Israel

On June 23, 1992, fifteen years of Likud rule came to an end. The Labor party returned to power, with Yitzhak Rabin taking up where he had left off in 1977. The midyear change of government brought about a dramatic shift in Israel's international stature: relations with the United States, which had hit bottom during the first part of 1992 because of differences between the Bush administration and the Shamir government over loan guarantees, were quickly restored and improved. The international community as a whole greeted the new government and its policies with satisfaction, especially after its decision to unilaterally freeze new housing in Jewish settlements in the territories. However, expectations for a quick breakthrough in the peace process begun the previous year were dashed by the end of the year. Not only was no substantial progress achieved in the peace talks, but the very continuation of the process was overshadowed by Israel's decision to deport 400 Hamas activists to south Lebanon. Prime Minister Rabin, it seemed, was more eager than his Likud predecessors to achieve peace, but he had no intention of dropping the hard-line policies on matters of security that had earned him the confidence of the Israeli electorate in the first place.

National Security

The Intifada

The intifada continued unabated in 1992, despite the promise held out by the Washington peace talks and despite the midyear change of power from Likud to Labor, which brought about a significant moderation of government policies toward the territories and the Palestinians. Internecine bloodshed among the Palestinians continued to rise, as Palestinians killed almost twice as many of their own number (238) as were killed in skirmishes with the Israeli army (124).

In the politically minded West Bank, the occurrence of violent incidents was down, but the always volatile Gaza strip exploded, as armed Palestinian groups resorted more and more to deadly attacks with guns and grenades.

Twelve Israeli soldiers and twelve civilians were killed in 1992, compared to one soldier and seven civilians the previous year. The number of wounded soldiers decreased from 800 to 650, while the number of injured Palestinians rose from 1,381
to 1,605. There were 28,392 "disturbances," including 1,174 hurlings of Molotov cocktails and 94 of hand grenades, 504 incidents of shooting, 311 cases of arson, 162 detonations of explosive devices, and 1,001 "cold" attacks in which knives and axes were used.

Following the November 1991 peace conference in Madrid, Palestinian rejectionist groups, comprising the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas and Islamic Jihad movements, as well as the more radical secular groups, declared "war" on the peace process. The main instrument of this war was to be armed attacks against Israeli civilians and soldiers. The mainstream Fatah movement, which had lent its support to the Madrid process, nonetheless had not renounced the use of terror and needed to maintain the "armed struggle" against Israel in order to maintain favor with the disgruntled Palestinian public, especially in the Gaza Strip. The peace process and the new Israeli government, elected in midyear, found violent opponents on the Jewish side as well. Jewish settlers increasingly accused the government, both old and new, of "selling out" and of "abandoning" them in order to curry favor with the Arab side. The more extreme elements carried out acts of retaliation against innocent Arabs, ostensibly in order to "increase security" for Jews, but with the hidden agenda of destabilizing the government and hoping to derail the peace process.

The opposition to the peace process erupted on the first day of the new year as Doron Shorshan, a settler from the Gaza settlement of Kfar Darom, was gunned down in his car near the Dir el-Balah junction. Shorshan was the first civilian to be killed in the Gaza Strip since the beginning of the intifada five years earlier. In a symbolic gesture that was to become a pattern throughout the year, fellow settlers set up a "memorial" settlement in the area where the incident had occurred and were promptly evacuated from the area by the Israeli army. Responding to the murder of Shorshan, the Defense Ministry announced on January 2 that 12 Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza would be deported because of their involvement in attacks on Jews and Arabs alike. On January 6, the UN Security Council "strongly condemned" the issuing of the deportation orders. On January 23, the government revoked a deportation order against one of the 12.

On January 14, seven Israeli settlers were wounded when shots were fired at their civilian bus near the West Bank town of Ramallah. Outraged Jewish settlers retaliated by opening fire on a private Arab car near Hebron. On January 15, Israeli Druze Mofid Kna’an was murdered near Jenin, while on a hunting expedition with friends; his assailants were not captured. A week later, four Hebron residents were wounded by gunfire from roaming bands of Jewish settlers. On January 28, an unknown Jewish group dubbed "the Hasmoneans" claimed responsibility for shots fired at the home of Bethlehem mayor Elias Freij. Two days later, an Israeli civilian, Yisrael Hirshorn, was killed at a construction site in the town of Rishon LeZion.

While public disturbances did decrease somewhat over previous years, as many Palestinians presumably decided to "give peace a chance," the opponents of peace became more armed and more dangerous. At the end of January, Israeli security
forces uncovered eight heavily armed terrorist cells, complete with Israeli-made automatic weapons. The cells belonged to the opposition Democratic Front and Popular Front, as well as to the mainstream Fatah movement. Political agitation, especially at universities, was also on the rise, and on January 29, the army decided to shut down Hebron University after an army raid uncovered thousands of virulent anti-Israel pamphlets and posters.

Disagreements among the Palestinians were also wreaking havoc internally. In the third week of January, American-born professor Robert Glick, head of the archaeology department at Bir Zeit University, was killed by masked Palestinian gunmen. At the beginning of February, 17 residents of the West Bank village of Sureik were accused of stoning a fellow villager to death, after she had been accused of "collaboration." On February 8, in several separate incidents, two Arabs were killed and four seriously wounded in acts of "retribution" carried out by fellow Palestinians. A few days later the bound, gagged, and bullet-ridden body of a suspected collaborator was hurled out of a speeding car right in front of the Tul Karem police station on the West Bank.

On February 5, the army issued new open-fire guidelines, allowing soldiers to open fire on a Palestinian carrying a weapon without first giving the previously obligatory warning. By mid-February, security sources were expressing "grave concern" at the rapid rise of inter-Palestinian murders. Fifteen suspected collaborators had been killed in less than two months, they said.

On February 9, two soldiers and two civilians were wounded when an explosive device hidden in a steel pipe exploded near the Gaza kibbutz of Netzarim. On the same day, a civilian was kidnapped and stabbed on the West Bank. On February 11, an Israeli Arab, Yunes Mazrawa, was shot and killed. His body was found near the West Bank town of Tulkarm.

The violence reached a peak on February 14, in one of the most gruesome attacks ever carried out by Arab terrorists; the incident was doubly shocking because it took place inside an army base where new immigrants were undergoing basic training.

ARMY-BASE ATTACK

Despite prior intelligence warnings of an impending attack on an army base, a terrorist squad succeeded in infiltrating an army bivouac inside the Green Line, in Ramot Menashe near the town of Hadera. Two new recruits and their commander were hacked to death; the terrorists made off with their victims' weapons. The two soldiers were new immigrants from the former Soviet Union. The subsequent army inquiry revealed negligence on the part of the base commanders in their security guidelines. The incident provoked wide public discussion of the role of new immigrants in the army, and for a while elicited concern that news of the attack might cause other prospective immigrants to review their plans.

Security sources at first ascribed responsibility to the Fatah-affiliated Black Panther group operating in the territories, but investigators at the scene pointed accus-
ing fingers at Israel's Arab community, based on evidence found near the campsite. Leading Israeli Arab figures protested the accusation, claiming allegiance to the Jewish state. Reaction was different among Palestinians in the territories, where demonstrations favoring the attack took place in the West Bank town of Bethlehem. Yasir Abed Rabbo, an official of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), refused to condemn the attack, expressing "understanding" for the motives of the attackers, who lived under the "oppression of occupation."

On February 17, a Black Panther group in Jenin claimed responsibility for the attack, thus contradicting the findings of the investigators. However, their initial instincts proved to be correct. On March 4, Israeli security services and the police arrested seven suspects, all members of one Israeli Arab family, from the Israeli village of Shirpa and the town of Umm al-Faham, all members of the Islamic movement. The incident soured relations between Jews and Arabs, and for a while Arabs lived in fear of Jewish retaliation.

On February 18, the Likud government showed its unswerving commitment to the territories, despite the waves of terror. Ma'aleh Adumim, a Jerusalem suburb in the Judean hills, on the way to Jericho, was declared the first Israeli "city" in the territories. The ceremony of declaration had been scheduled for the previous October, but was postponed for fear it would upset the U.S. and Arab attendees at the Madrid conference.

New Soviet immigrants provided another victim of terror on February 21, when Genya Friedman was stabbed to death in Kfar Sava by a youth from the West Bank town of Kalkilya, who appeared to be acting on his own. Three other civilians were wounded in the attack. In this atmosphere of rising violence, on the same day as the Kfar Sava attack, three suspected Palestinian collaborators were murdered; a Palestinian was killed by army troops near Tulkarm; three Molotov cocktails were hurled at a passing Israeli vehicle; and 15 Gaza residents were wounded by army gunfire.

Two days later, violence struck again as a 23-year-old security guard, Lior Srelker, working on an oil truck south of Jenin, in the West Bank, was shot by a masked gunman. The town was placed under curfew as the army searched for the terrorist. On March 5, an Israeli soldier was killed in the southern Gaza Strip in a violent incident between an armed terrorist squad and one of the army units working undercover, "Shimshon." The disclosure of the existence of such units, in which soldiers operated disguised as Arabs, had created a public uproar the previous year, with Arab and some Israeli politicians accusing the units of serving as execution squads. The terrorists in this incident who were wounded or apprehended were suspected of killing scores of suspected Palestinian collaborators. In their possession were found automatic weapons, axes, and knives, as well as uniforms identical to those used by the Israel Defense Forces.

In March the violence continued as before, as Islamic organizations swore revenge for the February 16 Israeli killing of Hezbollah leader Abbas Musawi in southern Lebanon (see "Lebanon," below). Shootings, knifings, and grenade-throw-
ing were daily occurrences, creating political difficulties for the Likud government and increasing calls by Jewish settlers to use a "strong hand" against the Palestinians. On March 12, the army and the General Security Services carried out a wide-ranging operation in the town of Jenin. One of the most sought-after members of the Black Panther group was shot and killed. Scores of suspected terrorists were arrested. On March 15, an elite army unit shot dead three wanted terrorists in a West Bank refugee camp.

On March 17, tragedy slightly repaired the strained relations existing between Israeli Arabs and Jews since the axing attack by Israeli Arabs on the army camp. Abdel Rani Kareem, a garage owner and Arab resident of Jaffa, was murdered by a knife-wielding Gaza terrorist, outside a Jaffa night club; Kareem had come to the aid of Ilanit Ohana, a 19-year-old Jewish woman who was also killed in the attack. The perpetrator, who belonged to the Islamic Jihad organization, wounded 20 schoolchildren who were near the area before being shot dead by an Israeli border policeman on leave. The assailant had been carrying a valid permit to enter Israel from the Gaza Strip. Responding to the public outcry, on March 19, the government sealed off the strip and forbade Gazans to come to work in Israel, for a period of three days. The army heightened its surveillance of the checkposts through which the Gazans entered Israel.

The Hamas organization, known primarily for its daring terrorist actions, showed signs of gaining in political influence when it won overwhelmingly in elections for the Ramallah city council held on March 3. Violence broke out between Hamas and Fatah supporters in the wake of the elections. In elections held later in the year, however, Fatah fared better.

Throughout this period, Palestinian terrorists, apparently emboldened by the February attack on an army camp, stepped up attacks against army patrols and outposts. On April 1, four Palestinian gunmen who tried to attack a border police patrol in Rafah were killed. On the same day, a hand grenade was thrown at an army lookout post, and three soldiers were injured when their jeep caught fire under a hail of Molotov cocktails.

On April 7, PLO chairman Yasir Arafat was saved from what had been reported as a fatal air crash during a sandstorm in southern Libya; spontaneous demonstrations of joy erupted in the territories, leading to inevitable violent clashes with Israeli troops. Mass demonstrations appeared to be resuming: on April 11, 16 Palestinians were wounded by gunfire in Khan Yunis and the Nur-a-Shams refugee camp. On April 16, 6 soldiers and 11 Palestinians were wounded in mass demonstrations in the Jebalya refugee camp. Despite all this, Defense Minister Moshe Arens sought to return a semblance of normalcy to the territories. On April 20, he allowed the engineering and science departments of Bir Zeit University to reopen, overriding the objections of senior army officers who viewed the campuses as hotbeds of ferment and agitation against Israel.

On April 11, another Israeli Arab, Adnan Biaza, was stabbed to death while shopping for vegetables in Dir el Balah. On April 26, the body of 61-year-old
Avraham Greenberg was discovered in central Tel Aviv; the Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the killing. Mass violence reached new heights during the Passover holiday weekend at the end of April: 12 Palestinians were injured, 15 Molotov cocktails were thrown at passing Israeli vehicles, and an old woman in Gaza died after inhaling tear gas hurled at rioters.

In response to the increased attacks against soldiers, the army reissued, in late April, yet stronger open-fire guidelines authorizing soldiers to "shoot to kill," without warning, if they encountered "wanted" terrorists holding weapons in their hands. Palestinians interpreted the new rules as part of an Israeli policy of "executing" wanted Palestinians, with no regard to whether they were actually carrying out an attack.

Israeli security services again scored some successes in uncovering terrorist cells. On May 1, the GSS announced the capture of several Fatah cells in Nablus that were thought to be responsible for scores of attacks on both Jews and alleged Arab collaborators; a few days later, an 11-member Fatah squad was uncovered in Kabatiya. In five months, the security services captured 205 wanted terrorists and killed 15.

Still, the cycle of violence continued. On May 17, an Israeli animal trader was shot and killed in the Gaza Strip by members of the Hamas military wing, Iz A-din al-Kassam. A few days later, scores of Palestinians were injured by army gunfire after taking part in demonstrations commemorating the first anniversary of the May 20, 1991, murder of seven Arab laborers by the Israeli Ami Popper.

**ARAB VIOLENCE, ISRAELI RIOTS**

On May 23, 15-year-old Helena Rap was murdered in Bat Yam by a knife-wielding Gazan. This murder caused particular outrage among residents of Bat Yam and other Jewish cities, and riots raged throughout Israel for several days. In the immediate aftermath of the killing, 11 Arabs were injured in incidents with Israelis; an Israeli Arab from Nazareth was stabbed in Rishon LeZion. The government decided to close off the Gaza Strip, both to protect the Palestinians and to prevent further infiltration by terrorists. In Israel, the demonstrations seemed to be gaining in strength, and on May 26, thousands of Bat Yam residents scuffled with thousands of policemen; dozens were injured, scores of others arrested.

That same day, a Jewish settler in Gaza, Shimon Biran, was stabbed to death near his settlement of Kfar Darom. Biran was the settlement's rabbi. Fellow settlers went on the rampage, burning Arab fields and groves. In Bat Yam that day, 100 more demonstrators were arrested. Sensing the dangerous mood among Israelis, Palestinian leaders Faisal Husseini and Samir Abdallah publicly condemned the murder of 15-year-old Rap.

A sign that the Palestinian leadership now believed that the internecine violence was getting out of control was a "conference" of masked gunmen in Gaza, reported by the press, which saw leaders of the gangs issue a call to "minimize" killings of
suspected collaborators. On May 23, PLO chairman Arafat issued a call to the leaders of the intifada to put a stop to the internal violence and murders of so-called collaborators. On June 7, Fatah and Hamas signed an agreement pledging an end to the killing of collaborators and promising to work together in the "efforts to end the Israeli occupation."

On the Israeli side, the open-fire guidelines of the undercover units were also raising concern. The human rights watch group B'tselem issued a special report on June 3, claiming that soldiers in these units were given a subtle message by their superiors that the killing of wanted terrorists, even if they posed no immediate danger, was permissible. The army strongly rejected the allegations, saying that soldiers were under strict orders to open fire only in cases of self-defense.

In early June the army utilized the sealing off of Gaza to seek out terrorist cells. No fewer than 71 suspects were rounded up in a single day; a few days later, on June 4, the GSS disclosed the capture of a terrorist cell that had been responsible for the murder of two Israelis. The closure of Gaza had calmed a volatile situation, but international pressure was building up on Israel to allow Palestinians to return to their jobs inside Israel. Israeli employers were discreetly conveying the same message to their government. On June 7, the government announced a partial lifting of the closure, allowing 3,000 Gazans to return to work. A few days later, more thousands were allowed in; Gazans employed in Bat Yam wisely decided to stay away for a little while longer. Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir said, on June 9, that in any case the closure provided only a "partial solution to the crazed murderers."

The strip was not reopened, and economic pressures mounted. On June 14, thousands of Gaza residents rioted near the Erez checkpoint that connects Gaza to Israel. The same day, Israel announced that henceforth all Gazans over the age of 25 would be allowed to return to work. A few days later, the UN Relief and Works Agency, in charge of the welfare of refugees, announced emergency plans to distribute food to 120,000 families who were facing starvation because Israel was depriving them of their livelihood.

Following the June 23 election, the Palestinians greeted the defeat of the Likud and the election of Labor and its new prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin, with a mix of hope and suspicion. Rabin had been defense minister when the intifada broke out in December 1987, and his call to “break the bones” of demonstrators was still fresh in Palestinian memories. Nonetheless, the new prime minister had pledged during his election campaign to reach a settlement with Palestinians “within six to nine months.” The Jerusalem daily Al Fajr predicted that Labor would form a coalition with Likud, and that things would remain the same. The El Kuds daily predicted superficial Israeli moderation aimed at improving relations between Israel and the United States in order to secure the $10-billion loan guarantees sought by Jerusalem.

If there was any honeymoon, it was brief indeed: 48 hours after the elections, one of the bloodiest days since the start of the intifada took place. A Jewish father and son, Moshe and Amikam Saltzman, were murdered in Gaza by terrorists posing as vegetable vendors. The killers were members of the Hamas Iz A-din al-Kassam
group, which was forging a reputation as the most deadly of all terrorist organizations operating in the territories. That same day, a settler in Gaza was attacked with axes and moderately wounded; near the site of the attack a note was found with the inscription “This is the answer to Rabin.” In Jenin, a soldier was killed in a skirmish with three terrorists who were also killed. Scores of irate Jewish settlers went on the rampage in Hebron in reaction to the renewed wave of terrorism.

On July 7, an 84-year-old citrus grower, Avraham Kinsler, was hacked to death inside the Green Line near his moshav of Batzra. That same day, the month-long truce between Hamas and the Fatah broke down, and open warfare erupted inside the refugee camps. The army decided to send in troops to stop the battles, but not before at least seven Palestinians were killed. In Amman and in the territories, the two groups once again negotiated a cease-fire.

In mid-June, the politically active a-Najah University in Nablus was the scene of one of the most dramatic showdowns since the start of the uprising. The army went onto the campus to search for wanted terrorists, claiming that at least two dozen were hiding there. To protest the action, 300 students from families of mukhtars—village chiefs—went on a hunger strike. Demonstrations erupted in which nine students were injured, and the army was effectively driven off the campus. Rabin, in his double capacity of prime minister and defense minister, defused the situation by striking a deal that allowed only six wanted terrorists to leave, provided they went on voluntary exile to Jordan. Rabin was criticized in the Israeli papers by “senior military sources” for “caving in” to the Palestinians. In moderate circles, however, optimism was expressed over the peaceful resolution of the conflict and the apparent show of Palestinian trust in the new government.

A few days later, the army killed one of the more wanted terrorists in the territories, the deputy commander of the Black Panther squads in Jenin. In a separate incident, a four-year-old Palestinian boy was killed when soldiers opened fire on a suspicious car; three soldiers were detained for investigation. All over the territories, the battle between the army and the terrorists raged on. The Palestinians were growing bolder by the day; on August 1, they infiltrated the building of the Israeli Civil Administration in Hebron, scribbling slogans on the wall before making their getaway.

While the government was battling the Palestinians, it was also facing an old/new political adversary, the Jewish settlers. The new Labor government, opposed to the expansion of what Rabin had termed “political settlements,” announced plans to seriously cut back building plans both inside Israel and in the territories, for what it described as “budgetary reasons.” In a move also linked with efforts to secure American loan guarantees, the government announced that 15,000 apartments previously planned would not be built; 7,000 of these had been slated for construction in the Jewish settlements. Jewish settlers vowed to fight the government’s actions, which they termed “capitulation.” Now the army had to allocate significant forces to control rioting settlers, both inside and outside the Green Line. The settlers launched plans to move into houses in East Jerusalem’s Muslim Quarter; Rabin
ordered his officials to put a stop to these "provocations."

On August 19, 55-year-old Bechor Hajaj was murdered near his village of Kfar Yavetz by two of his own Palestinian employees. A week later, the terrorists scored one of their biggest victories in the battle against Israeli undercover units: Capt. Eliahu Avram, commander of the Border Police undercover unit, was killed in a skirmish with two Black Panther men in Jenin. A few days later, terrorists kid-napped an Israeli soldier, who was found stabbed but alive in a grove in Gaza. Security sources told Ha'aretz that the terrorists were getting more proficient and courageous in their attacks against military patrols. The next day, another border policeman was killed in a direct confrontation with an armed terrorist. On September 12, 33-year-old new immigrant Boris Asherov was shot to death in Haifa by a Palestinian from the West Bank.

While vowing to maintain the battle against terrorists, Prime Minister Rabin was also trying to boost Palestinian confidence in the peace process. He ordered "gestures" toward the local population, including the cancellation of the deportations (August 24), partial release of prisoners with a short time left to serve, and the opening up of previously sealed-off streets and houses. On September 23, however, most of the residents in the territories joined a protest strike called by rejectionist organizations opposed to the peace process. The Palestinians were not convinced that a new era had arrived. Local leader Faisal Husseini called on PLO chairman Arafat to "apologize" to the West for his Gulf War support for Iraq, in order to increase political and economic support for the beleaguered territories.

On September 29, Palestinian security prisoners in jails throughout the country went on a hunger strike, submitting a long list of demands for improvements in their living conditions. The strike prompted widespread demonstrations of support in the territories, which quickly turned violent and exacted a steep price, with over 100 Palestinians wounded in skirmishes with the army. The strike ended after a month, after Rabin ordered the Prisons Service to accept some of the strikers' demands; once again Rabin was accused of "capitulating to terrorists."

In October, despite, or because of, the resumption of the peace talks a month earlier, the violence against Jews reached a peak. Four Israelis were murdered: On October 11, Amazia Ben Haim was killed in the Gaza settlement of Gush Katif. On October 15, Shimon Avraham, a farmer in the northern moshav Meitav, was stabbed to death in his field. Two days later, Yehudit Ostern, of Bat Yam, was burned to death when an explosive device ripped through her car near the West Bank town of Matityahu. On October 27, Motti Biton was shot to death near Jenin.

The territories were on fire. Three soldiers were killed in separate incidents. The continuing murder of Jewish farmers in their fields prompted the government to order farmers to go to work armed and alert. Pressure inside Israel for a strong hand against the Palestinians was on the rise. Rabin ordered the army to "take all measures" in order to calm the territories. However, on November 26, Rabin resorted once again to the "carrot," allowing 241 visiting spouses of residents of the territories to obtain permanent resident status. The Likud accused him of "validat-
ing” the Palestinian demand for the “right of return.”

On December 7, the by-then notorious Iz A-din al-Kassam group of Hamas struck again. Three Israeli reservists were killed when their patrol car was overtaken by another car, from which deadly automatic weapons were fired. That same day, four Israeli soldiers from an elite unit were wounded in a fight with terrorists in Jenin.

The army escalated its search for Palestinians on the wanted list, and began using new and previously banned methods. On December 10, the press reported for the first time that the army was firing antitank missiles into the houses where suspected terrorists were holed up. The new tactic was to become a source of internal and international debate in the months to come.

The Deportation of the Hamas Leadership

On December 13, border policeman Nissim Toledano was kidnapped as he made his way to work in the town of Lod. Several hours after his abduction, a note was delivered to Red Crescent headquarters near Ramallah, demanding the release of Muslim leader Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, who had been in prison since October 1991. The note said that Toledano would be murdered if the demand was not met that same evening. The same day, a soldier was killed in Hebron. The Iz A-din al-Kassam group claimed responsibility for both acts.

For two days, the country watched in anxious anticipation as the army launched one of its biggest manhunts in history to find the kidnapped Toledano. Hundreds of known leaders and activists of Hamas and of the Islamic Jihad movement were rounded up and interrogated. Publicly, the government said it was “considering” the Hamas demands, although privately it was made clear, and published in the newspapers, that Israel would not give in to terrorist extortion.

On December 15, Toledano’s body was found—bound, gagged, and shot—near the West Bank settlement of Kfar Edumim. Subsequent investigation revealed that Toledano had been murdered shortly after the initial deadline set by the terrorists passed. Subsequent extensions of the deadline by the terrorists were therefore not genuine, but part of the psychological battle against the Israeli government and public. Rabin reacted by saying that Israel would “retaliate gravely.”

The inner cabinet met on December 15 to discuss the situation and make good on Rabin’s pledge. An unprecedented decision was reached: 400 Hamas and Islamic Jihad leaders would be deported to Lebanon. Eager to contain the potentially explosive public outcry that followed the discovery of Toledano's body, the cabinet gave overwhelming approval to Rabin's proposal to deport. Sixteen ministers, including the left-wing Meretz representatives, voted in favor of the plan; Justice Minister David Libai was the sole dissenter, abstaining and protesting the intention to bypass the process of appeal to the High Court of Justice. Rabin’s plan included an immediate deportation, giving only retroactive right of appeal to the deportees.

The plan was leaked to the press almost immediately, and petitions were filed with
the High Court by the Association for Civil Rights in Israel and families of the deportees, seeking to stop it. The next day, the court decided, 5–2, not to block the deportations but ordered the government to explain its actions within 30 days. On the evening of December 17, scores of buses were filmed making their way to the north of the country, their passengers bound and gagged.

The deportations enjoyed almost unanimous support inside the cabinet but were greeted with dismay by the press and the rank-and-file of the leftist parties. The international community was also shocked, and the outgoing Bush administration issued a strongly worded protest. The mainstream Israeli public, however, was gratified: first polls revealed almost 90-percent support for the move. The Labor government under Rabin had dared to do what the previous Likud government had not even dreamed of doing. Palestinians in the territories were shocked; the future of the peace process appeared grim indeed.

On December 18, Israel literally "dumped" over 400 deported Hamas activists inside Lebanon, north of the Israeli-controlled security zone, near the Marj al-Zuhur checkpoint. Israel had hoped that the transfer of the deportees would proceed in secret, thus preventing Lebanese attempts to repel the unwanted visitors. But as news of the deportations became public in Israel, the Lebanese government took steps to prevent the deportees from dispersing. The deportees had no choice but to set up a makeshift tent city in the no-man's-land north of the Marj al-Zuhur crossing. The camp was to attract worldwide media attention for several months to come, causing Israel severe propaganda damage and slowly transforming the image of the Hamas activists from ostensible terrorists to suffering victims.

On December 19, ten days after the fifth anniversary of the start of the intifada, violence erupted in the territories on a scale unknown since the late 1980s. Seven Palestinians were killed and more than 30 seriously wounded. The Fatah and the Hamas for the first time issued joint directives for action to be taken by the population.

With the Lebanese army preventing PLO and Hezbollah activists from giving aid to the deportees, and the Lebanese government refusing to accept them, another attempt was made to persuade the Israeli High Court of Justice to order the Israeli government to take them back. On December 21, the South Lebanese Army (SLA) opened fire on the deportees, wounding three, and claims were made that because of the enmity between Hezbollah and the SLA, the lives of the deportees were threatened. The High Court of Israel ordered the army to take steps to prevent such incidents in the future, while it considered the petitions to return the deportees. The next day, the High Court rejected the petitions, saying that since the deportees were inside the sovereign territory of Lebanon, they were not in any danger, and therefore there was no urgent need to return them. The court postponed until January its deliberations on the larger question of whether the deportations had been legal in the first place.

The Lebanese army continued its policy of quarantining the camp, ostensibly preventing food, water, medicine, and warm clothing from reaching the deportees.
Scenes of cold and hungry deportees were shown repeatedly on television screens all over the world. Surreptitiously, however, Hezbollah activists were supplying the camp with food and cooking utensils.

On December 22, a special UN representative, Under Secretary James Jonah, announced his intention to visit Israel to help resolve the deportee problem. Arriving on December 27, Jonah rebuffed Israeli contentions that Lebanon was now responsible for the fate of the deportees. Rabin, for his part, rejected offers of parachuting food to the deportees via Israel, for fear that Jerusalem would thus be acknowledging its responsibility for them. Rabin assumed that the Lebanese government would ultimately have to relent and allow food convoys to reach the camp by land. On December 30, Jonah left the area, having achieved nothing; efforts to find a third country that would absorb the refugees had failed, and the Lebanese government, for its part, refused to get involved.

The deportations calmed the Israeli public, but the Israeli government, which had wished to distance the Hamas activists from its borders, found itself embroiled in a new and unanticipated controversy that refused to go away.

Other National Security Matters

LEBANON

On January 11, the London-based Financial Times reported that Iran and Hezbollah had reached an agreement by which the Shiite terrorist organization would “renew” its operations against American and Israeli targets. Although the organization had never declared a formal cease-fire, it had reduced operations at the end of 1991 as hostage swaps were taking place. Several days after the news item appeared, two Israeli soldiers were killed in south Lebanon when an explosive device detonated near their patrol. The next day, a mukhtar of the south Lebanese village of Tir Harfa died in an explosion in his home. The Hezbollah, indeed, was back in business.

On January 26, an Israeli soldier was killed in a skirmish with Hezbollah terrorists. On February 8, another soldier was killed and two wounded. Hundreds of villagers just north of the Israeli-held security zone began fleeing from their homes, fearing an Israeli reprisal.

Israeli retribution, however, deviated from the norm this time around. On February 16, Israeli helicopters shot air-to-surface missiles into a convoy carrying the secretary-general of the Hezbollah, Abbas Musawi. Musawi, his wife, and four-year-old son were killed, and another 18 people were wounded. It was one of Israel’s most successful operations against the Hezbollah, although much criticism was leveled at the government over the killing of Musawi’s child. Hezbollah leader Sheikh Muhammad Fadlala called for all-out Jihad against Israel. The next day, scores of Katyusha rockets landed in the security zone and on northern settlements in Israel, but there were no casualties. The army retaliated by firing over 400 artillery shells at Hezbollah targets north of the security zone.
On February 18, Musawi was buried in Beirut in a funeral attended by tens of thousands of followers who demanded revenge. A previously unknown Shiite organization announced that it had executed captured Israeli navigator Ron Arad, who had been taken prisoner in October 1986. Israel responded with skepticism, announcing that the organization was unknown and that it continued to hold Iran responsible for the safety of Arad. Hassan Nasrallah replaced Musawi as secretary-general of the Hezballah.

Israel increased its forces along the northern border, and Defense Minister Moshe Arens, on a tour of the north, warned the Lebanese government that “if Israelis will be disturbed, so will the citizens of Lebanon.” The warning apparently did not deter the terrorists who, on February 19, lobbed several Katyusha rockets into the northern town of Kiryat Shemonah. Three days later, Israel suffered its first civilian casualty in the north in over 11 years, as five-year-old Avia Eliizada, from Moshav Granot, was killed by a rocket. A day earlier, two soldiers were killed in a skirmish with Hezballah, and Israel once again bombarded terrorist targets in the north. Seeking to defuse the escalating situation, Iranian president Hashemi Rafsanjani and Syrian president Hafez al-Assad pressured the Hezballah leadership to stop firing rockets inside Israel.

Throughout February and March, the pattern repeated itself: Hezballah fired rockets, Israel fired back, and thousands of Shiites fled their villages, fearing harsher Israeli raids, which did not come. On April 6, two Israeli soldiers were killed in a confrontation with Hezballah’s sister organization, the Islamic Jihad. Israeli security sources estimated that there were about 600 active terrorists in south Lebanon. April brought reports that Syria was once again trying to curtail the activity of Hezballah and other organizations, fearing a massive Israeli reprisal that could jeopardize the peace talks.

On May 4, Amnesty International issued a report claiming that Shiite prisoners held in the El-Khiam prison in south Lebanon were being systematically tortured by their south Lebanese captors. The organization claimed that Israelis had also been present in some of these interrogations. The commander of the Israeli-backed South Lebanese Army (SLA), General Antoine Lahad, denied the charges.

Despite reports of Syrian “intervention,” the Hezballah continued periodic shelling of Israeli positions both inside the security zone and on Israel’s northern border. From May 19 on, Israel’s response became harsher, starting with massive artillery bombardments and continuing with air raids, which in two days left at least 14 terrorists dead and dozens wounded. Some 14,000 Lebanese residents fled from the Tufah region in southern Lebanon to escape the continued Israeli raids. Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, in the midst of an election campaign, expressed hope that the retaliation efforts would “calm” the Hezballah. Defense Minister Arens accused Syria of transferring hundreds of Katyusha rockets, which had arrived from Teheran, into the hands of the terrorist groups.

As Israeli air attacks continued unabated, tension mounted between Israel and Syria, whose government held effective control over Lebanon. Syrian foreign minis-
ter Farouk al-Sharaa stated, on May 25, that “if Israel forces us into a war, we will not hesitate.” The next day, Radio Damascus announced that Syrian units had been placed on full alert, and that reinforcements were being sent into the Bekaa’a Valley. Israel made clear that it did not seek a fight with Syria, but that it would continue the battle against Hezballah, wherever it might be.

On May 27, an Israeli soldier was killed in an ambush in south Lebanon. Israel retaliated with artillery, air, and helicopter attacks against terrorist targets. President Assad accused Israel of seeking a war. “If attacked, we will respond,” he said. The Lebanese government called on Iran to restrain the Hezballah. The tension showed no signs of easing. Egyptian president Hosni Mubarak, in a letter sent to Prime Minister Shamir in the first days of June, warned that the continued Israeli attacks in Lebanon would escalate into a full-scale regional war. Syria and Lebanon, however, were not interested in a war, and throughout June exerted pressure on the terrorist groups to minimize their activities. The June 23 victory of the Labor party reinforced their motivation to calm the situation, although in the days following the elections, the cycle of violence continued as before. On July 21, one Israeli soldier was killed and three wounded when their patrol ran into a well-laid Hezballah ambush. The Israeli air force once again went into action.

On September 22, the Lebanese delegation to the Washington peace talks formally notified Israel that it had information that navigator Ron Arad was alive. Israeli prime minister Rabin demanded clarification, saying that Lebanon was responsible for the navigator’s safety. “I hope the Lebanese are serious enough not to play with Arad’s life,” he said. On October 4, the leader of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, Ahmed Jibril, said in an interview that he had met with Ron Arad, and that he was feeling well. Jibril gave no further details.

The London-based Foreign Report magazine revealed in early August that the Hezballah was planning to step up its operations against Israel, having received new and sophisticated arms from Iran, including antitank and anti-aircraft missiles. Several weeks later, the magazine’s prediction proved to be correct. On September 29, Hezballah launched one of its biggest and most sophisticated operations, with hundreds of terrorists attacking SLA positions in different areas in the security zone, for the first time using Sager-type antitank missiles. Israel retaliated with a massive bombardment of positions north of the security zone. The United States contacted the Lebanese government, urging it to stop the new conflagration in the south.

After a few weeks of quiet, the Hezballah struck again, with deadly results. On October 25, five Israeli soldiers were killed when an explosive device demolished their patrol van inside the security zone. Israel immediately sent in planes to bomb targets in Lebanon, and fears of a full-scale battle were heightened when long Israeli military convoys were spotted making their way to the north. On October 27, a Hezballah Katyusha rocket hit a house in the northern town of Kiryat Shemonah, killing Vadim Shuchman, a 14-year-old new immigrant from Ukraine. The United States, Britain, and France called on Israel not to retaliate, for fear that the peace process might be jeopardized. Israeli planes bombed targets in Syrian-held territory,
but otherwise the government decided to heed the international warnings and to let Syria try and calm the situation.

On November 8, another salvo of Katyusha rockets was fired at northern settlements, but there were no injuries. The next day, another round of rockets landed inside the border. Syria promised the United States, once again, to put a stop to the Katyusha attacks. The situation throughout the next week appeared grim, but Israel once again held back. On November 15, after several days of attacks and counterattacks, calm was restored.

(On the deportation of Hamas activists to Lebanon in December, see above.)

JORDAN

The year 1991, the year of the Gulf War, had also been a turbulent year on the Israeli-Jordanian border, in which there were several bloody skirmishes with terrorists coming from Jordan. Although Israel was satisfied that the Jordanian government had not approved the attacks, there was some fear that Hussein's government was losing control over the army. One of the main reasons for King Hussein's loosened grip on his troops was the economic hardship suffered by Jordan in the wake of its support for Iraq. On March 4, Jordan announced a "revolutionary security concept," stating that it was freezing compulsory recruitment to the army. The official reason: economic hardship.

On May 3, Jordan returned to Israel a small boat that had strayed from the coast of Eilat to the southern Jordanian port of Aqaba.

On May 24, a single Katyusha rocket was fired from the Jordanian border into an uninhabited area on the Golan Heights. Israeli sources said it was an "isolated" incident and decided to play it down. Six weeks later, on July 8, a terrorist squad infiltrated from the same area and attacked an Israeli position in the southern Golan Heights, before escaping back to Jordan. On August 4, a terrorist squad crossed the border in the Jordan Salient; three terrorists were killed and two Israeli soldiers wounded. A previously unknown group called Hezbollah Falastin claimed responsibility.

On September 5, a German tourist was killed north of the Dead Sea when he was spotted by an Israeli army patrol as he tried to cross the border from Jordan to Israel. Given the sporadic attacks by terrorists from Jordan, the soldiers had mistaken the tourist for another terrorist. On November 7, an Israeli patrol apprehended two Jordanian citizens who had crossed the border near the Dead Sea. They were found with a copy of the Koran and axes in their possession and were duly imprisoned. On November 30, shots were fired from across the border into the Beisan Valley region, wounding an Israeli soldier.
SYRIA

On February 12, Syria accused Israel of building nuclear weapons in order to dominate the Middle East. Throughout the year, and despite its participation in the peace process, Syria maintained its close ties with fundamentalist Iran; in March a delegation of Iranian Revolutionary Guards toured the Golan Heights, saying later that they had wanted to cut the border fences "so that we could destroy the enemy."

In April a rare occurrence of Israeli assistance to Syria took place when a small Syrian ship was saved from sinking by the Israeli navy and taken to Haifa for repairs. After the boat left Haifa, a problem emerged over payment for the cost of the repairs.

On August 12, a senior official accompanying Rabin on a visit to the United States revealed that Syria had recently carried out two experimental launches of the North Korean-made Scud-C surface-to-surface missile. The official accused Syria of funding the Islamic Hamas movement in the territories and the opposition Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan. Several days later, security sources quoted in the daily Ha'aretz said that the Syrian Scud-C missile would soon become operational. Western intelligence sources were quoted by the newspaper, on August 13, as claiming that, aided by North Korean scientists and technicians, Syria was building its own factory to produce Scud-C missiles. Foreign Minister Shimon Peres reacted to the reports by saying they indicated "grave designs" by Syria; he said the peace negotiations did not negate the need for preparedness by the Israeli army.

On August 16, Syria reacted by accusing Israel of engaging in a "sick campaign" concerning the Scud missiles. The daily organ of the Ba'ath party said that "Syria would not succumb to threats and will maintain its policy of safeguarding the rights of the nation." The next month, the London-based Foreign Report magazine reported that Syria had two fully operational factories manufacturing poison gas.

On November 23, the U.S. Congress released a report claiming heavy Syrian involvement in the international drug trade operating out of Lebanon. President Assad's brother, Rifat, was personally involved in the drug distribution, the report stated.

TERRORIST INCIDENTS ABROAD

On March 7, the security officer at the Israeli embassy in Ankara, Turkey, was killed when his booby-trapped car exploded. Various groups linked to Hezbollah and the Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility, linking the bombing to the Israeli killing of Hezbollah secretary-general Abbas Musawi.

On March 17, a car bomb exploded outside the Israeli embassy in Buenos Aires, Argentina, killing 28, including 4 Israeli diplomats. The Islamic Jihad organization claimed responsibility, once again citing revenge for the killing of Musawi. Foreign Minister David Levy told the Knesset on March 18 that the perpetrators were "destined for painful punishment."
OTHER SECURITY MATTERS

On January 6, it was revealed that the Pentagon was conducting an investigation into possible wrongdoing by the Israeli Defense Purchasing Mission in New York and looking into allegations of misuse of American aid money. The investigation grew out of the Rami Dotan affair, in which the Israel air force brigadier general was convicted in 1991 of bribe-taking and theft of over $10 million in American military aid monies. In June Israel rejected an American request to interrogate others involved in the Dotan scandal, citing possible risks to its national-security interests. In December an American delegation came to Israel to investigate arms-purchasing operations by the Defense Ministry.

In early February, Israel expressed concern at the American decision to sell Saudi Arabia 72 advanced F-15 fighters; in September U.S. defense officials launched talks with Israel on maintaining its air superiority. (See also “Relations with the United States,” below.)

On May 2, Israel successfully tested the Israeli-made Barak seaborne antimissile missile. The missiles were to be placed on Saar 5 missile boats, then under construction in the United States. On September 23, Israel carried out its fourth experimental launch of the Arrow antimissile missile and termed the launch a success.

On June 8, the head of Israeli military intelligence, Maj. Gen. Uri Saguy, warned the Knesset’s Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that Iran could develop and produce nuclear weapons by the end of the decade. Such a development would place Israel’s very existence at risk, he said.

On July 30, 2 Israelis were killed and 46 wounded in an explosion in a Military Industries factory near the coast in Herzliyah. Damage estimated at tens of millions of dollars was caused to neighboring buildings and houses.

Twelve soldiers were killed in training accidents between April and August, creating a public uproar and demands for external investigations. Prime Minister Rabin ordered the army to take all measures to put a stop to the accidents, blaming them on what he termed the notorious Israeli “trust me” attitude. In August the army decided to appoint “training safety officers” in each army unit that trains soldiers. Five Israeli soldiers from an elite infantry unit were killed on November 5 during an operational exercise at the Ze’elim training base. The soldiers were hit by a shoulder-held missile launched by another unit posing as the enemy. A military investigation later recommended disciplinary measures against three senior officers. On November 23, the New York Times reported that the soldiers had been training for action against the Hezballah; the next day the Miami Herald added that the target of the planned action was Hassan Nasrallah, the man who succeeded Abbas Musawi, the Hezballah official killed in an IDF raid in February.

On September 30, Germany announced that it would give Israel $600 million worth of military equipment and that intelligence sharing between the two countries would continue as before. Germany also announced a $140-million investment in the development of electronic warfare equipment by the Israeli Elta company.
On October 19, the U.S. Congress approved a $33-million American purchase of the Israeli-made Popeye air-to-air missile.

On November 8, Israeli helicopters rescued ten passengers from an Israeli pleasure yacht stranded off the coast of Sudan. The operation cost $2 million.

In late November the U.S. Armed Forces Journal reported that three Israeli military delegations had visited India. The two countries were about to conclude a $1-billion arms deal, the newspaper said.

In late December it was reported that Israeli pilots were test-flying both the F-16 and F-18 jet fighters. Israel announced that it wished to purchase 60 planes at a cost of over $2 billion.

On December 27, the army announced that compulsory military service for women would be shortened during 1993 from the current 24 months to 22 months.

DIPLOMATIC DEVELOPMENTS

The Peace Process

The first round of talks between Israel and its Arab neighbors, held in Madrid in November 1991, and the second, in Washington in December, had produced no results. Not only was there no progress on matters of substance, but in the most closely watched track, the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, the two sides had yet to reach agreement on the modalities of the Palestinian representation, and had thus failed to convene a formal round of talks.

Israel had objected to the separate participation of the Palestinian delegation, which according to the rules of Madrid was a part of the so-called “Jordanian-Palestinian” delegation. The Palestinians, for their part, sought to break free of the constraining rules of Madrid and to be as independent as possible. In discussions leading up to the January 13 talks, which ended just a few hours before their scheduled start, a complex compromise was worked out whereby certain issues would be discussed in the forum of the joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation, while others would be discussed directly between Israel and the Palestinian team.

BILATERAL TALKS, ROUND THREE
(Washington, January 13–16)

The third round of bilateral talks between Israel and its Arab neighbors convened in Washington on January 13. “This is the beginning,” said the head of the Palestinian delegation, Haidar Abdel-Shafi, when he arrived for the start of the talks in the State Department. His Israeli counterpart, Cabinet Secretary Elyakim Rubinstein, explained to reporters that the talks would first concentrate on “matters of procedure.” The start of the talks, originally scheduled for January 7, had been held up for a week as Arab delegations arrived late in protest over Israel’s decision to
deport 12 Palestinian activists. The Israeli delegation, arriving in Washington as originally planned, waited for a week in the American capital for their Arab interlocutors.

Palestinian and Israeli negotiators both submitted their own blueprints for Palestinian self-rule in the West Bank and Gaza. The Israeli proposal, modeled along the general lines of the 1978 Camp David accords, envisaged the establishment of an “interim self-government authority,” excluded Jerusalem from any settlement, and was vague about the kind of elections that would be held to elect the “authority.” The Palestinian counterproposal ensured the inclusion of Jerusalem in the interim arrangements, foresaw complete Palestinian control over land and water, and demanded the dismantling of Jewish settlements in the territories. The Israeli delegation refused to discuss the matter of settlements, claiming that this issue could be raised only in negotiations on the final status of the territories.

There was little progress on the other fronts either. Israeli and Syrian negotiators Yossi Ben-Aharon and Mowaffak al-Allaf sparred over the fate of Syrian Jews, with Allaf claiming that “there are no Syrian Jews, only Syrian citizens.” Jordan asked to discuss the fate of Jewish settlements and the correct interpretation of UN Security Council Resolution 242, while Israel emphasized diplomatic recognition and economic cooperation. Lebanon demanded a complete Israeli withdrawal from the security zone in the south of the country, while Israel demanded a Lebanese guarantee against further terrorist attacks from Lebanese territory.

The sides disbanded without agreement even on the venue or date of the next round of talks. The Arab states, however, made clear that they wished to continue with the Washington talks.

MULTIATERAL TALKS, ROUND ONE
(Moscow, January 28–29)

The multilateral talks aimed, in broad terms, at discussing a “post-peace” Middle East in which multilateral cooperation would blossom, both within the area and with the rest of the international community. Originally an Israeli idea, the concept of the talks was embraced by the United States and Europe as a means of augmenting the direct bilateral talks and of showing the negotiating sides what the “fruits of peace” would be if they reached agreement.

From the outset, however, it was clear that the bilateral talks would cast a long shadow over the multilaterals. Two of the chief protagonists, Syria and Lebanon, announced that they would boycott the talks in protest over Israeli “intransigence” in Washington. The Palestinians, for their part, wished to exploit the multilateral forum in order to achieve what they had failed to achieve in the bilateral talks under the so-called Madrid rules: the participation of “diaspora” Palestinians—those residing in other countries—and even PLO representatives in the talks. Israel, however, claimed that the Madrid formula covered all other arenas of the peace process and refused Palestinian demands, although there was some support in
Washington for the participation of Palestinians from outside the territories. Thus, as the Moscow talks got under way, the Palestinian delegation chose not to attend. Algeria and Yemen withdrew from the talks in sympathy with the Palestinians. Even Egypt was reluctant to attend, finally deciding to go to Moscow while expressing “understanding” for the Syrian boycott.

In an effort to induce the Palestinians to attend, Secretary of State James Baker, heading the American delegation, agreed with the Palestinians to support the inclusion of diaspora Palestinians on condition that known PLO officials not attend the talks. All the other participating countries, except Israel, gladly accepted the formula; thus, the groundwork for future American-Israeli friction was laid.

Despite this, the Moscow talks constituted a diplomatic coup for Israel. For the first time, representatives of several Arab countries ended their decades-long boycott of Israel and sat together at the same table with Israeli officials. Foreign Minister David Levy, who represented Israel, found himself sitting across the table from high-ranking officials from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Tunisia, Mauritania, and Morocco. Others attending included the two cosponsors of the peace process, the United States and Russia, as well as Canada, China, Japan, Turkey, and the European Community.

The conference agreed to set up five working committees that would meet in April or May: a group on arms control and regional security, which would meet in Washington; a group on refugees, which would meet in Ottawa; a group on water, which would meet in Turkey or Austria; a group on regional economic development, which would meet in Brussels; and a group on ecology, which would meet in Tokyo. Israel had objected to the establishment of a group dealing with refugees, but bowed to American pressure on this matter.

BILATERAL TALKS, ROUND FOUR
(Washington, February 24–March 4)

The fourth round of talks opened under inauspicious circumstances. The February 16 killing of Hezbollah leader Abbas Musawi cast a pall over the talks, as did the arrest, in the territories, of two members of the Palestinian delegation. Israel, for its part, came to Washington just as Secretary of State Baker announced that Washington had decided in effect to reject Israel’s request for $10 billion in loan guarantees. The atmosphere was not conducive to progress, and indeed little was achieved.

The Palestinians decided to concentrate on the issue of Jewish settlements in the territories, which Israel had refused even to discuss during the previous round of talks. Palestinian spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi said on February 25 that the Palestinians would discuss substantive issues only after Israel agreed to address the matter of settlements as well as human-rights violations in the territories. “If Israel does not stop settlements,” she said in a press conference in Washington, “there will be no discussions on any other matter.” The previous day, Cabinet Secretary Rubin-
stein submitted a ten-page document outlining Israel’s vision of the interim arrangements with the Palestinians. Contrary to the provisions of Camp David, the Israeli document made no mention of elections for the “self-governing authority,” nor did it refer to the “redeployment” of Israeli troops. Israel proposed that the Palestinians should be in charge of their own civil affairs, such as taxation, justice, education, social welfare, and the like. Palestinian negotiator Haidar Abdel-Shafi said that the Israeli position was “very negative and endangered the negotiations.”

On March 3, the Palestinians submitted their own counterproposal for the self-government arrangements. Their 16-page document called for free elections, control of most matters, including internal security, and the inclusion of East Jerusalem in the autonomy. Rubinstein rejected the document, calling it “a plan for a Palestinian state in all but name.”

Israel and Jordan continued to bicker over the meaning of UN Resolution 242, but nonetheless began informal discussions between officials on matters of health, economy, and justice. Israel and Lebanon continued to squabble about the meaning of the 1983 Security Council Resolution 425, which called for an Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon. The Syrian team sought to concentrate on Resolution 242, claiming that it mandated a complete Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights. Syrian negotiator Allaf said that Israel had come to the talks with “premeditated determination not to allow any progress.”

On March 5, the heads of the delegations met with Baker, who, according to the next day’s Washington Post, criticized the Palestinians for “posturing.” The Americans also submitted a proposal for establishing a joint Israeli-Lebanese military committee to discuss security arrangements in the south. The talks once again disbanded without setting a venue or date for their next meeting.

BILATERAL TALKS, ROUND FIVE
(Washington, April 27-30)

In the weeks leading up to the next round of talks, Washington tried to make good on its pledge to Israel to try and move the talks to a locale in the Middle East vicinity. The administration asked Arab states to submit lists of acceptable cities in the area, hoping to cull a venue acceptable to all sides. On April 20, the administration announced that the sixth round of talks would be held in Rome. The Arabs, for their part, said that they would refuse to hold further talks with Israel until the June 23 Israeli elections took place.

In the fifth round, Israel submitted to the Palestinians a plan for holding municipal elections in the West Bank and Gaza, and offered to transfer immediately, on an experimental basis, the authority for running the health services in the territories. The Palestinians did not reject the Israeli offer of elections out of hand, saying that they would agree to municipal elections only after general political elections were held in the territories for the election of a legislative council.

On April 27, Syria announced an end to travel restrictions on Syrian Jews. The
statement improved the atmosphere in the Washington talks, but there was no report of progress. Israel and Jordan discussed water rights, while Israel and Lebanon discussed the situation in southern Lebanon.

The talks ended after only four days, in the wake of a unilateral Israeli decision to return its delegates to Israel because of national holidays. Overall, the fifth round of talks, though short, took place in a better atmosphere than its predecessors and was generally considered to be the first in which substantive issues were discussed. Before the next round convened, however, Israel would have a new government with radically different policies than the one in power in April.

MULTILATERAL TALKS, ROUND TWO

(Various Sites, May)

The dispute between Israel and the United States concerning the participation of diaspora Palestinians in the multilaterals, as promised by Secretary Baker to the Palestinians in Moscow, was not settled in the four months leading up to the May convening of the five multilateral working groups. Baker had agreed that the Palestinians would be able to send their diaspora representatives to two of the five groups—refugees and economic development. On May 7, Baker sent a note to Foreign Minister Levy emphasizing that American agreement to the participation of outside Palestinians did not mean that Washington recognized the Palestinian right of return. Nonetheless, on May 9, the Israeli government decided that it would boycott the two problematic groups unless Palestinians from outside the territories were barred from participation. Israel also objected to the participation of the European Community in the forum dealing with arms control, thus straining its bilateral ties with the European countries. Syria and Lebanon, for their part, maintained their boycott of the entire multilateral process.

The economic talks, boycotted by Israel and attended by outside Palestinians, convened in Brussels on May 11 and 12; concurrently, the regional arms talks convened in Washington, with Israel but without the Palestinians, who, by an Israeli-American consensus, were kept out of these talks because they were not a "state." On the eve of the controversial refugee talks, which Israel had opposed from the outset and which it was now boycotting because of the participation of Palestinian refugees, a diplomatic crisis erupted between Jerusalem and Washington. This occurred after State Department spokeswoman Margaret Tutwiler said, at her daily briefing, that the United States supported the 1948 UN Resolution 194, which called for the return of refugees. Several days later, Tutwiler "clarified" the American position by stating that the only UN decisions relevant to the entire peace process were Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.

In Ottawa, on May 13, Palestinian representatives refused to heed an American request and insisted that the refugee forum discuss their "right of return to Palestine." The Palestinians did not specify which areas of "Palestine" they wished to return to, because of internal differences on this matter within the Palestinian
delegation. The next day, bowing to heavy American pressure, the Palestinians agreed not to demand that the "right of return" actually be placed on the agenda of the talks. The participating countries, minus Israel, agreed to explore practical ways of improving the lives of the Palestinian refugees.

Israel did participate in the water talks, held in Vienna on May 13 and 14. The participating countries agreed to discuss the establishment of an international database on water resources, regional cooperation, and ways of increasing regional water resources. In the May 18–19 talks on the environment, held in Tokyo, the delegates discussed the ecology of the Mediterranean and the Red Sea and methods of preventing pollution of the sea. On May 27, a steering committee of the multilateral process met in Lisbon, setting up the dates and venues for the next round of talks.

THE NEW ISRAELI GOVERNMENT

On June 23, 15 years of Likud rule came to an end and Labor returned to power. During the election campaign, party leader Rabin repeatedly emphasized that one of his primary targets as prime minister would be to achieve an autonomy agreement with the Palestinians "within six to nine months." Rabin appeared to be formulating a "Palestinians first" policy, by which his government would strive to achieve a breakthrough in the territories and only later deal with the other Arab partners. In his campaign, Rabin also distinguished between "security" and "political" Jewish settlements in the territories, saying that the latter were unnecessary and an obstacle to progress in the peace process. In a June 24 press conference, immediately after his election, Rabin reiterated his campaign promises.

On July 12, the police called in for questioning Palestinian spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi and the head of the Palestinian delegation, Haidar Abdel-Shafi, in the wake of a meeting held between the Palestinian delegation to the peace talks and PLO chairman Yasir Arafat, in Amman on June 18. The two had violated an Israeli law that forbade contacts with the PLO; the new Israeli government, however, had pledged to repeal that law. The chances of the two being prosecuted were thus minimal.

The new Israeli government was greeted with ambivalence by the Palestinians as well as the rest of the Arab world. On the one hand, it was clear that Labor held more moderate positions than the Likud and genuinely sought a peace settlement; but Palestinians were wary of Rabin, who had initiated a tough response to the intifada during his tenure as defense minister in the late 1980s. The Palestinians were also skeptical about whether Labor's more dovish policies would be acceptable to them; they rejected Rabin's differentiation between "political" and "security" settlements.

In his July 13 inaugural speech to the Knesset, Rabin offered to visit any Arab capital in order to make peace, and invited the joint Jordanian-Palestinian delegation to come for talks in Jerusalem, an offer that was not accepted. Several days later, new foreign minister Shimon Peres reiterated the Israeli pledge to achieve a break-
through with the Palestinians within the next year. On July 16, new housing minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer announced a freeze on all building contracts for Jewish homes in the West Bank and Gaza. A week later, the government announced that 6,681 contracts for buildings where construction had not started would be canceled; 8,781 contracts for buildings where construction had already begun would, however, be honored. Ben-Eliezer made clear that as far as Israel was concerned, East Jerusalem was not part of the West Bank and therefore there would be no reduction in the pace of construction in the capital. The Palestinians reacted cautiously to the announcement; Ashrawi described it as “encouraging,” while PLO chairman Arafat, who continued to demand a complete halt to Israeli construction in the territories, described the partial freeze as “a first step.”

Following the formation of the new cabinet, Secretary of State James Baker toured the Middle East, July 19-23. In Amman, Baker sided with the Arabs by rejecting Rabin’s differentiation between “political” and “security” settlements. He proposed, however, that in exchange for a complete Israeli freeze on settlements, the Arabs would end their economic boycott of Israel. In Damascus, on July 23, Baker reportedly solicited Syrian reaction to a proposal for phased Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights; according to Arab news reports, the reactions were negative. That same day, the Russian ambassador to Damascus visited Israel, stressing the Syrian wish to achieve a breakthrough in the peace talks within a few months.

Following Baker’s visit, Arab foreign ministers met in Damascus and repeated the Arab demand for a complete freeze on settlements. PLO chairman Arafat, on July 30, expressed satisfaction at the change of government in Israel and said that he would be willing to meet with Rabin at anytime. On August 1, the United States and Russia issued invitations for a resumption of bilateral talks which, it was hoped, would now lead to quick and meaningful progress.

On the internal front, Rabin and his foreign minister, Shimon Peres, perennial arch-rivals for the leadership of the Labor party, agreed to maintain the division of labor that had existed in the outgoing Likud government. The Prime Minister's Office, it was decided, would be in charge of the bilateral talks, while the Foreign Ministry would be charged with running the multilaterals. As in the previous government, the allocation of responsibilities was more a result of the fierce rivalry between the prime minister and his foreign minister than a well thought-out plan of action.

On August 11, President George Bush announced that the U.S. administration had decided to give Israel $10 billion in loan guarantees. The decision raised howls of protest in the Arab world. Arab foreign ministers meeting in Damascus stated that the United States had reneged on its commitment to seek a complete settlement freeze. The ministers said that the United States could no longer be considered an unbiased mediator and proposed, without really meaning it, that the negotiations henceforth be held under the auspices of the United Nations.
BILATERAL TALKS, ROUND SIX
(Washington, August 24-September 3; September 14-24)

The sixth round of talks was the longest to date, lasting for a month with a ten-day break in the middle. The media reported a much-improved atmosphere at the start of the talks.

On August 17, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz revealed that the United States was offering to position American troops on the Golan Heights within the framework of a peace arrangement. On the eve of the talks, Prime Minister Rabin further improved the atmosphere with the Palestinians by announcing the release of 800 Palestinian prisoners. The government also announced that 280 homes in the territories that had been sealed up would be unsealed. Streets that had been closed would be reopened. On the day the talks started, Rabin announced the cancellation of deportation orders against 11 PLO activists whose deportation had been ordered in January.

One of Rabin's first steps as prime minister was to replace Yossi Ben-Aharon, the director-general of the Prime Minister's Office in the Likud government and a self-confessed hard-liner, with Itamar Rabinovich, the rector of Tel Aviv University and an expert on Syrian affairs. The appointment raised hopes that Israel would be more flexible on the issue of the Golan, which during the previous five rounds of talks had not even been discussed. Commenting on the new Israeli negotiator, the spokeswoman of the Syrian delegation, Bushra Kanafani, said on the opening day of the talks that there was a "different style" on the Israeli side. However, the major change was in substance, not style: at the start of the talks, Rabinovich told his Syrian interlocutors that Israel was now willing to acknowledge the "peace for territories" principle embodied in Resolution 242. For all practical purposes, the Golan Heights had been placed on the negotiating table for the first time. On August 25, Rabin stated that Israel would not withdraw from the entire Golan Heights, but also said that "we will not stick to every centimeter." Rabin, speaking in the Knesset, reminded his listeners that it was the Likud that had created the precedent by giving up the entire Sinai in order to reach a peace agreement with Egypt.

In Washington, Israel presented a new draft of its proposals on autonomy to the Palestinians. Israel dropped the terminology of "administrative council"—in reference to the body that would run the territories in the interim period—and was now willing to propose general political elections for the "self-governing authority." The head of the Israeli delegation to the talks with the Palestinians, Elyakim Rubinstein (who stayed on in his post in the new government), said that the council elected by the Palestinians would be able to legislate bylaws and rules but would not have the authority for "primary legislation." The Palestinians, for their part, demanded a 180-member parliament that could legislate freely. They added, however, that the matter of legislation was open to negotiation.

By the end of the first week of talks, the Palestinians reverted to their grumblings about Israeli intransigence. On August 30, the head of the Palestinian delegation,
Abdel-Shafi, said that Israel was not willing to consider “real changes.” He said the
new Israeli proposals fell short of what Israel had agreed to in the 1978 Camp David
accords. The Palestinians once again demanded assurances that Jerusalem would be
included in the final-status arrangements.

The Palestinians presented a new ten-point document on September 1; Israel did
not reject the document, but news reports indicated that there were major differ-
ences between the two sides. A counterproposal submitted by Israel on September
15 offered the Palestinians, for the first time, a say in the control of water and land
resources in the territories.

On the Syrian front, the head of the Syrian delegation, Mowaffak Allaf, appeared
to be indicating new Syrian flexibility when he stated, on September 3, that Syria
would be willing to make peace with Israel in conjunction with an Israeli withdrawal
from the Golan. A day later, however, he made it clear that as far as Damascus was
concerned, “peace” did not necessarily mean open borders and normalization.

In the second part of the sixth round of talks, the two sides began discussing, for
the first time, theoretical future security arrangements, although no agreement was
reached. The Syrian position, unacceptable to Israel, held that any security arrange-
ments would have to be “symmetrical”—that is, of equal scope on both sides of the
future border. Rabin announced, on September 7, that Israel would also be willing
to negotiate with Syria on an interim settlement. On September 10, he said that
peace with Syria must entail some sort of “territorial compromise.” Although it had
accepted the “peace for territories” formula, Israel had yet to use the word “with-
drawal” in the drafting of its positions on the Golan. On September 21, U.S.
ambassador to Israel William Harrop said that the Syrian demand for a prior Israeli
commitment for full withdrawal on the Golan was “unreasonable.”

Rabin’s willingness to speak of territorial changes on the Golan created political
turmoil at home, but it did not impress the Syrians. Allaf rejected a new Israeli
proposal for talking points, submitted on September 14, saying that the document
did not commit Israel to full withdrawal, which was a prerequisite to progress as
far as Damascus was concerned. On September 17, the Syrians went so far as to
break off the talks with Israel, but were subsequently persuaded by the United States
to return. Following the end of the round, Allaf stated that the talks had proven,
for the first time, that “peace was possible.” But a few days later, Syrian foreign
minister Farouk al-Sharaa said that “anyone who thinks that peace is possible
without a full Israeli withdrawal from every inch of land is making a big mistake.”

Away from the limelight, Israel also continued negotiations with Jordan and
Lebanon. Progress was reported with Jordan on issues such as allocation of water
from the Yarmuk River, but talks with Lebanon continued to be bogged down in
discussions of whether Israel would commit itself to a withdrawal from southern
Lebanon before Beirut proved that it could fend off terrorist attacks against Israel.
MULTILATERAL TALKS, ROUND THREE
(Various Sites, September–November)

The third round of multilateral talks got under way in largely uneventful meetings of the arms-control group, in Moscow on September 15, and the water committee, which met in Washington on the same day. The environment group met in The Hague on October 26.

Throughout the months of September and October, Egypt played a central role in ironing out the differences between Israel and the Palestinians that had led to the Israeli boycott of two multilateral committees in May. Egyptian foreign minister Amre Moussa concluded an agreement with the Israeli government by which it would agree to the participation of diaspora Palestinians in the multilateral forums, on condition that these would not be members of the PLO or of the organization's "parliament," the Palestine National Congress (PNC). Thus, on October 8, Foreign Minister Peres announced, following a meeting with Moussa, that Israel would no longer boycott the talks on refugees and on regional economic development. Israel also dropped its opposition to European—as well as Palestinian—participation in the talks on arms control and regional security. Syria and Lebanon, however, maintained their ongoing boycott of the entire multilateral process.

The regional talks got under way in Paris on October 29, with a diaspora Palestinian, Zein Myassi, in attendance. For the first time, Israeli officials sat at an official forum with a representative of the Palestinian refugees. The two sides even agreed on a World Bank survey of economic problems of the region. In Ottawa, on November 11, the Egyptian-brokered agreement appeared to break down. Mohammed Hallaj, a member of the Palestine National Council, appeared as a member of the Palestinian delegation; Israel claimed that this was a violation of the agreement and decided to boycott the first day of the talks. After many tense hours of Egyptian and American intervention, the Israelis returned to the talks, after receiving assurances from the United States that Hallaj had not been a member of the PNC since 1991.

The steering committee of the multilaterals met in London, December 3–4.

BILATERAL TALKS, ROUND SEVEN
(Washington, October 21–29; November 9–19)

On October 1, Syria rejected a call made by Rabin for a summit meeting between the leaders of the two countries. In the hiatus between the sixth and seventh rounds of talks, French foreign minister Roland Dumas launched his own diplomatic initiative to bring the Syrian and Israeli positions closer and the leaders of the two sides together, much to the displeasure of Washington. The flurry of activity on the Israeli-Syrian front worried the Palestinians, who feared a "separate" Syrian deal with Israel. PLO relations with Syria, never good, cooled even further, and Arafat canceled a planned October visit to Damascus. On October 20, Rabin told the
French daily *Le Monde* that the talks with the Syrians were "promising." According to Israeli news reports, Rabin, who had begun his prime ministership with a "Palestinians first" attitude, was now leaning toward a quick breakthrough first with the Syrians.

At the start of the seventh round, Israel submitted a new document to the Syrians which for the first time employed the specific word "withdrawal." Rabinovich made clear that Israel's willingness to withdraw did not include agreement to evacuate any Jewish settlements on the Golan. American sources, quoted in *Ha'aretz* on October 25, made clear that the simple addition of the hitherto-unspoken word would not suffice in order to reach an agreed Syrian-Israeli declaration of principles, which was now the main goal of the Israeli-Syrian talks.

The Israeli-Palestinian talks appeared for the first time to be getting down to substantive issues, as the two sides formed subcommittees to discuss details of the interim settlement as well as the overall concept of what self-rule would actually mean. Palestinian sources, quoted by *Ha'aretz* on October 27, said that Israel was showing "surprising flexibility."

But the real surprise of the seventh round was the Jordanians. On October 28, Israel and Jordan announced that they were on the verge of finalizing a detailed agenda for talks in the future. The aim of the talks, according to the document, was to reach a "peace agreement" between the two countries. Israel and Jordan also agreed to discuss the future of small slivers of land in the Arava which Jordan claimed—and Israel did not deny—had been illegally occupied by Israeli farmers in the aftermath of the 1948 war.

After taking a break for the U.S. presidential elections, the talks resumed on November 9. The defeat of George Bush and the election of Bill Clinton cast a cloud of uncertainty over the peace process, especially on the Arab side. Bush had been considered by the Arabs to be the most "pro-Arab" American president in modern times, and was widely credited, together with Secretary of State Baker, with having brought Israel, against its will, to the negotiating table. President-elect Clinton was thought to be much more "pro-Israel," especially after receiving a high proportion of Jewish votes. Concerns for the peace process were also raised in Israel, because of Clinton's self-professed intention to place greater emphasis on domestic affairs at the expense of American involvement overseas.

Although the peace talks continued on schedule, the sides conceded that little progress could be expected during the remaining months of Bush's lame-duck administration and before the new Democratic administration took power.

After the first week, Israeli officials spoke of "frustrating talks," and it was widely understood that the uncertain position of the U.S. administration was taking its toll. Syria continued to demand a full Israeli withdrawal from the Golan, while Prime Minister Rabin, in a November 14 interview with the *Washington Post*, accused Damascus of working against the talks by encouraging Hezbollah actions in south Lebanon. What had started as a promising round of talks was quickly turning into an acrimonious exchange of accusations. Rabinovich said, on November 12, that the
peace process had not collapsed but was definitely facing serious difficulties.

Developments with the Palestinians were not faring any better, leading the Palestinian delegation to warn, in a letter to Rabin made public on November 21, that the talks would collapse if progress were not achieved soon. PLO chairman Arafat stated, on November 25, that the talks had reached a "dead end." Rabin, in response, declared, on November 29, that the Palestinians could be repeating their "historic mistake" of 1947 when they rejected the United Nations Partition Plan.

Lebanon, for its part, rejected an Israeli proposal to set up a joint military committee, while Jordan reneged on its intention to sign the agreed agenda with Israel, concluded in the last round of talks. Jordan was also miffed at an Israeli rejection of its request to allow the repatriation of 70,000 Palestinian refugees living in Jordan. The only bright light appeared to be the start of official Israeli-Jordanian talks on water rights.

**BILATERAL TALKS, ROUND EIGHT**

*(Washington, December 7–17)*

The eighth round of peace talks convened on December 7, still plagued by the uncertainty caused by the transfer of power in the United States and now also overshadowed by violent events in the occupied territories. The Palestinians, who had unsuccessfully tried to have the talks postponed, showed up with only a four-member delegation, in protest. On December 9, two days after starting, the talks broke up for a day as the Arab delegations commemorated the fifth anniversary of the start of the intifada.

The Palestinians were pressing for direct American involvement, proposing that trilateral Israeli-American-Palestinian talks take place. After rejecting the proposal out of hand, Israel was surprised when State Department officials proposed that they intervene in the talks and submit a paper that would try to bridge the differences between the sides. Assuming that such an offer would not have been made without the acquiescence of the incoming administration, Rabin sent a message to President-elect Clinton asking the United States not to involve itself in the substantive matters under discussion at the negotiating table.

On December 15, the Palestinians appeared to be ready once again for substantive discussion, presenting a new proposal for an agreed declaration of principles. But the positive atmosphere lasted for less than 24 hours as news began to arrive from Israel about the government's decision to deport 400 Hamas activists. Protesting the deportations, the Arab delegations decided to end the talks on December 17. No new date was set for the next round, and the talks disbanded in an atmosphere of despair and failure. Palestinian spokeswoman Hanan Ashrawi said the talks were "on the verge of disaster."

President Bush met with the Palestinian delegation on December 19, but the meeting, which had been originally conceived as a gesture aimed at encouraging Palestinian pragmatism, was also overshadowed by the deportations. As Arab for-
eign ministers met in Cairo on December 24 to plan their next moves, Palestinian activist Faisal Husseini announced that the Palestinians were on the verge of a decision to “readopt the option of armed struggle.”

The Arabs, however, were not willing to accept a Palestinian demand to boycott the talks until all the deportees were returned. In fact, despite the deportations, Syria was once again making positive noises about the future of the peace process: Syrian vice-president Abdul Halim Haddam said, on December 24, that Israel and Syria were in a position to reach a peace agreement, including security arrangements. On December 30, Professor Rabinovich, the head of the Israeli delegation to the talks with Syria, estimated that the two countries would achieve a peace agreement by December 1993.

Relations with the United States

Relations between the Bush administration and the Shamir government had gone from bad to worse during the latter months of 1991. Contrary to Israeli expectations, Congress bowed to the administration’s request to postpone the approval of Jerusalem’s request for $10 billion in loan guarantees until Washington and Jerusalem could agree to the “terms” of the guarantees, which, in effect, meant Israeli concessions on the issue of settlements in the territories. The two countries also crossed diplomatic swords on issues related to the peace process and human rights in the territories.

The loan-guarantees issue was the main source of friction between the two countries. The United States wished to attach strings to the loan guarantees that would prevent their being used, directly or indirectly, for funding construction activities in the occupied territories. Israel was willing to consider some token gestures in order to accommodate American concerns, but refused to consider an overall freeze on new construction since, after all, expanding settlement was the main political goal of the ruling Likud party.

Sen. Phil Gramm (R., Tex.), visiting Israel in early January, told Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir that President Bush was “very upset” about the continuing rate of settlement and construction in the territories. Gramm spelled out what was already becoming quite clear to Shamir: the loan guarantees would not be given unless Israel took significant steps to “appease” the president on this matter.

Israel, for its part, stepped up its campaign in America to nudge the administration forward on the issue of guarantees, and started employing what could be described as scare tactics, emphasizing the critical importance of the guarantees to Israel’s economic well-being. In January Israeli officials told American counterparts that, without the guarantees, the unemployment rate in Israel would climb from the current 10–11 percent to 16 percent or higher, that taxes would be raised, and growth would be stunted.

On January 25, Secretary of State Baker met with Israeli ambassador to Washington Zalman Shoval and offered a “compromise” formula. According to Israeli press
reports, Baker suggested that if Israel undertook to stop any future building in the territories, it would be allowed to complete the projects already under way. In exchange, Baker said, the administration would approve the guarantees. Several days later, on February 2, it was unclear whether even this suggestion, which by itself was unacceptable to Israel, reflected President Bush's views. National Security Adviser Brent Scowcroft said, on February 2, that the president would not give a seal of approval to any increase in the Jewish population in the territories by means of an agreement that would allow Israel to complete housing already started.

On February 6, Shoval returned to Baker with a counterproposal, by which Israel would put a cap on the amount of money it would invest in the territories, rather than limit the precise number of housing starts. In Jerusalem, Prime Minister Shamir appeared to be facing the possibility that the guarantees might not be given at all. "If we won't receive the guarantees," he said, "we will have to look for other sources, but the immigration from Russia will not stop."

On February 8, Baker publicly asked Israel to put a stop to building in the territories, adding that monies spent by Israel on settlements would be reduced "dollar for dollar" from "American aid." It was not clear whether Baker was referring to the loan guarantees or to the annual economic aid given to Israel; the ambiguity raised concern in Israel to new heights. On February 10, Ha'aretz reported that Baker "had changed his mind" about the loan guarantees and was now willing to allow Israel to build an additional 6,000 housing units in the territories. On February 12, the paper reported that the administration would like to defer dealing with the loan guarantees altogether until the elections in Israel were over.

Baker and Shoval met again on February 21, but failed to achieve progress. Baker confirmed that the United States would be willing to allow Israel to finish the construction of 6,000 housing units, but subsequently there would have to be a complete freeze on new housing. According to some reports, Baker also said that monies spent on construction in the territories since the 1967 war would first be deducted from the loan guarantees. Shoval replied that any blanket freeze on settlements was unacceptable to Israel. Two days later, Shamir rephrased the Israeli position by saying that "we will not stop settling even for one day."

Baker made the American position public on February 24, and it was now clear that negotiations between the two countries on this issue had reached a dead end. The New York Times, on February 24, confirmed the worst suspicions of the Israeli government: the paper said that President Bush wanted Labor candidate Yitzhak Rabin to become the next prime minister of Israel. Likud officials had no doubt that Bush was actively contributing to Rabin's election campaign by refusing to budge on the matter of loan guarantees. The next day, President Bush said that he would not change his mind concerning the guarantees, even if his position harmed his chances for reelection.

Throughout March, U.S. senators Patrick Leahy (D., Vt.) and Robert Kasten (R., Wis.) attempted to reach a compromise by which Congress would give formal approval to the granting of loan guarantees, but the administration would continue
negotiating with Israel the exact conditions under which they would be given. After being given the green light to proceed with their proposal, the senators were cut short on March 17 when Bush said that he had decided to reject it. Leahy said following the meeting that the loan-guarantees issue was "dead."

Several days earlier, the *New York Times* had reported that Israeli leaders were considering taking back their request for loan guarantees altogether, in light of the administration's tough stand. Defense Minister Moshe Arens, visiting Washington, replied that "we will not get down on our knees and beg for help. If the Americans attach intolerable conditions to the loan guarantees, we will raise the money by ourselves."

At the end of March, President Bush made a final offer on the guarantees, proposing that Israel be allowed to finish all housing that was already under construction at the beginning of 1992, in exchange for an immediate granting of $300 million in loan guarantees and another $9.7 billion staggered over six years. But Shamir responded that Israel would never agree to a freeze on settlements.

Relations between the two countries had reached their lowest point in years, perhaps in history. On March 8, New York mayor Ed Koch alleged in an article published in the *New York Post* that Baker had made an obscene remark about Jews in a closed meeting with Republican party workers. A senior minister in the government responded by saying that "the problem is not what Baker says against the Jews, but what he does against Israel."

In mid-March, Defense Minister Arens came to Washington against the background of another ominous development in the relations between the two countries: American allegations that Israel had violated arms export agreements by transferring restricted technology to China, including technology from the Patriot missile batteries supplied by the United States during the Gulf War. Israeli sources, quoted in *Ha'aretz* on March 16, said that the United States was conducting a "smear campaign" against Israel, based on a "web of lies."

In a meeting with Defense Secretary Dick Cheney on March 16, Arens said that the reports of illegal transfers of technology—which, he claimed, were inspired by American officials—had caused "irreparable damage." Cheney reportedly replied that the leaks had not come from the Pentagon, but from people interested "in harming relations between the two countries." Despite Cheney's disclaimer, the Pentagon announced that it was sending a team of investigators to Israel to mount an inquiry. According to Israeli reports published on March 24, the investigators found no evidence to corroborate the allegations against Israel. On March 28, the London *Sunday Telegraph* claimed that it was Saudi Arabia, not Israel, that had transferred the Patriot technology to China. On April 1, a published State Department report stated that Israel had systematically violated agreements on the illegal transfer of technologies. The next day, however, the Pentagon rejected the State Department's findings, adding that Israel's hands were clean concerning the transfer of Patriot technology to China.

Despite Shamir's stated refusal to pull back Israel's request for loan guarantees,
by the beginning of April the matter was effectively dead, and Israeli officials desisted from raising the matter with their American counterparts. In April and May, election campaigns in both countries were heating up. The Likud, for its part, tried to ignore the crisis that had developed with the United States, although some of its spokespersons accused President Bush of intervening on behalf of Rabin, thus seeking to enlist votes of protest against "outside interference" in the elections. Labor utilized the campaign to accuse the Likud of "wrecking" relations between the two countries. The U.S. administration, for its part, did its best to assuage the feelings of resentment that had welled up in the American Jewish community.

Foreign Minister David Levy met with Secretary Baker twice during this period: on April 28, in Washington, and on May 24, in Lisbon. In the second meeting, Baker declared his satisfaction at the progress that had been achieved in the peace talks.

In June, tensions flared once again because of the U.S.-funded and Israeli-built Arrow missile project. A test-firing scheduled for early June was canceled due to pressure exerted by the administration, which, according to news reports, wished to "save Israel from the embarrassment" of another failed launch.

On June 17, just a week before the elections, a senior administration official was quoted as saying that, following the Israeli ballot, Bush would work to improve U.S.-Israeli relations by renewing the dialogue on the loan guarantees and by inviting the Israeli prime minister, whoever he might be, for talks in Washington.

THE NEW ISRAELI GOVERNMENT

Although they had not publicly advocated the election of Yitzhak Rabin, U.S. officials did not hide their delight at his victory in the June 23 elections. Rabin not only espoused more moderate policies on the peace process, which were much more attuned to American positions than those of the Likud, he also viewed relations with Washington as the core of Israel's foreign policy and had close personal ties with many American officials and opinion-makers. Rabin was also thought to prefer Republican administrations to Democratic ones, a result of his tenure as ambassador to Washington during the Nixon years and his negative experiences as prime minister with the Carter administration during the first few months of 1977.

In a press conference convened on the day following his victory at the polls, Rabin said one of his top priorities would be to repair relations with Washington, halt large-scale building in "political" settlements in the territories, and renew Israel's quest for the loan guarantees. On June 28, American Jewish leader Max Fisher, visiting Israel, said that Israeli-American relations would soon improve dramatically. Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger concurred, saying, on June 30, that, with the election of the new government in Israel, the administration would be able to restore a normal working relationship between the two countries. Eagleburger said that the two governments would be in direct contact and would no longer need the services of go-betweens, such as Congress or AIPAC.

On July 2, the new and favorable winds blowing from the administration were
expressed in a meeting between Baker and Ambassador Shoval in which Baker said that the administration would try to work out a formula on settlements that Rabin would be able to accept. On July 5, senior administration officials expressed the view that relations between the Bush administration and Shamir had been based on "a pattern of deception." Rabin, the officials said, would not try to deceive the United States, and could therefore be offered a more convenient formula on the settlements. On July 13, following the formation of his new government, both Bush and Baker telephoned Rabin to congratulate him. Bush invited Rabin to come to Washington in August.

Secretary Baker made a Middle East tour in mid-July. Although Israel had wished to use the opportunity to conduct talks concerning overall relations between the two countries, Baker preferred to restrict his talks to the peace process and the loan guarantees. He told Rabin, in Jerusalem, that a "significant limitation" on building in the territories would allow Bush to announce the granting of the entire Israeli request for loan guarantees. In Amman, on July 21, Baker rejected Rabin's differentiation between "political" and "security" settlements. At the same time, Baker said that Arab states should end their economic boycott of Israel in exchange for a complete "suspension" of settlement activities in the territories.

In early August, Israeli and American officials began new negotiations on the terms for receiving the guarantees. Israel was dismayed by a new American condition that half of the monies raised through the loan guarantees—$5 billion—would have to be spent on purchases inside the United States. The governor of the Bank of Israel, Prof. Yaakov Frankel, came to Washington to discuss the issue.

Bush and Rabin met in the president's summer retreat at Kennebunkport, Maine, on August 11-12. In their talks, Rabin succeeded in putting aside the American request that half the loans raised by the guarantees be spent in America; however, the two sides were in disagreement about the "scoring" of the loan guarantees. The scoring was a percentage of the sums that could be raised through the loan guarantees, determined by the White House, that would need to be included in the U.S. budget as a sort of insurance premium against the danger of default by the borrower. Rabin presented to Bush the Israeli government's decisions on freezing settlements in the territories, which included a ban on any new housing not currently under construction.

On August 11, Bush announced that he had decided to approve Israel's request for loan guarantees. He extolled the "special relationship" between Israel and the United States, a relationship which, he said, was "between two friends who are also strategic partners." He reaffirmed America's commitment to maintaining Israel's "qualitative military superiority" over its Arab neighbors. Bush's statements did not go down very well with the Arabs, but in Israel they were welcomed as a clear sign that the bad days between the two countries were finally over.

On August 13, Rabin met with Democratic presidential candidate Bill Clinton. According to press reports, Rabin's aides acknowledged that the meeting had not gone well, despite the fact that Clinton "said all the right words." It appeared that
Rabin's preference for Republicans still influenced him, causing no small concern among Clinton's staff in the coming few months. Rabin also met with leaders of AIPAC in another meeting described by participants as "unpleasant," in which Rabin lambasted the Jewish leaders for their role in the loan-guarantees standoff between Bush and the Likud. The new Israeli government, Rabin made clear, would conduct its business directly with the administration.

On September 11, Bush announced his administration's willingness to sell 72 sophisticated F-15 fighters to Saudi Arabia, at a cost of $9 billion. Of the 72 planes, 48 were to be of the ultra-modern F-15E model, which had never before been exported abroad. The sale raised new concerns in Israel about Saudi military might, especially in the air. The United States tried to allay Israel's fears by offering sophisticated technologies and early-warning systems against missile and airplane attacks. On September 26, the two countries agreed on a $700-million supplemental arms-deal package, which included Apache helicopters and Blackhawk aircraft, within the framework of the American commitment to maintain Israel's qualitative edge. The two countries also agreed on the "prepositioning" of $300 million worth of American military stockpiles in Israel, which could be used by both countries in case of an emergency.

Israel, however, was not calmed. In early October it demanded that Cheney submit a written commitment to Congress that the Saudi F-15s would under no circumstances be used against Israel nor placed in airfields close to Israel. Eagleburger, in a letter to Rabin, reiterated the U.S. commitment to Israel and said that, henceforth, Israel would be eligible to buy sophisticated technologies on the same level as that of NATO countries. He said that in the future the United States would maintain current military aid levels to Israel.

On October 5, both houses of Congress approved the granting of $10 billion in loan guarantees to Israel, stating that the money could be used only inside the pre-1967 borders. Despite the long and costly battle waged by the administration, there was no specific mention in the bill passed by Congress of any freeze on settlement activity. The geographical provision was a long-standing American condition, attached each year to the regular aid package as well. The Likud would have agreed readily to the final wording of the American loan-guarantees bill. Together with the loan guarantees, Congress also approved the annual $3-billion military and economic aid package to Israel.

On November 3, Bill Clinton was elected president of the United States. In his first speech, he stressed his wish to see progress in the Middle East peace process. On November 9, Rabin called Clinton to congratulate him on his victory. Asked about his expectations from the Clinton administration, Rabin said that the United States should "encourage" the Middle East talks while giving the sides "latitude" to maneuver by themselves. Generally speaking, Clinton's election was greeted warmly in Israel, even by supporters of the Labor party. Despite Labor's appreciation of the possible role played by the loan-guarantees issue in their electoral victory, many shared the conviction that the Bush administration had been too "brutal" in
its handling of Israel, even under the Likud. Clinton, who had won a majority of Jewish votes, was considered to be a distinctly pro-Israel president.

Rabin and his aides were concerned, however, by the president-elect’s campaign promises to devote more time and effort to domestic affairs, at the expense of foreign matters. There was concern, as well, that Clinton and his advisers believed—though never said—that Rabin had let it be known that he preferred a Republican victory in the elections. Thus, even before taking power, Clinton aides were contacted by Israeli officials in Washington in an effort to arrange an early meeting between the two leaders, a short time after the president’s inauguration in January.

In December the United States strongly condemned Israel’s decision to deport 400 Hamas activists. Israelis were heartened, however, by Clinton’s even-handed response to the deportations, the president-elect expressing sympathy for the need to combat the terrorism that had brought about the deportations.

Other Foreign Relations

The years 1991 and 1992 were watershed years for Israel’s international standing, in which the trend of international isolation that began in the late 1960s and the 1970s started to be reversed. The collapse of the Soviet Union was reshaping former allegiances. In the Gulf War, in early 1991, Israel, for the first time in many years, was seen as a victim rather than an aggressor. The Madrid conference, late in the year, softened international attitudes toward the Likud government, which until then had been considered an adamant opponent of any accommodation with the Arabs. The victory of the Labor party in June 1992 brought forth a government that had well-established links to world leaders and that was portrayed as an avid peace-seeker. No wonder, then, that 1992 brought down long-standing walls and opened new frontiers for Israeli diplomacy.

Another reason for Israel’s newfound popularity was the multilateral peace talks, which accompanied the more vital bilateral talks and dealt with long-range plans for a peaceful Middle East. Israel had succeeded in persuading the United States to make the existence of diplomatic relations with Jerusalem a prerequisite for participation in the talks. Many nations that might otherwise have postponed setting up links with Israel until a peace agreement was reached decided to take the plunge so as not to be left out of the prestigious multilateral forums and their promise of economic windfalls in the future.

Toward the end of the year, the deportation of 400 Hamas activists soured the new romance between Israel and the international community. The action, the scope of which had never been undertaken before, shocked the world leaders who had expected the new Israeli government to perform in a more “rational” manner than the previous Likud government.
THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITY

The European Community (EC) had effectively been locked out of the main peacemaking arena, the bilateral talks. Israel, with long-standing grievances over European policy on the Palestinian question, had done its best to minimize the European role; it found a willing partner in this in the United States, which had no wish to share peacemaking labors. The Europeans thus assumed a more commanding role in the forum left open to them, the multilateral talks. Although Israel had agreed to European participation in the multilateral forum, it further aggravated the situation when it sought to exclude the EC from the talks on arms control and regional security. On March 29, the EC foreign ministers expressed "disappointment" at this position, saying that Israel was ignoring "European stature and interests" in the Middle East.

Another source of tension between Israel and Europe was the EC wish to appoint its own ambassador to the occupied territories. This matter had been the subject of extended and often acrimonious diplomatic discussions throughout 1991. On February 10, Israel announced that the European representative would be recognized by the Israeli government but would not be allowed to set up a legation independent of the European Community embassy in Tel Aviv. On February 23, it was clear that even this arrangement was going to provide headaches to both sides, as Israel complained to the EC that its representative, Thomas Duple, had been involved in a number of "incidents" and had not coordinated his visit with the Foreign Ministry.

The June 23 election of Labor was greeted with a widespread sense of relief in Europe, European statesmen doing little to hide their satisfaction. Britain said the election results "provide an excellent opportunity for progress in the peace process." French foreign minister Dumas said, "I believe that we will now be able to implement our policies, which were the same as those which served as the basis for Labor's victory in the elections." The new government's stated intention of freezing settlements in the territories was taken as proof that European expectations would be borne out.

WESTERN EUROPE

European frustrations with the Likud were nowhere more apparent than in France, whose socialist president, François Mitterrand, was a bitter critic of Likud policies. On January 22, Mitterrand called in Israeli reporters to express French "disappointment" at having been left out of the peace talks. A few days later, already acrimonious relations between Israel and France took a turn for the worse after Paris decided to accept and then release Palestinian terrorist leader George Habash, who had come to the French capital for medical treatment after reportedly suffering a stroke. Israel lodged a formal protest with French authorities.

Later in the year, however, even before the election of the Labor party to power, relations between the two countries slowly thawed. In May France announced that
it would give Israel a credit line of $500 million for investments in infrastructure and industry. By the end of the year, Israeli-French relations were in a virtual honeymoon: President Mitterrand paid an official visit on November 25; he promised a European investment fund of $1.2 billion for the development of the Middle East; and he expressed support for the attitudes of the new Israeli government. At the same time, he reiterated traditional French support for the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

Traditionally close Israeli-German ties were strained as a result of Israel’s request for 10 billion deutsche marks in loan guarantees to help in the absorption of new Soviet immigrants. On April 21, Bonn announced that it would not extend the guarantees because of Israel’s policy of settling Jews in the territories. Later in the year, following Labor’s electoral victory, it emerged that the true reason for German reluctance was not its criticism of Israeli policies but its lack of funds, most of which had been diverted to the enormous task of reunification with the former East Germany.

Bonn announced on August 15 that it would be hard-pressed to comply with Israel’s request for loan guarantees because of urgent needs elsewhere. In September Prime Minister Rabin decided to drop the Israeli request for German loan guarantees altogether, proposing instead that funds be established for research and development in Israel. During a visit by Rabin to Bonn on September 15, Chancellor Helmut Kohl agreed to Rabin’s new proposals. On November 10, Ha’aretz reported that Germany was resisting Israeli demands for a billion and half deutsche marks in compensation for Nazi victims who lived in the area later controlled by East Germany. Also in November, the Israeli government condemned manifestations of neo-Nazism in Germany and called on the government there to take effective measures against its spread.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres met with Prime Minister John Major of Great Britain in London, on September 8. Major promised a British initiative against the Arab boycott of Israel as well as European support for the peace process. In December Rabin visited London and secured Major’s pledge to raise the matter of racism and neo-Nazism at the upcoming meeting of the seven industrialized nations. Major agreed to lift the arms embargo on Israeli arms sales to Britain, imposed ten years earlier.

On March 30, Israeli president Chaim Herzog paid an official visit to Spain, to meet the king and queen and also to participate in ceremonies marking the 500th anniversary of the expulsion of Spanish Jewry. Herzog was criticized in Israel for what was termed “the exoneration” of Spanish responsibility for one of the greatest calamities in Jewish history.

Portuguese prime minister Anibal Kavako visited Israel on October 25, signing economic cooperation agreements with Prime Minister Rabin.

Prince Hans Adam of Lichtenstein paid an official visit to Israel at the end of November. Israelis hoped that this visit would pave the way for European kings and queens to end their unofficial boycott of state visits to Israel.
On July 29, Israel and the Vatican announced the establishment of a joint committee to examine steps leading to the establishment of full recognition and diplomatic ties between the Jewish state and the Holy See. On October 24, Foreign Minister Peres met with Pope John Paul II, who accepted an invitation to visit the Holy Land.

OTHER EUROPEAN STATES

On January 1, Turkey decided to upgrade its diplomatic relations with Israel to the ambassadorial level; until then, the Turks had maintained a legation in Tel Aviv. Turkey made the move in preparation for its participation in the multilateral talks due to convene at the end of January in Moscow. It made clear that it had its own vital interests in these talks by offering to host the first session of the committee that would deal with water-related issues in the Middle East. In mid-July, President Herzog made the first visit to Turkey by an Israeli head of state, meeting with Turkish leaders.

On January 9, Israel and Lithuania established diplomatic relations. In April Israel set up diplomatic ties with the former Soviet republic of Armenia. On April 29, Russian vice-president Aleksandr Rutskoi paid an official visit to Israel. In June, former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev visited Israel, meeting with the country’s top leaders.

On March 10, Israel completed its reconciliation with the former Communist bloc countries of Eastern Europe when Israel’s ambassador to Italy, Avi Pazner, submitted his credentials as nonresident ambassador in Tirana, the capital of Albania. The former recluse of Eastern Europe, with a sizeable Muslim population, Albania had not maintained relations with Israel even before the 1967 war. Bulgarian prime minister Filip Dimitrov visited Israel April 17–20. On September 20, Hungarian president Arpad Goncz visited Israel, meeting with the country’s top leaders and signing cooperation agreements.

In the last week of May, President Herzog made a historic and emotional visit to Poland. Speaking to the Polish Parliament, Herzog spoke of the two peoples’ rich history and the tragic annihilation of Polish Jewry in World War II and warned against what he termed “the greatest danger to world peace—Islamic fundamentalism.” On July 16, Israel signed a free trade agreement with the countries of the European Free Trade Association—EFTA—which called for a mutual cancellation of tariffs on all manufactured goods traded between the various countries.

On August 6, an official Israeli delegation headed by MK Yossi Sarid left for the former republic of Yugoslavia to examine ways of extending assistance to the beleaguered people of Bosnia. Ten days later, on August 18, an Israel Air Force plane laden with 18 tons of medical supplies landed in the Croatian capital of Zagreb; the supplies were handed over to the United Nations for distribution in Bosnia. On August 24, Israel decided to extend aid to Somalia as well, despite its membership in the Arab League and its traditionally hostile policies.
On May 18, Greek prime minister Constantine Mitsotakis made a first-ever visit to Israel by a Greek head of state. He signed agreements for economic, industrial, technological, cultural, and educational cooperation between the two countries.

CHINA AND INDIA

Nowhere were the changing fortunes of Israel’s foreign relations more apparent than in Asia. The world’s two most populous countries, China and India, eager to participate in the multilateral peace forums, were now eager to establish formal relations with Jerusalem.

Relations with China had been warming slowly since 1990, when an Israeli “academic mission” was opened in Beijing. In December 1991, following the Madrid conference, relations warmed up quickly, and the two countries announced plans to establish formal diplomatic ties, for the first time ever. On January 8, it was announced that the official signing of the necessary diplomatic protocols would take place that month, in time for China to participate in the January 28 multilateral talks in Moscow.

Foreign Minister David Levy came to Beijing on January 22, marking the first-ever public visit by a ranking Israeli in the Chinese capital. On January 24, Levy and his Chinese counterpart, Qian Qichen, signed the agreement setting up diplomatic ties at the ambassadorial level. Levy then went to the academic mission and announced that henceforth it would be the Israeli embassy; Zeev Suffoth, a veteran diplomat, was named the first Israeli ambassador. Levy took part in a highly publicized tour of famous Chinese sites in Beijing, during which he called on his experience as a former bricklayer to comment favorably on the workmanship in the Great Wall.

The Chinese ambassador to Israel submitted his credentials to President Herzog in Jerusalem on June 11. In September Qichen came on a first visit to Israel, meeting with Foreign Minister Peres to discuss the peace process. Peres told Qichen that Israel had decided not to sell Kfir jet fighters to Taiwan. On October 26, China announced that it did not object to commercial links between Israel and Taiwan. A few days later, Israel gave in to a Chinese demand that a visit by a high-ranking Taiwanese Foreign Ministry official be described as “a commercial visit.”

On January 29, just in time for the multilateral talks in Moscow, Israel and India announced the establishment of formal diplomatic ties. Before this development, India had allowed an Israeli consul to operate in Bombay but throughout the years had maintained a highly critical policy toward the Jewish state. Later in the year there were numerous reports in foreign publications of wide-ranging military cooperation between the two countries, including a reported $1-billion arms sale from Israel to India. On March 23, the two countries launched their first diplomatic discussions, negotiating cooperation in education, science, and agriculture. On June 1, India formally opened its embassy in Tel Aviv.
OTHER ASIAN COUNTRIES

On April 12, Israeli ambassador to Moscow Arye Levin paid an official visit to Alma Ata, the capital of Kazakhstan, the large Muslim republic formerly part of the Soviet Union. Levin met with the top leaders of the country, and the two foreign ministries exchanged formal diplomatic notes. On September 6, the prime minister of Kazakhstan, Sergei Tereshchenko, came to Israel, where he tried to allay Israeli fears of a possible transfer of nuclear technology and weapons from his republic to Muslim states. The first Israeli ambassador to Alma Ata was appointed. Also in April, diplomatic relations were established with the republic of Azerbaijan.

Following year-long news reports of clandestine contacts with Vietnam, the two countries announced, on December 23, a first-of-its-kind barter agreement, on December 23, by which Vietnam would supply Israel with rice, coffee, and rubber while Israel would export agricultural products to Hanoi.

EGYPT

Relations between Israel and the only Arab country with which it had a signed peace agreement were, as had been the case throughout Likud rule, ambivalent. Egypt was gratified at Israel’s participation in the Madrid process but was still wary of Israeli intentions and determined to be the primary voice for the Palestinians in the Arab world.

On February 5, Egypt arrested two Israeli Arabs, Faris Subhi al-Musrati and his daughter Fayiqah, on suspicion of spying for Israel. Israel vehemently denied the charges and exerted diplomatic efforts to get the charges dropped. A week later, the heads of Israel’s main security services, the Mossad and the General Security Services (Shin Bet) issued a rare public statement saying that the two had never been employed by them. But two days later, on February 12, the affair became more complex when the Egyptians arrested a Jewish Israeli furniture salesman, David Ovitz, and accused him of aiding Musrati’s espionage operations. Musrati’s son, Majid, was also arrested.

On February 17, Egypt notified Israel officially that those arrested were suspected of “harming Egyptian security”; there was no specific mention of espionage charges. The affair clouded Israeli-Egyptian relations. Two months later Egyptian presidential adviser Osama el-Baz announced that Egypt wished to resolve the affair in order to “advance the peace process and not to damage Israeli-Egyptian ties.” On May 5, three months after their arrest, the Musrats and David Ovitz were released from jail. Ten days later, on May 14, it was revealed that Israel had arrested an Egyptian citizen on charges of espionage; Cairo asked that he be released in return for the release of the Israeli suspects.

On April 14, Defense Minister Moshe Arens complained that Egypt “was not encouraging” the development of full and normal ties with Israel. Arens noted that the Egyptians had refrained from publicizing the establishment of a joint agricul-
tural project with Israel, and that Cairo was discouraging the development of academic, cultural, and tourist ties.

The June elections were greeted with a notable sigh of relief in Cairo, which had maintained close ties with the Labor party throughout its years in the opposition. Newly elected prime minister Yitzhak Rabin chose Cairo as his first venue for a foreign visit, coming there on July 20, just after having organized his new government. It was the first visit to Cairo by an Israeli prime minister in over six years; Rabin was received warmly and held close consultations with Egyptian president Mubarak concerning the continuation of the peace process under Labor. On September 12, Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin visited Cairo; the two countries agreed to warm up their hitherto cool relations. In a speech to the Egyptian Parliament on October 7, in commemoration of the Yom Kippur War, Mubarak praised Israel's decision to "walk the path of peace." Visiting Cairo in mid-November, Foreign Minister Peres and counterpart Amre Moussa agreed to hold monthly meetings between the foreign ministers or deputy foreign ministers of the two countries.

The December deportation of Hamas activists put a special strain on relations with Egypt.

OTHER AFRICAN COUNTRIES

On January 14, Israel and Angola announced in Lisbon that they would be setting up diplomatic relations for the first time. Cape Verde made the same announcement on that day.

On April 5, Shlomo Avital presented his credentials to the president of Congo, reestablishing formal diplomatic ties that had been severed in the wake of the 1973 Yom Kippur War. On April 20, Israel and Zambia announced that they would reestablish diplomatic ties broken off in 1973. A top-level Zambian delegation visited Israel in early June.

On April 29, Foreign Minister David Levy went to Nigeria, the most populous country in black Africa, to reestablish diplomatic ties severed in 1973. The Israeli ambassador submitted his credentials on September 24.

On May 27, Israel reestablished ties with the West African country of Sierra Leone, and on September 13, Gambia entered into relations with Israel.

OTHERS

Israel and Nicaragua established formal ties in a ceremony in Washington on October 5.
UNITED NATIONS

Israel's new government was warmly received in the United Nations, the institution that had for many years been considered a hotbed of anti-Israel propaganda. In his speech to the General Assembly on October 1, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres was warmly received; for the first time, most Arab delegates did not leave their seats when he began his remarks. European countries and Russia announced that they would initiate a process of canceling all anti-Israel resolutions (the previous November, the "Zionism Is Racism" resolution had been repealed). In late November, Israel was invited for the first time to participate in UN peacekeeping forces and agreed to send Israelis to take part in these operations.

DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

Political Developments

It was inevitable that the peace process begun in late 1991 would disrupt Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir's ruling majority. Three of the right-wing parties that made up the coalition—Tehiya, Moledet, and Tzomet—were opposed to any and all concessions in the territories or anywhere else. The strains began to show in December 1991, when the three-member Tzomet party left the coalition in protest over the peace moves and Shamir's refusal to make good on his promise to seek electoral reform. Tehiya had already decided in principle to leave the government, but had yet to make good on its threat. It was clear that the two-member Moledet party, the most right-wing of the lot, would not stay behind and prop up Shamir's Likud-led coalition.

On January 19, the two parties ended their partnership with the Likud and left the coalition, leaving it with the support of only 59 of the Knesset's 120 members. On January 21, Tehiya minister Yuval Ne'eman resigned from his post as science and energy minister, and Moledet leader Rehavam Ze'evi resigned as minister without portfolio. It was now obvious to the Likud and to the religious parties who remained in the coalition that the elections, orginally scheduled to be held in November, would have to be held earlier. After a week of haggling, the two big parties, Labor and Likud, agreed that elections would be held on June 23. On February 4, the Knesset approved the new election date. The decision to hold elections in less than five months spurred the parties into their varied decision-making processes aimed at electing leaders and lists for the Knesset elections.

LABOR PREPARES

The process was set in motion by the Labor party, which had already scheduled its historic first primaries to select the party leadership on February 24. The two
main contenders for party leader were the perennial arch-rivals, Shimon Peres, the current party leader, and the former prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin. Other candidates had previously announced their intention to compete, but they gradually dropped out of the race, realizing their slim chances. The only two contenders left were Yisrael Kessar, the chairman of the all-powerful Histadrut Trade Union, and Ora Namir, former chairwoman of the Knesset's Labor and Social Affairs Committee.

The battle between Peres and Rabin had been raging for almost 20 years, since 1974, when the two vied to succeed Golda Meir, who had resigned as prime minister in the wake of the 1973 war. Rabin was the victor in that first match, but following his resignation in 1977, Peres ruled the party during 15 years of opposition. Peres was now considered the more dovish of the two, and the party appreciated his steadfast helmsmanship throughout the long years of opposition. Peres was in touch with the party activists, and close to them, unlike Rabin, who was considered aloof and distant. Rabin, for his part, enjoyed the aura of the security-minded general. But his main strength derived from the almost universal assumption, buttressed by countless polls, that he could win the election. Peres in the minds of the media and the public was a "loser," and Rabin, at least theoretically, a "winner."

If the internal elections had been held, as they had been since the party was established, in the Central Committee, there is no doubt that Peres would have won. But now, for the first time, over 100,000 party members, signed up in the 1991 recruitment drive, were going to make the decision. The contenders were thus under pressure to wage what was dubbed an American-style election campaign, complete with large newspaper ads, car stickers, and endless accusations and recriminations. On February 13, for example, Rabin's assistants were quoted by the newspapers as saying that those who supported Peres were doing so "out of compassion and pity." Peres loyalists responded by claiming that Rabin's people were "completely hysterical."

All the polls taken before the primaries predicted a victory for Rabin, but in the last few days before the actual ballot, Peres appeared to be closing the gap. This created concern among Rabin's people because, according to the rules of the primaries, the candidate who came in first had to garner over 40 percent of the vote, or face a second round against the second-place candidate. It was assumed that Peres's chances would improve in a second round because of the strong support he would receive from the Histadrut backers of Kessar.

Rabin won narrowly in the first round. With 108,000 party members voting in the primary, Rabin received 40.5 percent of the vote, Peres 34.5 percent, Kessar 19 percent, and Namir 5.5 percent. Peres pledged party loyalty and unity after the vote, but his supporters continued to claim that if Kessar or even Namir had not run, Peres would probably have emerged victorious. The supporters tried to convince the party apparatus not to force Peres to compete again in the primaries scheduled to be held on April 1, which would determine the makeup of the rest of Labor's list for the Knesset, but the committee in charge of the primaries refused the request.
In the end, the party rank-and-file, including Rabin supporters, voted overwhelm-
ingly for Peres, giving him first place in the primaries and thus second place on the party list for the Knesset. The April 1 ballot, in which over 100,000 party members participated, produced a surprising list of young and mostly dovish candidates. Rabin was reportedly dismayed by the results, which he felt would make it harder for him to capture the "middle-of-the-road" voters away from the Likud.

The voters turned away veteran and experienced Labor politicians in favor of young leaders who were much more adept at handling modern media. Finishing right behind Peres was young firebrand Avraham Burg, a religious politician who had led many battles in favor of the separation of religion and state. Other doves, such as Namir, David Libai, and Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, came in right behind Burg. The party hawks, supporters of Rabin, had suffered a severe defeat. It was widely thought that, while Rabin had won the primaries for party leadership, it was Peres who had emerged victorious in the battle for the party list. The left-wing Meretz leader Shulamit Aloni said, on April 2, “Now we have partners in the Labor party.”

THE LIKUD PREPARES

The Likud did not need the declaration of impending elections to ignite a full-scale internal war: that war had been raging continuously throughout the previous year, unrelated to national political developments. The main protagonists were three: Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, Deputy Foreign Minister David Levy, and Housing Minister Ariel Sharon. Shamir and Levy had crossed swords at every opportunity, the most prominent of which, in 1991, was Levy’s decision to boycott the Madrid conference after learning that Shamir had decided to head the Israeli delegation himself, whereas other countries were sending their foreign ministers. Sharon, for his part, had maintained a constant barrage of criticism against Shamir, accusing him repeatedly of conducting a “soft” policy toward the Arabs and of “abandoning” Jewish lives to terrorists.

Trouble erupted immediately after the January announcement of the June 23 election date, when Defense Minister Moshe Arens announced that he would challenge Levy for the number-two spot on the Likud list. Levy, always suspicious of plots by the majority against him, reacted angrily; his supporters threatened “all out war” if the second-place spot was not promised to Levy. After a week of consultations, Levy and his supporters decided that the best way to ensure the number-two slot was to run against Shamir for the number-one position. This would prevent Sharon, who had already declared his intention to run against Shamir, from coming in “second” by virtue of his being the only contender against Shamir.

Unlike Labor, the Likud had yet to adopt reforms, and the selection of both its party leader and its list for the Knesset was still entrusted to the party’s 3,000-strong Central Committee. On February 20, the committee voted for party leader; Shamir came in first with 46.4 percent of the vote; Levy was second, with 31.2 percent; and Sharon third, with 22.3 percent. Levy, who fared reasonably well, came away from
the vote with the conviction that at least a third of the "realistic" spots for the Knesset should go to his supporters by virtue of his performance in the voting for party leader.

The election of the party list was carried out in two rounds: in the first round, a panel of 50 candidates, unranked, was selected. In the second round, those 50 were ranked according to a convoluted voting system known as the "septets." In the first vote, held on February 27, Levy was the 18th candidate out of 50 to be selected for the panel. Although this result did not determine his final placing on the Likud list for the Knesset, Levy reacted angrily to the result, accusing his opponents of "plotting" against him. On March 1, the committee convened again to choose the septets and to determine the final ranking of the candidates for the Knesset. Arens, operating on behalf of the Shamir camp, struck a deal with Sharon and his supporters that each would support the other's candidates. The result: Arens was chosen as number two on the Knesset list, Sharon as number three, and Levy came in only as number four.

Seeking to recover, Levy struck a deal with Moshe Nissim, one of the leaders of the Liberal party, which had merged with the Likud. And, indeed, in the second septet, the Levy-Nissim axis succeeded in surprising the Arens-Sharon coalition, placing several of its candidates in slots 8-15 on the Likud Knesset list. The next day, however, Arens retaliated by drawing Nissim away from his deal with Levy and by imposing strict discipline on his and Sharon's supporters. Arens and Sharon succeeded in routing Levy's forces altogether in the ballots for the third and fourth septets. In practice, this meant that most of Levy's supporters were pushed back to slots that were considered "unrealistic," with scant chance of making it into the next Knesset.

Levy and his supporters were overcome with shock and rage, and a movement led by Levy's brother, Maxim, openly called on the foreign minister to bolt the Likud and set up his own party. Levy allowed his supporters to speak freely to the media about the possibility of a split, but refrained from speaking for himself. On March 29, in a speech at a Herzliyah hotel, Levy shocked the Likud by announcing his intention to resign forthwith from the government. In a speech that would come to be known as the "monkeys' speech," Levy—who is of Sephardic origin—accused his rivals of ethnic prejudice and discrimination, asking rhetorically, "Are we monkeys or what?"

A major crisis was now brewing in the Likud, only two months away from the elections. Fully aware that a bolt by Levy would cripple the party's chances in the June 23 vote, Shamir and emissaries tried to persuade Levy to retract his resignation. On April 4, the two sides announced that they had reached agreement. Levy took back his resignation, and more of his supporters were allowed to take seats on important party committees.

Although Levy declared, in the wake of the compromise agreement, that "common sense had won out," he did not intend to take part in the Likud's election campaign against Labor. Despite the apparent patching up of differences, Levy's
tirades against the "Ashkenazi" party leadership had left the Likud in tatters. Its traditional support among Sephardi North African voters, upset by Levy's allegations of discrimination at the top, appeared shaky, at best.

OTHER PARTIES

On February 5, the three left-wing parties—Mapam, Shinui, and the Citizens Rights Movement (CRM)—decided to form a joint list called "Meretz" for the upcoming elections. The leader of the Citizens Rights Movement, Shulamit Aloni, would lead the new party. The party conducted negotiations with the extra-parliamentary Peace Now movement, hoping for a joint front in the elections, but the talks failed.

The Tehiya party, on February 23, chose former minister Yuval Ne'eman to lead the party in the next elections. Geula Cohen came in second, and Elyakim Ha'etzni, a right-wing firebrand from the Kiryat Arba settlement near Hebron, came in third.

The National Religious party, on March 9, chose its list, with Zevulun Hammer taking first place, and Avner Shaki second. Hanan Porat, a leader of the Jewish settler movement in the territories, was relegated to fifth place, eliciting calls by settler leaders to seek another party that would represent their interests.

The two major Ashkenazi ultra-religious (haredi) parties, Agudat Israel and Degel Hatorah, agreed, on April 29, to form a joint list for the Knesset. The new list was given the name "Yahadut Hatorah." Torah Judaism. Rabbi Eliezer Schach, the spiritual leader of both Degel Hatorah and the Sephardi-haredi party Shas, sought the merger with Agudah after distancing himself from Sephardic rabbi Ovadia Yosef, who played a commanding role in Shas. On June 13, Schach was quoted as saying, "The Sephardim have yet to reach a state that they can be responsible for matters of religion or state. They still need time to learn." The statement caused an outcry among Sephardim throughout the country and created a clear ethnic split in the haredi community between supporters of Shas and those of Yahadut Hatorah.

Former Soviet dissident Anatoly Sharansky announced on April 17 that he would form a political party to run for the Knesset and work for the welfare of new Soviet immigrants. Sharansky's party was the third claiming to represent Soviet immigrants. On March 31, the chairman of a Soviet immigrants' society, Robert Golan, had announced that he would form a new party. And on April 14, a group called "Da" elected Yuli Kosharovsky, another former dissident, to head its list. On May 5, Sharansky announced that he had failed to put together an attractive enough list of candidates and was therefore abandoning the race.

After failing to persuade the Likud to secure him a spot on its list for the Knesset, Finance Minister Yitzhak Modai announced, on April 7, that he would run on his own list, called the "New Liberal Party."

On May 19, the Central Elections Committee announced that 30 lists would compete in the next elections, half of which had not been represented in the outgoing
Knesset. The number dropped to 28 after the High Court of Justice upheld, on June 9, the committee's decision to bar two lists—Kach and Kahane Hai—from running in the elections. The High Court held that the two groups, which claimed to be the successors of the late Rabbi Meir Kahane's anti-Arab ideology, were "racist." Three more lists dropped out of the race, leaving 25. The threshold for entering the Knesset had been raised from 1 percent of the vote to 1.5 percent.

THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN AND THE ELECTIONS

On April 9, Labor officially opened its election campaign. Presenting his party's candidates, Rabin said that Labor would emphasize Labor's "unity" and contrast it with the "divisiveness" of the Likud. Several days later it was revealed that Rabin had decided to run a tough and aggressive campaign against the Likud, specifically against Shamir, accusing him of "losing touch" and of working against peace. At the same time, Labor did its best to blur its socialist ideology, which was considered to be unpopular with the voters.

Contrary to the advice of some of its leading members, including Ronnie Milo and Benjamin Netanyahu, the Likud retaliated by launching a fierce countercampaign against Rabin, hinting at an alleged drinking problem and a suspected emotional breakdown when he was chief of staff on the eve of the Six Day War.

Both parties concentrated on getting the support of new Soviet immigrants, of whom some 250,000 were eligible to vote. Labor emphasized the high unemployment rate among new immigrants, while the Likud emphasized Labor's socialist roots, in the hope of conjuring up associations with the former Soviet Union, toward which the immigrants were presumably hostile. Likud also played up to the new immigrants' reported distrust of the Arabs, saying that Labor planned to "sell out" to the Arabs. Labor counterattacked by claiming that the massive funds funneled by the Likud to Jewish settlements in the territories were the main cause of the unemployment among immigrants. Labor also alluded to the Likud's failure to secure American loan guarantees, creating a direct link between the Likud's political ideology and the immigrants' economic plight. Labor also emphasized the internal strife in the Likud, carefully refraining from any personal attack on Levy, in the hope of attracting his disaffected supporters.

The two main parties, as well as the other parties, all employed big public relations firms to create their televised commercials, which were broadcast every evening starting in early June. Although these were aimed at arousing the interest of the electorate and getting it involved, they appear to have missed their mark. The assessment of most analysts in the media was that the public was negatively impressed by the dirty campaigning and exchange of accusations between politicians.

On June 16, Rabin and Shamir squared off in a nationally televised debate, which according to most analysts Rabin won handily. Likud activists were also quoted as expressing disappointment with Shamir's performance, saying the prime minister "hadn't said anything new."
On June 23, close to 80 percent of the country’s 3,409,000 eligible voters went to the polls. At 10 p.m., television broadcaster Haim Yavin, basing himself on exit polls, told the country that there had been a “mahapakh”—an upset. Labor and its allies to the left had triumphed.

Labor won 34.6 percent of the vote, Likud 24.9 percent, Meretz 9.6 percent, Tzomet 6.4 percent, the National Religious party 5 percent, Shas 4.9 percent, Yahadut Hatorah 3.3 percent, Moledet and Hadash 2.4 percent each, the Arab Democratic party 1.6 percent. Tehiya, with 1.2 percent, did not pass the 1.5-percent threshold.

Rabin and Labor picked up 44 Knesset seats, compared with only 32 for the Likud. No less crucial was the fact that Labor’s allies to the left won 17 seats, giving the Labor bloc an unassailable 61-seat majority and ensuring the prime ministership for Rabin. On the left, the new merged entity of three parties, Meretz, picked up 12 seats, the former Communist party Hadash, 3 seats, and the Arab Democratic party, 2 seats.

The big surprise of the election was the performance of Rafael Eitan’s right-wing Tzomet party, which more than doubled its strength from three seats to eight. The Moledet party won three seats, while the Tehiya party was erased from the political map, going down from three seats to none.

The religious parties fared reasonably well, taking into account the more than a quarter of a million new immigrant voters who were largely secular. Their combined total dropped from 18 seats in the outgoing Knesset to 16 in the new one. The combined Ashkenazi-haredi party, Yahadut Hatorah, picked up four seats, Shas six, and the National Religious party six as well. From a political point of view, however, the religious front had lost its entire world: for the first time in Israeli political history, religious parties did not hold the balance of power. Rabin would be prime minister with or without their consent.

FORMING A NEW GOVERNMENT

On June 28, after duly consulting with all the parties, President Chaim Herzog asked Yitzhak Rabin to form a new government. Rabin made clear that he would seek to construct a large majority, indicating that he did not wish to set up a narrow government that would have to rely on the five Arab votes on the extreme left. Rabin was casting a wide net, not ruling out the right-wing parties such as Tzomet and actively courting the religious parties in the center.

Rabin’s task appeared formidable. A political gulf divided Tzomet and Meretz, while a similar seemingly unbridgeable gap existed between Meretz and the religious parties. Although there was some talk among Rabin aides of the possibility that Meretz might be left out of the coalition so that Rabin could form a partnership with only the right-wing and the religious parties, such a scenario was improbable and would probably have sparked a revolt in Labor’s sizeable dovish wing. On July 5, Rabin appeared to have achieved the impossible, with a draft coalition agreement
that seemed to be acceptable to both the right-wing Tzomet party and the left-wing Meretz party.

Now, however, personal matters, rather than ideology, stymied Rabin. Meretz demanded that it be given the education portfolio, which was also sought by Tzomet's Eitan. Eitan made clear that without that ministry he would not join the government. Rabin decided to accede to the Meretz demand, not least because he did not wish to give Meretz the justice portfolio or foreign affairs, the only two ministries that Meretz might have accepted as substitutes for education. Rabin had bad memories of the Justice Ministry "interfering" in military affairs during his tenure as defense minister in 1988–1990. He was soon to learn, however, that handing over the education portfolio to Meretz leader Shulamit Aloni would cause him no less trouble.

Concurrently, Rabin was negotiating with all the religious parties, agreeing to defer the delicate matter—demanded by many in Labor—of recruitment of yeshivah students to the army. Rabin's negotiations with the National Religious party became bogged down in disagreement over Jewish settlements, while Rabbi Schach kept the Yahadut Hatorah faction from concluding a deal with Labor because of his opposition to Labor's secular ways. Still smarting from Schach's preelection disparagement of the Sephardim, Schach's spiritual mentor, Rabbi Yosef, decided to buck the emerging trend among the religious parties and to join Rabin's coalition.

On July 9, Rabin signed a coalition agreement with Meretz and Shas, and four days later he presented his cabinet to the Knesset. Rabin left three portfolios open as enticements for other parties to join the coalition. He kept the defense portfolio for himself, but—faced by powerful forces in his own party that supported Peres—agreed to appoint his arch-rival as foreign minister and, in practice if not in title, as the number-two man in the cabinet. Thirteen ministers were from Labor, three from Meretz, and one from Shas.

The Knesset approved the new cabinet by a vote of 67–53. Voting with the new government were the five members of the ultra-left-wing parties, who had promised to support the coalition from the outside in exchange for pledges to improve conditions among Israeli Arabs.

In the months following the establishment of the government, Rabin and Labor faced opposition from two different sources. The right wing reorganized after its defeat in order to fight concessions on the Golan Heights, which, according to news reports, Israel was about to make. The religious and haredi parties, for their part, launched a major political campaign against Aloni's placement as education minister. Their objections were twofold, one public and one hidden. In public, they claimed that Aloni was too antireligious to be charged with the overall education system of the country. In private, they conceded that the very fact of her being a woman played some role in their biting campaign.

In late September, Aloni made the first in a series of inflammatory remarks which would periodically shake the coalition and especially its haredi component, Shas. Referring to the sacred "Yizkor" prayer, recited to commemorate the memory of
THE NEW LABOR-LED GOVERNMENT  
(installed July 13, 1992)

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<td>Immigration Absorption</td>
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*On December 26, Rabin transferred the Labor and Social Affairs portfolio to Namir, and Yossi Sarid (Meretz) was appointed Minister of the Environment.

the dead, Aloni said she did not understand why the military version of the prayer had been amended from “May the People of Israel remember their sons and daughters . . .” to “May God remember. . . .” Shas exploded in anger, and Rabbi Yosef immediately demanded that Rabin sack Aloni. Faced with a counterthreat by Meretz to leave the coalition if Aloni was removed from her post, Rabin achieved a temporary cease-fire by persuading Aloni to write a letter of apology to Rabbi Yosef.

But the animosity between Aloni and Shas continued, and Rabin was unable to reduce it. Each week brought a new crisis, created by this or that statement made by Aloni. On November 2, faced with no-confidence motions over her controversial statements, another compromise was worked out: Aloni would hand over to her deputy, a Shas man, all authority over the haredi education system as well as expanded influence in the secular school system’s Jewish studies programs. The deputy, Rabbi Moshe Maya, created his own storm just a few days later, when he said in an interview that “secular teachers only seek adventurism in life; they have no inner content and are unable to pass on any content to others.”
On October 22, the Labor party chose Nissim Zvilli as its next secretary-general, replacing Micha Harish, who had been appointed to the cabinet. Yuval Frenkel, a candidate supported by Rabin, won 43.5 percent of the vote in Labor's Central Committee, compared to Zvilli's 47.7 percent. Zvilli was supported by Peres.

On December 2, the Knesset approved by a vote of 37–36, in a first reading, the repeal of the law that forbade Israelis to have any contacts with members of the PLO. In a cabinet meeting held a week later, the government decided that, despite the amendment, it would not negotiate with the PLO.

By the end of the year, Rabin had given up hope that any of the other religious parties would join the coalition. Thus, on December 26, Meretz was given a fourth minister, and Yossi Sarid became minister of the environment. Ora Namir received the labor and social affairs portfolio, which Rabin had been holding.

In the Likud, meanwhile, Yitzhak Shamir announced his intention to resign as head of the party, and the Likud began preparing for the election of his successor, with David Levy, Benjamin Netanyahu, and Binyamin Begin considered the three top contenders. In a speech to the Likud Knesset caucus, Shamir said that he was leaving the country in very good shape, indeed “in better shape than it’s ever been.”

**Immigration**

There was a sharp drop in immigration from the former Soviet Union in 1992, down to 65,000 from 150,000 the previous year. The two main causes for the reduction were thought to be the high rate of unemployment among new immigrants, who were warning their friends and relatives still living in the republics to change or at least postpone plans to come to Israel; the tough security situation; and the continuing reforms in Russia, which gave many Jews hope of improving conditions in the future.

Altogether, 77,057 immigrants came to Israel in 1992. In addition to those from the former Soviet Union, 3,600 came from Ethiopia, 1,600 from the United States, 800 from France, 600 from Romania, 550 from the former Yugoslavia, and the balance from other countries. Of the Russian immigrants who had come since 1990, 29 percent were unemployed at the end of the year, and most of those employed were not working in the professions for which they had been trained. In the Soviet Union, 36 percent had been employed as scientific and academic workers, but only 7 percent of them were so employed in Israel. Conversely, only 3.6 percent had been employed as service workers in the Soviet Union, but 26.6 percent were so employed in Israel. Despite the large unemployment, 80 percent of new immigrants polled in January said that they “did not regret” coming to Israel. Of those who did regret their decision to come, many said they felt that “they were not needed in Israel except as a demographic factor.”

In 1992, immigrants from Ethiopia, who had been perceived as docile and passive when they arrived, began demonstrating and agitating in greater numbers for improvement in their living conditions. In January the chairman of the Jewish Agency,
Simcha Dinitz, publicly complained that 11,000 Ethiopian immigrants had yet to receive permanent housing. In February and March, Ethiopians staged demonstrations and marches at various absorption centers across the country, demanding to be moved from “caravans” (mobile homes) to permanent homes. Most of the demonstrations were successful, persuading absorption officials to speed up the removal of the Ethiopians from hotels and makeshift absorption centers to permanent lodgings. It was reported that Ethiopians were proving more adept than new immigrants from the former Soviet Union in integrating in the army.

In midyear, in conjunction with the peace process, President Hafez al-Assad of Syria started allowing Jews to leave that country. By June 10, 150 of the estimated 4,000 Syrian Jews had departed, and another 1,500 had requested exit visas, according to the chief rabbi of Damascus, Ibrahim Hamara. Most of the departing Jews did not come to Israel but went to other places abroad, including the United States. By the end of August, the number of departing Jews reached 350.

Various trouble spots in the former Communist countries supplied groups of new immigrants wishing to escape war and bloodshed. Throughout the year, hundreds of Jews from the former Yugoslavia, Moldova, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan came to Israel to escape civil war in their homelands. At the end of the year it was reported that increasing anti-Semitism in Western Europe was also spurring interest among Jews in immigration to Israel.

**The Economy**

The year 1992 received mixed reviews from Israeli economists. The good news was that growth rates were up and inflation was down, but unemployment continued to rise and was threatening to remain stable at an intolerable 11 percent.

On January 2, the Knesset approved the 1992 budget by a vote of 60–53. The total budget, 107 billion shekels, aimed to reduce the budget deficit to 6.2 percent of the Gross Domestic Product, compared to 6.9 percent the previous year. The budget assumed that the United States would grant Israel $2 billion in loan guarantees.

The Israeli economy grew at an annual rate of 7.9 percent, the highest growth rate among Western democratic countries. Much of this achievement, however, was due to the massive housing and construction projects undertaken to accommodate the influx of immigrants from the former Soviet Union. At year's end, housing construction appeared to be slacking off, and growth rates followed in kind.Offsetting the decline in demand for housing was the growth of Israeli exports, which had suffered the previous year from the commercial slowdown caused by the Gulf War.

The 460,000 new immigrants who arrived in Israel between 1989 and 1992 created great demand for private consumption, and an even greater demand for investment in housing. The waves of immigration should have created a similar expansion of public services, but the government kept these under strict control, so that public consumption rates were lower than that in the private sector. In 1992, however, immigration rates were down, and toward the end of the year the rise in
demand for private consumption declined commensurately.

Israeli unemployment rates continued to rise, despite an increase of 4.7 percent in the number of jobs. Among the factors contributing to this trend were the expansion of social security and unemployment benefits, the growing female workforce, a hiring freeze in the public sector, and a reduction in government subsidies to work-laden enterprises.

Seventy percent of the 155,000 new immigrants in the workforce were employed by the end of 1992, although most were not working in their chosen professions. Inconsistencies between the demands of the Israeli market and the supply of the mostly Russian-trained work force, as well as existing levels of high unemployment, reduced the market's ability to fully absorb all of the new immigrants. Unemployment, in turn, was thought to be the prime cause of the lower immigration rates.

Inflation rates were down to 11.9 percent, compared to 19 percent the previous year. The main reasons for this dramatic change were the slow growth in nominal wages (up 1.1 percent in 1992 after declining 3 percent the previous year) and the end-of-the-year reduction in the demand for housing.

The Israeli economy showed encouraging signs of integration in the international marketplace, as exports and imports grew at similar rates (around 15 percent), and the balance of trade deficit remained stable, reaching a $6.9-billion surplus in imports at the end of 1992. Israel exported $20.8 billion worth of goods and services in 1992, and imported $27.6 billion. The foreign debt at the end of the year stood at $33 billion, with assets in foreign currency totaling $18.9 billion. The European Community continued to be Israel's major trading-bloc partner, with Israel importing $11.5 billion worth of goods and services and exporting $5.2 billion. The United States was Israel's biggest single-country trading partner, with Israel importing $3.2 billion and exporting $3.9 billion in goods and services. Of the $13 billion worth of goods exported abroad, $550 million were in agricultural products, $2.2 billion in electrical equipment, $1.5 billion in chemical and oil products, and $3.2 billion in diamonds.

On March 27, the International Monetary Fund announced that Israel could draw $243 million as compensation for the fall in earnings from exports and services during the 1990-1991 Gulf crisis and war.

In November the Knesset approved, in a first reading, the state budget for the year 1993. The package proposed a reduction in the budget deficit from 6.2 percent of GDP to only 3.2 percent. On November 11, the government announced that it would allow the value of the shekel to drop by 11 percent during the upcoming year, in order to spur growth. The government also announced a series of tax cuts and incentives, including a reduction in value-added tax from 18 to 17 percent and a 4-percent cut in corporate taxes, to be implemented during the next four years.

At the end of the year, the U.S. government approved the utilization of the first $2 billion in loan guarantees out of the total package of $10 billion in loan guarantees for five years approved by the administration.
Vital Statistics

The population of Israel at the end of 1992 reached 5,195,900, including 4,242,500 Jews, 725,400 Muslims, 140,900 Christians, and 87,100 Druze. Due to the significant drop in immigration, the rate of growth of the Jewish population dropped from 6.2 percent in 1990 and 5 percent in 1991 to only 2.4 percent in 1992. The non-Jewish growth rate remained steady at 4.3 percent. The Jewish population in Israel constituted a third of the world Jewish population.

Jerusalem led the other cities in population size; with a 2.3-percent growth rate, it reached a population of 556,000 at the end of the year, of whom 401,000 were Jews. Tel Aviv enjoyed a growth rate of only 1 percent, with a population of 356,000 at the end of the year, of whom 341,000 were Jews. Haifa had a negative growth rate of 0.5 percent, its population dropping to 249,800, of whom 225,000 were Jews.

Of the Jewish population, 2,574,000 were born in Israel, 263,000 in Asia, 335,000 in Africa, and 1,068,000 in Europe and America.

The number of males per thousand females dropped by one, from 979 to 978. Among Jewish males over age 15, 31.3 percent had never been married, compared to 23.2 percent among females. In the 25–29 age range, the never-married rate for males was 45.4 percent, compared to only 21.4 percent among females. Among those aged 45–49, however, the never-married rate among males was only 2.8 percent, compared to 4.4 percent among females. There were 30,000 divorced males, compared to 54,000 divorced females.

Israel had 1,354,000 households in 1992, with an average size of 3.58 persons, including singles. Among Jews, the average household size was 3.41; among non-Jews, 5.47. There were 75,700 single-parent households, with an average of 1.87 children under the age of 17.

The number of Israelis traveling abroad passed the one million mark in 1992, reaching 1,052,000. Tourism in Israel was up: of the 1,509,000 tourists who came, 59 percent were from Europe, 26 percent from North America, and 7 percent from Asia. Tourists stayed an average of 18.4 days in Israel, down from 21.6 days the previous year.

The number of hotels increased from 320 to 330, with 31,887 rooms and 67,113 beds. Of these, 240 were hotels recommended for tourists, with 27,258 rooms. The average tourist spent 3.7 nights in a hotel; the average Israeli, 2.4 nights. Total hotel occupancy stood at 67.6 percent of the rooms: 64.4 percent in Jerusalem, 73.2 percent in Tel Aviv, and 77.7 percent in Eilat.

Israelis had 1,176,000 cars, up a hundred thousand over the previous year. These were involved in 22,259 accidents, up from 19,147 in 1991; 507 people died on the roads, compared to 444 in 1991.

The Hebrew University in Jerusalem had 19,130 students; the Technion in Haifa, 10,470 students; Tel Aviv University, 23,440 students; Bar-Ilan University, 13,320 students; Haifa University, 9,670 students; Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, 8,220 students; and the Weizmann Institute of Science, 740 students. Another
19,000 students were enrolled in the Open University, which awarded 350 degrees. According to a survey of leisure-time activity among Israelis over the age of 14, 92.6 percent listened to the radio, with 79.6 percent tuning in "almost every day"; 66.7 percent listened occasionally to records or cassettes, 54.1 percent watched videos, 77.8 percent read a daily newspaper, 23.8 percent were enrolled in a library, and 30.8 percent engaged in a hobby. In the area of public entertainment, 45.7 percent went to the movies at least once a year, 29.2 percent to the theater, 10.7 percent to a concert, 6 percent to a dance performance, 35.2 percent to an entertainment show, 26.8 percent to a museum, 19 percent to a spectator sport, 23.9 percent to a discotheque or night club, and 61.6 percent to a restaurant or cafe; 20.4 percent went to the movies at least once a month, and 10 percent to the theater once a month.

**Other Noteworthy Events**

On February 11, the Supreme Court rejected the appeal of nuclear technician Mordechai Vanunu to overturn his 18-year prison sentence. Vanunu was convicted in 1988 for selling nuclear secrets to the London *Sunday Times*.

On February 23, financier Yaakov Nimrodi bought the daily newspaper *Ma'ariv* from the estate of the deceased British publisher Robert Maxwell for $14.5 million.

On February 29, 23 Palestinians were killed following the collapse of a roof in an Arab-owned café in East Jerusalem. Arab and Jewish rescue workers cooperated in rescuing many wounded from the destroyed building.

Veteran peace activist Abie Nathan was released from prison on March 30, after serving 6 months of an 18-month sentence for meeting illegally with PLO chairman Yasir Arafat.

On May 7, Prof. Yuval Ne'eman, world-renowned physicist and leader of the right-wing Tehiya party, returned his 1969 Israel Prize in protest over the decision to grant the 1992 Israel Prize to Israeli-Arab author Emil Habibi, a supporter of Palestinian nationhood.

On July 19, the Jerusalem branch of the Hebrew Union College ordained the first woman to become a rabbi in Israel. She was 37-year-old American-born Na'amah Kelman.

On July 30, Israel won its first Olympic medal ever when judoist Yael Arad earned a silver medal in the Barcelona Olympics. Two days later, fellow judoist Oren Smadja picked up a bronze medal.

On October 4, an El Al 747 jumbo jet, laden with fuel, crashed into a housing complex in a suburb of Amsterdam. Some 70 people were killed, most of them immigrants from Suriname (the final number of fatalities was never ascertained). All three crew members, as well as a passenger on board the plane, were also killed.
Personalia

Former prime minister Menachem Begin, leader of the Likud party and the architect of peace with Egypt, died on March 9, aged 78. Begin, born in Brisk in Lithuania, was appointed commissioner of the Betar Zionist Organization in Poland in 1939; following a prolonged exile in Siberia he came to Palestine in 1943, where he took control of the Irgun Zvai Leumi underground movement and waged a relentless battle against the British. From 1948 onward, Begin led the opposition Herut party; its victory in the 1977 elections elevated him to the post of prime minister, which he held until 1983. Thousands accompanied Begin to his burial on the Mount of Olives, where he was interred in a plot alongside former colleagues in the prestate underground movement.

Other prominent Israelis who died this year included Prof. Nahman Avigad, one of Israel's leading archaeologists, in January, aged 87; poet Avot Yeshurun, winner of the Brenner, Bialik, and Israel prizes, in February, aged 82; sculptress Batya Lishinski, recipient of the Israel Prize for lifetime achievement, in April, aged 92; Prof. Shlomo Broyer, head of Tel Aviv University's applied mathematics department, in May; Prof. Avner Yaniv, deputy president of Haifa University and a world-renowned expert on security and strategy, in May, aged 49; painter Mordechai Ardon, in June, aged 96; Yaakov Hazan, veteran Zionist leader and head of the socialist Mapam party and Hashomer Hatzair kibbutz movement, in July, aged 93; Prof. Eitan Berglas, chairman of the board of Bank Hapoalim and eminent Israeli economist, in August, aged 58; former president of the Supreme Court Shimon Agranat, an architect of Israeli criminal law, in August, aged 86; Haim Tavori, former inspector-general of the Israel Police, in August, aged 73; author and journalist Yehoshua Bar Yosef, recipient of all major Israeli prizes for literature, in October, aged 80; Prof. Yoram Ben-Porath, president of the Hebrew University, in a traffic accident, in October, along with his wife and five-year-old son, aged 55; retired army major general Moshe Bar Kokhba, director-general of the Israel Railroad Authority, in November, aged 63; Yitzhak Kiester, former Supreme Court judge and an expert on Jewish law, in November, aged 88; Prof. Gad Tadeschi, recipient of an Israel Prize and preeminent expert on jurisprudence, in November, aged 85; Prof. David Meir, director-general of Jerusalem's Shaare Zedek Hospital, in December, as a result of a fatal injury in a traffic accident, aged 65; Yitzhak Ernst Nebenzahl, former state comptroller, in December, aged 85.

MENACHEM SHALEV
Jews in the Middle East and North Africa

In the decade since the Year Book last surveyed this subject, the Jewish population living in the Arab and Muslim countries of the Middle East and North Africa has continued its gradual decline. Essentially three factors have contributed to the diminishing numbers: attrition through death among an aging population; the lifting of government-imposed barriers to emigration; and the emigration of young adults and their families seeking better educational and economic opportunities abroad.

Throughout the region both governmental policies and popular attitudes have been affected by the momentous global and regional developments in the period under review. Most notable are the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of the Iraq-Iran War in 1988, the Gulf War that liberated Kuwait from Iraqi occupation early in 1991, and the opening of direct Arab-Israeli peace talks in Madrid in October of that year. These positive developments have led to improvement in the status of the Jewish communities in some Middle Eastern countries and have also aroused hope among some Israeli and Arab leaders that a comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace settlement may eventually usher in a new era of Arab-Jewish coexistence and cooperation in the region.

Others warn against premature euphoria, pointing out that most of the regimes in the region remain autocratic and face severe challenges from both radical leftists and increasingly militant Islamic political groups that oppose peace with Israel and improved relations with the democratic West. For the most extreme of these groups, the distinction between Israeli, Zionist, and Jew is often blurred. In recent years, Arab terrorists have gone so far as to target innocent Jews in Lebanon, and isolated Arab terrorist attacks occurred against Jewish worshipers in Djerba, Tunisia, and Istanbul, Turkey—two countries whose governments accord full rights to their Jewish communities.

In those Arab countries such as Algeria, Egypt, and Iraq, from which the overwhelming majority of the Jewish population emigrated in earlier years, and the tiny remnant in each country consists primarily of pensioners over 65, the numbers continue to diminish as the elderly pass on. In Libya, where only a handful survive in Tripoli, there is no organized community. In Lebanon, there is no longer a
functioning community or a synagogue with regular services. Most of the few hundred Jews who remained in Beirut during the years of internecine fighting and the 1982 Israeli war with Lebanon left the country in the mid-1980s, following the Israeli withdrawal and the kidnapping and murder of leaders of the Jewish community by an Iranian-inspired radical Shiite group.

Among countries with still viable and well-functioning Jewish communities and a more healthy demographic composition are Morocco (6,500 Jews), Tunisia (1,585), and Iran (18,000). (It is difficult to obtain precise figures for the number of Jews living in Tunisia and Morocco, since some families divide their time between homes in North Africa and residences and businesses in France and other places.) The regimes in the two North African countries have been protective of their Jewish communities. In recent years they have expressed increasingly open support for the Madrid peace process and have been moving gradually to establish commercial, tourist, and quasi-diplomatic ties with Israel. Nevertheless, their Jewish populations have continued to decline, primarily through the emigration of university-age students and young professionals to France, Canada, and Israel.

With the lifting of emigration restrictions in the past couple of years in Syria and Yemen, the Jews of those countries departed en masse, leaving behind small numbers of those choosing to remain.

**Yemen**

In Yemen, where restrictions on emigration were rigorously enforced until the late 1980s, only a few individual Jews had been permitted to leave for medical care abroad. The approximately 1,000 Jews were virtually cut off not only from their relatives who had left in the massive “Operation Magic Carpet” that brought most of Yemen’s Jews to Israel in 1949–50, they were even denied normal phone and postal contact with the rest of the Jewish world. For many years, the anti-Zionist Satmar sect was the only Jewish religious group permitted to send occasional representatives to provide books and other religious articles to the few scattered Jewish communities remaining in the mountains of northern Yemen. While free to pray and study in their homes, they had no organized synagogues or schools.

Significant changes began to occur in 1989, motivated at least in part by the general decline in ideology and the move toward greater political openness and pragmatism that accompanied the breakdown of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the Soviet Union. The decline in Soviet influence and interests in the region was the major factor for the “Yemeni version of perestroika,” according to Yossi Kostiner, a Yemeni expert at the Dayan Institute of Tel Aviv University. This started in the south and extended to the north with the reunification in 1990 of the two Yemens—the Marxist-Leninist People’s Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen, with its capital in Aden) and the Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen, with its capital in San’a). (In May 1994 civil war erupted and the south seceded.)

The decline of Soviet influence and aid also made Yemen eager to improve
political ties and economic relations with the United States and thus more susceptible to American pressure. After years of unsuccessful diplomatic efforts, American citizen Yehiel Hibshoosh, an 80-year-old Yemeni Jewish historian and poet, finally received permission in October 1989 to visit the main Jewish communities in Rayda and Sa’ada as well as a number of smaller communities in the north. (The last Jews in the south had left when the British pulled out of Aden in 1969.) While most of the Jews eked out a living as artisans, silversmiths, other craftsmen, and peddlers, they were no worse off than their Muslim neighbors. The only restriction was that Jewish men were not permitted to carry the traditional daggers or rifles that were the accoutrements of Yemeni men in the fiercely independent tribal areas of the north.

Hibshoosh also found no confirmation of the rumors that had spread in the Jewish world that Jewish orphans and young women were forcibly being converted to Islam. The Jewish community maintained its traditional religious piety, the men and boys easily distinguishable from their Muslim neighbors by their long peyot (side-curls). He found many large families with many small children, who urgently requested small prayer books of their own. The elders requested Torah scrolls and the opportunity to reestablish contact with their relatives abroad. Hibshoosh met with Foreign Minister Dr. Abdelkarim al-Iryani, who reportedly told him: “From now on the Jews of Yemen who have relatives abroad will be able to visit their relatives where they live, and Jews who hold a U.S. passport and have not been able to visit Yemen will be able to visit the country.”

Earlier attempts to organize group visits to Yemen from among the 5,000 Yemeni Jews living in the United States had been encouraged by the Yemeni tourist offices, which were eager to earn foreign currency for their economically hard-pressed country. But these had nearly always been vetoed at the political level, ostensibly because of tribal unrest in the northern areas, where the Jews lived, and the attendant danger to visitors. This was also the official reason for the indefinite postponement of a proposed fact-finding mission by representatives of American Jewish voluntary organizations. Unofficially, it was reported that the security forces in the government and representatives of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in the country had vetoed the trip because they suspected that the American Jews’ secret agenda was to prepare the ground for emigration of the Yemeni Jews, just as similar visits had led to the exodus of the Ethiopian Jews to Israel.

In January 1990 a delegation of senior Yemeni officials, headed by Yemen Arab Republic president Ali Abdullah Salih, came to Washington. After a meeting with Secretary of State James Baker, Salih told a joint press conference on January 24 that they achieved “a very good understanding” with the American officials on bilateral issues, Middle East issues, and “the peace initiative which is being discussed these days.” Baker responded that he looked forward to further improvement in relations and pledged an increase in U.S. technical assistance to Yemen. The following day the Yemeni delegation also met with members of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, where Rep. Benjamin Gilman (R., N.Y.) and Rep. Mel Levine (D.,
Calif.) asked specific questions on the problems of the Jewish community and urged
that Yemeni Jews be allowed to travel abroad freely. President Salih responded that
while he appreciated their concern, it was not a serious issue. "I assure you they
have full and equal rights according to the constitution." He declared that "we
welcome any Yemenite citizen of the Jewish faith if they do not possess an Israeli
passport," adding, "We'd like you to give equal attention to Palestinian rights." He
asserted that "we have no different treatment between Muslims and Jews. Even
Yemenite Jews who left in 1949–50, if they want to come back, they can."

Discernible but slow progress was achieved over the following months. Several
small delegations of American Jews of Yemeni origin were permitted to visit north-
ern Yemen, and three Yemeni Jewish students were permitted to come to New York
for religious studies during the summer of 1991. In November a small synagogue
and mikveh were built for the community in Rayda, and a building was rented for
a school in Sa'ada. Yehieh Ibn Daud (David) Subairi, a blind man in his eighties
from San'a, was finally permitted to emigrate, repeated requests by his family abroad
and by Jewish organizations having fallen on deaf ears for many years. The case of
"the old man" had been specifically raised by Congressman Levine with President
Salih. In July 1992, upon the intervention of Roger Pinto, the Algerian-born head
of the Paris-based Commission for Jewish Communities in Danger, who had been
moved by the plight of a deaf and dumb boy he saw during a visit to Yemen in March
1991, the Yemeni authorities gave authorization for the boy and his uncle to go to
France for special medical treatment.

International Jewish efforts to provide assistance to the Jewish communities in
Yemen were hampered not only by the difficult physical conditions in northern
Yemen itself, and by the ideological opposition of the Satmar Hassidim—who tried
to sabotage the aliyah of Yemeni Jews to Israel—but also by fierce rivalry among
the Yemeni Jews in the United States. It took long and frustrating efforts by
American Jewish human-rights activists to get the Yemenite Jewish Federation of
America, headed by Elisha Najjar, to cooperate with the International Coalition for
the Rescue of the Jews of Yemen (ICROJOY), which was established in December
1988 under the leadership of Prof. Haim Tawil of Yeshiva University. (Subse-
quently, at the suggestion of a State Department official, the group changed its name
from "Rescue" to "Revival.") In addition, Tzemah Kadi, who created the New
York-based Ezrat Yehudei Teiman (Help for the Jews of Yemen), together with his
wife, started a small school in Rayda as the first of a hoped-for network of schools.
As Larry Cohler noted in a special report from Yemen, the factiousness of the
Yemeni Jews mirrored the fragmentation and feuding among the tribal sheikhs in
their native land. ("The Last Jews of Yemen," Long Island Jewish World, February
26-March 4, 1993.) ICROJOY was considered the most disciplined and responsible
group by the State Department and by the American Jewish Joint Distribution
Committee (JDC), which financially supported its efforts, as it had earlier efforts to
contact Yemeni Jews.

The major breakthrough did not occur until August 1992, when Yemen began
to implement its promise to permit Jewish emigration. A total of 57 Jews arrived in Israel in that year. According to Dr. Tawil, by the end of 1993 almost 500 had left Yemen and nearly all of the estimated remaining 520 were expected to leave in the near future. With the close cooperation of the Yemeni and American authorities, Gideon Taylor, the director of special projects for the JDC, organized technical and financial arrangements for the travel of the Yemeni Jews out of the country. Most subsequently went on to be reunited with their relatives in the large Yemenite community in Israel, while a few families chose to join relatives in the United States.

The relatively small movement of the Yemeni Jews was funded largely through the regular campaign of the United Jewish Appeal, in contrast to the special Operation Exodus Campaign that had been established to bring out the far greater numbers of Jewish emigrants from the former Soviet Union. Rav Tov, the relief organization of the Satmar, financed the travel of some of the families who came to the United States. As rumors of the departure of Yemeni Jews circulated in the international media, there was concern in the Jewish community that the publicity would cause the Yemeni authorities to halt the process, as had occurred a decade earlier when the Sudan stopped Ethiopian Jewish emigration because its help became publicly known. Consequently, there was surprise when Foreign Minister al-Iryani publicly confirmed that the Yemenite Jews were emigrating. “Yes, the reports are true,” he told a reporter from the Associated Press at the end of March 1993. “But we do not sanction their travel to Israel.”

Why did the Yemeni authorities, who in the past had been sensitive to negative reaction from the Saudis, the PLO, and the Muslim fundamentalists, make this public admission at the very time the country was preparing for its first democratic election? Economics and geopolitics were primary factors. Because the Yemeni government had sided with Saddam Hussein in Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait and failed to support the allied coalition in the Gulf War, the Saudis retaliated by expelling some 800,000 Yemeni workers and cutting off aid to the San’a regime. A desperately poor Yemen now looked to the West for help in developing its oil fields; however, Yemen would not get significant American help until it improved its human-rights situation, including allowing free Jewish emigration.

In June 1992, Sen. Alfonse D’Amato (R., N.Y.) introduced a resolution in Congress calling for “full and free emigration” of Yemeni Jews as a condition of U.S. aid. Although he introduced it in the last days of the session and it was never brought to a vote, D’Amato had been able to round up 30 signatories to his amendment to the foreign operations bill. The Yemenis were certainly aware that similar demands on Syria had easily won the approval of a three-fourths majority of the Senate. Moreover, after the Arab confrontation states and the Palestinians agreed to participate in direct peace talks with Israel in Madrid in October 1991, and especially after Syria announced in April 1992 that its Jews could travel freely, maintaining Yemen’s barriers to Jewish emigration became increasingly difficult to justify.
Iran

While all Iranian statistics are of questionable reliability, this is especially true for the numbers of the Jewish community. For various reasons, including a desire to demonstrate their importance and patriotism and to mask the extent of emigration, the number of those remaining in Iran has been inflated. Some Iranian Jewish scholars, such as David Yerushalmi, have placed the number of Jews before the departure of the Shah, in 1979, at between 125,000 and 130,000. He estimated that by November 1989 only 25,000 to 30,000 remained in the country. Other sources, including Lois Gottesman (AJYB 1985, p. 319), give an estimate for the prerevolutionary period of around 80,000, with about 60,000 residing in Teheran, 8,500 in Shiraz, 3,500 in Isfahan, and smaller communities scattered elsewhere. Gottesman estimated that by 1984 the total had declined to 35,000. In their article "World Jewish Population, 1992," elsewhere in this volume, the demographers U.O. Schmelz and Sergio DellaPergola note: "It is difficult to estimate the Jewish population of Iran for any given date, but it continues to dwindle. . . . The estimate for 1992 was reduced to 16,000."

Although its population is overwhelmingly Shiite Muslim, Iran is a non-Arab country. Under the Shah it pursued a pro-American orientation and avoided direct involvement in the Arab-Israeli conflict, although it did support Palestinian nationalism at the United Nations. Iran had granted de facto recognition to Israel in 1950. It maintained extensive commercial relations with Israel, for whom it was a major oil supplier, and had close but discreet political and intelligence ties with the Jewish state. Shared concern with the dangers of Soviet penetration into the region and expansionist Arab nationalism cemented Iranian-Israeli ties until the overthrow of the Shah by Ayatollah Khomeini and the establishment of the Islamic Republic in 1979. One of the first acts of the new regime was to sever all formal relations with Israel. The large unofficial Israeli embassy building was ceremoniously handed over to Yasir Arafat to serve as the embassy of the Palestine Liberation Organization. Oil shipments to Israel were canceled, as was the direct air service that El Al Israel Airlines had long maintained between Teheran and Tel Aviv. This direct link had facilitated the free movement of Iranian Jews to and from the Jewish state.

While the constitution of the Islamic Republic follows the Koran in recognizing Judaism as a revealed religion and the Jews as a protected religious minority (ahl-al-kitab [People of the Book] and ahl-al-dhimma [People of the Pact]), the Khomeini regime adopted a virulently anti-Zionist ideology, labeled Israel the "illegitimate offspring" of the "Great Satan," and called for armed struggle of the Islamic world to eradicate the State of Israel. The virulent anti-Israel propaganda campaign continued even after the death of Khomeini in 1989.

In the turbulent early years of the revolution Jews suffered from a reign of terror marked by the execution of 11 Jews, confiscation of Jewish property, and the dismissal of Jews from governmental and university positions. Many thousands of Jews emigrated in the turbulent period immediately before and after the overthrow
of the Shah. The new regime barred travel to Israel and generally tightened travel restrictions following the outbreak of the Iraq-Iran war in 1980, especially banning travel by all young boys and men subject to the draft for military service. Although Jewish schools were permitted to function, they were placed under the control of the Islamic committees and were required to take in Muslim students, to remain open on the Sabbath, to include Islamic religious instruction, and to add anti-Zionist (and indeed anti-Semitic) materials to the curriculum.

Although Judaism remained an officially recognized religion and synagogues continued to function, the combination of physical danger and psychological terror prompted Jews to seek desperately for ways of leaving the country. Some managed to circumvent the barriers to Jewish emigration by acquiring Christian or Muslim identity papers and passports. Thousands of other Iranian Jews seeking freedom risked imprisonment and possible death if caught when they embarked on a hazardous journey over mountains and deserts to reach safety in neighboring countries. Successful refugees who managed to reach Turkey or Pakistan were permitted to move on to Austria and other destinations, where they were aided by the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), the Jewish Agency, and other Jewish relief organizations to join their compatriots in the United States, Europe, and Israel. At a press conference in New York on October 2, 1987, Foreign Minister Alois Mock of Austria revealed that between July 1983 and August 1987 Austria had given temporary asylum to 5,188 Jews fleeing Iran. He stressed that his government was proceeding "without asking too many questions of Iranian refugees and without publicizing individual cases," in order not to jeopardize the flow of refugees in the future or to endanger their relatives who remained behind.

While thousands of Iranian Jews went to Israel, the majority resettled in the United States, primarily in the Los Angeles area in California and Long Island, New York. Among the early arrivals were relatives of wealthy Iranian Jews who, already in the days of the Shah, had sent their children for advanced education in the United States and had helped them establish professional and business careers. But many of those who followed in later years lacked the wealth or connections that would have facilitated their beginning a new life. Most had been robbed of their possessions, and many came with only what little they could carry with them. "The people who are leaving now had really, really tried to stay," Bruce T. Leimsidor, director of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society in Vienna, told New York Times reporter James M. Markham in an interview on November 13, 1986. He added that about two-thirds of the recent refugees had been tortured or otherwise physically mistreated in Iran.

The Times report of increasing Jewish emigration from Iran coincided with revelations of Israel's role as an intermediary, shipping American weapons to Iran as part of the White House effort both to secure the freedom of American hostages being held in Lebanon by pro-Iranian terrorists and to open a channel for improved communication with allegedly "moderate" elements in Teheran. Apart from its obvious strategic interest in preventing its avowed enemy, Iraq, from defeating Iran,
there was speculation that the Israeli arms sale was also intended to induce Teheran to end the harassment of the Jewish community and remove the travel restrictions. A senior Israeli official denied that the increased emigration was tied to the arms deal. While some believe the Israeli contacts did help persuade some Iranian officials to turn a blind eye to the "illegal" departure of Jews, others note that there was in fact an increase in the harassment of the Jewish community in Iran at this time. Manouchehr Kalimi Nikrouz, the sole Jewish representative in the Majlis (parliament), was arrested on trumped-up charges of alleged sexual misconduct with one of his employees. Former Iranian president Abolhassan Bani-Sadr, who was then living in exile in Paris, told Reuters that the real reason for Nikrouz's arrest was to indicate the anger of the Teheran regime over the disclosure by Israeli leaders of the secret U.S. arms shipments to Iran. *(New York Times, November 28, 1986.)* (Nikrouz was eventually exonerated of all charges, released from prison, and restored to his seat in the Majlis.) Some interpreted the crackdown on the Jewish community as a calculated response by the Iranian officials implicated in the arms deal to counter the allegations of militant Islamic opponents that they were yielding to American or Zionist pressure.

After a cease-fire brought an end to hostilities with Iraq in 1988, Iran began to ease its travel restrictions. President Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who won reelection to a second four-year term in 1993, has sought to rebuild Iran's war-shattered economy and reestablish economic relations with the West. Consequently, some Iranian Jewish businessmen have been able to travel to the United States and Europe, though entire families are generally not permitted to travel together, and there are severe restrictions on how much money departing travelers may take with them. In recent years, not only passports but also identity cards and licenses for business have listed the applicant's religion. Jewish businessmen from Iran complain that their identification as Jews combined with a concerted government campaign discouraging Muslims from buying from or selling to Jews has significantly hurt their businesses and has also made it difficult to dispose of property. This is in addition to the economic hardship that Jews share with the rest of the population because of the country's economic problems.

The regime officially maintains its militant Islamic ideology, manifested not only in restrictions on the rights of women and persecution of the Bahai but also in its foreign policy, including support for the Hezbollah (Party of God) in southern Lebanon and other militant Islamic groups that reject Israel's right to exist and actively oppose the current Arab-Israeli peace negotiations. Reports in 1993 that Iran was actively seeking to obtain a nuclear capability and that both Iran and Syria were purchasing long-range Scud missiles and other advanced weapons from North Korea and China aroused concern in Washington and Jerusalem. Unless there is a significant change in Iranian policy, the present climate of suspicion and animosity between Teheran and Jerusalem does not augur well for the long-term safety and security of the remaining Jewish communities in Iran.

Iranian Jews are concentrated in Teheran, Shiraz, and Isfahan. The Jews in the
provincial cities feel even more vulnerable than those in the capital. According to Iranian Jewish émigrés, in 1986 a Mrs. Nosrat Goel was executed in Shiraz on charges of Zionism, one day after her arrest. In 1989 a Mr. Shamsa was executed there on the same charge, and in 1991 Yousef Hashimeyreti was tortured to death in Shiraz under suspicion of being a Zionist. In May 1992, Feyzollah Mechubad, the 75-year-old shamas of a synagogue in Teheran, was arrested and held in Evin prison. The Jewish community reportedly was told that his release could be obtained by a payment of 30 million tuman (variously valued at between $200,000 and $4 million, depending on the exchange rate applied). Before the community could complete raising this sum, he was charged with having illegal contacts with Israel, to which he confessed under extreme torture. He subsequently recanted his confession but was executed on February 25, 1994, on Purim, even though Iranian tradition prohibits execution of persons over 75 (he was 77). An autopsy reportedly revealed extensive signs of torture, including gouging of both his eyes. It is presumed that he was killed in retaliation for the massacre of Muslim worshipers at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron that had been perpetrated earlier that morning by Dr. Baruch Goldstein.

These executions, while infrequent, have had the desired effect of terrorizing the Jewish community. Adding to their fears has been the occasional publication of blatantly anti-Semitic articles in the press. On the appearance of the book Blood for the Holy Matzoth, by Najib Alkilani, which recounts the infamous blood libel in Damascus in 1840, the major Teheran evening daily Keyhan carried a lengthy article by Mohammed Reza Alvand (December 31, 1992) entitled “Israel Must Be Destroyed.” The entire article is filled with vicious anti-Jewish statements and blames Israel and Zionism for all the world’s evils. The Jewish community wrote a rebuttal to this article, which was only printed two weeks later—in an inconspicuous place—after intervention by the president of the Majlis and the Jewish representative in that body.

There is always an officially approved Jewish representative in the parliament, and the Association of Iranian Jews is careful to publicly endorse the government’s foreign policy. For example, in the first year of his rule, Khomeini proclaimed the last Friday of the Islamic holy month of Ramadan as “Al-Quds [Jerusalem] Day,” and it is marked annually with marches and demonstrations calling for Israel’s destruction. The Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran English radio service reported on May 3, 1989, that the Association of Iranian Jews (AIJ) had “today lashed out at the Zionist regime’s ignorance of the sanctity of Al-Quds and voiced support for Al-Quds Day.” The AIJ’s statement pledged: “We, Iranian Jews, will defend the monotheistic values of Judaism against the Zionist regime’s racist policies and believe that Al-Quds belongs to all monotheistic religions.” The statement called on Jews throughout the world to join in the Jerusalem Day rallies and to condemn Zionism.

The government continues to enlist the local Jewish community in its international public-relations efforts. On March 2, 1993, the Tehran Times reported that
the Association of Iranian Jews had issued a statement denouncing Western media allegations of violations of minority rights in Islamic Iran. "The propaganda tirade by colonial loudspeakers is aimed at distorting world public opinion against Iran and its ruling Islamic values," the Jewish Association statement said. The Times report continued: "Any fair person in his first few days of stay in Iran will find that religious minorities lead a calm and honorable life in Iran along with the rest of their compatriots." The statement noted that, according to the Islamic Republic Constitution, there are four officially recognized religious minorities in Iran—Armenian Christians, Jews, Zoroastrians, and Assyrians—"all of whom enjoy equal personal and social rights." This benevolent assessment was intended to counter continuing reports of oppression of the Bahais, who are considered heretics from Islam, and the arrest of Christians accused of attempting to convert Muslims. In its annual global survey of human rights for 1993, the U.S. State Department concluded that Iran's Islamic government continues to reinforce its hold on power through arrests, summary trials, executions, and assassinations (New York Times, February 2, 1994, p. A9).

Should the current Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli negotiations result in peace agreements, they will place serious strains on the Damascus-Teheran alliance. Israel and the United States will certainly demand that Syria and Lebanon curb the activities of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard units and the Iranian-backed Hezbollah and other Lebanese Islamic militants. Iranian Jews are cautiously waiting to see whether the pragmatic or the ideological elements in the Iranian ruling elite will prevail in dealing with the growing reality of Palestinian and Arab acceptance of the existence of Israel in the region.

**Syria**

According to a State Department estimate in September 1991, the Syrian Jewish community then numbered some 3,600, of whom 2,900 lived in Damascus, 550 in Aleppo, and 120 in the small, remote town of Qamishli, near the Turkish border. Other estimates put the total at around 4,300.

Some of the more onerous restrictions on the daily life of the Jewish community—such as the requirement that Jews needed advance written permission from the secret police to travel more than four kilometers from their homes in the Jewish quarter—were eased in recent years. Syrian Jews could travel freely within Syria, and they participated actively in the country's economy, primarily as merchants and skilled artisans in jewelry and metals. There were also Jewish doctors and pharmacists. However, Jews were barred from employment in most government offices or public bodies such as banks, and suffered from discriminatory economic and legal practices that restricted their rights to dispose of property through sale or inheritance. Jews are the only group that has their religion entered on their identity cards, although the large red letters of the past have been replaced by smaller notations in black. Jews are able to practice their religion openly.
Until recently there were two Jewish primary schools functioning in Damascus and one in Aleppo. In 1991 the Alliance school in Damascus was rebuilt and expanded by the Jewish community with financial help from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. The teachers are Jewish but the principals are Muslim state officials. All synagogues and the one school still open, in Damascus, function under the watchful eyes of the authorities. For example, school attendance sheets must be delivered daily to the secret police, and agents visit the homes of those listed as ill to make sure they are really in bed and have not tried to flee the country.

One young woman from Damascus, whose husband and young daughter managed to escape a few years ago, described the feelings of the Jewish community in her testimony to the second International Conference for the Freedom of Syrian Jewry in Paris in May 1988 as follows: “Every time there is a knock on the door, mothers and fathers shake with fear for their children. Will the agents of the Mukhabarat take us to jail or some even more horrific fate? We are constantly spied upon by the authorities and our whole life is one big question mark.”

In contrast to the massive emigration of Jews from the other Arab countries of the Middle East and North Africa, which reduced their numbers from nearly 900,000 in 1948 to fewer than 15,000 at the end of 1993, Syria had forbidden its Jews to emigrate since 1949. Although there had been some easing of travel restrictions in recent years, special regulations still prevented Jews from leaving freely. One problem that was given high priority by the Jewish community was the fate of young single Jewish women. This received heightened attention after four young Jewish women who were attempting to escape to Lebanon were murdered in 1974. Their burned and mutilated bodies were returned in sacks to their parents by the Syrian authorities. For years this inhibited many other women from attempting to leave illegally.

Since more young Jewish men than women successfully fled the country, and because a number of men were not marrying, hoping to start families in freedom rather than trying to escape with a wife and young children, it was feared that many Jewish women would remain single if they were not permitted to leave to seek husbands abroad. It was also feared that the shortage of Jewish men might lead some of the single Jewish women to marry Muslims or Christian Arabs. The State Department’s Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1991, issued in February 1992, noted: “The Syrian Government closely restricts Jewish emigration, although it stated in 1989 that it would look positively at cases of family reunification and of unmarried Jewish women unable to find suitable husbands in the small Syrian Jewish community.” The State Department report indicated that the number of such women allowed to emigrate “jumped dramatically in the middle of 1989, following U.S.-Syrian discussions on this issue, and 20 were given permission in 1991.”

Before 1992 the Syrians rebuffed persistent requests to deal with the broader issue of Jewish emigration. Indeed, the State Department report pointed out that “there was no progress in 1991 on the issue of divided families seeking reunification,”
although it noted that “one case was resolved in early January 1992 when two minor children were permitted to join their parents” in the United States. The problem of divided families arose from the fact that in order to enforce the ban on Jewish emigration, the Syrian authorities required Jews permitted to travel abroad to leave behind members of their immediate family as a guarantee of their return. They also had to leave a substantial monetary deposit.

The total cost for exit permits, including official and “unofficial” payments to officials, has ranged from several hundred dollars to as high as $5,000 per person, or more than double the average per capita annual income in Syria. The State Department report acknowledged that, as a result, it is particularly those Syrian Jews “with significant holdings and financial ties in the country” who have benefited from the easing of foreign travel restrictions in recent years.

Desperate attempts to leave the country continued to occur before 1992. Those who were caught or suspected of planning to travel “illegally” were held in prison by the agents of the Mukhabarat. Amnesty International has confirmed that those arrested were subjected to brutal beatings and other forms of torture and usually denied access to legal counsel. They were routinely incarcerated for two to three years and often emerged from prison physically and mentally broken.

On November 28, 1991, apparently in response to the international advocacy efforts, and as part of a general amnesty prior to President Hafez al-Assad’s virtually unanimous reelection, four Jewish men were released. Two of them, Rahmoun Darwish and Joseph Sabato, had been arrested with their wife and fiancéé, respectively, on September 25, 1990, allegedly for trying to flee the country. Darwish’s wife, who was seven months pregnant, gave birth in prison. The women were released a few months later, after having been kept in abusive conditions and tortured, according to the Council for the Rescue of Syrian Jewry. The other Syrian men freed in November were Subhe and Sa’id Kastika, who had been arrested at the beginning of May 1991, together with their wives, a two-year-old child, and a three-month-old baby. According to the council, “for almost three weeks they were held incommunicado, after which the women, who had been visibly beaten, and the babies were released.”

Those who were held longest in prison were Selim Swed, a 51-year-old father of seven, and his younger brother, Eli, a 31-year-old bachelor. Eli had been arrested in November 1987 on his return from a trip abroad, and his brother was arrested at his pharmacy the following month. They were held incommunicado for more than two years in a damp and dark underground cell and subjected to brutal interrogation. Eli reportedly contracted tuberculosis. After numerous interventions, they were finally moved to regular cells in the Adra prison and in May 1991 were sentenced to six years and eight months, including time already served. The trial was closed to the public, but they were reportedly charged with “illegally traveling to enemy-occupied territory” and traveling without valid passports. In response to international complaints over the severity of the sentence, since they had reportedly gone to visit their relatives in Israel, Syrian officials responded that they had “gotten
off lightly," since they might have been charged with espionage, which is a capital offense in Syria.

There was hope that following President Assad's unopposed reelection to a seven-year term in December 1991 the Swed brothers would be released as part of the amnesty granted to some 3,500 political detainees. However, they were explicitly excluded from the general pardon, and their harsh sentence was confirmed by the Damascus authorities in January 1992. They were finally released in mid-April 1992, on the second day of Passover. Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D., Mass.) and 68 colleagues—more than two-thirds of the Senate—had written a joint letter to President Assad on March 26 urging him “to free the Sweds and to permit free emigration for all Syrian Jews.” Progress on human rights was one of the issues the senators cited as preconditions for improvement in Syrian-U.S. relations. Alice Sardell Harray, president of the Council for the Rescue of Syrian Jewry, stated that, while the council was “grateful that Eli and Selim Swed are free at last and have been reunited with their family, we pray that this gesture is a harbinger of change in Syrian policy toward the 4,000 Jews remaining hostage in Syria.”

Although the Jewish community had been scrupulously careful to stay out of domestic political activity, and no Jews were selected for any political post, they were drawn into unprecedented public action during President Assad’s December 1991 reelection campaign. In view of the tight control maintained by Assad over public expression and the absence of any opposition candidate, there was much speculation as to why the financially hard-pressed regime felt the need to spend $80 million on election banners, ubiquitous giant posters of Assad, and daily mass rallies by every possible professional and trade association. One explanation is that all this display was intended to convey to the United States and the world that Assad represented stability and security, was firmly in control, and had the support of his people.

Probably the most bizarre events of the election campaign were two government-organized “spontaneous” demonstrations of support for Assad by the Jews of Damascus. The first was an evening auto rally, which the English-language Syria Times described as an occasion for Syria's Jews to drive their “fancy cars” through the streets of Damascus, a not-so-subtle attempt to portray the Jews as the wealthiest of the country’s minorities. But when the Thursday night rally failed to attract the hoped-for Western media attention, a march on foot in broad daylight was quickly organized for the following afternoon. This was carried on Syrian television and received worldwide media attention, especially since it was the first time in history that Syrian Jews were permitted to carry banners in Hebrew, as well as in Arabic and English. The banners proclaimed the Jews' expressions of “love and honor for our great leader, Hafez al-Assad.” Reuters reported that 400 Jewish schoolchildren, carrying balloons and pictures of Assad, marched with the adults, calling out, “With our souls and blood we redeem the Hafez.” The 2,000 marchers were led by Chief Rabbi Ibrahim Hamra, who shouted with the others, “Hafez Assad is the symbol of national unity.” He told reporters that the Jewish community had benefited
greatly from Assad's rule and would vote yes in the referendum. "Whatever we do for President Assad is not enough," he said. He pointed out that "today is Friday and it is a day to prepare for the holy day [Sabbath], but we went ahead with the rally to express our gratitude to the President, who gave us a lot." (Daily Telegraph, London, November 30, 1991.)

As Rabbi Hamra hinted, the timing of the rally was not chosen by the Jewish community but was set by the authorities. A few weeks later, Judy Feld Carr, who spearheaded the Canadian Jewish Congress's efforts on behalf of Syrian Jewry, received a message from a friend in Syria, "Please don't be ashamed of us; we had no choice." This activity was also clearly intended for foreign consumption—as a direct refutation of the intensified human-rights campaign on behalf of the Jews of Syria.

Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir had pledged in speeches in Jerusalem in July and in Paris in September 1991 that Israel would work tirelessly until the Jews in Syria, like the Jews of Russia and Ethiopia, were free to emigrate. He mentioned the issue of the human rights of the Jews in Syria in his address at the Madrid peace conference in October, prompting Syrian foreign minister Sharaa to issue a categorical statement that Jews "have lived among Muslim Arabs throughout history, wherever they happen to coexist, without ever suffering any form of persecution or discrimination, either racial or religious."

A concurrent resolution of the U.S. House and Senate passed in October had called upon the Syrian government to immediately release all Jewish prisoners accused of traveling "illegally" and to grant Syrian Jews the right to travel freely. The members of Congress also urged the president to call on other countries to make similar appeals to Damascus and to seek a United Nations investigation on "the present condition of Syrian Jews and the status of respect for internationally recognized human rights in Syria." Individual members of Congress demanded that Damascus be denied U.S. economic benefits until it permitted free emigration. A State Department official wrote to concerned Jewish leaders in Chile in September, "Human rights conditions in Syria continue to be a matter of concern to the U.S. Government, and we continue to make this subject, including the restrictions placed on Syrian Jews, a prominent part of our diplomatic dialogue with the Syrian government."

The European Parliament, which had passed several resolutions on Syrian Jewry in the past, adopted a new resolution on November 21, 1991, deploring the failure of the Syrian government to permit the Jews to leave, and noting that "the perilous situation of the Jews had been made even more critical by the publication of a book by the Syrian Minister of Defense, Mustafa Tlas, which repeated the calumnies accusing the Jews of ritual murder." (The book in question, entitled The Matzah of Zion, recounted the infamous Damascus blood libel case of 1840, in which a Christian clergyman had falsely accused the Jews of using the blood of a Christian child to prepare their unleavened bread for Passover. At a meeting of the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva in February 1991, the Syrian representative
had recommended the book to fellow members of the commission as evidence of the malevolent nature of the Jews. As noted above, a book on the same theme was published in Iran the following year.)

Demonstrations sponsored by the European Union of Jewish Students calling for freedom for the Jews of Syria were held in front of Syrian embassies throughout Western Europe and in Moscow on December 1, the first night of Hanukkah. Similar demonstrations were held in many cities in the United States, Canada, and Latin America. On January 14, 1992, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, the National Jewish Community Relations Council, and the Council for the Rescue of Syrian Jewry joined in placing an advertisement in the New York Times and the Washington Post, headlined "There Are Still Hostages in the Middle East!" It described the 4,000 Jews of Syria as a "captive community" and demanded that "the Jews of Syria be allowed to leave now."

In the course of the bilateral Syrian-Israeli talks in Washington in January 1992, the Israeli delegation again raised the issue of Syrian Jewry and asked that the Syrian government give them permission to leave freely, "in accordance with international norms and obligations, and in accordance with a resolution passed recently by both houses of Congress." Ambassador Muwaffak al-Allaf, the head of the Syrian delegation, was sharply critical of congressional involvement in an issue he defined as a Syrian "domestic" matter. But the efforts which the Syrians made to respond to the criticism, including the well-publicized Jewish demonstration in Damascus, indicated a heightened measure of Syrian sensitivity to international public opinion. President Assad had in fact felt moved to declare to a group of Lebanese members of parliament visiting Damascus on December 12, 1991, that "everybody in Syria, including Syrian Jews, enjoys the right to leave the country." United Press International called it an "unprecedented statement," one indicating "a dramatic shift."

On the eve of the resumption of the bilateral Syrian-Israeli talks in Washington on April 27, 1992, the State Department announced that it had received confirmation from the Syrian Foreign Ministry that, in a recent meeting with the country's Jewish leaders, President Assad had declared that "all members of the Syrian Jewish community will be accorded the same rights as those enjoyed by all other Syrian citizens." The most important part of the announcement was the indication that "Syrian Jews will be allowed to travel abroad as families, on business and for vacation" (emphasis added). Jewish emigration was still not permitted, and departing Jews were officially issued only tourist visas, meaning that they could not take more than a limited amount of personal goods and money with them. Yet the promise to remove the requirement that immediate members of the family remain behind offered the opportunity for whole families to leave and for divided families to be reunited with their relatives in the United States and countries other than Israel. (The Jewish community of Syrian origin is estimated at over 30,000 in the metropolitan New York region alone.)

Damascus had assured Washington that, in future, Jews seeking to travel would only have to pay the normal exit visa fees. The State Department also stated that
the "Syrian Government has removed difficulties encountered by its Jewish citizens with regard to the sale and purchase of property." The State Department announcement hinted at Syria's failure to live up to past promises when it concluded: "We look forward to the full implementation of these decisions affecting Syrian Jews."

The cumulative effect of interventions on behalf of Syrian Jewry may have finally convinced the Syrian president that there was more to be gained than lost by ending his anachronistic policy. Not only had other Arab states permitted their Jews to leave, but with the floodgates of the former Soviet Union open to Jewish emigration—and with some 350,000 having by then already gone to Israel—the argument that permitting Syrian Jews to leave would contribute to the military power of the Israeli enemy seemed more ridiculous than ever.

When Rabbi Hamra publicly declared his support for President Assad as the symbol of Syrian national unity, he was reflecting the true feelings of the Syrian Jewish community. There is much concern that should Assad disappear from the scene, either through natural causes or by an assassin's bullet, the country might again be racked by factional strife, and Islamic fundamentalist protest movements might come to power. The sudden death in January 1994 in an automobile crash of Assad's 33-year-old son Basil, whom the president was grooming as his successor, heightened concern over the country's political stability and intensified the Jewish desire to leave. While demanding that all remaining restrictions upon them be removed, Syrian Jews appreciate the fact that Assad has protected them from radical Palestinians and other hostile forces and fear that their position would be far worse than it is at present if the fanatical Muslim Brotherhood took over.

As noted above, in the peace talks in Madrid and Washington, Prime Minister Shamir and the Israeli delegation repeatedly demanded that Syria give its Jews the right to leave. This placed the issue squarely within the context of the Arab-Israel dispute. This was in contrast to the strategy of the Council for the Rescue of Syrian Jewry and other advocacy groups, which had always been to emphasize that freedom for Syrian Jews was a human-rights issue that should be taken up in the context of the American-Syrian dialogue rather than in the framework of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This was necessary as long as the Syrians used the state of war between Syria and Israel as justification for their restrictions on Jewish travel, saying they had no way of assuring that Syrian Jews would not go to Israel and strengthen the military capacity of the "Zionist enemy."

Some observers believe that, in addition to seeking to improve his image in the United States, President Assad's gesture to permit Jewish families to leave was intended as a confidence-building measure in the negotiations with Israel, to induce Jerusalem to modify its stand on the Golan Heights. The June 1992 elections in Israel, which saw the defeat of the Likud party by the Labor party and the replacement of Yitzhak Shamir by Yitzhak Rabin as prime minister, held out hope of rapprochement. General Rabin, who as chief of staff in 1967 had commanded the Israel Defense Forces' capture of the Golan Heights, made it clear that his government was prepared for territorial compromise in exchange for peace, including
withdrawal from the Golan Heights, subject to appropriate security arrangements. However, despite this significant ideological shift from the Likud position, the bilateral Syrian-Israeli negotiations during 1992 and 1993 failed to achieve a breakthrough. Moreover, Assad would not participate in the multilateral negotiations on such vital regional issues as shared water resources, environmental problems, economic development, arms control, and refugees, arguing that Israel should not benefit from the fruits of peace before it had met Syrian demands.

The remaining Syrian Jews once again became pawns in this larger dispute. Between April 27, 1992, and mid-October 1992, some 2,850 Syrian Jews were given permission to travel, according to the State Department’s Report on Human Rights for 1992, issued in January 1993. The report noted that “the Government, however, remains opposed in principle to Jewish emigration, and Jews must have their applications for passports and exit visas approved by Syrian military intelligence.” In the second half of October, the Syrian authorities suddenly reduced the number of new exit permits to a couple a week, mostly for individuals. Knowledgeable Middle East observers attributed the slowdown to the impending American presidential elections and Assad’s subsequent attempt to use the release of the remaining Jews as a bargaining chip in his relations with the new administration in Washington.

Assad’s reneging on his promise spurred renewed diplomatic and political efforts on behalf of Syrian Jewry. On May 23, 1993, Senators Edward Kennedy (D., Mass.) and Charles Grassley (R., Iowa), together with 71 other members of the Senate, sent a letter to Clinton urging him to address directly the issue of Syrian Jewry. On July 15, President Clinton sent a strong reply to the signatories of the Senate letter affirming his commitment to Syrian Jews, assuring them that “I have not, and will not, let this matter slip from our attention.” The response from Damascus to high-level American diplomatic interventions remained the same. Both President Assad and Foreign Minister al-Sharaa assured Secretary of State Warren Christopher on his first official visit to Damascus, in February 1993, as they had President George Bush and Secretary James Baker, that no new ban had been imposed, and that the reduction in exit permits was due solely to “bureaucratic” problems. Yet by early December there was still no discernible change, and the Syrians were doling out the exit permits one at a time.

After a four-hour meeting with Assad on December 5, 1993, Secretary Christopher told reporters in Damascus that the Syrian leader had pledged to issue exit visas for all remaining Jews by the end of the month. Although there was indeed an increase in exit permits issued in the following weeks, 1993 ended with several hundred Syrian Jews still awaiting documents.

Frustration over the continuing delays and the apparent reimposition of the requirement that some family members remain behind prompted the organized Jewish community in the United States to hold a rally at the Syrian Mission to the United Nations on Sunday, December 5. The rally was cosponsored by 28 national and local Jewish groups, including such umbrella organizations as the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York and the Conference of Presidents of Major
American Jewish Organizations. Set for the weekend before Hanukkah, a time traditionally devoted to recalling Jewish triumph over religious persecution, the rally also coincided with the Assad-Christopher meeting in Damascus. American political and religious leaders joined more than 400 members of the Jewish community gathered on a cold and rainy day, carrying banners that proclaimed “President Assad Keep Your Word” and “Freedom for Syrian Jews.”

Alice Sardell Harary, president of the Council for the Rescue of Syrian Jewry, described the hardships caused by the disruption of the emigration process. Those who had already left gave up their money, their businesses, their homes, and all their assets in order to “breathe the sweet air of freedom.” The 1,400 who were still awaiting permission to leave to join their families abroad found their daily life disrupted. She noted that the school in Aleppo had closed and that there was only one kosher butcher to serve the remaining Jews in the three cities of Damascus (1,100), Aleppo (around 150), and Qamishli (fewer than 100). Many Jews were out of work and non-Jews would no longer extend them credit, knowing that they wanted to leave. (Prior to the mass departures, it was estimated that 50 percent of the Jewish population was middle class, 10 percent upper class, and about 40 percent at or near the poverty level.)

To illustrate the sorry state of the remaining remnant of the ancient Syrian Jewish communities, she noted: “Just six months ago we had ten baby boys who had not yet had a bris [circumcision] because there was no longer a mohel [ritual circumciser] in Syria. The oldest of the babies was eight months. It took so many months before the Syrians would agree to grant a foreign mohel a Syrian visa.”

By the end of 1993, according to the State Department, more than 85 percent of the Jewish community had been granted exit permits, while 500–600 requests still awaited approval. Mrs. Harary confirmed to the author that, as of the beginning of February 1994, all Jews requesting exit permits had already received them. While some 1,100 Jews were still in Syria, most were expected to leave within a few months, some reportedly waiting for the end of the school year and warmer weather. It is estimated that some 300 to 400 Jews—primarily the wealthy and well established—will choose to remain in Syria.

Should a formal peace agreement be concluded between Syria and Israel, and if Damascus lifts the ban on travel to Israel, some Syrian Jewish sources in New York believe that about half of the recent immigrants will choose to resettle in Israel rather than remain in Brooklyn.

**Morocco**

Anxiety and concern for the future cast a constant shadow over the daily lives of the small Jewish communities even in those Arab countries where generally moderate and pro-Western rulers have tried to protect them. Although Morocco has a relatively free press, several political parties, and labor unions, King Hassan II crushed a 1972 coup attempt and has used draconian measures to quell perceived
threats to his regime. The long-term stability of that regime will depend on his ability to improve the economic opportunities for a growing population by attracting increased foreign investment and tourism and to meet the popular demand for greater political participation and free expression. At the same time, he will have to restrain Islamic fundamentalists and other extremist elements that may threaten his regime.

In 1990-1991 Morocco felt the repercussions of the Gulf crisis, which exacerbated existing weaknesses, with high inflation and widespread unemployment continuing to fuel an economic malaise. The king managed to straddle the fence during the Gulf War, condemning the Iraqi invasion and sending troops to Saudi Arabia, but then announcing that Moroccan troops would never fire a shot against an Arab brother. Hassan permitted popular demonstrations in support of Saddam Hussein, in which some 300,000 Muslim fundamentalists reportedly participated, and as a result of which property was damaged and some 30 Muslims were killed. Although some of the demonstrators shouted anti-Semitic slogans, the king's police prevented the demonstration from turning into a pogrom.

After the war, he positioned himself quickly in support of the American-sponsored peace efforts, with Morocco joining 11 other Arab countries in the multilateral stage of the peace process, which convened for the first time in Moscow in January 1992. Hassan officially received Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres in Rabat in September 1993, on their return from the Washington signing of the Declaration of Principles with PLO chairman Yasir Arafat. The French-language Moroccan paper Le Matin du Sahara et du Maghreb reported on September 9 that the executive of the World Gathering of Moroccan Jewry had met in Paris and issued a declaration full of effusive praise for the king's "courageous," "visionary," and "pioneering" activities in support of the historic Palestinian-Israel rapprochement and pledging its support for broadening the peace process to include all the Arab states of the region.

The appointment in 1993 of Serge Berdugo, the leader of the Jewish community, as minister of tourism and the appointment of other Jews as financial advisers to the king reflected the hope that as peace took root, Moroccan Jews in France, Israel, and Canada, as well as many American and Western European Jews who were not of Sephardi origin, would increasingly be attracted to visit Morocco as tourists and even to invest in the country's development. The king has eagerly encouraged tourism and investment from American Jews and from Moroccan Jews living abroad.

Within the Jewish community, the pattern of institutional closure continued, as the population slowly decreased in size, falling to around 6,500 in 1993, according to Linda Levi of the Joint Distribution Committee. In Morocco, as in other countries with a dwindling Jewish population, there was a tendency to move from the small provincial towns to the major cities, where viable community institutions still functioned. In 1991 the JDC closed the homes for the aged in Rabat, Fez, and Marrakesh and transferred the residents to a home in Casablanca. The school in
Meknes was also closed. Tangier was the only community in the provinces to retain its homes for the aged, which JDC helped fund.

The Casablanca community continued to display a dynamism beyond its size, with more than 20 synagogues functioning on a daily basis, and 1,296 students attending Jewish day schools during the 1993-94 academic year. This represented nearly all the community's school-age children. Because of the financial pressures, the JDC actively encouraged consolidation in the four subsidized school systems: Otzar Hatorah, Lubavitch, Ittihad (formerly known as the Alliance Israélite Universelle), and ORT. A new Lubavitch youth center was opened in Marrakesh in 1992, and the JDC also helped fund their youth centers in Casablanca and Meknes, as well as summer camp programs for some 400 children sponsored by various Jewish groups. More than 500 Moroccan Jews received welfare assistance from the local community with JDC help; some 1,700 needy persons of all ages benefited from health services provided by OSE (Oeuvre Secours aux Enfants), with JDC support.

The two Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla had a combined Jewish population of around 1,500. In response to efforts to encourage communal self-sufficiency, the Melilla community in 1992 informed JDC that it now could manage to finance its own communal needs, but in Ceuta the JDC continued to provide part of the costs of Hebrew classes for 40 youngsters.

**Algeria**

Most of the 140,000 Jews who were living in the country when Algeria won its independence in 1962 moved to France. Although the governing National Liberation Front (FLN) was in the early years an ardent champion of the Palestinians in the Arab-Israeli conflict, the secular, socialist Algerian regime was careful to protect the local Jewish community. For instance, in May 1988, when the last functioning synagogue was desecrated by vandals who tore Torah scrolls, ripped prayer books, and broke furniture, Minister of the Interior El-Had Khedri met with Roger Said, the president of the local Jewish community, to promise that the police would seek out the vandals. The police arrested eight teenagers and charged them with robbery after stolen Jewish objects were found in local stores.

Beginning in the late 1980s, Algeria experienced growing political turbulence and the spectacular ascent of Muslim fundamentalists in the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), which pledged to turn Algeria into a Muslim state run according to Sharia law. The success of the fundamentalist party, even among many nonobservant Algerians, is attributed to various factors, including high long-term unemployment (over 30 percent) among the rapidly growing and youthful population, disillusionment with the unfulfilled pan-Arab and socialist promises of the FLN, and widespread reports of favoritism and corruption among the FLN elite that had governed the country since independence.

An Islamic takeover in January 1992 was prevented by an army-led coup that first unseated President Chadli Benjedid, then declared a state of martial law, appointed
a five-man junta, and finally arrested FIS leaders. After the military outlawed Islamic groups in 1992, they began an armed insurrection, and the country was placed in a state of emergency.

According to first-hand reports from Algiers, the small and aged Jewish community, which in 1990 numbered around 150 persons, had declined to fewer than 100 in 1993, through natural deaths or emigration. The remnant of this once flourishing community has kept a low profile and has not thus far been directly touched by the fighting. However, they suffer from the unstable political situation and the deteriorating economy. Most of the Jews are over 60, and all but two have French citizenship. (They continue to be free to move to France.)

The Joint Distribution Committee provides supplementary cash grants to seven elderly Jews lacking sufficient means. Subsidized medical care is provided to the remaining Jews when needed by the local Little Sisters of the Poor, a Catholic religious order.

In 1991, as the FLN loosened the reigns of control and the first multiparty political election campaign swung into high gear, anti-Semitic slogans became a regular tool in the arsenal of the opposition groups. There were no physical attacks on the local Jews, the aim being to focus on the "international Jewish mafia." Opposition and independent papers carried anti-Semitic articles, including reprints of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. The Islamic Salvation Front propaganda regularly invoked "the Jews as Middle East invaders and as the rivals of Islam." Shortly before his arrest on June 30, 1991, FIS leader Sheikh Abbas Madani accused the authorities of dispersing Muslim demonstrators with smoke grenades purchased from "American Jews." In subsequent clashes, Muslim fundamentalists taunted members of the security forces as "dogs, Jews and heretics." Roger Pinto, the head of the Paris-based Commission for Jewish Communities in Danger, complained that the embattled government "doesn't denounce anti-Semitism" and gloomily predicted that "the ongoing instability can only serve to strengthen existing tensions." (Edith Beck, "The Freedom to Be Anti-Semitic," Jerusalem Report, December 26, 1991.) Algerian Jews recall that anti-Jewish riots after the 1967 Six Day War resulted in much damage and the conversion of all but one synagogue into mosques.

Tunisia

The total Jewish population of Tunisia had declined to around 1,585 by the end of 1993.

In a bloodless coup in November 1987, Habib Bourguiba, Tunisia's "president for life," was deposed by Zine el-Abidine Ben Ali, his prime minister. The ailing 84-year-old "father of the nation" had ruled Tunisia since leading the country to independence from France in 1956. He had actively protected the Jewish community in the face of anti-Israel demonstrations in 1967. However, growing Islamic fundamentalism in recent years and virulent anti-Semitism, fanned by inflammatory broadcasts from neighboring Libya, resulted in several incidents against Jewish institutions.
The most serious of these occurred during Simhat Torah prayers in October 1985 in the ancient El-Ghriba synagogue on the island of Djerba. A crazed Tunisian security guard, posted by the government to protect the 140 worshipers, suddenly turned his weapon on the congregation, killing 4 persons and wounding 11. The gunman also killed a Tunisian policeman who tried to resist, whose police car he grabbed to flee toward the Libyan border, where he was finally captured. He was convicted and sentenced to a mental institution. The incident came a few days after Israeli forces had bombed the PLO headquarters on the outskirts of Tunis, in retaliation for a Palestinian terrorist attack on three Israeli civilian tourists in Cyprus. One unconfirmed report said that the synagogue gunman was the brother of a Tunisian guard killed in the Israeli raid on the PLO headquarters. Whatever the reason, it demonstrated how vulnerable innocent local Jews in the Arab world are to repercussions of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The incident also caused the Tunisian authorities to have serious second thoughts about the wisdom of their offering to host the PLO after it was kicked out of Beirut in 1982. The presence of militant Palestinians and potential terrorists in the country had reportedly hurt Tunisia's image as a mecca for tourism, which was the country's main source of foreign exchange.

Within days of assuming power in 1987, Ben Ali met with the leaders of the Jewish community to assure them that he would continue to protect them. While Ben Ali has maintained the country's generally pro-Western orientation, he also restored relations with Libya, which had been broken off by Tunisia in protest against Col. Muammar Qaddafi's campaign of subversion. For a while he also eased up on local fundamentalists, whom he had helped to suppress when he served as Bourguiba's minister of the interior.

However, in the face of renewed Islamic militancy, Ben Ali intensified his vigilance and has quietly worked with the pro-Western governments of Morocco and Egypt in an attempt to stem the Islamic tide in the Maghreb. In 1991 and 1992, the government again resorted to draconian measures designed to eradicate the now outlawed An-Nahda Islamic party from the political landscape, including press restrictions and the imprisonment of 265 party leaders for plotting to assassinate the president and overthrow the government. In elections held in March 1994, Ben Ali won virtually unanimous reelection. The ruling Constitutional Democratic Rally Party won heavily in elections to the Chamber of Deputies, with four opposition parties taking 19 out of 163 seats under a new liberalized electoral system.

Although the potential for Islamic resurgence remains a concern, there is no immediate threat to the Jewish community. Both the government and the Jewish community look forward to benefits deriving from the success of the Arab-Israeli peace process. The government hopes to reap financial dividends, in which Tunisian Jews and their tens of thousands of relatives abroad may well play a helpful role. A recent sign of the priority given by the government to attracting Jewish tourism and investment was the red-carpet welcome given Chief Rabbi Joseph Sitruk of France in September 1992 on his first visit to Tunisia since he left the country as a youth in 1959. Sitruk was escorted to the presidential palace in Tunis by motorcy-
outriders with sirens blaring, and the state media gave extensive coverage to his visit. Ben Ali reportedly believes that the former Tunisian Jews—particularly those who prospered in the French textile industry—could be attracted to invest in his country. As a further sign of his eagerness for rapprochement with the Jewish world, Ben Ali promised to release the assets of Tunisian Jews resident in France and made a pledge of $200,000 to restore the capital’s Jewish cemetery. As for the nearly 100,000 Tunisian Jews who emigrated, Ben Ali told Sitruk, “They are at home here, and can come whenever they want.” It soon became clear that this welcome also extended to Tunisian Jews who had settled in Israel.

Although Tunisia never opened formal diplomatic relations with Israel, Israeli officials were welcomed to participate when Tunisia hosted multilateral discussions on refugee issues in 1993, and four Tunisian students participated in agricultural training courses in Israel under the auspices of the Israel Foreign Ministry.

The historic el-Ghriba Synagogue in the Hara Sghira section of Djerba has long drawn Tunisian Jews from across the country, from France, and even from the United States to participate in the special three-day hiloula celebrations around Lag B’Omer (the 33rd day following the first day of Passover). (According to an ancient legend, the original synagogue, rebuilt on the same site in 1920, contains a stone from Solomon’s Temple, which was brought by a mysterious Jewish woman who carried it with her from Jerusalem at the time of the Babylonian destruction of the Temple in 586 BCE. The stone is believed by some to possess the magical power to grant wishes.) What is unusual is that in May 1993 the Tunisian authorities actively encouraged the participation of Tunisian Jews from Israel as well. Indeed, the kitchens of seven tourist hotels in this resort area were made kosher especially for the occasion to accommodate the 2,000 Jewish visitors from abroad. The government also invited a group of American Jewish writers to cover the events, to meet with government officials, and to tour the Jewish communities in Tunis and Djerba. In this Tunisia was following the example of Morocco, which had carried out a similar program in 1980, resulting in a significant increase in American Jewish tourism to that country.

As in Morocco, the declining population forced a consolidation of institutions. In Tunis the JDC is helping to finance the remodeling and enlargement of one old-age home in order to accommodate the residents of another building, which will be sold. The JDC also provided support for the only remaining Jewish school in Tunis, a Lubavitcher institution with 75 children aged 3 to 16, most of whose families came to Tunis from Djerba. Funds were also provided to two schools in the Hara Kbira section of Djerba, a girls’ school and a yeshivah for boys, with a combined enrollment of 245, and talmud torah classes for seven youngsters in Hara Sghira.

It should be noted that, although the total Jewish population of Tunis—estimated at 700–900—exceeds that of Djerba, with a Jewish population of only 670, the far higher percentage of Jewish children going to day schools in the latter reflects the different character of the two communities. The Jews in the capital are generally
Francophone and more assimilated, while the Arabic- and Hebrew-speaking Djerban Jews remain traditional and place a high value on Jewish observance and scholarship. There are also demographic differences, the Jews of Tunis tending to be older on average with small families, the Djerbans younger, with large families and many young children. When they emigrate, the Jews of Tunis tend to go to France, while those from Djerba prefer to settle in the Holy Land.

The JDC provided financial assistance to 185 indigent Jews, mainly single elderly persons, and also helped subsidize the salaries of two ritual slaughterers and provided Passover supplies. Other communal needs were paid for by Tunisian Jews themselves. However, as the local economy continued to deteriorate, they turned increasingly to Tunisian Jews in France to finance special needs, such as new heating equipment for the old-age home and for help in cleaning up the Tunis Jewish cemetery.

The Jewish population in outlying Tunisian towns continued to dwindle, with only some 70 remaining in Sousse, 55 in Sfax, 50 in Zarzis, and 40 in Nabeul.

**Egypt**

The local Jewish communities in Egypt are a pale shadow of their ancient glory. Only some 250 persons, mostly aged, remain, chiefly in Cairo and Alexandria. There is also a tiny Karaite community.

The Joint Distribution Committee gave assistance to some 50 elderly and impoverished individuals, providing health care in partnership with the local communities, and covering 90 percent of the costs of two small homes for the aged. (The Alexandria home was closed in 1992.) The JDC also helped organize festival meals and group recreation for the elderly population, consisting largely of widows living alone.

Since the conclusion of the Egyptian peace treaty with Israel in 1979, the community is no longer as isolated as it had been, and Jewish tourists and business executives from various countries, including relatives from Israel, have often helped in providing a minyan for Sabbath services in the main synagogue in Cairo. The ancient Ibn Ezra Synagogue, site of the famous genizah, has also recently been restored and reopened to visitors.

Although President Hosni Mubarak has taken an active role in seeking to mediate between Israel and the PLO and between Israel and its Arab neighbors, the fate of the members of the aging Jewish community depends more on Mubarak’s success in domestic affairs—in countering the growing fundamentalist challenge to his regime and maintaining the principles of secularism and religious pluralism which he officially endorses.
Iraq

After the conclusion of the Iraq-Iran war in 1988, Saddam Hussein approved restoration of a synagogue in Baghdad, and Jews were again permitted to travel. According to a report in the Israeli newspaper *Ma'ariv* (December 12, 1991), 26 Iraqi Jewish men and women had arrived in a European country after obtaining official permission to leave Iraq. They said that only 81 Jews remained in Baghdad, most of them in their seventies.

The allied bombing of Baghdad in January 1991 as part of Operation Desert Storm did not damage the main synagogue, although its windows were shattered by the blast of nearby bomb explosions. However, the war revived concern not only for the physical safety of the tiny Jewish community but also for the fate of its valuable historical archives and its many precious Torah scrolls. Haham Solomon Gaon of Yeshiva University in New York has tried for years to get Iraqi permission to export these materials, urging major Jewish organizations to undertake a more active campaign to protect the cultural heritage of this ancient Jewish community.

Lebanon

During 1993 the Lebanese authorities authorized the removal of 50 Torah scrolls from Beirut and their export to other Jewish communities. This was mute but poignant evidence of the dissolution of this ancient and once flourishing Jewish community.

In October 1991 there were reportedly only two Jews—an elderly brother and sister—still living in the Wadi Abu Jamil section of West Beirut, where the main synagogue had closed in 1984. There are reportedly between 50 and 100 Jews living in Christian East Beirut, their average age being around 65. The dozen or so younger Jews are mainly students at the city's universities. Explaining his decision to remain, one young Jew told an Israeli reporter, "There have been Jews here for the past 2,300 years. We're one of the 17 officially recognized sects. We don't want them to become 16 one day." (*Jerusalem Report*, October 24, 1991.) In addition, some Lebanese Jewish businessmen whose families reside in Europe make periodic trips to Beirut in hopes of participating in the massive reconstruction effort that is now under way, on the assumption that peace will finally come to that troubled country.

The last American hostages held by Shiite groups in Lebanon were released in 1991, and toward the end of 1993 Syrian president Assad offered his help and that of the Lebanese authorities to ascertain the whereabouts of seven Israeli soldiers captured or missing in action; however, there has been absolutely no progress in determining the fate or even recovering the bodies of nine Lebanese Jews kidnapped in Beirut in the mid-1980s. On July 24, 1987, Joseph Mizrahi, acting president of the Lebanese Jewish community, asked the present author to convey a personal appeal to UN secretary-general Pérez de Cuéllar urging him "in the name of the most elementary human rights" to use all of his moral authority to help the Jewish
community recover the remains of the murdered Jews so that they could be laid to rest "in accordance with Jewish traditions."

The Organization of the Oppressed on Earth, which in July 1989 announced that it had hanged U.S. Marine Lt. Col. William Higgins as an "American spy," kidnapped nine Lebanese Jews in 1984 and 1985. Ideologically and operationally linked to the Iranian-backed Hezbollah (Party of God), a group bearing this name first surfaced in Beirut in December 1985, when it announced the execution of two of the Lebanese Jews it had kidnapped earlier. Two additional Lebanese Jewish hostages were killed by this group in February 1986, because, it said, Israel failed to meet its demands to release all Lebanese and Palestinian prisoners held in southern Lebanon. Only the first three victims were found, dumped on the streets of Beirut. The coroner reported that the body of the third victim, Abraham Benisti, bore signs of torture and that he had been shot twice and strangled.

The Organization of the Oppressed claimed that those executed had all been "spies" for Israel, but a close investigation of their personal backgrounds demonstrates that none of the victims had been involved in Lebanese politics or in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The only thing they had in common was that they were born Jewish and had remained in Muslim-controlled West Beirut after most Lebanese Jews had fled the strife-torn city. The random nature of the attacks on the helpless Jews was made clear in a statement by the group on December 28, 1985, warning that unless all its demands against Israel were met, it would kill not only those it had already kidnapped but would strike against other Jews "on whom we may lay our hands."

Among the best known and most highly respected of the Jewish victims was Dr. Elie Hallak, a pediatrician who was called "the doctor of the poor" because he often treated without fee needy Lebanese and Palestinian patients, irrespective of their religious or political affiliation. In a poignant public challenge to the kidnappers, his wife, Rachel, described his benevolent career and the unsuccessful efforts by his many friends to secure his release. Her open letter was published in the Lebanese press and in Le Monde (Paris), March 5, 1986.

Well-placed Lebanese sources believe that the motivation of the Organization of the Oppressed was not purely ideological or political. More mundane motives were also at work: The poor Shiites coveted the homes and communal properties of the once prosperous Jewish community and sought to pressure the kidnap victims—who included the president, vice-president, and secretary of the Jewish community—to turn over title to property and bank accounts to persons designated by the terrorists.

This radical Shiite band claimed to have executed a total of nine Jews whom it had abducted, but, as noted, only three bodies were ever recovered. The terrorists refused to release the bodies of any of the later victims, declaring that they would not do so until Israel withdrew from "all occupied territory." In a statement published in An Nahar on June 20, 1987, the Organization of the Oppressed reiterated its refusal to release the bodies and vowed to "continue to chase the Zionist
invaders and their agents wherever they may be until this cancerous gland is uprooted."

Until a few years ago there were persistent but unconfirmed reports that Isaac Sasson, 72, president of the Jewish community, who was kidnapped in 1985, and some other Jewish hostages might still be alive. Salim Jammous, 65, the secretary-general of the Lebanese Jewish community, was abducted near the main synagogue in the Wadi Abu Jamil section of West Beirut on August 15, 1984. Since his body has not been found and no announcement has been made of his death, his sister continues to believe that he may still be alive. She has continued to write letters to the press urging that his fate be placed on the table in the current Syrian-Israeli and Lebanese-Israeli peace talks. In Paris, Roger Pinto in 1993 continued to urge European governments to press for information on the Jewish hostages.

In a statement on August 11, 1991, President George Bush underscored that "there will not be—there can't be—totally normalized relations [with Iran or Syria] as long as people are held against their will." Mr. Bush called on those with influence "to work for the release of all hostages, regardless of their nationality." The president also called for "an accounting of those who may have died while in captivity."

The relatives of the missing Lebanese Jews believe Syrian president Assad can play a crucial role in bringing this about. Syria's effective control of Lebanon was demonstrated when Syrian security forces warned that they would attack the headquarters of radical Shiite groups unless the terrorists promptly released Jérôme Leyraud, a French doctor who had been kidnapped on August 8, 1991, in Beirut, and threatened with death by a new terrorist group opposing additional hostage releases. Dr. Leyraud was freed within 60 hours.

To keep the issue before the public, Roger Pinto organized a demonstration in Paris on June 7, 1993, which was attended by several leading French personalities and relatives of the Lebanese Jewish hostages. On July 7, Pinto and Bernard Gagnassia, secretary-general of Siona, the French Zionist group, met with Cornélio Somaruga, president of the International Committee of the Red Cross, in Geneva, and asked him to pursue the question of the fate of the Jewish kidnap victims with the Lebanese, Syrian, and Iranian governments. It remains to be seen whether the recent rapprochement between the United States and Syria and the hoped-for peace agreements between Syria and Israel and between Israel and the Syrian-dominated Lebanese government will finally bring an end to the ordeal of the Lebanese Jewish hostages and their families.

George E. Gruen