trapped motor-scooter exploded in the center of the city on May 3.

ENTEBBE OPERATION

The most dramatic event of the year—probably the outstanding Israeli success in combating Arab terrorism—was the rescue of 94 Israeli and other Jewish passengers and 12 crew members of an Air France airbus en route from Israel to Paris, hijacked by pro-Palestinian terrorists and held captive in Entebbe Airport, Uganda.

The aircraft was hijacked at about noon, on June 27, shortly after takeoff from Athens, where it had made an intermediate stop, by three men and a woman calling themselves the Che Guevara cell of the Haifa section of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The woman, Gabriele Kröcher-Tidemann, and one of the men, Wilfried Böse, were Germans, and the other two were believed to be Palestinian Arabs; they had presumably boarded the plane in Athens. The pilot of the plane, which carried 247 passengers, was forced to fly to Benghazi, Libya, where it refueled, and then to Entebbe, Uganda, where the hijackers were joined by six more men, some of them armed. The passengers, who were obviously expected, were transferred after six hours in the aircraft to the former terminal building of the airport, where they were guarded by some 30 Ugandan armed soldiers.

President Idi Amin of Uganda told the hostages that he supported the Palestinian cause, but hoped that they would soon be released provided the hijackers' demands were fulfilled. The demands were for the release of 40 "freedom fighters" said to be imprisoned in Israel, and another 13 alleged to be held in West Germany, Kenya, Switzerland, and France. After negotiations with a French government representative, 47 of the hostages—women, children, old men and invalids—were released on June 30, and the non-Israelis were separated from the others. On July 2 the 101 remaining non-Israelis were also released.

The Israeli government stated that the primary responsibility for the safety of the passengers rested with Air France and the French government. There was considerable pressure on the government by relatives of the hostages to depart, in this case,

from the established policy of making no deals with terrorists. On June 29, Prime Minister Rabin declared that "the government of Israel regards itself as bearing responsibility for the fate of every Israeli, wherever he may be, if he is persecuted, threatened or detained because he is an Israeli." The Cabinet met on June 30 and July 1, when it resolved unanimously to authorize negotiations for the release of all the hostages, "involving readiness for the release of detained terrorists." The decision was taken in consultation with the leaders of the Opposition Likud.

Prime Minister Rabin later said that, in default of any alternative, the government would have stood by this decision, but in the meantime contingency plans were made for a possible rescue operation. Comprehensive information was gathered about the airport and the location of the hostages, a team of about 200 commandos was selected, operational plans were made by Chief-of-Staff Lieutenant-General Mordecai Gur, and Major-General Dan Shimron, chief Commando officer, and a practice raid was staged in a remote area of Israel. On July 3 the Knesset foreign affairs and security committee and the cabinet unanimously approved the operation.

Three Hercules C130 transport aircraft and a Boeing 707 left Israel at 4 P.M. local time, on the same day, and while the Boeing, equipped as a hospital plane, landed at Nairobi, Kenya, the other three aircraft flew directly to Entebbe, arriving shortly before midnight local time. While some of the troops occupied the control tower, destroyed several Ugandan Mig fighters on the runway, and guarded the airport perimeter, the main force attacked the old terminal building, warning the hostages to lie down to avoid being shot. The seven terrorists in the building were killed and the hostages rescued, except for 74-year-old Mrs. Dora Bloch, who had previously been taken to hospital in Kampala, and three hostages who were inadvertently killed during the operation. The leader of the rescue force, Lieutenant-Colonel Jonathan Netanyahu, was shot by a Ugandan soldier; five hostages and four Israeli soldiers (one of whom later died) were wounded, and 20 Ugandan soldiers were killed. The entire operation took 52-53 minutes. The three Hercules planes left for the Embakasi Airport in Kenya, where they refueled and the wounded underwent surgery, arriving back at Ben-Gurion airport on July 4. The government stated it had been guided by two basic principles: that "the State of Israel was created to ensure that Jews should never again perish for lack of home and haven," and that "there can be no concession to terrorism," which threatened the very survival of an already fragile system of international law and order.

At a special Knesset session the same day, Rabin described the operation as a "remarkable manifestation of Jewish fraternity and Israeli valor." He declared that it had been undertaken on the sole responsibility of the Israel government and without prior consultation with any other government. He charged Amin with collaborating with the terrorists, "while using deceit and false pretences." Likud leader Menahem Begin paid tribute to the "complete national unity" that had prevailed between government and the Opposition throughout the crisis, and declared: "On this day we shall say with all our hearts: Prime Minister, well done!" He compared the separation of the Israeli passengers from the others by the German

leader of the terrorist group, "a leftist Nazi," with the selection parades carried out by the Nazi Dr. Mengele.

An Israeli expert told reporters that the hijacking had been planned by Wadia Haddad, head of foreign operations of the PFLP, to which the two Palestinian members of the group belonged, and that there was reason to believe that PLO chairman Yasir Arafat had advance information of the operation.

A tragic aftermath of the operation was the fate of Mrs. Dora Bloch. She was last seen at a Kampala hospital on July 4 by a British diplomat, who was refused admission when he returned an hour later. According to diplomatic sources, she had been taken away by Ugandan security men and killed by suffocation. Since Mrs. Bloch also had British nationality, the British government made representations to the Ugandans and refused to accept their protestations that her whereabouts were "completely unknown."

ABU DAUD INCIDENT

Great indignation was aroused in Israel by the hasty release by the French on January 11, 1977, of Mohammed Daoud Audeh, known as Abu Daoud, a leading member of the Fatah terrorist organization, who helped plan most of the operations of its Black September section and had organized the murder of the Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in 1972 (AJYB 1973 [Vol. 74], p. 451). He had been arrested in Paris by French counterespionage agents, reportedly on an Interpol warrant issued at the request of the West German government. Israel and West Germany immediately requested that he be held pending completion of diplomatic proceedings for his extradition, but a hastily convened Paris court decided to release him, and he was immediately flown to Algeria.

Foreign Minister Yigal Allon described the release as "an ugly surrender to threats by terrorist organizations," which had not only violated France's extradition treaty with Israel, but disregarded the European Economic Community's anti-terror pact. Israel Ambassador to France Mordecai Gazit was recalled for consultations and an official protest note was handed to French Ambassador to Israel Jean Herly. (See also below.)

Foreign Relations

UNITED STATES

Reliance on the United States for military supplies, financial aid and political support continued to be the main feature of Israel's foreign relations.

During the second quarter of 1976 much effort was devoted to obtaining \$550 million of aid during the three-month transition quarter between the 1976 fiscal year, ending June 30, and the 1977 year, which was to begin on October 1, since

the federal government was in the process of changing its fiscal calendar. Rabin and Allon stated that President Gerald R. Ford and Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger had undertaken not to oppose the allocation, but some members of the Israel cabinet urged that the issue should not be overemphasized, and the President's final offer of \$275 million was accepted without protest. It was pointed out that Israel was receiving some \$2.3 billion during the fiscal year 1976 and was expected to get another \$1.8 billion during fiscal 1977.

In October there was some controversy over Ford's announcement that Israel was to be supplied with several highly sophisticated weapons systems. According to Israeli reports, the decision was the outcome of a personal appeal from Prime Minister Rabin. Israel defense ministry sources commented that the new equipment had been on order for at least two years and had been included in the list presented to the Americans by Defense Minister Peres when he visited Washington in December 1975.

In mid-December, Defense Minister Peres visited Washington for meetings with Kissinger, Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld, and top Pentagon officials, reportedly in order to discuss a completion of US arms deliveries and the possibility of obtaining licences to produce some US-designed arms in Israel.

In general, Israeli spokesmen expressed appreciation of United States political support, particularly at the UN, but there was much criticism of Ambassador William Scranton's statement during the Security Council debate on the Middle East in March, describing Israel's settlement policies in the administered areas and Jerusalem as an obstacle on the road to peace. Allon called it "a bad speech at an unfortunate time." Toward the end of November, however, Allon praised Scranton's speech in the General Assembly debate on the report of the "Committee of 20," which called for Israel's withdrawal from all occupied areas and the establishment of a Palestinian state.

SOUTH AFRICA

Closer relations with South Africa were established during the year. South African Prime Minister John Vorster visited Israel in mid-April as the guest of Prime Minister Rabin, who expressed sympathy with South Africa's "historic efforts to achieve detente on your own continent, . . . to create coexistence that will guarantee a prosperous atmosphere of cooperation for all the African peoples, without outside interference and threats." It was announced on April 12 that a joint ministerial committee would meet at least once a year to review economic, industrial, and scientific cooperation, including the supply of South African coal for a projected electric power station.

It was denied, however, both by Israeli sources and by Vorster himself, that the latter had come to buy arms or to set up an anti-Communist alliance. Israel Ambassador to Pretoria Yitzhak Unna stated that the invitation to Vorster by no means implied approval of *apartheid*. Replying to Arab and Third-World criticism of the

rapprochement, Israel Ambassador to the UN Chaim Herzog pointed out that Saudi Arabia exported large quantities of oil to South Africa and that 22 black African states imported over \$600 million worth of South African goods annually.

MEXICO

Relations with Mexico, which had seriously deteriorated after the Mexican vote for the UN Assembly resolution condemning Zionism in November 1975 (AJYB 1977 [Vol. 77], pp. 115-18, 147-48), improved after a visit by Foreign Minister Allon on February 29-March 2. Arrangements were then made for scientific, technological and economic cooperation, and a direct air route between the two countries was opened on November 10 with a visit by Transport Minister Gad Yaacobi.

FRANCE

Relations with France, which remained chilly in view of consistent French support for the Arabs, reached a new low point in January 1977 with the release of the Arab terrorist Abu Daoud (see above). The affair affected attitudes regarding the case of Samuel Flatto-Sharon, a Jewish financier who had lived in France since 1939 and had been in Israel since 1970. In September 1976 it was reported that he was wanted by the French authorities on charges of large-scale fraud and tax evasion, and on December 26 he was arrested at the request of the French and released on £1 million bail (a record sum). A formal request for his extradition was received from France on January 28, 1977, but further proceedings were delayed while the 400 pages of documents were being translated and studied.

There was widespread agitation against handing over an Israeli citizen to France in view of the French failure to extradite Abu Daoud. A petition against Flatto-Sharon's extradition was signed by 30,000 persons, including 62 members of the Knesset, and protests in the same vein were made by Alignment and Likud speakers in a February 8 Knesset debate. Justice Minister Hayim Zadok replied that there could be no political interference with the lawfully constituted authorities.

However, Ambassador Gazit returned to his post in Paris on February 4, and there was some progress toward normalization, which was marked by French Foreign Minister Louis de Guiringaud's visit to Israel at the end of April.

PORTUGAL AND SPAIN

An announcement in August 1976 by Prime Minister Mario Soares of Portugal that his country favored establishment of diplomatic relations with Israel was followed by a visit by the Portuguese Minister of Agriculture in October. Soares and Allon announced agreement on the subject on April 16, 1977, in Amsterdam, where they were attending a Socialist International meeting, and relations at ambassadorial level were officially established on May 12, 1977.

Hopes of the establishment of relations with Spain suffered a setback when, under

Arab pressure, expected official and royal recognition was withheld from a meeting of the European Section of the World Jewish Congress in Madrid in December. Foreign Minister Allon told the Knesset on December 9 that Israel had not been consulted in advance by WJC; had this been done, he would have advised against the meeting, which, he said, was held "in the wrong place at the wrong time."

Political Affairs

Tension continued in the Israel Labor Party, especially between Prime Minister Rabin and Defense Minister Peres, while former Foreign Minister Abba Eban and former Defense Minister Moshe Dayan continued to criticize from the sidelines. The "steering group" set up in March to strengthen the leadership (AJYB 1977 [Vol. 77], p. 495) proved ineffective. Dissatisfaction was expressed at gatherings of party workers from the Tel Aviv and Jerusalem branches, and of intellectuals and kibbutz members—the latter under the watchword, "It can't go on like this!"

Eban announced that he intended to declare at the forthcoming party convention his candidacy for the Labor nomination for prime minister after the next general election. Dayan made it clear that he did not aspire to the position, nor to any cabinet post, but Peres was also expected to contest the nomination. Rabin's position was that renomination should be a matter of course, unless the party had a specific reason for deposing the prime minister. In particular, he felt it was inadmissible for a cabinet member (with obvious reference to Peres) to compete for the nomination without first submitting his resignation. He also hinted that if Peres lost, he might not be included in the next cabinet. Peres refused to divulge the position he would adopt at the convention.

The tension between Peres and Rabin erupted in mid-May when a political correspondent in the *Ha'aretz* daily quoted a "source close to the Prime Minister" as saying that Rabin suspected the other's supporters of conducting a campaign to disparage him and would like to have the authority to dismiss ministers. Peres spoke out at a meeting of the Labor party's leadership bureau, declaring: "If Rabin wants to fire anyone, let him resign and that will bring about the resignation of the entire Cabinet." After a private meeting between the two men a few days later, the incident was considered closed. There were reports from time to time, however, of exchanges—sometimes heated—between Rabin and Peres at meetings of the cabinet: for example, over the dispute between Israel and Amoco (an American company believed to represent Egyptian interests) over oil drilling on the Israel-held side of the Gulf of Suez, and, after the disturbances in Hebron in October, over the handling of the administered areas.

Efforts were made by Rabin's supporters to avert a confrontation. Finance Minister Yehoshua Rabinowitz and Housing Minister Avraham Ofer tried to persuade Eban to join the cabinet as minister without portfolio, but he declined. Some of the junior party leaders called for the replacement of some cabinet members by new faces to restore public confidence.

There were also rumblings inside the other parties. In October, the Free Center,

led by Shmuel Tamir, broke away from Likud in protest against its domination by Menahem Begin and his categorical opposition to any territorial compromise in Judea and Samaria. In November Major-General (Reserves) Ariel Sharon, who had resigned his position as the prime minister's advisor in March, announced that he was leaving Likud and would make a bid for the premiership through a new independent movement called Shlomzion ("Peace of Zion"). The younger leaders of the National Religious party were increasingly critical of the government and expressed "hawkish" policies in defiance of coalition discipline. The Independent Liberals threatened to withdraw from the coalition in protest against its failure to carry out their proposals, notably reorganization of the ministries and compulsory arbitration of labor disputes.

DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT FOR CHANGE

A new and powerful challenge to the established parties, especially to Labor, came from Professor Yigael Yadin, noted archeologist and in 1949-52 chief-of-staff of the Israel Defense Forces. Toward the end of May he announced that he would consider entering politics if he found enough support for a program of electoral reform, reorganization of government to promote more effective decision-making and action, a quest for peace with the Arabs even at the cost of territorial compromise, but without establishing a separate Palestinian state, and an intensive effort to improve social and economic conditions. He advocated a small, strong cabinet to determine major policy without being hampered by administrative detail, and decentralization through regional administrations.

On November 22 Yadin announced the formation of the Democratic Movement, which, he hoped, would gain enough support in the 1977 elections to enable him to lead the government. His primary condition for joining a coalition would be an immediate change in the electoral system and the holding of elections according to the new system at the earliest possible date. Among his most prominent supporters were retired senior army and police officers and university professors. He declared that the movement would accept only individual members; he would make no deals with existing parties. Two weeks later, the Shinui (Change) movement, established in 1974 under the leadership of Professor Amnon Rubinstein, decided to dissolve, and its members individually went over to the new party, which was renamed Democratic Movement for Change (DMC). The Independent Liberal Party and the Citizen's Rights Movement held talks with the new group on the possibility of merging, but the negotiations fell through because of Yadin's insistence that all membership must be individual and that Keneset members wishing to join the new party must resign their parliamentary seats. In mid-January the Free Center joined DMC, and its Keneset members resigned their seats.

GOVERNMENT CRISIS

The political scene was radically transformed in December, when Prime Minister Rabin resigned as the result of a break with the National Religious party (NRP). The crisis began when the Torah Front (Agudat Israel and Poalei Agudat Israel) submitted a vote of no confidence in the government because of the alleged desecration of the Sabbath on the occasion of the arrival of the first three F15 jet planes, which were flown directly from the United States, and arrived at an air force base on Friday, December 10.

Rabin said the ceremony was over 17 minutes before the start of the Sabbath, and apologized if there was a desecration; but NRP resolved that it could not support the government on this issue, and its Knesset members, including two ministers, abstained on the no-confidence motion (Interior Minister Yosef Burg voted with the government).

The motion, although supported by all opposition parties, from the Communists to Likud, was defeated by a vote of 55 to 48, with nine abstentions. Rabin, however, said it was inadmissible for a coalition party to abstain on an issue of confidence, and proposed, under Article 11 of the Transition Law (amended in 1962), that the NRP ministers be regarded as having resigned. The proposed was ratified by the cabinet on December 19 and reported by Prime Minister Rabin to the Knesset a day later.

Likud submitted another no-confidence motion, and that very evening Rabin, without waiting for it to be put to the vote, submitted to President Ephraim Katzir his resignation, involving that of the entire cabinet. It appeared obvious that no new cabinet commanding a majority could be formed until after the elections. Since, under Israeli law, a cabinet that has resigned remains in office until replaced by another, and no resignations are possible from such a cabinet, the two ILP ministers, Moshe Kol (Tourism) and Gideon Hausner (without portfolio), submitted their resignations shortly before Rabin submitted his, to avoid their being "trapped" in a cabinet from which they would be unable to resign if their demands were not met. The Supreme Court, however, ruled that the resignations were not valid, since the statutory 48 hours had not elapsed before Rabin's resignation. On January 5, 1977, the Knesset decided on its own dissolution, and set May 17 as the date for the elections.*

Rabin explained that his decision had been taken on grounds of constitutional principle, but some commentators described it as a shrewd move designed to enhance his prestige, regain the political initiative, and catch the Democratic

*The returns showed the following distribution of seats in the 120-member Knesset: Likud 43; Labor Alignment 32; Democratic Movement for Change 15; National Religious Party 12; Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (New Communist List and Black Panthers) 5; Agudat Israel (Religious) 4; Sheili (Left-Socialist) 2; Shlomzion (Arik Sharon) 2; Citizens' Rights Movement 1; Flatto-Sharon 1; Independent Liberals 1; Poalei Agudat Israel (Religious Workers) 1, and the United Arab List 1. A full discussion will appear in Volume 79.

Movement before it had time to organize. One result of the move was to precipitate the struggle for the premiership. Peres now felt free to announce his candidacy, since he could not be called upon to resign from a "caretaker government."

The confrontation between Peres and Rabin for the Labor party's leadership took place at its convention on February 26—the first time such a vote had been held. Peres was supported by many of the younger leaders, as well as by Abba Eban, who withdrew his own candidacy; Rabin was backed by the old guard of Mapai, the former members of Ahdut Ha'avodah, and most of the kibbutz delegates. Rabin was chosen as the Labor nominee for the premiership by a narrow majority: 1,455 to 1,404.

CHARGES AGAINST OFFICIALS

Meanwhile, one of the most sensational scandals in Israel's history had broken. The cabinet decided, on September 5, to appoint Asher Yadlin, chairman of Kupat Holim, the Histadrut medical insurance service, and former head of the Histadrut's economic enterprises, governor of the Bank of Israel to succeed Moshe Sanbar on November 1. On the day after the cabinet decision, Police Minister Shlomo Hillel and Attorney-General Aaron Barak were informed that the police had been inquiring into allegations against Yadlin of improper conduct in the management of Kupat Holim. Yadlin declared that the allegations were without basis and that he would welcome an investigation.

After a month of intensive police investigation, Yadlin was detained for interrogation on suspicion of having accepted bribes and undercover commissions in transactions affecting Kupat Holim. On October 24 the cabinet resolved, without prejudging the charges against Yadlin, that it could no longer delay the appointment, and named Director-General of the Treasury Arnon Gafny as governor of the Bank of Israel.

There was considerable criticism of the daily publicity by the press to unproved rumors of charges against Yadlin, which were believed to have been fed by unauthorized disclosures from police sources. In mid-December Yadlin was charged with taking bribes totaling I£280,000, as well as other offenses, and was remanded in custody until his trial. On March 14, 1977, Yadlin pleaded guilty to some of the charges, involving bribes totaling I£ 124,000, but claimed that he had handed over I£ 80,000 of the money to Labor party funds, adding that he had raised "millions" for the party. The judge did not accept his claim and sentenced him to five years' imprisonment and a fine of I£ 250,000. Further charges were to be investigated by the police after consideration of Yadlin's appeal.

Another scandal, which broke toward the end of the year, ended in tragedy. Minister of Housing Avraham Ofer broke down under publicity given to police investigations into his activities before joining the government, and committed suicide. In November Yigal Laviv, a correspondent of the weekly *Ha'olam Haze* who had also been involved in airing the charges against Yadlin, gave the police

information on 30 different matters raising suspicions of offenses committed by Ofer. The police examined Laviv's charges, but came to the conclusion toward the end of the year that they were not substantiated, leading Ofer to expect that an official statement clearing him would soon be made.

On December 31, however, a witness in the Yadlin affair sent the police a statement which raised more questions for investigation, and various rumors were published about possible charges. On January 2, Prime Minister Rabin and Justice Minister Zadok assured Ofer that everything possible would be done to expedite the inquiry, but a day later his body was found in his car on Tel Aviv beach. In a suicide note Ofer said he was innocent, but did not have the strength "to bear any more." He was reported to have been particularly depressed by the lack of support from his political associates.

As the Labor-Mapam Alignment was preparing for the elections, it was hit a further blow by the revelation that a joint dollar account in the names of Mr. and Mrs. Rabin, opened in a Washington bank during Rabin's term of office as Israel ambassador (1968-73), was still in operation, in breach of Israeli law. Although Mrs. Rabin explained that she alone had operated the account, Rabin publicly accepted joint moral and legal responsibility. The sum involved was first thought to be \$2,000—well below the \$5,000 limit above which offenses were punishable by an administrative fine. It turned out later that the maximum deposit in the account had been over \$20,000. Rabin thereupon announced (April 8) that he was withdrawing from the first place in the Alignment's Knesset list, and Defense Minister Shimon Peres was unanimously elected to succeed him. Since, according to Israeli law, resignation from a caretaker government was impossible, Rabin took a vacation from his duties as prime minister and Peres took his place. Mrs. Rabin was tried and fined I£250,000; Rabin was given an administrative fine of I£ 15,000.

Economic Affairs

There was some progress in the government's efforts to improve the balance of payments by switching economic activity from services and production for the home market to exports. Although the GNP grew by only 1 to 2 per cent, exports of goods and services went up by 15-16 per cent, to \$4.6 billion. Imports fell by 3 per cent, to \$7.9 billion, so that exports were 58 per cent of imports, compared with 47 per cent in 1975. The main export increases were in polished diamonds (up by 30 per cent), other industrial goods (by 26 per cent), and agricultural products other than citrus (by 50 per cent). There were 790,000 tourists during the year, an increase of 29 per cent.

The rise in exports was largely attributed to the "creeping devaluation" system (AJYB, 1977 [Vol. 77], p. 498), which kept them profitable. In July the Israel pound was linked to a basket of currencies (consisting of US dollars, pounds sterling, German marks, French francs, and Dutch gulden in specified proportions), instead of to the dollar alone. Successive "mini-devaluations" brought the exchange rate to

I£ 9.44 per dollar on May 25, 1977, compared with I£ 7.52 per dollar on March 14, 1976.

The deficit on current account fell by some \$800 million, to \$3.2 billion, and foreign-currency reserves rose from about \$1 billion to \$1.2 billion. While exports constituted a higher proportion of the total resources at the disposal of the economy (22 per cent as against 19 per cent in 1975), the percentage devoted to investment fell from 19 to 16.5 per cent. Public expenditure took up 24 per cent of the total (26 per cent in 1975), and the share of private expenditure rose by 1.5 per cent to 37.5 per cent. Although government revenue was increased by the imposition of value added tax at the rate of 8 per cent and improved collection of income tax, personal consumption rose by 2 per cent.

While practically full employment was maintained, the number of available jobs reported to the labor exchanges exceeding the number of registered applicants for work, the continued rise in the consumer price index—38 per cent—was a major cause of labor unrest. A spiral of wage claims, generally reinforced by strikes, slowdowns, and sanctions in the public services culminated in spring 1977 in a series of inflationary wage increases, which, it was estimated, would cost the economy over I£ 1 billion. As a result, the Histadrut demanded a compensatory wage increase of 4 to 5 per cent for workers in production.

On January 23, 1977, Finance Minister Yehoshua Rabinowitz presented a budget of I£ 122.5 billion for the fiscal year 1977–78, as compared with I£ 87.6 billion in 1976–77, an increase only sufficient to maintain the real level of government expenditure. Defense accounted for 39 per cent of the total and debt services 25 per cent (21 per cent the year before). Despite the financial stringency of recent years, Rabinowitz pointed out, I£25 billion were to be spent on social services, compared with I£ 1 billion in 1972, including I£ 9 billion on income support (family allowances, etc.), as against I£ 1 billion in 1972.

However, since the government had resigned and elections were impending, the opposition (now including NRP) was not prepared to adopt the budget, and after lengthy negotiations, an agreed interim budget of I£ 31.8 billion for April–July was passed on March 17. The opposition also rejected a government-sponsored bill to give legal effect to a “package deal” between the government and the Histadrut (which the employers’ organizations refused to sign) freezing prices, taxes, and wages until the end of June 1977.

During the first three months of 1977, commodity exports grew by 24.5 per cent, and foreign currency reserves went up to about \$1.2 billion. The consumer price index rose by only 2.7 per cent, less than in the corresponding period of any year since 1970.

Education and Culture

Some of Israel's educational achievements and aims were outlined by Education Minister Aharon Yadlin in his budget statement on February 14, 1977. In 1970, 74

per cent of 5-to-19-year-olds were receiving education, compared with an average 70 per cent in the EEC countries. Of the 20–24 age group, 23 per cent were receiving higher education (17 per cent in EEC countries); Israel came third, after the United States and the USSR, in the percentage of students in the population. In 1976, 84.3 per cent of the 14–17 age group attended postprimary schools, as against 60 per cent in 1966. At the other end of the age scale, 80 per cent of three-year-olds and 94 per cent of four-year-olds went to kindergarten.

The main stress in the education ministry's efforts was put on the advancement of socially disadvantaged pupils, mainly belonging to the Oriental communities (of African and Asian origins); 10 per cent of its budget (twice the 1975 percentage) was spent on special additional measures for their benefit, such as the extended school day, boarding schools for gifted children, and community projects to deal comprehensively with the educational and cultural problems of parents and children in selected slum neighborhoods and development towns.

Other measures included experimental projects in primary schools concerned with teaching methods, cultural enrichment programs, etc.; the establishment of additional comprehensive schools; reform of the matriculation examination for high-school graduates; curriculum reforms, particularly in the study of recent Israeli history, the development of Zionism, and the Jewish communities in the Diaspora; voluntary service by high-school students in development towns, and more attention to the heritage of Oriental Jewry.

There was improvement in the achievements of pupils from the Oriental communities: their percentage in secondary education had grown from 35.6 percent in 1967 to 49.5 percent in 1976; they constituted 24 percent of those who passed the matriculation examination in 1974, as against 12 percent in 1968. The percentage receiving higher education was 19 in 1974 and was steadily growing; almost 3,000 students, many of them from the Oriental communities, attended "second-chance" pre-academic courses after demobilization from the armed forces to prepare them for the universities.

Israel and World Jewry

After the death of Pinhas Sapir, chairman of the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency, Haifa's Mayor Joseph Almogi (Zionist Labor Movement) was elected to succeed him. He defeated Leon Arye Dultzin (Confederation of General Zionists), WZO and Agency treasurer, who had been active chairman since Sapir's death.

Immigration in 1976 was almost at the same level as the year before (comparisons with 1975 in parentheses): 19,879 (minus 149), including 7,274 (minus 1,257) from the USSR; 3,042 from the United States and Canada (minus 23), 2,575 from Latin America (plus 814), 2,802 from Western Europe (plus 16) and 583 from South Africa (plus 168).

There was much concern about the high proportion of Soviet Jews who, after

arriving at the transit center in Vienna, opted to go to other countries than Israel. In 1976, the percentage of such "dropouts" was 49 percent, compared with 37 percent in 1975 and 19 percent in 1974. Reasons given for this phenomenon included absorption difficulties in Israel; deliberate selection by the Soviet authorities of candidates unlikely to settle in Israel; the assistance given by HIAS to those opting for other countries, and the feeling among the emigrants that they could try out the United States and still keep open the Israeli option. A joint committee of the Jewish Agency, HIAS and the JDC was reported to have agreed that the Agency alone should deal with those who originally had applied for visas to Israel, while the other two bodies would assist those who had asked for visas to other countries. Owing to strong opposition within the American agencies, however, the proposals were not adopted.

In the first four months of 1977, there was a drop of about 20 percent in immigration from Eastern Europe, counterbalanced by considerable increases in immigration from Latin America and South Africa.

Systematic efforts were made to encourage Israelis residing abroad (*yordim*) to return, and the *aliyah* department's section for returning Israelis dealt with 2,358 families, comprising over 7,000 persons, during the year. Accurate statistics of the number of returnees are not available, since they are not registered as immigrants.

In a report issued in October 1976, a joint government-Jewish Agency committee on immigrant absorption problems, headed by Technion president Amos Horev, pinpointed as a major cause of difficulty the lack of coordination between the Jewish Agency's *aliyah* department and the ministry of immigrant absorption. It recommended the replacement of both by a single *aliyah* and absorption authority, to be operated by the chairman of the Agency executive under the supervision of a supreme council headed by the prime minister. It also proposed that each ministry concerned with the problems (interior, housing, labor, etc.) have a deputy director-general for absorption, and suggested various reforms in the handling of immigrants. The Agency accepted the report, but the government took no action, pending the 1977 elections.

The Zionist General Council scheduled the opening of the 29th Zionist Congress for January 17, 1977, and amended its rules to provide that approval by 90 per cent of the election committee in any country of an agreed list of delegates made elections unnecessary. However, the Congress court ruled in October that the amendment was unconstitutional, and the Congress was postponed until February 1978.

Arab Population

After Arab protest demonstrations on March 30 against the government's plans for the development of Galilee (AJYB, 1977 [Vol. 77], p. 500), Rakah (New Communist List) moved for a vote of no confidence in the Knesset (March 31), accusing the government of ordering the security forces to attack "peaceful demonstrations." Prime Minister Rabin called on Israeli Arabs not to cooperate with the Communists

in "a criminal incitement campaign aiming to destroy the positive relations between the Jewish and Arab communities, woven with such great effort over the past 29 years."

In light of these developments, the cabinet established on May 23 three committees to coordinate government policy and ensure its speedier implementation "in all matters related to the integration of the Arabs in national life, on the basis of full and equal citizenship, with due regard for their specific religious and cultural character." A committee of ministers, headed by the prime minister, and a committee of directors-general of ministries, chaired by the prime minister's advisor on Arab affairs, would coordinate the operations of government agencies, and a public council, with Jewish and Arab members, would advise and recommend.

A heated controversy broke out in September over a confidential report prepared by Israel Koenig, the interior ministry's district commissioner for Galilee before the March 30 disturbances, proposing curbs on the Arab population of the area. The report, published in full on September 7 by the Mapam daily *Al Hamishmar*, forecast that by 1978 the Arabs would make up 51 per cent of the population in Galilee, and warned of serious social, political, and security dangers. To counter the growth of Arab influence in the area, Koenig suggested, *inter alia*, that the number of Arab workers in industrial and business concerns be limited to 20 per cent of the total; that educational privileges of Arab students be curtailed and they be encouraged to study abroad and not return; that an Arab political party, guided by Israelis, be established as a rival to Rakah; that a "reward and punishment policy within the law" be instituted for Arab leaders and local authorities to counter hostility to the state; that family-allowance payments to Arabs should be restricted or the responsibility for the allowances transferred to the Jewish Agency, which would make grants only to Jews.

The memorandum was widely condemned in the press. *The Jerusalem Post* wrote that it was "tainted with nationalistic fanaticism" and "calculated to perpetuate Arab enmity and to cause immense harm to the cause of Jewish-Arab coexistence." Foreign Minister Allon called the report an "unfortunate document," harmful to Israel's democratic image and efforts to achieve coexistence between Jews and Arabs.

Minister of the Interior Yosef Burg, to whom Koenig was responsible, declared that the report was only an internal office memorandum, not a statement of policy, and had been pigeonholed. Prime Minister Rabin said there was no reason for the cabinet to consider the report, of whose very existence he had been unaware, because it was merely a private communication between a civil servant and his superiors. This was understood to be the reason why he rejected demands for Koenig's dismissal. He declared on several occasions that the government's policy on the Israeli Arabs remained unchanged.

The New Communist List's (NCL) victory in Nazareth (AJYB, 1977 [Vol. 77], p. 500) was not followed by further municipal successes. In the large village of Kafr Kana, where elections were held in January 1976, NCL received only 20 per cent

of the votes, compared with 51 per cent in the Keneset elections of December 1973, while candidates associated with the Labor party headed the polls in five out of seven Arab local councils, where elections were held in May.

Administered Territories

In the municipal elections held in April in 24 towns in Samaria and Judea, considerable gains were achieved by candidates of the "national bloc," comprising what the *Jerusalem Post* described as a "strange assortment of radicals, Communists, Ba'athists, and PLO backers." Out of 205 seats contested, 148 changed hands and most of these were won by national bloc candidates of the younger generation, displacing the traditional leaders who were generally sympathetic to Jordan. The bloc won all ten seats on the Hebron council, eight out of nine in Ramallah, and eight out of ten in Nablus (Shechem), but only one seat out of eight in Jericho, and the moderate mayor Elias Frej was returned in Bethlehem with six supporters against five for the bloc.

The new mayor of Ramallah, Karif Khalaf, stated that he and his colleagues would confine their official activities to municipal affairs and "foil any attempt by the Israeli authorities to involve us in political deliberations," since the PLO was the only political representative of the Palestinian people. They would oppose "the attempt to promote home rule, which is designed to substitute for the PLO leadership." Some commentators believed that the elections were intended by the Israeli authorities to bring to the fore new local leaders, with whom Israel might negotiate in place of the PLO, and said that the results had frustrated this purpose. Defense Minister Shimon Peres declared, however, that the elections were held because Israel was a democracy and was bound to accord democratic rights to the Arabs under its rule in their local affairs.

From time to time demonstrations took place in various towns: in April to protest against a Gush Emunim march to Jericho (see below); in mid-May on the anniversary of the foundation of Israel, and from July on in protest against the imposition of the value added tax. Several Arabs were killed during the suppression of these riots.

Gush Emunim continued to press for further Jewish settlement in all parts of the historic Land of Israel, especially in the heart of Samaria. In April 1976, it held a mass march to Jericho to support its demands and protest against withdrawal from the area. The number of participants was variously estimated at 20,000 to 40,000. On May 9 the cabinet decided that no settlement would be established at Kadum, where a Gush Emunim group had been allowed to camp in December 1975 (AJYB, 1977 [Vol. 77], p. 495), and that the group would be transferred to a permanent site within the framework of the authorized settlement program. The government would continue to prevent settlement attempts, which were "contrary to the law and to Israel's policy of security and peace." The group rejected various sites it was offered; but no action was taken to move it, despite protests from left-wing and dovish circles.

In August, 20 Gush Emunim activists were charged with criminal trespass for holding prayers in the former Hadassah building in Hebron to establish a Jewish presence in the city itself, besides the settlement at Kiryat Arba on its outskirts, and to avert the possibility of a withdrawal from Hebron. Religious Affairs Minister Yitzhak Raphael declared that Jews should be allowed to live in the city proper. There were disturbances when the Kiryat Arba settlers, led by Rabbi Moshe Levinger, held the prayers, and the military government ordered Levinger to stay out of Hebron, except at the hours specified for prayer at the Tomb of Abraham. When he defied the order, troops were sent to his home to bring him in for questioning; they clashed with Gush Emunim members who surrounded his house. After negotiations with the authorities, Levinger reported to the military government at Hebron.

There was serious trouble at the tomb of Abraham in Hebron on October 3, the eve of Yom Kippur, when an Arab mob stormed the Jewish prayer hall, tearing up and desecrating the Torah Scrolls and destroying ritual objects, in retaliation for damage done the day before to copies of the Koran in the Muslim area of the tomb. The city was placed under curfew; 65 young Arabs were detained on suspicion of complicity in the vandalism, and the tomb was closed for repairs.

Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren and Ovadiah Yosef appealed to Jews for tolerance and restraint, and Sheikh Hilmi al-Mohtasib, head of the Supreme Muslim Council in Jerusalem, declared that he was no less shocked by the desecration of the scrolls than by the desecration of the Koran, but disturbances broke out in other West Bank towns in solidarity with the Hebron Arabs. Thousands attended the traditional interment of the desecrated scrolls, which was held under the auspices of the Chief Rabbinate and the military chaplaincy.

Gush Emunim and the Kiryat Arba residents were severely criticized by cabinet members for increasing tensions and provoking the Arab population. Replying to a heated Knesset debate on October 6, Defense Minister Peres declared: "We shall continue to extinguish the fires of blind hatred and we are strong enough to extend protection to all citizens, no matter what their religion and nationality." The curfew in Hebron was gradually lifted, and the tomb was reopened on October 20. Toward the end of the month, Levinger was indicted on charges of disobeying the orders forbidding him to enter Hebron, insulting an army officer, and resisting arrest.

Personalia

Shlomo Avineri, professor of political science at Hebrew University, was appointed director-general of the foreign ministry, effective as of April 13, 1976, to succeed Avraham Kidron.

Yoel Sussmann, relieving president of the Supreme Court, was appointed its president to succeed Shimon Agranat on September 8.

Major-General Michael Barkai, deputy-commander of the Israel Navy, was appointed its commander on September 23, succeeding Maj.-Gen. Binyamin Telem.

Yehoshafat Harakabi, advisor on strategic policy to the Ministry of Defense, was

appointed also advisor to the prime minister on counterterrorism and intelligence coordinator to succeed Rehavam Ze'evi, as of February 1, 1977.

Miles Sherover, businessman and philanthropist, died in Jerusalem on March 3, 1976, at the age of 79. David Elazar, former chief of staff of the Israel Defense Forces, died in Tel Aviv on April 18, at the age of 51. Marcus Reiner, cofounder of the science of rheology, died in Haifa on April 24, at the age of 90. Louis E. Levinthal, former president of ZOA, died in Jerusalem on May 16, at the age of 84. Israel Ritov, pioneer of the cooperative movement, died in Tel Aviv on June 19, at the age of 81. Rabbi Ezekiel Abramsky, the oldest *yeshivah* head in Israel, died in Jerusalem on September 18, at the age of 91. Gabriel Stein, professor of physical chemistry at Hebrew University, died in Jerusalem on October 22 at the age of 56. Eliyahu Dobkin, former member of the Zionist and Jewish Agency executives, died in Jerusalem on October 26, at the age of 77.

MISHA LOUVISH

Jews in Arab Countries

JEWISH LIFE in the Arab countries of the Middle East virtually came to an end in the period under review (1972–1976), though remnant Jewish communities continued to exist in Iraq, Egypt, and Lebanon. There were some 330,000 Jews in Arab Middle East lands before 1948, about 20,000 in May 1967, less than 8,000 at the end of 1976. The once-flourishing Egyptian Jewish community has been reduced to about 300–400 members, most of them elderly and many needing financial aid. About as many were left in the once largest Middle East Jewish community, that of Iraq. When civil war began in Lebanon in the spring of 1974, about 1,800 Jews still lived there. All but some 400 fled in the 19 months of fighting. Libya, like Aden before it, no longer had any Jews, except for 15 in Tripoli. The Arab Republic of Yemen, once thought to have been emptied of Jews by Operation Magic Carpet that airlifted nearly 50,000 to Israel between December 1949 and March 1950, may still have, according to one recent report, as many as 1,500 scattered among tribes throughout that country. In short, the only “sizable” community was that of Syria, whose 4,500–5,000 Jews were still forbidden to emigrate.

Iraq

Following the 1968–70 period of terror for Iraqi Jews, during which the Ba'ath Socialist regime of General Ahmad Hassan al-Bakr hanged 11 and tortured at least 18 more to death (AJYB, 1971 [Vol. 72], p.444), there was a period of respite. In response to international protest, the government set free Jews still in jail, began issuing some emigration visas in mid-1971, and apparently closed its eyes to a small movement of Jews out of the country through border mountain passes. However, a new wave of persecution began in September 1972, when security police arrested a prominent Jewish lawyer, Yaacov Abdul Azis, three days before Yom Kippur, and another well-known Jew, Abraham el-Sayegh, was slain in his home a few days later. Sayegh's property was seized by the authorities within the week.

By the end of the month, plainclothesmen and security forces had suddenly and without warning picked up eight more Jews in their homes and businesses. Three others, arrested and briefly held in the notorious Baghdad Kasr el-Nihaya prison (The Palace of No Return) in December, could give no information about the eight. A statement, issued on January 7, 1973, by the European office of the American Jewish Committee on the basis of information leaking out of Iraq, questioned

whether they were still alive; and Israeli government senior officials asserted in February that they had been executed in prison. A wave of protest brought replies from the Iraqi government, such as one issued in London, March 6, 1973, that such "Zionist propaganda" reports were "preposterous rumors and fabrications;" that there had been "absolutely no execution or arrest of any Jew in Iraq," and that "most Jews whose names were allegedly reported or mentioned in those rumors have left Iraq illegally." Another nine Jewish men and women were arrested in Baghdad in February, March, and April.

Concern for the arrested Jews mounted steadily, as notices began to appear in Baghdad papers listing them as having "escaped justice" (a phrase used by the authorities only when referring to persons known to have perished in jail); packages and funds left for prisoners by friends and relatives were returned, and their properties were sequestered. To this day, nothing has been seen of, or heard from, the 18 since their arrest, and they must be presumed dead. Besides Azis, the following were arrested: in September 1972, Azouri Shamash, Saul and Yaacov Rejwan, Ezra Azam, Ezra Abu Daoud, Saul Shamash, Naji Siat, Selim Sadka; in February 1973, Naji and Suad Kashkush; in March, Ezra and Selim Nahtan; in April, Naim Fattal, Shua Azis (Uzeir), and Yehuda, Rahma, and Aliza Twegg. The closest the government has ever come to acknowledging that they were dead was when President al-Bakr, describing the activities of former security chief Nazem Kazzar, who was killed in an attempted coup in July, told French correspondent Eric Rouleau (*Le Monde*, July 20, 1973): "We now know that Kazzar is responsible for the assassination of innocent Jews. . . ." Among Kazzar's methods of torture, Rouleau reported to have learned from other Iraqi leaders, were cigarette burns, injection of boiling water into the intestines, electric shock, crushing of genitals, and acid baths.

Fear among Baghdad Jews reached new heights in April 1973, when Reuven Kashkush, his wife, two sons, and a daughter were machine-gunned to death in their house at mid-day. This, too, Rouleau said, prominent Iraqis later attributed to Kazzar and his police, as an act of "vengeance in his fashion" for the death of three PLO leaders in an Israeli commando raid on Beirut that month. The Kashkushs were murdered only two days before they were scheduled to leave Iraq.

The ensuing international clamor again brought some relief to the Iraqi Jews. While ill-treatment stopped, most of them were still without occupation and barred from selling property or freely disposing of their possessions. Several required assistance from the Administrative Committee for Iraqi Jews, the community organization. That summer a score or so were able to leave in one way or another. Emigration ceased when the Yom Kippur war broke out, but resumed in May 1974. Some months later the head of the Jewish community, Meir Basri, declared in a guarded interview with *Droit et Liberté* (Paris, October 1974) that the community, reduced to about 500, still had two synagogues where services were being held and two rabbis, as well as a secondary school. Basri and his family left Iraq early in 1975. At the end of 1976 there were an estimated 300 Jews in Baghdad, another 20 or so in the port town of Basra, and about the same number in Hit, on the Euphrates.

March 1975 brought the arrest of Leender Aronson, a Dutch Jew who was a medic and a volunteer with the Kurds fighting the Iraqi government. Insisting that Aronson was an Israeli, the Iraqis refused him Dutch consular aid. Reports of his execution, in November 1975, prompted official Dutch protest, a request for his body, and a denial by the Iraqis. On March 15, 1976, Aronson's family was notified by phone that he had been executed three months earlier. The Dutch, never officially notified, recalled their *chargé d'affaires* for consultation, but did not break diplomatic relations. Some months later the family was permitted to recover the body.

In December 1975 the Iraqi government took the lead in an Arab propaganda campaign inviting Jews who had left the Arab countries to return to their homelands. In full-page advertisements in a number of Western newspapers, the Revolutionary Command Council announced its adoption, on November 26, 1975, of a resolution declaring that "Iraqi Jews who left Iraq since 1948 are hereby entitled to return home," and that the government "shall guarantee, to [them] full constitutional rights enjoyed by Iraqi citizens," including "equality and secure living without any discrimination." Some newspapers rejected a part of the copy that read: "The Zionists sinned against the very essence of Judaism, they excluded themselves through the erroneous belief that they belong to some mythical 'Superior Race.' This racist claim has rightly earned them universal condemnation." Other sections of the advertisement printed by all papers described the Zionists as "propagating the myth of a 'Chosen People,'" and turning the Jewish "religion into a nationality" with "the expulsion of the Arab Palestinians from their homeland" as its "first outcome."

The advertisement brought many letters from Iraqi Jewish refugee groups and others—and counter-advertisements like that published in the *New York Times* by the American Sephardi Federation and the American Committee for Rescue and Resettlement of Iraqi Jews—pointing to Iraq's record of discriminatory legislation against Jews, sequestration of Jewish property, hangings, and terror. Insofar as is known, only two Jews, Daniel Eliahu Salman, who was wanted by Israel for treason, and an unsuccessful businessman, Yusef Salah Navi, with wife and two children, returned to Iraq. The Iraqi government gave much publicity to the matter, and in January 1976 Jews in Iraq were required to express their gratitude for the law of return in a special government advertisement. In August the government announced that an international conference would be held in Baghdad in mid-November to "reveal the theoretical aspects of the Zionist, racist movement." This was countered by a conference in Paris, sponsored by the International League against Anti-Semitism, which denounced Iraq's treatment of its minorities, such as the Kurds, Arameans, and the Jews.

Syria

In 1976, after years of active official persecution and discrimination, President Hafez al-Assad's government gradually eased the plight of Syrian Jews. Up to that point the Syrian authorities strictly applied restrictions, which required Jews to

carry special identity cards; barred them from traveling more than two-and-a-half miles from their homes without special permit; imposed regular curfews on them; limited them in employment and profession; kept them under constant surveillance, and often confiscated their estates after death. Jews were harassed in other ways as well, not only by the Syrians but also by Palestine refugees living near the Jewish quarters.

During the second half of 1971 more than a score of Syrian Jews, including women and a four-year-old child, were arrested and jailed without trial for trying to leave the country. Following public protest abroad, six women and the child were released in November. Another 14 were released on May 11, 1972, by direct order of Assad. The secret police kept two Jews, Nissim Katri and Joseph Swed, in solitary confinement without trial for more than two years, and then transferred them to the Damascus al-Maze prison, where they remained another year. They were released in summer 1974 with the warning not to talk about the tortures they had suffered. Believed to have perished in a Syrian prison was 68-year-old Albert Elia, secretary of the Lebanon Jewish community, who had been abducted in Beirut in September 1971.

Over the years, quite a few Jews tried to make their way out of Syria. This was not only dangerous for the escapees, but also for the relatives they left behind, who were severely interrogated and beaten by the police. Some of the successful escapes became known, when refugees, with their identity carefully guarded to protect their families in Syria, described the plight of Syrian Jews to the press or to Jewish communal gatherings in Europe (as in Geneva in February 1972); or when, on July 1, 1974, the London *Daily Telegraph* reported that 92 Syrian Jews reached Lebanon and were hidden until they could flee to other countries. The murder, in late 1973 and early 1974, of several Jews who fled in this way (see below) and the war in Lebanon made such escapes virtually impossible by the end of 1974.

When, in an attempted rejoinder to widespread protest over Syrian treatment of Jews, the authorities in August 1972 wanted Jewish communal leaders to participate in a telecast attempting to show that the community was well treated, young Jewish women and men in the Damascus ghetto held an amazing impromptu demonstration which made the filming impossible.

Throughout 1973 the situation of Syrian Jewry remained basically unchanged. Word came in March that a 35-year-old Aleppo Jew named Zeki Kassab was shot down in cold blood by four armed men who came to his home. The Jewish community expressed its outrage by covering his coffin with his bloodstained clothes. The killers were never found. During the Yom Kippur war, there was considerable concern for the Jews in Syria. But although they lived in fear, scarcely venturing out of their homes for weeks, they were not molested.

March 1974 saw a second Jewish protest demonstration in the ghetto as well as in the streets of Damascus that was even more astounding in that it was joined by Moslems and Christians. It was triggered by the tragic fate of four young Jewish girls (Eva Saad, 18, Toni Zebah, 22, and her sisters Laura, 23, and Farah, 24), who

had attempted to flee the country with guides used by others before them. Their bodies were delivered to their mothers in early March. They had been raped, robbed, and murdered. Two weeks later the police, without explanation, delivered to the Damascus Jewish community the bodies of two young men, Hatan Hsaya, 18, and Kassam Abadi, 20, who had also tried to escape and had been missing for six months.

The Syrian Minister of the Interior later announced that a band of four murderers and smugglers—two Jews, Yussef Shaluah (the brother-in-law of one victim) and Azur Zalta, and two Moslems, Mohammed Moustapha Leila and Hicham Ezzedine—had “confessed” to the murder of the four young women. From the outset, Jewish sources in Damascus scoffed at this official attempt to involve Jews. In a trial on July 21, lawyers for the Moslems asked for psychiatric examination of their clients; no subsequent court proceedings ever took place. The two accused Jews, after having been tortured, were released on bail in September, and murder charges against them were eventually dropped.

It was in March 1974, too, according to the statement of three Syrian Jewish escapees to the London *Observer* on April 21, that Syrian security police arrested 11 Jewish women in Aleppo, brought them to Damascus, and tortured them in prison until they revealed who had helped smuggle their children out of the country.

The desperate position of Syrian Jewry was the focal point of a major gathering of the International Conference for the Liberation of Jews in the Middle East, held in Paris, July 3, 1974, and attended by delegates from over 30 lands. This meeting, chaired by Alain Poher, president of the French Senate, was the second of its kind. Founded after the Baghdad hangings in 1970, the International Conference has been active on behalf of Middle East Jews, as were the Committee of Concern, headed by General Lucius Clay in the United States, and a similar Israeli group, headed by Justice Hayyim Cohen.

Partly because of such efforts, partly no doubt also because of greater Syrian concern with its image in post-Yom-Kippur war negotiations, torture of Jews ceased in the latter part of 1974. For a brief period some Jews were even permitted to leave the country for medical reasons if they left hostages assuring their return. Therefore, while all other restrictions on Jews continued, tension was reduced and persecution made less obvious. This was an impression actively fostered by the Syrians, who were careful to provide an escort for foreign journalists on all visits to the ghetto and to arrange meetings with two or three prosperous Jewish shopkeepers, who had always had good relations with the police. American Jewish organizations, aware of the real situation, entered into a controversy both with CBS's Mike Wallace for his February 1975 “Sixty Minutes” program (e.g., the American Jewish Congress lodged a complaint with the National News Council) and, in April 1975, with *National Geographic*, charging they had given a too favorable account of Jewish life in Syria. Wallace did a more balanced show in March 1976, and the magazine subsequently published a retraction.

In 1975 there were continued efforts and agitation to ease repression. On February

25, at a time when the United States Congress was considering foreign assistance to Syria, 82 members of the House of Representatives wrote to Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger, urging the administration to "prevail upon the Syrian government" to reciprocate the United States "expression of good faith" by giving Syrian Jews the right to emigrate (AJYB, 1976 [Vol. 76], pp. 150-51). Circulator of the letter was Representative Stephen J. Solarz, member of the House Foreign Relations Committee, whose Brooklyn, N.Y., district has the largest concentration of Syrian Jews in the United States. He had raised the issue some weeks earlier in a two-hour meeting with Syrian President Assad, which he attended as a member of a Middle East fact-finding mission. According to Solarz, Assad had made it clear that he would not allow any Syrian Jews to leave, not even some 30 Jewish families with close relatives in the United States.

In June Rabbi Chaim Beboliel of the Committee for Rescue of Syrian Jewry and American Jewish Committee Middle-East Affairs director George E. Gruen testified on Syrian Jewry's plight before a House sub-committee. In July the issue was raised before the Human Rights Commission by Homer Jack representing the nongovernmental World Conference on Religion and Peace. Behind-the-scenes approaches to the Syrians were made through international bodies in Geneva and embassies in Damascus. Throughout, the Syrians remained intransigent.

Little by little, however, the basic situation began to improve. October 1975 reports claimed that the Syrians were cracking down on the Palestinians who had been harassing Jews in the ghetto. In early 1976 it became apparent that permits for Jews to travel inside Syria were being granted more readily. Visiting United States congressmen reported Assad as having said that Jews could enter Syria to visit relatives (and one or two later were to take advantage of this). Syrian concentration on events in Lebanon, the changes brought about in Damascus by the influx of Lebanese refugees, and the later switch in Syrian attitudes toward the Palestinians, all seem to have contributed to easing the situation of Jews.

At the end of the 1976 came word that internal travel restrictions for Jews had been lifted; that it was easier for Jews to do business and go about their occupations, and that the inscription "Mussawi" (of Mosaic faith) on identity papers of Jews no longer was in red print, but now resembled the entry denoting the faith of other Syrians. According to certain unconfirmed reports, one Syrian official, in a meeting with community leaders in November 1976, intimated that Jews might eventually be permitted to emigrate. The community was particularly anxious, and was pressing, for at least the emigration of a few hundred Jewish girls of marriageable age, since there were not enough young Jewish men left in Syria to assure that they would be married.

The largest Syrian Jewish community was in Damascus, nearly 2,900 strong; 1,300 were in Aleppo and the remainder in Qamishli, a town near the Turkish border. Families tended to be large, and births exceeded deaths. Jewish life was regulated by the High Committee on Jewish Affairs, headed by a Ministry of the Interior official. Selim Totah directed the seven-man Jewish Community Council in

Damascus. Synagogues were open in all three communities. The Jewish community school al-Ittihad al-Ahlieh in Damascus, subventioned by the Alliance Israélite Universelle, had over 550 students, of whom 70 per cent were girls. Boys predominated at the more Orthodox community-supported Ben Maimon primary and secondary school, which had some 600 students. In Aleppo, some 350 children attended *Talmud Torah*. Admission of Jews to Syrian schools of higher learning has vacillated with Syrian policy over the years; current university enrollment was about 35.

Most Jews were artisans skilled in copper and brass work, or merchants; about 30 were in the medical or paramedical professions, and three practiced law in Damascus. For all practical purposes, government employment (with the one known exception of an agricultural engineer) was closed to Jews. They still suffered various economic restrictions, though the community benefited somewhat from the economic boom in Syria in the last two years. Still, about one-third of Jewish families in both Damascus and Aleppo barely eked out a living and needed assistance. Qamishli Jews were even poorer. Fortunately, even in the worst years the Syrian government permitted friends and relatives abroad to send money for the needy.

Lebanon

Nineteen months of intense civil warfare (May 1974 to December 1976) between local Moslems and Christians, involving PLO forces and outside Moslem armies, which ended with a Syrian-imposed truce, may well have put an end to organized Jewish life in the country. The approximately 400 Jews in the country and Jewish refugees returning to Beirut "to look things over" were considering whether meaningful reestablishment was, indeed, possible.

The community, some 6,000 strong in 1967 and reduced to half that number in 1970, had remained relatively stable at about 1,800–2,000 after the Yom Kippur war. True, there had been the kidnapping of Albert Elia, assassination threats against other communal leaders, and tensions arising from incidents between the PLO and Israeli forces, either in Lebanon itself or just across the Israel border. On the whole, however, Jews were free to come and go as they pleased, to engage in any business or commerce, and to enjoy Jewish religious and cultural activity without interference. And they had relatively good relations with non-Jewish neighbors in a city where life was acknowledged to be quite pleasant.

One deep concern of the Beirut community was the fate of Elia. There had been patient efforts over the years to find out what became of him and to bring about his release. Quiet intervention by top Lebanese authorities at the request of Jewish community president Dr. Joseph Attie, diplomatic demarches, press conferences held by his children, like that of his daughter Mrs. Gabriel Tewfik, in Paris in 1974, sponsored by the International Conference for Liberation of Middle East Jews, all were to no avail. Hope flared briefly when the Beirut *Al Jaryda*, on January 4, 1973,

reported him alive, although he was known to have been a sick man when kidnapped. There was, in fact, reason to believe that he had been kidnapped by the Syrian Saiqa forces and later died in a Syrian prison. According to one rumor, the Syrians gave him burial along with dead Israeli soldiers at the end of the Yom Kippur war. Yet the Syrians persisted in denying knowledge of his fate.

In the early months of the conflict, the Jews were not molested and did not feel threatened. They were given assurances by Lebanese government leaders that they would be protected. Indeed, in some respects theirs became a privileged position. They always had had good rapport with the Christian Phalangist leader, Pierre Gemayel; and the Moslems and Palestinians, too, were anxious that Jews should not be attacked in order to demonstrate the PLO theory that Jews would be secure in any Palestinian-controlled state. In October 1974, however, when the fighting became more widespread and less controlled, and entire sections of Beirut including Jewish shops and homes were destroyed, more and more Jews began to leave. In subsequent months, perhaps a dozen Jews died, not because they were Jews (except, perhaps, in one instance), but as a result of the senseless, indiscriminate shelling and fighting in the city. Although Jews lived in all parts of Beirut, the Jewish quarter, Wadi Abu Jamil, where the major synagogue, the Jewish community building, and the Alliance Israélite Universelle school are located, was just along the hotly contested boundary line between the conflicting forces. That these structures escaped with but little damage was a minor miracle.

On several occasions, residents in the area took refuge in the synagogue building and twice, reportedly on orders from Yasir Arafat, PLO forces protected and even brought food and supplies to these refugees, making sure the event was well photographed and publicized for propaganda purposes. Several Jews were to credit Moslem friends with coming to their aid in difficult circumstances. This became increasingly necessary when non-Lebanese Moslem forces pouring into Beirut confused the word "Israelite" on identity cards of Jews with Israeli. Many took refuge in the mountain villages of Bhamdoun and Aley, long-time popular Jewish summer resorts close to Beirut. It was to the synagogue in Bhamdoun that *Sefer Torahs* and other religious objects were brought for safekeeping. These towns were to become the center of what remained of organized Jewish life, largely around the person of Chief Rabbi Shahoued Shreim, who managed to see that Jews in Beirut could find kosher meat even at the height of the conflict and distributed funds to those in need or wanting to leave.

Departing Lebanese Jews, most of whom had relatives or friends in numerous countries throughout the world, including France, the United States, Canada, and South America, had little difficulty finding a haven, particularly since certain countries like France were ready to give visas to those making their way to the airport or, later, by sea to Cyprus from the Christian-controlled port of Junieh. The difficulties began when the Beirut airport was shut down (Dr. Attie, who had gone to Paris with the intention of returning, was unable to do so and died there before the end

of the conflict, at the age of 82) and getting to the port soon became the major problem. A few Jews managed to go via Damascus as Lebanese refugees, crossing the Syrian frontier adjacent to Christian-controlled territory.

When peace was restored, a few Jewish businessmen were returning to Beirut to see what could be salvaged and to assess future prospects. According to reports, many Jewish community officials knew Elias Sarkis, the new head of the Lebanese government, and thought well of him. On the other hand, Jews were aware of the greater Syrian role in running Lebanon and, since many had relatives or friends in Syria, had full knowledge of Syrian persecution of Jews.

Egypt

When, in July 1970, the Egyptian government freed and expelled the last 81 of the Jewish men it summarily had arrested during the six-day war, their families were quick to depart. Within a few months the number of Jews in Cairo and Alexandria had decreased to some 500 in all; and since most were elderly, this number has gradually been falling off. A handful of Jews have left the country to finish their days in old-age homes in Switzerland and elsewhere.

The Cairo Jewish Community Council, whose president was 75-year-old Felix Iskaki, continued to administer communal buildings and assets under government supervision. The same was true in the Alexandria community. There was no interference with Jewish religious or communal life, such as it was; but the synagogues were in a dilapidated state and Bassantine Jewish cemetery desecrated and plundered. Egypt's Jews reported no popular feeling against them or government discrimination of any kind. The government apparently has also relaxed enforcement of a decree forbidding reentry of Jews. (Those who were expelled or left the country had to sign a statement that they would not return.) Some have been permitted to come back for visits.

Yemen

The Arab Republic of Yemen was one of the Moslem countries, which, in April 1975, invited its Jews who had gone to "occupied Palestine"—practically all left for Israel in 1948–51—to return, and promised them equal treatment with all other citizens. Even the publication of Arab supporters in Paris, *France-Pays Arabes*, July 1976, doubted that this offer would be accepted by anyone. Describing Jewish life in North Yemen today, the publication declared there were three Jewish families consisting of 13 persons in Saada, less than 500 in the province, and between 1,500 and 2,000 living with Yemenite Moslem tribes throughout the country. Israeli estimates were a little lower. According to *France-Pays Arabes* writer Joseph Chelod, Jews were free to live as they liked, suffered only occasional minor annoyances, were relatively not badly off, but strongly felt their isolation. Other reports indicated that while there was no active repression, traditional Yemenite attitudes relegated

Jews to an inferior status by restricting occupations open to them and in other respects.

Tunisia

Jewish life in Tunisia was maintained on an even keel in 1976. The estimated population was some 7,000, of whom about 4,500 lived in Tunis, another 1,000 or so in the two Djerban towns of Hara al-Saghira and Hara al-Kabhira, and the rest in Sfax, Sousse, Zarzis, and in the interior. The community was an aging one, with a substantial part of the Jews at least 55 years of age. The exception was Djerba, where the demographic balance was somewhat better. Of the 900 youngsters receiving a Jewish education in Tunisia—primarily in Lubavitcher *yeshivot* and the Glatigny community center in Tunis—some 300 were in Djerba. Apart from the age factor, a small emigration was slowly diminishing the community which once numbered 90,000. Some 350 Jews were known to have left for various destinations in 1976, about twice the number in 1975.

What to do about communal properties in towns and cities where there were no Jews, or practically none, was a problem, but one that was generally ignored. Often they seem to have been neglected, or, like the Gabes synagogue and cemetery, simply taken over for general local use, sometimes with the acquiescence of Jewish leaders and sometimes without permission. There was no central institution of Tunisian Jews. The local council in Tunis, "temporarily" established in 1958 and coopting members since, was headed by Edward Fitoussi. Franji Uzzan was elected Grand Rabbi of Tunisia after the death, on May 27, 1974, of 90-year-old Grand Rabbi Meiss Cohen, whose funeral was attended by several government representatives.

Tunisia's President and Supreme Commander Habib Bourguiba, by far the outstanding personality in the country, was increasingly relinquishing management of government because of ill health. Premier Hedi Nouira, like Bourguiba a man of Western and pragmatic outlook, has been quietly taking over, and fears of what might happen in the event of Bourguiba's death were diminishing. The idea that Tunisia and Libya might merge into one Arab Islamic Republic—Bourguiba and Libya's Muammar al-Qaddafi signed an agreement to this effect January 1974—sent a wave of shock and apprehension through Jews in Tunisia, and equally strong relief when Nouira and others succeeded in annulling this agreement several days later.

The proposed merger, moreover, came after Bourguiba had taken a more pan-Arab position than in the past. Shortly before the Yom Kippur war, he called for Israel's retreat to its UN-drawn 1948 boundaries. When he visited Pope Paul VI on December 14, 1973, he urged Christian-Jewish-Moslem control over Jerusalem. At about the same time he declared in Tunis that once, when he had organized a Tunisian pre-independence demonstration, "the Jews spat on me." However when the Yom Kippur war broke out, Bourguiba immediately told his countrymen that "not a hair on a Jewish head must be touched," and stationed guards around Jewish installations and synagogues.

While the Nouira government has since then supported general Arab positions in UN forums and elsewhere, it has not been particularly prominent or aggressive in this regard. Queried in May 1976 by a Kuwait newspaper about Tunisia's failure to issue an invitation to Jews to return, as did other Arab lands, Nouira replied that it was thought such an invitation would have no real effect. However, many of its former Jewish inhabitants in France and elsewhere have been returning to Tunisia for vacations for two reasons: to be able to spend assets left behind when they quit the country and to enjoy what they still felt was a pleasant land. Actually, the younger Tunisian generation, affected by Radio Cairo, Radio Libya, and Middle East events, appears to have a harsher attitude toward Jews than their elders, as indicated by an occasional display of hostility.

The economic situation of the Jews, essentially a middle- and lower-middle-class group with a fair proportion of poor and needy aged, has been reasonably good considering that Tunisia has been going through some expansion, inflation, and not a little land speculation. Over one-third of the Jewish population has been receiving American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee assistance of one form or another through local agencies. Though sales of olive oil, petrol, and phosphates—mainstays of Tunisian commerce along with tourism—did not have a good year in 1976, textiles and clothing manufacturing did well. In contrast to Moslem merchants, Jewish merchants from time to time seemed to find it more difficult to get import licenses or overcome administrative difficulties. In March 1974 when a number of Tunisian businessmen, including several Jews, were charged with currency smuggling along with certain foreign embassies, a leading journal, *La Presse*, sought to give the impression that only Jews were involved. Within a short time, however, all charges were dropped or settled.

Maintained despite the departure of the overwhelming majority of Djerban Jews, and encouraged by the Tunisian government as a tourist attraction, was the annual Lag Ba-'Omer pilgrimage and celebration at the Ghariba synagogue in al-Saghira, which was reputed to have a stone from the Temple of Solomon. The Djerban towns of al-Kabhira and al-Saghira have steadily been losing their once purely Jewish character, as Moslems moved into houses and quarters formerly inhabited by Jews; but Jewish life there still was much more traditional than elsewhere.

Morocco

The last of several attempts to assassinate King Moulay Hassan II of Morocco by shooting down the plane in which he was returning from France on August 16, 1972, was unsuccessful. The presumed author of the plot, Minister of Defense and Armed Forces General Mohammed Oufkir, died violently in the Rabat palace under mysterious circumstances later that day. This attempt produced less immediate reaction in the country than that of Skhirat the year before (AJYB, 1972 [Vol. 73], p. 590), but had more long-range repercussions. Jews were understandably concerned, since Oufkir had played a key role in the implementation of the royal policy

protecting them and permitting emigration. The King acted almost immediately to calm Jewish fears. At an August 21 press conference he said, "I can only tell Jews to be reassured," for he had never thought "Oufkir was their protector since the Alaouite throne already had done this on several occasions," and that therefore Jews "would not have to deplore the death of the General."

While the situation of the then 30,000 Moroccan Jews did not, in fact, change much in the following months, Jewish malaise, fed by general Moroccan malaise, was substantial. However, emigration continued to be permitted as before, and Jews were now feeling increasingly secure. After dropping at a rate of about 15 per cent annually between 1972 and 1974 through emigration, the Jewish population remained stable at an estimated 18,000. Departures for Israel in 1975-1976 totaling just under 400, in addition to 500 who left for countries like France and Canada, were almost balanced by the birthrate. But Jewish psychological and demographic stability admittedly was tenuous, depending largely, Jews in Morocco felt, on the stability of Moulay Hassan's regime.

Several factors combined to strengthen the King's hand in 1975-76. In 1972 the opposition parties refused to enter a coalition government. The Army and police, still shaken by the assassination aftermath, were not considered too secure. From Algeria, reportedly with the support of Libyan President Muammar al-Qaddafi, Moroccan dissidents raided Army posts in the so-called March 3, 1973, plot. Unemployment was high as always, the population growth staggering, agricultural and economic plans askew, and corruption visible. By 1976 all political parties had agreed to participate in the November municipal elections; the Army and police apparently were well under control; the five-year plan of Premier Ahmed Osman showed certain successes; the King enjoyed unusual popularity.

Much of the improvement could be traced to Moulay Hassan's very adept diplomatic and other maneuvering that brought Morocco the most substantial and phosphate-wealthy part of the Spanish Sahara in a division of that territory between Morocco and Mauritania. To assure the takeover, he called for a peaceful "Green March" by the Moroccan people into the Spanish Sahara early in November 1975, a move that enthusiastically rallied the entire nation behind him. The Jewish community, for its part, joined Hassan's efforts to convince the Western world of the rightness of Moroccan claims to the Sahara: Georges Berdugo, secretary-general of the Council of Jewish Communities of Morocco, led a Jewish delegation to the United States, Canada, and Mexico to seek public support for the action.

Phosphates were critical to Moroccan economic strategy, and with the Sahara lands it now controlled three-quarters of the world's known reserves. Morocco also followed the OPEC oil example by quadrupling prices after the Yom Kippur war, and using this income to finance a broad expansion program. By the end of 1976, however, the enthusiasm appeared to be wearing off. The Sahara became a serious drain when the local Polisario Front movement, seeking independence with Algerian support, fought Moroccan forces in the desert. At the same time, the world price of phosphates fell. Still, there was no doubt that over-all the King's position was much more solid than in 1972.

A number of events caused concern among Moroccan Jews. In 1973, for example, when phrases like "the Jewish enemy" were bandied about in Moroccan publications and rumors circulated that Qaddafi (then considered the archenemy of Morocco) had "a Jewish mother," some Jewish institutions asked for police protection. The king, abandoning restraint in his Middle East policy, announced that Moroccan troops would be sent to Syria to help the Palestinians fight Israel. In the Yom Kippur war, Moroccan troops indeed fought on the Golan Heights. The end of the year, too, saw Moroccan Jews, and only Jews, wanting to go abroad on business or vacation turned back at airports on grounds that they could not leave without first producing tax receipts.

Yet, the Jewish community was given police protection upon request; the government firmly maintained its policy that, regardless of its policy toward Israel, Moroccan Jews were not to be molested, and there were virtually no incidents, even when there were reports of Moroccan soldiers killed in the Yom Kippur war. The demand for tax receipts was immediately dropped when Dr. Leon Benzaquen, quondam Moroccan minister and Jewish communal leader, protested to the authorities. By 1974, which was a kind of transition year, most of the Jews who remained in Morocco did so because they were fairly well off economically and rather reluctant to give up comfortable apartments and good businesses to emigrate. Postwar depression in Israel and the worsening economic situation in the Western world strengthened their resolve to stay. It was, moreover, a calm and uneventful time for the community.

The one issue significantly marring relations was the take-over by the Fez municipal government of three buildings belonging to the Jewish community and their conversion into a youth center. Fez authorities claimed that the Jewish council had made a "gift" of the buildings when, in fact, it had simply indicated that it was willing to sell them if agreement could be reached on the price. The issue thus far remained unresolved despite quiet intervention by Rabat government officials with the governor of Fez.

Early in 1975 there were reports that the Moroccan government had instructed its consulates in different countries to welcome the return of Jews, a position actually stated by the King several years earlier, though without result. The matter attracted international attention when Premier Osman, in a reply to a question posed by a Jordanian journalist in March 1976, openly declared that Jews could return to Morocco. The Moroccan public welcomed this position as a decision of the King. Hassan was warmly congratulated for this initiative by PLO representatives then visiting Morocco, who described it as "a great step toward the liberation of Palestine and the reestablishment of Palestinians in their rights." The same PLO representatives sought, in informal conversations with Jewish leaders acting in their individual capacities, to persuade them that North African Jews could be an important link in an understanding between Jews and Arabs in the kind of Middle East state the PLO was projecting.

Early in May the Moroccan government made considerable fuss, including an audience with the King, over four American Jews—Rabbi Israel Moshowitz,

Harold Gordon, Edward Girshfield, and Baruch Helman—who came to the country at the invitation of the Moroccan tourist office. At the same time, headlines began to appear in the press, as for example, “The New Moroccan Judaism: A Presence and A Future,” in the Marrakesh *Le Matin* of June 7, 1976. A moving spirit behind this new approach to the Jews and the need for a “fraternal coexistence and fruitful cooperation between the descendants of Abraham” was Ahmed Alaoui, leading Moroccan editor and a former minister known often to reflect royal views. Well received in Morocco, too, was a group of former Moroccan Jews now living in France, who had established an organization known as Dialogue and Identity. They were, they said, seeking to maintain both their Moroccan identity and positive attitudes on support for Israel.

The invitation to Jews to return to Morocco and the activities of Dialogue and Identity members created some fuss in Israel, where rumors, which later proved to be false, quickly spread that many Jews there intended to respond to the Moroccan initiative. Later, on November 12, the Associated Press reported from Rabat that the invitation had resulted in the return of some 1,000 Jews. Actually, by the end of 1976, perhaps about 40 in all had returned, and some of these did not remain in Morocco. It was true, however, that a growing number of Jews of Moroccan origin living in different countries, who would have become stateless without Moroccan passports, were finding it easy to get such documents and were applying for them. In the summer of 1976 Moroccan authorities privately indicated that this policy would continue, despite a revision then being planned of Morocco’s system of issuing passports that would have made acquisition more difficult for people outside the country.

The one major community was in Casablanca, with 14,000 Jews; Tangiers, Agadir, and Marrakesh had about 1,000 each, Fez 800, and Rabat, the capital, 500. Some isolated families were scattered throughout the country. Jewish religious and communal work continued freely. Jewish schools had a total enrollment of 6,000: some 2,300 in the Ittihad schools connected with the Alliance Israélite Universelle; 1,800 in Ozer Hatorah institutions; 600 in Lubavitcher *yeshivot*, and 450 in ORT schools under the leadership of David Amar, former secretary-general of the Council of Communities. Local Jewish communal activity was limited mostly to the administration of properties and welfare, the latter with the assistance of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee whose aid, it was estimated, reached over 9,000 Jews.

Two Jews were elected to the municipal council in November 1976: Professor Simon Levy and Armand Amzallag, an architect. In a press conference in Paris in November 1976 King Hassan commented on this and on his invitation to Jews to return to Morocco as follows: “I wish this [return of Jews] all the more, since I have never asked Jews to leave Morocco, but quite the contrary. At a certain time, Moroccan Jews left clandestinely, and I always have done everything to make them return. That is why, in my Constitution, I always included my Jewish subjects together with Moslem Moroccan subjects. The proof is that two won in the last

municipal elections." King Hassan went on to characterize Jews as "an intelligent, working element — an economic, profitable, and very interesting element," with which, he stated, he had always had strong rapport.

Algeria

There were approximately 900 to 1,000 Jews in Algeria, of whom about two hundred were Frenchmen who had come to the country to work on various joint projects. Most of the others were also French nationals, and some were Tunisian or Moroccan. The largest number lived in Algiers, with a few hundred in Oran and several families in Constantine and Blida. The community was largely made up of elderly persons; there very few young people or children.

The Houari Boumedienne regime, vigorously anti-Israel, has always made a sharp distinction between its anti-Israel policy and its treatment of Jews within the country. When Shalom Lebar, the last functioning synagogue in Algiers, was broken into and pillaged in January 1977, the Algerian president's office and the Ministry for Religious Affairs contacted the president of the Jewish community, Maître Roger Said, and some weeks later the culprits, a band of youngsters, were brought to justice.

While occasional problems did arise between the community and the authorities, these were usually settled amicably. Thus, after protest, a home for the aged, which had been taken over by the government, was returned to the community. Also, when the Jewish cemetery in Medea was requisitioned, in accordance with that city's urban renewal plan, the community was given another tract to which to transfer the graves.

Algerian Jews maintained contact with the Consistoire in France, and some Jewish welfare aid was received from abroad to assist needy individuals. All in all, however, Jewish communal life was minimal.

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